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US-Colombian Relations in the 1980s: Political Violence and the Onset of the UP Genocide.[i]

Andrei Gomez-Suarez

It is commonplace to say that Colombia is facing one of the longest armed conflicts to date (1964 - 2007). Today, Colombia has the second largest number of internally displaced people after Darfur, some four million, and one of the worst human rights records documented (UNCHR 2006). This 'new war', to use Kaldor's term (1999), in which the distinctions between private/public, international/national, and combatant/civilian are blurred, has attracted the scholarly interest of political scientists, international relations and conflict studies scholars alike (e.g., Pécaut 2001, Pearce 1990). What is not common, however, is to find scholars discussing the occurrence of genocide in Colombia. As I have argued elsewhere (Gomez Suarez 2007; 2008), however, genocide happened and is still ongoing today. Between 1985 and 2002, an entire political party, the Unión Patriótica (UP), was annihilated in the midst of the forty-year Colombian armed conflict.

The UP was a political front bringing together the Communist Party and other leftist and centrist political forces. It was the product of the Uribe Agreements between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), a Marxist-Leninist oriented guerrilla movement, and the Colombian government in 1984. Although the UP was thought as the means for the FARC to demobilize, the year itself seemed not to be the

right moment for such a strategy. In fact, the UP was set up at a time of adverse conditions. Internationally, Reagan was carrying out his campaign against communism in order to defy the belief that the United States' (US) hegemony was declining (Oye 1983). In Colombia itself, the counterinsurgency campaign led by the Colombian government had stepped up since 1981 when the army, drug traffickers and governmental officials established a paramilitary group based in the Middle Magdalena Valley in order to defeat various guerrilla groups. This, together with the 1982 FARC's own new strategy of government takeover, which meant a rise in kidnapping for ransom and even more harassment of landowners and other sectors of the population in order to increase their finances, resulted in a degenerate war in which all the actors increasingly targeted non-combatants as means of winning the war. In spite of these conditions, the UP was publicly launched in May 1985.

According to some UP survivors, the assassination of civilians involved in the UP process started even before the official launching.[ii] Since 1985, it is estimated that between 3000 and 5000 of its members have been assassinated, hundreds have been disappeared, thousands displaced and many others rejected their UP affiliation so as to survive the violence (Quiroga 2003). Over the last 20 years or so, different genocidal practices brought down the social and political power of the UP resulting in its annihilation. Cepeda (2006: 106-109) suggests that the UP genocide occurred in three phases: first, the weakening of organisational structures (1984-1992), then, the coup de grâce phase that normalized its destruction (1992-2002), and finally, although the UP formally ceased to exist in Colombian politics in 2002 due to a lack of affiliates and support in the polls, the last stage is, according to Cepeda, the destruction of the survivors which is still ongoing today.

This chapter is an attempt to explore some dynamics within the first period of the UP genocide. Given that the first stage of the genocide developed along with the international turmoil of the unexpected end of the Cold War, which saw in the early 1980s the re-emergence of the US crusade against communism, I pay special attention to the role that US-Colombian relations played in the development of the genocide. This analysis, I believe, demonstrates Grandin's (2004: xv) assertion that "the conception of democracy now being prescribed as the most effective weapon in the war on terrorism is itself largely, at least in Latin America, a product of terror."

I develop the analysis aimed at complementing a new line of research that is emerging in genocide studies, which attempts to overcome the shortcomings of mainstream genocide scholars. Following Shaw (2007), I see genocide as a particular form of warfare against the social power of civilian groups, which usually takes place in the midst of a broader conflict (Shaw 2003). This 'external' relation of genocide with war brings my analysis closer to Bloxham's (2007) study of the Armenian genocide, which sees genocide not only as the result of domestic forces but also the product of geopolitical tensions; this is, precisely, the case in the Cold War Latin American geopolitics. The analysis is structured in two parts. First I explore how US foreign policy's representations of Colombia interacted with domestic factors, creating an environment for the destruction of the UP to happen. In the second part I turn to study the domestic developments that brought about the perpetrators of the UP genocide, the discourses that legitimated the destruction, and the way in which these discourses interplayed with international dynamics in the occurrence of the genocide.

