The Relevance of Ideology to Contemporary Armed Conflicts: A Quantitative Analysis of Former Combatants in Colombia

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Abstract

This article counterclaims that ideology lacks relevance to contemporary armed conflicts, especially when economic factors play an important role. Focusing on the case of Colombia, the authors utilize logistic regression analysis to test whether ideology allows one to distinguish between different armed groups and whether a combatant's level of agreement with his or her armed group is related to affinity for that group's ideology. The high degree of collinearity between three indicators of ideology—discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses—and their similar explanatory power support the article's conceptual proposal of viewing them as different dimensions of the same phenomenon. The authors find that ideology continues to play a role in the internal dynamics of Colombian armed groups and that a combatant's ideological development is influenced not only by pre-enlistment experiences but also by participation in a particular group. Future research should not ignore ideology as an important element of contemporary armed conflicts.

Keywords

Ideology, conflict, Colombia, paramilitaries, guerrillas

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While ideology, broadly defined as a minimally structured set of beliefs, was a primary explanation of armed conflict during the cold war, its relevance to the study of conflict appears to have diminished in recent decades. Contemporary armed conflicts have been increasingly characterized as transnational, resource-driven, private ventures with diminished political agendas (Collier 2000; Kaldor 1999). Such a change in focus has helped expand our understanding of insurgencies and other forms of organized violence. However, there is a growing debate among scholars over whether it is useful to mark too sharp a contrast between contemporary conflicts and those that occurred during the cold war (Duyvesteyn and Angstron 2005; Kalyvas 2001).

This concern has led some scholars to develop a comprehensive framework for research on armed conflicts in which social, economic, and political factors are all taken into account—and not considered mutually exclusive. Within such a framework, ideology clearly has a place. Nevertheless, much of the literature on armed conflict today favors data-rich analyses that focus on variables that are more naturally quantifiable, especially those related to the political economy of war. As a result, greed- and grievance-based explanations of armed conflict continue to predominate. While efforts to reconcile these two approaches have contributed to scholars' understanding of the multidimensionality of conflict, ideology remains largely disregarded.

We ask whether ideology is still relevant to contemporary armed conflicts, and if so, what role might it play. This article takes on the challenge of answering these questions through *quantitative* analysis, focusing on variables previously limited to ethnographic approaches, interviews, and qualitative observation. The Colombian conflict is an ideal case for testing. While the political roots of Colombia's leftist guerrilla groups are widely recognized, most recent studies focus on the economic motivations of the armed actors, ignoring ideology in the process. Our research uses data related to ideology gathered through surveys of recently demobilized guerrillas and paramilitaries in Colombia. We use logistic regression analysis to test whether ideology allows us to distinguish between different Colombian armed groups. We also explore the relationship between a combatant's level of agreement with his or her armed group and the affinity he or she has for that group's ideology.

This article first discusses the current perspectives on ideology in a debate on armed conflict dominated by the concepts of greed and grievance. We then briefly review the literature on the Colombian conflict, much of which focuses on the individual economic motivations of armed combatants. We proceed to discuss our operationalization of the concept of ideology and the research design used for our study. After some conceptual considerations, we present our statistical analysis and consider the relevance of the results to the Colombian case and armed conflicts in general. Our findings suggest that ideology is significant at the individual level, most likely as motivation to fight, and plays a role in maintaining internal cohesion within armed groups.

Dimensions of Armed Conflict

The literature on armed conflict experienced a change in the late 1990s, when rationalist explanations that emerged in the aftermath of the cold war began to overshadow the ethnic and religious perspectives on the subject. Economic explanations of conflict became dominant and found great appeal among scholars and policy makers alike. Rent-seeking behavior was no longer simply a means through which actors achieved political goals; in some cases, rebel groups appeared to be driven primarily by economic agendas.

Rationalist approaches have offered three general explanations for contemporary armed conflicts. First, security dilemmas, created by commitment/information problems or outright threatening actors, push civilians to take up arms or avoid peaceful settlements to existing conflicts (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Hardin 1995; Lake and Rothchild 1998; Walter 2004). Second, socioeconomic and political grievances, such as marginalization, repression, unemployment, and underdevelopment, drive individuals toward violent action (Blomberg and Hess 2002; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004; Nafizinger and Auvinam 2002; Spoor 2004; Stewart 2008; Stewart and Fitzgerald 2001). Finally, armed combatants pursue war out of greed for power or for control of natural resources, illegal industries, and public finances (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; Berdal and Keen 1997; Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon 2005; Keen 1998).

The dominant paradigm that has emerged from this research is one of greed versus grievance. Are rebels driven by opportunities for self-enrichment through conflict? Or are they motivated by desires to address grievances held by a wider group? A minimal consensus concedes importance to both greed and grievance and the structures and institutions that incentivize certain courses of action. However, such an approach still leaves other important factors aside.

Critics of rationalist explanations of contemporary armed conflicts emphasize the anthropological and psychological features of organized violence. In this vein, conflict is explained by the ideological and identity-based mobilization of groups that compete violently against each other, though scholars disagree on the origin of such competition: fear of subrogation or extinction of identity and culture (Horowitz 1985; Petersen 2002), manipulation by elites (Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Gagnon 2004; Ohlson 2008), or responses to symbols, myths, and discourses (Kaufman 2001, 2006).

Many rationalists and nonrationalists see the need to move beyond the greed/grievance duality in order to answer questions unresolved by the dominant paradigm (Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Berdal and Malone 2000; Berdal 2005; Sambanis 2004). Even scholars who argued strongly in favor of greed-based explanations for the emergence of war have softened their tone and are now more inclusive of the myriad of variables that influence conflicts (cf., e.g., Collier [2000] with Collier and Hoeffler [2004]). Indeed, an individual's motivation

to fight is likely to be diverse, and interpretation may vary depending on the researcher's level of analysis (Henriksen and Vinci 2008). Recently, some scholars have suggested a conceptual framework that takes into account both rationalist and nonrationalist perspectives (Arnson and Zartman 2005; Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Duyvesteyn and Angstron 2005). Zartman (2005) labels this framework ''need, creed, and greed,'' adding a dimension related to identity and ideology (creed) to complement the dominant perspectives of greed and grievance. It is here where our research enters the picture. We aim to substantiate this expanded framework, addressing ideology through quantitative means often considered the province of greed- and grievance-focused analyses.

Yet, even among those who advocate renewed attention to ideology as a component of creed, there is debate over its specific role. System-level analyses[1] have highlighted the apparently weak ability of ideology to explain armed groups' formation, consolidation, and expansion in contemporary conflicts (Fearon 2004). Discourse and doctrine would be, at best, secondary elements to explain combatants' inner motivations and armed groups' internal dynamics.

However, scholars in other fields insist on taking a closer look at insurgents' less utilitarian behavior. According to social psychology, ideological indoctrination proves to be an efficient tool in fostering the creation of militias, as it helps leaders to develop mechanisms of coercion and domination, to push people toward violent action, and to establish an ally-enemy mentality (Hewstone and Cairns 2001). Theory of organizations supports arguments that consider ideology to be crucial for the survival of social structures that distribute political power in a certain way (Ferro and Uribe 2002; Panebianco and Trinidad 1990). Moreover, recent sociohistorical research suggests that the role of ideology may not be limited to window-dressing greed-motivated actions undertaken by armed groups, but rather that it may provide concrete tactical and strategic advantages for insurgent action. The crucial role of ideology once rebellion has broken out, as an organizing and motivating factor, has been analyzed in empirical works in a number of cases, both before and after the end of the cold war (Parsa 2000; Ugarriza 2009).

