

The Need for Enemies*

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Abstract

We develop a political economy model where some politicians have a comparative advantage in undertaking a task and this gives them an electoral advantage. This creates an incentive to underperform in the task in order to maintain their advantage. We interpret the model in the context of fighting against insurgents in a civil war and derive two main empirical implications which we test using Colombian data during the presidency of Álvaro Uribe. First, large defeats for the insurgents should reduce the probability that politicians with comparative advantage, President Uribe, will fight the insurgents and second, this effect should be larger in electorally salient municipalities. We find that after the three largest victories against the FARC rebel group, the government reduced its efforts to eliminate the group and did so differentially in politically salient municipalities. Our results therefore support the notion that such politicians need enemies to maintain their political advantage and act so as to keep the enemy alive.

Keywords: Political economy, civil war.

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1 Introduction

If an agent is hired by a principal to work until a particular task is completed, then by completing the task the agent is putting himself out of a job. This phenomenon may be particularly important in politics. It is often claimed that a particular politician is elected because “they are the man for the job” perhaps because they have a particular skill or comparative advantage. Once the job is over this skill will be less valued and the politician, even if they have successfully completed the job for which they were selected, may be replaced. A salient historical example may be Whinston Churchill who, though not particularly successful as a peacetime politician was thought to be the man for the job in 1940 to lead Britain to victory in the Second World War as prime minister. As soon as the war was won in 1945, British voters, instead of rewarding him, immediately removed him from office. A related example is Margaret Thatcher. She was selected as the Conservative leader in 1975 because she was known to be very anti-trade union, and after the Conservative government of Edward Heath had been effectively brought down by the unions in 1974 the Conservative Party was bent on revenge. Just as important, the median voter in Britain was swinging against the union movement so a rabidly anti-union leader gave the party a strong electoral advantage over the Labour Party. After being elected in 1979, Mrs. Thatcher passed a gamut of anti-union legislation and acted very toughly, particularly during the miner’s strike of 1984-85, hence her catchphrase “this lady’s not for turning”. She destroyed the power of the union movement and was rewarded by being removed by the party as it’s leader in 1990 and replaced by John Major.

These examples suggest that such politicians have an incentive to not do their job properly, even if Whinston Churchill and Mrs. Thatcher ignored this intuition. If Churchill had not won the war but rather allowed it to carry on, he would have stayed longer in office. If Mrs. Thatcher had been less successful at decimating the trade union movement, the Conservative Party would have needed her longer. These phenomena belong to a class of examples which the social anthropologist Frederick Bailey (1998) described as “the need for enemies”. Both Churchill and Thatcher were selected because they were thought to be particularly good at removing a particular threat, Nazi Germany and the trade union movement. But in both cases they needed the “enemies” they faced in order to maintain power themselves.

In this paper we develop a simple political economy model of this need for enemies, showing how a politician who is good at undertaking a particular task has an incentive not to complete it fully since he needs to keep the task alive in order to maintain his strategic advantage in an election. We focus on the particular case of civil war where democratically elected politicians are facing an insurgency and have to make a decision about whether or not to fight the insurgents. There are two types of politicians, one of whom has a greater comparative advantage in fighting the insurgency in the sense that if he did so he would have a greater probability of defeating it. We assume this type of

politician is an incumbent facing re-election. We show that such a politician's incentive to eliminate the insurgents is mitigated by the fact that if he did so he would destroy his electoral advantage. He needs to keep his enemy alive in order to sustain his political power.

The model generates two main testable implications which stem from the comparative statics of two key parameters. The first comes from the exogenous component of the probability that if the politician tries to eliminate the insurgents he will succeed. We show that the higher this is, the less likely the incumbent politician with the comparative advantage in fighting the insurgency will actually try to eliminate the insurgents. This is because the greater is the exogenous component of the probability, the higher is the chance that the insurgents will actually be eliminated, removing the strategic advantage of the incumbent in the upcoming election. The second testable result comes from the interaction between the exogenous component of the probability of defeating the insurgents and the sensitivity of voters to policy outcomes (captured in our probabilistic voting model by the density of swing voters). The model suggests that the effect of higher exogenous probability is greater the more sensitive voters are to policy.

We test these implications of our model using data from Colombia. In 2002 Álvaro Uribe was elected president on an explicit platform to fight against the left-wing insurgent guerilla groups the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN). Uribe, whose father was murdered by the FARC, was widely seen as having a major political advantage in his loathing for the group, particularly relative to the traditional politicians who had a long history of trying to negotiate with the group (see Kline, 2007, for the failure of the most recent attempt during the previous presidency of Andrés Pastrana). Thus Uribe was a politician for the job who intensified the fight against the guerilla. Nevertheless, our model suggests that his incentive to attack the guerilla could have been mitigated by the fact that had he eliminated them, he would have removed his own electoral advantage. To the extent that Uribe valued rents from office as well as peace, this could have reduced his incentive to eliminate the FARC and ELN, just as our model predicts.

We can test the predictions of the model by identifying events in the Colombian civil war which correspond to a high probability of defeating the guerilla. These include the release of information on May 24 2008 that the FARC's long standing leader Manuel Marulanda Vélez, known as Tirofijo ("Shurehot") had died from natural causes, the killing by the Colombian military of FARC's spokesman and Secretariat member Raúl Reyes in Ecuador on March 1 of the same year, and the rescue to long-time hostage and 2002 presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt in 'Operación Jaque' on July 2 also of 2008. All three events were major positive shocks for the government in the sense that they signalled that if the government would try to eliminate the FARC, they would have a greater chance of success. In the case of Tirofijo and Reyes this was because of the central military role these leaders played and in the case of Betancourt it was because this was such a demoralizing defeat for the FARC which led to intensified defection by

its members. As such they capture a positive shock in the exogenous component of the probability of defeating the FARC. Our model implies that such a situation would lead to a reduced incentive to eliminate the FARC. To test this, we study the pattern of government activity against the guerrillas around these key events.

Our model further implies that this effect should be differentially strong in places which are politically salient in the sense that they contain a lot of swing voters. To distinguish such municipalities, we take advantage of another key component of Uribe's presidency: his weekly *Consejos Comunales* (Communitarian Councils). The councils were held each weekend in a different municipality and broadcasted live on national television. Uribe's *Consejos Comunales* enable us to identify the municipalities where the president believed voters are most responsive.

Examining these three events and sets of municipalities, we find exactly what the model predicts. First, in our regressions for government military activity, the coefficient on a post-event dummy shows that such activity significantly decreases after each of the three major events. Of course, there are alternative plausible explanations for a decrease in government military activity after a major army achievement or guerrilla setback. Most obviously, it may take a while before a new major operation can be planned and executed, or the guerrilla may seek refuge in strategic safe havens right after a major setback. But the second major prediction in our model is harder to reconcile with alternative stories, and we find strong support for it: the decrease in government activity is more pronounced in electorally relevant places. Our estimates reveal that, after each one of the events, government military initiative dropped in places where Uribe had organized *Consejos Comunales*, relative to areas where he had not. (In other words, the coefficient on the interaction between a post-event dummy and a dummy variable that equals one if Uribe had organized a *Consejo Comunal* in the municipality is negative and significant). This result is robust to controlling for a large number of observable municipality-specific characteristics and to the inclusion of department-level fixed effects, suggesting that it is not driven by omitted variable bias.

Moreover, we perform a series of additional checks to study alternative mechanisms that could be driving our results. A major potential objection to our interpretation is that the patterns of government activity after a major blow are in fact not so much determined by the government's own initiative, but by reaction to the guerrilla's activity. However, an examination of the behavior of guerrilla attacks reveals that they do not follow a similar pattern across different municipalities after the major setbacks, casting doubt on this alternative interpretation. As an additional exercise, we also run regressions for alternative "placebo" events. In particular, we choose events that represented important army operations or attempts at offensive measures against the guerrillas, but did not turn out to be successful. If time to undertake new operations (especially in some areas more than others) explain our results, then we should see an effect in these types of regressions. We do not. Finally, even though we control for municipality observable characteristics, we conduct an additional test to verify if our results are driven by other traits that are

correlated with Consejos Comunales but have little to do with the electoral response of areas where Consejos were held. Specifically, we establish that the most important correlates of Consejo's Comunales are the municipality's total population, area, level of poverty, and distance to the department capital. If these correlates, and not the electoral responsiveness of the municipalities, were driving our results, then allowing for a differential trend in government activity for municipalities categorized according to these traits should render our main coefficients of interest insignificant. Again, we find that our main results are still typically significant with the expected sign, reassuring the validity of our main conclusions.

