



LUND
UNIVERSITY

Department of Political Science

STV102

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Guarding the Backyard

US Policy in Colombia

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Abstract

The United States of America has a long history of involvement in their “backyard” Latin America. However some countries have experienced significantly more involvement than others. In this essay we discuss the role of the US policy in Colombia, and examine how the relationship between these countries can be interpreted through the application of two different theories.

Our analysis is based on the Structural theory of Imperialism developed by Johan Galtung and the World Systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, both of which analyze relations between Centre/Core and Periphery.

By focusing on three main topics: *paramilitary involvement*, *human rights violations and democracy*, we examine the relationship between the countries. Our results show that the intricate relationship between the US and Colombia is, according to these theories, imperialistic, and that the actions taken by the US concerning Colombia, help to maintain US hemispheric influence.

Key words: Colombia, US policy, Imperialism, Vertical Interaction, World-System

Characters: 69,837

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1 Introduction

When Americans think of Colombia they immediately connect the Latin American country to the “War on Drugs”. Colombia has built a reputation since the 1970s, throughout the world, for its thriving drug business. The drug cartels of the 1990s were a big topic in the media and captured the imagination of both Hollywood and the pop culture. Today as the war in Iraq and the conflict in the Middle East take the front seat in the media coverage of US foreign policy, the drug conflict still lingers quietly in the background. Though unknown to most of the general public, Colombia and its drug policy is the third highest receiver of American military aid behind Israel and Egypt (Loveman 2006: 57). This is due to the military driven US foreign policy in Colombia since the Cold War. This policy exists in Colombia even today but over the years the motivation for American aid and influence in the Latin American country has changed. Today the policy is driven by the global war on terror.

Though the Cold War marked the beginning of the strong bilateral relationship between Colombia and US, the American presence has been felt in Colombia since Latin America fell under Washington’s influence with the signing of the Monroe Doctrine (Grandin 2006: 81). Latin America, with Colombia as the focal point, has been Washington’s testing ground for its growing hegemonic role in world order.

1.1 Question formulation

We are particularly interested in understanding the relationship between the US policy in Colombia and how it has impacted both the US and Colombia. We want to know how the American foreign policy influences Colombia’s domestic issues and development; and what kind of relationship this leads to between the two countries. Thus the question we will attempt to answer is:

How can US policy in Colombia be understood through the Structural theory of Imperialism and the World Systems theory?

In our analysis we will use the two theories to investigate whether the indirect support of paramilitaries, the increase of human rights violations and the weakening of democracy in Colombia are consequences of a possible imperialistic relationship between the two countries.

1.2 Method and Material

1.2.1 Method

We have chosen to do a Discipline Configurative study, which is when one uses already existing theories as a method to analyze the empirical data available to answer our question. The two theories we will use are based on imperialism and on relationships within a world system. These theories will help us analyze the US policy in Colombia and see if the policy is a way for the US, through maintaining an imperialistic influence over Colombia, to uphold influence in Latin America.

The key to our analysis of the US policy is a clear understanding and definition of the theories that we have chosen to use in order to apply them to our specific study. The theories are Johan Galtung's "A Structural Theory of Imperialism" and Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory. These theories will be explained in more depth in chapter three.

In order to investigate the US-Colombian relationship we will examine what we see are the three most prominent problems that have arisen as collateral damage from this relationship. In this paper we define this collateral damage as the growth of paramilitary troops, the lack of human rights protection and the weakening of democratic institutions.

1.2.2 Material

All our material is second hand material since we have not been able to conduct our own research in Colombia. We have chosen a wide spectrum of reliable authors who have written a variety of books with different perspectives on the US policy in Colombia and the American influence in the region. We have also made use of different articles from different political science journals in order to broaden our perspective.

As critical analysts we are aware of the American influence on the literature and of the sensitivity of the topic of American Imperialism. We are therefore careful to take these facts into account. We have also ensured that we have had many different sources in order to grasp the entire picture and not only be presented with one side of the story.

2 Background

It is important to understand the complexity of the relationship between Colombia and the US. Therefore it is necessary to examine Colombia's historical background, the US' involvement in Latin America, and the US' role in Colombian politics and development.

2.1 Colombia's Background

After achieving independence, the Conservative and Liberal parties fought for power in Colombia. However, in the mid 1900s, the two parties' monopoly on power and a need for left-wing policies led to the creation of a number of left-wing guerrilla groups. Out of these, the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) and the ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*) became the most dominant players. To counteract them, the Liberals and Conservatives united and were able to maintain power. And, yet another dissident group arose in order to counter the guerrillas: the right-wing paramilitaries. (Nationalencyklopedin 2007).

Therefore there are now three opposing sides; the leftist guerrillas, the government with its army and the right-wing paramilitaries. All three official parties have had numerous subgroups that has led to a long history of bloodshed. Because of the high number of actors and their high usage of violence, this bloodshed has become a standard factor in Colombian society. The Colombian army, for example, has for the majority of history enjoyed a legitimized autonomy, which gave it independence from the Colombian judicial system. Therefore violence, in order to gain power and influence, became normalized in Colombian society and weakened the government's ability to build functioning democratic institutions. (Thoumi 1995: 2)

Today Colombia is a divided country both geographically and socially. Some areas are totally ruled by leftist guerrilla groups, while others are under the influence of the right-wing paramilitaries. Also most of the leftist groups have a strong foothold in the peasantry, while the highest classes are the ones supporting the paramilitaries.

2.2 The United States in the Region

2.2.1 The US in Latin America

Ever since the Monroe Doctrine¹ in 1823, the US has been actively involved in Latin America in a number of ways. The doctrine declared that Latin America was important to the US and could therefore be protected by US military forces. (Livingstone 2003: 171) This principle greatly influenced the independence movements in the Latin American countries and awoke fear in the European great powers. Simultaneously, this remarkable event led to a Latin American dependency on the soon to be super power of the United States.

The doctrine's sincerity has shown itself mainly during the 20th century, expressed by indirect interventions. Throughout the 1900s, coup d'états and other interventions were organized and financed by US intelligence in order to remove "dangerous", democratically elected socialist presidents. This is only one of the strategies the US has launched throughout the years with the purpose of maintaining its dominance and hegemony in Latin America, whilst protecting its own core interests. (Livingstone 2003: 171-172) Other strategies have included economic interventions e.g. stopping of monetary support.

These actions are not only to be seen as part of the past; US foreign policy is still very concerned and focused on Latin America. The main goals of American foreign policy since the Cold War have not changed; they continue to be the promotion of a liberal international order, by e.g. economic and military means. The opposition towards the reformist democracies of Venezuela and Brazil are just a few examples of the US' promotion of this specific order, where the United States acts as a hegemonic power player. (Stokes 2005: 39) In the case of Venezuela, a US-linked coup in 2002 failed which spurred the growing anti-Americanism of the region.

The fact that the US imports more oil from Latin America than from the Middle East is also significant in US-Latin American relations. Venezuela, Mexico and Colombia are the largest oil sources in the region, which means that the US' relations with these countries are important. In light of the fragility of the US-Venezuelan relationship stemming from Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez' anti-Americanism, Venezuela is an uncertain source oil for US consumption. (Hylton 2006: 102) This means that relations with Mexico and Colombia are essential to the US in order to keep an influence on these oil sources.

