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FARC and Sendero Luminoso: Examining Their Development, Longevity, and Ideology

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FARC and Sendero Luminoso: Examining Their Development, Longevity,
and Ideology

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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Over the past few centuries, governments have increasingly become concerned with terrorism, especially after the devastating attacks on September 11th, 2001. Although Middle Eastern terrorism, driven by extremist fundamentalist views of Islam, occupies much of our attention, it is only one manifestation of a problem that has existed throughout much of the twentieth century. Beginning with the anarchists in the late nineteenth century, other ideologies such as nationalism and Marxism have been the driving force behind terrorism. Although less prevalent today, some of these groups have shown remarkable resilience and an ability to continue to gather national and international attention. The purpose of this study is to focus on two of these groups, FARC and Sendero Luminoso, in Colombia and Peru, respectively. These two groups are interesting for a number of reasons, but I focus on three factors that make them interesting cases for my study.

First, unlike in the past, when terrorist groups relied on bank robberies, kidnapping, or state support to finance their operations, these two groups use the lucrative drug trade to finance their operations, allowing for deadlier attacks, higher numbers of recruits, and making it more difficult for authorities to neutralize them. FARC and Sendero Luminoso fund themselves primarily through the production of cocaine and marijuana; they have ties to other international terrorist groups and cartels that funnel these drugs into the United States. As long as they continue to cling to the rural Andes regions that they dominate, successfully avoiding capture and continuing to produce drugs, they remain a huge threat to U.S. anti-narcotics efforts as well as to the governments and citizens of Latin America. For this reason, I wanted to analyze why these two groups have lasted so long, and what helped them achieve such longevity.

Second, despite circumstances such as the fall of the Soviet Union, anti-narcotics efforts by the U.S., Colombia, and Peru, and a lack of civilian support, all of which toppled other leftist organizations, Sendero Luminoso and FARC have remained a top security threat in their countries. In addition to their involvement in the drug trade, both groups have extensively manipulated leftist ideology to suit their needs and frequently harm the peasant class that they claim to represent. Because of this, I seek to establish whether the groups have undergone such an ideological shift that they are no longer leftist insurgency groups, but fully-fledged drug traffickers.

Third, although FARC and Sendero Luminoso are not the only two organizations in Latin America that the U.S. lists as active terrorist groups, they are the largest, longest-lasting, and are the only two to have conducted notable attacks within the past year. The ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) has had much more success in peace talks with the government and frequently coordinates attacks with FARC, going as far as to publish a letter in 2012 on their website asking for further cooperation between the two organizations¹. However, because of its small size, proximity to a peaceful settlement with the government, and frequent overlap with FARC, I've eliminated it from my analysis. The AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia) has been mostly demobilized since 2006 and its top leaders have been extradited to the U.S., so it too has been excluded.

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. I will first examine leftist ideology as a whole, then move to left-wing organizations in Latin America and the effects of the Cold War and Fidel Castro. I'll then look at the background, basic tenets,

¹ "Declaración Política." ELN website.

and methodology of both groups before delving into their entrance into the drug trade, its effects on their ideology, and the possibilities (if any) of a legitimate political future for the two groups.

I. Leftist Terrorism

Generally speaking, the term “terrorism” is controversial and difficult to define. Bruce Hoffman, in his article *Defining Terrorism*, notes the lack of a concise definition and, in his working definition, explains that terrorism is the creation of and exploitation of fear through violence in order to attain political objectives². Most scholars today agree that terrorism can be committed by both state and non-state actors, and has a variety of causes and catalysts. Because both FARC and Sendero Luminoso use violence to achieve leftist political goals, they are considered left-wing terrorist groups.

Left-wing terrorist groups use Marxist and other communist and socialist thought to justify their violent opposition to governments they see as authoritarian, corrupt, and exploitive of the general population. They typically promote land reform, workers’ rights, and anti-imperialism or anti-Americanism³. Their influences span the entirety of leftist thought; these terrorist groups have cited every variation from Leninism and Maoism to more anarchic concepts like “propaganda by the deed”⁴ as forerunners to their organizations. Whatever their particular leftist ideal may be, almost all seek to overthrow current governments in an attempt to establish a more egalitarian, communist state⁵.

Left-wing terrorism differs from other types of terrorism in ways other than ideology. When compared to contemporary nationalist-separatist movements, for example, left-wing groups often refused to compromise their revolutionary goals,

² Hoffman, Bruce. "Defining Terrorism," 6-7.

³ Moghadam, Assaf, Leonard Weinberg, and William Lee Eubank. *The Roots of Terrorism*, 50.

⁴ Rapoport, David C. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 50.

⁵ Moghadam, Assaf, Leonard Weinberg, and William Lee Eubank. *The Roots of Terrorism*, 56.

whereas nationalist terrorists may be more willing to make concessions⁶. This reluctant rigidity of left-wing terrorists is one explanation for their lack of support from the general population and their difficulty with transitioning into formal political parties. Left-wing groups also see themselves as part of a much larger global fight against unfair capitalist governments, and therefore give and receive support across international borders (especially so regarding the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. during the Cold War). Nationalist-separatist movements, on the other hand, are inherently based around one nation and only receive external support from nationals living abroad⁷. Separatist movements have occasionally adopted socialist ideology into their tenets, but leftist economic policies and separatist sentiments are not necessarily one in the same⁸.

Left-wing terrorism has its roots in 19th and early 20th century anarchist terrorism and became pronounced during the Cold War period, especially with events like the Cuban Revolution and the Vietnam War⁹. The assassination attempts committed by anarchist groups like Narodnaya Volya paved the way for the Russian Communist Revolution that would later spread to China and Cuba¹⁰. The more modern left-wing terrorism developed after these revolutions and reached its peak in the 1960's and 70's at the height of the Cold War. As the entire world became enveloped in the polarizing struggle between the communist U.S.S.R. and a free-market U.S., left-wing groups sprung up across the globe: the West German Red Army Faction, the Italian Red

⁶ Brockhoff, Sarah, Tim Krieger, and Daniel Meierrieks. "Looking Back on Anger: Explaining the Social Origins of Left-Wing and Nationalist Separatist Terrorism in Western Europe, 1970-2007," 2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rapoport, David C. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 56.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Rapoport, David C. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 47, 49, 51.

Brigades, and the French Action Directe in Western Europe, the Japanese Red Army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Asia, and the multitude of Latin American groups such as the Sandinistas, the Montoneros, and the Colombian 19th of April Movement¹¹. With the exception of the few lingering organizations like FARC and Sendero Luminoso, left-wing terrorist groups worldwide have more or less disappeared within recent decades and have been replaced with religious terrorist groups and a few nationalist groups¹².

One might suppose that right-wing organizations would be the complete antithesis of leftist groups, but this is not the case. According to some scholars, radical left-wing organizations and right-wing organizations operate in a similar manner, despite their virulent opposition to one another. In Colombia, for example, both FARC and the AUC are considered terrorist organizations and have committed similar atrocities in the name of their cause, which happens to be the elimination of the other. McClosky discusses governments in his article, but the sentiments ring true for non-governmental organizations as well:

No particular expertise is required to discern the striking similarities in political style, organization, and practice among, on the one side, such left-wing dictatorships as the Soviet Union, Communist China, East Germany, Cambodia under Pol Pot, Cuba under Castro, Albania, Bulgaria, Ethiopia and Angola; and, on the other side, such right-wing dictatorships as Fascist Italy, Spain under Franco, Nazi Germany, Portugal under Salazar, Argentina (especially from 1976 to 1983), Uruguay, Zaire and Chile under Pinochet. One can cite, in addition, a number of highly repressive dictatorships in which left-wing and right-wing elements (or at least left-wing and right-wing rhetoric) are so heavily intermingled that even experts might find it difficult to decide whether to place them on the

¹¹ Rapoport, David C. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 56, 57.