US Foreign Policy towards Colombia during the 1980s

Since the 1980s the US foreign policy towards Colombia has relied on two 'scripts'[iii] of the country. On the one hand, Colombia is described as the most stable democracy in Latin America, on the other hand, it is depicted as a dangerous place in which insurgency and drug trafficking have brought into being a terrorist threat, namely 'narco-guerrilla'. These two scripts of course do not just reveal reality; they, instead, also help to create reality. This creation of reality through mere representations rather than through raw events has brought about, what O'Tuathail (1992: 157) calls, 'the principle of hyperreality' in foreign policy. That is to say that scripts structure ways of seeing reality, admitting "only certain political possibilities as ways of responding to that 'reality'." The result, then, is "a persuasive story designed to explain the messy complexity of events in a simple fashion." The principle of hyperreality, accordingly, "reached a grand apotheosis in the Reagan years."

Since 1978, both US presidents, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, saw Colombia as the perfect ally in South America; in spite of the sharp increase in human rights violations during the presidency of Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala (1978-1982). During Turbay's term in office, the 'Security Statute' was issued,[iv] a Decree "which gave greater authority and autonomy to the military, identified new, vaguely defined crimes such as 'disturbing public order', and restricted press freedom" (Shifter and Stillerman 2004: 334-5). This resulted in thousands of arbitrary detentions (Pearce 1990: 232). Colombia, however, was depicted by both US administrations as one of the few democracies in the Western Hemisphere, fighting the 'War on Drugs' and, therefore, was rewarded during these years "with $16 million in additional antidrug assistance" (Shifter and Stillerman 2004: 335). Nevertheless, by 1982, when President Belisario

Betancur assumed power, drug traffickers had thoroughly permeated social, economic and political circles in Colombian society. Furthermore, dangerous alliances between drug traffickers, governmental officials, and the army, were proliferating in different regions of the country in order to fight guerrilla groups (Romero 1990). Vice President George Bush (Snr) and President Reagan both visited Colombia in August and December 1982 respectively, they 'scripted' Colombia, however, as a free society, which according to Reagan had a "profound tradition of law and liberty,"[v] endangered though by insurgency movements; according to Bush, it was hence necessary that "the United States build a military base in Colombia to monitor the country's insurgents" (Shifter and Stillerman 2004: 336).

By 1985, the principle of hyperreality that shaped Reagan's foreign policy encouraged alliances between the CIA, the contras in Nicaragua, Noriega in Panama, and the Medellín Cartel in Colombia,[vi] among others; such alliances were to be made public years later when the investigation into the Iran-*contra* scandal was carried out. In early 1989 the US Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations published the *Drug, Law Enforcement and Foreign Relations* report (hereafter Kerry Report) demonstrating how during Regan's war against communism in Central America the drug cartels had consolidated, posing "a continuing threat to national security at home and abroad" (Kerry Report 1989: iv). Nevertheless, the report also used the common scripts of Colombia in describing the country as "the oldest democracy in Latin America" threatened by the alliance between drug traffickers and guerrillas. According to them, for example, the "M-19 had become an enforcement mechanism of the [Medellín] Cartel, using its soldiers to protect narcotics shipments and intimidate the Colombian government" (Ibid.: 25, 28).

The raw events that these representations of Colombia did not tell is that Amnesty International (AI) visited Colombia in 1988 and found that assassinations of political activists were taking place along with the 'systematic extermination' of the Unión Patriótica. According to the report, paramilitary groups, such as MAS (Death to Kidnapers), were not the only perpetrators, alongside them high rank officers of the Colombian armed forces and drug traffickers had orchestrated paramilitary actions and many government officials had colluded with them. The day after the report was published, the Minister of Defence, Gen. Rafael Samudio Molina, stated against AI's claims that the armed forces only acted in defence of Colombia's 'democratic' institutions; most civil servants, afterwards, followed suit to support the general's claims and disregarded the findings of the report (Ramírez 1988). The US foreign policy scripts of Colombia undoubtedly were largely created by the interaction of Colombian and American elites dominating the governments of both countries. In the reproduction of this interplay of representations, then, the reality of the Dirty War and the UP genocide was overshadowed by the hyperreal *oldest democracy* threatened by hyperreal *narco-guerrillas*.

