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THE CHAMELEON OF WAR: WHAT THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT CAN TEACH TO BRAZIL

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Lt Col João Spencer F. C., Jr

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THE CHAMELEON OF WAR: WHAT THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT CAN TEACH TO BRAZIL

The commonly held assumption of the end of communism after the Berlin Wall downfall should have a second look, especially when dealing with the History of Latin America since the 1990s. In the aftermath of the end of Soviet Union, communist dictator Fidel Castro and other prominent left-wing leaders in the region gathered around an institution named after its first meeting, the *Foro de São Paulo* (FSP), to realign their overall strategy in the face of the changes in the world scenario.¹ The initiative bore its fruits, considering that in two decades FSP participant parties were ruling a dozen countries in the region.² Curiously – but quite understandably – out of the scope of academia and mainstream publications is the connection of the main Colombian Marxist guerrilla group – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) – with the FSP.³

The goal of this paper is to analyse the implications of this “all forms of struggle” approach of the political left in Latin America (specifically in Colombia and Brazil) in the outcome of endemic violence and the brink of state failure in both countries. It will be shown that although not fitting exactly in the concept of armed conflict, the current state of violence in Brazil has characteristics that place it as a hybrid between a public security issue and a low intensity conflict. The Colombian conflict termination and its immediate aftermath can provide

¹ Bruno Castanho e Silva. “The Sao Paulo Forum and Latin American Regional Integration.” 22nd IPSA World Congress of Political Science, Madrid, 2012, 2-5. http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_11763.pdf

² *Ibid.*

³ Alejandro Peña-Eslusa, “The Foro de São Paulo – A Threat to Freedom in Latin America” (Bogotá: Mary Montes Edition, 2009), 8-9. <http://fuerzasolidaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/TheForoDeSaoPaulo.pdf>. Interestingly, Peña-Eslusa is arrested in his homeland, Venezuela, since 2010, under circumstances that evoke a kind of *déjà-vu*. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/07/13/venezuela.politician.arrested/index.html>

some informative lessons to the Brazilian case, seen through the lenses of some of Clausewitz's concepts on the political nature of war and its fluid character.

In order to reach this objective, we will start with the recent historical context of the violence in both countries and its murky connections with leftist ideologies and organisations. Following that, two famous Clausewitzian concepts will be applied to the case: the role of politics in warfare, and the ever-changing character of war, as applied by the revolutionary movements throughout the 20th century, with emphasis in Latin America. In this light, the lessons learned so far in the Colombian case will be applied to the Brazilian scenario, in order to distinguish a predominantly political and cultural type of warfare, in which the endemic violence can be exploited as a source of destabilization and discredit of the national institutions. Closing the work, some considerations on how this disguised form of asymmetric and hybrid warfare could be tackled.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The situation of public security in Brazil

The state of violence in Brazil has evolved dramatically since the beginning of the 1980s. Statistical data show that from a situation within the average of the Americas in 1980

(11.7 deaths per 100,000 people), it reached a rate of 26.2 in 2010;⁴ more than four times the world average.⁵ Figures 1 and 2 show the overall picture through time.



Figure 1 – Evolution of the homicide rates in Brazil (1980-2010)

Source: Julio Weiselfisz, Mapa da Violência 2012, 19. Data from the Brazilian Health Ministry

⁴ Julio Weiselfisz, “Mapa da Violência 2012 – Os Novos Padrões da Violência Homicida no Brasil” (São Paulo: Instituto Sangari, 2012). 18, https://www.mapadaviolencia.org.br/pdf2012/mapa2012_web.pdf

In the 1980-2010 period, the total number of homicides in Brazil reached the appalling figure of more than one million deaths.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “Global Study on Homicide 2013 – Trends, Context, Data”, (Vienna: UNODC, 2013), 12, https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf

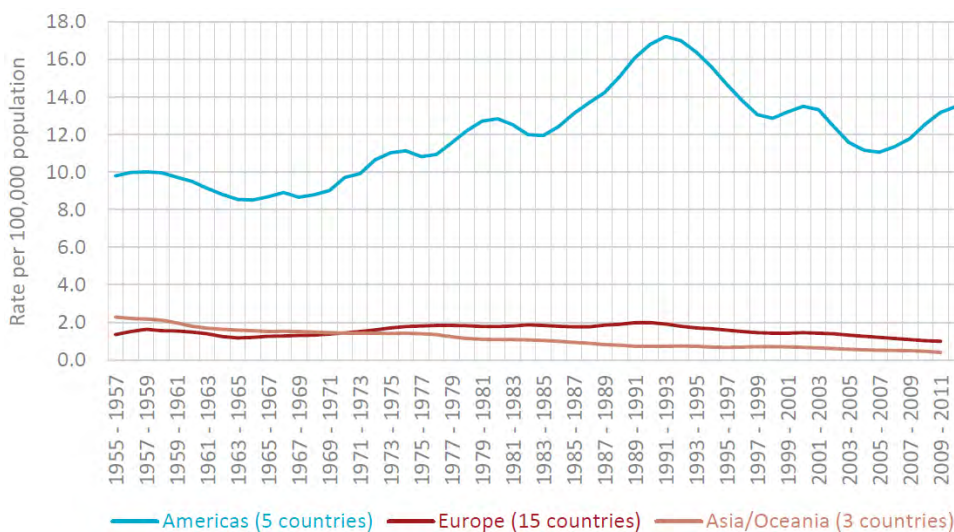


Figure 2 – Homicide rates, selected regions (1955-2012, three-year moving average)

Source: UNODC Global Study on Homicide 2013, 12.

The tentative explanations for this surge and posterior endemic persistence of violence vary from the typical blame on poverty and socioeconomic inequality (that were even worse in other less violent periods and were even statistically refuted as a determinant of violence)⁶ to more likely phenomena, such as the rise of organized crime groups in Brazil.

The first major criminal organization in Brazil is the *Comando Vermelho* (CV). It reportedly came from the cross-pollination of Marxist insurgents and common criminals in the prison of Ilha Grande (a kind of local version of Alcatraz), in the 1970s.⁷ Amidst an initially

⁶ Adolfo Sachida and Mario Mendonça, “TD 1808 - Evolução e Determinantes da Taxa de Homicídios no Brasil” (Brasília: IPEA, 2013), 38.
http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17077%3Atd-1808-evolucao-e-determinantes-da-taxa-de-homicidios-no-brasil&catid=337%3A2013&directory=1&Itemid=1.

The final remarks of the study seem like an odd apologize for crushing some else’s cherished assumptions with hard data. It is a curious example of how the intellectual milieu in Brazil is tainted with ideology.

⁷ Carlos Amorim. *Comando Vermelho – A História Secreta do Crime Organizado*. (Rio de Janeiro: Bestbolso, 2011), 27-38.

sympathetic population and an ever-flattering *intelligentsia*,⁸ (another feature of successful insurgencies), as well as corrupt officials⁹ and the lenient security policy of a populist left-wing government in Rio¹⁰, the CV flourished and set the standard for criminal organizations in Brazil. A later alliance with the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC), in 1990, secured the major drug and arms smuggling supply routes and gradually extended the influence and *modus operandi* of these larger organizations to all Brazilian states.¹¹ Not surprisingly, the homicide rates pattern in Brazil is one of geographical spread (mainly toward the North-Northeast regions). The demographics of the victims also show a strong correlation with criminal gang conflicts.¹²

In this evolution of the organized crime profile to spread over virtually all major cities of a continent-sized country like Brazil, the state police forces' (equivalent to the provincial level, in Canada) capacity were frequently overwhelmed. The Federal government, upon the request of the States' governors, has resorted to the Armed Forces to execute missions of *Garantia da Lei e da Ordem* (GLO, or Law and Order Assurance, in a free translation), as prescribed in the 1988 Federal Constitution and further specific regulations.¹³ As of July 2017,

