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The Coverage of Mass Media on the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Mobilizations
in Colombia

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Diego M. Cortes

Committee in Charge:

Professor Daniel Hallin, Chair
Professor Nancy Grey Postero
Professor John McMurria

2010

The Thesis of Diego M. Cortes is approved and is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the members of the ACIN, CRIC, ONIC, journalists, scholars and human rights advocates, who put their lives on risk in order to construct a better Colombian society.

EPIGRAPH

“¿De que Sirve la Decencia en el Pais de la Seguridad Democratica?”

(Fernando Vallejo, 2010)

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Coverage of Mass Media on the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Mobilizations
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by

Diego M. Cortes

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Daniel Hallin, Chair

This thesis explores the portrayal of the Colombian Indigenous mobilizations – or Mingas – in 2008 and 2009 by domestic mass media outlets, specifically newspaper and television news reports. This analysis is done in four main parts. First the paper provides a background on the Colombian indigenous movements in the years leading up to these protests. It illustrates some of the challenges and achievements of the Indigenous movement in Colombia, one of the most successful grassroots movements in Colombian history.

The second part of this thesis shows three structural problems of mass media that affect the coverage of the Indigenous political process in mass media: the

monopolization of mass media, the problems endure by journalists, and the racist and Eurocentric hegemonic ideology embedded in mass media structure.

The third part explains the most important events of the 2008 and 2009 Mingas. This part evidences the violence and the unfounded accusation of the government against the Indigenous people, some of the conflicts of the Indigenous movement with illegal groups, and some of the internal challenges of the Indigenous movement. The final chapter is the content analysis of the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Mingas in the most important newspapers and television news in Colombia: *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, Caracol News, and RCN News.

Introduction

In October 2008, the Asociacion de Cabildos Indigenas del Norte del Cauca (ACIN), the Concejo Regional Indigena del Cauca (CRIC), and the Organizacion Nacional Indigena de Colombia (ONIC), launched a political process called the Social and Community Minga. To start this process, these Indigenous organizations convoked one of the largest and longest mobilizations in Colombian history. From October 12 to November 25, 2008, thousands of Indigenous people participated in roadblocks, marches, and public demonstrations, to express their disapproval of the negative effects of the neoliberal economic and militaristic policies implemented by the Colombian government. In addition to protest, the Indigenous movement used the Minga to introduce the public to their five point political agenda that seeks to alleviate the hardships endured by many Colombians under these neoliberal economic and militaristic policies. The government responded to these mobilizations with heavy handed violence. During the first days of the protest, the government mobilized the infamous anti-riot police squadron to repress the Indigenous mobilization. As a result, five Indigenous people were killed, hundreds wounded, and homes, crops and other Indigenous property were destroyed. Violent repression, however, was only one tactic used by the government; they also actively sought to criminalize the movement. According to the government, terrorist groups – especially the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) – were behind this Indigenous mobilization. Unfortunately, the largest Colombian mass media outlets – *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, Caracol News, and RCN Television News – replicated the unfounded accusations of

the government against the Indigenous movement. One year later, these Indigenous organizations again convoked a massive mobilization to evaluate and continue the political process they had initiated in October 2008. The objective of this thesis is to analyze the mass media coverage of these two massive Indigenous mobilizations. This thesis shows how the Colombian mass media outlets replicated the criminalization of the government against the Indigenous movement during the 2008 mobilization and how mass media largely ignored the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. This thesis also provides some explanation why the political project proposed by the Indigenous movement was not accurately reported in these mass media outlets. The remainder of this introduction provides an overview of the situation within Colombia that has resulted in Indigenous mobilizations.

Colombia has been a highly stratified country since colonial times. The Colombian elite have always deemed inferior the culture, the economic traditions, and languages of the numerous Indigenous communities that inhabited the country. For this reason, the elite attempt to govern the country based exclusively on Eurocentric economic and political policies, excluding Indigenous traditions. The results of these political processes have been catastrophic. Colombia is one of the most unequal, most violent and with highest levels of displacement countries in the world (Brice, 2010). Despite the evident failure of these policies, the Colombian ruling class does not waiver in their belief that aggressive capitalist development is the solution for Colombia's varied problems. Since the beginning of his presidential period in 2002, the Alvaro Uribe Velez government has engaged in an aggressive economic campaign

to exploit the vast natural resources of Colombia. During his presidency, the development of industries like African palm oil and gold mining have skyrocketed (Kaosenlared, 2009) (El Espectador, 2010). This aggressive capitalist development has been accompanied by strong militarization (and paramilitarization) and dislocation of the population (in the majority of cases by force) out of the areas where these projects are being developed. The idea of the government is to completely control the richest areas of the country in order to fully develop these kinds of economic projects. Leftist guerrillas and narco-paramilitary organization have also established lucrative illegal businesses, like drug production and transportation, in many of these areas. As a consequence, the military forces and its paramilitary allies, leftist guerrillas, dissident paramilitary groups, and criminal bands are in war to develop these legal and illegal businesses. The inhabitants of these rural areas – Indigenous people, peasants, and Afro Colombians – have suffered the most for this situation.

The department of Cauca has been one of the epicenters of this war. This department, located in the Colombian southwest, is a very rich and strategic region. The department of Cauca also has the highest Indigenous population of the country. More than 200,000 Indigenous people – 20 percent of the department population – inhabit this department. This Indigenous population is divided into seven Indigenous communities: Nasas, Misak (or Guambianos), Totoroes, Kokonucos, Yanaconas, Eperara-Siapidara, and Ingas (Galeano, 2006). Many of the Indigenous towns of these communities belong to the CRIC, the oldest and one of the most successful Indigenous organizations of Colombia. Since its foundation in 1971, the CRIC has unified the

Indigenous communities of Cauca and developed a variety of successful civic proposals – like the Indigenous Guard and the Territory of Peace and Dialogue, La Maria – to counteract the terrible consequences of the conflict in their territory. Despite its success, this political Indigenous process has been largely ignored by the Colombian mass media.

It is very important to study the coverage of the Indigenous political processes – like the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Mingas – to understand the level of discrimination and racism in mass media, one of the most influential Colombian institutions. In Colombia, as in many parts of the world, racism is seen as something of the past. The Colombian elite argue that the State has given Indigenous peoples differential rights and treatment. According to them, the Indigenous people have too much land and political rights, forgetting that the political and cultural rights for the Indigenous communities stipulated in the 1991 Colombian Constitution are the product of years of an arduous political process. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze how mass media outlets – which are largely controlled for and directed by the middle and upper classes – portrayed Indigenous political events, like 2008 and 2009 mobilizations. This thesis attempts to contribute to the discussion about the responsibilities that mass media has on the preservation and consolidation of racist and discriminatory ideas against the Indigenous people in Colombia.

This thesis is divided in four chapters. Chapter 1 illustrates the story of the Indigenous movement in Colombia, focusing on the formation and consolidation of the Indigenous movement from Cauca. This chapter provides a general idea of the

roots, struggles, conflicts, and difficulties that the Indigenous people have gone through in order to consolidate their political project. The knowledge of this political process is very important to establish that the Indigenous movement is based on an autonomous and solid economic, political, and cultural ground.

Chapter 2 explains some of the problem that affects the quality of the mass media coverage on political projects that challenge the racist and Eurocentric structure of the Colombian society. Three general problems are explored: first, the monopolization of mass media news in the hands of a few powerful groups; second, the problems endured by journalists in the practice of their profession; and third, the hegemonic ideology embedded in the practice and the practitioners of mass media journalism.

Chapter 3 looks chronological at the events of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Mingas, providing a completely different version than the version reported on mass media outlets on those events. This chapter illustrates the disproportionate violence used by the government to quell the 2008 Indigenous protests. It also explains the five political points proposed by the Indigenous movement. In addition, Chapter 3 also illustrates the most important events that happened to the Indigenous movement from Cauca during the months following the 2008 Minga. As it is explained, the government deployed different methods – assassinations, intimidations, militarization, and support of dissident groups – to undermine the Indigenous movement. This chapter ends by explaining the events of the 2009 Minga and the perspectives for the future of this political project.

Chapter 4 contains the content analysis of the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations in *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, Caracol Television News, and RCN Television News – the mass media outlets with highest audiences in Colombia. For this analysis, more than 160 articles from *El Tiempo* and 82 articles from *El Espectador* and hours of Caracol and RCN Television News published and broadcasted from October 12 to November 25, 2008, and October 11 to 16, 2009, were analyzed. In general, this content analysis shows three general problems with the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilization. First, during the 2008 mobilization, these mass media outlets replicated and validated the unproven and racist government declarations about the relations of the Indigenous movement with illegal organizations and the FARC. Second, these mass media outlets ignored the violence and human rights violations committed by the police against those who participate in the Indigenous movement. And third, these mass media outlets barely reported the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. Also, this event was reported, not as the continuation of the process initiated in 2009, but as another Indigenous manifestation.

This thesis ends with an explanation of some general conclusions that can be derived from this study. For example, this thesis makes evident the cynical and authoritarian political and economic ideology of the Uribe government and its international allies. Also, this thesis highlights that, despite the harassment from the government and illegal groups and the labor instability, some Colombian journalists continued reporting the harsh situation that millions of Colombians endure. Finally, this thesis demonstrates that the Indigenous movement is one of the few political

projects in Colombia that can eventually end with centuries of inequality, repression, violence, poverty, and exclusion in this nation.

Chapter 1

The Indigenous Movement of Cauca

The Indigenous movement in Colombia is one of the most important forces in current politics, though the Indigenous population only comprises 2% of the Colombian population (Galeano, 2006: 15). Since its founding in 1971, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, (CRIC)¹ has been the backbone of this movement, earning political credibility that was unthinkable 40 years ago. This political influence was manifest in 2008 when CRIC, supported by different Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, organized one the most impressive political acts in Colombian history. After a month of road blocks, confrontations with the police, and unfruitful dialogue with the local and national government, CRIC lead a march from La Maria, Piendamó, Cauca, to the capital city of Bogotá. For seven days, more than 10,000 Indigenous people marched 450 kilometers in order to raise awareness of the problems that Indigenous people face. This chapter illustrates the political trajectory of the Indigenous movement in Colombia, from its roots until the current period, giving a special attention to the creation and consolidation of the CRIC. The analysis of the history of the Indigenous movement is crucial to understand the context, the importance, and the magnitude of the Indigenous movement in this country.

The Roots of the Indigenous Movement

¹ Consejo Regional del Cauca

The Department² of Cauca has been the epicenter of the Indigenous movement in Colombia. This department, located in the southwestern part of the country, has the largest Indigenous population in Colombia with, approximately, 200,000 people, 21 percent of the department's population (Galeano, 2006). This Indigenous population is divided into seven ethnicities that possess their own language and traditions: Nasas (renamed as Paeces by the Spaniards), Misak (renamed Guambianos), Yanaconas, Ingas, Kokonucos, Totoroes, and Emperara-Siapidara (Galeano, 2006).

The preservation of these Indigenous cultures was possible, in great part, because of the mode of production implemented by the Spanish crown in Cauca. Cauca was one of the most important agricultural centers in Colombia during Spanish domination, attracting many landless Spaniards. These newcomers displaced thousands of Indigenous peoples from their land. Some the Indigenous people were relocated to communal land known as *resguardos*. The principal objective of these *resguardos* was to maintain a high concentration of Indigenous labor close to the Spanish haciendas. Many were forced to rent land from the church and rich Spaniards. The implementation of the *terraje system* forced many to work in the Spanish haciendas. This *terraje system* was a series of laws that forced Indigenous people to pay taxes on the land they inhabited, although they did not have any property rights over that land. As a result, the Indigenous people had no other option than working on those Spanish haciendas to pay those taxes. These laws, though exploitive, helped to maintain the Indigenous population in Cauca (Gamboa, Fajardo, Villanueva, 1999:69).

² Colombia is politically divided in 32 departments.

The exploitation of Indigenous people remained the same after Colombia's independence in 1819. Indigenous people began to organize uprisings at the beginning of the 20th century. One of the most prominent leaders of this movement was Manuel Quintin Lame. Lame, who was born in 1880, at Tierradentro, Cauca, was the fifth son of an interethnic marriage: his father was an Indigenous Nasa and his mother was a non-Indigenous Catholic conservative. Lame experienced racism, violence, and discrimination at an early age. At the age of five, a group of five armed men raped Licenia, his mute sister, and looted his home. This sinister event was one of the biggest motivations for Quintin Lame to fight for the rights of Indigenous people in the following years (Romero, 2005: 70).

In 1914, Quintin Lame and his brother Naciaseno initiated a political campaign against the terraje system, encouraging hundreds of Indigenous people not to pay taxes or rent for their land. One of the most memorable political events that year took place in the municipality of Paniquita, Cauca. Quintin Lame gave a famous speech in which he stated that Colombian independence was a lie because the Indigenous land was not being returned to its original owners. These demonstrations and political acts increased the tension between the Indigenous communities and the mestiza population (Galeano, 2005:86).

Since that event in Paniquita, the Indigenous movement became more active in their struggle for the protection of Indigenous land. The Indigenous communities started to take direct actions against terraje and to favor protecting Indigenous resguardos. At the same time, Quintin Lame publicized his political intentions of

constructing an Indigenous republic through electoral means. This political process was rapidly boycotted by the conservative elite. The conservatives charged Quintin Lame with vandalism and rebellion resulting in a nine-month incarceration (Gamboa, Fajardo, Villanueva, 1999:, 1999: 87, 88) (Romero, 2005:88).

Quintin Lame continued his political work with the indigenous communities as soon as he was released in 1916. At that this point, the Indigenous movement was becoming increasingly radical and violent as Indigenous groups continued to confront the police. Alarmed at the growth of the Indigenous movement, the government and the agrarian elite from Cauca decided to keep harassing Quintin Lame. In June of that year, Lame was arrested again; but, due to the pressure of his supporters, he was released in November. After his liberation, Lame organized an Indigenous armed group to counteract the abuses of the police and oligarchy. As a response, the *latifundistas*³ decided to organize self-defense groups. In 1917, paramilitary forces, the army, the police, and the Catholic Church coordinated a military action against a group of 60 armed men commanded by Quintin Lame. In this action seven Indigenous people were assassinated and 17 were wounded. Lame escaped, wounded. During the first months of 1917, armed indigenous groups organized several attacks on different municipalities within Cauca. The intensity of the Indigenous uprising decreased after the detention of Quintin Lame and other members of the Indigenous movement in May of that year (Gamboa, Fajardo, Villanueva, 1999: 91) and (Loaiza, 2005:90-91).

³ Latifundistas are those who posses large extensions of land.

The political repression from the Colombian elites successfully suppressed the Indigenous resistance for more than four decades. When Lame was finally freed in 1921, he continued working for Indigenous rights until his death in 1967, but with much less intensity than previous years. Although the indigenous insurrection described above did not entirely succeed, this movement was very important for the formation and organization of the Indigenous movement years later.

Contemporary Indigenous Movement

Peter Wade, in his book *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, explains that from the 1920s to the 1960s Latin American intellectuals and scholars believed that the ideas of racial and ethnic identities were destined to disappear. During those years, the Indigenous and black culture were “associated with primitivism, slavery, antique modes of production, traditionalism, and so on” (Wade, 1997: 58). This prejudice motivated different groups to abandon their language, their internal political structure, and their habits in order to be identified as peasants. Because the stigma for being Indigenous was highly negative, many communities preferred to assume an identity as peasant, rather than be recognized as Indigenous (Gros and Ochoa, 1998:187).

The majority of the productive land in Colombia was controlled by small group of families. During the 1960s, in order to counteract the possible influence of revolutionary movements in Latin America, such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the Colombian elite introduced different policies to keep manipulating and controlling the

most destitute sectors of the society. The *Asociacion Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos* (ANUC) was created in 1968, by the administration of President Carlos Lleras Restrepo, with the objective of monitoring any peasant uprising against the *latifundista* system. Despite the government's intentions, the ANUC rapidly started to work for objectives beyond the limits imposed by the government. Divisions among the leadership of the ANUC split the organization between the *linea Armenia*, which was more sympathetic with the government, and the *linea Sincelejo*, which was closer to the struggle of landless peasantry (Laurent, 2005:69-70). Despite the good intentions of many of the leaders of the ANUC, especially those from the *linea Sincelejo*, the ANUC did not provide political space for the specific grievances of the Indigenous communities (71).

AUNC's indifference drove the Indigenous leaders to organize their own political movement. In 1971, more than 2,000 Indigenous people, non-Indigenous peasants, and rural workers met in Toribio, Cauca, seeking political autonomy for Indigenous people. Most representatives were from the Nasa's *cabildos* (autonomous indigenous municipal council). The participants of this meeting created the Consejo Nacional Indigena del Cauca (CRIC), the pioneer organization of the indigenous movement in Colombia (Laurent, 2005: 69-70). This organization was founded and organized according to the political characteristics of the Nasa tradition (communal form of work, organization, and decision making). They denominated this collective way of participation as *Minga* (Rathgeber, 106:2004).

The CRIC's political agenda aimed to transform the traditional centralized and corporatist political culture of the nation into a multicultural, decentralized, and pluralistic state. CRIC sought to improve the disadvantaged role of the Indigenous communities in market production, demanded the recuperation and expansion of Indigenous territory, and the cessation of *terraje*. In addition, the CRIC also had a series of demands related to the preservation of the Indigenous traditions and culture. Overall, their demands aimed to strengthen the power of the traditional Indigenous authorities. Also, it sought to expand the public knowledge and deployment of laws that protected their territory, to investigate Indigenous history, language, and culture, and to create educational centers to provide bilingual education within the Indigenous communities (Laurent, 2005: 69-70). These demands were the basis for Indigenous political projects in the following years.

The 1970s were crucial for the expansion of the Indigenous movement in Colombia. The CRIC decided to focus its struggle on the protection and expansion of the Indigenous territories in order to counteract the political, social, and economic pressure that Indigenous peoples faced from different sectors of the Colombian society. The CRIC adopted two forms of struggle for territory: direct action and legal action. The CRIC started to denounce, protest, and resist the violent methods that the state and the latifundistas deployed against Indigenous people. Land seizures became one of their principal political weapons. At the same time, this organization started to take legal action in order to protect Indigenous territory (Laurent, 2005: 71).

The law 89 of 1890, which was rejected by Indigenous communities for a long time due to its pejorative tone, became very important in order to protect and recuperate territory (Laurent, 2005: 69-70). According to this law, resguardo land could not be sold, transferred, or rented (Gros and Ochoa, 1998: 187). This law has protected Indigenous communities from the state's attempts to expropriate their territory.

During the 1970s, more than five regional Indigenous organizations were created following CRIC's example. In 1982 the first national Indigenous organization in Colombian history, called Organizacion Nacional Indigena de Colombia (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC), was formed. The ONIC centers its objectives on the defense of the Indigenous territories, the right of the collective property of the resguardos, the right to control the exploitation of natural resources located in Indigenous territories, and the creation of new communitarian economic entities. The ONIC also has as a mission to research Indigenous history, language and culture, and giving high importance to community education in Indigenous territory. In addition, the ONIC has openly supported other exploited sectors of Colombian society, such as Afro-Colombians and members of the working class (Laurent, 2005: 75).

During the 1980s the violence against Indigenous communities dramatically increased. Despite the political and organizational victories of the Indigenous movement, Indigenous communities faced violence from leftist guerrillas, the army, and paramilitary groups. One of the causes of this violence was the emerging drug

business, with Cauca as one of the most affected departments. Armed groups intensified operations in order to control this lucrative business, declaring war against the Indigenous organizations (Villa, Houghton, 2005: 91). Indigenous sectors from Cauca created the Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame (Quintin Lame Armed Movement, MAQL), a guerrilla organization that aimed to protect Indigenous communities from armed groups which operated in the region (Laurent, 2005: 98). This guerrilla group became public after the assassination in 1984 of the Indigenous catholic priest Alvaro Ulcue, one of the most influential leaders of the Indigenous movement in Cauca. For six years, MAQL protected the Indigenous communities from Cauca, not only from the violence perpetrated by the latifundistas and the state, but also from the leftist Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC). For years, the FARC has sought to violently repress the CRIC due to its independence of thought and action (Trojan, 2008). In 1990, the Indigenous movement realized that the MAQL was incapable of military resistance to the power of the army, leftist guerrillas, and paramilitary groups. They subsequently decided to negotiate demobilization of the MAQL in exchange for direct political participation at the national level (Laurent, 2005: 100).

At the end of the 1980s, the Indigenous movements were a strong political organization capable of demanding structural changes on behalf of the Indigenous people. In addition to acquiring political strength and successfully negotiating different concessions with the state – such as political participation in the constitutional process – the Indigenous communities took advantage of political

reforms occurring in Colombia during the last half of the 1980s. These political reforms started in 1986, when the administration of President Belisario Betancourt launched a series of decentralization reforms. These decentralization reforms sought to withdraw the responsibility of the national government into regional governments by democratization of the local institutions, increasing economic resources at local levels, and expanding local power. The CRIC took advantage of one reform which elected local and executive officials by popular vote as a way to garner political strongholds within their territories. Initiatives in education and health and reflected the political philosophy developed and supported by the CRIC (Laurent, 2005: 139).

Indigenous Peoples: A Process towards a New Constitution

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Colombian political institutions faced high levels of illegitimacy. In previous years, the country seemed to be out of control: the drug cartels increased their power, more than 3000 people who belonged to the political party Union Patriótica (UP) were assassinated by rightwing groups, and three presidential candidates for the 1990 elections were murdered (Kirk, 2003: 63-64, 79-83, 90,128). Seeking to restore political legitimacy, President Cesar Gaviria Trujillo (1990-1994) issued the Ordinance 1926 of 1990, organizing the election of a National Constitutional Assembly (Ballen, 1991: III). The project of a new constitution was seen by the Indigenous movement as a great political opportunity to strengthen their political participation at national level. In November of 1990, after two years of

internal debate, the ONIC presented the document *The Colombia We Want*, which explained the general political goals of this Indigenous organization. According to this document, the Indigenous movement believed that the Colombian state should be:

1. A participatory and pluralistic democracy, with rights to territorial reorganization, and with protected social participation of minorities.
2. Respectful of human rights by advocating rights to life and dignity, social rights, elimination of all forms of discrimination, responsible executive power, and the existence of civil control that wouldn't resort to a state of martial law but that respected civilian police.
3. Capable of guaranteeing justice and peace (ideological and political tolerance, political solutions to conflicts, people's wardens and justices of the peace).
4. Protective to the environment and the Indigenous culture (rational use of natural resources, biodiversity, and preservation of ecosystems, land use planning, territories, education, protection of the environment, integral agrarian reform).
5. Favorable to fair economic development (a mixed economy, guarantees for communitarian economy, participatory planning, agrarian reform, economic openness, settlement of the foreign debit (Leger, 1994:69).

These points illustrate that the political plan of the ONIC dealt not only with Indigenous issues, but also issues that affected other sectors of Colombian society and became central to their campaign for a seat in the constitutional assembly. ONIC decided to divide their proposals into two categories: proposals of national interest (democracy, human rights, ecology, public force) and specific Indigenous proposals (multiculturalism, ethnic groups, territorial autonomy, cultural identity, and collective ownership of land) (Leger, 1994:66).

