

THE COLOMBIAN-U.S. RELATION IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

A discursive analysis of Plan Colombia prior to and post 9/11



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INTRODUCTION

On December 7, 1941 the then-president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his 'Day of Infamy' speech after the attacks on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese army. There is a striking resemblance with the speech that president Bush Jr. held sixty years later after the attacks on September 11, 2001. Both speeches spoke of an aggressor that deliberately attacked the United States people and soil and consequently the American way of living. President Roosevelt uttered in his speech that: "our people, and our territory and our interests are in grave danger". Furthermore, he says: "Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation" (Soccodato, 2018, p.6). Roosevelt's narrative had a clear victim, the United States, and one clear aggressor state, Japan. In Bush's speech there are clear parallels, one of them appears in the opening statement: "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist attacks". He continues by saying: "These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong." In regard to constructing the evil other, Bush said: "The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. (...) We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them". At the end, he claims: "we stand together to win the war against terrorism" (Soccodato, 2018, p. 5). It is precisely that last sentence that forms the introduction to the central theme of the thesis, as it marked the starting point of the War on Terror. The attacks of September 11, 2001 differed from the attacks on Pearl Harbor, as the construction of the 'other' could not be tied down to one state. The War on Terror far extended beyond the actual terrorists and affiliated associations that executed the attacks and evolved into a global conflict. The changed discourse of terror caused the FARC's image to shift from guerrilla group to terrorist organization, as exemplified in Plan Colombia.

The central theme of the thesis is the bilateral relationship between the United States and Colombia and its shift after the events of September 11, 2001, generally indicated as 9/11. More specifically, the altered approach towards counterinsurgent groups, in particular the FARC, will be compared prior to and after the events. A document that demonstrates the transition in the denomination of insurgent groups and consecutive counterinsurgency methods is Plan Colombia. This plan was first drafted in 1999 and consisted of foreign aid and military assistance to end the Colombian armed struggle. The changes that appeared in the updated version will be analyzed to investigate the discourse of terror that came into being after 9/11. The research question is: *To what extent has the altered discourse of terror manifested itself in Plan Colombia post 9/11 considering the denomination and treatment of the FARC?* The hypothesis is that the discourse of terror manifested itself through a change in perspective of counterinsurgent groups, that were from then on considered terrorists. Moreover, the thesis will research to what extent the discourse of terror manifests itself through a war-by-proxy that is fought in Colombia.

That is, the increased military presence in Colombia is used as a means to end the armed conflict and engage in the global War on Terror that has been going on since 9/11.

The first chapter identifies the key concepts that are necessary to contextualize the thesis. The concepts that are defined are narco-terrorism, terrorism studies and International Relations (IR). The concept of narco-terrorism is relevant because of the high interconnectedness between the two concepts, narcotrafficking and terrorism, in the context of the FARC. Discussing the discipline of terrorism studies bears importance because of the ambiguous definition of terrorism and the changed discourse of terrorism that influences this discipline. The last concept is IR, which plays an intricate role considering the relation between the U.S. and Colombia and the foreign aid and military assistance Plan Colombia entailed.

Chapter two provides an analysis of historical antecedents to further contextualize the coming about of Plan Colombia. It commences with the origin of the FARC in Colombia, which sprouted from Marxist-inspired self-defense groups in rural Colombia. Furthermore, it discusses the actors involved in Plan Colombia, such as political parties, left-wing guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitary groups and lastly the United States.

The last chapter analyzes Plan Colombia in its original state as it was presented in 1999. The chapter then continues by comparing various alterations to Plan Colombia as well as relevant policy plans and government documents that showcase the changed discourse of terror. Finally, the thesis aims to provide an insight in the relation between two states that was altered because of global tendencies that far extended beyond each of the two states.

The methodology the thesis employs is discourse analysis as an investigative method for the comparison of the two versions of Plan Colombia. Discourse analysis centers around the study of words, be they written or spoken, and represents the analysis of language in terms of signs and signifiers. The reason this methodology was selected is because of its applicability to analyze the different designations for the FARC in Plan Colombia prior to and post 9/11. The shift became noticeable not just in the words used, but also in the tone each document presented. Because of this, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), a subdivision of discourse analysis, is the preferred methodology in the context of the thesis. Therefore, not solely the words used to describe the FARC will be analyzed, the thesis will cover the overall tone of the documents as well.

CHAPTER 1

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE FARC

1.1 List of definitions relevant to the topic

1.1.1 Terrorism studies

Among the terms of concepts that the thesis covers, is the discipline terrorism studies. It is important to note that this discipline has undergone a transition and that there are different subsections of terrorism studies. The reason why terrorism studies is required for the construction of the thesis is because its definition is intricate to determine whether the FARC can be considered a terrorist group at all. As is mentioned by Silke, prior to the attacks on 9/11 terrorism was only a subject on the fringes of scientific interest. In the aftermath, terrorism and subsequently counterterrorism moved towards the subject of major attention. Silke (2018) notes that the publication of scholarly articles on terrorism and counterterrorism nearly quintupled after 2001. In addition to this, Silke speaks critically about the way terrorism is being studied.

The production of original data is one of the main arguments in the criticism of terrorism studies after 9/11 (Silke, 2018). The argument is that even though there was a heightened focus on terrorism, the largest percentage of articles concerning terrorism studies were not providing new data. Other than that, the discipline of terrorism studies remained too focused on states as rational actors, largely failing to consider personal experiences as part of the rationalist paradigm. The paradigm through which terrorism studies has been studied has led towards the upsurge of a new discipline in the field, called *critical terrorism studies*. The purpose of critical terrorism studies is, in the case of state terrorism, to move beyond this paradigm. The discipline of critical terrorism studies aims to incorporate the personal experiences of the ones affected by terrorism or counterterrorism in its definition of terrorism studies, to provide a more inclusive overview (Heath-Kelly, Jarvis & Baker-Beall, 2014).

This in turn begs the question what exactly *terrorism* is. Terrorism is defined as the acts of murdering civilians to intimidate populations or coerce governments, motivated by ideology. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the definition of terrorism has been subject to change, especially since 9/11. Roach argues that even though terrorism was not invented with those attacks, it was unprecedented on such a scale. The effects set in motion a heightened focus on and awareness of terrorism as well as an increased sense of a necessity of counterterrorism and other anti-insurgency measures. Nonetheless, one clear definition has remained at large. This sparks an interesting debate on what acts can be considered terrorist attacks and which ones cannot (Roach, 2011).

1.1.2 Guerrilla

The definition of what a guerrilla group consists of is also important for the research of the thesis. The word guerrilla derives from the diminutive form of the Spanish word *guerra*, which thus translates to 'little war' (Schmid, 2011). A guerrilla group is defined as a small, independent group taking part in irregular fighting, typically against larger regular forces. The guerrilla engages in an uphill battle, as it fights against a traditional military that is far larger and better equipped in terms of arms. The problem with classifying the paramilitary or guerrilla groups and distinguishing them from terrorist organizations lies within its definition. That is, the distinction between the two is not always clear-cut and subject to change. Certain paramilitary groups strongly resent the notions of being classified as terrorist organizations and have vehemently disassociated themselves from them. This is an interesting phenomenon that sheds light on the ambiguity between terrorist and non-terrorist groups and what it consists of to be considered as either one. The main difference seems to be the ideological motivation behind the attacks perpetrated, in which case acts of terrorism are characterized by ideology. After 9/11, the distinction, if there was any to begin with, has become even foggier (Schmid, 2011).

1.1.3 Narco-terrorism

The definition of narco-terrorism is also essential to write this thesis. In order to ascertain to what extent the classification of the FARC in Plan Colombia has altered, it is important to assess the organization. Beyond the definitions of a guerrilla/para-military group, the FARC is characterized as an organization that is highly involved in the trafficking of drugs. Especially the export of cocaine is something the FARC is heavily engaged in, which further obscures its categorization. The criminal activities carried out by the FARC have become more characterized by its involvement in drug trade, removing it even further from its original status as a para-military group, motivated by a Marxist ideology (Gomis, 2015). The second chapter will provide additional historical antecedents for a more complete overview.

1.1.4 International relations

The concept of International Relations (IR) is relevant to construct the thesis, as it deals with the way different states position themselves and others in relation to each other. In short, it can be defined as the study of relations and interactions between countries, including the activities and policies of national governments, international organizations, and multinational corporations. Even though IR was theorized as early as the ancient Greek period, it did not gain academic relevance until the 20th century (Booth & Erskine, 2015). The concept of IR is relevant because the relation between the US and Colombia is

discussed. The foreign policy that is encapsulated in Plan Colombia will be analyzed prior to and post 9/11. The extent to which the shift in Plan Colombia has manifested itself is indicative of the Colombia-US relation, explaining the necessity for IR theory. All the different manifestations of IR in this understanding are constituted by discursive interplays (Booth & Erskine, 2015).

1.2. Terrorism and terrorism studies

The first theory worthy of mentioning is the theory of terrorism itself, and the misattribution that comes along with it. A prime example are the acts carried out by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, that are automatically deemed terrorist acts because of their perpetrator (Richards, 2018). In such cases, the kind of act is subordinate to the executioner, resulting in opportunistic appropriation. Because, as was mentioned before, the definition of the concept of terrorism is not unequivocal, the tendency arises to apply the term to the perpetrator rather than to the action.