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-12,

⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-98.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-149. Leonel Brizola, son-in-law of President João Goulart, deposed by the military government that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985, was exiled until 1979. As governor of Rio de Janeiro State (1983-87 and 1991-94), he promoted a human rights-oriented policy that hampered an effective action by the state police against crime and gave ample self-regulating freedom to the incarcerated population. This ultimately contributed to an almost complete dominance of Rio's penitentiary system by the CV.

¹¹ Alexandre Hisayasu, "27 Factions dispute the control of the organized crime in all the country's states." *Estado de São Paulo*, 07 January 2017. <http://brasil.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,27-faccoes-disputam-controle-do-crime-organizado-em-todos-os-estados-do-pais,10000098770> The PCC is believed to have 10,000 members in its "army" (seven thousand in prisons and the remaining in the streets). In Brazil, the drug trafficking is largely managed from inside the prisons, due to bribery of officials and the help of organized crime lawyers.

¹² Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA), "Atlas da Violência 2017" Ed. Daniel Cerqueira *et al.* (Rio de Janeiro: IPEA, 2017), 8-9, 30.

¹³ The Article 142 of the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution (CF88) establishes the Armed Forces roles, which includes the GLO, which is further detailed in the Complementary Law 97, of 9 June 1999. An unofficial

29 GLO Operations occurred in Brazil since 2010, ten of them in the city of Rio de Janeiro alone.¹⁴ The effectiveness and especially the persistence of the outcomes of these operations are debatable, as well as the inherent risks of military forces employment in internal affairs.¹⁵

The Colombian conflict and the peace process

Armed conflict between rival political factions in Colombia has been almost a constant in the country's two century history as a sovereign nation. From Civil Wars in the 19th century to violent clashes after the assassination of the popular Liberal leader Eliécer Gaitán, in 1948,¹⁶ the situation evolved, since the success of the Cuban Revolution, to an intensification of radical left-wing guerilla warfare.¹⁷ Since 1964, more than twenty Marxist-Leninist organizations were formed in Colombia, the larger and most well-known groups being the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN).¹⁸ The initial approach of the Colombian government was restricted to the military action and ignored the political and sociological aspects of the counterinsurgency (COIN).¹⁹

but very precise English translation of the CF88 is available at:
<http://web.mit.edu/12.000/www/m2006/teams/willr3/const.htm>

¹⁴ Data from MoD, in 28 July 2017. <http://www.defesa.gov.br/noticias/33430-operacao-seguranca-e-paz-8-500-militares-das-forcas-armadas-atuarao-em-glo-no-rio-de-janeiro>

¹⁵ André Woloszyn, "Law and Order Assurance Operations: A Challenge for the Brazilian Armed Forces. Analysis of a low-level, asymmetrical conflict that is unique in its kind". *Diálogo Digital Military Magazine*, 22 May 2017. <https://dialogo-americas.com/en/articles/law-and-order-assurance-operations-challenge-brazilian-armed-forces>. Six months after the last GLO mission in Rio, the Federal Government decreed federal intervention in that city. This is a degree above the GLO, for which now the Army is not a backup of the state security forces, but now has the formal command and responsibility over them. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-43088817>

¹⁶ Library of the Congress, Federal Research Division, *Colombia: a country study*, Ed. Rex Hudson, 5th Ed. (Washington: Library of the Congress, 2010), xxx. The riots that immediately followed Gaitán's assassination are known as *The Bogotazo* and sparked a wave of violence that lasted for the remainder of 20th century.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xlv.

