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Reconstructing the Concept of Terrorism After 9/11: The Case of FARC-EP in Colombia

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Reconstructing the Concept of Terrorism After 9/11: The Case of FARC-EP in Colombia

By
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ABSTRACT

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Reconstructing the Concept of Terrorism After
9/11: The case of FARC-EP in Colombia

Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group that formed in the rural sections of Colombia in 1966. The guerilla group has claimed to fight for the marginalized Colombian. Because this insurgent group disrupts the status quo, more recent hardliner governments of Colombia and the United States have vilified the organization publicly to denounce the legitimacy and goals of the Leftist guerillas as well as labeled them terrorists and narco-terrorists.

This thesis provides analysis and research to negate the comparison between the rural guerilla fighters and terrorist organizations, while it also provides evidence that challenges such ongoing policies and tactics of Colombia and the U.S. against the FARC-EP. The term “terrorism” will be examined critically to uncover the lack of legitimacy that, today, surrounds this over politicized idea. In addition, the insistence on violence as a political mechanism in Colombian history, particularly between its main political parties, will contextualize the FARC-EP’s tactics and emergence as a political and military player in the battle between Leftist insurgent groups and both the armed forces and the paramilitaries of Colombia.

Three seemingly random and unconnected chapters will be integrated in order to provide an intrinsic and authentic understanding behind the ideology, tactics, structure and support of the FARC-EP. In order to argue against mainstream media and influential

governments, deep analysis and sufficient evidence needs to be uncovered and established. To provide an alternate depiction of the Leftist guerillas, this thesis had to investigate beyond information solely attributed to the FARC-EP. Instead, it must begin with an understanding and dissection of the political and economic strife in Colombia since its independence. As discovered, the incessant violence in the country displayed by unrest between political parties of the Liberals and Conservatives is the primary cause for the outbreak of *La Violencia* and consequently the creation of guerilla republics.

After analysis of Colombia's violent past, the subsequent topic of unjust labeling of the FARC-EP as "terrorists" is confronted. This section scrutinizes the transformation of the once tactical strategy to its present day recognition as a global fear due to the attacks of September 11. Lastly, in order to unravel the reasoning behind U.S. and Colombian designation of the guerillas as "terrorists," research moves towards uncovering the underlying motives behind U.S. policy in Colombia. Plan Colombia is dissected to discover the implications of economic gains beyond that of the proclaimed "War on Drugs." The aggressive positions taken by the Colombian and U.S. governments against the FARC-EP have been publicly justified by the claims of counter-narcotics, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism, but in reality, economics drive the implementation of such policies and the calumny of the insurgency.

Through personal accounts of both hostages and combatants, primary interviews, governmental documents, field journalism, researched secondary accounts, news sources and personal interviews research comes together to defend the marginalized fight against the status quo. In addition, historical accounts have been compared and analyzed as well as modern implications towards the same topic of the FARC-EP's struggle for equality.

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Glossary of Terms.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Preface.....	vii
Chapter 1: Understanding the FARC-EP: When Diplomacy Fails	1
Drug Connection—Paramilitary Presence.....	3
Support and Structure of the FARC-EP.....	8
The Geography and History of Violence.....	14
Chapter 2: The Violent Past and Present of Colombia.....	18
Brief Colonial History.....	19
Latin American Populism.....	21
Banana Massacre.....	23
Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.....	25
La Violencia.....	27
Marquetalia Republic.....	28
Marulanda and the Creation of the FARC.....	30
FARC-EP Leadership and Structure.....	31
Conclusion.....	35
Chapter 3: The Illusion of Terrorism and Misrepresented Guerilla Warfare.....	36
Terrorists or Not.....	36
History and Evolution of Terrorism.....	39
Terrorism: The New Communism.....	41
September 11’s Rebirth of Modern Day Terrorism.....	43
Terrorist or Freedom Fighter?.....	45
Contrast Between Guerillas and Terrorists.....	48
The FARC-EP True Guerilla Insurgents.....	52
Violent Conclusion.....	53
Chapter 4: Peace Talks, Plan Colombia and <i>Secuestrados</i>.....	56
Peace Talks and Negotiations.....	57
Damage of Plan Colombia.....	59
Plan Colombia or Plan U.S.A.....	62
U.S. Intervention.....	64
United States Economic Protection.....	66
U.S. Profit and Personal Accounts.....	69
Chapter 5: How will the FARC-EP Fair?.....	74
Bibliography.....	78

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ANC	African National Congress
AUC	United Self Defense Forces of Colombia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
FARC-EP (FARC)	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army
LASO	Latin American Security Operation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
M-19	19 th of April Movement
PCC (CCP)	Colombian Communist Party
PSR	Revolutionary Socialist Party
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNIR	National Leftist Revolution Union
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

LIST OF FIGURES

FARC-EP Secretariat Members since Inception:

Pedro Antonio Marín - *Manual Marulanda Vélez*, “Tirofijo” (**Died 2008**)

Luis Alberto Morantes Jaimes - *Jacobo Arenas* (**Died 1990**)

Victor Julio Suárez Rojas - *Jorge Briceño Suárez*, “Mono Jojoy” (**Killed 2010**)

Manuel Jesús Muñoz Ortiz - *Iván Ríos* (**Killed 2008**)

Luis Edgar Devia Silva - *Raúl Reyes* (**Killed 2008**)

Noel Matta - *Efraín Guzmán* (**Died 2003**)

Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas - *Alfonso Cano* (**Commander in Chief**)

Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri - Timoleón Jiménez, “Timochenko”

Luciano Marín Arango - Iván Márquez,

Milton de Jesús Toncel Redondo - Joaquín Gómez “Usuriaga”

Jaime Alberto Parra - Mauricio Jaramillo “El Médico”

Felix Antonio Muñoz Lascarro - Pastor Alape

Jorge Torres Victoria - Palbo Catatumbo

PREFACE

In 1982, at the Seventh Conference of Guerrilla Movement, *Las Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia* advocated for the development of new strategies to take on more offensive military tactics and broaden their support base. As a result, *Ejército del Pueblo* (People's Army) was added to the insurgency's title. Thus, prior to 1982 the organization will be referred to as the FARC, and afterwards it will be referenced as the FARC-EP.¹

The FARC developed out of civil society in the midst of violence and chaos in Colombia. The time in which the guerillas formed is not only important because of the movement that emerged, but because it was the culmination of violence found among the disputing parties and dejected citizens. Such violence has not seemed to subside in Colombia, and thus the nation is still entrenched in a long, violent civil war. Therefore, it is important to begin with Colombian history, from Spanish colonization to the death of the prominent presidential-hopeful Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. It is essential to understanding not only why the FARC emerged but also to comprehend the current violent situation within Colombia. This violence is not solely attributed to the FARC-EP, but to other Leftist guerillas, right-wing paramilitaries, and the armed forces of the government as well. The civil war in Colombia is vast and complicated. Thus, a sole analysis of the FARC-EP, their structure, goals, projects and actions would not have any purpose without the context of the violent country, the dueling political parties or a grasp of the immense socio-economic inequality.

¹ James J. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: the Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*. (London: Pluto, 2010), 25.

Secondly, understanding guerilla insurgencies is a feat in itself. When combined with a hegemonic power of the United States that has a newly profound conception of terrorism, life as a militant Leftist organization that directly opposes the status quo is increasingly consequential. The FARC-EP has therefore faced the scrutiny of both foreign and internal policy aimed and created to dismantle and discredit them. Furthermore, popular media's portrayal of the insurgency highlights and deliberately discredits the social movement. Both Colombian and United States' administrations have used "counter narcotics," "counter insurgency" and "anti-terrorist" rationales to implement policies and obtain monetary means to fight the FARC-EP. The preferred result of these policies is to devastate the organization under the pretext of national security. However, while the aforementioned grounds for combat and intervention are legitimate ploys in the eyes of the public, the underlying motivations are in actuality directly connected to economic and political objectives; they do not connote national security.

These unscrupulous policies of the Colombian and United States' governments are found overwhelmingly in Plan Colombia, on a variety of levels. Since the implementation of the Plan under the Pastrana administration until today, billions of dollars have been spent on military operations and tactics rather than on substitute-crop implementation and resources for the rural farmers. In addition, there is ample evidence that connects U.S. policy in Colombia with U.S. corporations' economic interests in natural resources. United States' investments and interests in Colombian resources and economics serve as fuel to vilify and publicly denounce the Leftist insurgency.

Finally, the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001 have consequently given the U.S. much leeway in their designation of foreign “terrorist” organizations. The term has entered global society and in the process the meaning and connotation of the term has altered. It has become the “red scare” of the recent decade. As a result, U.S. foreign policy has used the fight against “terrorism” to implement power abroad. In conclusion, the labeling of the FARC-EP as “terrorists” or “narco-terrorists” is a politically charged allegation, which can be negated by the historical context of Colombia, the guerilla tactics and formation of the insurgency as well as its ideology.

CHAPTER ONE

Understanding the FARC-EP: When Diplomacy Fails...

Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group that formed in the rural sections of Colombia in 1966. The insurgency was created in order to support the increasing population of the countryside that suffered from the lack of land reform and the constraints of the Conservative party of 1946. The country's Liberal and Conservative parties were in constant dispute, and from this conflict came the period known as *La Violencia* where more than 200,000 people lost their lives primarily during the years from 1948 to 1958.¹ The violence broke out after the assassination of the prominent lawyer and popular land reformer, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. As riots ensued and the Liberals and Conservatives fought for years in the countryside, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, also known as *Tirofijo*, and Jacobo Arenas imagined and created the FARC in order to aid agrarian society and the rural poor of the ungoverned and forgotten territories.²

The media along with the United States and Colombian governments have twisted the line between guerrilla fighters and terrorists to portray the insurgency as the latter. This thesis will provide fair analysis and research to negate the comparison between the rural guerilla fighters and terrorist organizations. The term "terrorism" will also be confronted and analyzed to uncover the lack of legitimacy that today surrounds the over politicized idea. Furthermore, the use of violence and its prevalence since Colombia's

¹ Harvey F. Kline, *Chronicle of a Failure Foretold: The Peace Process of Colombian President Andrés Pastrana* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 8.

² Alfredo Molano, "The evolution of the FARC: A guerrilla group's long history," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 34: 2 (2000), 23-31 (<http://www.proquest.com>), Jan. 15, 2011.

Independence among political parties and disputing territories will contextualize the FARC-EP's tactics.

According to James Brittain, a professor and author of *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, state-based reports, scholastic papers and popular media accounts have hypothesized the FARC-EP's involvement in the coca industry and the drug trade while demonizing the group as a terrorist organization.³ However, through interviews with supporters, leaders and local farmers over the past several years, he unravels the truths behind the FARC-EP's connections with coca production, the drug trade, money laundering and their political and military systems. Furthermore, he provides evidence and arguments that demonstrate the FARC-EP's commitment to their ideology and fight for social equality for the Colombian rural and urban working class populations. It should also be noted that the guerilla's means of income have in recent years intensified along with those of the paramilitary groups.

In connection with Brittain's findings, the author of *Beyond Bogotá: Diary of a Drug War Journalist in Colombia*, Garry Leech, an independent journalist and editor of *colombiajournal.org*, reports from inside FARC-EP territories and proclaims the desire and perfunctory actions of the organization to continue on the path of social equality. Leech has spent years in conflict zones in Colombia, and these experiences allow for insight into the insurgency. He reiterates the importance of Colombia's history and the prevalence of violence that plagues it. While his accounts recognize the violent acts of the FARC-EP, he understands the inequalities that persist and the struggle of the people

³ Brittain, 89.

who live outside of Bogotá as well as the purpose of the guerillas fight.⁴ Leech provides a well-researched and knowledgeable base of the violence and issues that are prominent in Colombia. Furthermore, he is critical of U.S. involvement in the country, especially in regards to Plan Colombia.⁵

To further discover the path and *trabajo* of the organization, other personal narratives such as former guerilla María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo's memoir, *My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary*, will be dissected and used to reflect on the inner workings of the FARC-EP and the relationships, roles, daily life and goals of the organization. To act as a contrast, retellings of kidnapped peoples, mainly U.S. citizens and Colombian elites, will be examined and analyzed in search of governmental or media influences. These accounts will simultaneously serve to acknowledge the use of force that does in fact exist within the organization. Ingrid Betancourt's *Even Silence Has an End: My Six Years of Captivity in the Colombian Jungle* coupled with U.S. citizens Marc Gonsalves, Tom Howes and Keith Stansell's *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* are primary sources referenced to illustrate a comparative image of the guerillas. They provide an alternative depiction of the insurgency; they demonstrate the violent and desperate side of the FARC-EP that enables them to take arms and hostages in order to contend with and ameliorate their position with the Colombian government.

Drug Connection—Paramilitary Presence

The primary misconception, as developed and promoted mainly by mass media and both the U.S. and Colombian governments, is the insurgency's association with the

⁴ Garry Leech, interview by Josh Rushing, *After Words with Garry Leech*, C-SPAN, Feb. 11, 2009 (<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/284132-1>).

⁵ *After Words with Garry Leech*

drug trade. From this association, the label of “narco-terrorists” is now commonly associated with the group. Though there is immense speculation and information that connects the FARC-EP with the drug industry, their connection with coca production does not justify the insurgency’s classification as a terrorist organization. Furthermore, the recent surge in the FARC-EP’s involvement with cocaine is due to the need to compete with the country’s paramilitaries that are heavily imbedded in the drug industry.⁶ Previously, the FARC-EP protected coca-growing peasants while they taxed the dealers.⁷ According to James Petras, a professor of sociology at Binghamton University, in 2002, former president Andrés Pastrana admitted, “contrary to U.S. State Department propaganda, the FARC neither produces or sells coca or drugs.”⁸ Again, authors such as Petras, Brittain and Leech discuss the actualities of the FARC-EP’s association with drugs, violence and crime. Although, it should be noted that much of their research is outdated and the insurgency has made changes to their policies towards the drug trade, it is all relative to the other conflicting Colombian powers. Furthermore, the work of Brittain, Leech and Petras denotes different ideas than those of the U.S. State Department.

For example, Leech says, “if FARC leaders are little more than the heads of a criminal organization, then they must be considered miserable failures,” meaning that the FARC-EP members do not live in luxury like the paramilitaries and notorious drug cartel leaders.⁹

⁶ Adam Isacson, phone interview by author, January 20, 2011.

⁷ James Petras and Michael M. Brescia, “The FARC Faces the Empire,” *Latin American Perspectives* 27:5 (2000), 134 (<http://jstor.org/>).

⁸ Petras and Brescia, 134.

⁹ Garry M. Leech *Beyond Bogotá: Diary of a Drug War Journalist in Colombia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 238.

