Colombia from the Inside

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Cuadernos del Cedla

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Contents

Foreword

In July 2002, two meetings concerning Colombia were organized in The Netherlands. First an expert meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. A few days later, two sessions on the current political crisis in Colombia were organized during the 2002 Conference of CEISAL, the Consejo Europeo de Investigaciones Sociales de América Latina, in Amsterdam. At both these events a number of Colombian academics had intensive discussions with their Dutch and European colleagues and regional experts; and also among themselves! These insightful conversations offered new perspectives to all participants. For this reason, the organizers decided to revise, translate and publish the materials presented on these occasions into English.

In the meantime, the political situation in Colombia changed dramatically. When the translations were ready to be published, some of the arguments started to belong to history; while others became more relevant. Updating the papers was unrealistic at that point. Going over these contributions one more time at the end of 2004 it is clear that continuities still prevail. Many of the issues and debates presented in this Cuaderno remain at the top of the political agenda. These essays contain valuable insights and important observations, historically as well as for shedding light on the present-day situation in Colombia.

Portia Reyes accepted the task to serve as our English editor, for which we are extremely obliged, and Marinella Wallis has formatted the manuscript. We sincerely thank the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support in bringing our Colombian friends and colleagues to the Netherlands and making the reproduction of these papers possible. We hope to continue strengthening this connection between Dutch academics and policymakers and our Colombian colleagues. This kind of cooperation is more relevant than ever in present-day Colombia.

Amsterdam, November 2004

1

INTRODUCTION

DONNY MEERTENS[1] AND MICHIEL BAUD[2]

Colombia has often been described as the linchpin of Latin America. Located between Central and South America, it has been a crucial geo-political region. The country has followed a distinct and idiosyncratic political path, but its social and cultural development has been illustrative of the continent and has offered interesting comparative perspectives. In the nineteenth century, Colombia already possessed a sophisticated, albeit at times violent, political system. Socially and culturally, it was one of the more advanced countries in the region until the mid twentieth century. However, apparent little has remained of these accomplishments in the twenty-first century. The country has symbolized uncontrolled violence and fragmentation and dissolution of state power. The civil war that has haunted the country after the murder of presidential candidate Gaitán in 1948, has disrupted Colombian society and nearly destroyed the state and its institutions. Its strategic hemispheric position has turned from an asset into a serious liability. The production and commercialization of narcotics have become an increasingly important sector leading to an uncontrollable economy and a vulnerable international position.

The present volume focuses on this complex and often contradictory society that has been characterized by violence, international controversy and uncontrolled military struggle. It is largely based on the results of a special seminar on the Colombian Conflict in International Perspective, held at the CEISAL congress, Amsterdam, in 2002, and a meeting organized at the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs in

The Hague. Both events aimed at understanding the Colombian conflict, emphasizing a vision *from within*. They reflected on the different perspectives on the situation in Colombia, while hoping to generate debates between academics and policy makers on current dynamics of conflict, particularly in the context of North American anti-terrorist and anti-drug measures.

The seminar took place in July 2002 and most of the authors of this volume finished their contributions before the end of that year. In August 2002, Colombia's current president, Alvaro Uribe Vélez, took office. Many observers have tended to see the Uribe government as a clear break with the past. Indeed, there is no doubt that Uribe's election symbolized a rejection of the conciliatory and 'dialogical' political project of former president Pastrana and a turn to a political project geared towards confrontation and repression of drugs traffickers and guerrillas. But does the Uribe government really represent a clear break with the past? Have the dynamics of the conflict fundamentally changed during this new presidential period or in the evolving international context? And what are the prospects for the future? Do we find a progressive development in the situation of conflict - for the best or for the worst-, or does the sensation of circularity, as mentioned by Gonzalo Sánchez in his introduction, dominate the Colombian political scene? Definitive answers are difficult to come by, but there seems to be more continuity than many politicians want us to believe. In this chapter an attempt will be made to take up some of these issues that are essential for understanding the present-day condition of Colombia.

The Colombian crisis

When president Andrés Pastrana took office in 1998, expectations were high. In the tight election campaign with his Liberal opponent Horacio Serpa, he had promised to do his best to find a peaceful solution for the Colombian crisis and to fight corruption and uncontrolled government violence. After the disappointing experiences of the government of Samper, who was been accused of financing his election campaign with drugs money, this was more than the Colombian population could hope for. As so many presidents before him, Pastrana hoped to end the violence through negotiations with the guerrilla's. Negotiations with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) had already begun before his election, but he decided to allow the FARC a so-called *zona de distensión*. The guerrilla would be allowed to take control over this demilitarized zone during the ninety days of peace

talks. This strategy seriously backfired in the long run. The FARC were not prepared to negotiate with the Colombian government and so, the President was repeatedly humiliated. FARC used the demilitarized zone to reinforce its military power and to continue its strategy of kidnappings and infrastructural sabotage.

At the same time, paramilitary troops increased dramatically. The paramilitary organizations had grown rapidly in the 1980s as they became more or less centralized under command of the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia). It was a public secret that the paramilitary forces were supported by the Colombian army. By the 1990s the AUC constituted a formidable military force in the country and presented just as serious a challenge to the government as the guerrilla. The paramilitary used their new military power to attack (supposed) centres of guerrilla activity and, above all, to gain territorial control of FARC-dominated zones. They systematically violated human rights and committed numerous massacres. Thus the peace process became, paradoxically, a period of increasing polarization.

Although the strategy of the Pastrana government proved to be a failure, it managed to restore sympathy from the United States and Europe, which lauded Pastrana's efforts in ending the war and improving the human rights situation in his country. This led to a more positive attitude towards Colombia in the international community, thereby increasing financial and political support. However, the Pastrana government ultimately left Colombian society with a profound sense of frustration. The military and political situation in the country deteriorated rapidly and peace appeared to be further away than ever. Both insurgents and paramilitaries strengthened their military force disrespectfully of human rights and international humanitarian law. The rural population became especially victimized by the ruthless methods of the military factions. The humanitarian crisis intensified, particularly after the collapse of peace talks in February 2002, which generated increased militarization leading to attacks on infrastructure and indiscriminate violence in rural population centres.

Along with the military and political sectors, economic conditions in Colombia deteriorated. The country entered a period of deep recession in 1998. The percentage of the total population below the poverty line increased from 56 per cent in 1999 to 60 per cent in 2000, and up to 82 per cent in rural areas.[3] Low agricultural production in war-torn countryside, combined with the impact of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on urban resources and social services have reduced the living standards of the poor further. Indeed, according to UNDP's latest

report on human development, Colombia went down to number 68 in the ranking of 173 countries.[4] A survey of IDPs in six regions of the country showed that their income is just above the misery line defined as half the average income of the poor.[5]

The government of Álvaro Uribe

In this sombre panorama of May 2002, three months after the breakdown of the peace process, Álvaro Uribe was elected president. Emblematic of most Colombians' desperate wish for security, he won these elections with an absolute majority in the first round. This result showed the disillusionment of the populace with the former government. Uribe's political agenda stressed *mano dura* vis-à-vis the guerrilla, promising to end the violence in the country. After his inauguration in August 2002, the new president immediately granted emergency powers to the military by declaring a 'state of internal upheaval' (*estado de conmoción interior)*.[6] This was part of a series of highly contested measures taken by the new government, which included financial budget assistance to a million civilian informants or 'collaborators'. The state also created 'zones of rehabilitation and consolidation' (*zonas de rehabilitación y consolidación)* in more than half of the country, where civilian rights were restricted, including movement and residence of all inhabitants and military control of foreigners like journalists and members of international NGOs.[7] At the same time, to demonstrate his control of the country, the president travelled extensively to its remote parts, especially those that were threatened by the guerrilla or even considered to be under their control. In 2003, Uribe symbolically moved the centre of his government twice to the frontier region with Venezuela, where the Chávez government apparently worked together with The FARC. Uribe therewith signalled to the FARC and his Venezuelan colleague that Colombia would protect its sovereignty, fomenting nationalist feelings among the Colombians at the same time.

In the wake of his popularity, president Uribe has energetically put forward a series of measures for modernization, one of the four goals outlined in his administration's Development Plan. By June 2003, Uribe had reduced government employment to 8.468 workplaces, by merging six Ministries into one and unifying three national agricultural institutions. He had ordered the revamp of the national telecom company, national oil company and institute for social security.[8] As a result, the Colombian economy somewhat recuperated. The gross national product reached 3.8 per cent during the first three months of

2003, and consolidated around 2.5 per cent for the whole year. The National Bank (*Banco de la República)* accorded this new economic dynamics to the country's improved security situation and strict monetary policies.[9]

The most important characteristic of the Uribe government has been its tough posture vis-à-vis the problem of violence and insecurity. Its Strategy of Democratic Security (*Estrategia de Seguridad Democrática)* has caught the attention and provoked contrasting responses from people inside and outside the country. The establishment of above-mentioned rehabilitation and consolidation zones was followed by measures combining repressive and conciliatory tactics to resolve the insurgency. The Uribe government clearly favoured a military solution of the conflict. It established a network of paid informants, created a special peasant soldiers military force, promoted desertion and demobilization of those in arms (both amongst guerrillas and paramilitary groups) and adopted an Anti-Terrorist Decree, which featured the controversial endowment of judicial power to the military.[10]

The military vision of the Uribe government also became clear in its relations with the United States. Instead of being cautious in involving US military in Colombian affairs as former governments did, the new president openly sided with the United States. Uribe supported the Plan Colombia and its anti-coca policies without hesitation. In the wake of the September 11 attacks on the US and its new war on terrorism, he requested intensified involvement of US troops on Colombian soil. In July 2003, Uribe pressed president Bush again to take a more active stand in the Colombian conflict.

The Uribe programme also repressed the cultivation and trafficking of coca and drugs. Here, the president worked closely with the US administration. His programme of eradication entailed the fumigation of coca plants and allowed US planes to intensively control of Colombian airspace. FARC's shooting of a US airplane and hostage taking of three US military men only led to a temporary suspension of these flights.

The War on Drugs and resulting close relations between the US and Colombia received mixed responses among Colombians. Many people feared the consequences of a purely military strategy and dreaded US dominance. They have supported the complaints of small peasant and indigenous communities on the negative consequences of indiscriminate fumigation, which had seriously affected staple crops and killed cattle. Their suggestion to manually eradicate coca plants and end fumigation fell on deaf ears, however. In March 2003, the Colombian government announced that the area of coca cultivation had fallen to

almost 30 per cent over the last year.[11] This announcement buttressed the government's continued faith on fumigations as the best instrument to put an end to coca cultivation. Many people have doubted these success stories, however. They have pointed at the relocation of the of the coca crop as a result of government policies. Coca cultivation has dwindled in some of the old zones, such as southern Putumayo and Caquetá departments. But cultivation has rapidly increased in the neighbouring province of Nariño, which has developed into the second largest coca-growing region after Guaviare. In addition, government figures have been questioned and enormous discrepancies have been found between the information given by the US monitoring system, by the army and by the peasants.

Recently, the relations between the Uribe and Bush governments have cooled because of conflicting interests in the international sphere, and Uribe's new efforts to involve other Latin America nations and the United Nations in finding a solution for the Colombian conflict. In the beginning of July 2003, Washington announced that military aid for 2004 of nearly five million dollar would be stopped as retaliation for Colombia's opposition to the American Service Members Protection Act at the International Criminal Court. In other aspects, however, military cooperation between the Uribe-government and the US has continued, and even intensified. Nonetheless, the good relations between the two countries have evidently been severed. As a result, Uribe has tried to talk the United Nations into a more active role in the conflict through an array of sometimes contradictory tactics. First, he courted UN officials. But Kofi Annan refused to send UN blue helm troops to Colombia, and so, Uribe criticized the UN harshly. In a speech delivered at the Inter-American Court for Human Rights in Costa Rica, he stated that 'the UN criticizes a lot, but does not resolve anything'. He expressed the hope that the help of the Latin American countries in the so-called Rio Group, which had asked the UN a tougher stance on The FARC, could change the reticent attitude of the UN. Some observers have a more cynical interpretation of Uribe's words: 'It is not so much that the UN does not want to help in finding a solution for the Colombian conflict, but that it does not do what he wants the organization to do'.[12]

All these events indicated a gradual change in the national and international positioning of the different Colombian partners in the negotiation process. After the earlier collusion course of The FARC and the Uribe-government, a slight softening of positions now appears. Both parties have presented - although expectedly circumspect - new

openings for peace talks. The more active involvement of recently elected Brazilian president Lula may open new roads for peace.

Security

The longer term results of the tough security strategy of the Uribe government are difficult to measure at this moment, but they will undoubtedly be contradictory. It is clear that the first period of the new government improved the security situation in the country and notably succeeded in the war on drugs and in decreasing violence. In September 2003, a joint operation of British and Colombian police forces resulted in an unprecedented arrest of 14 people and confiscation of seven billion dollars in bonds and seven million British pounds in cash. Although many people see the war on drugs as a hopeless case, this event marked an important success in the struggle against drug trafficking and money laundering.

In the case of internal violence, the Uribe government has also had some success. Colombian and international newspapers triumphantly reported the lessening of violence in the first half year of 2003.[13] Government reports stated that killings were down by 22 per cent (to 11.000) and kidnappings even by 34 per cent (to 1000), compared to the same period in 2002. However, these figures were not unambiguous. It should be noted for example, that the decrease in violence was weighed against the extreme levels of violence committed during the Pastrana government (1999-2002). In this period, a total of 12.948 (verified) hostages were taken. At the beginning of the Uribe period 3958 of these were still in custody; 552 died in hostage; 5543 paid for their liberation; and the anti-kidnapping combined task force GAULA rescued 2325 people.[14] Columbians felt increased fear and insecurity at the end of the Pastrana period. As a result, they were relieved by the tough measures and more efficient repression of the Uribe government. There was a sense that Uribe indeed 'holds back the tide' as the title of a recent issue of *The Economist* proclaimed. The improvement of the security situation under his government accounted for his continuing high level of popularity of more than 70 per cent. Confident of popular backing, Uribe launched emotional attacks on critics of the country's human rights situation, including the United Nations, international organizations or the extensive and diverse NGO sector. However, the UN High Commissioner and the, protested against him, when he accused some members of the European Union of being directly connected to terrorism.[15]

Perhaps the most successful part of Uribe's strategy to undermine the guerrilla movement has been the programme aimed at stimulating desertion and providing reintegration of ex-guerrilla into society. Desertions and demobilizations increased dramatically according to figures of the Ministry of Defence. A surprisingly high number of ex-combatants (1278 in one year, 86 per cent of whom are guerrillas) have surrendered and entered a network of army-run 'refuge centres' (*albergues)* which are part of the governments reintegration programme.[16]

At the same time, the Uribe government started negotiating with the paramilitary, who were offered a special pardon (*indulto)* in January 2003 in exchange for a partial ceasefire.[17] The government had been able to put pressure on the AUC because the US had asked for extradition of some of the AUC leaders for human rights violations. However, it still has to answer to the difficult questions of dealing with the paramilitary involvement in drug trafficking and communicating with the large number of internal factions. Discussions were simultaneously held with three different blocks that were active in 21 different provinces (30 per cent of the national territory), each having different stances towards drug trafficking. Clear-cut negotiations were quite difficult.[18] The US stance towards these conversations was ambiguous. On the one hand, the US organized a meeting between Embassy functionaries and members of the AUC in 2003. The State Department also supported the discussions financially. On the other hand, the DEA and the Department of Justice opposed too many concessions to the paramilitaries especially with respect to the extradition of specific AUC members accused of active involvement in the drugs trade. Finally, the question remains how to regain state authority and restore democracy at the local level without a parallel process of conversations with the guerrilla that at least temporary would resolve the local security problems.[19]

The Uribe government thus walks a tightrope. Ideologically, the paramilitary troops should be considered the government's allies, but, ironically, they have also been guilty of systematic and awesome atrocities against the civilian population and structural violations of human rights. The paramilitaries have endangered public order, which purportedly needed to be controlled. The government did not want to weaken them too much as they were needed in containing the FARC. These difficulties demonstrate the quagmire of Colombian politics where political and military negotiations take place simultaneously at different tables.

The situation in Colombia remains very unstable and much is to be done with respect to security. The FARC is far from being wiped out, and the *narcotráficantes* and guerrilla still pose a danger to the Colombian state. And public perceptions can change rapidly. Alfredo Rangel's contribution to this book notes that the bombing of Bogotá's exclusive Club El Nogal, by the FARC on 7 February 2003, shocked the public and greatly damaged the perception of security.[20] In the build-up to the provincial elections of October 2003, a number of assaults occurred and several candidates were killed. The Asociación Colombiana de Municipios reported that more than hundred candidates were seriously threatened in the period before the elections.[21] In the coming period, hence, the Uribe government will have to show to what extent it really and lastingly can make a difference.

Rehabilitation and reconstruction

The policy measures that prioritized return to zones of origin for internally displaced populations encountered many problems as well. In fact, people returned to their villages without any security guarantees.[22] Additionally, many observers criticized the absence of reconstruction aid for destroyed towns, like the case of Bojayá. This village was attacked by the FARC and more than a hundred civilians were killed and thousands displaced when the church where they had sought refuge, was hit by a FARC explosive. Another example qualifying the rosy picture is provided by the situation in the first Zones of Rehabilitation comprising several municipalities in the provinces of Arauca, Bolívar and Sucre, particularly the so-called Montes de María area. The government first tried to regain control over the region by military means. The objective of the operation was to 1) combat terrorism and drug trafficking, 2) restore legitimate authority in the region and 3) guarantee local population's safety and security.

However, it became clear that the government's narrow military definition of 'security' proved to be disadvantageous. Six months of rehabilitation demonstrated that in order to find long-term solutions social, cultural and economic elements should also be considered. In spite of positive results in preventing terrorist acts and the capturing several drug traffickers, tranquillity has not been restored in the zones. On the contrary, guerrilla groups have responded ferociously and succeeded in evading the army.[23]

The results of the network of paid informants or 'collaborators' are equally mixed. They have been kept out of publicity, for obvious

security reasons and the controversy the project has generated. Many Colombian observers have been sceptical about the possibilities of success of this new programme; others criticized its moral and political implications. They doubted the credibility of a state, which had demanded a part of its constituency to spy on the other. Many Colombians voiced their disgust on the government ways of attracting informants in television. Commercials showed uniformed men giving big amounts of money to informers - the faces of both being hidden. The programme has seeded new patterns of distrust and multiple forms of polarization. Because of the secrecy surrounding the programme, it is difficult to assess if military intelligence has improved with the help of these collaborators. The least that can be remarked is that it has not brought clear-cut successes for the government. Kidnappings, some of them high-profiled ones, have continued. One of the most spectacular examples of a military rescue action failed, disastrously leading to the death of a number of prominent hostages.

Through its tough stance, the Uribe government has managed to win the trust of the neo-conservative US administration. However, Colombians are more difficult to convince. Neither those who wish an end of the violence, not the more engaged amalgam of human rights activists, left-wing political parties and critical observers have been impressed by the results of the government. The elections of October 2003, confronted Uribe with the consequences of this situation. The population of Bogotá voted a left-wing mayor into office. Uribe's plans to overhaul the political system and push through austerity measures failed to gain enough support in a referendum, and the Constitutional Court made serious objections to the Anti-Terrorist Decree. However, these essential political debates seem to have been overshadowed by the President's efforts to gain political support for his re-election and for the constitutional modification that has to make this possible.

Prospects of peace

Although the Uribe government has tried to present itself as a tough government of the *mano dura* politics, it left some possibility for continuing peace talks open. The possibilities of dialogue with the armed groups have not been completely out of the agenda, even though negotiations with the AUC paramilitaries have been wearisome and the resume of talks with FARC and ELN guerrillas are yet to be resumed.

On their part, the guerrillas and particularly the FARC have changed theirs tactics. The number and scale of violent acts have diminished; violence is now directed against the central government and the formal institutional system of the Colombian state in general. In the years 2002 and 2003, the country experienced various bomb attacks in its most important urban centres and at least one open attempt to assassinate the president himself. In relation to its strategy of kidnappings – one of the most clearly and directly felt dangers within the Colombian population - the FARC has also changed its tactics. In order to raise funds, the FARC added the selective kidnapping of important politicians to their agenda. Their economic logic has been complemented by a more politically oriented strategy of putting pressure on the government.

Recently, new discussions have been waged as to the possibilities of a Humanitarian Agreement. To these discussions the FARC demanded a 'law of exchange', in which their imprisoned members will be exchanged for kidnapped politicians and civilians. Such a law has been on FARC's agenda for quite some time now; it keeps the issue alive by targeting the circles close to Uribe. This invariably leads to an impasse between the government, who want all hostages freed, and the FARC, who demand the release of all imprisoned guerrillas. Since July 2003, Uribe has tried to find a way out of this impasse presenting a risky proposal for a new law on 'Conditional Liberty' (or 'Penalidad Alternativa', as it is now called). This law aims at strengthening the demobilization strategy by offering conditional liberty (in contrast to amnesty or pardon) for imprisoned leaders in exchange for their commitment to demobilization. The controversial aspect of this law is its coverage of prisoners condemned for crimes against humanity. This has again fuelled debates on impunity and the relationship between crimes committed by different actors in the course of Colombian violence. It begs for new discussion of its multiple origins, interrelationships and endless chain of vengeance. As Alfredo Rangel (Chapter 7) observes: 'The peace process in Colombia will thus be extremely long and complex, much like the armed confrontation between the Colombian people has been'.

The challenges faced by the Colombian peace process, mentioned by Gonzalo Sánchez in Chapter 2, continue to haunt the Uribe government. The following chapters deal with them in various ways. Different perspectives on the historical roots of the conflict and its relation to trafficking of drugs are presented by Alvaro Camacho (Plan Colombia), Ricardo Vargas (drugs and security policies), and Alfredo Molano (the underlying problems of land reform and corruption). The second

part of the book addresses the current dynamics of war's participants: National Army (Leal), guerrilla forces (Rangel) and paramilitaries (Romero). With these last chapters, the volume ends at the heart of debates on the issue under scrutiny.

Notes

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[3] Colombia, Departamento Nacional de Planeación, *Coyuntura económica e indicadores sociales*, Bogotá, December 2001

[4] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, 2002, http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/ 2002/en/ [accessed September 2002]

[5] International Organization for Migration, *Diagnóstico sobre la población desplazada en seis departamentos de Colombia*, Bogotá, 2001.

[6] Colombia, *Decreto 1837 de 2002*, Bogotá, 11 August, 2002

[7] Colombia, *Decreto 2002 de 2002*, Bogotá, 14 Septemcer, 2002. Also: 'Decretan la Conmoción Interior', *El Tiempo* [Bogotá], 12 August, 2002; 'Restricción en medio país', *El Tiempo* [Bogotá], 15 September, 2002.

[8] *El Tiempo,* 15 and 17 June, 2003.

[9] *El Espectador* 1 June, 2003, *El Tiempo* 17 June, 2003.

[10] The *Estatuto Anti-terrorista* was passed by Congress on 18 June, 2003. It was heavily criticized by human rights organizations and United Nations Special Advisor on Colombia, James Lemoyne, for its suspension of basic human rights, and therefore being unconstitutional.