¹⁸ Jesús A. R. Mora, "Learning through our Mistakes: the Legacy of Marxism in Colombian Counter-Insurgency Strategy", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol 17, Issue 4 (2017), 237.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

During the 1980s, the Colombian government took initiatives to establish a peace and reconciliation process,²⁰ without favorable results. The situation only deteriorated and included, in the 1990s, the involvement of the *narcos* (drug cartels) and self-defence organizations in the mosaic of violence and lack of governance within Colombia.²¹ The widespread violence and lack of positive results in the areas dominated by the insurgents led to a loss of popular support to the insurgency cause.²² The tide started to reverse to the government side in 1999, with Plan Colombia. This was the first whole-of-government (WoG) approach to the counterinsurgency campaign, focusing in winning legitimacy among the population, and was supported by the United States. Successive improvements in the government strategy and policies, especially after 2002, led to a massive demobilisation of the insurgent's fighting forces (downsized by 50% in 2008), targeted their leadership and forced FARC to retreat deep into the jungle.²³

In face of these setbacks, the insurgents adapted their strategy back to guerrilla warfare, coupled with a political offensive, “increasing efforts to infiltrate and manipulate social movements”, as well as gathering support and safe ground in the territories of the left-wing ruled neighbours Venezuela and Ecuador.²⁴ The FARC also closed ties with local leftist militias and criminal groups, as well as established alliances with former para-military groups, used by the government to fight the insurgents, but that were demobilized in 2006. Many of these groups turned into the drug trade and became partners of the FARC in this illegal business.²⁵

²⁰ Colombia, *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración de Personas y Grupos Alzados en Armas (ACR) - Reseña Histórica Institucional*. (Bogotá, ACR: 2016), 5-6.

²¹ Jesús A. R. Mora, “Learning through our Mistakes...”, 240.

²² *Ibid.*, 239-240.

²³ Carlos Ospina Ovalle, “Legitimacy as the center of gravity in Hybrid warfare: Notes from the Colombian Battlefield”, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol 17, Issue 4 (2017), 260. General Ospina was the Commander of Colombian Armed Forces from 2004 to 2007.

²⁴ James Bargent, “The FARC 2002-Present: Decapitation and Rebirth”, *InSight Crime*, 26 May, 2014. <https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/farc-2002-present-decapitation-rebirth/>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The new offensive gave the insurgents a higher ground to initiate peace talks with the newly elected President Juan Manuel Santos.²⁶ The peace treaty was mediated in Cuba, by figures such as Raúl Castro and “Pepe” Mujica (president of Uruguay, former Marxist guerrilla member in his country). The outcome: a Peace Nobel Prize Juan Manuel Santos, the FARC recognized as a political party and a cheerful international community (or at least their major news outlets and the UN assembly).²⁷ In the other hand, the Colombian population seems less enthusiastic, based on the rejection of the peace process in a 2016 referendum.²⁸

CLAUSEWITZIAN CONCEPTS APPLICABLE TO THE CASE

The role of Politics in a Conflict

Although there is not explicit attribution of Clausewitz’s influence in Mao’s theories, the similarities between their ideas seem to be more than mere coincidence. Lenin was an avid reader of Clausewitz, and the common background of their ideas in Hegelian philosophy helps to explain the resemblance.²⁹ Mao expanded the Clausewitzian concept of war as “a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means”³⁰ into

²⁶ *Ibid.* Santos was elected with a campaign promise to continue the previous government (in which he was the Defense Minister) policy of non-negotiation with the insurgents, only promoting demobilization at the individual level.

²⁷ United Nations News Centre, “*At UN, Colombian President says successful peace process could serve as model for others*” <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57570#.WoCtMsuWxeU>, last access: 11 Feb 2018; Nicholas Casey and Joe Daniels, “*‘Goodbye, Weapons!’ FARC Disarmament in Colombia Signals New Era*” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/27/world/americas/colombia-farc-rebels-disarmament.html>. More sober news reports from the same NYT, in Washington Post or even in more neutral news agencies, such as Reuters, show the same overall tone of declaring success in the peace process and especially the disarmament of the FARC-EP.