In general, however, evidence of ideology's relevance from system-level analyses is scarce, as statistical research and formal modeling have tended to disregard this element in studies of contemporary armed conflicts. In part, this results from the difficulty of trying to quantify a variable such as ideology, which already suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity. This difficulty is even greater when we consider the comparative ease with which greed and grievance indicators can be quantified. Armed conflict-related works usually circumscribe both concepts to their most empirical definitions, more easily subjected to external measurement and verification. However, greed- and grievance-focused scholarship tends not to account for the differences between individuals that face the same external forces. Thus, applying the conclusions of system-level analyses to the group and individual

levels may be misleading; new evidence may emerge if the focus of analysis is changed.

This article offers empirical data in support of theories asserting the continued importance of ideology with respect to the internal dynamics of armed groups and the motivations of individual combatants. We hope that the quantitative approach used in this article fosters increased consideration of ideological variables in future analyses.

Ideology as an Empirical Concept

But what is meant by ideology? Use of the word can be traced back to political texts of the sixteenth century; since then, however, the term has been plagued by inconsistent usage, concept stretching, and a multitude of definitions. The uncertainty surrounding ideology as a distinct concept poses a further barrier to its incorporation into the empirical study of conflict. In order to render the term useful for quantitative purposes, we aim to conceptualize ideology as a specific and measurable phenomenon, rather than a reference to a diffuse spectrum of political beliefs.

From early on, sociologists used the term widely, with great variation between those attributing it neutral and negative connotations. The latter tended to describe ideology as an elite mechanism used to control and manage society—a conception that implicated ideology's undesirability in contemporary societies (Adorno et al. 1950; Althusser 1971; Gramsci 1971; Laclau 1977). It was usually with such a negative connotation that doctrines such as liberalism began to be acknowledged as ideologies.

However, ideology slowly dropped its intrinsically negative connotation and became a more neutral, descriptive term. In the 1960s, for instance, political scientists began to use the term to refer to sets of ideas with a particular degree of coherence and consistency, independent of the positive or negative effects these ideas might yield (Axelrod 1969; Bennet 1977; Cassel 1984; Feldman 1988; Knight 1985; Smith 1980). Sociologists and philosophers also began making more descriptive use of the term in their study of systems of thought in historical moments of societies (Carlsnaess 1981; Geertz [1964] 1973; Loewenstein 1969; Rosenberg 1988; Skocpol 1979; Sowell [1987] 2002; Van Dijk 1998).

But the twentieth century's move toward a more neutral conception of ideology left unaddressed a problem of concept stretching. Scholars often failed to constrain ideology's contours or to differentiate it from similar terms such as doctrine or dogma. While this theoretical underdevelopment deprived it of robust content, it did not stymie ideology's continued presence in social science literature. Two major trends persisted. First, scholars used ideology as a vague linguistic resource—largely synonymous with doctrine, dogma, political belief, or agenda—to refer to communism, liberalism, and fascism (Knight 2006) or the left–right political spectrum (Arian and Shamir 1983; Conover and Feldman 1981; Jacoby 1986), especially during the

cold war. A second trend involved the term's use in political, sociological, and psychological theories as a way to describe patterns of political differentiation among masses, elites, and social organizations (Green 1988; Kritzer 1978; Snow and Benford 1988; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1978).

Various scholars responded to these diverse notions of ideology by trying to delineate its limits as a theoretical and empirical concept. Yet, the result of these efforts was not a robust consensus but rather a myriad of competing definitions (Eagleton 1991). One relatively recent systematic effort to navigate this sea of definitions comes from John Gerring (1997). Accounting for what constitutes the core of most definitions, he explains ideology as a set of political ideas that are bound together with a minimal level of consistency, and that stand in contrast to competing sets of ideas. To this core understanding, Gerring suggests that scholars add context-specific attributes in order to more clearly define what they mean when using the term. These attributes may help to specify a wide or narrow use. In some cases, an author may use ideology as a concept that refers to thought, language, or behavior, or all of these phenomena simultaneously; in others, he or she may use it to describe competing political agendas or subtle power relations.

Building off of Gerring's core definition of ideology, we specify two key considerations appropriate for empirical research into the ideological dimensions of conflict. First, we define ideology as a set of political beliefs that promotes a particular way of understanding the world and shapes relations between members of a group and outsiders, and among members themselves. This approach acknowledges the importance of linking ideological stances to specific actors, rather than assuming them to be shared by heterogeneous groups (Parsa 2000). Unlike greed and grievance, which are often assessed by measuring external variables at the system level in order to explain the behavior of collectives, we analyze the internal characteristics of individuals in order to better understand an identifiable group. And second, we understand ideology to be a corpus of thought that incorporates and arranges a series of more specific elements usually present in armed conflict, such as doctrines, narratives, symbols, and myths.

We identify three major proxy variables operationalized by scholars in their efforts to measure ideology in both violent and nonviolent political contexts: discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses. Here, we will test them as different dimensions of the same phenomenon.

Discourse

Much of the empirical work on ideology has used discourse as the main unit of analysis. Here, we understand discourse as sets of statements that reveal uses of power and knowledge.[2] Most studies of ideology and discourse are qualitative in nature (Foucault [1984] 1991; Howarth 2005; Van Dijk 1993), though there are also quantitative approaches involving logical, statistical, or text-count and lexicographic methods (Myhill 2005). Discourse analysis has been applied in the context of conflict not only with descriptive purposes but also in an attempt to advance conflict

resolution efforts (Gadamer [1960] 1975; Hansen 2006; Jabri 1996; McMahon 2009). We posit that it is possible to detect references to overarching meta-discourses by quantitative means.

Attitudes

We understand attitude from a psychological perspective as "the readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way, based on an underlined psychological orientation" (Jung [1921] 1971). The use of psychological indicators as a way to account for ideological commitment can be found in empirical works like Petersen (2001). The questions included in our research design, for example, aim to detect negative attitudes toward other groups. Through the use of opinion surveys, researchers have identified patterns of group identity, ambivalence, stereotyping, and bias that may be associated with an ideological framework. All of these patterns are regarded as explanatory variables of political opinions expressed in an articulated way (Crewe and Searing 1988; Feldman and Zaller 1992). In the study of armed conflict, however, the enormous obstacles to obtaining this kind of information from combatants has made solid empirical research difficult so far.

Emotional Responses

Emotions are here understood as psychological states of readiness for action that are triggered by internal and/or external events and, unlike attitudes, are not necessarily linked to rationalized propositions (Deigh 1994; Frijda 2008; Goldie 2000). Social scientists have long studied the powerful effect of propaganda and targeted communication on people's behavior at a political level. Scholars have identified the strategic use of symbols and other cultural references as a way to mobilizing groups and masses to commit violence and undertake military action. The reaction of combatants to these various forms of communication depends, in part, on emotional responses; hostile feelings toward enemy groups may obstruct reasoned behavior and facilitate violence (Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Kaufman 2006; Mertus 1999; Petersen 2001).

We will use these three dimensions to examine ideology in the context of the Colombian conflict. In answering the question of whether there is a measurable ideological component to Colombian guerrilla and paramilitary groups, we are testing our multidimensional definition of ideology as well.

Colombia as a Relevant Case Study

In 1958, a ten-year period of political upheaval known as La Violencia came to an end with the National Front, a power-sharing arrangement between Colombia's Liberal and Conservative Parties. For decades, these two parties had fought over issues such as the role of the church and traditional values in the young republic.

