

EXPLAINING THE TERRITORIAL VARIATION OF

Why is it so difficult to negotiate with the ELN?

An Organizational approach to analyze the Micro Territorial Armed Enterprises, 1964-2009



What is the ELN? How can we analyze and understand it? Is peace possible with this organization?

Interpretative Lens

The ELN is an insurgent organization that displays tremendous sub-national variation due to the heterogeneous manner in which different regional fronts embed themselves in drastically divergent territorial dynamics. As a result, this armed group has had considerable difficulties resolving collective action problems related to both war and peace, an organizational limitation that is evidenced by the different territorial logics of the spaces it attempts to govern.

In order to understand the ELN's sub-national variation, one needs to examine **two key variables**.

1 Historical Formation and Organizational Development

The growth of the ELN witnessed the creation of diverse micro-level armed enterprises, all of which encountered distinct experiences inserting themselves and consolidating their presence in different regions of Colombia. Despite the fact that the ELN has one central command structure, it has never been able to integrate all of its armed structures in a homogenous manner, a factor which explains the insurgent group's difficulty overcoming collective action problems.

2 Adaptation/Response to Military Setbacks

With the paramilitary expansion (1996-2005) and the strategic defeat of the ELN's armed project, this insurgent group retreated to its traditional areas of influence as a survival strategy.

THIS RESULTED IN:

GREATER MILITARY AND POLITICAL AUTONOMY of the Fronts

GREATER involvement of some armed structures **ILLEGAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

A RISE IN PRAGMATIC ARRANGEMENTS with **other armed actors** [GAPD, dissidences and other guerillas]

In each territory where the ELN is present, these local conditions influence how the insurgent front materializes.

In the **SOUTH OF BOLIVAR**, the ELN's operation is limited to certain fields of economic life such as mining and coca growth, but in military terms **it is irrelevant**.

In **CATATUMBO**, the ELN is a **critical actor**, but not hegemonic.

In **CHOCÓ**, the ELN is characterized by its criminal operations and by a logic of military occupation and **important human impact**.

In **ARAUCA**, the ELN is a **structural and decisive actor**, with an important disruptive capacity.

In **CAUCA and NARIÑO**, the ELN's operation has been marginal and it is of **little military significance**.

This variable helps explain the variation between **ELN structures in the following ways:**

Each Front has **possibilities and capabilities of QUESTIONING THE COMMAND** on subjects related to war, peace and distribution of resources.

The **INDIVIDUAL TERRITORIAL EXPERIENCES** of each armed structure determine the way in which ELN materializes territorially.



The **CONTRADICTIONS** between a **strong control at central level** (commanders) and a **fragile control regarding the regional and local**.



The **DIFFICULTIES OF CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS**, such as the COCE and the National Direction, **that seek to regulate and conform to the behavior of the whole organization**.

IN CONCLUSION, the ELN is an armed group that has **problems endemic to:**

1 The mobilization and control of **local units** in a collective, coherent and coordinated action.

2 Taking part in the expansive processes such as **peace negotiations**.

3 Maintaining the coherence and **discipline of combatants** in spite of the existence of clear ideologic and strategic guidelines of action.



The Historic Trajectory of ELN

Between the Revolutionary Manuals and Seeking Social Meaning

- The autocratic leadership of **Fabio Vásquez Castaño**.
- **Camilo Torres**: from the urban mobilization of the "Frente Unido" to his involvement with ELN and his death in combat.
- Pronounced military and logistic limitations.
- Tensions and internal disagreements: executions, purges, etc.
- **Devastation at Anorí**: Military disaster? Or an opportunity for restructuring?

Inability to Achieve Strategic Leap

- **Plan of "Vuelo de Águila"**.
- Mobilization of "No Demilitarized Area".
- Tensions in localities because of monopolistic and auditing arrogance.
- Paramilitary progress.
- Captures of **Francisco Galán** and **Felipe Torres**.

Towards a new ELN?

- Decline of Gabino.
- Rise of the **Frente Occidental**.
- Expansion into Venezuela (**Arco Minero**).
- Use of terrorist acts.
- New dilemmas for Peace.

1964-1973

1974-1991

1992-1998

1999-2009

2010-2019

Restructuring after Anorí through Federalization

- **Anorí**: more than a tragedy, a window of opportunity for restructuring.
- Consensual shared management to prevent autocratic military leadership.
- The oasis of Arauca.
- Ideological realignment (political-military/Marxist-Leninist/Popular Power) and military (GPP and strategic geo-economic positioning).
- Institutional and organizational transformations (COCE, DN, Fronts, etc.).
- Centralization through the addition of local armed enterprises.
- Unprecedented military growth and territorial expansion.

