

2018

Gandhara Research
Society, Pakistan

Alia Bashir, Lecturer
Department of Humanities,
COMSATS Institute of
Information Technology,
Abbottabad & Ahsan-ur-
Rahim, Professor of Politics,
HoD Department of political
Science, Government College,
Havalian

Gandhara Journal of Research in Social Science

ISSN: 2415-2404

Volume 3, No. 1, Spring 2018



One Hundred Years of Solitude: An Historical Account of Authoritarianism in Latin American Politics

One Hundred Years of Solitude is a portrayal of generational civil wars, diseases, incest and various colonizing forces in Macondo. These evils, symbolically representing Macondo, are, in fact, the real picture of disturbed, violent and politically instable state of Latin American politics. This research paper is an attempt to locate the reasons as to why Marquez depicts dictatorial power and authoritative characters such as Colonel Aureliano Buendia, Don Apolinar Mascote in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or the General in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* or as to why Macondo or the unnamed place in the latter text are destined to destroy. Well marked passages from the text have been analyzed through close reading method to show Marquez as successfully depicting disastrous effects of dictatorship on Latin American political and social system. It has been concluded that the dictatorial regimes in the region have mainly been responsible for the destruction of Latin America.



One Hundred Years of Solitude: An Historical Account of Authoritarianism in

Latin American Politics

Ali Bashir Tanoli & Ahsan-ur-Rahim

Introduction

One Hundred Years of Solitude is an historical account of Latin American political and social system. The complexities and the spell bound narrative, which surround the text of the novel, e.g. recurring names in seven generations, Jose Arcadio Buendia, Colonel Aureliano Buendia, bearing seventeen Aurelianos Jose Arcadio, Aureliano Jose, Arcadio, Aureliano Segundo, Jose Arcadio Segundo and yet another generation of Arcadio and Aureliano, finally ending at Aureliano and Aureliano, Ursula and Amaranta and Amaranta Ursula, etc, the diseases, the forgetfulness, the loss of memory and the incest, all symbolically represent the difficulties of imperialism, colonization and the civil wars and continuous military intervention in the political system of the region. This multilayered text may appeal its reader for imperialism and colonialism, starting straight from the conquest of Columbus in 15th century, through the Spanish conquest, such as the arrival the Arabs in Macondo, or the arrival of gypsies or various other forces, such as Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh and many more to influence the flow of events in Macondo, it is the character of Don Apolinar Mascote, the magistrate who brings the first seeds of authority and dictatorship in the area. It is in this context, the authoritative and



powerful hand in Mocando, the microcosm of Latin America, that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is important to study and understand.

One Hundred Years of Solitude is a portrayal of generational civil wars, diseases, incest and various colonizing forces in Macondo. The evils symbolically representing Macondo are, in fact, the realist picture of disturbed political and social state of Latin American politics. This research paper is an attempt to locate the reasons as to why Marquez depicts dictatorial power and authoritative characters such as Colonel Aurliano Buendia, Don Apolinar Mascote in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or the General in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* or why Macondo or the unnamed place in the latter text are destined to destroy. Well marked passages from the text have been analyzed through close reading method to show Marquez as successfully depicting disastrous effects of dictatorship on Latin American political and social system. Both primary and secondary sources have been employed including cross references which help shed light on the political system and the constitutions of Latin America, especially focusing Colombian politics. This research paper is an attempt to provide a better understanding to know the causes of instable democracy in Latin America. It has been concluded that the dictatorial regimes in the region have mainly been responsible for the destruction of Latin America.

Research Questions

This research paper comes out of two main questions, the first as to what makes Marquez to write about military politics in Macondo or why different dictators and authoritative characters are prominently placed throughout the text; and the other one as to why democracy has remained a failed political system in Latin American politics.



Literature Review

Pelayo (2001) observed that from 1910 to 1950 Latin American writers tried to present their world in realistic terms depicting, facts, supernatural, the world of dreams, magic and the absurd. This touch of realism is also associated with regionalism. The depiction of the regions with faithful representations. In that sense realism and the regionalism are one and the same. The way Marquez differs from these realist novelists is the novelty of technique and style from his predecessors. Earlier plot was emphasized more than style and technique. The continuous wars depicted by Marquez, in fact, are the civil wars fought by Colombia. Violence marred the political history of Colombia. Unlike his European counterparts, who dwelt on the themes related to WW1, Marquez dwelt on social, political and historical events of his own land, Columbia.

