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MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO
CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA

BY

HERMES FOMUTAR BERINYUY

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
Through the Department of Communication, Media and Film
in Partial fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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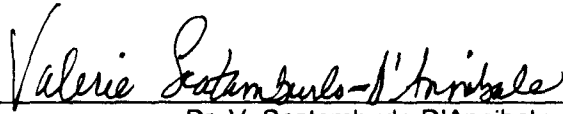
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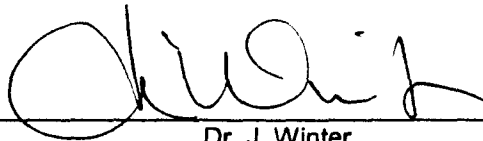
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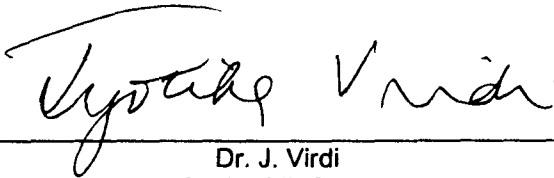
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ABSTRACT

The Propaganda Model of communication by Herman and Chomsky has been in the periphery of academia as its authors predicted. The authors also predicted what dimensions media coverage will take when the mainstream media cover events in states where corporate-governed super powers have interests, especially the U.S. It is this prediction of media performance that this research is testing in relation to the conflict in Colombia. In recent years Latin America has achieved some nationalist governments, as in Venezuela and Bolivia, however, the U.S quest for hegemony is a fact in Latin America. How the media cover conflict in Colombia, especially in relation to contributions of the U.S and its interventions is the concern of this thesis. This research uses Critical Discourse Analysis as methodology and the PM as its conceptual framework. *The Toronto Star, CBC, National Post, and the Globe and Mail* are analyzed in this research. Conclusions arrived at support the PM as a good instrument for predicting media performance: Mainstream media coverage favours allies of the U.S., protects U.S. corporations, supports capitalist values and imperialist ideology, and generally neglects the interests of the masses and social justice, while the elite agenda is favoured.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. with the purpose of effecting 'regime change' or spreading freedom and democracy has carried out imperialism in virtually all corners of the world for centuries especially in the last many decades. Hegemony, colonialism and neo-colonialism have been used to keep much of the Third World or Southern nations in conditions of despair. This has often taken the form of overt force, covert operation, or subverted election. In the last two decades, a few examples that come to mind include the successful use force in 1989 in Panama to oust Manuel Noriega. 1990 to 1991 saw the use of subverted elections in Haiti to manipulate and take out President Bertrand Aristide. In 1990s in Nicaragua Daniel Ortega, a Christian socialist was faced with confronting the 'Contras' that were backed by the Ronald Reagan U.S. administration.

From the Carter presidency through the Bush administration, El Salvador was a base for U.S. hegemonic policy. As a civil war raged on the ground, Washington's cold war concerns ensured massive and continued U.S. support for the El Salvadoran government and military against the forces of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) from 1980 to 1990s. Hugo Chavez of Venezuela saw a U.S. backed coup d'état that failed in 2002 due to popular support. The present president of Bolivia since 2002 had been a target of the U.S. making sure that he never came to power because he and his leftist following would not let the U.S. control Bolivia the way it wants.

Recent events such as the coup d'état in Honduras in 2009 during which progressive president Manuel Zelaya was overthrown is just one of many current examples of self-interested involvement by the U.S. in the affairs of third world countries. The U.S. preaches freedom and democracy but supports the overthrow of democratically elected presidents if this will protect her interests and empire. Zelaya was overthrown because he was becoming too close Hugo Chavez and signaling a threat to the U.S. grip in Latin America which is already becoming shaky with the rise of liberal movements. With Rafael Correa, a progressive nationalist becoming president of Ecuador, Evo Morales elected in Bolivia and Hugo Chavez consolidating his position in Venezuela, the U.S. has to do all it can to maintain its relationship with her ally Colombia.

The U.S. does everything to protect its hegemony because it exploits labour, minerals, market and all sorts of resources from other nations. In a Country like Colombia, most of the major mineral, agricultural and industrial conglomerations are U.S. corporations. In the case of Colombia, Monsanto, the United Fruit Company now renames Chiquita, Coca-Cola, Drummond etc are the major companies controlling the Colombian economy. Of course the U.S. signs trade deals with her allies to ensure markets for her products.

Colombia is one such territory that has been in violence and disorder for decades while its governors enjoy support from the U.S as it holds onto Colombia for hegemonic reasons.

A case in point that supports Blum`s thesis is that of the former Chilean leader Augusto Pinochet. The U.S. helped Pinochet with material and all

types of support to the military regime during and after the coup against Allende that brought Pinochet to power, although the media have covered it up. A document released by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2000 through its Director, Kombluh Peter entitled "CIA Activities in Chile,"¹ revealed that the CIA actively supported the military junta after the overthrow of Allende and so many of Pinochet's officers were paid contacts of the CIA or U.S. military, despite the fact that they were known to be involved in human rights abuses.

To an informed observer who is not blinded by corporate and state propaganda, dozens of case studies such as this are available which confirm the U.S. attempts to control the rest of the world. As William Blum and others have convincingly demonstrated, since World War II the U.S. has been the leading hegemonic and oppressive force on the planet. For examples, one could go back to the 20th century, to the occupation and eventual annexation of Hawaii, or the subjugation of the Philippines, or Cuba.

This is all described in the record of internal U.S. government documents, U.S. planning documents such as National Security Council reports on Latin America. Chomsky notes the role of the third world:

The assigned functions of the Third World countries are to be markets for American business, sources of resources for American business, to provide cheap labour for American business, and so on...the main commitment of the United States, internationally in the Third World, must be to prevent the rise of nationalist regimes which are responsive to pressures from the masses of the population for improvement in low living standards and diversification of production; the reason is, we have to maintain a climate

¹Kombluh, Peter, (2000) *CIA Acknowledges Ties to Pinochet's Repression: Report to Congress Reveals U.S. Accountability in Chile* by <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20000919/index.html>

that is conducive to investment, and to ensure conditions which allow for adequate repatriation of profits to the West.²

As we can see from the latter example, a particular area of interest for the Americans has been the Caribbean and Central and South America. Respected British journalist John Pilger demonstrated in his 2008 documentary film, *The War on Democracy*, that U.S. involvement is a tale of ruthless and murderous exploitation on an immense scale. The documentary describes the attempt by the U.S to overthrow the government of Hugo Chavez and other exploits in Latin America. Among the “honours” of U.S foreign policy it reveals that since 1945 the US has been involved in overthrowing more than 50 governments. President George Bush once said of Latin America, "What we say goes" (Chomsky)³ which is the modern re-statement of Manifest Destiny, applied with rigor, relish and intensity which is unparalleled, save perhaps for the Roman Empire.

Aside from Pilger's journalistic work, many of these case studies have been documented. Young (2008) uses the propaganda model indicate media bias in the coverage of President Uribe of Colombia compared with Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. He takes a comparative approach to media coverage of parallel political events. He examines coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and states that:

We can reasonably conclude that the propaganda model—which predicts systematic media bias in favor of official friends and against official

² Peter Mitchell and John Schoeffel, (eds) (2002) *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*. New York The New Press. P.64

³ Ibid. P 170

enemies—holds for coverage of Colombia and Venezuela in the United States' two leading "liberal" newspapers.

Similarly, Bastien (2008) uses the propaganda model to study the reversal of the 2002 coup in Venezuela and the role of U.S. foreign policy in Venezuelan politics. She examines the media coverage and the attempt to destroy the will of the people of Venezuela and establishes that the U.S will cruelly do anything to ruin a democracy in developing nations especially if the rulers do not want to follow what Washington wants. Bastien says the U.S argues Hugo Chavez, a democratically elected president for being 'anti-democratic' and therefore try to overthrow him. Thanks to the determination of the people the U.S effort is rendered futile within 48 hours.

Amy Goodman (2004) discusses the cruelty with which the Reagan administration almost wiped out Nicaragua with U.S. mercenaries under the guise of fighting terrorists. The excuse was that terrorists were in Nicaragua and a threat to the U.S. and to humanity while in actual fact they were ensuring U.S. control of Nicaragua. Goodman uses the framework of the Propaganda Model in an interview with Chomsky:

By now, Nicaragua is lucky to survive a few generations (sic). That was one part of the massive international terrorist campaign that the Reaganites carried out in the 1980's under the pretense they were fighting a war on terror. They declared a war on terror in 1981 with pretty much the same rhetoric that they used when they re-declared it in September 2001

Adam (1995 p. 113) investigates the corporate media coverage of wars in Central America with its elitist and hegemonic manifestations and

comments in line with the PM that there is an “imperial gaze” in the coverage of news. The PM foresees the mainstream media favouring an imperial U.S. Adam states that:

A close reading of news discourse supports Herman and Chomsky’s “Propaganda Model” of the news. News coverage of the war, the peace process, and the humanitarian rights record of the Central American nations reveals a pattern of systematic (in)attention which absolves U.S client states of critical scrutiny while legitimizing the destruction of the Sandinistas revolution.

Writing directly of moral agency Nelson (2002) shows how social justice and the individual lose their base in a society where propaganda media operate. He indicates that the PM is a valuable tool in assessing media performance. He argues that the PM is just a demonstration of the truth of what the U.S. government is doing and how U.S. turn the world into two parts of predators and victims: “Chomsky and Herman’s model provides just such an explanation. They do the main work of demonstrating its truth in their book...”

Nelson argues strongly that using the PM for any analysis of the media in society is a very worthwhile activity. The current work provides a case study of Colombia. This case study is undertaken from within the theoretical framework of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model.

CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA.

For decades, Colombia has experienced a civil war between left-wing guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitary organizations and the Colombian government. The two predominant rebel groups are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known by its Spanish acronym, FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The conflict started in the 1960's basically as a result of exploitation of the masses by the politicians and the elites although the immediate cause was a mistake in power sharing. The marginalized felt very oppressed and disenfranchised and decided to form armed movements. Under Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, who took office in 2002 and has been boosted by a large inflow of U.S. funding, both groups have been depleted in numbers and resources. Yet peace talks between each group and the government remain foiled by difficulties. Allegations in March 2008 by the Colombian government that FARC is receiving support from the Venezuelan government have further complicated prospects for peace and also contributed to Colombia's poor relations with Venezuela. The FARC have however been weakened following events in 2009 and 2010. Most of its major leaders like Raul Reyes have been killed and high profile hostages that they held such as the presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt have been rescued. But Venezuela's relations with Colombia have not improved very much.

In the 1950's, Colombia went through a very difficult period that is popularly known as "La violencia" (Violence). During this period there were several violent deaths that were a result of political instability and disgruntlement

with governments. Many workers were also killed for fighting for their rights and to have a say in political decisions. The FARC and the ELN were both founded in the 1960's when the two main parties in the country agreed to end the violence of the 1950's by sharing power in government, leaving the workers and the peasants desperate. This action showed the peasants that the elites were ready to oppress them and do whatever they wanted with the country. Meza (1999) documents this:

The widespread violence of the 1950s was formally ended with the creation of the National Front, a power-sharing agreement between the two traditional parties. The agreement, in fact, concentrated control of the state apparatus and bureaucracies in the hands of elites, and prevented the expression of alternative political projects.

What happened was that the posts in government were shared among the business people who were active in politics and the educated.

To the peasants, the power sharing was therefore seen as something that would not end their suffering as they were not considered. So in 1963 the Students' Catholic Radicals, and the Left wing intellectuals led by a priest, Fr. Camilo Restrepo Torres started communal actions in line with Fidel Castro's ideas and this gradually became the ELN. FARC was formed later in 1965 and brought together communist militants and peasant self-defense groups.

The FARC and ELN have similar objectives: they say that they represent the rural poor against Colombia's rich and wealthy classes, and oppose U.S imperialism in Colombia, the privatization of resources, corporate rule and violence from the rightists. The history of conflict in Colombia can therefore not be told without the role of the paramilitaries and their support for government. Scholars like Livingstone (2004 p.15) write that because of collusion with

paramilitaries, 80% of the arrest warrants prepared by the Attorney General's office on paramilitaries are never implemented. The government either refuses to send forces or does not carry out the arrests. Livingstone defends her position by quoting government acknowledgement of the collusion and the United Nations report:

The government of Andres Pastrana (1998-2002) claimed that the human rights situation in Colombia was improving. It admitted that there had been 'isolated' cases of collusion between the military and paramilitaries in the past but asserted that the government was doing all it could to crack down on them. Nobody else agreed. In 2000, The United Nations stated: 'Paramilitary operations against the civilian population have been stepped up in intensity and frequency; far from diminishing, they have increased.

The United States intervention in crises, economic policy and violence always seem to be related. That is why the joint economic programs of the Colombian and U.S. governments like *Plan Colombia* of former president Andres Pastrana and the Bill Clinton administration as well as the Free Trade Agreements of president Alvaro Uribe and George W. Bush have had implications for conflict in Colombia. Most of these economic plans coincide with the nature of politics. *Plan Colombia* which allegedly sought to tackle economic underdevelopment, drug problems and the guerrilla conflict met a major blow and did not help the violence as most countries did not contribute to it as envisaged. The major reason was that the emphasis was shifted from economic recovery, rural assistance and the civil society to militarization of the crises by the U.S. Stokes (2005 p.93) contends that:

Most European countries held back primarily because of the militarized focus of the US aid, which allocated \$1.3 billion to the plan, primarily in the form of military aid. This money significantly changed Plan Colombia from a regional development initiative, as originally envisaged by Pastrana, to

an aggressive military engagement with what were still characterized by the USA as the 'FARC narco-guerrillas'.

Similarly, George Bush's proposed Free Trade Agreement with Colombia has already been affecting the violence in Colombia even though it has not yet been signed by the U.S. congress. The plan has been opposed by many Colombians as a neo-liberal economic instrument for the inclusion of Colombia into the "free market" and global economic order that has been established by the U.S. Consequently several violent protests have been manifested in opposition to the Colombian Free Trade Agreement. Relations between Colombia and Venezuela have been violent because of such economic policies and because of Colombia's accusation that Hugo Chavez is a supporter of FARC. Hugo Chavez has proposed the Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Latin America and the Caribbean. (ALBA- La Alternativa Bolivariana para América Latina y El Caribe). Using ALBA, Chavez is gradually uniting the Latin American countries to form an economic union within which they will have trade agreements that serve Latin America, instead of becoming prey to U.S. trade agreements that are meant to turn Latin America into a source of raw material for the U.S., market for its finished goods. As Leech (2008) writes, the trade agreements introduced by the U.S. could be more of a problem with the intervention in the violence in Colombia rather than a solution.

Only days after the U.S. presidential debate, more than 12,000 indigenous demonstrators took to the streets in southern Colombia to protest, among other things, the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement. The Colombian government promptly responded by deploying riot police who proceeded to kill four demonstrators and injure more than 130 others. These indigenous protesters, like a majority of Latin Americans, have endured more than two decades of neoliberal policies that have only increased inequality and

created massive job insecurity by forcing many workers to survive in the informal economy. As a result, millions of Latin Americans now view free market policies as the problem, not the solution.

It should be recalled that violence in Colombia started as a result of huge disparities in wealth distribution and economic inequalities and that is exactly the result of the economic policies of the U.S. in Latin America, including Colombia, in their supposed effort to curb violence. The following paragraph from the archive of the Transnational Institute demonstrates the fact that the conflict in Colombia has its base in the peasant struggle and disparity in economic base:

During the period between "La Violencia" and the 1964 formation of the FARC, colonization was fueled by government aggression toward peasants. In response, peasants organized themselves in self-defense groups. The violent expulsion of peasants from their farms also led to structural changes in rural land tenure. The peasants, forcibly displaced and under attack from government forces, sought out inhospitable areas such as the foothills region of the Amazonic departments of Caquetá, Guaviare, Putumayo, and Meta, or in Sumapaz, Cundinamarca. Armed peasants, who would later form the FARC, began a process known as "armed colonization." The insurgents developed their most important base of support through this process and were able to consolidate control over several strategic geographic areas.

So with creation of deeper inequalities there will be a tendency to have a chain effect of violence. Fox (2006) defines ALBA saying that:

ALBA is by now well known as the antidote to the US-backed Free Trade Area of the Americas. An alternative that is based on cooperation and solidarity, without forgetting economic sustainability. Built on forging a new road away from multinational competition and neo-liberal free trade, so that each country retains its own sovereignty and is able to develop its own country according to its own necessities and desires. Based on breaking away from the economic colonization that swept across Latin America in the 90s through a wave of privatizations, free trade agreements, and structural adjustment policies that pushed Latin America further in to debt and increased the already aggravated inequality ratio.

Some critics actually think that the history of violence and conflict in Colombia is directly related to U.S relations with Venezuela because the U.S is using the violence in Colombia in part as camouflage to reach its enemy, Venezuela.

Following Colombia's violation of the sovereignty of Ecuador on March 1, 2008 by attacking a FARC secretariat in Ecuador, Manton (2008) of *The Socialist* had this to say:

The standoff between Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia was resolved at a summit in the Dominican Republic and a public apology by Colombian President Uribe. However, the potential exists for similar incursions into Ecuadorian or Venezuelan territory by Colombia or even for open military conflict, as the U.S uses the Colombian government as a tool in its battle against Chavez and Correa. U.S imperialism has troops and special forces in Colombia and could use this as a "base" from which to launch assassination and/or coup attempts against Chavez in particular. These recent events are a warning that Chavez must heed, that he may yet end up like Allende in Chile, overthrown and murdered as the result of a CIA backed coup unless the revolution is completed, and all power and wealth is removed from the capitalists.

I would like to end this overview of conflict and violence in Colombia by stating that while conflict is not a recent phenomenon in Colombian politics as it dates to the Colombian era, The U. S. was, in part, responsible for the birth of FARC and the guerrilla warfare in Colombia as the references below will show. In the early 1960's while the peasants were fighting for their rights by creating what they called the republic of Marquetalia, the U.S gave the Colombia elite based government military assistance to bomb the peasants who then declared an armed guerrilla war. Braun (2003) recounts the history of FARC and comments on the official declaration of armed resistance in 1964:

Shortly after the army bombed the independent republic of Marquetalia in 1964, the emerging guerrilla movement declared that 'We were patient,

awaiting that the official promises about the respect for life, honor and property be met. After trying to make ourselves known wherever we could, in the national Parliament and before other representative entities, before the high clergy, the National Government, we were not heard. We have now felt obligated to take up arms and to turn ourselves into a guerrilla movement' in 1965, the FARC were born.

Harper (2002) confirms this when she narrates the history of the civil war in Colombia:

In 1964, the Colombian military, using a loan from the U.S, launched a napalm attack against the independent republic of Marquetalia. The attack prompted the survivors to declare war against Colombia and founded the Southern Bloc. Two years later, at an annual conference of guerrilla leaders, the Southern Bloc expanded their military agenda into a nation-wide "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia," with revolutionary left-wing "focus" throughout Colombia. Marulanda remained the commander-in-chief of the militia.⁴

Hence, this study will consider the U.S contribution to conflict in Colombia. It has probably been involved with the guerrilla conflict in Colombia, not just doing a neutral intervention in order to free the Colombian people and install democracy, and freedom

INTEREST, IMPERIALISM AND CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA

The History of Colonialism is very important in the literature of modern Colombia and Latin America. Like most countries that suffered from colonialism and had to fight to liberate themselves, so many of the problems of Colombia can be traced to the colonial era to the extent that some of the problems can rightly be attributed to neo-colonialism. This is so because the forms of governance and economic activity today still have elements of the colonial and post-colonial eras.

⁴ Liz Harper(May2002) "Colombia's Civil War: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in *Online Newshour*. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/colombia/players_farc.html Retrieved October 2010

Skidmore and Smith (1992) trace the current problems of Latin America to the colonial era. According to the authors, the Spanish and Portuguese conquest created a totally new social order based on domination, hierarchy and dependence. Hence Latin America continues to be a paradoxical region wherein there is independence and dependence, autonomy and subordination. It has become a land of opposing forces especially with the rise of recent liberation movements influenced by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez.

Some amount of violence may be reported from Colombia from time to time but one thing that is often omitted is the fact that democracy and capitalism leave us in a dog-eat-dog world. The politicians, members of the government in Colombia and the U.S. everyone is trying to settle first with selfish agendas and interests, and this may lead to all types of conflicts and clashes. It simply depends on the level and the circumstances. Ballen (2006) discusses democracy in Colombia and opines that it is survival of the fittest. The various groups with interest in power eliminate each other with the slightest opportunity. He reveals that the present president Alvaro Uribe eliminates those who speak against him. Moreover, he also contributed to the formation of the paramilitaries, right wing armed groups that fight the revolutionary forces, FARC and other bodies that oppose the Colombian government. He writes that Uribe claims to be working for Colombia whereas he is just protecting his interest and the interests of the U.S. These interests are discussed by Linda McQuaig in *It's The Crude, Dude*. In this book, McQuaig uses examples from Latin America and the present Iraq war to show that American interventions in these two countries are for the sake of crude oil and other resources. As soon as a country has oil and does not

want to collaborate, like Venezuela and Libya, then it becomes an enemy.

International institutions and programs are even employed in the implementation of this U.S. agenda. Klaehn and Winter (2005 p 173) confirm this saying:

We contend that one definitive purpose of globalization is to eliminate the 'interference' of domestic populations from the corporate agenda and, on occasion, also non-client governments, whose attempts to take matters into their own hands are typically regarded as a 'crisis of democracy.'

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This research will cover media coverage on Colombia from 2002 to 2010. The year 2002 marked the greatest amount of U.S intervention in Colombia politically, financially and militarily. The tenure of Colombian president Alvaro Uribe Velez who is a pro U.S president in terms of policy and ideology also started in 2002. This study will cover issues related to the intervention by the U.S that has influenced the violence in Colombia. This includes the American economic policy for Colombia, military support in terms of finance, training, supplying of equipment and on-ground presence as well as joint ventures with the Colombian government. So the idea is not just to look at incidences of violence but also to look at many of the factors that surround the conflict in Colombia and how the media cover U.S. involvement. The scope of violence that will be covered will be limited to various types of violence that are related to politics. It will not cover household violence and other types of violence that may not be related to the socio-political situation in Colombia. Geographically, the scope of violence in Colombia will also affect not only the territory of Colombia but also events that happen in neighboring countries that directly affect the Colombian military and

politics. One example was on the 1st of March 2008 when the Colombian army bombed a FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Force) secretariat inside the territory of Ecuador killing the FARC second in command, Raul Reyes and twenty other people, including an Ecuadorian.

The media articles examined are all relevant articles that concern Colombian politics, economy, violence and conflict in the last 9 years. These will involve articles related to economic and welfare programs, some major clashes between the FARC and the government troops, killings of union workers such as with the Coca Cola company, murders as was the case in the Banadex Colombia (United Fruit Company or Chiquita Banana) company and other operations such as the rescue of the presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The testing of the propaganda model as a potential instrument for analyzing media representation of news about the conflict in Colombia is the major concern of this research. The major thesis statement here is that the PM has elaborated predictions about news production that can be applied to the case of Colombia. Can this structural model be used to predict media coverage of conflict in Colombia? The model predicts a correlation between patterns of media behaviour and broader institutional imperatives by which the media protect the interest of their stakeholders and established power. Therefore, even when they are not its stakeholders, the media are influenced by the prevailing empire which determines how to treat the masses and territories with some being 'unworthy'

while others are 'worthy' and therefore favoured. The concern of this thesis is to test the first-order predictions that deal with the functioning of the media. The PM model supposes through its structural model that media bias favoring the aspirations of empires, especially the U.S., can be 'tested' by various substantive predictions and hypothesis in consideration with parameters like 'boundaries of the expressible' and 'paired examples' in media discourse.