¹ The Monroe Doctrine proclaimed that the European powers would no longer colonize and interfere with the Americas. Any attempt by a European power to oppress or control any nation of the Western Hemisphere would be considered a hostile act against the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007)

2.2.2 US in Colombia

The US has supported Colombia for a long time. During the Cold War period, when the fight against communism was the US' major drive force, the US installed training facilities and was a significant donor of military aid according to their counterinsurgency (CI) policies. Therefore, the US played a vital part in the development of the Colombian military during a large period of the 1900s. (Stokes 2005: 1ff)

During the 1970s drugs became an increasing problem in Colombia. Today the country produces more than 90 % of the cocaine consumed in the United States (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 99). Consequently the US has taken an important role in the fight against narcotics in Colombia and has been a generous donor of both military and economic aid for the last decade.

In the 1990s the CI support developed into a counter-narcotics strategy, the war on drugs. Stokes even argues that the strategy never changed, only its description (2005: *passim*). This means that CI training and usage was still an important part of the war on drugs, though not explicitly. As an extension to the war on drugs, a programme called Plan Colombia was developed. This was essentially a Colombian initiative to the socio-economic development of the country. However, with the influence of the United States, it became a militarized agenda of counter-narcotics. (Stokes 2005: 92-93)

Today the United States is fighting a war against terrorism, which also legitimizes their involvement in Colombia. The left-wing guerrillas, who are labelled as terrorists, are once again undergoing counterinsurgency attacks. This means that the rhetoric used during the Cold War is once again in usage and has won renewed legitimacy. (Stokes 2005: *passim*)

We will elaborate on US policy in Colombia in chapter four by examining these three wars: the Cold War, the war on drugs and the war on terror.

3 Theory

We have two different theories that strongly complement each other. Both are relevant when it comes to dependency problems between states. First we will briefly explain each of them and later apply them to the collateral damage issues of *paramilitaries*, *human rights* and *democracy*.

3.1 Structural Theory of Imperialism

Johan Galtung's "Structural Theory of Imperialism" looks at the inequality within and between nations. He argues that this is a case of dominance and power relationships that is essentially a "more general structural relationship between two collectives" (Galtung 1971: 81). Galtung divides the world up into Centre and Periphery nations and each nation in turn has its own centre and periphery (cC, pC and cP and pP)².

This dominance relation splits up collectives and relates them to each other in relation to: *harmony of interest*, *disharmony of interest* and *conflict of interest* (Galtung, 1971: 83).

In this two-nation relationship, imperialism is one way the Centre nation has power over the Periphery nation. This brings about a condition of disharmony of interest between them. The relationship between the two nations is that:

- (1) there is *harmony of interest* between the centre in the Centre nation and the centre in the Periphery nation
- (2) there is more *disharmony of interest* within the Periphery nation than within the Centre nation
- (3) there is *disharmony of interest* between the periphery in the Centre nation and the periphery in the Periphery nation

Thus the Centre nation's bridgehead in the Periphery nation is the centre in the Periphery nation and they are tied together by a harmony of interest. (Galtung 1971: 81-83) This harmony between the two centres is very important because it allows the Centre to maintain its dominance over the Periphery. What is important

² cC: centre of Centre; pC: periphery of Centre; cP: centre of Periphery; pP: periphery of Periphery

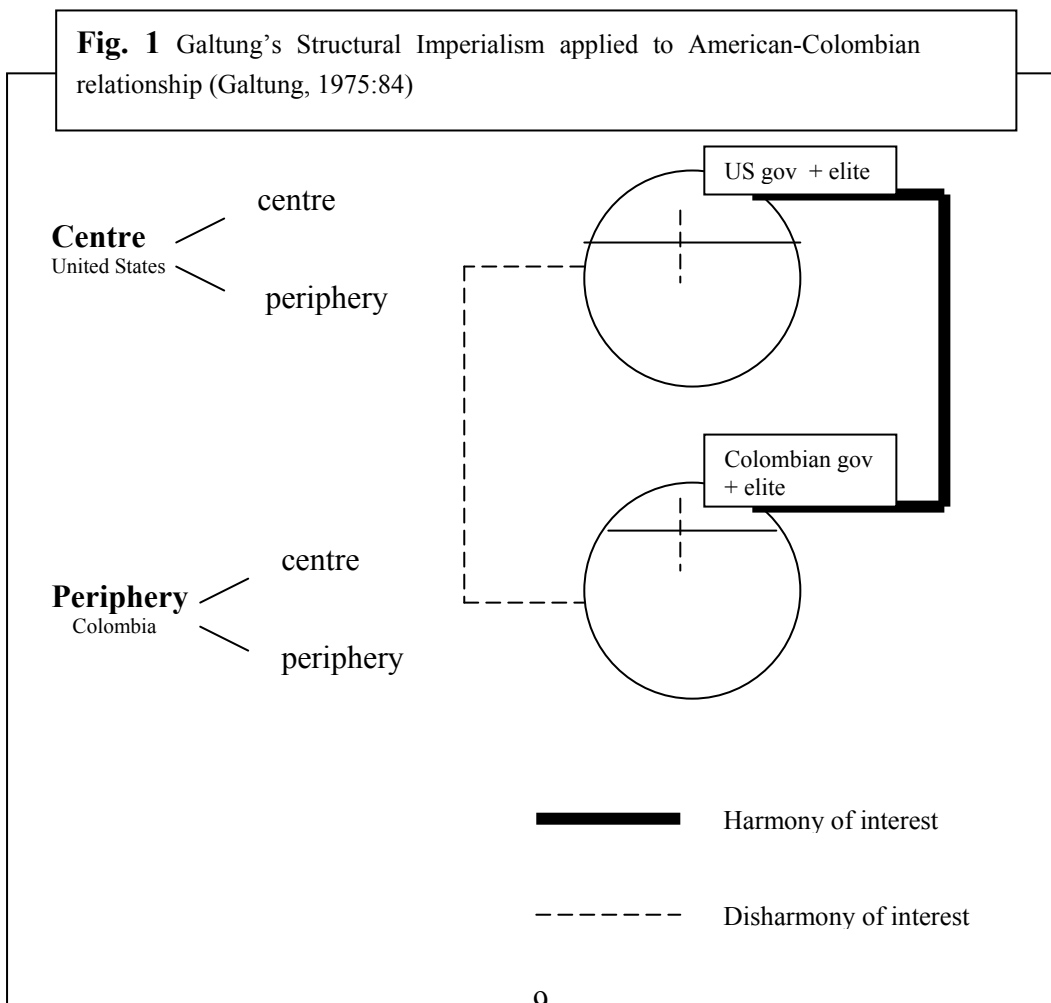
is that this bridgehead creates a joint benefit for both the centre of Centre (cC) and centre in the Periphery (cP).

In our study we see America as the Centre nation and Colombia as the Periphery nation. The relationship between the two countries fits perfectly into this theory because of the fundamental basic idea that there is more disharmony in the Periphery nation than in the Centre nation.

Plan Colombia is an example of the harmony of interest between the US and Colombia because it is the centre of Centre (government in America) and the centre of Periphery (elites and certain parts of the government in Colombia) within the two countries that both benefit from the plan.

