

THE VALUE OF A HUMAN BEING:  
A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF KIDNAPPING  
NEGOTIATION WITH GUERRILLA GROUPS IN  
COLOMBIA

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**Abstract**

This article analyzes the bargaining process that occurs when guerrillas kidnap individuals in a developing country. Anecdotal evidence is used to illustrate the different strategies used by kidnapers to abduct, gather information and collect ransoms, as well as the organization required by the victim's family, and the potential strategies they can use. Importantly, I expose the rationale underlying the guerrilla's actions and responses of the victim's family that may determine the success or failure of the negotiation. For this purpose, I use a sequential bargaining game structure that takes into account not only monetary factors determining the path of the negotiation, but also multiple dimensions embedded in such a bargaining process. The main conclusion of the article is that negotiations about monetary ransoms in developing countries need to be based, not only on economic considerations, but also on a deep analysis of the political and socio-cultural condition of both kidnaper and the victim.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Colombia is a deeply troubled and violent country, perhaps even one of the most violent countries in the hemisphere a decade ago. An extended civil conflict prevailed in the country due to historical income inequality and competition for natural and economic resources in strategic rural areas. Such conflicts are attracting increasing international interest and concern, especially the complex relationships between drug trafficking, political violence, and the victims. The major parties in today's violence are the insurgents, the paramilitaries, organized crime, and the Colombian Armed Forces; with abuses and violations of human rights being committed on all sides. The largest guerilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) evolved into a major political and economic actor over a period of many decades, growing from a small peasant organization to unprecedented military strength. This growth was facilitated by the lack of government response to the severe hardships faced by peasant farmers in the regions, by profit from extortion, kidnaping, and taxation of illicit drug production.

While the FARC size and strength has decreased after strong military efforts by the government of Alvaro Uribe Velez, there are many lessons that can be learnt about the costs from such long standing violence and the ways in which people behave under war circumstances. In particular, it is interesting to examine the rationality of seemingly irrational behaviors, such as kidnaping and ransom payment. Kidnaping and extortion in Colombia became, in the decade of 1990s, more than a major source of resources for guerrillas. In fact it was a political strategy which pushed the insurgents to be active in gathering intelligence on resource administration at the local and regional levels, and let them reach principal objectives such as: become involved in the armed oversight of municipal budget administration by kidnaping and threatening mayors, and targeting individuals such as executives from the petroleum, banana, commercial agriculture, and cattle industries, in order to get them involved in the political conflict.

In the political arena the FARC guerrilla leaders argued in response to critics against the kidnaping "procedure" that this was not actually a kidnaping procedure, rather it was an act of retention to enforce the payment of a tax with social and political goals. This "tax" was indirectly used for income redistribution and equality promotion by helping to maintain guerrilla troops and revolution against the oligarchy. On a more micro level, the members of the group who were carrying out the kidnappings directly argued that they were suffering the same kind of human right violations and were under worst living conditions, longer time ago.

In light of these observations of the “institution” of kidnapping in Colombia the object of this paper is to analyze the basic aspects of sequestered negotiations viewed as a bargaining game between the kidnaper and the family of the kidnapped person. Based on anecdotal evidence, I illustrate the special case where the kidnapper is the guerrilla group and the victim is a common citizen. I analyze the different dimensions of such a negotiation and draw lessons from it. In the second part of the document the structure of the ‘game’ is explained; in the third, the participants and their first move effective strategies are exposed; in the fourth section, the second part of the game, consisting of the calling process is presented. Fifth, the resolution possibilities are explained. Sixth and final, I show why some participants fail to recognize or respond to the strategies of the opponent.