In addition to the ONIC, the Autoridades Indigeneas del Suroccidente de Colombia (Southwestern Indigenous Alliance, AISO) also presented a candidate to run for a seat on the constitutional assembly. The AISO, mostly composed of members of the Misak community, decided to have their own candidate due to some political rivalries with the CRIC and the ONIC (Rappaport, 2005: 2, Leger, 1994: 67). The ONIC and AISO were strongly supported by different non-Indigenous sectors of the Colombian society, especially by Afro-Colombians, who did not have their own candidate (Lager, 1994:70). As a result, the two Indigenous candidates of these collectivities, Francisco Rojas Birry (ONIC) and Lorenzo Muelas (AISO), were elected to the National Constitutional Assembly (67). A third indigenous delegate from the Indigenous Commando Quintin Lame, Alfonso Pena Chepe, participated in the constitutional assembly as part of the demobilization accord that was signed with the government (Leger, 1994:68).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169, signed by the Colombian government in 1989, was one of the principal political weapons that the Indigenous representatives had for the approval of their constitutional proposals in the 1991 constitutional assembly. Due to the political pressure of the Indigenous movement, Colombia was one of the first countries in the world to ratify this international convention. The first goal of the 169 convention was to ratify a series of rights for Indigenous people stipulated in previous conventions, especially the ILO Convention 107 of 1954. The general purpose of the 107 convention was “the

protection and integration of Indigenous and tribal populations in independent countries” (Roldan, 2000: 22). Specifically, the Convention 107:

1. Condemns all forms of racism.
2. Underscores the values of the Indigenous communities and describes them as constituent elements of these societies whose right to live and develop in accordance is as legitimate as that of any society.
3. Enshrines Indigenous people’s right to participate in and contribute to the adoption and implementation of initiatives that may affect them.
4. Specifies and demands attention in special areas, such as land, employment conditions, business development, social security, health care, and education, in order to improve their lives within the context of their own aspirations (Roldan, 2000:25).

In addition to ratifying conventions previously signed, the Convention 169 also added a new set of individual and communal rights for Indigenous peoples in modern nations. The Convention 169 adds:

1. Capacity to develop and maintain forms of political organization, justice, and social control.
2. Autonomy to control the public affairs within their Indigenous territories.
3. Complete dominion of the Indigenous territory in relation to their own models of ownership (Sanchez, Roldan, and Sanchez 1993: 32).

The participation of the Indigenous organizations in the National Constitutional Assembly was very successful. The most important recognition obtained in this political process was the recognition of Colombia as a multicultural nation. Article 7 of the Colombian constitution stipulates: “the State shall recognize and protect the

ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation” (Leger, 1994: 76). Article 70 (in the chapter on social, economic and cultural rights) adds “the State shall recognize the equality and dignity of all cultures which live together in the country” (77). This recognition was a remarkable victory for Indigenous people. For the first time in history, the Colombian constitution recognized a multiplicity of cultures (religions, languages, customs) within its territory. This marks a drastic change from the government’s attempts to integrate by forcing Indigenous cultures into the mainstream society (76, 77). Based on the principal of multiculturalism, the Colombian constitution proclaims many other rights for Indigenous peoples:

Culture

The 1991 constitution stipulates that by recognizing the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the nation, the national identity is enriched. Indigenous languages are declared official in the Indigenous territories, opening the door to bilingual education. Moreover, Article 68 guarantees the right to education which respects and develops the specific cultural necessities of the Indigenous communities (Leger, 1994:77).

Property

Ownership of communal lands by ethnic groups was created by the new Constitution. Article 63 stipulates that these lands hereafter are inalienable, indefeasible, and unsizeable. Articles 63 and 329 specifically protect the Indigenous resguardos (Leger, 1994: 77-78)

In regard to a potential exploitation of cultural and natural resources in these territories, Article 72 also protects the potential special rights of ethnic groups inhabiting territories containing archeological treasures (Leger 1994: 77). Also, the Constitution established that natural resources cannot be exploited to the detriment of the integrity of Indigenous communities. Therefore, they have to authorize any project in their territory (Article 330) (77). Articles 286 and 287 guarantee autonomy in the management of Indigenous territories. This means that Indigenous communities can govern themselves, exercises their own jurisdictions, manage resources, levy taxes necessary for their functions and share in national, non-tax revenues (79).

Autonomy

The new Constitution recognizes the autonomy that Indigenous people have in organizing their territory politically, depending on their specific traditions. Governance in the Indigenous territories is organized by internal councils (Article 330). These councils are not subject to any sort of rigid rules due to the varied forms of authority which exist among the Indigenous communities like elders, councils, caciques, clan chiefs, etc. These councils take over the functions regarding the following issues: development plans and programs, public investing, fiscal revenues, land use, peopling of territories, natural resources, programs for communities inhabiting the territories, public order, and government representation (Leger, 1994, 80).

Resources

Despite the new Constitution denying Indigenous communities the right to receive any sort of revenue for exploitation of natural resources, it still guarantees revenue from shares of national non-tax revenues (Article 287, No 4), levying of taxes (Article 330, No 3), resources which the councils may collect and distribute (Article 330, No 4), royalties received from ports located in the territory or the National Royalties Fund (Articles 360 and 361), and debit financial acts (Article 295). In addition, the executive branch is given the power to decree the fiscal measures necessary for the Indigenous territorial entities to function (Article 56) (Leger, 1994, 81).

Nationality

The Article 96, No 2 of the constitution recognizes the right to citizenship for those people who live near Colombia's borders. This Article aims to resolve the problem of Indigenous people not being recognized as citizens of any country. This article sets a precedent for Latin American legislation (Leger, 1994, 81).

Political Representation

The Article 176 guarantees a special electoral district to elect up to five representatives to the House from ethnic groups, political minorities, and Colombians residing out of the country. This Article also provides the opportunity to directly elect two Indigenous Senators (Leger, 1994: 82).

Justice

In general, the new Constitution recognizes the Indigenous authority. This means that the Indigenous authorities can exercise jurisdiction over their territories in

accordance to their own standards and procedures, on the condition that they do not oppose the Constitution or the laws of the Republic (Article 246) (Leger, 1994: 82). Regarding this point, Rappaport states “ cabildos have been forced to assume the role of the State and have suddenly found themselves obligated to take control of a penal system whose exercise has been suppressed since the colonial period and replaced by State criminal statutes and enforcements (Rappaport, 232: 2005).

Situation after the Proclamation of the 1991 Constitution

Despite the important political victories of the 1991 Constitution, the Indigenous people have continued enduring high levels of violence and marginalization. The constitution opened the door to different neoliberal reforms such as the opening of the Colombian market to imported agricultural goods, the privatization of public companies, and lower taxes for national and foreign businesses, that deeply affected traditionally destitute sectors of the Colombian society, especially those in rural areas. Colombia's importation of primary agriculture products has increased tenfold, from 700,000 at the beginning of the 1990s to 7,000,000 in 2002. According to analysts, the high level of agriculture importations has ended more than 300,000 jobs related to agriculture during 1990 to 2002 (Robledo, 2002). Neoliberal policies have been accompanied with an increase in governmental repression and violence in different regions of the country. Since the 1990s, the paramilitary project has gained tremendous power at regional and national level. The paramilitary has

been used by state and private entrepreneurs to repress any sort of political or social opposition against neoliberal policies. The strengthening of the paramilitary project has been possible by the support of some sectors of the military, politicians, and drug business (Hristov, 2009: 58-102). The consequences of the implementation of neoliberal policies and the arising of the paramilitary groups are dramatic: Colombia became the country with highest incidence of the most land held by the fewest hands in Latin America and the tenth country in the highest gap between rich and poor in the world. Also, approximately 4,628,882 people were displaced from 1985 to 2009 in this country and more than 80% of the Colombian rural population lives in poverty (Hristov, 2009: 90 and Galeano, 2006:85).

The consequences of the expansion of the neoliberal project for Indigenous communities are especially dramatic. Some of the most affected Indigenous groups are those who inhabited the Department of Cauca. In December 16, 1991, 20 members (11 men, 5 women, and 4 children) of the Indigenous reservation of Huellas, municipality of Caloto, Cauca, were massacred in the Nilo Hacienda (ranch) by members of a paramilitary group, hired by neighboring ranchers and supported by the 3rd Army Brigade and the police (Second Report, 1993). Five days after this massacre, the state acknowledged the responsibility for this action. The Nasas and the Colombian government signed 13 accords where the Colombian government compensated the victims of this massacre, which included 15,663,000 hectares of land suitable for agriculture and livestock production (CCAJAR, 2005). After repeated defaults in the fulfillment of these accords from the state, the Indigenous communities decided to

take the case to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, IACHR. In 2000, this commission recommended that Colombia completely fulfill the accords signed with the Nasa community as soon as possible (ONIC, 2008). Colombia has yet to fill the stipulations of the accords. According to the Alvaro Uribe's government, the state has acquired 11,382,271 hectares for the Indigenous communities, but the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN), one of the most active members of the CRIC, argues that only 40% of this land is suitable for agriculture and livestock production. The rest of the land is located in conservation and protection areas not suitable for production (CCAJAR, 2005). Land and territory are the most fundamental points in the relation between Indigenous communities from Cauca and other actors such as the state, landowners, paramilitary, and guerrillas.

From 1992 to 1996 the violence against Indigenous communities in Cauca slightly decreased. Villa and Houghton believe that the legitimacy that the Colombian political institutions acquired after the 1991 constitutional process and the prestige obtained by the Indigenous movement contributed to the improvement (Villa and Houghton, 2005: 91). The Indigenous political project also gained strength throughout the department. Members of two political Indigenous parties, the Social Indigenous Alliance (ASI) and the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), were elected as mayors of different Cauca's municipalities, becoming a very important political force in this region. This situation was not welcomed by the traditional political forces in the department of Cauca, who saw the Indigenous movement as a threat to their

political and economic interests. The guerrilla groups began to regard the Indigenous movement as part of the state and, therefore, as military adversaries (91-92).

In 1997 the situation worsened again when leftist guerrilla groups adopted a plan to sabotage regional elections. The FARC threatened the Indigenous people who participate in the electoral process. The ASI decided to confront the guerrillas, a situation that ended up with the assassination of many of its members. Meanwhile, the paramilitaries threatened those candidates who renounced their political aspirations from pressure by the guerrillas. This situation marked the beginning of new stage of the armed conflict in Cauca, where Indigenous people find themselves in the middle of a violent conflict between guerrillas, narco-paramilitary, and the state for the control of Cauca's territory (Villa and Houghton, 2005: 92).

In April 2001 the Frente Calima, a paramilitary group commanded by Diego Murillo Bejarano and Hebert Veloza (both extradited to the United States for drug trafficking)⁴ and with the compliance the infamous 3rd Brigade of the Army, tortured, killed, and mutilated hundreds of residents of the Nasa district of Alto Naya, Cauca. According to the Nizkor International Human Rights Team, this massacre left 130

⁴ The extradition has been strongly criticized by different human rights advocates, including Indigenous organizations. According to the report "*Truth Behind Bars, Colombian Paramilitary Leaders in U.S Custody*" (February 2010), the extradition of 29 paramilitary commandants to the United States for drug trafficking have negatively affected the legal investigations and reparations for crimes committed by paramilitary groups in Colombia. The report specifically states "(t)he extraditions have (1) substantially diminished Defendants' cooperation with ongoing human rights and corruption investigations in Colombia; (2) severely curtailed access to remedies for Colombian victims; and (3) undermined U.S counternarcotics efforts by prompting a ruling by Colombia's Supreme Court to block future extraditions of demobilized paramilitaries to the United States" (IHRLC- UC Berkeley, 2010: 1). In addition, these extraditions have undermined the investigation of the nexus between the members of the government and the military with paramilitary organizations (Semana, 2008).

Indigenous people murdered and more than six thousand displaced (Hristov, 2009: 191). One of the objectives of this massacre, according to some experts, was to measure the political power of the Indigenous movement, especially the CRIC, in this region. They were especially interested in the reaction of the Indigenous movement to this action.

The expansionist plan of the paramilitaries included occupation of the Naya territory, area which is rich in biodiversity and exceptionally strategic for drug production and transportation. The Indigenous movement organized 40,000 people to protest the massacre, the paramilitary violence and the nexus of the state with these illegal groups (Villa and Houghton, 2005: 92).

Since Alvaro Uribe Velez assumed the presidency in 2002, levels of violence have continued increasing. Uribe launched an aggressive military plan called Democratic Security (Seguridad Democratica). This military policy sought to diminish the production of drugs and weaken leftist guerrillas, specially the FARC, different areas of the Colombian territory. This plan increased the level of militarization, especially in rural areas with historical presence of the guerrilla groups, including the department of Cauca. This policy augmented dramatically the level of violence in those areas. In different regions of the department of Cauca the rates of assassinations skyrocketed, in some cases, to more than 100 percent after launching the Seguridad Democratica policy (Villa and Houghton, 2005: 92).

The Indigenous movement from Cauca decided to address Uribe's plan non-violently, but energetically, deploying three types of actions: congregating massive assemblies – *mingas* (See page 6) – during risky situations; strengthening the civic Indigenous Guard; and establishing a territory of peace at La Maria, Cauca. Since 2001, the *mingas* have been especially important in this process of civic resistance. One of the reasons why the Indigenous leaders have organized *mingas* is to discourage combat in their territories. For example, in December 2001, the inhabitants of Purace, Cauca, forced the leftist guerrilla Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the police to stop a conflict by going out to the streets with music and speakerphones (Villa and Houghton, 2005: 106).

Due to the continuing failures of the government to fulfill the 1991 land agreement, CRIC started to take actions to recuperate land possessed by large landholders, paramilitaries, and drug-lords. In 2005 the CRIC organized two peaceful occupations of the haciendas Emperatriz y El Japio, both located in Caloto, Cauca. These actions were violently repressed by the police's infamous anti-riot squadron (Escuadron Antidisturbios de la Policia, ESMAD).⁵ In these two actions, the unarmed Indigenous people were violently attacked by the ESMAD, with the use of tear gases, machetes, and explosives. Many were detained, more than 40 people were wounded, and one adolescent was killed. Those arrested were humiliated, mistreated and tortured

⁵ The ESMAD has been involved in different scandals due to the tactics deployed by its members. Former members of this police force have denounced and different videos have documented that the ESMAD has used non-conventional weapons forbidden by the international law. For example, in 2006 Oscar Salas, student at National University, was killed when a small crystal's ball penetrated his head through his eye during a protest. Three years after, a former member of this police squadron declared that the ESMAD frequently uses this kind of non-traditional weapons to repress and disperse protestors.

in captivity.⁶ The government has attempted to legitimize the repression and violence against Indigenous protestors by making false accusations that link the Indigenous movement between with the FARC ⁷(Hristov, 2009: 197).

In 2006, the CRIC, demonstrating its great convoking and organizational power, organized the National Itinerant Summit of Social Organizations (Cumbre Nacional Itinerante de Organizaciones Sociales) held in the peace territory of La Maria Piendamó, Cauca.⁸ They gathered more than 10,000 people in La Maria and mobilized more than 300,000 people for different activities throughout the country (NASAASIN, 2006). For four days, members of social and political movements discussed different political points, such as their opposition against the Colombia-United States Free Trade Agreement; demanding to the government the fulfillment of the 1991 accords; and protesting against the Salvajina Dam (largely owned by the multinational Union Fenosa).⁹ As a part of the event, the organizations congregated in

⁶ The documentary *Pa' Poder Que Nos Den Tierra* (2006) produced by the Communication Network of the ACIN, denounces that many of the Indigenous detainees were whipped and suffered finger mutilations during their captivity.

⁷ This strategy has frequently deployed by the Uribe's government to de-legitimize the actions, not only of Indigenous movement, but all political opposition, including journalists, NGO's, human rights advocates, union leaders, educators, etc. Many of these people have been assassinated, displaced, and received death threats for these incriminations (Amnistia Internacional, 2008).

⁸ La Maria is a *resguardo*- communal Indigenous territory- of the Mishka- renamed by the Spanish as Guambianos. In 1999 the Indigenous communities of Cauca declared La Maria as territory for dialogue and negotiation where all sectors of the society could participate. They were responding to the arrogant attitude taken by the FARC and the Colombian government on their failed peace negotiations. The Indigenous communities felt that civil society were getting excluded from these peace negotiations, thus they decided to open up spaces to negotiate and discuss solutions for the Colombian conflict. La Maria was chosen because the area was constantly attacked by armed groups- around those days, the FARC kidnapped five young men that the community later rescue- and this closeness to Pan-American road (Pechene, 2006).

⁹ The Salvajina Dam project has been surrounded by high controversy. Hundreds of inhabitants of the northern Cauca were affected for its construction in the decade of the 1980s. The former owner, the state's company Empresa Energía del Pacífico (EPSA), and the current owner, the Spanish company Union Fenosa, have never compensated those communities who have been affected by this project.

this event decided to block the Pan-American Highway, to pressure the government to negotiate possible solutions for the grievances exposed in this summit. One more time, the reaction of the government was brutal. Sabas Pretel de la Vega, minister of government and justice at that time, denounced in congress and justify violence against Indigenous people by declaring that the Indigenous movement was manipulated and controlled by the FARC. Subsequently, the government deployed force to deal with these roadblocks. Using tear gases, helicopters, armor cars, unconventional and conventional weaponry, the police and the army violently attacked people and looted La Maria Piendamó. At the end, these police's actions resulted in the death of at least one protestor, destruction of seven homes, the burning of cars and motorcycles, and the wounding and torturing of hundreds of demonstrators (NASAASIN, 2006).

The Alvaro Uribe Velez's government has not only tried to attack the Indigenous movement – as well as any other progressive sector in the Colombian society – by deploying extreme force and incriminating them with fake accusations. This government has also attempted to undermine the Indigenous movement by revising laws that protect the Indigenous communities. One of the most controversial law is the Statute of Rural Development (Estatuto de Desarrollo Rural, Law 1152), which would protect the large landowners from any possible agrarian reform. Among many points, this reform proposed:

Protestors and community leaders have been mistreated and threatened for elevating their grievances against this project. In 2009, 6 community leaders were threatened for their opposition against the proposal to divert a river to power the Salvajina dam (Bacon, 2007) (Amnesty International, 2009).

1. To eliminate the right to confiscate or settle in any uncultivated land from large landowners, even if the land is unused for more than 10 years.
2. Nomadic Indigenous people would lose any right over territory.
3. Landless and displaced peasants would be penalized for settle down on lands designed as natural reserves.¹⁰
4. Allowing local and foreign corporations to become the permanent owners of areas previously inhabited by Indigenous communities, such as resguardos (Hristov. 2009:200).

After being approved by the congress, the Colombian constitutional court declared this law unconstitutional, for not taking into account the opinion of the Indigenous communities. However, this law illustrates Uribe's political agenda, regarding tenancy of land. It is clear that the Indigenous communities are an obstacle for completely implementing the neoliberal agenda that benefits the national and foreign corporations.

After analyzing the situation of Indigenous people in the department of Cauca after 1991, it is evident that the high level of violence and destitution endured by Indigenous people are the result of a long conflict for the control of the territory and natural resources of the department of Cauca. As we have seen, the Indigenous community has bravely struggled against drug traffickers, paramilitary groups, leftist guerrillas, and the state to recuperate and defend their territory. This means that the Indigenous movement has not been passive nor submissive actors in this conflict. On the contrary, the Indigenous movement has acted according with its own political,

¹⁰ Many of the Colombian natural reserves are being administrated by private tourist companies (Mejia, 2008).

social, and economic plan. Since the foundation of the CRIC, the Indigenous movement has impressively grown in the Colombian political spectrum. However, the Indigenous communities from Cauca have paid a high price for this struggle. This situation specially worsened during the last 8 years. Only from 2002 to 2008, more than 1,200 Indigenous people have been assassinated and, at least, 54,000 have been displaced (Semana, 2008(2)).¹¹ For this reason, it is very important to analyze the role of the mass media in this conflict. Is mass media used as another instrument of power against Indigenous people? Are the CRIC and other Indigenous organizations portrayed according to political importance among Indigenous people? Is mass media replicating the racist and defamatory message of the Colombian government against Indigenous people? We will try to find some answers for these questions in the coverage analysis of the 2008 and 2009 mobilizations in chapter 4.

¹¹ As it was said, only 2% of the 44 millions of Colombians are Indigenous. This is less than 1 million people.

Chapter 2

Structural Problems of the Colombian Mass Media

Colombian journalism does not have the best reputation among Indigenous organizations. These organizations have denounced journalism for misconduct and lack of ethics on several occasions. The documentary *We are Raised with Our Staff of Authority*, produced by the communication network of the ACIN,¹ shows a confrontation between participants of the 2006 National Itinerant Summit of Social Organizations in La Maria,² Cauca, and a crew of RCN television news. Some participants of the summit demanded the RCN journalist crew to report in their national television news broadcast the violence and abuses perpetrated by the police against people and Indigenous property at La Maria. The RCN television news reporter replies to the summit participants:

Nosotros como periodistas tenemos que permanecer neutrales. Nosotros no podemos estar ni de aquí ni de allá, sino en la mitad. Por ejemplo, nosotros decimos, ‘así quedaron las instalaciones del resguardo La María, después de los disturbios.’ Pero nosotros no podemos entrar a juzgar, porque nosotros no somos jueces, nosotros no podemos decir “fue la policía, fueron los Indígenas, fueron los campesinos, no! Eso no nos corresponde a nosotros porque no somos autoridad (NASAACIN, 2006)

Despite the thoughtful RCN reporter’s speech on journalism ethics and neutrality, the later report of the RCN news incriminated and blamed Indigenous people for the destruction and violence occurred at La Maria:

¹ The communication network of the ACIN is a well established communication project of the Indigenous communities of Northern Cauca. It encompasses a three radio stations, video production, and Internet production, printing and publishing (Murillo, 146: 2008).

² See Chapter 1

Apesar de la calma de la mañana, en la zona permanecen miles de nativos que a un kilómetro de la vía Panamericana amenazan con nuevos bloqueos y desbandadas iracundas, como las que en las últimas horas dejaron seriamente afectado el resguardo de la María, casa de los manifestantes, que pese a lo registrado insisten que los destrozos son ajenos a su responsabilidad (NASAACIN, 2006).³

This report was accompanied by confusing video images of Indigenous people reacting to and protecting themselves from an off screen attack by the police. Because the images only showed the Indigenous people, not the police offence, it gave the impression that they were destroying La María without any apparent reason.

