

Making peace with war?

A research about the effect of third- party
intervention in Colombia

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The Master thesis in front of you is the final result of the Master specialization Conflicts, Territories and Identities at the Radboud University Nijmegen. I started this specialization because I wanted to expand my knowledge on conflicts: what causes a conflict? Why do some conflicts last over more than 50 years while others only last for a year? What role do external parties have in conflict? Because I am interested in so many aspects of conflict and find so many cases fascinating, it was hard for me to determine what to write my thesis about. The case of Colombia, however, was always in the back of my mind. Ever since I was little, this conflict intrigued me. At first, it were mostly the kidnappings that caught my attention. Later, it stroke me how many internal parties are actually involved and that the United States was very much interfering in the conflict. In the end, I decided to focus on the relation between the United States and the Colombian conflict because the effect of third- party interventions on conflict interest me tremendously.

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I have put blood, sweat and tears in this thesis so I hope you will enjoy reading it.

Abstract

In this thesis the United States “War on Drugs” intervention through “Plan Colombia” is taken as a case study to illustrate the effect of unilateral partisan third- party interventions on the political, economic, and military power of most important actors in armed intrastate conflicts. Realist theory, with power as a central concept, is at the core of the research. According to realists, actors will only choose to undertake an action if they expect this will strengthen their position relative to the status quo. One can therefore argue that the United States intervention was carried out with the goal to increase the power of the Colombian government and to decrease the power of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The effectiveness of the intervention is determined by its effect on the power of the FARC and the Colombian government. By using the research method of process- tracing, it is found that the “War on Drugs” intervention caused an increase in the power of the Colombian government. The presence of a causal relation between the intervention and the power of the FARC, on the other hand, is less clear. The thesis illustrates that the focus of the “War on Drugs” and “Plan Colombia” on coca eradication is too limited. The “War on Drugs” can only be won and the Colombian conflict can only be solved if the economic, social, and political problems are also addressed.

Key words: Colombia, conflict, power, third- party intervention, realism, United States, “War on Drugs”

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1. Introduction to the Colombian Case

“My grandfather left the house that day with my eldest son, as he lived with them. He didn't know there were soldiers along the way. They shot him in front of my son. They covered the child with dust and blood. He says he screamed and cried for his grandfather, that he couldn't stop screaming. He thought they'd shoot him, too. They killed my grandfather just because they felt like it. They shot him from seven meters away. He was wearing normal clothes, not a guerrilla uniform. After they shot him, they stripped him and buried his clothes in the road.” – Sol Milena Cordoba, San José del Guaviare (Power, 2011).

While this story probably leaves many people in a state of disbelief and shock it is unfortunately part of people's everyday lives in Colombia. For the past six decades, citizens who travel for work, visit their family or go out at night face risks. In fact, almost all Colombians deal with violence and crime at some point in their lives. Sometimes, crime entails a carefully planned attack against guerrilla group members or the government but innocent civilians are also killed. The conflict, with the government on one side and guerrilla groups on the other, has caused violence, extortion and abduction for more than sixty years (Lalancette, 2010, p. 3 and 7). Thousands of people have stories similar to the one above. It shows that common people who do not actively support either the government or guerrilla groups are heavily affected by the conflict.

Dissatisfaction regarding the political, economic and social systems are mainly put forward as core reasons for rebellion in Colombia (Alex, 2010; Lopez, 2011). Motives are shifting however, and new actors emerge while interests of the fighting parties change. Nowadays, drugs are one of the key drivers behind the conflict: guerrilla groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) (see 1.3.4.) and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) gain most of their income through crop cultivation and illegal drug trade (Cook, 2011, p. 22; Alex, 2010, p. 4). The revenues that can be earned through drugs also cause new groups to emerge in the conflict and has replaced people's ideological motives to rise up and fight against their government. Also, the drug trade and cultivation is accompanied with heavy violence disrupting Colombia's everyday life.

The intrastate conflict was becoming a greater threat to the regional stability as well.¹ Neighbouring countries deal with an overflow of refugees and illegal drug trade by guerrilla

¹ See 1.3.1. for the definition of “intrastate conflict”.

groups, becoming more and more challenging. A large part of Colombian drugs are trafficked through the United States, which often results in drug related crimes. In an effort to understand and compensate for these problems, the United States and Colombia signed a treaty in 1970, wherein they agreed on close cooperation regarding issues relevant to the drug problem (Oehme, 2010, p. 223). This marked the beginning of the third- party intervention² by the United States in Colombia, primarily carried out through the anti-drug policy (Barry, 2002, p. 174). The two countries' governments have been allies for most of the 20th century, but this relationship intensified as a result of the "War on Drugs". The "War on Drugs" is a set of United States anti-drug policies aimed at reducing the illegal drug use, production and distribution, both domestically and abroad (Drug Policy Alliance, 2015).³ More recently in 1999, the United States got involved in the Colombian peace plan better known as "Plan Colombia".

1999-2000 appears to be a changing point regarding the United States' drug policy in Colombia. Expenditures alone increased by 300% and stayed high from that point onward, which can be explained by the aforementioned "Plan Colombia" (Chomsky, sd; Barry, 2002, p. 173-174; Oehme, 2010, p. 222). This plan was developed by Colombian president Pastrana to address the economic, political, social, and security problems permeating Colombia. The United States decided to get involved and to continue their own "War on Drugs" through this plan in close cooperation with the Colombian government. Tackling the drug problem was one of the key objectives, but certainly not the only objective. Other objectives are, amongst others, strengthening the rule of law and the promotion of human rights.

Despite the common goal of the United States and Colombia to tackle the drug problem, there existed a discrepancy in priorities. For the Colombian government the plan was a long-term, comprehensive program to build peace and improve security. One may argue that this was also the main purpose of the United States, whose support came primarily as the result of a desire to reduce the drug supply to its own borders (Oehme, 2010, p. 228). The Colombian government aimed at improving the social, economic, political, and security situation in the country, whereas the United States was specifically focused on decreasing the drug supply to its own border. One could therefore argue that both countries had different objectives or at least different priorities within their respective plans. This discrepancy can be problematic in

² See 1.3.2. for the definition of "third- party intervention".

³ See 1.3.3. for the definition of "War on Drugs".

achieving both “Plan Colombia” and the “War on Drugs” goal. A difference in priorities can be problematic because it can create difficulties in the decision-making, which in turn affects the overall outcome. It will be harder for parties to come to an agreement, due to different agendas. For example, a certain action might contribute to a decrease in drug trafficking to the United States, but at the same time have a negative effect on the social circumstances in Colombia. The United States and Colombia can thus perceive success of the United States intervention differently: policy can be bad policy in one context, but still be good policy in the other (Smith, 2010, p. 49). In other words: the intervention can be perceived by the Colombian government as a success but by the United States policymakers as a failure (or vice versa). Therefore, one can question to what extent this plan, and in particular the involvement of the United States, has been able to make a difference in Colombia (or has been effective). More specifically: did “Plan Colombia” and the “War on Drugs” changed the power positions of the FARC and the Colombian government? According to official documents by the United States government, the United States involvement is primarily focused at decreasing the illegal drug trade to the United States. Therefore, the intervention can be considered a success when the set target is met. The goal of the intervention was the following: to reduce production of illicit drugs (primarily cocaine) by 50% in 2006 and to improve security in Colombia by regaining control of areas held by guerrilla groups (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). For the Colombian government it is successful or effective when it contributes to peace, prosperity and the strengthening of the state. These are the goals of plan Colombia, developed by the Colombian president (Colombia President, 1999).

Not only is the inconsistency in priorities challenging the potential effects of the “War on Drugs” and “Plan Colombia”, but results from previous anti-drug policies suggest that a successful intervention by the United States would not be simple either. The intervention can be perceived to be effective or a success if the set goal is achieved. The target of the United States government was to reduce coca cultivation by 50% within five years and to improve the security by reclaiming control of areas under guerrilla control (Mason, 2010, p. 344). Despite decades of spending millions of dollars in Colombia, the drug problem⁴ remains undeniably present (Mejía, sd, p. 19; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005, p. 11; Witness for Peace, 2009, p. 3). This illustrates the complexity of the problem. The “War on Drugs” is aimed

⁴ For the purpose of this work, the drug problem is defined as following: all illegal drug trade, illicit crop production and drug related crime (UNODC, 2012, p. 4).

at reducing the drug supply in addition to illegal drug use, but Colombia (together with Mexico) remains America's biggest drug supplier. Thus, instead of the aimed decrease in drug trade to the United States, drug trafficking from and drug cultivation in Colombia continues (UNODC, 2012, p. 2 and 29; Count the Costs, sd: p. 7). So, despite tremendous efforts of the United States to tackle the drug problem it is still undeniably present. This makes one wonder what the exact effect of the "War on Drugs" intervention has been.

1.1. Research Question

The Colombian conflict started out as an internal affair but has changed over the years. One outside actor getting involved is the United States, whose main reason to intervene was to tackle the drug problem (drug cultivation and trafficking are a threat to the security of both countries). The trafficking of drugs undermines security in regions, mostly because it is accompanied by transnational crime. Illegal activities of non-state actors undermine local economies, the safety of people and the rule of law: they do not act according to the national laws and are relentless. Furthermore, drug cartels and traffickers are often better armed than government forces (Realuyo, 2015, p. 3; UNODC, 2011). Needless to say, drug trafficking is a serious security threat. "Plan Colombia" was designed to solve the economic, social, political, and security problems within the country. The United States strongly supported this plan and continued their "War on Drugs" in close cooperation with the Colombian government. United States expenditures in Colombia increased greatly. However, it can be questioned to what extent cooperation between the two countries is effective due to difference in priorities between the United States and the Colombian government. With more than a decade gone by, ambiguity still surrounds this answer. More specifically, one must ask whether the United States' anti-drug policy has in fact contributed to strengthening the Colombian government and weakening the FARC.

The core problem of this thesis is a seemingly never- ending conflict wherein a third party is trying to influence the situation. Gaining more knowledge about how policy of an unilateral third- party is influencing the conflict and the engaged parties, may help solve conflicts in the future. Eventually, it can contribute to improving the quality of people's lives in the conflict area. The research question of this thesis is therefore the following:

To what extent can a partisan unilateral third- party intervention affect the power of two opposing parties in an intrastate conflict?

This question can be further specified to the case of Colombia. This research examines whether or not the United States is helping the Colombian government to become stronger and, eventually, win the war. The other focus group is the FARC because it is the largest guerrilla group in Colombia and deeply involved in drug cultivation and trade (UNRIC, sd). Consequently, “Plan Colombia” and the “War on Drugs” policies are largely focused on this guerrilla group. The year 2000 is the starting point of the intervention because it can be seen as a changing point in the United States policy. The changing power positions of the FARC and the Colombian government, since the intervention, are measured by looking at the economic, military, and territorial strength. Together these are the indicators determining the overall power of an actor.⁵ This brings us to the question below:

To what extent has the United States “War on Drugs” intervention in 2000 affected the economic, territorial, and military power of the FARC and the Colombian government?

The Colombian government and the FARC are the (only) two actors because they are thought to be the most important forces in the conflict. Peace talks in addition to United States and Colombian policies are mostly focused on the FARC, indicating that they are the main force to take into account. The FARC is not the only party fighting the government; additional smaller parties are involved, such as the ELN and paramilitaries, however, these are not included in the research. The motivation for this choice is that there are limited resources about those parties, making it harder to measure their military, economic, and territorial strength (Cook, 2011, p. 22). Information about the FARC is, however, in abundance. This increases the validity of the research because it allows comparison of data. The researcher is no longer dependent on just one source of information. This increases the credibility of the data.

1.2. Case Selection and Goal of the Thesis

The goal of this research is to gain more knowledge about the effect of unilateral partisan third-party interventions on the political, economic, and military power of non-state and state actors in armed intrastate conflicts. Research into the relation between third-party interventions and conflict is relevant for multiple reasons. First, the effects of unilateral interventions, as opposed

⁵ For further elaboration on why economic, military and territorial power are taken as the indicators, see 1.4. or chapter two.

to multilateral, are understudied. Almost all scholars are focused on interventions carried out by international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or other international alliances. As the majority of interventions are indeed carried out by international alliances such as the UN and NATO, this is neither surprising nor striking (Regan, 2002; Carment & Rowlands, 1998; Siqueira, 2003; Mullenbach, 2005). However, this does not mean that unilateral interventions should be neglected, as it is to be expected that different types of interventions will have different processes, methods and effects. For example, an international organization such as the United Nations is likely to have more means at its disposal and a wider support to intervene than a single state has.⁶ It is unclear however, what these differences mean for the outcome of an intervention.

Second, a great deal of the studies to the effect of third-party interventions are quantitative. Quantitative research is appropriate and effective when looking for a relationship between intervention and, for example, the duration of a conflict. It is less suitable when one wants to know *why* there is (or is not) a relationship. Qualitative research is needed for this and will allow us to better understand the role of third-parties in conflict. Focusing on a particular case, such as the Colombia–United States case, provides an opportunity to go deeper into the material and research the exact relationship between external unilateral intervention and the power of the biggest parties in intrastate conflicts.

Third, it is important to know whether or not third-party interventions are capable of influencing the power of state or non-state actors. The United States' intervention in the Colombian conflict is not an anomaly: the United States is one of the most frequent interveners in international conflicts (Aslam, 2010, pp. 251 and 260-264). Thus, the United States interferes regularly in other states' affairs and it tries to influence both the decisions made by governments and the non-state actors (such as guerrilla movements). Therefore, gaining insight into the effect

⁶ This claim is based on the fact that the United States is included in most interventions carried out by international alliances such as the UN and NATO (Tures, 2003). In these cases, the resources of the United States are complemented by those of other states. This makes it more likely that a multilateral intervention has a significant impact on the dynamics of a conflict. This does not imply that it is also "easier" to intervene with others or that it is a guarantee to success, as opposed to an unilateral intervention. A multilateral intervention brings about many challenges, such as getting parties to agree with each other (despite different interests) and the extent to which each party contributes.

of third-party interventions carried out by the United States may help to prevent failures⁷ in the future. It can help in improving the quality of life of people living in conflict areas. Also, there is still a lot of ambiguity about the exact role of the United States in the Colombian conflict. The governments of both countries argue that the intervention has helped the Colombian government to become stronger and that it contributed to a decreased drug supply to the borders of the United States. However, many scholars and journalists oppose this and even claim that the FARC has benefitted from the “War on Drugs” (Amnesty International, 2015; Arsenault, 2014; Carpenter, 2001; Count the Costs, 2008; Huey, 2014; Kaplan, 2014; Kirk, 2004; Loveman, 2006; Richani, 2013; Stokes, 2005). By focusing on the relationship between the United States’ intervention as the independent variable, and the power of the FARC and the Colombian government as the dependent variables, these claims are tested.

Finally, this research can provide the governments of the United States and Colombia with tools to explain to the public why certain amounts of money are spent on what and why. Overall, there is still much ambiguity in the literature of third-party interventions, especially with regards to the effect and effectiveness of such interventions in intrastate conflicts. For both the third party as well as the country wherein the conflict takes place, it is important to keep researching what exactly the result is regarding foreign intervention into an “internal matter”. This is important not solely because lives are put at risk, but also because of the large amounts of money involved. In sum, the relevance of this research is both scientific (getting more knowledge about the scope of unilateral third-party interventions and getting more insight in the relation between interventions and conflict) and social (policy recommendations and providing tools for political accountability to the people).

1.3. Method and Methodology

To find answers on what kind of relationship there is between the United States intervention and the power of the FARC and the Colombian government, this research uses the method of process-tracing. The following paragraphs explain why this qualitative research method is most suitable to answer the research question. Consequently, some of the key concepts are defined and the data collection is discussed.

⁷ An intervention can be considered a failure when it did not have the wanted result for the intervener. A statement by the government or president is usually presented before of an intervention. This explains why the government decides to intervene and what it is aimed at. The intervention is not successful when it does not meet these aims.