Military Setback and Restructuring: Towards the Idea of Armed Resistance

- Loss of territorial domains to the **AUC**: Montes de María, Bajo Cauca, South of Bolívar, Valle del Cauca, Catatumbo, Magdalena, Cesar, etc.
- Marginalization and restructuring.
- Return to the war of guerillas.
- Use of non-conventional methods (anti-personnel land mines).
- Involvement in illegal territorial economies.
- Strategic defeat.
- Incubation and development of armed resistance.

CONCLUSIONS

War



- The strategies, tactics, and plans used by the Colombian military against the FARC are counter-productive.
- Greater need to respond to the demands of the local social organizations.
- Part-time Combatants.
- Strong capacity of regional and local destabilization and victimization.

Peace



- Any serious negotiations will imply internal disagreement.
- The agenda used with the FARC is not feasible.
- Negotiate with the most political and pragmatic sectors to demobilize in exchange for political status.
- Resource distribution is key.
- Current Congressional formulas regarding territorial representation do not work.

SOUTH OF BOLÍVAR

1. Influence of the Regional Configuration on the Insertion of ELN

The regional configuration in the South of Bolívar is characterized by a **slow, disperse, and spontaneous** populating due to the **LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE**, since colonial times for the integration of such territories into the rest of Colombia.

The populations were not familiarized with regulations because of the minimal provision of and access to goods and services [Conde, 2009; Baquero, 2006; González, 1990; Posada, 1998].

The **population was Afro-Colombian and mestizo**, which intertwined with waves of colonization arriving from the Andean Zone as a result of the violence between Liberals and Conservatives.

Counter position of two ways of territorial appropriation

ANDEAN CONCEPTION

"ANFIBIA COSTEÑA"

INSTITUTIONAL PRECARIOUS

Insertion and consolidation of ELN in this area

Unfolding of its **"bienestarista"** agenda of territorial regulation

Collaborated with the peasants in their organizational and productive processes (mining)

Carried out strong political work
[Medina, 1996 and 2009 and Vargas, 1992]

The ELN's INSERTION in the **1970s** also depended on:

- 1 It is nearby area were the guerrilla has its origin.
- 2 There were remnants of the **liberal guerilla of Rafael Rangel**.
- 3 The Cuban Revolution ignited the spirits of the regional **trade unions** in hydrocarbons sector and **student movements** in the area of **Magdalena Medio**, where the ELN would establish a broad base of support.

2. Characterization of the Armed Structure



This guerrilla has been present since the **1970s** through several structures.

At the beginning it established itself with the founding of the **"Frente guerrillero" José Solano Sepúlveda in Santa Rosa del Sur (Bolívar)**.

That belonged to **FRENTE DE GUERRA DARÍO RAMÍREZ CASTRO** To which also belonged the

"Frente Guerrillero" Alfredo Gómez Quiñones Mobile Company Heroes and Martyrs of Santa Rosa

Such was its level and degree of presence that the **COCE (Central Command)** had its headquarters in that area.

It maintained a robust presence there until its **withdrawal** caused by the **PARAMILITARY INCURSION in 1997**

With the **PARAMILITARY DEMOBILIZATION in 2005**, together with that of FARC in **2017**, the ELN **returned to the territories** that it had lost against counterinsurgent forces. Since then, the structures of ELN have been characterized as **more political than military**, coupled with a certain **regulation over mining and coca crops**, particularly in the high parts of the SERRANÍA.

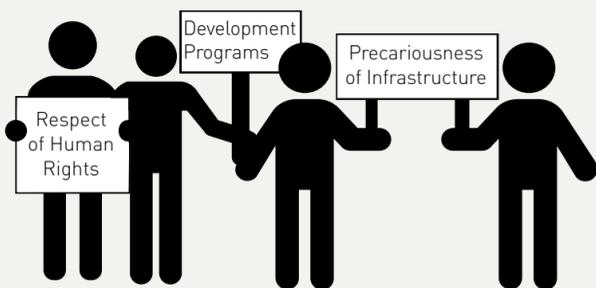
Its operations were limited at times, to **joint operations with the FARC**.

With the exit of FARC from the South of Bolívar, the ELN has tried to **occupy those areas previously controlled and regulated by the FARC**.

3. Type of Order: What it Regulates

The guerrilla was able to **establish a social control that responded to the interests of the peasants** regarding the **conservation of rural property**, some guidelines of coexistence, and assistance with community work.

Similarly, it supported several **peasant demonstrations** demanding:



Nevertheless, with the **loss of control** of the territories in the **1990s**, the ELN's influence in political and social life was almost terminated.

Currently, the ELN controls economic activities such as coca crops and illegal gold mining.

4. Involvement with Territorial Economies

From its arrival until the present, the ELN has dedicated itself to the **regulation of informal mining in the SERRANÍA DE SAN LUCAS**, taxing extractive activities and more recently, the operation of the mining backhoe loaders.

Since the arrival of **coca crops**, it has also undertaken the **regulation of this economy** in the territories as a way to generate greater revenues.

