

Poli-416: REVOLUTION & POLITICAL VIOLENCE

DÉDIE
AU GOUVERNEMENT
de la
CONFÉDÉRATION GRENADE.
HOMMAGE de L'AUTEUR

TODAY'S AGENDA

- 1 Pop quiz
- 2 Overview of Colombian conflict
- 3 Paramilitaries and *parapolitica*

Colombia



Early Politics

All over Latin America,
the new republics have elections between:

Liberals

vs

Conservatives

Commercial

Land

Weak church

Strong church

Individual liberties

Social order, tradition

Elections in Colombia



In Colombia competition between these parties was very violent



Winning party in one election would attack supporters of losing party

Why so violent?

Today
(USA):

Elect president

Congress

governors,
mayors

Cabinet, executive

Back then
(Colombia):

Elect president

Congress

governors,
mayors

Cabinet, executive

“Winner-take-all”
System

Lots of goodies
to be given out

Use violence
while in power

Pay back for
last election

The land problem

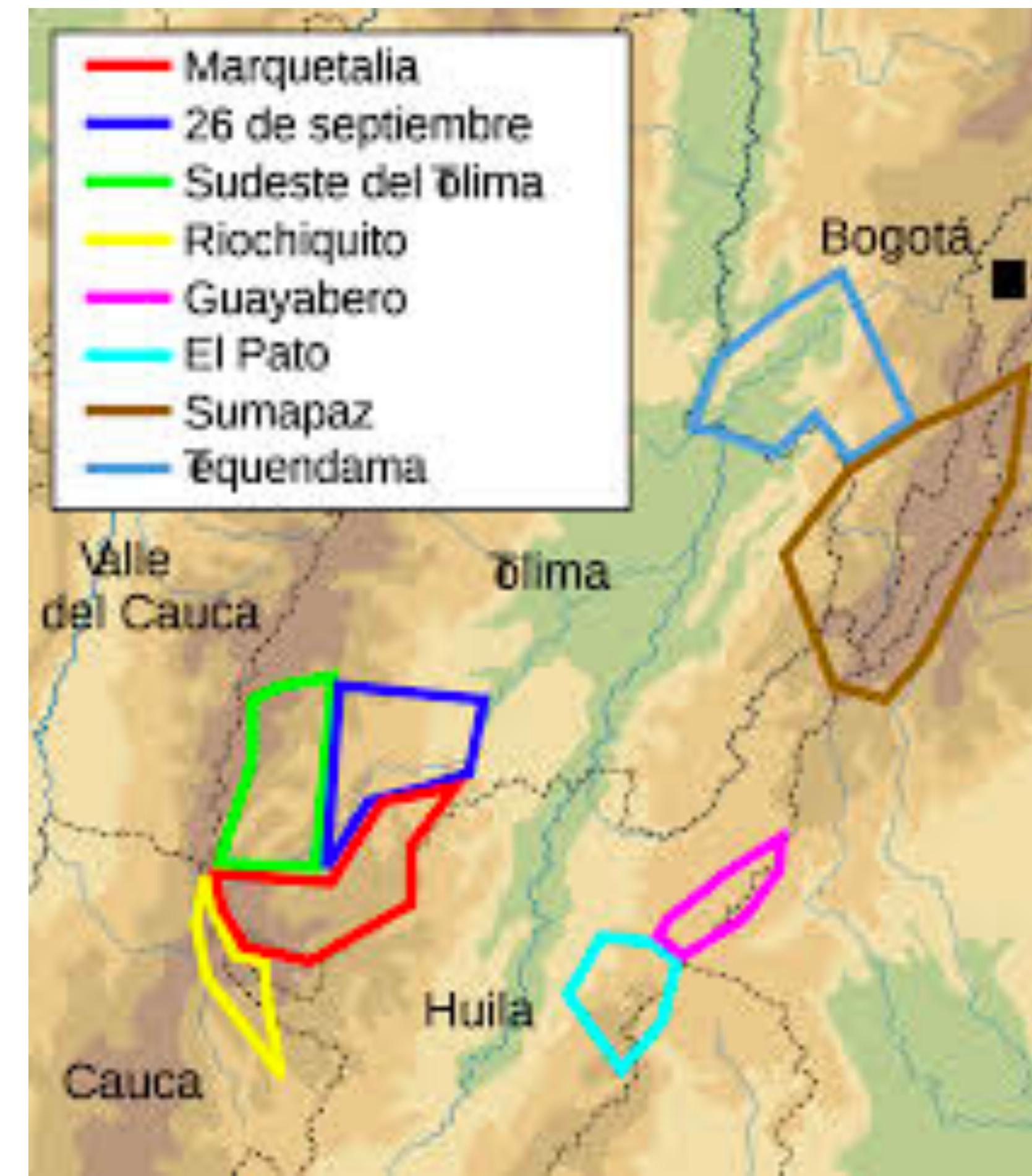
Land theft, land
conflicts
rampant during
the 20th century