The problems surrounding media coverage of situations related to Indigenous people in national print press are also evident. In the article *Se Abre un Capítulo que Involucra al Periodista Hollman Morris en la 'Farcpolitica'*⁴ (May 2009) the magazine Cambio reports that, according to information obtained from the Raul Reyes computer,⁵ the journalist Hollman Morris had contacts and close relation with the leftist Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). In addition, the article states that Mr. Morris and Manuel Rozenthal, long time advisor of the communication

³ “Despite the calm of the morning, thousands of native people remain about one kilometer away from the Pan-American Highway, threatening new blockages and erratic dispersions such as the ones in the last few hours that left the resguardo La María, home of the protestors, seriously affected, despite of what was officially registered that insist that the destruction was not of their doing” (Their translation)

⁴ “A Chapter is opened that Involves the Journalist Hollman Morris with the ‘Farcpolitica’”

⁵ On March 1 2008, the Colombian army attacked a FARC camp in Ecuador, killing Raul Reyes, one of the most important commandants of the FARC. According to the Colombian government, a computer with valuable information was recovered in this attack. Since then, the Raul Reyes computers became an extraordinarily source of information for the Colombian government. This information has been surrounded by controversy. The government has found documents and e-mails that relate members of opposition, journalist, social leaders, and the Venezuelan government with the FARC. The veracity of this information has been questioned. For example, Noticias Uno, one of the most critical media against the Uribe regime, informs that only word documents were found in these computers; e-mails were not founded (Aselma, 2008). This completely contradicts the government’s version.

quilt of the ACIN,⁶ have spent time walking around in Cauca with members of the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, ELN, the second largest Colombian guerrilla group (Cambio, 2008). Due to the intense war between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the army, and the strong political polarization among the population, these types of rumors can easily end up in a death sentence in Colombia. Manuel Rozenthal, as consequence for this report, was forced to leave Cauca and to exile for second time in less than 4 years.⁷

This chapter shows some of the causes for the repeated problems with the coverage of Indigenous issues within the mass media in Colombia. This chapter begins by analyzing the problems that the monopolization of mass media in Colombia has caused. The second part of the chapter deals with the problems that journalists face in the exercise of their profession in Colombia such as, political harassment, labor instability, and violence. Finally, this chapter will explain why even if the conditions for journalism discussed before improve, it is very unlikely that the political project of the Indigenous movements would have a favorable coverage on Colombian mass media. The Indigenous political project challenges the social, political, and economic structure of the Colombian state. Thus, the only possible manner to deeply change the mass media coverage is by changing the pro-capitalist and euro-centric structures imposed by the dominant Colombian ruling class.

⁶ The Communication quilt of the ACIN is communication project, which encompasses an Internet “telecenter,” video production, printing, and publishing, and three radio station (Murillo, 2008:146).

⁷ Mr. Rozenthal was forced to exile in 2005 for various death threats from groups that accuse him of being a CIA agent. It is an irony that, 4 years later, he is accused of having nexus with leftist guerrilla organizations (Pudor, 2005).

The Monopolization of Mass Media in Colombia

The Colombian media has not escaped from the neoliberal philosophy that has dominated the national political and economic panorama over the last 25 years; the media ownership is now more concentrated than ever. Four economic conglomerates (Santodomingo, Ardila Lulle Groups, the Spanish Prisa, and Planeta Groups) have control over the most influential news media outlets. Their media outlets nearly dominate the print, television, and radio markets. In the case of television, Ardila Lulle's RCN and Santodomingo's Caracol have an enormous control over television market, with audiences of 89.3% and 87.8% respectively (Bonilla and Narvaez, 2008: 93). In the case of radio, 11 of the top 20 stations in terms of audience share are controlled by Caracol Radio (Santodomingo-Prisa) and five are controlled by RCN (Ardila Group). These 16 radio stations combined control 36 percent of the audience (90).⁸

The outlook for print press is not much better. Since 1997, 55 percent of the stock of the Casa Editorial El Tiempo (CEET) is controlled by the Spanish Group Planeta and the rest is owned the powerful Santos family (Reuters, 1997). The CEET, in turn, controls the El Tiempo (the newspaper with highest circulation and one of the only two national daily newspapers), two magazines (Cambio and Don Juan), two regional newspapers (Siete Dias, Boyaca and Siete Dias Llano), Bogota's largest local

⁸ The monopolization of radio is not amply discussed here because the content analysis of this thesis focuses on television news and newspapers.

television channel (City Tv), and various internet portals (Citytv.com.co, Futbolred.com, and Eltiempo.com, among others). Meanwhile, the other national newspaper, El Espectador, and the magazine Cromos are owned by Santodomingo group (Bonilla, Narvaez, 2008: 85). The only large publication that is not controlled by any of those four economic conglomerates is the weekly news magazine Semana.

The monopolization processes of newspapers and television in Colombia took quite different paths. Contrary to television, the Colombian print press is not, economically speaking, an attractive business. The family owned newspapers and magazines have gone through tremendous economic troubles during the last years. Despite this fact, powerful conglomerates have invested millions of dollars these newspapers. The Santodomingo Group, for example, bought the almost-broken newspaper El Espectador in 1997. Since then, the Santodomingo group has invested millions of dollars to maintain the paper's circulation. In 2000, the alarming economic situation drove the Santodomingo group to switch the frequency of newspaper circulation from daily to weekly. Eight years later this group invested 12 million dollars to return El Espectador to this original daily circulation (El Espectador, 2008). Explaining why economic conglomerates are willing to invest money in newspapers and magazines, Bonilla and Narvaez state "there is a sort of oligopoly consisting of a small number of publications, indicating that the business is by no means profitable for all and that their existence bows to other kinds of interest" (Bonilla and Narvaez, 2008: 85). One of these interests is political power. Economic conglomerates have used their power over media to gain and maintain political power. Julio Mario

Santodomingo, the most important member of the Santodomingo group, has commented “the mass media outlets are like guns, when you need them you take them out and shoot” (Reyes, 2005:2003). This comment reveals that Santodomingo sees media, not merely as business, but as an instrument of power and explains why he is willing to invest millions of dollars in a newspaper, despite economic losses.

Economic conglomerates are also willing to take radical actions against journalists when their reports affect their economic and political interest. In February 2010 the CEET made drastic changes to the direction and orientation of its political investigative magazine *Cambio*. *Cambio*'s editor, Maria Elvira Rueda, and director, Rodrigo Pardo, were fired; the focus of the magazine changed from politics to fashion, sports, and travel; and the magazine's circulation was reduced from weekly to monthly. The CEET argues that the economic crisis and the consumption's decline of political analysis magazines caused these radical changes (El Tiempo, 2010). Despite this explanation, different media scholars and journalist believe that these changes were politically motivated. In 2009 *Cambio* magazine revealed many of the biggest corruption scandals that has affected the Uribe administration such as, the Agro Ingreso Seguro scandal⁹ and the secret negotiations that allowed the United States to use seven military bases throughout the country (Cambio, 2009 (2) and (Castaneda, 2010). *Cambio*'s investigations created very tough political environment for Uribe's government, decreasing his popularity to the lowest point in his 8 year government (El

⁹ The magazine *Cambio* denounced that the Ministry of Agriculture gave millions of dollars to rich families, latifundistas, and beauty queens in exchange for political support for the government of Uribe Velez in various regions of the country. Many of these people are involved in the foundation and consolidation of paramilitary groups in different regions of the nation (Cambio, 2009 (3)).

Tiempo, 2009). As Antonio Caballero – one of the most reputed Colombian political analysts – explains, Cambio’s investigations were not welcomed by the CEET’s largest stockholders: the Spanish Grupo Planeta and the Santos Family. These two groups have large economic and political ties with the Alvaro Uribe government. On one hand, the Grupo Planeta is currently vying for the concession of a third national TV channel.¹⁰ On the other hand, two members of the Santos family occupy important political position in the government. Francisco Santos, vice-president of the nation, and Juan Manuel Santos, former minister of defense and current presidential candidate of the Uribe’s political party Unidad Nacional. Members of the Santos family and the Planeta Group criticized Cambio’s reports and investigations before the magazine restructuration, making evident their discontent with the magazine. Juan Manuel Santos, for example, publically branded Cambio’s journalists as useful idiots after they published a NGO Nuevo Arco Iris report that questioned the security policy of Uribe’s government (Caballero, 2010) (Castaneda, 2010).

In the case of television, the incentive for investing has being political and economic. The Colombian television was conceived as a public service at its beginnings. In 1956, the coffee bonanza allowed the Rojas Pinilla government to support the establishment of the first television channel in Colombia fully funded by the government (Herran: 88, 1991). Two years later the government permitted private companies to broadcast commercial television due to the elevated cost of producing and transmitting television. For years the medium for television transmission was state

¹⁰ Colombia only has two national television channels. The economic conglomerates Grupo Cisneros, Prisa, and Grupo Planeta have shown their interest on this new channel (El Tiempo, 2007).

owned, but the production and commercialization of the programs was a private (193). Seeking to provide better commercial and public television, the government founded, in 1963, the Institute of Radio and Television- (INRAVISION). The function of this institute was to regulate and administrate the three national channels; two mixed and a public one (163). To guarantee the production of non-commercial television, the government also founded a public producer company named Audiovisuales (165). During the 1980s, the government started to decentralize its absolute control over television, establishing the first mixed regional channels (165, 168). This mixed system dominated the Colombian television until mid 1990s.

The Colombian state started to rapidly disband public and mixed television since 1997. In this year the government announced the opening of the first two private national channels in Colombian history. The following year, after winning a public bid, the two largest producers of television in Colombia, Radio Cadena Nacional (RCN) and Caracol Television, opened their private national channels. These channels came to compete against two mixed national channels (Canal 1 and Canal A) and one public national channel (Señal Colombia). After the adjudication of the private channels, the monopoly over television dramatically increased. Four small TV production companies (Punch, Tevecine, JES, and Cenpro), who had produced programs for the mixed private/public stations, went out of business, in 2000, due to their inability to compete against RCN and Caracol. In 2003, other small private producers declared bankruptcy and the government decided to close mixed channel (Canal A) for its catastrophic economic situation (Lablaa, 1998). In 2004, the Alvaro

Uribe Velez government liquidated INRAVISION and Audiovisuales arguing that these entities were highly corrupted and all their budgets were used for bureaucratic and administrative purposes. 485 employees and 1000 pensioners were affected by this decision. The government transferred INRAVISION and Audiovisuales functions to new founded entity named Radio Television de Colombia (RTVC), company with less than 100 employees (Semana, 2004).

The privatization of television was a fantastic business for the Santodomingo and Ardila Lulle conglomerates. In addition to the economic benefits for controlling almost absolutely all the television audience, Santodomingo and Ardila Lulle groups have reaped benefits in three other ways. First, advertising expense goes from one company within the conglomerates to another, leaving smaller television producers without advertisers. This was one of the principal reasons for the bankruptcy of the majority of small television producers. Second, these economic groups have access to much less expensive advertising for their different companies on their own channels. And, third, because their own discounts lower the projected income of concessionary media business, these television channels are able to sue the state for the difference between the income guaranteed by the State and their actual revenues (Bonilla and Narvaez, 2008, 95).

According to the Colombian NGO Corporacion Medios Para La Paz, MPP (Media for Peace Corporation), there are seven negative consequences for the monopolization of the mass media in Colombia: (1) More than 94% of the information comes from official sources; (2) scarcity of spaces for debate; (3) non-existence of

independent research; (4) strong interference of the interest of the media's owners in the coverage of political and economic issues; (5) corruption and manipulation of the information; (6) weaknesses of the regional voices; and (7) weaknesses of educational and cultural content (MMP, 2007: 56).

Overall, the history of the television in Colombia shows a shift from conceiving television as public services to regarding television as business. In the current model, the private interest prevails over the public interest. This means that the main goal for this market oriented media is not to provide good social service. Rather, the main goal for market media is to maximize profits at any cost. If we add to this situation the monopolization of radio and print press, the panorama is very disturbing. The media oligopoly tends to be aligned with the neoliberal political and economic project. Bonilla and Narvaez argue that "the news agenda is deeply compromised by the political ambitions of some of the most powerful economic elites of the country; ultimately they are an integral part of the corporative framework" (Bonilla and Narvaez, 96: 2008)¹¹. As we will see in chapter 4, the mass media inclination for maintaining the status quo is evident in their coverage of the Indigenous issues.

Problems Practicing Journalism in Colombia

¹¹ The ideological and political affinity of the Uribe government with some mass media outlets is evident. There are many cases where people with great power among media, ended up working for the government of Alvaro Uribe. In addition to Juan Manuel and Francisco Santos, Alvaro Garcia, former director of RCN news (2000-2008), ended up as Alvaro Uribe's ambassador in Argentina.

Analyzing the structure of the news market alone is insufficient to understand the problems of the news coverage related to Colombian Indigenous issues. In order to fully understand the reasons for these problems, it is necessary to analyze different aspects related to the profession of journalism in Colombia. The non-corporative media and journalism endure diverse problems that affect the quality of their work such as, harassment, bad working conditions, and poor academic training.

A primary problem of journalism is the government's persecution of dissident media and journalists. Although Colombian law does not have an official policy that censors the flow of information, government censorship is deployed in various ways. Vladimir Florez (Vladdo), one of the most critical journalist and caricaturist in Colombia, explains “[h]ere the censorship is much more subtle, [...] some attitudes of high government functionaries contribute to demonize the opinions that are not aligned to the official line, or the information that is drawback to the government (My translation).” (Florez, 2008: 73). It is very common to hear incriminations, without showing any proofs, from Alvaro Uribe Velez and members of his cabinet against journalist and members of the opposition, referring to them as “the intellectual bloc of the FARC” (SP, 2009). One of the most notorious incriminations involved the journalist Holman Morris. Mr. Morris, former RCN journalist, and current correspondent of Radio France International and director of the non-corporative investigative television program *Contravia*,¹² was signaled as FARC's collaborator by

¹² *Contravia* is an investigation television show that analyzes some of the most complex cases of the Colombian conflict. The production of this program is supported by the European Union and the

the Colombian President and Juan Manuel Santos, minister of defense at that time. According to Uribe and Santos, Mr. Morris has “a lot in common with the FARC” (Amnesty, 2009). These accusations were the product of Morris’ journalistic work on the liberation process of two hostages held by the FARC. Mr. Morris was one of only two journalists at the moment of the hostage liberation. He reported, among other details, that the Colombian government violated an agreement of not to fly over the area where the liberations would take place. Following government accusations, Mr. Morris and his crew received a series of death threats against themselves and their families (Amnesty, 2009) (Hylton, 2009).¹³

The persecution of the Uribe government against journalists and leaders of the opposition is not limited to unfounded accusations. An investigation made by the Colombia General Attorney Office found that the intelligence service of the Colombian Presidency, DAS (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad) had systematically wiretapped, monitored and harassed human rights workers, members of

George Soros Foundation. This program is emitted in Canal Uno, the only one national mixed channel left on air.

¹³ This time the corporative journalism served, one more time, as a “resonance box” for the shallow and dangerous accusations of the Uribe’s government against Hollman Morris. As it was mentioned before, the CEET’s Cambio Magazine published an article that validated the government accusations. According to this article, based on the computers founded by the government, Mr. Morris had a close relationship with high rank members of the FARC. However, this article absolutely relies on the version of the state’s of events. Through his career, Mr. Morris has interview members of this guerrilla organization, as well as members of paramilitary groups. He has never denied contacts, for journalistic proposes, with members of these organizations (Hylton, 2009). Maria Elvira Samper, Cambio’s former long time general editor, had en extensive interview with Hollman Morris in Contravia days after the CEET suddenly fired her (see page 5-6). In this interview, Samper was very disturbed, ironically, for the threats against press freedom in Colombia. Hollman’s questions if she ever thought that she would be silence, she categorically answered “NO.” This reminds me the famous Niemoller poem *First they Came* (In fact, she made vague referenced to it): “They first came for the Communist, and I did not speak up because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews [...]. Then, they came for me and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

opposition parties, and journalists. Mr. Morris, not surprisingly, is on the list the monitored journalist. According to the investigation, the DAS has a folder with detailed information of all aspects of the personal and professional life of Mr. Morris. This information includes photocopies of Morris' identification documents, residence and office addresses, and phone numbers and e-mails where the information was collected. This file also contained information about Mr. Morris family members, some of them minors, and workmates. Among these documents was a memo sent by one of the DAS detectives to Carlos Alberto Arzayues, sub-director of operations of the DAS, that states: "SEGUIMIENTOS A ORGANIZACIONES Y PERSONAS DE TENDENCIA OPOSITORA FRENTE A LAS POLITICAS GUBERNAMENTALES, CON EL FIN DE RESTRINGIR O NEUTRALIZAR SU ACCIONAR"¹⁴ (EPC, 2009).

The DAS actions were not limited to wiretapping and illegal surveillance; the DAS also carried and had plans for actions of physical and psychological intimidation. In the case of Mr. Morris, the DAS had plans to initiate an international campaign against him through media press releases, videos that relate Mr. Morris and the FARC, and also to negotiate the suspension of his United States' visa (Semana, 2010).¹⁵ It is also known that the DAS has provided the collected information to far-rightwing

¹⁴ "Following up to organizations and people with opposition tendency to the government policies with the goal of restrict or neutralize their action" (My Translation)

¹⁵ At least 16 journalists have been affected by the actions of the DAS. In addition to wiretapping and monitoring, the DAS also had manuals to threaten and harass in order to fright. One of the most infamous cases is that of Julieta Duque, correspondent of Radio Nizkor. Since 2001 she has suffered all types of harassments. Her home has been raided in different occasions. Also, she has received pictures of her daughter along with death threats. According to investigations, the DAS was behind these actions. The paradox is that she had DAS bodyguards due to the death threats. The bodyguards' mission was to spy Ms. Duque (RWB, 2009) (FLIP, 2010).

paramilitary groups. Much of this information was used to harass and assassinate journalists, among others, in different regions of the country (Semana, 2006). This and the actions of guerrillas and paramilitaries have made Colombia one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Between 2002 and 2005, 13 journalists were assassinated, 24 kidnapped, 233 threatened, and 18 forced to exile (Bonilla and Narvaez, 99: 2008). In its latest report, the Committee to Protect Journalist shows that the level of assassinations of journalists has declined in Colombia. However, the report states that this is not product of the improvement on the conditions to exercise the profession of journalism, but it is a product of journalists' self-censorship. The study also remarks at the high levels of impunity on investigation for assassination of journalists in Colombia (CPJ, 2009).

Violence is not the only weapon frequently used by the state to manipulate journalists. Advertising is also a tool used by the government to control the media. National and local governments invest millions in official advertising on mass and alternative media. According to the Fundacion Para la Libertad de Prensa, FLIP,¹⁶ “the allocation of public advertising without any clear criteria or goals, is another way to affect the freedom of press and is a harmful practice for the right to information in Colombia” (FLIP, 2010(2)). Private advertising is also used to pressure media and journalists. Vladimir Flores' alternative newspaper, El Pasquin, is one of the many media outlets that struggle to find advertisers due to his critical journalistic position. Seeking for advertisers, Flores talked with the president of one the largest advertising

¹⁶ Foundation for Freedom of Press

companies in the country. The executive told Flores straightly that he would not be able to help; first, because he was an Uribe supporter, and, second, because he believed that none of his customers want to advertise in an oppositional newspaper. In another occasion, the president of one of the Colombian conglomerates told Flores of his unwillingness to advertise in his newspaper due to the close economic relation between the conglomerate and the Uribe's government (Florez, 2007: 75).

However, being aligned to the political project of the government does not guarantee a harmonic and stable working condition for journalists. The Foundation Konrad Adenauer presented, in 2003, a compilation of various reports on different aspects of the labor situation for journalists in Colombia. The most relevant finding of this report is the labor exploitation that journalist endure in mass media, especially in radio and television. The closing of many media outlets has diminished the demand for journalist in the market. Journalist, therefore, are willing to work in mass media outlets despite low wages, long shifts, few opportunities for professional upward mobility and no benefits. The majority of journalists, who are lucky enough to have stable jobs, have very low salaries. A Universidad Javeriana's study shows that the salary average of journalist in Colombia was 1'399.345 pesos per month in 2003¹⁷ (Manrique and Cardona, 2003: 35). This situation has forced high number of people to combine their labor as journalist with other activities, such as press officers of local politicians, involving political interest in the exercise of their profession (Cano, 2003:

¹⁷ This was, around, 500 US dollars in 2003. That that time, one dollar was around 2800 Colombian pesos. Now, that the dollar cost 1,800 pesos. Thus, this is, approximately, this amount is, around, 700 dollars.

30). The situation is even worse when the conditions for regional correspondents is analyze. The vast majority are paid only if their reports are broadcast. They were paid, in average, 50 to 70 thousand pesos¹⁸ for published report (Gomez, 2003: 64). This financial relationship encourages some of the journalist to inflate the information to make more attractive their reports (31) (65).

Labor instability and bad working conditions have pushed the most experienced journalists to seek other professional opportunities, especially in politics. At the same time, media outlets prefer novice and inexpert reporters to lower production costs. As a result, the majority of journalists in Colombia are considerably young, with an age average of 35 years (Manrique and Cardona, 2003: 15). These novice journalists are those who report, redact, and edit information (18). The inexperience of these journalists and the scarcity of jobs foment submission from the journalists to bosses and media owners (15).

The awful working conditions for journalists increased with the swift privatization and monopolization of mass media over the last 13 years. Eleven of 15 television news programs disappeared in Colombia since 1998. Prior to the privatization in the 1990s both public channels had three daily news broadcasts each produced by different companies providing a unique interpretations to the day's news. Now, each RCN and Caracol channels produce their own four daily news broadcast. In addition to narrowing the options for viewers, this has worsened the working

¹⁸ This is, currently, less than 40 dollars.

conditions for television news workers, including journalist. Many of them have shifts of 12 and 15 hours, without any compensation for overtime (Gomez, 2003: 63).

The deficiencies of the Colombian academia, in the area of communication and journalism, have also negatively affect journalism in this country. The journalists and academics Alejandro Manrique and Ivan Cardona Restrepo assure that, despite the professionalization of the journalism field in recent years,¹⁹ the deterioration of the quality of the information on mass media is evident. This is explained, in part, for the curriculum of the different communication and journalism programs. The emphases of these curriculums are on the phenomena and paradigms of the communication process, and not outside training and researching of Colombia's political, social and economic context. Even worse, the majority of the university curriculums offer courses with little relation to journalism, such as advertising, marketing, and organizational communication (Manrique and Cardona, 17: 2003). In addition, the educational cost of the education is very high, the quality mediocre, and the options very limited. As a result, only 20 percent of the Colombian journalists possess post-graduate education (13).

It is important to notice that access to education in Colombia, especially post-secondary, is highly limited. In 2000, Colombia only had 95 universities (55 private and 40 public) for almost 45 millions of inhabitants. The majority of these institutions are in the five main urban Colombian centers (Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla

¹⁹ In 2003, 80 percent of the mass media Colombian journalists have university degrees (64 percent with a degree on "Social Communication and Journalism.") Twenty years before the majority of the journalists were empiric (Manrique and Cardona, 2003: 13).

and Bucaramanga), leaving rural areas largely underserved (MEN, 2002: 6). This translates into enormous educational cost, making it almost impossible for members of the Colombian working class, peasantry, and Indigenous communities to attend higher education institutions. For this reason, the majority of mass media journalists come from middle and upper class families. Adding to the educational deficiencies and the exclusion of Indigenous people from mass media journalism, we find a scenario very unfavorable for the coverage of the Indigenous movement in Colombia.

Hegemony and Colombian Idiosyncrasy

Improving the working conditions for journalists and pluralizing the media private ownership will improve mass media journalism in general, but it would not fully guarantee a fair coverage of the political and social perspectives of the Colombian Indigenous movement. As shown in Chapter 1, the Colombian Indigenous movement is proposing a radical political economic change that would eventually ends centuries of marginalization, racism, and discrimination against Indigenous, working class, peasants, and Blacks. Their political position, in other words, challenges the ethical, cultural, economic and political philosophies of the nation. Quoting Arturo Escobar, German Rey explains that the Black and Indigenous movements in Colombia,

[...] based on the principles of cultural difference and the identity, and territorial rights, those movements constitute a frontal challenge to the eurocolombian modernity that is imposed in the rest of the country. In

this way, the Black and Indigenous culture challenge the traditional definitions of cultural politics housed in the traditional parties and in political clientelism, the conceptions of the “national” and the strategies of capitalist development²⁰ (My Translation) (Rey, 2007: 296).

