

Links between Economic and Military Violence

Lesson 2: Colombia

Standards Addressed by Lesson: **CIVICS 3.1:** Students understand the domestic and foreign policy influence the United States has on other nations and how the actions of other nations influence politics and society of the United States. **GEOGRAPHY 4.3:** Students know the patterns and networks of economic interdependence; **5.1:** Students know how human actions modify the physical environment. **HISTORY 4.2:** Students understand how economic factors have influenced historical events.

Objectives of Lesson:	To engage students in critical thinking that allows them to see connections between militarization and globalization, specifically as it relates to the United States' economic interests in Colombia.
Instructional Strategies:	Group discussion/ Group activity/ Film
Preliminary Lesson Preparation:	Suggested reading: <i>Colombia and the United States: War, Unrest and Destabilization</i> (Mario A. Murillo. Seven Stories Press, 2004)
Vocabulary:	militarization, guerrilla, paramilitaries
Suggested Time:	60-90 minutes
Suggested Resources to Obtain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure</i> (DVD, Free Will Productions, 2003)- Current statistics on Military Aid to Colombia at www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm- Key concept cards- Make an overhead transparency of key concepts- Objectives vs. Facts of Plan Colombia cards and overhead
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Key Concepts CardsB. Historical Overview handoutC. Plan Colombia Objectives and Realities

Introduction to Lesson: This lesson assumes students have already taken the globalization course and have a general understanding of neoliberal economic policies. Distribute "Historical Overview and Development of Plan Colombia" as a homework assignment before class. If it cannot be distributed as homework, it can be read at the beginning of the class.

The objectives of this lesson are to encourage the students to make connections between economic interests/globalization and militarization, specifically in Colombia, and gain an overall understanding of the current situation in Colombia.

Lesson Outline

Activities

Activity 1:

Historical Overview

This is a brief exercise allowing educators to assess the level of understanding within the class. Educators should use the following questions/points to open discussion and gauge students' comprehension of at-home reading and general knowledge of Colombia.

- What are some of the products/resources that Colombia has to offer to an international market?
- Colombia is a country of 44 million people—approximately 64% living below the poverty line and 23% in absolute poverty. Roughly 30% are of African descent (Afro-Colombians). Fewer than 5% are indigenous although within this 5%, there are 84 different ethnic groups.
- Colombia has vast wealth disparity, the second most inequitable in the Western Hemisphere after Brazil. Two percent own 53% of the land, while the basic food requirements of 25% are not met.
- It is a country rich in biodiversity.
- Who are the key actors in the conflict?

Review the Study Guide Questions at the end of the Historical Overview handout. Make sure that students understand what Washington's "War on Drugs" is and how it has been played out in Colombia. In particular, review terms like *campesinos*, *militarization* and *fumigation* with students. Ask for questions about the readings or other general information.

Activity 2:

Film: *Plan Colombia*

Show the last 15 minutes of *Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure*. (This clip begins with Jeff Wenders stating, "There are always economic interests directly related to this military and paramilitary action against civilians." Continue the film until the end.)

Beforehand, review with students what NAFTA is and introduce the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the FTAA. (When this curriculum was written in 2004, the possibility of the FTAA was strong. That hemispheric strategy toward one trade agreement has been abandoned in favor of a more bi-lateral approach. In February 2007, free trade acts with Colombia and Peru are pending.) Let students know that the film clip will illustrate connections between violence in Colombia and U.S. economic interests; i.e. militarization and globalization.

Questions:

- Ask for the students to give their thoughts/reactions to the film.
- After reading the handouts and viewing this film, whom do you think prospers or "improves economically" from this form of free trade?
- How do you think people in this region might react to neoliberal policies?

- How has Colombia's history influenced the current political and economic situation that was just illustrated in the film?

Share the following facts with students:

- 1) Colombia was one of the largest suppliers of oil to the U.S. from 1997-2001. (See <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/oiltrade.html> for current statistics.)
- 2) Only 20% of the potential oil regions have been explored, much of the remaining 80% lies in guerrilla-controlled territory or indigenous land.
- 3) During the 2000 Congressional debates on Plan Colombia, Lawrence P. Meriage, a vice president of Occidental Petroleum (a U.S.-based oil giant with extensive holdings in Colombia), was one of the few non-governmental witnesses to testify on behalf of the plan.
- 4) The Bush administration has continued to push Colombia's oil production as a means to finance the war.

Activity 3:

Connecting Key Concepts

Have students divide into four or eight groups (depending on class size) and revisit the following key concepts. Put key concepts on the board or a screen. Allow 5 minutes for discussion and report back to class. (For this exercise, make key concept "cards" from the document.)