The Bush Snr. administration was aware of allegations about the large number of human rights violations, nevertheless, according to Human Rights Watch's (HRW) report, *Colombia's Killer Network: The Military-Paramilitary Partnership and the United States*, "from 1989 to 1993, the State Department issued thirty-nine licenses to U.S. firms to export small arms to Colombia, for a total value of $643,785."[vii] Although arm transfers were legitimated through the need to protect an old democracy, the transfers themselves were part of the US security strategy for the Western Hemisphere.

The important role that arm transfers played in the Cold War US foreign policy is demonstrated by Blanton:

> "During the Cold War, U.S. arms transfers were […] both an instrument of influence and an indicator of US political support. […] The United States thus exported arms to friendly and often regionally dominant governments –democracies and non-democracies alike- that voiced opposition to communism. […] Therefore, during the Cold War years, human rights and democracy were likely overshadowed by traditional security concerns" (Blanton 2005: 648-9).

However, with the Cold War finally 'over,' the communist threat was supposedly replaced by the drug threat, thus arms transfers were bound together with Bush's "Andean Initiative, a five-year, $2.2 billion plan designed to heighten the United States' war on drugs" (Shifter and Stillerman 2004: 338).

The rise of arms transfers since 1989 though, was also the result of a shift in Colombian politics. In late 1987, due to the deadlock in the peace process, the decision was made by the FARC to go back to fight a war against the state, this had reinforced the central government's counterinsurgent discourse, opening the space for a new intelligence strategy to fight the insurgency. In 1990, within the framework of the Andean Initiative, the US government formed an advisory commission of CIA and Pentagon officials to develop a set of national security recommendations for Colombia's Ministry of Defence. As a result, the Colombian government issued Order 200-05/91, which was a plan to better combat "escalating terrorism by armed subversion."[viii]

HRW demonstrates how, through Order 200-05/91, paramilitary groups were incorporated into the armed forces' intelligence apparatus in order to carry out

surveillance of opposition political leaders and attacks on 'dangerous' individuals selected by the army's high command.[ix] The consolidation of this military intelligence network resulted in the proliferation of massacres against the UP in different regions of Colombia, such as Meta, Arauca, Casanare, and Urabá. From 1992 to 2002, then, what I have called a 'perpetrator bloc,' gathering armed forces, drug traffickers, governmental officials, paramilitary and so-called self-defence groups (Gomez-Suarez 2007: 641-5), carried out the second stage of the UP genocide. Throughout those years, US foreign policy continued using the same scripts of Colombia: a *democracy* threatened by a *narco-guerrilla*. After 11 September 2001, however, these scripts merged under another grand apotheosis of the principle of hyperreality: George W. Bush's 'War on Terror.'[x] These periods need to be analysed elsewhere. For the time being, I turn to discuss the complex dynamics in which the UP genocide developed in its first stage.

The Institutionalisation of a Complex Web of Violent Relations in 1980s Colombia

Colombia was, at the turn of the 1980s, in a state of political and social turmoil. Although 1978 had marked the end of the 'transition' of the 'Frente Nacional,'[xi] public and government positions were still shared equally and exclusively between the traditional parties: Liberal and Conservative. Yet, instead of addressing the crisis of legitimacy that the political system was facing, President Turbay turned a blind eye towards the possibility of reforming it, opting rather to align forces with the Carter administration in an attempt to tackle the buoyant narcotics industry.[xii] During the previous administration, drug trafficking had proliferated, in part because

> "The very abundance of foreign exchange on the black market [had] induced the Central Bank to become involved in the laundering business itself. […] Thus, in 1975 the Central Bank [had] opened a so-called 'sinister window' through which it could buy foreign exchange with no questions asked, a practice which was [only] eliminated in 1983" (Thoumi 1987: 41).