Colombian media, like all other social institutions, is dominated by the hegemonic power of the ruling class. Hegemony is “a particular form of dominance in which a ruling class legitimates its positions and secures the acceptance if not outright support of those below them. [...] This power for being stable the ruling class must create and sustain widely accepted ways of thinking about the world that define their dominance as reasonable, fair, and in the best interest of society as whole” (Johnson, 1995:128). This hegemonic power results in social institutions that defend, reinforce and validate the Eurocentric ideology of the Colombian elite.

Todd Gitlin warns that the hegemonic process on media is very complex. According to Gitlin “hegemony is constructed through the entire spectrum of media production, is built into the structure of TV programming, and is solidified by incorporating elements of resistance and opposition.” (Garner, 2001: 284). In other words, the hegemonic power and ideology of the capitalism is in all stages of the media production, even when dissident points of view are present. In the case of journalists, even when journalists are impartial, they are not neutral. The vast majority of them, in fact, are on the side of the values and norms of the State. Gitlin states:

²⁰ “Basados en el principio de la diferencia cultural y los derechos a la identidad y al territorio, dichos movimientos constituyen un desafío frontal a la modernidad eurocolombiana que se ha impuesto en el resto del país. De ese modo, la política de las culturas negras e indígenas esta desafiando las definiciones convencionales de cultura politica albergada en los partidos tradicionales y en el clientelismo, las concepciones de lo “nacional” aun reinantes y las estrategias de desarrollo convencionales, también de mercado corte capitalista moderno” (Rey, 2007: 296).

By socialization, by the bonds of experience and relationships- in other words, by the direct corporative and class interest- the owners and managers of the major media are committed to the maintenance of the going system in this main outlines: committed, that is to say, to private property relations which honor the prerogatives of capital; committed to a national security State; committed to reform of selected violations of the moral code through selective action by State agencies; and committed to approving individual success within corporative and bureaucratic structures (Gitlin, 2003: 258:259).

In other words, journalists, managers, and media owners, support, unconsciously in the majority of cases, the established capitalistic structure of the government because it is convenient for them and for their social class. Regarding hegemony and journalism in Colombia, Rafael Pardo²¹ states:

The media, as institutions, and the journalists, in general, do not have neutrality regarding the State. They are on the side of the state and they defend it, regardless its critical position. Here in Colombia there is not any mass media outlet that is against of the State, or against the type of political and social organization that we have (My translation)²² (Giraldo, Roldan and Florez, 2003: 167)

The ideology constructed by the Colombian elite, and reinforced and validated by social institutions, such as the media, the educational system, and the church, is full of exclusions, inequalities, historical ignorance and enormous social distances and inequalities. The creation and consolidation of new forms of communication and journalism is essential to break the hegemonic dominance of the Colombian elite. The Indigenous movement is very aware of this fact. For this reason, the creation and

²¹ Rafael Pardo Rueda: former minister of defense, director of the television news CM&, Colombian senator, and current presidential candidate for the Liberal party.

²² “Los medios de comunicación, como entidades, y los periodistas, en general, no tienen neutralidad frente al Estado. Están frente al marco del estado y lo defienden, sin que eso quiera decir que no sean críticos frente a él. Aquí en Colombia no hay ningún medio que este en contra del estado, contra ningún tipo de organización política y social que tenemos” (Giraldo, Roldan and Florez, 2003: 167).

consolidation of new communication channels is one of the most important political, social, and cultural objectives for the Indigenous movement in Colombia.

Chapter 3

The 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Mobilizations in Cauca

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Indigenous communities from Cauca organized various protests and mobilizations to call attention to the difficult situation in their territory. In October 2008 and again in October 2009, these communities, led by the Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas de Norte del Cauca, ACIN, the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca, CRIC, and the Organización Nacional de Indígena de Colombia, ONIC, organized two of the largest mobilizations in the history of the Indigenous movement in Colombia: the 2008 and 2009 *Social and Community Minga*¹. The 2008 Minga arose out of the necessity to create a political agenda from below. Tired of the harsh consequences of the economic and social policies implemented by the Colombian elite, the Indigenous movement decided to take action and propose to the people a five point political agenda that would challenge the ideology that, for decades resulted in desolation, poverty, and death. This chapter explores the most relevant issues related to this political process that started in October 11, 2008, starting with a chronology of the key events of the 2008 mobilization, followed with a discussion of the challenges faced by the movement after the mobilization to the next Social and Community Minga in 2009, and ending with some of the conflicts and contradictions originated through this political process.

¹Tuathail and Rozental explains the term Minga as “the name given by Indigenous people in the Andes to an ancestral practice that involves entire communities in efforts towards the achievement of a common goal. It is a collective process, and such, cannot be owned” (Tuathail and Rozental, 2009).

The 2008 Mobilization

The year 2008 was very turbulent for the Uribe administration. In response to the worsening situation for communities across the country, groups organized various social movements to protest the Uribe government's economic and military policies. In August of that year, two powerful unions, public teachers and truck drivers, went on strike. In September, employees of the Federal Justice Department and the National Registry² followed suit. In the same month, sugarcane cutters also declared strike and occupied eight sugar mills in the department of Valle del Cauca, located just north of Cauca. These workers were protesting the extreme overexploitation, lack of guaranteed benefits, and the terrible working conditions that they had to face in their job. These protests forced the importation of sugar for Ecuador and Bolivia, affecting companies that produce sugar and ethanol, such as Incauca and Ingenio Providencia – owned by Ardilla Lulle Organization.³ Instead of trying to establish a dialogue with the sugarcane cutters, the Uribe administration criminalized their mobilization and used coercive force to resolve this conflict. After Diego Palacio, Minister of Social Protection, accused the sugarcane strikes of being backed by the guerrilla, the police used violent force to repress the strikers, wounding several workers, arresting various sugarcane leaders, and deporting some foreign journalists who were covering the strike (Zibechi, 2008).

² It is the government agency in charge of the registration, identification, and administration of the electoral process.

³ The Ardilla Lulle Organization is the owner of RCN Television (See Chapter 2).

Uribe's unwillingness to negotiate with labor and worker organizations was evident. On October 6, 2008 he declared a State of Internal Commotion. The Colombian president can declare a State of Internal commotion – stipulated in Article 213 of the 1991 Colombian Constitution – on moments of “serious perturbation of the order that put at risk the institutional stability, the security of the State, or the citizen's coexistence, and when they can not be resolved through the normal deployment of the Police” [My Translation] (CPC, 1991: 63). This law allows the president to act without the supervision of the legislative power and limit fundamental rights, such as the free circulation of people, temporary use of private property, imposition to provide technical services, limit information through press and media and, restrict freedom of association, and the utilization of police and military forces to repeal manifestations (Pinzon, 2002) (Murillo, 2008). The Uribe administration argued that declaring a State of Internal Commotion was necessary to prevent a massive releasing of criminals and terrorist as a consequence of the strike of judiciary workers (Presidencia, 2008) This argument was later dismissed by the Colombian Constitutional Court months later.⁴

In this convulsed environment, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC) and Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) convoked *The Social and Community Minga*, one of the largest mobilizations in the history of the Indigenous movement in Colombia. From October 11 to November 24, 2008, these Indigenous organizations

⁴ The Constitutional Court overturned Uribe's declaratory of State of Internal Commotion in February 12. According to the court, the government had different alternatives to deal with the judiciary employee's strike. The government, in turn, stated that the declaratory was proposed by the attorney (El Espectador, 2009)

launched various events, such as road blockages and marches, in throughout Colombia. Although there were Indigenous mobilizations in 15 of 32 departments⁵, the largest Indigenous concentration was in Cauca at the “Territory of Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence” in La Maria, Piendamó (El Tiempo, 2008). The primary goals of these massive mobilizations were to denounce the problems endured by the Indigenous communities and to present a five point political agenda to the rest of the nation. These five points, according to Manuel Rozental,⁶ were:

1. No to the Free Trade Agreements and the so-called ‘free trade economic model.’
2. No to the terror, an instrument of the global system to dispossess people of their territories, rights and freedoms and delivered these to corporative interest through all the armed actors, each of whose presence reinforces that of the others and the threatens the permanence of the people in their communities, as well as the survival of the democratic opposition and unions.
3. No to laws and constitutional reforms, which are the backbone of a political agenda designed to evict people from their lands, deny basic and essential rights and freedoms and deliver the country to the interests of the transnational capital and accumulation.
4. Yes to the Colombian state honoring its previous agreements and obligations, regardless of who heads the government, with all Colombians, including the Indigenous, Afro-Colombians, and other communities and sectors.
5. Yes to the weaving of a common agenda of the peoples. All causes are our own. (Tuathail and Rozental, 2009).

This political agenda rejected the militaristic and free marked oriented policies launched by the government of Alvaro Uribe Velez during his first seven years in

⁵ Colombia is politically divided in 32 departamentos (states) and one capital district, Bogota.

⁶ See Chapter 1

power. These demands were not limited to issues that affected the Indigenous communities of the country. Rather, the Indigenous five point political agenda included issues that affected other marginalized sectors of the society, such as Black sugar cane cutters, peasants, and white and blue collar workers. The political project behind this Minga, in other words, was to unify all the sectors, social classes, and groups affected by the policies oriented that favored the most privilege sector of the Colombian population (Tuathil and Rozental, 2009). This strategy was successfully deployed by Indigenous organizations in other countries. In Ecuador, for example, the Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas, CONAIE, has built class and political alliances with various excluded sectors of the population (Postero and Zamosc, 2004: 11).

Yet, the State was not the only target of this Indigenous mobilization. The Indigenous communities wanted to protest against guerillas and paramilitary groups as well. As it is illustrated in Chapter 1, these armed groups have committed hundreds of crimes against Indigenous communities. Just days before the beginning of the 2008 Minga, for example, Nicolas Valencia Lemus and Celestino Rivera –leaders of the Nasa community – were assassinated by unidentified gunmen. According to witnesses, they were assassinated by members of the paramilitary group “Aguilas Negras.”⁷ This

⁷ The Aguilas Negras (Black Eagles) are a new paramilitary group conformed by former members of old paramilitary organizations that gave up weapons in a polemical demobilization negotiated with the government of Alvaro Uribe Velez. As it explained in chapter 1, many of the leaders of these organizations were extradited to the United States, making very hard the investigations on the political nexus of those criminals with regional and national politicians. Also, many of the victims of these groups have not been adequately compensate. Ironically, because its the negotiation with paramilitaries, the government of Uribe Velez claims that there are no more organized paramilitary groups in Colombia. This government claims to be the government that ends with these illegal groups in this

paramilitary group has been on war against “Los Rastrojos,” another paramilitary group with presence in Cauca, for the control of drug production and transportation. In turn, “Los Rastrojos”, which is composed of more than 1,500 armed men, has made alliances with the guerillas Fuerza Armada Revolucionaria de Colombia, FARC, and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, ELN,⁸ to control drug production and transportation in Cauca. This war has dramatically affected civil population. Social and Indigenous leaders that denounced the actions of these organizations, like Lemus and Riviera, have been often threatened and, in many cases, assassinated (Salazar, 2008) (Matiz, 2009) (El Pais, 2009).

The participation of FARC and ELN guerrilla organizations in violent acts against Indigenous communities is not limited to its alliances with these new paramilitary organizations. As explained in Chapter 1, guerilla groups, especially the FARC, have threatened and assassinated Indigenous leaders in several occasions. Also in the days before the 2008 mobilization, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, CRIC, was notified by the Cauca governor’s office that intelligence reports indicated that the FARC had plans to assassinate Feliciano Valencia, one of the most visible leaders of this Indigenous organization. The Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca, ACIN, also received messages threatening members of the Indigenous councils of Toribio and Jambalo for considering them government collaborators (Murillo, 2008 (2)).

country. The evidence proofs the contrary, according to human rights organization Nuevo Arco Iris, the new paramilitary bands have more than 10,000 armed men who operate in different parts of the country (Semana, 2007) (Salazar, 2008) (Verdad Abierta, 2010).

⁸ The ELN is the second largest guerrilla organization in Colombia.

In the midst of military, paramilitary and guerrilla violence against Indigenous communities, more than 12,000 Indigenous people congregated at La Maria, Cauca, on October, 2008. Demanding a direct dialogue with Alvaro Uribe Velez to discuss their demands, the Indigenous people blocked the Pan-American Highway on October 12. The government responded by sending the police and military to confront the political rally. During the next six days, Indigenous people battled against the police, military, and the anti-riot police, ESMAD, to control the Pan-American road. One of the most violent attacks happened on October 15 when more than 1,000 police and military men attacked, not only those Indigenous people who were blocking the Pan-American Highway, but the whole indigenous community congregated in La Maria. They deployed the same tactics used to repress previous Indigenous protests:⁹ fire arms, indiscriminate use of violence, and excessive force were the rule. As a result, two Indigenous people were killed, more than 120 were wounded, and upwards of 10 homes, farms, and other Indigenous properties were destroyed by the police (Murillo, 2008) (Zibechi, 2008) (Contravia, 2008).

Many police men were also injured during these clashes. The most notorious case was of police Major Aldiver Giraldo Galeano who lost his both hands in one of these confrontations. The first version of the incident says that two Indigenous people, who attempted to block the Pan American road, dropped a plastic bag when the police were chasing them. When Mayor Giraldo and other three policemen were checking it, the bag exploded wounding them severely (El Tiempo, 2008 (2)). Days later, Police

⁹ See chapter 1

General Orlando Paez, altered the story declaring to *El Tiempo* that the police officer was injured when the indigenous crowd threw an explosive at him (El Tiempo, 2008 (3)).¹⁰ As we will see in Chapter 4, this specific case was frequently used by the government to criminalize the Indigenous protest and the Indigenous movement, despite inconsistencies and lack of clarity.

The violent response of the government against the 2008 Minga was not limited to the excessive force to repeal the road blockage. Like on previous cases, The Uribe administration also used the media as a weapon to defame the Indigenous uprising. Uribe stated, without showing any evidence, that the Indigenous mobilization was infiltrated by “terrorist” organizations, like the FARC. Other members of his cabinet repeated this message. On October 15, Colombian Vice-president Francisco Santos declared that the, according to him, “immensely radical” Indigenous group Movimiento Sin Tierra Nietos de Quintin Lame (MNQL)¹¹ was the responsible for the violent clashes between the Pan-American road (Hernandez, 2008). Santos’ statements served not only to justify the disproportionate police and military action against the indigenous communities, but also to deceive the public as to the relations between MNQL and protest organizers. Santos failed to explain that the MNQL, a small fraction of the Indigenous movement in Cauca, is a dissident organization that does not recognize the authority of the CRIC. Although the MNQL has similar political goals than the CRIC, they believe that the Indigenous strategy has to be based on

¹⁰ Unfortunately, it has not possible to find reliable information regarding the causes of this lamentable act.

¹¹ “Movement without Land Quintin Lame.”

direct actions -like land seizures, roadblocks, etc. The CRIC, who has prioritized the dialogue and peacefully actions as a strategy for negotiation, has rejected MNQL approach (ACIN, 2010).

As part of this propaganda campaign against the Indigenous movement of Cauca, the minister of social protection, Diego Palacio; the director of the polemical National Department of Security¹² (DAS), Maria Del Pilar Hurtado¹³; and the National Director of the Police, Oscar Naranjo,¹⁴ held a press conference in October 17 about the popular mobilizations that were taking place. Naranjo accused the Minga and the sugarcane cutter mobilizations of being infiltrated by the FARC's sixth front.¹⁵ According to Naranjo, several documents and videos verify this claim. He said that this evidence would be presented as soon as the people involved were tried.¹⁶ In addition to making unproved accusations, Naranjo also denied the violent actions of the police and the military against the people who participate on these protests. According to him, the police were not using any sort knives, machetes, or fire arms. The police, Naranjo added, were only using protective equipment to repeal this protest

¹² See chapter 2 to see the scandals on espionage and harassment that this institution has been currently involved.

¹³ Maria Del Pilar Hurtado renounced to her position on October 24, 2008. However, she is currently investigated for their role in the espionage of members of the Colombian Supreme Court . Apparently, she was in charge of these illegal activities when she was the head of the DAS. She argues that the order for these illegal activities came directly from Colombian presidency. Curiously, the Swiss government did not approve her as a Colombian ambassador in that nation (El Tiempo, 2010).

¹⁴ Naranjo is one of many high level officials in the Uribe administration that has family involved in drug related business. His brother was captured in Germany for drug trafficking (Semana, 2008).

¹⁵ The FARC is militarily organized on different divisions. The Six Front is the FARC division that operates in Northern Cauca.

¹⁶ The only evidence that I found about this case was a two page transcript of conversation between two, supposedly, members of the FARC's sixth front. In the conversation, they mentioned the Pan American road, but they never mention anything relation or whatsoever with members of the Indigenous communities (SP, 2008(2)).

(SP, 2008). A report presented by the International Federation of Human Rights dismissed Naranjo's accusations. This report shows that police, the military and the anti-riot forces used rifles, tear gas, machetes, and grenades against the Indigenous people and their property from armored cars and helicopters (FIDH, 2008).

The accusation of the government that links the FARC with the Indigenous mobilization has several problems. First, they ignore the long-time conflict between Indigenous organizations in Cauca and the FARC. They do not even mention the death threats received by the CRIC and the ACIN from the FARC just days before the mobilization. The government also failed to probe these serious accusations. Antonio Caballero, one of the most prestigious Colombian political columnists, rated these accusations as slander (Caballero, 2008).

A second problem with the government's accusations of the relation between Indigenous movement and FARC is the government's use of dirty tactics to incriminate the Indigenous manifestations. Indigenous organizations assure that the police and the military attempted to infiltrate the protest to spy and plant false evidence. These accusations are supported by videos and testimonies that show non-uniformed men among the police during the clashes. In fact, during one of the clashes with the police, the Indigenous Guard¹⁷ captured an undercover military who, according to the community, were trying to plant false evidence. A tribunal composed by 60 Indigenous leaders judged this soldier, under the Indigenous law-stipulated in the

¹⁷ The Guardia Indigena is an Indigenous civil force that protects the Indigenous communities of Cauca within their territories (Galeano, 2006). The does not use any weapon different to the Indigenous stick control (baston de mando).

Colombian constitution,¹⁸ and sentenced him to receive nine lashes on his legs for his actions against the Indigenous community (Polo, 2008) (CRIC, 2008).¹⁹ Corporal punishment has been one of the most controversial topics of the Indigenous special jurisdiction. However, the Colombian Constitutional Court declared legal this form of punishment. According to the court, torture can be defined only in culturally specific ways. Thus, these nine lashes can not be considered as punishment according the Colombian constitution (Rappaport, 2005: 248).

On October 20th the Indigenous movement decided to continue their mobilization marching to Cali, a major city located 100 kilometers north of La Maria, Piendamó. Their objective was to link the Indigenous mobilization with others mobilizations, such as the sugarcane cutter's strike. On October 22, while the mobilization was walking to Cali, CNN in Spanish broadcasted a report that showed a member of the Colombian police firing an M-16 rifle during one of the clashes at La Maria, Cauca. This report supported the denunciations of Indigenous and human rights groups regarding the utilization of fire arms by the police during the clashes with the Indigenous protestors. This report also demonstrated that the government was lying when it denied the Indigenous accusations. Although CNN report was not the first that showed police shooting against Indigenous people,²⁰ this report forced

¹⁸ See chapter 1

¹⁹ This action has generated a strong judiciary polemic in Colombia. The Indigenous people acted under the especial legal jurisdiction stipulated in the 1991 Colombian constitution (see chapter 1). The Colombian government, on the other hand, states that this action was torture and illegal. The Minga's leaders Aida Quilcue, Daniel Pinacue, and Feliciano Valencia were processed for this action. Valencia was detained, but released days before, for this process (Fidh, 2010).

²⁰ El Espectador published a picture at October 19 of a policeman targeting a protestor with a rifle M16.

President Uribe to organize a press conference to recant his previous statements. Uribe –appealing to his populist style and surrounded by high rank military leadership – stated that this police shooting shown on CNN report was an isolated incident. According to Uribe, the action did reflect all the police procedures during the confrontations with the Indigenous demonstrators. Loyal to his tradition to shift responsibility onto others, he also added that the police shot to the crowd because the Indigenous protestors were throwing explosives at the police. Despite his cynical reaction, Uribe declared that he and the top members of his administration were willing to meet the Indigenous people to negotiate possible solutions for the crisis (SP, 2008 (3)).

October 26 was the day agreed upon by Indigenous leaders and the government to meet face to face. Uribe and the Indigenous movement had disagreements about the rules and logistics for this meeting. Uribe wanted a small debate in a closed space with the most visible leaders of the Indigenous movement; while, the Indigenous movement preferred a debate in an open space where all the Minga's participants could be present. In the end, thousands of people congregated to witness the public debate between Uribe and Indigenous community at the place proposed by the Indigenous movement. Five hours later, when the community was preparing to leave, Uribe came to meet the crowd. Denied the respect of an on time arrival, the Indigenous community decided to postpone the meeting with Uribe until their conditions would be respected (Murillo, 2009: 150).

On November 1, 2009, the Indigenous movement and Uribe finally met in a public debate at La Maria, Piendamó. For little more than 6 hours around 4,000 people gathered to hear the first public debate of this magnitude between a Colombian president, members of his administration and the Indigenous community. Despite the strong tension between the Indigenous communities and the government, the Indigenous leadership exposed their ideas and confronted Uribe energetically, but respectfully. Researcher Mario Murillo, who was present on this debate, comments regarding one of the tensest moments of the debate:

President Alvaro Uribe's opening remarks, uttered in a calm, hushed tone, were nonetheless defiant in nature, including a reprimand to the community for not having sung the words of the Colombian National Anthem during the opening ceremony, while standing up and singing with pride their anthems of the Guardia Indígena and of the Nasa people, known as "The Children of Cauca." In response, Aida Quilcúe, Chief Counsel of CRIC and a national representative of the minga, reminded the President that roughly three weeks earlier, as the communities were being confronted by Special Forces Police in that very location, the officers "tore down our flag, the flag of the CRIC, and burned it." "Is that a sign of respect of our people?" she asked the President. "This, to me, is a sign of the discrimination, the hate, the rancor, the heartless inhumanity that we have faced as a people for so long in this country (Murillo, 2009: 150).

The Indigenous leadership and Uribe – and the members of his government – discussed the Minga's five political points (see above). Uribe did not offer any solution to any of those points discussed by the Indigenous people. He insisted on the positive results and the necessity of his aggressive militarization and war policy. Uribe also took the opportunity to restate his belief in the necessity of the free trade agreements with the United States, Canada, and the European Union, his counter

agrarian reforms, and his mining law proposals.²¹ Uribe, in addition, never presented any excuses to Indigenous communities for his multiple false accusations of terrorist links and violence (ACIN, 2008). In the end, this debate made evident the huge distance between the political positions and approaches between Indigenous people and the government. The political differences with government made clear to the Minga participants that the point of the 2008 Minga was not about negotiating with the government, but about the creation and consolidation of a strong social movement for social change that include all social oppressed sectors of the Colombian society. This motivated the Indigenous movement to continue the Minga by walking, this time, to Colombia's capital Bogota (Murillo, 2009: 152).