The problem here therefore is to use both Critical Discourse Analysis and the PM to research these first-order predictions and correlations between media behaviour, institutional forces and state apparatuses in media representation of U.S. contribution to the conflict in Colombia. Let me comment a bit on the first order predictions by Chomsky and Herman. Chomsky (1989 p 159) sees the first-order predictions in relation to certain atrocities; chief among them are 'Constructive bloodbaths' which he defines as those atrocities that serve the interest of U.S. power. He elaborates on all the three predictions and writes that:

The first-order prediction of the propaganda model is that constructive bloodbaths will be welcomed (with perhaps some clucking of tongues and thoughts about the barbarity of backward peoples), benign bloodbaths ignored, and nefarious bloodbaths passionately condemned, on the basis of a version of the facts that need have little credibility and that may adopt standards that would merely elicit contempt if applied in the study of alleged abuses of the United States or friendly states.

Such applications of the model form the crux of the test of this research thesis as we will see how matters that concern Colombia and the U.S. are handled in relation to those of neighbouring Venezuela which is not an ally or friend of the U.S.

RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

The main concern of this study is based on the conception that the U.S. “intervention” in Colombia is part of the problem and not the solution to the conflict and violence in Colombia. Media coverage of Colombia has over the years been involved with social injustice in a way because the masses are affected. One could easily accuse many newspapers of being accomplices to imperialism because their coverage indirectly or directly supports imperialism and oppression especially by the United States over South America, and Colombia in particular. This is because despite efforts using programs like *Plan Colombia* which are American programs supposedly meant to help Colombia out of its economic and political crisis, the Colombian government in collaboration with the U.S. is still involved with violence and repression that may not end up providing the right solutions. As Leech (2008) writes:

The U.S-sponsored Plan Colombia and Uribe’s so-called Democratic Security Strategy have improved security for many Colombians, particularly in urban areas. However, Colombia’s conflict continues to rage in rural regions and civilians continue to be the principal victims of the violence. The state’s escalating role in the rapidly growing number of forced displacements, disappearances and extrajudicial executions represents the human rights reality for many rural Colombians⁵.

The United States under the banner of the ‘war on drugs’, war on terror’, ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ may have been involved with the violence in Colombia and the media coverage of this U.S. contribution therefore needs thorough examination.

⁵ Garry Leech(2008) “Displacements, Disappearances and extrajudicial Executions increase under Uribe” in *Colombia Journal*. <http://www.colombiajournal.org/index.htm> Retrieved February 2010.

METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

It is the intention of the researcher to use Critical Discourse Analysis as the main method for this research to analyze news articles on conflict and politics in Colombia. While the PM is used as the frame work to investigate issues of media behaviour, information scrutiny, corporate, and elite and capitalist influences on media; critical discourse analysis will be used to analyze issues of assertion of power, identity, marginalization, dominance, discrimination, values, conflict, social hierarchies, language and ideology. The theoretical underpinnings of media expression will be examined using concepts such as presupposition and inferences. Huckin (2007) defines presupposition as “the use of language in a way that appears to take certain ideas for granted, as if there were no alternative.”

Other techniques of Critical Discourse Analysis that the researcher will be critiquing the media for using include *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* which deal with the writer emphasizing certain ideas while de-emphasizing others and perhaps leaving some out entirely using techniques like *omission*. In covering an event, some information can be left out entirely in a way that they will never even cross the readers mind to be part of the information. The question then to the critical analyst is; how can the reader scrutinize something that is not even there? Huckin writes that:

The ultimate form of backgrounding is omission- actually leaving certain things completely out of a text. Omission is often the most potent aspect of textualization, because if the writer does not mention something, it does not even enter the reader's mind and thus is not subjected to his or her scrutiny. It is difficult to raise questions about something that is not even there.

Insinuation is also another technique that CDA analyzes when deconstructing and interpreting some intentions of media communicators. Insinuations are comments that are slyly suggestive and extremely difficult for the reader to challenge. And even if challenged, the creator of the discourse can easily deny culpability. In the following report by the National Public Radio (NPR) in March 5, 2008 about the Colombian governments attack on the FARC secretariat in Ecuadorian territory, consider the message being conveyed about the FARC:

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is an ally of the FARC; in response to the raid, he sent tanks to the border with Colombia. Colombian officials say intelligence information seized in the raid shows that Chavez has given hundreds of millions of dollars to the FARC. Colombia also claims to have uncovered evidence that the FARC has been dealing in uranium, which could be used to make radioactive dirty bombs. The FARC has long been deeply engaged in drug trafficking. Last night, a senior U.S. official said the group may be trying to smuggle the radioactive material into the United States to sell to terrorist groups.⁶

The statement claims that the FARC and Hugo Chavez are allies against the U.S. and preparing to send bombs to terrorist groups in the U.S. There is no proof that Hugo Chavez is an ally of the FARC nor that the FARC is engaged in drug trafficking. There is proof of their taxing drug farmers but no proof to show that they have the time to engage in farming and exporting of drugs. That aside, this radio program says "Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez is an ally of the FARC". If he were, the story of the Colombian conflict would certainly be a grave one. To fit in with the PM, the source of the information is 'a senior US official'. The name of the official is not provided.

⁶"Talk of the Nation" program on National Public Radio (NPR) (March 5, 2008) <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=87922264> Retrieved February 2010.

Other techniques include the use of *connotations*, tone and considerations of diction used in presenting information. These are all possible avenues for analyses that will be applied to the coverage of conflict in Colombia by *the Toronto Star*, *the National Post*, *the Globe and Mail* and the *CBC*.

It is worth noting that both the propaganda model and critical discourse analysis grapple with issues of power and social relations. Similarly both interpretive frameworks deal with deconstructing the ideology of controllers and hegemonic forces on one hand and the marginalized on the other hand. So this research intends to use the Propaganda Model as a theoretical framework together with Critical Discourse Analysis which is a methodology that is also informed by a critical, pro-social justice framework.

The PM was chosen because the predictions it makes seem to apply well in the production of news in and about Colombia. It predicts a situation where news production will favour 'worthy' victims and not favour the 'unworthy' victims. Victims such as those in Colombia and in Pinochet's Chile will be viewed differently from those in other areas like Venezuela. The PM was also chosen because of its incisive view of corporate media and elite control of the media. It lays a framework by which biases and dominant discourses that favour the elite and mainstream ideology can be unraveled. The propaganda model sees the media as an ideological apparatus for thought control and manipulation. As Herman and Chomsky (1988 p.29) state:

The final filter is the ideology...this ideology helps mobilize the populace against the enemy, and because the concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests or support accommodation ...and radicalism. It therefore helps fragment the left and labor movements and serves as a political-control mechanism.

This will probably apply very much in the case of this study as the labour movements and the peasants seem to be at the mercy of the Colombian government. It does everything to control them even if it means influencing the journalists directly. In this instance one can consider what Leech (2008) says of foreign correspondents in Colombia:

The foreign correspondents based in Colombia often attend the same event or press junket in order to avoid being the only reporter not covering that particular "story." Consequently, several almost-identical versions of the same article are frequently published the following day by various US media outlets. Government officials know that if they keep the media occupied daily with pre-packaged stories that portray government policy in a positive light, then reporters may be too busy to conduct deeper investigative journalism. Consequently, in its coverage of Colombia's conflict, the mainstream media has tended to reflect the perspective of the country's dominant political, social and economic sectors

The model predicts a systematic elite, agenda setting media that will employ techniques that lead to an uncritical acceptance of information that is directly or indirectly influenced by official state sources or their corporate accomplices. The P M is a relevant framework because media like *the Toronto Star*, *the National Post*, *the Globe and Mail*, and *The CBC* that this research will investigate are mainstream could following the first and second order predictions of the PM which deal with media behaviour, media discourses and ideological institutions as they disseminate information.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly this research is significant because it will add to the existing scholarly literature on U.S. involvement in Colombia, particularly how the propaganda model can be useful when it comes to analyzing media representation of news on Colombia. This is because reliance on media information in the case of Colombia without considering the predictions and notions of the propaganda model has led to people not clearly understanding the contributions of the U.S role in the Colombian conflict.

It is also significant because it examines the Colombian situation to see the factors that are responsible for such media practices that disenfranchise, oppress or affect social justice and attempts to make some recommendations.

Chomsky (2003 pp.59-60) contends that:

Atrocities in Colombia include displacement of the population through chemical warfare (called 'fumigation') under the guise of a drug war that is hard to take seriously. One of the leading academic authorities notes that "a provocative case can be made that US drug policy contributes effectively to the control of an ethnically distinct and economically deprived underclass at home and serves US economic and security interests abroad. Many criminologists and observers of the international scene regard that as a considerable understatement... The governors of Colombia targeted Southern provinces, along with peasants and human rights activists... Meanwhile the land is poisoned by fumigation, children die, and the uprooted and scattered victims suffer from sickness and injury... Campesinos, indigenous people, and Afro-Colombians are now joining the millions in rotting slums and camps. And with the people gone, multinationals can strip the mountains for coal, extract oil and other resources, and or agroexport in an environment shorn of its treasures and variety. Informed analysts and observers describe Washington's fumigation programs as another stage in the historical process of driving poor peasants from the land for the benefit of foreign investors and Colombian elites.

Addressing issues like the human rights of the peasants also gives this study significance as it is directly concerned with the social injustices endured by the masses.

Since the major thrust of the project is media representation, it will hopefully practically unravel some of the current negative patterns that are inherent in propaganda. Hopefully this will be useful to communicators generally and not just to Colombia or the researcher. However, it is hoped that the research will carefully show how propaganda affects information about conflict in Colombia and also possibly propose how the media can help enlighten the public. As Herman and Chomsky posit, the biggest issue about propaganda is that the masses that are manipulated are not aware of it. Winter (2002) even makes the picture clearer of the damage that is being done when he writes that recipients of media messages are deceived right from birth. So much that as they grow they do not even stop to think whether they hold a correct picture of life. Winter writes that:

Indeed, so natural are they that we seldom reflect on them or even realize that we hold them. Instead, like the common sense view that the world is flat, we just accept them.

Thus, apart from being an effort to join the struggle for social justice, identifying problems and making useful recommendations, the research will also be significant because of its enlightening role to some of the people that are living with illusions

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

This section of the thesis discusses existing materials on the PM as an instrument for media analysis and particular situations in which the PM has been tested in Latin America and other areas.

The PM as the authors predicted has been largely excluded from academia but is gradually gaining ground as an appropriate instrument for critiquing the media primarily because of its focus on inequality of wealth, power, institutions, dominance and its multilevel effects on mass-media choices and interests. It provides insights that are very useful in tracing how public interests are marginalized in favour of elite or corporate interest. The model is slowly becoming a useful tool for analyses of the methods used by the empire nations especially the U.S. in the present era to defend its interest in conflict areas and the interest of its friends. Pineda (2002 p.4) opines in his analysis in the Spanish language that the PM offers ideological and operational presuppositions of institutions with focus on the U.S., and that the PM is gradually spreading as a model to be used for analysis on information, politics and even on more diverse cultures of the earth. Pineda concludes his critical essay saying that the PM and its ideological interpretations are having influence across the entire planet. In his words:

...nos ofrece una lectura de los presupuestos ideológicos y operativos de las instituciones y focos de poder del ámbito estadounidense; instituciones y focos cuya influencia se extiende paulatinamente, como un modelo a

seguir, a los sistemas informativos, políticos y hasta culturales más diversos del planeta.

Translation (Mine):

...it offers us a lecture on the ideological assumptions, institutional operatives and focus of power within the U.S. atmosphere; institutions and focus, the influence of which is gradually extending and being followed in the media, politics and in diverse cultures of the planet.

The five filters of the PM are very fundamental in consideration of news and information but also very important are the ideological implications of the model and its methodological approaches. How the news is manipulated and how it is affected by the five filters (ownership, advertising, source, flak and ideology) are presented to be the aspects through which the elite and corporate media make 'thought control' easy in democratic societies. Thought control is said to be invisible because of the inherent role that media play ideologically in class warfare and hegemony. The interrelatedness of media and corporate capitalism are so interwoven that this often makes it at times difficult to picture the role of the media in buttressing hegemony without the use of elements such as those identified by the PM. According to Klaehn

(2005 p 1),

The model argues that the result of this is self-censorship without any significant coercion. Media, according to this framework, do not have to be controlled nor does their behaviour have to be patterned, as it is assumed that they are integral actors in class warfare, fully integrated into the institutional framework of society, and act in unison with the other ideological sectors, the academy, to establish, enforce, reinforce and 'police' corporate hegemony.

So, it becomes difficult for the masses to imagine any form of influence on them by the media. A careful reading into related literature on the PM and into areas where it has been tested becomes an imperative in this chapter. This is because when one has the ability to understand how the 'manufacturing of consent' is achieved, then one will be able dissect its presence in particular cases of media operation as in the case of media coverage of the role of the U.S. in the conflict in Colombia.

One needs to be very careful about media manipulation because it is very difficult to realize especially when one is not trained in media literacy. Media interpretation is an exercise which calls for caution. Winter (2002 p. xiv) sees this difficulty of apprehending the patterns of manipulation by media to be so 'natural' and look very much like 'common sense' in a way that it requires careful attention to interpret and understand them. Herman and Chomsky (1988 p. 2) recommend a 'story-by-story' view, both macro and micro, of media operations to properly perceive the level of systematic bias in mainstream media:

The elite domination of the media and marginalization of dissents that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that media news people, frequently operating with complete integrity and goodwill, are able to convince themselves that they choose and interpret the news "objectively" and on the basis of professional news values. Within the limits of the filter constraints they often are objective; the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way, that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable.....It requires a macro, alongside a micro- (story-by-story), view of media operations, to see the pattern of manipulation and systematic bias.

Media coverage and the Propaganda Model

The PM has been seen as a realistic instrument that does extremely well in its revelation of media performance especially after being tested on some coverage around the world including some in Latin America. The PM through its logical methods exposes the relatedness of news production in the society to the elite and corporate interest at all levels. Sparks (2007 p.68) writes that:

The status of a theory is determined by three things: the extent to which it is beautiful (that is, it gives an internally-consistent and logical account of reality to which it relates); the extent to which it is true (that is, it is subject to a process of evidential testing); the extent to which it is comprehensive (that is, it can account for all of the observed phenomena in its sphere of relevance). Of course, very few theories, even in the natural sciences, can claim to meet all three of these criteria in full but we can judge their value by the degree to which they approximate to these ideals. In its current form at least, the PM performs extremely well...

The coverage of elections in El Salvador in 1982 just like the media coverage of the overthrow of Manuel Zelaya of Honduras stand as evidence of how media such as *New York Times* can promote the government agenda. In protection of a democracy, the army conducted mass killings of civilians and systematic destruction and demobilization of virtually all popular organizations in El Salvador in the months leading to the elections. Herman and Chomsky (1988 p.109) call this kind of terror and the lack of media coverage of it a government 'propaganda frame'. Despite the mass killings and havoc spread all over El Salvador by the state and its army, it was never even hinted at in the media. According to the analyses of these founding fathers of the PM the media never suggested once that the election plan was to create an electoral atmosphere of

extreme terror and fear which made it difficult for the rebels to participate hence working to the favour of established power.

...this is in accordance with the hypothesis that the real purpose of the election was to placate the home population in the United States and render them willing to fund more war on terror. It is a poor fit to the hypothesis that the people of El Salvador had had a free choice. An honest press would point up the failure of the election to substitute "ballots for bullets." The mass media of the United States did not raise the issue.

The PM presents the media as system in whose patterns journalists have to adapt and be adapted. Given the imperatives of corporate organization and workings of the filters especially the ideology filter it becomes essential that those who adapt feel free to express themselves. They assert all information in line with protection of the interests of the privileged or powers that be without any pressure to conform, or any managerial control. Hence the reason why journalists did not report some of the atrocities of the 1980s in Guatemala where the media performed perhaps even worse than in El Salvador. The mass murders committed by the Guatemalan state and its generals went totally unquestioned by the media and rather danced to the tune of the Reagan administration. Sourcing for all reporting was even confined to U.S. officials and Guatemalan generals. Herman and Chomsky studied a situation there where the *Times*, *Newsweek* and *CBS* almost never spoke to common citizens for anything or to spokespersons for the insurgents and this assured a very 'patriotic' agenda. Staying in such filtration looks perfectly alright to mainstream media practitioners because they are adapted to the system and its filters.

It is only through alternative media and a framework like the PM that some truths can be traced in handling some of the realities of U.S. imperialism

and involvement in politics and conflicts in developing nations. One of the recent cases is that of the Coup d'état in Honduras in June 2009 where the government of Manuel Zelaya was overthrown. Zelaya was overthrown because he was increasingly drifting to the left, and drafting more and more programs that would help Honduras and its people. He was gradually moving his country away from dominance and trying to secure its resources for the use of Honduras' development. His plans to eventually withdraw a military base from U.S. control was a nightmare that the U.S. could not entertain. When Zelaya was overthrown, Harris (2009) lamented the unfortunate repressive and hegemonic role that the U.S. continues to play in its efforts to bring other western powers into it. He evaluates the involvement of the U.S. and writes of the crimes of Manuel Zelaya using the experience of Lisa Sullivan, a lay member of the Catholic Maryknoll order working with the poor in Latin America. Lisa had gone to Honduras just a month before the coup at the invitation of a leading human rights group representing families of those who disappeared during the previous military dictatorship in the 1980s. They went to a meeting with Honduran President Zelaya.

It was not just an ordinary meeting, but one in a series of gatherings between the president, some of his ministers, and leaders of most of Honduras' social movements. It was a six-hour, heart-to-heart, head-to-head real dialogue on deep issues such as whether to continue with the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), to keep the Palmerola military base open to U.S. soldiers, how to create a sustainable water system, whether to pull Honduran troops from the School of the Americas. I have been in Latin America for 32 years, but this kind of president-to-the-people consultation was a first. And, it made me realize that something very interesting was happening in Honduras.

A month later Pres. Zelaya was kidnapped out of Honduras and civil liberties suspended. Zelaya's "crime" was that he threatened the privileged position of the elites in his country. With over 65 percent of the Honduran population below the poverty level (U.S. AID), the Zelaya administration was beginning to listen to the social movements and give their needs consideration.

Zelaya had raised the minimum wage, gave out free school lunches, provided milk for the babies and pensions for the elderly, distributed energy-saving light bulbs, decreased the price of public transportation, made more scholarships available for students, and passed legislation to protect forests from logging.⁷

The *NYT* on the other hand ignored all such details as above and reported that Manuel Zelaya, an ally to Hugo Chavez has been ousted. The report in *The NYT* offered many reasons why Zelaya had to be brought down and absolutely nothing about his alliance with social movements and his efforts to improve the country.

With the U.S. as Honduras' largest trading partner, its army is heavily subsidized by the U.S. and some of the coup leaders including the head of the military, trained at the U.S. School of the Americas. This would suggest some tacit involvement in the coup. The popular saying among Latin Americans is that 'the Honduran army breathes through the noses of its U.S. advisers', and the U.S. military base in Honduras is one of the most active in the whole of Central and South America.

In examining the coverage of the U.K. financial crises Robertson (2008) uses the PM and comes up with a series of conclusions that suggest an almost complete partisan nature of the economic explanation offered by U.K. TV while

⁷ Harris, Roger D. (August 31, 2009) "The Honduran Coup and U.S involvement" in Global Research. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14993> Retrieved November 2010.

reporting the crisis and events that affected it. The U.K. TV neglected issues such as 'inequality' which was a major factor in the crises. In addition, there was also a lot of use of supposed experts in the form of government officials who led the news production and creation. He also reveals the role that official resources played in twisting news.

According to Robertson:

Just under 10%, of reports were of an investigative nature concerning economic or financial matters. Five of the reports concerned the 'extravagant' expense claims of members of the UK parliament ... Reporting of these two issues typically adopted an indignant tone regarding personal morality while asserting the non-criminal behaviour of all concerned and ignoring wider implications regarding inequality. More promising but rather rare in any search for 'democratic deepening' were the remaining two reports investigating the phenomenon of 'cheating' by city traders and income tax avoidance by the 'super rich'.

In essence Robertson's analysis on this period suggests the usefulness of Herman & Chomsky's *Propaganda Model* beyond U.S. foreign policy and into domains such as U.K. domestic economic discourse and demonstrates a value for the PM that goes far beyond North America.

Dimaggio (2007) applies the PM to media coverage of international crisis using the British-Iranian stand-off during which British forces strayed into Iranian waters. Summarily, a British vessel strayed suspiciously into Iranian waters and the Iranian forces surrounded the vessel and detained and questioned the British officers for intruding into Iranian territory. Dimaggio also examines the role of government officials and how mainstream media coverage of this incident mostly favoured the British who saw little wrong in their violation of Iran's. Dimaggio (2007) points out that information derived from official sources favoured the

government and its friends, while the enemies of the state were made to look dangerous to society:

Official sources are treated with deference, and U.S. humanitarian rhetoric elaborating high-minded goals of American foreign policy is left largely unquestioned. The propaganda of U.S. allies and client regimes is accorded positive coverage (and certainly *not* referred to as propaganda), while dissidents and officially designated "enemies" of state are denigrated and denounced for coercive, terrorist, and/or aggressive behavior. Such claims against the American mass media are not meant to be taken lightly, as they should be made the subject of serious empirical testing and scrutiny. It so happens that the British-Iranian standoff represents an important opportunity to test the propaganda model in the real world.

Both tests of the PM therefore reveal an underlying relation between sources and the media coverage. Official sources determine and influence news from a defensive point of view during which their actions are projected positively in representation while presenting others as evil. Hence, neutrality in news performance is lost entirely be it on T.V. as in Robertson's analysis or in newspaper as in Dimaggio's. Dimaggio's test recalls the predictions of the PM as concerns this particular aspect:

As the propaganda model predicts, the American mass media are quick to demonize the actions of official "enemies," while exonerating the U.S. or allied governments for any blame. In no uncertain terms, Max Hastings argued in the *New York Times* that "Iran represents a menace to the security of us all," while the *Washington Post* editors railed against the "illegal attacks against a major Western power," despite the fact that there was still uncertainty at the time over whether the British troops had been in Iranian waters or not. Of the four editorials run by the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* on the detainment incident, all condemned Iranian leaders for utilizing propaganda in pursuit of selfish motives. The *Los Angeles Times* editors labeled the sailors and marines "innocent" victims of Iranian "escalation."

Young (2007) conducted a test of the PM on coverage of Colombian versus Venezuelan crises and the predictions as well as the mechanisms presented by Herman and Chomsky prove that the media indeed will often favour the allies of the U.S. like Colombia. While the mainstream media like the *New York Times* that he uses demonstrate a lot of sympathy and understanding in the way they treat Uribe, the president of Colombia, Chavez is treated by the same media with hostility and ideological scorn. Young analyzes how the media portray Uribe as a defender of 'liberty' 'freedom' and 'democracy' while his counterpart Chavez is treated like a dictator and enemy of freedom. Both presidents were facing difficult situations for trying to renew their tenure of office. Juan Forero of the *Times* wrote several articles in which he sympathized with Uribe and evoked the sympathy of the readers while Chavez asking for more time was seen as another step of a dictator. It should be noted that after ruling for two terms against the constitution of Colombia that permits only two terms, Uribe was finally ousted in August 2010 by pressure from the population and by injunctions from the country's Supreme Court. If not for the intervention of the supreme court of Colombia Uribe was going to stay in power beyond the will of the people. Young found a situation where despite the horrible human rights abuses of Uribe the mainstream media ignored all such records, and rather tried to paint Chavez negatively using manipulative techniques that Young (2008) unraveled using the framework of the PM.

