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Cherie Nicole Brown

*University at Albany, State University of New York*

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**Who Does and Who Doesn't: The Impetus for Terrorist Organization Involvement with  
Drug Trafficking Organizations**

**Cherie Nicole Brown**

**Honors Thesis**

**RPOS499Z – Spring 2011**

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## **Who Does and Who Doesn't: The Impetus for Terrorist Organization Involvement with Drug Trafficking Organizations**

### **Introduction**

Since the 1960s to the present, international government officials have been linking drug trafficking with terrorism. When studying the connection between drug trafficking and terrorism, many scholars study Latin America, as it is a well known region that participates in the drug trade and has many insurgent groups as a result of a generally weak political history.

There are many different theories that attempt to explain the connection between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations. Some theorists argue that these organizations will create connections based on their ideology, while others argue that these groups will interact out of convenience. Additionally, there are theorists that believe there should be no connection between the two at all. This paper evaluates the theories based on a case study of two Colombian terrorist organizations.

### **Theory**

Many scholars argue that theoretically there should be no connection between drug trafficking and terrorism because the two have differing goals. While those who participate in the drug trade would rather attract less attention from the government, terrorist organizations seek public recognition for their actions. According to Cilluffo, however, “[d]espite this, the links between organized crime and terrorism are becoming stronger in regards to the drug trade” (Cilluffo 2000: 1). In this mutually beneficial relationship, groups that participate in organized

crime run the trafficking part of the operation, while the terrorist organizations control the land where the drugs are cultivated. Ultimately, this allows both groups to achieve their respective goals; however, although many groups use drug trafficking for financial support, there are many groups that do not.

One linkage theory states that drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations are linked due to greed and self-interest. The link between the two has little or nothing to do with political agendas. From looking at the general goals of terrorist organizations, scholars argue that they seek to transform society in order to overthrow governments. Drug trafficking organizations on the other hand, "...seek to be immunized from government intervention so they can go about their business" (Damask and Miller 1996: 124). Lee argues that the two groups are able to come together because they share a common enemy in the form of the government. While the government interferes with the drug trafficking organization's attempts to participate in organized crime, it also interferes with the attempts of the terrorist organization's to implement a new government policy. The other side of this argument, however, shows that there are times in which the drug trafficking organization will participate within the established power system, thus providing no support for the terrorist organization. Differences like this have the potential to create clashes in countries in which the government is being funded by drug trafficking organizations (Damask and Miller 1996: 124-125).

According to Damask and Miller, the relationship between drug traffickers and terrorist organizations is a myth that is supported by North American policy interests. He argues that the presidential administrations of both Reagan and George H. W. Bush used the connections between the two in order to help move forward their political agendas. Damask and Miller argue

that the link of drug trafficking and terrorism is both tangential and ephemeral. Norco-terrorism is ultimately a myth, as drug trafficking and terrorism do not intersect and when they do, the relationship is short-lived and superficial (Damask and Miller 1996: 114).

During the 1980s, two professors stated that drug trafficking and terrorism were linked because they both shared the common goal of undermining the West. By using the Soviet Union as a case study, they determined that this theory was not so farfetched, as Soviet terrorist organizations were mainly communist and had connections with drug trafficking organizations that could be used as a weapon to attack the Western ideology in the form of the United States. Ehrenfeld argues that Marxist and Leninist regimes developed drug trafficking solely as a weapon to take down the West (Damask and Miller 1996: 115). While this theory addresses a possible reason for the interaction between communist terrorist organizations and drug trafficking organizations, it fails to account for those drug trafficking organizations that are not anti-American in nature. Those who support the idea of narco-terrorism as a global communist conspiracy argue that the relationship between the terrorists and drug trafficking organizations is based on communist ideology. In addition to the Soviet Union, Ehrenfeld uses the Cuban example of the Guillot-Lara Episode in order to support her thesis that drug trafficking and terrorism are linked through common ideology. A closer look at the event, however shows that drug trafficking and terrorism worked hand in hand in this particular case because linking the two would prove beneficial to all parties involved in the transactions. Ehrenfeld assumes that involvement of some communist Cuban officials means there is an involvement of the Cuban government. In other words, smaller parts of the government were seen to represent the government as a whole (Damask and Miller 1996: 117-118).