## II. GAME STRUCTURE

Since the profitability of kidnaping proved to be extremely high, the kidnap-strategy was generalized up to the point, that anybody in the country could be snatched (not only rich or powerful people) and had to pay an amount according to their income level or social class position. The snatching activity in the country increased exponentially towards the end of the 1990s<sup>2</sup>, becoming a common matter in the daily life of the citizens. The fact that anti-snatch organizations that advice families of the victims and radio programs that send messages to the hostages were created is a testament to how kidnapping in Columbia has become an institution.<sup>3</sup>

### The “Game” and its Rules

Kidnapping bargaining can be viewed as a sequential game consisting of several moves, where the kidnapper is generally leading the actions. The kidnapper makes the first move by carrying off

<sup>2</sup> A CNN report states: “Every three hours someone is kidnapped somewhere in Colombia...More than half the world's kidnappings take place in Colombia, according to the British Medical Journal, and the country is on pace to set a new record this year”. In: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2000/colombia>.

<sup>3</sup> The radio program “The Voices of Kidnapping” (Las Voces del Secuestro) from the major national radio consortium Caracol, specializes in letting the relatives and friends of kidnapping victims talk about their loved ones and plea for their freedom. This program has obtained national recognition and support from CNN, BBC and others. This initiative brought its founder the Simón Bolívar National Journalism Award twice, the National Peace Prize in 2008 and other international awards.

the person, thereby revealing important information for the family to plan a strategy while anticipating the first call of the kidnappers.

In general, telephone communications initiated by the kidnaper to the family of the kidnapped follow this pattern; the kidnapper asks for a certain amount of money with the goal of maximizing the value he will finally obtain then the family offers a different quantity, using different strategies to lower the price requested, thus attempting to minimize the final payment, until a final price is agreed. These communications can take several weeks to several years. After the 'price' agreement, which involves non monetary payoffs on several occasions, another strategy must be jointly planned: how to transport a big amount of cash money (or worst when non monetary payoffs are to be done i.e. two thousand pairs of boots, military uniforms, cement sacks or other construction materials, etc.) from one city to a remote place in the country that cannot be reached by plane, taking into account that several military and paramilitary inspections of the cars will be done and that taking anything to the guerrilla means you are cooperating with them and can, in the best case, be sent to jail.

After the complicated negotiations of how to transport the payoff is overcome, four things can happen:

- i. The family cooperates (goes with the money as planned) but the guerrilla defects by taking the money and keeping the victim.
- ii. Both parties cooperate, the family takes the money and the guerrilla releases the prisoner.
- iii. The guerrilla cooperates, but the family defects, calling official military forces to attend the appointment, or sending some paramilitary group to rescue the victim (the latter is only possible if the family is very powerful and is involved with this right winged party).
- iv. Both defect.

The game development is primarily determined by the information revealed to the participants during the process, which allows them to focus on specific strategies and expected payoffs. To interpret the different strategies used, it is important to understand the multiple intertwined dimensions that the game consists of.

### Monetary Aspect

Regarding only monetary payoffs, this is a zero sum game, where the maximum monetary payoff for the kidnaper is the same negative payoff for the family of a kidnapped person. In terms of negotiation it pretends to be an exchange of a “merchandise” of a high level of value. The “value of one person” depends on her socio-economical position in the society, as a proxy of her income level (the social class is estimated by observable characteristics such as place of living, car(s) used, and known properties). Four main classifications of socioeconomic level exist:

- i. upper class
- ii. middle-upper class
- iii. middle-lower class
- iv. lower class

Depending on this characterization of the “good” of exchange, there are three different value variables to consider:

- i. the value demanded by kidnapers (as the strategic variable chosen by the kidnapper)
- ii. the values offered by families (as one strategic variable chosen by the family)
- iii. the transacted value (as one result of the bargaining process)

### Political Aspects

The fact that the kidnapper is a group of people, who are looking for acknowledgement as political actors, means that they have to follow some self-established rules put forth by its political leaders. These rules include:

1. This is not a kidnapping this is a involuntary retention to enforce the payment of a tax.
2. The tax has to be proportional to the victim’s family estimated capacity of payment, otherwise the business is not sustainable and the guerrilla loses credibility.
3. If the victim’s family does not want to pay, the guerrilla will not release the relative/friend.