For them, it is a hard life spent sleeping on wooden planks, bathing in rivers, fighting odd tropical diseases, coping with separation from family and loved ones, and constantly moving from camp to camp to avoid U.S. intelligence-gathering efforts and the Colombian army.¹⁰

In the 1960s, the Colombian government passed legislation that allowed for self-defense groups to form in order to protect their assets. These types of groups developed throughout the country, and decades later paramilitaries surfaced directly from the initial self-defense organizations. The most well-known and powerful paramilitary that emerged in Colombia was the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense Forces, AUC).¹¹ The AUC united various self-defense organizations, many of which previously associated with and were followers of drug lords, local political and economic elites, as well as organized crime organizations. However different, these paramilitary groups commonly united against the leftist FARC-EP, and confrontation between the two has persisted for years. Although the Uribe administration claimed that paramilitaries no longer exist due to the 2003 agreement between the his administration and the AUC to demobilize, new branches and increasingly similar criminal groups have since formed.¹²

The AUC, which has connections with the Colombian army and government, is responsible for the victimization of Colombian citizens. They have displaced indigenous communities from their land, massacred civilians, and kidnapped political figures.¹³

Brittain cites a piece written by a U.S. citizen who found herself in both paramilitary and FARC-EP territories. She recounts that at paramilitary check points, one is interrogated, searched, intimidated and harassed. She mentions stories of rape, theft and terrorization

¹⁰ Leech, *Beyond Bogotá*, 238.

¹¹ Stephanie Hanson, "Colombia's Right-Wing Paramilitaries and Splinter Groups," *Council on Foreign Relations*, http://www.cfr.org/publication/15239/colombias_rightwing_paramilitaries_and_splinter_groups.html#p2. (Jan. 22, 2011).

¹² Hanson, "Colombia's Right-Wing Paramilitaries and Splinter Groups."

¹³ Hanson, "Colombia's Right-Wing Paramilitaries and Splinter Groups."

by government forces. Whereas on the other hand, when she discusses the FARC-EP, she says she was welcomed and never threatened.¹⁴ In the end, the paramilitaries have closer connections with both the U.S. and Colombian governments; yet, they are openly and directly linked to the drug trade and violence. They partake in assassinations as well as kidnappings.

Violence in Colombia is present and prevalent beyond the guerilla groups, both the government and the paramilitaries have histories of violence and human rights violations. In the Human Rights Watch's *World Report 2010*, the section designated to the guerilla groups, FARC and the *Ejercito de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army, ELN) is significantly shorter than the sections allotted for paramilitary and government violations. The violations listed for the FARC are massacres, killings, threats, and recruitment of child combatants as well as the use of landmines. The FARC-EP has been responsible for massacres and abuses against the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations.¹⁵ Though the FARC-EP's violations are unacceptable, in comparison with competing forces their misconduct in actuality is at least contextualized. The report notes that, on the other hand, the violations of the paramilitaries involve drug trafficking, active recruitment, and various abuses, including: massacres, killings, rapes, threats, and forced displacement as well as attacks against union workers.¹⁶ Furthermore, the past years have shown an increase in the amount of extrajudicial killings of civilians attributed to the Colombian army. "Army members, under pressure to show results, kill civilians and then report them as combatants killed in action."¹⁷

¹⁴ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 32.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2010* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009), 212.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 213.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, 214.

According to Adam Isacson, Director of Programs and Latin American specialist at the Center for International Policy, in the late nineties there was a dramatic shift in the percentage of murders in Colombia, as the AUC was created in 1997. About seventy per cent of the murders are attributed to the right-wing paramilitaries while the FARC-EP was responsible for less than a quarter, leaving the government with a designated five per cent.¹⁸ Before the formation of the paramilitaries, the FARC-EP and the government were equally responsible. This change in numbers establishes a clear connection between the paramilitaries and the Colombian governments. The paramilitaries took over the unethical and violent role in which the government would otherwise partake.¹⁹ The diminishing government abuses allude to the development of the paramilitaries as a scapegoat for Colombian administrations. Accusations against Colombian congressmen and their connections with the paramilitaries have risen. In 2006, the investigations of more than eighty members of the Congress commenced due to these accusations involving government collaboration with the AUC. These investigations and accusations are known as the *parapolitics* scandal. However, “the Uribe administration has repeatedly taken actions that could sabotage the investigations, including issuing public and personal attacks against Supreme Court justices.”²⁰

The violence and the strength of the paramilitaries coupled with that of the government brings forth the rationalization that the FARC-EP has taken to violent means in order to compete with these opposing forces. They, the Leftist guerillas, have also consequently deepened their connections with the drug trade because of the

¹⁸ Isacson phone interview, Jan. 20, 2011.

¹⁹ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*, DVD, directed by Gerard Ungerman and Audrey Brohy (2002; Cinema Libre).

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, 213.

paramilitaries' increasing and intense association of their own. The disappearance of the Medellín and Cali cartels, the two main and most powerful cartels of the 1970s and 80s in Colombia, opened the FARC-EP and the AUC to association with the drug industry in the mid 1990s.²¹

Support and Structure of the FARC-EP

The FARC-EP is portrayed in negative light by the United States and Colombia, and although the FARC-EP is present on the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center's list of international terrorist organizations, there is little information and analysis provided on the highly dangerous terrorist group.

The guerilla group is oddly one of the world's least researched politico-military organizations. As no in-depth scholarship has been conducted on the FARC-EP's ideological or practical relation to contemporary social change, there is much need for such study."²²

More importantly, there is evidence that the guerilla group has provided aid to its supporters and it has increasing amounts of followers especially seen in the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s. Peasant support grew steadily throughout the mid 1960s and 70s, but the 1980s brought more significant growth as roughly one fifth of the country gave his or her support to the organization. The guerillas expanded their control to more than sixty per cent of the country with tangible influence in 622 municipalities, and by the end of the decade, their influence had reached 1,000 municipalities;²³ in a few short years, ninety-three per cent of all areas had guerilla presence. The insurgency reached its peak in the

²¹ Arlene B. Tickner, "Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism," 2003, in Thomas J. Badey, ed., *Violence and Terrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2009), 69.

²² James Petras Preface to *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: the Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP* (London: Pluto, 2010), xv.

²³ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, pg. 16

late 1990s to the early to mid 2000s. As Isacson noted in an interview, it is difficult to know for sure how much support for insurgency exists. Calculations published in Brittain's *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* affirm that in 2002 the FARC-EP had more than 25,000 fighters,²⁴ where as the *BBC* reported that in 2002 the guerilla group consisted of 16,000 troops.²⁵ Perhaps a greater contrast comes in Brittain's estimation that in 2008 the FARC was comprised of nearly 35,000 combatants,²⁶ whereas both Isacson and the *BBC* believe that a more realistic number of current combatants is around 8,000.²⁷ Brittain acknowledges the difference; he realizes that "this number [40,000-50,000] may appear high when compared with popular media accounts and state sources, but it must be understood that the FARC-EP remained disproportionately underrepresented for the greater part of the previous two decades."²⁸

The diminishing numbers of the FARC-EP came primarily during the Uribe administration as his father was killed by the guerillas. His personal vendetta against the insurgency fueled his policymaking as he increased military action towards the insurgents.²⁹ The FARC-EP's growth of the past fifteen years can be "attributed to continued political and economic repression of the rural population and urban working poor."³⁰ This suggests that if the government does not recognize the legitimate call of the organization, then, combined with the insurgent's will, the group will not cease to fight and will continue to find support.

²⁴ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, pg. 20

²⁵ "Colombia Hostage Release: Breakthrough for Peace?," British Broadcasting Corporation, Feb. 17, 2011 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/world-latin-america-12491339>)

²⁶ Isacson phone interview, Jan. 20, 2011.

²⁷ *BBC*, Feb. 17, 2011.

²⁸ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, pg. 19.

²⁹ *BBC*, Feb. 17, 2011.

³⁰ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, pg. 19.

The combatants are spread throughout Colombia based on the need from certain blocs. The largest blocs are the Southern and Eastern blocs. Blocs in central coffee-growing region, the Magdalena medio region, Antioquia and Caribbean have departments fewer members because they have had to contend with the strengths of paramilitaries for more than twenty years.³¹



Structurally, the FARC-EP consists of seven blocs, in which each has a number of fronts, on average 300 to 600 combatants per unit. By 2002, it was generally conceded that 105

³¹ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, pg. 21.

³² The Center for International Policy, *Colombia Program* <http://www.cipcol.org/?p=601>, (May, 28, 2008).

fronts exist throughout the country.³³ As of the late 1990s, the organization controlled 622 municipalities and there is a rigid hierarchy spread from the High Command of the seven-person-secretariat, to the soldiers.³⁴ Within their controlled territory, the FARC-EP recruits, maintains camps, develops the land for infrastructure and houses a regular army.³⁵

According to Isacson, the strong blocs operate in more remote and unpopulated regions of triple canopy jungles, which allows a separation from the government, and the populations consist of many rural and peasant people who will follow the FARC-EP.³⁶ “The guerillas did not represent or fight *for* the masses, but the insurgency *was* the masses.”³⁷ The transformation into the people’s army in 1982 further emphasizes the important and basic connection that the organization instinctively holds to the masses. Thus, their goals will persist beyond the ridicule and libel of the media, U.S. influence and the Colombian government. Furthermore, the insurgency has had to withstand the billions of dollars and aid that the United States has funneled into the Colombian government to combat the supposed “terrorists” or “narco-traffickers.” Yet, while U.S. and Colombian time, money and resources are geared towards the guerillas, the paramilitaries see little of the aggression.

³³ James J. Brittain, "Columbia's FARC-EP Defies Imperialist Expansion," *An Independent Socialist Magazine - Monthly Review*, Nov. 26, 2010 (<http://www.monthlyreview.org/0905brittain.htm>).

³⁴ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 16.

³⁵ Chaliand and Blin, 24.

³⁶ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 21.

³⁷ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 31.



In an interview between Leech and Josh Rushing, a reporter for *Al Jazeera*, the two discuss the term narco-guerillas and narco-terrorists. Leech mentions that the latter became more commonly used after 9/11 and Rushing comments that “the use of that word terrorist [can be traced] to 9/11 and [it is interesting to] then see how it is used for politics and money afterwards.”³⁹ Leech says, now, due to the War on Terror, congressional approval is easy to come by when terrorism mentioned, which encapsulates the idea that the term “terrorism” has lost meaning and become solely a political mechanism to reduce non-state oppositional powers around the globe. Leech adds that Plan Colombia is seemingly more of a counter-insurgency plan rather than a counter-narcotics scheme.⁴⁰ The FARC-EP cannot be grouped with other terrorist groups because they have “put forth a series of fundamental socio economic reforms and worked to aid the masses for whom they stand and fight.”⁴¹

³⁸ “Colombia’s War without and End,” BBC http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1849603.stm (Mar. 2, 2002).

³⁹ *After Words with Garry Leech*.

⁴⁰ *After Words with Garry Leech*.

⁴¹ Petras and Brescia, 135.

In 2006, it was made known the FARC-EP had been providing medical services in some of the most impoverished slums of Colombia. The guerillas had created infirmaries capable of supplying surgical operations, medicine and health care supplies to local civilians.⁴²

Leech wrote after the death of Jorge Briceño Suárez, who went by Mono Jojoy, that Mono Jojoy implemented some of the FARC-EP's most progressive social and economic policies in order to aid peasants in the rural regions of Colombia. Many of the small towns under Mono Jojoy's control were also subject to significant infrastructure improvements due to the guerillas' public works programs, such as road construction between dozens of rural towns. Furthermore, with the aid of FARC-EP's tax revenue, Mono Jojoy was able to construct electrical grids in dozens of remote towns and villages that would be otherwise neglected by the national government while he also oversaw the redistribution of land to subsistence farmers as a result of agrarian reforms.⁴³ However, many of these reforms, movements and projects are overlooked and rarely commemorated by the government or the media.

While it [the FARC-EP] can be described as 'the most important military and political force in South America opposing imperialism' (Escribano, 2003:299), Washington prefers to classify the FARC-EP as the hemisphere's most dangerous terrorist organization.⁴⁴

The Geography and History of Violence

The fall of the Soviet Union, and thus the elimination of foreign aid, coupled with increasing pressures from paramilitary powers as well as the U.S.-aided Colombian military pushed the FARC-EP towards more violent and harmful actions. They began to

⁴² Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 29.

⁴³ Garry Leech, "The Significance of the Killing of FARC Leader 'Mono Jojoy,'" *Colombia Journal*, Sept. 24 2010, <http://colombiajournal.org/the-significance-of-the-killing-of-farc-leader-mono-jojoy.htm>.

⁴⁴ Petras, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, xv.

use land mines, gas-cylinder bombs, hijack commercial jets, assassinate elected officials, murder peace activists, and they also attacked an upscale family recreation center in Bogotá killing and wounding many.⁴⁵ Such actions created means for the government and media to associate the insurgency with terrorism. As a result, there have been reported links between the FARC-EP and other insurgencies-deemed-terrorist organization such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA).⁴⁶ Furthermore, these violent acts can be contextualized through the investigation of the history of politics in Colombia. Political scientist, Harvey Kline, argues that peace and politics and Colombia are not commonly associated with one another.⁴⁷ In the 19th century alone, Colombia was victim to eight civil wars, six of which were direct fights of political opposition: Liberals versus Conservatives.⁴⁸ Kline cites, Fabio Zambrano Pantoja as he said,

*The real people, that is to say, the majority of the population, learned politics through the use of arms before they did through the exercise of the suffrage...most people were applying the generalized idea that war is the continuation of politics by other means.*⁴⁹

The geographical diversity of Colombia is responsible for the creation, since its independence, of a “political archipelago,” each region consists of increasingly different needs and lifestyles.⁵⁰ Lastly, Kline cites a Colombian Sociologist:

Probably because of the traditional, oligarchic set up of Liberal and Conservative parties, we [Colombians] never developed peaceful ways to resolve conflict. If we have disagreements we only think of violence as the way to solve them.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ Kline, 11.

⁴⁶ Mark Burgess, “Global Terrorism: The FARC-IRA Connection,” Center for Defense Information <http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/farc-ira-pr.cfm> (June 5, 2002).

⁴⁷ Kline, 8.

⁴⁸ Kline, 8.

⁴⁹ Kline, 8.

⁵⁰ Kline, 1.

⁵¹ Kline, 9.

Regardless of the innate urge towards violence that resonates throughout Colombia's politics, four administrations since the 1982 administration of Belisario Betancur have taken part in Peace Talks with the, at that time, four guerilla groups present in the country.⁵² During the Betancur government, the FARC-EP was the only insurgency that maintained the truce and cease-fire with the government.⁵³ After the failed Pastrana talks, the prospect of a peaceful outcome during the Uribe administration was crushed. However, due to the recent releases of six hostages, as of February 18, 2011, there is speculation that peace talks could ensue between the insurgency and the Colombian government.⁵⁴ Yet, while speculation circulates, President Santos was quoted by Colombia's *El Tiempo*, "In addition to leaving behind terrorism and freeing all of the kidnapped people, the guerillas should renounce narco-trafficking to even think of the possibility of dialogue."⁵⁵ It appears that Santos has pledged a similar tactic to Uribe in dealing with the guerillas and Colombia's civil war.

In conclusion, the FARC-EP is a guerilla group working for social and economic equality with hopes of shared political presence. However, decades have passed and they have yet to attain any power within the formidable Colombian government. Thus, the methods of the organization have had to change with the times, which is partly seen through the rural-based movement's expansion into urban centers. Yet, while the organization still holds true to developmental ideals, as "many townsfolk enjoyed living in the rebel safe-haven because it provided a sense of security and the

⁵² Camilo P. González, "Negotiations with the FARC." Conciliation Resources, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/colombia/negotiations-farc.php> (2004).