Hunger for power is the theme which is dominant in the narrative; the politician, whether Liberals or Conservatives, and the other officers, all competing for the same.

Pelayo (2001) also noted *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a narrative so rich, dense and complex that it becomes difficult for the reader to grasp what does the writer actually wants to say. The time period is from 1820 to 1927 with occasional references to sixteenth century, British colonial period, covering other foreign influences, such as, the arrival of gypsies and of the Arabs, etc.

As Bloom (2003) has observed that every single page of the novel is so rich that each word in the text demands close attention, 'an aesthetic battle fatigue'. The novel itself does not present any difficulty as far the flow of the text is concerned, but the repetition of the names, and the



recurrence plague, insomnia and the incest create a sort of illusion, so much so that the text takes toll on the reader's memory.

Barman (2010) noted that Latin America inherited a legacy of anarchy and destabilized political and social system, spoilt by powerful oligarchy who controlled Latin Americas newly independent nations. The struggle for power created extreme political, economic and social disorder and instability. This resulted in dictatorship which had had a long and lasting impact on Latin American politics. Dictatorships and repressive military regimes have been a constant and chronic feature in the Latin American political scenario. Colombian politics was mired in the intense rivalry between its two political parties — the Conservatives and the Liberals. Separated by ideological differences, resulting in numerous civil wars and internal conflicts.

Williams, R. (2007) *The Columbia Guide to Latin American Novel Since 1945* had observed that Latin American novels are often categorized as the 'Dictator Novels' According to him the most horrific period in 20th century Latin American politics is the insurgence of military rule which became popular during 1970s Latin American literature. The roots are to be found in Ramon del Valle and Guatemalan Miguel's novel during 1946 and Gabriel Marquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* in 1975. Marquez mainly drew upon notorious military men of the time.

Martin (2012) observes that the theme of military dictatorship is dominant in the text that Macondo as a national symbol becomes the continental symbol. According to him, Marques dwell on the military dictatorship of Colombian Politics, as the text of *The Hundred Years of Solitude* has its thematic relevance in *The Autumn of The Patriarch*, the figure who represent dictatorship in the whole continent, or *No One Writes to the Colonel*. The hints of military rule are to be found in the text when banana workers were massacred by the military government of



Colombia on having shares in the business with the North American company. The obsession with dictatorship of Marques is still clearer when he writes about the power, fame and the solitude. The novels depict the effects of dictatorship on people's psychology. The Patriarch is powerful, ugly and barbaric. People have no voice of their own, there is no progress in the novel nor any progress in the minds of the people, symbolizing a general decadence of military dictatorship.

Latin American politics is characterized by Left-Right wings of ideologies.

Williams (2010) observes that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a historical account of Columbia's chaotic history after its independence. It is unique as compared to the states of Latin America in its having two party system the Liberals and the Conservatives. Party loyalties and affiliation run in the families in Columbian politics. In fact, it is this division of Liberals and the Conservatives that is mainly responsible for the civil wars in the country. The incessant rain which is referred to in the latter part of the narrative symbolically represent continuous wars in the country.

The 'transculturation and the appropriation of beliefs and values in a hierarchy of power relation' and the 'identity construction' as noted by Chong (2008) is maintained by the aboriginals and the foreign forces throughout the text. This represents a continuous tug of war between the local people in the form of resistance to the foreign influences and the seize of power by the foreigners.

Latin America includes Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and other smaller states. The party strength, like states in Latin American political system is an important pillar of authoritarian government. It is through party politics that power has been maintained.



(Way, L& Levitsky, S, 2010). They provide a comprehensive view of Latin American politics how these regimes consolidated their through election system yet they maintained their power through authoritarianism. This parallelism is manifest in the text of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as the government through manipulations tries to maintain its hegemony in the state.