Wardlaw argues that there are many different ways in which drug trafficking organizations can be linked, and each linkage must be looked at on a case by case basis in order to appropriately address the situation. To Wardlaw, the term narco-terrorism implies that there are defined characteristics and potentially one general way to fight this type of terrorism. Wardlaw believes that one needs to define narco-terrorism in order to be able to determine the nature of its presence in the international arena. While it is easier to define what constitutes international drug trafficking, political officials often disagree over a definition for terrorism. For his research, Wardlaw uses a definition that emphasizes that the group must seek to “...create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group large than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group onto acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators” (Wardlaw 1988: 7). Although he can produce a working definition for narco-terrorism, he still believes that the term should not be used to describe the connection between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations.

Wardlaw argues that narco-terrorism does not exist as a general type of terrorism because in each case, the link between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations is different. There is no general requirement of what constitutes a connection between the two. Labeling the connections between the two groups under the heading of narco-terrorism leads to the false belief that most, if not all, instances in which the groups interact are more or less the same. Drug trafficking and terrorism remain in two separate spheres because drug trafficking is not terrorism. Members of drug trafficking organizations do not commit violence to instill fear. Expanding the definition of terrorism to include drug trafficking is problematic because it helps

to make the definition of terrorism so broad that it includes certain events, such as wars, that would not necessarily be categorized as such (Wardlaw 1988: 11-12).

## **Literature Review**

Terrorist organizations can be funded either through the state or through private funding. State funding has been generally decreasing, while private funding, either legitimate or unlawful, has been increasing. Legitimate funding includes donations from those who make their money by legal means, monies from charities, and various methods of fundraising. According to Bantekas, state funding incorporates others means besides direct monetary funding. While the state may not produce hard cash for these organizations, their actions and decisions have the potential to influence the execution of terrorist acts and benefit the organization. When the state produces any sort of funding for a terrorist organization, it assumes responsibility for the actions of the organization (Bantekas 2003: 316-317). International law enforcement can more easily attack state funded terrorist organizations than they can non-state funded terrorist organizations.

Unlawful funding includes drug trafficking, money laundering, smuggling, and illegal arms trade. These types of funding are considered unlawful by either national or international definitions (Bantekas 2003: 316). Examining the link between terrorism with organized crime such as drug trafficking, money laundering, smuggling and illegal arms trade forces politicians to realize that terrorism and organized crime are not one in the same. Terrorism is unique in that terrorist organizations always have an ideological motivation while organized crime does not. Organized crime's main motivation is making money. Although terrorist organizations become

involved with groups that participate in illegal activities, they do not forfeit their ideological aspirations.

According to Steinitz, when exploring why terrorist organizations began interacting with drug trafficking organizations, scholars first looked to Colombia, as it was a prominent source of marijuana. The 19<sup>th</sup> of April Movement began to take advantage of the traffickers they saw becoming wealthy. They began interacting with members of the drug cartel by kidnapping family members of known members of the Medellin Cartel. Members of the 19<sup>th</sup> of April Movement also collaborated with Colombian traffickers by allowing drug traffickers to deliver weapons while members of the terrorist organization protected shipments of drugs. Through this mutually beneficial relationship, drug cartels pushed to provide terrorist organization members with "...resources, money and haven (Steinitz 2002: 3).