¹² Rapoport, David C. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 61.

left or the right. Possible examples include Ghana, Libya under Khadaffi, Syria, Iraq and Iran under Khomeini.¹³

Despite variations in the ideologies, practices, and symbolic identifications associated with either group, the end of the political spectrum at which a group places itself has little to do with how it operates. Any radical organization or government is capable of committing crimes in the name of its ideology, as is the case with FARC and Sendero Luminoso. Such classifications simply serve to give a broad idea of the organizations political affiliations and motives.

In addition to defining left-wing terrorism itself, it's also worthwhile to briefly differentiate between terrorism and guerilla warfare, as both terms are used extensively in this paper and help explain the evolutions in FARC and Sendero Luminoso's purposes. Guerilla fighters or insurgents have traditionally used violence to further their goals, but aim their attacks at militarily-superior government forces. Their actions, as well as the actions of states or individuals, may be considered terrorist acts. Groups considered to be "true" terrorist groups, however, frequently and deliberately engage in attacks against noncombatant civilians as well as government forces in order to instill fear and publicize their cause. Both types of warfare aim to weaken and delegitimize the government, but their targets vary. By these definitions, FARC and Sendero Luminoso began as guerilla groups and progressed into full-fledged terrorism as they began to target the peasant groups they claimed to represent.¹⁴

¹³ McClosky, Herbert and Dennis Chong. "Similarities and Differences Between Left-Wing and Right-Wing Radicals," 331.

¹⁴ Feldmann, Andreas E., and Maiju Perala. "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America." 106.

II. Other Latin American Groups

Because left-wing terrorist groups like FARC and Sendero Luminoso developed in Latin America at a rate not seen in any other region, I'll examine the unique beginnings of left-wing terrorism and how these groups became so prevalent across the continent.

A. The Cold War and Its Effects

The Cold War and its underlying proxy wars were undoubtedly the prevailing causes of left-wing terrorism throughout the world, despite controversy about the effects, if any, that the fall of the Soviet Union had on the survival of leftist groups¹⁵. The rush to promote capitalist democracies and communist regimes by the United States and the U.S.S.R., respectively, caused an international struggle in the Third World as governments were ousted and installed rapidly; these frequent shifts in leadership created instability and many of the lackey governments were viewed as illegitimate by the citizens. Insurgency groups took advantage of this instability and sprouted up in highly contested areas like the Middle East, Western Europe, and especially Latin America. Latin America's political and economic climate, combined with the U.S.'s paternalistic relationship within its "backyard," would provide the background for a unique hotbed of guerilla activity throughout the Cold War period.

As the Soviet Union and Cuba sponsored agreeable leftist governments and insurgency groups, the U.S. oversaw the construction of right-wing groups. Although

¹⁵ Feldmann and Perala's article argues that the downfall of the U.S.S.R. and the "failure" of communism did not end the nongovernmental terrorism by leftist groups that plagued Latin America, as evidenced by the continuance of these attacks into the 1990's. Rather, they state that the leftist terrorist groups continued because of poorly institutionalized governments, widespread human rights violations, and varying political and electoral liberties.

there are far fewer groups to examine, right-wing terrorism played an important part in Latin American politics and merits a brief mention. The U.S.-backed Nicaraguan Contras were the most notable example of right-wing terrorist groups, as well as the AUC in Colombia and its alleged ties to the government and Colombian military. Because right-wing terrorists and extremist groups generally lack a defined ideology and tend to be very poorly organized, the Contras and AUC were very short-lived compared to FARC and Sendero Luminoso¹⁶.

B. Castro's Involvement

The successful Cuban Revolution in 1959 was one of the first steps in the creation of many Latin American terrorist groups. The unpopular U.S.-backed Batista regime was successfully overthrown by Castro and Guevara and replaced by his Marxist-Leninist government; Castro then quickly forged ties with the Soviet Union and began his campaign for leftist revolutions around the world. Despite the economic problems that Cuba faced after his rise to power, Castro's successes in establishing a socialist state became an inspiration to leftist sympathizers throughout Latin America, especially those in countries with unpopular governments installed by the U.S. After Castro's initial involvement, the various revolutionary groups took different paths to achieve their goals: most utilized guerilla tactics and were quickly squashed by the militaries, some eventually developed into formal political parties and won offices, and others evolved into full-blown terrorist organizations that indiscriminately attacked both the governments they desired to overthrow and civilians. FARC and Sendero Luminoso fall

¹⁶ Feldmann, Andreas E., and Maiju Perala. "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America." 104, 108.

into the last category, but it's worthwhile to examine their contemporary organizations that fared very differently.

After his rise to power and public announcement of his Marxist-Leninist ideology, Castro began to demand revolution across the capitalist world, providing funding and support for various militant leftist groups. He gave formal training in Cuba to revolutionary groups from around the world and, together with Guevara, set up the Andean Project to create guerrilla movements across Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina. Castro also sponsored and trained *focos*¹⁷, or small groups of soldiers, to infiltrate any Latin American country not already revolutionized and spread his leftist ideology. Some of these *focos* would later become formal terrorist organizations, although their success and longevity varied greatly from country to country. In 1966, Castro staged the first Tri-Continental Conference of Africa, Asia and Latin America in Havana, further establishing himself as a leader in the spread of socialism, despite Cuba's dependence on Soviet aid and the failures of many of his ventures. After this conference, Castro created the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS), through which he indicated that Cuba, not the U.S.S.R., would be the champion of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Latin America.

Because of the extent of the involvement of the superpowers and Castro in terrorist activity, many observers expected that the end of the Cold War would mean a decrease in the violence in Latin America. However, this proved to be only partly true: terrorist activity decreased in most major South American countries and in Central America, with only sporadic attacks against U.S. targets or, in the case of Mexico, attacks from

¹⁷ See section on "foquismo," pg. 11.

indigenous independence movements¹⁸. But FARC and Sendero Luminoso emerged after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. with an unprecedented vitality despite the loss of support from a huge ally. Unlike other groups, they simultaneously managed to avoid neutralization by the military and, in FARC's case, withstood the loss of their biggest supporters in the international community.

C. Foquismo

Castro's *focos* would grow to represent not just a single concept, but his entire line of thought and of how leftist ideology would be implemented in Latin America. While Marx himself envisioned the urban working class as those who would bring about the global revolution, Mao and Castro, among others, believed that the rural peasant class could successfully incite revolution.

Focalism developed as Castro, Guevara, and other urban revolutionaries came into extensive contact with Cuban peasants and began to appreciate them as comrades in the revolution. As more and more peasants joined the ranks of the guerilla fighters, Castro understood that the agricultural base could be critical in not only succeeding with the revolution in his country, but spreading it elsewhere. Mao and Chinese communists realized the importance of the farmer too, but failed to utilize the widespread peasant population to implant revolution to other oppressed communities. Castro took Latin American insurgency to the countryside, where the guerillas could fight amongst the supported base of the marginalized sector of society. With this move to the countryside

¹⁸ Feldmann, Andreas E., and Maiju Perala. "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America," 110.

and its reevaluation of the importance of the peasantry, Latin American Marxist thought was finally extended from the cities and their urban proletariat to include the peasantry.

Régis Debray, a French academic, also argued that the rural armed struggle waged by revolutionary guerrillas would be the most successful way to eliminate the dominant classes in Latin America and assume power in the name of the masses. He, with Guevara and Castro, urged all true revolutionaries to take up arms and set up focal points of guerrilla activity (*focos*) in the countryside. The repression from the ruling elites that would undoubtedly follow the attacks will further enrage the peasantry, destabilizing a country and securing the path for Marxist leaders to assume control of the government.¹⁹

Foquismo would make its way through the rest of Latin America during the 1960's as Cuba aided guerilla groups attempting to organize rural warfare. However, most of these groups were almost immediately eliminated by national security forces for various reasons, with Guevara's failed revolt and subsequent death in Bolivia being the most well-known. Only Colombian guerillas succeeded in their attempts, with FARC, the ELN, and the short-lived EPL all emerging in the 1960's and 1970's as results of *focos*. When later insurgent groups adapted the focalism method to their urban settings, they saw much more success. Despite its early failures, *foquismo* is, essentially, responsible for the spread of leftist revolution across Latin America and for the beginnings of FARC.