4. The counterpart of the payment has to be setting the person free and alive (“political actors cannot violate human rights”).
5. BUT, in a war, victims working for guerilla enemies should be killed. So if the victim or its family cooperate with the official military forces or paramilitary forces the victim deserves to die.
6. As the guerrillas establish “their law” with words, their word has to be reliable.

The punishment for breaking “the Word,” is the weakening of their political image and of their status of not being common criminals with a wide range of the civil population. The punishment for the family of a kidnapped person for breaking its word depends on the magnitude of the contract it is breaking, and goes from having to wait months for the next communication and information about their relative to putting his/her life in danger.

#### Words and Human Sense

The bargaining in the kidnap-release process depends highly on the kind of human contact established between the two parties, mainly by phone, and from the image that the kidnaper has of the family. This is a point many people involved in a kidnaping process do not realize. Through the words they use the kidnaper draws a picture of them, which produces an effect on the treatment he gives them and on the strategy he uses.

The whole “contract” is spoken, ‘the word’ of each part specifies his intentions, and its credibility is enforced (or defection punished) by threats and promises. So words are a tool, whose importance relies not only in their logical meaning, but also in the social class differences that they reflect. People of lower and higher classes call objects in different ways, use different expressions to transmit thoughts and sometimes have different meanings for the same words or expressions. Both are able to understand the logical meaning of what the other is saying, but often they can not discern the different way of thinking (political, economical...) and living that it implies. Specially, the guerrilla troops, are mainly young men, women and children born in the rural areas of the country, sometimes born in a family where their parents were “guerrilleros” and the laws they know in their region are the ones established by the guerrilla leaders while those they kidnap are people from middle, middle upper and higher classes living in urban



concentrations under official laws.. For the most part these guerilla troops cannot imagine better educational or job opportunities as many of them can hardly read and write correctly.

### The Value of Information

In the bargaining process, the value of the kidnaped person increases as the kidnapers have more “truthful” information about the family properties, income and about the victim’s closest relatives. Therefore, they can put more pressure on the family and on the hostage. On the other hand, the bargaining position for the family also improves as they learn more about the characteristics of the guerrilla troop, which is retaining the hostage. For example, they may be able to use different strategies if they know that the commandant of the troop has a record of killing hostages, than if they know that he orders his secondaries to keep the kidnaped person alive ‘until the last moment’, or if they know he has forgiven somebody’s life when trying to escape.

Generally, the kidnaper does not have all the information about the kidnaped, so, he first mover tries to get more information, while stating that he knows more information than that what he really knows, and hiding details about himself and his location; the second mover intends to do something similar, looking for all possible information about the kidnapers and what they know about the family in order to plan a more effective strategy.

## III. THE PLAYERS AND THEIR FIRST MOVE STRATEGIES

### 1. The Kidnaper

The FARC guerrillas have a vertical structure, with a leading organ comprised of the political, financial and military chiefs of the organization. The military wing carries out the kidnappings and has several subdivisions; eight or nine regional subdivision (northern-, southern-, eastern-, western-, southeastern-etc. blocks), which are further divided into more than fifty “fronts” or troops. Each block has a boss and under his command are the commandants, which are the heads of the fronts.

One front or some of its members generally does a kidnaping operation. Depending on the quantity of hostages the troop retains, there is a lower bound to the total amount of money the superior bosses expect to receive from that front. But each front has a high level of autonomy in the treatment of the hostages, once the basic rules are fulfilled. In this case the kidnaper can be conceived as a composed agent, where the main decision taker about one specific hostage is the commandant of the front, which holds him. Usually he himself is not the one establishing the telephone communications; he assigns this task to a secondary person, and this person transmits the information received to him.

### 1.1 The Aims of the Kidnaper

- a. Maximize the money received, while minimizing the monetary costs of the abduction operation
- b. Political acknowledgement

#### 1.2.1. Common Abduction Strategies of Criminals in Colombia:

When kidnaping has a pure economic objective, common criminals follow the inhabitants of luxury residences or the drivers of valuable cars, until they establish their daily routine and plan the place to take him away by force, without anybody or few people noticing it. Another way is to enter the residence or the work place of the 'objective' person/s with guns and masks, threatening those present with shooting if they intend to avoid being kidnapped as well.