One could argue that it was not just President Uribe who was extracting rents from maintaining the FARC but also the military. It could be that after a positive shock, such as the death of Tirofijo, the military was scared that the FARC would collapse and so they autonomously scaled back their activities. This idea is made more plausible by the fact that there is a lot of evidence of military autonomy in Colombia such as the "false positives" scandal where possibly 3,000 people were illegally executed by the army to get pay increases and extra vacations. Though this theory could explain the fall in army attacks after big positive shocks it cannot in itself explain why this effect should be differentially large in politically salient municipalities. For this to be true, it must be that the army also wishes to keep President Uribe in power. This is also possible, but in this case the model would be very close to the one we have now but with a different central mechanism. However, though this mechanism may be present the degree of presidential dominance in Colombia and the enormous amount of evidence of President Uribe's power in many policy areas, not least the military strategy, makes it implausible that military autonomy can be the dominant mechanism generating our findings.¹

Although we are not aware of any study that develops the same mechanism as our model, our paper is related to a number of previous political economy contributions. The most related paper is Bardhan and Mookherjee (2010) who show in West Bengal that left-wing politicians who favor land reform refrain from doing it in office because they are better able commit to do it in the future. This again is a case where a politicians refrains from doing something they prefer in order to manipulate future election results.² They also provide empirical evidence supporting this hypothesis. This paper is part of a larger literature developed by Aghion and Bolton (1990), Milesi-Ferretti (1995), Besley and Coate (1998), Biais and Perotti (2002) and Robinson and Torvik (2005). These papers all developed in different contexts the idea that incumbent politicians have an incentive

¹In future work we hope to develop the model and the empirics in order to see if there is some way of distinguishing this explanation from our main one. For instance, the local extent of military rents will depend on other factors such as the incidence of spending from Plan Colombia, the US funded anti-narcotics strategy.

²An informal variant of this argument is made in the literature on the politics of Zimbabwe. The delay in agrarian reform after independence in 1980 has been explained by the fact that President Mugabe wanted to keep the issue "up his sleeve" because he needed to be able to use it when he became less popular and he could credibly commit to do so. This explains why fast track land reform was only promoted after 2000 when Mugabe faced strong political opposition (Meredith, 2007).

in setting policy inefficiently to increase the demand for their own services and inducing voters to support them. The mechanism through which this works is that current policy influences a state variable which helps to determine future voting intentions of citizens. For example, in Aghion and Bolton's paper a conservative government which dislikes taxing, borrowing and printing money, might be willing to create debt today so as to create a large stock of debt in the future. This could be advantageous electorally because the conservative government can then better commit to pay off the debt rather than inflate it away, thus encouraging voters who hold the debt to vote for it. These papers all differ in details and implications from the current analysis.

Though none of these papers discuss civil war, the case study literature on civil wars has noted phenomena akin to those we study. For example, in Nepal it is commonly argued (see International Crisis Group, 2005) that after the civil war broke out in 1996 King Dipendra, who controlled the army, refrained from committing it to the war in order to make himself more indispensable to the democratic politicians with the aim of regaining some of the constitutional powers he had previously lost.

One can also think of our model as related to the political economy literature on the difficulty of making efficiency enhancing reforms, such as Fernandez and Rodrik (1991), Alesina and Drazen (1991) and Drazen and Grilli (1993), in the sense that if the incumbent is better able to reform the economy than the challenger the incumbent has the incentive to delay reform to sustain the demand for this services. Cuckierman and Tommasi (1998) also present a model where a politician which cares most about doing something is the least likely to do it but their argument rests on asymmetric information.

Finally there is also a large literature on social psychology on the notion of the need for enemies (see for example Volkan, 1985, 1994, Barash, 1994, Murray and Meyers, 1999, and Abecassis, 2003), but we develop very different non-behavioral ideas based on rational choice.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we set up a very simple model, and in Section 3 we solve the model and yield our main theoretical results. In Section 4 we test the main predictions from the model using data from Colombia. In Section 5 we conclude.

2 Model

2.1 Private agents

The society we consider is populated by a continuum of citizens with measure normalized to unity. In addition to the citizens there are two politicians (or parties). One of the politicians, the incumbent denoted by I , holds power initially. The other politician, the opposition, is denoted by O . There are two periods, with an election occurring at the end of the first period. The politician that wins the election takes power in period 2. Private citizens derive utility from private income y in each period, and additional net

utility $P > 0$ if there is peace. There is peace if a guerilla group which is initially active is eradicated. Thus the utility of peace may alternatively be interpreted as a hate for the guerilla. Denoting the probability of peace in period t by Φ_t , the expected period t utility of income and peace for a private agent is given by $y + \Phi_t P$. Agents also have preferences over ideology and other characteristics of the politicians which we will term popularity. Each agent j has an ideological bias σ^j in favor of the incumbent politician I . We assume that σ^j is constant over time and uniformly distributed on the interval $[-\frac{1}{2s}, \frac{1}{2s}]$ with density $s > 0$. Popularity is stochastic and the popularity shock in a period, which we denote ρ , is governed by a uniform distribution with support on the interval $[-\frac{1}{2h}, \frac{1}{2h}]$ and with density $h > 0$. Thus, as in other models of probabilistic voting, h is a measure of voters' responsiveness to policy. A high h implies that policy which marginally increases the utility of voters will attract many additional votes.

2.2 Politicians

Politicians value rents and peace. A politician $i \in \{I, O\}$ in political power in period t receives rents $R_t^i = R$ per period. If not in power the politician does not receive rents. In each period $t \in \{1, 2\}$ the politician in power has to decide if to try to eradicate the guerilla or not.

The probability of success for a politician that attempts to eradicate the guerilla depends on his own ability or effort, as well as exogenous factors outside the control of the politician. Thus let the probability of success if politician i attempts to eradicate the guerilla be given by $\alpha q^i \leq 1$, so that q^i represents the ability or effort of the politician and α represent exogenous factors.

The key assumption in our model is that the two politicians may differ in their preferences or in their ability when it comes to eradication of the guerilla. To model this in the simplest possible way we can think of, let the politicians simply share the preferences of the private agents so that the per period net payoff of an eradicated guerilla is P , but in case the incumbent decides to try to eradicate the guerilla he can do that with a probability that is higher than the opposition politician, i.e. $q^I \geq q^O$. Thus the ability of eradicating the guerilla is higher for the incumbent than for the opposition politician. An alternative interpretation is that the ability of politicians are the same, but that the incumbent hates the guerilla more than the opposition politician. This more intense hate induces higher effort which, in turn, gives him a higher probability of success should he decide to try to eliminate the guerilla. A further interpretation is that the incumbent has more experience than the opposition, which in turn makes him more successful in a fight against the guerilla. The exact interpretation of the possible asymmetry between politicians is not crucial for our analysis. However, if there is no asymmetry our mechanism is not present as will be seen below. (The model can also easily be studied if it is instead politician O that is more able to eradicate the guerilla.)³

³Note furthermore that the formulation above implies that a more able politician is better able to

The payoff from peace is received if the guerilla has previously been eradicated or is eradicated in the same period. Thus if the guerilla is eradicated in period 1 it is not present in period 2. Since discounting does not matter for our mechanisms we simply discount the future at the same rate as the present. The expected net present value of utility of politician i is then given by

$$U^i = R_1^i + \Phi_1 P + E_1(R_2^i) + \Phi_2 P, \quad (1)$$

where $E_1(R_2^i)$ is the first period expectation of rents in period 2.

2.3 Timing of events and equilibrium

The timing of events in this society is as follows.