If right party was
in power, elites
could take with
impunity



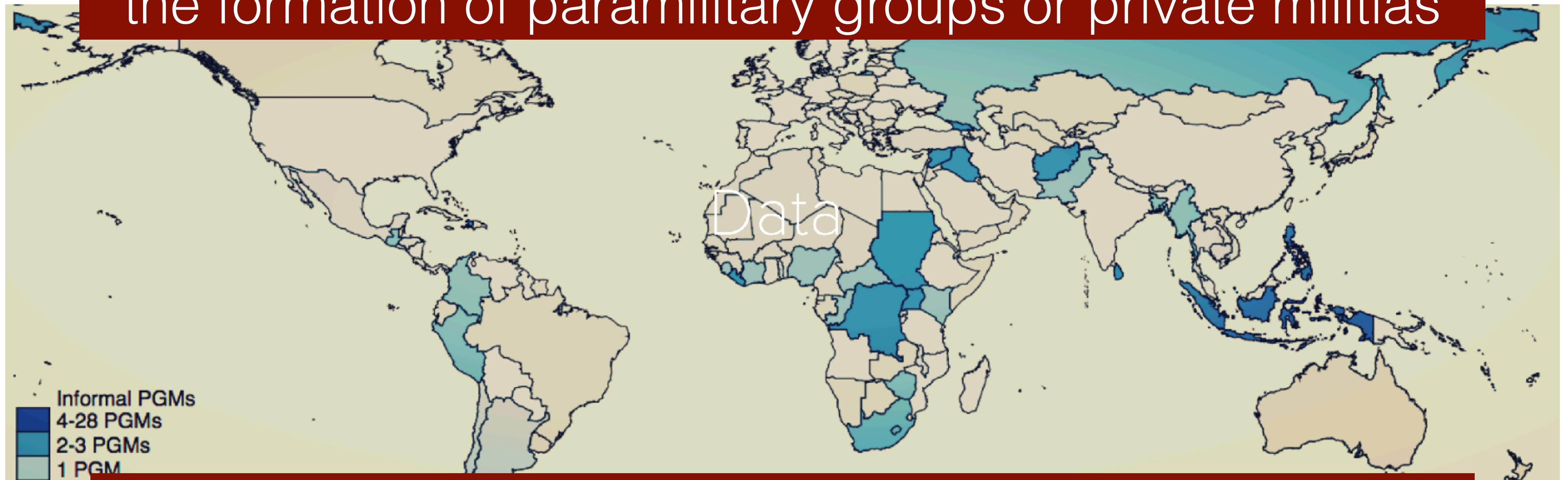
Self-defense militias

Peasants organize in **enclaves** to defend themselves, most famously in the “Republic of Marquetalia”



Paramilitary groups

Dozens of countries have either **encouraged** or **allowed** the formation of paramilitary groups or private militias



Armed groups that receive either direct or indirect support from the state, typically to combat rebels

Paramilitary recruitment

Who typically joins a paramilitary group?