²⁸ BBC, *Colombia referendum: Voters reject FARC peace deal*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37537252>.

²⁹ Jacob Kipp, “Lenin and Clausewitz: The Militarization of Marxism, 1914-1921”, *Military Affairs*, (October 1985), 184-186.

³⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

a two-way interrelation between war and politics, expressed in his famous axiom “politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.”³¹ His distinctive contribution to modern insurgency movements was to “introduce a political dimension into what had previously been a largely military affair. In a successful Maoist insurgency the political took primacy over the military.”³²

More than a mere battle of ideas, Mao’s theories gained actual fulfillment firstly in his own seizure of power in China and later as a prototype and inspiration to several insurgent and “liberation” movements around the world. Latin America was a fertile ground for these movements, with the FARC in Colombia being the ultimate example. Another case of success in the Maoist interpretation of the Clausewitzian doctrine (versus the American interpretation) was in the Vietnam War, when General Giap, understanding the primacy of the political aim, turned a military defeat into a political victory.³³

In the Colombian conflict, effective results against the insurgents only came when the local government and military establishment understood the influence of Maoist strategic thought and acted in a COIN campaign to disrupt the link between insurgents and its popular base.³⁴ Instead of using the American interpretation of Clausewitz’s center of gravity (CoG) in Vietnam and locating the center of gravity in the battlefield/ destruction of the enemy forces, the Colombian strategists opted to a school of thought closer to the one of the insurgents – electing legitimacy as the CoG³⁵ – with favorable results.

³¹ Mao Tse-Tung, “On Protracted War.” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967). <http://marx2mao.com/Mao/PW38.html>

³² John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 15.

³³ William Staudenmaier, “Vietnam, Mao and Clausewitz”, *Parameters*, Vol VII, No.1 (May 1976), 79, 87.

³⁴ Jesús A. R. Mora, “Learning through our Mistakes...”, 240-241.

³⁵ Carlos Ospina Ovalle, “Legitimacy as the center of gravity...”, 256.

The Chameleon of War

Clausewitz made two other very famous analogies in the same part of the initial chapter of his masterpiece: the “wondrous (or paradoxical, or *wunderliche*) trinity”, and the comparison of the changing character of war to a chameleon.³⁶ As the Clausewitz expert Antulio Echevarria II states, the complexity of *On War* articulation of war’s nature tend to produce a diversity of interpretations and heated debates around the theme, frequently with superficial and misleading assumptions.³⁷ But Echeverria itself recognizes that the multi-dimensional (politics included) and diverse manifestations of warfare along the 20th century rather confirm Clausewitz theories than make it obsolete.³⁸ History also abounds with examples that show how the adaptability of insurgents (and usually the lack of it in those trying to fight them) made them successful or at least very hard to defeat.

Colombia, in special, is a remarkable case in which both government and insurgents adapted and changed strategy to their own favour. On the verge of defeat by the comprehensive and population-centered approach of the Government, the FARC resorted to guerrilla and criminal activities and especially to the political warfare, achieving a highly favorable peace treaty despite the lack of popular support to it. Now in the light of legality, the FARC is waging a “judicial and judiciary warfare”, backed up by Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and lawyers, to delegitimize the Armed Forces and advance their political objectives.³⁹

Thus, the only constant in the revolutionary movements is the continuous adaptation of their strategies towards the overarching goal – radical transformation of a society through the

³⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*...89.

³⁷ Antulio Echevarria II, *Clausewitz & Contemporary War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 61.

³⁸ Antulio Echevarria II, “War, Politics and RMA: The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Continued Relevance of Clausewitz”, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, (Winter 1995-96), 77-78.