Steinitz also gives another example of how terrorist organizations utilized drug traffickers through the example of *Sendero Luminoso*. Peru, the base country of operation for *Sendero Luminoso*, became involved in the drug trade because the country was the leading producer of the coca leaf, an instrumental ingredient to the production of cocaine. Coca farmers, known as *cocaleros* had close ties with members of *Sendero Luminoso* because these farmers operated in the same territory in which the terrorist organization was founded. Out of the two terrorist organizations that operated within Peru, drug traffickers sought protection from whichever group was strongest in the area in which they were working. Members of *Sendero Luminoso* justified a relationship with drug traffickers because of the previous relationship of the terrorist organization with the *cocaleros* of the area, in addition to ability of the drug trade to weaken the power of the United States. Through analysis of the level of sophistication of the fire arms of the



organization, Steinitz derives that *Sendero Luminoso* used the money gained from involvement with drug traffickers in order to pay the salaries of the members of the organization (Steinitz 2002: 5-6).

Terrorist organizations serve to benefit from a connection with drug trade organizations because it allows them to have a non-state sponsored financial source. Depending on state sponsored support often allows to the state to impose limitations on the actions of the terrorist organization. Additionally, this separation from the states poses other advantage for terrorist organizations, as other international military powers, such as the United States can no longer target states to attempt to control the behaviors of terrorist organizations (Cilluffo 2000: 2). Since non-state sponsored funding allows terrorist organizations more freedom to do as they choose, the United States must now implement different policies to handle the threats that are posed by terrorist organizations.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, countries like Colombia and Mexico did feel the need to take steps to combat narcoterrorism within their state borders. Within Colombia, former President Virgilio Barco Vargas declared war against criminal drug trafficking organizations and cartels that operated within his country borders after presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan was assassinated by members of the notorious Medellin Cartel. While the Colombian government had been taking steps to combat this important issue, Galan's assassination pushed the government to do more towards these efforts (Bagley and Tokatlian 1990: 9).

After the drug barons of the Medellin Cartel responded to President Barco's declaration of war, they proceeded by targeting different groups. During stage one the cartel pursued a locally concentrated campaign of violence in and around the city of Medellin, subsequently

prompting members of the Department of Antioquia to declare that the government needed to alter tactics and have a dialogue with the cartel. During the second stage of their campaign, the cartel brought their violent attacks to other large cities in an attempt to show they would upset daily life within the whole country. Killing over 200 people, the drug barons convinced many other politicians that dialogue with the cartel would be preferable over any degree of violent confrontation. In the third and fourth stages, the Medellin Cartel politicized their campaign through bribery and attacked the traditional Colombian oligarchy. As a result of the politicization of the violent campaign, Congress proposed a national referendum concerning the constitutional reform and the extradition of criminals. Feeling that Congress was being intimidated by the actions of the cartel, President Barco threw out all proposed constitutional reforms to block the amendment process. Additionally, in response to the actions of the cartel prominent families agreed to negotiations that would lessen punishment of the drug barons if they agreed to free hostages and stop their terrorist campaign. Barco ultimately did not agree with these negotiations, and subsequently ordered the extradition of another Colombian drug trafficker (Bagley and Tokatlian 1990: 10-11)

Within Colombia, a group that has posed a large threat to the state has been the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, otherwise known as FARC. For many years, the terrorist organization had taxed drug traffickers within the country, but later became more deeply involved in the workings of the operations. They have become "...the middlemen between the farmers and the cocaine processing labs owned by the cartel bosses" (Cilluffo 2000: 4). Because of this link, as revenue from drug trafficking increases, the influence and power of FARC has increased as well. A major concern of Colombian officials is the large amount of territory

controlled by FARC. FARC has used this territory to continue drug cultivation with less involvement from the Colombian government.

Another country that has experienced a growing problem with the connection of drug trafficking and terrorism is Mexico. Within Mexico, drug trafficking started to become prominent around 1914 with the prohibition of opium, opiates, and cocaine within the United States. In 1991, for the first time the Mexican government adopted a political position arguing that drug trafficking was a threat to national security. The country paid greater attention to the situation after the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Calvani 2006: 139, 142-143).

Prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center, there was diminished international support for fighting terrorism within Latin America and other regions. Political officials believed that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the transition to democracy within Latin America would create governments that would be well equipped to fight terrorism within their countries; however, the governments of Latin American countries have historically rooted problems that strongly affect their abilities to control the issue of terrorist organizations that interact with drug trafficking organizations (Cilluffo 2000: 6).

According to Pardo, Colombia is an international security threat for two major reasons: drugs and control of the country. The drug threat within the country stems from the decisions of individuals to use traditional Andean coca and form an international drug business. By the mid 1970s, this group of individuals controlled nearly 70 percent of the world's marijuana supply and decided that the sale of cocaine could be lucrative as well. After seeing the effects of increased drug trafficking activity within Colombia, government officials attempted to control the traffickers; however the government was too weak to handle such a problem. While the country

does not lack laws, it is unable to efficiently put these laws into practice to create order within the country (Pardo 2000: 66-67).

According to Juan Carlos Calleros, the transition to democracy within Latin America remains unfinished, and until these countries find a solution to the holes within their democratic systems, Latin America will continue to experience many of the issues they have had since their first decisions to move towards democratization. Calleros' theory supposes that the main reason Latin America has not achieved consolidated democracy is because of the lack of the rule of law. Rule of law is defined as “[the] constitutional limits on the kind of powers that governments may legitimately exercise, as well as on the extent of those governmental powers” (Calleros 2009: 1). Rule of law emphasizes the power of the government to impose limits on the actions of individuals or groups who do not follow the laws laid out for the state.

Rule of law is a Platonic and Aristotelian idea that presupposes that people prefer being governed by law as opposed to being governed by man, as law is developed through reason. This concept emphasizes that laws should be known to the public, they should be open and clear, they should not be allowed to be altered to suit the needs of the judiciary or crime prevention agencies, and the judiciary should remain independent from all other branches of government. Some schools of thought believe that difficult cases can be determined by fresh legislation produced by judges. This problem however is combated through the existence of multiple courts within the larger judicial system. When an unsatisfactory or seemingly unconstitutional decision is handed down from a lower court, the public has the option of attempting to get the decision appealed to a higher court (Calleros 2009: 20-21).

According to Calleros, within Latin America, the judiciary problems generally negatively impact the underprivileged and the poor, while "...corruption practices and political networks provide some sort of legal privileges for the benefit of the rich and the influential (Calleros 2009: 32). Coupled with an understanding of the link between terrorism and drug trafficking, one can see how the lack of rule of law within Latin America is problematic and increases the likelihood of political violence. It affords little to no benefit the poorer classes in the region, leading some members of these lower social classes to achieve survival and push for change through illegal means. According to Guillermo O'Donnell, the elected government has the responsibility of carrying out its policies through democratic means and institutions that have a system of checks and balances (Calleros 2009: 35).

O'Donnell argues that both vertical accountability and horizontal accountability are important to the development of democracy. Free and fair elections, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association all provide means for vertical accountability, as these put political officials in the center of the political process. Citizens have the ability to lobby public officials in order to get them to meet their social demands. Officials are held responsible for their actions; however, the strength of vertical accountability is hard to measure because elections are held only periodically, and there are many aspects of democracy, such as political parties that complicate the situation even more. Horizontal accountability helps to measure how liberal or republican democracies are. Horizontal accountability is built on the idea that there are certain rights that cannot be violated by anyone including the state (O'Donnell 1998: 112-113).

Within Latin America, officials are not generally held responsible for their actions. Unaccountable power is generally concentrated in the hands of the Executive branch. For

instance, members of the Executive branch, often deviate from their proposed political platforms that helped place them into office. Additionally, there are also times when there are institutional, illegal, informal, or unconstitutional violations by the elected government that interfere with democracy working properly within a country. There are no particular checks and balances that restrict each branch of government from encroaching on the responsibilities of other branches of government (Calleros 2009: 35-36).