The result was a closed form of elected government that redefined the fissures of Colombian society. Clashes between the dominant classes were minimized, while conflicts between resistance movements and the elites of the National Front were militarized (Hartlyn 1988; Pécaut 1988; Corredor 1992).

Colombia's original leftist guerrilla groups grew out of La Violencia. The roots of the Revolutionary Armed Forced of Colombia (FARC) lie in self-defense groups that formed in response to the violence exacted upon Liberals, workers, and reformists by the Conservative Party in the 1950s. In 1966, under the auspices of the Colombian Communist Party, leaders of rural resistance groups formally organized the FARC. The National Liberation Army (ELN) was founded earlier by rebels inspired by the Guevarist model of revolutionary struggle.

In the 1960s and 1970s, National Front leaders largely regarded these groups as an outbreak of banditry, and downplayed their political nature (Sánchez and Merteens 1983). However, as the FARC and ELN grew considerably in size in the 1980s, a series of governments began to mount large-scale armed responses to their activities. This growth was due in part to the guerrillas' participation in Colombia's increasingly omnipresent drug trade (Guáqueta 2003). At the same time, observers and scholars of the conflict began to identify a direct connection between social grievances and the growth of the insurrectional movements (Corredor 1992; Sánchez and Peñaranda 1986). Recognition of guerrilla groups as political movements led to a series of largely unsuccessful peace negotiations with governments since the early 1980s.

In the late 1990s, the FARC constituted the largest, richest, and best-equipped armed group in Latin America. Divided into about sixty war fronts, the rebel group counted 12,000 to 15,000 individuals among its ranks—up from a couple of thousand in the early 1980s and only a few hundred in the 1960s (Otero 2007). In 2003, the FARC generated income from extortion, kidnapping, and the drug trade that was equivalent to 2 percent of Colombia's gross domestic product.[3] Today, despite setbacks suffered since 2002, the FARC is still a powerful force, with troops numbering somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000. The ELN, on the other hand, has historically been overshadowed by the FARC. At its height in 2000, the ELN was comprised of about 4,000 combatants. By 2007, that number may have been reduced to 2,200 to 3,000 (Aguilera 2006; International Crisis Group 2007).

Colombian paramilitary groups emerged in the 1970s when self-defense forces were organized against the guerrillas, funded mainly by landowners and drug traffickers (Reyes 1991; Romero 2003; Salazar 1999). Paramilitary groups grew from only dozens of combatants in the early 1980s to more than 13,000 in 2002. In 2003, paramilitary groups that had confederated into the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) offered to demobilize in exchange for legal benefits, such as reduced jail sentences. An unexpected total of 31,671 paramilitaries and collaborators took part in the demobilization process. In 2006, the last AUC bloc ceased to exist.

The end of the AUC as an organization rendered the FARC the dominant armed group in the country. The People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the Guevarist Revolutionary Army (ERG) were both small splinter groups of the ELN before their members, numbering only in the dozens, demobilized in the 2007 and 2008, respectively. A dissident faction of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), a small guerrilla organization that demobilized in 1991, continues to officially operate in the Colombian countryside, though their presence is almost negligible. As a national insurgency, the FARC is without rival.

Despite important differences between guerrilla groups, they are ideologically similar and thus worthy of consideration. While we will compare all ex-guerrillas with ex-paramilitaries, we recognize that former members of the FARC form the largest subsample of ex-guerrillas in our study.

The relevance of ideology to the FARC has been the subject of much academic debate, particularly since the 1990s. While many scholars agree on the importance of communism at the onset of the insurgency in the 1960s, a good number of authors believe that individual economic motivations have sidelined the guerrillas' commitment to advancing a political project (Collier 2001; Montenegro and Posada 2001; Salazar and Castillo 2001). Such authors have demonstrated a link between the growth of the drug trade and increased extortion on one hand, and increases in rebels' manpower and financial leverage on the other. Individual-level analyses, though hard-pressed for rich data, also suggest that economic and security motivations better explain recruitment than does ideological affinity (Theidon 2007; Villegas 2009).[4]

It is questionable, however, to view the FARC's economic activities as a reflection of ideological deficiency. Some scholars continue to highlight ideology's role in the consolidation and survival of the FARC, even in the presence of increasingly important economic factors (Chernick 2005). In a similar vein, some authors explain the FARC's military and organizational setbacks in the early twenty-first century precisely as a result of a decline in the group's ideological consistency (Corporación Observatorio para la Paz 1999; Cubides 2005; Ferro and Uribe 2002; Pécaut 2008). In addition to being a factor in the internal dynamics of the FARC, ideology has been cited as a reason for which some young fighters enlist in the first place (Gutiérrez 2008).

There is documentary and testimonial evidence of the significant resources expended by the FARC on ideological training for its members.[5] Typically, FARC envoys secretly visit small towns near the territories in which the guerrillas operate and invite residents to talks organized in makeshift auditoriums on the towns' periphery. Recruits often join out of economic need, fear, desire for vengeance, or simple allurement, although abductions and forced entries have also been reported. During their first two months, new rebels not only undergo military training but also study the FARC's agrarian program and political platform. This ideological education is required before rebels are allowed to participate in combat operations. While it is safe to assume not every FARC unit closely followed such a procedure, this protocol is prominent in the group's manuals and documents.

Unless prohibited by military conditions, members of the FARC customarily spend an hour each day discussing national politics, Marxism, Leninism, socialism, or Bolivarianism, a set of nationalist doctrines inspired by South American independence hero Simón Bolívar. Political training is theoretically a prerequisite for a rebel's promotion to the command level, and all rank-and-file members are required to join small cells of the guerrilla-sponsored Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia (PCCC).

It remains to be seen whether this ideological training has had a measurable effect on combatants. While FARC commanders have advanced an ideological discourse, currently dominated by socialist and Bolivarian rhetoric (Bolívar 2005; Ugarriza 2009), the ideology of rank-and-file guerrillas is not well understood. Making use of statistical tools, we intend to explore whether members of the FARC incorporate patterns of the group's ideological identity. In this study, we start to reveal the impact of required ideological training, and if ideology continues to play an important role in the modern-day Colombian conflict.

Research Design

In assessing the relevance of ideology to the Colombian conflict, we do not focus on the positions advanced by a group's leadership, but rather examine whether rank-and-file combatants reflect the purported ideological differences between armed groups. Specifically, we seek to determine whether there is any significant difference in discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses between leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries. We hope to measure the impact of a combatant's ideological training and demonstrate the continued importance of ideology in the internal dynamics of armed struggle.

Taken individually, measures of discourse, attitude, and emotional responses may not necessarily indicate a particular ideological commitment. However, if all variables are found to have similar explanatory power, we may consider them to be indicative of a single phenomenon: ideology. We operationalize our three elements of ideology and dependent variables as shown in Table 1. It is clear that our surveys of ex-combatants cannot fully account for the complex nature of discourses, attitudes, and emotions; we do not claim to be performing in-depth analysis of these three elements in and of themselves. We do believe, however, that the data generated by our research allows us to identify important relationships between variables.