There are two important mechanisms of imperialism that are central in Galtung's theory: (1) the principle of vertical interaction relation and (2) the principle of feudal interaction structure (Galtung 1971: 85). The vertical interaction relation is the major factor of inequality in the world and the feudal interaction structure is the factor that maintains and reinforces this inequality by protecting it (Galtung 1971: 89).

The Structural theory of Imperialism also stresses the importance of the definition of imperialism. There are five different types of imperialism depending on the exchange between the Centre and the Periphery nations. *Economic, political, and military imperialism* are types of vertical interaction (first mechanism) and *communication and cultural imperialism* are types of feudal interaction structure (second mechanism). (Galtung 1971: 91)



3.1.1 Paramilitaries

In Galtung's theory, vertical interaction is the major source of inequality in the world. This inequality between countries can only be explained "in terms of the cumulative effect of strong structural phenomena such as imperialism" (Galtung 1971: 89). The structural phenomenon is analyzed by looking at relationships between different groups in the Centre and the Periphery. The first mechanism of imperialism, vertical interaction relation, is the major factor behind the inequality. We can see this vertical interaction relation between the (Centre) and the Colombian elite (cP). This type of structural relationship is also seen between the Centre (US) and the Colombian military (cP). Both the Colombian elite and the Colombian military are parts of the centre of Periphery. They both share a harmony of interest with the centre of the Centre (cC), the American government. This is also illustrated in Figure 1 (see above).

Vertical division of labor is a division of labor within this structural relationship used to achieve the shared harmony of interests between the two groups. Under an imperialistic structure the two mechanisms (vertical interaction and feudal interaction) are not only used between nations but also in groups within nations (Galtung 1971: 91). In our case there is a vertical division of labour in the Periphery, Colombia, between the military and the paramilitary. These vertical relationships open up the possibility for an analysis of the effects of the relationship between the US and the paramilitary on the overall relationship between the two countries. The relationship between the US and the paramilitaries will be explained through Galtung's *military imperialism*.

3.1.2 Human Rights

The second mechanism in this theory, feudal interaction, is the factor that maintains the inequality between the two nations. The inequality between the nations can be represented in many forms- economical, standard of living, and through the protection of civil rights. In the Colombian case, one of the major factors behind the inequality found between the two nations is the vertical relationship between the centre in the US (cC) and the Colombian military (cP). The feudal interaction that we will examine in this case is the widespread human rights abuses found in Colombia.

3.1.3 Democracy

Democracy in Colombia represents both a disharmony of interest and a harmony of interest. The disharmony of interest will be analyzed through the relationship between the centre in the Periphery (Colombian elite) and the periphery in the Periphery (the rest of the Colombian population). We will then look at how the harmony of interest between the Centre and the cP provides a joint benefit of the

both nations. Weak democratic institutions illustrate a form of *communication imperialism* which is a type of feudal interaction.

3.2 World Systems theory

The World Systems theory is a Marxist theory of economic development and is an excellent complement to the Structural Theory of Imperialism. According to the founder Immanuel Wallerstein, state (politics) and market (economic) are interconnected, which means that all social science disciplines should be taken into account when studying the world (So 1990: 174). He further argues that the world has been historically organized according to two different world systems i.e. world empires and world economies. Today we are part of a capitalist world economy which is thoroughly controlled by the market. This means that the division of resources and labour is dependent on the market's demand and supply. However, the consequences are always the same: resources are taken from the Periphery to the Core of the world-system. (Bjereld 2006: 79) International trade within a capitalist world-system is therefore always inherently unequal (Wallerstein 1982: 92).

The Periphery, in this case, is a weaker country, which has no strong industry on which to support itself. Accordingly, the Core is a much stronger country whose industry and economy supports a greater spectrum. In a wider sense, the theory argues that the Core always exploits the Periphery for its own good and intentions (Baylis & Smith 2005: 232). Stronger states can thus more easily intervene in weaker states' domestic concerns and they can also influence weaker states to install or keep leaders that they see as most suitable. The Periphery thus adapts itself to the Core's demands (Wallerstein, 2003: 90-91).

The World Systems theory also implies that Peripheries cannot move upwards in the scale of development because of the Core's hegemonic power (So 1990: 198). This means that the US (the Core) is hindering Colombia's (the Periphery) development because of its own will to stay in power.

When it comes to the analysis, the nature of the world-economy and the patterns of cyclical rhythms throughout the periods under study are essential for the research. It is also of great significance to highlight intricate interactions between global dynamics and national forces, such as classes, ethnic tension and state policies etc. (So 1990: 256-258)

Although the World Systems theory focuses on the economic aspects of the dependency relation between the Core and the Periphery, it is a theory of great relevance for our study because of its view on the exploitation of the weaker state. According to the World Systems theory, there is a systematic competition between strong states and weak states, which has a great significance in our study. It is also of relevance since it is a perspective, which examines development from a critical point of view (So 1990: 180). For instance how the US' presence in Colombia has affected its growth and development.

3.2.1 Paramilitaries

According to the World Systems theory there is a systematic competition between different groups within a country for control of the state machinery (Hopkins et al. 1982: 51). Because of this systematic competition paramilitary groups arise in order to counteract movements that fight for political power. Also, since this theory implies that the more powerful always suppress the weaker, the paramilitaries' creation can be seen as a way to suppress certain weak groups of society. This can be seen in the fact that paramilitaries are often created to fight back insurgents, though their methods and actions target civilians (Livingstone 2005: 49-50).

If paramilitaries in the Periphery are sponsored or supported by the Core, this can be interpreted as an assertion of suppression and domination over the Periphery. According to the World Systems theory this is another variant of the Core's exploitation of the Periphery, and a way of intervening in the weaker states' domestic concerns.

3.2.2 Human Rights

The World Systems theory argues that the number one concern of the Core countries is protecting its own position and maintaining a capitalist world order. This means that, for example, the fight against communism during the Cold War was not to be viewed as a concern for human rights, but purely as a capitalist act. (Bjereld 2006: 81)

When the Core's aid to the Periphery is overtly militarized human rights are threatened (Stokes 2005: 8). Through the Core's funding of e.g. military forces, violence is spread in the Peripheral society and therefore also human rights abuses. This leads to the conclusion that a systematic use of violence, through human rights violations, maintains the power structure as it is today.

3.2.3 Democracy

Since the whole world-system is made up by inequalities, democracy in its perfect form cannot exist before the world system changes. This means that the entire Core -Periphery relationship must be overridden before democracy can develop in the Periphery.

The fact that the Core inadvertently strengthens the power of the Peripheral military at the expense of often fragile, civilian democratic institutions undermines the attempts to build a democracy (Stokes 2005: 8). When the Core's aid is militarized, democratic developments are harder to realize, because of a lack of the social and economic developments that are needed in order to create a functioning democracy. Thus, according to this theory, this is an example of how the Core exploits their power and domination through suppressing other countries, i.e. Peripheries.

4 US Policy and Their “Three Wars” in Colombia

In this chapter we will illustrate the US policy and presence in Colombia through the three significant “wars” that steered American foreign policy in the region: the Cold War, the war on drugs and the war on terror.