[11] From 144,807 hectares to 102,071 hectares, a decrease of 46,736 hectares. *El Tiempo* 18 and 19 March, 2003.

[12] *Cambio*, 23 June, 2003, p. 29, 'El regaño de San José', *El Espectador*, 18 May, 2003, p.6ª.

[13] See for instance *The Economist*, June 2003, 'Superman Uribe holds back the tide', p. 49 and the Dutch NRC Handelsblad, 2 July 2003.

[14] *El Tiempo*, 23 August, 2002 'El secuestro en Colombia alcanza las peores cifras de la historia'.

[15] *El Tiempo,* 14 September, 2003 p. 1, and 15 September, 2003, p. 20. The remark on 'theorists' was an indirect reference to the most recent UNDP Human Development Report (2003), *Violence: a deadlock with a way out* (*Violencia: callejon con salida*). His fury had also been raised by a NGO report on the human rights situation in 2003 called the *Authoritarian Witchcraft* (*Embrujo Autoritario).*

[16] *El Tiempo,* May 2003.

[17] Conversations in 2004 on the establishment of a 'concentration and negotiations zone' in Santa Fé de Ralito, Cordoba province.

[18] In 2004 the process became even more complicated by the disappearance and possible death of AUC's recognized leader Carlos Castaño simultaneously with the take-over by Mancuso, former second-in-command and involved in drugs trafficking.

[19] Mauricio Romero, *El Camino culebrero*, UN Periódico, no. 43, 16 February,

2003.

[20] *El Tiempo*, 14 February, 2003, p.17.

[21] *CNN-Español*, 'Estalla un coche bomba frente a sede política en Medellín', 4 September, 2003.

[22] The government was criticized for not complying with the UN Principles for Internal Displacement, which established the following: it must take place voluntarily (this is only possible when realistic alternatives are available) and human dignity and security must be guaranteed (see Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (OCHA) and The Brookings Institution, *Guía para la aplicación de los Principios Rectores de los Desplazamientos Internos (*Washington, 2002); pp. 27-8, 72, 78-9. Also Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli, *Finding Durable Solutions for IDPs: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and International Experiences of Voluntary Return, Resettlement and Reintegration*, paper presented to the seminar on Return, Resettlement and Reintegration of IDPs in Colombia (Bogotá, 2003); p. 2.

[23] For example, 'bicycle bombs' in Arauca; kidnappings (19), attacks on oil pipes (4) and homicides (117) in Montes de María-zone, or threats on local mayors in both regions. (*El Tiempo,* 10, 11 and 12 March, 2003).

2

CHALLENGES FACED BY CONTEMPO-RARY COLOMBIA

Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez[1]

Introduction

Contemporary Colombia embodies all issues related to war, starting with the characters of its actors. The first question concerns the type of war being waged, if it is that we are in war, is it a civil war? Is it a war that seeks to involve an oppressed population? Is it a war against a legitimate state? Or is it, like the 1950s' violence, a 'wave of criminality', which can be crushed only by coercive actions of those in power? Do these categories fall short in pondering on today's Colombia? Is it a war over property and means of production or participation and co-governance?

Whatever characterization, the war entails political implications. Some authors downplay the intensity of the conflict. Others, considering the current transformation of the nature of wars, declare that the distinction between internal and international war is no longer adequate. And yet again, a few scholars believe that the insurgency's objectives have become so blurred by economic interests that they have undermined the social origins and transforming vocation of their struggle.

Along this line of thought, a number of scholars have contemplated over what Michael Walzer[2] has called the moral arguments. These include justness of the fundaments that precede, accompany, or follow

wars; means used to win them; or foreign 'humanitarian intervention' that pretends to mitigate the excesses of domestic war and defend universal values beyond territorial jurisdiction and national sovereignty. Finally, it may be asked if and when the massive organization of war against an internal enemy is justifiable, especially when any basis for neutrality is demolished, as what happens during the Uribe government.

Origins

The origin of the current armed conflict is subject to intense debate in Colombia**.** Accumulated injustices are often invoked, starting with the aborted populism led by the assassinated Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Recently references are also made to the narrow-mindedness of the Frente Nacional, the oligarchic coalition that halted La Violencia of the 1950s. Still, some scholars resort to the tradition of unresolved civil wars and exceptional weight of memory in Colombia. Looking back, Colombians evoke the *Guerra de los Mil Días* (Thousand Days War) at the turn of the nineteenth century, which is considered the bloodiest in Latin America. From the 1940s on, Colombia has waged the longest war of the twentieth century: *La Violencia*. Despite evident ruptures, *La Violencia* is tied to the current war, which started several decades ago. The insurgents consider the agrarian problem, particularly the despoilment and humiliation of a peasant community during the military operation called *Operación Marquetalia*, as their myth. It represents the foundation of injustice that unfolds within an exclusive social pact of elites who block institutional projects to satisfy social demands, which, in turn, protract the insurgent struggle.

There are extensive discussions regarding the interrelationship of co-existing expressions of violence, which include guerrilla, drugs trafficking, organized crime, common delinquency, and their interconnections and internal hierarchies. Some discussants underline the role of the drugs traffic in fuelling all forms of violence; others stress that common delinquency weighs more than political violence. Others consider the criminal violence as a precondition for the expansion of political violence.

Dynamics

More recently, discussion centres on the relationship between the origin and dynamics of war. Scholars underline how the protracted Colom-

bian war transforms old and introduces new factors of war. Here drugs become relevant as a source of funding, logistics, weapons, and above all, a social base for peasants thrown from the centre of the country. Is this the sole dynamics? Could there be a more circular movement underneath this progressive one? Do actors and negotiations make a difference? Is there a search for identity behind its self-perception of a displaced society?

The most recent transformation has occurred after September 11, when the wars against drug trafficking and counter-insurgency unified into the Andean anti-terrorist and counterinsurgent strategy. The resources for the Drug War, formerly associated with some components for social and economic development, are now wholly reserved for War against Insurgency. Money is allotted for helicopters, intelligence operations and military training. The Colombian war has become part of the war against terrorism; three of its main armed actors are nowadays listed as terrorists. The US included them in the list because of their involvement with drugs. The guerrilla also lost credit because of the negative impact of their actions on the poorest sectors of society. They used gas pipe bombs in Bojayá (Chocó) and in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Bogotá, el Cartucho.

In a related matter, president Uribe defined his security strategy through the creation of a network of informants and armed civilians to support the army. He stealthily legalized the paramilitaries. This strategic reorientation raised serious doubts because it could be totally ineffective, if it is not accompanied by economic and social reforms (i.e. an agrarian reform through expropriation of drug traffickers' land) and tangible support from well-off sectors of society.

Internationalization

Significantly, current discussions revolve around the internationalization or transnationalization of Colombia's conflict. This is due to its repercussions in neighbouring Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Panama and Brazil, and the role that its resolution might play in the continent's political re-accommodation. Here the renewed role of the United States in hemispheric politics is crucial. The conflict ceased to be solely Colombian - a number of its aspects acquire a broader significance. This is the case of its humanitarian crisis, and the repercussions of intolerable methods such as kidnapping and forced disappearances. The forced displacement of a large part of the Colombian population extends beyond the Colombian borders. These factors turn the conflict

into a profoundly destructive venture, involving Colombia in issues and strategies that arose from the 11th of September. New contention or expansion strategies, linked to a reorientation of Plan Colombia towards an Andean Regional Initiative, are associated to these trends. These, as is said, 'sell the war to the neighbouring countries' and drum up support from multilateral organizations. The war of the past five years differs from that of the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, the peace process also becomes international: the role of the UN becomes bigger and so does the facilitation by 'friendly' countries. Many issues and debates have become internationalized, such as drugs and human rights.

Context of war and mechanisms for peace

Colombia's war can be conceived as an archaic phenomenon because of its origins in the context of the Cold War, which perseveres despite of the fall of the Berlin Wall. But it can also be seen as a modern war because of the resources, populations and territories that transcend ideology or social support. Its actors combine political and social motives with purely economic goals. Perhaps we will note at the end of the war, that the drug component, rather than advancing the guerrilla cause, led to its involution.

Paradoxically, even before peace negotiations started, mechanisms for ending the war and post-conflict reconstruction are already being debated. Thus, for example, in a recently published book, *Sobre la verdad en los tiempos del miedo*, Natalia María Springer deals with the issue of a Truth Commission.[3] The terms and scope of the Treaty of Rome and the International Criminal Court and their application to crimes against humanity are also being discussed. In the same vein, Iván Orozco ponders on victims and victimizers; as well as on tensions arising from the war. He swings between a normative need for justice and a political need for pardon.[4] I have similar thoughts.

In short, Colombia and its distress make up an extraordinary laboratory for the study of war. Hopefully, it will soon be so for peace.

Notes

[1] Institute for Political Studies and International Relations (IEPRI), National University of Colombia, Bogotá.

[2] Michael Walzer, *Just And Unjust Wars*, Basic Books, third edition, New York, 2000.

[3] Natalia Maria Springer, *Sobre La verdad en los tiempos del miedo,* Bogotá Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2002.

[4] Iván Orozco, 'La posguerra colombiana: divagaciones sobre la venganza, la justicia y la reconciliación', *Análisis Político* 46, May/August 2002, pp. 78-99.

PLAN COLOMBIA AND THE ANDEAN REGIONAL INITIATIVE

In memoriam
Rosa del Olmo

ALVARO CAMACHO GUIZADO[*]

One of the measures that have marked future prospects of Colombian politics and its relations with the United States and Andean countries, is what has been labelled Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia is the most ambitious cooperation plan between the Colombian and US governments, allotting enormous military, financial, and political resources to eradicate illicit crops and cocaine and heroin production. This plan strongly impacts Colombian illicit-crops policy and its treatment of irregular organizations, which challenge the country's institutional stability.

Plan Colombia will necessarily affect the country's international prospects. Cultivation of it illicit crops might diversely expand to neighbouring countries. Moreover, the whole plan might fail, causing the reorientation of US policy towards Colombia.

Here, I will address several topics. The first refers to the most important changes that have come about in narcotics traffic in the past decade; namely, the dismantlement of Cali and Medellín 'cartels', key organizations in illicit drugs production and export. The second subject describes modifications in patterns of political action brought about by changes in drug trafficking organizations. Drug traffickers have allied with landowners and other powerful social sectors, in order to finance extreme right paramilitary organizations. Parallel to this, is a third process, which has to do with changes in the structure of the demand for illicit drugs. Noticeably, illicit drugs are used to the country's irregular forces and war. The fourth concerns the nature of Plan Colombia and

its relation to President Pastrana's original proposal. The fifth refers to the Bush Administration's response to requests submitted by the Andean Regional Initiative (ARI). Lastly, I will speculate on the prospects of these initiatives, revering to Plan Colombia and its organizational dynamics and ARI's impact on the region, especially in Colombia.

Changes in the structure of the drug traffic in Colombia

As a result of Pablo Escobar's death, capture of the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers, and erratic ness of Northern Valley 'Cartel', profound changes has ensued in the structure of drug trafficking organizations.[1] Instead of an oligopolic structure, a series of fragmented organizations were established. With membership between 15 and 25 each, these drug trafficking organizations are now estimated at some 200 to 300 by the Colombian national police.

New faces make up these organizations. We now deal with younger drug traffickers, who are better educated and less conspicuous than their predecessors. These new traffickers have diversified routes and export tendencies; and so, they are much harder to detect. Therefore, the dismantling of these organizations and their capture are much more difficult.

Parallel to this fragmentation, there have been noticeable increases in the expansion of the areas cultivated and, consequently, in cocaine and heroin production.Between 1998 and 2002, coca-cultivation rose from 35,000 to 160,000 hectares, with extra 6,200 hectares for poppy. This increase roughly coincides with the fumigated hectares under Plan Colombia. This implies that for each hectare fumigated, a new one has been put into production.

In addition, the new narcotics traffickers have renewed former and make new allies in international organizations, based in Mexico and Europe. Because Colombians do not have the required operational capacity to handle the whole market cycle they needed to delegate a large part of the sales in the United Sates to Mexican organizations. Thus, Colombian organizations become partially secure and avoid capture and extradition. Furthermore, since they cannot handle the immense fortunes generated by increased production, they tend to multiply their ties with European organizations. This has been documented by Observatoire Européen des Drogues et des Toxicomanies (OEDT), which has shown existing business ties to the Russian, Polish and Spanish Mafias. The advantages are obvious since The European

markets are sound, offering much better prices for cocaine and heroin; and so, Colombian traffickers profit more.

Furthermore, as learned from the failures of their predecessors, new traffickers do not directly attempt to influence national policy. As a result they are not political enemies of the Colombian state. These new organizations are forceful forms of organized economic delinquency that do not threat the national government. Unlike in the past narcoterrorism or state penetration do not constitute the organization's agenda anymore. Fundamentally the new businessmen are organized delinquents who, though very rich and very powerful, stay away from politics.

Drug traffic and violence

The above does not mean that drug traffickers are totally absent from the political scene. Quite the opposite. They secure their part in the scene through their funding of extreme right paramilitary organizations. Unlike their predecessors, who acted, and defended isolated commercial interests, current narcotics traffickers establish relationships with powerful social sectors, which, in turn organize and fund paramilitary organizations against guerrilla. These alliances protect landowners and defend the interests of Colombian dominant class. Mostly legal businessmen, these Colombians prefer to ally with drug traffickers in order to confront the threat posed by insurgent organizations.

The political role played by the drug traffic has changed. Traffickers do not off bombs or assassinate opposing state officials, journalists, or politicians any longer. Organizations do not seek to penetrate the state and influence policies to its favour.

Today, drug traffickers constitute another type of threat. They prompt the creation of a third armed pole in the conflict against the insurgency, whose privileged mode of action consists of massacring peasant and social leaders, suspected abettors of the guerrilla by the paramilitaries.

Paradoxically, contrary to their pledge to support state institutions and current political regime these organizations have become terrorists. They represent a growing threat institutional order, which they purport to defend. The Colombian and United States governments acknowledged:

> There is abundant proof of the fact that the self-defence groups contribute to degrading the situation in Colombia, mainly because of their attacks against the civilian population, most particularly

against poor peasants. There are also, however, attacks which are less well known, namely those perpetuated by self-defence groups against state officials and political leaders… The assassination of civilians and what are termed as massacres, as well as other forms of intimidation and attacks against the civilian population, are some of the better known strategies practiced by the self-defence squads in violation of International Humanitarian Law…. Self-defence groups have assassinated and caused the disappearance and displacement of thousands of defenceless civilians, particularly peasants, workers and other inhabitants of the rural areas – frequently by recurring to atrocious massacres. Self-defence squads and guerrilla groups justify the killing of civilians by signalling them as their adversaries, thus making them their military targets.[2]

New trends in demand

Simultaneous to the processes named above, another phenomenon has became noticeable. The changes in the structure of international demand for cocaine and heroin has changed. As the market diversified, demand in the United States. The US State Department confirmed such positive results of their collective efforts in the following report:

> Current use of drugs (that is to say, the use of illicit drugs in the previous 30 days) among the population aged 12 and older is estimated at 13.9 million US citizens, or 6.4 per cent of the population. This indicates a decrease of over 50 per cent since in 1979, when 14.1 per cent of the US population reported past month illicit drug use.[3]

In the meantime, European demand has grown; and so have Colombian exports to these markets.

In Colombia, purchasing of narcotics for export as an economic activity has been radically transformed. A triple demand has consolidated in the country. First, there is the traditional demand made by narcotics traffickers for their business. Second, there FARC's relatively marginal demand that exerts pressure, in the same way as the paramilitary organization AUC, through taxes levied on direct producers and on the first intermediaries in the trading chain. This accelerates the dynamics of cocaine and heroin production (Aranguren, 2001). The income thus obtained helps to finance the troops of irregular organizations; more importantly, the money is used to acquire weapons for their struggle. As a result, Colombian narcotics' trafficking is now linked with worldwide illegal weapons organizations. Two of the most powerful mafias in the world have become allied to Colombian organizations. In recent

years, illicit drugs have fuelled Colombia's internal conflict, making the country a target for other countries' criminal justice systems and an issue to be addressed by international justice organizations.

The Plan Colombia

These changes in structure, dynamics and nature of narcotics trafficking in Colombia caused modifications of US policy towards Colombia. From the 1970s, as illicit-crop growing and of marijuana exports from Colombia to the United States grew, US policy towards Colombia has been the eradication of crops and termination of constant shifting of these crops from one area to another (Camacho 1988 and Tokatlian 1997 and 2001). Pressure was never applied to modify Colombia's internal political arrangements, however. Clinton only hardened his policy, when it became clear that President Samper's election had been financed by the Cali Cartel. President Samper's visa to the US was withdrawn, while intense criticism was thrown at the Colombian government. In line with the policy of combating drugs trafficking in the US, the Clinton administration tried to strengthen the Colombia National Police and assist in eradicating coca and heroin production through aerial fumigation.

When Andrés Pastrana became president, US policy was once again modified. Colombians were presented with a development Plan, 'Changes for Building Peace: 1990 to 2002'. As the new presidential policy, this plan recognized the need for economic development as the basis to achieve peace; and the need to strengthen state institutions, human capital through education, social capital by fostering diverse forms of association, and environmental protection and illicit crops substitution.

I do not intend to trace the fundamental changes of the development plan, brought about by negotiations between the Colombian and US governments, which concerned funding requests on the part of the Colombian government and growing direct pressure exerted by the US government (see details in Garcia 2001 and Ramírez 2001). As a result, there are significant differences between the original proposal and what is known today as Plan Colombia. Its first version 'underlines the fact that the peace policy consists of political reform, negotiation with the armed groups, and peace-oriented investments and acts, among which there is the mention of the implementation of a special plan for the economic, social and environmental reconstruction of those zones which are particularly affected by the conflict. With respect to illicit

crops policy, the Development Plan considers that the government has structured the Plan Colombia (which) will act on three fronts: illicit crop substitution by means of alternative development programmes, attention to displaced populations, and focalized and prioritized actions there where violence has reached critical peaks (García, 2001, p. 200).

Later, as of its submission to the US State Department, and upon suggestions from US officials, the plan suffered considerable changes. The version submitted to the US Congress is a 'Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State' which contemplates the following ten strategies.[4]

Elements of the Plan

1. An economic strategy that generates employment, supports the ability of the State to collect tax revenues and allows the country to have a viable counterbalancing economic force to drug trafficking. The expansion of international commerce, accompanied by enhanced access to foreign markets and free trade agreements that attract foreign and domestic investment, are key to the modernization of our economic base and to job creation. Such a strategy is crucial at a time when Colombia is confronting its worst economic crisis in seventy years, with unemployment reaching 20 per cent, which in turn greatly limits the government's ability to confront drug trafficking and the violence it generates.

2. A fiscal and financial strategy that includes tough austerity and adjustment measures, in order to boost economic activity and recover the historically excellent prestige of Colombia in the international financial markets.

3. A military strategy to restructure and modernize the Colombian Armed Forces and the National Police, to make them more capable to re-establish the rule of law and provide security throughout the country, and in combating organized crime and armed groups.

4. A judicial and human rights strategy to reaffirm the rule of law and assure equal and impartial justice to all Colombians, while pushing ahead with the reforms already initiated among the State security forces to ensure their proper role in defending and respecting the rights and dignity of each and every Colombian.

5. A counter-narcotics strategy, in partnership with other producer and consumer nations, to combat the production and consumption of

illegal drugs; and on a national level to allow us to obstruct the flow of millionaire resources from drugs to various insurgent and other armed organizations which is fuelling violence.

6. An alternative development strategy that will promote agricultural and other profitable economic activity for small rural farmers and their families. Alternative development will also consider economically feasible environmental protection activities that conserve the forest areas to stop the dangerous expansion of illegal cultivation throughout the Amazon Delta and Colombia's vast natural parks, whose immense biodiversity and environmental importance to the entire globe is incalculable.

7. A social participation strategy aimed at collective consciousness-raising. This strategy aims at more accountable local governments, community involvement in anti-corruption efforts and in continuing to put pressure on insurgent and other armed groups to end kidnapping, violence and internal displacement of citizens and communities. Also, this strategy will include working with local business and labour groups, in order to adopt newer, more productive models in light of a more globalized economy, and to strengthen our agricultural communities in the face of rural violence.

8. A human development strategy to promote efforts to guarantee, within the next few years, adequate education and health, to provide opportunities to every young Colombian and to help vulnerable groups in our society, including not just those affected and displaced by violence but also those in conditions of extreme poverty.

9. A peace strategy that aims at a negotiated peace agreement with the insurgency on the basis of territorial integrity, democracy and human rights, and which should strengthen the rule of law and the fight against drugs throughout the country.

10. An international strategy to confirm Colombia's leadership in the consolidation of the principles of shared responsibility, integrated action and balanced treatment of the drug issue. The role of the international community is also vital to the success of the peace process provided it conforms to norms established in international law and is requested by the Colombian government.

To implement the plan, the Colombian government designed a financial strategy, which required a total cost of $7.5 billion. $4 billion of this budget would be funded by the Colombian government, the US would provide $1,580 billion, multilateral agencies $1 billion, and Europe and other countries $1 billion.

Later on, as a result of pressure grown Republicans in the US Congress and the Clinton Administration, the plan was markedly modified. Indeed, what was once a program for development was turned into an anti-narcotics strategy. Once a measure solely carried out by the National Police, eradication of illicit crops soon became a military effort by the creation of three antinarcotics battalions within the Armed Forces. Purchase of military hardware ensued, including helicopters, planes, armaments, ammunition and other complementary resources. Thee hardware were assigned to confront the irregular armed groups, which protect the said illegal crops.

The antinarcotics strategy

The antinarcotics strategy comprised of the following goals:
1. Strengthen the fight against drug trafficking and dismantle the trafficking organizations through an integrated effort by the armed forces.
   • Combat illicit cultivation through continuous and systematic action of both the military and police forces, especially in the Putumayo region and in Southern Colombia, and strengthen the eradication capacity of the Colombian National Police;
   • Establish military control of the south for eradication. Destroy the processing structures and improve land, air, sea and river interdiction of drugs and illegal precursor chemicals;
   • Establish government control over key drug production areas.
2. Strengthen the judicial system and combat corruption
   • Strengthen the infrastructure of the Prosecutor's office, the courts and the public defenders;
   • Reinforce and train the corps of police investigators;
   • Build up the group charged with fighting corruption and investigating civil servants;
   • Reform the custody and jail system;
   • Apply extradition laws;
   • Obtain a proposal for oral trials in criminal cases and, in the meantime, draft regulations for the present criminal procedures for public trials;
   • Strengthen the infrastructure of the prosecutor's office, the courts and the public defenders, especially the human rights units.
3. Neutralize the drug trade's financial system and seize its resources for the state.
   • Strengthen counter-smuggling efforts;

• Carry out a vigorous asset seizure programme;

• Freeze and interdict bank accounts and assets inside and outside the country.

4. Neutralize and combat the agents of violence allied with the drug trade

• Increase security for citizens against kidnapping, extortion and terrorism;

• Stop the acquisition of arms by those groups that profit from drug trafficking though a concerted international effort.

5. Integrate national initiatives into regional and international efforts

• Share information and intelligence with other security agencies in the country;

• Contribute to and coordinate with regional and international operations and efforts.