1. The incumbent politician I decides if to try to eradicate the guerilla or not. If he decides to attempt eradication of the guerilla we denote this by $\eta = 0$, while if he decides not to attempt eradication this is denoted by $\eta = 1$.
2. The guerilla is eradicated or not. If the guerilla is eradicated this is denoted by $\gamma = 0$, while $\gamma = 1$ denotes the case where the guerilla is not eradicated.
3. First period payoffs are realized.
4. The popularity shock ρ is revealed and agents vote.
5. The politician $i \in \{I, O\}$ with most votes takes office.
6. If the guerilla has not already been eradicated, $\gamma = 1$, the politician in power decides if to try to eradicate the guerilla or not.
7. Second period payoffs are realized.

As usual we look for the subgame perfect equilibrium, and thus below we solve the model by backwards induction.

3 Analysis

In this economy all politicians and private agents agree that the per period net utility gain of eradicating the guerilla is $P > 0$. Thus at first sight one may think that they will all agree that one should attempt to eradicate the guerilla as soon as possible. Still, we get the following surprising proposition:

utilize increased exogenous opportunities, in the sense that the derivative of the eradication probability of politician i with respect to α is simply given by q^i . The obvious alternative is to use an additive rather than multiplicative formulation, letting the probability of eradication be given by $q^i + \alpha \leq 1$. As we discuss below, our results are valid in both cases, and thus we simply stick to the formulation we view as the most realistic.

Proposition 1 *Assume that the opportunities to eradicate the guerilla improve, that is, α increases. Then*

(i) *There is a direct effect whereby it is less likely that the incumbent currently attempts to eradicate the guerilla.*

(ii) *There is an interaction effect whereby the incentive to eradicate the guerilla decreases more the more responsive voters are, that is, the higher is h .*

Proof. Consider first the case where the guerilla has been eradicated in period 1. Then the politician in power in period 2 has no problem to solve, and simply enjoys the rents R .

Consider next the case where the guerilla has not been eradicated in period 1. Then the politician in power in period 2 will attempt to eradicate the guerilla, as both politicians have positive net payoff of peace. Given that politician i is in power in period 2, the probability of second period peace is αq^i .

Denote the reelection probability of the incumbent if the guerilla is eradicated in the first period by $\Omega[\gamma = 1]$, and the reelection probability in the case the guerilla is not eradicated by $\Omega[\gamma = 0]$. Then in case the incumbent decides to try to eradicate the guerilla his expected first period payoff is $R + \alpha q^I P$. With probability αq^I he succeeds, in which case peace is secured in the second period and with probability $\Omega[\gamma = 0]$ he wins the election and enjoys the rents R . With probability $(1 - \alpha q^I)$ he does not succeed in eradicating the guerilla. In that case he enters the election with the probability $\Omega[\gamma = 1]$ to get the rents and with probability αq^I succeeds in creating peace. With probability $1 - \Omega[\gamma = 1]$ he loses the election, get no rents, and a probability of peace given by αq^O . Thus the expected net present value of utility in the case where the incumbent aims at eradicating the guerilla is given by

$$\begin{aligned} U^I[\eta = 0] &= R + \alpha q^I P \\ &+ \alpha q^I (\Omega[\gamma = 0]R + P) \\ &+ (1 - \alpha q^I) (\Omega[\gamma = 1](R + \alpha q^I P) + (1 - \Omega[\gamma = 1])\alpha q^O P). \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

If the incumbent decides not to try to eradicate the guerilla in period 1 his expected net present value of utility is

$$U^I[\eta = 1] = R + \Omega[\gamma = 1](R + \alpha q^I P) + (1 - \Omega[\gamma = 1])\alpha q^O P. \quad (3)$$

Defining the incentive to eradicate the guerilla as $D \equiv U^I[\eta = 0] - U^I[\eta = 1]$, the incumbent will thus eradicate the guerilla when $D > 0$. Inserting from (2) and (3) we find

$$\begin{aligned} D &= (2 - \alpha q^O - \alpha(q^I - q^O)\Omega[\gamma = 1]) \alpha q^I P \\ &- (\Omega[\gamma = 1] - \Omega[\gamma = 0])\alpha q^I R. \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

Private agents vote for the candidate which gives them the highest expected utility. Consider first the case where $\gamma = 1$, so that the guerilla has not been eradicated in period

1. Then a private agent j supports the incumbent in the election if

$$y + \alpha q^I P + \sigma^j + \rho > y + \alpha q^O P,$$

or alternatively if

$$\sigma^j > -\alpha(q^I - q^O)P - \rho.$$

The share of voters who supports the incumbent, conditional on the guerilla not having been defeated, $S_I[\gamma = 1]$, is then given by

$$S_I[\gamma = 1] = \int_{-\alpha(q^I - q^O)P - \rho}^{\frac{1}{2s}} s dj = \frac{1}{2} + \alpha(q^I - q^O)Ps + \rho s.$$

The reelection probability of the incumbent, conditional on the guerilla not having been defeated in period 1, $\Omega[\gamma = 1]$, is thus given by

$$\Omega[\gamma = 1] = \Pr \left\{ S_I[\gamma = 1] \geq \frac{1}{2} \right\},$$

which can be simplified to

$$\Omega[\gamma = 1] = \Pr \{ \rho \geq -\alpha(q^I - q^O)P \} = \frac{1}{2} + h\alpha(q^I - q^O)P. \quad (5)$$

Consider next the case where $\gamma = 0$, so that the guerilla was eradicated in period 1. Then the share of voters that supports the incumbent is given by $S_I[\gamma = 0] = \frac{1}{2} + \rho$, with the corresponding reelection probability

$$\Omega[\gamma = 0] = \frac{1}{2}. \quad (6)$$

Inserting from (5) and (6) in (4) we find

$$D = \left(2 - \alpha q^O - \alpha(q^I - q^O) \left(\frac{1}{2} + h\alpha(q^I - q^O)P \right) \right) \alpha q^I P - h\alpha^2(q^I - q^O)q^I P R. \quad (7)$$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dD}{d\alpha} &= \left(2 - \alpha q^O - \alpha(q^I - q^O) \left(\frac{1}{2} + h\alpha(q^I - q^O)P \right) \right) q^I P \\ &\quad - \alpha q^O q^I P \\ &\quad - \alpha^2 h(q^I - q^O)^2 q^I P^2 \\ &\quad - (q^I - q^O) \left(\frac{1}{2} + h\alpha(q^I - q^O)P \right) \alpha q^I P \\ &\quad - 2\alpha h(q^I - q^O)q^I P R. \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

Evaluated at $D = 0$ we get

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dD}{d\alpha} \Big|_{D=0} &= -\alpha q^O q^I P \\ &\quad - \alpha^2 h(q^I - q^O)^2 q^I P^2 \\ &\quad - (q^I - q^O) \left(\frac{1}{2} + h\alpha(q^I - q^O)P \right) \alpha q^I P \\ &\quad - \alpha h(q^I - q^O)q^I P R < 0, \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

which proves part (i) of the proposition.

To see the interaction effect in part (ii) we use (8) to find.

$$\frac{d^2D}{d\alpha dh} = -3\alpha^2 q^I (q^I - q^O)^2 P^2 - 2\alpha (q^I - q^O) q^I P R < 0,$$

which immediately implies that the interaction effect is negative so that the incentive to eradicate the guerilla decreases more the more responsive voters are. ■

Thus exogenous increased opportunities to eradicate the guerilla makes it less likely that the guerilla is currently eradicated. Note that per se there is no conflict of interest in the eradication of the guerilla - everyone agrees that the guerilla is a problem. But still the better opportunity to eradicate it makes it less likely that the incumbent attempts eradication. The reason for this is a commitment problem: voters cannot commit to vote for a politician independently of which problems remain unresolved. In turn, when the incumbent has a comparative advantage in solving the problem, this creates an incentive for him *not* to solve it. Moreover, this incentive is stronger when h is high, as then the gain in terms of a higher reelection probability by not eradicating the guerilla is larger.