The judicial branches of many Latin American countries are weak and incapable of administering justice. They have historically been built on "...networks of patron-client relations, as well as rooted habits, expectations of impunity for government officials, and a predatory rent seeking attitude toward public office" (Calleros 2009: 39). Latin American political systems have historically been subjected to military influence. Because of this, governments have often made pacts with military officials that result in these officials not being punished for past human rights violations. Judicial branches are also often inefficient and inaccessible to many members of society. They are inefficient due to insufficient funding, unqualified personnel, outdated laws and procedures, lack of appropriate equipment, and lack of organization. They are considered inaccessible to many members of society because the system is biased towards the underprivileged and the poor. Laws are applied in a discriminatory manner as officials are inconsistent with their rulings concerning members of the underprivileged and lower classes. There are more court systems in urban areas rather than rural areas, affording members of the middle and upper class better access to court systems and legal assistance. Additionally middle and upper class citizens have better knowledge of their rights and responsibilities under the law which provides a disadvantage for underprivileged and lower class

citizens. Laws in Latin American countries are ultimately perverted in favor of the higher classes of society (Calleros 2009: 38-41, 43-44). While some of these people may include prominent members of the drug trade, other people who participate in drug trafficking and terrorism within Latin America are a part of the lower classes. They are products of a system that has failed them and are looking for ways to assist themselves financially and influence changes to the system.

From an examination of the deficiencies within many Latin American government systems, it is evident that there are economic disparities within these countries. More often than not, economic disparities among social classes cause discontent among those who are closer to the base of the social pyramid.

## **Investigation**

This paper seeks to discover why some terrorist organizations choose to use drug trafficking while others do not. Through and in depth analysis of the evolution of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the People's Revolutionary Army this paper will highlight the differences in the development of both groups, distinguishing those traits that have helped them make their decisions on pursuing or not pursuing involvement with drug trafficking organizations. While the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia has been heavily supported by the financial aid of drug trafficking organizations, the People's Revolutionary Army has been turning to other less lucrative illegal means of financial support. I will show that although these groups are both rooted within Colombia, the opportunities available because of geographic

location, as well as circumstances of development have ultimately influenced their decisions to use or not use drug trafficking as a form of financial support.

## **Colombia**

Like many other countries in the South American region, Colombia has a history of Spanish colonization. This history has helped to influence the development of paramilitary organizations within the country. According to Skidmore, Smith, and Greene, geography played an important role in the development of Colombia. Because of its geographical location, Colombia is divided into three major regions. These regions are the East Coast, the West Coast, and the Caribbean coast. In pre-colonial Colombia, political power developed in the East, while the Caribbean coast developed commerce and gold mining developed in the West. Because of the region's geographic disunity, the Spaniards arrived and colonized the country unevenly creating distinct cultural and racial profiles. The Caribbean and West Coast experienced a decline in indigenous populations, while the East Coast maintained a large portion of its indigenous population (Skidmore et al. 2010: 191-193).

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, creoles within Colombia began to push for independence after the 1808 invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by Napoleon. Within Colombia, the creoles felt that the Spanish monarchy should not be restored. Lower classes became involved adding a social class element to the liberation struggle. Social changes, freeing Afro-Colombian slaves and creating greater social mobility, came as a result of the Wars of Independence. Colombia gained its independence from Spain in 1819 (Skidmore et al 2010: 194).



This moment in Colombian history is important as it began the political violence between the more liberal components of society and the more conservative components of society. This violence has led to disagreement over development of public policy, as well as the implementation of public policy. Terrorist organizations have grown from these political schisms, viewing their use of force as necessary to help affect political change.

Upon gaining independence, Colombia began working on forming political parties in order to build its government. In the early 1900s, Colombia experienced a wave of violence and conflict over land reform. The Conservatives, consisting of landowners, the Catholic Church, and peasants under its control, disagreed with the Liberals, consisting of a large population of peasants. The Conservative Party was internally split and weakened by the Great Depression, allowing the Liberals to take control of government policies (Skidmore et al. 2010: 204). During the time period from 1930 to 1946, the Liberals initiated land reform within the country. This land reform "...restricted ancestral privileges and unleashed furious political opposition from the Conservatives" (Molano 2000: 1). The land reforms initiated by President Olaya allowed all uncultivated land to be transferred over to the state allowing public lands to be owned only by the individuals who were working on them (Skidmore et al. 2010: 204).