Discussion and Analysis

Nations like narratives begin to lose their meaning in the myths and metaphors but only then they emerge out of political thought and literary traditions as a powerful idea in the west. Bhabha (1990). Applying this idea of Bhabha to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* one can infer that the narrative of this novel is in fact an account of Latin America, whether it is called Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, or name it by any other nation state of Americas. Marquez depicts episodic military intervention in Latin American politics. He amalgamates different dictators of Chile, Dominican Republic, Colombia, and of Spain, such as Augusto Pinochet, Rafael Trujillo, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla and Francisco Franco into one dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. While depicting such an intervention in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* he explains his preoccupation in these words: “My intention was always to make a synthesis of all the Latin American dictators, but especially those from the Caribbean” (Darraj, 2006). Understanding military dictatorship in Marquez’ works, particularly in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, one first needs to struggle through a complicated, highly dense and symbolically rich text. The more one tries to read and grasp the events of the narrative the more the reader is perplexed. Dense information on each page of the text makes the memory stray. The generations of Arcadios and Aurelianos such as Jose Arcadio Buendia, Aureliano Buendia, Jose Arcadio, Aureliano Jose, Arcadio, Aureliano Segundo, Jose Arcadio Segundo and yet again



another generation of Arcadio and Aureliano, Ursula and Amaranta and Amaranta Ursula , etc, the diseases, the forgetfulness, the loss of memory and the incest, all not only affect the residents of Macondo or the invaders invading it but the reader of the text is also affected in the same way. Such is the effect of magic realism or of insomnia or the forgetfulness in the text that the reader literally feels paralyzed or amnesiac as in the words of William (2010), if history repeats itself then *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the depiction of such historical truths of Colombian politics.

This intricate text, as the narrative indicates, invites several responses but dominant theme is of military intervention and civil wars in Colombia. Although Macondo had had various foreign influences; of the gypsies, of the Arabs and Turks, of English Empire and the earliest of them all the Spanish Empire, the most lasting impact which Macondo had to face was the authority of Don Apolinar Mascote, the first despot who arrived in Macondo very tactfully, leading few soldiers and seven daughters, bringing with him the authority, the loss of memory of Macondo and the plague and forced the people to paint their houses blue, the official colour of the state instead of white. The insomnia and the forgetfulness and the plague were somehow endured by the people. They, with the help of science and magic of Jose Arcadio Buendia could bear the destruction by inventing memory machine and the list of the words at each of the entrance of the streets, they could not dismantle the disastrous effects of the authority brought by the magistrate:

His first order was for all the houses to be painted blue in celebration of the anniversary of the national independence. Jose Arcadio Buendia, with the copy of the order in his hand, found him taking his nap in hammock he had set up in the



narrow office. “Did you write this paper?” he asked him. Don Apolinar Mascote, a mature man, timid with a ruddy complexion, said yes. “But what right?” Jose Arcadio Buendia asked again. Don Apolinar Mascote picked up a paper from the drawer of the table and showed it to him. “I have been named magistrate of this town” (p. 57).

So the magistrate, the authority, the official colour of Colombian Conservative party, has been imposed upon the people of Macondo which later in the text leads to thirty civil wars fought by Aureliano Buendia. The earlier references to immortality of the Macondo is the reflection of their peacefulness and placidity that Jose Arcadio Buendia claims in their inexperience of death and graveyard in the area. In this context Chong (2008) has observed that it is the authority of the nation-state and the government that the forefather of Macondo refuses to submit. What is worse, in the imposition of authority is the massacre of the local workers at banana strike. And still heartening is the fact that out of fear of the government everybody in the town denies the massacre, even the only survivor of the incident is kept silent of not mentioning the incident. The ‘transculturation and the appropriation of beliefs and values in a hierarchy of power relation’ and the ‘identity construction’ as noted by Chong (2008) is maintained by the aboriginals and the foreign forces throughout the text.

Until this point, the narrative has been more metaphorical, symbolically representing the colonizing forces but the narrative becomes historical and bloodier with the liaison of Don Apolinar Mascote and Colonel Aureliano Buendia. Structurally too, the sweeping events of Imperial forces at the outset of the text present few problems of understanding the characters and