1.3.1. Process- tracing: A Five Step Guide

This case study research makes use of a qualitative research methodology called process-tracing. Process- tracing is a method whereby the researcher examines whether the causal process which a given theory implies can indeed be found in a particular case. Through the collection of multiple types of evidence a causal chain is explained (Gerring, 2007, p. 173; George & Bennett, 2004). Complex relations are uncovered and the analyst seeks to understand and make sense of a collection of evidence. Evidence can be both qualitative and quantitative (Gerring, 2007, pp. 178-181). In this thesis, the research method is based on secondary data analysis: existing data and evidence such as journals, books and reports are re-used (Heaton, 2008, p. 34). The data is collected from a variety of resources such as government documents, research databases, and reports. The qualitative research method of process-tracing was chosen for this research because a significant amount of literature already exists on the “War on Drugs” of the United States in Colombia, the Colombian government, and the FARC. Since much information is available, there is little need to create a new database, as the existing literature is sufficient to answer the research question. One of the strengths of process-tracing is that it allows the researcher to identify and gain insight into the existence of such causal mechanisms. More generally, it can uncover different paths leading to the outcome.

The method of process- tracing can be distinguished in different variants, such as theory-guided process-tracing, theory-oriented process-tracing and an “analytic narrative” approach (Falleti, sd, p. 3; George & Bennett, 2004, p. 206; Beach & Pedersen, 2011, pp. 2-3). One characteristic that differentiates the variants from each other is whether or not they aim to test causal mechanisms. As the research question in this thesis is about causality, namely the relationship between the United States “War on Drugs”, the power of the FARC, and the Colombian government, the method of theory-testing process-tracing is most suitable and therefore applied. This variant, explained is especially valuable when a correlation between variables has been found in previous studies but when the researcher is unsure whether there exists an actual, direct, causal relation between the variables in a particular case (Beach & Pedersen, 2011, p. 7). There are mixed opinions regarding the effect of the “War on Drugs” policy of the United States on the FARC and the Colombian government. Some scholars argue it made the FARC weaker while others claim it helped the guerrilla movement become stronger (Amnesty International, 2015; Arsenault, 2014; Carpenter, 2001; Count the Costs, 2008; Huey, 2014; Kaplan, 2014; Kirk, 2004; Loveman, 2006; Richani, 2013; Stokes, 2005). Though most of them agree on the presence of a relationship, many disagree about the direction of the effect,

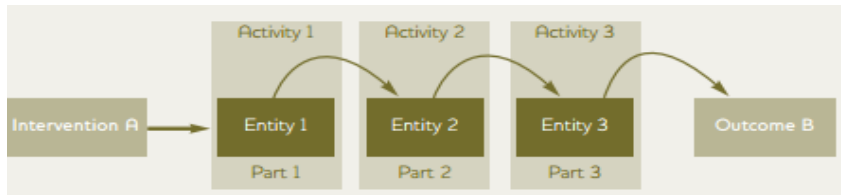
for example in advantage or disadvantage of the United States, or a stronger or weaker FARC. The assumed relation between the “War on Drugs” and a decrease in the FARC’s power is therefore yet to be verified.

As is the case with almost every research method, process-tracing also has its limitations. A shortage of available data, for example, only leads to temporary conclusions. It can make it impossible to eliminate alternative causal processes that also fit the evidence (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 223). It is therefore of the utmost importance to collect as much data as possible, without sacrificing quality for quantity. Internal and external validity are key in finding a causal relationship, therefore the operationalization of the key concepts and the causal mechanism must be accurate and clear.

Until now, the method of process- tracing has still been rather abstract. Therefore a five step guide to applying process- tracing presented in this research (Punton & Welle, 2015, pp. 4-8). First, a causal mechanism must be conceptualized. This is done with the help of existing literature about the particular case. All steps between A (the United States “War on Drugs”) and B (the power of the FARC and the Colombian government) need to be elaborated on. Figure one shows that this should include the involved actors (states, individuals, groups, etc.) and the actions (encouraging, protesting, advocating, etc.). This figure shows how change takes place in a particular case. The activities that cause change are explicitly conceptualized (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 9). By doing so, the attention is drawn to *how* an outcome has come about. Again, the focus is on causal relations parsed out the literature. Second, the causal mechanism must be operationalized. The operationalization also involves evidence for the link between A and B. The third and fourth step are gathering evidence and assessing it. This evidence needs to be considered reliable to formulate a conclusion on the hypothesis. In step five, the hypothesized causal mechanism is either rejected or accepted based on the results. If strong evidence is found, and other explanations can be dismissed, it is concluded that the causal mechanism is present in the case.⁸

⁸ NB: parts of the causal mechanism can be individually insufficient, but necessary parts of the mechanism (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 8).

Figure 1: From intervention A to outcome B



Source: Punton & Welle, 2015, p. 3

1.4. Identifying Key Concepts

Before analyzing the Colombian case it is important to explain what the most important concepts entail. Concepts such as “*intrastate conflict*” and “*third- party intervention*” are perceived differently by different scholars. This can be problematic because these concepts are at the core of the research. If there is no clarity and agreement on concepts, the research will lose its value and validity. For example, people could argue that the Colombian conflict is not an intrastate conflict, but in fact a regional conflict because the United States and other neighboring countries have been involved in today’s conflict for many years. Consequently, some scholars might argue the United States now is one of the parties in the conflict, instead of an external and intervening actor. This claim needs to be contradicted, otherwise theory on third-party interventions is not suitable for this research. This example shows it is of extreme importance to clarify and explain the exact definition of the key concepts because it is determinative for the research. To prevent any discussion about concepts that are central to this research, they are defined below.

1.4.1. Power: Geographical, Economic, and Military

The concept of power is key in answering the research question: one has to know the exact meaning of “power” and how to measure it. Power is described differently by different scholars, there is no universal definition. This research uses Hart’s (1976, p. 289) definition of power as “...*the control over resources, actors, events and outcomes with military expenditures, Gross National Product (GNP), population and the magnitude of the army as the most important indicators of that power*”. This definition includes elements of military (military expenditures, magnitude of the army) and economic (GNP, population) power. For the purpose of this work, territorial power is added to that definition. Territorial power is added because it is often closely intertwined with the military and economic power of an actor. For example, an actor controlling an area with a large river increases the trade possibilities (extra income) and gives the actor control over trade coming in over water.

The same goes for a region rich in natural resources. Also, territorial control can provide actors the possibility to house their supporters in the same area. In some cases, it can be very difficult to be a powerful actor within a state if the scope of the power is limited to just one small area.

Hart's definition of concept is separated into territorial, economic, and military power. These powers are the core of the analysis. Unfortunately, there is a difference in the availability of information between the Colombia government, the state, and the FARC, a non-state actor. Whereas there are reliable figures about, for example, the GDP or the military size of Colombia, this documentation is often missing in the case of the FARC. Therefore, when necessary, the same variable will be measured differently for the FARC and the Colombian government. This is avoided as much as possible so that the reliability and validity of this research can still be ensured.

- **Geographical/territorial power.** The geographical power of both the Colombian government and the FARC are determined by (1) whether they have territorial control and (2) whether their control is low, moderate or high (Cunningham, 2009, p. 581). An actor has control when they have the ability to impose their rule, to exercise influence over people and to coordinate, organize and plan actions (Kalyvas, 2000, p. 16). The latter is important to include because it determines whether there is actual control over the people and resources in a particular area. Low control can, for example, mean that the government 'officially' has control but that this is not the situation on the ground. An ordinal scale of measurement is most suitable because there are clear differences between the degrees of control, however it is difficult to point out what those differences exactly are. It is not possible to say that the control in area A is twice as high in comparison to the control in area B.

The acreage and the importance of the area are also taken into account. This is included because it matters *which* geographical area is under control, as not all areas are equally important. For example, the area around the capital is usually considered more valuable in political terms than the more rural areas of a country. The conquest and control of the capital is harder than conquering an unpopulated part of the jungle. Furthermore, operating outside the range of the government also provides non-state groups the opportunity to regroup and organize themselves (Billon, 2001, p. 581). Territorial power is a zero sum game: the territorial gain of one party is the loss of the other. This only applies, however, when all parties are taken into consideration. It is not

necessarily a zero sum game when only the FARC and the Colombian government are taken into account. For example, the loss of territory by the Colombian government does not automatically mean that the FARC is now in control of that area. It can also be a win by the ELN, paramilitaries, or other non- state actors. Therefore, every territory loss or gain needs to be assessed separately.

The degree of control is not a zero sum game either. If the FARC has moderate control over a particular area, it does not automatically mean the Colombian government has no control. It is possible for both actors to have moderate control in the same area. The degree of control is difficult to measure from a distance, therefore data is used from existing studies and organizations such as International Crisis Group, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and United Nations. These are organizations and research institutions who systematically collect data on the presence and the strength of the FARC and the government in Colombia. They have people on the ground who provide them with information from within. There is a preference for information coming from impartial organizations, because this limits the risk of bias. If possible, multiple resources and databases are used because this leads to the most complete and reliable evidence possible.

- **Economic power** (financial possibilities). It is difficult to get exact figures on the financial resources of the FARC, considering most of their activities are illegal and therefore not documented or accessible. Even if it is available, the reliability should be seriously questioned. Guerrilla groups have an interest in appearing strong. It can therefore be expected that their own documents on income or possessions are exaggerated to keep up appearances. Therefore, estimates of research institutes and international organizations about the income through (1) kidnapping, (2) illegal drug trade, and (3) incomes through natural resources, such as gold, determine the economic power of the FARC (Schachtel, 2014). This also includes income earned through the taxing of coca farmers. The costs of the FARC will limit the economic (territorial and military) power, however this is not assessed in this study because of a lack of data on these costs. As there is no official documentation, data on the economic power of the FARC is gathered from research institutions and international organizations such as Insight Crime, International Crisis Group and the United Nations.

The economic power of the Colombia government is more easily determined, simply because it is a recognized state by the international community. This means there are annual lists and figures about the economic state of the Colombian government. The economic power of a state, in this case Colombia, is defined as follows: (1) the GDP, (2) human capital, (3) capital resources, and (4) government resources (Bajwa, 2008, pp. 153-156).⁹ Human capital is mainly determined by the opportunities and capabilities of education. The higher the number of years of education and the more people, the higher the labor force (i.e. economic growth) (Bajwa, 2008, p. 154). Capital resources includes Gross Domestic Investment and Foreign Direct Investment. Data from the World Bank and the Colombian government are used to determine the economic strength of the Colombian government.

- **Military power.** (1) The mobilization capacity, (2) the ability to obtain arms, and (3) the fighting ability determine the military power of a non- state armed group (Haer & Böhmelt, sd). In the case of the FARC, this is primarily measured by the number of FARC fighters and supporters (manpower) and the quality and quantity of military equipment (such as weaponry). The *ability* and not the *actual* or estimated numbers are taken here because this indicates the potential of the non-state actor. The number of people the FARC is able to mobilize might be bigger or smaller than the number of people fighting at a particular time. Looking to the abilities rather than the given numbers will result in a more complete picture of the power. It shows the upper limit of their military power. The military power of the Colombia government is determined by (1) military-related expenditures, (2) armed forces personnel and (3) the quality and quantity of military equipment (Bajwa, 2008, p. 156). Data is collected from the Global Firepower Index, the World Bank and the Colombian government.

It is important to note that all three are intertwined with each other and cannot be seen as independent. For example, military power is influenced by the financial power, economic resources increase the possibility to obtain weaponry and equipment. This is also the case in the reverse; economic power is influenced by military power and territorial power. More

⁹ A rise or decline in, for example, the GDP is not sufficient to conclude this is the result of United States support. Other explanations must be eliminated first.

military power can lead to more territorial power and consequently more resources and thus more financial possibilities.

Important to note is that there are yet other factors that can determine the military power of actors. One can think of different military tactics/types of warfare. The military tactic of a group is of great importance for their survival and strength. For example, the “wrong” tactic to can lead to a negative image in the media or maybe even to the death of innocent people. A “good” tactic, on the other hand, can potentially lead to more support by the public or increasing military power. The problem with military tactics is, however, that actors are not very keen to share their approach. This makes it very difficult to measure and compare, especially in the case of a non- state actor. To ensure the validity and reliability, military power is therefore measured as described above.

1.4.2. Intrastate Conflict

For an intervention to occur, a conflict needs to be present. One can find various definitions of the concept “conflict”. Scholars in the field of conflict studies often use the following definition of “violent conflict”, formulated by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program: “...*an armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year*” (UCDP Battle- Related Deaths Dataset, v.5- 2014).¹⁰ According to the data, the Colombian case can indeed be classified as an armed conflict (UCDP Battle- Related Deaths Dataset, v.5- 2014 and Sundberg, v.5- 2013). Moreover, the conflict is taking place within the Colombian borders and its main actors are the Colombian government and guerrilla movements (non-state actors). This meets the frequently used definition of intrastate conflict: ‘*a conflict between a government and a non-governmental party, with no interference from other countries*’ (Uppsala University, 2014).

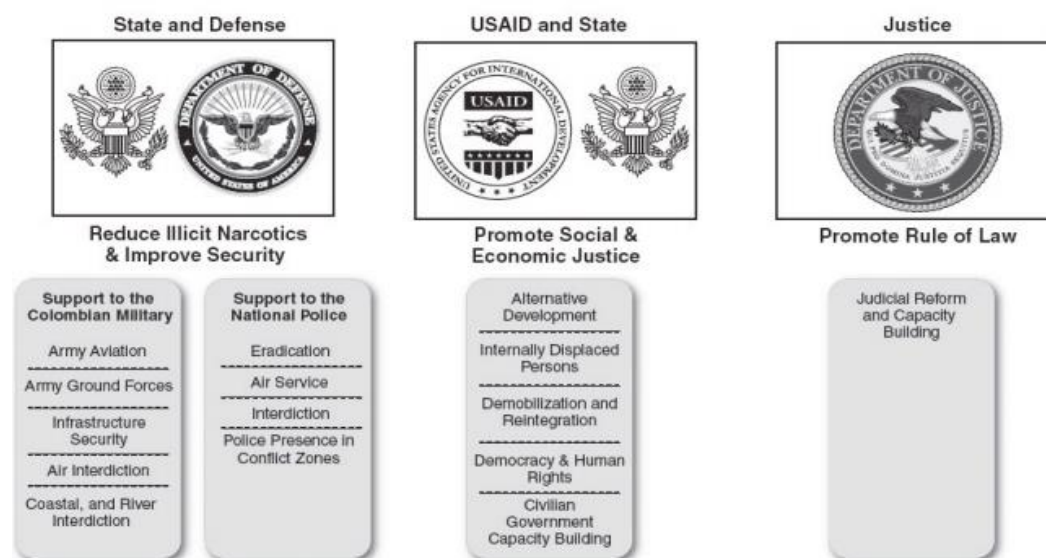
1.4.3. Third- Party Intervention

As stated in the introduction, the United States is present in the conflict, amongst others through “Plan Colombia”. Therefore, the Colombian conflict can be defined as an intrastate conflict with foreign intervention: “...*an armed conflict between a government and a non-government party where the government side, the opposing side, or both sides, receive troop support from*

¹⁰ “Counted as battle- related deaths is the use of armed force between warring parties in a conflict dyad, be it state-based or non- state, resulting in deaths” (Uppsala University, 2014).

other governments that actively participate in the conflict” (Uppsala University, 2014). In other words, the United States is a third party intervening in Colombia’s intrastate conflict. In this case it is the Colombian government receiving support from the government of the United States. For the purpose of this work, *all* support to the Colombian government aimed at tackling the drug problem beginning in the year 2000 is considered a part of the intervention (see Figure two). This can also include economic, social, or judicial support that is indirectly related to the “War on Drugs”. Social, economic, and judicial support are included in this research as part of the intervention because these forms of support are also included in Plan Colombia and often indirectly linked to the War on Drugs (Colombia President, 2000). One can think of education programs financed by the United States to make children aware of the dangers of drugs, or setting up reintegration programs to help people choosing a livelihood other than crop cultivation.

Figure 2: Means of the United States “War on Drugs” intervention in Colombia



Source: Þórarinnsson, 2011, p. 20

1.4.4. War on Drugs

The United States “War on Drugs” is the independent variable in this research; it is the means through which the United States is intervening in Colombia. “War on Drugs” is defined as following: *all measures taken by the United States federal government, in Colombia, aimed at reducing the (I) cultivation, (II) supply, (III) trade and (IV) use of coca and cocaine*. The focus

is specifically on cocaine because this is the primary source of revenue for most of the illegal organizations in Colombia (such as the FARC). For this reason, United States anti-drug activities are also primarily focused on this crop (Þórarinnsson, 2011, p. 18; Cook, 2011, p. 23; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008; Dube & Naidu, 2010, p. 6; Ford, 2000, p. 1; Paterson & Robinson, 2014, p. 2). As shown in figure two and explained above, the “War on Drugs” includes actions indirectly aimed at one of the four reductions as well. To answer the question to what extent the “War on Drugs” has influenced the power of the FARC and the Colombian government, facts are needed about the expenditures of the United States in Colombia. Official United States governmental documents are most suitable and thus used to get a clear overview of the actions executed in the “War on Drugs” in Colombia.