When kidnaping is aimed at political issues, the procedure used is more spectacular in order, to attract the attention of public opinion and to show either their military or strategic capacity. This involves hijacking an aircraft, especially if political actors are among the passengers, or taking hostages in an embassy or other international or governmental institution. Finally, it can be just taking one person who has political influence.

#### 1.2.2. Obtaining relevant information about the persons to be kidnaped:

Some criminals succeed in buying information such as income, properties, closest relatives, and other 'sensitive' points about one person or family -- from someone who is related to him.

Sending someone to ask about the person in the neighborhood of his residence, in the stores he visits and other places,, is another common strategy As is finding access to official information about the income tax returns of citizens, enterprises accounting balances, and lists of



landowners. Another used strategy is to put someone to work in a supermarket, a bank, or other places where credit cards are used and some financial and private information is given, so she/he can take the data of the persons who buy more than average, or have high bank balances. Finally, when the person is taken away, the kidnappers try to force him/her to give more information about himself and/or other persons.

### 1.3. Strategies Used by the Kidnaper

#### 1.3.1 To carry away people

In this case the guerrilla uses a strategy consisting of sending twenty or thirty armed men and women in military attire to stop cars on a highway or main road. Today this is the main strategy the guerrilla and paramilitary groups use to sequester people. Since the official military often stops cars on highways to inspect them, people think they are experiencing a routine official documents and inspections stop. Thus, the guerrilla troops are able to stand in the same place for about an hour, without anybody noticing what is happening.

This strategy is used because of its efficiency in achieving the aims in many ways:

Showing power and “domain” in the region, taking not only one hostage but between twenty and fifty in the same operation, thereby saving fixed costs and increasing the total expected payoff. Also, increasing the likelihood that the people in the group know each other, so the kidnaper can threaten one to obtain specific information about the other. The information about family and properties is compared: what hostage claims to have, and what people who know him say about him, what is reported by informants, and later on, what the family of the hostage states. When something doesn't match it has to be cleared, or the hostage and its family punished through higher payment, through time imprisoned, or through psychological pressure and manipulation. Another strategy aimed at kidnapping enemies, consists of obtaining information about politics in the region, especially about people cooperating with paramilitary groups (the guerrilla's enemies), and about other people of the region to be kidnaped at another time.

#### 1.3.2. Acquiring information

In the game portrayed in this paper the guerrilla pays money to the people of the region to get information about neighborhoods, shops, traders, building owners, landowners, both before and after the kidnapping occurs. A common characteristic of this group is that they hire many children, who have plenty of time, demand lower payments than an adult, and whom nobody

suspects. After the kidnapping, every kidnapped family sends someone to the place of the event to find the car, where they find the police asking for the names of the kidnapped and other information. It is common to see children just looking around.

As stated before, the hostages are forced to reveal information about their properties, their families, and others' families. Given that the guerrilla already knows some facts it cheats the hostage by making him believe that they already know almost everything about him, and that he is only being tested to see if he tells the truth and is going to be punished if he doesn't tell everything he knows.

### 1.3.3. Take care of the merchandise

The conditions under the hostages are being hold are very unusual to them. They have to sleep in the forest, under a plastic shelter, which doesn't reach the floor, so they are exposed to below freezing at night. They have to walk several hours a day, through the mountains and forest, which is very humid. In this situation the older ones tend to get sick. Usually the guerrillas give each hostage a pair of plastic boots and a blanket to the older ones. However, this is not always possible because of the lack of resources. They provide the hostages with abundant food; the same that they eat themselves. If the person needs some special medicine, they try to find it for him, but only when they see that the person is truly sick. For this reason many errors occur. Often hostages die because of the climatic and other difficult conditions.

## 2. The Family

Since the "family" is a broad concept of a compound of persons (in the broad sense it also includes close friends), here "family" is considered as the persons emotionally involved with the kidnapping victim and willing to participate in the bargaining process.