Our first dimension of ideology, discourse, aims to capture low or high affinity for the two meta-discourses advanced by the guerrillas: socialism and Bolivarianism. Socialism has been central to the political stances of various guerrilla groups since their formation. While socialism may be defined as a "theory or system of social organization based on collective or state ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange,"[6] the term as used by Colombian armed combatants is vague and overarching. In general, guerrillas' spokespersons and official documents regard socialism as the end point of their revolutionary efforts and

Table 1. Operationalization of Variables

Dimension	Variable	Indicators	Type	Categories
Discourse	Socialism	Socialism Anti-socialism Neither	Dummy coding	1 = agree 0 = do not agree
	Bolivarianism	Bolivarianism Anti-Bolivarianism Neither	Dummy coding	1 = agree 0 = do not agree
Attitude	Attitudes	Negative attitude toward guerrillas	Likert-type scale	6 to 30
		Negative attitude toward paramilitaries	Likert-type scale	6 to 30
Emotional responses	Hostility	Hostility toward guerrillas	Likert-type scale	−6 to 6
		Hostility toward paramilitaries	Likert-type scale	−6 to 6
DV	Armed group	Guerrilla (g)/ paramilitary (p)	Dichotomous	1 = g 0 = p

associate the term with both a redefined role of the state in economic development and a struggle against imperialism (Ugarriza 2009).

Bolivarianism is also difficult to define. While it alludes to the corpus of thought of South American independence hero Simón Bolívar, the interpretation of that corpus is a matter of great debate (Harwich 2003; Quintero 2002). In Colombia, rebels associate Bolivarianism with the ideas of Pan-American nationalism, anti-bourgeois revolution, anti-imperialism, and legitimacy of armed struggle, just as Soviet scholars did throughout the twentieth century (Grigulevich 1984). This conveniently adjusted version of the Bolivarian doctrine enabled the rebels to add a nationalistic tone to a discourse that tended to be mostly a reprise of foreign Marxist ideas.

Paramilitary ideology is based on its opposition to leftist thought and discourse (Corporación Observatorio Para La Paz 2002). While there exists a general consensus that economic motivations were at the heart of paramilitary activity, the AUC did make an effort to present itself as ideologically driven, defined by virulent anticommunism (Rangel 2005).

In our survey of excombatants, we did not elaborate on what we understood by socialism and Bolivarianism, in hope of capturing the identitarian attachment—or detachment—to these ideas, independent of combatants' specific interpretations of them. Two categories of responses, *agree, agree strongly* and *disagree, disagree strongly* are contrasted by means of dummy coding against a third category, *neither, I do not know*. Our first set of hypotheses is as follows: (1) responses to questions related to socialism are significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries and (2) responses to questions related to Bolivarianism are

significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. Questions applied in questionnaires and their respective coding are as follows:

Question	Type	Coding of Responses
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.		
(a) Socialist ideas are good for Colombia.	Categorical	1 = socialist (*agree, agree strongly*) 2 = anti-socialist (*disagree, disagree strongly*) 3 = ambivalent (*neither/I do not know*)
(b) Bolivarian ideas are good for Colombia.	Categorical	1 = Bolivarian (*agree, agree strongly*) 2 = anti-Bolivarian (*disagree, disagree strongly*) 3 = ambivalent (*neither/I do not know*)

Attitude scales are comprised of five items that capture favorable or unfavorable opinions toward rival armed groups. Each of these items measure one's level of agreement or disagreement with statements, asserting hypothetical positive or negative effects of guerrillas or paramilitaries on the country's levels of violence, economic performance, democratic participation, political debate, public expenses, and overall strength of society. Each of the statements intends to determine whether combatants of different groups can be discriminated on the basis of rationalized postures toward the perceived enemy. Respondents can answer *agree/agree strongly*, *disagree/disagree strongly*, or *neither/I do not know*. Our second set of hypotheses is thus (1) *negative attitude toward guerrillas* scores are significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries and (2) *negative attitude toward paramilitaries* scores are significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. Questions applied in questionnaires and their respective coding are as follows:

Question	Scale
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	
(a) Leftist groups increase violence	1 to 5 (total 6 to 30, least to most negative attitude)
(b) Leftist groups are generally good for my country's economy	
(c) Leftist groups restrict political spaces of the rest of society	
(d) Leftist groups improve my country by bringing in new ideas	
(e) The government spends too much money assisting leftist groups	
(f) Leftist groups help to make this a stronger country	

Question	Scale
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	
(a) Rightist groups increase violence	1 to 5 (total 6 to 30, least to most
(b) Rightist groups are generally good for my country's economy	negative attitude)
(c) Rightist groups restrict political spaces of the rest of society	
(d) Rightist groups improve my country by bringing in new ideas	
(e) The government spends too much money assisting rightist groups	
(f) Rightist groups help to make this a stronger country	

Emotional responses are measured by level of hostility toward one's enemy group. Hostility scales are composed of six items intended as proxies for emotional responses: pride, hope, worry, fear, anger, and hatred. Respondents can answer *yes*, *no*, and *I do not know*. These questions evaluate to what degree each armed group fosters hostility against its enemy groups. Our final set of hypotheses proposes that (1) *hostility toward guerrillas* scores are significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries and (2) *hostility toward paramilitaries* scores are significantly different between ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. Questions applied in questionnaires and their respective coding are as follows:

Question	Scale
Have you ever felt the following for/toward leftist groups?	
(a) Pride	-1 to 1 (total -6 to 6, lowest to highest level
(b) Hope	of hostility)
(c) Fear	
(d) Worry	
(e) Anger	
(f) Hatred	
Have you ever felt the following for/toward rightist groups?	
(a) Pride	-1 to 1 (total -6 to 6, lowest to highest level
(b) Hope	of hostility)
(c) Fear	
(d) Worry	
(e) Anger	
(f) Hatred	

Our analysis employs two sets of control variables. One is demographic: *zone of birth*, *zone of operation*, *perceived social class*, *years of education*, *gender*, *age*, and *political leaning of family*. The other one looks to control for at least part of the effect of demobilization on former combatants' political behavior: *years after demobilization* and *agreement with armed group*.[7] *Political leaning of family* was coded with two dummy variables, which contrast "leftist family" and "rightist family" against answers of *none* and *I do not know*. *Agreement with armed group* was also dummy coded, contrasting answers expressing agreement or disagreement with armed group against responses *neither* and *I do not know*.

In our study, we rely on demobilized fighters to understand rank-and-file troops' ideology. By November 2008, there were a total of 47,635 officially demobilized combatants in Colombia, 8 percent of whom were estimated to live in Bogota. At the time, Colombia's official reintegration program, run by the Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration (ACR), provided 31,441 ex-combatants with social and economic assistance, 3,080 of whom resided in Bogota.[8] Though participating in the same reintegration program, ex-combatants have different legal status. Ex-guerrillas are considered political rebels and generally receive amnesty upon demobilization. Ex-paramilitaries are considered nonpolitical criminals who can nonetheless apply for a substantial reduction in sentencing, which often eliminates any incarceration requirement entirely. At the time of our research, ex-combatants involved in the reintegration processes often felt a sense a legal uncertainty, as expressed to us in informal interviews, yet imprisonment did not seem imminent in almost any case.

Data for our analysis was obtained between May and November 2008 through surveys of former low-ranking combatants now residing in Bogota. More than any other municipality, the capital city attracts ex-combatants from all parts of the country, as shown by answers provided for *zone of birth* and *zone of military operation* (see the supplemental appendix online). We were able to gain access to ex-combatants representing all factions of the Colombian conflict. Our sample is 49.3 percent FARC, 7.2 percent ELN, 2.4 percent dissident guerrilla groups, and 41 percent AUC. These proportions reflect those of the entire demobilized population in Bogota.

To gather our data, we first visited ACR service centers and other non-ACR facilities where participants in the reintegration program met for mandatory, bimonthly psychological sessions. Every group session would gather between ten and sixty participants. We attended forty different regular sessions, in which we were able to present the details of our work to approximately 84 percent of Bogota's reintegrating population. During these initial encounters, we formally invited ex-combatants to participate in our study and presented them a "Protocol for Security and Confidentiality," guaranteeing their anonymity.