5. Influence in Social conflicts

The **regulation of MINING** is a potential source of social conflict with enormous repercussions.

The **National Government** has granted **concessions** to the **Anglo Gold Multinational Company**.

For local inhabitants, this has fuelled a grievance as it is perceived as an existential threat.

The mining organizations fought to stop the multinational's mining operations and to obtain titles for local mines.

This conflict corresponds with the ELN's nationalistic and energy driven discourse which could be very well be capitalized on by the insurgent group.

The Government's framework on what it considers to be **legal and illegal mining** plays an important role:

Mining by Multinational Companies → **LEGAL**

Informal mining by small-scale, independent miners → **ILEGAL**

Linking themselves to armed actors that go from FARC to Post-demobilization armed groups.

This has favored **stigmatization of the miners and the populations by armed forces and judicial organs**.

Multiple **judicial processes** have been opened to **leaders and social leaders in the South of Bolívar** relating these cases to the ELN; as it happened with the **social leader MILENA QUIROZ** who went through a judicial process full of irregularities.

SOUTHWEST (CAUCA AND NARIÑO)

1. Influence of the Regional Configuration on the Insertion of ELN

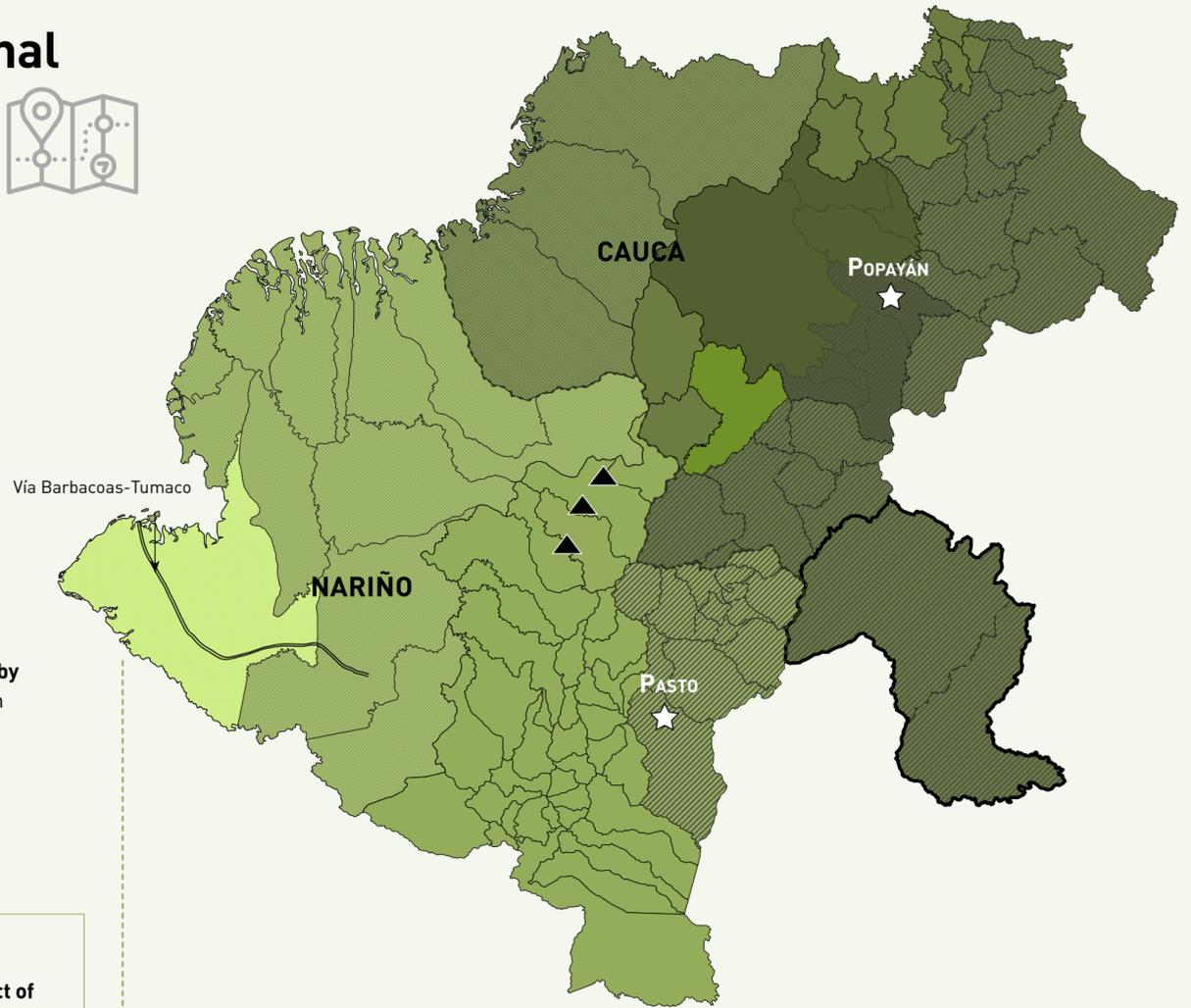


The departments of Cauca and Nariño together represent more than half of the Southwest territory. The Southwest representation of the ELN is made up of **multiple sub regions**:

- The Macizo Colombiano
- The Center of Cauca
- The Patía
- Part of the Pacific Platform
- The Boot of Cauca
- The Mountain Range of Nariño
- The South of Nariño
- The Pacific of Nariño

This explains that it is a **heterogenous area characterized by a great variety of climate zones**, that go from the mountain chains of the Central and Western mountain ranges, to the plains, the forests and mangroves of the Pacific Zone. This **diverse geography has played an important role in the development of the dynamics of the conflict and of the multiple extractive economies**, because of the tributaries and mountain ranges.

The nature of the geography, **the historic existence of smuggling routes**, its status as a border zone, **the neglect of the State of most of the municipalities towards the western areas of the Western Mountain Range**, and the development of the coca and poppy economies, are set within the high economic and strategic importance for armed groups.



2. Characterization of the Armed Structure

The ELN's presence in the area developed late in the **1980s** after the restructuring period following the military setbacks of the **1970s**.



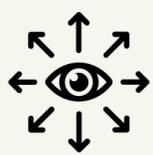
3. Type of Order: What it Regulates



The ELN has exerted control over political, social and economic aspects:

- Establishing coexistence manuals.
- Collecting of taxes.
- Distribution of resources.
- Administration of justice.
- Promotion of the organization of the communities.
- Promotion of political participation.
- Monitoring of local politics

ELN rol as a mediator in social conflicts has allowed the communities to exert as inspectors, of its operation as well as of the rules established.



The ELN has detained mayors and council members to let them know that they are watching them. It has subjected elected officials and public servants to possible penalties of retention, exile, threats, and even death.

CAUCA

In Cauca (sub region of the Macizo) the

FRENTE GUERRILLERO MANUEL VÁZQUEZ CASTAÑO

was consolidated.

From there, they spread to a wide part of the South of the Department, in the municipalities of San Sebastián, Bolívar, Almaguer, La Vega, Rosas, La Sierra and Timbío, among others, and all the way towards Popayán.

Afterward, in the Western area, after an arduous dispute with FARC, the

FRENTE GUERRILLERO JOSÉ MARÍA BECERRA

settled down in areas of the Municipality of Tambo (2007).

NARIÑO

The ELN managed to be present from the Macizo to the border with Ecuador, also positioning itself along the road that goes from Barbacoas to Tumaco. It consolidated a strong political and organizational project in villages and townships.

Its development in the sub region depended on its alliances and disputes with FARC, a much more preponderant military, economic, and territorial organization. It was also under constant military confrontation with the "Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia" (AUC), with the Bloques Calima (BC) and Farallones (BF) in Cauca, and Libertadores del Sur (BLS) in Nariño.

With the exit of the FARC, the ELN advanced into parts of Nariño and Cauca. Nevertheless, the Colombian military has forced it to retreat and adapt how it regulated these territories.

4. Involvement with Territorial Economies



The ELN has played a fundamental role in the development of **local infrastructure** by participating in the different productive activities by collecting revolutionary taxes and extortion payments. Not only it has financed its operations through these taxes, but it has also established a collective budget for the construction of bridges, roads, communal rooms, and schools.

Since its insertion, the ELN has sustained itself from mining and the collection of taxes.



With the emergence of coca crops, it established a system of tax collection related to this activity. The ELN has not gotten directly involved in every stage of the coca economy as the FARC did, but this may due more to its logistical and military limitations rather than any ideological commitment.



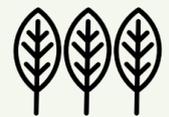
5. Influence in Social conflicts



Due to its presence in the region, the Army and the National Government have strongly stigmatized female and male social leaders. The ELN's manner of operating has generated problems for the armed forces to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. As such, counterinsurgent operations directly affect the civilian population.



The regulations regarding mining and the insertion of external actors have harmed traditional mining in the region.



Even though the ELN has not forced the inhabitants to cultivate coca or to eradicate it, it does play an important role in this activity and could potentially capitalize on peasant discontent with the breach of the FARC Agreements regarding this point.¹

1. Regarding this point, it should be understood that these communities do not have any other means of survival other than coca. Without infrastructure and the facilities for productive projects, fumigation does not help at all, and threatens the sovereignty to food access of the inhabitants.

1. Influence of the Regional Configuration on the Insertion of ELN

Since colonial times, Chocó has been characterized as a completely marginal zone with considerable mineral resources. This wealth of extractable resources influenced the zone's settlement, attracting fugitive slaves to populate the banks of **rivers San Juan, Atrato and Baudó**. By the **XIX Century**, the region's inhabitants began to exploit local forests to harvest materials such as ivory, palm, rubber, and wood.