As the phenomenon of terrorism is being experienced more and more on an international scale, the attempts to counter it have increased subsequently. Notwithstanding this, an internationally agreed upon understanding of what terrorism means is still lacking. Because of this, states can unilaterally decide what consists and what does not consist of terrorism, further complicating counterterrorism measures. In this context, 'terrorism' can be employed as a pejorative term to describe the activities of one's adversaries, regardless of whether or not acts of terrorism were indeed committed. Schmid also comments on this phenomenon, mentioning that the rubric of counterterrorism can be used to justify acts in support of the political agenda, such as the elimination of political opponents (Schmid, 2011). Schmid further argues that the labelling of political opponents or adversaries as terrorists offers a time-attested technique to delegitimize and demonize them. He thus argues for a unilateral terminology for terrorism, to equalize counterterrorism measures (Schmid, 2011).

Even though the definition of terrorism remains unclear, this mostly relates to its definition on a state level. The last fifty years have seen some agreement on the core essence of terrorism, at least in academic literature. This essence dictates that terrorism and the shock value attached to it entail an intent to generate a psychological impact beyond the immediate victims. In order to clarify this notion, Primoratz makes an argument that disambiguates terrorism from other types of political violence. He distinguishes it, saying that although "all uses of political violence use some degree of fear, terrorism proper the causing and coercion of fear is the objective" (Primoratz in English, 2009, p. 54). As an extension of this notion, Silke argues that the concept of terrorism needs to be taken out of the context of the perpetrator and more importance should be given towards the activity of terrorism as a distinct form of political violence (Silke, 2019). The transition away from a cause or perpetrator-based definition of terrorism does not

entail that there are no ideologies that explicitly justify the use of violence. The argument in this case, however, is that if an act of violence satisfies one's criteria as to what constitutes an act of terrorism, then terrorism it is and remains, regardless of who the perpetrator and what the cause is (Silke, 2019).

Silke argues that observing terrorism as a method can help to consider the phenomenon more objectively. The reasoning behind this argument is the potential it has to transcend the terrorist/freedom fighter-mantra. If the act of violence or the threat of violence satisfies one's conceptualization of terrorism, it makes no sense to call it anything else just because one empathizes with the cause (Silke, 2019). In opposition to this are the arguments that are proposed by Weinberg et al. (2010) who argue that the employment of the definition of terrorism as the purpose of political effect has hindered shaping one unequivocal definition. The lacking of such a term has made it subject to interpretation, resulting in an accumulation of many a negative connotation attached to it. The application of the term to the activities of a group, organization, or state institution is oftentimes accompanied by a rejection of the term by the ones labeled as terrorists. The negative connotations of the term result in the ones being accused of it rejecting the notion, by claiming to be freedom fighters rather than terrorists (Weinberg et al., 2010).

1.2.2. Critical terrorism studies

The problem of membership that terrorism seems to suffer from is a key aspect that makes for a difficult definition. In other words, considering terrorism as a form of political violence blurs the separation between the two terms. The same acts, such as air piracy or assassinations, might be considered terrorist acts on certain occasions and not on others, based on the assumed motivations of the perpetrators and the social standings of the victims of such acts. Moreover, the argument is made that acts of terrorism that take place far away tend to be considered as more benign and neutral, whereas those same acts carried out in nearer proximity would be considered as terrorism (Weinberg et al., 2010). Schmid, on the other hand, argues that terrorism relies on the factor of fear that is generated by such attacks. He has defined terrorism as "an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons whereby the direct targets of violence are not the main targets" (Schmid, 2011, p. 61). Rather, the direct targets serve as message generators, that underpin the intimidation, coercion, or propaganda that is sought by these attacks (Weinberg et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the lack of an unequivocal definition of terrorism also reflects on the clarity in the field of terrorism studies. Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) came into being not too long after 9/11, as the so-called terrorism studies industry received criticism for being too one-sided (Jackson, 2016). Jackson argues that the CTS has succeeded in widening and deepening key debates about the nature and the definition of terrorism throughout the course of its existence. Especially the heightened focus on language that is used to

describe terrorism has garnered more fine-tuning after the introduction of CTS. The discipline of CTS clearly articulates terrorism as a socially constructed category or signifier without any essential ontological content. Next to that, CTS also mentions the implications for gathering knowledge about terrorism and the responses for acts of violence that have been labelled as such. Moreover, the post-structuralist-based studies on the discourse of the War on Terror have revealed a substantial part about the ideational and discursive practices, structures, and mechanisms of contemporary terrorism (Jackson, 2016). The thesis employs the use of CTS, as the articulation of terrorism depends on the discourse on terror as a socially constructed category. A negative point about CTS is that much of the analytic research has mainly focused on Western states, and not enough on the terrorist groups committing the attacks.

1.3. Narco-terrorism

The next concept mentioned in the list of definitions that needs further clarification is the phenomenon of narco-terrorism. The term emerged first in 1983, and was uttered by the then-President Fernando Belaúnde Terry of Peru (1980-1985) to describe the attacks carried out by the anti-narcotics police. The phenomenon was first defined in scholarly articles in 1990 as “the use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organizations” (Ehrenfeld in Schmid, 2005, p. 12). As mentioned earlier, the ambivalent terminology that terrorism carries obscures the meaning of this phenomenon as well. The 2000s saw an expansion of the definition of narco-terrorism, yet did not provide much clarification. Björnehed (2004) points out the almost dual nature narcoterrorism has, combined with the variability of the emphasis of the drug aspects. She concludes by discussing how problematic a concept narcoterrorism is, because of the merger of narco-trafficking and terrorism it implies, which complicates rather than facilitates its definition. In the aftermath of 9/11, the use of the term experienced an upsurge in academic literature, as the link between international terrorism and international drug trade was re-established. Narcoterrorism has come to be identified, among other things, as violence perpetrated by drug trafficking to further protect economic interests; the cooperation between drug trafficking and terrorist organizations for mutual gains; and the merger of drug trafficking organizations to carry out both drug trafficking and terrorist activities (Gomis, 2015).

The abovementioned definition fails to consequently distinguish between terrorism and drug trafficking, and demonstrates a conflation of the two terms. Gomis argues that the symbiotic relationship between drug traffickers and terrorists is very rarely confirmed by evidence, hinting at the possibility that the immediate link between terrorism and drug trafficking cannot be proven. As argued earlier on in this chapter, the label of terrorism that has seen an increase since 9/11 can hinder the actual issues from being identified correctly. This is the case concerning drug trafficking and other types of illicit trade, which are important issues in their own right (Gomis, 2015). Nonetheless, completely discarding

the argument of the link between terrorism and the trafficking in illicit drugs is not backed by evidence either. Schmid argues, just as Gomis does, that the cross-over between terrorist and criminal organizations has caused some analysts to lump the two together. Schmid discerns the similarities and differences between the two groups, arguing that terrorist groups tend to be more ideologically and politically motivated, while organized crime groups are more profit oriented. In addition to this, terrorist victimization is generally less discriminate than the violence used by organized crime groups (Schmid, 2005).

Another important characteristic of terrorist groups is the desire to compete with governments for legitimacy (Schmid, 2005). In opposition to this are the similarities that exist between organized crime groups and terrorists, the first of which being the mode of operation that both groups employ. Both operate secretly, usually from an underground network as a means to pursue their respective objectives. Another similarity is the 'muscle and ruthlessness' that both groups employ, with their primary victims being civilians. Lastly, the tactics that both groups use to intimidate are similar, including kidnappings, assassinations, and extortion (Schmid, 2005). Schmid puts forward the argument that even though there are similarities between terrorist groups and organized crime groups, the motivational and organizational differences between them distinguish them vastly. It would entail too great of an overgeneralization to lump the two groups together.

Another way of approaching the narco-terrorism theory is by distinguishing it from drug-related violence, which are two different concepts. Drug-related violence is pointed out to happen daily on quite a visible manner, whereas narco-terrorism is characterized by a pragmatic approach of revolutionary groups that employ drug trafficking to mobilize their movements. Their involvement in dissident terrorism tends not to be motivated by ideology, but rather by an economic incentive, as financial means are necessary to facilitate drug trafficking (Martin, 2018).

One last important theory to tackle is the convergence theory, which has also been discussed extensively in academic literature. Convergence theory in academic literature identifies the point when the area of separation between criminal and terrorist organizations is removed, and the two types of groups converge. This process involves a swap by one of the groups from being a profit-driven organization towards having a focus on political goals or vice versa (Salt, 2017). Recent years have seen an increase of terrorist organizations being dependent on drug trafficking as one of several primary sources of revenue to fund terrorist activities. This only underlines the before-mentioned convergence theory of two separate groups imitating each other's activities, causing contingency. This in turn has faded the distinction between the policies the U.S. government has issued to counter drug trafficking and terrorism, namely the War on Terror and the War on Drugs (Dolan, 2005). The result is a relatively coherent nexus that now exists between antinarcotic and antiterrorist policies. To sum up, groups on both ends of the spectrum have engaged in the behavior that is typically associated with the other one. This is where the term narcoterrorism first came into being, which quickly

became conflated, as the concepts concerning them had not yet explicitly been defined. Yet, there are striking similarities between the two groups that were explained by Schmid, who argued that the attacks on civilians and the tactics both groups employ conflated the two. What is more, is the phenomenon of the two groups appropriating each other's characteristics, although the deed executed oftentimes outweighs the rationale behind it (Schmid, 2005).

1.4 International relations

The last topic to consider is the discipline of International Relations, which was briefly discussed in the list of concepts relevant for the thesis. The inclusion of IR within the theoretical framework is important for this thesis, as the research question deals with the altered Colombia-US relations as a result of global terrorism. IR is characterized by a subsection of four categories that each form a different approach. Realism and liberalism are classical theories that have come to be associated with the discipline, whereas Marxism and social constructivism present contemporary approaches and debates.