In order to incentivize participation, the ACR allowed an ex-combatant's involvement in our study to substitute for attendance of two mandatory psychological sessions. Since ex-combatants spend a great deal of their time studying, attending ACR

workshops, working, and caring for their families, this double participation credit served as an equal incentive for all potential participants. Nevertheless, our previous talks with the ex-combatants made it clear that security concerns, illiteracy, and low motivation would prevent most of them from joining in our research. The impossibility of undertaking a random sampling restricted the number of voluntary participants to 637. These participants represented 20 percent of all reintegrating combatants in Bogota as of May 2008, and 17 percent as of November 2008.

We acknowledge three major problems with the sampling procedures and the type of data we were able to collect. First, the absence of a truly random sampling may lead to biases in our analysis; there may be a self-selection bias that favors ex-combatants of particular ideological tendencies. We believe this is ameliorated by the neutral incentive provided to the entire demobilized population. The demographic similarities between our ultimate sample and Bogota's demobilized population are encouraging in this regard. Furthermore, our work with the demobilized population was not entirely focused on ideology. A number of participants also were involved in discussions that we organized among ex-combatants as part of a larger project on deliberative democracy.

Second, demobilized combatants may reinterpret their past experiences through the demobilization process and, therefore, may not accurately reflect combatants still at arms. The risk of recall bias cannot be completely ruled out. Nonetheless, one would expect the effect of this to be dissociation from the ideology of one's former armed group. As a result, it may be that any positive relationship between former group membership and ideology in our study is, at worst, weaker than the same relationship would have been when combatants were still at arms.

Third, some individuals were deserters—mainly ex-guerrillas—while others were ordered to demobilize by their commanders—mainly ex-paramilitaries. Deserters clearly had developed feelings of detachment from their former groups, while those pushed into civil life by their superiors tended to retain higher levels of loyalty to their former groups. These different circumstances may condition the answers we obtained in our study. We have controlled for these differences by asking combatants their current level of agreement with their former armed group.

While we understand that our sample does not allow for precise characterization of all armed actors in Colombia, we believe that it will permit us to determine important relationships among key variables. We recognize the potential biases inherent in any attempt to understand conflict based on former fighters, yet suggest that the demobilized population may offer the most accurate insight into the internal dynamics of armed groups available to research. No longer pressured by powerful and violent leaders to maintain hard-line positions, ex-combatants are freer to discuss their true beliefs. It may be that ex-combatants purposefully distance themselves from their former armed groups; if so, any significant relationship between ideology and group membership may be even more meaningful.

Results and Analysis

We first explore the potential differentiation factors between guerrillas and paramilitaries as a step toward building a predictive model applicable to ex-combatants—and combatants—in Colombia. (Results of a preliminary bivariate analysis are displayed in the supplemental appendix: Potential Predictors of Armed Group Membership).

Our preliminary bivariate analysis provides a general sense of what best predicts membership to guerrilla and paramilitary groups. Within our sample of ex-guerrillas, we find a larger number of combatants under the age of twenty-six and born into leftist families, mainly in central Colombia or the southeastern plains. Former guerrillas also tend to have less formal education and identify themselves as "poor" more frequently than their paramilitary counterparts. Since the factions are treated equally within the reintegration program, we assume that their social differences reflect those present prior to demobilization. A woman is more likely to be an ex-guerrilla than an ex-paramilitary. In addition, a larger proportion of former guerrillas express disagreement or ambivalence toward their armed group than former paramilitaries. Examining differences in discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses, we find that ex-guerrillas tend to more favor socialist and Bolivarian ideas and express negative attitudes and hostility toward paramilitaries that they do not express toward other leftists.

The three dimensions of ideology prove to be particularly good predictors of group membership. Due to a high degree of collinearity among the three, however, we cannot develop a model that simultaneously includes measures of discourse, attitudes, and hostility.[9] What follows are three maximum likelihood estimation (MLE)–based models that capture our hypothesized relationship between ideology and group membership. Each model includes one dimension of ideology as well as demographic variables. These models allow us to explore the predictive power of ideology in determining armed group membership. In addition, we examine variation within the population of ex-guerrillas, as a way to determine the extent of predictors' consistency.

Given the limitations of our sample, we do not claim the following models necessarily reflect with total precision the magnitude of relations between the variables. Nevertheless, we consider modeling of our data to be a useful approach to comparing the predictive power of the different dimensions of ideology under consideration.

Model 1: Discourse

We expect former rank-and-file guerrillas and paramilitaries to respond differently to discourse-related questions. While we acknowledge that our research does not account for a full discourse analysis, our surveys do reveal adscription or opposition to specific meta-discourses advanced by the guerrillas' leadership: socialism and Bolivarianism. Table 2 displays a logit model that demonstrates discourse's

Table 2. Discourse as Predictor of Armed Group Membership[21]

Variable/indicator	*b*	SE	*p* Value	(95 percent CI)	OR
Socialism	0.678	0.306	.027**	(0.078, 1.279)	1.971
Years of education	−0.139	0.042	.001***	(−0.222, −0.057)	0.869
Political leaning of family					
Leftist family	3.125	0.432	.000***	(2.278, 3.972)	22.774
Constant	0.215	0.318	.499	(−0.409, 0.840)	

Note. CI = confidence interval; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio. n = 284; R^2 McFadden = 0.287, Hosmer & L (χ^2) = 0.945; LR p = .000***.
**Significant at .05. ***Significant at .01.

predictive power. For collinearity reasons mentioned before, *Bolivarianism* and *socialism* cannot be included simultaneously.

The second column gives us the estimated parameters for each indicator. To facilitate a comparison between the variables, these parameters are presented as odd ratios in the column to the far right. Columns including standard errors, *p* values, and confidence intervals provide us with a general idea of the amount and quality of information added to the model by each variable.

The odds that a combatant is part of a guerrilla group instead of a paramilitary unit almost double when he or she agrees or strongly agrees that socialist ideas are good for the country, ceteris paribus.[10] Similarly, having been raised by leftist or moderately leftist family members increases a combatant's odds of being part of a guerrilla group twenty-two-fold. One's level of education seems to have the opposite effect: the odds of being a guerrilla decrease by a factor of 0.869 for every year of school attended. Marginal effects are shown in graphs in the Supplemental Appendix. According to the MLE model, the predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes 0.142 points as the dichotomous version of our variable *socialism* moves from 0 to 1, ceteris paribus. The predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes 0.536 points as *leftist family* moves from 0 to 1, ceteris paribus. Finally, the predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of paramilitary changes −0.03 points for each year increase in *years of education*, ceteris paribus.

The probability of correct prediction of our dependent variable, *armed group membership*, increases from 59.9 percent to 75 percent once we know the values of our predictors. Area under the receiver–operating characteristic (ROC) curve indicates that our model has a predictive power of 0.833.

If we restrict our analysis to only former FARC and AUC members—the most representative guerrilla and paramilitary groups in the country—the predictive power of the model increases slightly.[11] A comparison of the AUC and the second-largest guerrilla group, the ELN, has a similar result.[12] On the contrary, the model does not allow us to distinguish between FARC members and guerrillas from other armed groups.