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¹⁹ Vanden, Harry E. "Marxism and the Peasantry in Latin America: Marginalization or Mobilization?" 86-88.

²⁰ Feldmann, Andreas E., and Maiju Perala. "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America," 106-107, and Metelits, Claire. "From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC," 93.

III. FARC

A. Origins

FARC's beginnings lie in the period of Colombian history known as *La Violencia*, which took place from 1948-1958 and resulted in 200,000-300,000 deaths²¹. The country was divided between the Conservative and Liberal parties, and the unstable government was constantly engaged in pendulum-like shifts in ideology and complete "substitution of one party's members for those of the other in patronage jobs and government positions"²². In 1948, Liberal Party Leader and presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated in Bogotá, sparking massive riots and plunging the nation into the bloody *Violencia*.

While the war was for control of the government, most of the physical fighting took place in rural areas where peasants on both sides battled for control of their land. The horrifying atrocities committed were so widespread that over a million Colombians left their homes, fleeing the roaming *bandoleros*²³ that terrorized rural villages. A lack of governmental organization meant that victims had little chance of pursuing their attackers in the legal system. Most news outlets and individual journalists were heavily censored or persecuted outright, leaving many official records of this period very scattered and vague. The Conservative government shut down Congress and was accused of pogroms against any opposition. Many Catholic priests were accused of using their sermons to encourage attacks, although the Vatican never made an official statement and the alleged events were recounted by only a few priests.

²¹ Metelits, Claire. "From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC," 88.

²² Roldán, Mary. *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953*, 16.

²³ "guerilla groups" both Conservative and Liberal.

After years of bloodshed, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla assumed executive power and declared amnesty for all *bandoleros*, although this policy was reversed in 1955 when he ordered attacks on remaining guerillas that had established independent “republics”²⁴ in the Santander, Tolima, and Antioquia departments. Within these rural areas, future ideological leaders for FARC were forced to constantly retreat further and further into the countryside, where they developed a network of mobile guerilla groups and adopted the Communist Party ideology and structure. These independent communities created self-defense militias against Rojas’ military and mobilized themselves within their regions.

In 1958, the Liberals and Conservatives, along with a military junta, ousted Rojas and reached a power-sharing agreement known as the National Front in an attempt to halt the bloodshed. While this year is usually cited as the end of *La Violencia*, the attacks against peasants and opposing political parties didn’t actually stop. The government was somewhat stabilized and a ceasefire ordered, but peasant leaders such as Manuel Marulanda Vélez (“Tirofijo”) and Jacobo Arenas became the targets of another assassination campaign by the military. This time, the U.S. became involved and suggested various counter-insurgency measures to the Colombian government to quell the communist uprisings. The new counter-insurgency policy, known as Plan Lazo, would form the backbone of the Colombian government’s methodology concerning dealings with FARC for the next twenty years.

In 1964, 16,000 U.S.-backed Colombian troops attacked the small village of Marquetalia, a communist town declared independent by Marulanda. He and forty-eight

²⁴ Metelits, Claire. “From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC,” 93.

other members of the Colombian Communist Party fled into the mountains, where they formed the core group that would later become *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*. Their numbers quickly increased, and in 1965, the peasant leaders of the independent towns held a conference of guerilla groups in the southern area of Tolima. They agreed to adopt a more mobile guerrilla war strategy against the Colombian military and established the political and ideological roots of FARC, which would be officially founded in 1966. FARC would remain a relatively small-scale guerrilla group throughout the 1970's and didn't pose serious threats to the Colombian government; they survived on this small scale due to support from Cuba and the Soviet Union in the form of arms shipments and training, as well as support from the peasants that they were protecting. FARC would not grow into a powerhouse terrorist organization until they entered the drug trade in 1982. From then on, their tactics and motivations changed drastically as they were able to expand and finance more operations at an alarming rate.

B. Tenets and Goals

Officially, FARC identifies itself as a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary guerrilla organization involved in the continuing Colombian armed conflict in opposition to the government and military. FARC say they represent the peasant class of rural Colombia against the economic domination by the ruling elites. They also vehemently resent the political influence of the U.S. in the internal affairs of Colombia (for example, the Plan Lazo and Plan Colombia), the industrial farm reform that drove many Colombian peasants off their land, the monopolization of natural resources by large multinational corporations, and the repressive violence from Colombian military forces

against civilians²⁵. They are considered to be a terrorist organization by the United States, Colombia, and the European Union, but many neighboring countries like Venezuela, Argentina, and Brazil don't consider them as such for various political reasons²⁶. FARC has, over time, transitioned from a completely revolutionary group aiming to overthrow the government and establish a communist state to seeking a more formal political recognition²⁷.

Unlike many other insurgency and terrorist groups, FARC hasn't frequently questioned the complete legitimacy of the government, but the efficacy and functionality. They present themselves as alternative to the current state and have distanced themselves from part of the core communist ideology that requires complete transformation of an entire bourgeois state, and instead have propositioned a shift to a government that is more efficient and cares for the peasant class²⁸. FARC leaders have frequently stated that their group's tenets are a hybrid of beliefs molded to their particular situation. Founder Marulanda stated that FARC ideology combined "a bit of everything,"²⁹ and senior member Iván Ríos explained that the group "borrows from Marxism but not in a dogmatic manner"³⁰ before his death in 2008. FARC's ability to manipulate these

²⁵ Saskiewicz, Paul. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC – EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" 2.

²⁶ Hugo Chavez, the late socialist president of Venezuela, didn't consider FARC a terrorist group and often mediated in talks between FARC and the Colombian government. He shared many of their sentiments regarding land reform in favor of Colombian peasants, but disagreed with their frequent use of kidnapping.

²⁷ Saskiewicz, Paul. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC – EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" 6, Chapter IV.

²⁸ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 130.

²⁹ Saskiewicz, Paul. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC – EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

ideologies helped them survive the collapse of the Soviet Union, as other groups who adhered strictly to Marxism lost credibility when the worldwide communist system failed. Commander Fernando Caycedo stated that:

That Marxist-Leninism operated in one way or another in the Soviet Union, that's the Soviet Union's problem. We're in Colombia. Here there are other realities, we're living in other times. We have to apply Marxism to Colombian reality and to the historic moment in which we live. This isn't about mechanically copying Marxism or saying that we want to apply Soviet-style Marxism to Colombia. As if to say that as communists we never make mistakes. We think that the greatest virtue and principle of the communists is criticism and self-criticism, recognizing when we're wrong. If we didn't we would continue to create the same mistakes.³¹

Another important aspect of FARC's belief system, and one they've most successfully combined with Marxism, is the concept of Bolivarianism. Named for Simón Bolívar, the general credited with freeing many Latin American countries from Spanish colonialism, this idea revolves around anti-imperialism, return of land to indigenous peoples, and increased social mobility while removing inherited class systems³². Bolivarianism appealed to larger sectors of Colombian society because it doesn't necessarily require the establishment of a true socialist state, which allowed FARC to expand their mainly peasant-based support system to those in the middle class³³.

FARC has had strong ideological ties with the *Partido Comunista Colombiano* (Colombian Communist Party), but the two are not one in the same. While FARC's founders were members of the PCC and FARC has been labeled as its military arm, the

³¹ Ibid., 14.

³² Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 130.

³³ Saskiewicz, Paul. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC – EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" 15.

PCC officially distances itself from advocating violence and has always remained within the legal democratic framework³⁴. The PCC has never been able to completely control FARC and they have slightly differing ideologies, so the two groups remain separated as FARC seeks political recognition.³⁵

C. Funding, Tactics, and Notable Attacks

FARC now funds its operations by taxing and selling drugs throughout the world, although this was not always the case. Following its inception, FARC maintained its operations on a small scale and held to rural areas for most of the 1960's and 1970's. In 1982 at the Seventh Guerilla Conference, FARC leaders made a controversial decision to become involved in the cocaine trade as a means to better finance and expand their organization. Prior to this period, any coca leaf production in the Andean region was almost exclusively for indigenous use. Marijuana was frequently grown in the area, but government crackdowns on production and the closure of many of the Mexican and Jamaican marijuana transport paths led to a sharp increase in the production and profitability of cocaine. At the dawn of the drug boom in the late 1970's, FARC had maintained that the production and sale of cocaine was contradictory to communist ideology.³⁶

³⁴ The two groups grew apart over debates concerning control over the Unión Patriótica, FARC's short-lived attempt at formal political participation. They also disagreed over attachment to Soviet doctrine, as FARC favored a more hybrid approach to leftist thought. The two groups officially split after the fall of the USSR, but some members of both organizations allegedly keep working relationships.