their thematic significance. One can even recall the events as to how first generation gets into the incest, is made to abandon its hometown and leaves for a new region, named Macondo. With the introduction of Mascote the authoritarian, and his seven daughters, one feels to forget whatever happens in the text. Such is the effect of the magic brought by Mascote. The reader seems to identify with the characters and he too feels spellbound and intoxicated as the events further move on. This authoritative power of the magistrate intensifies with the introduction of Colonel Aureliano Buendia who is modeled after General Rafael Uribe Uribe, general in liberal party in Colombia. Their relationship strengthens a little more when he gets married to the magistrate's daughter, Remedios, 'the link with the Buendias consolidated Don Apolinar Mascote's authority in the town' (p. 90). Only then the magistrate is able to persuade the local population for painting their houses blue for the independence celebration. Marquez wants to imply here that merging of authority of Mascote with democratic values of Jose Arcadio Buendia 'that everyone can paint his house the colour he feels like'(p.59) and the soldiers should leave Macondo at once has brought a disastrous effect on the lives of the region. The collapse of Columbia in particular and the region of Latin America in general has been due to the mix of authority with democracy. It is here that the the account of Latin American politics is relevant here. Latin America includes Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and other smaller states. While classifying regimes on the basis of democracies or authoritarian, (Diamond& Jay, L, 2002) had observed that in the third wave of democracy and the renaissance associated with it, it is still difficult to identify a state on the basis of a democracy or an authoritarian regime. They question whether Russia, Ukraine, Indonesia, Turkey or Venezuela are democracies or authoritarian states. According to them it was a simple question of politics a few decades ago but new research has identified an overlap of these political system in these state, including Latin American states,



which they name them as hybrid regimes, hegemonic party systems, competitive authoritarian systems, something less than electoral democracies, etc.

Historically oligarchic democracies in Latin American states developed into full democracies until the rise of mass political participation. This is how the culture of democracy first started in small elite and gradually spread to mass participation till the point when this gradual process of democracy was interrupted and the elite sought out other way to curtail the political competition. For such hybrid regimes different scholars have coined various terms, such as ‘semi-consolidated democracies’ by Freedom House, ‘partial democracies’ by Epstein et al, ‘electoral democracies’ by Diamond, ‘illiberal democracies’ by Zakaria, ‘defective democracies’ by Croissant and Merkel, ‘competitive authoritarianism’ by Levitsky and Way, electoral authoritarianism by Schedler (Morlino 2008). The purpose of using these cross references in relation to the text of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is to gloss over the idea as to how an independent region of Macondo transformed into hybrid regimes which ultimately resulted into a crippled Colombia or Latin America as represented by a real cannibal in the text named as Aureliano with a pigtail.

While depicting party politics, Williams (2010) observes that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a historical account of Colombia’s chaotic history after its independence. It is unique as compared to the states of Latin America in its having two party system the Liberals and the Conservatives. Party loyalties and affiliation runs in the families in Colombian politics. In fact, it is this division of Liberals and the Conservatives that is mainly responsible for the civil wars in the country. The incessant rain which is referred to in the latter part of the narrative symbolically represent continuous wars in the country, ‘It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days.



There were periods of drizzle during which everyone put on his full dress and convalescent look to celebrate the clearing but people soon grew accustomed to interpret the pauses as a sign of redoubled rain' (p. 320). Later, it is with the floods that everything in Macondo is purged off and Macondo is reborn.

It is in this context that the party strength is an important pillar of authoritarian government. It is through party politics that power has been maintained. (Way, L& Levitsky, S, 2010). It is the same party system of which Aureliano is being briefed by his father-in-law in the following words:

The Liberals, he said, were, Freemasons, bad people, wanting to hang priests, to institute civil marriage and divorce, to recognize the rights of illegitimate children as equal to legitimate ones, and to cut the country cut up in federal system that would take power away from the supreme authority. The Conservatives on the other hand, who had received their power directly from God, proposed the establishment of public order and family morality. They were the defenders of the faith of Christ, of the principle of authority and were not prepare to permit the country to be broken down into autonomous entities (p. 98).

'Don Apolinar Mascote sealed the ballot box with the label crossed by his signature.' (p. 99). It is this hybridity of government that the ballot boxes are being prepared for voting in the country. The manipulation in the ballot is clearly revealed when he orders to open the box that



redouble the blue ones, ‘That night while he played dominoes with Aureliano, he ordered the sergeant to break the seal in order to count the votes. There were almost as many red ballots as blue, but the sergeant left only ten red ones and made up the difference with the blue. Then they sealed the box again with a new label and the first thing on the following day it was taken to the capital of the province’ (p. 99).