Turbay's foreign policy against narcotics was designed to match his counterinsurgency strategy. He thought that, "a clear, tough and repressive policy would effectively resolve the problems and restore public order" (Tokatlián and Pardo quoted in Tokatlián 1988: 144). In so doing, Turbay resorted, as all the administrations before him had done since 1947, to article 121 of the 1886 Constitution, which gave him special powers to introduce a 'state of siege' in case of social unrest. Thus, Colombia, as many analysts contend, was during most of the twentieth century in "an almost permanent state of siege" (Pearce 1990: 197).

The military repression, during the Turbay administration, however, did not resolve the counterinsurgency threat nor did it stop the consolidation of the narcotics business. On the contrary, according to Pearce, "for the first time guerrilla movements were articulating the people's real preoccupations […] there was a good deal of sympathy for them" (Ibid.: 174) and drug traffickers were moving towards a strategy of military and political consolidation in different regions of the country. The former began to materialize in 1981 when Jorge Luis Ochoa Vásquez together with other 223 drug barons created the MAS paramilitary group (Guerrero 1999: 247).

In 1982, President Betancur moved from the outset of his administration to distance himself from the Reagan administration and to develop a more independent Colombian foreign policy. He called Colombia to join the Non-Aligned Movement and created

alongside Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama the Contadora Group as a counterbalance to "the Reagan administration's hardline policies in Central America" (Bagley and Tokatlián 1985: 41). Betancur's shift in foreign policy reflected the changes he was to implement in domestic politics in order to "confront the regime's deepening legitimacy crisis and the problem of continuing political violence" (Ibid.: 35). Once in office, he opened up negotiations with various rebel groups and proposed a package of political reforms, among which, the most ambitious one was the popular election of mayors. Notwithstanding President Betancur's new policies, Colombia continued steadily to fall into the worst socio-political and humanitarian crisis. This was so because of (1) the strengthening of drug trafficking cartels, which developed a twofold strategy of regional power consolidation: politicization and militarization; (2) a weak and inefficient judicial system, which allowed extremely high levels of impunity; and (3) the collusion between various social groups (such as, military institutions, political entrepreneurs, and government officials) and paramilitary and so-called self-defence groups, which resulted in a Dirty War characterized by, what Guerrero (1999: 245, my translation) has rightly called, 'a counterinsurgency war delegated to private actors' and within which the UP genocide occurred.

The reason why the Medellín Cartel became by the mid 1980s one of the most powerful transnational criminal organizations is, bluntly, that during the Reagan administration, as Bagley (1988: 169) put it, "the struggle against communist expansion has always been given diplomatic priority over the war against drugs." This was demonstrated by the 1989 Kerry Report, which points out precisely that the strengthening of the Medellín Cartel between 1984 and 1986 was related with the fact that

> "the supply network of the Contras was used by drug trafficking organisations, and elements of the contras themselves knowing received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers. In each case, one or another agency of the US government had information regarding the involvement" (Kerry Report 1989: 36).

Thanks to the transnational consolidation of the drug cartels in which evidently the US government participated, drug traffickers acquired an economic power capable of having a major impact on Colombia's social and political institutions. At the level of everyday life, the expansion of the underground economy brought Colombian society into, what Thoumi (1987: 48) called, a 'dishonesty trap.' In such a situation, a weak judicial system could only get weaker. At the macro-socio-political level, "the narcotraffic was an armed instrument of political and social intolerance" (Guerrero 1999: 222, my translation) that allowed the assassination of thousands of civilians, and once the Uribe Agreements were signed, it contributed to the genocidal campaign against the UP in various regions of Colombia, such as the Middle Magdalena Valley and Urabá.