The US presence and influence in Colombia did not start with the dawn of the Cold War. Latin America as a region has served as “a workshop of empire” for the United States. The region has been the staging ground for America’s drive for an empire and also a classroom for American foreign policy officials and scholars (Grandin 2006: 2-3).

By the late 1920s the United States presence in Latin America was going full force through investment of capital, established control over the transit routes of raw materials, gains in military expertise and rehearsing the very tools that even today justify American power and dominance in the world (Grandin 2006: 27). Unlike the European method of colonialism, America was careful to respect the rising nationalism in the region and thus, through its Good Neighbour policy of the 1930s and 1940s, was able to open the doors for hemispheric cooperation. This change in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s policy from a young imperialist to a mature internationalist through the abandonment of the right to intervention bound the Americas together. This shift began a period in policy of what scholars call “soft power”- the spread of American influence through non-military means: commerce, cultural exchange and multilateral cooperation. (Grandin 2006: 33-39)

4.1 The Cold War

The dawn of the Cold War brought about a dramatic change in US foreign policy in Latin America. Although the US at first supported the democratization that swept the region, in 1947 it began to send signals that its preference for democrats over autocrats was conditional to political stability. Washington preferred to support an anti-communist dictatorship rather than risk the possibility that democratic elections could open the doors for the rise of a Soviet and Communist influence on the continent. (Grandin 2006: 41)

The elite and powerful in Latin America took advantage of the new US Cold War policy and launched a counterrevolution, overturning newly democratic governments and forcing those regimes that survived to go to the rights. By 1952 nearly every democracy that had come into being in the post war period had been upturned. (Grandin 2006: 42)

4.1.1 The beginning of counterinsurgency troops

The fear of a Soviet uprising in their own “backyard” forced American officials to pay special attention to the events on the continent. Colombia shared this anticommunist stance and this contributed to a warm bilateral relationship between the two countries. The result was a significant increase in US military involvement in the country. It was in the 1950s that the US government established army, navy and air force offices in Bogotá (Crandall 2002: 24).

The administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson considered Colombia key in the effort to stop the spread of Marxist-Leninist ideologies and the Cuban revolution in the Western Hemisphere. Seeing it as a security policy, Washington began giving counter-insurgency assistance to the Colombian armed forces (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 102) to fight this new threat. Part of the US aid was used to support the 1964 attack on Marquetalia, one of the major semi-autonomous communities inhabited by communist guerrillas. In reaction to the attack on their community the guerrillas who escaped formally organized the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and declared their identity by announcing that they were a guerrilla movement. (Crandall 2002: 61)

The guerrilla groups gained strength in Colombia in the 1960s and 1970s and began to demand “revolutionary taxes” from landowners to finance their activities. In retaliation the landowners and peasant groups formed self-defence groups to counter the guerrillas’ activities.

These paramilitary groups were institutionalized by the Colombian state in the 1960s and were often given official government sanction and military assistance. The support from the Colombian military was a two-way street since the paramilitaries did their dirty work in conducting operations against the guerrillas and thus the military did not take the blame for any human rights abuses that were committed during this “Dirty War” (Crandall 2002: 85-87).

It was the US military advisors who actually recommended the formation of these “self-defence forces” as fundamental components of their counterinsurgency strategy. These actions were justified in a 1965 decree law that included the US Doctrine of National Security into Colombian law. The doctrine specifically stated threats to national security and legitimized measures that were considered effective against these threats (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 102).

During the Cold War, Washington’s policy of containment, which was committed to strengthening internal security, turned the region into a counterinsurgency laboratory (Grandin 2006: 48). The US intervened in more Latin American states than in any other continent. During this period Colombia became one of the largest recipients of American counter-insurgency funding and training. There is evidence of widespread human rights abuses carried out by the Colombian military. Though they were not publicly acknowledged they were seen as a necessary evil to prevent a pro-Soviet state from rising. By the end of the Cold War Washington continued to escalate its support training and funding the Colombian military. (Stokes 2005: 1)

4.2 The War on Drugs

It was President Richard Nixon who changed the rhetoric of the US foreign policy in Colombia from the Cold War to his own term the "war on drugs", and declared it a national security threat (Crandall 2002: 25). Now the US involvement in Colombia had shifted from containment of communism to combating drugs (Stokes 2005: 8). Over time both the guerrilla and paramilitary groups had begun to take an active role in the drug trade (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 103). One must understand the distinct difference between these two groups and the narco-traffickers. All three have different ideologies and motivations to their actions.

In the early 1980s the guerillas and the drug cartels were engaged in war with each other. This only benefitted the narcotics traffickers because they viewed the guerillas as a physical obstacle that kept the Colombian state away from their illicit activities. But in the 1990s the guerrillas began getting directly involved in the drug trade. This involvement did not mean that all guerillas were "narco-guerrillas", the extent of their involvement in the drug trade is unclear. Though they do participate through taxing the drug traffickers they still maintained a strict political and economic ideology. FARC involvement in the drug trade has received most of the attention, though there is also evidence that the paramilitary groups also finance their war efforts by drug profits. (Crandall 2002:90-93; Stokes 2005: 101-103)

Today most of the paramilitary groups are united under the umbrella group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) which is led by former drug trafficker Carlos Castaño. Due to their improved financial support, which many think comes from drug trafficking, and weaponry sophistication, the AUC today is less dependent on the Colombian military. Therefore, they can carry out their own agendas and only use military support when it suits them best (Crandall 2002: 88).

American military support in the region at the time was facing criticism on the home front. The domestic conflicts of losing the Vietnam War and Watergate helped to create a strong anti-militarist opposition in both public opinion and within Congress (Grandin 2006: 59-62). Thus Washington had to tread carefully on how it defended and justified its continued military involvement in Latin America.

As a follow up, Democratic President Jimmy Carter began a period of antimilitarism and détente. He made human rights the core of his diplomatic policy. Latin America, where the US enjoyed almost total unmatched power and influence, was the perfect place to test out this new foreign policy. Even though the US viewed itself as an anti-colonial power, the rest of the world began seeing their foreign policy as imperialistic. (Grandin 2006: 63)

It was under Carter's administration that America pressured Colombian authorities to eliminate illegal drug crops and suggested an enforcement policy that involved the prospect of extraditing Colombian traffickers to America (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 103). By now Colombia had become the main supplier of marijuana to the US market (Crandall 2002: 26). Colombian President Julio Cesar Turbay supported the American initiatives and not only signed the

extradition treaty but also allowed Colombia's first aerial eradication, which was used to eliminate illegal crops, to take place (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 103).

Even though the eradication of marijuana plants in the long run was ineffective and actually led to the increase of coca cultivation and cocaine production, it is key in understanding to how the supply reduction side became a fundamental component on the war on drugs (Crandall 2002: 28). The method of fumigating drug crops in Colombia led to farmers moving to other countries to grow their crops and thus spread the production of drug crops throughout the continent.