From November 9 to 20, about 6,000 to 11,000²² Indigenous people peacefully walked more than 600 Kilometers from La Maria, Cauca, to Bogota. Throughout this journey, they met hundreds of thousands of Colombians who went out to the road to cheer and show their support for the Indigenous mobilization. Despite the incredible size of the crowd, the Minga once again faced the abuses of the government. When they arrived at Ibague, one of the largest cities located between Cali and Bogota, the police informed them that they were not authorized to stay nor walk through the city. This created a tense situation between the protestors and the police. Eventually, the local administration allowed the Minga to proceed through the city, permitting the

²¹ See chapter 1

²² I was not able to find a precise number of participants in this mobilization. In one of his earliest reports, Murillo affirms that there were more than 6,000. The edition of *El Tiempo* from October 20, 2008, assured that there were from 10,000 to 11,000.

Minga to meet the community of this city who cheerfully received the march (Zibechi, 2008) (Murillo, 2008 (3)).

In Bogota, the minga attracted the attention and solidarity of thousands. Despite the rain, more than 20,000 people, from a variety of indigenous and non indigenous groups, marched from the campus of the Universidad Nacional to the Plaza the Bolivar, located in the hearth of the Colombian capital downtown. There, the Minga's leadership presented their political points and met leaders for different political and social sectors, such as Tarcisio Mora, the president of the Colombian United Central of Workers, CUT.²³ Before of the crowd, Mora reaffirmed the necessity to create a coalition between all oppressed sectors of the Colombian society. In the same tone, Feliciano Valencia, one of the most visible leaders of the CRIC, and Ezequiel Vitonas, a chief council of the ACIN, stated that the Minga had to become a multicultural social project opposed to the neoliberal and militaristic policies launched and supported by the Colombian ruling class (Murillo, 2008 (4)).

After visiting various impoverished neighborhoods and meeting the hundreds of students at the Universidad Nacional, the participants of the minga departed to their respective communities on November 26. Some of the Indigenous leaders stayed in Bogota to continue discussing their grievances with members of the Uribe's cabinet. Once again, this negotiation reached a dead end due to the strong ideological differences between the government and the Indigenous movement. At that point, the

²³ The CUT congregates the great majority of the Colombian unions, making this organization one of the most important workers organizations in this country.

government promised, once more, to fulfill the accords previously signed with the Indigenous communities. Meanwhile, the Indigenous leadership assured that the minga would continue in this objective to consolidate a strong social movement for social change (El Tiempo, 2008(4)).

The 2009 Minga

Despite the massive 2008 mobilization and the strong popular support, the Indigenous movement paid dearly for challenging Uribe regime. On December 16 2008, members of the Third Division of the Colombian Army ambushed a car owned by the CRIC in a rural road of northern Cauca, assassinating Edwin Legarda Vazquez. Legarda was a member of the CRIC and husband of the CRIC leader Aida Quilcue – one of the most visible and charismatic leaders. The soldiers shot more than 116 bullets in the place of attack. According to the army, they opened fire against Mr. Legarda's car because he failed to stop at an Army checkpoint. However, there is strong evidence that the army is, one more time, lying. Minutes after the attack, the soldiers were detained and disarmed by the Indigenous Guard. They found that the soldiers had four extra rifles. Apparently the army wanted to present Mr. Legarda as guerrilla fighter killed in combat, but the rapid reaction of the Indigenous Guard prevented the deceit (Frontline, 2008). The attacks against Ms. Quilcue and her family did not end there. Three months later, unknown men attempted to harm her 12 year old daughter

in front of her residency. Mr. Quilcue and her family have constantly received death threats (Contravia, 2009).

On February 4, 2009, another massacre impacted the Indigenous community in Colombia. Thirteen Indigenous men, women, and children from the Awas community²⁴ were massacred, with machetes and knives, by the FARC. The FARC's column²⁵ Mariscal Sucre acknowledged responsibility for this crime and blamed these Indigenous people of being collaborators of the army. More than 400 Awas abandoned their territory after this massacre. This massacre awoke the solidarity of CRIC, which promised to support the Awa community while researching the situation. More than 700 members of the Indigenous Guard went to the dense jungle looking for the corpses to ask them about the nature and reasoning for the criminal act (Semana, 2010). Also, the ACIN communication network of the ACIN (see chapter 2) investigated and widely reported the reasons behind the crimes against this community.

The Uribe administration, as a response of the Awa massacre, increased the military presence on the Awa territory. This militarization, however, cannot be seen as action to protect the Awas. Different articles published by the ACIN communication network explain that militarization, in fact, increased conflict within Awa territory. On August 26, for example, twelve more Awa men, women, and children were massacred and three wounded by members of the army, according to the ACIN. The reason of

²⁴ Indigenous community located in the Department of Nariño –South of Cauca.

²⁵ A military division of the FARC. A front is composed by columns.

this massacre, according to the ACIN, was to assassinate an Indigenous Awa woman, who was the only witness of the assassination of her husband perpetrated by the army in May 2009 (Kaosenlared, 2009). The government and the army denied this accusation and blamed, for these deaths, criminal bands that operate in the area. However, their version has had some inconsistencies. On August 2009 the police captured Jairo Miguel Pai, an Indigenous person with a long criminal record that includes extortion and kidnapping. The police assured that, according to three Indigenous people, Pai perpetrated this massacre (El Espectador, 2009). Later it was probed that Pai was not in the area where the massacre took place, dismissing police accusations. Weeks later the police captured three members of the criminal band called “Los Cucharachos,” accusing them for having perpetrated the massacre (Semana, 2009). The investigation about this case has not yet been closed.

The ACIN has also argued the exploitation of vast natural resources at a large scale is behind the aggressive militarization of the Awa territory. The state – defending the interest of the big capital – the guerrillas, and other criminal groups are struggling to control this territory to develop different economic activities, such as the production and transportation of cocaine, agro-industry projects, mining, infrastructure, and tourism projects (ACIN, 2010). The consequences of this war for the Awas are devastating. In 2009 alone, 40 Awas were assassinated and hundreds displaced (UNIPA, 2010).

In 2009 the Indigenous movement also claimed that the government had attempted to increase conflicts between Indigenous communities to manipulate and

divide the Indigenous organization of Cauca. In March 19, 2009, some of these dissident Indigenous people from Cauca launched the Organizacion de Pueblos Indigenas del Cauca (OPIC).²⁶ The Minister of Interior and Justice, Fabio Valencia Cossio, the then Governor of Cauca, Guillermo Alberto Gonzales,²⁷ and the Vice-Minister of Interior Viviana Manriquez, attended to the inauguration ceremony of this organization. The OPIC, which has a strong Christian affinity, has received all this official support due to the political affinity between its leadership and Uribe government. The leadership of the OPIC has openly supported Uribe's economic and social policies, while at the same time criticizing the actions and grievances of the ONIC and the CRIC, and challenged the authority of the CRIC within Indigenous communities of Cauca (OPIC, 2009). The ONIC, CRIC, and ACIN, believe that this new political organization is another attempt of the Uribe administration to divide and decrease the power of the Indigenous movement. They also reject the practice of the Uribe administration that offers economic incentives to create pro government and conservative organizations, like OPIC (OPIC, 2009) (El Tiempo, 2009) (ACIN, 2010 (2)).

In June 2009 the establishment again attacked the Indigenous movement of Cauca. A judge issued an arrest warrant for Aida Quilcue, Feliciano Valencia, Daniel Pinacue, – some of the most visible leaders of the 2008 Minga –, Daniel Ramos and

²⁶ Organization of Indigenous Towns of Cauca

²⁷ The General Attorney office removed Gonzalez from his position as Governor of Cauca and banned him for 10 years to occupy public positions, for his participation on the investment of public founding on a private company Probolsa. According to the General Attorney office, Gonzalez invested more than 16 thousand millions of pesos (8 million dollars, approximately) in this company, which was not authorized to raised money (Semana, 2010(2)).

Mario Yalanda Yatacue – members of the Indigenous Guard. According to the judge, they have to respond to accusations of “simple kidnapping aggravated” and “personal injury” against Jairo Danilo Santiago, the soldier captured and punished with nine lashes for infiltrated the 2008 Minga. This is a flagrant violation of the Colombian constitution that recognizes the Indigenous law and their traditional forms of punishment. For this case, Feliciano Valencia was captured, but released next day. However, the case against the movement continues (Telesur, 2009) (Fidh, 2010).

The violence in the Indigenous territories of Northern Cauca also intensified in 2009. The FARC increased hostilities against the Indigenous communities located in this area. Through Resolution 002 of February 2009, the Nasa community notified owners of coca laboratories and armed groups that they had three days to disband their laboratories and leave the Nasa territory or their laboratories would be destroyed by the Indigenous Guard. After the three days, the Indigenous Guard started to fulfill this order. In their mission, they destroyed a various coca laboratories and found all sort of combat material – rockets, ammunition, weapons, clothes, and boots – belonging to the FARC. After destroying the FARC arsenal in a purification ritual, many of the Indigenous leaders were assassinated and several threatened by the FARC. Violence is not something new in this region. Here, the Indigenous people are in the midst of frequent combats with the FARC, paramilitary, army and police. Toribio, one the most affected municipality, was attacked more than 50 times through 2009 (Aldana, 2009) (Morales, 2009).

In the midst of this violent chaos, the Indigenous organizations decided to continue the political process initiated in 2008, organizing the 2009 Social and Community Minga from October 8 to 16. For a week, members of 115 Indigenous communities of Cauca various social organizations participated in a variety of events. From October 8 to 11, in La Maria, Cauca, they held multiple discussions and negotiations with members of the government. After these discussions and fruitfulness negotiations, more than 10,000 participants in this event marched two days to Cali. In this city, they met Indigenous organizations, students, and social activist from the departments of Valle, Risaralda, Caldas, Nariño, Antioquia, and Chocó. This political process was supported by several groups that organized various mobilizations in different regions of Colombia and the world. From October 14 to 16, more than 20,000 people participated in meetings to discuss strategies for the five point political agenda launched in the 2008 Minga (CRIC, 2009) (CRIC, 2009 (2)).

Despite the evident popular enthusiasm for this Indigenous process by indigenous communities and key allies, its future is not clear. The cohesive force of the elite class, divisions among Indigenous movement, and political ambitions could undermine this alternative political project. In November 2009, just days after the culmination of the 2009 Minga, the CRIC decided to sign a political alliance with the Alianza Social Indigena (ASI),²⁸ a political party with some Indigenous roots. The reason for this alliance was to create a political force based on a very moderate version of the five political points of the Indigenous Minga. They committed to struggle for:

²⁸ Indigenous Social Alliance

1. Respect for Human Rights and ‘good name’ of the Indigenous Movement.
2. Respect for international declarations, agreements and conventions, in particular the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People.
3. The halt and reversal of legislation of evidence, where the national debate on the FTA is a fundamental requirement.
4. Compliance with pending agreements between the government and processes of the social mobilization.
5. And the construction of a country where the differences are understood and included within the national territory and a state that responds to the dreams of the popular majority (Tuathail and Rozental, 2009).

Tuathail and Rozental explain that this political project is very different from the original five point political agenda of the Indigenous Minga. First, it focuses on Indigenous issues, excluding criticism to broad structural problems in the Colombian society. Second, it opens the political space to negotiate an Indigenous support for a free trade agreement which would recognize some Indigenous rights. Tuathail and Rozental also believe that in this version of an Indigenous political agenda “do not seek to challenge the current situation in Colombia ‘from below,’ the agenda of the CRIC seeks to demand a response from the state ‘from above’ and within the hierarchies of the leading organizations” (Tuathail and Rozental, 2009). In addition to the changes on the political agenda, some of the most visible members of the Indigenous movement launched political campaigns supported by the ASI. Aida Quilcue and Alcibiades Escue ran for a seat in congress, without success, in the 2010 elections. All these changes on the political spectrum of the Indigenous movement have created skepticism among many members of the movement and sympathizers of

the original political process initiated by the Indigenous communities of Cauca (Piñeres, 2009). They acknowledge that the Indigenous political project born in October 2008 is the only hope for change the terrible conditions than millions of Colombians endure daily.

Chapter 4: ***Content Analysis***

The dramatic 2008 Indigenous mobilizations stole the attention of national and international major media outlets. The number of articles related to Indigenous issues in *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* – the two major Colombian newspapers – skyrocketed compared with previous years. The electronic archive of *El Tiempo*, for example, reports that 2,589 articles were published related to “Indigenas” in 2008, 794 of them during October-November. This is a significant increase compared to the 2,046 articles published in 2007, and even more compared to the 746 articles from 1991 (El Tiempo, Archivo). Television news also focused their attention on the 2008 Indigenous mobilization. RCN and Caracol television news broadcasted several reports of this mobilization and sent special envoys to Cauca to report on it. However, media scholars and Indigenous leaders have expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of this reporting, especially with regard to the 2008 mobilization. Mario Murillo, specialist on representation of Indigenous people in mass media and Indigenous media in Colombia, found that the mass media coverage focused on the violence, strongly relied on the government version, and portrayed the Indigenous movement as if it were lead by a small number of people (Murillo, 2008).

In an attempt to understand some of the problems of the mass media coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations, this chapter analyzes the coverage of this event in *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, Caracol TV news, and RCN television news – the two largest print news and television channels and news in Colombia, respectively.

The aim of this study is to see how the Colombian mass media reported some key issues related to the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations, such as government criminalization against Indigenous movement, police violence against protestors, and the representation of the Indigenous political agenda. This study makes clear the mass media studied constantly replicated the unfounded accusations of the government against the Indigenous people. Also, this study shows that mass media ignored the grievances of the Indigenous communities and the abuses committed by members of the police, especially during the first days of the manifestation. We begin with an overview of the methodology used and then turn to presenting some of the academic criticisms of the mass media coverage of the Indigenous demonstrators. Finally, the chapter analyses the coverage of 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilization in newspapers and television news. In the end, it provides the conclusion of this content analysis.

Methodology

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of newspapers and television news reporting. The newspaper analysis is further subdivided in two parts. The first part deals with the coverage in *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* of the 2008 Indigenous mobilization. For this part, 157 articles of *El Tiempo* and 81 of *El Espectador* published from October 12 to November 16, 2008 were analyzed. This is all the coverage in the online archives of these newspapers during this period of time. The

content of these articles – which were found in the internet archive of each newspaper – were coded. The coding of these articles focused on the title of the article; whether or not article reports violent acts; whose version – government, NGOs, or Indigenous – is represented in the article; what government or Indigenous leaders are cited; if the article relates the Indigenous movement with “terrorist groups” and/or the FARC or not; the consequences, if any, of the Indigenous mobilization; the type of weaponry used by police and the Indigenous people; and the section where the article were published –first page, national, etc. The length of each article was also considered.

After coding these articles and analyzing the information, it was evident that many of these articles reproduced various unproved accusations of the government against the Indigenous movement. This situation was especially evident during the days of the clashes between the Indigenous and the police– October 12 to 17, 2008. In order to show this, the number of articles published during the days were counted and organized into two tables. The first two tables show the number of articles that mention links between Indigenous organizations and “terrorist” groups and/or the FARC. The other four tables show the type of weaponry used by the Indigenous and the police reported on each newspaper.

This study continues by analyzing the content of the longest articles published during this period on each paper. This analysis focused on different aspects of the coverage, such as the type of language used to frame the news, the sources, and some of the information published about these topics in some subsequent articles. Special attention was given to the reporting of the incident that left police Major Aldiver

Galeano without hands. The second part of the analysis of the newspapers focused on the coverage of the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. For this analysis, hardcopies of *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* editions from October 11 to 16, 2009, were analyzed. All the articles and brief notes published on *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* during these days are discussed.

The final part of this study deals with the coverage of RCN and Caracol television on both mobilizations. It was not possible to have a systematic analysis of the television news coverage on the 2008 mobilization due to the impossibility of acquiring copies of news broadcasts. Caracol TV and RCN were contacted by phone and e-mail and they refused to sell copies of their television news. Fortunately, it was possible to access some television news reports recorded by the communication network of the Indigenous Council of Northern Cauca, ACIN. Also, some on-line copies of the television news reports were found.

For the television broadcasts that were acquired, the content analysis focused on how the television news replicated the infamous accusations and tergiversations of the Uribe's government against the Indigenous people from Cauca. Various reports on the first days of the 2008 mobilization were analyzed. For the 2009 mobilization, the content analysis focuses on three reports (two from Caracol and one from RCN) broadcasted on October 12, 2009. These television news were chosen because October 12 was the day with the highest coverage of the 2009 Indigenous mobilizations.

Criticizing Mass Media Coverage

Mario Murillo is a vocal critic of the mass media's coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Mingas. In his analysis of the coverage of the first week of the 2008 mobilization, Murillo describes the mass media coverage as nothing more than "pro-Urbe war propaganda" (Murillo, 2008). Murillo states that the coverage relied heavily on the government's perspective of the conflict. He found, for example, that the unproved accusations of the government that linked the FARC with the Indigenous protest appeared in 19 of 25 reports published on different media sources on October 17, 2008. Murillo also found that the coverage mainly focused on the clashes between the police and the protestors and excluded the reasons behind the mobilization. Regarding the frames used by mass media to represent Indigenous people, Murillo states:

(...) when it comes to coverage and representation of Indigenous communities, the tendency of the mass communication media has been consistent: they either ignore the communities by making them invisible, clump them all together in a process of homogenization, thereby negating their diversity and complex and complexity, or presenting them as nothing more than passive actors, the poor, defenseless victims of an unjust system- "*pobre indio*." There is also the more benevolent yet equally harmful tendency of celebrating their exotic-ness, embracing the novelty of their different forms of dressing, their spiritual and healing practices, or their internal justice system, without really understanding the significance of each (Murillo, 2008: 20).

Another important study about the representation of Indigenous people in the mass media in Colombia furthers the analysis on the different frames used to report Indigenous issues. This study founded eight forms of representation of the Indigenous

people in the mass media in Colombia. (1) Omission: when the Indigenous issues are not even mentioned or are renamed; for example, instead of calling them as members of a specific community- ex: Nasas, Misaks, or Yanacunas– they are called “Caucanos,”¹ “Residentes”² or “Lugarenos.”³ (2) Collectivization: mass media tends to ignore the differences between Indigenous communities, referring them with general adjectives; such as Indigenous, Indians, peasants, invaders, and demonstrators. (3) Victimization: this representation reduces the Indigenous problems to simple adverse circumstances that affect groups without any capacity of resistance or political organization. This representation hides the role of the state and the complex situation that involves the Indigenous situation. (4) Criminalization: often mass media gives grade social conflicts using a set of moral and ethical codes (good/bad; legal/illegal), putting the Indigenous communities on the side of those who threaten the social order and operates illegal forms of protest. This representation criminalizes all members of any given social group, contextualizing individual actions as group actions. (5) Segregation and exclusion: unlike criminalization, this representation divides and confronts communities, emphasizing on ethnical and social difference. For example, social conflicts are pictured as result of conflicts between Indigenous, peasants, rural workers, etc. (6) Defense and revaluation: This representation range from those representations that create heroes – subjects that defends noble collective causes – to those attempts to recognize and value others. The Indigenous issues are seemed archaic, but novel. The message behind this representation is: if “we” – the modern

¹ Gerund of the people from the Department of Cauca

² Residents

³ Locals

men – acquire some of these archaic and novel Indigenous traditions, we would be a better people. (7) Archaization: This function represents the subject as an outdated element. The subject is portrayed as non-modern and exotic; in other words, as an archaic object in harmony with nature, but not with modernity. This representation is often used for commercial and advertising purposes. (8) Objectivization: this function covers the subject as a surmised object under the paternalistic power of the State. In the specific case of the Indigenous people, they are represented as passive objects “part of the landscape.” This function of representation is especially evident on tourism advertising campaigns (Minga, 57-89: 2005).

The framework proposed by the Indigenous scholars provides excellent tools to analyze the content of the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations in newspapers and television news. As we will see, this coverage has a strong tendency to frame Indigenous news in very negative way. Many of the reports of these indigenous mobilizations criminalize and collectivize the Indigenous people. We are going to see how is evident the function of criminalization in the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations.

The Coverage of *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* in the 2008 Mobilization

As previously discussed, 157 articles published in *El Tiempo* and 81 articles from *El Espectador* are in reference to the 2008 Indigenous mobilizations from October 12 to November, 2008. From October 12 to 17, 2008, – days when the

Indigenous protestors blocked the Pan-American road and were violently attacked by the police – these articles heavily focused on violence. During this period of time, *El Tiempo* published 29 articles and *El Espectador* 14. The following tables show the number of articles that replicates the criminalization of the government against the Indigenous movement.

Table 1: Criminalization

<i>Category</i>	<i>El Tiempo</i>	<i>El Espectador:</i>
Government criminalized the Indigenous people	7	6
Other criminalized the Indigenous People	2	0
No criminalizations are mentioned	13	3
The article specifically mention relations with the FARC	5	4
No clear message (ambiguous)	5	0
Critical to the criminalization	1	1
Total	29	14

Another tactic used by the government to criminalize the Indigenous protest and justify the excess of force to repeal the Pan American Block road was by accusing them of using fire arms and explosives against the police. As mentioned before, this accusation was strongly denied, not only by Indigenous movement, but also by human rights organizations. The following tables show the kind of weaponry used by the

police and the Indigenous people according to *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* articles published from October 12 to 17, 2008.

Table 2: Arms Used in the Protest

Arms Used	El Tiempo		El Espectador	
	By Indigenous	By Police	By Indigenous	By Police
<i>Rocks/Garrote</i>	6	4	0	0
<i>Fire Arms</i>	3	7	2	1
<i>Explosives</i>	4	2	8	0
<i>Machetes</i>	1	0	1	1
<i>Hand Baton</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Tear Gas</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>Defensive Arms</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>No Mention</i>	11	10	5	13
<i>Do not Apply</i>	6	7	1	0
<i>Not Clear</i>	2	0	0	0
Total:	34	38	17	16

Table 1 and 2 shows that the majority of articles from in *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* published from October 12 to 17, 2008, criminalized the Indigenous movement. Fourteen of the 29 articles of *El Tiempo* and 10 of the 14 articles of *El Espectador* mention that terrorist groups were involved in the Indigenous mobilization. This criminalization was also justified by saying the Indigenous protestors were using fire arms and explosives against the police. This situation is especially evident in the

articles from *El Espectador*; 8 of the 14 articles mention that the Indigenous people were using explosives against the police. Two of these 14 also mention that Indigenous people were using fire arms against the police. In the following section we begin a content analysis of some of the articles that criminalized the Indigenous mobilization published in *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* from October 12 to 17, 2008.

El Tiempo:

-Cuatro Hombres del Esmad Resultaron Heridos al Revisar un Paquete en la Via Panamericana (10/12/2008)

This article starts explaining:

Los nativos huyeron por la montaña y en la persecución los uniformados se encontraron una bolsa, que al intentar manipularla estalló. Un intendente y tres patrulleros resultaron gravemente heridos. Fueron trasladados a centros asistenciales de Quilichao y Cali

En el intendente sufrió amputación de ambas manos y permanece bajo pronóstico reservado en una clínica de Cali. Los otros uniformados reciben atención por traumas auditivos y múltiples heridas ocasionadas por la explosión.