### 2.1 The Aims of the Family

- a. Minimize the money paid
- b. Have the relative back in the best possible health situation
- c. Minimize the time the hostage is held

### 2.2 The strategy of the family

Some families decide not to pay the rescue money due to ethical arguments. Thus they cooperate with the official military forces to try to get the victim rescued.

Others decide to do both. On the one side, they bargain with the kidnaper, on the other, they try to get help from the military until they decide whether to pay or not to pay. Others prefer to manage everything only with family members and close friends, assuming from the beginning that they will have to pay. Some, also decide to pay but minimize the payment by limiting every bargaining decision to just a small group of family members.

In cases of escalating conflict it is common that the military does not have the capacity to attack a faction of the guerrilla holding kidnappers, without the avoiding heavy casualties. Most hostages are hidden in groups in the forest and are often moved. In one mountain chain there are around 500 kidnapped people being rotated in a month. This leads most families to the decision to pay for a rescue.

#### 2.2.1. Family Organization

Even though a hierarchy is automatically established after the kidnaping of a person, where the greater right to make decisions is given to: a) The closest relative(s) of the person (children, parents, siblings), b) The person(s) in the family with the greatest economic capacity, this should be restructured for the wealth of the bargaining process.

For example, the decisions taken about the negotiation should not be affected by emotional thinking. Therefore, the people negotiating should be different than the direct relatives of the sequestered person. The negotiator(s) should be very rational persons able to react quickly with words and take advantage of situations by anticipating, acting, improvising, forgetting about political affinity or disagreement, using different communication styles, mixing submission with aggression, and sympathy with coldness. For these they have to be very perceptive persons. The person(s) should have enough time and nerve to meet daily and discuss the progress and anticipate the next calls. They have to be able to gather, concentrate and classify the information and decide what the family should know. They have to give tasks to the other family members to help them with their strategy. Another important aspect is that in several occasions, the kidnaper asks the negotiator to go himself to make the payment for more security. Sometimes the negotiator is kidnapped, too. So the person has to be ready to this and many other 'oddyseys' which involve high physical and mental burden, thus the person should be in excellent physical

condition, and in the best case, should not have dependents such as children or a wife.. The burden of this responsibility implies that the negotiator should not be one person alone, since the decisions have to be discussed and analyzed again and again.

The decisions taken about economic aspects are better determined by members of the family who have the best access to economic resources and economic information of the kidnapped person. Finally, somebody should be in charge of the psychological dimension of the process. Not only anticipating that the victim will have several traumatic experiences upon return, but that because of the daily burden of the process the family may end up having emotional explosions, mental distress, and fights. The negotiation can be badly affected by family disagreement and even the kidnapped can suffer the consequences of everybody trying to do something, by different means, without any type of coordination. Once the family is aware of these aspects, a “Brainstorming” activity takes place between all members of the family, where family members are appointed to a committee, conformed by around three members. It is vital that this remain a democratic procedure in order to maintain a coherent strategy during the whole process.

#### IV. THE CALLING PROCESS

Since limited information about the strategy of the kidnaper exists, this section places more emphasis on the family calling strategies.

With the first call, the kidnaper is revealing part of the information the victim has given to him: The person chosen as a contact between the kidnapers and the victim. It suggests which persons of the family the victim thinks are not too vulnerable (in the whole dimension of the word: economically, politically, emotionally) to deal with the holders, given the information he knows that they have. So, if the call is done to one of the economic heads of the family, it is very plausible that the holders have more information about him beforehand, because the victim would not have directed the attention of the holders to that part of the family. Every victim tries to show the lowest economic-level profile he can; obviously, a person traveling in a Mercedes-Benz Model 2000 will not be able to give arguments enough to convince the holders that he has less money than the driver of a Renault 4 model 69.