³⁵ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 134.

³⁶ Cook, Thomas R. 2011. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 21.

At the Conference, however, FARC leaders agreed to change their stance and created a plan that would tax the entire process of making and selling cocaine while protecting the peasants from the larger narco-trafficking groups. Coca was very lucrative crop that could be easily grown in the area, and was the only option for many farmers after prices for coffee, wheat, and barley declined worldwide. While their entrance into the drug trade put FARC in an uneasy relationship with powerful drug cartels, the profits allowed them to expand into a much larger army that could then stage large-scale attacks on Colombian troops. They further developed their funding base by moving closer to urban centers and areas rich in natural resources. FARC owed its exponential increase in membership and ability to commit devastating attacks for the three decades after the 1982 Conference almost entirely to drug funds.³⁷

Most of FARC's attacks large enough to gain international attention occurred in the 1990's and 2000's, after they had evolved from protecting and taxing coca farmers to actually trafficking the product themselves. They utilized car bombs and outright infantry-style assaults to attack police officers and military personnel, and often focused their attacks around small towns and military bases³⁸. The departments of Caquetá, Meta, Arauca, Putumayo, and Antioquia were and still are the sites of most of the attacks; these provinces lack large populations and cities, contain military bases, or, with the case of Antioquia, have strategic importance in the drug trade. Notable attacks include the 1996 fight with the military on the Las Delicias military base in the Putamayo Department, which left fifty four Colombian military officers dead and resulted in the complete

³⁷ Cook, Thomas R. 2011. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective." 22.

³⁸ International Crisis Group. 2012. "Colombia: Peace at Last?" 3, 7, 8.

destruction of the base³⁹. FARC is also responsible for the bombing of Bogotá that occurred moments before then-President Alvaro Uribe was to be inaugurated in 2002⁴⁰, and another assassination attempt in 2003 that involved the explosion of a house near the president's plane⁴¹. It was during this time of records profits from cocaine production, high-profile attacks against Colombian politicians, and forced conscription of peasants into service that FARC earned a spot on the U.S. State Departments Foreign Terrorist Organization list⁴².

FARC is also known for their involvement in the Colombia Three case, in which FARC was accused of giving two million dollars in drug profits to Irish Republican Army members in exchange for training in bomb making. In 2001, Jim Monaghan, Martin McCauley, and Niall Connolly were arrested and later charged of teaching bomb-making methods to FARC, allegations made from satellite footage supposedly provided by the CIA of the three men in the Colombian jungle. Despite the suspicious disappearance of a key witness, the men were convicted and sentenced to seventeen years in prison. They escaped, returned to Ireland, and have not been extradited to Colombia. FARC's ties with another well-established terrorist organization, as well as the involvement of the CIA, highlighted their emergence as a potential threat to the international community.⁴³

³⁹ Petras, James, and Michael M. Brescia. "The FARC Faces the Empire." 138.

⁴⁰ "Deadly Welcome for Colombian Head." 2002. *BBC News*, August 8.

⁴¹ "Defiant Uribe Visits Bomb Plot Town." 2003. *BBC News*, February 16.

⁴² "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." U.S. Department of State. FARC was placed on the list October 8th, 1997.

⁴³ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 139.

In the mid-2000's, FARC made headlines by kidnapping various government officials, including former vice presidential candidate Clara Rojas, who was held captive for six years. During captivity, Rojas gave birth to a son, who was then taken from her by FARC members and hidden. She reclaimed her son two years later, who had been placed in a foster home under a different name. In 2009, the governor of the department of Caquetá was murdered near his home after an abduction attempt went awry. FARC claimed responsibility for the attack a month later, and it was alleged that the governor was murdered as the rebels were fleeing Colombian security forces. Around this time, the rest of FARC's political hostages were released as part of treaties or rescued by the government, and the group has since denounced kidnapping for ransom and has shifted to focusing on attacking military and police personnel. Since 2010, the Colombian government stated that FARC activity had been increasing and that the group was responsible for the deaths of over 1,000 Colombian military and police personnel⁴⁴. Their recent attacks are characterized by smaller hit-and-run assaults instead of large offensives.

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group. "Colombia: Peace at Last?" 4.

IV. Sendero Luminoso

A. Origins

Similarly to FARC, *Sendero Luminoso* (“Shining Path”) also has its roots in national conflict over land, albeit one with significantly less bloodshed. In the 1960’s, Peru’s ineffective government, long history of land inequality, and the spreading of Castro’s *foquismo* sparked a multitude of leftist guerilla groups aiming to assert themselves within the government.

Land in Peru has always been scarce, difficult to utilize, and, since the arrival of the Spanish, unequally distributed in a manner that surpasses the ratios of other Latin American countries⁴⁵. As of the early 1960’s, less than one-tenth of one percent of Peru’s farming population owned over half of the country’s arable soil⁴⁶. In the 1970’s, the government instituted sweeping land reforms that removed the owners of large *haciendas* from the countryside and caused the farms to be operated as cooperatives instead. Despite the massive changes, only “about one-quarter to one-third of all farm families benefited from the reform,” according to McClintock⁴⁷. The former hacienda workers saw the greatest changes in living standards as they became members of the cooperatives, but remaining members of peasant communities or independent farmers with small plots saw little or no improvements. The inadequacies of the land reform varied across region, causing even more frustrations within the peasant communities; after the reforms, the property values of land owned by coastal families were significantly higher than that of

⁴⁵ McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso," 64.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

families in the poorer highlands region⁴⁸. Peru's economy centered around the larger cash-crop farms along the coast, not the subsistence farmers in the Andes, and the reforms were imposed accordingly. When Fernando Belaúnde Terry was elected in 1980, he instated agricultural policies that failed peasants on both the coast and in the highlands, completely alienating the farming class⁴⁹.

It was in this environment that Sendero Luminoso's leaders began shaping their Marxist ideals with guerilla tactics in an effort to rid the government of what it saw as capitalist corruption at the expense of the working class. The group began in 1962 as the Huamanga command of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional⁵⁰ led by Abimael Guzmán, a philosophy professor at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga, who would later be known by members as Presidente Gonzalo⁵¹. The group quickly splintered off from the ELN and the Communist Party of Peru, and Guzmán intensified his recruiting of university students to his cause. The isolation of the university proved important at this point; because the Ayacucho department was relatively inaccessible and the only impoverished highland department with a university, it allowed for students and teachers with knowledge of radical leftist ideologies to intertwine with the peasant class they'd support, without much government interference⁵².

⁴⁸ McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso," 66.

⁴⁹ McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso," 64.

⁵⁰ Not to be confused with the Colombian or Bolivian organizations of the same name.

⁵¹ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." 128.

⁵² McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso," 76-77.

Guzmán's students quickly gained control of the student councils at his and other universities, expanding their presence across the highland departments and peasant communities⁵³. In the late 1970's, however, the group lost power in the university and turned to focus on regrouping and modifying their ideology. They held a series of secret meetings at which they trained themselves in weapons use and military tactics, and appointed Guzmán as the official leader of the now armed Sendero Luminoso⁵⁴.

In 1980, as Peru was returning to an election system after twelve years of military rule, Sendero Luminoso opted out of the election and staged their first "act of war" against the government: the burning of ballot boxes and of the hanging of dogs from lamp posts in Lima and Ayacucho⁵⁵. Their attacks escalated and their numbers grew throughout the early 1980's as they progressed to assassinations, jailbreaks, and bombings. Sendero Luminoso truly became a national concern by 1983, when the government declared five departments in a state of emergency and instated military rule. Fighting between the group and military forces claimed hundreds of lives⁵⁶.