Forero's (NYT) two reports on Uribe reveal a fundamental difference from those on Chávez: in Uribe's case, the reports offered *context* which encourages the reader to look more favorably on the president's actions. In the case of Venezuela contextual

details like the 2002 US-backed coup against Chávez, the lack of term limits in various Western nations, or the results of popular opinion polls showing significant support for Chávez were all but missing. Moreover, Forero's reports on Uribe represent the extreme end of the mainstream spectrum; more often, reports and editorials have heaped praise upon Uribe for his commitment to democracy and freedom. For the *Post* editors, "[i]n a region where populist demagogues are on the offensive, Mr. Uribe stands out as a defender of liberal democracy"

This liberal democracy is a value of U.S. corporate. Therefore, whether at the international level or the state level, state influence on the news and use of propaganda is a steady issue. When journalists rely heavily on official sources, this allows officials to frame issues and to use words in ways that serve their agenda especially with the mainstream media. The integration of word usage, framing, and source selection, points out the fact that language is an important aspect of conflict and struggle. Since words carry with them their associated connotations, propagandists seek to "label" their opponents in negative ways, while trying to create positive overtones for their supporters.

Chomsky (1999) examines the politics of Latin American countries and declares the United States as the number one terrorist state in the world perpetrating so much savagery on weaker states. Chomsky (1999 p. 40) argues that the weaker the state, the greater the savagery. He comments that:

The whole history of the United States in Latin America is one of destroying popular movements or crushing any move to independence and installing brutal and vicious dictatorships by which they keep the region under control.

The sad thing about these situations which the thesis will investigate with a particular focus on Colombia, is the role of the media in helping the U.S. achieve

its dominance and control of smaller states. Ignoring important facts or omitting them in support of the 'democratic' allies of the U.S is what the media often do. Testing the PM on media coverage of Venezuela and Colombia, Young (2008) writes that:

In the case of Colombia, all violence is either attributed to the guerrilla group the FARC or is understood to be reflective of an age-old struggle that no one can control—it is never Uribe's fault [83]. Continual revelations of Uribe's ties to drug traffickers (including legendary Colombian kingpin Pablo Escobar [84]) and right-wing paramilitaries is routinely ignored. In the last several years the papers have applauded President Uribe's "significant achievements reducing violence" and in "improving the country's human rights situation" [85]. They have systematically minimized or ignored the Uribe government's continued role in the violence in Colombia, and the fact that the Colombian government has long had the worst human rights record in the hemisphere (a record which is amply documented in numerous reports by human rights groups)

This is very similar to what Winter (2007 p. 268) points out about the case in Haiti where the U.S. has maintained a culture of colonization, military occupation and domination despite the wishes of the people to have a democratically elected (by the people) government;

The entire story is conveniently omitted from the mainstream media accounts. Instead of attributing Haiti's "failed state" to the real cause, which is external intervention in the interests of global capital, all of the blame is focused on the domestic population and its allegedly corrupt leadership, most of whom are desperately trying to pull themselves out of the quagmire created by the IMF and others. Haiti is portrayed as failing to thrive and as in need of even more right-to-protect interference from abroad. Bleed the patient.

Testing the PM in assessing media coverage has led to a disturbing discover of U.S. contributions in Latin America and manipulation of information. In the coup d'etat in Venezuela the U.S. is said to have participated with military

presence but the elite media will not report these events in their proper perspective. Using the PM as a framework Bastien (2008 p.68) reveals that:

There are also credible reports of American direct military involvement in the coup. "A STRATFOR intelligence brief claims, from unnamed sources, that the CIA and the State department were both involved offering direct support to coup-plotters" (Broderick,2002,p.2). According to National Security Agency (NSA) officers, U.S army units were present in Venezuela and provided communications intelligence to U.S. military and national command authorities on the progress of the coup

Despite the fact that with the coup in Venezuela there was direct military involvement by the U.S., the American government uses Mainstream media to claim that they did not know anything about the coup, and did not participate in it. The coverage of the coup was imbalanced until an independent medium like the film *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* surfaced. Bastien (2008 p.70) analyzes media like the *New York Times* using the PM framework, and concludes the following about the nature of the coverage:

The voices of Chavez's supporters were all but totally absent in the newspaper coverage of the coup. There were virtually no direct quotes from ordinary citizens that expressed their opinions of the political events. The discussions of economic policy did not contain any reactions from ordinary citizens who were most affected by Chavez's initiatives. Furthermore, there was no evidence that any of the reporters attempted to find out what the will of the people was during the coup. The majority of quoted statements came from government officials or the business class.

Colombia and Latin America are not only affected by the U.S. military quest for terrorism and military intrusion; the extent to which U.S. is intervening across the Latin world through use of media has caused many people to think that U.S. is intensely hegemonic and imperialistic. For example, when one looks very closely at the recently growing media propaganda efforts by the U.S.

administrations, aimed at realizing trade agreements with Colombia it is for the interest of the U.S. Colombia is strategically important to the control of the region because of its proximity to Venezuela where Hugo Chavez has led Venezuela to gain strength as a regional power and threatening U.S. control and hegemony. On the 29th October 2008, Venezuela launched its first satellite called Simon Bolivar confirming the country's swift growth in technological advancement, as well as indicating Chavez's intention to develop his country and stay away from any imperialist forces. It is noteworthy that Chavez calls the Bolivar satellite a satellite for freedom.

CNN reported on the launching of the satellite by Chavez, giving the satellite importance only to rural communication in the underdeveloped areas of Venezuela. Of course they are part of U.S. mainstream media and would report in favour of their hegemonic position. When one goes through that article as in many other CNN reports on Venezuela, there are many omissions, suppositions and insinuations. Marquez (2008) reports on the same event, giving it a fair commentary and even quotes Hugo Chavez saying:

"This is an act of liberation," said President Hugo Chávez, after watching the launch on a TV screen at a tracking station in Luepa, in southeastern Venezuela. "We now have a socialist satellite, to build socialism in our country and cooperate with and assist other nations."

There is no doubt that CNN would not comment on the remarks of the Venezuelan president nor on those of the many other Latin American heads of state that support Chavez and who are quoted in Marquez's article. Whatever the case, it should be obvious to any enlightened person that a communication satellite worth about \$241 million and that covers North America, the Caribbean

Islands and North America as it goes round the orbit cannot reasonably be reduced to a rural instrument in a CNN report. The satellite strengthens Venezuela's cooperation with its ally, China, from whose territory the satellite was launched and gives hope to Latin American nations for technological independence among several other advantages. To Venezuelans, we cannot doubt to what extent the satellite bolsters their communication and favours development. Developments in Venezuela such as this satellite would not put a smile on the face of the U.S. and their mainstream media. Hence, they will do all they can to have good relations with Venezuela's neighbour, Colombia in a bid to maintain their hegemony in South and Latin America.

In one of his early works, Herman (1985) shows that the intention of American global policy is to ensure hegemony over the Third World and safeguard the expectations of the U.S. This book is a critical discussion in which the marriage between the Pentagon and the C.I.A. is an evil connection in Washington that buttresses the imperialistic neocolonial program of the U.S. He also writes on the activities of the C.I.A. and military squads across the globe including South America. Thus, as rightly discussed by Herman in this book, there is a definition of terror by which the Western world sees small scale violence against them as terror, while the large scale violence committed by U.S. and its allies is called "order" and "security" and "freedom" operations. This is not far from what Herman (1995) argues in *The Real Terrorist Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda*. Herman uses content analysis with statistical tables to

show U.S involvement in terrorism in Cuba and other nations⁸. These countries involve a cross section of South America including Colombia. Herman examines the activities of the C.I.A. and their definition of “International terrorism”, which excludes those responsible for 90,000 people who disappeared in Latin America, in part through the maneuvers of the U.S. According to Herman, we are living in an age where propaganda and scholarship define terrorism to tackle the lesser fear while the “greater terror” is defined out of existence and is not given attention. He pays considerable attention to the other so called ‘Free Press’ of the United States that has played a strategic role in diverting attention from the “greater terror” to the “lesser terror”. Terms like “terrorism”, “totalitarianism”, “authoritarianism” are seen by Herman to be semantic inventions developed to meet the needs of propaganda. Terrorism is classified by Herman into three types with the third type being the complicity of the media with the power structure; a reason why a lot of bias filters into communication to serve the interest of the state.

Adam (1999 pp.98-99) writes on the coverage of elections in Nicaragua supporting the PM as framework that exposes the production and distribution of “news” and knowledge as a process legitimizing state policies. He remarks on the use of ideology in influencing news and summarizes the steps in mainstream news performance as the “interested procedures people use as a means not to know’...ideology prevents knowledge by limiting inquiry –by closing off the possibilities of an analytic examination of social life.” As in other areas where the

PM has been tested, Adam (1999 p. 101) emphasizes the use of official sources in construction of news and its consequences:

The sharpest contrast to this model of reporting is the very heavy reliance of the U.S. English-language networks on representatives of the U.S. for interpretations of events in Nicaragua. Consistent with its earlier coverage of the Central American peace process, U.S. congressmen, former president Carter, or other senior officials of the U.S. government for its characterization of the election. ..Latin American, European, and other non-U.S. observers remained invisible on U.S. television.

Adam views such news construction to be essentially an 'imperial discourse' that serves the needs of the corporate U.S. and its hegemonic interests and lends credence to Herman and Chomsky's PM mechanism of news analyses. Hence, Adam concludes:

Television news coverage of the 1990 election in Nicaragua lends credence to Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988:298) "propaganda model of the media" which "in contrast to the standard conception of the media as cantankerous, obstinate, and ubiquitous in their search for truth and their independence of authority... sees the media as serving to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state." Consistent with this model is a heavy reliance by the U.S. English language media, whether corporate or public, on state (U.S.) officials to define news "facts" in Nicaragua... These speakers are permitted short statements embedded in "framing" rhetoric..."

The above literature review on media coverage generally shows that the institutional approach of Herman and Chomsky has served in many areas from different perspectives as framework for examining media behaviour. The next chapter of this thesis will therefore discuss how the PM will be used as a framework and how CDA will be used as a method for analyzing media coverage of the role of the U.S. in Colombia.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As a research method CDA will be used in this thesis to unravel the texts and written material to reveal an underlying perspective of whose interests are being served, and to see if there is a presence of issues of social power, dominance, inequality and bias. Granted that objectivity is always questionable in news performance, it is no excuse for news to be constructed as discourse that asserts interests, defends superiority and hegemony while holding others in subjugation. As Wodak and Meyer(2001 p.10) point out, language is not power on its own – it gains power by the use that powerful people make of it and that is why the perspective of the oppressed is often given attention in analysis. The side of those who suffer is emphasized in CDA and then critical analysis is done on the language use influenced by those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who have the means and opportunity to improve but never do so for selfish motives.

Since words are hardly neutral, CDA will help uncover forms of injustice that are buried in media stories. Events related to the conflict in Colombia deal directly with social problems and power relationships and the manner of reporting them should be cautious enough not to fall in line with the stakes of the existing powers and their institutions. Huckin(1997 p.2) states that:

CDA practitioners typically take an ethical stance, one that draws attention to power imbalances, social inequalities, non-democratic practices other injustices in hopes of spurring readers

to corrective action. This is why the term critical is used: CDA not only describes unfair social/political practices but is explicitly critical of them.

In order to be critical, the research is going to consider the language structures used in media coverage and how they constitute discourses of subversion and oppression. This means that the language structures and sentences are going to be a concern because as Thompson (1990) says it does matter the way in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by various symbolic forms. The social contexts linguistic context within which specific forms are employed and deployed in media coverage do warrant an investigation. Language is entwined with social power and constitutes a major vehicle for delusion creation and manipulation. Media coverage therefore not only articulates events happening but is interrelated with societal conceptions and power relations and could lean favourably on the side of those with the mantle. Wodak and Meyer (2001) opine that:

Language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language but language can be used to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term. Language provides a finely articulated means for differences in power...CDA takes an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various manipulations of power.

Consequently, this research also focuses on ideology because questions of power and language codification are seriously linked to issues of ideology, power, inequality and subjugation. Writing on CDA and ideology Van Dijk (2003 p.367) contends that controlling discourse and controlling people's minds are the principal forms to reproduce dominance and hegemony. He does not see mind

control to be easy but finds discourse in media to be an easy way to shape the world of the recipients. For example, once the sources are from experts and scholars, then the news becomes credible and the element of power and dominance becomes evident in the picture. This means that the media portrayal of situations therefore, is very important in analysis. Thompson (1990 p.5) sees a clear link between symbolic forms in mass communication discourse and ideology. He views language as a weapon of dominance which must be deconstructed through careful examination of language interplay and use in different circumstances:

The analysis of ideology, according to the conception which I shall propose, is primarily concerned with the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of power. It is concerned with the ways in which meaning is mobilized in the social world and serves thereby to bolster up individuals and groups who occupy positions of power. Let me define this focus more sharply: to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination....Whether symbolic phenomena do or do not serve to establish and sustain relations of domination is a question which can be answered only by examining the interplay of meaning and power in particular circumstances, only by examining the ways in which symbolic forms are employed, circulated and understood by individuals situated in structured social contexts.

An important relationship that the research methodology has with the conceptual framework is the role of ideology in both. Being the major component of the fifth filter in the PM mechanism, ideology also cuts across the other filters and elements of the PM. Just like CDA, the PM recognizes that ideology is used systematically in media discourses by the dominant for control in 'democratic' societies. Through the ideology filter, Herman and Chomsky foresee a

dichotomization in news coverage. They anticipate and demonstrate that 'worthy' victims and 'unworthy' victims will be treated differently. Enemy states of the oppressors, such as the U.S. and its allies, will be given negative ideological values and then castigated for them. Ideological warfare is often seen to characterize media behaviour because of the influence of ideological tenets.

Parameters of research

The data analyzed in this thesis include news articles written in the selected newspapers and CBC online. From the universe of all written articles on Colombia in the selected media, articles that deal with the conflict in Colombia are being used for this study. The media organs selected are the *Toronto Star*, the *CBC*, the *Globe and Mail*, and *The National Post*. These have been selected because they are the major Canadian newspapers that cover international news. Some alternative media like *La Semana* of Colombia will be used as a part of comparison.

The research will not focus on particular events in the process of the conflict. This is because the conflict in Colombia and news evolve around so many aspects of life that is difficult to restrict the conflict and analysis to particular events. It will rather consider all articles on news concerning the conflict in Colombia, be they from the editorial or opinion columns or from the hard news section.

In any research process, any factor that can take on different values depending on the manipulation and affect the outcome is a variable. The components that will be evaluated as used by media practitioners and are

therefore variables that the researcher has drawn from CDA include (1) Framing and (2) structuration of details. Each of these variables will be examined in detail below, with the techniques that are employed by reporters to shape the perspective of news performance. These components and the techniques involved are used to analyze news construction and to determine the intended ideological impact, the intended audience perception and the general media representation effect when they are used by journalists. Analyzing these techniques constitutes the major analytical tool of this CDA based research, and also has a direct relationship with the conceptual framework of the research, the PM. Both CDA and the PM deal with media discourse and power relations, inequality and elite control of society, hegemony, ideology, media misrepresentation and emancipation.

The above research tools of the CDA and the PM will be used in analysing a population of news articles out of a universe from the *Toronto Star*, *the National Post*, *the Globe and Mail*, and the *CBC*. These will all be articles that deal with the conflict in Colombia and the involvement of the U.S in it. To reach the relevant articles, a search was conducted using the following as key words in various search engines: 'Colombia' or 'Colombia and conflict' 'Colombia and violence' 'Colombia and guerrillas' 'Colombia and war' 'Colombia and drug trade' 'Colombia and the U.S'.

The search resulted in hundreds of articles and 106 relevant ones to the topic 'U.S involvement in Colombia' have been printed out and analyzed in

the next chapter of this thesis. These articles are mostly hard news articles with a few under editorials and opinion columns.

Framing

Framing reveals the perspective presented in a news story. It relates to the angle or the point of view that the writer is putting across; how the discursiveness of the text is used to reinforce abuse of power and dominance or to portray news in a neutral way that will help readers take informed decisions about their communities. In other words, 'framing' has to do with how and what ideological agenda is being constructed for consumption and for what purpose.

Huckin (1997 p.12) discusses framing and comments that the writer can decide to create a sequence in which statements will frame the event into a confrontation and in the course of it depict officials in a favourable way and protestors in an unfavourable way. He says that framing can succeed in drawing attention away from the more substantive aspects of the event, such as American military policies, public health and environmental protection.

Framing is usually achieved by media practitioners through a myriad of ways. The following are the common techniques that CDA identifies as being used for realizing frames, which are going to be interpreted as instruments for analysis in this research.

Use of Visual Aids

This refers to the selecting and placing of specific photographs, diagrams, sketches, and other embellishments to focus the reader's attention on a particular direction or issue. Pictures of Hugo Chavez in mainstream media would normally portray a dull, angry or aggressive image of a dictator or war monger while those of Uribe, former president Colombia usually showed him in neat gentlemanly looking suits leaving positive impressions. In some of the media to be considered there are photos in the stories.

Omission

In constructing the news, at times the reporter can decide to leave out certain things or context completely for various reasons. It could be because including the information would betray or reveal the point of view or frame the reporter seeks to present. This happens a lot because the reader will not notice the absence of some information and will therefore be unable to scrutinize or judge the content appropriately.

Presupposition

This is when certain words are used that take certain ideas perspectives or context for granted while omitting others; it is often a strong tool of manipulation because it leaves the readers helpless unable to see what they ought to see. For example, a story can presuppose that government officials are more correct in their actions and accounts than ordinary citizens. Another one is that what is important about a news event is not the issue behind the protest but the violence or number of protesters that have been arrested. Presenting with

details on the numbers of arrested activists and not on the cause and effects of their protests will certainly frame and swing the story to take a different focus.

Foregrounding and backgrounding

The using of headings and keywords to emphasize some concepts by giving them textual prominence is called 'foregrounding'. 'Backgrounding' is when the text is de-emphasized or minimized. This could be done by the laying out sentences such that the first few sentences carry all the information to be emphasized, while the later ones carry information to be de-emphasized and in that way the writer would achieve foregrounding and backgrounding too.

Use of discursive differences or style of discourse

Framing can also be achieved by the reporter when he/she manipulates the reader by using selective voices to convey messages. This works with the principle that certain points of view are more correct, legitimate and significant to convey news, especially when other voices are left out. This relates to the aspect that language constitutes social identities. And this begins to propel thinking to the issue that the CDA's use of language for analysis does not limit its analysis merely to linguistic discourse. There is a social practice approach to the view of language, especially following the Gramscian approach to power and hegemony. Texts, voices, intonation and other supra-textual elements turn out to be indexes of dimensions of power relations and can be unveiled through inter-textual discourse analyses. Fairclough approaches this in handling 'orders of discourse', inter-textuality and how they are affected by institutions and social domains.

Identities and styles of writing are important because discourse even figures ways of being and in the constitution of identities. For instance, he states that the identity of a political leader, such as Tony Blair in the U.K. is partly a semiotically constituted way of being. Confirming the importance of writing style. Fairclough (1992 p.67) states that:

Discourses are diverse representations of social life which are inherently positioned and represent social life in different ways in different discourses. For instance, the lives of poor and disadvantaged people are represented through different discourses in the social practices of government, politics, medicine, and social science, and through different discourses within each of these practices corresponding to different positions of social actors. Finally, discourse as part of ways of being constitutes styles for instance the styles of business managers, or political leaders.

Control of text and talk

Discussing the theoretical strengths of the CDA, Van Dijk (1998) brings up an important aspect which this research will consider in analysis; the control of topics of discourse and communication. This is particularly crucial because the dominant group and its agents can determine the topic that favours them at a given time in the wake of an event. Van Dijk says that topics change as when news editors decide which topics will be covered, and how the choice of topics often depends on the contexts and could be harmful when those with the power to choose the topics abuse the situation at the expense of other participants. Many a time, the polarization of 'Us' and 'Them' and their underlying ideologies often characterize shared social representations in control of texts. It is therefore the work of the CDA analyst to also pay attention to how texts and discourse in

communication are being controlled because there could be an enactment or embodiment of overall power relations between groups which becomes effective in given contexts. When texts have been controlled then they pave the way for 'mind control' and reproduction of hegemony, especially where the recipients do not possess the knowledge and beliefs needed to challenge the discourse and information they are exposed to. Thus, discursive control becomes a form of power and dominance; such control is in the interest of the powerful especially if recipients have 'no alternatives' or are not exposed to them. Van Dijk (2003 p.9) summarizes this by saying that:

If freedom is defined as having the opportunity to think and do what one wants then such lacking alternatives are by definition a limitation of the freedom of the recipients. And limiting the freedom of others, especially in one's own interest, happens to be one of the definitions of power and domination.

STRUCTURATION OF DETAILS

Among the many mechanisms through which socio-economic structures imprint themselves in language is the form of organization of the words themselves because different word settings ascertain the weight and dimensions, of expression of some groups to the broader society. Details as in the formation and manipulation of lexical items in communication are very indispensable when it comes to CDA analysis. Writing a critique on culture, discourse and the CDA, Threadgold (2003) reiterates the vitality of details and their efficacy as arrows that lead to intervention and action:

Detailed work on and with linguistic and textual structure actually produces agency for the researcher. Understanding the minutely

detailed ways in which bodies are crafted and learn to perform can clarify the sites for intervention and even begin to predict the effects of political action. Of course the Derridean critique also holds good: the unexpected and the unpredictable may happen, but then the detail provides other alternatives for new kinds of action.... Analyse them in fine detail, figure out how they work, think about how they are institutionally supported and reproduced and what effects they have on bodies, on the organisation of space and social interaction, for example, and you begin to have some tools for intervening at the most unconsciously articulated levels of text.

In the aspect of *details*, which is the second major component of CDA analysis, I will look at how the details in the sentence by sentence structures are laid out. The words, phrases and the sentences used in the different news articles will be critically examined to reveal the various techniques that are used by media practitioners to convey meaning and what types of meanings they actually put across to readers. Techniques used often in news construction include insinuations, connotations, topicalizations, agency, modality, and omissions at the sentence level. It is a critical look into every word, every phrase and every sentence. 'Framing' deals with the bigger picture of the text as a whole, but the total, complete understanding of an article in its entirety depends on the manner and kind of details engaged. McGregor (2003 p.2) writes that:

Discourse analysis challenges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social, and political condition. Even more significant, our words (written or oral) are used to convey a broad sense of meanings and the meaning we convey with those words is identified by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions. Our words are never neutral (Fiske, 1994)! This is a powerful insight for home economists and family and consumer scientists (We could have a whole discussion about the meaning that these two labels convey!). We should never again speak, or read/hear others' words, without being conscious of the underlying meaning of the words. Our words are politicized, even

if we are not aware of it, because they carry the power that reflects the interests of those who speak. Opinion leaders, courts, government, editors, even family and consumer scientists, play a crucial role in shaping issues and in setting the boundaries of legitimate discourse.

Insinuations

This is a technique of writing a sentence by which a suggestive comment is made that is most often difficult for the reader to challenge, and yet has a powerful effect. A journalist reporting on the recent happenings in Venezuela and writing that the U.S. has ruled out of military option against Hugo Chavez, also insinuating that Hugo Chavez is a criminal who warrants military intervention, but the U.S. has declined to do so.

Inferences

Inference is the passing of judgement or conclusions based on premises conceived. Inferences usually lead someone to follow the conclusions of the person doing the expression because conclusions will be arrived and depending on the facts that have been exposed which are not necessarily the reality or truth. Inferences often come as indirect conclusions even when the speaker has not expressed them. For example, in the review “The Coca-Cola bears could not be reached for comment” (National Post, March 25 2010 – See Appendix for copy of this review) it is expressed that:

...the anti-Coke evidence is ill-explained and circumstantial while the filmmakers interview a handful of Colombians whose union-leader relatives have been killed, there’s no hard, direct link made between the company and the slayings.