⁵³ Kline, 17.

⁵⁴ *BBC*, Feb. 17, 2011.

⁵⁵ "“Con Estas Cinco Liberaciones No Basta,”” Anunció El Presidente Santos,” *El Tiempo*, Feb. 8, 2011 (http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/santos-planteo-condiciones-para-siquiera-pensar-en-dialogo-con-farc_8835801-4). (Feb 11, 2011).

ability to create alternative community-based development projects,”⁵⁶ adaptation was necessary for survival.

The insurgency began as a peasant led rural-based land struggle in the 1960s, but it has since been transformed into a national political-military social movement illustrating a vision of alternative development through socialist society via armed struggle.⁵⁷

Subsequent chapters will examine how, and why the FARC has transformed from the leftist guerilla group as it began in 1964 (to be rightfully founded in 1966) to being portrayed as a “terrorist organization” involved in drug production as it has been named through mass media, the United States and Colombian governments. This thesis will look to uncover the accuracy or lack of accuracy of these accusations and depictions of the FARC-EP surfaced and advocated by the public media and hardline administrations. It will also dissect the term terrorism and its connotations and meanings that have developed since its inception during the French Revolution. The hope of this research is to argue that the FARC-EP has maintained its ideology and continues to fight for social equality within Colombia and that the label of a “terrorist organization” is not justifiable.

As demonstrated predominantly by Leech, Petras and Brittain “rather than blindly following the rhetoric of [so-called] ‘experts,’ the mass media, or state-based reports,” the research and production of this thesis will investigate and promote discussion of the actions, ideologies and the accomplishments of the guerilla group.⁵⁸ Research will attempt to negate the insinuations that the insurgency has “failed to retain ‘an ideological vision’ of political organization or the expansion of class consciousness.”⁵⁹ Essentially, the argument will be made that drugs and crime are just means to an end for the FARC-

⁵⁶ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 31.

⁵⁷ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 30.

⁵⁸ Petras, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, xv.

⁵⁹ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 90.

EP. Such means have become necessary in order to uphold and maintain power in their struggle against neoliberal governments that have for decades ignored the rural populations and communities outside of Bogotá. These marginalized regions have seen little accommodation from the differing Colombian administrations. Instead, the government partakes in the violence and refuses to negotiate and compromise with the FARC-EP and their visions.

The first step towards understanding the complex situation of the FARC-EP lies in the historical development of the organization. A historical context of the insurgency illustrates the political, social and economic standings and systems entrenched in Colombia since colonial rule. Independence in Colombia from Spain did not result in liberation and equality for all, as it rarely does. Instead, independence meant the power of the few wealthy, landowners and centuries of Liberal and Conservative power. This combination resulted in erupted violence and grave socio-economic inequality. As the gap between the rich and the poor grew along with abuse and bloodshed, the marginalized persons of the countryside, driven by hope for change, rationalized and formed Leftist guerilla groups, which would result in the eventual creation of the FARC. Centuries of struggle and violence serve only as the pretext to the almost fifty year struggle of the peasant-influenced guerilla insurgency. The subsequent chapter will introduce the many aspects and obstacles that the insurgency now faces.

CHAPTER TWO

The Violent Past and Present of Colombia

In order to understand the cause and fight of the FARC, the social, economic and political circumstances of the country during the insurgency's inception will be uncovered. This chapter will reveal the immense inequality and violence that has plagued Colombia since colonization and into its independence. Without such context, the goals and justification of the guerilla army would be lost and unimportant. The FARC almost fifty years old. The organization has contended with dozens of Colombian administrations and inevitably social, economic and political changes. The insurgency has evolved accordingly, and it has likewise encountered present-day enemies and opposition.

The history of Colombia is a violent, turbulent story. In the 19th century alone, after Colombia's declared independence in 1810, there were numerous civil wars and nearly fifty regional or local conflicts.⁶⁰ The source of much of the violence resonates with the life-long conflict between the political parties of the Conservatives and Liberals. In 1899, in connection with the U.S. backed fight for Panamanian independence, Colombia began the Thousand Days War. The inevitable civil war between the dueling factions persisted until 1902 resulting in the deaths of thousands of citizens and the secession of Panama; it devastated the country with its ideological battles but to no avail. The same war and tensions between the parties broke out in violence again decades later in the period known as *La Violencia*, which left 200,000-300,000 people dead. Additionally, lives in Colombia have been further sacrificed due to the current internal war between the Leftist guerillas, paramilitaries and government's armed forces. As Daniel Peacaut, a well-known French student of Colombia's violence, notes, "party

⁶⁰ Cristina Rojas and Michael J. Shapiro, *Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 19.

identification overwhelmed any other social division...therefore, violence is linked to the autonomy of politics.”⁶¹ Violence has plagued Colombia due to the colonization and the implementation of the oligarchy, distribution of wealth, severe geographical differences throughout the country and the ongoing political opposition. To quote notable Colombian author and professor, Fernando Guillén Martínez:

The civil wars of the nineteenth century contributed, more than anything else, to the dysfunction of peasant life, to the destruction of social, moral and economic importance of the smaller urban centers and to the conversion of the majority of the population into fanatic bands, whose only hope of survival consisted in vanquishing the enemy on the national scale, imposing the domination of one ‘party’ over the other.”⁶²

Brief Colonial History

The roots of Colombian society are based on inequality and violence and so at this point, a recognition and explanation are developed in order to place the FARC in existence with the conflicting factors that drove Colombia to violence and decades of internal conflict. Moreover, Colombia never experienced a new process of state formation after its independence from Spain, and in consequence, Colombia had a weak central government and much of the power remained in the hands of the elite classes forming an oligarchic democracy.⁶³

After Independence from Spain, Simón Bolívar was elected as President of Gran Colombia in 1819; Francisco de Paula Santander became his vice president. The conflicts that erupted between the followers of Bolívar and Santander are consequently responsible for the creation of the separation and struggle between the Colombian Liberal

⁶¹ Rojas and Shapiro, 20.

⁶² Norman A. Bailey, “La Violencia in Colombia,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 9:4 (1967), (<http://www.jstor.org>), 572.

⁶³ W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003), 8.

and Conservative parties.⁶⁴ Bolivar's supporters later came to form the Conservative Party, which sought a strong, centralized government, alliance with the Roman Catholic Church and limited franchise.⁶⁵ Conservatives also encourage rural development because it sees property as a natural right and it is believed that the state should protect landowners and thus favor taxation on uncultivated land rather than parcelization of large territories and estates.⁶⁶ Followers of Santander created the Liberal Party, which wanted a decentralized government, state control over education and other civil matters as well as inclusive suffrage.⁶⁷ It is the party of the people; it favors the decrease of governmental restriction on trade and pushes for a greater role in meeting the individuals social and economic needs.⁶⁸

Colombia began as an export economy based on agriculture. Coffee, tobacco, cotton and cacao production began to surface and flourish in plantations on the western slope of the Cordillera Oriental toward the Magdalena River by the European colonizers predominantly in the 1850s.⁶⁹ Coffee as an economic entity coupled with Spanish colonization and the power of the oligarchy in Colombia serve to be the underlying forces responsible for the political situation and context in existence today. Charles Bergquist, Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington wrote, in Colombia, "economic resources were monopolized by a small upper class interested in preserving its position and generally unable or unwilling to generate new wealth."⁷⁰ Colonization and the

⁶⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm>.

⁶⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm>.

⁶⁶ Miles Richardson, *San Pedro, Colombia: Small Town in a Developing Society* (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1970), 17.

⁶⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm>.

⁶⁸ Richardson, 17.

⁶⁹ Richardson, 7.

⁷⁰ Charles W. Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978), 3.

wealth that remained in the hands of a few consequently led to discrimination and favoring of the city people over the countryside; today, the issue of Bogotá as separate from the rest of the country remains a rampant and important issue. Bogotá was one of the early settlements of the Spanish; it eventually became the political and cultural center of the colony of New Granada. In addition, after Colombia's independence, the city became the capital and remains the "residential base of the country's governmental apparatus and the home of its intellectuals."⁷¹

Latin American Populism

In the 1930s-1950s populist governments and figures such as Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico (1934-40), Juan Perón of Argentina (1946-55), Getúlio Vargas of Brazil (1930-45 & 1950-54) and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán of Colombia emerged as a new political force throughout Latin America. This twentieth century populism varied from nineteenth century European populism in that it emerged from and combined with the activists of the working-class, socialists, and social democratic mass movements.⁷² Populism inspired mobilization of the formerly passive and oppressed groups to take part in and voice their positions to the political establishment. Historian Eric Hobsbawm stated: "European fascist regimes destroyed labour movements, the Latin American leaders inspired and created them."⁷³ The connection with these more leftist organizations and movements influenced these leaders, Cárdenas, Perón, Vargas and Gaitán, who never associated

⁷¹ Richardson, 6.

⁷² Teresa A. Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present* (Chichester:U.K.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2010), 195.

⁷³ Meade, 195.

themselves with trade unions, socialists or leftist ideals, to address more common social and mass movement issues. As a result,

Their populist influence relied on the mass base that had been forged in the battle for workers' rights; matured under the tutelage of socialist, anarchist, or communist leaders; and relied on the organizational apparatus of left-leaning political parties."⁷⁴

However, while the leaders seemingly took a public role to address and aid the masses, in many cases, populist leaders articulated a progressive rhetoric, while actually undermining the interests of the masses, and ultimately strengthened capitalism and upper class goals.⁷⁵ Though the masses, meaning the middle class, typically supported populism, it, unlike socialism, encourages and embraces capitalism and does not advocate for a worker-run state. "Populists use the strength of the state...as a patronage machine to appease workers and meet the demands of mass movements."⁷⁶ Populism creates a supportive façade to the masses, yet at the same time the policies that are implemented do not necessarily reflect the presidential mantras. Populism gradually emerged in Latin America, in the 1930s, after the vast majority of the countries began to move away from agricultural and export economies. They began to internalize and move towards import-substitution industrialization.⁷⁷ Although it would appear that the separation from agricultural economy would create new political powers, the elite classes remained in power for the most part, even with the appearance of populism and the emergence of the masses.⁷⁸ The "genius" of populism is its ability to manipulate the different classes in order to appeal and appease to each of them.

⁷⁴ Meade, 195.

⁷⁵ Green, 3.

⁷⁶ Meade, 195.

⁷⁷ Green, 2.

⁷⁸ Green, 3.

Typically, characterization of Latin American populism includes an urban setting, a range of socio-economic support, a connection to nationalism, and a charismatic leader.⁷⁹ Steve Stein, a professor, portrays “populism’s ‘central dynamic’ as the personalistic particularistic ties between powerful leaders and dependent followers.”⁸⁰ It seems that the populist leaders use the faithful followers in order to achieve outside the goals of the masses. As Brazilian Antonio Carlos Riberiro de Andrada stated in 1930, “*Facamos a revolução antes que o povo a faça*” (We will make the revolution before the people do).⁸¹ This daunting statement implies that populist governments worked to control the revolution through political influence and charismatic leaders. Furthermore, Stein suggests that, “populism was the primary reason why ‘the expected build up of popular pressures for revolutionary change has not occurred.’”⁸²

Banana Massacre

Notably, Colombia has not had a successful revolution nor a real movement towards one; the closest actions may be those of the FARC guerillas. Colombia is in much need of a revolution and the guerillas fight for many of the same issues present in other Latin American countries (i.e. land reform and distribution of wealth). The Banana Massacre of 1928 is an event that encapsulated revolutionary ideas and demonstrates the masses unrest and desire for change. In the department of Magdalena, on December 6, 1928, United Fruit Company’s workers staged a strike in the train station of Ciénaga. Thousands of banana workers gathered to demonstrate in hopes of improving living and

⁷⁹ Green, 2.

⁸¹ Green, 4.

⁸² Green, 4.

working conditions as well as to see negotiations. However, in return the Conservative government's troops fired at the protesters and their families killing hundreds.⁸³ The United Fruit Company is a U.S.-owned corporation; it essentially created debt peonage. The banana workers, *bananeros*, were "independent workers" forced to sell their crop as rent for the company land while they were paid in script only redeemable in company stores.⁸⁴ Labor abuses were abundantly visible, so, anarcho-syndicalists and the *Partido Socialista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Socialist Party, PSR) organized to confront the company that had for years abused the workers' rights. After the massacre, the conflict and battle returned to the Conservative and the Liberals. Gaitán used this banana massacre in order create a strong reputation with the Liberal Party.⁸⁵ In 1929 he headed to Ciénago to initiate an investigation into what happened on December 6, 1928. Gaitán used the incident to campaign and confronted the people's frustration with "the domination of the *gringos*."⁸⁶

Gaitán, the charismatic leader, used the Banana Massacre as a crutch to appeal to the masses and win support throughout the country. His populist rhetoric permeated Colombia and consequently his death left populism and faith in politics dead as well. The death of Gaitán drove Bogotá and other cities in rubble and parish, and "the nation plunge[d] into seemingly eternal bloody strife."⁸⁷

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán

⁸³ Green, 26.

⁸⁴ Green, 60.

⁸⁵ Meade, 180.

⁸⁶ Green, 62.

⁸⁷ Green, 1.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was born in 1903 to a respectable lower class family in Colombia. Yet, he worked his way into elite political circles and into the heart of Colombian society; he served as Bogotá city councilman, departmental assembly deputy for Cundinamarca, mayor of Bogotá, congressman, senator, cabinet minister, Education Minister, Labor Minister and became a primary presidential candidate.⁸⁸ After the United Fruit Company's Banana Massacre, Gaitán split from the Liberal party.⁸⁹ In response, in 1933, he created his own political movement, the *Unión Nacional Izquierdista Revolucionaria* (National Leftist Revolution Union, UNIR). However, in subsequent years, in 1947, he became the *jefe único* of the Liberal Party.⁹⁰

Gaitán gained respect and praise from the masses in Colombia. He conveniently structured his image to reflect both his progressive political values and his aspirations of aiding the poor; he dictated a path to change and thus became the defense and voice of the *pueblo* as he bridged the gap between classes.⁹¹ The movement that followed Gaitán's prominence, Gaitanismo, has seemingly undeniable connections to populism. Gaitanismo included members of the capital-owning, commercial, and professional classes, the political elite, and even rural small holders and landless agrarian workers and artisans.⁹²

Although not a socialist, he used the language of socialism to advocate for a more humane capitalism in which the government intervened to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth, public education, a decent standard of living and that the benefits of modern society were available to everyone.⁹³

⁸⁸ Green, 1.

⁸⁹ Meade, 195.

⁹⁰ Green, 1.

⁹¹ Meade, 204.

⁹² Green, 9.

⁹³ Meade, 205.

Gaitán can be praised for his inclusion because it covers the social and political spectrum of Colombia.

