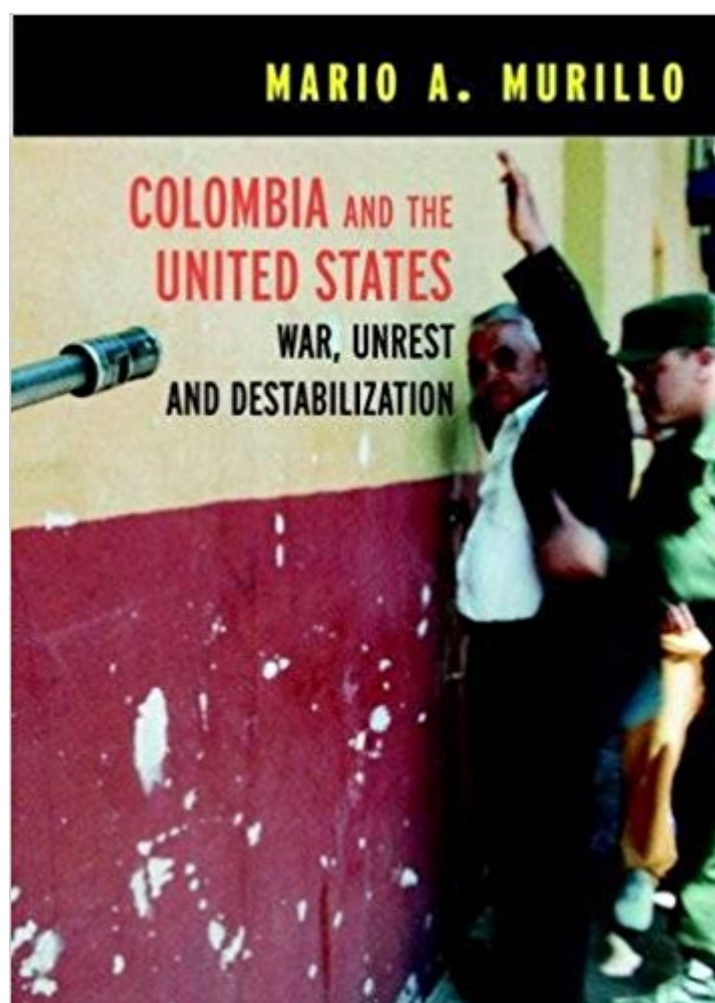




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Colombia And The United States : War, Unrest, And Destabilization (Open Media Series)



Synopsis

Every year the United States spends millions of dollars to help the war-ravaged country of Colombia. But help it with what? In *Colombia and the U.S.* Mario Murillo explores the misdirected and devastating impact that U.S. military "aid" continues to have on the war-torn people of Colombia. Beginning with a brief history of Colombia, Murillo analyzes the complex forces driving Colombia's current decades-old guerilla war, U.S. involvement, media perceptions, and possible paths to peace. Whether it has been the U.S.-led war against "drug trafficking," the newly constituted "war against terrorism," or, as we have seen over the last two years, a convenient marriage of the two, the main effect has been to allow the U.S. to further expand its role in Colombia. The foundations of Colombia's social, political, and military conflict are rarely addressed by U.S. policy. Murillo describes Colombia's history of institutionalized corruption, state neglect, far-reaching poverty, and political violence and how they precede by decades the introduction and expansion of the drug trade. *Colombia and the U.S.* argues that the conflict in Colombia is not about drugs, nor guerrillas, nor "terrorism," but rather about the unwillingness of the country's elite to open up spaces for truly democratic participation in areas of economic and social development and political representation.

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Customer Reviews

MARIO ALFONSO MURILLO is a professor at the School of Communication at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, and teaches media studies courses at New York University. A veteran radio

journalist, he has reported extensively about Colombia and Latin America, producing award-winning programs and documentaries for the Pacifica Radio Network and National Public Radio. He is author of *Islands of Resistance: Puerto Rico, Vieques, and U.S. Policy* (2001). He lives in New York City.

This is a good book to get some review of events that have happened in Colombia. The author though writes with a clear bias and criticism of the path to a better Colombia. Almost 10 years later I think his perspective has turned out not to have been accurate.

Yet another attempt to bring an easy solution to a difficult problem that has no easy solution. Nice try, and at least it is fairly even-handed.

Colombia is a complex nation and is often misunderstood, according to Professor Mario A. Murillo. Moreover, "the nature of Colombia's internal conflict has been completely distorted by the prism of drug-war politics," he adds in the opening chapter. To this end, the author provides hard-hitting facts to support his claim that United States aid to Colombia, "is very often used by the Colombian political and economic elite to promote its own agenda." Murillo does not stop there...he exposes Colombia's feeble legal system. "In Colombia, the Constitution and its laws are often ignored and rarely enforced, either because of a lack of bureaucratic capacity on the part of the state to do so, or because of an absence of political will on the part of the ruling elite to execute those laws that are designed to protect the public," he reports. The author has few kind words for President Alvaro Uribe. Murillo attacks the politically motivated violence "by the state and its paramilitary apparatus." He also is critical of the corruption of the traditional political parties, run predominantly by elites..."who compete for the spoils that serve as an incentive for cycles of generalized corruption." The origins of the conflict, the myths behind Colombian democracy, the principal actors in today's conflict and the many views in the United States are studied in detail in this text. The analysis of the paramilitaries in Colombia is brilliant...particularly in respect to the millions of displaced people and the terrible treatment of Afro-Colombians. Still and all, the best part of this book is the call for change. Murillo slams Alvaro Uribe's unconditional support for George W. Bush and worries that the impunity of the violent actors in Colombia will continue to fuel the civil war. In conclusion, the author clearly states that a pure military solution is impossible and that only true democratic reforms can stop the violence. Recommended. Bert Ruiz

With the presidential elections right around the corner, or as Mario Murillo, author of "Colombia and the United States (War, Unrest and Destabilization)" (Seven Stories Press), might put it: the elections right around the corner, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Vélez is vying for Colombia's first-ever re-election. Rising quickly to the National House in Bogotá on a promise to use military might to solve Colombia's ills, Uribe has ridden a wave of popularity he created from his "strong hand, big heart" slogan to his image of a hard-working man. He has even appeared in public in a poncho and campesino hat with a ranchero look strengthening his popularity. For those unfamiliar with the Colombian conflict, Murillo's book serves as good starting point, showing how the conflict has been oversimplified in the media and why one should be wary of doing so. The historical context Murillo presents is surprisingly thorough for a 200-page book, banking on a wide variety of Colombian and American sources, including an author's interview with a high-level FARC leader. Murillo's stellar Chapter 6, "Colombia in the News: Structural Damages in a Post 9-11 World", is reason enough to read this book. Murillo's unique research yields gripping data regarding not only how (or how little) the media covers the conflict in one of the countries receiving the most U.S. military aid, but the surging Orwellian doublespeak that appears in Colombian and U.S. media. Despite the likelihood of another Uribe term, Murillo offers a refreshing voice calling for non-military/non-Uribe solutions to conflict in Colombia.

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