Victims of rebels
(e.g., Colombia, Mexico, Peru)

Groups with interests
threatened by rebels

Groups formed by state
(e.g., Phillipines)

The paras: broad trajectory

Small self-defense groups
going back to 60s

Boost from drug cartels
1980s

Form coalition in 1990s

Demobilize (?) in early 2000s

Groups today continue unclear/
mysterious (“Black Eagles”)



Colombian paramilitaries

Base of support?

Victims (e.g.,
ranchers forced to
pay “war tax”)

Drug traffickers

The military



Carlos Castaño,
Founder of AUC

Drug-traffickers and paramilitaries

At first, guerrillas extort/“protect” drug-traffickers (why them?)

Eventually go from “guarding” fields
→ making coca paste (why?)

Brings them into conflict with cartels



M-19 kidnap daughter
of the Ochoas
(as seen in *Narcos*)

Why do this?

“deal with the devil” to defeat insurgency

Benefits

Costs

???

Bodies

Domestic
costs

“Monopoly
of violence”

Indiscriminate
violence

Local
knowledge

Principal-
agent
problems

The monopoly of violence

What is a “state”?

“Only entity that lays claim to the **monopoly on the legitimated use of physical force**. However, this monopoly is limited to a certain geographical area, and in fact this limitation to a particular area is one of the things that defines a state.”

Can rebel groups be “states” in the areas they control?



Max Weber,
Sociologist

Closing the can of worms

Mexico Confronts Cartel-Fighting Militias

The Mexican military confronted armed vigilantes that had organized to repel a crime cartel from their r

By [Nicholas Casey](#) and [Anthony Harrup](#)

Updated Jan. 14, 2014 8:58 pm ET

MEXICO CITY—The Mexican military confronted armed vigilantes that had organized to repel a crime cartel from their rural southern state, in deadly clashes on Tuesday.

The vigilantes, known locally as "self-defense groups," had largely taken control of parts of Michoacán state and refused to stand down and disarm.

Countries that give up "monopoly of violence" often have to wrestle it back from militias

Competing “states”

Allowing non-state armed actors to govern
makes winning over locals more difficult

Hearts and minds

“shared risk”

What if paramilitaries do a better job? States
may find themselves **competing** for
legitimacy

Principal-agent problems

One actor (principal) hires another (agent) to do some task

Agent makes decisions that impact principal, but principal knows less/cannot monitor agent
(informational asymmetry)

What's the PA problem here?

Involvement in drugs, excessive violence, etc.

Parapolitica

In 2000s, paramilitaries become involved in electoral politics

What's the *quid pro quo* here?

Deliver votes (how?
And where?)

Common enemy

Common enemy

Demobilization

Money

Not just 2000s



Even if against the interest of the state, **individual** politicians might strike deals with armed groups



1988: Colombia begins electing mayors,
Wave of violence against left parties



Protest against killing of leftist
social leaders in Colombia

Not just Colombia

Guatemala Presidential Candidate Solicited Sinaloa Cartel for Campaign Cash: US

ANALYSIS Written by Parker Asmann - APRIL 18, 2019

Elites and Organized Crime | Guatemala | Mexico | Sinaloa Cartel

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Former Guatemalan presidential candidate Mario Amilcar Estrada Orellana

US authorities have charged a Guatemalan presidential candidate with soliciting campaign funds from Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel and even asking the group to assassinate his rivals, in a case that highlights that politics in Guatemala, despite efforts to clean it up, remains a seriously dirty business.

Why doesn't the FARC do this?

Acemoglu et., al:
FARC has **national ambitions**, paras don't

At some point, group too threatening to state
and collusion is **not credible**

Does this make sense?

The ELN also influences elections in Arauca,
where it is powerful

Threaten/kill candidates
Collude with officials

Por amenazas, candidatos en Arauca hacen
campaña solo por internet

EL TIEMPO

Open question:
Why do armed groups get involved in
some elections but not others?



Recap

Colombia has a long history of **non-state** armed actors exerting influence

State faces **trade-off** in relying on paramilitaries

Even if state doesn't want to collude, **individual politicians** can

Parapolitica: trade of votes for support with consequences still visible today