The misguided speech and representation produced by the Machiavellian, populist leaders created an atmosphere of united support seen from all different socio-economic classes, thus the popularity and dedication particular to the populist leaders was immense. Specifically, the assassination of Gaitán served as a catalyst to riots, violence, revolution and social movements. The masses of Colombia took to the streets in rage and rebellion in reaction to the respected candidate's death. Gaitán was assassinated on April 9, 1948, by Juan Roa Suierra, a day that changed dramatically the path of Colombia and pushed the country into decades of violence and civil war. Immediately following Gaitán's death, the assassin was apprehended and killed by outraged Colombians. Riots were instigated, and Liberals and Conservatives took to the streets of Bogotá. The events nearly completely destroyed the city, the rampage is known as *El Bogotzao*.⁹⁴ The fight spread to the countryside where the period known as *La Violence* emerged and continued for more than a decade. The riots in Bogotá, following Gaitán's assassination, led to peasant land seizures in rural areas, which resulted in severe repression from land owners; they then hired thugs to force the farmers off of the apprehended territories. These peasants in turn formed guerrilla armies.⁹⁵ The death of Gaitán,

Brought an end to Colombia's longest period of peaceful political development, swept away much of the legitimacy of its political class, and completely altered its political environment for decades to come.⁹⁶

La Violence

⁹⁴ Meade, 205.

⁹⁵ Meade, 205.

⁹⁶ Green, 261.

La Violencia began in the subsequent months after the death of Gaitán and the break out of riots in Bogotá and the countryside: *El Bogotazo*. The primary source of the violence resonated with the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Liberals had previously held political power for sixteen years, until the power was transferred from Alberto Lleras Camargo to the new Conservative leader, Mariano Ospina Pérez in 1946.⁹⁷ The 1948 assassination of Gaitán sparked speculation between the parties. Soon, the Conservatives, in power, reorganized both urban and rural police in hopes to transform Colombia. The violence that erupted was atrocious and unfathomable especially as these acts were committed against fellow citizens. For example, common torture methods consisted of “*picar para tamal*,” which meant to cut up the living victim into small pieces as well as crucifixion, hanging, pushing victims from airplanes (later utilized during dictatorships in Argentina), children were raped and most disturbingly, some pregnant victims were given caesarian sections only to have their babies removed and replaced by roosters.⁹⁸ In order to combat such horrors, the Leftist guerilla movement grew and conceptualized. In 1953, the dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla granted amnesty to the guerilla fighters in the countryside. Many conceded to the request, but at the same time those that remained entrenched in the fight created “soviet republics” like that of Sumapz and Marquetalia, which were areas governed by rebel peasants in the countryside.⁹⁹ Two years later, in 1955, the rebel republics remained and peasant desire to continue the fight raged, but the Conservatives and Liberals were on the road to reconciliation with hopes to end the violence. *This* violence officially ended in 1957

⁹⁷ Bailey, 567.

⁹⁸ Bailey, 563.

⁹⁹ Bailey 567.

when Liberals and Conservatives signed a pact to divide political power in order to establish national unity.¹⁰⁰

Although the political parties subsided, these “soviet republics” in the countryside raged. Peasants were initially involved in the bloody battle due to the ever-present political and economic battles between the Liberals and Conservatives, however, in the end, peasants decided to take their own role in altering the political future of their country. *La Violencia* weakened political support in both the masses and the elite, while it stimulated class consciousness.¹⁰¹ The resulting peasant “soviet republics” led to the 1960s creation and organization of guerilla groups. “The Marxist have decided that *La Violencia* represents the rebellion of the downtrodden masses against the oligarchs—in other words, the class struggle.”¹⁰² Though the violence emerged as a conflict and fight between Colombia’s political parties, it resulted in a transformation and presence of peasant politics.

Marquetalia Republica

In the years following Gaitán’s assassination, radical Liberals as well as communist guerillas joined to form the *Marquetalia Republic*. This cooperation of Leftist idealist coupled with the assassination of Gaitán and the break out of *El Bogotazo* is essentially the catalyst to the eventual creation of the FARC. In an interview with a FARC-EP’s spokesperson, Marco Leon Calarca, *FightBack!News* uncovers the specific governmental actions that preceded the establishment of the guerilla group. Calarca credits the Colombian military’s plan, in cooperation with the U.S. pentagon, Latin

¹⁰⁰ Meade, 205.

¹⁰¹ Bailey, 575.

¹⁰² Bailey, 569.

American Security Operation (LASO) or Operation Marquetalia as the event that initiated the formation of the Leftist insurgency.¹⁰³ On May 27, 1964, commanders Joselo and Isaias Pardo led the Leftist guerillas into battle to defend their republic from the governmental oppression based on LASO. To the guerillas of the republic, these actions of the U.S. supported Colombian government rationalized the formation of the FARC.¹⁰⁴ As a result of the conflict, on July 20, 1964 the guerillas set forth an agricultural program and concocted a fighting strategy. Officially, on May 5, 1966, at the Second Conference of the Southern Bloc, the FARC was conceptualized and formalized.¹⁰⁵ The FARC-EP spokesperson details that after the government's attacks on the republic, the guerillas and rural farmers discussed the future and cause of the organization.

We all are revolutionaries who fight for a change of the system. But we wanted and struggled for this change using the least painful path for our people: the peaceful road, the road of democratic mass struggle, legal roads marked out in the Colombian Constitution. This path was violently closed to us. Because we are revolutionaries, who must in one way or another, play the historic role that falls to us. Forced by the circumstances that I already noted, we are inspired to look for another path: the road of the armed revolutionary struggle for power.¹⁰⁶

In the end, these *campesinos* and farmers felt objectified by the government and sought the next viable option in order to protect their land, lives and rights. They believe that the violent actions brought on by the government vindicate the guerilla formation based on military tactics of the FARC.

¹⁰³ FightBackNews!, "An Interview with Colombian Revolutionaries," <http://www.fightbacknews.org/1099/farc.html> (Oct. 1, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.fightbacknews.org/1099/farc.html>.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.fightbacknews.org/1099/farc.html>.

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.fightbacknews.org/1099/farc.html>.

Marulanda and the Creation of the FARC

The aforementioned creation of the Marquetalia Republic served as the incubator to the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the insurgents. From this influential environment, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, also known as *Tirofijo*, and Jacobo Arenas emerged as the founders of the Leftist guerilla group, the FARC. The reason for the formation of the insurgency remains consistent with the initial goals developed and pursued by the Republic. To aid the countryside as it suffered from the lack of land reform, increased violence and discrimination and the constraints of the Conservative party of 1946.

Though both Arenas and Marulanda are credited as the founding figures of the FARC, Marulanda is more commonly associated with FARC leadership; he was the Commander in Chief until his death in 2008. Marulanda was of peasant upbringing, a lower-level employee in public works.¹⁰⁷ By his twenties, Marulanda developed clear association with Marxism-Leninism and abandoned social-democratic ideology.¹⁰⁸ Later, he became associated principally with communism and became a member of the *Partido Comunista Colombiano* (PCC). People mistakenly connect him to the Liberals because he was born in a rural peasant area where he was influenced by the Liberal and Conservative struggle as he lived through *La Violencia*.¹⁰⁹ However, as Brittain emphasizes, the origins of the FARC are heavily and almost completely intertwined with the beliefs and ideologies of the PCC and some say radical Liberalism.¹¹⁰ In the 1930s the PCC originally called for “social transformation, unionism and the education of the

¹⁰⁷ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 14.

¹⁰⁸ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 15.

¹⁰⁹ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 14.

¹¹⁰ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 4.

working class”¹¹¹ while also working for better living and working conditions, thus they found the majority of their support in rural areas, coffee regions, among landless peasants and farmers and later the urban working class.¹¹²

The aim of the insurgency and the countryside’s Leftist guerillas from the beginning was not to militarize and coerce, but rather initiate reform and establish a governing “coalition with other progressive parties and movements in a multiparty system in which the centerpiece of socio economic policy will be the equitable redistribution of wealth and resources.”¹¹³ The FARC gained their support through, redistribution of land, which called for agrarian reform, their call for nationalism, which meant opposition to foreign control, their fight for democratization and thus a call to the end of Liberal-Conservative monopoly of political power and their devotion to dismantling of the oligarch’s control of the country.¹¹⁴

This meant, as consistent with Marxist-Leninist ideals, that the organization automatically set itself up against the foreign power of the United States, which during the sixties and seventies was already exerting much influence within Latin America. Yet, despite the strength and influence of neoliberal regimes and their U.S. backers, the insurgency has maintained its own strength and continued to grow throughout the decades to become the strongest and largest guerilla group in the Western Hemisphere.¹¹⁵

FARC-EP Leadership and Structure

¹¹¹ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 2.

¹¹² Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 3.

¹¹³ Petras and Brescia, 135.

¹¹⁴ Petras and Brescia, 134.

¹¹⁵ Petras and Brescia, 134.

Since the inception of the FARC, over the past 45 years of armed conflict with the Colombian government, only three of the guerilla group's seven-person *Secretariado* have been killed. Luis Edgar Devia Silva, who goes by the *nom de guerre*, Raúl Reyes, died during combat with Colombian Police in Putumayo region near Ecuador on March 1, 2008. José Juvenal Valandía, known as Manuel Jesús Muñoz Ortiz or by his *nom de guerre*, Ivan Ríos was killed March 7, 2008 and Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas, known more commonly as Jorge Briceño Suárez or Mono Jojoy, who joined the FARC at age twelve to later “commanded the rebel group’s largest bloc, which consists of forty per cent of its fighters,” was killed September 23, 2010.¹¹⁶ Founder and leader of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, Tirofijo, also recently passed away on March 28, 2008 due to natural causes along with two other members of the *Secretariado*. The few deaths since the creation of the FARC has allowed for the continuation of the insurgencies original goals to persist ideologically even though the situation that encompasses the violence has modernized.

The FARC-EP has complied with Protocols I and II of the Geneva Conventions, “which stipulate that oppositional armed movements vying for state power must formally arrange themselves into a visible ranked military construct.”¹¹⁷ Thus, the FARC-EP has a very rigid hierarchal system, however, the divisions of power and position do not prohibit the members from intercommunication. According to Brittain, who spent time within the FARC-EP, “on a daily basis, the leadership talked with all members on a variety of issues ranging from camp structure to regional coordination.”¹¹⁸ The

¹¹⁶ Leech, "The Significance of the Killing of FARC Leader “Mono Jojoy.”

¹¹⁷ James J. Brittain, "Columbia's FARC-EP Defies Imperialist Expansion," *Monthly Review* 57:4 (<http://www.monthlyreview.org/0905brittain.htm>).

¹¹⁸ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia* 26.

organization is led by the Commander in Chief, who is currently Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas, but goes by Alfonso Cano, who essentially holds all of the decision making power. He is part of the *Secretariado*, which consists of seven high-level leaders who finalize all tactical and political decisions as they consults and influence the Central High Command. The Central High Command, is made of commanders situated in the six blocs: Caribbean, Central, East, Middle Magdalena, South and West. These six blocs are the most common; sources vary on the number of blocs and their names. The blocs divide Colombia into specific regions in order to ensure control and mobility throughout the country; each of these blocs is then populated by the fronts. A front can have anywhere from 40-600 people in it depending on the size of the bloc and the location. Each bloc and all of the fronts maintain and update all of the information of each member and it is plentiful and accurate.¹¹⁹ Today, the Commander in Chief of the FARC-EP is Alfonso Cano. The secretariat consists of:

Rodrigo “Timochenko” Londoño Echeverri, who goes by Timoleón Jiménez
Luciano Marín Arango, Iván Márquez
Milton “Usuriaga” de Jesús Toncel Redondo, Joaquín Gómez
Jamie “El Médico” Alberto Parra, Mauricio Jaramillo
Jorge Torres Victoria, Pablo Catatumbo
Felix Antonio Muños Lascarro, Pasto Alape

The FARC-EP has remained a prominent organization within the country with ample support for more than forty years due to the insurgency’s staunch devotion to their goals and ideologies because of the lack of command change in the secretariat. Though the group has not yet been able to obtain their goals, dismantlement does not appear to be a fair or prospective outcome; they have for decades been working to promote their ideals and better the lives of their supporters.

¹¹⁹ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, 18.

The FARC-EP will not “negotiate its demobilization in return for reduced prison sentences as the paramilitaries have done. Nor will the guerillas demobilize in return for a full amnesty under a “peace” agreement that leaves the structures of neoliberalism intact.”¹²⁰

Due to the FARC-EP’s infinite dedication to their originating goals and causes, it can be concluded that “any negotiated peace would require a restructuring of Colombia’s political, social and economic system to ensure a much more equitable distribution of the country’s wealth and land.”¹²¹ However, Colombia’s dependence and affiliation based on monetary aid from the United States serves as the ultimate obstacle in the FARC-EP’s achievement of their institutional goals. U.S. policy to eschew negotiations with terrorists coupled with the media’s depiction of the insurgency as a terrorist organization has created little hope for progress and compromise between the FARC-EP and Colombia’s government in the near future.

The FARC began in the rural, forgotten and underrepresented areas of Colombia and has successfully been combating the national army. The original fight between the Liberals and Conservatives as well as inequality and the strength of the oligarchy caused the construction of the rebel force as it remains today. Guevara describes,

A guerilla fighter as one who shares the longing of the people for liberation and who, once peaceful means are exhausted, initiates the fight and converts himself into an armed vanguard of the fighting people. From the very beginning of the struggle he has the intention of destroying an unjust order and therefore an intention, more or less hidden, to replace the old with something new.¹²²

The FARC was created for this cause, violence spread through the countryside as the people’s needs continued to be denied. A revolution of a sort was seen as the only way in which progress could be made and the marginalized and suppressed voices could be

¹²⁰ Garry Leech, "Life in a FARC Camp," *Dissident Voice*, <http://dissidentvoice.org/2007/09/life-in-a-farc-camp/>, (Sept. 1, 2007).

¹²¹ Leech, *Life in a FARC Camp*.

¹²² Che Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 38.

heard. The same powers and parties have ruled in Colombia since its creation, and after a decade of sheer violence, something new was indubitably the cure that Colombia needed to find.

Conclusion

To conclude, the FARC emerged out of violence initiated by Colombia's political parties of the ruling elite, yet the peasants and masses used the penetration of violence throughout the city and deep into the countryside as fuel to fight for change. Similarly with nations around the globe, colonization has left developing nations in ruins, imbedded with weak, unstable governments. In Colombia, power succeeded from Spain only to fall unto the wealthy landowners, who had little regard for rural farmers aside from their cultivation ability of economic commodities. This disregard brought on by the oligarch created sentiments within the masses to seek separation from the constraints of Bogotá and the dueling powers of the Liberals and Conservatives. Such violence and conflict present in Colombian politics serve to rationalize the Leftist peasants and guerillas' creation and of the peoples' army: an army established in the fight for equality.

The following chapter will discuss the aforementioned idea of United States' influence in Colombia primarily in regards to the declaration of the insurgency as a "terrorist" organization. The issue to be uncovered is how the term "terrorism" is discussed globally and whether or not the classification is justified. Terrorism has been altered in past decades. Substantial changes in tactic and ideology behind the military strategy have ensued and as a result the definition that accompanies current day "terrorism" has reached an over used and generalized explanation.

CHAPTER THREE

The Illusion of Terrorism and Misrepresented Guerilla Warfare

As the history of Colombia and the FARC demonstrated, there has not always been a connection between the insurgency and terrorism. The connection is new and profound as it came as a result of the September 11 attacks against the United States. This section confronts the accusation against the decades-old insurgency as a new-age “terrorist” organization. In addition, the falsified label of “terrorist” veers the public image of the FARC-EP to a negative route and also defers from the organizations original connection with guerilla warfare.