³⁹ Fernando Torres. “The Continuous Judicial and the Judiciary Wars in Colombia: Critical Dimensions of Insurgent Political Warfare”, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol 17, Issue 4 (2017), 245-246.

absolute control of the means of coercion (state and military power) and of influence (academia, educational system, propaganda). From Lenin's "militarization of Marxism" and revision of theory in the light of the WWI scenario⁴⁰, to Mao's deep understanding of the role of politics and his methodology of mass mobilization in the Chinese revolution,⁴¹ the revolutionary minds had always find a way to reinvent itself and explore their adversaries' vulnerabilities. In this context the theories of Italian Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci had an effect that, as usual, his adversaries are slow to admit and counter. To tackle the extent of Gramsci's influence in Western contemporary thinking would greatly exceed the limits and scope of this essay, but to mention his influence in intellectuals such as Marcuse and Foucault would suffice to show the impact.⁴² Gramscian concepts of cultural hegemony, organic intellectuals and occupation of spaces in the worlds of art, media and academia are so ingrained in the Western higher culture that became a self-fulfilling prophecy, in terms of being a cultural hegemonic power.⁴³ The practical outcome of this dominance is seen daily in popular culture, media outlets, universities courses, governmental policies and legislation, as well as in the judiciary system, at least both in the Colombia case⁴⁴ as in Brazil.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Jacob Kipp, "Lenin and Clausewitz...", 186-187.

⁴¹ John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago...*, 18-19.

⁴² Renate Holub. *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992).11-12, 74-75, 193.

⁴³ Roger Kimball, *The Long March – How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America*. New York: Encounter, 2000, 14-15.

⁴⁴ Carlos Ospina, "Colombia and the FARC: From Military Victory to Ambivalent Political Reintegration?" *Impunity – Countering Illicit Power in War and Transition*. ed. Michelle Hughes and Michael Miklaucic (Washington: PRISM, 2016)163, 166-167.

⁴⁵ Mauro A. Corrêa, "Revolução Cultural no Direito: Gramsci e o Direito Alternativo" (Law degree thesis, Universidade Católica de Brasília, 2004), 7, 67-71; Rosemary Dore, "Gramsci, Intelectuais e Educação", in *Cad. Cedes, Vol 26, n. 70*, (Campinas: UNICAMP, Sep-Dec 2006), 285-209. www.cedes.unicamp.br

Current similarities between Brazil and Colombia

In present time, a convergence can be seen between Colombian and Brazilian internal scenario. Colombia is emerging from a prolonged conflict, with the insurgents reversing their military defeat into a political victory. They are assuming a legitimate political role, while maintaining their ties with the organized crime and gathering the support of sectors of the *intelligentsia* and NGOs to wage asymmetric information warfare to demoralize the government and the armed forces.⁴⁶ This approach, more related to a Gramscian perspective, is close to the strategy the political left pursued in Brazil in the last four decades. There, a failed insurgency in the 1970s gave organizational inspiration to ever-growing organized crime factions, which in some periods and places submit population and security forces to an environment similar to a low-intensity war. As a reaction to this, the Brazilian government frequently resorted to the armed forces as a dissuasive tool, to momentarily contain violence surges. Furthermore, the same kind of asymmetric judicial, information and cultural warfare that is waged in Colombia occurs in Brazil, where the motto *pas d'enemis à gauche*, reminiscence of the Cold War era,⁴⁷ still goes strong among *soi disant* educated people in Brazil.⁴⁸ The convergence between Brazil and Colombia is completed via the connections between the FARC and major organized crime groups in Brazil.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Jesús Mora, "Learning through our Mistakes...", 246-247; Carlos Ospina, "Colombia and the FARC:...", 169.

⁴⁷ Arnold Beichman, "Active Measures and Democratic Culture," in *Soviet Strategic Deception*, edited by Brian D. Dailey and Patrick J. Parker, (Toronto: Lexington, 1987), 80. The author defines "High Culture" as "represented by a self-styled political-literary *avant garde* in a democratic society. High Culture seeks a dominant, indeed a monopoly, role in determining societal values so that they will run counter to prevailing values".