For most of the **XX Century**, this area was a frontier zone, isolated from the Andean highlands until armed actors arrived to the region, as was the case of ELN in the **1980s**, to **establish a strategic refuge and resupply area**.

At the beginning of the new millennium, insurgent groups decisively expanded into the territory to avoid counterinsurgent operations, taking advantage of the strategic location of the department and the abundant territorial economies present (mining, timber, and coca).



The ELN prioritized the extraction of resources over communal organizing, a strategic decision which was reflected by the low level of social embeddedness in local communities. Therefore, it can be classified as an **exogenous actor to the process of regional configuration of Chocó**.

3. Type of Order: What it Regulates



In this part of the Country, the ELN:

- Establishes and imposes the coexistence manual.
- Controls displacement in some areas by imposing time tables.
- Establishes checkpoints in the fluvial basins to control the territory.
- Regulates the coca industry.
- Regulates public order.

However, the ELN's manner of operating and its deployment of violence **has generated certain collective action problems with the local population**, namely the indigenous population, that does not find any common cause with their revolutionary program.

2. Characterization of the Armed Structure



The insertion of ELN occurred in the late **1980s** as a result of the process of insurgent reconfiguration suffered after the crisis of the **1970s**.

This group arrived to the department because of its geographically proximate distance to active structures in the nearby department of Antioquia.

By then, it established the following structures:

- **Frente Guerrillero Manuel el Boche Hernández**
Urabá Antioqueña and Chococana
- **Frente Ernesto Che Guevara**
Medio and Bajo San Juan and the areas of Jurado
- **Frente Resistencia Cimarrón**,
Nuquí and Bahía Solano

The above fronts form what is now known as the

FRENTE GUERRILLERO OCCIDENTAL OMAR GÓMEZ

After the demobilization of FARC, the ELN has filled the spaces of the former insurgency, apparently through agreements reached with the FARC so as to avoid leaving the territories exposed to the neo-paramilitary bacrim AGC; That is how they have reached the Medio and Bajo Atrato, the Medio and Bajo Baudó and the Pacific Coast through Nuquí.

Currently, this is one of the War Fronts with greater military activity and more heavily armed members. Due to the territorial logics, the ELN has had an important humanitarian impact on the population as a result of the territorial dispute it is carrying out against the AGC and its monopolistic intentions with the regional coca economy.

4. Involvement with Territorial Economies



In this area, the ELN operates as a predatory rentier actor:



It extracts resources from coca, sometimes trying to interfere in all the chains of the business.



It demands tributes from some of the trading lines and river transport services.



It established a monopoly over **timber extraction**.

These material resources have allowed it to strengthen in military terms by increasing its troops.

5. The Potential for Social Conflicts



PROCESS OF VICTIMIZATION OF CIVILIANS

The armed interactions with the AGC and the ensuing territorial disputes have resulted in a substantial victimization of civilians.

The cases of confinement, displacement, and exposure of noncombatants to armed confrontations have been constant. Besides, recruitment has exploded over the past year.

An example of this is that one of the central axes of the agenda of the Humanitarian Agreement YA in Chocó was the **establishment of the bilateral ceasefire** between the ELN and the National Government to encourage the presence of the parties at the negotiation table.

ONE OF THE MAIN SOURCES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

Due to the ELN's way of operating (e.g. occupation army), the limited social anchors that the insurgency has coupled with its strategic prioritization of resource extraction, this insurgent group serves as a large potential source of social conflict in Chocó.

CATATUMBO (NORTE DE SANTANDER)