Terrorism originated in the midst of the French Revolution, however, it has undergone a rebirth and reconstruction in the years after September 11. Today, the international community, but mainly the U.S. places the label on almost any organization that serves to question the status quo. The overindulgence of the terminology has consequently diminished the power and meaning of the strategy. This chapter examines the illegitimate notion of “terrorists” that the hard liner governments of Colombia and the United States have deemed unto the FARC-EP.

Terrorists or Not?

In recent years, the FARC-EP has adopted more violent roles to spread their cause in order to “upset the civilian economic and social life of [the] adversary state as to force

negotiations to more equal terms.”¹²³ Furthermore, the insurgency has moved towards these aggressive methods in order to gain grounds against the corrupt Colombian administrations and the militarily trained and backed right-wing paramilitaries. However, these tactics have consequently upset Colombian administrations and thus the United States’ government. In return, the hard-liner governments and the media have strengthened the designation of the FARC-EP as a terrorist organization to further discredit the insurgency publicly. The FARC-EP serves as a threat to these administrations because it “seeks to alter the status quo and shake complacent (dominant) populations or elites out of their complacency. It threatens our comfortable and insulated everyday lives.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, today, the connotation associated with terrorism vilifies a so-called “terrorist” organization beyond previous measures.

There are two issues that surface in the argument to free the FARC-EP from the titles of “terrorists” and “narco-terrorists.” The primary issue is the complex and disputed definition of what constitutes as “terrorism.” The intricacy of the term has therefore denoted “terrorism” as an unproductive and controversial word that has been too politicized, used and redefined to hold any legitimate power in the world today. Secondly, the term has been embedded into global society and has consequently made it difficult to identify the contrast between terrorism and guerilla warfare.

Generalities and assumptions fill the U.S. formulated criterion that justifies terrorist designations. The Legal Criteria for Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the U.S. State Department reads as follows:

1. It must be a *foreign organization*.

¹²³ Marc E. Nicholson, "An Essay on Terrorism," 2003, in Thomas J. Badey, ed., *Violence and Terrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2009), 7.

¹²⁴ Nicholson, 7.

2. The organization must *engage in terrorist activity*, as defined in section 212 (a)(3)(B) of the INA (8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(3)(B)), or *terrorism*, as defined in section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 (22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2)), or *retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism*.
3. The organization's terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests) of the United States.¹²⁵

Clauses such as the organization must “retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism” present on the *Legal Criteria for Designation* of terrorist organizations can potentially denote any group as a terrorist association due to the broad implications. In addition to this arbitrary classification, the third point addressed under the Criteria reads, “the organization’s terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests) of the United States.” The insertion of the threat to “the economic interests of the United States” unravels the subject to be examined and analyzed in the subsequent chapter. The section develops the idea that the U.S. government has named the guerillas “terrorists” in order to protect their oil interests held by Occidental Petroleum. Furthermore, the resulting actions of U.S. taken to secure their economic interest have consequently and beneficially funneled money back into huge U.S. corporations such as Bell Helicopter, Sikorsky Aircraft Corporations and DynCorp.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> (February 10, 2011).

¹²⁶ David Montero, Kelly Whalen, *Global Reach: U.S. Corporate Interests in Colombia*, Public Broadcasting Service, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/colombia/corporate.html> (March 5, 2011).

History and Evolution of Terrorism

The first issue to be addressed is the complexity of the term “terrorism.” The matter can be discussed through examination of the history of the tactic. It has become a broad category used to denounce opposition threats worldwide in order to strengthen the status quo and current powers. Terrorism has transformed from its original establishment at the wake of the French Revolution in 1789 as a mechanism of terror used by the state against the masses, to being associated primarily with non-governmental groups fighting oppression.¹²⁷ However, still, the main clauses in the definition of terrorism are (1) use of violence; (2) political objectives; (3) the intention of instilling fear in a target population.¹²⁸ As further developed by Ariel Merari, a professor at Tel Aviv University, the broad definition of terrorism allows for a variety of different events to fall under the category of terrorism, which thus reduces the power behind the word. Merari uses the United States’ bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945 as an example. The acts were made of pure violence, encompassed with political ends and instilled fear in every Japanese citizen. Yet, the term “terrorism” is more commonly associated with insurgent rather than state violence.¹²⁹

It is a moral fiction to draw a sharp distinction between resort to force by states and employment of force by subnational, including terrorist, groups. Both cases bring death and entail the use of violence. The chief distinction is a surface legitimacy to the state premised on little more than its greater longevity and organized control of territory. Thus these varied actors—state and non-state—are

¹²⁷ Adam Roberts, “The Changing Faces of Terrorism,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, Aug. 27, 2002 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/sept_11/changing_faces_01.shtml), Mar. 1, 2011.

¹²⁸ Ariel Merari, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency,” in Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 14.

¹²⁹ Merari, 16.

better judged and distinguished ultimately by the morality of their ends, not by a priori 'status'.¹³⁰

While terrorism surfaced in the late 1700s, a substantial change in the actions associated with the mechanism of coercion came in 1878 with the Russian revolutionaries of "Narodnaya Volya." These revolutionaries used "terrorism" against political oppressors in order to surge a revolution of their own through the method of assassination. Political assassination by means of terrorism continued to be the associated technique of terrorism for decades. Eventually, this type of terrorism led to the initial spark of World War I with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.¹³¹ The next significant change in terrorism came in the years after World War II. New targets emerged, policemen, local officials and, in some instances, civilians. New tactics developed consisting of hostage-taking, aircraft hijackings and bombings of buildings.¹³² The definition changed dramatically one last time with the actions of members of *al Qaeda* in the United States on September 11.

The history of terrorism demonstrates the difficulties that arise in regards to the ability to distinguish groups as terrorist organizations or not. The terminology is ever changing and no two groups are the same. A plethora of organizations have developed to fight a number of different causes. Also, as seen through the formation of the FARC-EP, the ideology behind the struggle and tactics of the organization is based on the fundamental desire for social equality. Furthermore, Professor Adam Roberts, Professor Emeritus at Oxford University, writes that the common quote, "one man's terrorist is

¹³⁰ Nicholson, 6.

¹³¹ Roberts, *BBC*, Aug. 27, 2002.

¹³² Roberts, *BBC*, Aug. 27, 2002.

another man's freedom fighter,” which reflects genuine doubts about the term.¹³³

Roberts further discusses the strife that contends with defining terrorism.

The labeling of individuals and movements as 'terrorist' will remain complicated and highly political. Two key questions arise: (1) Is it reliance on terror that truly distinguishes a movement from its political opponents? (2) Even if parts of a movement have employed terrorist methods, is 'terrorist' an accurate description of the movement as a whole, made up of many different wings, and employing many different modes of action?¹³⁴

Roberts' remark directly denounces the over use of the term terrorism and the excessive classification of opposition forces around the globe. In today's global society, “terrorism” has permeated foreign policy, specifically in the United States, in order to deter ideological foes and to protect economic investment, political relationships and global power.

Terrorism: The New Communism

As Europe crumbled in 1945 due to the exhaustion of war brought on by the various fascist regimes, the U.S. was able to sustain growth and prosperity because of its geographic location and hesitant entrance into the war. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union emerged from the end of the war as a dueling superpower alongside the United States. The “two blocs represented the vanguard of radically opposing socio-economic and political systems, which both sides believed were destined to become globally universal.”¹³⁵ These conflicting ideologies almost completely shaped U.S. foreign policy for the four decades following the close of World War II, the Cold War.

¹³³ Roberts, *BBC*, Aug. 27, 2002

¹³⁴ Roberts, *BBC*, Aug. 27, 2002

¹³⁵ Michael Cox, Doug Stokes, *US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 38.

The United States spread its power and dominance, not solely to undermine Soviet influence, but to pressure other states into adopting policies that would compliment an American vision of how the post-war international economy should exist.¹³⁶ Such policies were implemented in countries that appeared valuable to the U.S., weak, or susceptible to communistic rule and worked to dismantle trading blocs that were set off from American capital. The United States portrayed the fight against communism to the American people as means of securing American safety, promoting democracy and aiding the people of the inflicted country and thus justifying any actions against communism.¹³⁷

The economic prominence within U.S. foreign policy, through the guise of communism, is evident in the instances of Greece, Iran and Guatemala. In 1947, the U.S. intervened in a civil war in Greece. The U.S. supported the neo-fascists over the Left simply because of their anti-communism ideals. In Iran, in 1953, the U.S. overthrew elected Prime Minister Mossadegh because of his intentions to national the British-owned oil company. The coup placed the Shah in power; he was responsible for 25 years of oppression, torture and abuse. Lastly, in Guatemala in 1954, the U.S. supported a coup d'état against democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz. Similar to the circumstances in Iran, Arbenz had nationalized, which to the U.S. exemplified communism, some of the United Fruit Company holdings. In both Iran and Guatemala, the underlying reason for intervention was the protection of economic interests (which can be seen today with Occidental Petroleum in Colombia). Through the decree of communism, the United States altered the governments in each of these countries and in each instance replaced

¹³⁶ Cox and Stokes, 68.

¹³⁷ Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times/Henry Holt, 2007).

democracy with violent, capitalist dictatorships.¹³⁸ Today, a similar tone is dispersed to the U.S. population meaning that intervention and foreign policy can be credited to “terrorism” in order to gain support and deter opposition.

September 11’s Rebirth of Modern Day Terrorism

The switch from the scare of communism to the fright of terrorism did not begin in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union, but rather it emerged after *al Qaeda’s* attacks against the United States in 2001. The large-scale terrorist attacks committed by members of *al Qaeda* on New York City’s World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia undoubtedly transformed the term “terrorism” into what it is perceived to be today. These acts of terrorism took the lives of nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. “In the entirety of the twentieth century no more than fourteen terrorists incidents had killed more than one hundred people. And until 9/11 no terrorist operation had ever killed more than five hundred people.”¹³⁹ The magnitude of these attacks has consequently altered the terminology and connotation.

That being said, to reiterate, terrorism has undergone a reformation in recent decades; today, “terrorism” is a derogatory term embedded with negative connotations rather than a term for specific activity based on the idea of **means to an end**.¹⁴⁰ Marc Nicholson, a retired Foreign Service Officer, poses this question, “Do terrorists’ means justify their ends,” in his essay entitled, *An Essay on Terrorism*. There are “terrorist” movements now and in history based on genuine political goals, which resorted to violent

¹³⁸ William Blum, *U.S. Interventions - 1945 to the Present*, Third World Traveler, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Blum/US_Interventions_WBlumZ.html (Feb. 4, 2011).

¹³⁹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 18.

¹⁴⁰ Merari, 12.

tactics because they served as the most effective means available.¹⁴¹ Historically, terrorism has been a tool of the oppressed, used by disaffected groups or minorities in opposition to oppressive, military-backed powers.¹⁴² Yet, the definition of “terrorism” has undergone too many forms since its appearance during the French Revolution to have a clear definition today. On the political scene, the over usage of the term has obscured the legitimacy and significance of the label, and the ambiguous definition can be applied to almost any violent incident. The determination of which organizations are labeled as terrorists is effected primarily by politics. The issue presented is that when a term becomes too politicized, reasoning and truths are skewed in order to legitimize the allegation.

A direct result of 9/11 and the newly proclaimed fear and label of “terrorism,” in direct connection with Colombia, came with President Pastrana’s proclamation of the FARC-EP as a terrorist organization. In February 2002, President Pastrana announced that rebels would be treated as terrorists “and in that, the world supports us.”¹⁴³ Until this time, the government of President Andrés Pastrana had never publicly referred to the guerillas as terrorists.¹⁴⁴

It was only after Washington went to war against Iraq and Afghanistan, and the US-dominated mass media launched a massive and sustained propaganda blitz labeling all critics and adversaries of US global militarism, that the “terrorist” label was pinned on the FARC. Under intense pressure from the elite media and under the scrutiny of the US security apparatus, many otherwise progressive intellectual and writers caved in and joining the chorus labeling the FARC and “terrorists.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Nicholson, 6.

¹⁴² Nicholson, 7.

¹⁴³ Jonathan Baker, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism* (Oxford: Verso Books), 134.

¹⁴⁴ Tickner, 67.

¹⁴⁵ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia*, xiii.

U.S. influence when it comes to the designation of terrorist organizations is immense but not necessarily concrete. The events of September 11 that speared the country's persona and faith placed immeasurable emotional and personalized angst on the word "terrorism." Thus, after the lives of thousands of innocents were stolen by one ill-hearted organization, judgment is undoubtedly distorted to create a bias and passion against any perspective oppositional forces.

Terrorist or Freedom Fighter?

Nicholson discusses the idea that if a terrorist organization is successful in obtaining its goal, then the leaders and the group itself can then be renamed and accepted as successful liberators and figures. For example, the African National Congress (ANC) was created during the apartheid era in South Africa in order to represent the black citizens and fight for recognition and rights. After decades of pacifism, nonviolence and community activism, only to be met with brutal state terror, in 1961, the organization looked towards violence to further their cause. They formed a military wing and targeted government facilities, the South African military, and some foreign businesses; these actions allotted them a place on the U.S. State Department's terrorist list.¹⁴⁶ In 1994, Nelson Mandela, who strongly advocated for the creation of the *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed wing of the ANC, became the president of South Africa.¹⁴⁷ Mandela went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.¹⁴⁸ Mandela and the ANC are a perfect example of an organization that had few options apart from armed actions to meet their goals.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Moran, *Terrorist Groups and Political Legitimacy*, Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism/terrorist-groups-political-legitimacy/p10159#p2> (Mar. 16, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ Nobel Peace Prize, *Nelson Mandela*, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1993/mandela-bio.html (Feb. 1, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ Nobel Peace Prize.

Seemingly, the main difference between the ANC and the FARC-EP is the cause for which each group stands. The ANC organized against racially based inequality, an issue that has been faced and dealt with worldwide. On the other hand, the FARC-EP struggles against distribution of wealth, which is prevalent still around the globe, especially in countries like the United States and Brazil. Furthermore, as Roberts notes, in 1987-8 the United Kingdom and U.S. governments labeled the ANC as “terrorists,”

A questionable attribution even at the time not because there had been no violence, but because the ANC's use of violence had been discriminate and had constituted only a small part of the ANC's overall strategy.¹⁴⁹

A similar example is found in that of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The Irish were oppressed and abused by English powers since mercenaries invaded Ireland in 1169. In 1607, the area known today as Northern Ireland was divided among the English and the Scottish.¹⁵⁰ Later, religious diversity and minimal rights of the Irish citizens further ignited tensions within Ireland and consequently lead to the formation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Republican Army.¹⁵¹ During World War I, the IRA confronted the British powers and won independence for the Irish Free State, Éire.¹⁵² Later, the IRA and its chief strategist, Michael Collins, destabilized British rule with limited means but remarkable organization and tactic. “Their experiment brought hope to myriad independence movements in Europe and beyond.”¹⁵³ In 1969, the IRA decided to leave violent means behind and move toward politics and negotiations.¹⁵⁴

However, the organization stood divided and consequently the Provisional Irish

¹⁴⁹Roberts, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/sept_11/changing_faces_07.shtml

¹⁵⁰ Jerrold M. Post, *In the Mind of the Terrorists* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 40.