6. Strengthen and expand plans for alternative development in the areas affected by drug trafficking

• Provide job opportunities and social services to people living in the cultivation zones;

• Promote public information campaigns on the dangers of illegal drugs. [5]

The plan's transformations

A review of these goals, and their role within the modified Plan Co-lombia, reflects the modifications of by the government's proposed development plan into an anti-narcotics plan.[6] For 2000, the United States Congress approved the sum of $1.3 billion for the Andean re-gion - $862,300 of this money allocated to Colombia, the rest to Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. Out of the package earmarked for Colombia, $519.2 million (60 per cent) was granted to the Colombian Armed Forces and $123.1 million (14 per cent) to the National Police. The remaining $218 million was intended for alternative development, support for displaced populations, judicial reform, the strengthening of the justice system, and promoting human rights.

The bulk of this military assistance financed three counter-drug brigades and provided Black Hawk and Huey helicopters together with corresponding equipment and spare parts. The police also received the same type of helicopters. The package included technical assistance for training of these brigades and piloting of planes. To this end, the US Congress has authorized the presence of up to 300 US military and a cap of 500 US private contractors.

The fourth goal is critical in understanding how the plan for a crop substitution and alternative development became policy to combat insurgent forces. As a government institution, the military was assigned the duty of combating insurgent and criminal organizations. We can better understand the logic behind the militarization of the counter-drug effort, if we consider how the US government has consistently insisted on portraying insurgent groups as 'narcoguerrillas'.

In short, the new strategy has a double-edged dimension. On the one hand, it is geared at keeping the FARC from protecting illicit crops, or from defending their supposed own crops. On the other hand, since the FARC obtains income from illicit crops, the strategy attempts to reduce funding sources for this organization. Afterwards, as paramilitary groups expand, it became apparent that they also receive funding from the narcotics business and control growing regions. Consequently US and Colombian officials have to broaden the plan's radius of action to encompass paramilitary forces as well. Until now, however, aerial fumigation has been concentrated in the Putumayo, a FARC stronghold.

By the end of last year, as Colombia's armed conflict intensified, President Pastrana has insisted that the plan should not be limited to fight narcotics traffic. This means that Plan Colombia's military apparatus, logistic, and financial resources may also be used against insurgency. This should be done, according to Pastrana, because terrorist attacks by Colombian guerrillas will impact Colombian oil exports to the US (Colombia is the 10th exporter of crude oil to the US). Pastrana requests US military personnel to train Colombians in protecting oil installations, many of which are exploited by US companies. This argument appeals more to concrete business interests, as opposed to the traditional rhetoric regarding the Drug War and political stability and peace in Colombia. This new way of reasoning is to be noted.

Since this change entails the amendment of legal provisions stipulated by the US Congress, current debates within this body have stepped up. Colombia's ambassador in Washington has carried out intense lobbying to this end (*El Espectador*, January 20, 2002, p. 5).

Though it is too soon to predict an outcome, two antecedents lead us to believe that this tendency might turn true. The approval of a waiver under which the President of the United States can justify the need to ignore the restriction which bans funding for Colombian Armed Forces units that have been involved in human rights abuses. This can allow the introduction new exceptions to the Plan Colombia's

initial limitations, and the growing degradation of Colombia's domestic conflict can well serve to justify this step.

Two studies support this tendency. Rand Corporation, an influential US research organization, suggests that the USA should reconsider the sustainability off its anti-narcotics policy and counter insurgent policy. It wonders if Colombia and its allies can succeed in the Drug War, when the Colombian government cannot control its territory. The authors recommend that the Colombian government should redirect its criminal focus on drugs and substitute it with a political-military focus. Another study, carried out by the Hoover organization – another influential organization which designs US policy – adopts a similar point of view. According to this second study, the main weakness of US policy towards Colombia is the de-coupling of anti-narcotics efforts from the fight against political subversion (Buscaglia and Ratliff, 2001).

In addition, a number of Republicans in the US Congress has expressed sympathy to this tendency. Hence, influential sectors could eventually changes on Plan Colombia. Undoubtedly as relevant as the first two, this third change shall complicate the already complex outlook of Colombia's armed conflict further.

A first assessment of the plan

In August 2001, Colombia General Treasure Inspector's Office (Contraloría General de la República –CGR), the state agency in charge of the use of the nation's financial resources, published the first assessment report on Plan Colombia. We consider it worthwhile to quote this report extensively:

Regarding this first endeavour on the part of the CGR, we wish to briefly highlight the following conclusions:

• New resources, available as of July 2001, only amount to US$2.051 million which is approximately a mere 27 per cent of the total amount estimated for the plan. This means that the achievement, in the short term, of the goal initially set at US$7.5 billion, is farfetched;

• Approximately 58 per cent of the resources appropriated for the plan come from incrementing Colombia's internal and external debt, which is highly unadvisable if we consider the critical situation of the country's national public debt;

• The social economic objectives of the programmes are, in general, very modest considering existing needs. This seems to point to the extremely rhetorical nature of the goals set. The measures are under-

taken as a form of assistance and are therefore not geared at generating self-sustainability or resources of their own;

• Up to now, forced eradication has not succeeded at stimulating reduction in the expansion of illicit crop growing. It seems as if the incentives for planting are tied to the powerful stimulus of a promising market rather than to the losses caused by eradication. As a result, it is highly suitable to look into other means for eradicating illicit crops;

• There are great disparities among the different sources of information regarding the estimated expenditures on the part of the Colombian state in its Drug War. The different information sources put forward divergent estimates regarding the Colombian state's expenditures on its Drug War. According to the Colombian National Drug Directorate (DNE), this war has meant an outlay of approximately $2.5 billion. Meanwhile, other sources estimate that it has cost much more. Consequently, a joint effort is required in order to establish more coherent figures. In any case, immense resources have been expended and they could have been used to provide goods and services needed for the well-being of Colombian citizens;

• The environmental component is not duly taken into consideration to the extent that, despite the fact that Colombian law requires it, aerial fumigation for eradicating illicit crops is not accompanied by an environmental management plan to mitigate or reduce its negative environmental impact and apparently crop substitution programmes do not encompass ecologically sustainable agricultural alternatives;

• It is highly likely that less than 50 per cent of what is programmed in the plan will be implemented in the course of this administration. For this reason, the plan's permanent and effective implementation would require the explicit engagement to this end on the part of the coming administration and the clear-cut cooperation of the international community, particularly the European countries. [7]

To say the least the perspectives are dramatic. The plan's degree of implementation has been very low; a sizeable part of the resources have been incurred as public debt in the process. As a result, the already over-burdened Colombian economy is further encumbered. It is also extremely dramatic that the Colombian government assign more money to eradicate drugs cultivation, compared to funds for the needs of Colombians; and that it has done there without considering the environmental impact of aerial fumigation. The CGR's report contrasts with Plan Colombia's rhetoric.

The Andean Regional Initiative

Expecting the described plan above effected Colombia's neighbouring countries. If the country's illicit crops were eradicated and prices of cocaine and heroin do not fall, cultivation will move Colombia's borders to neighbouring countries.[8] As a result, people feared that, like what happened in Peru, growers will plant on abandoned fields and seek to fill in for Colombian supply. Government officials in Ecuador and Venezuela dreaded the entrance of resisting Colombian guerrillas in their backyard.

In response such concerns and pressure from Andean countries, President Bush's government has designed the Andean Regional Initiative, which should:

• Promote and support democracy and democratic institutions;

• Foster sustainable economic development and trade liberalization;

• Significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs to the USA at the source.

Their underlying concept arose from the following diagnosis:

The Andean region represents a significant challenge and opportunity for US foreign policy in the next few years. Important US national interests are at stake in the region. Democracy is under pressure in all of the countries of the Andes, as there are growing doubts about the ability of democratic governments to deliver essential services and wider prosperity. Economic development is slow and progress towards liberalization is inconsistent. The Andes continues to produce virtually all of the world's cocaine, and an increasing amount of heroin -- thus representing a direct threat to our public health and national security. All of these persistent problems are inter-related. Sluggish economies produce political unrest that threatens democracy and provides ready manpower for narcotics production and trafficking and illegal armed groups. Weak democratic institutions, corruption and political instability discourage investment, contribute to slow economic growth and provide fertile ground for drug traffickers and other outlaw groups to flourish. The illicit drug trade also has the effect of distorting the economy and discouraging legitimate investment. None of the region's problems can be addressed in isolation. Rather, all need to be addressed comprehensively and accompanied by appropriate public diplomacy initiatives to advance our goals in the region. For that reason, the State Department proposes to allocate approximately $880 million in FY02 funds for the Administration's Andean Regional Initiative (US Embassy in Bogotá, 2001: 2).

Obviously the ARI's focal point comprises of a war on narcotics traffic, presumably a two-sided threat to the United States. On the one hand, drug exports are hazardous to public health. On the other, narcotics traffic compounds regional instability, threatening national security. Accordingly, a major component of ARI is the National Drug Control Strategy, which will be used by the United States to 'reduce illicit coca production by 20 per cent (base year 1999) by the end of 2002 and 40 per cent by the end of 2007. This includes a 30 per cent reduction in Colombian coca production and elimination of illegal coca production in Bolivia by the end of 2002' (US Embassy in Bogotá, 2001: 8).

To fulfil ARI's proposed goals, the US has earmarked $731 million. $399 million (54.48 per cent) of this fund has been reserved for Colombia, which, in turn, has decided to use its $252.5 million (63 per cent) for military and National Police assistance. $146.5 million (36 per cent) shall be used to provide assistance for social and economic development. The mentioned military assistance will equip and maintain Plan Colombia, ammunition, fuel, and training its military and police personnel in broadening aerial fumigation of illicit crops (*Desde Abajo,* 2001).

Regarding the military component, the ARI presumes that:

> The ability of the Andean militaries to perform their essential missions of supporting democratic institutions, controlling international borders and supporting counter-drug efforts has declined significantly in the last decade. Andean militaries in general are limited in their ability to perform their required missions. They are also still influenced to some degree by historical regional rivalries, not reflective of current real threats to national security. Most are saddled with deteriorating or obsolescent equipment that is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain and operate. They would benefit immensely from a modest infusion of security assistance in the form of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Educational and Training (IMET) and from increased contact with the U.S. military across the board. The impact in terms of professionalism, respect for human rights and mission readiness would be appreciable.[9]

It is too soon to determine ARI's effectivity. However, through this initiative, President Bush an interest in reducing cocaine and heroin supply into the United States, while reiterating the hegemonic role of the United States in regional political stability at the same time. Colombia check satisfies the interests of other Andean countries, which could then execute unilateral actions that can alter regional balance of power and stability. If political and financial management of the US

stop, some Andean countries might opt to acquire armaments from the international market to insure their defence against unfavourable consequences of Plan Colombia.

Crucially, the Andean Regional Initiative has coincided with 9/11 and its impact on the world. Although the region and its Drug War have lost political priority for the US government, the Bush Administration has nonetheless strongly reacted to irregular armed forces in Colombia. Guerrilla and paramilitary groups have been included in the list of terrorist organizations; and so, combat against these groups has become now to worldwide US military antiterrorist policies. These two trends have shaped decisions-makings in Colombia and the Andean Region. As already mentioned this will result in the redirection of Plan Colombia resources towards counter-insurgency military warfare. Its effects on ARI and the region's countries are yet to be seen.

The international drug complex

In this final section, I wish to outline a few ideas on methods that could predict the future of Plan Colombia and ARI. These two might become what was denounced as the Industrial Military Complex (Galbraith 1985) by President Eisenhower in his presidential farewell speech during the Cold War.

The Industrial Military Complex refers to a system, whose dynamics assures its own survival. Through decisions from a military political order, it supplies demands for corresponding military goods, equipment and personnel. Consequently, industrial production is stimulated while former military men and experts were employed, rationalizing the continuance of some state bureaucracies. In a way, the demand increase of industrial apparatus and growth of state bureaucracies stimulate the development of bellicose military policies. Under these conditions, policies grow out of its original jurisdiction.

The use of this model for our case leads us to think that the Drug War policies, particularly Plan Colombia and ARI, can be as addictive as the illicit drugs, which they purport to combat (Baum, 1977). I argue, hence, that these two programs might amount to an International Drug Complex.

The International Drug Complex concept has been developed by Hans T. van der Veen of the Centre for Drug Research (CEDRO) of the University of Amsterdam:

Just as individuals might get addicted to the use of drugs, so the societies in which they live are becoming addicted to the money

that is generated in the drug business (OGD 1995: xiii). This seems to be equally true for the agencies that are assigned the task to control it (….) the dynamics within and between the social forces at both sides of the law do not tend to keep each other in check, but rather reinforce each other, either by acting in concert or through more systemic interactions. Through this a 'community of interest' -a coalition of groups with vested psychological, moral, and material interests- develops between drug entrepreneurs and coercive state agencies or the power elites that control them. This mutual support takes many shapes and has many levels, changing over time and location. However, the consequence of this collusion is that the interests of both groups are advanced, to the detriment of third parties and great parts of the societies they flourish in. The drug industry and drug law enforcement, in this approach, are not necessarily opposite to each other, but develop a more or less intertwined and interdependent dynamic, a sort of countervailing but also mutually reinforcing 'coalition', that serves the interests of both, independent of democratic control by citizens and sometimes even the government.[10]

An International Drug Complex exists through political and economic co-operation between drug traffickers and the Colombian narcoguerrilla. This means that the Drug War must focus on combating insurgency. Traditionally assigned to civilian and police institutions the duties to reduce supplies becomes a priority. Military resources and personnel need to be provided therein.

Upon an examination of Plan Colombia's components and tendencies, we can assume that the following are true: of the $ 519.2 million apportioned for military assistance, $328 million are included for the purchase of helicopters, $208 million for 16 Black Hawks for the army and $120 million for the Huey helicopters. In this sense, it is pertinent to underline that the final approved version includes 18 Black Hawk helicopters (16 for the army and 2 for the police force.) In the $115.6 million approved for the police, 26 million are included for the purchase of 2 Black Hawk helicopters (García, 2001, p. 259).

The size of this expenditure provoked strong lobbying from manufacturers, who pressed their representatives in the government and the US Congress obtain the privilege of supplying this equipment. Similar lobbies were made by organizations of former military men and members of security forces, who live off of military expenditures (*Cambio,* 2000 and German Castro Caycedo, 2001).

A final comment

The paper panoramic ally illustrates the changes in Colombian narcotics traffic and the recent policies, designed to confront it. The first section shows the transformation of illegal entrepreneurs, who then became difficult to detect and combat for state forces. New strategies were called for the Drug War.

The aerial fumigation policy has led to the expansion of illicit crops to other regions of the country. The US government acknowledges that:

> While we emphasize to the region our view that the corrosive effects of drug production and trafficking have been 'spilling over' Colombia's borders for years, we do not believe Plan Colombia will result in the flight of a significant number of refugees, nor a significant increase in FARC, ELN or AUC cross-border operations. We do believe, however, it will result in major disruption of the cocaine industry. Traffickers will undoubtedly try to relocate as their operations in southern Colombia are disrupted. We believe they will first try to relocate to other attractive areas inside Colombia, and then try to return to traditional growing areas in Peru and Bolivia. But if those options are forestalled, they may well seek to move more cultivation, processing and/or trafficking routes into other countries such as Ecuador, Brazil or Venezuela.[11]

This is, no more and no less, an implicit recognition that the Drug War in its current form is generating what is termed as the 'hydra effect', whereby new heads inevitably emerge to replace those which are eliminated (Bertram *et al.* 1996). The interplay between increase in repression and price hikes allows for this premonition. It would seem that the measures applied are generating a perverse sort of community of interest between the militarization of the Drug War and the vested interest of narcotics traffickers.

As has been acknowledged by the Colombia and US governments, there is an inextricable relationship between illicit-drug production and the poverty among peasant communities. Similarly, production is also related with the growth of extreme right and left irregular armed forces, which obtain their funding from the said drug source. Hence, policies should be customized and comprehensive. Initially geared to combat poverty and stimulate alternative development in production zones, Plan Colombia has been transformed to become an anti-narcotics strategy. A counter insurgent component compounded the situation later. This leads us to suppose that, true to its dynamics, the Industrial Military Complex will gather force and combine with the International

Drug Complex. The expansion of illicit crops and exacerbation of Colombia's domestic conflict will henceforth endue.

It would be preferable if US policy focuses on one of its most noteworthy assessments, namely that which holds that:

> None of the region's problems can be addressed in isolation. Rather, all need to be addressed comprehensively and accompanied by appropriate public diplomacy initiatives to advance our goals in the region.[12]

Notes

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[1] This section is based on Andrés López Restrepo and Alvaro Camacho Guizado, *De contrabandistas, barones y traquetos: cambios en las estructuras de las organizaciones colombianas del narcotráfico*, in press. See also Daniel Pécaut 'Las estrategias de las "mafias" colombianas de la droga: entre el pragmatismo y la violencia', in id. *Guerra contra la sociedad* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2001).

[2] Observatorio de los derechos humanos y derecho internacional humanitario, *Panorama de los grupos de autodefensa* (Bogotá, 2000) pp. 3-4.

[3] ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse Fact Sheet, 'Drug Use Trends', October 2002. See also: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/druguse/index.html

[4] Presidence of Colombia, *Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State.* Submitted by President Pastrana to the US government in 1999. In early 2000, Pastrana presented a version of the plan to the European Union and Japan, where the emphasis on the military component is blurred, the order of priorities has been modified and the social and economic aspects were given precedence over counternarcotics measures.

[5] *Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State* (Bogotá, 1999).

[6] For details on the sums appropriated and various components included, see: *Desde Abajo*, 'Del Plan Colombia a la Iniciativa Andina' (Bogotá, Ediciones Desde Abajo, 2001).

[7] Contraloría General de la República, *Primer informe de evaluación Plan Colombia*, 2001, p. 4-5.

[8] US Embassy in Bogotá (Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Bogotá, Sección Cultural e Informativa), *La iniciativa Regional Andina,* Bogotá 2001, p.10. (Note from the translator: See also: US Department of State Fact Sheet: US Policy toward the Andean Region, 17 May 2001).

[9] The Spanish version of the document continues: 'It is necessary to go on working with the Armed Forces in the host countries, with the Organization of American States and with the Interamerican Defense Board, on the enhancement of subordination to legitimate civilian authorities, adhesion to constitutional norms and respect for human rights...' (US Embassy in Bogotá, 2001: 12).

[10] Hans T. van der Veen**,** *The International Drug Complex.* Amsterdam: Centre for Drugs Research (CEDRO), University of Amsterdam, 1999; revised in August 2000.

[11] US Embassy in Bogotá, 2001, p.10. See also: *US Policy Toward the Andean Region***,** May 17, 2001.

[12] Ibidem.

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THE WAR ON DRUGS AND REGIONAL SECURITY

Dedicated to the memory of Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone, ardent defender of fundamental rights and civil liberties in Colombia before the U.S. congress. Senator Wellstone died tragically, together with his wife, his daughter, and three of his associates on October 25, 2002.

RICARDO VARGAS MEZA*

Introduction: a banished state

This text focuses on early considerations by Washington decision makers regarding Colombia as a security issue and their consequences for the region. Plan Colombia embodies the outcome of this deliberation process, comprising a quantitative leap in funds and engagement of the Armed Forces in the Drugs War. However, poor results in the reduction of drug supply and growth of insurgent forces cast serious doubts on the reconstruction of safety in the midst of a War on Drugs. Colombia, with some Central Asian countries, has experienced the true nature of the changes brought about by the September 11 attacks, which include the precipitated crisis in peace talks and strengthening of Washington's commitment to war.

At this point of transition Alvaro Uribe Vélez, a strong opponent to former president Pastrana's peace process, came to power. Submitting a new security proposal Uribe effectively adjusted to President Bush's global-control strategy and preventive war. As a result, armed conflict entered a new phase. Drugs continue to play a key role in the future of Colombia's armed conflict. Guerrilla forces have become more powerful due to the trade in drugs which has given them wealth

and power. Hence, decision makers declared *zero tolerance* of drugs in order to cut off guerrilla funding and started to criminalize peasant producers and consumers.

In this context, the possibility of applying harm reduction policies – which have been successful in Europe – becomes more remote. I will tackle the argument on harm-reduction approaches in the last part of this text. It is unclear what will happen to the hundreds of organized drug trafficking groups in Colombia that contribute to and benefit from the thriving privatized counterinsurgency war model. This is precisely the problem behind the negotiation process initiated by the Uribe Administration with paramilitary groups: the former intends to pay the latter back politically for their economic and military 'contribution' to the campaign of the Colombian Armed Forces against counterinsurgent groups.

Lastly, this text suggests that the attempt to recover Colombian institutions through force will be meaningless if the justice system does not work, the rule of law deteriorates and fundamental rights abuses and humanitarian crisis become increasingly widespread in the country. Current anti-narcotics strategies do not take into account this aspect of the problem, only buttressing global security under Washington's hegemony. Since the Cold War, administrations in Washington have defined national security in rigid and militarized terms. Politicians have turned public opinion's attention towards real or imagined dangers of armed groups and built consensus around military solutions to foreign policy problems. Neither social issues nor other suitable means to influence neighbouring nations were discussed. This is having strong repercussions on Latin America, particularly on the Andean region.

The regional context from a security viewpoint

Washington agencies responsible for hemispheric security have defined the post-Berlin Wall scenarios in terms of four threats to democracy, regional stability, and prosperity in Latin America. They refer to illegal migration, arms trafficking, crime and corruption, drug trafficking in the four areas of responsibility of the US Southern command in the Caribbean, Central America, Andean region and Southern Cone countries.[1] Among these four subregions, the Andean region poses the greatest threat, within it, Colombia representing the riskiest country.

Illegal migration and paramilitary and guerrilla incursions to Venezuela and Panama, as a result of Colombia's armed conflict, foster social

and political instability in the region according to the Southern Command. The same view is held regarding the boundary with Ecuador.

Traffic of arms symbiotically relate with illegal drug economy. Colombian narcotics traffickers and armed groups, which are connected with organized illegal groups in Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Mexico, benefit from this relationship.

Crime and corruption are fuelled by the symbiosis between organized criminality's local and international power. Money laundering, kidnapping, extortion and corruption affect the Caribbean but, according to the Southern Command, they are more widespread in the Andean region. To prove its point, it highlights the kidnapping of oil companies' personnel in Ecuador in 2000 and high figures of abduction in Colombia, which are estimated at over 3,000 for the period 2000-2001.

Finally, as refers to drug trafficking, the success of anti-drug policies in Peru and Bolivia has been counterbalanced by the displacement of crops to Colombia. Links between drugs trafficking and armed groups have increased, reaffirming Washington's viewpoint.

These forecasts at the beginning of the new millennium have been outdone by complex internal conflict in the Andean region. Initially, officials connected the Colombian situation with regional instability. Now, they are concerned with the political and economic instability in Venezuela and its importance as a strategic oil producing country, particularly in consideration of the war against Iraq. Since the Pastrana Administration there has been friction between Bogotá and Caracas. This was partly due to accusations by the Colombian government that President Chávez sympathized and aided the FARC.[2]

Meanwhile, in post-Fujimori Peru, the new government's lack of legitimacy and its failure to gain force have cast doubts on its institutional capacity to fulfil its proposed aim of ending the preceding authoritarian and corrupt decades. This creates uncertainty as to the future prospects of the democratic spaces conquered.