Political leaning of family emerges as the most powerful predictor of group tendency. Three different explanations may help to account for this. First, many guerrillas have relatives involved in the insurgency, and interfamily recruitment is common. Second, guerrilla units tend to spring up in areas where state and paramilitary influence is low. In these areas, leftist ideas may already have been dominant, or guerrilla control of an area may affect the political leanings of the families in that zone. The significant bivariate correlation between *armed group membership* and *zone of birth* mentioned previously hints at the validity of this partial explanation. Finally, Colombia's long history of civil war and insurgency may have affected political culture in such a way that those raised in historically leftist families may view violent uprisings as legitimate.[13]

Although ex-combatants in our sample had some time to pursue further schooling through the national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, *years of education* continues to divide guerrillas and paramilitaries. Historically, the main guerrilla group in Colombia, the FARC, has relied on uneducated peasants to constitute its primary manpower (Gutiérrez 2008). Demobilized guerrillas have not been able to bridge the educational divide between themselves and ex-paramilitaries, who come from a broader spectrum of the population and have, on average, a slightly higher level of education.

On the discourse dimension, it is interesting to note that while *Bolivarianism* alone correlates higher than *socialism* with *armed group membership*, it is highly collinear with *political leaning of family*, rendering *socialism* a more useful variable in the model.[14] On the other hand, *socialism* is capable of explaining some of the variance in *armed group membership* that *political leaning of family* cannot. This indicates that there is a quantifiable effect of aspects such as ideological training and other in-group experiences, which is reflected in positive views on socialist and Bolivarian meta-discourses. It appears that there is a tendency among combatants to join a specific armed group according to their family experience (i.e., *political leaning of family, zone of birth*) and this tendency is activated, molded, and/or reinforced through combatants' participation in their armed group.

Who Are the Socialists?

Socialists are more commonly ex-guerrillas than ex-paramilitaries. In the full sample of former combatants, those who agree with socialism tend to come from leftist families. They also tend to agree with Bolivarianism and deny a major disagreement with their armed group. In a sample comprised only of former guerrillas, the power of the latter three predictors generally increases (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Socialism). Among guerrillas, *age, group*, *years of education*, and *social class* are not good indicators of agreement or disagreement with socialist ideas. Level of agreement with one's former armed group, however, *does* help to predict whether or not a former guerrilla believes in socialism. Not only can we differentiate between armed groups based on ideology, but we can also predict former guerrillas'

Table 3. Attitudes as Predictors of Armed Group Membership[22]

Variable/indicator	b	SE	p Value	(95 percent CI)	OR
Negative attitude toward guerrillas	−0.126	0.028	.000***	(−0.181, −0.071)	0.881
Negative attitudes toward paramilitaries	0.107	0.026	.000***	(0.054, 0.160)	1.113
Years of education	−0.170	0.037	.000***	(−0.242, −0.097)	0.843
Political leaning of family					
Leftist family	2.353	0.311	.000***	(1.742, 2.936)	10.520
Constant	1.275	0.637	.045	(0.026, 2.524)	

Note. CI = confidence interval; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio. n = 440; R^2 McFadden = 0.295; Hosmer & L (χ^2) = 0.484; LR p = .000***.
***Significant at .01.

ideological positions based on their level of agreement with their former group. This will be a recurring trend in all the analyses, suggesting that agreement with one's armed group is related to the affinity a combatant has toward that group's ideology.

Who Are the Bolivarians?

We reach a similar conclusion when we examine the variables that predict an ex-combatant's adherence to Bolivarianism. The Bolivarians, mostly of them guerrillas, tend to be younger than thirty-five, poorly educated, and raised in a leftist environment. They also tend to express agreement with their former armed group. Generally agreeing with socialism, they tend not to show signs of hostility or a negative attitude toward the guerrillas (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Bolivarianism). Once again, the predictive power of *agreement/disagreement with armed group* is significant in the sample comprised of former guerrillas.

Model 2: Attitudes

As in the case of questions related to discourse, we expect former guerrillas and paramilitaries to respond differently to questions related to attitudes toward one's enemy group. We use a Likert-type scale in order to measure adscription to a series of statements related to the conflict between the groups represented. Table 3 displays the resulting model that incorporates attitudes as predictive variables.

The odds of being a guerrilla decrease by 0.881 for every point added to the quantitative scale that measures the intensity of an ex-combatant's negative attitude toward the guerrillas; on the contrary, odds of being a guerrilla increase by 1.113 for every point increase in negative attitude toward the paramilitaries. It is worth noting that while the predictive power of *years of education* remains more or less the same as in model 1, the predictive power of *political leaning of family* is comparatively weaker. Nonetheless, odds of being a guerrilla increase almost eleven-fold when the

combatant was raised in a leftist environment. Graphs of marginal effects are shown in the supplemental appendix. According to the MLE model, the predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes −0.028 points for every point increase in *negative attitude toward guerrillas*, ceteris paribus. And the predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes 0.024 points for every point increase in *negative attitude toward paramilitaries*, ceteris paribus.

Using model 2, the accuracy of group membership predictions increases from 56.7 percent to 77.5 percent. Area under the ROC curve indicates a predictive power of 0.845. Both figures are just slightly better than the ones obtained using model 1. When restricting the analysis to former FARC and AUC members, model 2 holds.[15] Applied only to former ELN and AUC members, the model's predictive power is even higher.[16] Once again, the model is useless in distinguishing between different guerrilla groups.

In the full sample, *political leaning of family* remains a powerful predictor. Having been raised in a left-leaning family increases the probability by 0.449 that a prospective combatant joins the guerrillas, ceteris paribus.

Negative attitude toward guerrillas and *negative attitude toward paramilitaries* are both significant variables but are not highly collinear. This indicates that negative feelings toward one's enemy group do not necessarily constitute positive feelings toward one's own, and vice versa. This suggests that ideological training or in-group experience do not automatically produce symmetrical attitudes.

Who Has a Negative Attitude toward Guerrillas?

As expected, former paramilitaries tend to have higher levels of negative attitudes toward leftist armed groups than former guerrillas. Within the full sample, those with a negative attitude toward guerrillas tend to be older, express disagreement with their former armed group, and feel hostility toward guerrillas. They also tend to disagree with socialist and Bolivarian ideas. Within a sample of guerrillas, most predictors hold, while the predictive power of *agreement/disagreement with armed group* increases significantly (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Negative Attitude toward Guerrillas).

Who Has a Negative Attitude toward Paramilitaries?

Among paramilitaries, it is less likely to find combatants with negative attitudes toward rightist groups. No other variables seem to be correlated at significant levels. In the full sample, those that express high levels of hostility toward paramilitaries tend to have a negative attitude toward them as well. Within guerrillas, this indicator holds (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Negative Attitude toward Paramilitaries).

Table 4. Hostility Levels as Predictors of Armed Group Membership[23]

Variable/Indicator	b	SE	p Value	(95 percent CI)	OR
Hostility toward guerrillas	−0.236	0.048	.000***	(−0.331, −0.141)	0.789
Hostility toward paramilitaries	0.279	0.043	.000***	(0.192, 0.365)	1.322
Years of education	−0.154	0.038	.000***	(−0.230, −0.078)	0.856
Political leaning of family					
Leftist family	2.483	0.343	.000***	(1.811, 3.156)	11.985
Constant	0.989	0.304	.001***	(0.391, 1.586)	

Note. CI = confidence interval; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio. n = 447; R^2 McFadden = 0.368; Hosmer & L (χ^2) = 0.179; LR p = .000***.
**Significant at .05. ***Significant at .01.

Model 3: Hostility

Our third and final model incorporates hostility as explanatory factor. As in the other two cases, collinearity prevented us from including other indicators of ideology simultaneously. We expected former guerrillas and paramilitaries to respond differently to our hostility-related questions, which we have grouped in a Likert-type scale. Model 3 is shown in Table 4.