¹⁵¹ Post, 39-40.

¹⁵² Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 97.

¹⁵³ Chaliand and Blin, 97.

¹⁵⁴ Post, 48.

Republican Army (PIRA), also known as the Provos, and the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) were created accordingly as the military and political wings.¹⁵⁵ As the IRA became more powerful in the 1970s, both the political and militant sides took actions against the British oppression. The organization bombed locations, organized hunger strikes, developed campaigns, planned protests, discussed cease-fires and resumed peace negotiations.¹⁵⁶ However, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the term “terrorism” became undoubtedly loaded, the IRA noted that they would work to dismantle their arms and work towards political resolution for Ireland.¹⁵⁷ In the end, in 2007, Martin McGuinness a former leader of the PIRA, was sworn in as deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland and thus the prospect of political reconciliation is real and holds a similar ending to that of Nelson Mandela and the ANC.¹⁵⁸

The examples of the ANC and the IRA demonstrate the first proposed issue of this chapter: the difficulties of labeling organizations as “terrorists.” They represent the inaccuracy of the criteria used to designate terrorists as well as the complicity of the term itself. The second proposed matter plaguing the title of “terrorists” is contingent with the argument between guerilla warfare and terrorism. Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, experts in the field of guerilla warfare, argue that the terms “terrorism” and “guerrilla war” are unfairly used interchangeably. At this point, guerilla warfare, its origins, tactics, definitions and specific cases will be identified and discussed primarily through one of Latin America’s most prominent guerilla figures, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, as well as China’s Mao Tse-Tung and Vietnam’s Vo Nguyen Giap.

¹⁵⁵ Post, 48.

¹⁵⁶ Post, 48-54.

¹⁵⁷ Post, 54.

¹⁵⁸ Post, 54.

Contrast Between Guerillas and Terrorists

Guerilla warfare as a military term has been in existence since at least the commencement of the nineteenth century. Guerilla warfare seems to surface when forces that have greater numbers attack a nation or group of people and more advanced technology.¹⁵⁹ Guerilla warfare serves as a tactic to undermine the more powerful party seemingly obtains the power over the subversive group. However, a noted transformation in the twentieth century of guerilla warfare is the use of guerilla tactics internally rather than against an outside unit or power. For example, Mao Tse-Tung, a Chinese communist revolutionary and guerilla warfare strategist who lead China's Revolution, wrote, "our strategy is to 'pit one against ten,' and our tactics are 'pit ten against one.'"¹⁶⁰ What this means is that guerillas must look for the opportune moments to attack their aggressors. Mao led the communist Red Army of China, and at its inception, it was greatly inferior in both size and technology to the state's White Army, Kuomintang. The manner in which Mao successfully confronted the superior forces is through his tactical idea to "pit ten against one." He would wait until his army had the advantage and work to isolate the opposition so that his forces could "destroy the enemy one by one."¹⁶¹ In the end, the results of guerilla fighters were due to greater intelligence and tactic as well as intimate links with the population.¹⁶²

Though Mao Tse-Tung and others such as Vo Nguyen Giap of Vietnam were influential and pivotal leaders of their own guerilla movements, this chapter will

¹⁵⁹ Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁶⁰ Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 53.

¹⁶¹ Schram, 53.

¹⁶² Schram, 53.

investigate and detail further into Guevara and his guerilla warfare. The emphasis is on Guevara simply because of the geographical location between Colombia and Cuba. Che Guevara said the victory of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 shows “plainly the capacity of the people to free themselves by means of guerilla warfare from a government that oppresses them.”¹⁶³ Che died a “martyr and a prophet for leftist causes and beliefs.”¹⁶⁴ The story and image of Guevara has been popularized and associated with rebellion and liberty, but the story and ideology behind Guevara transcends contemporary fashion popularity. In 1961, two years after the successful overthrow of Fulgencio Batista, Guevara published a written manual on guerilla warfare. The account, in detail, describes and discusses the main causes, tactics, methods, means and ideas behind the fight for liberation and equality based on guerilla strategy. Marc Becker, a historian, states in the introduction to Guevara’s text that,

Che’s life represents a selfless dedication to the concerns of underclass, a struggle to encourage people to place the needs of the broader society above their own narrow personal wishes and desires, and a willingness to make extensive personal sacrifices to achieve a more just and equitable social order.¹⁶⁵

The decade leading up to the Cuban Revolution marked the commencement of many socialist revolutionary movements in Latin America. The ongoing threat of U.S. imperialism in countries like Guatemala and Cuba sparked the creation and development of policy based more on nationalization and agrarian reform. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro were at the forefront of these changes in Latin America. The success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 allowed for Guevara’s creation of the three fundamental lessons of how to the conduct revolutionary movements in America. First, popular forces can win a

¹⁶³ Guevara, 7.

¹⁶⁴ Marc Becker, *Introduction of Guerilla Warfare* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), v.

¹⁶⁵ Becker, v.

war against the army. Secondly, it is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making a revolution exist; the insurrection can create them. Finally, the underdeveloped countryside of the Americas is the basic area for armed fighting.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, decades before the eminent threat of terrorism and the proclaimed attributes of a terrorist organization, Guevara wrote about terrorism and the controversy that surrounds the topic.¹⁶⁷ He drew a line between *terrorism* and *sabotage*. He was aware of the benefits of *sabotage* over an enemy, but at the same time, he heavily emphasized the effects that these violent and deceitful acts would have on the future relationships between the opposing forces and thus the prospect of reconciliation and negotiations.

It happens that in a civil war the repression by the government power in certain towns is already so great that, in fact, every type of legal action is suppressed already, and any action of the masses that is not supported by arms is impossible...At any rate, well-managed sabotage is always a very effective arm, though it should not be employed to put means of production out action, leaving a sector of the population paralyzed (and thus without work) unless this paralysis affects the normal life of the society.¹⁶⁸

He continues to discuss *sabotage* as “one of the invaluable arms of a people that fights in guerilla form.”¹⁶⁹ Guevara introduces sabotage because it is a tactic that proves increasingly beneficial when alternative options have been exhausted. Much of Guevara’s ideology is found throughout the FARC-EP and the way in which they are organized and operated.

Since guerillas and insurgents often employ the same tactics (assassination, kidnapping, hit-and-run attack, bombings and hostage-taking) just as known terrorist

¹⁶⁶ Guevara, 7.

¹⁶⁷ Guevara, 22.

¹⁶⁸ Guevara, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Guevara, 99.

organization do, the connection can be made.¹⁷⁰ However, the FARC-EP does not kidnap innocent people in hopes to instill fear in the people. Instead, according to the U.S. State Department, “terrorist groups such as the FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips.”¹⁷¹ Moreover, though exact numbers and lists of offenses attributed to the FARC-EP are nearly impossible to encounter, the majority of the attacks associated with the insurgency are directed towards the Colombian Army and not civilians. However, the majority of the bombings and killings that the media connects with the FARC-EP emphasize not only attacks against the police and the Colombian Army but against Colombian civilians. There are in fact many instances in which both indigenous and Afro-Colombians have been gravely affected by Colombia’s internal conflict. These acts should be noted and condemned. However, the heart of the attacks are against the national power.

It is important to highlight the FARC’s infractions against civilians. The FARC-EP has been named responsible for the *La Gabarra Massacre* in 1996 where 34 coca farmers were killed due to supposed drug related motivations.¹⁷² Another horrific massacre due to the violence between the AUC and the FARC-EP took place in Bojayá, Chocó, a department comprised mostly of afro-Colombians. A reported 119 civilians were killed in the territorial dispute between the guerillas and the paramilitary.¹⁷³

Although these massacres are terrible and unjust, the FARC-EP typically targets the

¹⁷⁰ Hoffman, 35.

¹⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, *Travel.State.Gov*, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_941.html (Jan. 10, 2011).

¹⁷² Ruth Morris, “Colombian Rebels Blames for the Killing of 34,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 27, 2011 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2004/jun/17/world/fg-colombia17>).

¹⁷³ Daniel Mosquera, “The Afro Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi in Quibdó and its Narratives of Amendment,” in Derek Pardue, ed., *Ruminations of Violence* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2008), 75.

military and not civilians, however, in reality in any civil war, there are civilian casualties. For example, common FARC-EP attacks are the destruction of military bases, like that of Miraflores in southern Guaviare or similar to in 1998 when FARC-EP combatants ambushed the 52nd counter-guerilla battalion.¹⁷⁴

The FARC-EP True Guerilla Insurgents

Bruce Hoffman, the Director of the Center for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University and former Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency at the RAND Corporation, states that guerilla groups typically have a large number of armed individuals and military hierarchy. They also lead attacks against enemy military forces, seize and hold territory in order to form sovereign control over a defined geographical area and its population.¹⁷⁵ While on the other hand, terrorists do not function openly as an armed unit, generally do not attempt to seize or hold territory, avoid engaging enemy military forces, have little control over mass mobilization and see little to no dominance on both local and national levels.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, terrorist groups focus on lone assassinations or will have a maximum amount of 40-50 people involved in one mission. Furthermore, guerrillas and terrorists differ additionally in their choice of weaponry; where terrorist organizations use homemade bombs, car bombs, explosives etc., the FARC-EP and guerrilla groups use more military type arms like rifles and machine guns.

According to Hoffman's, *Inside Terrorism*, "nearly a third of the thirty-seven groups on the U.S. State Department's 'Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations' list

¹⁷⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_attacks_attributed_to_FARC

¹⁷⁵ Hoffman, 35.

¹⁷⁶ Hoffman, 35.

could just as easily be categorized as guerillas.”¹⁷⁷ Aforementioned justifications of the FARC-EP as a guerilla group allow for the assumption that the Marxist-Leninist group would fall into the third of the organizations that should be rightfully omitted from the U.S. State Department’s list.

Additionally, along with the term terrorism, a newly fashioned title, “narco-terrorism” has been applied internationally to further disparage organizations like that of the FARC-EP. Narco-terrorism, a term developed in the mid 1980s, is typically defined as, the “use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organizations.”¹⁷⁸ In regards to the FARC-EP, Isacson agrees that the term unjustly gives the organization a bad name internationally and implies that they do not have a social base or agenda.

Violent Conclusion

This thesis does not support terrorism, the violence it creates or the deaths it causes. However, it does examine and understand the differences between guerilla insurgencies and terrorist groups. Additionally, it examines the legitimacy of the term “terrorism” as it has been greatly modified, overused and politicized in past years. Similarly, this research also realizes and acknowledges the history of terrorism and the reasoning behind means to an end tactics. The discerning acts of the FARC-EP are condemned and recognized as the killings and kidnappings of innocent citizens should never be a sought out option for success. However, the existence and ideology of the guerrilla group are valued. The analysis and research provided by the history of terrorism

¹⁷⁷ Hoffman, 36.

¹⁷⁸ Hoffman, 17.

as well as the contrast between guerilla groups and terrorists coupled with recent insignificance of the term “terrorism” create a base to comprehend and appreciate the laudable objectives of the insurgency and the means of which they have undertaken to achieve said goals.

As contextualized by the previous chapter, the history of violence and unjust governing in Colombia provides a base for the intentions and actions of the FARC-EP. Violence and corruption are present in the offices of the government and the armies of the right wing paramilitaries, not just the FARC-EP. In order to compete with opposing forces while simultaneously increasing support, the insurgency has had no choice but to intensify their actions. The disputing forces are not innocent and flawless in Colombia, thus the portrayal of the FARC-EP as a terrorist organization cannot be perceived without the analysis and description of the government’s armed forces and the right-wing paramilitaries of the country. A poignant conclusion is that, in retrospect, in comparison with the dueling powers in Colombia, the FARC-EP is the lesser of all evils. The intertwined political and economic connections between each of these parties further emphasize reasons for the tainted reputation of the insurgency denounced by governmental administrations.

The subsequent chapter will use the material discussed here to open investigation between the dueling military groups engaged in civil war in Colombia. Right-wing paramilitaries will be introduced and contextualized as their connection with the Colombian government is dissected. These paramilitaries along with the Colombian armed forces are responsible for human rights abuses and scores of extra-judicial murders throughout the country; total blame for the violent circumstances of Colombia and its

civil war cannot be solely attributed to the guerillas. Guerilla compliance and peace talks are another primary topic established at the forefront of the following chapter. The section also recognizes and investigates U.S. foreign policy and its detrimental affect on Colombian society, specifically that of the rural farmers and the insurgents fighting for their cause. U.S. influence towards certain policies and the implementation of Plan Colombia are discussed as well as the underlying economic ties that accompany the plan. From these economic ties, U.S. infiltration emerges and as a result, U.S. citizens, Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Tom Howes, working for the private contracting company Northrop Grumman, were kidnapped by the FARC-EP guerillas. This specific event and their story opens the discussion on the insurgency's tactic and increasing amount of kidnappings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Peace Talks, Plan Colombia and *Secuestrados*

The FARC developed directly to oppose the status quo. Such a bold move has not only distressed the government that they openly combat, but consequently, in an interconnected political and economic world, upset and made an enemy out of the United States. In return to the rebels' opposition, the previous chapter discussed the ways in which Colombian and U.S. administrations have discredited the insurgency. However, this section uncovers the true, misrepresented reasoning behind the United States' role in combating drugs and terrorists in Colombia.

Corruption plagues Colombia, and consequently it hinders the political process between the guerrillas and the government. Although the FARC-EP has taken part in peace talks with various Colombian administrations, reconciliation exceeds agendas and planned negotiations. The United States' interference and accelerated policies complicate the relationship between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government. The fact is that the U.S. does not allocate billions of dollars to Colombia to make the country safe and riden of drugs and rebels. Instead, the U.S.'s main interests in Colombia resonate in economic profit. Occidental Petroleum and the oil fields of Colombia seem to be the actual motives for U.S. influence and propagation against the FARC-EP that deems them terrorists. U.S. intervention and policies towards Colombia serve as a tidal wave of speculation and hidden agendas. Furthermore, the role that the United States plays in Colombia is responsible for the kidnapping of, in a specific case, three U.S. contractors for Northrop Grumman.

Peace Talks and Negotiations

Throughout the history of the FARC and the civil war in Colombia, four administrations have worked towards negotiations with the guerillas. The process and negotiations began in 1982 with Belisario Betancur (1982-86). Virgilio Barco (1986-90) continued talks at the end of his administration and they began again during the first years of the César Gaviria (1990-94) government. Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) later reopened the peace talks. However, talks did not continue into President Uribe's administration and it does not appear that current President Juan Manuel Santos will initiate talks either.¹⁷⁹ During these talks and negotiations, the FARC-EP was not the only organization involved. In the first talks, the Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army-EPL), the ELN and the Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement- M-19) each took part in negotiations with Betancur.¹⁸⁰ During these talks with Betancur, the FARC, M-19 and EPL and the Colombian government reached similar agreements that included,

A cease-fire for one year; the creation of a high-level commission to verify compliance with the agreement; the granting of a series of juridical, political and social guarantees to facilitate the transition of the guerilla forces back to civilian life; and a rehabilitation program for peasant areas affected by the violence.¹⁸¹

However, both the EPL and the M-19 violated these truces while the FARC remained in the ceasefire for the duration of their agreement.¹⁸² Furthermore, during the first round of peace talks with Betancur, the commissioners insisted that the FARC condemn the

¹⁷⁹ Kline, 17.