1.4.5. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)

The FARC is the biggest and one of the oldest non-state actors (guerrilla group) in Colombia and hence, one of the main opponents of the Colombian government. The FARC’s roots go back to the period of La Violencia (1948-1957). During this decade-long civil war, self-defense movements emerged, one of which became the FARC in 1964. They began as a group claiming to protect the interests of farmers (Dyer, 2013). Originally, the movement was very defensive and had no connections to drugs. Over time, however, their strategy and objectives changed. As a means to finance their fight against the Colombian government, citizens were kidnapped, farmers were evicted and drug trade became their primary source of income (see also chapter 4). For the purpose of this work, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia is defined as follows: *the political, military, Marxist- Leninist organization focused on gaining control within Colombia* (Peace Delegation, 2013). This is based on the self-identification of the FARC. The FARC is opposing imperialism and capitalism. Therefore, United States influence in Colombia is unwanted (Stanford University, 2010-2015).

1.4.6. Colombian Government

The Colombian government is one of the fighting actors in the conflict. The government is the official system recognized by the international community as the legitimate power holder. For the purpose of this work, the Colombian government is defined as following: *the policy makers who, according to the international community, represent the Colombian people and have the authority to make decisions regarding affairs of the state*. This also includes the official Colombian military.

1.4.7. United States Government

The United States federal government is the actor intervening in Colombia. The government consists of policymakers who are recognized by the international community and the United States citizens as the legitimate power holder. When spoken of the “United States”, as an actor, the following is meant: *the policy makers who represent the people of the United States and have been given the authority to make decisions regarding affairs of the state.*

1.5. Data Collection

This research is based on secondary data analysis, meaning that existing data is re-used. The focus is primarily on United States foreign policy in Colombia, from 2000 and onwards, with an emphasis on expenditures related to the “War on Drugs” and “Plan Colombia”. “Plan Colombia” was signed in 1999, meaning that the first significant policy changes took place in 2000. Most data in this thesis is from the period 2000-2013, because not all data of 2014 and 2015 is available yet. To make this research as comprehensive as possible, all foreign anti-drug policies by the United States in Colombia, starting in 2000, are taken into account. This means that money is not the only factor considered: other non-material goods are equally important in the intervention. For example, weapon delivery, training, advocacy or the sharing of information can be very valuable tools in affecting the power of the FARC and the Colombian government as well.

Data is collected from official United States governmental documents and statements. This is complemented with existing studies on Colombia and the United States’ foreign drug policy. Before the information is presented as evidence, it is evaluated (as previously described in the five step guide). Not all data is usable and valuable to the research. Both the *quantity* and *quality* of the data are evaluated; more is not always better. Information must be collected strategically and also be relevant: contextual knowledge determines what the observations are actually telling us. Is the data reliable? What are the potential sources of error? These are questions that need to be asked in order to guarantee the validity of the research (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 142). Determining the quality of the data is key in this research. As noted in the five step guide to process-tracing, only if the evidence is considered reliable and other explanations can be dismissed, can the causal mechanism be verified.

1.5.1. Assessing the Evidence

To ensure the validity of the statements about the causal relationship, evidence must be considered reliable. The hypothesized causal mechanism is rejected or accepted. If strong evidence is found, and other explanations can be eliminated, one can conclude that the causal mechanism is present in the case.

The majority of the information in this thesis is coming from international organizations and research institutes such as Witness for Peace, InSight Crime, United Nations, International Crisis Group, The World Bank, Transnational Institute. These are complemented with official United States and Colombian government documents and news articles. It is important to ask if these resources are reliable and if they have an interest to misinform. Using many different resources can minimize the risk of misinformation and it increases the reliability of the presented data because it allows the researcher to test the validity. If possible, data is always compared and checked. A good example is the information about the effect of sprayings. According to some studies, these have been very effective in damaging the FARC. Other organizations and scholars claim the opposite. This shows that one should not rely on just one source of information.

1.6. Reading Guide

The next section of this thesis forms the theoretical framework. I will give an outline of the theory regarding third-party interventions and its presumed effects. For the purpose of this work I differentiate between scholars who argue interventions significantly affect intrastate conflicts and scholars saying it cannot. Realist theory, which holds power as one of the key concepts, explains why there is a focus on economic, territorial, and military power in this thesis. The third chapter contains a history of the Colombian conflict, because contextual knowledge is key in understanding the data. There is a focus on the economic, military, and geographical aspects of the conflict. Next, in chapter four, I present and analyze the data. First, in accordance with the five step guide to process- tracing, I identify and conceptualize the causal mechanisms. Second, I test these mechanisms with the help of secondary data analysis. In the final chapter I summarize the findings, discuss the limitation of the research, and I give recommendations.

2. What Can a Third- Party do? - Theory of Third-Party Intervention

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this research. First, literature regarding third-party interventions is discussed and reviewed. A distinction is made between scholars arguing that third-party interventions are effective and scholars who argue it does not change the overall conflict dynamics. Second, the Realist school of thought is applied to third-party interventions. Realism cannot only explain why third-parties decide to intervene, but it can also be used as a tool to examine to what extent an intervention has changed the dynamics of the conflict. Third, the concept of power is operationalized. Finally, the literature is critically reviewed with regard to this specific case.

2.1. The Effect of Third- Party Intervention on Intrastate Conflict

Is it within the range of capabilities of a third actor to effectively influence a long lasting and complicated conflict? Literature about third- party interventions provides us answers to this question: it shows what the effects are of an intervention on an intrastate conflict. As stated above, a lot of research has been done on the effect of third-party interventions, but with different outcomes. The research field can be broadly divided into two different schools of thought: (1) researchers claiming that third-party interventions are affecting the dynamics¹¹ of an intrastate conflict and (2) scholars who do not believe an outside intervention has a significant influence on the dynamics of an intrastate conflict (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline, 2000; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000; Regan, 2002, Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2004; Wood, 2012). Important to note here is that a great deal of studies regarding third- party interventions is focused on interventions executed by international organizations, such as the UN or NATO, and less on interventions done by single states. In this sense, the case of United States intervention in Colombia can be seen as an anomaly: not a number of countries, but one country has the lead in the intervention.

There are many scholars who claim interventions have a significant effect on intrastate conflicts and the dynamics between fighting groups, regardless of the type of intervention, be it an impartial or partisan intervention or through aid, military, economically, politically etc. (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline, 2000; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000; Regan, 2002, Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2004; Wood, 2012). The main argument behind their claim is that third parties

¹¹ For the purpose of this work, “dynamics” means the following: the existing distribution of power and relation between parties (Nye Jr., 2009, p. 65).

influence the capabilities of the fighting parties, which determine a great deal of the overall balance of power. One can think of the increase of weapons or manpower on the supported side, or assistance in decreasing the capabilities of the opposing party, accomplished for example through taking away their most important financial sources. A greater imbalance of capabilities can both prolong and shorten the expectation of a conflict (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline, 2000, p. 638; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000, p. 14; Regan, 2002, p. 56-58).

A biased/ partisan third- party intervention is a situation in which an intervener is supporting one of the fighting parties. The intervener is not impartial and is not trying to be. The intervention could become a prolonging because, for example, the third- party brings new weapons and manpower to the conflict. This can give new life to otherwise almost defeated parties. However, the expected duration of a conflict can also be lowered due to a biased intervention, especially relative to an impartial intervention, through the increase of capabilities (Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000, p. 14; Regan, 2002, p. 56-57). For example, foreign assistance to the government can contribute to the strengthening of legislature and an increase in per capita incomes, which in turn can have a positive effect on the social, economic, and political position of a country (Knack, 2004, p. 251). This foreign assistance can help countries in establishing institutions that promote non-violent expression and conflict resolution. Foreign money is often accompanied by foreign expertise. People from outside the conflict can have a different and fresh perspective on things, which may be good for a country that has been caught in a conflict for a long period of time. Outside input can have a very positive influence on the conflict situation. Also, the government can benefit from the intervention due to an increase of military or economic capabilities. One can think of a biased third-party intervention in the form of weapon supply or manpower. When significant, this can greatly influence the capabilities and even be decisive in the outcome of a conflict. There is, of course, also the other side of the coin: there has been a lot of critique on Western involvement in conflict areas. For example, the critique that involvement is too much western centered or out of self-interest, thereby overlooking what is best for that particular area and the people living there.

Literature discussed above illustrates that interventions founded in biased intentions can strengthen the group or power which they support, and thereby empower said actor to overcome the opposing party. In such a case, interventions can thus contribute to a change in the dynamics and perhaps even a conflict resolution more quickly than would occur without the aid of interventions.

However, there are also scholars who deny this possibility. They claim, for instance, that foreign assistance, despite the political character and the ability to change internal processes, has limited influence on the overall conflict dynamics (Ofstad, 2002, p. 165; Hironaka, 2005, p. 139). The main argument behind this statement is that change must come from within the country itself and cannot be imposed by an external actor. Despite the intervention, the conflict will continue and the intervention will not have a significant effect on the internal situation without the willingness of the people and fighting parties to change something themselves. In other words, an intervention may bring about some changes but it will not have a significant effect on the duration or dynamics of the intended conflict. This statement implies that outside interveners are not able to change the behavior and thoughts of people (with regards to the conflict). This can be opposed: third- party interveners can also promote change from within. For example, a third-party can improve the situation for individuals in such a way that the continuation of fighting is no longer desired (for example because they are given new economic perspectives, or an improved security). Intervenors can promote change without imposing it. For example, by financially supporting civil society organizations, or they can provide people tools to stand up for themselves and bring about change.

2.2. Realist Theory – Power As The Central Concept

The introduction of this thesis questions to what extent the power of the FARC and Colombian government have changed since the “War on Drugs” intervention in 2000. The focus on power stems from the Realist school of thought. To determine whether or not an intervention has had a significant effect, one must decide which angle to take. Different motives can influence an intervention (for example, interventions out of self- interest, economic motives, humanitarian reasons, etc.) in addition to the involvement of multiple actors. With that in mind, one can look at the effect of interventions in different ways.

To determine the effectiveness (and impact) of interventions, it makes sense to focus on what the intervention is aimed at changing. For example, when an intervention is carried out with an economic purpose, one can look at the extent to which economic indicators have changed from their initial state. By doing so, one can determine the effectiveness and impact of the intervention on the target (in this case the target is economic change). In this thesis, the position on why there was an intervention is perceived as crucial; the motive behind the intervention determines which indicators are looked at in showing *to what extent* the FARC’s

and the governmental power changed. Moreover, this is also an objective way to measure change. Figures will show if there is a relation, it is not a matter of opinion.

A limitation of this approach is that it assumes the effects are always in line with the objectives, while this is not the case. Actions can have many unforeseen effects. However, the economic, military and territorial capabilities largely determine the possibilities and survival of the actors in conflict. It is the fuel that keep the actors going. So even if the intervention is not directly aimed at one of these aspects, they are most likely still affected by it. Self-interest seems to be a frequent incentive for third parties, considering that many studies suggest that actors choose to intervene when national interests are at stake (Chang, 2007, p. 955).¹² This view can be described as realism, one of the dominant theories in international relations.

2.2.1. Realism Explained

Realism is taken as the ontological position throughout this research. Realists claim that the actions of states can be explained through the concept of power because power is crucial in the world of politics and conflict (Nye Jr., 2009, pp. 4-7; Walt, 1998, p. 31). States are seen as rational actors; all their actions are based on the presumed effect it will have on their relative power position. A cost-benefit analysis leads the decision-making process. Actors will not choose to undertake action if they expect this will weaken their position relative to the status quo of the power relation with other actors. According to realist theory, the dominant thinking in international politics, states will only act when it will benefit their position compared to other actors (Nye Jr., 2009, p. 4). In other words: only when states expect to get a positive result (for themselves) out of an action, they will act. A cost-benefit analysis is made prior to the action.

Not surprisingly, other scholars, such as liberalists and constructivists oppose this. They state, amongst others, that not (just) the balance of power is key in decision-making but that international organizations and/or values are crucial. Realism is used as the leading theory in this thesis because it provides a powerful explanation for conflict (Walt, 1998, p. 31). The power of a state and its position in the international community is, among others, determined by its economic, military, and territorial strength.¹³ This occurs because the international

¹² This does not suggest, however, that countries *only* intervene when national interests are at stake.

¹³ These forms of power are also used because several authors noted that differences between the Colombia government and the FARC on these factors can be seen as important causes of the conflict (Lopez, 2011; Raphael, 2010; Clark, 2012; Restrepo, et al, 2004; Alex, 2010).

community is in a state of anarchy, and will look for a balance of power.¹⁴ When states perceive that their position in this balance is threatened, actions will be taken to protect the status quo. For example, if another state's power is increasing (through, for instance, economic or military power) and one's own power is stagnating, the balance is disrupted. The other state becomes a potential threat. The same applies to threats against allies; if an important ally is threatened, it indirectly threatens one's own position. Allies are included in the power of a state. A state with more, powerful allies is considered a bigger threat than a state with no allies (Pearson Education, sd, p. 49). In case of conflict, the latter will be on its own while the former can count on its partners. Success on the part of an ally can also benefit the third-party, for example through trade or improved security (Chang, et al., 2007, p. 955).

In the case of conflict it is important to understand the relationship between the fighting factions (Siqueira, 2003, p. 399). Only with sufficient contextual knowledge one will be able to influence the situation. Realism can help with that. Realism cannot only tell us *why* states intervene or how actors are related to one another, but it also provides a tool to research *to what extent* an intervention has had an effect. According to realists, power is the core concept in international politics. Following this line of thought, an intervention in another state is focused on influencing the power of the other state or one's own power. In assessing the extent to which an intervention is effective, realist theory thus directs us to look at the power and power position of actors. We can conclude that power is an important factor that states take into their calculations when making decisions regarding intervention (Walt, 1985, p. 8). Regarding interventions, interveners often remain consistent with the realist mindset. It is expected of interveners that they pursue the course best suited to benefit themselves and/or allies. From this theoretical framework, third-party interventions can be seen as a means to increase one's own power and/or to prevent other actors from becoming too powerful.

Looking at the United States' intervention in Colombia from a realist perspective, it can be argued that the intervention was carried out with the aim to strengthen the power of the United States and the Colombian government. According to realists, United States policy

¹⁴ The international power position of a state can be negatively influenced by an intrastate conflict (Brown, 1996, p. 8). It can, for example, threaten allies because the safety of citizens of the ally can no longer be guaranteed. It can cost the government its credibility and eventually lead to the loss of allies and support. Or it can disrupt the stability of areas seen as strategically important by the international community (for example areas with many natural resources). It shows the official government does not have control over its territory, which makes them (look) weaker.

makers made a cost- benefit analysis which resulted in the intervention in Colombia's internal affairs. By making the Colombian government stronger and fighting against a common enemy, the power of the United States could be increased, directly or indirectly (Crandall, 2008, p. 8; Stokes, 2004; Oehme, 2010, p. 228; Bush, 2002, p. 10; LeoGrande & Sharpe, 2000, p. 1; Peceny & Durnan, 2006; Nieto, 2007, p. 112). Benefits of the intervention can directly reach the United States, for example because of a decrease in the drug supply to the borders. They benefit indirectly when the intervention makes their ally, the Colombian government, stronger. The shifts in the power of the FARC and the Colombia government are the focal points of this research, with the outside actor (the United States) trying to influence the strength of the guerrilla group and the Colombian government. According to realist theory, states are the only actors of importance in international politics. That statement is challenged in this thesis (despite the use of the realist perspective). The FARC is considered a threat to the security of the United States and Colombia (Realuyo, 2015, p. 3; UNODC, 2011). The history of the Colombia conflict and the far reaching power of the FARC, is supporting this argument. This implies that non-state actors are thus also actors that need to be taken into account, because they can be serious security risks for the government too.