The more detailed intuition for this result is the following. With increased exogenous opportunities to eradicate the guerilla the incumbent politicians' incentives to eradicate the guerilla is affected through six channels. First, as evident from the first line in (8) when it becomes more possible to eradicate the guerilla then the expected payoff of eradication is higher simply because one is more likely to create peace. This pulls in the direction of making the attempt of eradication more tempting the better are the possibilities for eradication. Second, as seen from the second line of (8), a higher α increases the probability also for the opposition to create peace tomorrow should they win. In turn, this makes it less risky for the incumbent to not try to eradicate the guerilla today, which weakens the incentive of eradication of the guerilla today. Third, as seen from the third line in (8), when the incumbent is the most able politician to eradicate the guerilla then he is better able to utilize the increased opportunities of eradication that an increased α represents. Because of this, the reelection probability should he decide *not* to try to eradicate the guerilla increases more the higher is α . In turn, this makes it less risky not to eradicate the guerilla today, since the probability that it is the most able politician that has power tomorrow, and that will try to eradicate the guerilla tomorrow, has increased. Fourth, as seen from the fourth line of (8), a higher α makes the competitive edge of the incumbent if the guerilla is not eradicated in period 1 more valuable in terms of peace tomorrow. The reason for this is that a higher α means a higher difference in terms of the probability of successful eradication tomorrow, making it less important to eradicate the guerilla today. The fifth and sixth effects are of equal size and are collected in the fifth line of (8). They show the effect on expected rents. Attempting to eradicate the guerilla lowers expected rents to two channels when α increases. First, when the probability of reelection increases with α , then it is more tempting not to have the guerilla eradicated as then the competitive edge by entering the election with the guerilla still around is higher, and thus the expected future rents

are higher. Second, for a given competitive edge, the probability of entering the election without this edge is increasing in the probability of successful eradication, in isolation lowering future expected rents. Thus we have one effect pulling in the direction of making the eradication strategy more tempting when α increases, while the other five effects pull in the other direction.

The key to note, is that when $D = 0$ the first and the sixth effect above are of exactly the same size and thus cancel out. In other words, one of the two expected rents effects of attempting eradication is sufficiently powerful to cancel out the direct effect of increased probability of peace. Thus, as shown in (9) four effects remain, all of which pull in the direction of making the attempt of eradication less tempting the higher is α .⁴

Although they are more difficult to test given our data, the model also delivers some other interesting results. First, when peace becomes more valuable, so that P increases, the incumbent is less likely to try to eradicate the guerilla in period 1, as

$$\frac{dD}{dP}|_{D=0} = -h\alpha^3(q^I - q^O)^2q^I P < 0.$$

Therefore even when all politicians and citizens agree that the value of peace is positive, and when this value increases, it is less likely that the incumbent creates peace. Thus it may be exactly when conflict is costly that it is difficult to end.

Second, note from (7) that

$$\frac{dD}{dR} = -h\alpha^2(q^I - q^O)q^I P,$$

so that the incentive to create peace in the first period is decreasing in the amount of rents which accrue to holding power. This result relates to the empirical literature on natural resources and civil war, where according to Ross (2004, p. 337) who surveys the existing empirical studies and concludes that lootable resources “do not make conflict more likely to begin, but they tend to lengthen existing conflicts.” In our model resource rents affect exactly the expected *duration* of civil conflict.⁵

It should be clear from the analysis that the advantage of a two-period model is that it greatly simplifies the analysis. Here, because there is no third period, at the election at the end of the first period the incumbent can commit to try to eradicate the guerilla in the second period because there is no future electoral incentive to keep the guerillas alive. In a multi-period or infinite horizon model we would have the issue that voters

⁴Note that rents are crucial for our results. If the rents of power R are equal to zero, then D is always positive, and the incumbent will always try to eradicate the guerilla. Also, it is straightforward to see that our result is also valid in the case where we model α as an additive rather than multiplicative constant. Then only the first, second, and sixth effect above remains. When $D = 0$ the first and the sixth effects still cancel, and only the second effects remains. Thus, Proposition 1 is valid also in this case.

⁵Finally note that Proposition 1 may also hold in an even starker version, namely that the probability the guerilla is *ever* eradicated decreases when α increases. There are two effects to consider. First, conditional on the guerilla not being eradicated in period 1, a higher α increases the probability the guerilla is eradicated in period 2. Second, however, as Proposition 1 reveals, a higher α may make the first period probability of guerilla eradication jump from αq^I to zero.

know that an incumbent with a comparative advantage in eliminating the guerilla has an incentive not to do so in order to maintain his electoral advantage. But if voters know he will not do so then this eliminates his advantage. Thus there can only be mixed strategy equilibria in such a model. Moreover, note that if such a model were extended to allow for an effort decision, an opponent who lacked comparative advantage, if in office, would have an incentive to work very hard in order to eliminate the guerilla and level the political playing field. Though the phenomenon we study would remain in such extended models, the analysis is obviously much more complex than the one we develop here.

4 Empirical Evidence

We now aim to test the predictions from Proposition 1.

4.1 Background

Colombia has a long history of rebel activity. The roots of the current internal armed conflict can be traced back to at least the period known as *La Violencia* of the 1940s. A brutal civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties, this period finally ceased in 1958 when the parties signed a peace treaty and set a system of power sharing institutions known as the National Front. The National Front ended the historical bipartisan conflict, but also excluded other political groups from power. Liberal and Communist guerillas of *La Violencia* transformed themselves into armed groups.

In particular, in 1964 the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) were formed. FARC and ELN survive to date and their armed opposition is active, especially in the case of FARC. These ‘left-wing’ guerilla groups were relatively small during the 1960s and 1970s, but began to expand rapidly in the 1980s. While they have increasingly been recognized as terrorists financed by illegal activities like drug traffic, both groups fight with the stated claim of wanting to take over political power.

In addition to the rebels and the government forces, the conflict has featured a third armed group since the late 1970s: the so called “paramilitary forces.” These right-wing militias were originally created by local elites, landowners and drug lords to counter-act guerrilla extortion and ransom in the rural areas of Colombia. The paramilitaries were effectively private armies. By the mid 1990s these groups joined forces in order to boost their counterinsurgency effort under an umbrella organization (called *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC).

A major peace negotiation process with the FARC was launched by President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002). Pastrana made contacts with the FARC in 1998 during the presidential campaign and, once in office, officially initiated the negotiation process in January of 1999. During this period, there was a growing perception that the government conceded too much without demanding anything. Among other things, the FARC enjoyed the de-

militarization of 42,000 square kilometers, known as *Zona de Distensión* (demilitarized zone) and did not agree to a cease-fire during the negotiation period. Talks were tortuous and proceeded in stop-start fashion with the FARC's leader Tirofijo even snubbing President Pastrana by not showing up for the first day's negotiations (the term *la silla vacía* - the empty chair - has now become emblematic of the dysfunctionality of Colombian politics). The government accused the FARC of using the *Zona de Distensión* to rearm, prepare attacks and conduct drug trade and even the FARC's apologists, such as Leech (2011), argue that kidnappings fell after the collapse of the *Zona de Distensión* because the FARC did not have anywhere safe to keep their prisoners! In 2001, negotiations finally broke up a few hours after a plane was hijacked by the FARC.

The conflict with the FARC dominated the 2002 presidential electoral campaign. Though early polls gave little chances to Álvaro Uribe, he won the 2002 elections. Traditionally a member of the Liberal Party, Uribe ran as an independent and his 'right-wing' speech of cracking down hard on rebel groups gained prominence as voters grew disillusioned with Pastrana's peace process. He ultimately obtained the first ever first-round presidential election victory.

There is no doubt that Uribe was seen as the candidate with the better chance of eradicating the guerrilla. Not only did he emphasize a hard-line against the rebels early on in the campaign. His personal and political record also made him stand out among other candidates. For instance, his father was killed by the FARC, and as Governor of Antioquia Uribe had been an important supporter of the CONVIVIR, a national program of neighborhood watch groups established in 1994 and believed to have facilitated the expansion of paramilitary groups.

As President, Uribe's policy of so-called "Democratic Security" included an important growth of military expenditure to fight the guerrilla. Another major program was the dismantling of the AUC between 2003 and 2007, following a peace process with the government (though splinter paramilitary groups including former AUC fronts are still active in the country). The Democratic Security policy delivered a number of positive results in the fight against the FARC. The army obtained some major blows against the FARC, guerrilla attacks and kidnappings decreased, demobilizations of guerrilla members increased, the overall homicide rate fell, and the general public perception of security increased. However, the FARC remains an active group. For instance, it continues to hold hostages and recruiting fighters.