¹⁸⁰ Kline, 17-18.

¹⁸¹ Kline, 18.

¹⁸² Kline, 18.

practices of kidnapping and extortion. In return, the FARC insisted that the government must,

Modernize the political institutions, enable agrarian reform, facilitate the mobilization of *campesinos* and indigenous groups, strengthen education, health, housing and labour policy, establish a policy of public order under the sole control of the institutional forces of the state and initiate reconciliation processes.¹⁸³

The FARC's active involvement in a series of peace negotiations demonstrates its commitment and desire to resolve the fundamental issues that urged the creation of the guerilla insurgency decades before. As Colombia has not seen a revolution since the fight for independence from Spain, the ideas and goals of the FARC are not uncommon or outlandish; they can be deemed reasonable and justified. Similar desires have been revolutionized throughout Latin America and much of the world preceding the inception of the guerilla group in the 1960s. Years after the first peace talks, in 1993, the FARC-EP and its leader and founder, Manuel "Tirofijo" Marulanda Vélez, issued a proposed agenda for the peace negotiations with the Gaviria administration, in which he outlined the goals and ideology of the nearly forty-year-old insurgency.

1. A political solution to the grave conflict in which the country is living.
2. A reform of the national military, reducing it to a size adequate to defend national borders and sovereignty
3. Political reform through strengthening democratic participation
4. Development and social justice, with private investment allowed in vital sectors such as energy, communications, public services, roads, ports, and the production of natural resources, but that the State should remain as the principal owner.
5. Social well-being, with 50 percent of the national budget dedicated to welfare, job creation, education, health and housing.
6. Income redistribution, though the value-added tax being applied only to luxury goods and services and with people with higher income paying higher income taxes.
7. An agrarian policy based on the elimination of large land holdings
8. Renegotiation of national resource exploration contracts with the multinational corporations, but not nationalization

¹⁸³ <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/colombia/negotiations-farc.php>

9. A change of foreign relations though a ten-year moratorium on foreign debt payments and a revision of military arrangements.
10. The solution to the production and marketing of narcotics with the financial support of the international community.¹⁸⁴

Marulanda has been the Commander in Chief since the creation of the organization, which allows for the stipulation that the goals and objectives of the FARC-EP have foreseen little change. Although methods, techniques and times have changed the fundamental principles of the FARC-EP remain intact through their armed struggle for equality. However, it is difficult to attain a current agenda or goals for today's FARC-EP with a new leader, Alfonso Cano.

Damage of Plan Colombia

On December 19, 1998, weeks before the first talks between Tirofijo and Pastrana commenced, Pastrana revealed the intentions of "Plan Colombia." The plan was coordinated by Pastrana's Commissioner Victor Ricardo, and they announced that the plan would be financed through resources of the state, the private sector and the international community. It was aimed towards aid for displaced citizens due to internal violence; aid would be given through legal title to lands as well as through projects intended to make the land more productive.¹⁸⁵ The planned purpose of Plan Colombia was to assist small farmers in the substitution of illicit crops in hopes of limiting coca and heroin poppy production throughout the countryside. Since the plan was proposed weeks before scheduled talks, Pastrana urged that the guerilla groups should contribute and adopt the plan "in the interest of a true reconciliation and in order to guarantee the

¹⁸⁴ Kline, 56-57.

¹⁸⁵ Kline, 56.

success of a fundamental peace process.”¹⁸⁶ Initially, Pastrana envisioned Plan Colombia as a sort of Marshall Plan for Colombia that would allot large amounts of money to social programs and education. However, the U.S. government intervened and the program became a military program that would cause deeper issues within Colombia.¹⁸⁷

Plan Colombia, as it is today, is a billion dollar investment from primarily the United States to eradicate coca cultivation in Colombia. It was created by the Pastrana administration in 1998; the initial plan did not involve heavy U.S. and military influence; however, the Clinton administration altered the initiative to a draft as it remains today under the Obama administration. The agreement between the U.S. and Colombia in 1998 became a \$1.3 billion agreement, less than twenty per cent of which would be spent on alternative options for the Colombian farmers.¹⁸⁸ The Colombian government would contest that they provide the *campesinos* with opportunities beyond cultivating coca and compensate the growers that chose different means of agriculture. According to William Brownfield, of the U.S. State Department and former Ambassador to Colombia, those coca growers that cease to cultivate coca and sign an agreement with the Colombian government will be provided assistance and support that will allow them to live a decent life. However, the Mayor of Puerto Aziz, southern Colombia, counters the former Ambassador’s statement and says,

Two million pesos or 950USD is not enough to live on. A family of five cannot survive one year on 950USD...what is provided is very little, we think it will be very difficult for the farmers to stop growing coca if the government doesn’t give them proper assistance.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Kline, 56.

¹⁸⁷ Kline, 56.

¹⁸⁸ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁸⁹ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

James H. Williams of the U.S. embassy in Bogotá states that the Colombian government and the U.S. are collaborating in order to reduce production of cocaine and trafficking in Colombia. He mentions that the governments provide an alternative to *traditional* coca growers and offers “a genuine economic alternative that is environmentally sound and economically viable.”¹⁹⁰ What the government suggests instead is the cultivation of yucca, pineapple and other crops. However, these small farmers do not have the means to transport their crops nor can they compete with the other economies, which is why many continue to grow coca and work with the guerillas.¹⁹¹ The truth is that the rural farmers and workers live in abandoned areas, have no economic opportunities and are all but forgotten by the government. “Hundreds of thousands of farmers driven to poverty by the international agro-business competition have been hired by the traffickers.”¹⁹² These are the exact reasons why the FARC was formed initially and why they still work to aid the farmers when the government’s plans fail.

In addition, Plan Colombia not only fails to provide the *campesinos* with other viable, lucrative alternatives, it spreads danger and disease through the herbicides that contractor companies are hired to spray on the coca fields. However, coca fields are not the only locations that are hit with the toxic herbicides. Farmers have reported that their personal crops such as yucca and banana as well as local fish populations are affected by the spread of the toxins and fumes.¹⁹³ Moreover, U.S. Congressman, Jim McGovern (D, M.A.), believes that aerial fumigation is a human rights violation. This contention is

¹⁹⁰ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹¹ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹² *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹³ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

supported by Dr. Theo Colborn of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), who argues that there has been a definite increase in skin disease in the Colombian regions hit by Monsanto's chemical, Roundup Ultra.¹⁹⁴ The effects due to the deadly chemicals of Monsanto have been seen not only in Colombia, but in Brazil, Ecuador and Peru as well. In 2002, the U.S. State Department reported that there are no harmful effects from the pesticides on the people and the herbicides do not pose health risks.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Dr. Colborn confirms that glyphosate, or Monsanto's Roundup Ultra, can cause tumors in the thyroid, pancreas and testicles. Further studies have shown that the glyphosate interferes with the enzyme systems in the thyroid, liver, pancreas and the brain.¹⁹⁶ According to studies conducted by Colombia's national human rights ombudsman in 2001 and 2002, the spraying glyphosate has both killed the legal crops within communities of southern Colombia as well as caused health problems due to inhalation and contact with the chemicals.¹⁹⁷ She observes the comparison between Colombia and the herbicides that were sprayed in Vietnam by the U.S. during the Vietnam War, that are now linked to child mutations and chronic illnesses.

Plan Colombia or Plan U.S.A

Noted linguist and professor Noam Chomsky questions in the documentary *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*, what gives the United States the right to intervene and take actions in other countries. He alludes to the comparison; if another

¹⁹⁴ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹⁵ Tickner, 65.

¹⁹⁶ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹⁷ Tickner, 65.

country were to spray herbicides on U.S. citizens' fields there would be an uproar.¹⁹⁸

Yet, the United States has a long history of intervention in foreign countries. While the government will argue and maintain ethical and social motivations for intervention, in reality much of U.S. foreign policy can be connected to economic purpose. As author and expert on American foreign policy, William Blum says, U.S. foreign policy is based on “making the world safe for American corporations, enhancing their financial statements, and preventing the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative capitalist model.”¹⁹⁹

Conveniently in Colombia, the “War on Drugs” is the scapegoat for U.S. influence and creation of Plan Colombia just as terrorism serves as the justification for war against the FARC-EP. The U.S. State Department will sustain that the military aid, training, money and resources appropriated to the Colombian government are issued for the feat against drugs. However, in both the documentary *Plan Colombia* and Josh Rushing, of Al Jazeera's *Fault Lines*, interview with Leech, it is concluded that the counter-narcotics war in Colombia is more of a counter-insurgency battle.²⁰⁰ Evidence to legitimize this statement lies in the number of drug fields that are sprayed in guerilla territory versus the amount sprayed in paramilitary lands.²⁰¹ The paramilitaries, namely the AUC's, known connections with the Colombian government liberate them from the unjust and dangerous herbicides that are spread over the poor, rural coca farmers of the countryside. Further conclusion and debate over Plan Colombia lies in the economic reasoning and reliance that the United States has in Colombia and its oil wealth.

¹⁹⁸ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

¹⁹⁹ http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Blum/US_Interventions_WBlumZ.html.

²⁰⁰ *After Words with Garry Leech*

²⁰¹ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

As of 2002, the annual sales of Occidental Petroleum Corporations, which is one of the largest U.S.-based oil and gas multinationals, were \$14 billion and the annual net income was \$1.2 billion.²⁰² Oil is a premium commodity in Colombia. In 1983, Occidental discovered the Caño Limón pipeline; it is the second largest oil field in Colombia and one of only fifty billion-barrel-class fields in the world.²⁰³ Occidental's share in Caño Limón alone yields hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The primary concern of the U.S. is to maintain control of the pipeline and oil fields. However, hypothetically speaking, if a Leftist-guerilla group were to gain power or control of the Colombian government, then there is the possibility that the oil industry within Colombia would be nationalized or severed from U.S. control. Thus comes the intervention and abundance of aid from the United States to Colombia; in 2002 Colombia received the third highest amount of aid from the United States after Egypt and Israel.²⁰⁴

U.S. Intervention

Similarly, in Chile the threat of nationalizing the copper industry erupted in the midst of the Cold War. However, under the guise of fighting communism, the U.S. government justified their intervention and eventual facilitation of a harsh dictatorial rule. Democratically elected President Salvador Allende's fight for nationalist movements created concerns for the United States and in turn the Nixon administration utilized propaganda and manipulation in order to gain economic control within Chile through the common legitimization of the fight against communism. The United States identified Allende's call to nationalize Chile's copper industry and prospective land reforms as a

²⁰² <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/colombia/corporate.html#1>

²⁰³ <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/colombia/corporate.html#1>

²⁰⁴ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

step towards communism and thus intervened based on national interest and security. To the U.S., the imminent threat of communism justified its right to promote capitalism abroad. However, in reality even though Santiago had relations with Havana and Moscow, it was still a weak constitutional coalition and it did not seek ties with Soviets like the ties that they had with Havana.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the United States saw an opportunity to use their foreign policy tactics to further expand capitalism and protect U.S. investments that would otherwise be threatened by nationalization.

The Chilean economy was based on copper, yet the country did not have control of the resource; ownership rested mainly in the hands of two United States companies, Kennecott and Anaconda. Thus, when Allende took power, he and Congress in 1971 unanimously voted to nationalize the resource so that benefits could be seen at home instead of abroad.²⁰⁶ The United States inserted power and influence within the country, in order to push the country to free-market ideals. The U.S. did this through means of coercion and through aid that led to the instillation and military coup of General Pinochet in 1973, and all because of the threat of losing the profit of the copper industry.²⁰⁷

In the end, capitalism spread and Chile became a free-market economy. However it came at a price of thousands of murders and disappearances issued by the dictator, Pinochet. Soon thereafter, to further aid Chile in its quest for capitalism, famed economist Milton Friedman flew to the country to discuss how to deal with inflation and policies that would support and promote a free-market economy. He stated that, there is an “inescapable link between free markets and freedom,” while stressing that a repressive

²⁰⁵ Cox and Stokes, 307.

²⁰⁶ John Pike, *Salvador Allende's Leftist Regime, 1970-73 - Chilean Intelligence Agencies*, Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/chile/allende.htm> (Sept. 11, 1998).

²⁰⁷ <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/chile/allende.htm>

government and a free economy do not generally coincide.²⁰⁸ Once the U.S.-backed general assumed power, he and his administration looked towards the “Chicago Boys” in order to jump-start a new economy based on free-market ideals and to also push it further away from Leftist-elected Allende’s policies. The “Chicago Boys” were Chicago-educated economists from Chile that helped bring what they had learned at the Chicago School of Economics to Chile to stabilize a U.S. friendly economy.²⁰⁹ This tangent and comparison in Chile illustrates the common relationship that the U.S. holds with many Latin and Central American countries. A similar issue persists in Colombia in regards to the Leftist FARC-EP and the oil industry. The eminent threat of nationalization and limited U.S. benefits scares the U.S. government, and thus the “War on Drugs” and fight against terrorism are heavily implemented and pursued in Colombia.

United States Economic Protection

In 2002, the United States’ budget for the war on terrorism and the defense of national security was \$27 billion. Of that amount, \$35 million was allotted to counterinsurgency activities in Colombia, the U.S. was also granted authority to use the aid for counternarcotics as well as counterterrorism in Colombia.²¹⁰ However, controversy arises around the fact that the U.S. gives millions of dollars in aid to Colombia even though the government and military units are involved in extrajudicial murders or “false-positives,” today. These are murders of civilians that are later

²⁰⁸ “Commanding Heights: Chicago Boys and Pinochet,” http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/shared/video/qt/mini_p02_07_300.html, *PBS*.

²⁰⁹ “Commanding Heights: Chicago Boys and Pinochet.”

²¹⁰ Tickner, 67.

presented as guerillas killed in combat.²¹¹ In recent years, the Colombian Supreme Court began investigations based on accusations against members of the Colombian Congress and their collaboration with the paramilitaries. For example, as previously discussed, currently in Colombia persists the matter of the “parapolitics” scandal where more than eighty members of Uribe’s Congress are being investigated.²¹²

In addition, under the Leahy Amendment, named for Senator Patrick Leahy (D., V.T.), the U.S. is prohibited from funding foreign security units in nations that have had reported human rights abuses.²¹³ Yet, the President has the authority to waive the amendment if the conditions at hand will affect U.S. national security; both Clinton and Bush waived the amendment regardless of the fact that there were a minimal amount of changes in the human rights abuses.²¹⁴ According to the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre, today, Colombia has between 3,303,979 and 4,915,579 internally displaced persons (IDPs).²¹⁵ This statistic does not include intra-urban displacement or the people displaced by crop fumigations, and it is derived from the government’s cumulative figures since 2000.²¹⁶ As of 2008, Colombia had the third largest population of internally displaced people.²¹⁷ According to Refugee International, nearly 200,000 persons are displaced a year in Colombia due to the armed internal conflict. The ultimate goal of organizations like Refugees International is to aid these citizens in a return home, however, much of the time it is neither sustainable nor safe to go back. The situation of

²¹¹ Kirsten Begg, “NGO: ‘Alarming’ Link between US aid and ‘false positives,’” *Colombia Reports*, July 30, 2010 (<http://colombiareports.com/colombia-news/news/11074-ngo-alarming-link-between-us-aid-and-false-positives.html>).