In sum, realists claim that power is the central force in international politics: this is suggested in the behavior of most states. In this research, the realist school of thought is applied to the United States' intervention in Colombia, to determine to what extent the United States has contributed to a decrease or increase in the power of the Colombian government and the FARC. More specifically, in this thesis the relation between the intervention and the power of both parties is researched. Indirectly, this also implies if the United States is helping the Colombian government to win the war.

2.3. Critical Literature Review

There seems to be a majority of scholars who argue that third-party interventions have a great influence on intrastate conflict when compared to scholars who claim it does not change the overall conflict dynamics. When looking at the finances, effort and resources put into third-party interventions it can indeed be expected that there exists at least *some* influence on the conflict dynamics, be it big or small, the intended effect or not. Looking at the case in Colombia, wherein the United States has spent billions of dollars through the "War on Drugs", it is hard to believe this has not had any effect on the economic, military, or territorial power of either

the Colombian government or the FARC, mainly because of the FARC's financial dependency on drugs. Interventions, be it economic, military or humanitarian, are very costly and often a very lengthy process. States go through an extensive decision-making process wherein the pros and cons are fastidiously weighed out. One can argue therefore, that if major powers such as the United States decide to intervene, it is within their range of capabilities to significantly affect the situation. If this was not the case and policy-makers would not be convinced of their ability to change the situation, it is unlikely they would intervene in the first place. Major states affect not only the dynamics of the intrastate conflict because they have many resources at their disposal, but more so because they are fighting for self-interested motives. A state will primarily act in accordance with one's own interest, and moral motives are less important.¹⁵ The many resources at their disposal will be deployed and much effort is put into the intervention. Benefits can be economical, humanitarian or territorial, as well as political. An intervention can be used by politicians to show they are doing 'the right thing', to show they are listening to the public opinion, or as a means to gain political support.

Despite the belief that third-parties have the ability to change the dynamics of intrastate conflicts, this effect may not however always be the *desired* one. Due to a highly insecure environment, the finances, weapons and information important to the conflict can easily end up on the 'other' side (Poole, 2010). With the 'other side' the following is meant: the opposite side of the target group. For example, when money, resources, information or any other type of goods are meant for the Colombian government but end up with the FARC, the FARC is the "other side". Challenges such as corruption make it very hard for a third-party to control who benefits of their resources and to influence the situation in accordance with the initial plan; the case in Colombia is no exception.¹⁶ Nonetheless, both the United States and Colombian governments have spoken about the "Plan Colombia" in a positive manner; both sides present it as a success story (U.S. Department of State, 2015; Mulholland, 2011). The current state of Colombia does indeed suggest that the FARC has had important setbacks since the start of the 21st century. Not only did they lose a substantial portion of their active members, but their territory of influence was also highly reduced (UNRIC, sd).

¹⁵ This does not mean moral motives are not frequently presented as the reason to intervene. However, it should always be questioned if that is the *real* reason of the intervention or if it said because of what people want to hear (the public, the parliament) and because it sounds better.

¹⁶ Colombia has relatively high score on the corruption perception index (Transparency International, 2015).

Nevertheless, the FARC is still present and seen as one of the most important threats to both the domestic and regional security. Although their numbers have diminished, they are most certainly still present. As previously noted, the drug problem remains present and some even argue that the FARC has only benefitted from the United States' intervention. The FARC can benefit from the "War on Drugs" because it can make drugs more scarce (when effective). Consequently, more money can be earned with the same amount of drugs (COHA, 2013). There is reason to believe the intervention only made the intrastate conflict worse and/or that it had no meaningful impact on the drug trade into the United States (Amnesty International, 2015; Arsenault, 2014; Carpenter, 2001; Huey, 2014; Kirk, 2004; Loveman, 2006; Richani, 2013; Stokes, 2005). This thesis should give an answer regarding the truth in this claim, as there is a strong focus on the concept of power. A stronger FARC, relative to that of the government, is not the goal of either the United States or the Colombian government. Therefore, if this is indeed the case (and if a direct relation is found) it can be argued that the intervention has made the situation worse for the Colombian government.

3. The Colombian Conflict – A History

This section gives a short overview of the onset, the course, and the role of the most important actors in the Colombian conflict. It also addresses the relationship between the United States and Colombia. To determine if and why a certain policy has (or could have) an effect on intrastate conflict, it is important to understand why the conflict started in the first place. What exactly motivated people to pick up their weapons? Can drugs explain the current violence? How did the conflict evolve? What role did the United States play in those changes? Contextual knowledge is a key element in understanding underlying processes and causal mechanisms.

The Colombia conflict is a long lasting conflict with many different actors involved. Economic, political, and social status quo are argued to be the core reasons for the outburst of the current conflict (Lopez, 2011, p. 7; Raphael, 2010, p. 163). There is an emphasis on the Colombian government and the FARC in this chapter because these are the two most important actors in the conflict.¹⁷

3.1. La Violencia and the Emergence of Guerrilla Groups

Political and economic inequality were present during most of the 20th century in Colombia. This caused increasing levels of tension and rivalry, mostly between liberals and conservatives. However, never did it come to a large- scale conflict with widely used violence (Lopez, 2011, p. 7). In fact, Colombia was one of the most stable democracies in Latin America (Restrepo, et al., 2004, p. 398). This changed in 1948 when the liberal politician Jorge Gaitán was assassinated and a violent period called *La Violencia* ensued, which later evolved into the current intrastate conflict (Lalancette, 2010, p. 3 and 7). Liberal and communist groups joined forces in reaction to the assassination and began rioting against conservatives in the streets of the capital (Zackrisson, 1989, p. 6). The situation rapidly escalated. The police, those expected to protect civilians, were nowhere to be found for aid in keeping the peace. Strikingly, the opposite happened; many of the police joined forces with the rebels. In addition to this absence of police forces, prisons then opened their doors and criminals were back on the streets. *La Violencia* lasted approximately ten years, from 1948 to 1958, wherein about 200.000 people were killed as a result of this chaos (Chacón, et al., 2011, p. 369; Restrepo, et al., 2004, p. 6).

The ‘end’ of the conflict was reached through an agreement between the liberals and conservatives. These two parties agreed to share power in a coalition. This coalition lasted

¹⁷ See chapter one for the argumentation about why they are, arguably, the most important actors.

approximately 20 years and is known as *Frente Nacional* (Clark, 2012; Restrepo, et al., 2004, p. 399). From the 1960s on, government positions would be shared equally between these two parties and these were the only groups allowed to participate in the presidential elections. A radical consequence of the *Frente Nacional* was that other political powers and parties were henceforth excluded from the political arena. For that reason, the new political system was also referred to as ‘consensual dictatorship’. As a reaction to this restriction of democracy and exclusion, guerrilla groups began to emerge. They called for change and demanded to be included into the political processes. Two of the largest and most well-known groups were, and still are, the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the ELN (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional) (Alex, 2010, p. 4).

The period after the agreement can be deemed the moment when the conflict changed; the battle shifted from a fight between conservatives and liberals to a conflict between the new ‘elite’ made up of liberals and conservatives on one side, and the excluded ones, mainly guerrilla movements, on the other. Thus, the conflict no longer carried on along party lines. The main goal for many rebel groups was to bring about political, social and economic changes and to overthrow the government. The FARC, for example, saw itself as the answer to economic inequality (Alex, 2010, p. 4). They had a strong left-wing profile and intended to install a Marxist regime (BBC, 2013). One can therefore conclude that the violence inflicted during *La Violencia* was politically motivated, most notably in its early stages. That is to say, the fighting happened in accordance with political preferences. People believed that political change was needed, and that another political direction was the answer to many problems. Political transformation could free the path for social and economic change. Later, inequality became more of an issue. The exclusion of all parties other than liberals and conservatives created inequality, not only in the political arena but similarly in economic and social spheres.

3.2. The Role of Natural Resources in the Colombian Conflict

As stated above, the desire to bring about political, economic, and social change are put forward as the main reason for rebels to pick up their guns. They felt excluded, they wanted to be heard and have the ability to give input on the direction Colombia was heading. However, it can be argued that the motives of the competing factions have somewhat shifted over the years and that, consequently, the conflict changed too. Natural resources and land, for example, became more and more important in the fight between the government and guerrilla movements. Natural resources are frequently integrated into conflicts. They are used as a way of financing

the actions and activities of rebel groups, and this greed can determine why people are fighting with one another (Billon, 2001, p. 580). This is also applicable in Colombia to a certain degree: it is one of the wealthiest countries worldwide in natural resources with rich supplies of oil, water and minerals in its soil (Lavaux, 2007, p. 19). The coca plant is one of the most important resources for non-state armed groups. It seems very unlikely that, with these important money resources at one's disposal, recoverable reserves do not play *some* kind of role in the conflict. However, as described above, most scholars do not see this as the core reason for the eruption of conflict. Liberals and conservatives were not directly fighting over access to or profit from resources. Furthermore, for a long time natural reserves were not a top priority on the agenda of the Colombian government. Concern over natural resources was secondary to national security. Peace promotion was not directly focused on the role of natural reserves, and most emphasis was instead put on social, political, and economic policies.

The role of natural resources and territory in the Colombian conflict should, however, not be ignored. It can even be stated that the social, political and military violence is directly related to the geopolitics of natural resources (Lavaux, 2007, p. 21). Not only are the areas most affected by the intrastate conflict the ones with the most natural resources of Colombia, but the geographical circumstances can also be assigned a key role in the conflict's continuance. The complex ecological conditions in the more rural areas favor the non-state armed groups. The relatively difficult environment complicates the search for illegal groups and activities: the jungle is great place to hide. Moreover, control over territory and natural resources such as coca allowed the FARC to pressure the government. It provided them with opportunities that they otherwise maybe would not have had. As described in the aforementioned literature, it can be concluded that politics (ideology) and inequality (economic, political, and social) are the most important factors in the start and continuation of the conflict. However the presence of natural resources and coca plants can certainly be added to that list.

3.3. The Role of Inequality in the Colombian Conflict

It is frequently argued that inequality is an important explanation for the violence that started in 1948 (Berkman, 2007, p. 13; Alex, 2010; Lopez, 2011). The above description of the conflict suggests this as well, but can this truly be deemed the most important cause of the current conflict? Figures and research would appear to support this. The Gini coefficient of Colombia, which measures the inequality of income, shows there was a relatively large inequality before

and during *La Violencia* (The World Bank, 2013).¹⁸ Colombia had, and to a degree still has, one of the most unequal distributions of income in South America (Restrepo, et al., 2004, p. 398). Economic inequality as well as political inequality occurred mostly between rural and urban areas, which greatly challenged the national stability. Rural areas often lacked the presence of political institutions, which made them more vulnerable to corruption and violence. Consequently, this led to yet more political inequality and consequently people living in these regions felt more and more excluded and left behind (Alex, 2010, p. 1).

However, these inequalities do not necessarily need to result in conflict; many countries, societies, and communities are dealing with relatively high levels of inequality and a great part of them do not suffer from any violent conflict, take for example United States. It can even be argued that inequality reduces the risk of conflict because a greater inequality will make the elite more willing to protect the status quo (Cramer, 2003, p. 398). Rebels acknowledge that their chances of winning a conflict are small, which in turn will make them more hesitant to pick up their guns. In the case of Colombia, inequality was present before the violence began, which renders it insufficient to explain why violence occurred in precisely that year, month, or day. In other words, inequality can explain why people were feeling deprived but not why the inequality resulted into violence.

An exploration of inequality in Colombia suggests that inequality is indeed present, as is a strong *feeling* of disparity (Berkman, 2007, p. 13; Alex, 2010; Lopez, 2011). The actual increase or decrease of inequality is not always the most important aspect. Rather the *perception* of it getting greater or unfair can be enough for people to rebel, despite what the facts may support (Gurr, 1970: p. 23). An ever- growing feeling of being excluded from the political process and of not being treated fairly triggered people in Colombia to rebel. Important to note here is that inequality should be understood in the broadest sense, meaning that economic inequality does not stand by itself: economic, political, social, ideological, and cultural elements cannot be disconnected from each other. All these forms are intertwined with each other

¹⁸ The Gini index “...measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditures among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Lorenz curve plots the cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients, starting with the poorest individual or household. The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. Thus a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality” (The World Bank, 2013).

(Stewart, 2000, p. 246; Cramer, 2003, p. 405). As noted before, inequality already existed before *La Violencia* but the *Frente Nacional* was the straw that broke the camel's back.

3.4. United States Involvement in Colombia

The United States has a long history of involvement in Latin America. The current intervention can be traced back to *La Violencia* and the Cold War. During the Colombian civil war, for example, the United States trained Colombia in counterinsurgency tactics (Dyer, 2013). In the aftermath of the civil conflict, the United States assisted the Colombian government in its attempts to gain back lost territory. The plan devised by the Colombian government was not very successful, as many areas were not reconquered. Those that were, were again retaken just a few months later. The strategy was implemented not only to regain control, but also to kill or capture key figures from the opposing parties. The United States was a strong supporter of this approach. One of the people on their radar was Manuel Marulanda, an active member of the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC). The Colombian government, in close cooperation with the United States, launched an operation to capture or kill him and take back the territory he had conquered. The operation did not succeed. Some people even argue its failure is the event that instigated the creation of the FARC (Dyer, 2013; Ruiz, 2001, p. 110). This shows the United States has been involved in the Colombian conflict since the beginning. It can even be argued that they played a role in the establishment of the FARC.

As the conflict continued, the dynamics also changed significantly. As previously mentioned, motives to fight or continue fighting shifted. In the 1980s and 1990s, drugs were becoming a more and more important aspect for all parties involved, such as paramilitaries, the Colombian government, and the guerrilla groups. Paramilitaries are professionally organized force units who often operate comparable to professional military forces. But, they are not a government body, although they can be used by government officials (Oxford English Dictionary, sd). However, there are close links between these paramilitary groups and the Colombian government and United States corporations (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Martin-Ortega, 2008; Restrepo, et al., 2004, p. 411). Paramilitaries were financed with money earned through drug trade, money that corrupted Colombian politicians. The “hidden” agendas of both the Colombian government and the United States illustrate the complexity of the conflict. One cannot simply think in black and white, there is a large grey area. One must therefore always be careful to draw conclusions.

Meanwhile, the guerrilla movements saw their revenues rise (Vargas, 1999). The difficult economic conditions and weak agricultural sector lured many farmers into the illegal circuit of illegal crop cultivation (Mejía, sd, p. 3). The cultivation and trafficking of drugs were excellent ways for non-state actors to earn money, specifically because it allowed them to operate out of the government's sight. Many small farmers were expelled by armed groups or forced to give away part of their revenue to support the activities of the organizations (Otis, 2014, p. 3; COHA, 2013). Consequently, the Colombian government lost control over numerous regions. Civilians were increasingly targeted for kidnapping and extortion.

As time passed, the initially very clear goal of the FARC, bringing about political, economic, and social change, was slowly abandoned or unacknowledged. The growing economic and military power as well as the increasing territorial control of non-state actors became increasingly problematic. The Colombian government was gradually driven back to the regions around Bogota. The United States had already been closely cooperating with the Colombian government in their fight against the guerrilla movements, but the far-reaching criminal activities and growing power of the opponents resulted in a stronger cooperation between the two countries. As noted before, the United States' involvement can be seen as a rational decision; the support for the Colombian government is the result of the United States' own interests. Through their support for the Colombian government, and thus by fighting the guerrilla groups, United States policymakers intended to tackle the drug problem. Seen from a realist perspective, the United States' intervention in Colombia was thus aimed at making the Colombian government stronger and the opposing parties weaker. The intention was that fighting the guerrilla movements, through the attacks on their most basic resource of income, drugs, would result in a decrease of the drug supply to the United States' borders.

The above exhibits the illegal drug trade and its related criminality, and the ideological clash can be seen as the main motive for the United States to intervene in the Colombian conflict (Gellman, 2004, p. 11). Colombia is a major recipient of United States' assistance, the biggest recipient in Latin America and one of the top 10 countries worldwide (Chomsky, sd; Tickner, 2014; Dube & Naidu, 2010, p. 7). This demonstrates the importance that United States policymakers assign to the drug problem and thus the Colombian conflict.