- Give each group one key concept card describing the concepts and guiding questions.
- Instruct the students to discuss what they know/think about the concepts they have just learned as they relate to Colombia and how they relate to globalization in general, even if they cannot provide specifics.
- Allow 5 minutes for discussion and then have each group report back to the class.
- Key Concepts (*Notes in parentheses are hints for instructor.*):
 - The Drug War
 - What is the "Drug War?"
 - How does the "Drug War" connect the United States and Colombia?
 - How does the "Drug War" relate to globalization? (*According to the UN report referenced in the film, 8% of international trade is in illicit drugs.*)
 - Terrorism
 - How is the current war on terrorism affecting Colombia?
 - What and who are guerrillas?
 - What and who are paramilitaries? (*Civil defense forces that have known ties to the Colombian military.*)
 - What is their relationship, if any, to global terrorists? (*No relationship exists but the Colombian government, post-9/11, attempted to make a link between guerrilla forces and global terrorists by calling them Talibanes or Bin Ladenes.*)
 - Militarization
 - How is militarization connected with globalization? (*See Helpful Hints from Previous Instructors below.*)

-How is militarization utilized in the current conflict in Colombia? (*It is used to intimidate civilians in order to cut base of support of guerrillas, maintain status quo, etc.*)

-What are the impacts of militarization on Colombian society at different levels? (*Kidnapping of citizens, massacres in villages, climate of fear/insecurity, and general presence of men with guns.*)

➤ Globalization

-How is globalization currently impacting Colombia? Its economic system? Its people?

-How is globalization connected to the current conflict in Colombia?

End the activity with these follow-up discussion questions:

- How does the situation in Colombia relate to our lives here in the United States?
- Does it affect our oil consumption?
- Our participation in/resistance to globalization:
 - The products we choose to buy or not to buy, corporations we choose to/not to support (*e.g. Coca-Cola*)?
 - What and/or how much we choose to consume, making ourselves and others aware of global issues/U.S. foreign policy
- Is it possible to promote peace through militarization? Why or why not?
- If it is possible, is it a good idea? Why or why not?

Activity 4:

Role Play

Use the Plan Colombia Objectives and Realities document to compare the stated objectives of Plan Colombia and the actual impact. Ask for one student to volunteer to represent a government official to read the objectives and one student to represent a campesino to read the realities. You will need to statistics for “U.S. Aid to Colombia” to illustrate the second objective/reality regarding providing aid to *campesinos*. Information available at www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm.

Ask students the following questions:

- After this discussion, what do you believe is the primary objective of Plan Colombia? i.e. peace, coca eradication, maintain U.S. influence in Latin America, protect U.S. economic interests, etc.?
- Can you think of other ways to address the conflict in Colombia?

Follow-up Activity:

Group Discussion

Ask students to list and define the key players who have been discussed so far: guerrillas, paramilitaries, state military (Colombian and U.S.), Colombian government, U.S. government, corporate interests, and campesinos. If time permits, play “Who am I?” where the educator reads descriptions of the above players and students guess who it is that is being described, reading the campesinos description last. This leads into the following discussion on how the conflict affects civilians, namely campesinos.

Discussion Questions:

- Do campesinos need to participate in the global economic market in order to survive or should they be enabled and encouraged to maintain their traditional way of life? How might they participate at a regional level?
- What rights do/should all human beings have in a globalized society?
- How important are social and economic justice in the world of free market globalization when compared to the benefits of cheap labor, access to resources and lower costs for consumers?
- What do you think is more important in our culture?
- What is important to you?
- What changes might you suggest and how would you implement them?

Helpful Hints/Comments from Previous Facilitators:

The word “militarization” is a difficult concept for students to understand. Be sure to check in with the group(s) of students that have this as a key concept. Reference the film clip to get them thinking about how protection of U.S. economic interests has involved military aid. Encourage them to think about what that looks like “on the ground” in Colombia. What happens to a society when most aid goes toward the military, police and drug enforcement authorities?

DJPC 2004

Attachment A: Key Concepts Cards

The Drug War

- 🌐 What is the “Drug War?”
- 🌐 How does the “Drug War” connect the United States and Colombia?
- 🌐 How does the “Drug War” relate to globalization?

Terrorism

- 🌐 How is the current war on terrorism affecting Colombia?
- 🌐 What are guerillas?
- 🌐 What are paramilitaries?
- 🌐 What is their relationship, if any, to global terrorists?