B. Tenets and Goals

Sendero Luminoso bases its ideology heavily upon Maosim but, like FARC, combined different ideologies to suit their particular situation. Guzmán traveled to China in the mid 1960's and returned with the intent to apply Mao's techniques to the Peruvian

⁵³ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." 128.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." 129.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

countryside⁵⁷, but combined it with the interpretations of José Carlos Mariátegui, a Peruvian intellectual and founder of the original Communist Party of Peru⁵⁸.

During the 1970's Sendero turned its attentions to its own development, concentrating on theory-building from within the refuge at the University of Huamanga and on solidifying its relationships with peasant communities in neighboring areas. In the eyes of his followers, Professor Guzmán successfully reconciled the longstanding differences between the doctrine of Mariátegui and that of Maoism, which had previously been the main divisive point in Peruvian leftist parties. Guzmán's synthesis of the two not only formed the ideological base of Sendero Luminoso, but secured his place among the hierarchy of Marxist thinkers (at least, according to his followers) and laid the groundwork for his budding cult of personality.⁵⁹

Because Guzmán remained the undisputed leader for all of Sendero Luminoso's development, the group remained committed to his ideology and program for gaining power. Main goals focus on converting the rural areas into bases of revolutionary support, attacking the bourgeois state and other communist revisionist groups, developing their guerrilla war techniques, and an eventual all-out siege of urban areas in order to bring about the total collapse of the state⁶⁰. They have been extremely shy about revealing strategies and ideas, and have published very few documents fully explaining themselves. The group believes that revolution is to be achieved by "a prolonged popular

⁵⁷ Lucero, Wayne. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path," 1.

⁵⁸ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," 128.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," 129.

war that will first gather support in the countryside and then finally encircle the cities,”⁶¹ similarly to FARC. Sendero is unusually sectarian among leftist groups; Guzmán was extremely critical of what he saw as the revisionist Soviet government and Chinese government after Mao’s death, as well as of Izquierda Unida (the group of Marxist parties that was still participating in Peru's electoral process)⁶². Unlike FARC and many other left-wing organizations, they rarely forged ties with other groups and there’s no evidence that they ever sought direct aid from Cuba or the Soviet Union⁶³. They utilized traditional Maoist practices such as “criticism and self-criticism” in order to rid group members of bad habits and to strengthen themselves; they believed that strict martial law was necessary in order to teach the peasant class about the virtues of Maoism, and they implemented harsh punishments for dissention such as forced labor, immediate executions, and corpse mutilation⁶⁴. Sendero leaders continuously reject the bourgeois perception of human rights, as explained by one of their infrequently released documents:

We start by not ascribing to either Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Costa Rica [Convention on Human Rights], but we have used their legal devices to unmask and denounce the old Peruvian state [...] For us, human rights are contradictory to the rights of the people, because we base rights in man as a social product, not man as an abstract with innate rights. "Human rights" do not exist except for the bourgeois man, a position that was at the forefront of feudalism, like liberty, equality, and fraternity were advanced for the bourgeoisie of the past. But today, since the appearance of the proletariat as an organized class in the Communist Party, with the experience of triumphant revolutions, with the construction of socialism, new democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat, it has been proven that human rights serve the oppressor class and the exploiters who run the imperialist and landowner-bureaucratic states [...] Our position is very clear. We reject

⁶¹ McClintock, Cynthia. (1984) "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." 51

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Manwaring, Max G. "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons." 162.

⁶⁴ Lucero, Waynee. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path," 3.

and condemn human rights because they are bourgeois, reactionary, counterrevolutionary rights, and are today a weapon of revisionists and imperialists, principally Yankee imperialists.⁶⁵

While Sendero Luminoso definitely asserts the Bolivarian ideals of rejecting Western influence in Latin America, they take it further by reaffirming the importance of indigenous groups within Peru, not just the mestizo peasant class, in standing against foreign dominance. They've incorporated symbols from the Incan insurrectionary tradition and focus on mobilization of the rural Indian periphery within peasant communities⁶⁶. According to McClintock, early Sendero members lived in indigenous communities, learned Quechua if they hadn't already, and politicized the native communities in a way that few other organizations could⁶⁷. They modeled their style of dress similarly to that of Indian populations, making it difficult for the military and governmental authorities to distinguish the two groups⁶⁸. This attachment to the native populations set them apart from other leftist movements and forged their early support base.

C. Funding, Tactics, and Notable Attacks

Like FARC, Sendero Luminoso is now funded through drug trafficking, although at a much smaller level due to the size of their organization. From its outset, the group acted

⁶⁵ "Sobre Los Dos Colinas," Communist Party of Peru, cedema.org, 2006. <http://www.cedema.org/ver.php?id=699>.

⁶⁶ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," 139, and McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." 51.

⁶⁷ Palmer, David Scott. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," 132.

⁶⁸ Lucero, Wayne. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path." 2.

as the governing body in regions where the national government had lost control, cementing their support from the marginalized peasant community. They provided any needed agricultural, educational, and medical services as needed, and drove out any remaining wealthy landowners and took over their assets⁶⁹. In the early 1980's, around the same time that FARC's recruits and drug profits were skyrocketing, Sendero members also began narcotrafficking, kidnapping for ransom, and implementing taxes on small businesses in areas under their control⁷⁰. They required that Colombian drug traffickers desiring to operate in Peru pay higher prices for unprocessed coca in exchange for protection; Sendero members also engaged in small amounts of weapons dealings, usually with narcotraffickers from Colombia⁷¹. Sendero Luminoso's smaller numbers, as well as the difficulty involved with cultivating land in Peru for coca production, meant that their involvement and profit from the drug trade wasn't nearly as significant as that of FARC. However, they didn't operate solely on capital, but rather intimidation; Sendero gained control of more areas and garnered national attention through the sheer brutality of their attacks, not from huge, costly operations or the control of millions of dollars in a lucrative business.

Unlike almost every other leftist organization in Latin America at the time, there is no evidence of support from foreign government like Cuba or the USSR. In fact, part of Sendero's early success can be attributed to the fact that they distanced themselves from Castro's *focos*, which failed miserably in Peru. The guerilla fighters were almost totally unsuccessful their cause; they did not establish a political base like Sendero's Huamanga

⁶⁹ McClintock, Cynthia. (1984) "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." 81.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lucero, Wayne. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path," 2.

and they overlooked the geographical differences between the Cuban Sierra Maestra and the Peruvian highlands. The Peruvian mountains have considerably less foliage than the Cuban ones, so the guerrilla groups in fatigues were readily spotted by aerial surveillance from the military. The guerillas also failed to win the trust of the peasants and indigenous tribes, who quickly turned against them. The Peruvian military defeated the guerrillas in about two years, and the young Sendero Luminoso quickly learned from their mistakes.⁷²

As the group grew, their tactics became increasingly violent. What began as ballot burning and discouragement of participation in the elections of 1980 quickly turned into military rule by Sendero, and many peasants suffered under their “protection.” Sendero began to disrespect the indigenous cultures in favor of introducing Maoism, and engaged in brutal popular trials of opponents that sometimes included throat slitting, strangulation, stoning, and burning. While capital punishment for theft was practiced in some parts of Peru, Sendero began killing peasants and community leaders for various minor offenses. Victims of Sendero’s attempts to purge society of those not worthy of their revolutionary ideals were not allowed to be buried.⁷³

In addition to their intimidation tactics, Shining Path also sought to overthrow the government by closing rural markets in order to end small-scale capitalism and eventually starve the urban centers. Their opposition to all forms of capitalism was so strong that they refused to differentiate between massive markets and those based in agriculture that supported peasant communities⁷⁴. As the peasants' livelihoods depended

⁷² McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." 78.

⁷³ Manwaring, Max G. "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons." 162.

