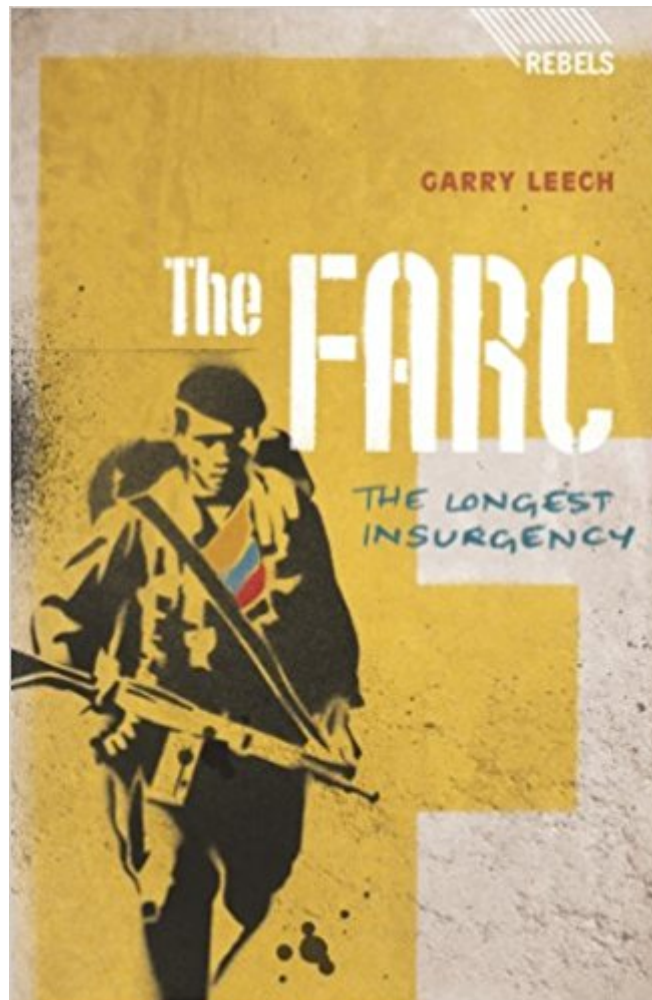




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The FARC: The Longest Insurgency (Rebels)



Synopsis

To many, including the Colombian, US and EU governments, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia are terrorists, engaged more in organized crime than ideological struggle. But does this tell the whole story? Is armed revolution possible without acts of terrorism? The FARC is the definitive introduction to the guerrilla group, examining its origins, aims, structure and operations. Garry Leech investigates the FARC's impact on local, regional and global politics and maps its future direction. Having reported from the frontline in Colombia for many years, and having been held captive by the FARC, Leech offers an unparalleled insight into one of the world's most high-profile armed revolutionary organizations.

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Customer Reviews

Gary Leech uses original sources and key interviews in writing this book on the history and evolution of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the FARC, from its inception to where the organization stands today. The FARC is Latin America's oldest and largest insurgency organization and has existed for almost five decades and will probably continue to operate for at least another two if true social and economic reforms do not happen in Colombia. We read of the origins of this

insurgency and its adaptability over time too the forces it opposes in Colombia. What started out as a grass roots supported guerrilla movement who had the interest of the repressed rural population has involved into a strong self-sufficient army and over the decades seems too have disconnected some what from the people. But with the economic and military aid being brought too bare on the FARC over the last decade by the United States it seems to be heading back toward its original ideological basis. Though not involved in the actual international drug trade they do derive a substantial income from taxing the drug trade. This has caused the media and western government to classify the FARC as narco-terrorist. But as the facts as presented in this book show it would be wrong too use this category for the FARC. This rebel group has been responsible for many human rights violations which have diminished dramatically since most of the infractions that from the FARC are the kidnapping; this is not too intimate that they have not committed atrocities. And seventy-six percent of all the real human rights violations were carried out by government supported paramilitary organizations and now the military and police force of Colombia.

Let me be clear what this book is: a piece of anti-American propaganda written by an author who is very politically motivated and woefully misinformed about the actual situation in Colombia. As one who has traveled to Colombia, interviewed individuals with extensive first-hand knowledge as to the workings and actions of the FARC insurgency, I can say that this book is terribly misleading. The book excels at presenting a strong history of how the FARC developed out of communist origins and then grew in strength over time to displace the government in many parts of the country. This comprises the first three chapters of the book. After that, everything goes downhill. In later chapters, Gary Leech begins to rationalize the actions of the FARC insurgency by saying that, although they take hostage and murder many civilians including women and children, so "do all the actors in Colombia's armed conflict" (104). Leech has the audacity to assume that this in some way disqualifies them from being a terrorist group. He goes on to quote a single lawyer who says that the FARC should have belligerent status under international law--a belief that Leech portrays as being universal in the legal world but, from my experience talking with attorneys, is limited to a few fringe individuals. Leech also misportrays the history of negotiations between the FARC and the Colombian government. In 1998, President Pastrana withdrew 2000 soldiers and police from a 16,200 square mile area in southern and eastern Colombia, effectively turning over control of this territory to the FARC as a gesture of good will, provided that the FARC disarm, turn over their hostages, and use the area to reintegrate into society.

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