Another key component of Uribe's presidency, allegedly an important determinant of his overwhelming popularity together with his stance against the FARC, were the weekly *Consejos Comunales* (Communitarian Councils). The councils were held each weekend on a different municipality and broadcasted live on national television. They showed Uribe exchanging directly with local authorities and cabinet members, publicly hearing and discussing various concerns.

Before 2006, the President of Colombia was elected for one four-year term with no possibility of re-election. But by the end of his first presidential period, Uribe took

advantage of his popularity to change the Constitution and remove the one-term limit. He was reelected on a landslide, and led the country for an additional term, from 2006-2010.

Despite Uribe’s popularity and achievements, his Presidency was marked by the outbreak of various scandals, many of them connected with his Democratic Security policy and stance against the illegal armed groups. These included: the “false positives” scandal we mentioned in the introduction; the “parapolitics” scandal, when Uribe’s congressional supporters were found to be linked to paramilitary groups⁶; the “chuzadas” scandal, or illegal wiretapping (by Colombia’s intelligence agency) of members of the judiciary and of the political opposition; and the “yidispolítica” scandal, or bribery of Congressmen in exchange for a vote for the project that would allow for Uribe’s attempt at reelection.

Another attempt by Uribe’s supporters to change the Constitution once again and let Uribe run for a third period failed in 2010, when the Constitutional Court ruled it unconstitutional. Nonetheless, Uribe remained very popular, and his successor and former Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos was elected largely on a platform that emphasized continuity of Uribe’s Democratic Security policy, especially the commitment to beat the rebels.

4.2 Data

We look empirically at whether the military initiative of the government responds differentially in municipalities formerly visited by president Uribe after the major setbacks suffered by the guerrilla. Our main proxy for government military activity is the sum of the number of attacks by the army and the number of combats against the guerrillas.⁷ In some of the robustness checks we also use the number of guerrilla attacks as the dependent variable. Our Colombian-conflict data is an original event-based dataset that covers the period 2002-2009. For each conflict event we recorded the date, location, type, perpetrator, and victims involved in the incident. We distinguish whether the incident was an uncontested *attack*, carried out by an identified armed group against a specific military or civilian target, or a *clash*, which involves an exchange of fire between two or more groups. We also record whether attacks were carried out by the guerilla, the paramilitary or the government, and the groups involved in a clash. Finally, we coded the number of casualties separately for combatants and civilians. [Include the original source: CINEP]

In terms of our main independent variable of interest, we downloaded from the website of the Colombian presidency information on each one of 305 *Consejos Comunales* held by president Uribe during his eight-year term. Specifically, by recording the exact date and location of each one of the visits, we were able to construct dummies pertaining

⁶See Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos (2009) and López ed. (2010).

⁷Our results are robust to using the number of combats only. The frequency of government unilateral attacks (mostly bombing of enemy camps and anti-kidnapping operations) is however extremely low and hence we cannot use the attacks variables alone.

to the municipalities visited by the president up to the moment when the events under consideration occurred.

We also have a rich set of municipal-specific controls that include: (the log of) rural population (from DANE, the National Statistics office), geographical and distance controls (from IDEAM, the National Climate office, and IGAC, the Geographic Institute), and the *unmet basic need* proxy of poverty (also from DANE).

4.3 Empirical approach

Our main empirical specification takes advantage of the most important setbacks of the guerrillas during Uribe’s presidency. These are: the death of Manuel Marulanda, a.k.a. *Tirofijo* (“Sureshot”), FARC’s founder and chief; the bomb-to-death in Ecuador of Raúl Reyes, FARC’s deputy chief during so-called “Operation Fenix”; and the rescue of Ingrid Betancourt and other political prisoners in the so-called “Operación Jaque” (Operation Check Mate). There is no doubt that the three events we selected are the most major setbacks for the FARC during Uribe’s presidency.

We study the pattern of government activity against the guerrillas around these key dates and across different types of municipalities. Indeed, our theory suggests that it is more important for the president not to eradicate the guerilla the more responsive voters are (measured by the density of the valence term in the model). The president will target his attention (and thus will most likely visit) such municipalities (as in Strömberg, 2008). Hence, we use Uribe’s Consejos Comunales to identify the municipalities where the president views voters as most responsive. Notice that in our context the data on where the president went is a more natural proxy of which municipalities (the president believes) have the most responsive voters than other measures of “swing” voters commonly used in the literature. For example, going to “swing” municipalities in the sense that they are around 50% in support for Uribe is irrelevant in national presidential elections where the only relevant thing is the national number of votes.

With this in mind, we estimate the following model specification for municipality m at time (month) t :

$$Y_{m,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CC_m + \beta_2 post.event_t + \beta_3(CC_m \times post.event_t) + \beta_4 X_{mt} + \varepsilon_{m,t} \quad (10)$$

where Y is the outcome (typically government military activity except for placebo regressions in which we use guerrilla attacks), $post.event_t$ is a dummy variable that equals 1 for each month after the main event (Sureshot’s death, Operation Fenix, and Operation Check Mate), and CC_m is a dummy variable that equals 1 if Uribe hosted a Consejo Comunal in municipality m before the event. X_{mt} is a vector of additional controls for robustness, and $\varepsilon_{m,t}$ is the error term. Our benchmark regressions have a 12-month before-after window, and we exclude the month around the event (the 15 days before and after the event). We emphasize that CC_m equals 1 only if Uribe visited the municipality in a comunitarian council before the event, as later visits could in fact be endogenous to

the event (for instance if the army offensive measures improved security allowing Uribe to visit the municipality).⁸ Also, notice that the three main blows to the FARC are relatively close to each other, occurring within a window of 5 months in 2008: Fenix (March 1), Sureshot (May 24), and Jaque (July 2). Thus, in an additional exercise we lump together the events, and let $post.event_t = 0$ for all periods prior to Fenix and $post.event_t = 1$ for all periods after Jaque, excluding the dates in between.

This specification tests the main predictions of our model. In particular, the theory suggests that government military activity decreases when there is an opportunity to eradicate the guerrilla, so one should expect a decrease in government activity after a major army hit or guerrilla setback ($\beta_2 < 0$). Of course, a limitation of this test is that there are alternative plausible explanations for a potential decrease in government military activity after a major army achievement. For example, it may take a while before a major operation can be planned and executed, or the guerrilla may seek refuge in strategic safe havens that are harder to reach for the army right after a major setback. But our model suggests an additional, more powerful prediction, which is harder to reconcile with alternative hypotheses. In particular, the decrease in government activity should be more pronounced in electorally relevant places ($\beta_3 < 0$). We next use our data to examine these predictions and explore the robustness of the results to a variety of additional checks.

4.4 Main results and robustness

We now look at the military activity of the government after each of the main guerrilla setbacks took place, comparing the areas visited by president Uribe with those he did not. Table 1 is divided in four panels. There is one panel for each one of the events considered, plus a fourth panel that lumps the three events together. In each panel we report the coefficient associated with CC_m , $post.event_t$, and the interaction term.

The first column of Table 1 reports the baseline *difference-in-differences* specification with no controls. The coefficient of interest, pertaining to the interaction between CC_m and $post.event_t$, is negative and significant and this is so across all three events as well as in Panel D where all the major guerrilla setbacks are lumped together. This implies that the government military initiative dropped in CC_m areas relative to other municipalities after each one of the events took place. In particular, the killing of Raúl Reyes was followed by a relative reduction in army involvement in offensive military operations and conflicts in areas previously visited by the president, and the same happened after the death of Sureshot and the rescue of Ingrid Betancourt.

This result is robust to controlling for a large number of observable municipality-specific characteristics. We control for these additively in columns 2 to 6 of Table 1. Column 2 adds (the log of) population as a municipality-scale control. Column 3 adds the

⁸As it turns out, results are not sensitive to coding CC_m equal to 1 without making such a distinction, yet we stick to this more reasonable coding procedure throughout.

municipality poverty rate as measured by the proportion of households with unmet basic needs. Column 4 adds various geography and ecological controls including the surface-area of the municipality, average altitude and rainfall, soil quality and erosion, and the distance to the department’s capital as well as to the closest main market. Column 5 adds department fixed effects.⁹ Column 6 controls for presence of illegal armed groups. In particular, it includes a measure of presence of guerrilla and of right-wing paramilitaries in each municipality suggested in Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos (2010).¹⁰

The interaction coefficient of interest survives the inclusion of all the control sets. Moreover the coefficient does not change in magnitude across specifications, which further points to the robustness of the finding.