A Crisis in US-Colombian relations

During the 1980s the Medellin and Cali family-based criminal cartels dominated the drug trade in Colombia. It was during this period that the US-Colombian relations became narcotized- all bilateral issues became dependent on the drug conflict (Crandall 2002: 30). Colombia knew that if they wanted any form of American support they would first have to show their cooperation on the war on drugs. President Regan's arrival to the American oval office brought about a restoration of military power in US policy. During his presidency the majority of the counter drug aid went to the Colombian police for their prohibitive efforts and fumigation of illegal crops. (Grandin 2006: 67-71)

A New York Times poll published in March 1988 showed that 48% of the US public considered drugs to be the principle challenge facing American foreign policy (Crandall 2002: 32-37). When evidence of Colombian president Ernesto Samper receiving financial support from the drug cartels began to surface, it marked a crisis in US-Colombian relations. Washington cancelled Samper's visa and decertified Colombia for their lack of cooperation in the drug war. Samper responded by pursuing an aggressive counter drug policy and the US continued to provide aid (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 104).

4.2.1 Plan Colombia and the support of military troop

After the birth of Plan Colombia in 1998 the Colombian military became the new primary recipient of US assistance (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 105). The plan was presented by Colombian President Andres Pastrana as a \$7.5 billion dollar aid package to address his country's problems of extensive narco-trafficking, civil war, economic underdevelopment and a need for a policy of investment, social development and a strengthening of institutions.

The Colombia conflict was seen as an "ambiguous war". Due to the links between guerrillas and drug traffickers it became hard to distinguish whether it was a counter narcotics war or a counterinsurgency war. This left Washington divided over a "Two-Track" policy. On one track the Department of State supported Pastrana's peace initiatives while on the other the Department of Defence pushed to strengthen both the armed forces and the police (Loveman 2006: 56-59). This same tension also existed among US public opinion due to the sensitivity left from the American involvement in the Vietnam War. But by

illustrating the conflict as an "ambiguous war" the Department of Defence was able to justify their point of view.

Over the next year the US under the Clinton administration altered Plan Colombia to reflect their analysis and priorities and downplayed development and in exchange favoured military aid (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 106). In the final US proposal over 80% of aid went to the military, quite a different layout from Pastrana's original plan of 55% military aid and 45% socio-economic aid (Stokes 2005: 96). By the end of 1998 Colombia had become the world's third largest recipient of US military aid behind Israel and Egypt (Pizarro & Gaitan 2006: 57).

4.3 The War on Terrorism

The September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington cleared the way for Washington to take on the guerrilla movements because what was once classified as counterinsurgency forces were now considered terrorist movements financed by drug trafficking. There was now a new threat with a new name in Colombia. The perspective linking illegal drug traffic and terrorism grew and any remaining controversy among Congress and public opinion in the Colombian approach disappeared (Pizarro & Gaitan 2006: 61).

In September 2001, the Secretary of State placed AUC on the list of international terrorist groups where it joined FARC and ELN, both of which had been listed earlier (Crandall 2002: 89). "Narco-terrorist" was the new term coined to refer to these groups since there was evidence of their financing coming from their involvement in the drug trade.

Since the approval of Plan Colombia, US resources have been flowing into the country without interruption, a solid indicator of the significance that the Colombian conflict and its regional impact have acquired in the formulation of the US national security policy (Pizarro & Gaitan 2006: 66).

The most significant change in US military assistance was the removal of the condition that for the first time since the Cold War, that military aid to Colombia was not exclusive to the war on drugs. Current President George W. Bush could now cross the line that earlier had separated the counter narcotics and counterinsurgency programs (Pizarro & Gaitan 2006: 69) The US' broadened authority after 9/11 allowed it to approve aid to a host of new non-drug military and police aid in Colombia. This included a US \$99 million dollar program to protect an oil pipeline in the conflict-ridden province of Arauca. The Cano Limon-Covenas pipeline, where the US firm Occidental Petroleum owns a major share had been bombed over 200 times by guerrillas between 2001 and 2002 (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 110). It is Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), who are responsible for these bombings. They motivate their actions through their ideology of economic nationalism and thus have targeted foreign oil executives by bombing oil pipelines (Crandall 2002: 63). Thus the actions of the guerrilla groups can be seen as a direct reaction to the US presence in Colombia.

Plan Colombia and US policies towards Colombia have essentially failed and in some cases the circumstances are worse than they were before Plan Colombia was launched (Loveman 2006: 47). The drug war (and now the war on terrorism) has failed to reduce drug production, drug related violence, human rights abuses and have left the country with weak governmental institutions.

5 Analysis

In this chapter we will analyze the previous chapter's empirical facts by using our two theories as analytical tools to examine the effects of the US policy in Colombia.

In both theories the relationship between the Centre/Core and the Periphery is the most valuable unit of analysis. Thus our theories are used as complements in order to strengthen our study and present a more thorough analysis.

5.1 Indirect support of Paramilitary groups

Through decades the US has in a number of ways supported the paramilitary groups of Colombia. Although the support has in recent years been mostly indirect and never, since the Cold War, overt there has been a strong link between these right-wing groups and US policy.

During the Cold War, counterinsurgency groups were trained and funded according to US anti-communism policy. These groups were later developed into the paramilitaries of today³, and they use the same counterinsurgency methods that the US schools and manuals have been teaching officers since the 1960s (Livingstone 2003: 195).

The US, through their continued aid to the Colombian military, has indirectly supported the paramilitary troops and also their human rights abuses. After the Cold War and during the war on drugs, all counterinsurgency activity linked to the US was officially banned because of reluctant US public opinion linked to the earlier failures of Vietnam. However, the counter-narcotic tactics used in Colombia then could be seen as a cover-up for counterinsurgency. Strong links between the Colombian military and paramilitaries have been found. The paramilitaries were often aided by the military in tasks that the military themselves could not carry out because of the injustices and human rights abuses that were commonly involved in this "dirty war" between the paramilitaries and the guerrillas. A perfect example of this relationship was evident in July 1997

³ It is important to understand the differences between counterinsurgency and paramilitary groups. The former ones are military fractions used in order to fight back insurgents that are threatening the state's security. The latter ones are groups that are either officially supported, unofficially supported or not supported at all by the state. They have often military backgrounds and fight insurgents because of the ideological differences between them.

when the military failed to respond to reports of a massacre caused by the paramilitaries. At the same time there is evidence that the military had actually escorted these groups in private planes and allowed them to pass through military zones in order to arrive at the site of the massacre (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 126).

Due to pressure from Washington the Colombian military has been forced to sever links with the paramilitaries. However, today the military is considered to provide logistic and intelligence support to the paramilitaries. There is evidence that this support has been made in exchange for other “favours” (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 126).

5.1.1 Structural theory of Imperialism

Vertical Interaction and Harmony of Interest

Vertical interaction is one of the two main mechanisms in Galtung’s theory of Structural Imperialism which looks at the relation between the parties involved in the case (Galtung 1971: 85). *Vertical interaction* is the major source of inequality in this world and the *vertical interaction relation* is the major factor behind this inequality. This *vertical interaction relation* between the US (C) and the Colombian elite (cP)⁴ is the driving force that holds together Galtung’s relationship between the Centre and the Periphery. This relationship was reinforced during the Cold war, when the US supported democracy on its own terms.

Thus the elite, who shared the US’ concerns with communism, could take advantage of this and assure there was a *harmony of interests* between them. This *harmony of interest* between the two centres is very important since it allows the Centre to maintain its dominance over the Periphery, i.e. US dominance over Colombia. Through assuring the Americans that Colombian democratic institutions would be formed in line with US interests the Colombian elite were able to gain the support of the Americans and thus stay and maintain their power. Today the elite are the party that supports and root for the paramilitaries because it is the paramilitaries that fight against the left-wing guerrillas who want to seize the power that today rests in the hands of the Colombian elite.

