

Committee: Security Council

Issue: The issue of the FARC Dissident Groups in Colombia's Pacific Coast

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INTRODUCTION

On August 24th 2016 a final agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government is announced, permanently ending a 52 year-period of conflict. In the years following and up until today, approximately 14,000 militants would formally enter a disarmament and reintegration procedure. At the same time, the infamous Marxist-Leninist group would complete its transition into a legally recognized political group with 5 seats in the House of Representatives and the Colombian Senate under the name 'Revolutionary Alternative Common Force'.

Even though the whole process was deemed relatively successful, a significant number of combatants refused to abide by the 2016 peace treaty continuing the insurgency using the organization's name (FARC). The dissident rebels continue to employ the same doctrine, albeit at a smaller scale, with kidnappings, killings and drug trade still troubling the citizens of many Colombian, Venezuelan and Peruvian provinces. Thus, with the new dissident rebels having shown continuous reluctance to communicate with the Colombian government and the number of violent deaths once again increasing, a re-evaluation of the current approach seems imperative.

The issue at hand might seem a minor intrastate confined conflict, yet, as proven in the past, rural areas tantalized by conflict and poverty, can provide the fertile ground on which extremist organizations flourish. Hence, the delegates of the Security Council are tasked with exploring new and effective methods to critically weaken or completely demobilize this ever-surviving threat to regional stability and development.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Dissident (rebel) Group

A rebel group that publicly disagrees with the mainstream established rebel group from which it has been separated.

Disarmament

“Disarmament is the act of reducing, limiting, or abolishing weapons.”

Disarmament can take place either unilaterally (only one side agrees to disarm), usually as a part of a peace treaty ending a conflict during which it was defeated, or unilaterally as part of a long term or permanent ceasefire between two or more conflicting parties.

Demobilization

“the act of changing from a war basis to a peace basis including disbanding or discharging militants/troops.”

Demobilization is usually a follow-up process to disarmament, focused on abolishing the organizational structures of the involved military entities, essentially officially removing/revoking the status of “active combatant” from the involved individuals.

Reintegration

“Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at a local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.”

Ceasefire

“Cease-fire, a total cessation of armed hostilities, regulated by the same general principles as those governing armistices. In contemporary diplomatic usage the term implies that the belligerents are too far apart in their negotiating positions to permit the conclusion of a formal armistice agreement.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Overview

In April 1948, armed clashes between paramilitary forces of the liberal and conservative Colombian parties engaged in conflict, initiating a decade-long civil war across the nation. Clashes finally concluded after the two sides decided to form the National Front, a system that spanned 16 years during which the presidency of the country alternated between parties every four years. The civil war also known as “La Violencia”¹ resulted in the death of approximately 250-300 thousand Colombians and left the already struggling infrastructure of the state crippled. The adverse devastating effects of the civil war were intensely experienced by the rural populations of the nation. Certain agricultural communities mostly in the southern and western provinces, were reportedly neglected by the government during the rebuilding phase of the nation. A number of such groups appealed to the Colombian Communist Party for support and were eventually led to form settlements and communes that partially ignored the official authorities. One of those communities established in the town of Marquetallia by Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas transformed in 1964 into the “The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), effectively becoming a Marxist-Leninist guerilla group with the aim of protecting a society in which the needs and concerns of the rural population would be addressed”².

In May 1964 the Colombian government forces launched attacks not only against Marquetallia, but also the surrounding communities forcing the dispersed guerilla fighters to gather and unify in “The First Guerilla Conference” in order to fight back. This first clash, initiated an extensive attempt by the various rural communities to create a larger defense group named the “Southern Bloc”. However, the beginning of the 70's was marked by “the Second Guerilla Conference” and a shift towards a more offensive group with the expanded role of providing social (medical and educational) services to loyal settlements along with training and enlisting new fighters. Part of this shift was the renaming of the “Southern Bloc”

1 “MMP: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).” FSI, Center for International Security and Cooperation, 2019, cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc#_ftn3.