An additional robustness check concerns the estimation window around the event. As noted above. Our benchmark regressions have a 12-month before-after window, and we exclude the month around the event (the 15 days before and after the event). In Figure 1, we show that we would have obtained similar results for our main interaction coefficient of interest had we considered any estimation window from 6 to 24 months. This Figure plots the interaction coefficient and confidence bands for regressions with estimation windows varying from 1 to 24 months. Given the low frequency of civil war events, it is unsurprising that when few months of activity are included (windows from 1 to 5 months) we fail to find a significant effects and there is a large uncertainty around the point estimate. But, as noted, starting with a window of about 6 months, the point estimate becomes very stable and typically significant. With this in mind, we continue to present results for a 12-month estimation window in what follows. In the next subsection we discuss further robustness checks.

4.5 Additional robustness checks

The evidence in Table 1 is very supportive of our theory. However, there are alternative hypotheses that could be consistent with these patterns. Perhaps the most obvious objection is that the patterns of government activity after a major blow are in fact not so much determined by the government’s own initiative, but by reaction to the guerrilla’s activity given the way we have measured the dependent variable. Thus, for instance, a weakened guerrilla may reduce its activity after major blows, and this would be reflected in the government’s operations and a reduced number of clashes between the army and the guerillas. This could explain $\beta_2 < 0$ in our estimations of equation (10). While it is harder to think of reasons why this would also explain why $\beta_3 < 0$, we can investigate this alternative hypothesis further by estimating (10) again with guerrilla attacks, and not government activity, as the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 2.

⁹In Colombia’s political division, the 1,100+ Colombian municipalities are equivalent to US counties and the 33 departments are equivalent to US states.

¹⁰Paramilitary presence is measured as total paramilitary attacks between 1997 and 2005 in each municipality per 1000 inhabitants, where the population measure is the average population between the 1993 and 2005 censuses. A similar measure captures guerrilla presence.

Indeed, while we find that $\beta_2 < 0$ as expected, β_3 is not significantly different from zero (and the estimated coefficient is very small).

As an additional exercise to assuage similar concerns, we can run regressions for alternative, “placebo” dates. In particular, we can choose events that represented important army operations or attempts at hits against the guerrilla, but did not turn out to be a major blow to the FARC. If the time it takes to build new operations (especially in some areas more than others) explain the patterns above, then we should see an effect in these types of regressions as well. The first two columns of Table 3 explore this. In particular, in column 1 we use the failed rescue of governor of Antioquia Guillermo Gaviria and former Defense Ministry, Gilberto Echeverri in May 5 2003 as a “placebo event.” The FARC had kidnapped Gaviria and Echeverri a year earlier during a peace march, and upon a failed rescue attempt by the government, these politicians were assassinated together with 8 soldiers. Along the same spirit, in column 2 we use the failed attempt of the army, in July of 2003, to rescue Ingrid Betancourt with support of the French government. Both columns include all our controls, and in both cases β_3 is not distinguishable from zero.

Along these lines, as additional robustness, columns 3 to 5 consider an alternative group of “placebo events.” Instead of major hits to the guerrilla, we run our main specification where the relevant $post.event_t$ is defined relative to important hits by the guerrilla. These include: the announcement by the FARC, in February of 2003, that they held hostage three Americans (who were conducting antinarcotics operations for the US when their plane went down over FARC-controlled territory); the kidnapping, in September of 2003, of eight foreign tourists in “Ciudad Perdida” (Lost City), an ancient ruin on a jungle-covered mountain; and the killing of 25 Colombian troops killed in an ambush by the FARC on June 2005, which constituted the worst death toll from a single operation since Uribe was in power. These were all important developments in the civil war, but it is hard to argue that they changed the likelihood that the guerrilla could be eliminated. Our key interaction term is not significant, which shows that it is not just important events that matter, only those that make it more likely that the guerrilla loses.

Finally, it is important to verify that our results are not driven by other characteristics of municipalities, correlated with Uribe’s Consejos Comunales, but not really related to the electoral response of these areas. To test this, we proceed in two steps. First, we run a simple OLS regression in which we seek to establish which are the major observable determinants of Consejos Comunales occurring in a given municipality. Table 4 presents the results. In column 1, we run a regression for the CC_m dummy relative to the killing of Reyes (Operation Fenix). That is, CC_m equals 1 if Uribe visited municipality m before the killing of Reyes, and zero otherwise. Columns 2 and 3, on the other hand, define the CC_m dummy relative to the death of Sureshot and Operation Jaque (Betancourt’s rescue). Finally, in column 4 the dependent variable is a dummy that equals 1 if Uribe organized a Consejo Comunal, regardless of whether it occurred before any of the major events. In all cases, we find that some observable characteristics that more strongly correlate with Uribe’s Consejos. These are: population, size (area of the municipality),

a poverty index, and distance to the department capital. That population correlates positively with Uribe’s visits is quite telling, as places with many people are places with many voters, in line with our story. Finally, the presence of illegal armed groups (guerrilla attacks with a positive coefficient and paramilitary attacks with a negative coefficient) are also important in the regressions for Consejos Comunales before the main events.

In a second step, we use this information on the most significant correlates of Consejos Comunales to verify that they are not explaining our main results. In particular, in Table 5 we estimate the following extended version of our main regression,

$$Y_{m,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CC_m + \beta_2 post.event_t + \beta_3(CC_m \times post.event_t) + \beta_5 Det_m + \beta_6(Det_m \times post.event_t) + \beta_7 X_{mt} + \varepsilon_{m,t}$$

where all variables are defined as before and Det_m is either a dummy variable that categorizes municipalities in terms of one of the four observable significant determinants of Consejos Comunales identified (Panels A to D), or the measure of guerrilla or paramilitary presence which were also found to be important (Panels E and F). Thus, in Panel A Det_m equals 1 if municipality m is above the median in terms of its population, in Panel B it equals 1 if the municipality is above the median size, in Panel C if it is above median poverty, and in Panel D if the distance to the department capital is above the median. In Panels E and F, Det_m is measured directly as attacks (of guerrilla and paramilitaries per ten thousand inhabitants, respectively).¹¹ If these correlates, and not the electoral responsiveness of the municipalities (that Uribe can measure better than us!), are driving the results, then their inclusion in the regression together with the interaction with the post-event dummy should render our main coefficients of interest (β_2 and β_3) insignificant.

In general, we find that β_2 and β_3 are still significant with the expected sign. All regressions include our full set of controls, and the results hold for each of the three key events and when we lump them together as a single major blow. Hence, these results are very reassuring of our main conclusions. An exception is in regressions where we add the categories according to population and area, where β_3 is not significant anymore for some events (the death of Sureshot and Betancourt’s rescue); for Reyes, and lumping the events together, the main prediction still holds. Moreover, it is unsurprising that these determinants which capture the scale of the municipality, and especially population, compete most with CC_m as a proxy of the responsiveness of voters. Indeed, large municipalities may in fact be responding differently precisely because of our theory regarding their greater electoral responsiveness.

¹¹Results are very similar if, instead of the continuous measure of attacks, we take categories for above or below the median, but since many places in Colombia have no guerrilla and (especially) no paramilitary attacks, we prefer the specification with the continuous variable in this case.

5 Concluding remarks

In this paper, we argue that an incumbent politician who is good at undertaking a particular task has an incentive not to complete it fully to maintain his strategic advantage when facing reelection. We examine this idea in a simple model of electoral competition in the context of civil war. In our set up the incumbent politician has a comparative advantage in fighting a rebel group while his opponent in an upcoming election does not. Our model generates two main testable implications which we take to the data. First, when opportunities to eradicate the guerilla improve it is less likely that the incumbent currently attempts to eradicate the guerilla. Second, the incentive to eradicate the guerilla decreases more in places in which voters are more responsive, as captured by the ideology density parameter of our model.