⁷⁴ McClintock, Cynthia. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." 82.

on trade in those markets, they rejected such closures. They also forced farmers to slash production to subsistence levels and to destroy whatever modern farm equipment they possessed, grinding production to a halt and exacerbating famine⁷⁵. In several areas of Peru, Sendero launched unpopular restrictive campaigns, such as a prohibition on parties and on the consumption of alcohol⁷⁶.

Sendero Luminoso's first significant attacks commenced within a few years of the ballot burning during the 1980 election. In 1983, military units and local anti-Sendero militias, known as *rondas*, killed a Sendero commander of the small town of Lucanamarca⁷⁷. As a response, Sendero entered Lucanamarca and the towns around it, killing 69 people as they went through⁷⁸. The Lucanamarca Massacre was the first time that Sendero fighters had massacred peasants, but similar events followed. They later murdered 47 peasants in the town of Hauyllo, including 14 children aged four to fifteen⁷⁹. In addition to the occasional massacre of their own support base, Sendero Luminoso established labor camps to punish those who committed crimes against their views; prisoners worked the coca fields, where they faced hunger, fatigue, and possible execution⁸⁰.

⁷⁵ Lucero, Wayne. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs. 2008. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path," 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "La Masacre de Lucanamarca." 2003. Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Courtois, Stéphane et al. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. 680. At this point (indiscriminate attacks on civilians to further a political purpose), most would have considered Sendero Luminoso a terrorist organization. However, they were not put on the U.S. State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization list until October 8th, 1997, the same day as FARC.

Sendero Luminoso's attacks progressed to the cities, where they sabotaged or bombed shopping malls and electrical transmission towers, detonated car bombs in public centers, and attacked political leaders. In 1992 they claimed responsibility for a powerful bomb that exploded on a crowded street, killing twenty-five people and injuring well over 100⁸¹. These attacks expanded their control from the rural highlands to the shantytowns in the outskirts of Lima, but willing support from peasants was dwindling⁸².

Attacks lessened greatly in the late 1990's after Guzmán and his replacement, Óscar Ramírez, were captured by Peruvian authorities. However, in recent years Sendero Luminoso has regrouped, strengthened its ties with drug traffickers, and continued to carry out attacks. They detonated a car bomb outside the U.S. Embassy in Lima shortly before the scheduled arrival of President Bush in 2002⁸³, and in 2010 they ambushed and killed two police officers and two workers who were in the process of destroying a large coca plantation⁸⁴. Their numbers have been reduced greatly, but Sendero Luminoso carried out attacks as recently as October 2012 and has yet to make any peace arrangements with the Peruvian government.

⁸¹ Fitz-Simons, Daniel W. "Sendero Luminoso: Case Study in Insurgency," 68.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Peru Bomb Fails to Deter Bush". *BBC News*

⁸⁴ "Peru Rebels Ambush and Kill Coca Plantation Clearers". *BBC News*.

V. Drug Trade and Evolution of Ideology

A. FARC

The FARC remained a small-scale guerrilla movement throughout the 1970's financed primarily through episodic extortion, bank robbing, and random kidnappings, and relying on support from poor *campesinos* and external ideological partners, such as Russian and Cuban communist groups. During this time, both the U.S.'s crackdown on the major marijuana trafficking routes used by Mexican and Jamaican drug smugglers and Colombian President Ayala's pressure on marijuana cultivators convinced some marijuana traffickers to switch to cocaine production, which happened to be both extremely profitable and easier to smuggle⁸⁵. Agriculturally, coca was hardy enough to thrive in poor soil, could be transferred and purchased in a nonperishable paste, and was extremely lucrative for the average Colombian peasant with no land titles and little access to irrigation and fertilizers. FARC leaders from the rural provinces of Putumayo, Caquetá, and Guaviare realized the early economic benefits from the coca crop and decided to support and tax coca farming as a method of raising funds, despite the groups' opposition to drugs and drug trafficking.⁸⁶

The decision by FARC leaders at the Seventh Guerrilla Conference in 1982 to support coca cultivation in all divisions and fronts was a monumental decision that would have long-lasting implications for Colombian history. Leaders were convinced by the early revenue from the initial districts and charged coca farmers a *gramaje*⁸⁷ in exchange

⁸⁵ Prior to this period, coca was primarily grown for traditional usage in the Andean regions of Peru and Bolivia.

⁸⁶ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 21.

⁸⁷ "farm tax"

for protection and social services. The group's decision to accept and protect coca farmers allowed FARC to expand throughout the Colombian countryside, where they came into contact with the narco-trafficking groups that had taken advantage of the new drug market a few years earlier. These groups were protected by paramilitary organizations that were expanding into the same regions as FARC, and thus the two entered into a tenuous relationship.⁸⁸

Clear distinctions must be made between FARC and the narco-traffickers. While FARC was still maintaining close ties to their peasant supporters and lofty, revolutionary ideals, narco-trafficking groups were free-market capitalists who operated primarily for their individual financial enrichment. Most narco-trafficking groups, especially the Medellín Cartel, benefitted from the weak, ineffectual Colombian government and actively sought corruptible government officials; they aspired to having little governmental oversight, enforcement, or pressure. Unlike FARC, the narco-trafficking groups wanted to “maximize profit by reducing associated costs; thus they harassed, intimidated, stole from, and generally mistreated peasants in order to get the lowest price for the coca leaf”⁸⁹. The narco-trafficking groups lacked local ties or strong interests in the fate of the government, and therefore were more flexible in where they acquired coca leaves and paste. FARC, on the other hand, still relied on peasant support as their greatest strategic asset, and held that profit maximization goals of the drug cartels were capitalistic evils.

⁸⁸ Cook, Thomas R. “The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective,” 22.

⁸⁹ Cook, Thomas R. “The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective,” 23.

When the FARC moved into a new farming community, they first raised coca prices above the level set by narcotraffickers while offering protection from their paramilitary groups. They then adopted state-like functions and provided public services to the previously ungoverned populations, such as collecting and appropriating tax revenues, settling disputes, providing health and educational services, and improving infrastructure like roads and landing strips for planes. FARC provided codes, including the *Reglas de Convivencia*, which regulated everything from carrying arms, fishing, hunting, cutting trees, and working hours to liquor consumption, prostitution, interfamily violence, and drug abuse in areas under their control. As FARC utilized their new political leverage in the rural areas, they obtained more land and their wealth began to grow exponentially.⁹⁰

The two groups started as mutual benefactors of a working relationship, but in the 1980's they began competing for control of valuable coca farming land. Narcotrafficking groups reinvested their profits by buying huge swathes of agricultural land, which displaced the *campesinos* and fueled FARC's push for agrarian reform in order to take land from large landholders, especially prominent drug traffickers, and redistribute it back to local farmers. As the two groups competed over land, the conflict became violent and FARC began to move away from its peasant protection strategy. FARC forcibly recruited or kidnapped young boys into the military ranks and harassed resistant peasant groups allied with the narcotraffickers, and the traffickers responded to by creating self-defense groups like the AUC.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 24.

⁹¹ Ibid.