The social and economic situation in Ecuador is extremely alarming. Poverty levels are pegged at 58 per cent, with 27 per cent of the population suffering extreme poverty while political parties undergo a profound representation crisis. Results of the November 24, 2002 elections indicate the politicians' low degree of legitimacy, favouring the left-wing populist leadership of Lucio Gutiérrez. The regime has been further threatened by the growing insecurity on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border. There, armed groups have expanded in the disputed Lago Agrio area and displaced people have continuously come in. Fur-

thermore, Quito has been pressured by the United States to modify its policies to fit counterinsurgency in the border areas. This could prompt Ecuador to get involved in Colombia's armed conflict, stimulating a political and military engagement with the neighbouring country.

Lastly, in Brazil, new challenges become apparent with the country's potential leadership in the region and in NAFTA negotiations. There is a further need to address poverty and social inequality, which, in turn, affects the country's relationship with Washington. For Brazil, the United States have always aimed to 'impose its unilateral policies' on the world.[3] This allegation was part of a series of diplomatic problems, which included Washington's attempt to remove Brazilian José Mauricio Bustani from the presidency of the Organization for Banning Chemical Weapons (OPAQ). He was accused of adopting a neutral tone and disregarding White House interests. US multinational companies were greatly concerned with Lula da Silva's election as president. Moreover, challenges were continually posed by organized crime in large urban areas and global traffic of drugs and weapons and money laundering, which, according to the State Department, amounts to $50 billion a year. This could be an ace up the Washington's sleeve when negotiating with the Lula government.

Nonetheless, Brazil shows strict control of its Amazon boundary from July 25, 2002, through the Amazon Vigilance System (SIVAM), which was built by the US Raytheon firm for $1.4 billion. SIVAM is complemented by a military structure that includes dozens of planes, six satellites, 25 radars and 87 receiving stations. The country interprets satellite control of its rainforest and overseeing of its resources as interference of its sovereign airspace. Brazilian border defence is ready to shoot down clandestine planes in its airspace.[4] Brazil has severely criticized Plan Colombia for representing another regional perturbation and using chemical aerial fumigation and biological (*Fusarium oxysporum*) eradication methods, which threaten the Amazon region.

There are three other issues on the Defence Department's security agenda. Forced displacement is becoming a problem at Colombia's borders with Ecuador, Venezuela and Panamá. It leads to increased resentment against fugitives from Colombia. These countries have threatened to demand visas for Colombian nationals. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were approximately 10,000 Colombian refugees in Ecuador by the end of 2002.[5]

Illegal immigration is invoked as a threat to regional security, comprising a legitimate part of naval activities in the Latin American Pacific

Basin, which is participated in by Panamá, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela and the United States. These countries also participated in the multinational naval deployment exercise UNITAS' operations in 2002.[6]

Arms smuggling is another regional concern. The best-known case involved the former Peruvian Fujimori-Montesinos government and Walter Crespo, an Anglican Bishop in Ecuador, who was accused of providing the FARC with weapons. There are also numerous examples of business transactions of the FARC and drug traffickers from México and Brazil.[7]

Finally, security structures have been considerably modified to thwart new threats of drug traffic in the Americas. Emphasis has been put on the building of air control networks, which seek to gather information and strengthen intelligence tasks of several Latin American armies, particularly Peru and Ecuador. Areas of responsibility, apart from the Southern Cone countries, are coordinated through Forward Operating Locations (FOLs), distributed between Aruba, Curaçao in the Caribbean, San Salvador for Central America and Manta for the Andean Region. Only Manta has total air coverage of Peru, Colombia and all the coca-growing regions in Bolivia.[8] The shift to maritime interdiction has been carried out with the Central American and Caribbean Armed Forces, beginning with Puerto Rico, which is the object of numerous bilateral agreements that attempt to suppress maritime drug trafficking. Colombia has been considered a pilot project for the re-organization of the armed forces for land interdiction engagements. To this end, three battalions and a specialized counternarcotics brigade have been created, to be supported by FOL's intelligence efforts.

Colombia: concentration of threats

Armed conflict and related drug traffic do not simply pertain to narcotics as 'an instrument of war' by an armed group. In Washington's perception, it represents a power that is founded on the four threats defined by the Defence Department for building a hemispherical security agenda (illegal migration, arms trafficking, crime and corruption, drug trafficking). As a result, the latest State Department report on Plan Colombia presents the increased participation of the Colombian Armed Forces in the war as an achievement.[9] The report highlights the engagement of different branches of the Armed Forces. Within the Infantry, anti-narcotics brigades have been constituted. The Navy signed an Agreement in 1997, through which the United

States can board Colombian ships on international waters. In 1999, this agreement was reinforced by the Standing Interdiction Operations Plan, which involved the Colombia Navy and Coast Guard in fluvial and maritime anti-narcotics efforts. The Colombian Air Force (FAC) improved its monitoring and interdiction abilities with new radars, fumigation planes and implementation of an Airmobile Interdiction Project (AIP) for quick discovery and dismantling of cocaine hydrochloride processing laboratories.

This engagement was supposed to guarantee further fumigation of coca crops[10] and an alternative development program that represents a key complementary component to the Colombian and US governments' interdiction and aerial eradication strategy. According to the State Department, two conditions limit the success of this strategy, particularly in the Putumayo province: presence of armed groups and lack of infrastructure. Therefore, the US requires the joint participation of Colombian Police and Armed Forces throughout the whole strategy. The report highlights the function accomplished by the naval forces in anti-narcotics actions - between 16 to 70 per cent of the inputs for drug processing is moved through waterways, 20 per cent of the laboratories destroyed were situated along the riversides and 50 per cent of drug seizures are carried out on waterways. Washington thus redefined an outdated security model from the end of the Cold War by establishing a pilot process of an anti-narcotics war and introducing complementary changes towards a new scheme of anti-terrorist security in Colombia.

Insurgency, legitimacy and drugs

It is no longer possible to analyze the complexity of Colombia's current war by simply relating armed confrontation, social struggle and the political exclusion that has characterized Colombian state formation. Colombia's armed conflict changed simultaneous with changes in war-waging tendencies of the global world. However, these tended to be more complex in Colombia because the country lacked ethnic and religious elements in its war, unlike those being waged in Kurdistan, Afghanistan, and in many parts of Africa. Moreover, Colombia does not share the nationalist extremism that unleashed Eastern Europe conflicts after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Colombia wages a partisan war in which armed organizations claim to be 'states in-the-making' or develop this standing when de facto imposing their own codes through the use of force. Through territorial control, they seek absolute power

over local populations and resources. War is no longer waged to demand the presence of states in excluded regions. It is now waged to become a state power.

Nonetheless, their resulting political power is not an outcome of legitimately constituted 'popular support', but based on armed control over economic resources and benefits. Accordingly, diversifying economic means to fuel the war is being bartered as a strategic consideration for power holders in a specific region. The illegal drug economy has been a decisive factor in the accumulation of armed groups' power. As a result, people tend to simplify and manipulate the correlation between drugs and power. Drugs trafficking is represented as a homogenous business without analyzing different spheres of risks and profits. There is no recognition of the diverse actors involved, reducing the issue to mere transportation of illicit substances while ignoring the top link in the chain, which is the legalization (laundering) of illicit assets. However, these are not 'information errors'. Homogenous treatment translates into political decisions, involving self-serving interests.

To highlight some of the most obvious issues: visibility of insurgent forces as involved in drugs traffic contrasts with the absence of information regarding hundreds of illegal business ventures, which followed the dismantling of large cartels.[11] By so doing, they reinforce an image of the FARC as a substitute to the Cali and Medellín cartels. This tactical error shapes policy decisions, as is corroborated by strategies such as Plan Colombia. A series of declarations and accusations by US anti-narcotics officials illustrate this analysis. US ambassador in Bogotá, Anne Patterson, stated in 2000 that the FARC and paramilitary groups operate in Colombia like prior cartels. Several US officials have made similar statements. These involve a case of a medical doctor, who was accused of being a FARC connection in a cocaine transaction with the Tijuana cartel[12]; alleged FARC ownership of a shipment seized in the Colombian Pacific region in November 2000; and the capture of Brazilian drugs trafficker, Luis Fernando Da Costa (Fernandinho), who implicated the FARC as principal associates in drugs and arms traffic. Consequently, the USA demanded the extradition of FARC commander Tomás Medina ('Negro Acacio').[13] Involvement of FARC members in the drugs economy has become a decisive argument to legitimate the use of materials supplied to Colombia for an 'anti-terrorist' campaign, in the name of the War on Drugs.

As was pointed out earlier, this situation contrasts markedly with indicators that show the poor results of the War against organized drug trafficking groups. Indeed, the State Department Report for 2000 fails

to mention land expropriation (the bill of Extinción de Dominio). This is a serious omission, considering the importance of this strategic issue within the framework of combating drug traffickers. The report neglects to mention that an important source of money laundering in Colombia is land acquisition and does not recognize it as an aspect that requires realistic strategies to combat drugs trafficking. It does not refer to the results of combating other cartels, stating: 'Most of the shipments are organized by the well-established trafficking organizations based in Cali, Medellin, Bogotá and other cities throughout the country.'

Additionally, references to the relationship between drugs and paramilitary squads are simplistic and limited to the demand to extradite AUC leader Carlos Castaño and to drug transportation. The report does not assess the violent accumulative ends to which illegal capital is put in Colombia. Through horrifying blood baths, these fortunes have financed dynamics of expropriation and violent control of strategic territories, fuelling forced displacement. Official 'information omissions' contribute in blurring the complex knitting of the more severe and dramatic aspects of Colombia's conflict. Likewise occurs with other issues. These include border-zone security strategies between Colombian and Ecuador, prison policies and training programmes for justice- and law-enforcing authorities.

Moreover, constant pressure of US politicians to connect security with drugs, in spite of its symbiosis with anti-terrorist issues, means a permanent adjustment process to parameters unilaterally established by Washington. As a result, Colombia fails to develop a comprehensive perspective that would address problems in strategic security, namely, an encompassing and inclusive national project. The US State Department's report, through its failure to consider decisive aspects of the war, raises doubts as to the greater efficiency it pretends to achieve. Despite this emphasis on the drug issue as a definitive aspect of security in the hemisphere, and in Colombia in particular, the 9/11 events raise serious questions regarding definitions of new threats and the status for the illegal drug economy.

Drugs, Security, and the New International Context

From a purely quantitative perspective, Colombia has been considered the country with the greatest number of terrorist organizations and, as such, serves as a recurrent example in signalling insecure spaces other than those in Central Asia. US officials have, at different levels, highlighted the FARC's criminal status, leaving less space for political

recognition. Moreover, the organization's inclusion in the State Department's list of terrorist organizations and the assassination of three US citizens, confirmed its status as Washington's enemy. This was reinforced by above-mentioned accusations and episodes regarding drug exports and seizures, which jeopardized the organization's political status.

International connections of guerrilla groups already constituted an important concern for the USA, even before 9/11. Colin Powell, days before his planned visit to Colombia on that same day, reiterated his support to the Colombian peace process and the Plan Colombia, but also expressed his concern regarding the demilitarized Caguán zone and alleged links between the FARC and the IRA.[14] The collapse of peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC on February 20, 2002 also meant an end to Washington's ambiguous recognition of these dialogues. In fact, the US's ongoing support for the Colombian Armed Forces' counter-insurgency efforts and actions in the Drugs War decidedly weakened the peace talks. This dichotomy, pointed out, by the Rand Corporation, led to more clear-cut definitions under the currently developed new security paradigm.[15]

At one of the most critical moments of the peace process, there were two interpretations of the Colombian case in view of the new 'terrorist paradigm'. The first viewpoint, expressed by US State Department Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, was founded on the different of profiles of insurgent organizations, operating under the concept of 'terrorist groups with global reach' (TGGR). The new threats posed to US security by diverse organizations were clearly determined in light of this concept. In this sense, Colombian groups are, in principle, not comparable to more radical Islamic organizations, as refers to their strategic objectives, capability of operating within the US, and danger they represent. This characterization somehow safeguarded US commitment to treat insurgent organizations politically, as done by President Pastrana in his strategy for peace in 1998. Nonetheless, according to this sector, differential treatment and characterization of Colombia's armed organizations were subject to modifications and, whether or not they would be treated as a TGGR, would 'depend on their own behaviour'.

The second viewpoint, popular in the US Defence Department, sectors of the State Department and US Embassy in Bogotá, highlighted the terrorist nature of Colombian armed groups. It held that, since narcotics' trafficking is the funding base for these groups, it was essential to continue with counter drug strategies such as Plan Colombia, whose keystone is illicit-crop eradication.[16] They so reinforced

the twin justification of anti-narcotics policies: to reduce supply and eliminate funding sources for the groups, classified as terrorist. The new scenario revealed the true nature of the package approved by the United States in 2000 proving the counter insurgent nature of Plan Colombia's anti-drugs funding. In Ambassador Patterson's words, '…the Plan Colombia continues to be the most effective anti-terrorist strategy that we could have designed.'[17] Additionally, the design of a new anti-terrorist strategy was announced as part of the bilateral agenda with Colombia. Its most outstanding feature is the support accorded by US military to defend oil infrastructure against terrorist guerrilla attacks, to which end $98 million have been appropriated. Reservations expressed by the US Embassy in Colombia regarding the declared use of to the demilitarized zone by the FARC complemented the interpretation that the FARC was a group of narcotics traffickers and reaffirmed previously expressed doubts by these officials regarding the FARC's non-political profile.

> My government is also considerably concerned by the FARC's use of the détente zone as a base for terrorist acts. The presence of foreigners linked to several terrorist groups is particularly worrisome. For this reason, we applaud and support President Pastrana's measures to establish better control over the demilitarized zone… The United States has to do more to combat terrorism in Colombia.[18]

How far does this new definition of threat go in restructuring policy outlook? The suspicion of IRA activities in the demilitarized zone served to reinforce the view of a globally connected phenomenon - the idea of a world-wide system (to paraphrase Henry Kissinger) - and the need to carry out actions in order to destroy them. Looking back, among the first reactions to 9/11 attacks, Henry Kissinger immediately called attention to some of the most outstanding characteristics of the operation:

> It seems to me that the fundamental challenge of terrorism is that it exists in many cells all over the world, but it cannot survive without some base and without some direction. If one reads of the structure of the various plots that one knows about, they all go back to a variety of base areas that provide organization, recruitment, fund-raising and a sort of coherence. It is for this reason that the elimination of these base areas, or at any rate the suppression of them by the host governments, has to be the strategic objective of the common policy.[19]

Kissinger immediately framed the reaction needed in sending a message to those who attacked on Tuesday the 11th, or to those who are thinking of doing a similar act. However, this is not the most

significant aspect of this train of thought. What is more important is the forecast of structural changes, meant to fill the void in security measures. The change is founded upon the reestablishment of political privileges and immunity for intelligence agencies acting throughout the world, starting with the CIA and undercover agencies. These privileges are further legitimized under the 'Immunity Accords' that protect US military personnel from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for any human rights violations they may commit in the course of their activities.

Consequences for the Colombian peace process

Political forces which favour the use of force in Colombia and state security agencies realized the importance of changes on a global scale. They sought to make the most of the new anti-terrorist movement and attempted to strengthen international alliances, as they now considered themselves legitimately backed by the US State Department's classification of insurgent groups as terrorists. To herald this new era, on September 16, 2001, El Tiempo dedicated a full-page coverage showing eight photographs of towns destroyed in Colombia by the FARC around a picture of the destroyed Tin Towers.[20]

This turn in perspectives on global security, however, does not end justifications for the Drug War. The US Congress favours less negotiation and more use of force in Colombia. Undoubtedly, Colombia represents today's two most sensitive conditions: drugs and terrorism. One of the first results of this new international paradigm and the crisis of the Colombian peace process was the establishment of further controls, including reconnaissance flights over the dialogue zone.[21] Fresh security measures of the government were interpreted by the FARC as a loss of mutual trust. The FARC Directorate declared this on November 8, 2000 through a statement that offered a formal return of urban centres of townships in the demilitarized zone to government control. This document expressed conclusions drawn by FARC' s Southern and Eastern blocks regarding the chances for peace. FARC arguments were based on a rejection of control measures surrounding the demilitarized zone. FARC's analysis of human rights and international human law abuses committed by the state's security forces, degradation of conflict, and absence of policies for restraining paramilitary squads commenced the rupture of peace talks.

According to those in favour of an open confrontation, the idea is to polarize the conflict as far as possible. Strategic advantage may

be gained with international help, and the power balance that once favoured the FARC when peace dialogues were launched, will be reversed. The FARC had given a legitimate ground for these arguments, as a result of its war practices on civilian population, before and after the rupture of the peace talks. Moreover, the FARC became extremely isolated on the international scene due to the systematic kidnapping of German, Japanese and Mexican citizens.[22]

Effects on the civilian population

The symbiosis between antiterrorism and Drugs War negatively impact on Colombia's civilian population, particularly for people in coca and poppy-growing regions.

Firstly, state policies have reinforced arguments that aerial fumigation is part of the struggle against guerrilla finances. This argument is highly self-destructive because it erodes the legitimacy of the state. It also turns peasants and indigenous small crop growers into criminals by charging them of drugs trafficking (Law 30, 1986) and financing the insurgency. In the meantime, 'voluntary' manual eradication pacts are signed with the same 'criminal' people. Such deals often happen based on personal political convenience, violating all principles of impartiality. As a result, eradication pacts were signed with some growers, as in Puerto Asis (Putumayo), while they were denied to neighbouring areas, with similar attenuating circumstances. They then had to suffer fumigation.

Fumigation is often applied in addition to other war measures, creating a dangerous symbiosis. The combined measures prompt a humanitarian crisis, which involves, among others, the destruction of people's staple crops that, in turn, drives them out of their homes. The state does not give these displaced persons assistance, by technically denying the condition of 'displaced'[23] to people affected by fumigation in the midst of war. These displaced peoples continue to be criminalized because they used to live on coca or puppy growing. However, the government campaigns alternative development programmes for the same stigmatized and displaced people. The pertinent question then clearly is: What exactly is the message?

Indiscriminate fumigation, high degrees of corruption among the anti-drug authorities, and stigmatization of crop growers contribute to the state's illegitimacy. These actions markedly undermine those who consider that the most notable cause of Colombia's domestic conflict

is the state's absence. In fact, the state apparatus and its interventions make up the conflict, or at least one of its aggravating causes.

Secondly, the other set of consequences derived from the symbiotic anti-terrorist war and Drugs War relates to the severe circumstances imposed by armed actors in coca growing regions. They forced conscription of youngsters and children and extrajudicial executions of people suspected of being enemy's informants; imposed draconian measures to limit the physical mobility of the local people between urban centres and rural areas, and demanded active participation in the war. These constitute flagrant violations of people's rights, frequently forcing civilians to search for protection. Choosing sides comprise a survival strategy. They increase violence and social divisions, contributing to the loss of social trust. Similar fears have been expressed regarding president Uribe's initiative for a paid network of informants. The conjunction of two interacting phenomena of combined anti-drug and terrorism policies and armed actors defending their territorial control leads to a humanitarian crisis, whose proportions and scope are still unknown because the war denies access to conflict zones.

Additionally, the state still fails to offer sustainable alternatives to its constituents who have survived on illegal economies for decades. Table 1 compares the scenario of illicit economy with living conditions of displaced people, who fled due to violence and fumigation from Putumayo to Nariño. Results show severe cutbacks of livelihood among the displaced people. With the legal economy in a severe crisis (unemployment rates at approximately 16 per cent and threatening social collapse), viable legal alternatives for a living continue to evade the displaced peoples.

Consequences for drug policies

Despite changes brought about in security matters by the 9/11 events, anti-narcotics policies continue to play a decisive political role in counter-threat strategies of the United States. Moreover, we now witness biased attempts to relate the use of drugs to financing terrorism. By so doing, the Drug War and the war on terrorism, become extended to encompass consumers of illegal psychoactive substances, and those who profit in growing illegal plants. The link of consumers and producers to terrorism hinders the development of effective policies, focusing on criminal aspects of consumers and growers. This aggravates negative factors that hinder policies in impacting on the rebuilding of trust between the state and users, and between the state and small-

Table 1. Family income of people taking part in illicit-crop growing in Putumayo and now displaced to Nariño; according to income category.

Income in pesos*	No. of families (prior)	Percentage	No. of families (current)	Percentage
Under $100.000	36	17.30	185	88.94
100.000 – 200.000	52	25.00	6	2.88
200.001 – 300.000	48	23.08	2	0.96
300.001 – 500.000	46	22.12	14	6.74
Over 500.000	26	12.50	1	0.48
Total	208	100	208	100

Note: *the calculated exchange rate is 2,700 Colombian pesos for one US dollar.

Source: UNHCR, Corporación Opción Legal, Samaniego Mayorship 'Proyecto Censo y Caracterización Población Desplazada del Municipio de Samaniego', Carolina Cortés (coord.).

crop growers. Therefore, the current paradigm, which highlights the symbiosis between drugs and terrorism, represents a highly dangerous extension of extremist 'prohibitionist' policies, and thwarts attempts at implementing alternative proposals.

This approach contrasts sharply with the perception and treatment developed and consolidated by several European countries, like Switzerland and the Netherlands, in spite the fact that, in the name of the global War on Drugs, the consistency of more liberal drug policies is often compromised.[24] For example, we may quote the Basque Observatory on drug dependency:

> The idea is to avoid the war on drugs which frequently becomes a war against users and jeopardizes rehabilitation and AIDS prevention efforts. If the user goes underground, because of institutional pressures, he will cease to be accessible to preventive assistance and rehabilitation interventions, thus generating greater social inequalities. It is also a matter of avoiding hardening legislation against drug use, above all, after recent information regarding these measures in the United States, which doubled the number of people in prison; one out of every 150 inmates, that is 60% of all inmates, has been incarcerated for drug related crimes.[25]

By contrast, in the Colombian case not even a distinction between hard and soft drugs is made and, accordingly, policy makers blame the substances themselves, lumping marijuana and hashish with heroin.

They do not take into account the specific users' troubles or environment. [26]

Here, it would be indispensable to consider a wide range of Colombian marijuana consumers and then proceed to establish the cases or quantities where its use became a problem vis-à-vis cases where it did not. This information should have then been used to develop comparative statistics of individual addiction. Instead the governmental 1999-2000 Anti-Drugs Report puts forward irregular and biased inferences that in the end contribute little towards the debate on this issue.

Colombian drug policies ignore treatment and rehabilitation of users. In general, current policies can be typified as follows: [27]

1. Prevention measures far outweigh strategies aimed at reducing demand.

2. The references, goals and actions designed to address treatment and rehabilitation are extremely poor.

3. This is confirmed by the fact that, under the Pastrana Administration, only the National Council for Economic and Social Policy dealt with the issue exclusively promoting prevention.

4. The National Plan for the Struggle against Drugs (Plan Nacional de Lucha Contra las Drogas) does not put forward clear and measurable objectives. Rather it reproduces extremely general criteria.

5. The above-mentioned plan completely ignores the prison issue and the problem of consumption. It excludes diagnostics and proposals regarding these topics.

6. It ignores knowledge derived from recent international experiences (above all the European case) which seek to reduce demand.