⁴⁸ The Brazilian journalist and philosopher Olavo de Carvalho exposed the ideology-tainted Brazilian academic and cultural universe in his books *O Imbecil Coletivo* and *Nova Era e Revolução Cultural – Fritjof Capra & Antonio Gramsci*, only available in Portuguese. They are quite similar in nature to Roger Kimball's *The Long March* and *Tenured Radicals*.

⁴⁹ Gerson Rolim da Silva, "FARC's influence in Brazil", (master's thesis, USACGSC Ft Leavenworth, 2013), 34-35. Not to mention historical ties between the FARC and all major Latin American leftist parties via the

The Problem; and what Colombia has to teach to Brazil?

As we could see in the examples provided in this essay the radical insurgent movements were very successful in adapting their strategies and *modus operandi* to prevail, resorting to any measure within the spectre of conflict and of political action to achieve their goals. Governments and organized civil society, in the other hand, has been slow to react and, in a certain way, have been severely affected by subversion efforts in the non-kinetic domain (psychological and informational). The Colombian conflict showed that through agility and a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic measures, the insurgency can be disrupted.

Considering how this could apply to the Brazilian case, where there is not an open conflict, just a “mere” (actually critical) public security issue, a valid concern could be raised over the use of the military element. Since the enforcement of the rule of the law would suffice to solve the problem, this interference would be undesirable and even illegal. Against this argument, it must be noted that both in Brazil as in Colombia, it is a constitutional duty for the armed forces to defend the institutions (with proper conditions and legal limitations in doing so). Moreover, the current Gramscian approach to the seizure of political power and cultural hegemony seeks to undermine the democratic institutions from within, using the very democratic tools (elections, legislation, courts, educational system) to promote their agenda and hegemony, whilst discrediting any form of dissent (and later on, simply suppressing it). The road Venezuela took to be in its current situation is the most vivid example of how this process unfolds.

Foro de São Paulo (FSP), the overarching dialogue forum of the political left in the region. Understandably, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), a FSP cornerstone, severed ties – and denied any previous links – with the FARC after electing its first president in Brazil. <http://forodesaopaulo.org/>

It also must be noted that the COIN WoG approach was quite effective to undermine and ultimately dismantle a Maoist type of insurgency. The Gramscian type of subversion, however, is much more nuanced and pervasive, and typically avoids (but doesn't exclude) the use of kinetic means. It requires a much more sophisticated and a truly "whole of society" approach to identify and counter its influence. Again, this mainly non-kinetic approach should arguably preclude the involvement of the military in the issue. Historical examples of politicising within the military in democratic societies show that it frequently had adverse results. The cases of the French Army in the COIN campaign in Algeria⁵⁰ and Brazil's own Republican history⁵¹ show that this separation is in the best interest of free societies.

Indeed, the military establishment under civilian institutional control is a basic tenet of modern democracies, and the Brazilian military seems to understand this quite well.⁵² Nevertheless, in the profound institutional crisis Brazil is currently facing,⁵³ discontentment raises, including public protests asking for military intervention.⁵⁴ From an insider's perspective, this is mainly due to the trust that a large portion of the population has in the military institutions.⁵⁵ Therefore, to avoid repeating past mistakes and recover the country's stability without going down the road towards radicalisation, it is necessary to take Colombia's lesson in to account. To counter a chameleonic adversary, it is crucial to have agility and

⁵⁰ Eric Ouellet & Pierre C. Pahlavi. "Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: A Case Study of the French Army in Algeria 1954–1960," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 34:6, (2011), 809, 812, 816-818.

⁵¹ Out of the 37 Presidents Brazil had (since 1889), ten were military officers, from which only two were elected by direct vote.

⁵² Heloisa Cristaldo, "Commanding General of the [Brazilian] Army Denies Possibility of Military Intervention", *Military Review* (July-August 2016), 53-54. Since the last period of military government, ended in 1985, the military senior leadership has adopted a conscientious distance from the political scenario and even has been explicit about the commitment to keep Brazilian Armed Forces strictly within its legal mandate.