The odds of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary decrease by 0.789 if *hostility toward guerrillas* moves up one point in our scale; odds increase by 1.322 if *hostility toward paramilitaries* increases by one point. *Years of education* displays a influence similar to that of previous models, and the predictive power of *political leaning of family* resembles that of model 2. Odds of being a guerrilla increase eleven-fold if the prospective combatant was raised in a leftist family. This represents an increase in the probability of being a guerrilla of 0.453 points, compared to 0.536 and 0.449 in models 1 and 2, respectively. Marginal effects are displayed graphically in the supplemental appendix. According to the MLE model, the predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes −0.052 points for each point increase in *hostility toward guerrillas*, ceteris paribus. The predicted probability of being a guerrilla instead of a paramilitary changes in 0.061 points for each point increase in *hostility toward paramilitaries*, ceteris paribus.

Our prediction accuracy increases from 58.4 percent to 77.8 percent using model 3. Area under ROC curve indicates a predictive power of 0.875, the highest of the three models under test.

If we restrict the analysis to former FARC and AUC members, the model holds.[17] It similarly holds in the case of former ELN versus AUC members.[18] Once again, the model is not useful in distinguishing among different guerrilla groups.

Examining the different factors that comprise our hostility scale, we find that *hatred*, *anger*, *hope*, and *pride* are particularly good predictors of *armed group membership*, as compared to *worry* and *fear*. The latter two appear to be common feelings

toward the enemy and even toward one's own armed group, which may be explained by the fact that the answers are provided by ex-combatants. In general, however, we find that membership in a particular armed group corresponds to the development of strong feelings against the enemy. Hostility is strongly collinear with the attitudinal and discursive elements included in our analysis, suggesting that ideology manifests through both rationalized and reactive channels.

Who Is Hostile toward Guerrillas?

In our full sample, hostility toward guerrillas is more frequently found among paramilitaries. Those who hold such feelings tend to have higher levels of education, disagree with their armed group, and have a negative attitude toward the guerrillas. They also disagree more often with Bolivarian ideas. Within guerrillas only, most predictors hold (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Hostility toward Guerrillas). The predictive power of *disagreement with armed group* increases within this subgroup, indicating that disagreement with one's former armed group is associated with strong negative feelings toward that group.

Who Is Hostile toward Paramilitaries?

As would be expected, hostility toward paramilitaries comes primarily from guerrillas. In the full sample, those who are hostile tend to be males and agree to some degree with Bolivarian ideas. They also tend to hold a negative attitude toward paramilitaries but not toward guerrillas. Also, a higher level of education corresponds to slightly increased hostility toward paramilitaries. Indicators of agreement and disagreement with one's armed group are not statistically significant to predict hostility toward paramilitaries (see the supplemental appendix: Predictors of Hostility toward Paramilitaries).

Comparing the Different Models

What is the best model to predict armed group membership on the grounds of ideology, education level, and family politics? Using Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), we conclude that model 1 best fits our data.[19] However, models 2 and 3 are more affected by missing data as some items in the Likert-type scale remain empty: if analysis is restricted to those cases in which all items were answered, models 2 and 3 perform better in goodness-of-fit measures.[20] In general, the different measures of fit suggest that all three models are functional and may be chosen at convenience, provided that data of high enough quality is available.

Conclusions and Implications

The preceding analysis reveals the high correlation between discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses. This supports the conceptual proposal of viewing them as
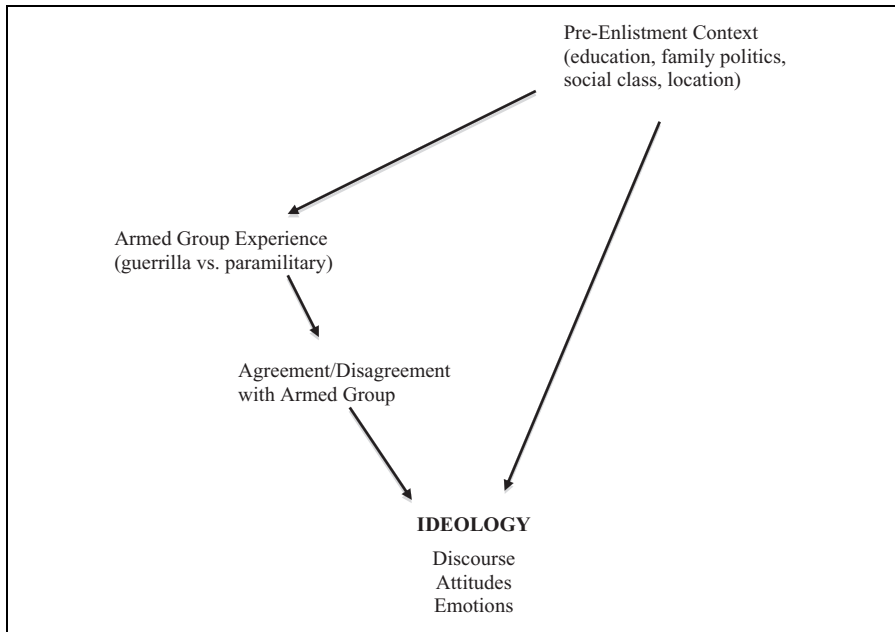
Figure 1. Development of ideological positions of combatants in Colombia

different dimensions of the same phenomenon: ideology. Our models demonstrate that guerrillas and paramilitaries can be distinguished by ideological characteristics. In addition to this major finding, it is important to highlight an additional conclusion: though there appears to be a relationship between family politics and ideology, both account for complementary portions of variance in our dependent variable. Simply put, ideological differences are not just explained by one's experiences before enlisting in an armed group; rather, membership in that armed group has a significant effect on one's ideological development.

Our statistical models are not necessarily indicative of causality, and we do not consider them as such. Rather, they help us to test ideology's power to differentiate armed factions and to analyze the effects of the combatant's experience within the armed group. However, we suggest a tentative diagram of the relationships between key variables analyzed here both to summarize our major findings and to present avenues for further research (Figure 1).

Demographic and environmental factors such as family politics and education level have an impact on the would-be-combatant's choice of armed group. These indicators may well proxy for other conditioning factors.

Significantly, additional variance in armed group membership can be explained by ideology. Although recent studies consistently suggest that ideology does not seem to be a primary motivation for joining an armed group in Colombia, we have

demonstrated that paramilitaries and guerrillas are clearly divided along ideological lines. While some political factors may lead an individual to become a guerrilla or paramilitary, experiences within the group—in particular, ideological training—appear to lead to greater ideological differentiation between enemy combatants.

We also find that ex-guerrillas with high levels of agreement with their former armed group tend to align more closely with that group's ideology. Such a finding is logical if we assume that guerrilla insurgencies truly have an ideological component. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure of the relationship between ideology and demobilization. It remains to be seen if armed combatants demobilize due to ideological differences with their group or if any disenchantment occurs once ex-combatants begin to reintegrate into society. Further research into the reasons for demobilization would provide greater context in which to interpret our findings.

Our research indicates that there continues to be an ideological component to Colombian insurgencies. Our focus on the individual level of analysis has allowed us to identify a minimal coherence between guerrilla groups' ideological position and individual responses. Experiences both prior to enlistment and while at arms influence rank-and-file combatants' development along certain ideological lines.