As the FARC's revenue increased, they moved up the production chain. By 1990, FARC had opened up nine fronts in the department of Meta, then a major coca producing region, and was involved in every aspect of cocaine production. Both FARC and the trafficking groups were able to attract, pay, and equip larger numbers of soldiers, only prolonging the tensions. The drawing power of FARC's drug business began to affect the Colombian economy as a whole; Colombia experienced reverse migration from urban areas into rural areas of coca production because of economic weakness in Colombian cities and the potential for a profitable lifestyle in narcotics. The Colombian agricultural sector accounted for forty percent of the national economy in 1945, but by 1984 it accounted for only twenty-two percent as many farmers turned to coca when staple crops were no longer as profitable. This reverse migration provided an additional large population of disaffected people who were easily recruited by both the FARC and the paramilitary groups.⁹²

With their new financial stability, FARC leaders were able to make strategic investments to further improve its military strength. FARC forces were sent to the Soviet Union and Vietnam, a military academy-like apparatus was established to prepare new recruits for a command structure, and investments were made in technological goods like FARC's communications systems, which allowed them to streamline their operations in the thick jungle. Coca acted as a gateway to a much wider range of economic activities, and FARC used its growing military and political power to expand outside of its

⁹² Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 25.

traditional areas of control. By continuing to colonize new areas of the countryside, FARC's importance overtook that of the Colombian government in many areas.⁹³

The successful U.S. and Colombian hunt for leaders of the Medellín and Cali cartels created a political and economic vacuum that would be filled by an ever-growing FARC. U.S. and Colombian law enforcement officials engaged in the high-profile targeting and capture of major cartels leaders, the most notably Pablo Escobar. His death in 1993 made international news and generated significant praise for American and Colombian counternarcotics efforts, but had unforeseen consequences. The end of the cartels meant the fragmentation of trafficking groups, which evolved into smaller, decentralized networks who evaded the high-profile targeting tactics. As new leaders vied for control of the trafficking trade, the FARC seized upon the opportunity to strengthen its control of the production phase. They made connections with other trafficking groups, such as the Arellano-Felix cartel based in Tijuana, Mexico, and successfully established financial relationships. Even before the surge in drug trafficking, legal loopholes meant that money laundering wasn't codified as a crime in Colombia, so the government was not always able to track FARC's financial connections. These loopholes weren't closed until the mid-1990's, long after FARC had solidified its position as a serious threat to political stability and as a key player in the drug trade.⁹⁴

To put FARC's enormous growth into more concrete terms, they supported an increase from 13,200 soldiers in 1989 to their peak of 18,000 in the late 1990's and were

⁹³ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 26, and Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 137.

⁹⁴ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 27-29.

part of the black market money exchange that laundered over five billion dollars of drug money within the same time frame⁹⁵. In 1998 alone, FARC earned \$285 million, \$136 million of which was directly drug-related revenue⁹⁶. FARC operation costs at the time were estimated to use only about fifteen percent of the profits, with the rest of the funds used for acquisition of land, weapons, or for further investments⁹⁷. In the same year, the Pastrana government ceded forty percent of Colombian territory to FARC as a peace gesture, withdrawing all military and police units from the area. Essentially, this allowed FARC to consolidate its power in the territory that would become nicknamed "Farclandia"⁹⁸. Their rapid expansion was unparalleled; no other Latin American rebel force has matched their size, capabilities, or longevity, characteristics that all of which can be directly traced to their engagement with the drug trade⁹⁹.

Despite their leftist rhetoric, evidence from FARC's incredible growth from their entrance into the drug trade speaks to the contrary. They've attempted to distance themselves from a market that is, practically by definition, a capitalistic venture that exploits the working class by avoiding partaking in the actual sale of narcotics in markets like the U.S. and Europe; they earn their money by taxing every process in drug

⁹⁵ FARC was not the only group that took advantage of this system, but they were a key figure. Profits from other trafficking groups were also accounted for in these numbers.

⁹⁶ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 137.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 31.

⁹⁹ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 137.

production and from its sale to larger distributors¹⁰⁰. Yet because they control so much land that could otherwise be used to farm legal crops, they limit the peasant class instead of allowing them to self-sustain. They remain vigilant in their stance against the Colombian government and present themselves as an alternative to it, but their measures are often draconian, not well received by their peasant base, or simply just as exploitive. Their willingness to release political prisoners over civilians attests to their abuse of the lower classes in exchange for political power. In addition to their links with the IRA, they've aligned themselves with other terrorist groups such as Hezbollah¹⁰¹ and cartels throughout Central America and Mexico¹⁰². Their actions over the past decade or so overwhelmingly suggest that their interests have shifted away from supporting the peasant class with leftist reforms, and toward using the power and money received from the drug trade to solidify their position as a Colombian political entity and as an international narcotics powerhouse.

B. Sendero Luminoso

Sendero Luminoso never became the serious contender in the international drug trade that FARC did, and the details of their involvement are not as lengthy. However, their entrance into narco-trafficking did drastically alter the path of their organization by allowing them significant growth.

¹⁰⁰ Cook, Thomas R. "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 30.

¹⁰¹ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," 139.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Originally, the group relied on extortion from businesses and from the agricultural production in areas it controls, but shifted to drug trafficking in the early 1980's¹⁰³. Sendero Luminoso reportedly collected millions of dollars in taxes from the Colombian narcotraffickers in the Upper Huallaga Valley, the area that at the time supplied sixty percent of the world's coca, and from the other coca-producing regions of Peru¹⁰⁴. By the end of 1993, Sendero had extended its presence into 114 provinces across all departments of the country¹⁰⁵. This effort has essentially left only the coastal departments and the large cities under central government control and gave Sendero Luminoso a commanding position. Such rapid territorial expansion would be impossible without financial and other substantive support, which they found by engaging in the cocaine trade.

The Upper Huallaga Valley became a conflict area when both Sendero Luminoso and another Peruvian guerilla group, the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru) sought control over coca production. Both groups claimed to represent peasant interests to drug traffickers and aimed to tax the sale of the raw coca to those groups, creating a rush to win a strong peasant support base. Although the local coca growers were not particularly sympathetic to the ideologies of either the MRTA or Sendero, they did desire the armed protection offered by the groups against the police, the military, and drug traffickers.¹⁰⁶

In September 1984, the Belaúnde government declared the Upper Huallaga an emergency zone and dispatched the military to the area in an effort to quash Sendero Luminoso. Combating the drug trade was not yet the Peruvian government's top priority,

¹⁰³ McClintock, Cynthia. "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case," 137.

¹⁰⁴ McClintock, Cynthia. "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case." 127-128.

¹⁰⁵ Fitz-Simons, Daniel W. "Sendero Luminoso: Case Study in Insurgency." 68.

¹⁰⁶ McClintock, Cynthia. "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case." 137.

and they saw successes in their operations after a top military commander forbade anti-narcotics operations in the area, arguing that they disrupted counterinsurgency. Since the coca growers didn't need guerilla protection from the military and traffickers could operate freely, the guerrillas retreated and the coca industry in the Valley boomed. When the Garcia government later imposed stricter anti-drug operations, both the MRTA and Sendero Luminoso reasserted control over the peasant population and the competition for peasant support turned violent. Sendero Luminoso emerged as the dominant force in the region after March of 1987, when a shoot-out in the small town of Tocache left forty to sixty guerillas dead and displaced much of the MRTA. This became a seminal moment in Sendero's development, as it marked a shift in their interests and behavior toward peasants.¹⁰⁷

While they established dominance over the Huallaga Valley, Sendero Luminoso turned their attentions toward creating relationships with the drug traffickers. They garnered significant support from the traffickers; for a time, they provided men and arms for Sendero; in turn, Sendero protected large drug shipments, warned the traffickers about imminent raids, and they guaranteed the traffickers that their demands for cocaine paste would be met. After the defeat of the MRTA, however, the relationships between Sendero Luminoso and the traffickers soured. Sendero had primarily represented the peasants' interests, not traffickers, and sought to remove and dissolve the traffickers' gangs from the area, raise the paste prices, and control to which group of traffickers the

¹⁰⁷ McClintock, Cynthia. "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case." 138.

peasants sold. As a result, conflicts erupted between Sendero and traffickers throughout the Valley.¹⁰⁸

In April of 1987, Sendero killed thirteen traffickers, and in August 1987, more than thirty traffickers and Sendero members were killed in a shoot-out in the town of Paraiso. Coca growers still wanted the protection provided by Sendero Luminoso and wanted Sendero to force the traffickers into paying higher prices for the coca, but this relationship was based on growers' economic interests and vulnerability, not support for Sendero Luminoso's politics. As such, Sendero's relationship with the peasants grew increasingly repressive and abusive.¹⁰⁹

At the height of their involvement in the late 1980's, Sendero Luminoso was estimated to receive about \$30 million a year from the drug trade and used it to maintain their position between coca growers and traffickers¹¹⁰. Sendero allied itself with the narcotraffickers, who were estimated to have earned an annual net profit of about \$700 million¹¹¹, but also charged them for protection and shipment rights¹¹². By lobbying for higher prices for the growers, Sendero Luminoso gained the loyalty of the 500,000 to 600,000 peasants in the Huallaga Valley and increased their numbers to 15,000¹¹³. While this pales in comparison to FARC's world-wide significance in the drug trade, it still allowed Sendero to expand their base to unprecedented areas while exerting significant control over Peru's government and economy.