This is the first article published in *El Tiempo* about the confusing incident where the police Major Aldiver Giraldo Galeano lost his both hands.⁴ This article states that Indigenous people left a bag with explosives in the Pan- American road that later wounded Mayor Galeano and other three policemen. The article only provides the police's version of the incident.

⁴ See chapter 3.

The next article that mentioned this incident in *El Tiempo* is “Mas de una Decena de Lesionados en Choques en Distintas Vias del Valle del Cauca y Cauca” (10/14). This article states that, at least, five Indigenous people and six policemen were wounded in clashes at two points of the Pan-American road. It also says that Major Giraldo suffered amputation of his both hands and other two policemen wounded. This article also states that: “Los indígenas dicen que lo que exploto fue una ‘papa bomba’ que tenían los policías.”⁵ This shallow phrase is the only reference of the Indigenous version on this incident published on *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* during the whole 2008 Indigenous mobilization (October 12, 2008, to November 25). This phrase does not even quote any Indigenous leader or organization leaving the impression that is an unofficial version.

In the article “Dos Muertos y Mas de 70 Heridos es el Balance de Segundo Dia de Choques entre Indigenas y Policias” (10/15/2008) the police provided a different version of this incident. The second version indicates that Major Giraldo lost his hands by an explosive thrown by the Indigenous protestors (see the analysis of this article below). This version was found in eleven articles from *El Tiempo* and six articles from *El Espectador* on subsequent days until November 25. Despite the inconsistencies in the police version and the lack of clarity on this incident, these articles presented the police version as a fact. For example, *El Tiempo*’s article “Presidente Alvaro Uribe les Dice a los Indigenas que Deben Pedir Perdon a Policias y Soldados” (10/16) states:

⁵ “The Indigenous say that what exploded was a “molotov” that the policemen had”

El presidente Uribe, quien participó en la celebración de 50 años de fundación de la Universidad Santiago de Cali, recordó al auditorio el drama que vive en una clínica de Cali el intendente Aldiber Giraldo Galeano, de 39 años, a quien un artefacto le amputo sus manos y permanece en delicado estado de salud.

Esta mañana el Gobernador (Juan Carlos Abadía) me decía que habló con ellos (indígenas) y piden que les mande una comisión a dialogar. Yo estoy listo, pero me queda una preocupación ética: ¿Entonces vamos a correr a dialogar como reacción a la violencia?', dijo el mandatario.

Y tras escuchar un reporte que habla de 70 uniformados lesionados, 34 de ellos en clínicas, agregó que 'No creo que el diálogo sea para premiar la violencia o es que la salud y la integridad de los soldados y policías no vale. Tenemos que hacer respetar a nuestros soldados y policías'

This article takes as a fact that Major Giraldo lost his hands for the actions of the Indigenous protestors. It also presents the police as the victims and Indigenous people as victimizers. Although the article also presents some grievances of the Indigenous people against Uribe's government and quotes some Indigenous leaders, it does not explain the version of the Indigenous people on Giraldo's incident. Neither does this article nor others found on this incident provide any clear explanation of this incident.

El Tiempo's article "‘Quiero Seguir, Me Gusta Llevar el Uniforme’, Dice Policia que Perdio las Manos con Explosivo" (11/05)⁶ is the last one published on this case in both newspapers until November 25. This article is on a homage organized by the police for Major Galeano. This article states:

⁶ “ ‘ I Want to Continue, I like to Wear the Uniform’, says Policeman Who Lost his Hands with Explosives”

Luciendo el uniforme de gala de la Policía que se acostumbra en las ceremonias especiales estuvo ayer Aldívar Giraldo Galeano, el intendente de la policía que perdió sus manos por un explosivo, en un procedimiento en el Cauca durante disturbios de los indígenas de ese departamento.

It indicates that he lost his hands for an explosive, but it does not mention if the explosive was in a bag left by the Indigenous people – first police version -, was threw by Indigenous protestors – second police version –, or if he was throwing it to the Indigenous people when it exploded in his hands – the version of the Indigenous people. Also, this article does not condemn the individual who supposedly left the bag with explosives or threw the explosives to the police. Rather, this article condemns all the Indigenous people who participate on the protest. This article also represents Galindo and his family as victims and humanizes them:

(...)Antes que lamentarse de su situación, dice que ‘gracias a Dios estoy vivo, tengo una familia por la que tengo que seguir luchando.’

(...)No pudo evitar sus lágrimas al reconocer el apoyo de sus compañeros y su familia. ‘No tengo palabras para agradecer, me han dado mucha fuerza para seguir luchando por mi familia. Tengo dos hijas, mi esposa, una familia por la que debo seguir adelante.’

(...)Llegó acompañado de su mamá, María Nubia Galeano, y su esposa, Angie Paola Valencia, quien estuvo a su lado al recibir la distinción. Fue una emotiva ceremonia en la que ella y varios de los presentes no pudieron evitar las lágrimas.

By portraying Giraldo and his family as victims, this article criminalizes indirectly the Indigenous protestors. This report also fails to explain the different versions of the incident and the inconsistencies of the police version. It does not take into account those versions – from NGOs, Indigenous organizations – that indicate that the police

were those who used explosives and fire arms against the Indigenous people (see chapter 3). At this point, it is very complicated to say who is responsible for Galindo's incident. However, the problem is that the newspaper reporting does not explain that the incident is not clarified yet, but takes as a fact that the "Indigenous" are responsible of Giraldo's tragedy. The lack of a background and clear explanation of the situation could drive the reader to misleading conclusions.

-Dos Muertos y Mas de 70 Heridos es el Balance de Segundo Dia de Choques entre Indígenas y Policías (10/15/2008).

This article – the longest article from *El Tiempo* (1646 words) during the first days of the mobilization – is a recount of the Indigenous protests in Cauca and Valle.

The article states:

(...)Por los enfrentamientos en varias zonas del país, las autoridades no han informado de bajas, aunque sí han indicado la pérdida de las manos de uno de sus miembros por un explosivo que le lanzaron.

(...)Las protestas tienen como objetivo denunciar que los pueblos originarios están sometidos a un "genocidio" y que sus tierras ancestrales les son arrebatadas por los grupos armados que operan en Colombia.

This paragraph explains that no police casualties had happened in the violent confrontations. However, it informs about the incident where the policeman lost his hands. The numbers of Indigenous wounded and dead are not mentioned here. Subsequently, the article explains that the reason of these protests was to denounce the "genocide" (newspaper quotes) against the Indigenous people and the high levels of land displacement on Indigenous areas, especially in Cauca and Valle. After this

introduction, the article quotes Luis Evelies Andrade, president of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, who makes serious charges against the Uribe government, the police, the military forces, and the FARC:

(...)En Cauca fue donde murieron los dos indígenas, el primero el martes por herida de bala y el segundo esta madrugada a golpe de machetes, dijo hoy en una rueda de prensa el presidente de la Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, Luis Evelies Andrade.

(...)'No se puede olvidar que los indígenas estamos asistiendo a un genocidio', denunció el presidente de la ONIC, quien aseguró que "la policía disparó indiscriminadamente con fusiles, lanzó explosivos y gases lacrimógenos" en Cauca, donde, según dijo, se contabilizan decenas de heridos.

(...)El presidente de ONIC subrayó que los indígenas colombianos 'no están de acuerdo con ninguna forma de guerra', al desmentir que se hayan aliado con las Farc, tal y como señaló el general Orlando Páez, director de Seguridad Ciudadana de la Policía.

After Andrade's serious charges, the article continues with subsections titled "FARC Harassed the Indigenous People" that explains the police version of the events:

FARC Acosaron a los Indígenas

Páez asegura que las Farc presionaron a los indígenas a que salieran a bloquear la vía o les iban a quemar las casas. 'Tenemos la certeza de la infiltración de las Farc en las protestas en la Panamericana', dijo. Explicó que algunos indígenas que se han atrevido a hablar con la Fuerza Pública, informaron que hace aproximadamente 15 días guerrilleros del frente sexto y de la columna Jacobo Arenas de las Farc pasaron casa por casa a exigir la participación de las comunidades en la movilización hacia la vía.

'Les advirtieron que solo podía quedarse una persona por casa a cuidar las gallinas y los marranos, pero que los demás debían salir a la vía', agregó.

Páez informó además de que un policía perdió ambas manos al estallar un explosivo que le lanzaron los indígenas y acusó a los manifestantes de abrir zanjas en la carretera y de causar destrozos a vehículos de

carga estacionados en la vía Panamericana, bloqueada por los manifestantes.

The subtitle of this part of the article suggests that Andrade could be right: the Indigenous movement is not allied with the FARC, but the FARC is manipulating the Indigenous movement. The absence of quotes on this subtitle suggests that the manipulation of the Indigenous people by the FARC is not just the version of the police, it is a fact. The article informs that Police General Orlando Paez “assured that the FARC pressured the Indigenous for blocking the Pan-American or they would burn their homes.” In other words, Paez pictures the Indigenous people as puppets of the guerrilla – ignoring the years of pacific resistance of the Indigenous people against the FARC. In addition, Paez declarations provide a different version of the incident that left a policeman without hands. He states that the policeman lost his hands due to an explosive that the Indigenous people threw against the police. This is version is different that version provided by the article previously discussed. The article does not mention that the police version contradicts the version provided by Indigenous leaders, like Aida Quilcue, and NGOS, like International Federation of Human Rights, that state that the police – and not the Indigenous protestors – were using explosives during the clashes (Redondo, 2008). But, even if the police version were true, the way this version is frame incriminates the whole Indigenous community for an individual act. After Paez accusations, this sub-section of the article ends with a short rebuttal from the ONIC:

(...)Pero la ONIC aseguró que se trata de ‘un proceso de movilización por la dignidad y la paz de sus pueblos’ y consideró grave que el

Estado colombiano se aproveche ‘para exacerbar su respuesta militar y su tratamiento de guerra.’

Instead to counteract the Paez infamous accusations, the weak and generic rebuttal presented by this report validates Paez version. This quote does not show ONIC’s version on the police accusations about the manipulation by the FARC nor the incident where the police loosed his hands. The lack of an extensive Indigenous version can not be attributed to the ONIC. The Indigenous versions of these events were extensively available on the ONIC, CRIC, and ACIN websites.

Another aspect that shows the unbalance of the newspaper is the utilization of language. This article frames very differently Andrade’s and Paez’s versions. On one hand, to frame Andrade’s charges, the article uses words that imply subjectivity –ex: “dijo” “denuncio” “aseguro” “segun dijo” “subrayo.” On the other hand, the article frames Paez’s version with words that implies certainty- ex: “explico” “informo.”

This article continues with some other subsections – “Agente En Manos de Indigenas,” “Solo Hablaran Con Uribe,” “Batalla Sobre el Asfalto” “Exigencias de los Indigenas”, and “Concentraciones en Otros Departamentos.” In “Batalla Sobre el Asfalto,” this article states:

(...)En menos de diez minutos, el martes, el tráfico en la Panamericana se detuvo y la Policía y el Ejército apostados en la carretera esperaban la orden para desalojarlos. Desde entonces una batalla medieval con armas no convencionales se libró sobre el asfalto

(...) Apenas diez metros separaban a los combatientes que se defendían con piedras, palas, gases lacrimógenos y, de vez en cuando, balas que

en medio de la trifulca parecían no tener un origen determinado. En Popayán se esperaba anoche la llegada de la viceministra del Interior.

In addition to the “archaization” of the Indigenous mobilization with the phrase “entonces una batalla medieval con armas no convencionales”⁷, this part of the article proves that *El Tiempo* knew that fire arms were used on these demonstrations before CNN reported it. The phrase “balas que en medio de la trifulca parecían no tener un origen determinado”⁸ leaves an important question in the air: Why did Indigenous cameras and NGOs witnesses saw the police using fire weapons and journalists of *El Tiempo* did not?

The article “Condenan a Gobierno por ‘Represion Violenta’ en protestas de Indigenas” (10/17/2008) shows that, in fact, the journalists of *El Tiempo* had information about the abuses committed by the police on these demonstrations. This short article (285 words) explains that the International Federation of Human Rights, IFHR, charged that the police were using disproportionate force against the protestors, destroying the clinic used by the community to treat the wounded, and hindering the medical services.

(...) La Federación condenó el uso desproporcionado de la fuerza y expresó su profunda preocupación frente a las denuncias de la presencia de civiles armados protegidos por la policía que disparan a los manifestantes desde los montes.

Denunció además la actuación de las fuerzas armadas contra el centro de atención a la salud y la destrucción de elementos de primeros auxilios para atender a los heridos, así como el haber obstaculizado la labor de los servicios médicos.

⁷ “Then a medieval battle with non-conventional weapons”

⁸ “Bullets that in the middle of the clashes, seemed that they did not have a determinate origin.”

The quotation marks around “Represion Violenta” in the title of this article show subjectivity. In other words, *El Tiempo* is showing us that the words “represion violenta” are from the IFHR. Those words just represent the version of the IFHR. This is very different that the case of the subtitle “FARC harassed the Indigenous people” previously analyzed. In that case, the absence of quotation on the subtitle indicates that the information is presented as a fact.

Another interesting thing is that, despite the severity of the IFHR’s charges, those charges did not have much follow up on the subsequent articles published on *El Tiempo*. The next article about the use of fire arms by the police in *El Tiempo* – “Gobierno Reconoce que Un Patrullero si Disparo en Plena Protesta Indigena” (10/22) – was about the scandal and the Uribe’s government reaction to the CNN’s report (see Chapter 3). This article is not about the police violence against the Indigenous people *per se*. The destruction of the Indigenous property in La Maria by the police was also barely mentioned in *El Tiempo*. The first article about this situation in this newspaper– “Indigenas Piden Que el ESMAD Desocupe La Maria” (10/29) was published 13 days after the end of the confrontations in La Maria. Even worse, references to the destruction of the clinic or the hinder of medical services were not found in any other of the 157 articles analyzed from *El Tiempo*.

El Espectador

The longest article published by El Espectador from October 12 to 17 was “Colombia, Un Pais en Paro” (10/16). This article comes with a full color picture of a policeman

laid down in a stretcher surrounded by Indigenous protestors. The printed version of the article⁹ has an explanation that states: “La Cruz Roja pudo prestar atención medica al agente de la policía Edgar Rojas Garay, a quien retuvieron las comunidades Indígenas.”¹⁰ Leaving the discussion aside of whether or not it was legal, illegal, moral, or immoral to capture a member of the police during the protest, this picture and its explanation criminalize the whole Indigenous community of Colombia. This article does not explain the circumstances, the location of this incident, and for how long the Indigenous people captured the policeman Garay. The picture caption just explains that the police was detained by the “Indigenous communities.”

But the picture is not the only part of this article that criminalizes the Indigenous mobilization. As an introduction, this article explains that various sectors – judiciary workers, miners, sugar cane cutters, and Indigenous – were on strike in through the nation. The article continues explaining that President Uribe stated in a conference:

(...) el gobierno ha hecho muchos esfuerzos por resolver la situación de los indígenas del Cauca y anunciar algunas medidas para proteger a la población civil.¹¹

The article continues explaining:

(...) Visiblemente molesto, el primer mandatario denunció la influencia terrorista en las marchas. El país ha hecho muchos esfuerzos. Diálogo sí, violencia no. Además, no aceptamos trampas, porque se infiltran terroristas, nos masacran a los policías, ejercen toda clase de violencia

⁹ The online version of the article does not have this legend.

¹⁰ “The Red Cross could provide medical attention to the police Edgar Rojas Garay, whom was detained by the Indigenous communities”

¹¹ “the government has made several efforts to resolve the situation of the Indigenous of Cauca and announced some measures to protect the population”

y en seguida nos acusan frente a la comunidad internacional porque simplemente nosotros actuamos y evitamos los bloqueos y enfrentamos la violencia. Y todo es con el propósito de bloquearle a Colombia pasos tan importantes como la aprobación del TLC.

This declaration is especially defamatory. Saying that the Indigenous movement has massacred members of the police is malicious. Although members of the police were wounded in the clashes, none of them die. Although the violence and negative reactions that these declarations can cause on readers, the article does not present any criticism or commentary on Uribe's accusations. Instead, the article continues validating Uribe's declarations by stating that the National Director of the Police, General Oscar Naranjo, showed a video that illustrates various police wounded during the demonstrations (I could not find this video). The article quotes Naranjo saying:

(...) 'Tenemos información de inteligencia técnica y humana que señala que se estaba preparando un plan para incendiar unos vehículos en la noche. Por esa razón el Gobierno tomó la decisión de cerrar la vía para asegurarnos de que nadie resulte afectado como consecuencia de este plan, que en todo caso tiene claras características terroristas y no corresponde a una protesta pacífica.'

After these declarations, the article states that Indigenous blocked roads in Valle, Cauca, Risaralda, Chocó and Sucre. The article states that the indigenous seek "un encuentro con el Ministro de Interior, Fabio Valencia, a quien solicitaron seguridad y tierras para sus 102 etnias."¹² This is a very incomplete and simplistic explanation of the 2008 Indigenous mobilization. As it is mentioned in chapter 3, the Indigenous communities mobilized to present and discuss a five point political agenda, which

¹² "A encounter with the Minister of Interior, Fabio Valencia, whom solicited security and land for their 102 ethnicities."

includes topics like free trade policy, militarization of the Indigenous areas, and counter-reform agrarian laws. These points were not mentioned in this article.

At the end of this article, there is a subsection titled “Siguieron los Choques” that states:

(...)Según la Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC), al cierre de esta edición se reportaban unos 70 indígenas heridos y dos policías muertos, producto de los enfrentamientos en diversos puntos del país. Los disturbios, que comenzaron el pasado martes en Cauca y el Valle, tuvieron lugar también en Risaralda, Chocó y Sucre.

Here the article reports that the ONIC denounces that the clashes between Indigenous and police that left 70 indigenous wounded and two death police. This information is incorrect. No police or military men were reported killed by the police or government during the 2008 mobilizations. During the first days of the mobilization, two Indigenous people – no policemen – were killed. This wrong information was not clarified or rectified in the subsequent editions of the newspaper. In fact, the electronic version of this article still has this wrong information almost two years after event.

The second part of these sub-article states:

Según denunció el presidente de la ONIC, Luis Evelis Andrade, en Cauca ‘la policía disparó indiscriminadamente con fusiles, lanzó explosivos y gases lacrimógenos’. Los indígenas retuvieron a un agente de la Policía, pero lo dejaron en libertad horas más tarde. Sus protestas comenzaron por la muerte sistemática de integrantes de sus etnias en los últimos años, y exigen la presencia del presidente Uribe Vélez para levantarlas.

Here, Andrade charges that the police shot rifles, threw explosives, and tear gases indiscriminately against the Indigenous people. This strong charge loses power

because of the incorrect report on the death of two policemen during the protest. This mistake could make an unaware reader to validate and understand the violence of the police against the Indigenous mobilization. Here again, article fails to explain the causes for the Indigenous protest. The article just states that the reason for these protests is the systematic death of “members of their ethnicities.” The five point political agenda is again ignored.

The Coverage of the 2009 mobilization in *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*

Despite the enormous media attention on the 2008 Indigenous mobilization, the 2009 Minga did not have much echo in the two largest Colombian newspapers. From October 11 to October 16, *El Tiempo* only published three articles - “Unos 25.000 Indígenas Participan en Minga Contra Impunidad y por el Respeto del Medio Ambiente” (10/11/2009), “Minga Indígena Arriba Hoy a Cali” (10/13); and “La Minga Llego a Cali Proponiendo Dialogo” (10/14) -, two news briefs on first page – “Gran Movilización Indígena en Colombia” (10/13) and “Ocho Mil Indígenas Llegaron a Cali (10/14) –, and a news brief in national section – “Por lo Menos 20.000 Indígenas Marchan a Cali” (10/12).

Despite the small quantity of information, it is possible to find inconsistencies on the coverage of this event just by reading these titles. An article’s title informs on October 11 that more than “25,000 people” participated in the 2009 Minga. Next day, another of these article titles reports that “20,000 People March to Cali.” Finally, *El*

Tiempo reported on October 14 that “Eight thousand Indigenous People” arrived to Cali. An explanation for the rapid decrease in the number of Indigenous participants in the 2009 Minga was not found in any of the articles and news briefs published on these days.

Another interesting aspect of this report is that the 2008 mobilization is barely discussed on these articles. These articles do not provide much background on the 2009 protest. It is as though like the long and multitudinous 2008 Minga had not happened. One of the few references to the 2008 Minga was made by Feliciano Valencia, leader of the CRIC, who was interviewed for the article published on October 11. Feliciano states:

(...)‘Es una continuidad de la minga del año pasado para seguir con metodologías y procedimientos para construir país’, manifestó Feliciano Valencia, indígena del pueblo Nasa y vocero de la minga.

In the article published on October 13, Aida Quilcue states:

(...) A pesar de que el año pasado se dio un debate, aún vemos con preocupación lo que sigue pasando: las masacres selectivas, las judilizaciones y las diferentes acciones en contra del movimiento indígena y social”, dice la líder que en febrero de este año denunció que su esposo, Edwin Legarda, había muerto en un ‘falso positivo’ del Ejército.

Mr. Valencia and Ms. Quilcue’s words remind the reader that this political process began in 2008. However, none of the articles published during these days provides any further recounting of the incidents and the political process initiated in 2008. It is as if this political process were starting in 2009.

Reading with some attention, it is possible to see the interesting framing of the circumstances of the assassination of Mr. Legarda previously quoted. According to the paragraph, Aida Quilcue “denuncio” in February 2009 that her husband was killed in a “falso positivo” committed by the army. As it is explained in chapter three, ballistic evidence proves that Ms. Legarda was assassinated by the army in an ambush. Therefore, there is more evidence than just Quilcue’s words that prove the participation of the army in this crime. This means that the accusation against the army for the death of Mr. Legarda is not a simple “Quilcue denunciation,” as the article frames the situation. It is also interesting to see that the article uses the euphemism “falsos positivos” to call an extra-judiciary execution committed by the Colombian army. This euphemism is, in fact, frequently used by Colombian mass media. “Falsos positivos” is the assassinations of peasants, Indigenous, and working class people committed by the army to later present them as guerrilla casualties. According Rafael Pardo, candidate for the Colombian presidency for the Liberal party, the Colombian General Attorney Office acknowledges more than 2,000 cases of these extra-judiciary executions during the Uribe’s presidency (Semana, 2010).

The reporting of the 2009 Indigenous mobilization in *El Espectador* was even weaker. “Miles de Indigenas de Colombia Inician Marcha contra Calentamiento Global” (10/11) was the only article published in this newspaper about the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. This very short article (320 words) explains that “thousands of Indigenous people from southwest Colombia” initiated a march from La Maria, Cauca, to Cali for the “liberation of the mother earth” and against global warming.

After explaining that 2,000 Indigenous from other regions, students, and Afro-Colombians would join the march, the article quotes CRIC leader Feliciano Valencia saying:

(...)‘Hay que hacer un llamado muy fuerte a la humanidad porque la vida está en riesgo y al estar en riesgo la vida lo están los seres humanos, la tierra, el territorio, los animales, la naturaleza; la vida total está en riesgo y somos los seres humanos los responsables de protegerla’, añadió.

This very generic explanation for the 2009 Indigenous Minga is the only reason provided by this article about the reasons for this Indigenous mobilization. In addition to this article, *El Espectador* also published two news briefs - “Indígenas Reclaman Política Social” (10/12) and “Minga Por los Derechos” (10/13) during the days of the 2009 Indigenous mobilization.