Military Imperialism

Within Galtung’s theory there are different types of imperialism depending on the exchange that exists between the Centre and the Periphery. This is relevant in explaining the US relation to the Colombian paramilitaries. *Military imperialism* is explained through the economic division of labour where the Centre nation

⁴ In our analysis it is the US and Colombia who are our Centre and Periphery respectively. Our cC in this case is the American government or rather those who hold the power and call the shots in the government. cP refers to the Colombian elite, which includes both the government and the rich and powerful in society. We see the Colombian military and Colombian elite as two different types of actors within the centre of Periphery (cP).

economically speaking also becomes the Centre nation in a military sense (Galtung 1971: 92). This means that the Periphery is dependent on the Centre to provide the economic resources and technological hardware to maintain their (the Periphery's) military influence.

This is a result of a *vertical division of labour*, which exists both within and between nations (Galtung 1975: 90). In *military imperialism* this division of labour between nations shows itself mainly by the Centre providing protection, through e.g. lending officers and instructors for counterinsurgency training, while the Periphery provides the discipline and soldiers needed (Galtung 1971: 92). This is backed by strong empirical evidence of the US funding and training the paramilitaries during the Cold War.

The *vertical division of labour* exists also in the Centre nation's influence on how the Periphery nation processes and makes its decisions. This is an important feature of *political imperialism* which is when the decision making centre is dislocated away from the nation itself and towards the Centre nation (Galtung 1971: 92). This was without a doubt an important reason for the American support of the creation of the paramilitaries' because the operations they carried out were made according to US policy, not Colombian. The reason for this is that no Colombian government had developed or implemented a specific strategy to counter insurgents, which without doubt has led to a reliance on the US government for strategic guidance (Alexander 2002: 127).

Vertical Division of Labour within nations

Since the *vertical division of labour* also exists within nations, in this case within the Periphery, there has been a notable division between the military and the paramilitary groups. The "paramilitary forces provided plausible deniability due to their clandestine nature of their composition, which allowed for a distancing between the "official" state policy and the "unofficial" use of terrorism directed against the civilian populations" (Stokes 2005: 62). For example in the late 1980's high ranking military officials were publicly linking unions, universities, judicial, human rights defenders and churches etc. to the left-wing guerrillas. This led to the paramilitaries working closely, though covertly, with local military commanders in order to eliminate "guerrilla sympathizers" (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 125).

This vertical division of labour between the military and the paramilitary groups reinforces the *military imperialism* that exists between the Centre and the Periphery. The paramilitaries carry out operations that help to protect the *harmony of interest* between the centre of Centre (cC) and the centre of the Periphery (cP).

An indication of the importance of the harmony of interests between both centres, can be seen by how the Colombian military and paramilitary are today responsible for over 70% of all politically motivated assassinations. This means that unfortunately the US is heavily accountable for parts of these high figures. (Stokes 2005: 2) Some would argue that this could be linked to the policies of the Cold War when violations of the human rights were justified by the fact that insurgents were stopped. The Colombian military carried out widespread human rights abuses, which at that point were seen as necessary in order to prevent a pro-

Soviet state from rising (Stokes 2005: 1). The harmony of interests in this case was the desire to stay in power and keep a capitalist world order, where the United States was seen as the pre-eminent hegemonic power and where the elite was to maintain its control (Stokes 2005: 39).

The relationship between the US and the paramilitaries

The vertical interaction between the US and the paramilitary is very present in the US-Colombia relationship. Firstly, because they give aid to the Colombian military, whom then give support and aid to the paramilitaries. The connection between the US and the paramilitaries cannot be disputed. Secondly, by their support of the Colombian elite, the US here too indirectly supports the paramilitaries. The US-Colombia relationship is therefore one of both political (decision-making), and military imperialism.

To sum it up Galtung concludes that “only imperfect, amateurish imperialism needs weapons; professional imperialism is based on *structural* rather than *direct* violence” (1971: 91). This implies that the US’ *indirect* support of the paramilitaries can be seen as a manner of assuring *structural* violence in the Colombian society.

5.1.2 World Systems theory

According to the World Systems theory, the US policy’s great stress on the militarization of Colombia can be explained by the fact that militarily strong states (Core) confront regions with fragile political structures, i.e. the Periphery (Wallerstein 2003: 91). This is one of various means for the Centre nation to state control and preserve the capitalist world-system. Given that the paramilitary groups derived from various legal self-defence groups that were funded by the US, their actions were, from the beginning, seen as officially authorized (Alexander 2002: 120). These self-defence groups played a vital part in the systematic competition for the control of the state-machinery, which is a central feature of the conflict within the world-system. (Hopkins et al. 1982: 51)

Also, as the Core states often interfere politically in economical activities of Peripheral states (Wallerstein 2003: 91), the US economic support of the Colombian military, which eventually gets to the hands of the paramilitaries, can be seen as a deliberate strategy. This because of the fact that paramilitaries are making sure the Core’s interests are fulfilled and maintained, though doing this without official ties to the US.

Since history can only be correctly understood in terms of class struggle, the rise of the paramilitary groups is a process within this fight. This is illustrated through the extraordinary consensus between the Colombian elite to preserve a political system, which excludes the working class and the poor (Livingstone 2003: 96). Colombia has always been ruled by these select few and has therefore lacked a blatant class struggle. However, when the lower classes began to understand the deficit in their representation within the dominant parties, guerrilla movements arose. Therefore, in order to counteract them, paramilitary groups

were created and trained by the US as part of their anti-communism fight. This means that there now exists an overt struggle between the classes, in the form of the fight between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries.

Since the US took a great part in the development of the paramilitaries and the upholding of the elite's power, a dependency relationship was formed, which weakened the Periphery. This dependency relation further leads to the fact that Peripheries cannot move upwards in the scale of their own development because of the Core's hegemonic power (So 1990: 198).

Plan Colombia underplayed the paramilitary involvement in the drug trade. The US' object of concern was the growing guerrilla groups, not the paramilitaries, thus there was no action taken with respect to the paramilitaries' growing role in helping the drug trade. By turning a blind eye to these activities, Plan Colombia led to the paramilitaries expanding their presence and consolidating their control of territory throughout the country (Hylton 2006: 103; Youngers & Rosin 2005: 109). This leads to questions about US deliberate or non-deliberate actions. Since the paramilitaries are fighting for the same goal as the US, i.e. a capitalist liberal world order, the overlooking of the paramilitaries role may have been a step in this fight.

One could also argue that the changes in US policy, i.e. from Cold War to war on drugs to war on terrorism can be seen as cyclical rhythms, which have all affected the Periphery ultimately the same way. Even though the support for the paramilitaries has changed, from explicit to implicit, this has not changed the US continuing influence on the development of the Periphery.