²¹² Human Rights Watch.

²¹³ Colombia Reports, July 20, 2010.

²¹⁴ Tickner, 68.

²¹⁵ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Colombia: Government Response Improves but Still Fails to Meet Needs of Growing IDP Population*, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia>

²¹⁶ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia> (Dec. 10, 2010).

²¹⁷ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

the displaced people is further escalated due to the lack of government support.²¹⁸ The people who are primarily affected by the violence of both the guerillas and paramilitaries are the rural *campesinos* as well as the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.²¹⁹ Once the families are displaced, they search for undesirable land to set up camp. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that IDPs end up living in slums in the periphery of large cities, which lack basic services. For example, outside of Bogotá alone there are tens of thousands of IDPs in the shantytowns of Altos de Cazuca and Altos de Florida. In these *barrios* there is little access to health, education or decent housing nor do those affected people have money or a place to live.²²⁰ On-going violence between the guerillas and the paramilitaries is the primary cause for the IDPs in Colombia. In many instances, guerillas and paramilitaries threaten and coerce populations into supporting their respective group. If the towns do not comply they do see the consequence.

In spite of human rights abuses and huge amounts of IDPs, the Bush administration requested that Colombia receive over \$500 million in addition to the aid already designated to the “War on Drugs.”²²¹ Evidence points towards U.S. economic investments in Colombia as the reason for the increased amounts of aid as well as the constant intervention and politics between the two nations. The economic ties come primarily from the Caño Limón oil pipeline located in the eastern Colombian province of Arauca, in which the American company Occidental Petroleum holds many shares. In a

²¹⁸ Refugees International, *Colombia*, <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work/americas/colombia>.

²¹⁹ <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work/americas/colombia>

²²⁰ The UN Refugee Agency, *Displaced Colombians Turn and Unwanted Corner of a Major Coastal Port into a Decent Home*, <http://www.unhcr.org/4b19463a9.html> (Jan. 4, 2010).

²²¹ Tickner, 67.

2002 budget proposal to Congress, Bush requested that approximately \$100 million be spent on training and equipment for new Colombian army brigades to protect the lucrative pipeline.²²² The pipeline is, along with military bases and units, a major point of attack for the Leftist guerillas in Colombia. The pipeline has been targeted by both the FARC-EP and the ELN over one thousand times in the past 25 years.²²³ The majority of the oil is exported to the United States and turned into profit. The influence of the U.S. in the oil industry in Colombia has similar aspects and correlations with that of the copper industry in Chile of the 1970s. The documentary, *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War*, concludes that the heavy influence and U.S. role in Colombia is primarily based on economic profit. However, the U.S. maintains legitimacy by the declaration of a war against drugs, terrorists and insurgencies. Furthermore, their fight against the guerillas is beneficial because the fall of the insurgency would eliminate the prospect of the nationalization of the oil industry if the FARC-EP were in fact able to gain a position in the government. In conclusion, the fight and vilification of the Leftist guerilla group is no more than a plot to reduce the chance for a non-capitalist government to come into power in Colombia and thus gain control of the oil export.

U.S. Profit and Personal Accounts

Unfortunately, economic and political matters appear to overpower the social aspects of Plan Colombia. Not only have we seen how the United States has intervened in Colombia in order to protect its assets in oil, but the implementation of Plan Colombia

²²² Tickner, 67.

²²³ Oil Watch Sudamerica, *Atentado Contro Oleoducto Caño-Limón*, <http://www.oilwatchsudamerica.org/Colombia/colombia-atentado-contra-oleoducto-cano-limon.html> (June 25, 2008).

itself has allowed for billions of dollars to be funneled back into U.S. corporations such as Monsanto, Northrop Grumman, Bell Helicopter Textron and Sikorsky Aircraft.²²⁴ According to William Hartung of the World Policy Institute, “it is not so much an aid program as much as another way to subsidize the military industrial complex in the United States.”²²⁵ Furthermore, the privatization of the war on drugs is due to the lack of support by the public. Former Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld “suggests that it is more economical to use contractors, rather than regular troops, because the army is stretched beyond capacity.”²²⁶ Isacson contributes in the documentary *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War* that no European or Latin American country supports the U.S. role or strategy issued by Plan Colombia. In the end, the influence and role of the U.S. along with the powers of the Colombian government are not exactly as they seem, instead, “Plan Colombia is more counterinsurgency than counternarcotics.”²²⁷

The ever-present influence and intervention of the United States is responsible for the abduction of three U.S. contractors, Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Tom Howes, by the Colombian insurgents. The three men worked as a drug surveillance unit for Northrop Grumman, a global security and private, multinational defense corporation; it is the fifth largest in the United States as it works to fight drugs in Colombia.²²⁸ The company works with the United States’ government to survey drug areas as well as to spray herbicides over the coca fields in Colombia. Gonsalves, Stansell and Howes were “mostly looking for coca fields and drug-processing labs under the control of the

²²⁴ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

²²⁵ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

²²⁶ Max Jourdan, “Protecting People or Profit,” *BBC*, Dec. 14, 2004 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/4079691.stm).

²²⁷ *After Words with Garry Leech*

²²⁸ *BBC*, Dec. 14, 2004.

principal revolutionary forces in Colombia, the FARC.”²²⁹ These flights and surveillance were initiated during the Pastrana administration in accordance with Plan Colombia, which was created in 1999.²³⁰

While this thesis has thus far favored the FARC-EP, the story of the three American contractors who crash-landed in the jungle sheds a different light on the insurgency, an image in accordance with the favored portrayal depicted by the hardliner governments. The vivid retelling of the three American contractors for Northrop Grumman, who were captured by the FARC-EP through *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* confronts an assortment of issues and gives detailed scenarios of life as a hostage to a rebel force in the Colombian jungle. The trio spent five plus years in the Colombian jungle and countryside at the hands of the guerrillas; they were subjected to extreme living conditions, were forced to wear chains, were malnourished, forced to march for weeks and saw minimal and inadequate healthcare. On July 2, 2008 the three men along with Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and eleven other hostages were rescued. There is no doubt that Gonsalves, Stansell and Howes were tried physically, mentally and emotionally for years as their future lay in the uncertain hands of the FARC-EP.²³¹

The written memoir of the three men is a compelling and remarkable story that evokes sheer emotion and clearly depicts and arouses true images of their pain and suffering, especially through the scenes where they discuss the importance of the radio. In Colombia, there are radio stations that for hours play only messages from family

²²⁹ Marc Gonsalves, Tom Howes, Keith Stansell, *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009).

²³⁰ *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*

²³¹ Gonsalves, Howes, and Stansell.

members of kidnapped persons to their missing loved one. Yet, while sympathy is the only feeling that the thesis directs towards the victims, criticism can be placed on the corporations and the governments. As previously discussed, the actual motives and basis for U.S. intervention and implementation of Plan Colombia are seemingly skewed by economic entities. As a result, private contractors are sent into Colombia to eradicate farmlands of peasants trying to make a living under the pretense that *campesinos* provide for and fuel the drug trade. One quote from *Out of Captivity: Surviving 1,967 Days in the Colombian Jungle* suggests a direct lack of knowledge from the men and women who are sent to take part in such a large-scale plan. In a section written by the youngest, Marc Gonsalves, he tries to discredit and belittle the youth that follow the guerillas, but instead he demonstrates his own innate ignorance of the vastness of the complexities that encompass the guerillas' struggle in their country. He says,

We ran into our own *¿quién sabe?* when we tried to imagine what these young men and women's lives had been like, how bad the conditions of their existence must have been to make them think that joining the FARC was a step up. A few of them we asked told us the same reason for having joined the guerrillas: "*la violencia.*" They didn't go on to explain what violence had been done to them personally, and we wondered if maybe they mean that they enjoyed being able to inflict damage on other people."²³²

While it is understood that a memoir written by hostages of the guerrilla group would be negative and would condemn the organization to its roots, the Colombian and U.S. governments do not have the same emotional strife to legitimize their active vilification. The U.S. dedication and involvement in Plan Colombia and aid in general to Colombia exemplifies why both Colombian and United States administrations defame the guerilla insurgency, the FARC-EP. United States' investments and interests in Colombian

²³² Gonsalves, Howes, and Stansell, 62.

resources and economics serve as fuel to vilify and publicly denounce the Leftist insurgency.

At this point, we have seen how the history of Colombia has shaped the violence that still exists today. The battle between Liberals and Conservatives can be argued as the catalyst behind the undeniable connection between violence and politics. Furthermore, this violence brought forth a cause for Leftist rebels to fight. Emphasized through the political and economic connections between the United States and Colombia, it has been demonstrated that the FARC-EP has not been easily categorized as a “terrorist” organization based on designated credentials or justifications. The following chapter will tie each of these chapters on history, terrorism and U.S. influence together in order to assert an argument on the falsities of the label of “terrorist” associated with the FARC-EP.

CHAPTER FIVE

How will the FARC-EP Fair?

As Colombian journalist and author of *Country of Bullets: Chronicles of War*, Juanita León acknowledges in her book, the “true” story behind events can be hidden, waiting to be uncovered. She also alludes to the fact that the truth lies within the people of Colombia, the thousands who are affected by the armed conflict daily, rather than mainstream newspapers and public media, which denote the conflict with a political emphasis and charge. This concept completely encapsulates the civil war and strife that has for decades plagued the country. As this thesis has demonstrated, simplicity is not a characteristic that follows the many relationships or labels that media and countless U.S. and Colombian administrations have designated unto the FARC-EP.

It has also worked to demonstrate a great spectrum of opinions on the guerilla insurgency. Through personal accounts of kidnapped persons like that of the United States contractors for Northrop Grumman, and in León’s retellings of affected people throughout Colombia, the thesis accounts for the negative, abusive and unjust actions of the FARC-EP. In addition, former Leftist guerilla groups such as the ELN as well as the wrong doings of the right-winged paramilitaries and the Colombian armed forces are addressed. In comparison, staunch believers and Leftist sympathizers found in James Brittain and James Petras develop the perception of the FARC-EP as the marginalized and oppressed forces of the countryside that have nobly joined together to protect the interests of the people.

Common rhetoric and discourse surrounding the rebels has long been established in order to protect political powers while simultaneously discrediting the insurgency.

The FARC-EP has been labeled “terrorists” and “narco-terrorists.” Such accusations have warranted U.S. intervention and harsh policies to suppress the insurgency and its *campesino* combatants. The struggle nears its fifty-year mark and the government still has not reacted to the circumstances of the rural poor in Colombia. Consequently, the rebel force continues to transform with the times to maintain powers within the country. In response, the government has further demonized the organization and since the Uribe administration of 2002 peace talks and negotiations have been halted and condemned.

The ensuing civil battles between Leftist guerilla fighters, right-wing paramilitaries and the Colombian government have ravaged and intimidated the country for decades. However, today, the Colombian and U.S. governments easily classify the initial peasant uprising and the formation of the FARC as terrorism. Present accusations are reliant on media portrayal and the random incidents and actions of the FARC-EP; the media and the government seemingly omit the context of the violence in Colombia while discussing the role of the FARC-EP. This unjust classification and vilification of the insurgency is what influenced the research on the root of the conflict. The conflict did not begin with guerilla attacks on the armed forces or civilians, but instead it surfaced as a clash between Colombia’s political powers of the Liberals and Conservatives.

The incorporation of the chapter discussing history serves to uncover the origins of violent politics and inequality in Colombia. In the mid nineteenth century, independence from Spain left the power still in the hands of the wealthy landowners and consequently rural poor were left marginalized and oppressed by politics and Colombian society. After violence erupted and the poor saw more abuse, need for revolution and change was abundant. Thus, the Marquetalia Republic organized to fight U.S. and

Colombian forces and later served to form the FARC in order to further their struggle against such powers. These actions of the Colombian and U.S. governments coupled with the disregard for the lower class population legitimized the creation of a resistance force. However, a “resistance” force or an organization that directly confronts the status quo automatically falls into a combat zone of hardline governments. As a result, the initial war against the guerillas was valid under the pretense of the “War on Drugs” and today the battle to dismantle the FARC-EP is masked by the “War on Terrorism.”

There has seemingly been a surge in international press coverage of the FARC-EP in recent months. Perhaps it can be attributed to the deaths of prominent figures in the organization, the global political climate, the release of hostages or new means for FARC-EP income. However, news sources in Colombia have updated stories on the FARC-EP almost daily. Specifically, Bogotá’s newspaper *El Tiempo*, on March 21, 2011, reported on a link between the rebel insurgency and Muammar Gadhafi.²³³ Libya’s Gadhafi is currently the center of attention as the harsh dictator of Libya who shows no mercy to his own citizens. Gadhafi’s oppression of his own people has warranted the actions of the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Furthermore, reports have not only linked the FARC-EP with Gadhafi but with Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua as well. Ortega led the Sandinistas to overthrow the dictatorship of the Somoza family. As a result, the Reagan administration vilified Ortega primarily because of his differing views. In conclusion, it seems that the sole purpose for the resurfacing of these accusations, previously reported in 2000, about the links between Gadhafi and the FARC-EP is to connect the insurgency with negative figures in hopes of

²³³ “FARC le habrían pedido dinero a Gadhafi para comprar misiles,” *El Tiempo*, Mar. 21, 2011 (http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/ARTICULO-WEB-NEW_NOTA_INTERIOR-9049540.html).

further discrediting their image and cause. Gadhafi serves as a current day example of how the media works to manipulate the global representation of FARC-EP.

This thesis examined how and why the FARC has transformed from the Leftist guerilla group as it began in 1966 to being portrayed as a terrorist organization involved in drug production as it has been named through mass media and the past administrations in the United States and Colombia. Research accompanies the argument that opposition forces to the FARC-EP have publicly and internationally demonized the insurgency because it poses a threat to the state. History shows that the insurgency began to pursue this exact path: to speak out against wealthy landowners and to give a voice to the exploited and forgotten. Instead of cooperating and compromising, countless Colombian administrations have silenced the call for equality. As a result, violence runs rampant throughout Colombia on all sides of the conflict. Research concludes that civil war in Colombia cannot place a “good” or “bad” label on the guerillas; history and current political situations confuse and complicate the fight and struggle. In addition, economic prospects and international intervention further deepen the battle between the FARC-EP and Colombia’s government. It is hard to grasp the complexities of the internal battles within Colombia based solely on media coverage and U.S. and Colombian propaganda. In conclusion, the image of the FARC-EP is not fairly depicted and can only be so with a contrast between the other conflicting armed forces within Colombia. Since these comparisons are not prevalent, it is easy for the United States and Colombia to illustrate the FARC-EP publicly in a light that is beneficial to their political and economic goals. In the case of the Leftist guerilla organization of the FARC-EP it is the perception and label of “terrorists” that keeps them suppressed and demonized.

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