The involvement of drug traffickers in the armed conflict meant not only that they established an underground economy but also that they saw themselves as an actor that could influence the structure of the state itself, which according to González, Bolivar and Vázquez (2004) was at the time still under construction. New landowners in colonization regions, drug traffickers and FARC became contenders. In search of territorial control, they needed a military force to confront the FARC. The first step towards the consolidation of their military strategy was the creation of the MAS, which, according to the Kerry Report, was advised by a US government official to the members

of the Medellín Cartel. This would explain, in Guerrero's (1999: 238) view, the organic nexus between the Nicaraguan Contras and the proliferation of paramilitary groups that took place throughout the 1980s in Colombia. Hence, drug traffickers not only attempted to control the whole paramilitary structure in the Middle Magdalena Valley, but they were one of the 'private financers' of the Dirty War that provided paramilitary groups with a larger budget, better arms, and more mercenaries.

This privatization of the war allowed the expansion of a 'narco-paramilitary campaign' towards Cordoba and Urabá, where drug barons had become big landowners (Reyes 1991). Their battle against the FARC allowed the flourishing of their particular political identity, which opposed social movements demanding social reforms and defended the 'liberal-capitalist' system. Both the militarization and politicization of drug traffickers coincided with the armed forces' counterinsurgency tactics and the regional elites' reaction to the guerrilla's harassment (Romero 1999: 177). This proved to be fatal for the UP because it had to be destroyed not only because it had been created by the FARC, but also because it was seen as one of 'those' social movements. Thus, drug traffickers such as Fabio Ochoa, Pablo Escobar, Fidel Castaño, Gilberto Molina, Víctor Carranza, and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, actively participated in the genocidal campaign against the UP (see Dudley 2004: 98).

The armed forces colluded with drug traffickers in part because some of its high rank officers, such as General Manuel José Bonett Locarno and Colonel Luis Bernardo Urbina Sánchez, continued to be trained in counterinsurgency operations at the School of the Americas (SOA). Even more telling is that Colombia was one of the "three counties [that throughout the 1980s] increased […] [officers'] enrolment several fold" (Gill 2004: 83). This training, as Gill (ibid.: 9) has demonstrated, was "shaped by the

geopolitical field of force in which the United States define[d] its national interests and security concerns." As the Reagan doctrine was fighting communists - "an enormous elastic category that could accommodate almost any critic of the status quo" (Ibid.: 10) - throughout the Third World during the 1980s, Colombian officers trained at SOA went back to the country to fight the 'internal enemy.' The US National Security Doctrine (NSD) had provided them with the rationale and the courses at SOA with the tactics for fighting 'communists' internally.

Thus, whilst President Betancur strived to negotiate peace with the FARC, senior armed forces commanders impeded the materialization of the Uribe Agreements. This contradiction within the Establishment was never resolved. Throughout the 1980s, the SOA-trained Colombian military officers managed regional intelligence networks, which "cultivated relations with paramilitary groups [and sometimes] […] worked temporarily with the paramilitaries" (Ibid.: xv-xvi). Just as happened on 15 and 16 August 1987, when paramilitaries and army intelligence agents, under the orders of Urbina Sánchez, murdered Alvaro Garcés Parra, one of the 23 UP mayors elected in 1986.[xiii] Thousands of assassinations and hundreds of massacres against the UP and other social organisations show that SOA played a central role in exporting a particular geopolitical discourse (that represented Colombia's insurgency as a threat to peace and security in the Western Hemisphere),[xiv] which entangled with local understandings and produced hyperreal threats, shaping local practices of dealing with the social unrest evident across Colombian society.