5.2 Human Rights violations

The human rights violations that have occurred in Colombia have increased exponentially over the years. As the paramilitary forces grew, the number of human rights abuses grew with them (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 125). By the late 1980s Washington knew that they would have to take action against the military's increasing human rights record before they could justify giving more assistance to the Colombian military. In 1993 a new Constitutional Court had confirmed the Supreme Court's 1987 decision to strike down military jurisdiction over civilian cases. The Colombian military, since its neutrality under La Violencia, had held a significant amount of autonomy that gave them the power to not only investigate and judge civilians for many crimes but also to keep the armed forces protected from civilian courts. Another significant ruling that also undermined the military's autonomy took place in 1997 ruling that violations of human rights and crimes against humanity fell outside the jurisdiction of the military justice system (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 123-127).

These advances were due to the growing human rights movements within Colombia. This set the stage for new dynamic relationship between the US, the military, and the paramilitaries. The Colombian military knew that it was losing its autonomy and it would have to be careful before taking further action.

5.2.1 Structural theory of Imperialism

Feudal Interaction

The principle of feudal interaction in Galtung's Structural theory of Imperialism shows how the principle of vertical interaction (the interaction itself) is held together. The major factor behind the inequality, is in this case the relationship between the US and the Colombian military, and the factor that maintains and reinforces this inequality is the human rights abuses.

By not being directly linked to the human rights abuses the US can maintain their dominant vertical relationship with the military. It would cause public outcry by the American public and the US Congress would never justify the sending of 2 billion dollars to Colombia between 2000 and 2002 alone if it came to light that it was American forces committing these climbing rates of crimes against humanity in Colombia (Stokes 2005: 84). Until there is strong evidence linking the US directly to the human rights violations they will be able to continue to maintain their position as a Centre in this two-nation relationship.

Ironically the ambiguity of exactly who is committing these crimes against humanity helps the US justify their presence in Colombia. For it gives them an opportunity to use the rhetoric of it being the world police that fights for freedom as a justification for them needing to take an active role in Colombia. "The defence of freedom requires the advance of freedom" said George W. Bush in his second inaugural address. (Grandin 2006:53)

The human rights abuses are a major factor behind the inequality between Colombia and the US because it shows how the Colombian population (periphery in the Periphery) is unable to enjoy the same protection of their human rights as the civilians in America (periphery in the Centre). Thus there is a double standard coming from the Centre since they do not uphold the same standard in other countries as they do within their own. This example shows how there is more *disharmony of interest* within the Periphery nation (Colombia) than within the Centre nation (US).

Communication Imperialism

The human rights abuses since the new legislation in the 1990s can no longer be directly linked to the Colombian military. Instead the number of abuses caused by the military has now been replaced by actions of the paramilitary. Ironically as the paramilitaries grew so did the number of human rights violations involving armed forces. Both the US and Colombian governments have turned a blind eye to the increase in paramilitaries and have focused on instead eliminating the leftist guerrillas and leftist movements (Hylton 2006: 96).

The increasing number of human rights violations has forced Washington to implement some conditions before they can approve of sending money to Colombia. As a result of this, human rights conditions focused on military-paramilitary relationships were incorporated into Plan Colombia. One of those conditions required that a stated percentage of military assistance to Colombia could not be sent until the US Secretary of State assured Congress that

Colombia's military was suspending officers alleged to have committed human rights violations.

Although it was a good intention, these conditions were not very effective because except for the first certificate, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright chose to waive most of the conditions basing her actions on a narrow legalistic interpretation of the conditions (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 128-129).

The example of the overlooking of the human rights abuses in Colombia is an example of *communication imperialism*. In the vertical division of labour in this case the Periphery produces the events that the Centre turns into news. From here the Centre presents the news through their version of the story. So the human rights violations that occur in Colombia are then filtered and presented to the media through the interpretation and eyes of the centre of Centre, this case the US government.

Conflict of Interest

The human rights issue also demonstrates a *conflict of interest* between the Centre and the Periphery. The centre in the Periphery, current Colombia President Uribe has made public attacks on human rights defenders and called them "political agitators the service of terrorism". Neither the US embassy nor the state department have condemned his remarks (Stokes 2005: 128). This is a good example of a conflict of interest where the two parties are pursuing incompatible goals (Galtung 1971: 82)

5.2.2 World Systems Theory

The human rights violations occurring in Colombia show an example of the class struggle that Wallerstein stresses in his theory. One form of this class struggle is taking form through the displacement of people, which increased as a result of violations of humanitarian law and human rights. Colombia's internal armed conflict has not only spread throughout the country but also over its borders and into Colombia's neighbouring countries. From 1999 to 2004 the estimated number of refugees who crossed the border into Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela ranged between 300 000 and 1 million. Since most of the displaced people are peasants and victims of the US-led fumigation of crops, this class struggle is evident. (Gottwald 2004: 517)

Another form of class struggle is the active fight between the guerrillas and the state. This originates from the fact that FARC and other left-wing guerrillas grew in order to fight the rural inequalities and the Colombian political system's failure to decrease the unequal distribution of national resources (Stokes 2005: 78). This form of class struggle has had a great impact on the amount of violence and human rights abuses in Colombia. The paramilitaries, the Colombian military and the guerrillas are all connected to human rights abuses. The guerrillas' strategies differed earlier from the paramilitaries from the fact that they did not regard civilians as their primary targets. (Livingstone 2005: 49-50)

Since the number one concern of Core countries is to protect their own position as the hegemonic power and to maintain capitalist world order one could argue that human rights abuses are made systematically in order to suppress the Periphery. By structural violence, the development of the Periphery ceases and the Periphery cannot move upwards in scale of development. This is best exemplified by the fact that the militarized form of aid given by US threatens human rights in Colombia (Stokes 2005: 8). Through funding the Colombian military, the US also indirectly funds Colombian paramilitary groups, who have caused an alarmingly high percentage of the human rights abuses (Stokes 2005: 12).

5.3 Democracy in Colombia

Colombia is one of the oldest democracies on the continent; still, the lack of strong democratic institutions has led to an absence of a fully consolidated democracy.

5.3.1 Structural theory of Imperialism

Disharmony of Interest

The *disharmony of interests* that exists in the Colombian society today makes it nearly impossible to develop a functioning democracy. Thus interests must either change or the dependency relationship between the Centre and the Periphery must be revised. A *disharmony of interests* exists because two parties, in this case, cP and pP, are coupled together in such a way that the living condition (LC) gap between them is increasing. In this case the elite, cP, are using their power to increase their own LC more than the rest of the country's. This is an act of protection of the vertical society that exists today in Colombia, which reinforces the inequality both within the Periphery and between the Centre and the Periphery. During imperialism, the centre of the Periphery (cP) grows more than the periphery (pP), due partly to how interaction between centre and periphery is organized. Because of this *feudal interaction structure*, which is how relations between parties are put together in order to strengthen inequalities, the Centre's supremacy only increases and so does the power of the centre of the Periphery. (Galtung 1971: 82-84)

Harmony of Interest

When it comes to the harmony of interests between the Centre and cP, it is obvious that this has had a great impact on the (lack of) development of democracy. The US has through the years helped the elite of Colombia to maintain power. This all refers to the vertical interaction between the elite and the US and goes back to the US' concept of "conditional democracy", which from then on decreased democracy's importance in the region and fortified the elite's grip on the power.