⁵³ BBC News. "Brazil corruption scandals: All you need to know", 8 April 2018. Last access 27 April 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35810578>

⁵⁴ Linette Lopez, "Brazilian protesters are calling for something downright scary", *Business Insider*, 16 March 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/brazil-protesters-call-for-military-intervention-2015-3>.

⁵⁵ <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2017/06/1896057-datafolha-armed-forces-are-countrys-most-trusted-institution-congress-loses-credibility.shtml>

strategic acumen. Against the collectivistic mindset of the Gramscian subversion, the emphasis should not be in more government action but, conversely, in emphasizing the individuals' responsibilities and roles in the life of the nation. The military should be only a catalyst of this process, preferably in more individual level (e.g. retired officers in civilian associations, think tanks, etc), fostering the dialogue and involvement of the "silent majority" in a broader articulation towards a true democratic state. Cognitive tools such as operational design, design thinking, intelligence, targeting and Info Ops could be used for the retaking of spaces currently occupied by the Gramscian establishment, breaking the intellectual and cultural monopoly. Emphasis must be in non-kinetic solutions, and the military institution should keep its current kinetic dissuasive role just to contain the radicalisation/polarisation of the political spectrum extremes.

Since the war shifted to the cultural realm, cognitive weapons are the most suited to counter the enemies of the true democratic rule of law from exploiting the grievances and natural flaws that emerge from democracies. As history shows, although they speak of peace, justice and equality, the only concrete examples in hand are façade types of democracy or "people's republics" (e.g. Cuba, Venezuela, China, North Korea; not to mention the past cases).

CONCLUSION

In the long march of revolutionaries' insatiable search for power and creation of distopias while searching for utopias, the only constant has been change and adaptation. Nurtured by inequalities – which abound in Latin America – the natural grievances that emerge from them were exploited by the radical left, which reinvented itself to look less bellicose and

more “democratic” and subtle, at least in the surface. In the particular case of Brazil and Colombia, the broad front of the “all forms of struggle” range from the cultural deconstructionism and academic/artistic political engagement to murky connections with potentially violent peasant/homeless movements and with the organized crime, besides the regular and legitimate political action.⁵⁶

Western democratic societies and their institutions are normally prone to incur in self-deception⁵⁷ and mirror-image perceptions (the tendency to attribute to the adversaries your own behaviour, concepts and moral values).⁵⁸ This Cold War era tendency, instead of withering, can be argued that even increased. Therefore, to avoid the collapse of Latin American societies from within, mimicking the Venezuelan disaster, it is necessary to deepen the lessons learned in Colombia. Since the battlespace moved to a predominantly non-kinetic realm, innovative cognitive tools and a power to the edge approach⁵⁹ are fundamental to safely remove Latin America’s largest nation from the dire straits it is now crossing.

⁵⁶ In Brazil’s case, even the regular politics, normally plagued by a certain level of corruption, have seen the gangster mentality reach unprecedented heights during the PT rule in the Presidency, as the investigations that led to the imprisonment of former President Lula da Silva has shown.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/01/brazil-operation-car-wash-is-this-the-biggest-corruption-scandal-in-history>

⁵⁷ Brian Dailey and Patrick J. Parker (Editors), *Soviet Strategic Deception*, (Toronto: Lexington, 1987), xvi.

⁵⁸ John Lenczowski, “Themes of Soviet Deception and Disinformation”, *Soviet Strategic Deception*, Ed. by Brian D. Dailey and Patrick J. Parker, (Toronto: Lexington, 1987), 56-57.

⁵⁹ David S. Alberts and Richard E. Hayes “Power to the Edge: Command, Control in the Information Age” Information Age Transformation Series. (Washington: CCRP Publication Series, 2004). 4-5.

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