2 Osterling, Jorge P. *Democracy In Colombia : Clientelist Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*. New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction, 1989; Romero, Simon. “Manuel Marulanda, Top Commander of Colombia’s Largest Guerrilla Group, Is Dead.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company. 26 May 2008. Web. 20 July 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/26/world/americas/26marulanda.html?_r=0; “Profiles: Colombia’s Armed Groups.” *BBC Latin America & Caribbean*. BBC News. 19 August 2013. Web. 20 July 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11400950>

to FARC, under which the group rose significantly in influence and popularity, while employing its infamous tactics.

Organization

The FARC followed a clear leadership structure throughout its existence. Its highest-ranking body was the Secretariat which comprised of 7 members. These 7 individuals decided on all matters concerning the group and appointed the leaders of the seven blocs which comprised the organization. Furthermore, each bloc consisted of typically 6 or more fronts, which were essentially units of approximately 200 guerilla fighters, all arranged geographically.

The expanded responsibilities of the group, along with its constant geographic and subsequently demographic expansion, made the establishment of efficient supply sources necessary. Subsequently, apart from the initial armaments and personnel training support provided by Cuba, the group systematically carried out kidnappings of high economic status individuals, especially residing in rural areas for ransom (the number of kidnappings peaked at 3,000 in 1999). A significant shift in the group's financing strategy was made during the 1970s when it entered the illegal drug production and trafficking market of Colombia. The immense development of the market also tremendously boosted the economic independence of the group, which by the late 1980s controlled the greatest part (70% of the cocaine market) of the national drug market, with its operations expanding to the markets of neighboring countries. Subsidiary operations included illegal gold extraction, civilian blackmailing and extortion. Yet, the scale of kidnappings and drug trafficking operations, although initially allowing the group to provide even more services to its loyal settlements, ultimately became a contentious point which gravely damaged its popular support.

Regarding the area of operations of the organization, ever since the 1970s and until the 2016 peace treaty, the group carried out militant and drug trafficking operations across almost all provinces of the country, while it reportedly had contacts mostly related with its illegal economic activities in countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico.

Strategy

Military

Especially during its early years, FARC mainly carried out kidnappings and extortion, along with small scale hit and run and bombing missions on local police stations and other industrial or governmental facilities. Yet, after gaining size, support and greater economic

power the targets and means employed scaled up. During the 90's and the early 2000s the FARC mounted direct attacks against the Colombian military and police.

One of the most notable attacks was mounted against the Las Delicias military base on August 30th 1996, which resulted in the death of 54 individuals and left 17 people wounded. Three years later, an even larger operation took place when 1,500-2,000 guerrilla fighters attempted to take control of the town of Miraflores, attacking a hospital, a police station and capturing 129 policemen. The official death toll of this two day "siege" was established to be 19 while the number of the wounded remain unknown. Finally, the most high-profile kidnapping carried out by the group was made on February 23rd 2002 when it successfully staged the kidnapping of presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt during her nationwide elections campaign, who was kept for six consecutive years until rescued in a major operation in 2008.

Political

In 1985 as part of the ceasefire "Uribe" Accord the group cooperated with the PCC (Communist Party of Colombia) in order to form the UP (Patriotic Union). This recognized political party was the result of the rallying of leftist political leaders and members of various Leninist-Marxist and other rebel groups. During the first elections in which it took part in 1986 the UP managed to secure more than 500 local council seats along with 6 Senate seats and 9 House seats. This level of success provided it with the ability to join the political opposition and seek further land reforms, along with greater educational and medical support for the poor. Its manifesto was a peaceful expression of the mission set by FARC and as a result the UP in a very short amount of time appealed to the majority of the rural population attracting ever more members. This political progress was allegedly halted by the immediate and harsh response of the Colombian government, as it is still claimed that the armed forces along with far-right paramilitary groups are responsible for the assassination of more than 4,500 UP members and leaders by 1992. This alleged crackdown on members of the political party, discouraged more individuals from openly joining it, gravely reducing its support up until 2002 when its status was revoked due to lack of members.