4. An Effective War? - Analysis of the United States Intervention in Colombia

This chapter argues that the United States' intervention has had a positive effect on the power of the Colombian government. The evidence is pointing towards a causal link between the “War on Drugs” intervention and the decreasing power of the FARC, but alternative explanations cannot be rejected entirely.

Firstly, this chapter gives a description of the conceptual, causal mechanisms between the intervention and the economic, military, and geographical power. These mechanisms are parsed out the literature. The operationalization of the concepts is already taken into account, as well as specifics of the case studied. Secondly, the causal mechanisms are tested with the help of gathered evidence. The contextual knowledge presented in chapter three is key in the analysis, since it allows interpreting and assessing the data in a correct way.

4.1. Identifying the Causal Mechanisms

There are many (different) roads leading to Rome, but not all possible causal mechanisms can be tested here. An emphasis is therefore put on the causal relations found through secondary data analysis. For example, many actions can lead to a change of the FARC's economic power. However, one can claim the United States' main strategy regarding the FARC focuses on tackling the illegal drug trade (see Chapter 1). This explains why there is a focus on the causal relation between the intervention and a decrease/increase in the drug supply in this thesis. Since the operationalization determines how concepts in this causal relation are measured, this is already taken into account here. Including these elements makes it easier to actually test the processes and causal relation. The figures presented do not show the actual operationalization but the concepts (to maintain the readability). Step one and two of the five step process- tracing guide are thus combined (see 1.3.1.).

The first step to take is the conceptualization of the causal mechanisms. Elaboration of all steps between the United States' “War on Drugs”, the power of the FARC, and the Colombian government is necessary. This is done as explicitly as possible and in accordance with the literature. Figure three shows that this should include the involved actors (states, individuals, groups, etc.) and the actions (encouraging, protesting, advocating, etc.). Consequently, it shows explicitly *how* A (the independent variable) leads to B (the dependent variable).

Figure 3: Identifying the causal mechanism



Source: Punton & Welle, 2015, p. 3

The literature on the United States’ “War on Drugs” in Colombia must therefore be applied in a formula similar to that of Figure three. It is clear ‘intervention A’ is the United States’ intervention, but there is above all, ambiguity about the steps to follow as well as the outcome. Some scholars argue the intervention made the Colombian government stronger and the FARC weaker, while others claim the opposite. Below, arguments of both sides are explained and shown in figures.

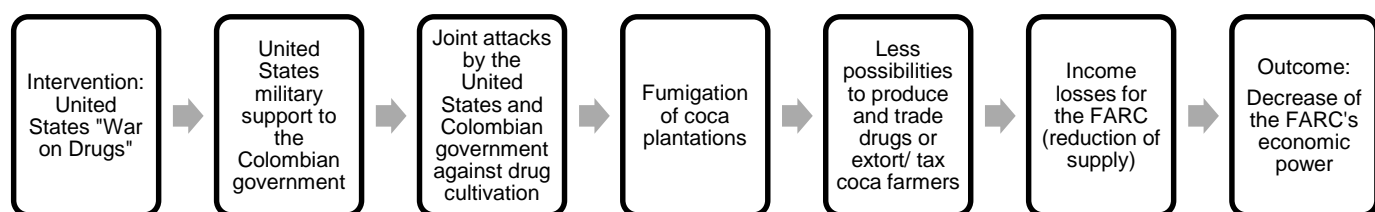
4.1.1. The Effect of the Intervention on the Economic Power of the FARC

The income of the FARC is determined by income earned through (1) kidnapping, (2) illegal drug trade and (3) incomes generated through natural resources. Literature suggests the FARC generates most of its income through drug trade (McDermott, 2013; Ince, 2012; Otis, 2014; LeoGrande & Sharpe, 2000). Therefore, the United States strategy in Colombia focuses mostly on reducing the drug supply. The United States War on Drugs is aimed at reducing the cultivation, the use and trade of drugs. Thus, both the demand and supply side of the drug market are targeted. However, there seems to be a clear separation in how they are approached. Especially regarding domestic and foreign drugs policy. The United States has one of the highest levels of drugs use in the world, with most of the drugs coming from Mexico, Colombia and the Caribbean (Central Intelligence Agency, sd; Warner, 2008). This explains why measures aimed at influencing the demand side mostly taken place within the United States and those aimed at the supply side in other countries.

The main strategy to reduce cocaine production is through the spraying of coca plantations with poison (Otis, 2014; Mejia, sd; Isacson, 2013). Not only is fumigation seen as a relatively safe strategy, because it limits the number of people needed on the ground, but it also seems highly effective and efficient. Major damage could be brought to the plantations with limited effort and resources. The assumption behind this strategy is that it quickly results in a lower coca production and thus a reduction in the cocaine supply, trafficking, and trade.

The drug trade to the United States would decrease and the power of guerrilla groups would be reduced; thus accomplishing two goals in one. As noted before, the FARC and other guerrilla groups generate most of their income through crop cultivation, the accompanied drug trafficking, and taxing the coca farmers. For these organizations it is of the utmost economic importance to reside in the geographical areas, mainly rural areas with difficult terrain, that allow them to continue their activities (Otis, 2014, p. 4). Consequently, air attacks of the Colombian government and the United States largely targeted FARC territory: the areas with the most coca cultivation overlap with the areas controlled by the FARC (The Economist, 2001). The fumigation of coca plantations are thus intended to negatively affect both the territorial and financial power of the FARC. The figure below shows the presumed causal mechanism.¹⁹

Figure 4: The United States intervention leading to decreasing economic power of the FARC



The opposite scenario could just as likely occur, such as the increase of FARC's power as a result of the fumigations. The argument behind this claim (as shown in figure five) is that the FARC has suffered little damage from the air attacks and sprayings, and the most damage is directed at small farmers who also produce coca (Bigwood, 2001; Castillo, 2012; COHA, 2013; Isacson, 2014; Witness for Peace, 2009, p. 2). In that case, the United States' strategy is counterproductive because the FARC can make a profit out of their intervention. The FARC

¹⁹ If *ceteris paribus*. This causal mechanism, and the following ones, do not take other changes into account. The remaining aspects that determine the power are assumed to be constant (except for those included in the other causal mechanisms).

territory²⁰ remains undamaged, meaning there is no direct loss in their most important income resource, the coca plant. Instead, other areas with coca plantations are damaged. Consequently, there is less coca/cocaine on the market (a decrease in the supply side) and thus, *ceteris paribus*, the price of the cocaine will rise²¹. The same drug is then worth more. The FARC can thus earn money with the same stock, thereby increasing its financial possibilities and economic power.

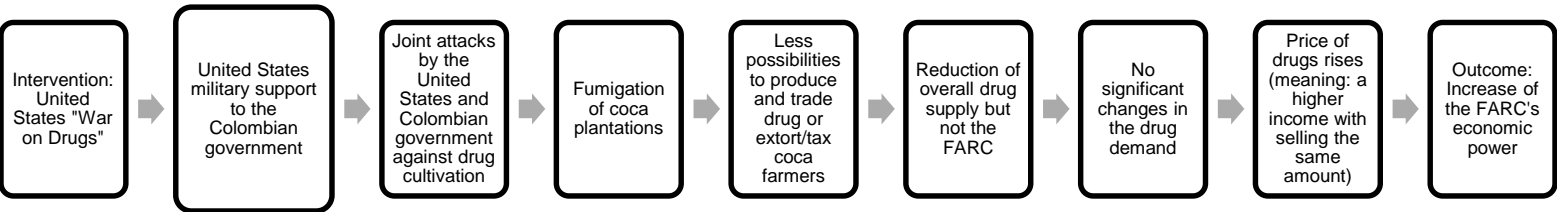
There exists yet another potential benefit for the FARC if the United States and the Colombian government spray the ‘wrong’ areas²². This benefit is that the spraying can increase the number of FARC supporters and members and lower the public’s trust in the Colombian government. Small farmers lose their only source of income, without economic alternatives available (Felbab- Brown, 2005; Isacson, 2013). For many coca farmers money and the absence of other opportunities are reasons to grow coca plants. It is a way to survive and they see no other options. Entire communities feel economically and socially excluded or disadvantaged (Latin America Working Group, sd). In many of those areas, local government is barely present. Fumigation is one of the few means through which the Colombian government shows their presence. This does little to boost the positive relationship between the government and its citizens. Rather, it fuels the anger and mistrust that is already present. The armed groups anticipate these feelings and present the state as common enemy (which creates a bond). Moreover, the fumigation has in fact had very negative effects on the ecosystems and the health of people living in the fumigated areas (James, 2006; Jelsma, 1998; Rogers & Aid, 2013). All lives of the people living in the targeted areas are thus affected by the crop spraying and attacks.

²⁰ With the term ‘FARC territory’ the following is meant: territory where members of the FARC are residing or have control over.

²¹ Changes in the value of cocaine value are a good indicator of the drug supply in Colombia because Colombia is responsible for at least 50% of the drug supply worldwide (International Crisis Group, sd; UNRIC, sd; Mason, 2010, p. 332; McDermott, 2013; Mulvey, 2009). Colombia thus has an important role in the drug market.

²² With ‘wrong’ areas the following is meant: areas that, by attacking them, are not directly influencing the FARC’s powers, but mostly affect citizens.

Figure 5: The United States intervention leading to increasing economic power of the FARC



In sum, fumigation does not address the factors that drive coca cultivation, those being poverty and the demand for drugs (Witness for Peace, 2009). It does not lead to a decrease in the power of the FARC. Figure five shows the increase of the FARC’s power, as a result of the United States intervention.

Figure four and five are quite extensive, with many steps leading to the outcome. To make it more clear, figure six and seven summarize causal mechanisms.²³

Figure 6: The United States intervention leading to decreasing economic power of the FARC

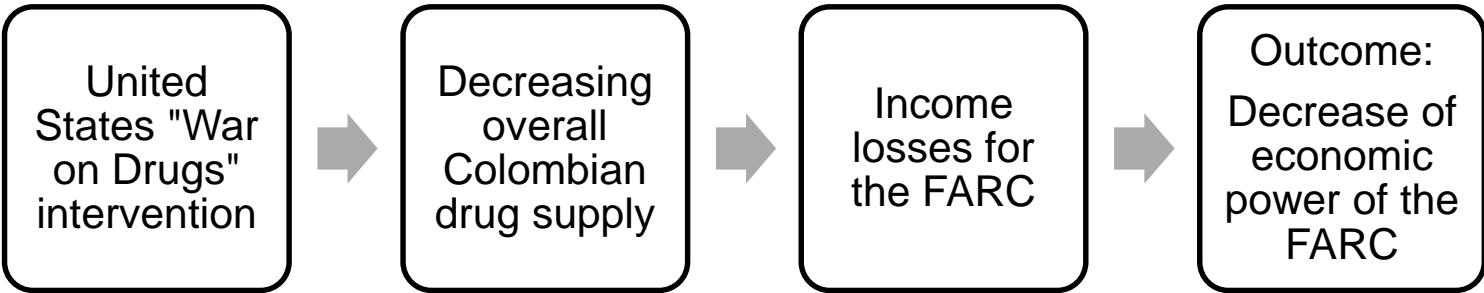
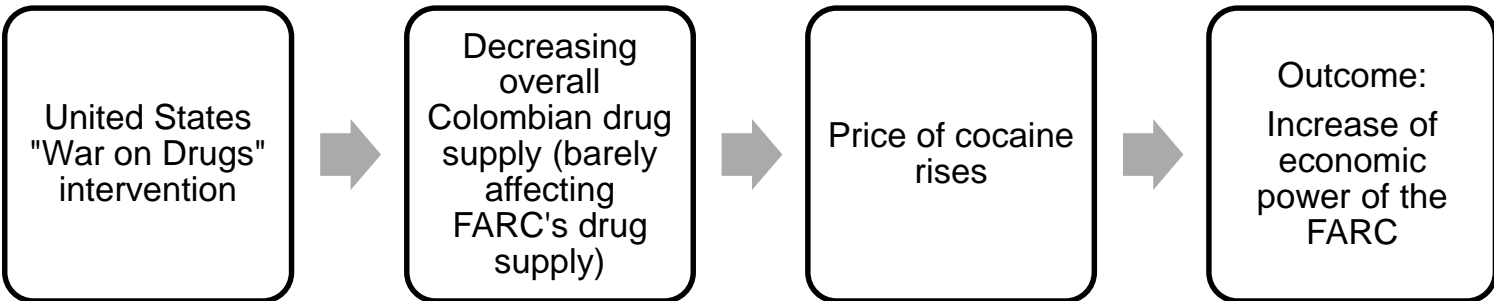


Figure 7: The United States intervention leading to increasing economic power of the FARC



²³ These causal mechanisms include the most important economic resources mentioned in the operationalization of economic power (3.3.4): drug trade and natural resources.

4.1.2. The Effect of the Intervention on the Economic Power of the Colombian Government

The (1) GDP, (2) human capital, (3) capital resources and (4) government resources determine the economic power of the Colombian government. As figure two shows, it can be expected that the United States' intervention has an effect on these aspects. One of the pillars of the United States' intervention is the promotion of social and economic circumstances (Beittel, 2012, Þórarinnsson, 2011). Education and development programs were set up to provide citizens (economic) alternatives to coca cultivation (The White House, 2013; U.S. Department of State, 2015; Veillette, 2005, p. 7). A good-working and accessible educational system offers citizens a positive future prospect and can prevent them from getting involved in illegal cultivation. This intends to eventually benefit the economy of Colombia.²⁴ Figure eight shows this presumed mechanism.

Figure 8: The United States intervention leading to increasing economic power of the Colombian

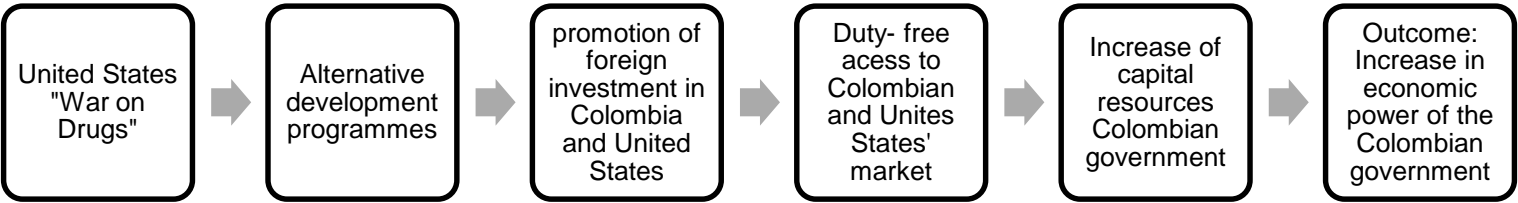


The second causal mechanism, with economic power as the outcome, is the positive influence of the United States intervention on the capital resources of the Colombian government. During the intervention, the United States actively promoted foreign investment and a free economy in Colombia and multiple trade agreements were signed between the two countries (Avilés, 2008). The United States provided tax-free access to its market (for certain products), thereby contributing to legitimate alternatives for drug cultivation and trade (Embassy of Colombia, 2012; Vargas Meza, 2011). United States corporations were also granted duty-free access to the Colombian market. The idea behind these arrangements was that it would lead to an increase

²⁴ An improvement of the educational system causes an increase in the labor force and labor mobility. This is good for the state's economy because there is a causal link between the educational level of a state's workforce and the average wages (Berger & Fisher, 2013).

of foreign investment in Colombia, thereby helping with the economic development (Economy Watch, 2010). Figure nine shows the causal mechanism.