Indígenas Reclaman Política Social

Nativos de diferentes comunidades del Cauca se desplazaron ayer desde el resguardo La Maria, en Piendamó, hasta Santander de Quilichao, para protestar contra la escasa política social del gobierno del presidente Álvaro Uribe. Reclaman atención en salud y educación. En el transcurso de la semana pasada se reunieron con ministros, pero según ellos no llegaron a ningún acuerdo.

This brief news explains that the Indigenous mobilization is a protest for the scarce social programs of the Uribe government. It also adds that the Indigenous people are demanding health services and education. The article also mentions that negotiations between the Indigenous and ministers held before the demonstration failed. The other brief news – “Minga por los Derechos – explains that the Indigenous movement demands the fulfillment of the pacts signed in 2004, protests against environmental

degradation, and denounces death threats against their communities. The article and the brief news of *El Espectador* present very simplistic information about the 2009 mobilizations. Neither the article nor these news briefs mention that the 2009 mobilization is the continuation of the political process initiated in the 2008 Indigenous mobilizations.

Some Supporting Voices from Mass Media Newspapers

Although the newspaper report on the 2008 Indigenous mobilization served to amplify the government's infamous criminalization of Indigenous communities, it is fair to say that some voices in these newspapers manifested their opposition to the government's repression against the Indigenous movement. Various columnists, especially from *El Espectador*, published excellent articles that explain the terrible situation that endures the Indigenous movement in Colombia, condemned the criminalization of the government and the media, and manifested sympathy for the Indigenous movement. 21 of the 81 articles published in *El Espectador* and 13 of the 157 articles in *El Tiempo* were columns of opinion in favor of the Indigenous movement.¹³

¹³ From *El Espectador*, Alfredo Molano – “Memoria Profunda” (10/17); “Tsunami a la Vista” (10/25), “Respiro” (11/7); Cesar Rodriguez Garavito – “Nuestros Aborígenes’: Indígenas o Terroristas?” (10/20); Mauricio García Villegas – “Mucha Tierra?” (10/24); Ricardo Penaranda Supelano – “Indígenas Activistas de las FARC?” (11/01); Carlos Ossa Escobar – “Donde Están los Encapuchados”; Daniel García-Pena – “Alzados en Bastones de Mando” (11/13). From *El Tiempo*: Luis Noe Ochoa – “Juego Limpio, Señores (10/17); Daniel Samper Pizano – “En Vez de Tierras, Repartir Palo” (12/21); and Myriam Jimeno – “Los Indios, Ni Sospechosos, Ni ‘Pobrecitos’” (11/14). Also it was found that

Although many columnists showed solid arguments in favor of the Indigenous movement and some of them criticized harshly the criminalization of the government against the Indigenous communities, their columns just represents their opinions. This means that, although these newspapers have these critical voices, they do not balance the wrongdoings and pro-government approach on their articles. In fact, other columnist seconded the racist and malicious incriminations of the government against Indigenous people. For example, Maria Isabel Rueda – one of the most influential journalists of Colombia and openly Uribe supporter – in her column “Lo que no Aguanto del Tema Indigena” (10/18/2009) shows a complete ignorance and racism against the Indigenous movement. She states that:

(...) Una, la defensa a ultranza que hacemos desde la civilización para impedir, con la disculpa de preservar intocables las raíces étnicas, sociales y culturales de nuestros aborígenes, que superen sus más puros niveles de atraso y así continúen saciando nuestras ilusiones paisajistas. Entre más desnudos deambulen por la selva; más caídos tengan las mujeres sus pechos; más gusaneadas estén las barriguitas de los niños; más dientes les hagan falta y menos logren comunicarse en nuestro idioma, más bonitos y más auténticos nos parecen. Es una actitud egoísta que me enferma.

Appealing to a cynical compassion, Ms. Rueda criticizes those who, “from the civilization”, defend the “pure levels of backwardness” of “our aborigines.” Rueda ignores the very important political, social, and cultural process of the Indigenous communities in Colombia and simplify the Indigenous people as the property of the bourgeois sector that she belongs. Rueda’s criticism continues:

the human rights activist and columnist Ivan Cepeda published a column in his weekly space at *El Espectador* wrote by the ONIC – “La Reivindicación es Nacional, No Local” (10/25).

(...) La segunda cosa que no me aguantó es la cara opuesta: la impunidad con la que actúan amparados en su condición de minoría étnica. Como son indígenas, pueden prohibir que en sus tierras se explore en busca del petróleo que necesita explotar el país. Como es indígena, nadie puede impedir que una madre que ha parido gemelos los bote a su suerte bajo un árbol para ahuyentar los malos espíritus. Y como son indígenas, hay que permitir que asuman la justicia por su propia mano, castigando a los suyos a punta de cepo y latigazos.

Rueda criminalizes the Indigenous communities by saying that they act with impunity. Without mention any specific examples, she suggests that this “ethnic minority” has the power to hold the progress of the country by opposing to oil drilling. She adds that, because they are “Indigenous,” nobody can prevent that “a mother that had delivered twins does not drop them under the shade of a tree to drive away bad spirits.” She does not specify or provide any sort of information regarding this comment. Also, she criticizes the traditional Indigenous forms of justices. Rueda’s accusations do not stop there. She also states that the Indigenous people do not respect the Colombian Constitution and the authority of the Uribe government. Rueda adds that the Indigenous people left without hands a policeman, and wounded more than 70. She also states that the Colombian State has been “more than diligent” giving to Indigenous people the 27 percent of the Colombian territory. This version has another defamatory thesis exposed repetitively by the government during the 2008 Indigenous mobilization.

The argument of the government and the subsequent column of Maria Isabel Rueda that denounce the Indigenous communities as the largest landholders of

Colombia have various problems. Alfredo Molano in his *El Espectador* column “Memoria Profunda” (10/14) explains:

(...) El argumento de Uribe de que el 25% del país —35 millones de hectáreas— está en manos del 1% de la población indígena es provocador y peligroso; sugiere —como blanco que es y vive— restablecer el equilibrio reduciendo los territorios indígenas al 1% de lo que son hoy, o sea, a poco más de un millón de hectáreas: la quinta parte de lo que los narcoparamilitares se han apropiado con total impunidad.

Molano warns about the danger of presenting the Indigenous communities as if they were large landholders. According to Molano, the government insistence that the Indigenous people already possess 25 percent of the Colombian territory suggests that the Indigenous people – which are between 1 to 2 percent of the Colombian population – have to possess the same proportion of the Colombian territory. It is also relevant to say that, according to the ONIC, 85 percent of the Indigenous land is non productive because they are located on national parks, deserts, moors, lakes, mountains and jungles. Of the 31.2 million hectares titled to Indigenous reserves, 24.7 million (79 percent) are in the Amazon and Orinoco rainforest, where only 5 percent of the Indigenous population live. Almost one million and half of Indigenous people have only 3,1 million hectares of productive land. This is almost three hectares per person (ONIC, 2008). This number laughable if is compared with the 1,000 hectares

of “El Uberrimo,” one of the most famous Uribe *haciendas* located in the department of Cordoba.¹⁴

The racist tone of Maria Isabel Rueda’s column provoked the reaction of various columnists who criticize her ignorance and eurocentrism. In fact, *El Tiempo* published the column “Refutación a María Isabel Rueda”, where Miguel Angel Lopez Hernandez – identified as member of the Wayuu community – replays some points exposed by Rueda.

The *El Espectador* column “Marcha Machabra” (10/25) wrote by Ernesto Yamhure deserves special comment. In this column Yamhure reproduce some government infamous accusations of the Uribe government against the Indigenous communities: the FARC is behind the protest, the Indigenous people abuse the police, the Indigenous movement appeals to terrorist tactics in the protest. Despite the harsh tone of his accusations, it is not surprising Yamhure’s position on this issue. Ernesto Yamhure frequently defends Uribe – his political allies and policies – on his weekly column on *El Espectador*. However, the relation of Yamhure goes further than a simple political sympathy. He worked as the General Secretary of the Colombian Embassy in Sweden until 2005. Yamhure was forced to resign after various members of the Colombian community and Swedish journalists denounced him for spying on Colombian exiles in that country. His diplomatic immunity protected him for being

¹⁴ The department of Cordoba has been one of the conclaves of the paramilitary project in Colombia. Ivan Cepeda and Jorge Rojas illustrate in the book “Las Puertas de El Uberrimo,” how the paramilitary project straightened around the “El Uberrimo.” Although the book does not show any direct relation OF Uribe with any paramilitary leader nor organization, the book explains that It is almost impossible that Uribe were not aware of the crimes that were happening next to his property.

processed for this case. Yamhure also has been involved in scandals for his close relation with paramilitary leaders, specifically with Carlos Castano Gil, one of the maximum leaders of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (Emmanuelson, 2009).

The 2008 Minga on Television News.

The coverage of the 2008 Indigenous mobilization on television news was also very polemical. Criminalization and racism against the Indigenous movement were evident. For example, it was possible to read on one the headlights of the RCN television news edition on October 17 “Las FARC Trans Protesta”¹⁵ while a voice states: “El gobierno denuncia que las FARC estan infiltradas en la protesta.” This shows confusing images of a clash between the Indigenous protestors and the police. This short highlight just reproduced the infamous accusation of the government that links the Indigenous movement with the FARC. Another report broadcasted on October 21 also evidences the poor quality of the coverage of RCN television news on the Indigenous mobilization. This report is about a discussion between the president of the United Central of Workers (CUT)¹⁶ Tarcisio Mora and Alvaro Uribe. The narrator introduces the report saying:

¹⁵ “The FARC behind protest.”

¹⁶ The CUT is the largest organization that represents unions in the negotiations with the government.

Narrator: *En el ministerio de Protección Social ocurrió una acalorada discusión entre el presidente Álvaro Uribe y el Presidente de la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores por el tema de movilizaciones y paros.*

Uribe: Y ojala este país no vuelva a esas épocas de patria bobá, porque uno oye mucho decir ‘no, es que se necesita para resolver todo esto es unos gobiernos de centro izquierda.’ Finalmente terminan en unos gobiernos de extremo desorden, que tanto daño le hicieron a este país. (The report shows a cut part of Mora replies)

Mora: (...) que la gente tiene que salir a protestar por la gente no me los atiende. Y eso le sirve para que usted...

(Uribe interrupts)

Uribe: No no no! yo vivo al pie de eso, Doctor Tarcisio. Vivo al pie de eso! Y los Indígenas cuantas marchas no han hecho. Yo lo que no permito es que bloquen las carreteras o secuestren a un soldado como secuestraron la semana pasada

(While the report shows images of the Indigenous mobilization)

Narrator: *Uribe rechazó los desordenes en las marchas Indígenas*

Uribe: Ese cuentito de tener esa revoltura con la FARC, eso hace mucho daño

Narrator: *Y agrego que no se puede confundir protesta social con violencia terrorista*

Uribe: Protesta social con granadas? Protesta social con bloqueo de carreteras?

Narrator: Recordó que en el caso de los Indígenas, su gobierno ha cumplido todos los compromisos con las comunidades organizadas

Uribe: Pero un sectorcito radical, que no está interesado en acuerdos sino que tiene una concepción política diferente de odio, ocio y violencia no ha permitido los acuerdos

Narrator: *El mandatario confrontó con los comandantes de la policía las denuncias de supuestos malos tratos a los manifestantes, desmintió*

el supuesto cierre de hospitales y reclamo sanciones por el prolongado paro de la justicia que cumplió casi 50 días.

This report has various aspects that deserve comment. First, it leaves the impression that Mora had a submissive position in the debate. This report only shows when Mora was interrupted and does not show the subsequent replies of Mora after Uribe's interruption. In this debate, Mora rebuked Uribe's position criticizing him for the violent repression of the police against social mobilizations, the closing of hospitals, and the terrible working conditions of the sugarcane workers (MP3, 2008). This report also reproduces several of the Uribe's accusations and lies against the Indigenous movement, such as their relation with the FARC, the use of explosives – granadas – against the police, and the completely fulfillment of accords by the Uribe government with the Indigenous movement. The report also shows Uribe assuring that those Indigenous people who were protesting have a political policy of “hate, laziness, and violence.”

The racist and defamatory perceptions of Uribe against the indigenous movement were presented in many other reports. On October 23 RCN news, for example, broadcast various reports about the shooting of the police against the Indigenous people in the mobilization. One of the reports informs about the negative repercussions of this incident on the negotiation of the FTA with the United States. Vicky Davila, a RCN anchor, introduced the report in this manner:

El Presidente Álvaro Uribe estuvo hoy en Medellín y se refirió al incidente de los disparos de un patrullero en las marchas Indígenas. El presidente dijo que sin duda este incidente será utilizado por los enemigos del TLC para bloquear la aprobación de la iniciativa”

(Subsequently the report shows Uribe in an event talking before of unidentified crowd)

Uribe: Vamos a ver como seguimos esta lucha en los Estados Unidos, no se puede desmayar. No se puede desmayar, hay que tener toda la constancia. Eso no ha sido fácil, y cuando lo vayan a aprobar entonces allá llegan otros a decir ‘como le van a aprobar eso a ese dictador de Uribe. Hay esta matando los Indios’ (laughths from the audience) y eso hay mil líos.

There are two interesting things about this short report (33 seconds). First, Davila validates the version of the government regarding the shootings in the Indigenous protest by using the phrase “y se refirio al incidente de los disparos de un patrullero”. According to the government version, the shooting showed in the CNN report (Chapter 3) was an isolated incident. This contradicts the version of Indigenous and some human rights organizations that denounced the police for using fire arms against the Indigenous protestors. The report also evidences – and validates – the racism of the Colombian president and the crowd. There is not any comment on Uribe’s tasteless joke – and the subsequent laugh o the crowd – on the police shooting and death of Indigenous people on the protests.

The report of the 2008 mobilization in Caracol television news was also deficient. In the television news edition of October 19, 2008, had three reports on the 2008 Minga. The first report was about the decision of marching to Cali made by the Indigenous movement. Mabel Lara and Juan Ignacio Velasquez, anchors of Caracol Television News, introduced this report in this way:

Lara: Los Indígenas del Cauca no dan marcha atrás. Hoy anunciaron que, pese a la decisión de comprarles tierra para honrar los pactos formados, mantendrán las protestas.

Velazquez: Los líderes indígenas afirmaron que mañana marcharan desde Piendamó, Cauca, hasta Cali para exigirle al presidente Álvaro Uribe que los reciba y dialogue con ellos

(Images of the Protest)

Narrator: *Los Paeces no aceptaron la propuesta que hizo el gobierno nacional a través del Ministro del Interior de apropiarse recursos para comprar tierras, porque según, Aida Quilque, presidenta del Concejo Regional Indígena, esta no es la única exigencia que hacen los nativos que protestan en la María, Piendamó.*

Ms. Quilque: Primero porque viola los derechos territoriales y aquí el compromiso con el gobierno nacional; uno, compra de tierras, pero además debe garantizar el derecho colectivo de los territorios Indígenas. Entonces debe desmontarse, por ejemplo, el Estatuto de Desarrollo Rural, debe desmontarse las leyes ambientales.

Narrator: *Álvaro Mejía, uno de los voceros de la movilización aseguro que en el caso de Caldonó, hay vetos para la adquisición de tierras*

Mejía: Entonces se tiene que empezar por derogar el Estatuto de Desarrollo Rural y el POT del municipio de Caldonó, que prohíbe que se compre para los pueblos indígenas de Caldonó. Los Indígenas de Caldonó son discriminados en Caldonó y por la nación.

Narrator: *Los Paeces anunciaron que iniciarán una marcha hasta la Ciudad de Cali para exigir que el Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez dialogue con ellos*

This report has some interesting things to discuss. First, some of the information provided is wrong. The narrator introduces Aida Quilque as president of the CRIC, position that does not even exist in this organization. Aida Quilque was a Major Council of the CRIC at that time. Second, the Indigenous movement is portrayed as the conflictive ones. The phrase “pese a la decisión de comprarles tierra para honrar los pactos firmados, mantendrán las protestas” leaves the impression that, despite the

good will of the government, the Indigenous people keep altering the social order. This position is especially hypocritical. As Chapter 1 and 3 explain, the government has not had the disposition to fulfill the different accords with the Indigenous communities. The following report broadcasted on this television news edition not only reiterates the “good will” of the government to resolve this crisis; it also “informs” the vast economic cost for the acquisition of land to the Indigenous communities of Cauca:

Velazquez: Pese a la decisión de los Indígenas en continuar con su protesta, el gobierno anuncio que comprara mas de 7,000 hectarias para honrar los pactos firmados con estas comunidades. La compra de tierras costara mas de 33 mil millones de pesos.

(The report starts with images of a conversation between the journalist Edgar Veloza Arias (EVA) and the Minister of Agriculture, Andres Felipe Arias (AFA)).

Narrator: *El Ministro de Agricultura Andrés Felipe Arias aseguro que se comprarán en el Cauca más de 7,000 hectarias para los Indígenas con el objetivo de poner fin a las protestas. Agrego que costaran más de 33 mil millones de pesos recursos que busca el Ministerio de Hacienda:*

AFA: Estamos hablando de 15 mil millones, aproximadamente, para las hectarias de Caldonó, estamos hablando de otros 8 mil 9 mil millones para terminar de honrar lo del Nilo, las 3,700 hectarias que quedan. A eso súmele lo que falta por comprar en el resto del departamento, unas 2,400 hectarias, que debe valer, mas o menos, 8 mil 9 mil millones adicionales.

Narrator: *Aclaro que los Indígenas son los principales propietarios de la tierra en ese departamento*

AFA: Podríamos decir que las comunidades Indígenas, en el Cauca, son dueñas del 33 por ciento de la frontera agrícola productiva, y son el 20 por ciento de la población. Esos son unos datos bien importantes.

Narrator: *Arias fue enfático que no se permitirán vías de hecho y dijo que se investigan ataques de los Indígenas en contra de policías, campesinos, y ganaderos de la región.*

This report portrays the Indigenous communities from Cauca as large landholders. Also, the report gives a various figures and promises that are not verified by any other source other than the Minister Arias. Minister Arias fails to explain, for example, what land was offered to the Indigenous communities, under what conditions, and when this land is going to be acquired. This report does not mention the grievances presented by Ms. Quilcue and Mr. Mejia in the former report about the different laws that pretend to end with the Indigenous *resguardos*. As it is explained in Chapter One, the problem of the Indigenous communities is not only lack of access to productive land. Another of their problems is that various laws, like the Estatuto de Desarrollo Rural,¹⁷ put on jeopardy the legality of Indigenous communitarian land. In addition, the report leaves on the air another accusation of the government against the Indigenous communities. The Indigenous people, according to Arias, not only attacked the police; they also attacked peasants and ranchers.

¹⁷ The “Estatuto Rural” sought to end with the special jurisdiction for the Indigenous communal territories called *resguardos*. Thus, territories that are considered as communal indigenous land would be titled as individual private property. The law also forbids extending *resguardos* in different regions of Colombia, such especially in the Pacific coast. This law was finally declared unconstitutional in April 2009 by the Constitutional Court because it violated the 1991 Colombian Constitution (Semillas, 2009). Different Indigenous, peasant, and African-Colombian organizations cheered this decision. This polemical law, they argued, sought to benefit narco-paramilitaries who accumulated land illegally by displacing millions of poor Colombians. Alvaro Araujo and William Montes, proponents of this law in the Colombian congress and members of the political coalition that supports Alvaro Uribe Velez, have been under investigation for supposed nexus with paramilitary groups (Mondragon, 2007).

The (dis)information about the Indigenous mobilization continued on this Caracol news broadcast. After the Arias report, Mabel Lara presents the next report saying:

Y sobre este mismo tema, la policía y el ejército mantiene una estricta vigilancia en toda la carretera Panamericana para evitar nuevos bloqueos, sin embargo, esta madrugada un grupo de indígenas intentó taponar la vía. Gildardo Arango [who is in the Pan-American road] ¿cuál es la situación en esta importante zona?

Arango: Mabel, muy buenas tardes. La situación es de mucha presencia policial para evitar protestas anunciadas ya por los indígenas, las comunidades Paeces y Guambianos que anunciaron protestas para las próximas horas ante la falta de un acuerdo en esta zona del país. Pero esta madrugada se registraron fuertes disturbios aquí en el sector de Villa Rica de la vía Panamericana, cuando 500 Indígenas Paeces y Guambianos intentaron realizar un nuevo bloqueo a la vía Panamericana. Allí hubo enfrentamientos que se extendieron por espacio de 40 minutos pero la fuerza pública logró replegar a los nativos que a esa hora pretendían protagonizar un nuevo bloqueo a la vía Panamericana. En esos hechos, hubo tres indígenas lesionados y cuatro policías que resultaron heridos. Vamos a tratar de hablar con uno de ellos. Patrullero Edwin Segura, ¿qué le paso?

(The image goes to a member of the anti-riot police who has a severe contusion on his face)

Policeman Segura: Sí, buenas tardes. Nosotros nos encontrábamos desbloqueando la vía Panamericana que se encontraba bloqueada por los Indígenas y al realizar el desbloqueo fuimos recibidos por artefactos explosivos, las mal llamadas “papas explosivas” y como resultado de eso, pues tenemos los que tengo en la cara.

Arango: Bueno, una fuerte lesión ocular que a sufrido este policía como consecuencia de los enfrentamientos que se registraron anoche y esta madrugada aquí en el sector de la vía Panamericana. Por ahora lo que se espera es que en las reuniones que se anuncian para las próximas horas en el departamento del Cauca puedan arrojar principios de acuerdo que, por lo menos, permitan un compromiso de los indígenas para no bloquear la vía Panamericana en las próximas horas. Es todo por ahora desde el municipio de Villa Rica, norte del Cauca, Gildardo Arango, noticias Caracol.

This final report fails to explain that the Indigenous protestors at Villa Rica were not part of the Indigenous mobilization organized by the CRIC in La Maria, Cauca. Also, this report incorrectly assured that the Indigenous people announced more protests. As it was mentioned by anchor Velasquez in the presentation of the first report, the Indigenous movement, at that point, announced the march – no more blockage – from La Maria, Cauca, to Cali. Also, the report failed to present the perspective on this conflict of the Indigenous people located at this point. The only perspective presented on this report was of a wounded policeman.

If we analyze holistically the content of these three consecutive reports broadcasted on the October 19 edition of the Caracol news television, the representation of the Indigenous movement is very negative. The first report shows the unwillingness of the Indigenous communities to negotiate, despite the government's disposition. The second illustrates that the government is assuming an elevated economic cost to please the Indigenous communities. And the final report confirms that the Indigenous protestors keep abusing and mistreating the police.

The 2009 Mobilization on Mass Media Television News

The 2009 Indigenous mobilization was not much reported on mass media television news. After monitoring the 7:00 PM news editions of Caracol and RCN from October 12 to October 16, 2009, five reports on this mobilization were found. The news editions that contained more reports on these mobilizations were broadcast

on October 12, 2009. This day Caracol television news broadcasted in its 7:00 PM edition two reports related – in some way – to the 2009 Indigenous Minga. One of these reports was in the broadcast’s highlights. The news highlights presents one of the reports in this way:

Narrator: *Familia norteamericana renuncio a su vida cotidiana para emprender una travesía de tres anos en bicicleta. Su viaje los traje hoy a Colombia*

(This note shows images of a North American family bicycling on the Pan-American road. In the background is possible to very see a small part of the 2009 mobilization – a *chiva*¹⁸ full of people and flags, and some people on the road.)