The power of *political leaning of family* to predict membership in guerrilla and paramilitary groups is another salient feature of our analysis. Familial example or influence appears to weigh heavily on a person's decision to join a particular faction. Colombia's genealogy of violence needs to be broken, as cultural justification of violence may well facilitate the incorporation of the young population into armed groups. Although family's ideological influence may not be a motive for enlistment, it does appear to interact with other variables in such a way to sustain conflict in Colombia.

From our analysis, it is clear that arguments that claim the nonexistence of ideological elements in contemporary armed conflicts such as the Colombian one are misleading. While ideology appears to be a marginal factor for recruitment in Colombia, at least according to previous studies cited above, it becomes a very salient feature in people's responses that can be partially attributed to their experiences within the armed groups. Ideology allows armed groups to distinguish themselves from rival organizations, allowing for long-term internal cohesion in the face of the enemy. As our data suggests, ideological affinity may be present before joining the group, but it is more systematically cultivated or activated later on. It is, however, open for debate whether this quantitatively modest but still significant coherence between the groups' public discourses and their members' responses speaks of relative success or failure of the groups' ideological indoctrination efforts.

It is important to note that a minimal correspondence between group leaders' ideological propaganda and rank-and-file ideological responses does not settle the question on whether ideology provides armed groups a means, an end, or both. The degree to which ideology affects organizational functioning is an open question, the answer to which may vary depending on whether an armed group is pursuing

policies in line with its ideological position. While rank-and-file combatants seem more or less convinced of political justifications of the Colombian conflict, we are unable to explore the commanders' inner convictions while they manage subordinates' ideological training. At the very least, an instrumental benefit for the organization can be observed.

Beyond the Colombian case, we believe our research illustrates the need to treat ideology as a relevant, multifaceted variable that helps explain behavior in armed conflicts. Our analysis took into account three main dimensions of ideology—discourse, attitudes, and emotional responses—though we acknowledge that other dimensions may also be subject to measurement. Further studies may observe other manifestations of ideology depending on the context of the conflict and the objectives of the study.

Our findings are not incompatible with other economic, political, and socials theories that seek to explain conflicts' origins or protraction. We merely seek to illustrate that in certain conflicts need, creed, and greed do coexist—and can all be measured quantitatively. As shown in our analysis, creed can be an important element related to the internal dynamics of armed groups. Ideological variation within and between groups only underscores the idea that ideology can account for differences in wider group behavior unexplained by greed and grievance.

We must acknowledge three principal challenges regarding the methodology of our research. First, it is difficult to assess how accurately we can measure an ex-combatant's political beliefs through a short series of questions. We cannot disregard the possibility that the design of our survey influence the answers we received from the respondents.

A second challenge relates to the sample used in collecting our data. We depended on ex-combatants in the process of reintegration in hopes of understanding ideological characteristics of current fighters. We did find that one's level of agreement/disagreement with his or her former armed group predicted ideological congruence with this group. Nonetheless, we cannot be completely certain that ex-combatants reflect the beliefs of current guerrillas and paramilitaries.

Even if we continued to depend on the ex-combatant population, a larger, randomly selected sample would have strengthened our results. However, accessing a population that strives to remain anonymous poses logistical as well as security challenges for the researcher. In any case, we are confident that while we may be unable to characterize the entire demobilized population, our research does identify relationships between key variables that shed light on the modern-day Colombian conflict.

Finally, our models treat ideology as static while we understand that it is undoubtedly a dynamic element. Were the former guerrillas now disenchanted with socialism once fierce champions of a revolutionary project? What specific aspects of combatants' experiences deepen their commitment to their groups' ideology and what aspects alienate them? Additional research must be done to account for the variability of ideology over time.

Further research also must focus on simultaneously measuring variables related to need, creed, and greed in an effort to determine their relative importance in specific armed conflicts. It would be helpful to assess which elements are strongly present in which conflicts. The interaction of such variables may offer avenues for further research as well.

Despite these challenges, our research provides important insight into the armed groups that continue to fight in the Colombian countryside. Ideology continues to play a role in the contemporary Colombian conflict; the energy and resources the guerrillas spend on ideological training yield a measurable result. Further research may reveal the same for other conflicts that scholars often consider to be driven and sustained primarily by economic factors.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. We use the term system-level to differentiate from group- or individual-level analysis. The importance of specifying levels of analysis to better interpret results has been discussed for decades in political science and international relations. See for instance Singer (1960, 1961).
2. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. ''Discourse.''
3. Figures are official estimations. See Ministry of Defense, ''Estimación de los Ingresos y Egresos de las FARC Durante 2003 Basados en Información de Inteligencia Recolectada por las Agencias del Estado,'' Joint Intelligence Staff (Bogota, published in 2005).
4. Although more robust research is needed on this issue, preliminary surveys of former guerrilla and paramilitary combatants suggest that security dilemmas, family dysfunctions, and lack of alternatives weight more in an individual's decision to join an armed group in Colombia. See also Alcaldía de Bogota, ''Ciudadanos excombatientes: un desafío de reconciliación e inclusión para Bogota. Caracterización de la población desmovilizada y acompañamiento civilista al proceso de reintegración,'' Programa de Atención Complementaria a la Población Reincorporada con Presencia en Bogota D.C. (Bogota, published in 2006), 32.
5. The following description was obtained from interviews with former guerrilla recruiters (May–November 2008) and from FARC documents.
6. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, 3rd ed., s.v. ''Socialism.''
7. Our use of rather lengthy questionnaires prevented us from including additional items related to the ex-combatants' war experience. Also this might have introduced noise to our main variables of interest.

8. Data were provided to authors by officials at the Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration.

9. Preliminary models including indicators of more than one dimension of ideology were discarded as they failed likelihood ratio tests of significance.

10. Prediction power of *socialism*—or *Bolivarianism*—increases if we restrict the analysis to those cases in which respondents answer *agree*, *agree strongly*, *disagree*, and *disagree strongly*, leaving off the ambivalent.

11. $n = 255$; R^2 McFadden $= .300$; LR $p = .000$***.

12. $n = 135$; R^2 McFadden $= .353$; LR $p = .000$***.

13. For an account of the recent history of civil wars in Colombia, see Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia 1875-2002*, trans. Richard Stoller (Duke University Press, 2006).

14. In spite of the correlation between *political leaning of family* and our ideology indicators, all of our models pass collinearity diagnostic tests included in the Supplemental Appendix. All VIF estimates for the variables in the model remain low while tolerance indicators are far from zero, suggesting that collinearity is not significantly high.

15. $n = 399$; R^2 McFadden $= .288$; LR $p = .000$***.

16. $n = 215$; R^2 McFadden $= .389$; LR $p = .000$***.

17. $n = 403$; R^2 McFadden $= .355$; LR $p = .000$***.

18. $n = 220$; R^2 McFadden $= .485$; LR $p = .000$***.

19. AIC: model 1 $= 280.900$; model 2 $= 431.263$; model 3 $= 393.213$.

20. Under these restrictions, AIC scores are model 2 $= 343.263$ and model 3 $= 230.712$. Classification accuracy also increases: model 2 $= 79.4$ percent and model 2 $= 79.47$ percent. McFadden's R^2 changes as well: model 2 $= .334$ and model 3 $= .387$.

21. This model was estimated through maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). Applying more stringent criteria such as Penalized Likelihood Estimation (PLE) it is possible to obtain almost identical parameters. See PLE estimates, and specification error and multicollinearity diagnostics in the supplemental appendix.

22. See the supplemental appendix for PLE, and specification error and multicollinearity diagnostics.

23. See PLE, and specification error and multicollinearity diagnostics in the supplemental appendix.

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