Yet, after the 2016 peace treaty, some of the most prominent FARC leaders moved on to form the FARC political party which, under the provisions of the peace treaty, is guaranteed 5 seats in the senate and the House of representatives regardless of the electoral results. This newly established party led by ex-militant leader Rodrigo 'Timochenko' Londoño has promised to take any measures possible to honor the treaty,

while it has condemned the choice of several hundreds of ex-FARC members who decided to take up arms against the government once more. Amongst those dissidents are some members of Congress with the party, with the most prominent example being that of Ivan Marquez, who claims that the country's current administration under president Ivan Duque has failed to protect ex-FARC leaders and members and has betrayed the 2016 peace treaty.

Interactions with other groups and states

In 1997 the FARC entered the USA's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations and continues to be listed up until today. In 2002 it was also entered in the according European list, yet, it was removed in 2017 after the reported completion of the disarmament and demobilization process.

The original militant FARC, was part of the "Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinating Board (CGSB)" which was formed in 1987 and consisted of several significant leftist rebel and paramilitary groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the 19th of April movement (M-19). Nevertheless, the organization was disbanded in 1992 when the only two remaining members (FARC and ELN) failed to reach a peace agreement with the Colombian state.

Even though the board was disbanded and almost all of the organizations that consisted it, with the exception of the ELN are currently officially demobilized, rebel members that refused to follow the disarmament process still take advantage of the cooperative relationships that were evolved during the previous years in order to jointly further their operations. Yet, FARC dissidents are reported to cooperate not only with ex-members of other leftist rebel groups, but also with criminal organizations inside the country (e.g. BACRIM, Los Urabenos), which are centered on the illegal drug and mineral production and trafficking market. Such attempts of cooperation or recruitment of dissident FARC members and leaders have also been made by Venezuelan leftist armed groups named "collectivos" which, even though tasked by the Maduro regime with supporting and protecting it, also allegedly operate part of the illegal drug and contraband market of the Colombian-Venezuelan border. Dissidents have also been reported to have been recruited by Mexican drug cartels in order to assist and train their members.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Colombia

After the achievement of the 2016 Havana ceasefire agreement, the Colombian government has been presented with a historical chance to demobilize permanently one of the largest rebel groups that have ever operated in South America. The increasing number of dissident fighters, indicates a partial failure of the implementation of the peace treaty. Yet, the current president has allegedly pursued a more immediate and harsh punishment of ex-FARC members, a decision which is claimed to constantly lead more initially demobilized FARC members back to taking up arms. Furthermore, in March 2019 the president initially refused to sign a statutory law meant to establish a legal framework on the functions of the JEP, a measure mandated by the 2016 agreement, even though it had already been passed by both the senate and the House of Representatives. Even though 5 more articles of the agreement have been openly disputed by it, the government continues to pursue the support of the international community in order to resolve the issue.

Venezuela

The country's current regime is ideologically in parallel with the FARC's initial manifesto, while the country's leader has been recorded to invite any ex-FARC members to seek protection in Venezuela. Even though such practices have been condemned by many states throughout the years, the Venezuelan state is reportedly still endorsing groups which conduct international drug and contraband trafficking and are connected with FARC dissident operations.

USA

The USA continue to financially support Colombian narcotics control operations, law enforcement and human rights violations persecution along with clearly military operations. USA nationals have been victims of kidnappings multiple times, while it is one of the most profitable markets for illegal drug trafficking groups in Venezuela. Thus, it is probably the most involved state outside of South American ones that aim for the solution of the issue. Under the current administration the scale of the financial aid became a point of contention, however, it was finally decided not to be decreased. Traditionally the US have supported a more immediate approach towards dealing with FARC rebels and now dissidents, supporting direct strikes by the Colombian military and law enforcement forces.

UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNMC)

Established on 10th July, 2017 the UNMC is the predominant UN mission operating in Colombia. Its mandate, established by the UN Security Council, gives this political mission the responsibility of verifying the 2016 Ceasefire Agreement. Most specifically, this mission focuses on the observation of the process of reintegrating ex-FARC members into society, but also oversees the implementation of development support and security programs in territories previously held by the FARC. The UNMC continues on-site work with a lot of local information and community development programs being carried out throughout the Southern part of the country. As a body, whose mandate is controlled by the Security Council, it is a useful tool in the resolution process of combatting the threat of FARC dissidents.

Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)

The JEP is a legal mechanism that functions as part of the general Transitional Justice System agreed upon by the FARC and the Colombian government as part of the 2016 Ceasefire Agreement. The mechanism’s main task is to deliver justice to the victims of the conflict, while focusing on reconciliation and the protection of the rights and integrity of the appearing parties. Individuals tried under the jurisdiction of the JEP are considered likely to face more lenient punishments relative to the ones predicted by ordinary law and have some minor offences pardoned, for the sake of reintegration and restoration of peace. The JEP has received criticism by several nations and organizations such as the Human Rights Watch which argues that its practices do not completely fall in line with the mandate of international law in cases of Human Rights abuses. Furthermore, the president recently announced that state funding for the Transitional Justice System and subsequently the JEP will be decreased.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
9 April 1948	Liberal Party Presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán is assassinated marking leading to the first clashes of the Colombian civil war.
16 March 1958	Elections take place and the Liberal and Conservative parties agree on a shared system of governance, forming the National Front and officially ending the Colombian civil war.
27 May 1964	The FARC is formed.

20 June 1964	The “First Guerilla Conference” takes place.
May 1966	The “Second Guerilla Conference” takes place and the FARC commits to its predominant offensive and expanded strategy.
May 1984	The “Uribe” Accord one of the most important and long-lasting ceasefire agreements is signed by the FARC and the State.
1987	The “Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinating Board” (CGSB) is formed
30 August 1996	An FARC bloc attacked the Las Delicias military base.
3 August 1998	The 2-day siege of Miraflores commences.
1999	More than 3,000 kidnappings are carried out by the FARC this year.
23 February 2002	The FARC kidnapped presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt.
22 June 2015	The last major attack carried out by the FARC takes place. An oil pipeline in the Nariño region on the Colombian South pacific coast is bombed leading to significant economic and environmental issues.
24 August 2016	The Havana permanent ceasefire agreement comes into force officially ending the armed conflict between the FARC and the Colombian government.
November 2017	FARC dissidents vow to continue the armed conflict.
29 August 2019	Former FARC leaders Ivan Marquez and Jesus Santrich release a video calling for ex combatants to join them and resume the armed conflict against the government.
30 August 2019	A Colombian military air strike killed 14 FARC dissident rebels, while the President of the state announced further similar military operations.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UNSC involvement in the issue of the FARC rebel group in Colombia has started fairly recently with the initial and landmark resolution RES/2261 (2016). This resolution, taking into consideration the Colombian president’s requests for an internationally mandated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration process, provides a first attempt for a clear and relatively long-term mandate after the signature of the peace treaty, through establishing the political Mission in Colombia.

Following that resolution several more were adopted:

- 13 SEPTEMBER 2016 S/RES/2307
 - This resolution officially approves of and sets the specifications (size, operational aspects and mandate) for the UN Mission in Colombia.
- 10 JULY 2017S/RES/2366
 - This was the resolution establishing the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, a successor mission to the UN Mission in Colombia. It essentially marked the gradual closure of the demilitarization and demobilization process and focused on almost all resources on the reintegration of ex-combatants and the setup of a transparent judicial framework for the establishment of justice on victims of the conflict.
- 14 SEPTEMBER 2017S/RES/2377
 - This was a resolution approving the Secretary-General's recommendations on the size, operational aspects and mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia as a political observer mission.
- 5 OCTOBER 2017S/RES/2381
 - This resolution extends the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, recognizing its ability to assist in further ceasefire negotiations with dissident active rebel groups.
- 13 SEPTEMBER 2018S/RES/2435
 - This resolution also extends the mandate of the already existing mission, recognizing its effectiveness in the process of reestablishing stability and peace.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The Havana Agreement and the Transitional Justice System

An immensely significant part of the overall reintegration process was the peaceful transitioning of combatants to civilian society, along with the administration of justice for any crimes committed during the conflict. However, in order to accept demobilization and disarmament the FARC required that the safety and integrity of its members was guaranteed. The Transitional Justice System and its JEP mechanism aimed to achieve the

balance between the above request and the need for reparation and recognition of the victims. This plan provided a great incentive for combatants to give up their weapons, as they were guaranteed an immediately safer peaceful future. Yet, the system also being challenged as too lenient has been reportedly seldom overruled by the government and has, in many occasions, failed to prevent the targeting assassination or isolation of ex-combatants attempting to get reintegrated. Such cases have been states as one of the main causes that led to an increase in the FARC dissidents and the loss of trust to the government.