25 minutes after the start of the broadcast and subsequent to an unimportant report on the auction of parts of the hair of Elvis Presley in the United States, the Caracol news program showed a report on a 2009 Indigenous mobilization in Bogota. The anchor introduced the report in this manner:

Hoy se celebra el Dia Internacional de la Raza. Por eso, aquí en Bogota, algunos Indígenas realizaron una concentración en la Plaza de Bolívar y denunciaron la grave situación que enfrentan actualmente

Narrator: *Uno de los aspectos que más preocupa a los Indígenas en Colombia es los asesinatos de 49 miembros de la comunidad Awa este ano. Pero eso no es lo unico que empaña hoy la celebración del día de la raza.*

Isabel Velasco (Identified as Indigenous): Yo creo que en los últimos días se ha agudizado más la problemática social de los pueblos Indígenas, el problema del desplazamiento, y las políticas de gobierno han influido en todos los territorios de los pueblos hermanos. Por eso, en estos momentos, estamos viendo gran desplazamiento hacia las ciudades capitales.

Narrator: *Además pide que se respete su cultura y sus diferencias*

¹⁸ Chiva is a bus used in rural areas of Colombia

Albenis Trui (Identified as Indigenous): Entonces están los Afros, están los hermanos campesinos, y estamos los pueblos Indígenas. Los pueblos Indígenas, en Colombia, somos 102 pueblos tenemos una forma de pensamiento (...)

Narrator: *Y por eso se critica también la presencia de Norte Americanos en bases militares Colombia.*

Carlos Chindoy (Identified as representant of the Indigenous): Con ello viene otras clases influencias negativas para nuestras culturas.

Narrator: *Por eso los indígenas que llegaron hasta la Plaza de Bolívar en Bogota pidieron a todos los Colombianos que no los dejen a un lado.*

This report is about a very small Indigenous demonstration in Bogota. According to the images on the report, no more than 10 people congregated for this Indigenous mobilization. It is also interesting to see that, despite the denunciations of Isabel Velasco, this report –or the subsequent ones – does not provide any further information about these denunciations. The negative consequences and the responsibility of the government in the crimes committed against the Indigenous organizations are not even mentioned in this report. Also, this report does not even explain the ethnicity of the people interviewed. They are just identified as “Indigenous” and Carlos Chindoy is presented as “Indigenous representative,” without explaining what organization or community he represents.

Three reports later, Caracol television news extends the story of the American family who is traveling through Latin America. The narrator starts the report saying:

Narrator: *Los encontramos en la vía Panamericana. Cuando centenares de Indígenas se disponían a iniciar su Minga desde Piendamó, Cauca hacia Cali, estos cuatro ciudadanos Norte Americanos cumplían su travesía hacia el sur del continente. Nancy y su esposo John Bogel y los mellizos David y Dariel de once años*

llevan diez y seis meses pedaleando. Partieron desde Alaska por dos razones, asegura ella.

(The report continues with interview of Nancy, the American mother, who narrates various issues related to their trip).

This report starts with an image of the North American family taking pictures to the Indigenous crowd, which was ready to start their march to Cali. It is interesting that the only images and the only reference to this massive Indigenous mobilization – in this broadcast – were included in this unimportant report. Also, it would be interesting to know why the Caracol preferred to have a report on a very small Indigenous mobilization in Bogota and not a report on the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. If the intention were to report the voices and grievances of the Indigenous movement during October 12, why did the television news not report the march of more than 20,000 people in Cauca? Why did they prefer to report the march of few Indigenous people in Bogota?

The October 12 emission of the RCN television news also had a report related to the 2009 Indigenous mobilization. This report – which was not mentioned on the news headlines – shows aerial images of the massive mobilization while the RCN anchor comments:

A esta hora descansan en Jamundi, Valle, los 15,000 mil indígenas del sur occidente del país que marchan a Cali. Una vez lleguen a la capital del valle del cauca, la Minga permanecerá en el coliseo del pueblo donde realizaran un pre-congreso que tiene como finalidad analizar temas los pactos hechos meses atrás con el gobierno, el calentamiento global, y la seguridad de los resguardos

This generic and short note (21 seconds) was the only report on the 2009 Indigenous Minga during the edition of the RCN television news. In total, this news edition lasted more than 35 minutes. This 35 minutes were filled with stories that report more human interest features than news, like the one of some people who confused lead rocks with gold (1:54 seconds) – the principal news of the day –, a woman that was captured after kidnapping a minor (59 seconds), and a man who got trapped after falling in a hole (58 seconds). The rest of the emission is filled with other few reports, 10 minutes of advertising, 5 minutes of sport news, 6 minutes of entertainment news, and a 4 minute report on the bad shape of the roof of a public market located in Buenaventura, Valle. The absence of news related to structural social problems is astonishing.

Conclusions:

This chapter highlighted a variety of problems with the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations in mass media in Colombia. For the 2008 mobilization, the mass media reproduced the unproven and malicious accusations of the government against the Indigenous movement. Infamous accusations – “the FARC was behind the protest”, “the Indigenous people are the largest landholders in Colombia”, “the Indigenous people attacked the police, peasants, and ranchers”, among others – were presented, not as the version of the government, but as facts.

This study also shows the racist position of many members of the government who even made fun of the deaths of the Indigenous people in the protest. It is shocking

– but not surprising – to hear Uribe accusing the Indigenous movement for being “mixed” with the FARC and for being composed of lazy and violent people. It is not new that Uribe and members of his administration accuse those who are in political opposition – or dare to criticize Uribe government – of being allied with the FARC. Alvaro Uribe has directly accused, for example, Human Rights Watch director for Latin America Jose Miguel Vivianco of being “complice and defensor” – accomplice and defender – of the FARC. The Uribe accusations were after Human Rights Watch criticized the impunity on the extra-judiciary executions of civilians committed by the army (AFP, 2008). As Chapter 2 explains, Uribe government has launched a systematic campaign of black propaganda against various journalists, social organizations, and politicians. In fact, the polemical Venezuelan publicist Juan Jose Rendon¹⁹, expert on – according to his own website – “rumorology”, has been one of the main advisors of the Uribe administration. Rendon is also currently working on the presidential campaign of Juan Manuel Santos, candidate of the Uribe political party “La U” (Begg, 2010). Although it is well known that the Uribe administration has frequently used unproven accusations to criminalize opponents, the Colombian mass media keep reproducing, without much criticism, these accusations.

¹⁹ JJ Rendon is a very polemical anti-Chavez publicist who has worked on various right-wing political campaigns in Venezuela, Honduras, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Colombia. He was involved in various scandals for creating rumors and lies about the personal lives of the political opponents of his clients. Rendon worked for many years in Colombia as image advisor of the Minister of Defense. Some Colombian congress men proposed to expel from the country Rendon for his unethical professional tactics. According to these congressmen, Rendon invented the rumor that Carlos Gaviria Diaz and Rafael Pardo, member of opposition parties, were allied with the FARC. Nicolas Uribe, member of the Uribe political party, denounced Rendon for blackmailing him. Uribe denounced that Rendon threatened him with spreading a rumor about fake encounters with prostitutes. At the end, Rendon was not expelled and he is currently working with the presidential campaign Juan Manuel Santos for the Uribe’s party (Semana, 2007) (Semana, 2007(2)) (Begg, 2010).

Their strong tendency to present the government version as a fact is not the only problem with the coverage of the Indigenous mobilizations on these mass media outlets. It is also possible to find mistakes on basic details of the information – ex: Aida Quilcue is the president of the CRIC (RCN Television), two police were killed in the protest (El Espectador), and the Indigenous announced more protests (Caracol TV). These inaccuracies show that many of the journalists that covered the 2008 mobilization ignored basic information. This study also evidences that violence and sensationalism are more important for these mass media outlets than reporting on the structural problems of the society. The 2008 mobilization was widely covered due to the disturbances and violence during the first days of the protest. The more peaceful 2009 mobilization, on the other hand, was largely absent from mass media newspapers and television news. This proves Mario Murillo's criticism against the coverage of mass media on Indigenous mobilizations. Mass media just focused on the violence and ignored the political reasons of Indigenous mobilization. Mass media, especially television news, prioritized unimportant stories –such as the people who confused gold with lead and the North American bikers – rather than reporting on the massive political process organized by the Indigenous movement in Cauca.

Despite all this problems, it would be unfair to say that all the journalists that worked for mass media outlets reproduced uncritically the government's infamous propaganda or that all of these journalist ignore the Indigenous political process. In those media outlets, especially in the newspapers, we can find journalist and columnist that, despite the great risks, dare to denounce and criticizes the policies, obscure

tactics, and defamations of the Alvaro Uribe Velez and the members of his government against the Indigenous movement.

The deficiencies of the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations are evident. This study supports, in some ways, Mario Murillo's complaint about the coverage of the 2008 Indigenous Minga. Newspaper articles and Television news reports reproduced and validated many the accusations of Uribe administration against Indigenous movement. Accusations about the participation of the FARC and terrorist groups were frequently repeated by mass media outlets. Also, the mass media does not further report the charges of the Indigenous people and NGOs about the abuses of the police against Indigenous people. It is remarkable that the Colombian audience only learned about the police abuses and the lies of the Uribe government when CNN – an international television channel – report about this incident.

Another point that shows this content analysis is that many members of the government, including the Colombian president, shamelessly lied to the Colombian people. For weeks, the Uribe administration assured that the FARC was behind the protest; denounced that Indigenous people used fire arms and explosives against the police, massacred policemen, and attack peasants and ranchers; and accused the Indigenous people of being the largest landholders of the country. All these accusations where reproduced by newspapers and television news. Although many of these accusations were never proved, I could not find any apologies from the government or the mass media outlets to the Indigenous movement.

Conclusion

In interpreting and representing news of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous Minga, the Colombian mass media outlets – *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, RCN Television News, and Caracol News – not only failed to provide an unbiased report, but also actively preached government mistruths. As it is shown in Chapter 3, three of the most militant Indigenous organizations of Colombia – the Asociacion de Cabildos Indigenas del Norte del Cauca, ACIN, the Concejo Regional Indigena del Cauca, CRIC, and the Organizacion Nacional Indigena de Colombia, ONIC – organized the 2008 Social and Community Minga to present to the country a five point political agenda. The Indigenous political agenda sought to counteract the neoliberal and militaristic policies imposed by various governments and increased during the Alvaro Uribe Velez presidency. Instead of reporting the 2008 mobilization as a political event, mass media coverage focused on the riots and violent confrontations between the Indigenous movement and the police. The mass media coverage of these violent confrontations heavily relied on the version provided by Uribe, his Ministers, the military and police leadership, and many other government officials. According to the government version, the Indigenous people were a major threat of the Colombian democracy: they were allied with terrorist organizations, manipulated by the FARC, and attacking the defenseless and unarmed police, peasants, and ranchers. These accusations were sustained with little and weak evidence.

The inflammatory accusations of the government did not stop there. Through various press conferences and press releases members of the government –including Uribe – portrayed the Indigenous communities as the largest landholders in Colombia. These declarations are very cynical and somewhat ironic considering that many members of the government possess large amounts of land and/or have strong political links with landowners the most productive areas of the country. It is also important to keep in mind that several members of the Alvaro Uribe political coalition have been investigated and sentenced for their political connections with narco-paramilitary organizations. These organizations are responsible for having acquired – by displacing and assassinating millions of Indigenous, peasants, and Afro-Colombians – some of the most productive land in Colombia.

Despite the inconsistencies and lack of evidence, *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, RCN and Caracol news frequently replicated and validated the unfounded government accusations against the Indigenous movement. This was especially evident during on the coverage from October 12 to 17, 2008, days of the most violent confrontations between the police and the Indigenous protestors. It was common to read in the newspapers and to see in the television news, members of the government “explaining” to the country that Indigenous protestors were using fire arms and explosives against the police, and others. The version of the government was largely taken by these mass media outlets as a fact. Although strong evidence proved that the police – and not the Indigenous people as the government argued – were using fire arms and explosives against the Indigenous people, this information was presented as

the biased version of the human rights organizations and the Indigenous protestors. Yet the problem with the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilization on these media outlets is not limited to their inclination to take as a fact the government version. Incongruencies and problems providing basic information were also not uncommon.¹

Another evident problem of the coverage of mass media of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations is the absence of analysis and discussion of the political points proposed by the Indigenous movement. Challenging traditional racist hegemony of the Colombian elite, the power of the landowners, and the authoritarianism of the guerrillas – especially the FARC–, the Colombian Indigenous movement has gained very important political and cultural spaces at regional and national level since the foundation of the CRIC 1971. In fact, the Indigenous movement – with all its internal problems and contradictions – is one of the most successful grassroots organizations in the Colombian history. Despite this, the political and economic proposals of the Indigenous movement are absent of mass media. It seems that it is more important for mass media, especially in the case of television news, to inform about trivial news – like the family who was biking from Alaska to Patagonia and the auction of Elvis' hair in United States – rather than inform about

¹ One RCN report introduced Aida Quilcue was introduced as president of the CRIC, position that does not even exist in this organization. This is very important because the philosophy of this Indigenous organization is completely against of a unique leadership. Another article – an article published in *El Espectador* – wrongly report that two policemen were killed a clash with the police. Those who were killed were Indigenous people (See chapter 4).

structural social problems and political process that can eventually improve the lives of millions of Colombians victims of the harsh internal conflict.

There are various reasons for the poor quality of the coverage of important political processes, such as the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilizations. The first reason is the strong monopolization of Colombian mass media in few powerful economic conglomerates. Colombian mass media outlets are owned and controlled by very few organizations: the Santos Family, the Colombian Santodomingo and Ardila Lulle Groups and the Spanish Planeta and Prisa groups.² In turn, their mass media outlets are close to entirely controlling the Colombian audiences of television, newspapers, and radio. These groups have strong economic and political interests. The Planeta Group, for example, has shown interest on the adjudication of a new national television channel and Santodomingo and Ardila Lulle groups have several businesses in various sectors of the Colombian economy. Thus, these economic conglomerates frequently used mass media outlets as political tools to augment and/or preserve economic power. In the case of *El Tiempo*, the ties and affinity of its owners with Uribe's government are evident. The Colombian current vice-president, Francisco Santos, and the candidate for the Colombian presidency for the Uribe's party *La U*, Juan Manuel Santos, are both members of the family owned newspaper.

² *El Tiempo* – Santos Family and Planeta – *El Espectador* – Santodomingo Group – RCN Television – Ardila Lule Group – Caracol – Santodomingo Group, and Caracol Radio – Santodomingo-Prisa Groups.

This creates an evident conflict of interest between the economic and political interest of the owners and the exercise of journalism of those mass media outlets.

The second factor in the poor quality of reporting in Colombia mass media is the backlash journalists receive if they challenge the political elite. In some cases, journalists have been fired because their comments and investigations have put in jeopardy the political and economic interests of the owners of mass media outlets. For example, after writing a column where she criticized the coverage of *El Tiempo* on the Agro Ingreso Seguro scandal – one of the biggest scandals of corruption in the Uribe administration – the columnist Claudia Lopez, one of the most highly respected columnists of this newspaper, was fired. Also, the Santos Family and the Planeta Group fired the director and general editor of their political magazine *Cambio* after this magazine published various investigations – like into the Agro Ingreso Seguro scandal and the secret military treaties between United States and Colombia – that deeply damaged the images of the Uribe regime. With this panorama, it would be very complicated to have an equilibrated report on a political process that challenges the economic and social privileges of these economic conglomerates.

A third problem that negatively affects the quality of mass media in Colombia is the violence that journalists endure in the practice of their profession. It is clear that various illegal groups – guerrillas, criminal bands, drug cartels, paramilitary groups – have harassed, threatened, and even assassinated hundreds of journalists in Colombia. But, it is also clear that the government and its security agencies have also instigated, defeated, threatened, and even assassinated journalists. The Colombian General

Attorney Office is currently investigating various highly ranked members of the Administrative Department Security, DAS, for persecution and harassment against journalists, members of the Supreme Court, members of oppositional political parties, and human rights advocates. The case of Hollman Morris – discussed in Chapter 2 – provides a clear example of the situation that those who report stories than bother the Colombian establishment have endured. Mr. Morris is one of the most critical journalists against the Uribe government, the guerillas, and the paramilitaries. His investigation program, *Contravia* – transmitted in the only semi-public national television channel – has reported stories that are largely absent in the mass media outlets. *Contravia*, for example, was the only television show that extensively reported on police abuses against Indigenous people during the 2008 Indigenous mobilization. *Contravia* also provided an extensive report on the 2009 Indigenous Minga and the government harassment against the leader Aida Quilcue (*Contravia*, 2009). For his journalist work, Mr. Morris and his production team has received several journalist awards, like the 2006 International Press Freedom Award, the 2007 Human Rights Watch Award, Premio Nuevo Periodismo Latiamericano 2007, and The 2010 Samuel Chavkin Prize for Integrity in Latin America, among others. Despite all these recognitions, Mr. Morris has been in a very difficult professional and personal position. President Alvaro Uribe and members of his government have publically accused Mr. Morris of being a FARC sympathizer. Also, security forces of the government organized an illegal plan to discredit, harass, and spy on Mr. Morris, his family, and members of his journalist team. As consequence of this propaganda, Mr.

Morris was forced to cancel *Contravia* due to lack of funding and advertisers. Few companies dare to advertise in investigative shows and newspapers because they do not want to have conflicts with the Uribe administration. In addition, various members of his family have been forced into exile. Many other journalists have been in similar positions to that of Morris. Journalists like Daniel Coronell, Claudia Julieta Duque, Alfredo Molano, William Parra and Felix de Bedout – among many others – have been systematically spied on, harassed, and accused by members of the government – without showing any proofs – for being terrorist sympathizers. The violence against journalists in Colombia is so catastrophic that between 2002 and 2005, 13 journalists were assassinated, 24 kidnapped, 233 threatened and 18 forced to exile. For this situation, many journalists have decided to opt for self-censorship in order to protect their lives and the lives of their families.

The fourth problem that affects the quality of journalism in Colombia is the poor labor conditions that journalists endure. The majority of journalists face low wages, long shifts, and lack of job security. The situation is even worse for those who work in rural areas, like Cauca. The majority of the journalists who cover rural areas do not receive stable salaries. They are paid only if their reports are broadcasted. This situation creates a host of problems. Journalists are forced to find other sources of revenue – many get involved in politics – creating conflicts of interests between their two occupations. Journalists are also tempted to exaggerate news reports to make them attractive to be broadcasted. Low wages and tough working conditions also discourage well trained and experienced journalists from staying in the profession for a long time.

As a consequence, the editing and reporting of important news in the mass media ends up in inexperienced and amateurish hands that are easily controlled and manipulated by media owners and powerful members of the government.

The fifth problem that affected the quality of journalism in Colombia is the structural problems of the Colombian higher education. Although the majority of journalists who work in mass media outlets have college degrees – many of them in journalism –, their educational training is very deficient. Some scholars argue that this educational training focuses on issues related to the processes of communication, the business of media, and advertising. Social sciences and humanities are barely present in the curriculum of journalism degrees. Other problems related to higher education in Colombia are its high cost and scarcity of post-graduate programs. Few journalists have advanced degrees and academic research on journalism – as well as many other aspects of the society – is very scarce. Due to its high costs, people from popular sectors – Indigenous, peasants, Afro-Colombians, and working class – are largely excluded from higher education. This is one of the reasons why those sectors are underrepresented on positions of power, including the mass media sector.

The final reason why the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 mobilization was so deficient is because mass media journalism is based on a Eurocentric pro-capitalist ideology. As it is mentioned in Chapter 2, improving working conditions for journalists and pluralizing the media ownership will improve mass media journalism in general, but it would not fully guarantee fair coverage of the political and social perspectives of the Colombian Indigenous movement. The Indigenous movement is

proposing a revolutionary change that ends a hegemonic ideology of exclusion, racism, and inequality that has governed Colombia for centuries. Mass media journalism is another social institution that has validated and consolidated this negative ideology. As Todd Giltin explains, the hegemonic power of capitalism is presented in all stages of mass media production. It is also clear that journalists are, even when they are impartial, not neutral. The vast majority of journalists defend – sometimes unconsciously – the privileges of their social class. It is very unlikely to find mass media outlets and journalists that support a radical – but necessary – change of the pro-capitalist, Eurocentric, and free market oriented hegemonic ideology of the Colombian society. Aware of this fact, the Indigenous movement has created their own media outlets. Indigenous media is part of various political and cultural projects – like the civic Indigenous guard and the territory of Peace, Dialogue, and Reconciliation at La Maria – launched by the Indigenous communities that challenge the pro-capitalistic hegemonic ideology that dominates the Colombian society. The story provided by this thesis of the 2008 and 2009 Indigenous mobilization would not be possible without the coverage of these events of the communication network of the ACIN and other Indigenous and working class media outlets. These media outlets, especially those of the Indigenous, became a very important alternative to the mass media outlets. For these reason, it is very important to research the political, economic, and cultural possibilities of Indigenous, peasants, and working class media in Colombia. It is fundamental to understand the limitations, problems, achievements, and possibilities of these grassroots communication media projects.

In addition to discussing various problems – and their causes – of the coverage of the Indigenous mobilization on mass media, this thesis also advances other three important points. First, it is evident the cynical position of the Alvaro Uribe Velez government and its international allies. During the eight years of his government, Uribe administration has deployed all kinds of violence against those who dare to criticize his authoritarian and militaristic policies. Indigenous people, peasants, union leaders, students, human right advocates, members of the opposition, journalists, and many others have been criminalized, spied upon, persecuted, harassed, and assassinated by members of the government security forces and its paramilitary allies. The actions of the government have become equal or even more harmful than the actions of criminal organizations, like the FARC, ELN, and paramilitary groups. The results of this internal conflict are catastrophic. For example, in May 2010, The Norwegian Refugee Council published a study that shows that Colombia has the second largest internal displaced population in the world – 3.3 million to 4.9 million people – very close to Sudan, which is in the first position – 4.9 million. The report also explains that in 2009 alone, 290,000 Colombians were displaced – the sixth highest displacement that year in the world. This report also shows that less than one percent have returned to their place of origin (IDMC, 58: 2009). This study also points out that the Indigenous people are especially prone to internal displacement. It is very important to keep in mind that the European Union, Canada, and, especially, the United States have been accomplices of the authoritarian and repressive regime of Uribe Velez. In exchange of this support, Uribe has been willing to sign FTA, allow

the establishment of seven U.S. military bases, and use the Colombian intelligence services to spy on the governments of Venezuela and Ecuador – with the guidance of the United States (Contavia, 2010).

The second point that this thesis makes evident is that, despite all the violence and repression, some valiant journalist have dared to tell the crude reality that millions of Colombians endure daily. Journalist like Hollman Morris, Alfredo Molano, Antonio Caballero, Daniel Coronel, Vladimir Florez, Vladdo, among others, deserve all the recognition for their courageous and critical stance. However, some of them work on mass media outlets making it unfair to automatically disqualify all journalists who work on these mass media outlets. Finally, this thesis finds that the Indigenous movement is one of the most powerful political forces in Colombia. Although the path traveled by the Indigenous people has had plenty of obstacles, they have successfully created hope for millions who dream of an equal, prosperous, and sovereign Colombian society.

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