Reading the justification of perpetrators' actions and the large number of academic works discussing the armed conflict in Colombia and the destruction of the UP (e.g., Pizarro 1999, Ortíz 2007, González, Bolívar & Vázquez 2004, Dudley 2004), the

accepted explanation for the destruction of the UP seems to be: *La combinación de todas las formas de lucha*, or "the combination of all forms of struggle." During the first two years when FARC and the Colombian government were still holding peace talks, military officers within the 'perpetrator bloc' justified the violent campaign against the UP on the ground that the group was the 'political arm' of the FARC, which, in their view, had designed along with the Communist Party a secret plan of power takeover. This assumption was to be reinforced in 1987, when the FARC went back to wage war against the state. At this stage, paramilitary leaders within the perpetrator bloc justified the destruction of the UP by arguing that they were killing guerrilla fighters dressed as civilians (see Castaño's statements in Aranguren 2001: 98). Scholars' accounts of these episodes have relied on the *perpetrators' representation* of the conflict, which instead of depicting raw events allowed them to wage war on the UP. According to Pizarro (1999: 310), for instance, FARC's and Communist Party's ambiguity of waging war and doing politics, represented in *la combinación de todas las formas de lucha*, continued to inform their strategy in the peace talks; this served as the motive for the perpetrators to wage war on the UP.

The same thesis is supported by Dudley (2004: 95-7) who argues that the UP was only a part of a master plan to open up political space for the FARC. *La combinación de todas las formas de lucha* is a discursive practice that in my view requires further research. Although Giraldo (2001) analyzes the transformation of the UP's discursive practices, which in his view started a radical transformation in 1989, it is necessary to further study the way perpetrators appropriated them to carry out the annihilation of the group. Suffice to say, for the time being, that interviews with UP leaders show that the group itself had began to distance itself from the FARC in 1987. By 1988, this would be

evident in the consolidation of a new national government board of the UP that regarded political dialogue between FARC and the Colombian government as the only way to overcome the armed conflict (Harnecker 1989: 29-43). UP political speeches and attitudes did not convince governmental and military officials within the perpetrator bloc. In the prelude of the geopolitical victory of capitalism over communism, there was no space for a political group product of *la combinación de todas las formas de lucha*. The Dirty War against any social movement was well under way by then; it was only matter of finishing off the UP within it.

The political death toll in 1980s Colombia is well over 10,000 (Pearce 1990: 232). Within this campaign of assassinations, albeit underinvestigated and generally regarded as less systematic than the Argentinean case and which (I believe) deserves to be investigated under Feierstein's (2007) perspective of genocide as a social practice, the UP death toll approximately accounted for about 20 per cent of the total.[xv] The pattern of the actions demonstrating that UP victims were selected only because of their membership is explicit in three of the most bloody plans against the group between 1985 and 1991. The "*Operación Cóndor*" (1985), the Plan "*Baile Rojo*" (1986), and the Plan "*Esmeralda*" (1988). The first two campaigns attempted "to undermine the national governing board of the party and to murder or disappear those members elected to public offices," whereas the latter sought "to destroy the grassroots of the party in Meta and Caquetá" (Matta, quoted in Cepeda & Girón 2005: 274, my translation). The Operación Cóndor had an immediate effect in the UP; according to one of its leaders "more than three hundred UP members had already been assassinated, and the party hadn't even had its first anniversary" (Herrera quoted in Dudley 2004: 93).

By the time President Betancur left office in 1986, his two most ambitious projects were underway. On the one hand, FARC had renewed the commitment to continue peace talks with the entering President Virgilio Barco, on the other hand, a new constitutional reform was to enable the first democratic elections of mayors in 1988. However, as a strategy to transit towards a more open political system, the decision was taken by the central government to give 23 mayoralties to the UP in towns where the party had become the dominant political force in the 1986 municipal assembly elections. Between late 1986 and early 1988, 46 UP members acting as mayors, town councillors or competing for these positions were murdered; the violent campaign against UP candidates, as Gaitán (1988) recognises, was particularly vicious in the months before the first democratic elections of mayors. In all, as Dudley (2004: 103) remarks, "the tally of UP dead reached five hundred in the first two years of the party's existence."