Evidence from Colombia, where President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010) was elected (and reelected) on an explicit platform to fight against the left-wing insurgent guerilla groups and was widely regarded as “the man for the job” lends strong support to both predictions. We identify events in the Colombian civil war which correspond to a high probability of defeating the guerilla, and municipalities where the president believed voters were most responsive. The patterns of government military activity reveal that such activity significantly decreases after each of the major events. Second, and more importantly, the decrease in government activity is more pronounced in electorally relevant places. This second result is harder to reconcile with alternative hypotheses, and is robust to controlling for a large number of observable municipality-specific characteristics and to the inclusion of department-level fixed effects, suggesting that it is not driven by omitted variable bias. Moreover, we offer evidence that it is not driven by a reaction to guerrilla activity, by time to build up new military operations, or by municipality traits that are correlated with the electoral relevance of different places. Overall, we believe that our results provide compelling evidence in favor of our suggested mechanism.

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Figure 1: Coefficient of CC x Post for the regression of *all events* using different before-after window lengths

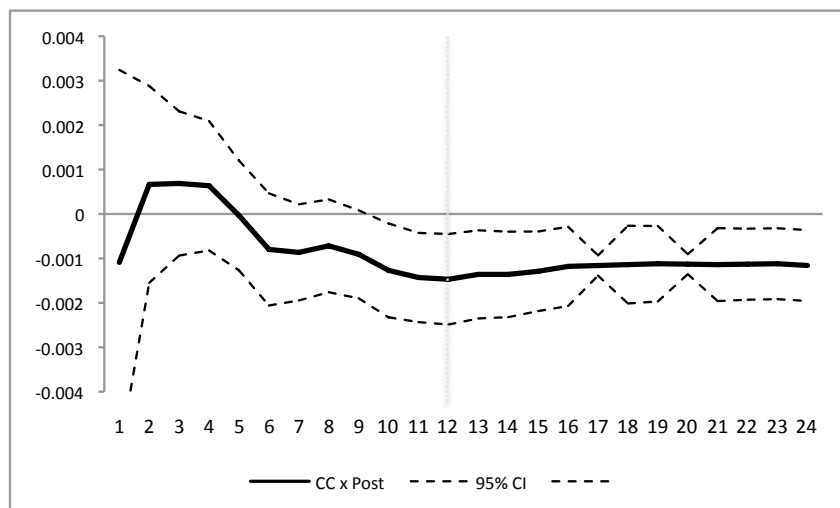


Table 1: Benchmark results: Major guerrilla setbacks and government military reaction

Dependent variable: Government military activity						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Killing of Raul reyes						
CC	0.00245*** (0.000643)	0.00144** (0.000664)	0.00170** (0.000662)	0.00167** (0.000665)	0.00186*** (0.000605)	0.00181*** (0.000597)
Post	-0.000852*** (9.64e-05)	-0.000892*** (0.000104)	-0.000898*** (0.000107)	-0.00104*** (0.000124)	-0.00104*** (0.000125)	-0.000969*** (0.000120)
CC x Post	-0.00125*** (0.000441)	-0.00123*** (0.000446)	-0.00126*** (0.000454)	-0.00121** (0.000476)	-0.00121** (0.000479)	-0.00128*** (0.000479)
R-squared	0.042	0.064	0.112	0.139	0.240	0.264
Panel B: Death of Sureshot						
CC	0.00178*** (0.000536)	0.000862 (0.000560)	0.00103* (0.000560)	0.000962* (0.000576)	0.00107** (0.000522)	0.00101* (0.000518)
Post	-0.000861*** (9.08e-05)	-0.000894*** (9.79e-05)	-0.000903*** (0.000100)	-0.00105*** (0.000117)	-0.00105*** (0.000118)	-0.00104*** (0.000120)
CC x Post	-0.000826** (0.000390)	-0.000810** (0.000395)	-0.000833** (0.000403)	-0.000756* (0.000421)	-0.000756* (0.000425)	-0.000764* (0.000426)
R-squared	0.038	0.062	0.102	0.129	0.238	0.259
Panel C: Rescue of Ingrid Betancourt						
CC	0.00174*** (0.000533)	0.000835 (0.000551)	0.000995* (0.000553)	0.000924 (0.000571)	0.00108** (0.000514)	0.00103** (0.000513)
Post	-0.000810*** (0.0000895)	-0.000846*** (0.0000965)	-0.000863*** (0.0000989)	-0.00100*** (0.000115)	-0.00100*** (0.000116)	-0.000997*** (0.000119)
CC x Post	-0.000867** (0.000407)	-0.000795* (0.00041)	-0.000809* (0.000418)	-0.000733* (0.000436)	-0.000733* (0.00044)	-0.000739* (0.000441)
R-squared	0.038	0.061	0.1	0.126	0.241	0.261
Panel D: All events						
CC	0.00245*** (0.000643)	0.00148** (0.000660)	0.00172*** (0.000658)	0.00167** (0.000660)	0.00186*** (0.000602)	0.00181*** (0.000595)
Post	-0.000991*** (0.000102)	-0.00104*** (0.000111)	-0.00105*** (0.000113)	-0.00122*** (0.000132)	-0.00122*** (0.000133)	-0.00115*** (0.000130)
CC x Post	-0.00154*** (0.000479)	-0.00149*** (0.000485)	-0.00153*** (0.000494)	-0.00147*** (0.000516)	-0.00147*** (0.000520)	-0.00154*** (0.000520)
R-squared	0.049	0.072	0.116	0.144	0.236	0.259
Controls						
Scale		x	x	x	x	x
Poverty			x	x	x	x
Geography				x	x	x
Dept. dummies					x	x
Presence of illegal armed groups						x
Observations	2356	2170	2116	1830	1830	1790

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. CC is a dummy that equals 1 for the municipalities that president Uribe visited prior to the event of each one of the panels. Post is a dummy that equals one for the months after each event took place. * is significant at the 10% level, ** is significant at the 5% level, *** is significant at the 1% level.

Table 2: Robustness check: Major guerrilla setbacks and guerrilla reaction

Dependent variable: Guerrilla attacks				
	Reyes	Sureshot	Betancourt	All
CC	0.00102*** (0.000377)	0.000639** (0.000287)	0.000648*** (0.000249)	0.000979*** (0.000367)
Post	-0.000373*** (7.44e-05)	-0.000181*** (6.41e-05)	-0.000147** (6.55e-05)	-0.000318*** (7.52e-05)
CC x Post	-0.000505 (0.000382)	-9.71e-05 (0.000287)	-0.000173 (0.000251)	-0.000442 (0.000394)
Controls				
Scale	x	x	x	x
Poverty	x	x	x	x
Geography	x	x	x	x
Dept. dummies	x	x	x	x
Observations	1830	1830	1830	1830
R-squared	0.183	0.175	0.178	0.184

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. CC is a dummy that equals 1 for the municipalities that president Uribe visited prior to the event of each one of the columns. Post is a dummy that equals one for the months after each event took place. * is significant at the 10% level, ** is significant at the 5% level, *** is significant at the 1% level.

Table 3: Robustness check: Military reaction to placebo government hits and to guerrilla hits

Dependent variable: Government military activity					
	Failed government hits		Kidnap of American citizens	Guerrilla hits	
	Failed rescue of governor and minister	Failed rescue of Betancourt		Kidnap of 8 foreign tourists	Ambush and killing of 25 army members
CC	-0.000775 (0.00163)	-0.00150 (0.00129)	0.000296 (0.00241)	-0.000744 (0.00123)	0.000882 (0.00102)
Post	-0.000182 (0.000192)	-0.000505*** (0.000182)	0.000211 (0.000235)	-0.000716*** (0.000186)	-0.000727*** (0.000152)
CC x Post	0.000367 (0.00124)	0.000769 (0.00113)	-0.00214 (0.00151)	-0.000488 (0.00107)	-0.00133 (0.000916)
Controls					
Scale	x	x	x	x	x
Poverty	x	x	x	x	x
Geography	x	x	x	x	x
Dept. dummies	x	x	x	x	x
Pres. of illg. armed grps.	x	x	x	x	x
Observations	1790	1790	1790	1790	1790
R-squared	0.337	0.337	0.286	0.327	0.228

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. CC is a dummy that equals 1 for the municipalities that president Uribe visited prior to the event of each one of the columns. Post is a dummy that equals one for the months after each event took place. * is significant at the 10% level, ** is significant at the 5% level, *** is significant at the 1% level.