1.4.1 Realism

The first approach is the realist theory, which assumes the placement of the state as the pre-eminent actor in world politics. Realism considers all other actors in world politics, be they individuals, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, as far less important or unimportant. The main point of foreign policy is considered the betterment and defense of the interest of the state. Nevertheless, realism does not consider all states as equals, and highly emphasizes the hierarchy of power among the different states. Realism understands international relations primarily as a struggle for domination and security between the great powers (Jackson, Sørensen & Møller, 2019). Realism can be divided in two subsections, each presenting a different view regarding the theory that realism represents. The first category is classical realism, which is a normative approach that focuses on the core values of national security and state survival. The second is social science realism, which is the scientific approach of the first one, generally adopted by American scholars (Jackson et al., 2019).

1.4.2 Liberalism

The second theory to consider in IR is liberalism, which is often considered the historic alternative to the most dominant IR theory, realism. Liberalism is a theory of both government within state, as well as governance among states and peoples worldwide. Unlike realism, which sees the 'international' as an anarchic realm, liberalism seeks to

project values of order, liberty, justice, and toleration into IR. The high-water mark of liberal thought in international relations was reached in the interwar period, when warfare was considered an unnecessary and outdated model of settling disputes among states (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2017). Liberalist thinking views domestic and international institutions as required to protect and nurture liberal values. However, within liberalism there are various subcategories that disagree on the causes of war as well as what kind of institutions are required to deliver liberal values in a decentralized, multicultural international system. One camp of liberalist thinkers argues the activist conception of liberalism, meaning interventionist foreign policies and stronger international institutions. The other camp argues a more pragmatic approach towards liberalism, which places priority on toleration and non-intervention (Baylis et al., 2017).

1.4.3 Marxist theories of international relations

The next theory to consider in IR is Marxist theory, which can be traced back to the German philosopher Karl Marx. Because Marx's ideas changed over time, his legacy has been open to numerous interpretations, leading to various schools of thought claiming Marx as their direct inspiration. However, there are various elements to Marxist thought that are shared by all Marxist theorists. The first relates to the view that the social world should be analyzed in its totality, meaning a transcendence of the disciplinary boundaries that characterize contemporary social sciences (Baylis et al., 2017). The rationale behind the idea is that this type of analysis is the only way to generate a proper understanding of world politics. Another key element of Marxist thought is the materialist conception of history, meaning that processes of historical change are ultimately a reflection of the economic development of society. Or, in other words, economic development is effectively considered the motor of history. Marxist theory identifies the tension between the motor of production and the relations of production, that together form the economic base of a given society (Baylis et al., 2017).

1.4.4 Social Constructivism

The fourth category that pertains to the discipline of IR is constructivism, which is relatively new to the field. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world lost a bipolar world order, resulting in global turmoil. This turmoil represented itself in an unprecedented number of nations demanding sovereign statehood or political subdivision (Kubáľková, 2015). New geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic changes taking place altered internal ways of running political, economic and state affairs. The concept that no part of the world can avoid these changes and is therefore under 'construction' explains the name constructivism. As the other theories linked to IR were unable to anticipate such changes, the constructivist approach gained academic longevity.

Constructivism essentially points to the limitation of mainstream thought in IR, but rejects the conclusion that theory about the world – or a coherent description of the world – is impossible (Kubáľková, 2015). Constructivism places people and their activities at the forefront in their analysis of world politics, seeing the construction of the world as a consequence of social relations. Notwithstanding this, constructivists disagree on the scope for people in the agent-structure relation. It is one thing to argue that people make the world and that state identities influence the international structure. It is another to specify and explain the mechanism by which ‘making’ or ‘influencing’ works (Kubáľková, 2015). As the labelling of terrorism as a social construct has shaped the U.S. foreign approach towards Colombia, social constructivism as a subsection of IR will be the method used in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

PROFILING AND ASSESSING THE EVOLUTION OF THE FARC IN CONTEXT

2.1 The origin of the FARC

Brittain & Petras underline the importance that is placed on the fact that the internal structure of the Communist Party in Colombia differs from other Communist Parties (CPs) throughout Latin America. Brittain and Petras essentially argue that the peasantry played an intricate role in the formation of the CP in Colombia, which in turn enabled the fortification of the FARC. “Unlike most areas of Latin America, where Communism gained strength in urban and labor-export enclaves, in Colombia the Communist Party developed its greatest influence in rural areas, particularly the coffee regions, and among landless peasants and small farmers” (Chernick in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p. 3).

The Communist Party of Colombia (PCC) demonstrated an excellent approach in its mobilization of the peasantry, unifying the Colombian populace behind a common cause. Prior to the 1940s, during the height of the class struggle of the Liberal and the Communist Party of Colombia, large material differences existed between the two camps. Unlike the liberal “guerrillas”, who stole and laundered for individual profit and revenge, the PCC organized a class-conscious state movement that rallied against the state and the ruling class therein (Brittain & Petras, 2010). Between 1948 and 1958, right after the murder of the politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Colombia began to be classified by a period of increased political turmoil, known as *La Violencia*. According to Brittain and Petras, during the time of heightened political turmoil in Colombia during the 1940s and 1950s, the PCC continued to consolidate both rural and urban workers. By doing this, it became a small, but significant political force – or potential threat and economic liability from the view of Colombia’s dominant class. As a result of this, the PCC was banned from the conventional political process, by a pact between the Liberal and Conservative Parties that marginalized more radical alternatives (Brittain & Petras, 2010). Moreover, this pact further cemented oligarchic rule by excluding other groups from the political process, particularly those that were representative of the urban poor and the peasants. This exemplifies the positioning of the PCC as a group that fell outside of the status quo. The growing political momentum the communists had had up until that point was eradicated after the PCC was made illegal. According to Brittain and Petras, it remains disputed if the autonomous enclaves of radical peasants during the 1950s and 1960s had an ideological connection to the PCC. Even if an ideological connection is missing, the FARC’s history is firmly planted in the PCC of the twentieth century, making it the people’s army (Brittain & Petras, 2010).

The official founding date of the FARC was on May 27, 1964 and marked the beginning of a paramilitary peasantry-based group that was characterized by a Marxist ideology (Brittain & Petras, 2010). In 1966, two years after it was founded, the FARC gained official recognition as a guerrilla movement during the Tenth Congress of the PCC. This contradicts the FARC's own image at the time, as a "real peasant movement, a response to official violence and military repression" (LeGrand, 2003 in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p. 13).

At the earliest stage after the FARC was founded, there was a greater importance that was placed on ideology and an overarching feeling of a necessity of resilience against the dominant political groups. The transition from being a largely peasant-based political movement towards the expansion of the FARC into Colombian urban settings is important. The misconception that exists surrounding the FARC, is that it emerged directly out of the Colombian Communist Party and radical Liberalism (LeGrand in Brittain and Petras, 2010). Brittain and Petras reject this notion, by stating that the assertion that the FARC's roots were extensive in both the Liberal and the Communist parties is incorrect. The PCC is attributed to having changed the political policy in Colombia by mobilizing sectors of the populace into specific defensive networks. Alongside this, the party showed deep support of the development of political enclaves outside the vicious power struggle of Colombia's two dominant parties (Brittain & Petras, 2010). It is argued that the peasant republics – the regions that became safe havens from the violence – historically were mainly rural islands of the Communist Party influence in a sea of Liberals and Conservatives. The guerrilla or PCC leadership encouraged the peasant communities to share the land among the residents and created mechanisms for collective work. These became areas with a new mentality concerning social and political proposals that were different from those offered by the regime, with the decisive factor being the presence of power in people themselves (Brittain & Petras, 2010).

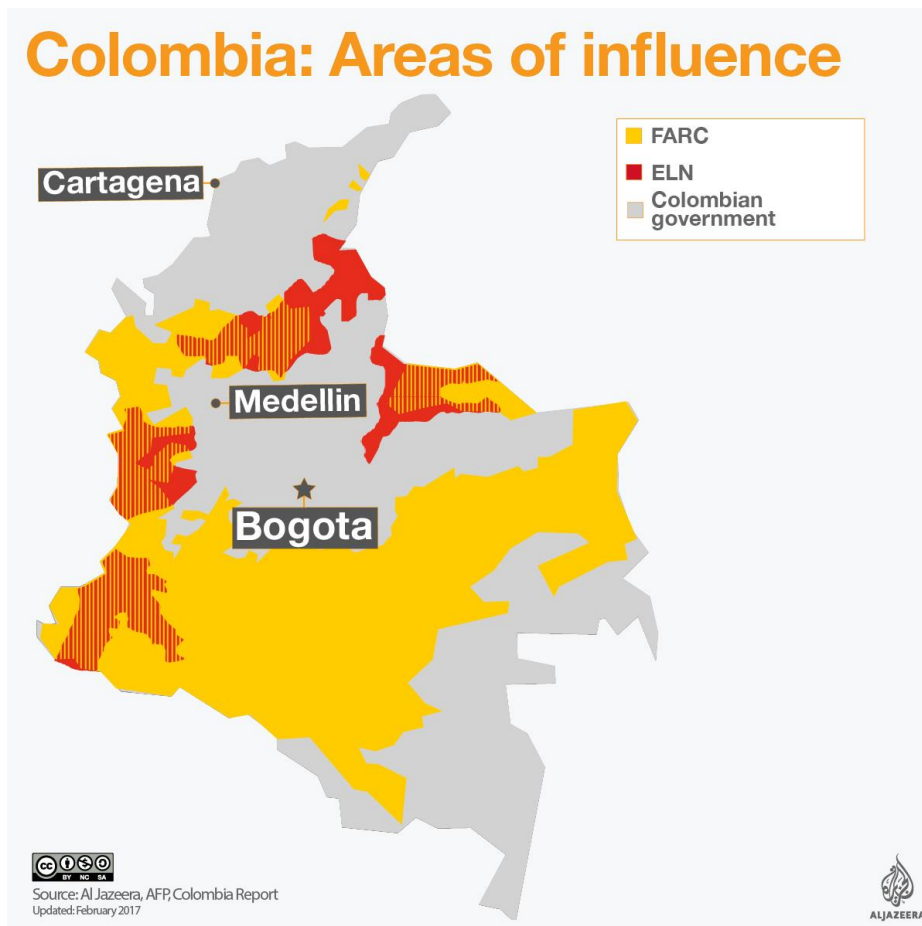
Various viewpoints exist regarding the development and purpose of the self-defense groups, with certain scholars regarding the collectives as autonomous passive alternatives to a repressive state, and others seeing them as strategic centers of grassroots communist-based organizing. Avilés argued the former, attesting that the communities were "trying to build sanctuaries independent from the national government" (Avilés, 2006, p. 382). LeGrand in Brittain & Petras (2010) argued along the same lines, stating that Colombian peasants came to view the state as the people's primary enemy and fled to create regions of safety to avoid this threat. Most of the academic literature published regarding the foundation of the independent republics prior to the FARC's foundation paints a largely pacifist picture of how "these Communist-influenced rural redoubts became refuge zones for peasants fleeing from the partisan violence". Alongside the same train of thought are the arguments presented by Simons, who argued that "peasants had to become organized in self-defense by the Communist Party... forced to take military initiatives to avoid extermination" (Simons, 2004 in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p. 10). The first real response that drew up a plan to contain the self-defense groups came into being in 1957, under the name Plan Lazo. This consisted of an extensive tactical campaign implemented by the United States and Colombia entitled "Operation Marquetalia". In