Figure 9: The United States intervention leading to increasing economic power of the Colombian government



4.1.3. The Effect of the Intervention on the Territorial Power of the FARC and the Colombian Government

The effect of the United States’ “War on Drugs” can have positive and negative effects on both the FARC and the Colombian government. As noted before, the intervention has been mainly military. Most finances and resources are put into military action and support (Beittel, 2012, p. 38; Þórarinnsson, 2011, p. 20). As described above (4.1.1), the spraying of coca plantations by the Colombian and United States’ government is used to attack the income source of the FARC but also to expel them and gain back control. The fumigation limits the possibilities to earn money, which takes away one of the most important incentives to stay in a particular area. If there is no money to be earned, or if there are constant air attacks by the opposition, it is more likely for an armed group to leave that region. Consequently, it provides the government the opportunity to gain control back or strengthen it (Arsenault, 2014; Huey, 2014).²⁵

Figure 10: The United States intervention leading to a decrease in the territorial power of the FARC



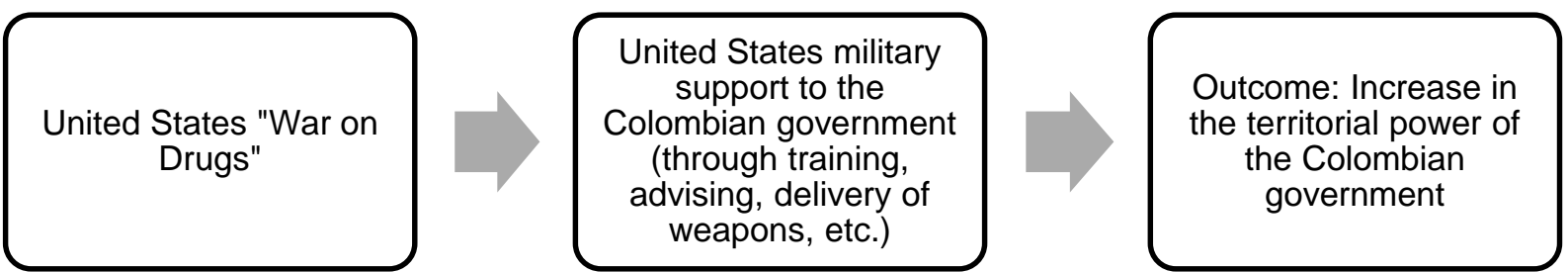
²⁵ This is not a certainty. The fact that the FARC is leaving a particular area does not automatically mean the Colombian government will then take over control. It is one of the possibilities. Paramilitaries could also, for example, become the most important actor.

Figure 11: The United States intervention leading to an increase in the territorial power of the Colombian



The outcome of figure eleven can also be achieved without the air attacks being directly effective (see figure twelve). The United States government is assisting the Colombian military, thereby providing weapons, training, strategic advice, manpower, etc. Although the air attacks may not lead to the destruction of coca plantations or the withdrawal of the FARC, other military support can still empower the Colombian government. For example, the increase of military power of the Colombian government can result in winning battles on the ground.

Figure 12: The United States intervention leading to an increase in the territorial power of the Colombian



The causal mechanisms in figures ten and eleven start with the assumption that the air attacks of the Colombian government and United States are indeed effective. However, not everyone agrees on this matter (see 4.1.1.). Small farmers and citizens experience many negative effects resulting from the aerial actions (Amnesty International, 2015; Carpenter, 2001; COHA, 2013; Isacson, 2013; Veillette, 2005). This negatively influences the relationship between citizens and the government, because people feel like the government does not care about them. The FARC can anticipate such feelings, presenting the government as the common enemy and thereby increase support for their actions. In such as case, the Colombian government is not (or no longer) accepted as the main authority. The FARC is seen as the better alternative and

becomes legitimate power holder. The FARC gets more support and their degree of control can be increased.²⁶

Figure 13: The United States intervention leading to an increase in the FARC's territorial power

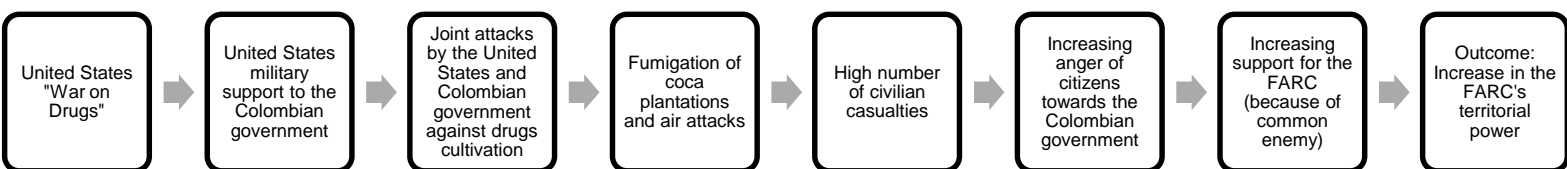
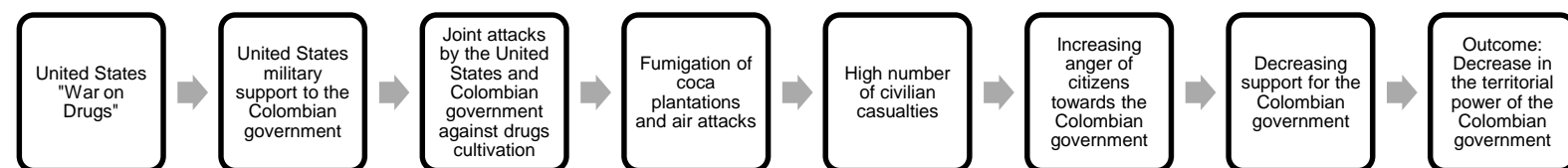


Figure 14: The United States intervention leading to a decrease in the FARC's territorial power



4.1.4. The Effect of the Intervention on the Military Power of the FARC and the Colombian Government

The Colombian government has received massive military support from the United States government since 2000: over \$6 billion dollars (Barry, 2002, p. 173-174; Beittel, 2012, 38; Chomsky, sd; Oehme, 2010, p. 222; Tickner, 2014). This support can be separated into different forms: military training programs, the contribution of weaponry and supplies, air services, ground forces, etc. The support and thus increase of all these different aspects, all contribute to a direct increase in the power of the Colombian government. This causes an increase because military power is defined as following: the military- related expenditures, armed forces personnel and the quality and quantity of military equipment together. Support of the United States in the form of, for example, helicopters, military personnel or equipment, directly affects power as defined in this thesis. An increase in the military power of the Colombian government

²⁶ "Civilian casualties" means civilians are damaged by the fumigations of the United States and Colombian government. This can be economic, social, environmental, and health damage.

can also lead to more attacks against the FARC. The more attacks that occur, the more likely it becomes that they suffer losses, mainly in manpower. The presumed causal relations are shown in figure fifteen and sixteen.

Figure 15: The United States intervention leading to an increase in the military power of the Colombian government

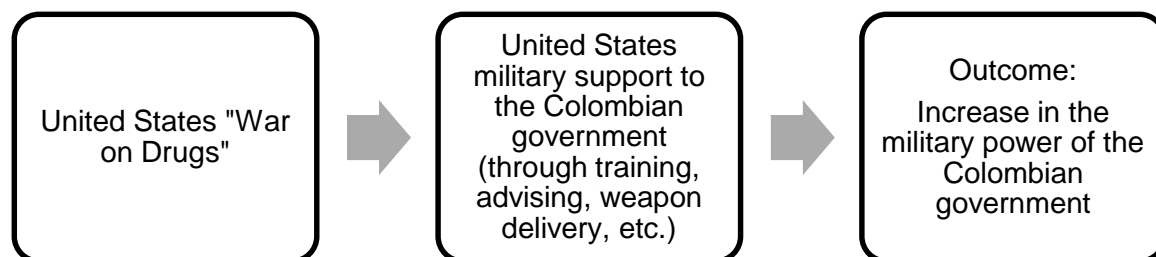
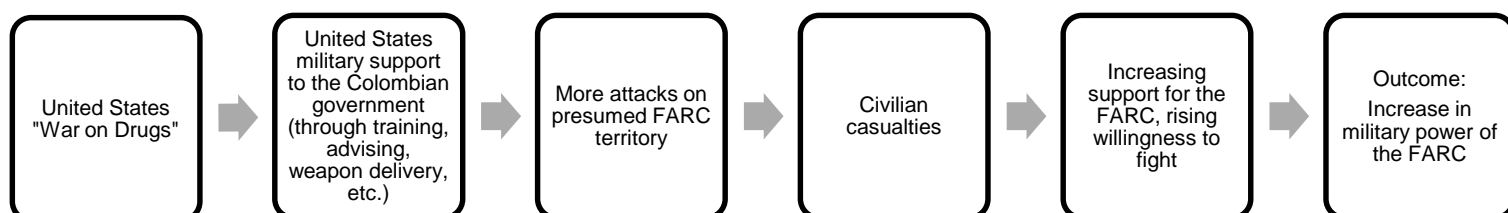


Figure 16: The United States intervention leading to a decrease in the military power of the FARC



However, as described in figure seven and thirteen, the military actions of the Colombian and United States government can also have counterproductive effects, such as an increase in the power of the FARC. It can cause an increase in the support for the FARC: a growth in the number of people willing to act against the government with the FARC.

Figure 17: The United States intervention leading to an increase in the military power of the FARC



All the causal mechanisms and figures above show the many possible effects the “War on Drugs” can have.²⁷ It illustrates that the highly insecure environment makes it hard to predict beforehand if a particular strategy or action will have the desired effect. It furthermore shows the different forms of power are very much intertwined with each other. The economic power of the FARC greatly depends on the territory they have under control. Regions unsuitable for coca plantations negatively influence the FARC’s financial capabilities. The military strength of the FARC influences the ability to conquer territory. Thus, there is a lot of overlap between the causal chains. In the next part of this chapter, evidence is gathered and used to test the identified hypotheses.

4.2. Testing the Causal Mechanisms

The first two steps of process- tracing are completed, which means the causal mechanisms (hypotheses) can be tested now. This is done through the gathering of evidence for the link between A and B. Secondary data analysis determines to what extent the United States “War on Drugs” influenced the economic, territorial, and military power of the FARC and the Colombian government.

4.2.1. Testing the Effect of the Intervention on the Economic Power of the FARC

The economic power of the FARC is determined by revenues earned through kidnapping, drug trade and natural resources. Drug trade is by far the most significant source of income for the FARC (McDermott, 2013; Ince, 2012; Otis, 2014; LeoGrande & Sharpe, 2000; International Crisis Group, sd). The United States “War on Drugs” is therefore mainly aimed at reducing the income earned through drug trade. The analysis of secondary data shows that the fumigation of coca plants was the main strategy in the fight against drug cultivation and trade (see 4.1.1., figure 4 and figure 5) (Dion & Russler, 2008, p. 418). The extent of the United States’ influence on the economic power of the FARC is thus mainly determined by the successes of these fumigations. More specifically, the extent to which the fumigations and air attacks were indeed damaging the coca plantations controlled by the FARC or affected the drug trade.

²⁷ Again, not all possible causal relations are tested in this thesis. The figures represent the presumed causal mechanisms mentioned in the literature.

First, let us take a look at the figures with regards to drug cultivation in Colombia, including the cultivation of drugs in FARC territory. Despite a difference in the exact numbers, data shows a sharp decline in the total drug cultivation in Colombia in the period 2000-2012, see figures eighteen and figure nineteen (Isacson, 2013; Woods, 2015; Otis, 2014, p.2; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008; UNODC, 2012, p. 2; Norman, 2013, p. 6). This decline can, at least to some extent, be attributed to the fumigations and manual eradications of the United States and Colombian government. Since the start of “Plan Colombia” and the intensified cooperation between the United States and Colombia there have been great successes in eradicating a big part of the coca crops (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008, p. 71; Isacson, WOLA. Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas. Time To Abandon Coca Fumigation in Colombia, 2013). Important to note is that a decline in the Colombian coca cultivation can also have other explanations, such as adverse weather conditions or increasing (alternative) economic possibilities.²⁸ However, the evidence shows that the eradication did in fact destroy coca plants. Whether or not it was efficient is a whole other question.

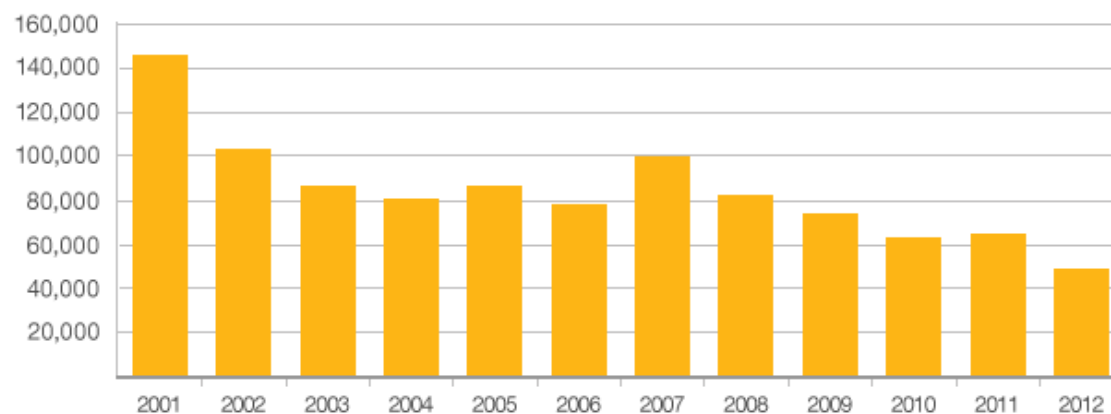
It is striking, however, that the sharpest decline is after 2007, when there was reduced fumigation. This suggests it were not the sprayings that caused a decline in the drug supply but that, perhaps, other actions by the government, such as manual eradication, were more successful (Ebus, 2014; Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense, sd; Mejía; Brodzinsky, 2015; Latin America Working Group, sd).

²⁸ Increasing economic possibilities can provide people an alternative to coca cultivation, causing a decrease in the (illegal) coca cultivation.

Figure 18: Coca cultivation in Colombia

Coca cultivation in Colombia, 2001-12

Hectares

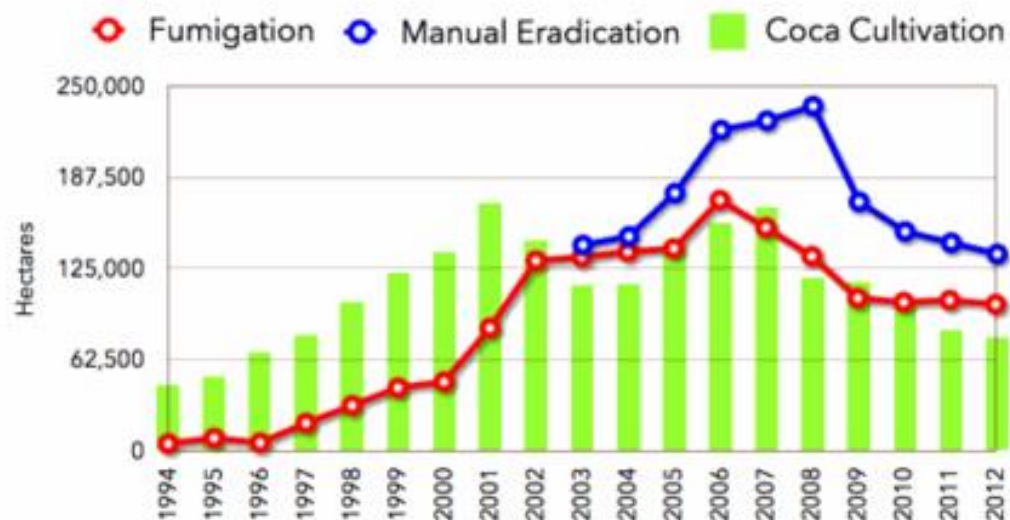


Source: UNODC

Source: Woods, 2015

Figure 19: Fumigation and eradication in Colombia

Coca Crops, Fumigation, and Manual Eradication in Colombia



Source: Isacson, 2013

The claims above are based on the assumption that the fumigations/manual eradications have an immediate effect. The opposite causal link is also a possibility: because the crop cultivation decreases the number of fumigations also decreases. If there is, for whatever reason, less coca cultivation in Colombia, the need to fumigate/ spray is also less present. The problem with this argument is that it is very difficult to determine what came first: a change in the cultivation or a change in the number fumigations. As this chapter argues, the quantity of coca crops and the fumigations most likely correlate with one another. The above possibility mentioned above can, therefore, not be ignored.

Important to note here is that the figures of the ‘successes’ of eradications do not take the side effects into account. The sprayings and manual eradications may indeed be successful in destructing coca plants, but they often also have negative side effects (Latin America Working Group, sd; James, 2006; Jelsma, 1998; Rogers & Aid, 2013). For example, effective fumigations can add to the problem of displacement or negatively influence the food production (Latin America Working Group, sd). Thus, the success of one policy can potentially lead to the emergence of new problems or make existing ones worse. Once again, this shows that all the problems in Colombia are intertwined with one another. The economic, military, and economic power of the political actors (FARC and the Colombia government) cannot be seen as independent units but need to be addressed all together.