This is a premise that leads to the conclusion that the documentary film 'The Coca-Cola Case' is a lie and a set up of the Coca-Cola U.S. corporation. Such inference is therefore meant to create disbelief while indirectly crediting the Coca-Cola U.S corporation despite its role in murders in Colombia.

Connotations

Words and phrases usually have deeper meanings that say far more than the surface meaning of the word. Connotative meanings are usually derived from the cultural and sociological usage, more so than from the syntactic meaning. When people are termed 'militants' and not 'demonstrators' in news, it affects how news coverage is received and interpreted by readers. Those advocating for peace or release of a detained innocent person may be described by the media as people 'protesting' against the government and not as demonstrators for peace. The connotative appeal will yield sympathy for either the government and / or corporate institution, or those advocating peace depending on what is used in the context.

Topicalization

In choosing what to put in the topic position of the sentences, the *journalist or reporter can easily realise framing or slant the reader's perception.* Topicalization deals with the swing and focus of the sentences. If a story has thirteen sentences focusing on the protestors and one or two on the officials or the reason for the demonstration then there is certainly not just an imbalance but the effect of topicalization. The chronicle is for example, clearly about the

'protestors' and not their reasons for demonstrating. Moreover, as in this case, the connotative meaning could be leaving a negative impact where the author wills it, consciously or not.

Agency

Sentences at times depict some persons as originators of power and therefore such sentences will convey power relations. While some persons are powerful and exert strength, some are weak and passive and are therefore just recipients. The researcher will assess such structures and see how they affect the portrayal of the involvement of the U.S. in Colombia.

1. The Propaganda Model (PM).

The conceptual framework for this research is the PM as propounded by Herman and Chomsky (1988), being a structural model on media behaviour and performance that provides a description of how the media work in controlling thought and manipulating 'consent' for the interests of the elite and/or corporate institutions, and the state, especially the U.S.

As a conceptual framework, the PM is central in developing the hypothesis for this research and consequently has connected the four principal elements of this research inquiry, which are the research problem, the methodology, the gathering of data and the analysis.

The purpose of this research is to ascertain whether the propaganda model can be used to predict media coverage using Colombia as a case study. Hence, the predictions of the PM, its identified mechanisms for systematic control

of news performance, and the techniques of the model are very pivotal to the thesis because it is the functionality of these structures that is indirectly the research question here.

The predictions

The PM puts in place first-order, second-order and third-order predictions dealing with news performance and critiquing of the media as an institution. The first-order predictions states that media coverage is done with imbalances in favour of the friends-states and institutions of the U.S. This means that a state government like the government of former president Manuel Zelaya of Honduras will receive very hostile coverage because of its concentration on serving its national affairs rather than on fulfilling the wishes of imperialist U.S. Meanwhile states with a pro-U.S. approach like Colombia will commit crimes against its own citizens virtually to any length, and would rather get support from the U.S. because they carry out its 'democratic' agenda.

The second-order predictions show studies that are critical and expose the ideology of the mainstream and its lack of neutrality will not be welcome. Herman and Chomsky say that such thoughts will be 'out of bounds' and will be 'dismissed with ridicule'. Hence when Israel and the U.S. hold hands to carry out various forms of social injustices against the Palestinian people and in the Middle East generally, the agenda for conversations on that will not be set by those who condemn the U.S. as they are dismissed 'with ridicule', while those who condemn the media for alleged anti-U.S and anti-Israel bias will receive the most publicity.

The third-order prediction stipulates that the PM will be ignored in academic debates because it conflicts with the interests of the powerful and the privileged. So the privileged intellectuals will want to relegate the PM out of academic discourses and it will never occur to them to carry out research work such as this.

Mechanisms identified by the PM for systematic control

The PM is an institutional critique of the media. It lays out mechanisms through which the media function in a very systematic way to serve the needs of the rich and powerful. It explores how money and power influence news performance in so organized a manner that no other form of coercion or force is required to do so. Five filters are presented that interact and influence one another and lead to scrutiny of news and heavy imbalances determined by corporate values. However, this research does not rely only on the five filters for its use of the PM as a conceptual framework. This is because the PM has many elements and all of them end up asserting that the mainstream media serve a capitalist, corporate and elitist ideology sometimes even when the media are not corporately owned. For example, one major element is that there are elite media like the *New York Times* that lead information and then other media would just pick up and echo, and develop related information. Due to the presence of many of such aspects in the model, this research will consider the outcomes of techniques in favour of dominant ideology which can best be traced with techniques of the CDA that intersect with the assumptions, predictions and

techniques of the PM. In fact, as Klaehn (2005 p.234) argues, one cannot pin down the PM to the filters because;

The propaganda model implies that media serve a legitimizing function on a range of issues: globalization, domestic social and economic policies, distribution of power and resources, and systematic structural inequalities pervading a range of central issues and topics that are generally speaking of wide concern. The model highlights fundamental inequalities deriving from unequal distribution of resources and power within democratic societies and stresses that media can be seen to facilitate specific interests, such that *MediaThink* (James Winter's phrase) becomes akin to 'commonsense.'

With such wide appeal, I think it is wise not to limit myself to analysis using the filters but to use the CDA and the PM concepts, the predictions and ideology to examine media coverage. However, the filters will no doubt be of great use in the analysis. The filters that influence media as presented by Herman and Chomsky(1988) are:

(i) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms (ii). Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media (iii)The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (iv) "Flak" as a means of disciplining the media and (v) "Anti-communism" as national religion and control mechanism. This last filter now also stands for the 'other' or oppositional ideologies such as domestic nationalism and this is where all enemy states and ideas are pinned.

The filters are used to set the premises of discourse and the elements of interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy. They even determine and explain the basis and operations of what amounts to propaganda campaigns.

This research will not be concerned with testing individual filters, but will examine how ideology as the crux of the system is manipulated in the process of manufacturing consent using filters like sourcing. Herman and Chomsky (2008) do indicate that the filters do not work independently. They are related and interact with each other. Flood et al (2007) do an analysis specifically using the ideology filter; in this context will be looking beyond the ideology filter. In other words other filters will also be seen as having a nexus with, and do contribute to the realization of the fifth filter and the predictions of the PM. Wang (1995 p.110) does a test of the PM in media coverage in China and recommends that ideology be a major factor of PM related analysis because ideology serves as a more important news factor than the national interest of the country being covered, in influencing the news coverage. The aspects of interests, dominance, inequality, power relations and hegemony will be examined using the techniques of the CDA to expose how these issues penetrate news performance and work in line with the predictions and assumptions of the PM.

Techniques of the PM

Despite the fact that there are a number of elements of the PM that are usable for analysis, Herman and Chomsky present two clear techniques which they also test in many areas. These are the use of 'paired comparison examples' for dichotomization in media coverage, and also the "boundaries of the

expressible” which relates to the permissible areas that media will often be limited to in coverage.

By use of paired examples the analyst will take two events that deal with ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ cases and then examine them and through it will be able to see how the media behave or perform in each case depending on the relationship with established power, corporate institutions or the state / U.S. That is why in Young’s (2008) analysis of the behaviour of media towards representation of Colombia is different – friendly, from the behaviour towards Venezuela – hostile.

The ‘boundaries of the expressible’ examines the spectrum of expression that is allowed and according to the PM, the spectrum will be determined by the consensus or of powerful elites or powers that be. The approach therefore is reminiscent of scrutiny and manipulation using content, sources, framing and so on.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The following analyses are done using articles searched using the pro-quest tool and also the web sites of the media organs being analyzed. A search was done on thousands of articles and reviews from each of the media. When I searched using 'Colombia' only I would normally see between six thousand to fifteen thousand articles in the different media. So, to select only those relevant I used the following search cues 'Colombia and conflict and/or violence', 'Colombia and U.S involvement', 'Colombia and freedom', 'Colombia and democracy', 'Colombia and drugs', 'Colombia and Venezuela', and 'Colombia and FARC and/or guerrillas'. All the above were searched within the time frame 2002 to 2010.

In each search topic above and with the different media the search led to a number of articles ranging from twenty three to three hundred and fifty articles. Lots of articles would still appear which dealt with sports and where Colombia was just peripherally mentioned. I omitted such articles from my study. For example, articles kept coming up in which Colombia appeared in the context of comparison of the nature of trade deals being signed with Peru by the U.S. Some also appeared within the context of comparison of the war on drugs in Colombia and the war against poppy production in Afghanistan. The search also brought up some articles in which Colombia was being compared to Israel as the second country in the world with the highest amount of aid form the U.S. When I left out all such articles and those which deal with sports I was left with a hundred

and five relevant articles. The articles ranged from twenty three to twenty nine per media with the highest being the *National Post* with twenty nine relevant articles. The articles mostly covered the following areas according to which the coverage has been analyzed (1) Human rights and violence. (2) Colombia and Venezuela in various aspects like border crisis and elections. (3) Trade Deals, economy and cooperation with Canada and the U.S. including Plan Colombia (4) Drugs and cocaine (5) Elections (6) Reviews particularly of the documentary film, 'The Coca cola case'.

The attention by the media on U.S. contributions to the conflict in Colombia in terms of figures or number of coverage per topic may be seen in the following table. To get the quality of the coverage the analysis will be handled in sections. Various events, circumstances and subjects that have been covered by major Canadian media will be in focus in my analysis and this will help guide the nature of conclusions. I will begin with human rights which should be the guiding social justice notion that guides any newspaper that claims to serve a people anywhere and especially as inscribed in the UN charter.

	Toronto Star	National Post	CBC	Globe and Mail	TOTAL
Human rights	14	8	7	8	37
Colombia and Venezuela	4	10	5	7	26
Trade & economy	5	5	8	4	22
Drugs	9	4	-	-	13
Elections	-	2	2	1	5
Reviews	-	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	32	30	23	21	106

TABLE: ARTICLES ON COLOMBIA IN 2000-2010 CANADIAN MEDIA

Positive articles.

Among the one hundred and six articles that I have, five of them are very positive ones. One out of the five is from the *Globe and Mail* while the other 4 are from the CBC on-line. I will discuss one positive article from the *CBC* where I discuss reviews later in this chapter.

On Wednesday June 9, 2009 in the opinion section of *Globe and Mail* is published "Hold the Applause for Mr. Uribe – Yet'. Written by 5 authors (See story in the index) this article is based on Canada's signing of the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia. The authors state that the Colombian government does not organize free elections, works with the paramilitaries and violates human rights and therefore is not worthy of any Free Trade Agreement with Canada. The authors called on the then president of Colombia Uribe to be called

to order. In relation to elections the authors say elections are not fair and the president supported paramilitaries influence the outcome:

Although elections are held periodically in Colombia, and turnout is good, campaigns are neither entirely clean nor fair.

Voters are often intimidated, especially in rural areas. Close ties between more than 80 members of congress and paramilitary groups have been, or are currently being, investigated. Many of these tainted legislators belong to the President's camp.

Similarly, the Colombian government a human rights violator as the articles points out that trade unionists are killed as military and paramilitary work together while there are also lots of extrajudicial killings of civilians:

Colombia's biggest challenge is to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Journalists and trade unionists have been targets for assassination, and as many as three million people have been displaced from their homes as a result of the struggle between guerrillas, drug traffickers, military and paramilitary groups.

Worse still, there are numerous ongoing investigations into macabre extrajudicial killings of civilians by the soldiers who present the bodies of their victims to inflate the "body count" and win promotions or bonuses.

Such portrayal of a few articles helps one to see a bit of the terrible things that the Colombian government is doing with its international partners as quoted above from the article while most of the media portrayal is not bringing this out for the readers to see. If media coverage were done as in such few articles, the contribution of the U.S. and the Colombian government to violence in Colombia would be exposed.

HUMAN RIGHTS

This is probably the subject that most newspapers and in line with many Western governments claims has seen more coverage than any other. Yet it is interesting to read into the dimensions of how human rights abuses have been represented in the media in the Colombian situation especially in relation to U.S. involvement. 37 articles were identified which deal with violence, deaths, refugees and human rights. The tendency was for the newspapers to decry the rising deaths in Colombia and human rights abuses. The articles would point out numbers of people dead and most often blame the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. I will take here the case of the Banadex (a subsidiary of the then United Fruit Company, now Chiquita Banana) and show the major weakness in coverage.

In 2003, an Organization of American States report showed that Chiquita's subsidiary in Colombia, Banadex, had helped divert weapons and ammunition, including 3.400 AK-47s, from Nicaraguan government stocks to the United Auto-defense of Colombia (AUC), a paramilitary group in Colombia. The same company gave 1.7 million dollars to the AUC. The AUC is responsible for hundreds of massacres of primarily peasants throughout the Colombian countryside, including in the banana-growing region of Urabá.

OMISSION IN MEDIA COVERAGE.

All the articles that deal with human rights say nothing about the role of the U.S. contractors and government officials like Eric Holder, Deputy Attorney

General under the Clinton administration, in assisting the paramilitaries either with arms directly as in this case or with finance or military assistance. If one reads from the alternative media such as *Counterpunch* one would see Mario Murillo (2008) bring out many of the details of the role that the U.S. plays in assisting the paramilitaries as they violate human rights in Colombia. Through Eric Holder's negotiation, not only was the case made easy for Banadex, Colombia, but also the names of government officials involved have been protected and kept under seal. As Murillo points out in the article, if the U.S. were serious about human rights in Colombia and to cause those responsible to account for rights violations. Eric Holder and the Justice department did, he would not be promoted to U.S. Attorney General. His appointment rather shows the U.S. government commitment to violate human rights in Colombia to achieve their selfish aims there especially through the aims of its corporate partners. This ought to be reflected in the media coverage, but it is not. It is omitted in all the articles that cover human rights, violence and the paramilitary death squads in Colombia. This is true even when they write on the death of the 4000 poor rural workers killed through the Chiquita (Banadex Colombia) deal. Omitting such facts like 3.400 AK-47 guns that were transported using the U.S. and its corporation's connections from Nicaragua to the AUC from news, is certainly a cause for concern.

Presupposition

Presupposition in CDA is when texts are presented in certain words that take some facts for granted and therefore leave the reader unable to see

completely what they ought to see if the text was written otherwise or if complete information was provided by the text. It would be progressive if the news stories dealt the role of the Colombian government in human rights abuses and even better if the role of the U.S. and / or its military was discussed. Not only does the government participate but it does so with the aid of U.S. So, by focusing only on the Colombian government and not showing the role of the U.S. there is a presupposition too that the U.S. is not contributing to the violence and human rights abuses.

Such journalism was also the type reflected in the Banadex Colombia murders. There are no reflections or any investigations into the nature of the death of these trade unionists and why they were killed. If it did, it would bring out the involvement of the U.S. corporations, contractors, and government officials both national and foreign. Yet this is one example of thousands of situations where the U.S. has collaborated in human rights abuses and with different avenues that the media could use to do more balanced coverage.

USE OF DISCURSIVE DIFFERENCES OR STYLE OF DISCOURSE

Discursive differences refer to the way in which emphasis is placed – the ‘voice’ used in conveying information on certain aspects to the exclusion of others.

Similar to the articles affected by presupposition, the articles on human rights also show use of discursive differences especially those that deal with signing the ‘Free trade’ agreement. Out of eight articles that deal directly with free

trade, six of them have the words 'human rights' or 'rights' in the headline suggesting the focus is on human rights. When one actually reads the articles, it becomes clear that rights are not the focus in five of the articles. A CBC article dealing with human rights in Colombia for example, by nature of the textual discourse, places all emphasis on the economic value of trade rather than on human rights. It's a news story that covers the Canadian prime minister's intentions to sign a trade deal with Colombia. The headline reads: "Harper, Colombian leader to discuss free trade deal: Human rights groups pressing for talks on humanitarian issues" (CBC Sunday, July 15, 2007). The textual pattern leaves out the details of the nature of human rights abuses in Colombia. It just mentions that there are alleged abuses and quotes some government sources on the human rights abuses' figures. There is no mention of the victims of these human rights abuses and the situations which would have helped inform readers about why the human rights abuses were taking place in the first place and who was responsible. The media's (CBC) ensuing point of view fails to discuss the broad implications and details of human rights. 'Harper's official' is quoted in the CBC article making it emphatically clear that the major thing that matters in the trade deals is that they are going to strengthen Canada's "economic prosperity". Even the quote from the Harper official is not followed by any form of proper commentary. The economic prosperity of Colombians or the human rights situations are not only portrayed as unimportant but do not get the attention of the journalist doing the coverage.

It is probable that the mention here about human rights is not over genuine concern for Colombian citizens and that is why you do not find discussed the involvement of the U.S. and other Western powers in such human rights abuses. This is because of the interests of the U.S. When the Colombian army and the paramilitaries commit havoc on the poor under the auspices of the U.S. it is partly because the U.S. wants to make sure the Colombian capitalist economy takes the shape the U.S. wants. The U.S. wants to ensure markets for its goods, investments for its corporations and a source of raw materials and minerals.

PLAN COLOMBIA AND U.S. AID

The U.S.A. continues to be the principal supporter of Colombian state-sponsored terrorism. As such the new war of terror in Colombia performs the same function as the earlier war on drugs: it provides a propaganda pretext for the continuing militarization of Colombian society so as to destroy armed groups and progressive elements of civil society that are seen as a threat to U.S. interests.

Plan Colombia refers to U.S. legislation aimed at curbing drug smuggling and combating a left-wing insurgency by supporting different activities in Colombia. Together with \$700 million dollars per year mostly in the form of military aid to Colombia these two forms of intervention have been the major means through which the U.S. has involved itself in the Colombian conflict.

Plan Colombia which was implemented under the Clinton administration, included U.S. military/counter-narcotics aid, but was not limited

to it. The plan was conceived with the goals of ending the Colombian armed conflict and creating an anti-cocaine strategy. It is the Plan Colombia that George Bush extended to broader aid, as he initiated the anti-terrorist discourse after the September 11 attacks. Elements within the Colombian security forces and legal system, which received aid and training from the U.S., were involved in assisting or tolerating abuses by right-wing paramilitary forces against left-wing guerrilla organizations and their public sympathizers. Colombia was meant to be mainly an economic approach to solving the crises but the implementation by the U.S. turned it into a ruthlessly brutal military exercise against the guerrillas and their sympathizers, most of whom were thousands of peasants in the countryside. Another controversial element of the anti-narcotic strategy is aerial fumigation to eradicate coca. This activity has proved detrimental to the farmers and the general population of Colombia because it damages legal crops and has adverse health effects upon those exposed to the herbicides.

INSINUATION AND U.S. AID IN MEDIA COVERAGE

Just nine stories out of my lot of one hundred and concern Plan Colombia, financial aid or the drug war. In seven of these articles one can see that the negative effects of fumigations of drugs, the displacements of the rural masses and crop destruction, are not brought out. A pattern in the articles also shows the stories do not bring out that the drug war is failing because of the military nature of the involvement of the U.S. Drugs are not being fought directly with economic, education and social programs but with military

investment and tactics because that is what favours the hold of the American hegemony in Colombia, strategically. Rather, there is an insinuation that the drug war is a waste of money because it is not succeeding, while potential reasons for the failure are not explained.

In “Drug War in Colombia going up in Smoke” (Globe and Mail, March 12, 2007) it is rightly reported that The campaign, known as Plan Colombia, has neither come close to its goal of cutting the country's coca crop in half nor reduced the availability of cocaine in North America.” The entire article, like the others, concentrates on lamenting the proliferation of drugs in the U.S. and Canadian communities despite the efforts of the U.S. to fight its production in Colombia through Plan Colombia and other aid. An example of a sentence from the article reads:

The campaign, known as Plan Colombia, has neither come close to its goal of cutting the country's coca crop in half nor reduced the availability of cocaine in North America. Critics ranging from Colombian peasants to Washington politicians attribute the plan's shortcomings in part to its underfunding of alternative development programs that help farmers switch to legal crops.

The statement here is that the money put in has not been enough and with more funding the program will succeed. The stories show a pattern that there is a waste of money trying to fight the drug and cocaine production in Colombia, and that underfunding is the primary cause. Many statistics are given about how much money is put into the drug war and Plan Colombia but how the money is distributed and therefore indicative of the purpose of the assistance are not given

and it such details that could help clear these types of insinuations in media coverage.

The coverage does not investigate details of Monsanto's practices either, which is responsible for fumigation activities designed to chemically eradicate drugs. The entire U.S. aid package is a package that is supposed to include military, economic and social components. Unfortunately for Colombians and fortunately for the U.S. only the military component of Plan Colombia and other aid is being implemented. The social and economic components of Plan Colombia resemble a doctrine of displacing target populations considered potentially pro-insurgency, and concentrating them in controllable and often urban areas. The principal mechanism for civilian displacement has been the militarization and the insertion of paramilitary forces into the conflict zones affected by Plan Colombia. Besides, working in collaboration with the military and its contractors and scientists, herbicides have been developed that not only affect the cocaine but also affect food crops and is used in areas deemed as potentially insurgent. This has led to large scale civilian displacement, hunger and lots of health, social ills and injustices.

The focus on sums of money make the reader think that the U.S. put huge amounts of money on fighting drugs and nothing else. Military bases have been built in Colombia with the strategic capacity of attacking any country in South America. These bases are built out of funds that are supposed to be used for fighting the 'drug' problem. This is not mentioned even though half of the U.S. aid actually goes for such military endeavours. In the story, "A perfect storm:

Colombia. It all comes together in a country where drug lords rise from the dead and smugglers never run out of lucrative schemes” it is written:

U.S. authorities will spend upwards of \$500 million combating the drug trade in Colombia. They will eradicate more than 150,000 hectares of illegal coca plants, the raw material for cocaine. And they will invest immense efforts in capturing clandestine drug shipments on their way from Colombia's Pacific and Caribbean seacoasts toward American soil... Nevertheless, Colombians will continue to supply about 90 per cent of the cocaine consumed in the U.S.” (Toronto Star, May 15, 2005)

Statements like this leave the reader clueless that half of the \$500 million will go into military expenditures and training that may have nothing to do with the drug trade. In the Colombian newspapers, especially those which are not mainstream, a different perspective is offered. Colombia's popular radical newspaper, *La semana* (7 June 2007) reports on the visit of President Alvaro Uribe to the U.S. in June 2007 to discuss the failing Plan Colombia and to plead that the approach be shifted from military investment and fumigation of crops to increasing of social plans that would help the people and help curb drug production since the present approach is causing more problems to the people of Colombia than solutions.

El presidente Álvaro Uribe está en Washington. Y llegó con unos objetivos precisos. Entre ellos, dar la batalla por el Plan Colombia... con la condición de disminuir la inversión militar y la erradicación y fumigación de cultivos, para aumentar programas sociales. Es que cada vez hay más argumentos para pensar en el fracaso del mencionado plan.⁹

(English version: Translation mine);

⁹Juan Esteban Mejía Upejía (June 7, 2007) “¿Es eficiente el Plan Colombia para la erradicación de los cultivos ilícitos?” in *La Semana* <http://www.semana.com/noticias-on-line/eficiente-plan-colombia-para-erradicacion-cultivos-ilicitos/104233.aspx> Retrieved December 2010

President Uribe is in Washington, and arrived this time with precise objectives among which is to battle out the issue of Plan Colombia under conditions of reducing military investments, and the eradication and fumigation of crops in order to increase social programs. As each moment goes by the above give more reasons to the failure of the above mentioned plan.

Hence the stories and the analysis that followed show the reader how the plan is a failure because of the approach used and the way the U.S involvement is designed. By 2007, seven years after the plan started, these stories actually indicate a 127,000 hectares increase in drug production as the U.S. consolidates its military position in South America through bases in Colombia, and American hegemony grows stronger. Plan Colombia is therefore not designed to particularly concentrate on social and educational programs that will help Colombians but the drug fight, aid and Plan Colombia are designed to support the U.S.