1964, then, the first acts of aggression were committed against the then-newly founded FARC, with orders to “retake the municipality of Marquetalia, a communist hamlet” (Hylton, 2006 in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p. 12). Both the United States and the Colombian state were involved in this operation, aimed against the self-defense zones, who in their eyes were a manifestation of “class struggle”. The plan of aggression was aimed at restoring the national order, with its ultimate goal being the “return to the orbit of national life” (Gomez, 1972 in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p. 12). By the time of operation Marquetalia, the communities had become virtually autonomous principalities whose borders could not be violated by government borders.

Alongside this, these communities demonstrated how peasants and guerrillas were able to create and hold power for themselves, without help from the Colombian state. Operation Marquetalia became a success for the combined forces of the Colombian state and the United States, insofar that it destroyed much of the region the self-defense groups then occupied. Yet, considering the larger battle, it is hard to categorize it as such, as the self-defense groups stayed intact, and the organizational presence of the PCC continued in southern Colombia. Another government-led operation, named Operation Cabeza, reinforced the state’s inability to achieve its goals and demonstrated the ability of the guerrillas to function and defend zones when targeted. This operation saw the government’s groups prevailing, but also saw the struggle of these groups to defeat a few hundred guerrillas (Brittain & Petras, 2010). The failure of these operations to eradicate the self-defense groups marked the start of a new armed resistance, because even though the army took hold of the Marquetalia region, it was militarily impossible to wipe out the seed of struggle. This seed of struggle is the origin of the FARC, which had sprouted from these rural lands as a result of these military operations. Manuel Marulanda Vélez, the then-officer in command of the PCC, claimed that no other avenue but armed struggle was available to end the class struggle in Colombia. Even though the PCC party itself sought a “peaceful road towards revolution” (Gomez, 1972 in Brittain & Petras, 2010, p.12), it claimed that there indeed were many forms of struggle needed to achieve change in Colombia, including armed action. It did not come as a surprise that the founding father of the FARC was also Marulanda, who has been cited as one of the greatest revolutionary peasant leaders of the Americas (Ruiz, 2001). Even though Marulanda was briefly associated with the Liberal party during adolescence, his ideology and sociopolitical tendencies resonated mostly with the communist doctrines. During the time he was a member of the PCC, he stood out as a guerrilla fighter and organizer of the PCC in the Central Cordillera (Brittain & Petras, 2010). Marulanda pursued the formation of the FARC as a revolutionary political-military organization with a coarse but organized hierarchical structure. The FARC’s roots can be extensively traced back to the PCC of the twentieth century as well as the self-defense groups, making it the people’s army.

During the formative era of the FARC, it was still considered a peasant revolutionary organization, backed by the Communist Party, which tried to engage in the class struggle. Notwithstanding this, the guerrilla groups in Colombia shifted their strategy by deconstructing state power at the village and municipal levels, rather than seizing

political power by assuming state central apparatus and institutions. By doing this, they underlined their position as a revolutionary front that challenged the state and supported the Colombian people's struggle. After the shift in strategy, the FARC experienced another shift as the guerrillas began to move away from the rigid top-down structure that had been installed by Marulanda. In the regions where the FARC has remained control throughout the decades it has been around, the rebels have functioned as a de facto government. Among the practices the FARC has carried out are redistribution of land among subsistence farmers and the implementation of a tax system that funds military operations by kidnapping and extortion (Brittain & Petras, 2010). By moving beyond mere guerrilla combat towards para-military control, the FARC has established itself as a political force in peripheral cities throughout Colombia. This, however, does not mean it has refrained completely from insurgency measures such as guerrilla warfare tactics to offset the government's air power advantage. The FARC has succeeded in creating a distinct counter-hegemony via the "accumulation of local power", through extending its influence using a slow, realistic, ideologically motivated program. The majority of the sphere of influence of the FARC sprouts from its enclaves in the Colombian countryside, failing to attract a measurable following in the cities (Rochlin, 2011). Rochlin describes this as the reason why the FARC's insurgency is perceived to lack urban strength and therefore unable to create substantial change. Brittain and Petras contest this notion by putting forward the argument that in the regions the FARC controls, a pre-revolutionary dynamism has introduced new forms of development outside metropolitan capital systems. The FARC attempted to create a war of position by organizing ongoing consolidation of newly revolutionized socio-geographical environments across rural Colombia, instead of taking central power (Brittain & Petras, 2010). In an attempt to end this war a plan was drafted, which is the focal point of this thesis, Plan Colombia was drafted by President Pastrana to eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development. The U.S. Congress approved of a total funding of 4.5 billion dollar as foreign aid to Colombia in light of this plan. (Veillette, 2005)



Source: Al Jazeera, AFP, Colombia Report, 8 February 2017.

2.2 The activities of the FARC

Even though the FARC has been labeled as “the most dangerous international terrorist group based in this hemisphere” (Taylor, 2001, p.1) relatively little is known about its activities, operations, and ideology. The main ideas that exist regarding the FARC are either distorted or underreported by monopolized media outlets, that generally portrayed it as a revolutionary project. Journalists in Colombia have become completely dependent on solely state sources, which resulted in an increasingly distorted coverage of the conflict. This was all due to Colombian media owners having come to rely exclusively on the government or armed forces for information related to sociopolitical issues, especially concerning the civil war. The restricted space that journalists had to report about the activities of the FARC has resulted in its classification to be open for interpretation. False information has been spread around and various attacks have been unrightfully accredited to the FARC, for instance the placement of car bombs, leading to the FARC being accused of a terror organization (Brittain & Petras, 2010).

Usually however, Brittain and Petras argue, the FARC is presented as a revolutionary organization, but a further analysis of its denomination will follow in the third chapter.

Linking back to the original roots of the FARC, its aim from the beginning has been the betterment of social conditions for the poorer classes. One case that has observed the installment of social ways of thinking is the education system in the areas controlled by the FARC, usually referred to as cultural centers. These centers are empirically and theoretically faithful to a model of counter-hegemony through their unified approach towards revolutionary upheaval. The cultural centers have seen the cooperation between civilians and the guerrilla fighters, yet remain to be funded by the FARC's class-based taxation model. The conditions under which the FARC recruits its students suggests a Stalinist method of manipulating intellectual endeavors (Brittain & Petras, 2010).

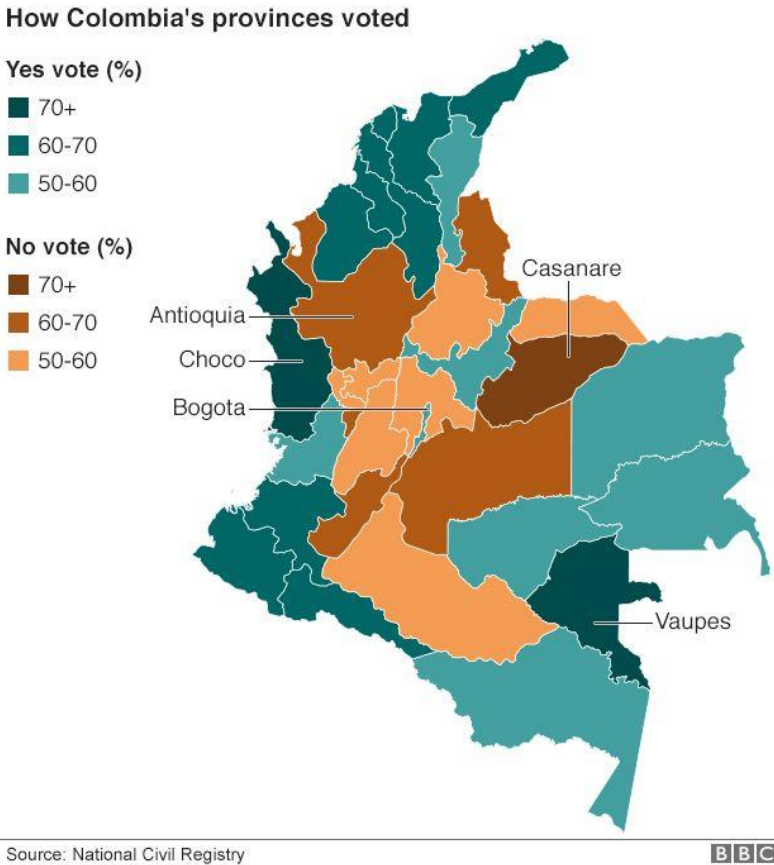
2.3 Redefinition of terrorism: The attacks of September 11, 2001