This situation is aggravated by the way in which the media abused statistics regarding drug consumption. Frequently, newspaper headlines denounce the growing use of illicit substances without taking into account such differentiation criteria as figures regarding frequency and those which would disassociate the relation between consumption and harm to third parties. The way the Colombian media approach the subject gives the reader the impression that what is called for is further criminalization and repression.

Observed from this angle, one can state that Colombia undoubtedly needs a differentiated policy which assigns distinct responsibilities to a series of coordinated agencies charged with addressing problematic use, illicit-crop growing, narcotics production and trafficking. At the same time, and unfortunately, the debate in Colombia regarding legalization has become a search for an easy way out of an extremely complex problem. The impact of a (hypothetical) legalization would be

highly segmented,[28] putting those countries with a weak institutional capability (like Colombia) in imminent danger when confronted with the problematical use of hard drugs, the effects on third-party non consumers, and the repercussions on the thousands of families that currently survive on the illicit-crop economy.

In this sense, harm reduction strategies allow for more profound analyses of existing alternatives, and are better adapted to the existing institutional capacity to cope with problematic drug use or with the illegal economy. In addition, the improved analysis of social indicators related to drug use can better help us to evaluate the impact of these policies and go beyond the simplistic prohibitionist approach, which confines the issue to a problem of prevalence and levels of consumption. In this sense, and a century later, one can say the Prohibition paradigm is not only old and outdated, it is plainly decadent and out of breath. On the one hand, the indicators which sustain prohibitionist 'zero tolerance' rationality, reflect the abundant increase in the supply of illegal drugs on the market. On the other, harm reduction proposes an alternative approach to strategies geared at abstinence that respond to a punitive model of conduct, which is finally no more than the fruit of either medical paternalism or law-enforcement considerations.[29]

It is not consistent to draw a strong line between legal drugs - accepted because they are supposed to be less dangerous - and illegal substances, considered as such because they are inherently hazardous to people's health. Such an inconsistency opens other viewpoints from which to approach the drug issue. In Switzerland, for instance, approximately 3,500 people die every year from alcohol abuse. Deaths related to tobacco are estimated at 8,700 per year. Meanwhile, harm reduction measures have been extremely useful at reducing mortality associated with carelessness in the use of drugs, decreasing from 417 in 1992 to 181 in 1999.[30]

All member states of the European Union, in general, favour adopting alternative measures to imprisonment, and depenalizing drug consumption. Although drug abstinence is generally considered a desirable goal, most of the programmes that adopt this approach have had only partial results among a very limited range of addicts. Users with severe organic or psychosocial deterioration, heroin addicts who prostitute themselves, prison inmates, long-term drug addicts, and all of those users who cannot abandon their dependence are, in general, not very receptive to classic treatment programmes. They can, nonetheless, be appealed to through programs whose goals are not those of attaining abstinence. [31]

Accordingly, harm reduction policies have gradually evolved towards the recognition that problematical users of drugs are competent people, whereas prohibition places them in the same category as delinquents, or considers them incapable of deciding their own lives. The harm-reduction approach is therefore gaining momentum for it takes into consideration the addicted person's social and cultural environment. Furthermore, it seeks to foster favourable access to assistance networks and health services, as well as the means to finding a better quality of life.

Concluding remarks

Policies that consider national interests and expectations by differentiating the three levels of the drug circuit might alleviate what has become a severe problem. These policies would have to separate problems associated with consumption and illicit-crop growing from security issues that uniformly criminalize while defending vested interests. Meanwhile, law enforcement efforts should be redefined and redirected against the rentiers of the drugs business. Apparently, Washington does not seem interested in taking this direction.

Within the framework of such an implacable policy that prevails in Colombia, with high degrees of militarization and an antinarcotics budget of over two billion pesos, a paradox has been generated. The present groups dedicated to drugs trafficking have become more powerful than when the so-called cartels existed. These sectors are taking advantage of irrational and ill-conceived anti-drugs policies. The fact that they finance strategies based on the privatized use of force as a basis for combating the insurgency has given them a golden political opportunity to legalize and legitimize the illegal capital they have brought to Colombia.

The role these sectors play (as civilians or 'investors' as Carlos Castaño qualifies them in his autobiography) in Colombia's counter-insurgency war is seen to be a pragmatic resource in the short term, due to the difficulties exhibited by the Colombian Armed Forces. This has been clearly pointed out in a document –based on a study of the conditions in which the Colombian conflict evolves and prospects for a solution– outsourced by the Strategic Studies Institute (SIS).[32]

Seen in this context, reiterating the stigma which surrounds the use of drugs and the growing of illicit crops is a useful distraction. Meanwhile, diagnoses and policies that address the fragmented but powerful illegal business sectors are practically nonexistent. The secret to this

apparently incomprehensible omission lies in the extremely profitable business behind the Drugs War. By increasingly presenting drugs as a security problem, higher levels of militarization are attained and greater business opportunities for private capital ventures are opened for countries that produce weapons and sell security. It is, however, difficult to justify militarization if the problem is approached from an accurate angle, namely, by applying the law to narcotics traffickers. To justify militarization of the drug issue, it is much more convenient to magnify the scenario of the dangerous Amazon jungle where illicit crops are grown. The nefarious consequences of this policy are suffered by the socially excluded peoples who have colonized these regions. They furthermore affect the country's natural environment. This is the only likely explanation to the political progress made by the *cocaleros* in Bolivia, proof of the overwhelming failure of the US's 'successful measures' of alternative development programmes and counter-drug policies. Meanwhile, narcotics traffickers conquer more political spaces, recover the assets which the Colombian state 'has tried' to seize,[33] increase their means for exporting illegal substances, and privatize counterinsurgency war. The profitability of this privatized counter insurgency war remains invisible to the State Department and its reports. Because of its war, its weak institutions and its impunity, Colombia continues to be a paradise for drugs traffickers.

Notes

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[1] US Senate Armed Services Committee Statement of general Peter Pace, United States Marine Corps Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, March 27, 2001, Washington.

[2] The Bush administration and the Pastrana government issued a joint statement censuring Chávez's tolerance of the FARC. See, 'Bush y Pastrana contra Hugo Chávez', *El Tiempo (19* April 2002).

[3] Fernando E. Cardoso, speech before the French Assembly, December 2001.

[4] AFP, July 25, 2002, Brasilia.

[5] PCS Borders Program Colombia, July 2002, Mama Coca, http://www.mamacoca.org/ informes_fronteras/informe_fronteras_julio_2002_en.htm

[6] PCS Borders Program Colombia, ibidem

[7] See, among others, Mariana Neira: 'Los misiles y las Farc', *Vistazo* No.828, 21Feb., 2002, Quito, Ecuador.

[8] Ibídem, US Senate Armed Services Committee.

[9] US Department of State International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2001 (http: //www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrp/2001/rpt/8477.htm).

[10] 'However, all agree that in the absence of aerial eradication, the coca harvest in Colombia would have been significantly greater'. NCSR 2001, page 16

[11] Information published by the newspaper *El Tiempo* refers to an official document that recognizes the existence of 162 new narcotics trafficking organizations in Colombia. These employ 4,060 people and are linked with over 40 groups of an international nature. *El Tiempo*, 24 March 2002, Bogotá

[12] See 'De su puño y letra' en Revista *Cambio* No.409, 32 April 2001, Bogotá.

[13] 'Fernandiño compromete a las FARC', *El Tiempo*, 23 April 2001, Bogotá

[14] *El Espectador*, Separata, '15 hombres del IRA en el Caguán', 16 Sept. 2001 Bogotá.

[15] See Rand Corporation: *Colombian Labyrinth*, (http://www.rand.org/publications/ MR/MR1339/).

[16] Anne Patterson ' Las nuevas relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Colombia' in La Revista, El Espectador, 4 Nov. 2001, Bogotá.

[17] Ibidem

[18] Ibidem

[19] Henry Kissinger as quoted in *El Tiempo*, 20 Sept. 2001 and developed in *Foreign Policy in the Age of Terrorism*: Transcript of the 2001 Ruttenberg Lecture, The Centre for Policy Studies, 31 Oct. 2001, p.2.

[20] The dramatic scenes which sought to put these events on the same footing were accompanied by the following caption 'Terrorism knows no limits… Neither does it know nationalities, boundaries, ethnic distinctions, languages, religious beliefs, nor gender. In the last three years the FARC, ELN and self-defense terrorists have destroyed 161 peasant villages in Colombia, they have assassinated 5,274 defenseless citizens, and they have kidnapped 8,983 people. The enemies of humanity.'

[21] The assassination of Consuelo Araujo when she was kidnapped by the FARC, an incident of the presidential candidate, Horacio Serpa, who was turned away from the demilitarized zone allegedly because the FARC could not guarantee his safety, revelations in the Senate of the Republic regarding a series of criminal acts inside the demilitarized zone where taken advantage of by those who question the peace process.

[22] This situation was compounded by political acts such as a statement made by the British ambassador in Colombia on the terrorist nature of the Colombian guerrilla groups, and his government commitment to freezing guerrilla financial resources in the United Kingdom. Likewise, an end to the official presence of the FARC in Mexico constitutes another expression of set-backs on the international scene. The horrifying events of March 1st 2002 were critical to the FARC's full loss of political recognition. They had immeasurable international repercussions, when armed confrontations in the Medio Atrato region led to the violent death of 119 members of the Bojayá community (Chocó department).

[23] Humanitarian organizations had to invent the category 'mobilized by fumigation' (IOM) or 'affected by fumigations' (Social Solidarity Network) is in order to address, and assist, the plight of this social group, which poses serious social and economic challenges at a structural level.

[24] Such is the case of the authorization granted by the Netherlands to the United States for a ten-year concession to install air-shield bases in Aruba and Curacao to control the Caribbean region. Extra officially, it is common knowledge that the United States exerted pressure on the Netherlands on the subject of its domestic drug policy.

[25] Observatorio Vasco de Drogodependencias, *Drogodependencias: reducción de daños y riesgo,* Gobierno Vasco, Departamento de Justicia, Empleo y Asuntos Sociales, Vitoria-Gasteiz, septiembre de 2001.

[26] Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes*, La lucha de Colombia contra las Drogas Ilícitas acciones y resultados 1999 – 2000*, Bogotá, 2001.

[27] This assessment is based, among others, on Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes, Plan Nacional de Lucha contra las Drogas 1998 – 2002, Bogotá.

[28] A highly interesting thesis developed in Robert MacCoun y Peter Reuter in *Drug War Heresies,* Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[29] Observatorio Vasco de Drogodependencias, ibídem.

[30] The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, *La Política de Drogas Suiza*, September 2000, Berne.

[31] Observatorio Vasco de Drogodependencias, ibídem p. 16.

[32] Thomas Marks: *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency,* January 2002 Department of the Army, DOD, US Government, Washington.

[33] For an assessment of this situation, see Contraloría General de la República, *Plan Colombia Segundo Informe de Evaluación*, 30 de agosto de 2001, Bogotá and 'La mafia recupera sus bienes'en *El Tiempo*, 28 de julio de 2002, Bogotá.

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COCA, LAND AND CORRUPTION

Alfredo Molano Bravo[*]

So many controversial things have been said on the origin of narcotics trafficking in Colombia that it is almost impossible to approach the issue without being suspected of sympathy with one or another political orientation.[1] In this paper, the relationship between drug trafficking, or more specifically, 'illicit' crop growing, the agrarian issue and the crisis of the Colombian state will be explored. It will be argued that the cultivation of illicit crops (coca crops) has been borne out from an absence of agrarian reform and administrative corruption. These two determinants are linked to the 'patrimonial' character of the Colombian state. In this sense, narcotics trafficking and insurgent movements are rocked in the same cradle. This is why it is so convenient and rewarding to treat them as a single phenomenon.

Bipartisan politics

Bipartisan politics in Colombian history has served as a lever, used by the establishment's vested economic interest to administer political power. Colombia's two large political groupings, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have similar economic interests and have taken turns at governing the nation. They have acted either as the government or the opposition, monopolizing the political game. Governments used to be a coalition of factions of both parties, which had ousted a similar coalition. Since the nineteenth century Colombian political parties have never directly confronted each other. At the most, confrontations

took place between coalitions, composed of diverging political factions. For this, civil war in Colombia was called a national sport. Such was also evident in La Violencia of the 1950's. Unlike now, however, then protagonists did not publicly show their involvement in a war: they threw the stones and hid their hands.[2]

Bipartisan politics breeds impunity for crimes committed by members of the establishment or the political and economic elite. The law only applies to an ordinary citizen.[3] Impunity assists bipartisan politics to monopolize political power in the guise of a democratic set of rules of a game. Hence, for many years, Colombia has been two countries: a formal one, where law and order reigns; and a real country, which is characterized with plundering, clientelism, and corruption. This aspect is compounded by a historical exclusion of any political opposition and frequent resort to exceptional measures that had to keep the population under control.

The state has become a large business enterprise. Coming to power means the possibility of accessing economic resources. Public administration is a means to defend large vested interests and a way to make a living. The result is corruption. For many years, the state is merely preoccupied with what is popularly referred to as 'What's in it for me?'. Whether related to an appointment, a contract or a judicial ruling, 'What's in it for me?' equates with 'How much money is involved?'. With a patrimonial state, institutional actions have economic repercussions; and every political outreach is marred with economic interests. Benefits are shared by a public agent and a recipient.

The land

Land has been Colombia's most important economic resource and a source of political power. It has belonged to the most widespread means of making a living and a source of fighting. Domestic market, foreign trade, electoral power and livelihood are determined by land. Its control is a matter of life and death. Balzac's phrase: 'Where there is land there is war', helps to explain many critical aspects of our history. This is why land property laws and the state have a close and intimate relationship. In the nineteenth century, large landowners, politicians and generals constituted one sector, while farmhands made up soldiers and electorate. Land rights have always been construed in this double origin, which, on numerous occasions, has ensued in the contrast: property as a fruit of labour or as a result of a political decision.

Twentieth-century agrarian laws reflected the drama entailed by this twin nature. Law 200 of 1936, while recognizing the social function of property, failed to recognize the rights acquired through deeds and to disallow property stripping. Law 100 of 1944 curtailed rights acquired through deeds while upholding stripping of property. This revision contributed to the violence of the 1950s. Hence, the resulting peace agreement involved a bi-party alternation in power and a proposed agrarian reform, which the Alliance for Progress supported later. A decade after, results were pathetic. With only a few defenders, the reform continued to be unpopular among large landowners. When he realized he was going to lose the political struggle, Lleras Restrepo (1966-70), a reformist, tried to turn the reform into a peasant movement. A bipartisan agreement called Chicoral served to repeal Law 61 of 1959, and returned guarantees that landowners demanded for investing in land. With the Green Revolution underway, this agreement created credit and loan mechanisms (Law 5), which financed accelerated development of commercial agriculture. In the early 1970s, two irreconcilable forces confronted each other: a peasant movement called 'Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC)' and a united front of large landowners. State security forces repressed invasions of large haciendas while the government successfully divided the peasant movement.

Colonization

Colonization opened up a new chapter in agrarian history. It has been a political outlet used by the state in order to evade land distribution; but it has also been a path taken by peasants as a means of survival when thrown off their lands and when cities were too full and unemployment was rampant. In the mid-1970s, these disperse and contradictory tendencies constituted the reasons for colonizing new lands. At that time, the import substitution model heralded its limitations while the secondary sector began to tire, especially since the Currie Plan[4] had not harmonized urban migration with industrial reactivation through housing construction. Urban unemployment compelled a large number of peasants to clear land in the rainforest and become settlers.

Colonization has not only been an escape valve, it has also been a tool for primary capital accumulation. Normally, colonization processes meant: 'You clear the land and I pick up the winnings'.[5] The frontiersman was a labourer with no other resource than his family. At times, he did not even have basic farming tools. He faced an amazingly

powerful jungle under the most adverse conditions. He had to turn to profiteers in order to work and survive until crops could be harvested, which, by then, he already owed to someone else. The soil allowed him minimal earnings, to breathe, and keep his hopes up. He cleared rainforest and built a farm on loans from tradesmen. Consequently, his improvements on the land eventually fell into the hands of loan sharks, who then put various land holdings together to form large haciendas. In all, the frontiersman was plundered under the law and colonization was a process through which large landowners expanded their holdings and extended the frontier. Land settlers became particularly skilled at this mode of transfer, living on the setup of farms. Many ended as farmhands on the land they had cleared, while others persisted on continuing their search for horizons. In the 1960's to the 1970s, this hype of colonization became a rule. This was due to legal guarantees that endorsed large landowners' undertakings and evident future prospects in commercial agriculture. Extensive cattle raising was privileged, enjoying tax exemption and protection through high duties levied on imports, including a meat ban in domestic markets in order to stimulate exports. Law 5 was paying off then.

Armed Colonization

Colonization zones have not only operated as economic havens, but also as political shelters. In the nineteenth century, the vanquished ended in jungles surviving on trading activities or land improvement. The struggle against Conservative governments started in peasant territory and transformed into resistance in colonization zones. After Rojas Pinilla's [6] peace and the National Front agreements, the agrarian movement took refuge in the jungle and became a self-defence movement, which the government tauntingly labelled as 'Independent Republics'. Among these, the best known included Marquetalia, Riochiquito, El Pato, Sumapaz, Guayabero, and Ariari. The Cuban revolution contributed to this uprising in Colombia's jungles and the propagation of a war strategy where, patterned after Che Guevara's example, warfare was to be waged through mobile and offensive guerrilla forces. In the 1950's to the 1970's, the agrarian movement – imbued with communism – became rooted in the colonization zones, particularly in the South-eastern slopes of the Central Cordillera Mountains, Macizo Colombiano, Magdalena Medio, and Urabá region. Intense struggle over land dominated politics in these regions. A peasant colonization movement could not be easily distinguished from armed resistance.

But these two were intimately tied since the years of La Violencia. Ties became stronger in the 1970's due to land concentration under the Chicoral Agreements, repression of the ANUC movement and, a new Security Decree (Estatuto de Seguridad) by Turbay Ayala (1978-82), which controlled social unrest and eliminated political opposition. The land settlers movement and armed political opposition merged into a single movement. In the beginning, land settlers and insurgents in these zones were one and the same. They had to wait for the peasant economy to generate the surplus needed to send out a group of young colonists as a guerrilla force, led by intellectuals or those with experience in social struggles. The breakdown of their peasant economy became a source of unrest and inconformity. Land concentration of cattle raisers and businessmen turned into a new source of enrichment, as extortion and kidnapping became standard practices. The guerrilla started as an authority in the peasant movement and developed further to express the movement's demands, substituting the state in the arbitration of social conflicts and even serving the cause of regional development.

Illicit crops

With the minimal exception of coca, illicit crops do not have cultural roots in Colombia. Marijuana was first planted in the 1920's on the Atlantic Coast, as commercial hemp brought to Santa Marta by Mexican experts working for the United Fruit Company. It was only in the 1960's when Peace Corps workers linked to the hippie movement made marijuana part of an expanding market, stimulated by the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, fumigation of Mexican crops briefly displaced the weed to Colombia. Trafficking of cocaine began as a business venture in which accumulated capital from marijuana trade was invested to refine the basic coca paste from Peru and Bolivia in order to produce cocaine for the North American market. When the marijuana market broke down, many narcotics traffickers ventured with coca crops in the Cauca and Meta departments, launching a production line that rapidly prospered in the colonization zones, where the state was barely present and the peasant economy was severely sustained. Poppy crops came to Colombia at the end of the 1980's as a project of the Cali Cartel in the indigenous *resguardos*[7] of the Cauca department.

For colonists, illicit crops came as a new bonanza; much like the rubber, hides, gold and emerald booms. They quickly saw that for the first time their work was paid and their efforts were recognized. These crops made their dreams come true and represented in fact the

accomplishment of their pleas from the state: credits, markets, education and recreation opportunities. Frontiersmen realized they could pull out of their chronic bankruptcy and join the consumer world. The guerrillas were shocked. Their world was in turmoil. After living off peasants' cooperation and protection, guerrillas feared the erosion of their social bases through illicit crops. They considered marijuana and coca as weapons of imperialism; and so, prohibited their planting and marketing until peasants told them 'Either you allow us to plant these crops, or we do without you.' However, the guerrilla also saw how the new cultivation flooded the zones with money, giving them the opportunity to extort greater amounts of money. Hence, the insurgency opted to accept a *fait accompli* and played to take advantage of the new bonanza, which, through a twist of fate, coincided, with the crisis of Communism. In the wake of its loss, a new source of financing arose to fund a war that was reaching new peaks of intensity. So, too were social conflicts becoming increasingly aggravated as the state's weakness worsened.

It should be noted that the guerrilla groups were not the only sector to profit from the narcotics traffic. The chain which links direct producers to consumers consists of parallel interests, thereby allowing this phenomenon to flourish and multiply. Merchants who trade in precursors – many of which are licit merchandise such as gasoline, permanganate, acids, cement, light salts and acetone – are a part of this business. Large capital from the narcotics traffic has turned legal through this channel. Great fortunes were also made by supplying expanded local and national demand generated by the flood of dollars on the Colombian market. This is particularly true in the case of the contraband business. Traditional landowners, in their turn, abruptly discovered that land was in such high demand, that their properties were worth much more leading to an accelerated process of land concentration. Nonetheless, perhaps no other sector gained from this boom as much as the legitimately constituted state authorities, namely, state security forces, judges, mayors and congressmen. Greater blackmailing opportunities corrupted the political system from top to bottom. The State, through its various agencies, became the channel for participating in all sorts of narcotics-trafficking activities. This was, no doubt, due to the patrimonial nature of the Colombian state and the existing void – where opposing political forces should have existed – which laid the conditions for narcotics trafficking to operate without a hitch. The voices and forces that opposed and denounced this corrupt behaviour by government officials ended up dead or stigmatized as Mafia or guerrilla

collaborators. Had there not been a tradition of impunity and corruption, it would have been more difficult for narcotics trafficking to take root and prosper. The great consequence of the narcotics traffic was not only hunger and the people's unsatisfied needs; it was also corruption and the ease with which government officials could be bribed. The US State Department's description of the Colombian political system as a 'narco-democracy' is apt.

Social conflict and illicit crops

Colombia's social conflicts deteriorated since the mid 1970's. Land invasions, labour strikes, sit-ins, roadblocks, and nationwide protests were endemic. In the colonized regions, social strife coalesced in the early 1980's. The frontiersmen of the Sierra de la Macarena – to whom the government could not confer legitimate property rights since it was a national park – organized a succession of marches to San José del Guaviare, Macarena and Villavicencio. Their marching motto was the right to land titles. Parallel to this demand, were the right to roads, lower interest rates, trade subsidies and respect for their lives. The assassination campaign against the leaders of the Unión Patriótica (UP)[8] had already been launched. All of these marches led to some sort of agreement, most of which were never fully honoured by the government. This, compounded by the disappearance and assassination of the movement's leaders, fostered further mobilization. It is interesting to note that there was little mention made of the coca. It was a tactical factor, for the government did not want to penalize it, while the frontiersmen concealed it so as not to add one more crime to their precarious legal situation as land invaders. Public officials and peasant leaders, notwithstanding, addressed the issue in private, and in fact, it was one last card used by the frontiersmen to negotiate: bartering coca for development and state presence.