As explained previously, success regarding the eradication of coca crops does not automatically mean the FARC is also weakened. A closer look is needed to uncover what the exact effect on the FARC has been. Figures on the earned drug income of the FARC (2000-2013) vary widely. There are some outliers but most studies agree upon an income between US\$200- US\$350 million annually (Mason, 2010, p. 332; UNRIC, sd; Otis, 2014, p. 10; McDermott, 2013). Although the FARC’s annual drug earnings have dropped somewhat since 2000, there is no clear indication of a sharp decline. The FARC remains a very rich guerrilla group (Gillin, 2014). Thus, the FARC has been able to remain most of their income earned through drugs, despite the eradication and fumigations. So there is no evidence for a direct relation between the “War on Drugs” and a decrease in the FARC’s income earned through drug trade (figure 4). According to the mechanisms displayed in 4.1.1. the maintenance or increase of the FARC’s

income can be explained by (1) an increase in the price of cocaine and/or (2) the spraying of the “wrong” areas.²⁹

There is no evidence that the fumigations have caused an increase in the price of cocaine. Cocaine prices in the United States have stayed virtually the same since the start of “Plan Colombia” (Carpenter, 2001; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011).³⁰ While the share in the worldwide drug supply declined and the drug price did not rise, the income of the FARC remained relatively steady. Evidence about the exact impact of the fumigations on the FARC is very unclear. The FARC’s share in the worldwide cocaine supply suggests they were damaged by the sprayings. Estimates show that the FARC was responsible for 80% of the worldwide cocaine supply in 2004 and that this had dropped to a share of 50-60% in 2009 (International Crisis Group, sd; UNRIC, sd; Mason, 2010, p. 332; McDermott, 2013; Mulvey, 2009). The FARC’s share in the worldwide cocaine supply thus dropped significantly since the early years of “Plan Colombia”. The drug cultivation and trade by the FARC seemed to be disrupted (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). But, it is too quickly to conclude the FARC was heavily damaged by the sprayings of the “War on Drugs” and “Plan Colombia”. Evidence in studies show that the fumigation of coca plantations did not have the wanted effect and mainly damaged Colombian civilians and farmers (Pecený & Durnan, 2006; Carpenter, 2001; Rogers & Aid, 2013; Isacson, WOLA. Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas. Time To Abandon Coca Fumigation in Colombia, 2013; Paige, 2014; Wells, 2013; James, 2006). Secondary data analysis thus cannot give a decisive answer about the effect of the “Plan Colombia” on the drug income of the FARC.

We can therefore look briefly at other income sources of the FARC, namely kidnappings and natural resources. Although not mentioned in the causal mechanisms, it is worth looking at these sources because they might be able to give an alternative explanation regarding the FARC’s income. For example, a significant increase in the income earned through natural resources can explain why the total income of the FARC did not fall, despite a decrease of drug

²⁹ Yet there could be other reasons, such as changes in the income through kidnappings or natural resources. These are discussed on page 51.

³⁰ The price of cocaine in the United States is used to indicate the cocaine price of drugs coming from Colombia. This stems from the fact that (1) the majority of the drugs in the United States are coming from Colombia (about 80%) and that (2) most of the drugs produced in Colombia are trafficked to the United States (Central Intelligence Agency, sd).

income. In other words: looking at these alternatives income resources can possibly give more insight into why the income of the FARC did or did not change.

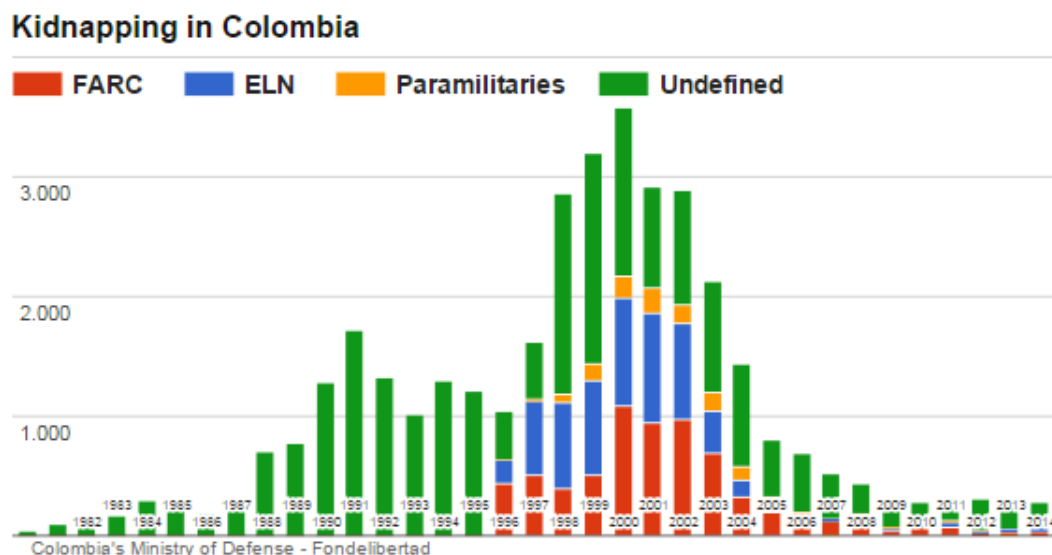
Figures about the number of kidnappings by the FARC show a decline, thereby also suggesting a decline in the income earned through kidnappings (Mason, 2010, p. 333; Alsema, 2012). The number of kidnappings reduced significantly since the introduction of “Plan Colombia”. In 1999 seven persons per day were kidnapped in Colombia, in 2008 this number had dropped to two per day: a decrease of approximately 61%. As figure 20 shows, kidnappings by the FARC reduced from 1100 in the year 2000, to less than 50 in 2014. A great success for Colombia’s security. Literature suggests that the decrease in kidnapping can be assigned to the territorial and military losses of the FARC (Alsema, 2015; Gurney, 2015; Shifter, 2012). The loss of territory also means there are less possibilities to hold hostages. The loss of fighters means the capacity to kidnap diminishes. This shows, again, that the economic, military, and territorial power of the FARC are very much intertwined.

However, alternative explanations (besides the loss of territory or decreasing military strength) for the decline in kidnappings cannot be rejected. For example, a change in the FARC’s policy can also be a reason for a decline in number of kidnappings. The FARC may have decided to not focus on kidnappings as much anymore because of financial reasons. This decision can be made independently of the “War on Drugs” or “Plan Colombia”. Whether or not this is the case, is not tested in this thesis. Therefore, one cannot conclude that “Plan Colombia” resulted in a decrease in the number of kidnappings.

The income gained through natural resources increased over the past few years. In 2012 the FARC had control over 489 out of 1119 municipalities, including regions with gold mines. Part of the reason for this increase is the loss of drug income, which had to be compensated for (Ince, 2012). It cannot be determined if this increase is the direct result of the “War on Drugs” because of the reason also mentioned above: this research cannot eliminate other explanations. For example, changes in exchange rates or the value of natural resources can also explain an increase or decrease. This research is not able to eliminate those factors and solely hold the “War on Drugs” responsible for changes. It is only possible to state that the evidence points towards a correlation. Also, the share of natural resources income on the total income is small relative to the drug income. The focus is, therefore, mostly on the income earned through drug trade.

In sum, one can state that the FARC gained most of their income through crop cultivation and drug trade. Since “Plan Colombia”, the coca supply in Colombia has decreased significantly, which would also suggest a decrease in the drug income of the FARC. The set goal of the United States, a decrease of 50% within 6 years, is not achieved. It is uncertain to what extent the FARC was economically affected by the sprayings, air attacks and manual eradication of the United States and Colombian government. The income of the FARC has stayed relatively stable, despite the share loss in the worldwide drug supply and the steady cocaine prices. This can point towards an income resource that is not taken into account. For example, there can be an increase in money earned through extortion or money earned with other criminal activities. The income earned through natural resources increased and those of kidnappings decreased, but this only determines a small part of the overall economic power of the FARC. The secondary data analysis points towards a relation between the “War on Drugs” and the decrease of coca cultivation in Colombia but a causal link is not proven. The economic power of the FARC has diminished, but it cannot be stated that the United States “War on Drugs” has caused this. Alternative explanations for the changes in the economic power of the FARC cannot be eliminated.

Figure 20: Kidnappings in Colombia



Source: Alsema, 2015

4.2.2. Testing the Effect of the Intervention on the Economic Power of the Colombian Government

The GDP, human capital, capital resources and government resources determine the economic power of the Colombian government. The higher these indicators, the more economic power the Colombian government has. According to the figures in 4.1.2. the “War on Drugs” is affecting the economic power of the Colombian government mainly through the increase of human capital and capital resources. Through economic development programs, alternatives to coca cultivation were promoted. These programs were, however, initially not included in the “War on Drugs” intervention through “Plan Colombia” (see figure 21). The focus was primarily on military support and less on the social and economic development of Colombia. From 2000-2007 \$350 million dollar was spend on alternative development programs (Dion & Russler, 2008, p. 419). This is only a small level of funding compared to the military expenditures for eradication. Consequently, a limited effect of the “War on Drugs” on human capital is to be expected. Figures of research institutions show that the human capital of Colombia has indeed increased since 2000. Between 2001-2005 the well- educated workforce grew by 1.4%. Literacy raised from 67% in 2004 to 93% in 2008 and the expected years of schooling increased (Federal Research Division, 2010; United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Figure 21: United States Assistance for "Plan Colombia" (2000-2011), in millions \$

	Andean Counterdrug Initiative ³¹	Economic Support Fund	Foreign Military Financing	International Military Education and Training	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	Non-proliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs	Air Wing	Department of Defense	Total
2000	60,1						38	128,5	226,6
Extra support*	832							100,7	932,7
2001	48						38	190,2	276,2
2002	379,9					25	38,2	117,3	560,4
2003	580,2		17,1	1,2		3,3	41,5	164,8	808,1
2004	473,9		98,5	1,7		0,2	45	178,2	797,5
2005	462,8		99,2	1,7		5,1	45	155,3	769,1
2006	464,8		89,1	1,7			45	140,5	741,1
2007	465		85,5	1,6		4,1	37	129,4	722,6
2008	244,6	194,4	55,1	1,4	41,9	3,7	39	119,9	700
2009	230,1	196,5	53	1,4	45	3,2	12,4	127,9	669,5
2010		201,8	55	1,7	243,9	4,8	12,9	129,4	649,5
2011		184,4	47,9	1,7	204	4,8	3,6	110,4	556,8
Total	4241,4	777,1	600,4	14,1	534,8	20,6	357,6	1792,5	8338,5

* Approved legislation by the United States Congress in support of Plan Colombia

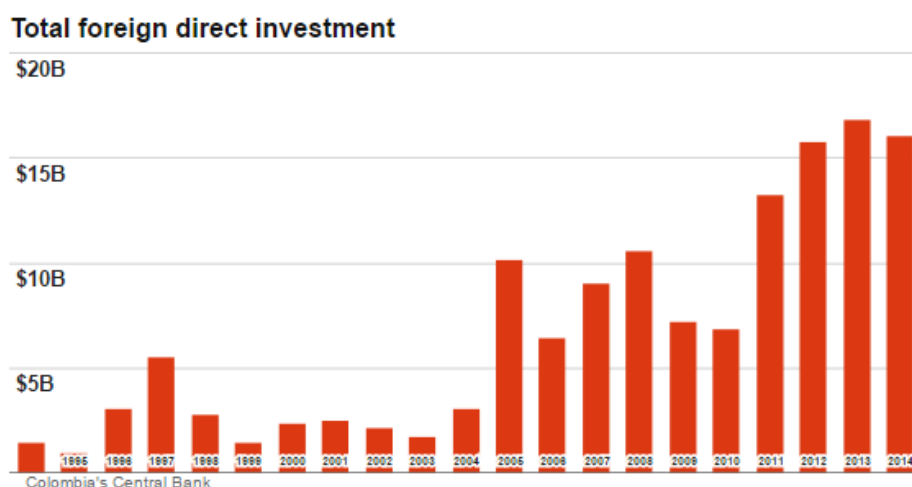
Source: Beittel, 2012, p. 38

A rise also occurred in the capital resources of Colombia (see figures 22 and 23). There has been a growth in the import between 1999- 2006, resulting in a positive trade balance of \$ 1 billion in 2008 (Federal Research Division, 2010). Foreign Direct Investment has grown more than 50% since the start of "Plan Colombia" (see figure 21). Colombia's GDP growth shows a significant increase since 2000, part of which can be attributed to natural resource income (The

³¹ The Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) was a set of plans aimed at reducing the coca plantation and drug trafficking in Colombia and the Andean region (Wyler, 2009, p. 22).

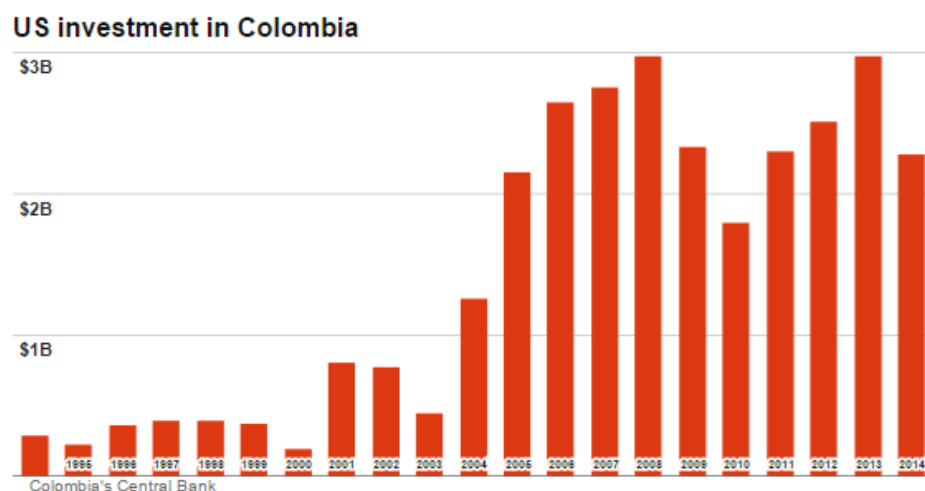
World Bank, 2015). The United States is one of Colombia's most important investors and can thus be held partly responsible for the increase in capital resources and GDP. However, there are many factors influencing the economic power of the Colombian government. For example, the state of the global economy, natural disasters and the demographic are also important factors influencing the income of the Colombian state. The exact impact of the "War on Drugs" on the economic strength of the Colombian government is thus difficult to determine. No evidence is found for the direct relation between the "War on Drugs" and the increasing economic power of the Colombian government.

Figure 22: Total foreign direct investment Colombia



Source: Alsema, 2015

Figure 23: United States investment in Colombia



Source: Alsema, 2015

In sum, one can state that there is no evidence for a direct causal link between the “War on Drugs” and an increase in the human capital of Colombia. There is, on the other hand, evidence for the causal relation between the United States “War on Drugs” and the increase of capital resources in Colombia. Foreign Direct Investment increased significantly since 2000 which can be partly attributed to the United States, one of the biggest investors in Colombia. Thus, one can say that the “War on Drugs” intervention positively affected the economic power of the Colombian government. The extent to which the “War on Drugs” intervention affected the economic power of the Colombia government, on the other hand, is much harder to determine. Reason for this are the many other, external factors influencing the economic power of the Colombian government.

4.2.3. Testing the Effect of the Intervention on the Territorial Power of the FARC and the Colombian Government

The territorial power of the FARC and the Colombian government is determined by the areas they control and the degree of control (low, moderate or high). At the start of “Plan Colombia” in 2000 the FARC was active in about 40% of the 162 municipalities (Mason, 2010, p. 333; LeoGrande & Sharpe, 2000, p. 4). This number has dropped significantly. Since the early 2000s, FARC controlled territory has greatly diminished (see figure 24) (International Crisis Group, sd; Priest, The Tico Times News, 2013).