As the thesis picks the attacks that were perpetrated by the Muslim extremist group Al Qaeda as the transitional phase in the categorization of the FARC, it is important to shed light on these attacks. September 11, 2001 was the day that airplanes flew into each of the Twin Towers in New York, as well as attacks being carried out on the Pentagon. These attacks marked a new era of terrorism, largely because of their scale and recipient. During the attacks of 9/11, 3000 people were killed, which was unprecedented for any terrorist attack up until that point. In addition to this, the hegemon of the Western civilization, the United States, had been attacked, causing an immediate response of anti-terrorism measures (Huyssen, 2002). The ruins that the attacks caused needed to be banned from the American imagination, as no such ruins were allowed in it. These ruins suggested weakness in the imagery that the United States represented as the "leader of the free world", and repairs and repercussions were called upon. The argument is proposed that because of the position of the United States in world politics, they were able to shift the discourse and consequently heighten the focus on terrorism (Denzin & Giardina, 2015). Before its enemy had even begun to be identified, or the nature of the attacks had begun to be comprehended, the US had already mobilized its army, air force and navy. In addition to this, the media shared the rhetoric carried out by the government that dichotomized between the 'good' Americans and 'evil' terrorist perpetrating the attacks. In the case of these attacks, that spurred the War on Terror, creating the evil other or enemy proved slightly more difficult. The reason for this is that a non-state group was behind the attacks, which entailed an increased difficulty to legitimize the war, because of a lacking of one clear aggressor state (Denzin & Giardina, 2015). Once the war begins, it will develop a momentum, a logic, and a justification of its own, causing the loss of sight of what is being fought in the first place. However, in order to motivate the American populace behind the warfare, it is necessary to persuade to believing America's commitment to freedom and democracy are under attack (Denzin & Giardina, 2015). What has become clear after the onset of the War on Terror is the increased focus on and changed rhetoric towards terrorism. These attacks set into motion a new categorization of terrorism, which altered the way counterinsurgent insurgent groups, such as the FARC were classified.

2.4 Debate among local actors concerning the FARC

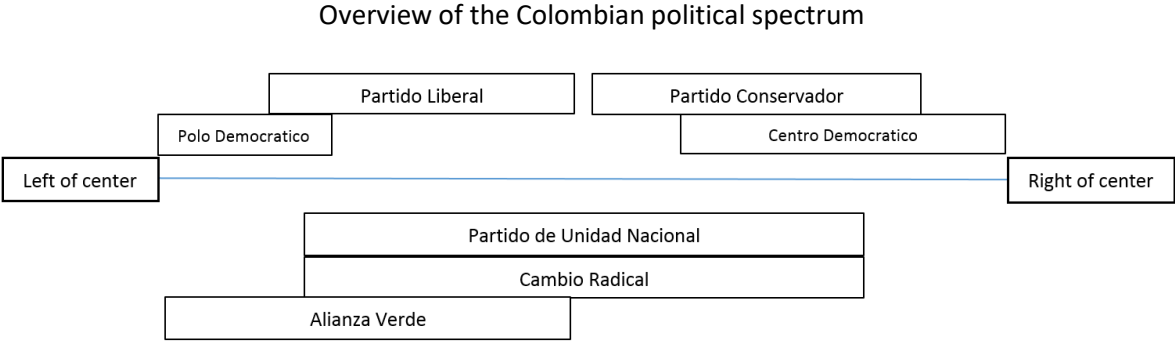
2.4.1 Political parties

As was mentioned earlier, the FARC owes its origin in part to the Communist Party in Colombia. However, there are numerous other parties to consider when placing the FARC in a political context. In late 2012, the FARC met with the Colombian government to negotiate the peace agreement to end the civil war that had been going on for nearly half a century. The government and the FARC were able to settle an agreement on various terms, among which were agricultural and land distribution policies. Alongside this, political participation by the FARC was another term the two negotiators saw eye to eye with, setting in motion a process of including the FARC in the political process. Up until that point, in Colombian politics, the FARC had been considered a group of rebels that challenged the Colombian state. The peace agreements were ultimately held through a popular vote, which saw 50.2 percent of voters rejecting the agreement. These numbers showed a high percentage of rural settlements voting in favor of the peace agreements, compared to a lower urban percentage. As the FARC came into being in the rural settings of Colombia, this outcome is not in the least bit surprising (Liendo & Braithwaite, 2018).



Source: BBC, "Colombia referendum: Voters reject FARC peace deal" 3 October 2016

The bipartisan system in Colombian politics ended in the early 1990s, as it saw the inclusion of other parties next to the then-reigning ones, being the Conservative and Liberal party. Even though the constitutional reform of 1991 saw the emergence of many other political parties, most were unable to leave their mark on Colombian politics. Among these parties are a number of left-wing parties arising from former insurgency groups that disappeared after one or two elections (Liendo & Braithwaite, 2018). Many of the parties that were able to consolidate their position in the Colombian politics tend to be on the right-wing side of the political spectrum, entailing an opposition towards the peace agreements with the FARC. In the five-decade span of the presence of the FARC, both the Liberal and Conservative Party had attempted peace negotiations, which were met by little success (Liendo & Braithwaite, 2018).



Source: Global Risk Insight “FARC isn’t the biggest threat to Colombia’s political establishment” Daniel Lemaitre, February 23, 2016.

The presidential election of 2002 constituted a critical juncture in Colombian politics, as a military solution to the war was promoted by the Liberal Party. This in turn led to the breakaway of a fraction of the Liberal Party, which came to be known under the name of *Centro Democrático*, led by former president Uribe. Then-president Santos’ decision to initiate peace talks caused the newly created party’s leader to distance himself from his successor, as he fiercely opposed the negotiations and denounced the resurgence of the FARC (Liendo & Braithwaite, 2018).

2.4.2 Left-wing guerrilla groups

In light of recent developments, for instance the self-termination of the FARC, it bears importance to review its activities, as well as those of other Colombian guerrilla groups. The counterinsurgency methods carried out by the Colombian state resulted in a significant loss of power by the FARC, causing cross-border political and criminal activities. The criminal activities related to drug-trafficking in the long run did not work in the FARC’s favor, because of a lack of technical capability and network. It is even argued that the FARC’s demise was partially due to its cessation in participation in drug related crime, in order not to be perceived as such an organization (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

Throughout its run, the FARC maintained a predominantly rural, peasant base, including more women, younger recruits and generally less highly educated recruits. Methods that were applied to recruits its members were coercion, intimidation or enticement, by offering twice the amount of salary the Colombian army offered. The FARC's main target of violence was the Colombian military, attacking personnel, bases, or equipment. Its overarching political goal can be described as the destruction of the Colombian state and its replacement with a FARC-controlled government (Saab & Taylor, 2009). Its original ideology, Marxism-Leninism, was moderated and replaced by a focus on the government's incompetence and poor governance. The peace negotiations that the reigning parties attempted to establish with the FARC initially turned out to be of little success. However, ultimately the peace negotiations proved successful, as the FARC was reshaped into a new political party (Guzman & Holá, 2019).

Alongside the FARC stands the ELN in Colombia, whose abbreviation means National Liberation Army in English. Just as its left-wing counterpart, the ELN was founded in the 1960s after more than a decade of political violence in Colombia, *La Violencia*. In contrast to the FARC, the demographic composition of the ELN consisted of students, Catholic radicals, and left-wing intellectuals. Both groups were originally driven by ideology, although the emphasis on Marxist theory was arguably stronger in ELN's case. The shared ideology results in similar viewpoints, such as an opposition to US influence in Colombia, the privatization of natural resources and rightist violence, as well as claims to protect the rural poor against Colombia's wealthy. The crackdown of the ELN that was heavily featured during president Uribe's tenure that resulted in a dramatic drop in violence committed by both the FARC and the ELN. As of today, the ELN in Colombia is still active, although it has exponentially diminished in size (Renwick & Hanson, 2014).

2.4.3 Right-wing paramilitary groups

The FARC and ELN, however, are not the only insurgent groups that emerged in the Colombian political landscape. Next to these groups stood the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), which was created in the 1990s in response to the fall of the Colombian cartel system. During the mid-1990s, Colombia found itself amidst the production and transport of narcotics, carried out by unorganized drug producers and traffickers. The groups involved in the illicit drug trade became the main constituency of the AUC, explaining why this group openly admitted to having connections to drug trade. The founding of the AUC in 1996 arose to bring some degree of central coordination, funding, and political organization to the numerous independent Colombian paramilitary groups (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

The group's ideology was anti-communist in nature, and it offered its security models to business owners plundered by guerrillas. The AUC's membership consisted of three social groups: the old security services of defunct cartels, small- and medium-sized drug lords, and regional landowning elites. Most of its members sought to fight against "leftist subversion", which had become a prominent feature of Colombian paramilitary groups. The AUC's political goal was not to overthrow the Colombian state, nor was it antagonistic

of the government's policies. Rather, its activities focused on attaining local and regional political and economic power. Throughout its existence, the AUC did not consider itself to be in conflict with the national government, ultimately enabling itself to engage in peace negotiations. The negotiations ultimately led towards the signing of the Sante Fé de Ralito Accord, which committed the group to continuous ceasefire and the demobilization of all its combatants (Saab & Taylor, 2009; Kaplan & Nussio, 2018). The largest part of the Colombian demobilized combatants belonged to the AUC, who collectively disarmed after peace negotiations. These negotiations were criticized for a lack of transparency, inflated number of demobilized fighters and continued violence by spoiler fractions (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018).