But the problem grew. Crop-growing areas multiplied and commercial activity became frenetic. The state dealt with this matter quite slow, as the agreements were not fulfilled. The country was getting richer and the bonanza became financially profitable for legal and illegal economic sectors. As a result, when the Betancur government (1982-86) demanded that, as a prerequisite to peace negotiations, guerrillas renounce kidnapping and attacks, they could have conceded without affecting their military strength. Despite the Palace of Justice[9] tragedy and systematic assassination of UP leaders and members, local negotiations in Caguán proposed an exchange of illicit crops for agricultural

development programmes and land deed adjudication. However, this project was frustrated in the following Barco Administration (1986-90), when hostilities broke out in Puerto Rico (Caquetá). The negotiation process came to an end, liquidating the programmes commenced in Caguán. Immediately, aerial fumigation of coca fields started. The army officially adopted the idea of 'narcoguerrilla', whereas the government neither accepted nor completely disowned it.

In the Southern Cauca and Northern Nariño, the United Nations started a crops-substitution programme that involved local communities' participation and state support. According to the UN, this programme was inspired by the knowledge of the inadequacy of fumigation measures. The new initiative failed because: first, the market for the substitute crops was neither guaranteed nor had been previously agreed to; second, the substitute crop, coffee, was not protected by the World Coffee Pact any longer; and third, the Cali Cartel introduced under very profitable conditions poppy crops, which were to be planted from loans for substitution. Despite these failures, the UN still launched its project in Guaviare and another in Putumayo.

Towards the end of its rule, the Barco Administration reached a highly publicized agreement, which, however, also failed. Meanwhile, the Cali Cartel continued land concentration in the lowland regions of Cauca and in Valle del Cauca. And because some of these were indigenous lands, the Cartel's action precipitated the horrifying Nilo Massacre. The indigenous population, who had adopted a *de facto* acceptance of poppy growing and tolerated the occupation of their territories by drug traffickers, decided to turn to the government for help in eradicating poppy from its lands. The Jambaló Agreement was hence signed between the *cabildos* (Indigenous Councils) and government authorities. The state committed itself to development programmes in exchange for permanent eradication. The following government rejected this agreement, however. Aerial fumigation of the Macizo Colombiano and Central Andes Mountains began. Indigenous communities created roadblocks and marched to Popayán to paralyze the Cauca region's economy.

Under the Gaviria Administration (1990-94), peasants in the Magdalena Medio, Catatumbo, Vaupés, Guaviare and Caquetá, marched to demand from the Colombian state the implementation of development plans in order to pull out of the coca economy. Agreements signed by the government were barely fulfilled. Meanwhile, the peace talks in Caracas y Tlaxcala broke down renewing the trend of armed confrontation. The guerrilla vowed an intensive arms race,

which they financed through kidnapping, extortion and *gramaje* (taxes levied on the production and marketing of coca paste and poppy latex). After the Casa Verde[10] attack, the war scenarios encompassed almost the whole country. Sixty fronts with approximately 10,000 people comprised the FARC. Guerrilla expansion became feasible through coca and poppy cultivation. This development was facilitated by an economic liberalization during the Cesar Gaviria administration. Since the *apertura económica* or liberal-market measures in the 1980's, commercial agriculture steadily declined. Foodstuffs were imported with money coming in from coca. After militarization, however, agriculture with went into a state of crisis. Many existing fortunes tried to soften the blow by engaging business ties with narcotics trafficking and investing in cattle farming, one of the few sectors protected by imports duties. The import and contraband of corn and rice, cotton and sorghum outdid domestic production while coca and poppy crop growing reached a golden age. Another factor that contributed significantly to this state of affairs was the decline of Peruvian and Bolivian raw material imports for processing and making cocaine in Colombia. The country stopped being an intermediary and soon became a producer of cocaine.

The Samper government (1994-98), in view of a political crisis and its failure to dialogue with guerrillas, increased aerial fumigation measures throughout the whole country. This led to three consequences: first, illicit crops shifted to new areas, paving the way for destruction and pollution of the nation's natural resources; second, coca and heroin prices stayed high; third, peasant communities took a stance. Upon the demand of the FARC and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), large marches were held in Magdalena Medio, Guaviare, Caquetá, Putumayo and Cauca. At the same time, planes fumigated illicit and licit crops. Commercial plantations of coca, which were less than one fifth of all plantings, and staple crops were destroyed. The military repressed social mobilization, adding another grievance to peasant demands. For years, peasants asked for land titles, loans and credits, marketing of their products, roads, schools and heath services. Settlers needed these incentives in order to substitute illegal crops (coca) and politicians always promised these demands during election campaign. But they never materialized.

The Plan Colombia

Despite multiple actions of the Pastrana Administration (1998-2002) to present Plan Colombia as an autonomous and generous initiative,

many still fear that the plan had been an old concoction of Washington. The US became involved because of worldwide expansion of narcotics trafficking, Colombia's role in the drug market, ties between the guerrillas and illicit crops, and above all, the Andean-Amazonic region's social and political prospects. The State Department had already begun to tighten its reins. An example was Samper. He was a politician who was disliked in Washington since he, as director of ANIF (National Association of Financial Institutions), proposed to legalize marijuana. Regardless of all the proof filtered by Washington and their service to the opposition, in the end the US attacked Colombian sovereignty by its so-called 'decertification' of the country. The United States used this concept to turn Colombia into a pariah state, while at the same time considering to expand its free-trade zone, NAFTA. The Republicans formulated a strategy against drugs in Colombia that also encompassed the repression of armed insurrection through governance. These hypotheses would be validated in future events.

Plan Colombia had been formulated by Pastrana as a star programme of his government and named after his father's Operación Colombia. The World Bank has sponsored the Plan since Ernesto Samper's administration. Plan Colombia should be the Marshall Plan for Colombia, which would rebuild the country and pull it out of war. Pastrana wanted to link the European Union and United States to join in these economic efforts and also wished to associate Latin America, particularly Mexico and Brazil. He submitted his initiative to Washington prior to its presentation to the Colombian people. The Plan was reformulated as a military and political strategy, strengthening public security forces to war against narcotics. Guerrillas would be considered as enemies against the Plan. In all, Plan Colombia's goal was to combat guerrilla forces by attacking their sources of funding, and treating them as drug cartels. The US Congress adopted the Bush-Pastrana request to use Plan Colombia's resources in attacking guerrilla forces.

In Europe, Plan Colombia was received with misgivings. The Europeans saw it as a Washington-led military operation; and so, only funded the Plan's social projects. European directives assisted in local projects only without getting mixed up in military operations. The United Nations adopted a similar stance. Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Venezuela, stayed distant from the North American strategy.

Briefly, the plan consists in strengthening state security forces, which were severely overpowered by the FARC on several occasions. At the same time, the plan fosters social and economic development in regions

that are involved in illicit-crop growing. Plan Colombia's budget was $7 billion over a seven-year period. $4 billion of this money will be shelled out by Colombia, $1.5 billion by the US and $1.5 billion by the European Union and Latin America. Colombia's contribution was to be taken from the national budget. And because funds from the European Union and Latin America never arrived, the United States became Plan Colombia's main contributor. The proposal was mainly military. Eighty per cent was earmarked for troop training, leasing of planes and helicopters, and supporting international maritime and air interdiction operations. In August 2000, the US Congress authorized the funds for the Drug War to wage war against Colombian subversion. Meanwhile, Colombia elaborated a vast strategy to fight insurgents, who not only have irregular military power in rural areas, but also try to sustain an irregular war in urban zones.

Corruption

No other country in Latin America has had a more pervasive bipartisan politics than Colombia. From the mid nineteenth century, the Liberal and Conservative parties have held absolute control over the government. José Hilario López's (1849-53) liberalism was not similar to López Pumarejo's (1934-38 and 1942-45); nor was Ospina Rodríguez's (1857-61) Conservative Doctrine similar to that of Ospina Pérez (1946-50). But these parties have, nonetheless, continuously monopolized political power. Approximately 70 per cent of the years between 1886 and 1986 were years of power sharing between alliances. Historians looked at this power-sharing of parties as a defence mechanism of parties who feared of being displaced from power by other movements. Bipartisanship embodies the persistent claim by Colombian politicians that Colombia has the oldest democracy in Latin America, hiding the continuance of the country's two traditional parties therein. This monopoly has allowed the elite's interest to merge with those of the state, giving a clear-cut indicator of this sector's patrimonial and excluding nature.

The National Front, a bipartisan coalition in power, blocked Law 2000 of 1936 reforms, truncated Jorge Elíecer Gaitán and upheld Ospina. The Front legitimated and eventually toppled Rojas, who has perceived a threat to their hegemony. An understanding of this Front is the key towards understanding the corruption in the Colombian government and the discrediting of political opposition, which, in turn, had to resort to the use of armed force. The National Front has monopolized power through clientelism and State-of-Emergency meas-

ures, called the State of Siege (Estado de Sitio) since 1991. Clientelism is established by controlling the legislative branch to allow for impunity and annulling judicial power. Clientelism pertains to a commerce of power, in which the executive branch relegates some prerogatives in exchange for those of the legislative branch. The Colombian congress passes laws by the executive, in exchange for a quota to appropriate the state's bureaucracy and budget. Prerogatives are agreed in a closed circle, excluding all opposition. With the command of a two-thirds majority for the passage of bills, the National Front keeps negotiations between the two current parties and three powers of the government. This led to a millimetric parity in public administration posts and a controlled judicial branch, which in turn absolves the excesses perpetrated by the National Front hegemony.

The two parties were also strengthened by the exclusion of military power from political exercise. The Armed Forces had no right to political deliberation. According to Francisco Leal[11], this principle divorced civilian and military power, leading to the Armed Forces' autonomous management of public order. The USA welcomed this outcome, which professionalized the military in accordance with the US National Security Doctrine of Cold War. The National Front's economic policies followed the conditions of the IMF. In spite of former president Lleras numerous efforts, the Front discounted an agrarian reform, without solving Colombia's development or employment problems. Hence, social conflicts worsened to become public order problems. The military arrived on the scene to assume repressive functions.

Such governance was irreproachable, except for its *clientelism* and military autonomy. Both contributed to an increase of administrative corruption. Corruption embodied one of the forces behind the National Front's mode of governance. It evoked resistance to change from the military forces and politicians. They tended to block civil solutions to Colombia's armed conflict and resisted a dismantlement of bipartisan politics.

Because of this form of governance and social conflict 'solving', corruption thrives when political and economic practices are declared illegal. Since there is no opposition, controls are nonexistent or ineffective. Through convenient pacts between public officials, the nation's oversight agencies, such as the Procuraduría (Procurator-General of the Nation), Contraloría (Treasury Inspector), Fiscalía (Prosecuting Attorney) and Defensoría (Ombudsman) are voided. Illegal management of public funds, and imposition of private business upon politics have generated a jurisprudence that permits delinquency and crime.

The narcotics traffic

Narcotics trafficking can be considered as a specialized field in marketing illegal merchandise or contraband. Contraband has a long-standing tradition in Colombia and is closely tied to protectionism. The Spanish Crown, in an attempt to monopolize commercial activities between its colonies and the metropolis, introduced activities and practices to its own harm. Protectionist policies have always been circumvented by contraband, supported by producer countries that compete for markets.

In Colombia, narcotics traffic have always been linked to the contraband of legal merchandise. For this reason, marijuana flourished in the Atlantic Coast through contraband runners, who did business with the West Indies and Panama. Smuggling merchandise through the Guajira and the former Provincia de Padilla date back to the seventeenth century, when Holland and England were boycotting Spain. The same could be said regarding the use of the Atrato and Orinoco rivers, waterways which had been banned by the Crown to protect its monopoly in Cartagena. These are precisely the regions where marijuana flourished.

Contraband thrives on prohibition, the secret of its high margins of winnings. Smuggled goods only became high priced because of accrued costs in risks and payment of bribes involved. The practice of smuggling necessarily implies a degree of impunity, previously negotiated with the border officials-in-charge. The degree of impunity is proportionate to the scope of a transaction and determined by the level of tolerance in a political system. Accordingly, bribing is moulded by clientelism and impunity. In Mexico and Colombia corruption has an enormous margin of manoeuvre; and so, narcotics traffic has achieved its greatest political pre-eminence. Hence, we are forced to conclude that Colombia was an ideal haven for narcotics trafficking, not only due to its geographic conditions and economic structure but especially because of a political regime that allowed it to develop and prosper.

Notes

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[1] Original text in Spanish: 'Han echado tanto perro muerto sobre el origen del narcotráfico en Colombia, que se hace imposible acercarse al asunto sin quedar untado, es decir, señalado'.

[2] 'Tiraban la piedra y escondían la mano'.

[3] 'La ley es para los de ruana'.

[4] The Currie Plan was implemented in Colombia in the 1970s for solving agricultural development problems through a push in industrial output and investment accompanied by rapid migration out of rural areas. Lauchlin Currie, *Accelerating Development*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966.

[5] 'Tú tumbas, yo recojo'.

[6] General appointed to the presidency (1953-57) by a legislative decree.

[7] Territories which belong to communities, as opposed to a *reserva* that belongs to the nation.

[8] A political party formed by demobilized guerrilla members and members of the intellectual left after the 1984 truce – Acuerdos de la Uribe – signed between the government and the FARC.

[9] In November 1985, the insurgent group M-19 (later demobilized) occupied the Palacio de Justicia by force. This resulted in a brutal reaction of the Armed Forces and ensued in the death of numerous judges and leaders of M-19.

[10] Casa Verde, headquarters of the FARC Secretariado, was attacked by the army on 19 December, 1990.

[11] See Leal's contribution to this volume (note by the editors)

6

THE MILITARY AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

Francisco Leal Buitrago*

The professionalization of the Colombian military was a belated process compared to most South American countries, even later than the countries of Southern Cone. Military professionalization in Colombia was carried out around 1907, when the Military School of Cadet José María Córdova was founded and, in 1943, when graduating officers from this school occupied the highest-ranking posts in the hierarchy.[1] This professionalization led to the modernization of institutions, becoming autonomous from civil society through corporative values, socializing processes, and their own rigorous hierarchies. This article seeks to analyze how these changes in the military institutions manifested the context of great transformations in Colombian society during the past decades.

The army and violence

Military institutions in Colombia have been affected by the phenomenon, known as La Violencia. This period has been a factor since it broke out at the end of the 1940s in a society polarized between Conservatives and Liberals, whose premodern sectarism moulded Colombian values. Because the military was apolitical and stayed out of the debate, it could conveniently become subordinate to civilian authorities. In addition, the military presidency of Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957) and the Military Junta from 1957-1958 ensued from bipartisan coalitions. Notwithstanding this apolitical condition, the military were

nonetheless called to become guarantors of public order. But like other sectors of society, the military followed a path to depoliticization with respect to traditional parties. In the mid-1960s, when remnants of bipartisan conflict disappeared, a new type of political violence came to the fore: the guerrillas, established during the Cold War. The military involvement in this new violence substituted the ideological void left by an enforced demise of membership in either of the two parties. Thus, a counter-subversive military mindset defined Colombia's input to the National Security Doctrine, elaborated in the Southern Cone countries.

1960 was a turning point for the military's transformation. General Alberto Ruíz Novoa became the Army's Commander in Chief. He administered the upgrade of the military institutions to 'modern warfare' principles. This undertaking reflected the general's background as commander of the Colombia Battalion in the Korean War. He was well versed in Cold War perspectives and politically adept after serving a government post during General Rojas Pinilla's Administration. Furthermore, Novoa had the backing of select Korean War veteran officers, who, in the name of shared experience, took up the advocacy of this renewed cause. Novoa's outlook was development-oriented and transcended military considerations. He founded an Officers' Library, which included both military and political publications, and created two military journals, which army officers compulsorily subscribed. One of his articles written at the time reflect his views well: 'The Armed Forces… are the institutions in charge of guaranteeing normality in the face of both external and internal enemies and the Army is the only institution capable of doing so in times of crisis.'[2] Novoa's development-oriented outlook did not oppose his anticommunist views. The General held that communist influence was a result of backward Colombian society and its ensuing problems. For him, to eradicate subversion was to 'reform the structures', criticizing the state's failure to implement reforms therewith.[3]

This same year, 1960, the government created the Higher Council for National Defence to coordinate military policies at the highest level. However, the Council's efforts were superfluous given the autonomy enjoyed by initiatives issuing from Army Command, which designed an innovative strategy against *bandoleros* (bandits), loose ends of bipartisan violence. Diverse operational measures initiated in 1960 were brought together under what was known as 'Plan Lazo'. This plan was articulated under the guidelines stipulated by the United Sates for counterinsurgency tactics that stressed the psychological compo-

nent of 'irregular warfare'.[4] One of its pillars, civilian-military action, undermined popular support for 'subversive' organizations through a deployment of literacy, health and public works campaigns. Initial support for Plan Lazo's civic-military actions came mainly from the US through USAID and the Military Assistance Program (MAP). From 1961 to 1967 Colombia received 60 million dollars as part of a Military Assistance Program, signed with the United States in 1952. Colombia also received 430 million dollars as economic assistance through the Alliance for Progress.[5] Only Brazil and Chile received larger amounts. Additionally, military training in the Panama Canal Zone and the United States was an important means for promoting US counterinsurgency tactics.

In 1964, the army deployed military actions against the 'Independent Republics'. These zones, located in the heart of the country, were under communist influence and harboured peasant self-defence organizations that comprised a sub-product of bipartisan confrontation. The military was to 'exercise sovereignty' while showing the truth regarding communism. In the meantime, the self-defence groups relocated to new territories and soon constituted the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). In the same period, in Santander, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) consolidated and inaugurated 1965 with its first armed confrontation.[6] In the same year, General Novoa was removed from office, due to his outspoken political declarations and development-oriented view of the military's autonomy in public order. As a result, though the development-oriented component in counter-insurgency strategies did not completely vanish, the military increased operations, responding to the emergence of new radical guerrilla groups. Armed confrontations became more frequent.

The recurrent resort to a state of emergency since La Violencia completely eclipsed the social state of law. Although legal arguments were consistently brandied to demonstrate abidance to the Constitution, the quasi-permanent application of exceptional measures created a temptation in taking an easy way out in addressing the innumerable problems related to the country's political violence. For example, the army was authorized to apply penal justice. The state of war legitimized trials of civilians by military tribunals as of 1965.[7] It also justified the establishment of military-controlled Civil Defence and legalized the military training of self-defence groups in the rules zones.[8] The development-oriented approach of the initial counterinsurgency model had assigned the military the role of teaching people to read and write, providing health care and executing public works. In turn, the police

was subjected to reinforced militarization. Lastly, the establishment of 'public order zones' under the state of emergency allowed for the predominance of military authority through the establishment of military mayor ships. The military decided on military operations, without consulting civilian authorities.

In the mid 1970s, the military built on the disperse counterinsurgency projects they had developed in the previous years. They began by purchasing more advanced equipment. They equipped soldiers with automatic rifles and ascribed to theoretical schemata, compounded from a doctrine elaborated in the Southern Cone countries and US National Security state principles. The Higher School of War oriented its courses towards a study of texts that expounded these two complementary orientations.

At an operational level, there were also diverse initiatives. 'Operative commandos' that tried to overcome rigid conventional units, were brought in to complement older anti-guerrilla 'Lanceros' units. Plan Lazo's civic-military component was revived. Furthermore, advances were made in psychological warfare and the gathering of information. An intelligence and counterintelligence battalion (Binci) was created in 1962 under Plan Lazo. This unit was frequently accused of human rights violations in the following years. As Colombia underwent intense social agitation, the military became a target of criticism from different sectors. To reject these accusations, the military shielded themselves behind their anti-communist ideology. Moreover, in late 1977, high-ranking officials issued a public document demanding the application of emergency measures against subversion. From 1978 to 1992, efforts were made to implement the National Security Doctrine. President Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978-1982) provided the state structure that officiated military operations.

Turbay's government allowed a state 'occupation' by the military, while applying the best doctrines. Defence Minister Luis Carlos Camacho Leyva and President Turbay noticeably empathized with one another. They were often seen and photographed together. This cooperation allowed an application of the Security Statute (Estatuto de Seguridad), which authorized indiscriminate detention and torture of numerous leaders of communal organizations, union members and left-wing intellectuals. The military rationalized these episodes in their framework of military justice, exercised through frequent verbal war councils and continuation of operations against guerrillas. The manifestation *à la criollo* of the National Security Doctrine coincided with

the decline of intellectual activity, which shortly helped to condone military operations. Praxis became the substitute for thought.

The doctrine's local version was created in a climate fraught with social agitation and political controversy. The guerrillas were reborn with their ups and downs. An example was M-19, whose leaders were imprisoned after being subjected to war councils. Colombians became polarized in favour and against military actions. Human rights issues and reports by international human rights organizations instigated aggressive responses of the president. The government downplayed the effects of war by creating a fleeting and inoperative peace commission, lifting the State of Siege and proposing a doomed bill on amnesty to guerrilla fighters.[9]

Throughout the presidential campaign, candidates reiterated the need for pacification as expressed by public opinion surveys. López Michelsen sought to be re-elected through a sectarian slogan 'peace is liberal'; while Belisario Betancurt, in his third try at the presidency, campaigned for an abstract 'National Movement' which prioritized peace. The resounding triumph of Belisario Betancurt, member of the minority Conservative Party, showed the public's clamour for change. Independent political groups increased in number.

Betancurt (1982-1986) inaugurated an era of peace processes. He recognized the political nature of guerrillas through a generous amnesty bill.[10] The bill was approved by Congress that same year, thanks to the popular support enjoyed by the President and his pacifying policy. President Betancurt and the military had a conflictive relationship from the beginning, becoming worse over time.

Liberal president Virgilio Barco Vargas (1986-1990) did not meddle into military matters but his mandate suffered the changes effected by high-ranking army officers and armed confrontation with narcotics traffic. Peace policy dialogues remained at a standstill during his administration. But towards late 1988, the executive opted to take advantage of the willingness expressed by M-19 to hold negotiations and demobilize. This situation contrasted with the unbending attitudes of ELN and the FARC. The dialogue with M-19 became successful in early 1990. Hence, at the end of term, the government salvaged its original political line of peace.[11] The greatest challenge faced by Barco was what became known as the 'president's war' against drugs trade during the last year of his term.[12] This war responded to the terrorist campaign, perpetrated by narcotics traffic. Thus, more than a struggle against the slipping narcotics trafficking business, confrontation was

directed on narcoterrorism. This became the central issue in the years to come.

Redefining Colombia's national security: a deadlock

One of the consequences of Colombia's protracted violence was the isolation of military institutions from the rest of society. Violence has impacted greater in the severance of its institutions than its professionalization. However, institutional isolation has also been compounded by other factors such as the growth of officers' recruitment from lower classes, which, in turn, generated instability among its ranks. Furthermore, the rapid growth and diversification of the middle class became endangered, due to the precarious state of the country's economy. The heterogeneity and instability of this class has led some to rely on traditional institutions like the military. The universal tendency of the military towards seclusion has thus received additional reinforcement. However, the factor that most influenced military isolationism has been the institution's longstanding autonomous power in the handling political violence. Since the 1960s, this task has been guided by important doctrinarian ideas. If the Colombian military have been assigned to address public order, it received this power because of an absence of guidance from national civilian authorities. This gap in the state's political strategy for public order was filled by a precarious military stance, in alignment with a state-security conception from the US and South American National Security Doctrine. Hence the military have taken the responsibility of civilian authorities and risked thereby to lose their prestige.