Figure 24: FARC territory

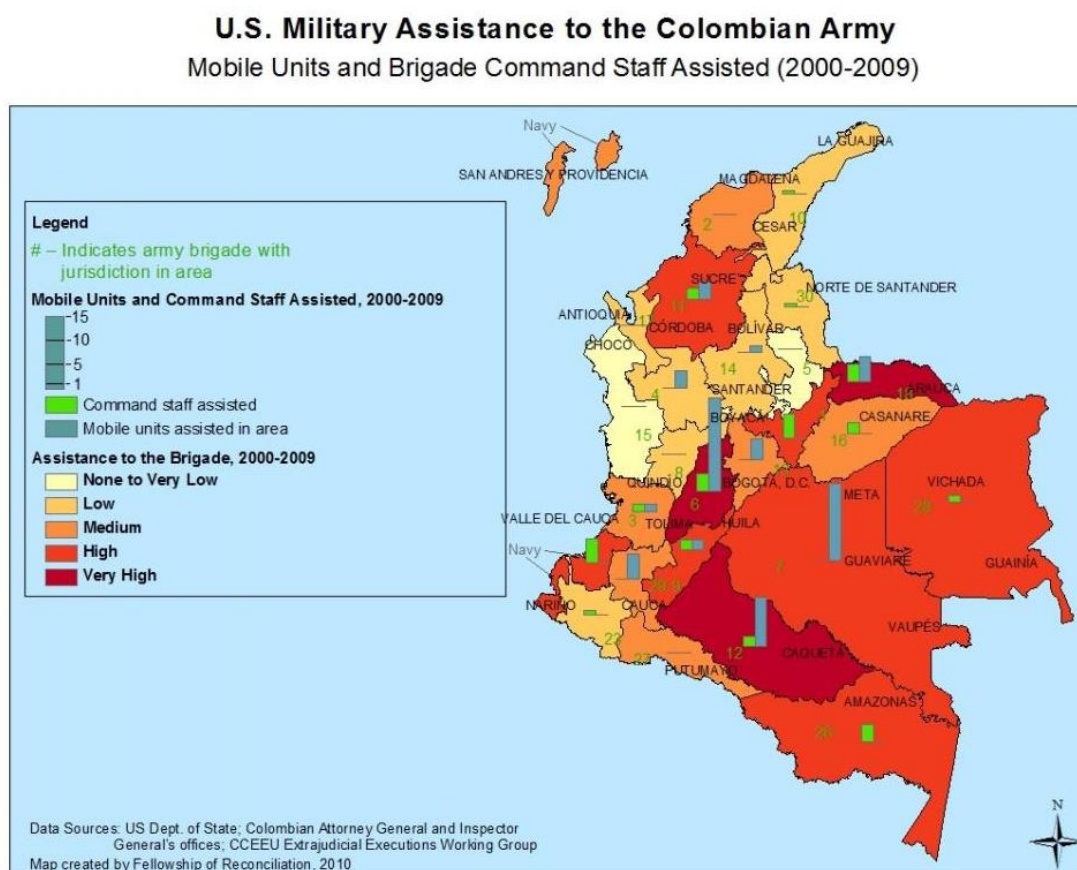


Source: Priest, 2013

The degree of the FARC control also diminished since 2000, meaning that the overall territorial power of the FARC has declined (International Crisis Group, sd). This can be attributed to the loss of FARC members (see 5.2.4.) and to a stronger state presence in many regions of Colombia (although state control is still considered weak in the south (UNRIC, sd; BBC, 2013)). A decrease in the number of FARC members means there are less people who can assist in remaining the control over a certain region. The loss of territory and control by the FARC does not automatically imply an increase in the territorial power of the Colombian government. Control can also be taken over by the ELN or paramilitaries. But as said above, data supports the claim that the territorial power of the Colombian state has increased. The Colombian state gained back control over many regions and is more present in the rural areas (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008, p. 45; Tickner, 2014). The government has become more visible through air attacks and better trained police forces increased the governments capacity to control regions. When figures 24 and 25 are compared it shows that many of the regions with high United States assistance to the Colombian government are also the regions wherein the FARC lost control. State presence directly reduces coca cultivation, which causes withdrawal by the FARC (see figure 10) (Dion & Russler, 2008, p. 416). Furthermore, the improved security as a result of the more active and capable government caused an increase in the trust of the citizens in the Colombian government (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008).

In sum, one can state that the FARC has suffered great territorial losses. The Colombian government did not only reclaim territory but also increased their degree of territorial control (including the control in FARC territory). Evidence points towards a direct relation between the “War on Drugs” and the increasing power of the Colombian government.

Figure 25: United States military assistance to Colombia



Source: Fellowship of Reconciliation , sd

4.2.4. Testing the Effect of the Intervention on the Military Power of the FARC and the Colombian Government

The mobilization capacity, the ability to obtain arms and the fighting ability determine the military power of the FARC. The number of FARC supporters and members determine a great deal of their military power. As is illustrated in figure 26, the number of FARC members has decreased significantly since the start of “Plan Colombia”. Estimates show that the FARC had around 16000 members in 2001. This number dropped to 8000 in 2010. The FARC suffered many military defeats and is now at half the strength they were in 2000 (Global Security, sd; Smith M. , 2010; Stanford University, 2010-2015; Maddaloni, 2009; Insight Crime, sd). Thus, their fighting ability, in terms of manpower, has decreased significantly. According to the figures, support for the organization also diminished (Alsema, Colombia Reports. FARC, 2015).

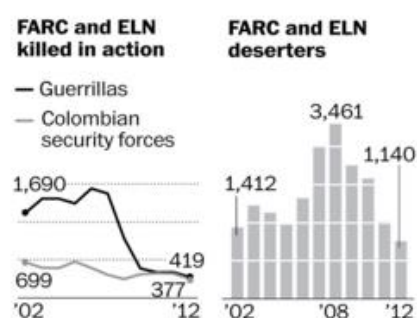
Figure 26: FARC membership

Estimated size FARC	Year
16,000	2001
17,000	2003
18,000	2007
7000-9000	2013
7000	2014

Source: Stanford University, 2010-2015; Maddaloni, 2009, p. 24

The loss of manpower and support cannot be solely attributed to the “War on Drugs”. Did the FARC lose members as a result of attacks by the United States and Colombian government? This is probably a big part of the reason (see figure 27) (Priest, December 2013; Stanford University, 2010-2015). But, one has to be careful, because there can be many reasons for a decline.

Figure 27: FARC members killed/ deserted



Source: Priest, December 2013

Economic prosperity can motivate people to step out and choose a career other than the FARC. The seemingly never ending cycle of violence in Colombia may have helped people in deciding to put down their weapons (they are tired of fighting). Or if the FARC is not living up to the expectations and is breaking promises it can turn people against the organization. The air attacks can only explain a part of the decline in FARC support. Exact figures on how many members got killed in which attack are not present. The precise influence of “War on Drugs” on the decrease of FARC support cannot be determined with secondary data analysis solely, but there

seems to be a correlation. However, there are too many alternatives that can also explain the decline in the size of and support for the FARC.

The FARC's ability to obtain weapons has remained relatively stable over the years (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006, p. 28; Lohmuller, 2015; Blank, 2009, p. 18). Neighboring countries, supporters further away and international arms dealers are still able to provide the guerrilla movement with weapons. There is no evidence suggesting there is a direct relation between the "War on Drugs" and the ability of the FARC to obtain weapons.

The military- related expenditures, armed forces personnel and the quality and quantity of military equipment determine the military power of the Colombian government. Almost 75% of the United States assistance agreed upon in "Plan Colombia" was earmarked for military support (see figure 21) (Mason, 2010, p. 344; Beittel, 2012). Most of it went to training, equipment, helicopters and the creation of new counternarcotic brigades. The Colombian military benefitted directly of this support. Their fighting capacity increased significantly. After the attacks of 9/11 there was a shift to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (Mason, 2010, p. 344). The FARC was marked as a terrorist organization, which led to an even tougher United States approach (intensification of military actions). Since 2000, the Colombian military personnel increased with 50% (Smith P. , 2010; Stanford University, 2010-2015). Not only was there an increase in the number of soldiers but they were also better trained and equipped (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). In 1999, 2500 soldiers were trained by the United States, in 2003 this already increased to 13.000 (Mason, 2010, p. 345). Figures of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show the large share of the United States in the total weapon supply to the Colombian government (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2014). This eliminates other options for the increase of weaponry in Colombia. All the figures above indicate a relation between the "War on Drugs" and the increase in the military power of the Colombian government.

In sum, one can state that the "War on Drugs" has caused an increase in the military power of the Colombian government. The link between the "War on Drugs" and the military power of the FARC cannot be proven, although the evidence points towards a correlation.

4.3. Evaluation of the Results

The analysis shows unilateral partisan third- party interventions can affect the power of actors in intrastate conflict. The tests above point to a relatively strong link between the United States “War on Drugs” and increasing power of the Colombian government. The “War on Drugs” has contributed to the increase in the capital resources (and thus GDP), the reclaiming of territory, a stronger presence of the Colombian government and the growing military power of the Colombian government. The causal relation between the “War on Drugs” and the decreasing power of the FARC is less clear. Since 2000, the FARC’s share in the drug supply has declined (but their income has stayed relatively stable), they suffered great territorial losses and they lost half of their members. A direct link between the “War on Drugs” and the decreasing power of the FARC cannot be proven, because alternative explanations cannot be eliminated. The data does, however, point towards a relation between the increasing power of the Colombian government and the decreasing power of the FARC.

It seems that as the Colombian government is getting stronger, the FARC is losing power. Data suggests links between, for example, a stronger presence of the government and a decrease in the coca cultivation of the FARC (Dion & Russler, 2008, p. 419). The instalment of a strong government results in a good infrastructure, reduction of corruption, more transparency and more accountability. A better access to legal markets will help reduce illegal coca cultivation. This causal mechanism is, however, not tested in this research and cannot be proven. A second example is the relation between the growing economic power of Colombia and the loss of FARC members/fighters. Again, this relationship is not tested in this research but data suggests that increased economic alternatives contribute to a decrease in FARC members and supporters (see 4.1.1). The Colombian economy has grown significantly between 2000- 2013. 2007 even has been one of the best economic years in Colombia, with a GDP increase of 7,5% (Federal Research Division, 2010). This can explain why more people decided to step out of the FARC.

The goals of the United States “War on Drugs” were to reduce the production of cocaine with 50% within six years and to improve the security in Colombia by reclaiming control of areas held by guerrilla groups (such as the FARC) (Mason, 2010, p. 344; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). They did not succeed in reducing the cocaine supply with 50% within the set six years, but they were very close (see 4.2.1.). The security improved significantly in Colombia as a result of increased territorial and military power of the Colombian government (Priest, The Washington Post. Covert action in Colombia, December

2013; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). One could thus state that, altogether, the intervention has been quite effective. It primarily contributed to the strengthening of the Colombian government.

The “War on Drugs” cannot, however, be called an unanimous success. As is pointed out numerous times in this research, the effectiveness of certain strategies is debatable. Especially the fumigations are heavily critiqued because they take away the livelihoods of people without offering an alternative. The evidence shows, for example, that the FARC did not suffer major income losses since the “War on Drugs”. Therefore, the main critique on the “War on Drugs” strategy is that it is too simplistic to resolve the drug problem. The focus is predominantly on coca eradication (see figure 21), while all causes of the conflict should be addressed. Because as chapter three illustrates, drugs are not the only cause of the conflict. Improving the security and changing the political, social, economic circumstances in Colombia were the objectives of “Plan Colombia”. But as the analysis shows, solving the drug problem is not possible without also addressing the political, economic, and social problems. All are intertwined with each other.

5. Conclusion

In this research the United States intervention in Colombia is used as a case study to gain more knowledge on the effect of unilateral partisan third- party interventions on the political, economic and military power of non-state and state actors in an armed intrastate conflict. In 1999 “Plan Colombia” was designed by the Colombian government to solve the economic, social, political and security problems within the country. The United States strongly supported this plan and continued their “War on Drugs” in close cooperation with the Colombian government. The “War on Drugs” in “Plan Colombia” can be seen as the start of a third- party intervention by the United States in Colombia. In the fight against drugs, the FARC was one of the main opponents of the governments of the United States and Colombia.

According to realists, a state will only intervene when this will benefit their own power position (Nye Jr., 2009, pp. 4-7; Walt, 1998, p. 31). Following the realist line of thought, one can say the intervention is aimed at increasing one’s own power and/or the power of the Colombian government and weakening the power of the FARC. With more than a decade gone by, the effect on the power of both actors remains uncertain. Literature regarding third- party interventions is not in accordance either about the effect of an intervention. On one side, there are scholars who claim an intervention affects the power of actors in an intrastate conflict. On the other side, there are authors claiming it cannot. By taking Colombia as a case study, this thesis tested to what extent a partisan unilateral third- party intervention can affect the power of two opposing parties in an intrastate conflict. The following research question was asked: ***To what extent can a partisan unilateral third- party intervention affect the power of two opposing parties in an intrastate conflict?***

Through process- tracing (secondary data analysis) the effects of the intervention on the economic, territorial and military power on the FARC and the Colombian government were tested. The evidence suggests partisan unilateral third- party interventions can indeed affect the power of two opposing parties in an intrastate conflict. It is clear the intervention has an effect on the power of the supported side, in this case the Colombian government. The “War on Drugs” affected the economic, territorial and military power of the Colombian government. There is strong evidence for a direct link between the “War on Drugs” intervention and the increasing military and economic power. Also, the coca cultivation dropped significantly and the security improved.

A direct relation between the intervention and the economic, territorial and military power of the FARC, on the other hand, is not proven. There are many alternative explanations for the changes in the economic, territorial and military power of the FARC. These are not tested in this research and cannot be eliminated. The evidence does, however, point to a relation between the increasing power of the Colombian government (as a result of the intervention) and the decreasing power of the FARC. Despite the successes of the Colombian government and the United States it is also argued that the drug problem cannot be resolved without addressing the economic, political and social problems too.

This case study illustrates that unilateral partisan third- party interventions can affect the political, economic and military power of non-state and state actors in armed intrastate conflicts. This does not mean, however, that *every* unilateral partisan third- party intervention will have an effect. Every conflict has its own history, its own causes, its own actors and its own solutions. This thesis solely argues that third- party interventions can affect the power of the fighting actors. Consequently, interventions can help enhance the quality of daily life for citizens living in a conflict.

5.1. Discussion and Recommendations

There is always room for improvement. The same applies to this study. First, the method of process- tracing can be criticized. As a researcher you are very dependent on the available data, which has its limitations. There is enough information about the Colombian case that can be re-used but gathering first- hand information would have been very valuable for this research. Visiting the areas affected by the sprayings and talking to the locals will give a more realistic picture of the effects of the “War on Drugs” on the daily lives of Colombians. Figures are often contrary to each other and only tell a small part of the story. Corruption of military personnel or government officials is, for example, not taken into account in this research. Reason for this is that it is very difficult to determine who is corrupt and what the effects are. A recommendation for future research on this topic is therefore to also include interviews. This will give a more complete and decisive answer to the research question.

Second, only a limited number of causal mechanisms is tested in this research. As a result, the findings are also somewhat limited because alternative explanations for an outcome cannot be eliminated. It would also be interesting to change the operationalization of the most important concepts. Will the results be the same if economic, military, and geographical power are measured differently? It is important to take in mind that the operationalization determines

a great deal of the further research. As a researcher you have to choose a particular definition, you cannot use multiple. However, a different definition of, for example, geographical power means different data needs to be used. Consequently, the results will be different. A recommendation for further research would be to test even more causal mechanisms. This will result in stronger evidence because alternative explanations can be eliminated.

Third, the focus on the “War on Drugs” can be perceived as problematic. In the analysis I argue the Colombian government and, particularly, the United States focus too much on tackling the drug problem. This approach limits them. The history of the Colombian conflict teaches us there is more to the conflict than “just” the drug problem. Social, geographical, political, and economic problems can be assigned a key role as well. This means one cannot just focus on one of the issues: they are all intertwined with each other (as shown in the analysis). However, this research also focuses on the “War on Drugs”. I critique the policymakers for their focus on drugs but meanwhile I am doing the same. A recommendation would therefore be to *not* focus on the “War on Drugs” that much but on the other means through which the intervention is carried out. One could, for example, research to the extent to which social and economic programs affect the FARC.

A policy recommendation for the United States and the Colombian government would be to broaden the focus of “Plan Colombia” and the “War on Drugs”. The focus has been primarily on crop eradication and less on improving the economic and social circumstances. However, this research has shown time and time again that the drug problem and the conflict cannot be resolved with just crop eradication. As long as people do not have economic alternatives to (illegal) coca cultivation, the drug problem will remain present.

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