Table 4: Determinants of Uribe visits to Consejos Comunales before each event

Dependent variable: Dummy for municipality visited by Uribe previous to each event				
	CC pre Reyes	CC pre Sureshot	CC pre Betancourt	All CC
Population	0.116*** (0.0117)	0.121*** (0.0117)	0.122*** (0.0116)	0.141*** (0.0115)
Surface area	2.35e-05*** (7.42e-06)	2.20e-05*** (7.36e-06)	2.19e-05*** (7.36e-06)	1.70e-05** (7.19e-06)
Poverty	-0.00208*** (0.000498)	-0.00191*** (0.000539)	-0.00194*** (0.000546)	-0.00234*** (0.000629)
Altitude	-4.29e-06 (5.97e-06)	-5.85e-06 (6.05e-06)	-6.18e-06 (6.06e-06)	-8.36e-06 (6.59e-06)
Erosion	0.00324 (0.00932)	0.00105 (0.00946)	0.000831 (0.00954)	0.00699 (0.0105)
Soil quality	-0.00260 (0.00835)	-0.00158 (0.00872)	-0.000106 (0.00886)	-0.0121 (0.00932)
Rainfall	1.32e-05 (9.29e-06)	1.23e-05 (9.66e-06)	1.12e-05 (9.66e-06)	1.73e-05 (1.11e-05)
Dist. to capital	-0.000150* (9.05e-05)	-0.000166* (9.29e-05)	-0.000170* (9.31e-05)	-0.000209** (0.000102)
Dist. to market	0.000120 (9.55e-05)	0.000120 (9.73e-05)	0.000110 (9.77e-05)	0.000224** (0.000106)
Guer. attacks 97-05	0.00543* (0.00294)	0.00573* (0.00303)	0.00557* (0.00307)	0.0102 (0.00619)
Param. attacks 97-05	-0.0381** (0.0178)	-0.0424** (0.0180)	-0.0420** (0.0186)	-0.0296 (0.0278)
Observations	895	895	895	895
R-squared	0.239	0.241	0.238	0.238

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable (in column headings) is a dummy that equals 1 for the municipalities that president Uribe visited prior to each event. * is significant at the 10% level, ** is significant at the 5% level, *** is significant at the 1% level.

Table 5: Additional robustness checks: Controlling for main correlates of Uribe visits

Dependent variable: Government military activity				
	Reyes	Sureshot	Betancourt	All
Panel A: Controlling for mun. with population above the median				
CC	0.00171*** (0.000611)	0.000882* (0.000530)	0.000887* (0.000521)	0.00164*** (0.000607)
Post	-0.000530*** (0.000145)	-0.000500*** (0.000119)	-0.000485*** (0.000119)	-0.000595*** (0.000150)
CC x Post	-0.000829* (0.000486)	-0.000333 (0.000436)	-0.000338 (0.000451)	-0.00101* (0.000527)
Population	0.000741** (0.000362)	0.000718** (0.000310)	0.000556* (0.000295)	0.000698** (0.000352)
Population x Post	-0.000986*** (0.000238)	-0.00107*** (0.000222)	-0.00101*** (0.000220)	-0.00120*** (0.000252)
R-squared	0.244	0.244	0.246	0.241
Panel B: Controlling for municipalities with surface above the median				
CC	0.00179*** (0.000592)	0.000987* (0.000515)	0.000968* (0.000508)	0.00177*** (0.000589)
Post	-0.000189** (9.07e-05)	-0.000286*** (9.20e-05)	-0.000288*** (9.10e-05)	-0.000260*** (9.95e-05)
CC x Post	-0.000951** (0.000464)	-0.000511 (0.000413)	-0.000483 (0.000433)	-0.00118** (0.000501)
Surface area	0.00185*** (0.000297)	0.00160*** (0.000269)	0.00154*** (0.000253)	0.00191*** (0.000289)
Surface x Post	-0.00160*** (0.000222)	-0.00144*** (0.000208)	-0.00136*** (0.000207)	-0.00180*** (0.000236)
R-squared	0.261	0.258	0.260	0.260
Panel C: Controlling for municipalities with poverty above the median				
CC	0.00197*** (0.000604)	0.00115** (0.000519)	0.00115** (0.000511)	0.00198*** (0.000601)
Post	-0.000520*** (0.000126)	-0.000559*** (0.000123)	-0.000547*** (0.000129)	-0.000583*** (0.000135)
CC x Post	-0.00137*** (0.000482)	-0.000886** (0.000428)	-0.000850* (0.000443)	-0.00167*** (0.000524)
Poverty	0.00107*** (0.000400)	0.00116*** (0.000367)	0.00113*** (0.000359)	0.00114*** (0.000386)
Poverty x Post	-0.000953*** (0.000237)	-0.000904*** (0.000222)	-0.000840*** (0.000222)	-0.00116*** (0.000253)
R-squared	0.245	0.246	0.248	0.243

(Table continues...)

Table 5 (continued): Additional robustness checks: Control for main correlates of Uribe visits

	Reyes	Sureshot	Betancourt	All
Panel D: Controlling for mun. with dist. to capital above the median				
CC	0.00188*** (0.000602)	0.00106** (0.000522)	0.00108** (0.000515)	0.00189*** (0.000601)
Post	-0.000754*** (0.000160)	-0.000902*** (0.000152)	-0.000845*** (0.000144)	-0.000854*** (0.000166)
CC x Post	-0.00129*** (0.000478)	-0.000798* (0.000426)	-0.000776* (0.000442)	-0.00158*** (0.000517)
Dist. To capital	0.000661* (0.000341)	0.000522* (0.000314)	0.000458 (0.000302)	0.000723** (0.000338)
Dist. x Post	-0.000539** (0.000242)	-0.000278 (0.000226)	-0.000298 (0.000226)	-0.000683*** (0.000258)
R-squared	0.242	0.240	0.242	0.239
Panel E: Controlling for guerrilla attacks				
CC	0.00182*** (0.000597)	0.00103** (0.000516)	0.00105** (0.000511)	0.00182*** (0.000594)
Post	-0.000836*** (0.000125)	-0.000850*** (0.000124)	-0.000822*** (0.000124)	-0.000991*** (0.000136)
CC x Post	-0.00133*** (0.000478)	-0.000832* (0.000424)	-0.000802* (0.000440)	-0.00159*** (0.000518)
Guer. attacks 97-05	0.000286*** (7.41e-05)	0.000311*** (7.49e-05)	0.000295*** (7.10e-05)	0.000290*** (7.60e-05)
Guer. x Post	-0.000102* (6.06e-05)	-0.000145** (6.52e-05)	-0.000133** (6.13e-05)	-0.000123* (6.70e-05)
R-squared	0.263	0.260	0.262	0.260
Panel F: Controlling for paramilitary attacks				
CC	0.00186*** (0.000605)	0.00106** (0.000525)	0.00108** (0.000518)	0.00186*** (0.000603)
Post	-0.000922*** (0.000125)	-0.00102*** (0.000125)	-0.000965*** (0.000127)	-0.00109*** (0.000138)
CC x Post	-0.00130*** (0.000478)	-0.000771* (0.000425)	-0.000749* (0.000441)	-0.00156*** (0.000519)
Param. attacks 97-05	0.000795* (0.000417)	0.000602 (0.000412)	0.000491 (0.000397)	0.000768* (0.000422)
Param. x Post	-0.000324 (0.000269)	-0.000133 (0.000283)	-0.000222 (0.000286)	-0.000453 (0.000320)
R-squared	0.251	0.243	0.245	0.246
Controls				
Scale	x	x	x	x
Poverty	x	x	x	x
Geography	x	x	x	x
Dept. dummies	x	x	x	x
Observations	1830	1830	1830	1830
(Obs. in Panels E and F)	1790	1790	1790	1790

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. CC is a dummy that equals 1 for the municipalities that president Uribe visited prior to the event of each one of the columns. Post is a dummy that equals one for the months after each event took place. * is significant at the 10% level, ** is significant at the 5% level, *** is significant at the 1% level.