2.4.4 US influence in Colombia

The last actor to consider are the United States, specifically the influence their policies have had on Colombian politics. Alongside the War on Terror, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the United States have engaged in the War on Drugs for decades. This coincides with the political engagement the United States had with Colombia for the better half of the twentieth century. This engagement predates the War on Drugs, but proved to be the greatest impetus for developing stronger bilateral relations (Oehme, 2010). The 1980s saw the gradual expansion of the War on Drugs, as drug trafficking and illicit crop cultivation had increased vastly in Colombia. This resulted in guerrilla groups raising revenue by coercing coca growers and cocaine processors, thereby expanding the field of operation. In addition to this, drug cartels commissioned paramilitary groups to target the guerrillas, because these guerrillas routinely kidnapped drug traffickers and wealthy landowners for ransom. This engendered the implementation of the directive law, which provided Colombia with even more foreign aid for law enforcement programs that targeted illicit drug trade (Oehme, 2010). It was not until the late 1990s that the approach towards the War on Drugs in Colombia altered, focusing more on counterinsurgency operations rather than traditional counternarcotic procedures. A military doctrine that intended to address the nexus between drugs, guerrillas, and paramilitaries was Plan Colombia. Its two-track foundation included peace negotiations with the insurgents, as well as the neutralization of the drug economy (Mejía & Restrepo, 2008). Severing the connection between the drug trafficking organizations and the illegal armed groups had been a priority of Plan Colombia, but became a strategic imperative for Washington after 9/11 (Monroy & Sánchez, 2017). In the end, the goals of Plan Colombia were not met, but the tendency towards peace negotiations with the insurgency groups was mirrored in the Colombian government's approach.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF PLAN COLOMBIA PRIOR TO AND POST 9/11

3.1 Methodology

The main research the thesis conducts relates to the way the FARC is labelled in Plan Colombia - guerrilla group or terrorist organization. A means of assessing this is the method of discourse analysis, which is extensively written about in academic literature. Discourse analysis essentially studies how language, both spoken and written, enacts social and cultural perspectives and identities. It can be employed to be used in a wide variety of disciplines, including linguistics, education, psychology, and communication (Gee, 2004). The French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote extensively about the applications of discourse analysis, and how it can be used as a tool to discuss the objectives of post-structural analyses of language (Graham & Dornan, 2013). The application of discourse analysis for the purpose of this thesis is the manner in which the FARC is labelled in Plan Colombia prior to and post 9/11. The discourse in this sense determines the way a phenomenon, in this case the FARC, is described and thought about, both prior to and post 9/11.

This section will elaborate further on the origin, application, and different viewpoints that exist concerning discourse analysis. Since the 1970s, discourse analysis has come to refer to an extensive and diffuse field of qualitative research concerned with the analysis of language and text. Because discourse analysis uses its own unique conditions shaped and transformed by intellectual desires, problems and institutional demands, discourse analysis can mean very different things. Moreover, it is often subject to competing interpretations, further complicating its precise definition (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2008). Discourse analysis is often linked to Foucault, who discussed the phenomenon of discourse throughout his academic career. Foucauldian discourse, as is described by Willig & Stainton-Rogers (2008), is characterized by three broad dimensions that are necessary for the analysis of 'discursive practices.'

- Firstly, the analysis of discourse entails a historical inquiry, also known as genealogy. This entails a clear description of historical antecedents to capture the essence of the 'thing' that is discussed in the discourse.
- Secondly, Foucauldian discourse attends to mechanisms of power and offers a description of their functioning. Broadly speaking, Foucault (2012) described in his works the ways in which relations between phenomena determine how a 'thing' functions and the determining factor power has in this respect.

- Lastly, Foucauldian analysis is directed to subjectification, also known as the material or signifying practices in which subjects are made up. This third dimension encapsulates the signs or signifiers that characterize the 'thing' that the discourse analysis discusses.

Foucauldian discourse became heavily popularized after the publication of Foucault's works, and originates from Marxist and structuralist theories relating to language. Foucault's approach differed from what other scholars had published up until that time, as it completely rejected the notion of the functional totality of ideology. Rather, his definition of discourse provided a detailed investigation of how forms of subjectivity are constituted by material or signifying practices. Foucault was able to relate discourse to diverse social groups and linked them to the specific practices in which they were located (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2008). As mentioned earlier, the popularity of discourse analysis among many scientific disciplines has obscured its original meaning. For the sake of this research, it bears importance to select one definition of discourse analysis that will be applied.

A relatively recent phenomenon that has emerged is the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis. This is a different manner of observing discourse analysis, that considers the necessary nuances that provide a more inclusive and accurate description of discourse analysis. There are various subsections that consist the discipline of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS): the ones that apply to this thesis will be listed below. The first subsection that is useful in terms of practical application is the focus of CDS on larger units of speech, rather than just isolated words and sentences (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). CDS also considers texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, and communicative events as an expression of language, encompassing basic units of analysis. This widens the scope discourse analysis can be applied to, creating a more nuanced broader picture. The second method that CDS employs is the study of the functions of (social, cultural, situational, and cognitive) contexts of language use. This is a study of language that extends beyond the actual words that are uttered, but also includes the implicit use of language. Lastly, an analysis of a vast number of phenomena of text, grammar and language use, including macrostructures, speech actions, and many other aspects of text and discourse characterize CDS. In sum, the difference between discourse studies and critical discourse studies relates mostly to a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach of the latter. CDS is a theory that refrains from investigating a linguistic units per se, but rather aims at analyzing, understanding and explaining social phenomena (Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

The thesis focusses on the first two aspects of CDS, as it also considers the implications of the language used in Plan Colombia. Furthermore, the function of language is discussed as well, as the alterations in Plan Colombia prescribed increasing the U.S. military presence in Colombia.

3.2 An analysis of the implementation towards the eradication of the FARC in Plan Colombia prior to and after 9/11

Plan Colombia came into being in 1999, and was originally designed as a six-year-plan by President Andrés Pastrana. At first implementation, Plan Colombia was mainly focussed on three points. It aimed at ending the country's forty-year-old armed conflict, eliminating drug trafficking, and promoting economic and social development (Veillette, 2005; Rochlin, 2011). Pastrana had promised to end the conflict in Colombia by initiating a peace agreement with the guerrillas, particularly with FARC. The three main armed organizations in Colombia — the FARC, the ELN, and the AUC, have been designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) by the American State Department. The ELN and FARC were first designated FTOs in 1997, and subsequently redesignated in 2001. The AUC was first designated as an FTO in 2001 (Veillette, 2005).

Even though it became evident that there was a difference in some respects, a significant overlap of goals of Colombia and the US in Plan Colombia was established. The overlap consisted mainly of the focus on addressing illegal drug trafficking in the country, by promoting peace and economic development (Veillette, 2005). Almost immediately after the events on 9/11, the categorization of Colombian subversive groups shifted from 'guerrilla groups engaged in civil conflict' to 'global terrorists'. These terrorists were deemed to pose a threat to world peace, and were therefore added to an altered list of U.S. enemies (Rochlin, 2011). The shift in denomination has created a political environment that more overtly states the strategy of dealing with these terrorists. The events post 9/11 in Colombia exposed the transition from the War on Drugs to the War on Terror, both of which were executed by the U.S. government. The War on Terror discourse represents an attempt to diminish the ideological and political power of the FARC on both a national and global scale (Rochlin, 2011).

3.2.1 A discursive analysis of Plan Colombia prior to 9/11

As has been established, the discourse of terror shifted early on in the twenty-first century as a result of 9/11. However, for an in-depth analysis of how exactly the discourse shifted a comparison of Plan Colombia both before and after 9/11 is required. As was mentioned before, the original Plan Colombia was drafted in 1999 and focussed specifically on the elimination of drug trafficking. Nonetheless, this does not mean there was no attention paid whatsoever to the eradication of insurgent groups in Colombia. Rather, the approach towards the eradication of certain groups altered after the redefinition of FTOs took place. Originally called "Plan Colombia: Plan for Peace, Prosperity, and Strengthening of the State", Plan Colombia consisted of eleven elements that were aimed to pave the way towards a peaceful Colombia. The third of the eleven elements put forth a peace strategy that aimed at a negotiated peace agreement with the guerrillas. The Peace Agreement tackled the armed conflict that had been waged in Colombia for over thirty-five years during that time. The negotiation processes were aimed at obtaining a peace agreement

on the basis of territorial integrity, democracy and human rights. In the long run, the peace negotiations were thought to rapidly strengthen the rule of law and the fight against drugs in the country (United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

Three main protagonists were identified in the Colombian armed conflict, with the FARC and ELN being the representatives of the guerrilla groups. Their roots were said to:

“lie in agrarian-based movements and the Cold War respectively” (United States Institute of Peace, 1999, p. 7).

Next to these stand the “illegal ‘self-defense’ groups, who seek an armed solution to all guerrilla activities and increased political recognition for their organization” (United States Institute of Peace, p.7). The last protagonist in this scenario are the great majority of Colombians that are “caught in the crossfire” and “suffer at the hands of the armed actors” (United States Institute of Peace, 1999, p.7). This version of Plan Colombia describes the guerrilla movements as having “roots in the traditional rural and political antagonisms of Colombian society”. In addition to this, the “ideological rhetoric of capitalist-communist confrontation” is attributed to guerrilla groups (United States Institute of Peace, p.7).

The document continues by saying:

“its fight to extend its territorial presence and acquisition of military and political and military power has been financed by extortion and kidnappings” (United States Institute of Peace, 1999, p.8).