In this context of Red and Blue, the colours of Liberals and Conservatives, Delpar (1981) traced the history of Colombian politics and had observed that such party politics is effacing from other Latin American States, such as Brazil and Uruguay. Colombian literature mainly dwells on nineteenth century politics which comprise biographies, autobiographies and other genres. Liberal party first served in government from 1863 to 1885 and later on as opposition from 1885 to 1899. It is that period of Colombian history when Liberals organized a Revolution after a long period of seclusion from mainstream politics. The war, the martial law and the curfew in the narrative represent the history of Colombia. Every time the house is cleaned by Ursula and the filth is washed away whenever there is flood or the rain or whirlwind, ‘Macondo is already a fearful whirlwind of dust’,(p.422). This historical account of violence, and wars reveals that Marquez is clearly against dictatorship and authority. Since first quarter of seventeenth century Colombia has been a democracy where party system has had a tug of war for power, an uncompromising ideological conflict between the church and the state, legalization of marriages and divorces etc., which led to civil wars in the country.

The obsession of Marquez with the division of Liberal and he Conservatives is so intense that he writes in the same mood of anger in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, ‘...the liberals who had sold the federalist war, the conservatives who bought it, the generals of the high command, three



of his cabinet ministers, the arch bishop primate and Ambassador Schontner, all together in one single plot calling for the unity of all against the despotism of centuries, so that they could they divide up among themselves the booty of the death, so absorbed in the depths of greed that no one noticed the unburied president.....' (p. 26). The language, thought and emotions in the text are even more profound in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* than the *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The criticism more blunt, but the theme is the same, a hatred toward dictatorial governments, a voice in favour of rule of the people and the rule of law the region where peace should prevail.

Conclusion

After analysis and discussion of the well marked passages from the text it becomes clear that Marquez is obsessed with civil war or party politics or the dictatorship in Macondo because he is depicting the violent history of Latin American politics especially the disturbed political state of Colombia. The difficulty with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is. As suggested by Bhabha (1999), is a metaphor, an allegory. The writer is not easily visible from the text as compared to *The Autumn of the Patriarch* yet it is clear that Marquez dwells on the theme of peacefulness, against violence. The generations of Arcadios and Aurelianos such as Jose Arcadio Buendia, Aureliano Buendia, Jose Arcadio, Aureliano Jose, Arcadio, Aureliano Segundo, Jose Arcadio Segundo and yet again another generation of Arcadio and Aureliano, Ursula and Amaranta and Amaranta Ursula , etc, are the account of the Latin American history.

The questions raised at the start of the text as to why Marquez dwells on the dictators, wars, the liberals and the conservatives etc. it becomes clear that he is faithfully tracing the history of his own country. Tracing from the earliest times of history, the colonizing effects, independence of Colombia from its Spanish Empire, the bloody violence and the power politics



in the country resulting civil wars, all converged in a magical creation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

End Notes

Barman, B. (2010) Representation of Colombian political history – A study of the selected novels of Gabriel García Márquez.(Unpublished doctoral thesis). Assam University India.

Bhabha, K.H. (1990). (Ed). *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.

Bloom, H. (2003). (Ed). *Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Chelsea House Publishers: USA.

Chong, T. (Ed). *Globalization and its Counter-forces in South east Asia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Close, D. (2017). *Latin American Politics: An Introduction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Delpar, H. (1981). *Red against Blue: The Liberal Party in Columbian Politics, 1863- 1899*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press.

Darraj, M.S. (2006). *Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. New York: Info Publishing.

Diamond & Jay, L. (2002). Thinking about Hybrid Regimes. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol.13.No 2,pp21-35.University of Hopkins Press.



Morlino, L. (2008 September). Hybrid Regimes or Regimes in Transitions? Retrieved from http://fride.org/download/WP70-Hybrid_regimes_ENG_sep08.pdf

Marquez, G.G. (1967). *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. New York: Penguin Books.

Marquez, G.G. (1977). *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. New York: Penguin Books.

Martin, G. (2012). *The Cambridge Introduction to Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. Cambridge: New York.

Pelayo, R. (2001). *Gabriel Garcia Marquez: A Critical Companion*. Greenwood Press: London.

Way, A. L., & Levitsky, S. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarian Regime: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, R. (2007) *The Columbia Guide to Latin American Novel Since 1945*. Columbia University.

Williams, R. (2010). *A Companion to Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. New York: Woodbridge.

William, R. L. (1984). *Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Wood, M. (1990). *Gabriel Garcia Marques: One Hundred Years of Solitude*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