Another alternative view that could help shed light on how more neutral media coverage of Plan Colombia's failure could be seen is the opinion held by European nations as written in the article, "The Peace Laboratories of the European Union: Europe's Plan Colombia?" by Loingsigh (2005):

What is the European Union's game in Colombia? When the Clinton government announced its anti-narcotics strategy, Plan Colombia, many human rights and social organisations spoke out against it, correctly describing it as a military plan that sought to take advantage of an anti-drugs discourse in order to reposition the USA militarily and economically in the continent. Time has proved those critics right. Today we see an increase in US personnel levels in the country and a race to get their hands on the natural resources and the assets of the state.

The European Union as a whole did not support Plan Colombia due to its high military content. They said that they would carry out social investment

in order to strengthen civil society and to support peace building and in line with that, these investments would not form part of the misnamed social component of Plan Colombia. It is presumed that the peace laboratories are that contribution.

Only Spain donated a good amount in one financial period due to her general engagements in South America and particularly with Colombia. Roy recounts the frustrations of European nations with the Plan Colombia due to the militarization of the plan by U.S. He observes of finances that;

Spain committed then more than \$100 million for the 2000-2003 period, about a third of the sum committed by all of the European states and from the EU budget¹⁰.

Roy goes on to explain that the amounts committed by other European countries had difficulties in being realized principally because of the approach the U.S was taking with Plan Colombia.

TOPICALIZATION

In "Bush saddles up to fight 'hate'"; (*Toronto Star*. Sep 27, 2002.) one can see that the techniques of topicalization and framing are being used to influence readers. The article features Bush's stepping up of the drug fight and writes elaborately on how the U.S. and Israel are hated by some people and therefore George Bush is stepping up the war on drugs to a war on terror so that the enemies of the states will not destroy the U.S. Hence an article written on Colombia does not direct its concerns to the Colombian people and does not recognize the fact that George Bush is simply declaring an ideological war that will manifest through its support of state terrorism in Colombia and protect U.S.

¹⁰ Roy, Joaquin. Europe: *Neither Plan Colombia, nor Peace Process --From Good Intentions to High Frustrations* Miami University Working Paper Series Vol. 2 No. 7 June 2002 p. 15 http://www6.miami.edu/eucenter/royworkingpaper_colombia.pdf

interests there. An uncritical reader will actually feel sympathy for the U.S. because there are no issues raised in the articles that question how poor masses in villages in Colombia can suddenly become a threat to the U.S.

CONTROL OF TEXT AND DISCOURSE

In the *CBC* lead story “Bush offers renewed U.S. support to Colombia during tour” (March 11, 2007) there is serious control of text and discourse. This article that deals with U.S. aid to Colombia focuses its coverage on the American president’s visit to Colombia but it shifts attention from the details of the moment that matter and lays them on aspects that one would consider less important. The topic portrays a successful tour and the body of the text only mentions a 2,000 person protest six Kilometres away from where Bush was hosted. The article presents the tour as if it were smooth and successful. The thousands that took to the streets in Brazil protesting the presence of George Bush and the reasons they protesting were not discussed. By contrast Colombian media of like *La Semana* (The Week) reported large scale protests across the country and especially focused on the exploitative nature of the U.S. in Colombia and how this led to protests that forced Bush to cut his visit six hours ahead of schedule and go home. Such thwarting of text and details are also seen in U.S. aid for Colombia fails to meet goal” (*CBC*; Wednesday, November 5, 2008). The *CBC* attended to Colombian institutions that have not lived up to the expectation of the use of aid without mentioning any particular institutions and omitted the main reasons why the ‘aid’ and plan Colombia have failed to work over the years. The U.S. was originally working with the World Bank (which is part of the U.S.

globalization mechanism and the Washington connection) and other countries to ensure that Plan Colombia worked. Eventually only a few European nations committed to the plan with Spain committing the largest amount. Most European nations withdrew because of the militarized focus of the U.S. aid. The plan was changed significantly from a regional development initiative, as originally envisaged to an aggressive military engagement and portrayed as an anti 'narco-guerrillas' plan.

The article laments that until Obama came to power the plan was not effective. But it fails to acknowledge that most of the money was put towards training military personnel, buying Bell Helicopters, sponsoring state death squads and the paramilitaries. Statistics from *The Centre for International Policy's Colombia Program*¹¹ show that half of the money allocated to Colombia by the U.S. as aid and for Plan Colombia was spent on and by U.S. contractors, U.S corporations and all of the rest is spent on military and policing. If the population goes into drug production because of poverty, would it not be wiser to pump all the money into food and crop production and other social programmes that directly benefit the poor instead of giving it to Monsanto and other U.S. corporations and agents. The Centre for International policy reports that the U.S., out of the AID to Colombia, has constructed seven military bases with a major one in Palanquero, Rio as part of the narco-guerrilla war. The media coverage examined does not cover such details and explore why the U.S. would involve itself so much and bother to construct military bases that have the strength to

¹¹ <http://www.cipcol.org/?p=1455> (Retrieved December 10, 2010).

attack any country in South America. Issues of details and investigations of ideology and interest are at stake on the part of the U.S. involvement more than the expressed desire to help the Colombian people. Chomsky (2002) laments this kind of help and says that it cannot portray any good intentions when "...before every election in Colombia members of the opposition are murdered in large scale, labour union leaders are murdered, students, dissidents are murdered, there are death squad all around," supported by the U.S. with aid that amounts to half the aid in the entire hemisphere yet these atrocities do not appear in the media.

COLOMBIA'S BORDER CRISIS AND RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA

The propaganda model predicts...that there will be a qualitative and quantitative difference in the treatment in the Western media accorded 'unworthy victims' -(victims of oppression and/ or state terrorism perpetrated by us – Canada, the U.S., and the other capitalist democracies), and 'worthy victims of oppression and/or state terrorism perpetrated by official enemy states). (Klaehn 2005, p 11)

On March 1, 2008 Colombian president Alvaro Uribe bombed a guerrilla hide-out on Ecuadorean soil killing the guerrilla leader Raoul Reyes and sixteen others. This triggered a crisis with Hugo Chavez who ordered troops to the border with Colombia. Other tensions developed including the severing of diplomatic relations.

Twenty six news stories out of the 106 for this research deal with Colombia and Venezuela. This means that almost ¼ of the news coverage is was

focused on this. All the articles in one way or the other show patterns of media performance that fall in line with predictions of the PM. Applying the PM method of paired examples in analyzing media coverage of Colombia's crisis with Venezuela, one sees clearly the concepts of 'unworthy' victim and 'worthy victim' at play. The Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez has rejected vehemently the hegemony and aggression of the American empire and elites. Having brought down the elites from power, Chavez has redistributed wealth in his country and has created institutions called 'missions' through which the proceeds from oil and some of the nation's other resources go directly to the poor, and has been doing his best to keep democratic elections running. He has expelled U.S. corporate presence from Venezuela and is developing national and regional programs that are meant to keep harmful western influences away. Of course he has become an ardent enemy of the U.S. while his Colombian counterpart who is a major trading partner to the U.S., with all forms of U.S. elite control, is an obvious official friend and therefore a 'worthy victim'.

The PM states that the corporate media legitimize the dominant ideology and its values by "systematically defending the principal economic, social and political agendas of dominant elites and social institutions" (Klaehn, 2005 P. 7) Media will therefore be very selective in both quantity and quality of media coverage, the state terrorism of 'worthy' or official friends will be labelled as brave acts of freedom fighting and the struggle for democracy, while the sincerely democratic and nationalist efforts of the unworthy victims will be seen as threats to established order and interests. These are the kind of predictions that are

explored in some of the following examples that are focused on the PM's ideology filter.

The CBC, the *Toronto Star*, *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* all reported this crisis and all articles have very favourable representations of Alvaro Uribe whereas Chavez is represented more or less as a terrorist. In one article Chavez orders troops to Venezuela's border with Colombia' (CBC, Sunday, March 2, 2008) Chavez is portrayed to have "very warm" relations with the guerrillas. The article says that "Chavez has recently angered Uribe by urging world leaders to classify the leftist rebels as "insurgents" rather than "terrorists." It is a story of about two hundred words in which the name 'Chavez" appears sixteen times with different accusations that he has levied on Colombia. Consider for example the opening description of Chavez in the following quote from the news story, "Neighbours set stage for war with Colombia; Venezuela, Ecuador assemble troops at the border" (*National Post*, March 4, 2008)

Mr. Chavez, a self-styled socialist revolutionary who has been sympathetic to FARC and is accused by Colombia of sheltering the terrorists, called for a minute's public silence to mark Reyes' death, praising him as "a great revolutionary."

The article presents Chavez as a problematic figure in the Andean region especially in relation to Colombia. It should be recalled that the Colombian guerrillas became known as terrorists after the 9/11 attacks as George Bush and the U.S. began referring to those who rose up against his client states as 'terrorist' and these included the Colombian guerrillas. Chavez is virtually

portrayed as a dictator who is taking advantage of the situation to face Washington's ally, Colombia.

The *Globe and Mail* (March 5, 2008) handles Colombia's relations with Venezuela by presenting the Venezuelan leader as a 'leftist' leader who is using the crises to keep the population at home distracted from internal problems. While the media reports described the Venezuelan leader with connotations such as 'leftist' leader one would hardly find where they describe the Colombian leader as a 'rightist' Uribe. The language of the text itself encourages the reader to develop softer feelings for one party in the crisis being reported. Not only does the language of the media favour the 'worthy' victim but even the content of the story. The thrust of the story in the *CBC*, the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* is about Chavez having aggressive tendencies by moving troops to the border as well as broadening his ideological gap with the U.S. None of the coverage does raises questions about the violation of Ecuadorian sovereignty by Colombia. This is military action that was carried out totally in the territory of another country in violation of its land and air space. The media rather makes the audience conceive of the crises as if it were Hugo Chavez who is a problem and is threatening Colombia.

Similarly, the involvement of the U.S. in the bombing is totally overlooked. The action was carried out with intelligence received from U.S. military and its spies and was carried out under the guidance of the U.S. The media totally leave out this part of the story and fail to mention that the equipment used that was from the U.S. including the satellites and the planes. While ignoring the role of

the U.S. fingers are quickly pointed to Russia from whence Hugo Chavez obtains his equipment. The Colombian government said Chávez received money from the drug-funded guerrillas in 1992 when he was an impoverished coup-monger with political ambitions and that recently, now a self-styled socialist revolutionary at the helm of an oil power, he gave the rebels \$300 million. Accusations such as these and negative representation of Chavez are common in media coverage.

In the opinion column under headline, "Venezuela's Smoking Gun" (Globe and Mail July 2010) Alvaro Vargas lashes out at Chavez throughout for being a dictator, leftist and for opposing the U.S. foreign policy manifestations in south America. Chavez is portrayed as an accomplice of terrorists in the region and for providing safe haven for the terrorists. The article accuses Chavez of positioning himself outside international law and will soon not be able to survive the exposure that will come to him with the new president of Colombia Manual Santos. The border crisis is brought into focus with Chavez to blame. On the other hand, the story has all good praise for Colombia where proper democratic principles reign and whose president Uribe has helped the Western hemisphere in exposing the sanctuary that Chavez is providing to terrorists. Colombia is seen as a light to the international community its "Popular Mr. Uribe won't stop" revealing the collaboration that existing between the ..." terrorist groups and a neighbouring state. Chavez is given the image of a bad example in the whole of Latin America and laments that:

At the very least, Latin America has a right to know the truth about Venezuela, whose government, not contented with instituting a dictatorship, is propping up the region's most unsavoury characters – the latest being

Suriname's president-elect, Desi Bouterse, a former dictator accused of multiple murders and convicted of cocaine trafficking in the Netherlands.¹²

It therefore becomes clear here that the predictions of the PM are at play in this type of media performance. The ideology of the mainstream media with its lack of neutrality is visible in the above coverage by the Globe and Mail. It is 'out of bounds' to say anything that does not sound positive about the U.S. or its ally, Colombia. Colombia is portrayed as a democratic peaceful exemplary state in the region while Venezuela is seen to be a dictatorial enemy in the region that other states must not emulate.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective there is imbalance in the media coverage of Venezuela and Colombia as seen in the twenty six articles from the four media sources examined.. We can take the examples and analyze the use of the following techniques: foregrounding and backgrounding, framing, connotations, and modality.

FOREGROUNDING AND BACKGROUNDING

This involves the manipulation of discourse consciously or unconsciously at the level of headlines or in sentence construction. Some concepts are given prominence in the headlines while others are de-emphasized or minimized. Looking at the twenty six stories that I have from four media sources the headlines are quite revealing of the perspectives that the stories will take. Let us

¹² Alvaro vargas Llosa, "Venezuela's smoking gun" in Globe and Mail Wednesday, July 28, 2010. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/venezuelas-smoking-gun/article1653750/>

examine some of them like the editorial, "Venezuela's Smoking Gun" (*Globe and Mail*, July 28, 2010).

The foregrounding in this headline creates a metaphor that leaves an impression of aggressiveness on Venezuela. It is reflected inside the story that discusses Hugo Chavez as a violator of the United Nation's Security council resolutions and a threat to Colombia that will soon be taken care of. It is written that "He knows he's in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, an anti-terrorism measure passed two weeks after 9/11....and that he controls his army sufficiently to pr-empt any rebellion. " Chavez is accused in the article of complicity with the FARC "Venezuela's complicity with the FARC is no scoop" It says that when asked, Chavez reacts like "...a husband who comes home at 3 a.m. with lipstick on his face, when confronted by his wife, walks out furiously, slamming the door." Such portrayal strengthens the impression already created in the title makes Chavez look evil while Present Uribe looks good.

The story "Why Chavez and co are about to Lose Clout" (*Globe and Mail*, January 5, 2010) sends the message that Chavez is fighting a lost battle. The story claims that the new wave of leftist leaders coming up in Latin America will not last long.

There has been abundant talk about Latin America's tilt to the left this past decade, but such chatter will soon become antiquated. Presidential contests in key countries are almost certain to move the region in the opposite direction.

The story argues that the leftist rulers winning elections are simply socialist dictators wanting to imitate Fidel Castro. That the new right in Argentina and

Argentina becoming a regional power will affect the influence of Hugo Chavez. In summary, the article opines that the 'interventionism' of Hugo Chavez will be put under control without any ambiguities:

The tilt to the right could be more momentous in foreign policy, reducing the disproportionate influence of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Brazil would stop indulging his whims and providing cover for his geopolitical gamesmanship. Chile would drop its ambiguity toward Venezuela's foreign interventionism

In "Colombia's U.S. defence deal alarms Venezuela" (*Globe and Mail*, 2009) there is both foregrounding and backgrounding. With claims to fight the guerrillas and drugs the U.S. signed agreements with Colombia to build military bases that can be used for military operations in any country in South America as the bases will be constructed in preparation for "conducting full-spectrum operations throughout South America" - not only for monitoring narcotics trafficking and guerrilla movements, but to protect U.S. interests against threats from "anti-U.S. governments." Hugo Chavez condemned the agreement and said that Colombia was encouraging U.S. hegemony and asked for Colombia to provide the Organisation of American States with complete information on the deal.

Backgrounding is seen here as the aims of the U.S. have been de-emphasized while only the defense of Colombia seems to be the issue. Instead, the article goes on to emphasize Chavez's supposed diminishing popularity amongst his people in Venezuela and to say that Chavez wants to use the idea of Colombia defending itself for "demagogic ends"

The next story is “Strange times in Colombia” (*Globe and Mail*, 2009) which was during the presidential election time in Colombia and a candidate, Anthanas Mockus who saw Venezuela as a potential ally was leading the electoral race. This story discredited the population of Colombia and claimed that they were “strange times in Colombia”. It condemned Mockus’ agreement to hold Uribe responsible for incursion into Ecuadorian territory to attack the guerrillas without permission or discussion with Ecuadorian authorities.

“Answering the Chavez call to Arms; Venezuelan Army reserves swell with poor Volunteers training for an imminent U.S attack” (*Toronto Star*, August 2005).

This well foregrounded headline carries the implications of Chavez baiting and obliging poor and incapable Venezuelans to join the army in preparation for a U.S. attack. The article mocks Chavez’s approach to army recruitment and his self-interest since it claims Chavez’s horrible approach to army recruitment is to ensure that there is no rebellion against him. One finds statements such as;

...his reservists-to-be, drawn largely from the ranks of the poor, are being trained with the army’s FAL assault rifles and within six months should be capable of replacing regular army units if necessary.

Yet four months into their training, the men and women lined up behind him are still wearing makeshift uniforms and have not yet touched a rifle.

Critics of Chavez say he is imitating the Cuban military by giving himself direct command over a force more loyal and ideological than the regular army.

The article insinuates that Chavez is wrongly accusing the U.S. for supporting a failed coup d’état against him in 2002 and claiming to prepare for a war against

the U.S. while he is actually preparing to quell domestic opposition. Without clearly quoting the sources it is said that;

“...domestic critics allege that he is circumventing the regular armed forces to create a military body that can quash opposition at home”

“Poor are fed by Chavez's vanity; Clinics, cheap food boost support, but poverty remains high in Venezuela” (*Toronto Star*, May 8, 2006).

All Chavez's efforts to help poor people through missions are portrayed here as 'vanity'. He is presented as a tactless leader who cannot lead his people out of poverty. Despite the rising economy in Venezuela, this article claims that Chavez is creating economic problems in his country. That his “Bolivarian Revolution” cannot be seen to help his country progress in any way. Read the following description from the article:

From here, high atop Caracas, as the dust kicks up from the packed van hurtling down the clay roads offering the only means of temporary escape from this poverty, it is hard to see Hugo Chavez's "Bolivarian Revolution."

What you can see are sheets of scrap metal cobbled together to form a shantytown that provides shelter for 25,000 in what used to be a forest.

You can see the sign advertising a clinic, until you realize it, too, is scrap, used to keep out the elements, not advertise a needed service.

You've already seen the piles of garbage in the streets of the barrios down below, the pharmacy behind bars to deter thieves, the piles of sewage pipes on the street representing a construction project stalled by bureaucratic wrangling, the "chop shop" street where stolen cars are stripped for parts.

In the kitchen inside a hovel, volunteers are stirring an eight-kilogram pot of lentils, enough to feed 150 at lunch with government-supplied food. There's chicken, but the women running the kitchen say they haven't seen meat for some time.

Poverty remains stubbornly high here, and has risen to more than 50 per cent during Chavez's reign

The above depiction reveals leads the reader to picture how bad of a leader Chavez is. The picture painted of the lives of Venezuelans during his reign is just ugly and leaves nothing to admire despite.

“Falling back on a reliable scapegoat: Running out of ‘imperialist’ to blame, Chavez has turned to the Jews” (*National Post*, January 23, 2010).

The foregrounding in the news story headline emphasizes that Chavez is always looking for problems with others and now it is the turn of the Jews. The article claims that Chavez has taken a redistribution program as advantage to seize the property of a prosperous Jewish family. It creates an impression that Chavez is more of a danger to his own people. It actually uses the phrase “None of you are safe” referring to Venezuelans. It portrays Chavez as a bad leader caught in a personality cult. Among other negative statements made, it says,

“The seizure sent a strong message: None of you are safe. The Chavez regime's turn toward harshly anti-Jewish policies as part of an ominous self-radicalization.”

“Chavez and FARC” an opinion column published in the *National Post*. (May 10, 2008.) alleges that Hugo Chavez is crippling a dying economy of Venezuela and giving the fruits of such exploits to the FARC insurgents of Colombia. It states that “..the Western Hemisphere may be about to gain its first internationally designated state sponsor of terrorism.” Chavez is seen as a sponsor of state terrorism while Uribe who government worked with auto defense groups and paramilitaries to terrorize citizens and union workers is seen as a victim. The article claims that Chavez is personally involved with sponsoring terrorism through the FARC. It quotes an e-mail in 2005 as proof but does not

show excerpts from the e-mail nor say who wrote the e-mail or the destination of the e-mail:

An e-mail from 2005 confirms the long-suspected presence of a FARC operations base inside Venezuela. Other e-mails apparently describe Venezuelan intelligence efforts to smuggle shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades into FARC hands. Mr. Chavez's personal involvement is confirmed throughout.

The beneficiaries of all this red solidarity are formally considered a terrorist organization under the laws of Canada, the United States and other senior democracies... The group is, in short, an enemy of democracy and order in Colombia, and of the human race generally.

In the CBC online story (July 11, 2008) "Firebrand Chavez and U.S. ally Uribe of Colombia hold talks" the connotation left by foregrounding in this headline is that a U.S. ally is going to be holding talks with a "Firebrand" of a person. Such a headline suggests that the news article will present Chavez as a difficult person to deal with. He is portrayed as 'controversial' supporter of the FARC. The opening sentence of the story reads:

Venezuela's controversial president Hugo Chavez, is having talks Friday with Colombia's Alvaro Uribe to discuss improving prickly relations between their two countries.

And the story goes ahead in its detail to say that "Uribe is strengthened internationally' while "Chavez has discovered he was riding the losing horse". It therefore seems that the story is out to hold President Uribe for praise while ridiculing President Hugo Chavez.

"Chavez orders troops to Venezuela border with Colombia" (CBC, March 2008).

An examination of the aforementioned headline demonstrate a common idea which links all of them – the demonization of Chavez. Out of the twenty-six

headlines on news that dealt with Colombia and Venezuela fourteen of them featured the name “Chavez” and most of the time it is Colombia that appears in the headline and not Uribe. So, strictly speaking one can say that the news is about ‘Chavez versus Colombia’ and not “Venezuela versus Colombia” Uribe appears only in two headlines and with peaceful connotations. These headlines and others like “Chavez accused of meddling in Colombia’s election” (National Post, April 20, 2010) always emphasize somehow that Hugo Chavez is the problem in Colombia’s crisis with Venezuela.

Of course, as the PM predicts, enemies of the established empire like Venezuela will always be treated differently and with disdain in media performance as opposed to the ‘worthy’ or the friends of the empire like Colombia.

FRAMING OF NEWS STORIES

The perspective presented in the news is very important in determining issues of power relations and domination in media coverage. It usually relates to the angle or point of view that the writer is creating for his/her readers. The readers are swayed right from the headlines. The way the headlines are framed cause the readers to begin to have impressions about someone or an issue even the impressions are false as in this case of Chavez. Most of the time is directly related to ideological issues in news performance and it is through framing that one sees the ideological position of the writer. In the story “Putting the boots to FARC” (Globe and Mail September 10, 2010). Chavez right from the headline is

portrayed to support FARC guerrillas and is portrayed as a failure himself. For example, it is said in the article that the leader of FARC will soon be negotiating for a peace deal except if;

..he is in Venezuela, where Hugo Chavez, who has been humiliated by voters in the legislative elections and is presiding over an unprecedented crisis of law and order, as well as an economic debacle, feels he has nothing to gain by clinging to a political leper.

Chavez is thus portrayed as a failure in elections, security in his country and in the economic domain while the article hails Colombia and the U.S. which Colombia is working to sign a Free Trade agreement with.

It is said in the *The twenty six stories* that this research is analyzing that deal with Colombia and Venezuela revealed a strong U.S. imperialist and capitalist ideology in one way or the other in their support for Colombia while demonizing Chavez.