The military's social isolation is the cause and result of its discreet profile in the past two decades. This isolation produced what is known as the military *ghetto,* with its own schools, universities, neighbourhood hospital and social endogamy. It also manifested in the unarticulated appraisals of diverse social sectors, which resulted from the military viewpoints and behaviour. As we mentioned, a number of politicians and journalists served as 'organic' intellectuals and contributed to intensifying an anti-communist ideology among the military. They expressed their military-minded view of politics and promoted the use of repressive actions. Both businessmen and professional sectors have echoed these sympathies and have systematically defended the military.

Until recently the Colombian military remained fairly small and weak. And though its expansion did not strengthen the institution, it nonetheless became autonomous to the equally weak civil society.

Limited citizen participation, economic marginality of Colombians and dirty electoral politics limited civil society. Failure of the state to exercise force was due to the fragile civil society and state isolationism. Armed private organizations emerged to fill the void left by the state. The military determined the use of state force with no consideration whatsoever to the interest of the majorities of the country's fragmented population and they did this with the complicity of civilian authorities who opted for ignoring the problem.

The most conspicuous aspect of security in Colombia is that civilian governments have not assumed the responsibility of designing and implementing policies to guarantee it. Security exclusively concerned the military and was addressed according to the emergence of public disturbances. For the first time, President César Gaviria's government (1990-1994) espoused national security as an issue that engaged different state institutions and formulated by civilian authorities. This perspective, however, was confronted by serious obstacles due to the persistence of violence and other factors. Eventually, it meant the return to the repressive policies that had been dominant in the past.

National security in Colombia has focused above all on domestic problems due to the protracted guerrilla violence. Debates on military modernization only appeared on a circumstantial and transitory basis like during border incidents with Venezuela. These episodes highlighted that some regions of the country had been completely abandoned by the state. They have emphasized the incapacity of the Colombian military to defend sovereignty against its neighbours and evidenced its misdirected dedication to internal conflict. The issue of sovereignty has been undermined by a dominant concern about an internal enemy. This situation has devalued modern military organization, constituted by a conventional state structure and weaponry that justified existence of Naval Forces, Air Force and, to a lesser degree, Army.

The protracted nature of the country's armed conflicts and the fast change of social organization caused the growth and diversification of Colombia's violence. The nature, organization of violence put the country at the top of homicide rates worldwide from the second half of the 1980's onward.[13] Safety was continuously undermined as narcotics traffic perpetrated terrorist activities. The governing class, which profited from the narcotics traffic, failed to address the trade as a policy issue. Pressures exerted by US authorities to repress this delinquent activity prompted the state to an armed confrontation with narcotics traffickers. The National Police and the Armed Forces confronted this threat and preserved the stability of the state. This reaffirmed the domestic

focus of Colombia's military institutions, the militarization of its police force, and the unification of the police and military forces.

Modernization of national security models has been counterbalanced by chronic presence of communist guerrilla forces. At the end of the Cold War, guerrillas lost material and ideological ties abroad. Despite changes, the Colombian military have not disengaged from security doctrines; they treated guerrillas as internal enemies, who must be eliminated at all costs. Their insistence on cataloguing guerrillas as bandits, villains and narcobandits (*bandoleros*, *facinerosos*, and *narcobandoleros*) do not fit the description of a military enemy. Furthermore, this assessment does not coincide with the Samper government's efforts (1994-1998) to continue the peace process and the Pastrana government's attempts (1998-2002) to dialogue, because it denies guerrillas the political status that could act as a basis for any peace process.[14]

Rapid increase of crimes like kidnapping and extortion is due to two conditions. One, political violence stimulates other types of violence, and two, crimes have become the means of subsistence for armed actors. So, political delinquency and common delinquency have joined efforts. For instance, common delinquents kidnap, and then sell their victims to the guerrillas. Or, they are previously contracted by the guerrilla to abduct certain people. This collaboration has made Colombia the most notorious in the world of kidnapping. When personal insecurity is prevalent, safety becomes a collective problem that deserves a political and not military response. Colombians' feeling of vulnerability has led the society to arm itself, which, in turn, has contributed to more violence. Such a degree of social degradation cast further doubts on Colombia's capacity to recover and, above all, on the viability of its democratic development.

Another aspect of the security problem concerns the possibility of a civil war, sparked by the polarization of the populace's alignment with armed actors of the war.[15] Since the late 1970's guerrillas have tried to polarize Colombians by campaigning for an armed insurrection. For them, insurrection could simply resolve poverty and justice. This simplistic view fell from grace during the 1980's but the guerrillas' growing financial capability gave it new life. It supported a rebel force that might defeat the country's Armed Forces. The guerrilla's search for legitimacy through people's political support soon became a secondary issue. Unconcerned with advise from abroad, the guerrillas disregarded repercussions of their actions from the international community, particularly from the US. However, military restructuring

with US support during the Pastrana government has reminded the guerrilla of these factors which they tried to ignore.

Through support from drugs traffic, paramilitary groups also gained strength and unity, therewith realizing a conventional civil war. The guerrilla groups relegated public opinion and forced people's support through intimidation and territorial control. Fear made rural and semi-rural communities 'support guerrillas', while wide sectors of the urban population frankly rejected them. The paramilitaries adopted these same tactics with the endorsement of numerous social groups.

Colombia's social organization and democracy are favourable conditions for civil strife.[16] The state's and civil society's weakness support old economic and social privileges, which create an unjust social organization. The state's vegetative growth, and narcotics trafficking unleash further violence and corruption.[17] Such an environment could conveniently host a paramilitary project because it supported privileged groups and common citizens, who rejected terrorism and the guerrillas' arrogance. The inefficient security forces could now use the paramilitaries to do the dirty work, which security forces were not authorized to do since the end of the Cold War.

The particularities of this strife are complex. Marco Palacios argued that the strategic objective of guerrillas to take power and carry out a socialist revolution became blurred in the 1990s. Their political infrastructure was militarized and violent tactics became their priority. Palacios added that guerrillas, like their enemies, have been reduced to power play. Thus, the current conflict is a matter of political economy of violence rather than politics or ideology. None of the armed actors is interested in democracy.[18]

Two legal analysts, De Sousa Santos and García Villegas, sustain that Latin America has sought to solve the state's protracted democratic failure to monopolize justice by a normative fetishism of changing reality. Fragile political representation and extremely abstract and ideological political debates explain constitutionality in Latin American institutions: Colombia is not excepted from this pattern.[19] One analyst highlights that Colombia belongs to those countries, whose state laws compete with other means of justice. The legal system combines despotic and repressive with democratic dimensions, or highly formal with informal components. It comprises areas, where the state is omnipresent and areas where it is absent. Hence the Colombian situation equates with the utmost expression of 'domestic judicial pluralism'.[20]

De Sousa Santos holds that, rather than addressing inefficiency of Colombia's justice system, it is much more important to address

its social impact and served interests. Equal access and application of justice is more of a myth than a reality. For example, most lawsuits are brought to court by banks and other financial entities that use the judicial system to recover their debts, while the penal system only serves to confirm 'the injustices of the judicial system'. Santos sustains, as long as the justice system is not fundamentally reformed, the courts will continue to perpetuate social and economic inequalities that are manifold in Colombia.[21] As Garcia Villegas states, in countries where military regimes came to power, civil society strengthened its democratic discourse against the military. In Colombia, both right-wing and leftist opposition avoided democratic discourse to be free from identifying with respective governments. To complicate matters, these two positions propitiated the illegal political opposition of both guerrilla and paramilitary groups.[22]

The Colombian state has been incapable of exercising the monopoly of force. Ramírez Tobón affirms that Gaitan's project was the bourgeoisie's last chance to articulate its class hegemony over violence, ensuing from social resentment and the forces of capital. This lost opportunity, says Ramírez, made the expansion of violence possible because, in the face of the state's inability to bring its social forces together, violence became a viable means for integrating internal fractures among different classes and social groups.'[23] In the 1980's, the narcotics traffic incapacitated the state further becoming the greatest challenge to national security. The narcotics traffic

> was inserted as an outstanding and easy source of rents which increases the potential of political armed struggle and places it within an entrepreneurial logic which assigns new meanings and engagements to its foundational postulates and practices.[24]

In Colombia, the public had to fight for sovereignty in the midst of a precarious awareness regarding nationality. Alternative *de-facto* orders have been configured under what María Teresa Uribe calls 'war-waging territoriality'. These territorialities established states in-the-making, capable of guiding a collective. They established their own small sovereignties. Nonetheless, these alternative guerrilla orders were neither sound, nor permanent; since the paramilitary have challenged their sovereignties and redefined national orders acts of violence increased. Predictable social organizational principles have become hazardous. Uribe writes, 'this is a complication of authoritarian and vertical orders in the face of which inhabitants are defenceless, vulnerable, with no rights, and left to their own devices.'[25] She concludes: 'There are no alternative projects for a nation-state, nor multi-cultural arguments

behind these confrontations… If there is no recognized and universal sovereignty, citizenship is a virtual matter in which rights of social actors are not covered by disputing orders. Subjects become dependent on protection-security by different war machines.'[26]

Under above conditions, state security forces represent only one of the elements, which navigate in a hostile social organization without means for appeasing the stormy winds of its maladjustments. Although insufficient, military effectiveness might be a necessary condition to solve existing security problems. In this sense the USA sponsored military reform during the Pastrana government is ambivalent. On the one hand, it increased military efficiency through progressive substitution of recruits by professional soldiers, created units trained to fight an irregular war, implemented operational reorganization to function in such a confrontation, and changed the regional organization of military deployment.[27] On the other hand, US intervention in this reform undermined military efficiency by enforcing a militarized Drug War and expanding the scope of armed struggle.

Under the Samper government, Colombia became prominent in the international scene because of its association with narcotics traffic. Diplomatic efforts to restore the country's good image and gain support for the peace process generated concern after the United States decided to finance the military component of Plan Colombia. By then, Colombia's armed conflict was also known at an international level and political and social sectors knew they could not salvage the country alone. Any effort towards this end needed the participation of the international community. However, the predominance of the USA in the project has evidenced that international support could also generate problems. Other members of the international community, such as the European Union, have been hesitant to counterbalance this predominance.[28] The Bush Administration has reaffirmed its policy towards Colombia and projected it to the rest of the region through what is known as the Andean Regional Initiative.

At the national level, security policy holds on to its old vices. In 1999, some sectors submitted a law, which sought to give further powers to state security forces to combat subversion. These security forces were criticized both domestically and abroad. In 2001, when the bill was passed, criticism and support generously poured in, despite the law's alteration that allowed the constraint of military prerogatives. Given the aggravated domestic crisis, the guiding strategy in security matters has spent itself out. In order to be effective, such a strategy should be part of a global state policy, where civil society and international mediation

contribute to create democratic solutions.[29] This policy does not exist. Because of its military bias, traditional national security proves to be too narrow a strategy for solving the nation's crisis.

Towards the future

A global state policy would have to go beyond current peace policy criteria, which have become limited to the search for agreements with the insurgency. Such policies are not viable because they exceed possibilities of direct action by the involved parties. Neither the government nor the guerrillas are in any condition to control the country's dispersed interests. Accordingly, this model seems to have reached a dead end. Insisting on applying it as a guideline for pacification could be self-defeating. The country needs a progressive 'social pact', which would design a model of democracy geared at solving the national crisis. However, it is highly unlikely that powerful groups, including illegal armed forces would be willing to voluntarily part with their power quotas. This was evident during the Pastrana peace process with the FARC and ELN. Therefore, a social mobilization should be an end in a long-term national policy, accompanied by coercive state measures and backed by public opinion.

At present, the Uribe government can choose between two political programs. One, it can insist on negotiations that disregard civil society's direct and active participation but rely on US-strengthened military force. The future would therewith be left to the risks of war. Or two, the government can launch a process of democracy building with the active participation of diverse interest groups, the parties in conflict, and ample representation of the international community as mediators. In the first scenario, the so-called peace process might come to a standstill. In the second scenario, negotiations and forceful measures could entail a lot of possibilities.

The first scenario poses severe complications because the struggle and the results of negotiations will be conditioned by the legitimacy of forces involved in armed confrontation. The FARC and ELN would strengthen themselves to obtain their belligerent status and win support in the context of deteriorated state legitimacy. The paramilitaries would gain their legitimacy from those sectors, which reject subversion and doubt the state's capability. Since 2000, guerrilla and paramilitary groups have resorted to the strategy of doubting the legitimacy of their adversaries and pitting the state against their enemies in national and international campaigns. The military has used similar tactics against

the guerrillas. Is paramilitary legitimacy not growing at the expense of state legitimacy, represented by its Armed Forces? Furthermore, would the United States promote a multinational 'solution' for intervening in Colombia or in its border zones? How much can Colombia take more of this war without endangering its nationhood? These are just some of the questions, which must be taken into consideration regarding the country's future.

The second scenario is an ideal one. Nonetheless, it also poses a series of inconveniencies, due to the lack of a legitimate political class in charge of the process, lack of unity within Colombia's ruling class, and the absence of political leadership in the country. The precarious Colombian state and its dispersed civil society compound these difficulties. Nonetheless, citizenship must be supported, for citizens who support this democratic ideal are essential assets in building democratic institutions. A long-term political action program should be designed to stimulate participation of all Colombians.

Colombian elites have been anti-military since the nineteenth century, when wars resulted from politics in a disarticulated society where the state was practically nonexistent.[30] This still holds true, despite violence and a militaristic stance of politicians, professionals, guerrilla fighters, paramilitaries and military institutions. The conflicts of the past 50 years have contributed to a military behaviour, which has provoked contradictory opinions about their role in society and fuelled antimilitarism among Colombians, who now desire peace. An additional factor of violence, the state has negated its function as a pacifier in the country's internal conflicts. Its military institutions have become judge and party to these conflicts. National defence matters have been privatized to the extent that the army tends to protect age-old privileges. For many Colombians, the military embodies an object of suspicion and fear; for others, it comprises protectors of vested-interests or conveniences. Since 2000, guerrilla abuses against civilians have favoured the image of the military institutions. Nonetheless, paramilitary expansion and military condescension, have generated ambivalent feelings.

Military re-institutionalization and professionalization are political tasks in building a future. These are *national* responsibilities, especially if the country's security forces and its military institutions are to be re-erected. The initiative for this reconstruction must come from a self-criticizing military. Self-criticism is contrary to military nature but, above all, contrary to dogmatic national security models. These are part of the negative legacy which weighs heavily on the military. The military must 'examine itself closely' to effect national reconstruction, which should be the responsibility of the state and the whole Colom-

bian society. Addressing the plural society is the essence of democracy and politics is the means for advancing on this path. The military is foremost a means at the disposal of a state to fulfil the mandate of a social community.

Notes

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[1] Francisco Leal Buitrago, 'Los militares en el desarrollo del Estado, 1907-1969', in: F. Leal Buitrago, *Estado y Política en Colombia,* Bogotá, Siglo XXI Editores-Cerec, 1984, p. 186.

[2] Comando del Ejército, *La misión del Ejército,* Bogotá, Sección Imprenta y Publicaciones de las Fuerzas Militares, 1960, p. 38.

[3] Alberto Ruiz Novoa, *El gran desafío,* Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, 1965.

[4] See Edwin Lieuwen, *Generales contra Presidentes en América Latina,* Buenos Aires, Siglo Veinte, 1965, p. 178.

[5] Richard Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas and Politics in Colombia,* Lexington, Lexington Books, 1973, pp. 107-108.

[6] Leal Buitrago, *Estado y Política en Colombia,* pp. 208-212.

[7] Gustavo Gallón Giraldo, 'La república de las armas. Relaciones entre Fuerzas Armadas y Estado en Colombia: 1960-1980', *Controversia,* Numbers 109-110, Bogotá, CINEP, 1983, pp. 27-29.

[8] *Ibid.,* p. 36; Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas and Politics*, pp. 75.

[9] Leal Buitrago, *Estado y Política en Colombia*, pp. 266-275.

[10] Socorro Ramírez and Luis Alberto Restrepo, *Actores en conflicto por la paz. El proceso de paz durante el gobierno de Belisario Betancur,* Bogotá, Siglo XXI Editores-Cinep, 1989, and Ana María Bejarano, 'Estrategias de paz y apertura democrática: Un balance de las administraciones de Betancur y de Barco', in: Francisco Leal Buitrago and León Zamosc (eds), *Al filo del caos: Crisis política en la Colombia de los años 80,* Bogotá, Tercer Mundo Editores and IEPRI, National University of Colombia, 1990, pp. 57-124.

[11] Regarding the peace process see, *ibid,* Chapters 4, 5 y 6.

[12] See Iván Orozco Abad, 'La guerra del Presidente', *Análisis Político,* Number 8, Bogotá, September- December, 1989.

[13] In addition to the police's lack of prestige, this placed citizens' safety at the center of discussion on security and generated an awareness regarding a need to improve police services. Nonetheless, the results were not very flattering since, criminality continued unbridled. Javier Torres Velasco, 'La ciudadanía pacta con su policía: El proceso de modernización de la Policía Nacional de Colombia', in: Francisco Leal and Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (eds), *Orden mundial y seguridad: nuevos desafíos para Colombia y América Latina*, Bogotá, Tercer Mundo Editores, SID-capítulo Colombia and IEPRI, National University of Colombia, 1994.

[14] Iván Orozco Abad, *Combatientes, rebeldes y terroristas. Guerra y derecho en Colombia,* Bogotá, Editorial Temis, IEPRI, National University of Colombia, 1992, p. 181.

[15] The concept of civil war is a controversial issue. I believe that, rather than forcing changes to a widely accepted concept that better adapt to aspects of current conflicts. Juan Tokatlian, for example, adopts 'new war' formulated by Mary Kaldor. See Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, *Globalización, Narcotráfico y violencia. Siete ensayos sobre Colombia,* Bogotá, Grupo Editorial Norma, 2000, p. 19-21.

[16] As concerns the last phase of the country's modernization, Ramírez Tobón points out: 'The National front was a brilliant solution to the mid-century crisis but, it ended up

being the definite desisting of the deferred historical task of building a social contract which would integrate, within the real possibilities of capitalist inclusion, the particular and contradictory interests comprised by Colombian society'. See William Ramírez Tobón, 'Violencia, Guerra civil, contrato social', in: Varios autores, *Colombia, Cambio de Siglo, Balances y Perspectiva,* Bogotá, Planeta and IEPRI, -National University of Colombia, 2000, p. 37.

[17] See Beatriz Franco Cuervo (comp.), *La corrupción y la lucha contra la corrupción,* Bogotá, Konrad Adenauer Foundation-Goethe Institute, 1997.

[18] Marco Palacios, 'Un ensayo sobre el fratricidio colectivo como fuente de nacionalidad', in: *Museo, memoria y nación,* varios autores, Bogotá, Ministery of Culture-National Museum of Colombia-UNDP-IEPRI-ICANH, 2000, pp. 443-447.

[19] Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Mauricio García Villegas, 'Colombia: el revés del contrato social de la modernidad', in B. de Sousa Santos and M. García V., *El calidoscopio de las justicias en Colombia,* Tomo I, Bogotá, Colciencias-Ediciones Uniandes-Ces, Universidad of Coimbra-Colombian Institute of Antropology and History, National University of Colombia, Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2001, pp. 76-77.

[20] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Los paisajes de la justicia en las sociedades contemporáneas', in: de Sousa Santos and García Villegas, *El calidoscopio de las justicias,* p. 146.

[21] Interview on the occasion of the publication of the research findings co-directed by de Sousa Santos and García Villegas. *Semana,* Nº 992, Bogotá, 7-14 May, 2001, p. 53.

[22] Interview on the occasion of the publication of the research findings co-directed by de Sousa Santos and García Villegas. *Ibid,* p. 54.

[23] William Ramírez Tobón, *Violencia, Guerra civil, contrato social,* 32-33.

[24] *Ibid,* p.. 59.

[25] María Teresa Uribe, 'Las soberanías en disputa, ¿conflicto de identidades o derechos?', in *Museo, memoria, nación,* Bogotá, p. 473.

[26] *Ibid,* pp. 475-77.

[27] Regarding the need for these changes: Francisco Leal, Patricia Bulla, María Victoria Llorente and Alfredo Rangel, 'Seguridad nacional y seguridad ciudadana. Una aproximación hacia la paz', in A. Camacho Guizado and F. Leal Buitrago (comps.), *Armar la paz es desarmar la guerra,* Bogotá, Cerec-DNP-Fescol- IEPRI- Presidencia de la República, 2000.

[28] The European Union has a different outlook regarding a solution to the crisis. It cooperates in a timid manner and avoids getting involved in the problem, as it does not consider Colombia, important enough to enter into a controversy with the USA. See: 'Pax Christi de Holanda cuestiona aportes a Colombia: Ayuda de Unión Europea es confusa, lenta y limitada' ', *El Tiempo,* 6 August, 2001, pp. 1-9.

[29] 'But [Colombia] should not make the mistake of taking its military and police forces to the front without an effective national strategy that engages its government authorities and social classes. Marcella, Gabriel and Schulz, Donald, 'Las tres guerras de Colombia. Estrategia de Estados Unidos en la encrucijada', *Análisis Político,* Nº 37, May-August 1999, p. 62.

[30] Leal Buitrago, Francisco, 'Formación nacional y proyectos políticos de la clase dominante en el siglo XIX', in: Leal Buitrago, *Estado y Política en Colombia.*

THE GUERRILLAS' PEACE NEGOTIATION STRATEGY WITH THE STATE

*Alfredo Rangel Suarez**

In Colombia, peace negotiations between the state and guerrilla groups started in early 1980's under the Belisario Betancurt government. Today after numerous peace talks, five guerrilla groups have demobilized, surrendered their arms, and reintegrated into civilian life. They include Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), Corriente de Renovación Socialista (CRS), Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) and the Movimiento Indígena Quintín Lame. Several urban militias in Medellín have also been demobilized after talks with the Colombian government. Nonetheless, the two strongest guerrilla groups, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército de Pueblo (FARC-EP) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) continue to fight because, despite several attempts of dialogue, the government has not reached an agreement with them.

Different views on peace negotiations

The stance of these guerrilla groups on negotiations with the state has been very different. Indeed, the FARC intended to negotiate with the state from its inception. In the past years, it negotiated with the governments of Belisario Betancurt (1982-86), Virgilio Barco (1986-90), César Gaviria (1990-94) and Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002). The ELN rejected the peace process in its first eight years of existence. This changed in the context of Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera, as the ELN joined the FARC and a sector of the EPL during talks in

Caracas and Tlaxcala (Mexico) with the César Gaviria government. Later attempts made by the Andrés Pastrana administration never consolidated into formal peace talks. The acute political crisis during the Ernesto Samper government (1994-1998) made it impossible to hold peace negotiations. All peace initiatives were delayed during this presidential term.