1. Influence of the Regional Configuration on the Insertion of ELN

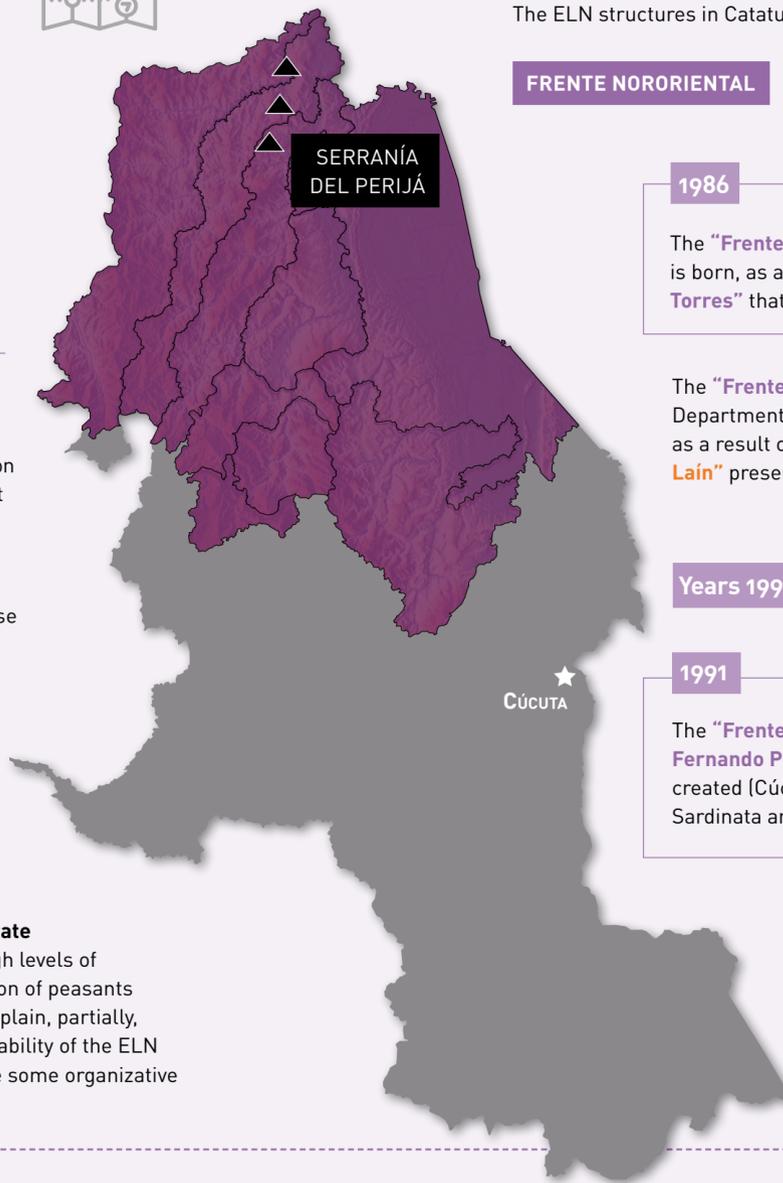


Factors that made possible the insertion of guerrillas in Catatumbo

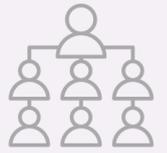
<p>Strategic geographic position (binational border)</p>	<p>Tributaries that allow some communication</p>
<p>Geography with difficult access</p>	<p>Fragmented colonization with very little support from the State</p>

In 1979 the ELN arrived was the first guerrilla organization in the area. During these years, this insurgent group arrived following its process of restructuring after **Operation Anorí (1973)** and sought refuge in the Eastern Mountain Range.

The ELN is a strong protagonist in the area. This condition is explained, among other things, by having inserted itself into a territory that saw several processes of colonization that varied in space and time. **The economic lag and weakness of the local State in the area**, extreme poverty conditions with high levels of unsatisfied basic needs, and the weak integration of peasants into the national economy, are elements that explain, partially, the strengthening of illegal economies and the ability of the ELN to insert itself into the territory and to influence some organizational processes and potential social conflicts.



2. Characterization of the Armed Structure



The ELN structures in Catatumbo belong to the

FRENTE NORORIENTAL

which historically have been formed by the following structures:

1986

The **"Frente Carlos Armando Cacia Guerrero"** (Catatumbo), is born, as a result from the evolution of the **"Frente Camilo Torres"** that was predominant in the **Serranía del Perijá**.

The **"Frente Efraín Pabón"** in the south of the Department (Pamplona and neighboring municipalities), as a result of the development of **"Frente Domingo Laín"** present in the piedmont of Arauca.

Years 1990s (Period of expansion of ELN)

1991

The **"Frente Juan Fernando Porras"** is created (Cúcuta, El Zulia, Sardinata and **Abrego**)

1995

The **"Frente Carlos Germán Velasco Villamizar"** is created exclusively for the **metropolitan area of Cúcuta**.

Currently the ELN has a greater **military capacity** and greater territorial control, particularly after successful armed confrontations with the EPL and the Rastrojos.

3. Type of Order: What it Regulates



The ELN has exerted regulation in political, social, judicial and economic affairs:

<p>Has carried out the collection of taxes from extractive companies (oil companies)</p>	<p>Imparted "Guerrilla Lectureships" to peasants, teachers and students</p>	<p>Carried out public trials to accused of crimes and public officials who did not comply with their jobs</p>	<p>Restricted the entrance to several areas</p>	<p>Promoted the organization of Community Action Boards with committees that responded to several scopes of social life</p>
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Currently, especially in the municipalities of Catatumbo, it is still considered as a requirement to have the approval of the ELN to run a political campaign.

In its areas of regulation, there is control over the displacement of people (Venezuelan immigrants, settlers, etc.), over fights, theft, rape, narcotics consumption, etc., which are penalized accordingly.