In twenty of twenty-six articles Colombia is framed as a country with true democratic values and a real market system that should be supported while Venezuela under Hugo Chavez is always framed to be under the governance of a socialist and confrontational regime. In *the National Post* news story "U.S. rules out military action against Venezuela," Hugo Chavez is portrayed as a trouble maker in the region that has been spared from military action by the U.S. Virginia Staab, a U.S. State Department spokeswoman opines in the story that the U.S. has no intentions to wage war against Hugo Chavez. She does not say anything about Colombia's violation of the sovereignty of another country. According to

her, Colombia's indication that guerrillas were lodged in Venezuelan territory was enough to justify the attack by Colombia. One would think that the focus of the story should have been on what proof Colombia had to show that the guerrillas were in Venezuela and therefore question the intentions of Colombia to plan an attack on Venezuela. The story has rather been put in a perspective and framed such that Hugo Chavez is the 'wrong doer', the 'leftist president' is at the mercy of the U.S. which is ready to use the opportunity of conflict in Colombia to ensure that Venezuela and neighbouring states are not a threat to its empire.

I am not suggesting that it is correct to have Colombian guerrillas operating from Venezuela but that media coverage should report with balance, as they claim to, rather than giving ideological and hegemonic advantage to the U.S. *La Semana* a Colombian alternative media outlet did coverage on Colombia and Venezuela in the article "Uribe acepta que contempló capturar a las Farc en Venezuela" (Translation mine – "Uribe accepted that he considered capturing the FARC members in Venezuela"). In *La Semana*, the story focused on why and how Uribe planned to do this and quotes Uribe who confirms that he wanted to do it and that he was ready to do it to protect the Colombian people. Here the story sounds different and sounds like balanced news while in the story in the *National Post* Hugo Chavez is framed like a culprit whom the U.S. have opted not to touch.

Another technique used to create a negative framing the impression of Chavez among readers is that of use of visual imagery. Though it has been used

only in six of the articles, it certainly does have an effect on the readers that read the six stories. Visual imagery refers to selecting and placing specific photographs along with the stories. Photographs are supposed to help edify the perception of the reader. The image that the reader sees in the picture is the image that he/she has in his/her head as he/she reads the story. In six articles relating to Colombia and Venezuela photographs have been used. In five of the stories the photographs are photographs in which Chavez is in military attire and looking aggressive. The pictures are not even taken at the time of the event being narrated as in the articles "Chavez accused of meddling in Colombia's election". Such a picture of someone ready for war will stay in the reader's mind all along as he/she reads through the story through even though the story is supposed to be handling trade and diplomatic lock out at election time. Another example is evident in the article "U.S. rules out military action against Venezuela". There is a picture of Hugo Chavez standing behind a flame and waving his supporters. This is where one would think that if there were need for a picture, they would put Hugo Chavez in a bold picture in military attire because the discussion is framed to be that of military prowess and ideology. Instead a picture is put with a flame covering him except a small view of his head and fingers waving.

The diction and phrases that are used in the twenty-six articles have also gone a long way to help frame the stories in ways that create specific impressions about the Venezuelan and Colombian leaders. Chavez can be very much identified with use of the following several times in the articles; 'dictator' 'Leftist leader' (in a way that suggest maybe he may never be right and Uribe is

never called 'rightist' anyway), 'anti-American' (Thereby suggesting he hates the Americans rather than U.S. foreign policies; according to George Bush's principles those who hate the U.S. are terrorists), 'former paratrooper', 'coup plotter' 'head of an oil-rich yet poverty stricken ' state, 'Chavez boasted'' 'Chavez is forcing' 'a self-styled socialist revolutionary', his words are mere 'bluster'. This is all language that corrodes the image and respect of someone while uplifting other people he is confronting or having issues with. Chavez is therefore indirectly painted and framed by the articles as evil and unworthy while Uribe is painted with a pure image that is symbolic of positive values. No matter what Chavez is doing in his country to change the living conditions of the people, no credit is given to him. He is made to look like the wrong person to lead his country because he clashes with the U.S. over its foreign policy and tries to enlighten the people of his region and to support them so they grow into independence from the U.S. empire. Colombia on the other hand is portrayed to be the light under guidance of the U.S. while the ills of the Colombian governments and its use of the U.S. body, corporations, formations and institutions to do ill on its own people is not brought out.

INFERENCE

In the article "South America's growing arms race" which is was a news article (CBC, January 25 2010) there is an example of use inference that shows the CBC's support and sympathy towards the U.S. in ideological warfare that relates to Colombia and Venezuela. This is a news story with four sub-headlines. These are:

“Beefing up”

“Washington Watching”

“Leadership Vacuum”

“Moscow’s Mischief”

Looking at the headline and the sub-headlines one sees that there is an arms race in South America which the U.S. is just watching while Russia is the super power committing mischief in South America. This on its own shows which ideological position the media supports. It is inferred that the U.S. is a peaceful observer of the crises. Furthermore, there are three photos in the news story; one small photo of a jet fighter, a small photo of lieutenants’ graduation ceremony at Bogota Colombia and a big photo of Chavez almost double the size of each of the other two photos. In the photo Chavez is carrying a weapon and a comment below the photo reads “Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez shows off... anti-tank weapon in a news conference in Caracas” This photo appears in the “Beefing up” section which begins thus:

To make their case, South America's presidents called an emergency meeting last month to discuss the deal. They grilled Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, asking him for guarantees that U.S. troops won't venture outside Colombia's borders.

Notice that the other South American presidents are said to have ‘grilled’ the Colombian president. In this instance the other presidents are said to be putting pressure on the Colombian president because he accepted the building of seven U.S. military bases especially as opposed to the stock of arms that other nations especially Venezuela are piling. The choice of words, the sub-titles and other

aspects of the coverage all ridicule Chavez and Russia while supporting Colombia and U.S. In section entitled "Leadership Vacuum" it is claimed that

...Washington has lost interest in Latin America, with the exception of Mexico because of concerns over drug trafficking and illegal immigration. "The U.S. prefers to transfer leadership in the region to Brazil," Fraga says "But Brazil doesn't want to pay the cost of that leadership yet. And that's an opportunity for Chavez who doesn't have enough power to make decisions [for the region]. But he has enough power to establish the agenda of the debate."

The above infers that the U.S. has no interest in Latin America except concerns over drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Even its stocking up of arms by Colombia and building up seven military bases there is not part of the discussion of the 'leadership Vacuum' but there is much focus on the 'powerless' Chavez, and also on Russia's motives:

Moscow is back in circulation in South and Central America, raising questions about what its motives might be.

MEDIA SYMPATHY WITH U.S. CORPORATIONS – 'The Coca-Cola Case' in media reviews.

In this section that deals with reviews I found three articles related to Colombia. The first one was a book review of Jasmin Hristov's *Blood and Capital: The Paramilitarization of Colombia*. This review (See index) done by Matthew Behrens (July 2009) does not seem to reflect any media bias on the part of CBC where the article is found. Matthew does a review that shows the book has properly portrayed the Colombian government as a government that is treating its own citizens unfairly and assisting the paramilitaries. The government of

Colombia is seen a “democracy on paper” that works on line with its international partners to perpetrate social injustice and bad governance in the country.

Behren’s (July 2009) writes that:

Based on extensive research, and three years of on-the-ground interviews with Colombians from all walks of life, Hristov presents a disturbing picture of a nation that exercises almost total control over the daily lives of its citizens – a situation that has resulted in one of the world’s highest populations of forcibly displaced people, a 65% poverty rate (with some 10 million homeless), and a police apparatus in which torture is the norm. Hristov deconstructs the manner in which such a state can present itself as a democracy, examining the dual rationales of the wars on drugs and terror, which are regularly trotted out by both the Colombian government and its international supporters.

Hence this review is a positive article in which the nature of the Colombian government has been portrayed as written in the book *Blood and Capital: The Paramilitarization of Colombia*.

Where one finds an issue in media coverage is when it comes to the reviews on the documentary on Coca-Cola and corporations. U.S. involvement in Colombia is achieved along the lines of development strategy using multinational corporations. Programs like Plan Colombia, drug eradication and fumigation, the trade deals etc, are all effected through U.S corporations. The major U.S. multinational corporations in Colombia include Drummond Coal, ExxonMobil, Enron Corp, Occidental Petroleum, Dole, banadex Colombia (the former United Fruit Company or Chiquita), and Coca-Cola.

Among the articles on Colombia that I found in the Globe and Mail, the National Post and the CBC are reviews on the ‘*The Coca-Cola case*’ which is a documentary written and directed by Carmen Garcia and German Gutierrez. It is

based on lawsuits filed in the United States in 2001 and 2006 by the United Steelworkers of America and the International Labour Rights Fund on behalf of SINALTRAINAL and victims in Colombia. Several of its members were falsely imprisoned, tortured and some silenced by murder under the auspices of the Coca-Cola corporation, which is an anti-union investor in Colombia. Survivors of Isidro Gil and Adolfo de Jesus Munera are part of the production. These lawsuits charged that Coca-Cola bottlers "contracted with or otherwise directed paramilitary security forces that utilized extreme violence and murdered, tortured, unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders." The lawsuits and campaign were developed to force Coca-Cola to once and for all end further bloodshed, compensate victims and provide safe working conditions.

I found three reviews on this documentary, one each from three of the media. While the review from the CBC "Coke discourages screenings of labour documentary" (CBC, January 2010) was neutral and somewhat balanced, the other two from the National Post and the Globe and Mail showed a great sympathy for the U.S. corporate system in Colombia and therefore a social injustice to the victims of corporate cruelty exercised by the Coca-Cola corporation. Although the review from the CBC fails to point out some of the incidences of the Coca-cola company and the union workers in Colombia including the horrible conditions under which people work and the corporation's opposition to union activity, the review does present a neutral view of the documentary itself and states that the Coca-Cola corporation is fighting against the screening of the documentary.

On the contrary, “Coco-Cola: The Polar bears could not be reached for comment” (National Post) dismisses the allegations of the documentary:

For starters, the anti-Coke evidence is ill-explained and circumstantial at best. While the filmmakers interview a handful of Colombians whose union-leader relatives have been killed, there’s no hard, direct link made between the company and the slayings. (The one affidavit we see Kovalik receive linking a bottling company to a worker’s execution is from a man already in jail on corruption charges, hardly the most reliable of witnesses.) The shadowy “paramilitary” units supposedly doing the dirty work are also never fully explained — the film is content to cast them as anonymous bogeymen and leave it at that.

Ray Rogers, the human rights campaign officer involved in the documentary productions, is addressed by the review as an ‘old-school instigator’. Similarly, the review “Diatribes are badly made but fun to watch” (*Globe and Mail* March 20, 2010) condemns the documentary and ridicules it saying it is full of ‘fascinating types’ and is an un-conclusive documentary. The article in the *Globe and Mail* by Stephen Cole comments on the technical aspects of the documentary that:

Unfortunately, *The Coca-Cola Case* refuses to stay on topic, jumping at everything that makes the filmmakers mad. So we have a diatribe against Chicago college protesters – right-wing nitwits who are against anyone who would knock a U.S. company.

Elsewhere, the film compares the hourly wages of Colombian workers and Coca Cola CEOs. Application of CDA interpretation to these reviews reveals a lot of use of inferences, connotations, analogies, and figurative language that is just directed at demeaning the film “The Coca-Cola Case” and its directors. Consider the headline of the review article in the *National Post*, “The Coca-Cola Case: The polar bears could not be reached for comment” and the headline “Diatribes are badly made but fun to watch (*Globe and Mail*); backgrounding in the headlines

is so cynical. From the choice of words like “diatribe” and the construction of the headline, the reader is directed to read just the worst about the film which is a fair attempt to call the U.S. Coca-Cola corporation to account for potential human right abuses.

The review in the National Post begins:

In an early episode of the cartoon series Futurama, it's revealed that the 31st century's most popular soft drink, slum is made from the secretion of a giant alien worm. While that's disgusting and amoral, the filmmakers behind the new documentary *The Coca-Cola Case* would have you believe that the 21st century's most popular soft drink is a product far worse than worm juice

This is analogy that is certainly directed at ridiculing the film right from the first line and relating it to Coca-Cola the drink which is not the focus of the film. After all such language and critiquing the directors for making a bad film the review then attacks its characters and the personality of the directors inferring that they do not know what they are doing. The ad-hominem attacks belittle the producer while protecting 'killer' U.S. corporation, Coca-cola. Reading a section like the two paragraphs I am quoting below from “The Coca-Cola Case: The polar bears could not be reached for comment” (*National Post, Thursday March 25, 2010*) could be sickening to an informed reader:

The documentary's subjects are also hard to sympathize with. Kovalik at first seems like a force to be reckoned with, but as the film wears on, it's clear he's a bit of a camera-hog and wide-eyed idealist. Collingsworth seems a bit more level-headed, but the filmmakers deliver a near-fatal blow to his credibility when they show the lawyer with an empty bottle of Coke-produced Dasani water on his desk.

Perhaps the film should have focused less on the legalese and more on the activism, since Rogers proves to be the only captivating character. As the founder of the New York City-based human rights campaign, Rogers is an entertaining, old-school instigator in the Michael Moore vein. Sure, he may

have put blinders on when it comes to Coca-Cola, but at least he's dedicated to a cause he believes in and is able to clearly and passionately explain why on camera.

One is left with the impression therefore that these two media organs do not care much about working conditions and human rights of the workers and people of Colombia but care much about the corporations whose interests they seem to be defending. The write up in these two corporate newspapers simply remind us that the corporate media will always defend the interest of its stake holders or corporations especially in Canada and the U.S. The U.S. case in Colombia goes hand in hand with multinational corporations since most of them are U.S based. Colombia is rich in natural resources—from coal and oil, to biodiversity and tropical foods. Corporations view Colombia as prime land for exploitation of raw materials for exportation. Their “investment” in Colombia is little more than the minimum infrastructure to be able to export and they rarely invest in local communities (creating jobs for local citizens or in the needs of the communities) that would improve Colombians' quality of life. Corporations, most of which are also the base of U.S. “capitalist democracy” have taken advantage of and participated in Colombia's long and complicated armed conflict to increase resource extraction and to repress civilian opposition. The Colombian society is a corporate capitalist society like the U.S. run by the same corporations that control much of the U.S. economy.

Any media organ that writes in favour of these corporations is supporting corporate America while trampling gravely on social justice.

U.S. companies have reportedly maintained relationships with paramilitary death squads to intimidate unionists. Workers have been tortured, kidnapped, and/or unlawfully detained in order to encourage them to cease their trade union activities. The following are just some of the popular cases that have gone officially legal. Thousands are unknown.

- In 2001, Coca-Cola was sued for allegedly hiring paramilitaries to kill, threaten, torture, and kidnap Colombian trade unionists.
- In 2007, Drummond was sued for allegedly hiring paramilitaries to assassinate three union leaders.
- In 2007, Chiquita was fined for financing paramilitaries with \$1.7 million supplying AK-47 guns and entering into other deals with the United auto-defence paramilitary group.

These cases all show a trend of U.S. corporations using violence to increase profits amidst horrid working conditions and these are all issues the media should handle which unfortunately are highly evaded or supported as is the case in the two articles above supporting the Coca-Cola case. Workers often do not have the ability to stand up for their rights due to threats and violence. The Colombian government, the U.S. and corporations must ensure the welfare of workers and the communities where they operate. Unfortunately, in case after case companies rather collaborate with armed actors to deter resistance to corporations increasing their profit margins and media coverage does not reflect this. Not even in reviews as above.

CONCLUSION

After critical analysis of the situation in Colombia as reported by the media used for this research, mainstream media performance has been seen to follow patterns that support the predictions of the PM. This is revealed by many conclusions from the coverage examined.

First and foremost, from a social justice perspective, the interest of the masses in Colombia is not seen to be part of the consideration of media coverage. What is more important is the interest of various stake holders, elites, corporate owners and the established imperialist. So many omissions in the coverage of the plight of the poor; from the drug eradication programs that jeopardize and victimize them to the torture and death of union members. Through frames and connotations focus is given to news that moves away from the issues that ought to matter to the issues that favour the interests of elite agenda.

The PM predicts that the media will favour allies of the U.S. while demonizing the states that oppose its imperialism and hegemony and that is what the media are doing in their coverage of Colombia and Venezuela. While the nationalist and constructive efforts of Hugo Chavez are negated and portrayed as dictatorial and oppressive, Uribe's use of the military and paramilitary to oppress the poor is glorified.

Under a smokescreen of fighting the guerrillas in Colombia the U.S. is busy establishing its military bases and trying to consolidate its shaky hold over South America. Unfortunately for the U.S., quite a few countries are gradually

discovering the diabolic nature of U.S. 'assistance' and working to install leaders with a national conscience in their countries, such as Rafael Correa of Ecuador and Evo Morales of Bolivia.

U.S multinational corporations like Coca Cola and or the Chiquita subsidiary, Banadex Colombia, are seen to be enjoying very favourable media coverage in Colombia that is uncritical and even supportive of their dubious activities in Colombia including their anti-union tendency that imposes a lot of pain, suffering and death on the workers. Hence the corporate owners as seen by the PM continue to influence media performance.

Freedom, democracy, liberty and more are all seen to be values that capitalism and particularly the U.S. use to achieve their imperialist ideology. Insurgents are called 'terrorists' and haters of the U.S. and used as reasons for the U.S. to penetrate the Latin American countries and media coverage fails to illuminate and educate the readers on the objectives of the U.S.

Conclusively, this research establishes that the PM can be used to predict the dimensions of media coverage of Colombia. With the present turn of events in the Latin world, it is important to check the media so that as progressive governments that care for their people, their independence and therefore their interest come to power, the media should begin to report news properly. Academia especially the discipline of communication needs to continue to take the PM seriously as it continues to show that it is a good instrument for predicting media performance.

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APPENDIX

The Coca-Cola Case: The polar bears could not be reached for comment



Argus Films / NFB

The Coca-Cola Case explores a U.S. Federal Court case against Coca-Cola

Barry Hertz, National Post Thursday, Mar 25, 2010

Film Review: The Coca-Cola Case (1.5 stars)

In an early episode of the cartoon series *Futurama*, it's revealed that the 31st century's most popular soft drink, Slurm, is made from the secretion of a giant alien worm. While that's disgusting and amoral, the filmmakers behind the new documentary *The Coca-Cola Case* would have you believe that the 21st century's

most popular soft drink is a product far worse than worm juice. In fact, co-directors German Gutiérrez and Carmen Garcia claim the company behind Coke is responsible for human-rights violations, union-busting and cold-blooded murder.

The latest offering from NFB focuses on a U.S. Federal Court case against Coca-Cola, which alleges that the corporation known for its cuddly polar bear mascots is responsible for the slayings of several union leaders in Central and South America. After a too-brief introduction on the abhorrent labour practices down south, the filmmakers introduce their three key players: American lawyers Daniel Kovalik and Terry Collingsworth, and activist Ray Rogers, who spearheads the “Killer Coke” campaign familiar to most university students.

The crux of the trio’s argument against Coke is that the company should be held responsible for what goes on in its bottling plants around the world, especially in Colombia, where paramilitary groups are allegedly hired to quell union activity. Coke, on the other hand, argues it has no authority over local companies. Looking at the issue as a whole, it’s easy to side with the little guy, which would normally mean Gutiérrez and Garcia have a slam-dunk project on their hands — unfortunately, the documentary is low on both facts and cinematic flair.

For starters, the anti-Coke evidence is ill-explained and circumstantial at best. While the filmmakers interview a handful of Colombians whose union-leader relatives have been killed, there’s no hard, direct link made between the company and the slayings. (The one affidavit we see Kovalik receive linking a bottling company to a worker’s execution is from a man already in jail on corruption charges, hardly the most reliable of witnesses.) The shadowy “paramilitary” units supposedly doing the dirty work are also never fully explained — the film is content to cast them as anonymous bogeymen and leave it at that.

The documentary’s subjects are also hard to sympathize with. Kovalik at first seems like a force to be reckoned with, but as the film wears on, it’s clear he’s a bit of a camera-hog and wide-eyed idealist. Collingsworth seems a bit more level-headed, but the filmmakers deliver a near-fatal blow to his credibility when they show the lawyer with an empty bottle of Coke-produced Dasani water on his desk.

Perhaps the film should have focused less on the legalese and more on the activism, since Rogers proves to be the only captivating character. As the founder of the New York City-based human rights campaign, Rogers is an entertaining, old-school instigator in the Michael Moore vein. Sure, he may have put blinders

on when it comes to Coca-Cola, but at least he's dedicated to a cause he believes in and is able to clearly and passionately explain why on camera.

The rest of the film, on a purely technical scale, is a bit of a mess. Seemingly hastily assembled and dully edited, the picture suffers from a wealth of first-time documentary mistakes — too many shots of talking heads in taxi cabs, not enough colourful scenes and little dissenting opinion. The problem is, though, that Gutiérrez and Garcia are far from novices — they have almost 10 films between them.

While standing up to corporate malfeasance is an integral part of a democratic society, I fear weak films such as *The Coca-Cola Case* will do more harm than good. Its loud, unbalanced shrieking might be some people's cup of sugar water, but it's far from the real thing.

Read more:

<http://www.nationalpost.com/Coca+Cola+Case+polar+bears+could+reached+comment/2726540/story.html#ixzz1A1ryNRZz>

Diatribes are badly made but fun to watch

Stephen Cole

From Friday's Globe and Mail

The Coca-Cola Case

- Written and directed by Carmen Garcia and German Gutierrez
- Daniel Kovalik, Terry Collingsworth and Ray Rogers
- Classification: NA

A new NFB film suggests that Coca-Cola would like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony – except in South America, where it claims the company is “complicit” with paramilitary death squads that torture and murder union leaders.

The movie is badly made, meandering and overemphatic in the way of much left- or right-wing pamphleteering. For one thing, it can't stay focused. Montreal filmmakers Carmen Garcia and German Gutierrez make a very serious charge: That first in Guatemala, then Colombia, Coke's subsidiaries paid thugs to torture and murder close to 50 union organizers.

And the film pursues that story, after a fashion, following American lawyers Daniel Kovalik and Terry Collingsworth as they attempt to sue Coke in a U.S. court, taking advantage of the Alien Tort Claims Act, a provision that allows companies to be charged in the United States when a fair trial is deemed unlikely in the country where the alleged grievances occurred.

Unfortunately, *The Coca-Cola Case* refuses to stay on topic, jumping at everything that makes the filmmakers mad. So we have a diatribe against Chicago college protesters – right-wing nitwits who are against anyone who would knock a U.S. company. Elsewhere, the film compares the hourly wages of Colombian workers and Coca Cola CEOs. Guess who makes more?

An investigation of the right-wing student movement in the United States or a critique of capitalism would make valid documentary inquiries, but surely they are the subjects of other films.

Still, paranoids do have enemies. And there is much in *The Coca-Cola Case* that makes us figure that the soft-drink giant is a bad guy here. Coke twice offers to settle with Kovalik, first offering \$1-million for the American lawyer's Colombian clients to go away, then upping the offer, if the complainants agree to relinquish

their union positions. These are tactics that cause anyone watching the film to go, hmmm.

While the NFB film is hardly a conclusive documentary, it frequently makes for fascinating spectator sport. The movie is stocked with fascinating types, starting with lawyer Kovalik, a well-meaning Don Quixote who seems destined to lose his head to a windmill. We see the lawyer early on at his desk, sitting in front of a Che Guevara poster. Later, in a Washington hearing, he is bombarded with questions from Foghorn Leghorn-type senators, thundering about his office decor.

Why is Che a hero? Is Kovalik a Communist?, the politicians wonder. "I was humiliated," the lawyer tells filmmakers afterward. "Now I just want to go home and see my kids."

What did he expect? Did the lawyer arrive in Washington on a load of watermelons?

More intriguing are the Colombians Kovalik represents – proud, defiant men who turn down the fortune Coke offers them to disappear. These union organizers don't want money, they want justice. Someone to apologize and say they were wrong.