The Havana Agreement and commitment to rural reforms

The first and one of the most fundamental articles of the Havana Agreement was titled “Towards a New Colombian Countryside: Comprehensive Rural Reform”. The article aimed at ameliorating one of the fundamental demands of the FARC which was increased state support for rural areas. Considering that the majority of combatants depended on agricultural and other activities based at the more isolated southern and southeastern parts of the country, the guarantee of rural reforms provided a strong social and economic incentive for the demobilization of the combatants. Even though subsidies and tax relief programs were implemented as mandated by the agreement their extent was deemed insufficient to cover the entirety or even majority of the affected population, thus, combatants attempting to establish a peaceful way of life mainly through farming were reportedly unable to, due to lack of capital. Therefore, this attempt was also only partially successful at limiting the number of dissidents.

Military Retaliation

On 30th August, 2019 a military airstrike reportedly killed 14 FARC dissidents. This small in scale, yet swift and targeted military operation, according to the president of the country will be the first of many follow-up operations aiming to immediately eliminate active FARC dissident forces.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

During this critical point for Colombia’s future delegates need to decide whether the already existing mechanisms mandated by the 2016 agreement are sufficient to resolve the issue, need certain alterations and improvements or should be abandoned entirely. Of course, each decision would need the support of the two sides and considering the lack of

communication with the dissident rebels further steps in order to achieve negotiations need to be taken first.

Pursuing the strict abidance of the 2016 agreement by both sides

Should delegates opt to continue supporting the abidance of the 2016 agreement as it is a ratified internationally recognized agreement, certain measures could be taken. Firstly, updating the mandate of the UNMC in order to report more excessively on the abidance of both parties to the agreement could lay the basis for further action. Furthermore, based on such reports the UNMC could be asked to draft a map clarifying the progress that has been made towards fulfilling the provisions of the agreement and even provide a possible advisory plan on how remaining provisions could be covered. A case for more extensive international financial and expert aid could be made, as an incentive for the Colombian government to continue pursuing the implementation of its responsibilities. All could prove effective in decreasing or completely halting the increase of FARC dissidents.

Reevaluating Contentious parts of the agreement

Bearing in mind that the establishment of the Transitional Justice System has been contended multiple times by the president of the country, a further reevaluation of the approach towards trying ex-combatants for alleged crimes perpetrated during the conflict could be proposed. Yet, this would require the opening of talks between the government and the dispersed dissident rebels; a task which at this point is almost impossible to be immediately fulfilled.

Attempts to recognize and negotiate with the dissident rebels

Establishing communication between the Colombian government and a dispersed mainly unorganized group of rebels might be difficult. Yet, delegates could propose various measures in order to make a breakthrough; such measures could involve recognizing the dissident rebels as a group, or attempting to contact them through the legitimate political organization of FARC.

Direct attempt to restrict the dissident's economic capabilities

Bearing in mind that the main source of income of the rebels is currently based on cocaine production and contraband trafficking across borders, it would be reasonable to attempt the establishment of a regional international coordination structure that would aim to effectively carry out cross-border drug-restriction and illegal trade elimination operations. Furthermore, operations could not only physically target the drug sources and trafficking

routes, but also aim to safeguard the targeted markets, essentially obstructing the groups' ability to complete its operations and transactions.

Military and Law enforcement Operations

Finally, the Security Council could provide expert advice and support to the Colombian military and Law enforcement forces, in order for them to successfully carry out operations attempting to disrupt or completely eliminate FARC dissident activities.

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