Alongside this murderous campaign in which some UP parliamentarians had been shot down, the assassination of UP President Jaime Pardo Leal in October 1987 demonstrated that nobody would escape the violence deployed by the various actors forming the perpetrator bloc. In 1988, when the Plan Esmeralda began to be deployed in earnest, massacres were not only a common practice in the Middle Magdalena Valley and Meta, but they were proliferating towards Cordoba and Urabá (Romero 1999: 201; Ramírez 1997: 126-134). The Segovia Massacre, one of the most well documented episodes (e.g., Dudley 2004: 124-6), was to become the benchmark of the genocidal campaign: the killing of anyone who was associated with the UP, including women, children, and elderly. This campaign left a clear message floating about Colombian

society: “the UP had to disappear, or the people would suffer” (Gomez-Suarez 2007: 641).

It was not the genocidal campaign against the UP that led President Barco to issue Decree 1194, which declared paramilitary groups illegal in 1989. Rather, the imminent danger that the violence deployed by these groups represented for the survival of the Colombian Establishment. Paramilitary groups had given the confidence drug traffickers needed to declare a war against the state in order to disrupt the extradition treaty that in 1984 had been put into force again. By 1989 drug traffickers’ terrorist actions had created a regime of terror not only in the peripheral regions where their standing armies patrolled, but also in the cities. Although the military-paramilitary strategy had weakened the power of the FARC in some regions, Colombian civil institutions seemed incapable of assuring the monopoly of violence. Barco’s attempt to bring to an end the ‘counterinsurgency war delegated to private actors’ did not however prosper. The alliances between governmental officials, armed forces, drug traffickers, and paramilitary leaders had become engrained across the country.

The genocidal campaign against the UP also continued. In March 1990, Bernardo Jaramillo, the last UP presidential candidate, was assassinated; this marked the end of the political power of the group at the national level. Many people withdrew from the party and the decision was taken by the UP not to present a candidate for the 1990 presidential elections. Notwithstanding, the destruction of the few members that remained did not halt; it concentrated in the regions in which UP members still retained some social and political power, namely Urabá, Casanare, Arauca and Meta.

Under President Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994) Decree 1194 remained in place, albeit the links between armed forces and paramilitaries became institutionalized under

Ministry of Defence's Order 200-05/91. The US government, as mentioned earlier, participated in this process through forming an advisory commission to develop the set recommendations that the Colombian government adopted in order to re-design its intelligence strategy. Order 200-05/91, in the words of HRW,

> "laid the groundwork for continuing an illegal, covert partnership between the military and paramilitaries […] Although the term "paramilitaries" is not used in the order, the document lays out a system similar to the one present under the name of MAS and its military patrons in the Middle Magdalena […] the order provided a blueprint for: a secret network that relied on paramilitaries not only for intelligence, but to carry out murder."[xvi]

This was to become the pattern of paramilitary action throughout the 1990s. This alliance was not only responsible for an increase in the killing of civilians but, as the Plan "*Golpe de Gracia*" (1992) and Plan "*Retorno*" (1993) demonstrate, this alliance was responsible for the continuation of the genocidal campaign against the UP. The covert operations between military and paramilitaries against the UP made possible the participation of state institutions in the destruction of the group. However, the government has not taken responsibility because it is argued that the UP was trapped in the war between paramilitary groups and the FARC. Although Romero (2003) carried out an excellent research on the evolution of paramilitary groups from 1982 to 2003, further investigation is needed regarding the war that the ACCU (United Self-defence of Cordoba and Urabá) and the AUC (United Self-defence of Colombia) and many other paramilitary groups before them waged against the UP. What must be said in order to close the analysis of this first period of the UP genocide is that in 1991, the transformation, brought about by order 200-05/91, in the army's intelligence strategy

enabled the last stage of the process of concentration of coercion that paramilitary leaders had begun in the Middle Magdalena Valley years before. Therefore, 1991 is the turning point that marks the transition from the first period of the UP genocide, in which different groups gathered together to destroy the UP without a cohesive apparatus that integrated their actions, to the second period of the genocidal campaign, in which a more hierarchical-type of perpetrator carried out the destruction of the last remnants of the UP.