In the mid-1900s, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan became the center of a mass movement to help push for laws that would help the disadvantaged sectors of society. Gaitan's movement attacked the Conservatives and oligarchic rule while empowering the lower classes that were generally disregarded in the policymaking process. While Gaitan embodied many of the Liberal arguments, he also represented a threat to the leaders of his own party. Through utilizing his talents as a powerful speaker, Gaitan had the ability to mobilize the masses. His movement did

not create systemic support, or support of the leaders of the Liberal party. Those who chose to follow the ideals of Gaitan remained loyal to him, which did not necessarily benefit the Liberal party as a whole. His assassination in 1948 caused even more turmoil and disagreement within Colombia, as it brought the period of *Convivencia* to an end. This new era from 1946-1964 was known as *La Violencia*. During this time, Liberals protested Conservative rule and sought to push for economic gain for the lower classes of society. *La Violencia* was brought to an end by Laureano Gomez who offered amnesty to the guerillas that had been involved in the rampant violence of the prior years. When Colombia experienced an economic crisis in 1956, Liberals and Conservatives came together in order to remove Rojas from power (Skidmore et al. 2010: 205-208). This led to the development of the National Front.

After many uneventful attempts at transitioning to democracy, Colombia developed the idea of the National Front which would create a formal pact between the majorities of the Liberal and Conservative parties. Through this agreement, the Liberals and Conservatives would alternate control of the presidency while positions in the all three governmental branches would be distributed evenly among members of both the Liberal and Conservative parties. The main goals of the National Front were to end the great amount of political violence within the country, to restore constitutional democracy and civility within Colombia, and to ensure that members of both political sides had access to power within Colombian government. While this arrangement helped to quell partisan fighting, it created different forms of anti-system violence and disagreement of social policy. Due to a prominent population of peasants within Colombia, agrarian reform was an important issue. Conflict over agrarian reform and political ideology helped lead to the development of two organizations: The National Liberation Army and the

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. While the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia has grown into a larger, more powerful force, the National Liberation Army has split. In addition to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, this paper focuses on the People's Revolutionary Army, one of the groups formed from the split of the National Liberation Army. While the People's Revolutionary Army focused mainly on who was ultimately making the decisions within the Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia emerged with a greater emphasis on conflict over agrarian reform (Skidmore et al. 2010: 194, 209).

### **Case Study: People's Revolutionary Army of Colombia (ERP)**

In order to understand why the People's Revolutionary Army of Colombia did not turn to drug trafficking organizations for financial support, it is imperative to understand the history of the National Liberation Army, as the ERP is a splinter group of this larger organization. In 1962, university students formed the National Liberation Army (ELN), which was opposed to the elites making all political decisions within the country. The National Liberation Army was inspired by Che Guevara, and was led by Fabio Vasquez Castano (Garcia 1). The National Liberation Army is the second most well known guerilla group within Colombia.

The National Liberation Army is primarily based in Colombia, with other bases operating in the borderlands near Venezuela. According to Jane's Information Group, the ELN has wanted to establish a socialist government within Colombia by attacking both the state as well as economic targets. The group targets "...infrastructure, including power lines, bridges and dams, [and] roads and oil pipelines" (Jane's 2011). During the late 80s and early 90s, in addition to physically attacking these targets, the group used kidnapping and extortion to gain profit to

support their operations believing that drug trafficking was not a viable option for financial support as it had the potential to destroy Colombia (Gomez 2009).