This description is especially relevant considering the word *terrorism* that is only scarcely mentioned throughout the document. There is one occasion that mentions *terrorist attacks* in relation to the guerrillas, but these attacks are attributed to the self-defense groups as well. In addition to this, the FARC is not singled out as a guerrilla group, and is largely equated to the ELN. Rather, emphasis was placed on the peace agreements that had to be shaped with both guerrilla groups, where a mutual regard as legitimate agents was required. The factor of narco-terrorism is made explicit throughout the document, as both insurgent groups are associated with such practices.

The text states that:

“both trafficking and processing of coca and opium poppy crops occur in Southern Colombia where there is a strong guerrilla presence” (United States Institute of Peace, 1999, p.12).

The fight against drugs, as well as the rule of law could be strengthened as a result of a negotiated peace agreement with the guerrillas, according to Plan Colombia. This peace agreement was supposed to be obtained on the basis of territorial integrity, democracy, and human rights.

Briefly discussed earlier on was the emphasis on the rural origin of the Colombian economy, that has only recently shifted towards an urban-based one. The end of the Cold War saw the public support of the guerrilla groups fall to a meagre four percent, indicating an inability to win the armed struggle. It is also important to note that throughout the document, relatively little emphasis is placed on differentiating between the guerrilla groups. Rather, the distinction between the guerrillas and self-defense groups is made explicit, as opposed to discerning each guerrilla group.

An example is provided in the following quote:

“The achievement of peace will ultimately rest on three pillars: first, advances in the agreements already made with the main guerrilla organizations (FARC and ELN) to regard one another as legitimate agents in serious peace talks” (United States Institute of Peace, 1999, p. 8).

A brief description of the then-current situation is also provided, which discusses the distention area that was created as a safe haven for negotiations on the peace process (United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

3.2.2 A discursive analysis of Plan Colombia after 9/11

As mentioned earlier on, the US Department of State updated their list of FTOs after 2001, but the list was also revised. Formally, the list of FTOs is based on section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (U.S. Department of State, 2019). This section defines an FTO as any organization that "threatens the security of United States nationals or the national security of the United States" (Cronin, 2003, p.1). The FTO list is not alone among the lists of other terrorist list maintained by the US government, but is the only one that is challengeable in court.

The legal criteria for what constitutes an FTO were redrafted as a combination of section 219 of the INA and consist of the three following points. Firstly, it can only be a foreign organization carrying out the attacks. Secondly, the organization must engage in terrorist activity, terrorism, or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism. The last criterion dictates the organization's terrorist activity or terrorism to be a threat to the security of U.S. nationals or the national security of the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2019). The last point in particular is of key issue in the redefinition of the FTOs, as this has altered the legal criteria for their designation. In the government-issued document that lists all the FTOs and their activities stemming from 2004, the reasons for including the FARC are mentioned. The FARC is said to have engaged in anti-American activities, such as kidnapping and killing thirteen Americans, shooting down a US plane, and abducting and killing three humanitarian U.S. workers.

Next to this, the FARC “poses a serious threat to US interests in Colombia”, “is very actively involved in drug trafficking and extortion”, and “is a threat to the stability of the Colombian government” (Cronin, Aden, Frost & Jones, 2004, p. 92).

It becomes apparent that the anti-terrorism discourse carried out by the U.S. government post 9/11 has come to be characterized by a tendency to equalize terrorism with terrorism on U.S. nationals or U.S. interests.

The important question to pose in this respect is to what extent the inclusion of section 219 of the INA in the designation of the FTOs translates to Plan Colombia post 9/11. As mentioned in the previous section, the Plan Colombia that stems from 1999 did not explicitly differentiate between the FARC and the ELN. Rather, it distinguished between guerrilla and the self-defense groups (Veillette, 2005). The then-president of the US, George W. Bush, adopted a different approach towards Plan Colombia, which was exemplified in the 2002 National Security Strategy. “Therefore, we have developed an active strategy to help the Andean nations adjust their economies, enforce their laws, defeat terrorist organizations, and cut off the supply of drugs...” (The White House Washington, 2002, p.10). It is noteworthy that this strategy explicitly mentions terrorist organizations regarding Colombia, whereas Plan Colombia in 1999 solely mentioned terrorist attacks or actions. Furthermore, the concept of narco-terrorism is enforced, as the Strategy states:

“In Colombia, we recognize the links between terrorist and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that help finance the operations of such groups” (The White House Washington, 2002 p. 10).

Nonetheless, the Security Strategy did not overtly mention specific groups, but terrorist or extremist groups in general. However, the inclusion of the FARC on the revised list of FTOs also sparked controversy, with the FARC itself rejecting that notion vehemently. Then-rebel commander Raúl Reyes said that the classification:

“forms part of the campaign of the U.S. government has launched to discredit the FARC” (Ferrer, 2001, p. 1).

This statement is in line with the difficulty to define terrorism or terrorist groups, as many such-labelled groups reject the notion of being defined as such. The overall tendency that caused a heightened focus on terrorism was not only visible in U.S. policies, but in Colombia’s own policies as well. President Uribe showed strong support for the U.S. policies, as military action was followed in an attempt to resolve the insurgency. Even though Plan Colombia was originally only designed as a short-term strategy, it laid the foundation for future administrations. President Uribe implemented an updated security policy called “Democratic Security and Defense Policy”, which includes the legal strategy for combatting the terrorist organizations and drug cartels (Perdomo, 2007). The

perception of the insurgent groups becomes apparent almost immediately when examining the policy, exemplified by this quote.

“Terrorism is the main method used by illegal armed groups to destabilise Colombian democracy” (“Democratic Security and Defence Policy”, 2003, p. 23).

This quote shows a departure from the original version of Plan Colombia, as it does not solely mention *terrorist attacks* that are employed by the armed groups, but mentions terrorism as the main method. Even though the document largely refrains from a thorough differentiation between the FARC and the ELN, it mentions the FARC as the main perpetrator of terrorism, as is exemplified by this quote:

“Other forms of terror against the civilian population include the forced displacement of around 300,000 people from their land, terrorized by the threats and assassinations carried out by the illegal armed groups. Off-duty soldiers and policemen in civilian are also constantly targeted, especially by the FARC” (“Democratic Security and Defence Policy”, 2003, p. 23).

This quote is emblematic of the shifted perspective towards terrorism, as it became part of Colombia’s own rhetoric as well. Uribe made no secret of his inclination towards engaging in U.S. relations, openly involving the U.S. military in Colombian affairs. Uribe supported Plan Colombia, and requested the intensification of the involvement of U.S. troops as a result of this (Baud & Meertens, 2004). In July of 2003, then, Uribe pressed Bush once more to take a more active stance in the Colombian conflict. The increased U.S. military and war rhetoric prioritized counter-insurgency operations, making the Colombian war part of the war against terrorism (Baud & Meertens, 2004).

The internationalization of Colombia’s conflict is not however only observable in the renewed role in of the United States in hemispherical politics. Colombia’s border states are burdened with the humanitarian crisis and the repercussions of kidnappings and forced disappearances the conflict causes. This has resulted in the reorientation of Plan Colombia towards the Andean Regional Initiative (ARI), as far as the War on Drugs was concerned (Meertens & Baud, 2004). The ARI was an expansion of Plan Colombia that originally started in 2001 that focussed on drug crop eradication, military assistance, alternative development projects, rule of law and judicial reform, and aid to displaced persons (Pizarro & Gaitan, 2006). Even though Colombia is the major recipient of ARI funding, the initiative provided funds for Panama, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela too. After 9/11, however, the package of US aid Colombia was receiving changed rapidly, transforming from a tool to combat illegal drug trafficking to a worldwide anti-terrorist coalition. Plan Colombia, which until 2005 had aimed to tackle the interrelated issues of drug trafficking, was followed up by military policy under the name Plan Patriota (Lugar, Meyers & Blinken, 2006).

3.2.3 Plan Patriota

First initiated in 2002, Plan Patriota was the military campaign carried out by the Colombian government that aimed to extend government control and security presence throughout the national territory (Lugar et al., 2006). The ultimate goal of Plan Patriota is self-described as “breaking the will of the narco-terrorist groups” (Ejército Nacional de Colombia, n.d. p. 1).

Alongside efforts to recover ungoverned space in the FARC-controlled south-central departments of Colombia, all government agencies “aimed to consolidate state presence throughout Colombia” (Ejército Nacional de Colombia, n.d. p.1). Plan Patriota consisted of two phases that aimed to diminish the size of terrorist groups and their sphere of influence. The first phase entailed the planning and preparation for forceful removal of the armed groups. About the completion of this first phase, which was considered a major setback for the FARC, the following quote was uttered:

“The Colombian military effectively cleared the area around Bogotá of terrorist fighters” (Colombia Program, 2004 in Teicher, 2005, p. 12).

This quote is largely representative of the denomination of ‘terrorist fighters’ that the FARC came to be identified with after 9/11.

The second phase was further divided in three subsections, each dealing with the implementation of the goals specified in the first phase. Phase 2A, taking place from June to December 2003, saw the removal of the FARC from Bogotá and the Cundinamarca department. Phase 2B was aimed at military actions that removed the FARC from the Meta, Caquetá, and Guaviare departments, which represent the rural regions where the FARC originated. The last phase dealt with ridding the Antioquia department of the FARC, which was initially postponed. About the second phase of Plan Patriota, Uribe declared this statement:

“to recover and maintain control... over a vast territory that has long been under FARC influence” (Veira, 2004 in Teicher, 2005, p. 14).