Book Review

Blood and Capital: The Paramilitarization of Colombia

Author(s): Jasmin Hristov

July 2009

Comments 0 Recommend 0

During a controversial July 2007 trip to Colombia, Prime Minister Stephen Harper bluntly stated that human rights concerns could not get in the way of trade relations with that country. Since last year's Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement was inked – in blood, some would say – reports of grave human rights abuses continue to emerge, receiving little or no Canadian media coverage.

An attempt at filling that void comes from Jasmin Hristov's in-depth examination of a country that, while a democracy on paper, is in fact run by what she calls a State Coercive Apparatus (SCA) composed of death squads, the military, intelligence services, and paramilitary forces. Its function over the past four decades has been to steamroll over any opposition to economic policies that are designed to benefit foreign investors, and to target any dissenters who are thrown together under the broadly defined "internal enemy" moniker (i.e., journalists, students, labour organizers, and human rights lawyers, among many others).

Based on extensive research, and three years of on-the-ground interviews with Colombians from all walks of life, Hristov presents a disturbing picture of a nation that exercises almost total control over the daily lives of its citizens – a situation that has resulted in one of the world's highest populations of forcibly displaced people, a 65% poverty rate (with some 10 million homeless), and a police apparatus in which torture is the norm. Hristov deconstructs the manner in which such a state can present itself as a democracy, examining the dual rationales of the wars on drugs and terror, which are regularly trotted out by both the Colombian government and its international supporters.

The book is generally a very accessible study that suffers only occasionally from the kind of academic language that may leave lay readers scratching their heads. And while Hristov's narrative is not overly long, there are sections in which she illustrates her points with pages of examples where a couple of paragraphs would have sufficed.

Copies of *Blood and Capital* certainly belong on the Prime Minister's reading list, and would no doubt be helpful to those Canadian business executives who remain clueless about (or willfully blind to) the human costs of high returns on Colombian investment.

Matthew Behrens

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Hold the applause for Mr. Uribe - just yet

By Maxwell A. Cameron, Ana Maria Bejarano, Felipe Botero, Eric Hershberg, Gary Hoskin

Special to Globe and Mail Update

Published Tuesday, Jun. 09, 2009 5:39PM EDT

Wednesday, Jun. 10, 2009 9:43AM EDT

President Alvaro Uribe's visit to Montreal today to address the International Economic Forum of the Americas provides a useful occasion to reflect upon the precarious state of Colombian democracy.

Canada has negotiated a free trade agreement with Colombia. The agreement, which is pending parliamentary approval, affirms the commitment of both countries to "respect the values and principles of democracy."

Canadian officials have argued that the agreement will help to create a "more prosperous, equitable and secure democracy" in Colombia.

The claim that Colombia is making progress as a democracy should be based on clear standards and solid evidence. Both are readily available. Canada and Colombia are both signatories of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Work by both Colombian and Canadian-based scholars under the aegis of the Andean Democracy Research Network provides relevant factual evidence. We make three points.

FREE, FAIR ELECTIONS

First, the Democratic Charter upholds the principle of "periodic, free, and fair elections." Although elections are held periodically in Colombia, and turnout is good, campaigns are neither entirely clean nor fair.

Voters are often intimidated, especially in rural areas. Close ties between more than 80 members of congress and paramilitary groups have been, or are currently being, investigated. Many of these tainted legislators belong to the President's camp.

Without them, he does not have a majority on congress. In light of these problems, we concur with the United Nations Development Program's Electoral

Democracy Index, which places Colombia last among a list of 18 Latin American democracies.

SEPARATION OF POWERS

Second, the charter also upholds the “separation of powers and the independence of branches of government.” Here, curiously, Colombia performs somewhat better, but hold the applause for President Uribe.

In parts of Latin America elections are free and fair but elected leaders rule like autocrats. In Colombia, elections are neither entirely fully free nor fair, yet the constitutional order is remarkably robust in light of the level of political violence that has afflicted the country over the past 40 years. For example, Colombia has one of the most vigorous and independent judiciaries in Latin America.

Yet, Mr. Uribe has battled the high courts quite consistently, attempting to reform and curtail their powers. He has appointed people who are close to him and share his views to head those agencies in charge of checking the powers of the president. A constitutional amendment allowed Mr. Uribe to be re-elected in 2006; if a future referendum clears the way for yet another term, he will be in a position to extend his reach into the judiciary, making investigations of human-rights abuses more difficult, and to roll back the powers of the courts to uphold the rights of citizens. He will also be in a better position to persecute his opponents.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Third, Colombia's biggest challenge is to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Journalists and trade unionists have been targets for assassination, and as many as three million people have been displaced from their homes as a result of the struggle between guerrillas, drug traffickers, the military and paramilitary groups.

Worse still, there are numerous ongoing investigations into macabre extrajudicial killings of civilians by the soldiers who present the bodies of their victims to inflate the “body count” and win promotions or bonuses.

Taken together, the picture that emerges is of an electoral democracy of low quality that has suffered as a consequence of widespread violence, the persistent violation of citizenship rights, and a President bent on expanding executive power.

WHAT SHOULD CANADA DO?

Should Canada reward Colombia's rulers with an agreement that they will portray as an endorsement of their legitimacy? A parliamentary committee has called for a full independent assessment of the human-rights situation in Colombia before the free-trade agreement is in place. We concur that approval of the agreement should be postponed until Colombia can demonstrate that there will be no further deterioration of the state of human rights and democracy.

We also believe that Canadian aid priorities should reflect a commitment to democracy and human rights. In a move not unrelated to the negotiation of the trade deal with Colombia, the Canadian government has announced more foreign aid for Latin America and, specifically, Colombia.

If Canadian tax dollars are going to be spent on a middle-income country, they should aid Colombian civil society organizations in their efforts to foster conditions for the free and safe exercise of citizenship rights.

The fact that Colombia has preserved its electoral democracy should be celebrated, but not taken for granted. Rather than assume a free-trade agreement will create a more secure, equitable and prosperous democracy, Canada should make an investment in ensuring that this happens.

Maxwell A. Cameron teaches comparative politics (Latin America) and international political economy at the University of British Columbia.

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Gary W. Hoskin is professor emeritus at Los Andes University, where he was director of international relations. His current research focuses on the 2006 elections in Colombia.

Chavez dreams of a continental shift Series: Che's Children: Latin America's New Left;

*Peter Goodspeed. **National Post**. Don Mills, Ont.: Jan 30, 2006 pg. A.2*

Abstract (Summary)

Without a doubt Mr. [Hugo Chavez] considers himself the political reincarnation of [Simon Bolivar], who tried, unsuccessfully, to forge the scattered post-colonial states of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia into a grand new union.

As President, Mr. Chavez has championed the poor, who make up 68% of Venezuela's population. He established new institutions, called "missions," to put Venezuela's oil money to work helping them.

Like Mr. [Fidel Castro], Mr. Chavez has frequently bolstered his regime by claiming his Bolivarian revolution is under threat from the United States. He has accused the United States of plotting to kill him, supporting a coup in 2002, placing spies inside the state oil company and of planning to invade Venezuela.

» [Jump to indexing \(document details\)](#)

Full Text

(1869 words)

(Copyright National Post 2006)

Part two of a three-part series.; Profile of Hugo Chavez.

Once governed largely by right-wing military dictatorships, 360 million people in South America have used their democratic rights to elect seven left-wing governments in the past six years, with several more expected to win power in elections this year. In the second of a three-part series, National Post reporter Peter Goodspeed looks at Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, the vehemently anti-American protagonist of the continent's new socialism.

- - -

All last week, tens of thousands of left-wing activists from around the world paraded through the streets of Caracas, Venezuela, under banners reading "Forward to Socialism."

In workshops, lecture halls and over dinner, 60,000 delegates to the sixth annual World Social Forum earnestly criticized free trade, denounced the evils of capitalism, attacked the war in Iraq, complained about U.S. imperialism and debated the plight of the poor, debt forgiveness, indigenous people's rights, gender issues and the international sex trade.

This year, the annual gathering, designed as an ideological alternative to the World Economic Forum attended by business leaders in the Swiss resort of Davos, also heaped unstinting praise on the socialist-oriented policies of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez.

A former paratrooper and failed coup plotter, who a dozen years ago was practically destitute and depended on friends for support, Mr. Chavez is now the most radical protagonist of Latin America's New Left.

The head of an oil-rich, yet poverty-stricken, country of 26 million, Mr. Chavez has practically become the ideological successor to Cuba's Fidel Castro and Latin America's most outspoken critic of the United States.

Through the use of Venezuela's windfall oil profits, he has funnelled millions of dollars into new anti-poverty programs at home and raised his country's profile abroad by offering energy deals on highly favourable terms to poor countries.

Lately, when he hasn't been threatening to cut off oil sales to the United States, Mr. Chavez has confidently discussed his plans to change the western hemisphere's balance of power by uniting all of Latin America and creating "21st century socialism" as an alternative to U.S.-style capitalism.

"Venezuela has become an epicentre of change on the world level," Mr. Chavez boasted in a speech on Friday. "That's why [U.S.] imperialism wants to sweep us away, of course ... because they say we are a bad example."

As he spoke, delegates to the World Social Forum could marvel at a series of colourful new murals that appeared on buildings all over downtown Caracas. They depict Latin America's "Great Liberator" Simon Bolivar, Che Guevara, Karl Marx and Mr. Chavez.

Mr. Chavez worships Bolivar, who liberated Latin America from the Spanish in 1819.

He has memorized Bolivar's proclamations, visited Bolivar's shrines and battlefields and officially changed Venezuela's name to "The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela."

Some of Mr. Chavez's critics, who once served in his government, insist that during Cabinet meetings the Venezuelan president occasionally pulls up an empty chair -- for Bolivar.

Without a doubt Mr. Chavez considers himself the political reincarnation of Bolivar, who tried, unsuccessfully, to forge the scattered post-colonial states of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia into a grand new union.

Like Bolivar, Mr. Chavez's vision and ambition are continental.

He dreams of creating a unified South America, composed of socialist states that form a new international power bloc, independent of the United States.

This "Bolivarian Revolution" manipulates Bolivar's legendary status in Latin America to mobilize populist support. It also both hides and justifies Mr. Chavez's persistent flirtations with authoritarianism.

"Chavez wears this Bolivarianismo as a shield against economic globalization and what he calls the 'savage neoliberalism' of the international economy," says Elias Pino Iturrieta, a historian at the Catholic University in Caracas. "Anyone questioning that view suddenly becomes a traitor to our supreme national myth."

Ironically, Bolivar was banished from Venezuela as a despot and tyrant and fled to neighbouring Colombia, where he died in 1830.

Mr. Chavez was elected President of Venezuela in 1998, just six years after he unsuccessfully led a coup against president Carlos Andres Perez.

After a two-year imprisonment, the former paratroop commander was pardoned and emerged to establish his Fifth Republic Movement, campaigning on an anti-corruption, anti-poverty program.

A charismatic and flamboyant speaker, who, even now, loves to serenade his audiences, Mr. Chavez won 53% of the vote in 1998.

Once in power, he rewrote Venezuela's constitution to enhance his own powers and now controls the legislature, the supreme court, two separate armed forces, the institutions that stage elections, and Venezuela's state-owned oil company -- the only important source of state revenue.

He recently passed a law allowing the government to supervise the content of Venezuela's news media and revised the criminal code to allow the jailing of anyone convicted of showing "disrespect" to government officials.

As President, Mr. Chavez has championed the poor, who make up 68% of Venezuela's population. He established new institutions, called "missions," to put Venezuela's oil money to work helping them.

State agencies, which report only to Mr. Chavez, now provide Venezuela's poor with deeply discounted food at bimonthly open-air markets, literacy classes, job training, adult high schools, and health centres and primary-care clinics.

Up to 40,000 Cuban doctors, nurses and teachers work in Venezuela's poorest barrios as part of a barter deal in which Mr. Chavez provides Cuba with 90,000 barrels of oil a day.

Oil is the basis of Mr. Chavez's power. He leads the world's fifth-largest crude oil exporter, which sells 60% of its output to the United States and accounts for 15% of the U.S. fuel supply.

In 2004, rising oil prices pushed Venezuela's state-owned energy company's profits past the \$25-billion mark and Mr. Chavez used some \$4-billion of that to support his new social programs.

Mr. Chavez regularly uses Venezuela's oil wealth to advance his own political causes and to leverage his country on to the world stage.

In recent months, he has forged agreements with Russia, Brazil and Spain to supply the Venezuelan military with aircraft, naval vessels and 100,000 AK47 assault rifles. He has expropriated land for distribution to peasants, bought \$100-million of public debt from Argentina, made security arrangements with Brazil and cut energy deals with China, India, Russia and Brazil.

He also has urged the rest of Latin America to join him in establishing a new, continental, state-run energy company, which would exclude big, multinational oil companies from developing South American energy resources.

He has called for the creation of a new Bank of the South, to bypass the U.S.-led World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to finance regional development projects.

And he has begun to finance a new television station, Telesur, which, like Al-Jazeera in the Middle East, is supposed to offer a Latin American view of events in competition with U.S.-owned satellite networks.

Mr. Chavez also has been instrumental in pushing for the creation of a comprehensive new trade group, called the South American Community of Nations, which includes 12 South American countries with a total population of 360 million people and a gross domestic product of \$1.3-trillion.

A staunch critic of U.S. attempts to launch a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Mr. Chavez has called instead for a new socialist-oriented grouping called the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. Mirroring the European Union, the group would seek to encourage continental integration and the development of "the social state" for the benefit of the poor, while shunning free-market economics and U.S. leadership.

"To call Chavez a populist and leave the matter there dismissively -- as his opponents consistently do -- is a mistake," warns Michael Weinstein, a political scientist at Purdue University, Indiana. "Bolivarism is a complex vision that is riddled with tensions."

Lately, Mr. Chavez has been accused of meddling in other nations' politics by publicly endorsing left-wing candidates such as Bolivia's recently elected President Evo Morales and Peru's leading presidential candidate, Ollanta Humala.

The United States and Colombia have both accused Mr. Chavez of offering sanctuary to leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC). And Peruvian officials say he has secretly funnelled \$1-million to Mr. Humala's election campaign.

Mr. Chavez has campaigned for Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua's former Sandinista leader and perennial presidential candidate. He also played a behind-the-scenes role in Mr. Morales's election in Bolivia, funding a powerful group of small-farm owners who oppose U.S.-led efforts at coca eradication.

Immediately after Mr. Morales was elected, Mr. Chavez offered Bolivia \$30-million in financial aid and signed a barter deal offering to supply it low-priced oil in exchange for agricultural produce.

Mr. Morales, the first indigenous leader in Latin America, has taken to calling Mr. Chavez "my comandante."

But it is Mr. Chavez's admiration of the Cuban revolution and his friendship with Mr. Castro that has infuriated the United States.

Venezuela's oil and its increasing financial support prop up Cuba's cash-strapped and heavily embargoed economy, allowing Mr. Castro to rebound from his devastating loss of support from the Soviet Union following the collapse of communism there in 1989.

Mr. Chavez claims he built his own revolution by emulating Mr. Castro, and he once claimed Venezuela should head "toward the same sea as the Cuban people ... a sea of happiness, true social justice and peace."

Like Mr. Castro, Mr. Chavez has frequently bolstered his regime by claiming his Bolivarian revolution is under threat from the United States. He has accused the United States of plotting to kill him, supporting a coup in 2002, placing spies inside the state oil company and of planning to invade Venezuela.

And he has threatened to cut off all Venezuelan oil exports to the United States if Washington tries to destabilize his government again.

U.S. President George W. Bush's administration loathes Mr. Chavez and has sought to isolate him, but it denies trying to harm or overthrow him.

"I think we have to view, at this point, the government of Venezuela as a negative force in the region," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said during her confirmation hearings last year.

Last February, CIA Director Porter Goss put Venezuela at the top of a list of Latin American countries described as areas of "concern." He referred to it as a "potential area for instability" and a "flashpoint" and claimed Mr. Chavez was "consolidating his power by using technically legal tactics to target his opponents, and was meddling in the region."

More recently, Washington has attempted, without success, to interfere with Venezuela's arms deals and has expressed concern over Mr. Chavez's press restrictions.

Still, Mr. Chavez's dream of South American unity may be more imminent today than at any time since Bolivar's original bid for continental solidarity.

The repeated election of socialist or left-leaning governments in Latin America is creating what Mr. Chavez proudly calls a "new geopolitical map to counterbalance the global dominance of the United States."

Public opinion polls also give Mr. Chavez an 80% approval rating.

This Christmas, Venezuela's top-selling toy was a Hugo Chavez action figure that outsold the more traditional Spider-man or Superman.

When squeezed, the doll recites one of Mr. Chavez's anti- American rants.

Venezuela's smoking gun

Alvaro Vargas Llosa

Washington— From Wednesday's Globe and Mail

Published Wednesday, Jul. 28, 2010 5:00AM EDT

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If anyone thought Colombia's Alvaro Uribe, who'll be succeeded as president on Aug. 7 by Juan Manuel Santos, was going quietly into that good night, they were wrong. The Western Hemisphere has been shaken by his government's exposé of the sanctuary that Venezuela's Hugo Chavez has provided to two Colombian terrorist groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Mr. Uribe's ambassador to the Organization of American States presented photos, videos, satellite maps and testimonies as evidence that 1,500 guerrillas enjoy protection in 14 camps along the Venezuelan border with Colombia. Ivan Marquez, a member of the FARC's high command, is based there.

Venezuela's complicity with the FARC is no scoop. In December of 2004, Colombia used bounty hunters to capture FARC's international spokesman, Rodrigo Granda, in Venezuela. In March of 2008, Colombia took out a FARC camp headed by Raul Reyes two kilometres inside Ecuador, a Chavez ally. A video posted by a Spanish journalist on YouTube shows the guerrillas in La Gabarra, a village in the Guasualito area inside Venezuela's Apure region. Not suspecting the hidden microphone, a military boss from a nearby Venezuelan base admits he is aware of them.

But, this time, the evidence is overwhelming. Mr. Chavez has reacted, in the words of former Colombian vice-president Humberto de la Calle, like a husband who comes home at 3 a.m. with lipstick on his face and, when confronted by his wife, walks out furiously, slamming the door. Caracas has broken ties with Bogota – which doesn't alter the status quo since ties were frozen a year ago. For the umpteenth time, Mr. Chavez has announced preparations for a war he doesn't intend to wage, that his army would swiftly lose, and that he knows Colombia is too prudent to join.

In saner times, Mr. Chavez would not survive this exposure. But positioning himself outside of international law has never cost him much. He knows he's in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, an anti-terrorism measure passed two weeks after 9/11. But he also knows that the OAS is a dysfunctional organization headed by Jose Miguel Insulza, a man intimidated by

Mr. Chavez's government; that the United States won't attack Venezuela; that Brazil is too ideologically sympathetic with Mr. Chavez and interested in a sphere of influence that counterbalances the U.S.; and that he controls his army sufficiently to pre-empt any rebellion.

Caracas is also aware that Mr. Santos, Colombia's incoming president, has a more accommodating personality than Mr. Uribe. Before the outgoing president ordered the exposé, Mr. Santos was on a mission to repair relations with Venezuela. He had announced that Maria Angela Holguin, a non-ideological Venezuelan expert, will be his foreign minister, that his emphasis will be on achieving economic growth, and that he welcomed Mr. Chavez at his inauguration. Mr. Chavez is calculating that, once Mr. Uribe is out of the picture, he'll have a less obsessed foe.

None of which bodes well for the prospects of Mr. Chavez getting rid of the FARC and the ELN. Except that the popular Mr. Uribe won't shut up. He has placed the international community in an awkward position by revealing a degree of collaboration hard to find anywhere else between a state and the terrorist groups of a neighbouring country – comparable situations usually involve terrorists harassing a neighbouring country from a territory over which the national state is sovereign in name only.

Even if Mr. Chavez survives this, Venezuela is under notice that everything inside its territory will be meticulously revealed. The warning may scare some allies of Caracas. Since Raul Reyes's camp was targeted inside Ecuador, that country's president, Rafael Correa, has apparently broken ties with the FARC.

Some Colombians initially criticized Mr. Uribe for rarefying the climate of the handover of power. But he's actually done Mr. Santos a favour. No government with this much evidence of a neighbour's complicity in crime can afford to sit on it; sooner or later, Mr. Santos would have had to confront the situation – and bear the cost Mr. Uribe has now assumed. Should it have been revealed later on that Colombia did nothing, Mr. Santos would have been pummelled for jeopardizing the success of the "democratic security" policies of recent years.

Alvaro Vargas Llosa is a senior fellow at the Independent Institute.

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Poor are fed by *Chavez's* vanity; Clinics, cheap food boost support, but poverty remains high in Venezuela;

Tim Harper. Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: May 8, 2006. pg. A.01

Full Text

(1335 words)

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From here, high atop Caracas, as the dust kicks up from the packed van hurtling down the clay roads offering the only means of temporary escape from this poverty, it is hard to see Hugo Chavez's "Bolivarian Revolution."

What you can see are sheets of scrap metal cobbled together to form a shantytown that provides shelter for 25,000 in what used to be a forest.

You can see the sign advertising a clinic, until you realize it, too, is scrap, used to keep out the elements, not advertise a needed service.

You've already seen the piles of garbage in the streets of the barrios down below, the pharmacy behind bars to deter thieves, the piles of sewage pipes on the street representing a construction project stalled by bureaucratic wrangling, the "chop shop" street where stolen cars are stripped for parts.

In the kitchen inside a hovel, volunteers are stirring an eight- kilogram pot of lentils, enough to feed 150 at lunch with government- supplied food. There's chicken, but the women running the kitchen say they haven't seen meat for some time.

Poverty remains stubbornly high here, and has risen to more than 50 per cent during Chavez's reign, even as the economy recovers from a debilitating national strike in 2002-'03 - and is growing.

But if Chavez is to be returned to power in elections next December and beyond - how many years is a favourite parlour game in Venezuela - he will draw his strength from the squatters in the forest and the neighbourhoods below.

It won't come from his decisions to rewrite the constitution, or rename the country the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, or rename his congress the National Assembly.

It won't be because he added an eighth star to the flag, in a nod to the Simon Bolivar proposal of the 19th century, or because he changed the horse in the country's coat of arms so it gallops to the left, not the right.

These are the vanity decisions of a leader often consumed by hubris.

He will do it by importing some 17,000 Cuban doctors and Cuban medical supplies to provide much-needed health care to the masses.

He will do it by feeding the poorest of the poor in subsidized supermarkets where cheap lentils and pasta are packaged in plastic advertising articles of the Venezuelan constitution, and by launching ambitious literary programs.

He will do it by providing free tuition to his Bolivar University and bringing food and health care each day to Parque Carabobo for the homeless of Caracas.

He does not have universal support in the poor barrios outside Caracas, but people will tell you things are improving.

"No government is perfect," says Fernando Aranguren, a fast-talking aspiring politician who glad-hands everyone in his barrio as he acts as the *Toronto Star's* guide and bodyguard, though he appears to tilt only slightly on the plus side of 100 pounds.

"The revolution will never be perfect because it is run by men, not by machines," he says. "There is corruption, there are defects.

"But day-to-day, for the first time, a government has appealed to the masses because he has taken notice of the masses.

"Yes, we have garbage on the streets. But there is garbage on the streets of Brooklyn, too."

Alejandro Herrero, a 73-year-old whose family has run a store in this neighbourhood since the 1940s, says he sees the good in Chavez, but is not shy about "constructively criticizing him."

"In some ways, things have improved," he says. "People are receiving more now and they are sharing in the petrol wealth inside the country.

"But he is also sharing a lot of it outside."

Herrero has hit on one of the common criticisms of Chavez, who is accused of spending too much money earned by Venezuela's natural riches on trying to build alliances outside the country to further his own personal ambitions.