Militarization

- 🌐 How is militarization connected with globalization?
- 🌐 How is militarization utilized in the current conflict in Colombia?
- 🌐 What are the impacts of militarization on Colombian society at different levels?

Globalization

- 🌐 How is globalization currently impacting Colombia? Its economic system? Its people?
- 🌐 How is globalization connected to the current conflict in Colombia?

Attachment B: Historical Overview and the Development of Plan Colombia

- Colombia is a country that has been plagued by internal conflict during the colonial period and since gaining independence from Spain in 1810.
- Until the 1950s, the conflict was largely between two major political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, both run by Colombian elites concerned primarily with power and personal economic gain.
- The CIA-backed assassination of the popular resistance leader, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, sparked “La Violencia,” beginning in 1948 and lasting 15-20 years. Over 200,000 were killed and 2 million people displaced.
- As power struggles between Liberals and Conservatives increased, social and economic well-being deteriorated. Many people were dispossessed of their land and the majority of the population was impoverished.
- The early 1960’s saw a large peasant uprising in protest of inequity and repression. This uprising was met with a massive air and land attack by Colombian armed forces, trained and financed by the U.S. government.
- In 1964, the main guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and National Liberation Army (ELN – Ejército de Liberación Nacional), formed to organize peasant resistance against military repression.
- Although the Cold War ended formally in 1989, thus ending the “communist threat” in Latin America, the strength of the guerrillas continued to threaten the stability of the region, which had become a primary market for U.S. goods and services.
- Guerrilla operations were largely financed through taxation of coca growing and kidnapping, prompting the “War on Drugs”, declared by former president George H.W. Bush as a means to destroy the power base of the guerrillas. This was implemented initially through the Andean Initiative, a \$2.2 billion, 5-year plan to target coca production and bolster local security forces.
- Paramilitary forces are involved much more intensely in drug trafficking and have been responsible for 80% of the human rights violations in Colombia.
- In 2000, a further \$1.3 billion was given to Colombia through Plan Colombia, a policy heavily influenced and financed by the U.S., to eradicate coca production and bring “peace” to Colombia.
- After 9/11, both the guerrillas and paramilitaries of Colombia were listed as terrorist organizations, shifting the focus from the “War on Drugs” to the “War on Terrorism”.
- From 2000-2004, the United States has provided \$3.9 billion worth of assistance to Colombia, 80% of which has been for Colombia’s military, police and drug crop-eradication program. This makes Colombia the fourth largest recipient of U.S. military aid (behind Israel, Egypt, and Iraq).

Study Guide Questions:

1. What happened in 1948?
2. Why did the peasant uprising take place in 1960?
3. What is Plan Colombia?
4. Identify some instances when the U.S. has become involved in Colombia.

Attachment C: PLAN COLOMBIA Objectives and Realities

Objective: DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS

Reality:

- The death toll in Colombia is now approximately 20 people/day, many of whom are civilians caught in the crossfire between the military, paramilitary and guerrilla forces.
- The U.S.-funded Colombian security forces hold the hemisphere's worst human rights record and have documented links to the brutal paramilitary forces, responsible for nearly 80% of the deaths in Colombia's war.

Objective: ADVANCE THE COLOMBIAN PEACE PROCESS

Reality:

- Only \$3 million of the \$860.3 million given to Colombia through Plan Colombia in 2000-2001 was allocated to promote peace, while \$642.3 million went to military and police assistance.
- A statement on Plan Colombia produced by more than 100 NGOs at the International Conference for Peace and Human Rights states, "International organizations are fully convinced that Plan Colombia, as it is designed, will not contribute to peace, but rather, we fear, will result in more deaths and despair for the Colombian people and will lead to a regionalization of the conflict."

Objective: REDUCE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ILLEGAL DRUGS

Reality:

- Colombia pledged to reduce illicit drug crops by 50% in Colombia by 2005, however the coca production increased 25% from 2000-2001, due in part to the difficulty Colombian farmers face in competing in the international market with legal crops.
- Coca growers moved crops to more remote areas, often necessitating further clearing of the Amazon rainforest, threatening biodiversity and the cultural survival of indigenous inhabitants.
- All major armed groups including the guerrilla forces, paramilitaries, and Colombian armed forces have documented links to the drug trade, but the guerrillas are the ones most heavily targeted.

Objective: PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR PEASANTS GROWING COCA AND HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE OVER 2 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Reality:

- Only 18% of Plan Colombia funding goes to social development programs. Reports from NGOs claim money designated to go to campesinos for alternative means of economic survival is often inadequate, and in many cases never reaches those it's meant to serve.
- Money also goes straight to US weapons manufacturers to supply Colombian forces.