This forms a discontinuation from the original Plan Colombia, where no such an overt statement regarding one single insurgent group was made. Altogether, Plan Patriota secured the diminishing of the size of the FARC from 18,000 to 12,000 and can thus be considered a success by the Uribe administration (Lugar et al., 2006). Plan Patriota ultimately reinforced the notion of the separation of the anti-narcotics and anti-terrorism politics that had previously been fought simultaneously (Teicher, 2005). The U.S. efforts considering Plan Patriota were grand, both the amount of in money allotted to the cause of fighting the narco-terror war, as well as the number of military personnel sent to

combat the insurgency. Even though operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were deemed a higher priority, fighting the battle in Colombia was seen as a step towards achieving victory in the war against terror.

3.3 Results

Ultimately, the road towards peace talks was opened because of the debilitation of the insurgent groups. The peace talks set in motion the ultimate succumbing of the FARC that happened due to the transformation of Plan Colombia into Peace Colombia. The then-president, Juan Manuel Santos, adopted the plan in 2016. Adopting it ultimately enabled the peace talks that caused a lay-down of arms by the FARC (Isacson, 2016).

Comparing Plan Colombia prior to and post the events of 9/11 has demonstrated a clear shift in the way terrorism was constructed. Before 2001, the counterinsurgency measures were attributed to guerrilla groups that pursued a Marxist ideology. Alongside this, the anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics battle was to a high degree equated in the context of Colombia, as the two concepts were strongly interwoven. The events of 9/11 set into motion a change in discourse on terror that separated the two concepts. The Colombian, and more generally speaking, Andean struggle against drug-related criminality was seen as a different struggle than the anti-terrorism was. This caused the creation of different policies to tackle each issue facing Colombia separately. On the one hand, the ARI was created as an anti-narcotics measure, whereas the creation of Plan Patriota saw increased military action to end the Colombian armed struggle and eradicate the insurgent groups.

The shift in Plan Colombia is also observable when comparing the means of addressing the armed rebel groups. In the original Plan Colombia, the rebel groups are largely equated and the only real differentiation exists between guerrilla groups and self-defense groups. The inclusion of AUC on the list of FTOs after 9/11 is not insignificant in this respect either. Before that day, the FARC and ELN had been added to that list, but after 9/11, the list was also updated. From then on, organizations that actively threatened U.S. individuals or possessions were deemed terrorists. This reinforces the notion that the U.S. was able to change the discourse of terrorism and thus the way in which terrorism is studied. Furthermore, the construction of the 'other' bears importance in the context of terrorism and the anti-terrorism measures that come along with it.

The point of the research was investigating the bilateral relation between the United States and Colombia, and the subsection of IR the research focussed on was constructivism. Plan Colombia provides an interesting vehicle to study this relationship, and demonstrates the change in perception of terrorism that ultimately altered the view of the insurgent groups. Because of this, the bilateral relationship between the two countries altered dramatically, with ever increasing U.S. military presence in Colombia.

CONCLUSION

The main point of research in this thesis was discerning between Plan Colombia and its implications prior to and post 9/11 regarding the labeling of the FARC. The hypothesis was that in the original Plan Colombia the FARC as an organization was not openly deemed terrorist, but rather its activities. Also, the Plan Colombia that was drafted in 1999 only scarcely differentiated between the different counterinsurgency groups. Another striking difference in the comparison of Plan Colombia and its follow-ups is the tone each of the documents was written in. President Pastrana wanted to overcome the Colombian armed struggle by ending the narcotics war, promoting peace, as well as defeating the insurgent groups. After the original implementation of Plan Colombia, the government showed a change in tone, not just towards the insurgent groups. The Democratic Security and Defense Policy overtly condemns terrorism and explicitly mentions the need to protect the Colombian populace from such attacks. This is exemplified by the following quote:

“The terrorist uses violence to impose his will on others, at the expense of lives of thousands of civilians (...) We Colombians will not give in to this threat. We will defeat it with the support of all citizens” (Democratic Security and Defence Policy, 2003, p. 5-6).

This demonstrates a shifted discourse on terrorism that extends beyond the labelling of insurgent groups as terrorists. It opposes the terrorists and the civilians and presents a call to arms speech that unites Colombians behind a common cause. The introduction mentioned the speeches held by Franklin D. Roosevelt and George W. Bush, after the attacks on Pearl Harbor and 9/11, respectively. The speeches were largely comparable regarding the call to unite behind a common cause and the call to arms by the Americans. The main difference between the two speeches relates to the construction of the enemy state, as the perpetrators did not come from one sovereign state in the case of 9/11. Rather, they belonged to a terrorist group, which caused other insurgent groups to be deemed terrorists as well. This is where the notion of discourse comes into play, because of the need to construct one's enemies in a certain way in call to arms speeches. The construction of the enemy state, which in the case of 9/11 was obscured, bears importance in the discipline of IR. Constructivism as a discipline of IR was the preferred method for the purpose of this research, because the construction of other states in relation to one's own determines the relation between the two states, exemplified in by the Colombian-U.S. relation.

The thesis also mentions of the discipline of terrorism studies and the drastic changes it underwent as a result of 9/11, because of the redefinition of terrorism the attacks engendered. Throughout the original Plan Colombia, the word *terrorism* is only mentioned on a single instance, and its sole use as a method is attributed to the insurgent groups. After 9/11, specifically the FARC is labelled as a terrorist organization, even more so than the ELN and AUC. This led towards a redefinition of terrorism, even though the activities of the FARC had not changed since the events. The Democratic and Security Defense Policy mentions the different types of terrorist behavior the FARC engages in, ranging from kidnappings and extortions to homicide. The number of homicides and

kidnappings by all insurgent groups has dwindled after 2001, yet this is not mirrored in the Defense Policy. The original Plan Colombia opted for a strategy that was more inclined to negotiating with the insurgent groups, rather than creating an us-versus-them dichotomy. In this sense, the discipline of terrorism studies was altered, as terrorism came to be identified by the perpetrator, rather than the attacks that were being carried out.

Moreover, the conflation of the term narco-terrorism, consisting of narco-trafficking and terrorism, is addressed considering the Andean Regional Initiative (ARI) and Plan Patriota, that tackle narco-trafficking and terrorism separately, respectively. This is exemplary of the notion to prioritize the War on Terror that was being fought globally to the Colombian context as well. Even though the necessity was experienced to separate the anti-narcotics and anti-terrorism struggle, the association between the two continued.

“The ever-increasing involvement of the FARC and the AUC in the illegal drugs business (...) has contributed to the loss of ideological discipline and consequently to their downward spiral into terrorism.” (Democratic and Security Defence Policy, 2003, p. 25).

This quote shows the focus that is placed on counterinsurgent groups and their involvement in drug trade. The notion of narco-terrorism comes into play in this respect, even though the international necessity of tackling the drugs issues was mentioned in the original Plan Colombia as well. Ultimately, drug trade seems to be another aspect to define the terrorist nature of a group. Even though ideology is important factor of terrorism, in this case a lack thereof defines an insurgent group as such.

Lastly, the discipline of IR was discussed as the core focus of the bilateral relation between Colombia and the United States. This bilateral relation is influenced by the way in which Colombia is represented, underlining the importance of constructivism. The original Plan Colombia views the United States as a partner, whose aid might contribute to Colombia's road towards peace. As social constructivism places people and their activities on the forefront of IR, the way this approach manifests itself in Plan Colombia is evident in the treatment of the insurgent groups. The increased military presence that started after 9/11 was result of the shifted perspective of the Colombian insurgent groups. The necessity of a heightened military presence was felt, because from that point onwards the enemies of the Colombian state were called terrorists. Because of the global nature of the War on Terror, fighting this war in Colombia equated fighting this war everywhere.

The overall objective to provide an overview on the discursive changes in Plan Colombia considering the FARC was limited by two factors. Firstly, the FARC was not directly addressed in Plan Colombia throughout the document. Even though the FARC was accredited the role of the largest insurgent group, it was not always distinguished from its counterparts, the ELN and AUC. It is indeed the case that after 9/11, the insurgent groups came to be identified as terrorist organizations, but not specifically solely the FARC. So as a result, the analysis that is made could not be a completely exact analysis, because more insurgent groups were deemed terrorists. The second limitation the thesis was confronted with is related to the selected documentation. The attempt to analyze Plan Colombia prior to and post 9/11 had to be executed using other policy plans, e.g. Plan

Patriota and the Democratic Security and Defense Policy, because Plan Colombia continued through these forms of government documentation.

A further in-depth analysis of the denomination of terrorism in the post-modern world, has to investigate the root of terrorism. Throughout the analysis in this thesis it became clear that the word became a catch-all term for categorizing groups that opposed the state order. The misnomer has obscured the meaning of terrorism even further, which results in an increased difficulty to study it. Further research on this topic should therefore reevaluate the definition before applying it as loosely as happens currently. This is a route that Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) has delved into more deeply than terrorism studies had beforehand. The role of agency has been exemplified regarding this research, as the way terrorism is defined depends on who defines it. As was mentioned in the first chapter, the criticism that CTS has received relates to its reluctance to refrain from considering non-Western states. This obstacle can be overcome by examining a country's own accounts of terrorist behavior.

Overall, the research concerning the labelling of terrorism revealed a great deal in terms of who defines it, who is defined by it and how the definition changed since 9/11. Taking the route of a discursive approach demonstrated the power of words and how strongly they affect the relations between states. Beyond words, the tone used to mobilize the populace behind the greater cause of fighting the evil forces attacking the state, whether they be internal or external, was prevalent throughout the decades. The call to arms speeches were characterized by a need to fight against a common enemy, which became more problematic after 9/11. Broadly speaking, the nature of the global conflict has caused a tendency to overgeneralize the ones behind this problem, regardless of their actual involvement in the conflict at hand.

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