The People's Revolutionary Army was formed because of the internal power struggles and disorganization of the leadership of the National Liberation Army. While the People's Revolutionary Army is a splinter organization, it does share the same communist/socialist ideology of its parent organization. This group followed in the footsteps of its parent organization and used kidnapping and extortion as a means of obtaining financial support (GTD). Founded in the early 90s, the movement of the People's Revolutionary Army was short lived due to weakness caused by a lack of support. The group surrendered to the Colombian government on September 15, 2007. The ERP was weakened through pressure of the Colombian army. They were isolated and cut off from provisions. This was a factor that helped them decide to demobilize (Colombia Estereo).

This group's major motivations for not seeking out financial aid from drug trafficking organizations are clear. While it may have been economically beneficial to do so, the group adhered to the ideological followings of its parent organization. They were also located in a geographical area that would not allow them to interact with drug trafficking organizations. Lastly, because the group was a faction of the larger National Liberation Army, it competed for followers. The group's demobilization in 2007 shows that it was unable to compete and gain substantial support. Unlike the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the People's Revolutionary Army was not provided with the opportunities and circumstances to be able to become involved with drug trafficking organizations.

### **Case Study: The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia**

During the 1940s, the Liberals became internally divided, allowing the Conservatives to take control of the Colombian government. They pushed to regain land lost because of the Liberal reforms. The Conservative government of Colombia gave weapons to peasants who supported the Conservative cause, while Liberal peasants took up arms against the government. These peasants on the eastern plains were supported by the Liberal Party as well as Communist Party activists. They banded together in order to form multiple small guerilla groups throughout Colombia. In the late 1950s, these guerilla groups had retreated to the jungles of the Andean foothills. This group, known as the Independent Republics, organized based on the principles of economic self-management and military self defense. Liberals in the group later withdrew support and were silenced by the government, as it believed the Communist ideals of this group was disturbing public order within Colombia. In 1964 the Colombian army attacked the Independent Republics; however the area inhabited by these guerilla fighters had been abandoned and the small number of the members remaining in the area sought refuge in neighboring mountains. (Molano 2000: 1). This small group later became known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, otherwise known as FARC was established as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party in 1964 (Global Security 1). According to Skidmore et al, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia had its roots in the agrarian movements during the 1920s (Skidmore et al. 2010: 210). This history has greatly influenced the evolution of the group and its level of strength within Colombia. Today FARC is known as the most powerful Communist Colombian guerilla group.

According to Molano, the members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia felt that they could not affect change within Colombia through legal means. They turned to armed rebellion. The National Front, still in effect during the 1970s still pushed for agrarian reform. Between the years of 1970 and 1974, the government initiated a rural development plan that would hurt the business of small-scale peasant producers and urge peasants to move towards the industrial work force. In response, peasants invaded large areas of land. Both government and private groups used violence against the peasants in order to regain their land. (Molano 2000: 2-3).

With the increased violence against peasants many more individuals chose to join FARC's movement. During this time, the group focused on increasing its influence, opening new areas and training military leaders. The group grew from 500 to approximately 3000 people and became more structured with a training school, political program, and top down military structure (Molano 2000: 3). Living as displaced peasants, they sought to survive by any means necessary.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia has had a mixed history of both armed conflict and peace negotiations with the Colombian government. In the early 1980s, the government made motions to legalize the political activity of the organization, converting their military force into a political party. With this initiative, the Patriotic Union was developed as a political wing of FARC. Subsequent presidents, like Virgilio Barco offered them political and civil participation in exchange for them ceasing the violence. The group however, did not comply with the requirements of the state, and violence was once again initiated. In the early 1990s, attempts at peace were made again requiring the guerillas to be confined to a specific

geographical location and to suspend all kidnappings, extortions and bombings. This intervention for peace failed, as FARC refused to remain in one geographical location. The group's inability to be confined to one area had thus far been their strongest and most effective weapon (Molano 2000: 4-5).