In the first call the kidnaper confirms that he has the person and sets his first price. This price is always an extraordinary amount of money, in order to get the highest possible payment

from the family. For the same reason, during the first contact the kidnaper is very aggressive and intimidating, often threatening to take the life of the victim. If they don't have enough information they will try to ask for other telephone numbers, arguing that they cannot call to this number anymore, for some reason.

In the present context the threat of the kidnaper of killing the hostage is not very credible, at least without the victim trying to escape or being considered a political enemy. In the scenario of this simulated game the victim is assumed to not be politically involved with paramilitary groups, therefore allowing the family to be more lax with the money and the time, than it would be if the percentage of kidnapped killed people by the guerrillas were higher.

The biggest time pressure for the family is that even if the person is in good health, the kidnaper tries to make them believe that the person is sick, so that the family feels more pressured. Here it is important to note that as the game is repeated so many times in the country, the family has external information from different sources, especially from people who have already been kidnapped and released by the same guerrilla group, and possibly even by the same front. Thus, some of the approximated prices requested by the guerrillas have been established by these families, depending on the socio-economic level:

Upper Class: between 400,000 and 2,500,000 US\$<sup>4</sup>

Middle Upper: between 80,000 and 400,000 US\$

Middle Lower: around 10,000 and 100,000 US\$

Lower: around 1,000 and 10,000 US\$

With the first price is set the family can deduce approximately if the profile the guerrilla has corresponds to reality. In this kind of kidnapping (multiple), the guerrilla might have significant information or not from the snatched person. It uses lists of people expected to be in the stopped cars, from the persons which are not in the list some are snatched (the ones with the most expensive cars) and some are immediately released (mainly women and old or sick persons). If the family can find one of these released persons, they would be able to know another very important fact: if the person was on the list or not. If it is so, the guerrilla has, for sure, economic information of the person.

<sup>4</sup> Calculating \$ 1US= \$ 2100 Pesos Colombianos.



Regarding what the family thinks the guerrilla believes that their properties are, they can use arguments to undermine those beliefs in the following communications, or even try to prove it by sending them truthful or false documents of mortgages, credits, or debts of the victim. Some people even print out lottery tickets and tell them that they had to organize such an event to be able to gather the money for the rescue. These strategies allow the family to possibly create a lower economic profile.

The image the negotiator of the family gives to the guerrilla negotiator influences the way he is going to tell the facts to his superior. Thus an effective approach that the family negotiator can use is to use expressions similar to the ones used by the kidnaper, and if he has information about the region the kidnapers come from, the family negotiator can make comments about being familiar with that region thereby inducing a “friendlier” type of communication.

After analyzing the troop, the family offers five to ten percent of the value the kidnaper has set and then observes the reaction of the kidnaper. Cases of multiple retention are different than cases of specific hostages being taken from their residences or work places, who are usually ‘sold’ by a person known to them. A popular saying between families of kidnapped people depicts what the auction process is in this kind of case (where the victim is not a ‘special’ objective): “the kidnapper goes down on the elevator and the family goes up on the stairs”.

The timing of the calls used by the kidnaper is an important factor to analyze. It reveals information about what he knows about the family. Especially compared with people who are released earlier, the last persons released are the ones the guerrilla commandant considers that have more economic capacity or political information to give. Once the guerrilla lowers the price to an amount that the family believes is ‘fair’ regarding the amount requested to other people in a similar socio-economic level of the kidnapped group and according to the information (right and wrong) the family deduced that the guerrilla believes, the price the family was sustaining is increased until that level. After this moment, the same day, the place, the time, and the day to hand over the money is established.

After the price agreement, the guerrilla requires forty-eight hours or less to deliver the money, thereby preventing any action taken by a military group. During the whole process the kidnaper tries to confuse the negotiator by using different strategies and tests the credibility of the contract and the no intromission of other military forces in different ways. Sometimes, they intercept the telephone lines of the house or call just after the price agreement, saying that they



are from the official intelligence corps, and are trying to help and want some information. If the family does tell them the truth, the guerrilla will defect in the release of the kidnapping victim.