¹⁰⁸ McClintock, Cynthia. "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case." 139.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ These are American estimates, figures from Peruvian analysts suggested that the number was closer to one billion.

¹¹² Fitz-Simons, Daniel W. 1993. "Sendero Luminoso: Case Study in Insurgency." 69.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Like FARC, Sendero's involvement in the drug trade marked a defined shift in their attitudes toward their peasant base. During the early 1990's, Sendero Luminoso witnessed its highest profits from drug sales and simultaneously began its widespread executions of *leftist* politicians¹¹⁴, peasants who allegedly supported the national government, and Indians who refused to assimilate¹¹⁵. They formally abide by strict Maoism, but continuously use violence and terrorist tactics instead of the "winning hearts and minds" approach that Mao required. Those who've suffered most under Sendero Luminoso's presence have been the peasant classes they claim to support: poverty is still rampant in the rural parts of Peru that were their base, and radical leftist leaders aren't winning national elections as they had hoped¹¹⁶. Under President Fujimori, the Peruvian government committed various human rights violations against its own citizens in order to capture Sendero Luminoso leaders, especially peasants in their base areas. After the capture of Guzmán and others in Sendero's hierarchy in 1992, there was a sharp decline in the number of attacks and an increase in the number of members that returned to civilian life¹¹⁷. While the organization and its small splinter groups are still committing attacks and attempting to regain their prominence in the drug trade, their rapid decrease after Guzmán's incarceration hints at the possibility that Sendero Luminoso may have

¹¹⁴ In the article by Fitz-Simmons, he mentions the execution of a leftist reformer Elena Moyano, who was "shot dead and her body blown up by dynamite as her children watched," pg. 67.

¹¹⁵ He also discusses how Sendero "openly boasts of an extermination campaign against the fiercely independent Ashaninka Indians," pg. 71.

¹¹⁶ Peru's current president is Ollanta Humala. His party, the Peruvian Nationalist Party, is not particularly conservative, but he did garner a lot of support due to his long military career of fighting Sendero Luminoso in the 1990's.

¹¹⁷ Lucero, Wayne. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs. 2008. "The Rise and Fall of Shining Path." 4.

began as a leftist insurgency group, but eventually morphed into a cult of personality surrounding Guzmán before evolving into a cocaine supplier.

VI. Entry into Politics and Future

While FARC and the Colombian government negotiated a ceasefire as recently as August of 2012, the agreement was broken by the government in favor of offensive operations against the group. FARC leaders and representatives from the government met again in Norway in October of 2012 to draw up the terms to another peace agreement, but this one was broken as well by FARC members. The death of Hugo Chavez, who frequently mediated between the two, hasn't proved problematic yet. Because peace agreements are continuously made and broken, it's difficult to determine whether or not FARC will demobilize anytime in the near future. FARC leaders maintain that it will not stop its activities unless certain conditions are met, such as the cessation of government violence against rural peasants, social reforms to reduce poverty and inequality, and the release of all jailed (and extradited) FARC rebels.

FARC attempted to formalize itself politically in 1982 by creating the Patriotic Union as part of an agreement with the Betancur government. However, the *Unión Patriótica* party members were assassinated to such an extent that by 1987, almost 500 members had been killed. The party virtually disappeared after that, furthering FARC's distrust of the Colombian government and reluctance to engage in the legal democratic system. Because FARC cannot advocate for its demands through the democratic system and believes that the Colombian government will continue to abuse the political rights of the part of the population that FARC represents, FARC will not likely transition to a non-violent, legitimate political party anytime soon. Despite the fact that other nations in Latin America have elected leaders with similar political ideologies to FARC, FARC will remain active until it secures political legitimacy in its own country.

Sendero Luminoso has almost no record of peace agreements with the government; rather, Sendero's decline is due to the government succeeding in capturing or killing members of the Sendero hierarchy since Guzmán in 1992. A leader by the name of Comrade Artemio was captured in February 2012, leading President Humala to say that this marked the end of Sendero Luminoso in the cocaine producing center of Huallaga Valley. However, they've attacked helicopters near an international pipeline in October of 2012, and well-hidden factions continue to make demands via videotape.

The Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights (MOVADef) is an organization that tried to register as a lawful political party according to Peruvian law on behalf of Sendero Luminoso. However, its registration was denied by the Peruvian judiciary, signaling the continuance Sendero's terrorist activities. Despite the fact that Sendero Luminoso's leaders have been captured and the organization's numbers have dwindled in recent years, this lack of political recognition will inevitably propagate further violence as they attempt to complete the Maoist plan for complete takeover of the government. Sendero Luminoso sees itself as the vanguard communist party, continuing to fight for the proletariat when other communist parties have failed; most likely, its leaders won't stop committing violent acts against the state unless the state offers some sort of legitimate political recognition. And even then, the human rights' abuses committed by the militants will go unanswered for, as the leaders of the Sendero Luminoso allow themselves to commit such crimes because they see the idea of inalienable rights as something created for and perpetuated by bourgeoisie. Refusal of the Sendero Luminoso to admit wrongdoing and abuses combined with inaction by the

Peruvian government in accepting them as a political party will only encourage the remaining militants to fight for their cause (or, for drug profits).

VII. Conclusions

FARC and Sendero have survived because of their dependency on the drug trade and on their ability to distance themselves from the inconvenient parts of leftist ideologies. The fact that they've become so incredibly dependent upon a capitalistic venture to survive demonstrates their shift from leftist insurgents to drug traffickers, as do the facts that they manipulate leftist ideology to satisfy their needs and leftist leaders like Castro and Chavez have condemned their methods.

The Pink Tide that swept (and still is sweeping) Latin America delegitimizes their cause and also supports the idea that they've left their ideology behind. Leaders with leftist and outright socialist ideals have been elected to national office in almost every Latin American country, so why is there still a need for FARC and Sendero Luminoso to call for reform? U.S.-backed regimes, corrupt right-wing dictators, and military juntas are no longer the norm in Latin American politics. The people have elected leftist leaders that they believe serve their cause, and have done so in a largely democratic, uncorrupt election system. Since this is the case, groups like FARC and Sendero Luminoso no longer represent the masses as they claim that they do. Their long lists of abuses against the working classes, combined with the fact that leaders like Bachelet, Lula and then Rouseff, the Kirchners, Evo Morales, Ortega, and Correa have won elections instead of a mass call for FARC and Sendero leaders to participate in the election system clearly shows that they no longer have the support they need to qualify as "people's parties."

Having eliminated political participation as their purpose, their only goals left to satisfy would be the popularization of Marxism and Maoism and utilization of the drug trade for financing. Yet, their actual ideologies are not representative of Marx and Mao,

but are hybridized to serve their purposes, or, in the case of Sendero Luminoso, a cult-like collection of one leader's thoughts. The end of the Cold War wasn't the end for FARC and Sendero Luminoso because their ideologies have grown to satisfy the drug trade, not lofty communist thought, leaving the production of narcotics for funds as their sole purpose.

In this study, I argued that FARC and Sendero Luminoso owe their longevity to their involvement in the drug trade, and that such an extensive reliance on narcotrafficking has caused them to veer from their core ideology. As such, they can no longer claim to be "people's armies," but are simply traffickers using a thin veil of leftist ideology to cover their desire for and dependence on drug profits. An interesting extension of the research would be to compare FARC and Sendero Luminoso to a possible counterfactual; that is, a leftist terrorist organization with extraordinary longevity that hasn't entered the drug trade or corrupted its base ideology. I have yet to come across a leftist group that meets these standards, although some nationalist terrorist organizations, like the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the Zapatistas in southern Mexico, might fit the requirements if I were examining nationalist groups. Another possible extension would be to examine if the ideological changes experienced by FARC, Sendero Luminoso, and other leftist terrorist groups were a result of generational change and not from involvement in the drug trade.

Political Map of Colombia



Political Map of Peru



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