Because of the elite's support of US policies, the US legitimizes the Colombian government, which is literally run by the elite. The problem here lies in the fact that the government and its institutions are fragile and, without the US backing, would not last for long. This means that the US, through its imperial relationship supports a government which has little democratic value. An example is shown through the election of current President Alvaro Uribe where only 38% of Colombians took part in his election. These low voter turnouts are due to paramilitaries threatening rural Colombians who would not vote for Uribe. As expected the Bush administration welcomed Uribe as a partner and Uribe, in his turn, became fully committed to the war against terror. (Stokes 2005: 108)

Imperialism through vertical division of labour

Imperialism can also be shown by how the *vertical division of labour* tends to lead to some nations producing decisions (Centre), while others provide obedience (Periphery) (Galtung 1971: 92). An example of *political imperialism* is found in 2002 when the Bush administration was granted permission by US Congress to use training and weapons even when operations were not drug-related. Formerly these items were provided to Colombia's military in order to fight illegal drugs in operations that targeted guerrillas and paramilitaries. (Kirk 2003: 19) The change in policy basically means that US supported militaries can use counterinsurgency strategies for whatever purpose they might have, which is highly undemocratic. Moreover the decisions that are made concerning Colombia are then actually not made in Colombia, but in the Centre, which undermines the Colombian government's legitimacy and therefore also democracy. The concept of political imperialism points consequently out how the decision-making is dislocated away from the Periphery nation itself and towards the Centre nation. (Galtung 1971: 91) A reasonable question here is: If decisions concerning domestic issues cannot be made in the Periphery, then how can democracy be implemented and sustained?

Feudal Interaction Structures

One could say that systematic utilization of *feudal interaction structures*, in this case the Centre's monopoly on policy and decision-making, are a way of protecting the Centre against the Periphery. Undermining and weakening the Colombian institutions can assure the US that no threat will be plausible. This is the most important consequence of *political imperialism*. (Galtung 1971: 92)

Another problem is that to guarantee a minimum of democratic order requires that the Colombian state is capable of legislating and enforcing laws (Loveman 2006: 72). However, the US dominance leads to the overriding of Colombian law and thus making the institutions lose sovereignty. This can be exemplified by the case of the implementation of Plan Colombia, which risks undermining democratic actors and institutions in the country. For instance, the continued focus on fumigation has undermined existing legal and constitutional limitations on aerial spraying programs and also contradicts broader national development objectives. (Ramirez Lemus et al. 2005: 136) This shows the US' political imperialistic relationship towards Colombia, since they monopolize the legislative branches and implementation of law. US policies contribute therefore "to political

instability, renewed militarization of internal security functions and loss of certain types of economic opportunities” (Loveman 2006: 22).

Colombia is also a case of *communication imperialism* since president Uribe, backed by the US, is trying to gain stronger control of the media. He is doing this by seeking to pass laws which e.g. censor reporting on Colombian counter terrorist measures and Colombian military activity. This is all done in the spirit of the war against terrorism, which is highly influenced by US foreign policy.

5.3.2 World Systems theory

According to the World Systems theory the whole Core – Periphery relationship is not democratic, because of the exploitative relationship between them. Since it is the elites in the Periphery and the Core that actually gains from this kind of world order or system, the world-system is overtly inequitable.

During the Cold War there was a consensus among the Americans that only through active intervention, meaning military support and picking leaders who firmly shared Washington’s views, could the menace of communism be stopped (Kirk 2003: 23). This gives support to the theory that strong states influence weaker states to install or keep those in power, i.e. president etc., that they see as suitable. The Periphery adapts itself to the Core’s demands and its domestic concerns are determined or greatly influenced by the dominant force, i.e. the Core nation (Wallerstein 2003: 91). The fact that the US has a long history of promotion of coups against legitimately constituted governments, sabotaging reformist movements and backing dictatorial or democratic regimes according to its perceived necessities, shows that, when it comes to the Core’s political and economical interests, the Core is willing to renounce democracy and all democratic means of conduct. (Zuluaga 2007: 112)

These actions that have been made by the US have all undermined the importance of democracy in Latin America and specifically in Colombia. They also show how the Core, in its defence of economic and strategic interests, such as the maintenance of a strong foothold in Latin America, subordinates the promotion of democracy (Zuluaga 2007: 115).

The fact that the US calls popular movements and other grassroots organizations that try to create democracy from below, threats to US national security can also be interpreted as a way of stating and acting out dominance. The US urges governments to use force to put these groups down which means that democratic actions are turned into menaces. For Colombia, subordination of democratization is therefore a rule to be followed. This originates from the fact that US government favours democracy but not elected governments that represent interests which are in conflict with US policy and its global and regional agenda. (Loveman 2006: 21 & 25) The US can therefore be said to be promoting democracy in so far as it complements US interests (Stokes 2005: 52). “In the case of Colombia this means that the US opposes democracy when it means that Colombians exercise their rights of association and free expression in order to call

on their governments to resist US global, regional and local hegemony” (Loveman 2006: 22).

Also, the weakening of institutions by inconsistent policies destabilizes the economies and democracies of the region. When the US for example strengthens the power of the military, fragile civilian democratic institutions are weakened (Stokes 2005: 8) and the socio-economic developments needed to democratize the country are being left to the side. This means that the militarization of the US aid, e.g. Plan Colombia, does not lead to democratic developments: the Colombian state remains fragile, corrupt, authoritarian, repressive and ineffective (Pizarro & Gaitán 2006: 73). This grave militarization of US policies and the great emphasis on “national security” have been, for a long time, instruments of US economic, political, cultural, and military domination (Zuluaga 2007: 112).

This kind of behaviour is typical of the Core, since it exploits the Periphery’s domestic concerns. It also further affirms that there is a systematic competition between strong states and weak states, i.e. between the Core and the Periphery (Hopkins et al. 1982: 51), since the Core uses its power to weaken the Periphery, so that it cannot become a threat in the present nor in the future.

6 Conclusion

Our analysis, through the application of our theories, has shown that there is significant empirical evidence that the three examples of collateral damage from the US policy in Colombia represent an imperialistic relationship between the two countries.

The vertical interactions shown through the relationships of: the US and the elite, and the US and the military, illustrate how through the division of labour between the military and the paramilitary, the US indirectly supports the paramilitary troops that fight in order to keep the Colombian elite in power.

The feudal interaction, which is the factor that maintains and supports this inequality, is the human rights abuses that arise mostly out of the paramilitaries' violent acts.

These human rights abuses in turn occur because of the weak democratic institutions found in Colombia. Without strong democratic institutions to protect the rights of the people, human rights cannot exist and thus there can be no further development or growth of a country.

Our conclusion from the results of our analysis is that these two theories illustrate how the US policy in Colombia provides the grounds of what can be argued is an imperialistic relationship between the two countries. Galtung's theory shows how different structural relationships between the players in the Centre and Periphery lead to an imperialistic power structure between the US and Colombia. Wallerstein's theory on the other hand shows how the Core stunts the development and the progress of Colombia, which thus in turn makes it dependent on its relationship to the Core.

From this we conclude that this relationship can be used as a jumping point to maintain their power in the region. Because of a growing anti-Americanism in Latin America, the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the US is important for keeping up the Core's influence and for guarding the US' "backyard". This can then be expanded into a further study on whether US policy's main goals are to maintain a capitalist world order where the US plays a vital part as the Core.

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