The right-wing opposition Primero Justicia tells voters Chavez has pledged \$4 billion (U.S.) in new social programs this year, while he is spending \$16 billion (U.S.) in an effort to win support for his particular brand of socialism outside the country.

The centrepieces of Chavez's social revolution are the clinics in the barrios, clean two-storey brick structures with second-floor apartments for the Cuban doctors.

In the waiting area are posters backing Chavez and pictures of Chavez and Cuban leader Fidel Castro embracing. The doctors' program will now be expanded to Bolivia. New President Evo Morales agreed to sign on when he met Chavez and Castro in Havana late last month.

Nurse Carmen Hernandez says the doctors can treat up to 40 patients a day, and will attend emergencies day or night.

"Before the doctors came," she says, "people had to go to hospital. Very often they died in the hospital.

"They were poorly served."

At Chavez's chain of Mercal subsidized supermarkets, staples such as chicken, rice, pasta, milk and cooking oil can be purchased at substantial discounts.

"It is working," one diplomat said. "He is getting food to the poorest of the poor."

The supermarkets look like campaign headquarters with grocery shelves.

One Chavez poster exhorts voters to choose him for "Seven More Years - For Now."

Another celebrates "The Motherland, Free and Glorious."

Even the packaging touts Chavez programs.

Damelis Castro grabs a bag of lentils in a wrapper printed with Article 322 of the Venezuelan constitution, avowing the country's right to security and defence.

Mixing self-defence and cheap food is a blessing for Castro, who says it's a way for the people to understand what their government is doing. Shopping in a state-run supermarket with low prices can save 40 per cent, sometimes 50 per cent, on her weekly grocery bill, she says.

And who does she have to thank for that?

Her face brightens. "Hugo Chavez," says Castro, standing beneath a poster extolling the Venezuelan leader's virtues.

Chavez says Mercal is serving an average of 15.6 million people a month, and provided 1.5 million tonnes of foodstuffs to Venezuelans last year.

A couple of blocks away, a line of the homeless has formed in front of the Mision Negra Hipolita, where they'll receive a basic meal and glass of orange juice.

Workers will offer "rehabilitation" if they need it, and ask them to counsel others on the street in return.

But worker Elba Vasquez concedes the program has not made much of a dent in the homeless problem in Caracas.

"What can we do?" she asks. "If they choose to live on the streets, they will do so because we can't force anyone into rehabilitation."

[Illustration]

Reuters photo Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, looking out from a new house that he gave to a family during a weekly radio broadcast, will likely be returned to power on the support of the country's poorest.

Credit: *Toronto Star*

Why Chavez and Co. are about to lose clout

Alvaro Vargas Llosa

Lima— From Wednesday's *Globe and Mail*

Published Tuesday, Jan. 05, 2010 5:21PM EST

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There has been abundant talk about Latin America's tilt to the left this past decade, but such chatter will soon become antiquated. Presidential contests in key countries are almost certain to move the region in the opposite direction.

Chile's runoff election this month will probably end the centre-left coalition's two-decade hold on power and the emergence of businessman Sebastian Pinera as a political force. In May, Colombians will vote either for President Alvaro Uribe – if he wins approval for an ill-advised constitutional reform – or for someone who will carry on with his policies. And, according to every poll, Brazilians are likely to pick Jose Serra, the governor of Sao Paulo state, over President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's chosen successor in October.

If these indeed turn out to be the results, the ideological shift that was first hinted last year with Ricardo Martinelli's victory in Panama and Porfirio Lobo's election in Honduras will be powerfully reinforced.

But there is more. Peru's left-wing nationalist candidate is fading after almost winning in 2006; a long list of centre-right candidates (a couple of whom coquettishly call themselves centre-left, but are not perceived as such) dominates the polls. And, by all

indications, most Argentines support various opponents of the socialist policies of Cristina Kirchner's government. This will make it difficult for her husband, ex-president Nestor Kirchner, should he run next year.

The significance of the tilt to the right is potentially twofold. Could it mean a new wave of reform not seen since the 1990s and a foreign-policy realignment across the continent?

In theory, some of the favoured leaders will aim to make Latin America much more entrepreneurial and economically diversified. The region is still far too dependent on natural resources, its investment levels are too low compared with other newcomers to the development race and its education standards continue to be dismal. But there is no guarantee that the shift in ideological direction will bring meaningful change. Much like their social-democratic rivals, the centre-rightists tend to settle for the status quo. Many seem to have exhausted their reformist ambitions with the liberalization and privatization of the 1990s, which left a sour taste because of the corruption involved.

The tilt to the right could be more momentous in foreign policy, reducing the disproportionate influence of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Brazil would stop indulging his whims and providing cover for his geopolitical gamesmanship. Chile would drop its ambiguity toward Venezuela's foreign interventionism,

an attitude explained by President Michelle Bachelet's own ideological roots. And the re-emergence of Argentina as modernizing regional leader could deprive Mr. Chavez of much breathing space.

Cutting Mr. Chavez down to size would also help to release some of the pressure Venezuela places on Colombia and Peru. The presence of left-tilting governments in the region has allowed Venezuela to pick fights with Colombia and to delegate to Bolivia's Evo Morales the mission of attacking Peru's president. Colombia's concentration on its war against the narco-guerrillas and the care it has placed on avoiding armed conflict with Venezuela have prevented Bogota from shaking off Mr. Chavez's meddling. In the case of Peru, Lima's difficult relations with neighbouring Chile have made it hard to counter Bolivia's pressure.

Predicting anything in Latin America is mighty risky. But if I were sitting at a desk at Barack Obama's National Security Council or the State Department, I would be preparing for a strange scenario in which a left-leaning American president might find more common ground with right-leaning Latin American leaders than he has been able to find with neighbours too ready to let Venezuela – with Cuba's help – undermine Washington's limited engagement with the region so far.

Alvaro Vargas Llosa is a senior fellow at the Independent Institute.

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ANSWERING THE CHAVEZ CALL TO ARMS; Venezuela Army reserves swell with poor volunteers training for an imminent U.S. attack

Jens Erik Gould. Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: Aug 28, 2005. pg. A.11

Abstract (Summary)

Full Text

(908 words)

(Copyright (c) 2005 Toronto Star, All Rights Reserved.)

Marialena Moron always wanted to be a soldier. A 44-year-old mother of six, she spends her Saturday mornings learning how to salute in the hot sun.

Beside her are 250 men and women - from 18-year-old kids to senior citizens - standing in formation on an overgrown soccer field south of Caracas.

For Moron, a street vendor, the military reserves offers a chance to advance women's rights. But for many of her mates, heeding President Hugo Chavez's call to repel a U.S. assault is Job One.

"We are preparing for the invasion," says Lt. Octavio Serrano, who commands Moron's reserve unit. "They could come internally with the CIA ... or it could be directly and militarily, like they invaded Iraq."

Moron's unit, now with more than 2,000 registered volunteers, was one of many created in April when the president announced an aggressive plan to boost Venezuela's reserve forces from 50,000 to 2 million men and women.

Chavez has repeatedly accused Washington of trying to overthrow his government and even attempting to assassinate him.

The United States has denied all the allegations, but conservative Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson inflamed the situation last week when he said the U.S. should assassinate Chavez because "it's a whole lot cheaper than starting a war."

Chavez, who was visiting his friend Fidel Castro in Cuba during the uproar, has blamed Washington for the failed coup d'etat against him in 2002, as well as national strikes that ended in early 2003 and last year's recall referendum against his presidency.

"If something happens to me, the responsible one will be George W. Bush," Chavez declared Friday.

Exacerbating his fears is his conviction that Washington has designs on Venezuela's petroleum reserves - the hemisphere's largest.

Gen. Melvin Lopez Hidalgo says Venezuela must train ordinary citizens because its armed forces can't match the U.S. military machine. If necessary, he says, Venezuelans will emulate the guerrilla tactics used in the current insurgency in Iraq.

"(The Americans) can come in here, bomb us, etc., but the people can respond."

However, former defence minister Fernando Ochoa, who was in office when Chavez attempted a failed coup in 1992, says Venezuelan military reservists are incapable of the sort of ideological warfare found in current conflicts in the Middle East.

Serrano says his reservists-to-be, drawn largely from the ranks of the poor, are being trained with the army's FAL assault rifles and within six months should be capable of replacing regular army units if necessary.

Yet four months into their training, the men and women lined up behind him are still wearing makeshift uniforms and have not yet touched a rifle.

Critics of Chavez say he is imitating the Cuban military by giving himself direct command over a force more loyal and ideological than the regular army.

"His inspiration is the model of the Cuban army," says opposition congressional deputy Pedro Pablo Alcantara, who claims Cuban military advisers helped draft a new law governing Venezuela's armed forces.

"The national reserves and territorial guard are practically a new militia."

Alcantara and other critics also argue that enlistments are on the rise not because of anti-Americanism but because reservists will receive a daily stipend equivalent to \$7.40, while the regular minimum wage works out to about \$6.25 a day.

Military analysts estimate that 100,000 men and women have registered for the reserves, nearly double the number that Lopez says existed before the presidential call to enlist.

Chavez, who says he is leading a "revolution for the poor," has nicknamed U.S. President George W. Bush "Mister Danger" and has called the Bush

administration the "most savage, cruel and murderous empire that has existed in the history of the world."

Last week, the U.S. revoked the visas of six Venezuelan military officers suspected of drug trafficking. The move came days after Chavez accused U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents of spying and suspended bilateral cooperation with the DEA.

Washington also has accused Chavez of fronting an increasingly authoritarian regime and funding regional guerrilla movements, including Colombia's FARC revolutionaries.

Military analyst Alberto Garrido says increased U.S. criticism of Venezuela is part of an "information war" that marked a shift from a conciliatory policy to a more aggressive, Pentagon-driven strategy toward Caracas.

The hardened U.S. stance, Garrido adds, came in response to Chavez's growing influence in the region - strengthened by energy agreements with Latin American and Caribbean countries - and his strong alliance with Castro's Cuba.

Still, some analysts and economists argue that Chavez will ultimately not compromise his relationship with his nation's largest oil customer and financial market. Venezuela continues to feed 15 per cent of the U.S. oil market, which accounts for 60 per cent of its exports of about 2 million barrels a day.

Meanwhile, Chavez's domestic critics allege that he is circumventing the regular armed forces to create a military body that can quash opposition at home.

But volunteer Jesus Leon, a 30-year-old sculptor, is having none of that.

"Our fatherland is at risk," he says. "Civilians should prepare themselves for the military side of life."

Jens Erik Gould reports on politics and economics from Venezuela.

Falling back on a reliable scapegoat; Running out of 'imperialists' to blame, Chavez has turned to the Jews

David Frum. National Post. Don Mills, Ont.: Jan 23, 2010. pg. A.25

Abstract (Summary)

Full Text

(786 words)

Copyright CanWest Digital Media Jan 23, 2010

I picked an exciting week to visit Venezuela. The night before my arrival, the regime seized the country's largest shopping mall. The day after, Israeli authorities disclosed that a recently intercepted shipment of missiles to Hezbollah had originated in Venezuela.

These two dissimilar events are importantly related. The seized mall belonged to one of Venezuela's wealthiest Jewish families. Following an armed attack on the country's most visible synagogue in January 2009, the seizure sent a strong message: None of you are safe.

The Chavez regime's turn toward harshly anti-Jewish policies is part of an ominous self-radicalization.

Days before seizing the mall, the Chavez regime had grabbed a chain of French-owned hypermarkets. In the regime's early days, nationalizations were concentrated in the energy sector and were generally compensated, although at prices well below market values. Now, however, there is no pretense of payment -- and the targets reveal more ominous intentions.

In 2007, the regime shut down an independent television station. It has closed dozens of independent radio operations. It has gained control of the country's largest Internet service provider. (You can still access independent sites from within the country -- like the indispensable CaracasChronicles.com-- but I am told by well-informed sources that the regime's Cuban-assisted intelligence services do monitor who reads what.) There are two prevailing theories of events here.

Theory One is that the regime is cocky and confident -- and is determinedly driving toward a Cuban-model dictatorship. Last year's scheduled elections for the national assembly were postponed to this September. Many Venezuelans speculate they will be postponed again. But then, postponement may not be necessary: In the interim, Chavez has staffed the supposedly independent electoral commission with regime loyalists, who are gerrymandering districts against the opposition.

Chavez sometimes loses elections, but those losses are never allowed to matter. If he loses a governorship, he transfers the governor's powers -- and tax revenues -- to the central government. If he loses a mayoralty, he establishes an independent municipal "revolutionary" structure and shifts the mayor's powers to his own creatures.

Theory Two is that the regime is radicalizing because it is disintegrating. Chavez has overspent his oil revenues and is inflating the currency to cover the huge fiscal gap. He has applied price controls to conceal the inflation, but of course that generates shortages of everything from engineering supplies to coffee.

(Remember the old joke: If communists ruled the Sahara, there'd be a shortage of sand? Venezuela used to be the world's No. 2 producer of coffee. Now people stand in line for it. Underinvestment in the electrical network causes blackouts and brownouts throughout the country. In Maracaibo, the second biggest city, two-hour blackouts roll through every quarter of town. Caracas is exempt. But even there, the streetlights are dimmed at night, aggravating the country's horrible traffic safety and crime problems.)

Chavez fixes blame for the shortages -- and especially the food shortages -- on speculators and capitalists. But you can only do this for so long. Eventually, you must act. So when rice became scarce, he grabbed a rice-processing facility from Cargill.

Last week, Chavez devalued the local currency, the Bolivar, from a fixed rate of 2.15 Bolivars to the dollar to 4.3. (The market rate is lower still, closer to 6 to 1.) Chavez issued orders that nobody was to raise prices after the devaluation. When prices of course jumped anyway, as they had to, somebody had to be punished. The blow fell upon the French grocery chain Exito. Blame the foreign imperialists when prices rise after the value of money falls!

The trouble for Chavez is that eventually you run out of imperialists to punish. And yet the prices will keep rising and the shortages will get worse.

What he needs most of all is confrontation with a foreign enemy on whom all social evils can be blamed. The United States? Yes, but only up to a point. This is not the Cold War anymore; there is no Soviet superpower protector. If Chavez goes too far -- if, for example, he is caught too blatantly aiding the FARC guerillas operating against U.S. ally Colombia -- he risks overwhelming retaliation.

No, the enemy he needs should be remote but omnipresent, one who can be represented as powerful but who cannot in fact hit back. Who does that sound like? Hmmmmm ... Oh yes! That favourite reliable standby of thugs and dictators everywhere.

And so the airwaves fill with attacks on "criminal Zionists" and the country's walls are suddenly daubed with slogans like this which I saw yesterday under a spraypainted Star of David: "The Jews are the cause of all our misery."

(c) David Frum

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Credit: David Frum; Special to the National Post

Firebrand Chavez and U.S. ally Uribe of Colombia hold talks

Last Updated: Friday, July 11, 2008 | 12:11 PM ET Comments 15 Recommend 167.

CBC News

Venezuela's controversial president Hugo Chavez, seen here in March, is having talks Friday with Colombia's Alvaro Uribe to discuss improving prickly relations between their two countries. (Miraflores Press Office/Associated Press) Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Colombia's Alvaro Uribe are attempting a rapprochement after months of angry exchanges that threatened billions of dollars in trade and unleashed a diplomatic crisis in South America.

The continent's leading U.S. opponent, Chavez, and Uribe, seen as Washington's most important ally in the region, will set aside their feud for talks in Venezuela on Friday because, analysts say, each benefits politically from normalized relations.

The countries are key commercial partners, with more than \$6 billion in trade last year and Uribe says he expects to sign accords to link the Andean neighbours with two new railways.

For both presidents, "the interest right now is to lower the level of confrontation and strengthen relations in common areas, especially the economy," said Sadio Garavini, a former Venezuelan diplomat.

Relations sank to their lowest point in decades in March after Colombia attacked a rebel camp in Ecuador. Chavez responded by briefly dispatching troops to Venezuela's border with Colombia, pulling his ambassador and threatening to cut back trade. He later restored normal ties.

During a row over Chavez's mediation role with Colombian rebels, the Venezuelan president called Uribe a "pawn of the U.S. empire" and likened him to a mafia boss. "A man like that doesn't deserve to be the president of a country — coward, liar!" the always outspoken Chavez said.

Support for rebels crucial irritant

Colombia, meanwhile, accused Chavez of offering an open-ended loan of at least \$250 million to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC — charges bolstered by documents that Uribe's government said were retrieved from a laptop at the bombed guerrilla camp.

Chavez denied the accusation and Colombia's ambassador to Caracas, Fernando Marin, said the laptop documents are not on Friday's agenda.

Chavez made reconciliation easier for Uribe when he called on the FARC last month to disarm and free all the hostages it holds.

Through what appeared to be Chavez's mediation, the guerrillas freed six hostages earlier this year.

But FARC said subsequently that the release was a unilateral gesture. And then Colombia's military rescued 15 rebel-held hostages on July 2, pushing Uribe's already immense popularity to new highs.

"Uribe is strengthened internationally," while "Chavez has realized he was riding the losing horse" and has expediently adjusted his stance toward Colombia, said Rafael Nieto, a Colombian former deputy justice minister.

Chavez is also facing state and local elections in November, and maintaining a conflict with Colombia could be unpopular among Venezuelans, analysts say.

The talks — the first one-on-one meeting between the two since August — are being held at Venezuela's Paraguana oil refining complex on the Caribbean coast.

Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2008/07/11/uribe-chavez.html#ixzz18p8OPWzE>

Chavez and FARC

Anonymous. **National Post.** Don Mills, Ont.: May 10, 2008. pg. A.28

Abstract (Summary) Other e-mails apparently describe Venezuelan intelligence efforts to smuggle shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades into FARC hands.

Full Text(410 words)

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been accused of many things: squandering his country's oil income, suppressing opposition media, using his army to intimidate the citizenry. Now, documents recovered from computers belonging to FARC, the drug-

funded Leninist insurgency based in Colombia, suggest Mr. Chavez may be actively undermining the sovereign government of its western neighbour. If so, the Western Hemisphere may be about to gain its first internationally designated state sponsor of terrorism.

Specific details of the file trove were scarce until The Wall Street Journal went to press on Thursday with a front-page story on the contents. In it, U. S. intelligence sources provided with copies of the documents claim that they appear to be authentic and that they contain damning details of high-level co-operation between Mr. Chavez and FARC. Colombia is still awaiting the results of a forensic audit of the files by Interpol. But at least some of the publicly known content of the document trove has been confirmed. (In a particularly absurd twist, FARC chose to disavow the existence of high-level contacts with the Venezuelan government ... by issuing a communique on the Web site of the Venezuelan information ministry.)

The activities described in the Colombian FARC files should arouse the highest indignation wherever the ideal of nonintervention between sovereign states is still taken seriously. Certainly it would take a great deal of nerve on the part of Mr. Chavez's supporters on the North American left, who have been screaming continually about the sacred inviolability of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, to ignore the revelations. An e-mail from 2005 confirms the long-suspected presence of a FARC operations base inside Venezuela. Other e-mails apparently describe Venezuelan intelligence efforts to smuggle shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades into FARC hands. Mr. Chavez's personal involvement is confirmed throughout.

The beneficiaries of all this red solidarity are formally considered a terrorist organization under the laws of Canada, the United States and other senior democracies. Founded in 1964, FARC has a black history of atrocities that includes terrorism, executions, hijackings, assassinations, kidnap-pings and torture. The group is, in short, an enemy of democracy and order in Colombia, and of the human race generally. Providing aid to FARC would be the most sordid crime to date in the annals of Chavismo. And if Interpol confirms the truth of the Journal report, the legitimacy of the Venezuelan government should climb to the top of the agenda for both Canadian and U. S. lawmakers.

Credit: National Post

Strange times in Colombia

Alvaro Vargas Llosa

Washington— From Wednesday's Globe and Mail (2009)

The rise of dark horse Antanas Mockus to front-runner in Colombia's presidential race has international tongues wagging. Some see him as a Trojan horse for Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. Others compare him to Peru's Alberto Fujimori, who went from outsider to dictator. And then there are those who think Colombians have gone cuckoo after so many years of internal war.

You would be forgiven for shuddering at the thought of a Green Party president who, as rector of a university, mooned his students, got married atop an elephant and, as mayor of Bogota, walked around the capital city in a spandex suit and sent about 400 mimes to enforce traffic laws. Not the kind of chap with whom Queen Elizabeth II is clamouring to have tea and scones.

And you would be forgiven for fearing Mr. Mockus's foreign policy after he said he "admired" Mr. Chavez for submitting his rule to the ballot box (later downgrading the term to "respect"), or that he would extradite current President Alvaro Uribe should Ecuador, a Venezuelan ally, seek to try him for Colombia's incursion into Ecuadorean territory during an attack on a terrorist camp. (Mr. Mockus later apologized for not being an international law expert.)

No, Colombians have not suddenly decided to throw away the progress Mr. Uribe achieved in cornering the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), liberating the economy from insecurity and restoring morale. I would suggest they are trying, awkwardly, to preserve what is best about the President while rectifying the excesses of his era.

Juan Manuel Santos, who was Mr. Uribe's successful defence minister, is locked in a close race with Mr. Mockus in the first round of the May 30 elections. Mr. Mockus has pledged to honour Mr. Uribe's anti-FARC policy and recalled that he was commended by the President when, as mayor of Bogota, he collaborated with his security policy. And Colombia's leftist party, the Democratic Pole, commands a humiliating 6 per cent in the polls.

But Colombians also want to evolve from a country in which a president towered above the institutions to one in which institutions temper political power. Mr. Chavez and Mr. Fujimori were originally elected by voters sick of weak governments. Mr. Mockus, who has risen under a very strong President, says Colombia's chief problem is "illegality and the justification of illegality by people who normally behave themselves." His ethical inclination – substantiated by two corruption-free stints as mayor – resonates in a country plagued with scandals

ranging from links between the politicians and paramilitary organizations to political espionage by the secret police.

Mr. Mockus's support comes from young people, urban areas and the middle classes. It is not poor Colombians but the elites who are craving for an end to political excess. The poor are supporting Mr. Santos – Mr. Uribe's man. This tension between liberalism (in the classical sense) and authoritarianism has defined Colombian history since the tempestuous relationship between Francisco Santander (vice-president) and Simon Bolivar (president) in the republic's beginning. Currently, the tension occurs not just among Colombians but within Colombians: The same voters who give Mr. Uribe a 72-per-cent approval rating are making Mr. Mockus the front-runner.

But a Mockus victory is not a foregone conclusion. His rise as a candidate has been slowed because of his silly statements. Questions abound over his ability to govern, considering his party has only five senators and three representatives in the Colombian Congress, and his personal ambitions.

Marcela Prieto, executive director of Colombia's Institute of Political Science, told me that "governability would not be a huge problem because the Liberal Party would back him, although he would have trouble putting together stable coalitions. As regards his unpredictability, the danger is attenuated by the fact that his is not a one-man effort: His campaign has brought together three former mayors of Bogota and the former mayor of Medellin, all of whom have strong egos and will act as checks and balances."

I have seen too many anti-politicians not to fear Mr. Mockus turning into a Fujimori or a Chavez. But the more I observe Colombia, the more I am convinced that his support is for the right reasons, whether he delivers or not – meaning that Colombians will hold him in check if he wins and becomes messianic. And they will force Mr. Santos to restore the pre-eminence of institutions if he bests his rival. A comforting thought because I, too, was starting to think that this most admirable of countries was going cuckoo.

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VITA AUCTORIS

Hermes Fomutar studied languages for his Bachelor of Arts degree. He has worked as language (English, French and Spanish) teacher in African countries, Colombia and in Canada. He has also worked as journalist and editor of newspapers and magazines that are community and social justice oriented in Africa, Colombia and Windsor, Canada. He hopes to continue to pursue his career as an educationist within the scope of Education, Communication and Technology.