Conclusion

Genocide is usually studied from a domestic perspective. What I have tried to show here is that although the criminal responsibility lies only on the perpetrators, international relations matter. In the case of the destruction of the UP in Colombia, some representations that underpinned US foreign policy were disastrous for the group. The destruction of the UP during the last years of the Cold War was possible due to the anti-communist geopolitical indoctrination of Colombian militaries trained at the School of the Americas. These discourses merged with local representations flourishing in the armed conflict, creating a fertile field for genocide to happen. US economic and military support to Colombia and the misrepresentation of the threat that guerrilla groups represented for the security of the hemisphere, allowed drug traffickers to consolidate a military apparatus capable of destabilizing the country and carry out, together with the Colombian armed forces, government officials, and mercenaries, the UP genocide. These alliances generated a socio-political turmoil within which the judicial system was incapable of prosecuting criminals.

The US fortified the widespread impunity in the country by providing packages of military aid to Colombia allowing thus the persecution of social movements and the destruction of the UP. US foreign policy did not take action to make the Colombian institutions involved in these crimes accountable to justice; instead, the realist approach that dominated US foreign policy advised the Colombian government to implement counterinsurgency measures, which were responsible for the paramilitary expansion of the 1990s. This paramilitary expansion carried on with the violence against the UP in the peripheries and brought about the annihilation of the group through massacres and displacement. Put simply, US-Colombian relations were the backdrop against which paramilitary groups, armed forces, governmental officials, and regional elites, created genocidal traps in which the UP perished. The need today is to uncover such traps in order for Colombia to transit from war to peace, or at least to begin the process.

Notes

[i] I wish to thank Nadine Voelkner, Martin Coward, Stefan Elbe and Martin Shaw for their dedicated reading of the manuscript and the insightful suggestions of which this chapter has benefited immensely. Any errors are of course my own.

[ii] These statements are part of a documentary carried out by Yesid Campos with UP survivors called 'El Baile Rojo' (2003).

[iii] I borrow this term from O'Tuathail's analysis of the US foreign policy towards South Africa. According to him a script is "a set of representations, a collection of descriptions, scenarios and attributes which are deemed relevant and appropriate to defining a place in foreign policy" (O'Tuathail 1992: 156).

[iv] According to one Colombian scholar, Amnesty International carried out an investigation that showed how human rights violations had increased due to the actions of military officers acting under the Decree 1923 (see Leal 1984: 270).

[v] See complete Reagan's speech: http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/120382d.htm (accessed 28 March 2008)

[vi] The complex relationship between drug cartels and the contras is discussed in pages 36-61 of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations' report (1989)

[vii] http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killer6.htm#313th (accessed 28 March 2008)

[viii] http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killer3.htm (accessed 28 March 2008)

[ix] This strategy is translated by HRW directly from the original document, which can be accessed online in: http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killerapendixa.htm (accessed 28 March 2008).

[x] An insightful analysis about US' influence on the dynamics of the armed conflict is developed by Rojas (2007: 41), according to her, "the US has played a central role in the changing dynamics of the Colombian armed conflict by confusing a counternarcotics war with a counterinsurgency war in one single strategy, today identified as the war on terrorism." (My translation)

[xi] The Frente National was a political agreement signed between the leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties in 1957. According to this, they were to share power for the next 16 years.

[xii] According to Tokatlián (1988: 143), due to a quiet diplomacy on the drug issue President Turbay implemented three changes in the political system: he signed the Treaty of Extradition (1979), drafted a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (1980), and instituted a vast program to eradicate marijuana. In return, between 1979 and 1981, Colombia received airplanes, communications and other operational materials and more than $25 million in security assistance.

[xiii] For an account of military participation in the plot see: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/cases/1%5E94col.htm (accessed 1 April 2008)

[xiv] It is calculated that by 1992 half of Colombian officers trained at SOA were responsible for gross human right violations (Word Organisation Against Torture quoted in Gill 2004: 137)

[xv] This percentage would vary depending on the sources. I rely on victims' statistics (Cepeda 2005). Due to the high levels of impunity the number of UP members assassinated is not known.

[xvi] http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killer3.htm (accessed 1 April 2008)

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