4. Involvement with Territorial Economies

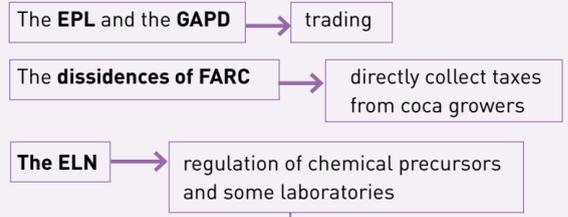


COCA ECONOMY



The late insertion of the ELN in this economy, explains why it does not rule all the links of the business and why it has difficulties operating and controlling this business. The best example is the recent armed confrontation with the EPL and the difficulties and little credibility it possesses with coca farmers from old FARC areas of influence. In these areas, it has tried unsuccessfully to replicate the strategies of the demobilized guerrillas.

As a result of these limitations, the ELN has made alliances and pragmatic agreements related to this business:



The ELN also controls the **"pategrillo" trade**, a locally produced fuel which is processed from the irregular extraction of hydrocarbons from the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline.

5. Potential for Social Conflicts



The ELN has influenced the agendas, repertoires, and proposals of Catatumbo's inhabitants because of the State's lack of response to the demands made by the region's social organizations. The ELN's influence has been evidenced in several mass mobilizations including:

- The strike of Nororiente
- The coca mobilizations
- The 2013 agricultural strike

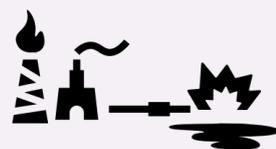
1986

mid-1990s

2013



The **expansion of palm crops**, and the conflicts this activity has generated regarding the access to water, are one of the current concerns of the inhabitants of Catatumbo, a social rupture which may allow the ELN to appropriate this potential social conflict.



The ELN's **proclamation of energy sovereignty** in defense of the environment contrast with its armed actions to oil pipelines which cause enormous environmental damage.



As a result of the diverse processes of colonization, there are several conflicts regarding land ownership.

One of the most relevant are the **tensions between indigenous people (Motilón Barí) and peasant settlers**. The native inhabitants associate the presence of peasant settlers with the guerrillas and illegal crops, and they feel more and more confined. Also, there have been tensions that have resulted in the expulsion of peasant settlers from their reservations.

1. Influence of the Regional Configuration on the Insertion of ELN



At least **two processes of regional configuration** are related with the emergence and consolidation of the ELN in Arauca:

The colonization of el Sarare/Piedmont

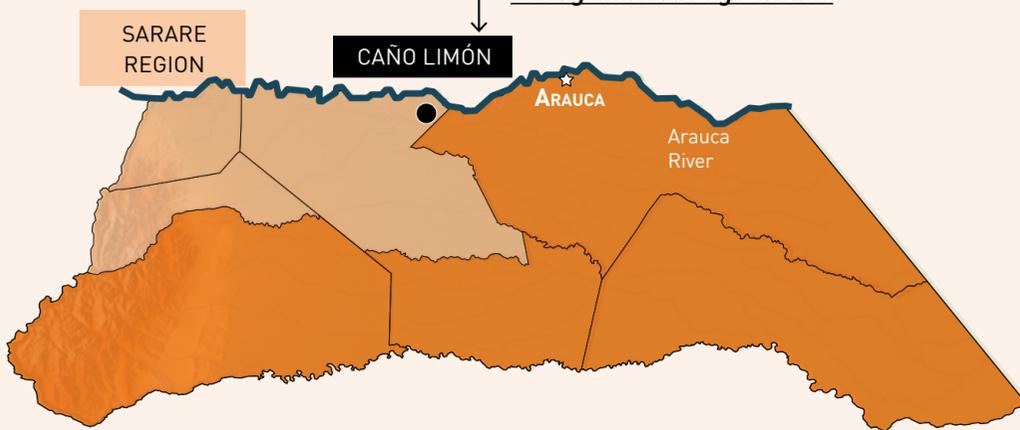
Previously inhabited by **indigenous U'wa**, peasant families arrived from Santander, Boyacá and Norte de Santander beginning in the **1950s**. They managed to settle the inhospitable zone due to the collective action, solidarity, and community organization. However, **they were forced to mobilize to make basic demands from the State related to public goods and services (roads, schools, electricity, etc.)**. Various peasant organizations lead the mobilizations in the piedmont, and these became further radicalized due to the State's failure to fulfill their demands and the increased repression of the peasant leaders by the military. These peasant leader in turn armed themselves and formed an ELN unit which formally became the **Domingo Laín** front in **1980**.

Oil exploitation in Caño Limón

The political and organizational work of the ELN in the piedmont was supported by the civilian inhabitants in their areas of influence, with resources derived from the kidnapping and extortion of large cattle ranchers and contractors employed by the oil multinationals in Arauca.

After the discovery of the oil fields of Caño Limón and the political decentralization between **1986** and **1991**, the ELN financed its military growth with oil rents, while also capturing power in municipal and departmental political institutions by mobilizing peasant communities to support their electoral candidates.

This explains how the ELN became a structural agent throughout the territory and a key actor in the process of regional configuration.