With many of the peace talks that moved through the 80s and 90s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia persuaded the Colombian government to create a demilitarized zone in order to proceed with negotiations (Ortiz 2002: 135). This action shows that FARC did have some pull in the government through their ability to receive concessions from political officials. This type of strength is atypical of guerilla groups (Ortiz 2002: 136). They used this tactic to have the state demilitarize a large portion of Colombia, thus giving FARC control over larger areas of territory.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia has had the ability to be able to be independent from any foreign state. While the group developed in poorer areas of Colombia, it has taken advantage of the benefits of involvement with drug trafficking organizations. They have used their strategy skills to provide "...peasants and dealers involved in the business basic services such as justice, maintenance of public order, and defense against the operations of the army and the police (Ortiz 2002: 137). Through negotiating with the organizations and providing protection, FARC makes money to support their political cause. Additionally, other members of peasant society who grow drugs move to support the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia because they are involved with drug trafficking organizations. This added support also helps to make the movement bigger and stronger.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia was formed outside of an organizational structure. While the National Liberation Army was formed by university students within an institution, FARC was formed by angry, displaced peasants. These peasants operated outside of any institutional control. Those who supported their movement did so as they had nothing to lose. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia also realized that they had more to gain than to lose from becoming involved with drug trafficking organizations. Their ultimate strength in numbers, geographical location, and relative autonomy from the state allowed them to choose this route for their financial support.

Additionally, later global events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed the group to alter its political ideology without many repercussions. The fall of the Berlin Wall within the Soviet Union helped reduce the credibility of communism. This is important because it allowed the group to escape having to adhere to a strict Marxist/Leninist ideology, moving towards a political agenda and actions that would be more practical for their success (Ortiz 2002: 135). They set themselves up to be able to use any means necessary to pursue their goals.

As far as theory on the connection between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations, the case studies of the People's Revolutionary Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia support two different theories. The People's Revolutionary Army supports the theory that argues that there should be no connection between the two groups. The People's Liberation Army sought to establish a Communist state within Colombia. As this was their ultimate goal, there was no necessity for the group to turn to drug trafficking organizations, as they did not share the same objective. This is not to say that there was no need for financial



assistance from drug trafficking organizations, but the group believed that they were financially sound without the assistance of these organizations.

The example of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia supports the theory that the relationship between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist groups is ultimately motivated by self-interest. Members of both the terrorist organization and the drug trafficking organization see a benefit from becoming involved with one another. The terrorist organization can offer the drug trafficking organization protection from the state, while the drug trafficking organization can provide financial support to the terrorist group. The drug traffickers do not necessarily have to adhere to a united ideology, while FARC retains its communist ideology. No group has to give up anything substantial in order to assist the other.

### **Conclusion**

While this paper explores the reasons why two organizations in one country chose different paths to development and financial support, it does not produce findings that could be held true for all other existing terrorist organizations. It does, however highlight factors that could be looked at while doing a quantitative analysis of groups of terrorist organizations that drug traffic and groups of terrorist organizations that do not participate in the drug trade. This descriptive analysis presents a theory that could apply to terrorist organizations that developed within the borders of Colombia. A quantitative analysis would allow for this study to not be so geographically isolated, thus allowing for a theory that could apply more broadly to all terrorist organizations. A study done quantitatively, however, would have to acknowledge that any generalizations made would have to be broad because as Wardlaw notes, the relationship between each terrorist organization and drug trafficking organization is unique.

Additionally, the inclusion of more terrorist organizations would allow for me to better evaluate the nature of the relationship between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist groups. As this study stands, it shows that there are two plausible theories, but no theory is stronger than the other. Including more terrorist organizations in a study looking at the relationship between drugs and terrorism would ultimately show that although there are many theories to explain the connection between the two, there is most likely one theory that is the strongest when it comes to explaining the nature of the connection.

While this study does make some strides to determine why some organizations traffic, while others do not, it can be expanded further. Further research would create a general theory that could be applied to all terrorist organizations. These case studies, however, are important because they allow for a deeper understanding of the development of both groups, thus allowing for me to be able to pinpoint differences that can be later examined in another study.

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