Again, the guerrilla never releases the prisoner the same day that the money is handed over in order to protect themselves. Instead they choose another random day, and give instructions to the family of some possible places in the country and a range of time where the victim is going to be released, and tell them to wait for a call from the person. Before being released, the men are shaved, their hair is cut, and they are dressed in their clothes from the first day, which they have been carrying the entire time.

When a family lets the holder know that they would do anything to have the relative back as soon as possible, the guerrilla uses the strategy of making them buy and transport to the forest materials such as military uniforms, plastic boots, cement, food, and other bulk supplies. The transport of those exposes the family to higher risks.

The strategy of the transport is not going to be exposed here because it involves the strategies of external actors trying to intercept the money and the communications between the family and the kidnaper.

## V. THE RESOLUTION OF THE BARGAINING PROCESS

As exposed in Part II of the text, after this point, four things can happen:

- a. The guerrilla cooperates, but the family defects, calling official military forces to attend the appointment, or sending some paramilitary group to rescue the victim: this possibility is not very probable in the actual case; the family is assumed not to be related to paramilitary groups, and in the actual situation of the country, the incentives to negotiate are very high; even official military intelligence advises people to negotiate with the guerrillas. If the family defects, it is going to be the first and the last defection, because the guerrillas are not going to accept an offer of cooperation again, and the life of the victim is going to be in the highest possible risk.
- b. Both cooperate, the family pays the ransom money and the guerrilla releases the prisoner: this is the best scenario, if the game finishes. If the game is not finished it implies that the victim has agreed to give the guerrilla troop either more money or information after being released.

- c. The family goes with the money as planned but the guerrilla takes the money and does not release the victim: there are high incentives for this outcome. In fact, the empirical results show that when the guerrilla believes that the family has more money than that they admit to having, they induce faster the agreement point lowering the initial price. So under the promise of freedom the family cooperates, but the guerrilla doesn't release the prisoner and justifies it by revealing extra information that they have about the family and saying it is just fair to retain the victim, because the family has cheated. At this point, a new bargaining process begins, given the new information the guerrilla reveals.
- d. Both defect: the bargain process continues if the defection of the family doesn't imply involvement of other military group. If it implies, it has the same result as part a.

## VI. FAILING TO RECOGNIZE THE STRATEGY OF THE GUERRILLA

There are several instances where families fail to recognize the strategy of the guerrilla troops. In some cases the family does not organize early enough. In others, the family believes that the guerrilla is a common negotiator and that the business is like any other. Since the victims are often from wealthy families, sometimes families try to make the negotiation through important political leaders, through the Red Cross international organizations, or attempt to first have first contact with the main guerrilla bosses. This often increases the socio-economical profile of the family, letting the guerrilla know that they have contacts in higher spheres.

Additionally, wealthy families sometimes are not able to lower their socio-economic profile, because they are not aware of the different type of language (different words and idioms) spoken by other classes. They also may not notice the subtle details in their communication that give away their social status or not understand how exhibiting wealth can generate aggressiveness in the members of a revolutionary group. They do not know the reality in which the kidnaper is living, nor his way of thinking, and thereby assume that it cannot be so different than their own rationality.

Finally, internalizing the kidnapping as an unforgivable aggression and prevents many from being able to imagine the position of the guerrilla members, from a rational perspective, and understand the possible objectives and logic of action.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

I have analyzed the bargaining process that occurs when guerrillas kidnap individuals in a developing country. Anecdotal evidence is used to illustrate, the different strategies used by kidnapers to abduct, gather information and collect ransoms, as well as the organization required by the victim's family, and the potential strategies they can use. Importantly, I expose the rationale underlying the guerrilla's actions and responses of the victim's family that may determine the success or failure of the negotiation. For this purpose, I use a sequential bargaining game structure that takes into account not only monetary factors determining the path of the negotiation, but also multiple dimensions embedded in such a bargaining process. The main conclusion of the article is that negotiations about monetary ransoms in developing countries need to be based, not only on economic considerations, but also on a deep analysis of the political and socio-cultural condition of both kidnaper and the victim.