3. Type of Order: What it Regulates

The **"Frente DOMINGO LAÍN"** of the ELN emerged and consolidated in Arauca due to its ability to appropriate local cleavages and to assume control of territory, civic organizations, political institutions, and regional economies. Due to this formidable capacity, the ELN has performed a relevant role in the governance of the region, historically and presently.



This armed group regulates:



Conflicts between inhabitants, mainly in rural areas.



An **intermediary** between the **State and the communities**.



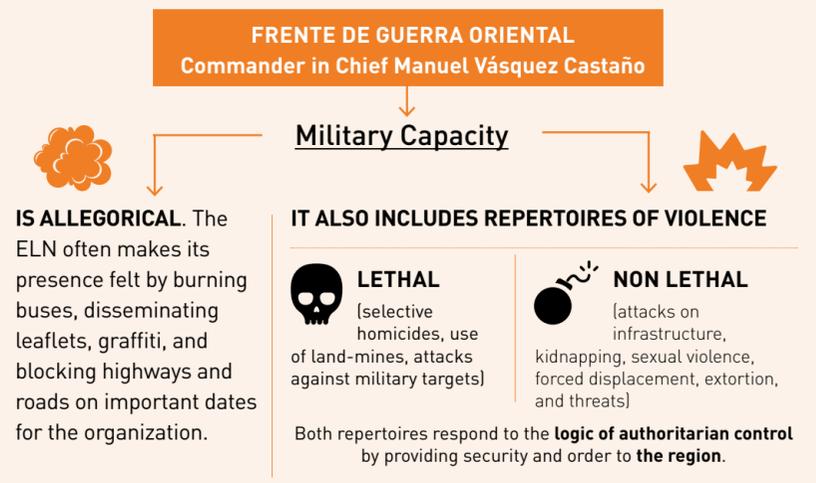
A structure that offers **security services** to communities and to legal and illegal businesses.

SOME SCOPES OF REGULATION	
	Carrying and use of weapons
	Selling and consumption of alcoholic beverages and hallucinogenic drugs
	Entrance of unknown persons to the region
	Interpersonal conflicts
	Sexual violence
	Theft
	Management of public resources
	Land distribution
	Environmental regulation

2. Characterization of the Armed Structure



The armed structures that operate in Arauca, as well as in parts of Boyacá, Casanare, Vichada, Norte de Santander and the State of Apure in Venezuela, are part of the



The ELN structures are composed of militants



recruited from the communities where they operate. These supply intelligence and serve as a channel of communication between civilians and commanders (many of whom live in Venezuela).

The ELN also maintains a network of highly trained militia members, local youth and adults with experience in the tactics of war, which operate clandestinely in **urban centers**, carrying out actions of social control such as selective homicides or the delivery of vikingos*. Many of these are young people (the **fourth generation of the "Frente Domingo Laín"**). Many believe that their interest is to control the economies from which their power depends, prioritizing resource extraction over social development, demonstrating a notable shift in their relationships with the civilians.



*Messages sent by ELN commanders giving orders and demanding meetings.

THE "FRENTE"	DOMINGO LAÍN SÁENZ
THE "COMISIONES"	Martha Elena Barón (Tame, Puerto Rondón)
	Omaira Montoya (Fortul, Arauquita)
	Rafael Darío Villamizar (or Border Commission) (Arauca municipality)
	Camilo Cien Fuegos (Arauquita)
	Ernesto Che Guevara (Saravena)
	Compañero Tomás (Fortul, Tame)
THE "BATALLÓN"	Heroes and Martyrs of the ABC
THE "COMPAÑÍAS"	Simacota
	Capitán Pomares

4. Involvement with Territorial Economies

The financing sources of the ELN have diversified over time:

	CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVILIANS AND ASSAULTS	In the beginning, the main financial support of the ELN came from peasant support . Also, it participated in armed robberies of public entities.
	EXTORTION AND TAX COLLECTION	From the beginning, the ELN kidnapped Colombian and Venezuelan cattle ranchers and their livestock, workers from the oil sector, public employees and foreign contractors, all for extortive purposes. Each year each year, it collects taxes from every economic activity in its areas of influence.
	PUBLIC MONEY	The ELN adopted a strategy of taxing public contracts , charging between 5% and 10% of contract signed and implemented in the department. Likewise, it has been able to establish alliances with contractors (especially from the health and infrastructure sectors), which allows it to participate in the distribution of public budgets.
	LEGAL BUSINESSES	The ELN of Arauca fostered the organization of the agrarian economy using cooperatives and trade guilds , many of which its owns. It also participates in other productive chains (dairy production, hotels, transport services, among other things) and owns property (farms, businesses, transport vehicles).
	BORDER CONTROL	Since the end of the ELN-FARC war, the ELN has controlled the Arauca river, and by extension, control of contraband (of gasoline and other goods), as well as the transit of civilians across the border.