Upon the de facto dissolution of Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera, the two guerrilla groups opted to negotiate separately. Their different military and economic situations and corresponding strategic viewpoints influenced their approaches towards the state. Their working philosophies and views about the war's end conditioned the guerrilla negotiation strategies. Indeed, the FARC is an insurgent group that still aspires to triumph over the Colombian state and exercise complete power over the nation. In order to carry this out, the FARC seeks to strengthen its military capability to approximately 40,000 men. The FARC estimates that such a military force should allow it to overpower the state. However, the FARC would require an increasing inflow of economic resources to double its numbers, develop military logistics and acquire needed weapons and ammunition. It would need to implement control and territorial expansion plans, with the aim of opening new corridors for mobilizing its troops, connecting controlled zones, and extracting economic resources in territories beyond its control.

The peace dialogues play a functional role in the FARC's strategy to ascend to power. By negotiating in the midst of conflict, the FARC gains time to develop a military strategy, and win political support for an aspired military leap forward. Thus, the peace negotiations are a political tactic within a strategy of war for power. However, the FARC also considers a second strategic option, namely a peace agreement with the state. This could be done, if they could not win the war. Thus, dialogue during conflict is an extremely functional schema in both strategic options. It allows the FARC to win time and political support while preparing for war and betting on a military victory; and to move ahead with the negotiation agenda.

In contrast to the FARC, the ELN has steadily weakened in the past years. This does not mean, however, that it has been defeated and lost its capability for armed confrontation. The ELN's decreasing force has changed the group's perception of conflict and its potential therein. It has given up the dream of taking over power through force and focused its attention instead on achieving a political negotiation with the Colombian state. For the ELN, the use of force is a military tactic for negotiation. The ELN considers the military aspect as a tributary to

political negotiation; for the FARC, political negotiation is secondary to its aim of a military victory over the state.

War and peace

The two groups' diverging views and agendas impose different dynamics and rhythm on their approach and dialogues with the Colombian state. For the FARC, the idea is to continue winning time and strengthen itself militarily. Negotiating with this group is a very slow process, full of pauses and protractions. In the negotiations with the Pastrana Administration, the FARC imposed a slow pace at the negotiation table and frequently halted the dialogues for moths. Due to the FARC's parsimony and the government's lack of initiative no progress was made in negotiations, except the establishment of an agenda.

For the ELN, time is becoming a scarce. As it weakens, this group rushes to negotiate in order to close a respectable peace accord with the state. Paradoxically, the Pastrana government did not succeed in starting formal talks with the ELN, while it was negotiating with the FARC almost from the start of its term. Several factors explain this contradiction. Firstly, the government prioritized dialogues with the FARC, at the expense of the ELN. Secondly, the government's lack of interest and inconsistency, are compounded by the ELN's difficulties at achieving an internal consensus and strategy for approaching the government. As a result, the process had to contend with obstacles which, despite significant advances that we will examine, made it impossible for involved parties to negotiate.

The differences between the two guerrilla groups have attributed distinct roles to civil society in their negotiations. The FARC is an orthodox, Marxist-Leninist group with a totalitarian statist view of society and politics. It considers itself a state in-gestation, exercising the powers of a state in its controlled regions. The FARC wants to be treated equal with the Colombian state in the negotiations. Thus, the FARC, should it not achieve a military victory, hopes to negotiate with the state on level. Decisions regarding reforms would be adopted by both parties. Civil society's proposals, like in Public Audiences, could be considered by the state and guerrilla, but not incorporated in their final decision. Thus, civil society would only be a passive spectator of negotiations.

The ELN, in turn, is a group with an ideology, which is a diffuse mixture of liberation theology, populism and 'Guevarism'. It does not recognize the legitimate Colombian state and attributes civil society

with homogeneity without great contradictions. Civil society is not considered a sociological or political category but a moral one. For the ELN, civil society is the incarnation of good while the state is that of evil. Accordingly, the ELN assigns civil society an active role in defining the agenda and search for solutions to negotiations with the state. Before initiating negotiations with the government, the ELN held what it called a National Convention, which would bring together spokesmen from civil society groups and the ELN to discuss options and solutions to the country's problems. However, the participants' identity remained unclear; and so were the type of representation, deliberating methodology, and type of procedure to seek agreements. What is politically significant is that the ELN seeks social support for its negotiations with the state by addressing civil society. As such, it compensates the precarious state of its military force during negotiations with the state. Other differences between the ELN and the FARC concern the conditions of negotiating, such as a ceasefire, demilitarized zones and international oversight.

At the start of peace talks with the Pastrana government, FARC commanders declined discussing truce and ceasefire until 90 per cent of the agenda was reached. When the government discussed the need for a ceasefire in order to create a better atmosphere for negotiating, the FARC tactically aligned their position to the proposal that enjoyed wide support of Colombians and concerned countries. The FARC agreed to consider proposals on the issue. However, one should not forget that the FARC aims to come to power and so requires military strengthening which, in turn, requires large quantities of economic resources. The FARC needs to continue its armed confrontation while it negotiates with the state, since it is only through conflict that it can continue to acquire economic resources. These would be impossible during a ceasefire, for it would halt extortion, kidnapping and cooperation in drug traffic. Hence, the FARC cannot accept a ceasefire.

Economic and political considerations

The FARC cannot explicitly come out in public and tell the reasons mentioned above; and so it now tries to win a political victory by coyly defending the cause of a ceasefire, which it will not accept until the government fulfils its conditions. These concern the country's macroeconomic policy, a halt to Plan Colombia, solving the unemployment crisis, and acceptance of FARC's control over territories that allow immense strategic and military advantages. Since war cannot be justified

by another war, the government's refusal to fulfil the guerrilla's demands gives the latter the opportunity to blame the former for the continuation of the conflict and justification of its further call to arms.

The ELN would be agreeable to a truce with the state in the short term, without making disproportionate demands in exchange. Since the public is demanding a halt to the conflict, this boosts ELN stature and stops its progressive decline in the military and economic arena. Today the ELN is fast becoming a war booty for state security forces, paramilitary groups and the FARC. Its adversaries try to evict the ELN in zones it earlier established. The ELN has already lost control to the paramilitaries over many of these areas, and FARC has ousted it from other ones though disarmament and, in some cases, assassination of its combatants.

The paramilitaries and the FARC are trying to take over spaces left vacant by the ELN. As a result, because of such pressure from adversaries, the ELN is forced to negotiate a truce or ceasefire with the state. War and peace issues are not a matter of good or bad will. They involve political and military calculations regarding specific circumstances, in which the conflict evolves throughout the country at large.

These two insurgent groups also have diverging attitudes concerning the international community. While the FARC is deeply distrustful of its participation in the peace process, the ELN has been demanding the international community's participation from the start. For the FARC, the so-called international community consists of capitalist states, whose solidarity with the capitalist Colombian state cast serious doubts in its neutrality to the conflict. The international community's participation would counteract FARC's capability of exercising pressure on the Colombian state. Its negotiations would no longer be between two parties, but among three, and two of them are against the insurgency. For the FARC, the presence of third countries in the peace process should only be to monitor the state's commitments after the negotiation.

For the ELN, on the contrary, the presence of other countries guarantees a speedy peace process and transparency of the Colombian state, which is perceived to be inclined to double cross the insurgency. The ELN is convinced that the involvement of certain countries could allow it to increase its pressure on the state and achieve more at the negotiation table. This would provide the needed political and financial support for the organization. Consequently, the ELN has favoured an active participation of the international community since the beginning of the peace process in Colombia.

Scenarios of dialogue

The two Colombian guerrilla groups also differ in their views regarding the scenario of the dialogues. This is not an insignificant factor. In a long conflict, as in Colombia, the place of dialogue has become very controversial, leading to power-play between parties. The guerrilla groups have adopted different attitudes concerning a demilitarized zone for holding peace talks with the government. The FARC turned its demilitarized zone into a privileged zone for military strengthening, recruitment and training of new troops, retraining of veteran troops, accumulating enormous amounts of weapons, logistical development, and place to hide hostages and negotiate for ransoms.

The FARC also used the zone to enrich itself through expansion of crops and coca processing. Moreover, the demilitarized zone was used as a platform to launch attacks on neighbouring towns and a haven for escaping the state security forces. In other words, the zone was used first to strengthen FARC's military force and second, to maintain a dialogue. Until the last minute, the FARC refused to agree on the rules of negotiation and to have the international community monitor the demilitarized zone. Ensuing incidents in the demilitarized zone made the public wary of the peace process ending the dialogue.

The ELN has shown signs of using the demilitarized zone in South Bolívar for negotiations only. The ELN was willing to define clear norms with the government regarding mutual obligations in the zone. After establishing a code of conduct for both parties inside this zone, the ELN agreed to the monitoring and eventual decisions by national and international commissions therein.

The FARC's demilitarized zone in southern Colombia was generally supported and accepted by people in the area, while inhabitants in the South Bolívar (ELN's zone) did not. ELN's long history of abuse opportuned influential paramilitary groups in the region to (forcefully) mobilize its inhabitants to oppose demilitarization. In the end, the government had neither convinced the populace to accept a peace process with the ELN, nor decisively confronted paramilitary groups. It failed to create the necessary conditions to guarantee the safety of inhabitants from intimidation.

Lastly, the two groups also differ in their views regarding the outcome of the armed conflict. The FARC seems inclined to agree to partial accords only. It would not accept partial and temporary agreements as a process, through which a final agreement could be reached. Wary of international check, the FARC would rather exercise armed and belligerent monitoring of the immediate realization of engagements reached

with the government on each issue, demanding that this fulfilment is indispensable to the continuance of the negotiation. This protracts the negotiation process and neither demobilization nor disarmament is therewith in sight. The ELN seems willing to accept partial agreements prior to signing peace with the state. This implies a shorter and less traumatic negotiation process in one or several demilitarized zones.

In sum, the Colombian peace process might be a parallel march of two distinct political negotiations with two guerrilla groups. The peace talks could have different rhythms and velocities and levels of violence: the FARC escalates armed confrontation and the ELN de-escalates armed confrontation. The results could differ in the issue of weapons. The ELN has not objected to demobilization and disarming, whereas the FARC opposes both suggestions. The peace process will thus be extremely long and complex, much like the armed confrontation between the Colombian people has been.

Note

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PARAMILITARIES, SELF-DEFENCE GROUPS AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Mauricio Romero[1]

The study of guerrilla, insurgent and revolutionary movements has a long tradition in the social sciences. Numerous analyses regarding rebellions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America enlighten us on the emergence and development of insurrections.[2] Political and armed reactions provoked by these movements have not, however, received the same attention in spite of their import on rebellions and theatres of occurrence. This article approaches this issue through a study of the emergence and consolidation of paramilitary groups between 1982 and 2000, generally called Autodefensas Unidas de Córdoba (AUC). The AUC, a federation of right-wing paramilitaries, has been a decisive factor since the mid-1980s in the failed negotiations for peace between the Colombian government and guerrillas movements.

By warring with their accused guerrilla sympathizers, paramilitaries have taken control over areas, where local owners and foreign investors faced security problems, political conflicts and social mobilization for rights and recognition. As the AUC stabilized these regions, it gained support from the region's elite. The acceptance of this armed group in the conquered territories has weakened the central government's authority and aggravated its decline. How can we explain the flourishing of parastatal organizations within a state? Why did violence in Colombia escalate while most Latin American countries regained control of their political systems during the 1970s and 1980's? How can we explain the AUC's consolidation in the periods when its various factions violated human and civil rights and the spread of violence?

Until the mid-1980's, North America and European academics praised Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela for preserving constitutional governments while the rest of Latin America succumbed to *coup d'états* and military regimes (Fitch, 1986; Mainwaring, 1992; Scully, 1995; Rouquié, 1986). As opposed to Venezuela, however, Colombia's 'consociational democracy' did not incorporate its left-wing guerrilla groups into political institutions during this period (Hartlyn, 1992).[3] Unlike Costa Rica and Venezuela, the Colombian state has confronted a protracted guerrilla insurgency since the 1960's, massive human and civil rights violations since the 1970's, and narcoterrorism since the early 1980s. Furthermore, in contrast to Mexico, not the civilian authority but the Colombian Armed Forces dictated official response to collective mobilization and armed rebellion (Americas Watch, 1992; Gallón, 1979; Hartlyn, 1986; Leal, 1994a; 1994b; Reyes, 1990; Serrano, 1995).

Colombia was also the first Latin American country to negotiate for peace with guerrilla groups. These began in 1982, way before the Central American peace processes with armed insurgent groups began. But as peace accords in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala concluded successfully in the 1990's, armed confrontation in Colombia intensified. The political liberalization that allowed for peace dialogues in all of these countries took a different path in Colombia, where armed conflict escalated. Studies about contrasts of transition to civilian governments in the Southern Cone and Central American countries have assumed that peace negotiations would always reach happy endings (Arnson, 1999). These studies do not consider sequences of reform and its effect on armed conflict and opposition, including an armed reaction.

This text presents an analytical perspective that underscores a political explanation for the emergence of paramilitary groups in Colombia. To this end, it uses the concept of *coercion entrepreneur* in the sense of an individual specialized in administrating, deploying and applying organized violence that is merchandised in exchange for money or other types of assets (Volkov, 2000). Coercion entrepreneurs should not to be confused with regular businessman and their (legal or illegal) enterprises. Regular entrepreneurs earn incomes through production of goods and services for market. They do not, however, resort to directly using violence themselves; they pay specialists for such.[4] This does not mean that economic profit is the end of specialists in the use of organized violence. Use and deployment of violence set limits, regulate behaviour, and bring about certain values. In all, they are means to impose social order that commands authority, obedience, and regula-

tion even at an economic level. For paramilitary groups mercantile profits are means to restore and sometimes redefine local and regional political regimes, threatened by the peace policy.

My argument proposes to highlight an aspect of the issue, which has not been duly considered in the search for understanding the emergence of coercion entrepreneurs: the peace-negotiation, political-liberalization and decentralization context, where paramilitary groups emerged in the 1980s. This context favouring guerrilla groups, allies and sympathizers, prompted a series of risks and threats to the regional power balance, thus provoking a dramatic change in the forms of coercion fostered by these violent defenders of the *status quo*. This contribution holds that the central government's attempts at negotiating peace accords with the guerrilla unleashed destabilizing dynamics inside regions of armed insurgency and social mobilization and the state, as a whole.

First, regional elites rejected the presidency's reformism and challenged the central state's peace policies. They opposed negotiations and supported violence against communists, radicals, socialist or reformist at local levels. Second, narcotics traffickers, who had become rural proprietors and landowners, promoted private vigilance groups, which attacked civilians suspected of backing guerrillas and mobilized groups that demand for their rights and social-progress policies. Third, the Armed Forces rejected peace negotiations and accords between the presidency and guerrillas. They opposed these dialogues and favoured the implementation of counterinsurgency measures.

Polarization, competition and fragmentation

The abovementioned dynamics can be identified as three different political mechanisms (Tilly, 2001): *Polarization* between regional elites and central state representatives, and among these same elites and organized local groups which support peace negotiations; *Competition* between narcos and guerrillas and their local influence on social and political movements; and *Fragmentation* within the state's organization. The differences of opinions between central state representatives and army officers regarding peace negotiations officiated the cooperation of negotiation's opponents at a sub-national level. This collaboration threatened to unhinge regional power agreements that accommodate emergent individuals tied to the traffic of illicit substances.

Interaction among the three aforementioned mechanisms prepared the way for the emergence and consolidation of coercion entrepreneurs and aggravated the corrosion of the Colombian state by further weak-

ening its monopoly of organized violence, severely dwindled by guer-
rillas. In fact, the resulting estrangement between local elites and the
central government and opposition by high-ranking military officers to
peace dialogues paved the way for regional leaderships linked to drug
traffic. These leaders emerged and converged with military officers in
their common opposition to peace negotiations and following possible
reforms. These could include the guerrillas' reincorporation to civilian
life and the ensuing restructuring of power, both in the local and insti-
tutional levels. This strategic concurrence between opposing sides of
the law created a grey zone, where legality and illegality were, in many
cases, merged as the way was paved for private counter-insurgency
groups that were strongly connected to the state apparatus.

These political dynamics in the regions and within the state – po-
larization, competition and fragmentation – did not occur inside an
institutional void. On the contrary, structural changes within the state
in course of the negotiations further obstructed the peace dialogues at
a regional and local level. In fact, political decentralization initiated in
1987 allowed for the first popular election of mayors in 150 years of
centralized governance. Leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties
considered that this decentralizing reform was the obvious response to
the loss of state legitimacy and a therapy against insurgency (Bell, 1998:
97). Paradoxically, reverting power to the regions had the opposite
effect. Increasing political competition at the local level through free
election led to a bloodbath. The sequence of reforms markedly influ-
enced this outcome. Wider electoral competition escalated ferocious
competition between those who insisted on the revamp of political
system and those who defended the *status quo*. Violence became part
of politics among armed actors in different regions of the country.

Peace talks and decentralization were part of a wider political lib-
eralization process, which raised expectations and opportunities to
be heard in a new democratizing environment. Both the government
and the guerrilla groups called for greater political participation, as a
means for building a true democracy. In his inaugural speech in Plaza
de Bolívar, Conservative President Belisario Betancur (1982-1986)
asked people not to limit themselves to electoral participation but to
permanent exercise of their citizenship as a right and an obligation.
'Only then can we say that our people have ceased to be burdened
with history and become its own actors' (Betancur 1982). This was
the first time that a newly appointed president addressed an expectant
crowd. At the same time, M-19, a small guerrilla group with a wide
and favourable urban audience, demanded that a national dialogue be

launched as a condition for signing a peace treaty with government (M-19, 1995).

Betancur's stance contrasted markedly with the hardline approach of three Liberal administrations between 1974 and 1980. Their governments used coercion and military force to answer demands for land, support of peasants, and labour and political rights of agricultural and urban workers. The Betancur government's permission to protest and mobilize fostered diverse rural and urban collective actions (Pardo, 1996: 44). Construed linkage between popular collective action and communist subversion fuelled the military's rough handling of strikes and protest during the 1970's and 1980's, augmenting risks associated with such actions. Betancur's approach towards social protest and insurgency was opposed by some important sectors of the two principal parties, but allowed for a series of transformations that ultimately gave the Bipartisan regime a breathing space. Meanwhile, legal opposition strove for constitutional reform that should end bipartisan monopoly. Together with these demands for participation and reform, human rights organizations and groups of lawyers criticized the unchecked military jurisdiction over civilians. They demanded civilian control over the military and limitations to its prerogatives. Union members, social activists, progressive legislators and politicians rejected the application of military justice and arbitrary detention to civilians, as well as the judicial police functions accorded to the military. In the early 1980's, peace talks, regime liberalization and decentralization led those who were discontent with traditional bipartisanism to believe in the attainment of greater democracy.

Nonetheless, the risk of a shift in the regional power balance favouring guerrillas and narcotics traffickers provoked a vehement reaction from new and old political and economic elites. They rejected the integration of former insurgents and their public agendas into local political systems. To be accepted as respected politicians, former rebels had to stop being a group of 'mountain bandits' according to important sectors of public opinion.[5]

Cattle raisers and rural businessmen from Córdoba were the first to openly and publicly criticize the Government's negotiations with guerrillas. This sector considered Betancur's amnesty 'an illusion since it meant introducing, in the midst of the social corpus, agents of chaos and ruin, which previously operated in remote regions.' Similarly, the same regional group sustained that the inclusion of guerrillas in the political process would equal to subjecting the social sphere to

'that which we so often experience in agrarian life: when a rotten fruit comes into contact with a great quantity of healthy fruit, it passes on its corruption and they, in their turn, in the near future, fulfil the same role of contributing to rotting others.'[6]

Likewise, this regional and economic group considered that peace negotiations were an instrumentalization of the government by guerrillas and the first step towards 'imposing an agrarian reform and drowning the countryside in misery.'[7] In August 1984, in an extensive letter addressed to President Betancur and published in major Colombian newspapers, Córdoba cattlemen, rural proprietors and investors questioned the president regarding the future of rural producers confronted with the possibility of a redistributive land reform as a result of negotiations with the guerrilla. 'Why attack them with an agrarian reform and with impunity of invasions after having left them defenceless to face a guerrilla commanded by Moscow?'[8] One of the most influential Conservative newspapers in Bogotá in the 1980's stated that the possibility of having left wing candidates elected was a threat to democratic institutions and even to national unity.

More mayorships than expected will go to the hands of the guerrilla groups or fall under the political administration of groups from the extreme left. We might suppose that, as a result, ties of unity with the national government will disappear there where its presence is not felt, and with municipal governments where Marxist leaders will govern.[9]

Thus, the introduction of local political competition, public discussion of social justice and rights, together with security for local elites, contributed to alerting influential sectors of the possibility of a social and political revolution. This new context was propitiated during the 1980's in different regions as a result of negotiations between the central government and the guerrilla groups, and by structural state reforms.

Peace negotiations and expansion of paramilitary and self-defence groups

The emergence and consolidation of the so-called paramilitary and self-defence groups occurred in parallel to the different peace processes carried out since 1982 (see Figure1). In accordance with the argument developed herein, these irregular groups are part of a wider reaction against those reforms which could eventually come as a result of a successful peace process (Romero, 2000). In other words, when peace processes begin, these types of groups tend to proliferate. In fact, this is what is evidenced in the following assessment and figure. In the 1980's they grew as a reaction against peace policies and later, as a counterbal-

ance against the opportunities offered by political decentralization and the free election of mayors. This happened because they gave alliances and electoral coalitions influenced by the guerrillas or left wing movements access to regional and local power.

This increase in the number of armed citizens continues until 1990, when several guerrilla groups – EPL, M-19, Movimiento Quintín Lame, Patria Libre y ADO – demobilized approximately 5000 combatants. Likewise, peace expectations of the 1991 Constituent Assembly mitigated the conflict's intensity and led to the disarming of such paramilitary groups as Fidel Castaño in the southern part of the Córdoba department. This positive correlation between paramilitarism and political reform derived from negotiations with the guerrilla, is useful to understanding the nature of this armed reaction. It has been almost exclusively associated with such economic motives as the monopolization of lands for *latifundio* cattle grazing, or the displacement of populations to take advantage of rising land values and extract future benefits from public and private investment projects. It also concerns demands for increased security measures in the face of the guerrilla extortion. While these aspects are related to the development of irregular groups, such views underestimate the political process linked to the emergence and evolution of the coercion entrepreneurs.

In 1993 and 1994, the number of paramilitary combatants once again increased, first, as a result of the conflict's intensification between the FARC and the ELN; and, second, due to the Liberal Cesar Gaviria government (1990-1994). During the Samper government (1994-1998), paramilitary groups expanded at a slower pace, because the CONVIVIR – cooperatives charged with addressing security in conflict zones – were legalized for a couple of years. This, together with the then stalled peace negotiations made it unnecessary to wage offensives to neutralize armed groups' possible incorporation into the legal political systems and avoid the risk of potential reforms.

Nonetheless, we should keep in mind the fact that this was a period of intense internal organizational work oriented at defining a more precise political profile for what was at the time a series of disperse groups operating throughout different regions of Colombia. Precisely, this is the start of political and military centralization of the different paramilitary and self-defence groups. First, towards the end of 1994, was the creation of the ACCU – located in the northeastern part of the country – and later, April 1997, the AUC under the command of Carlos Castaño. Carlos, brother of Fidel Castaño – founder of the group PEPES – took part in 1993, in collaboration with US Antinar-

Figure 1. Growth in number of paramilitary troops. Number of men
up in arms.
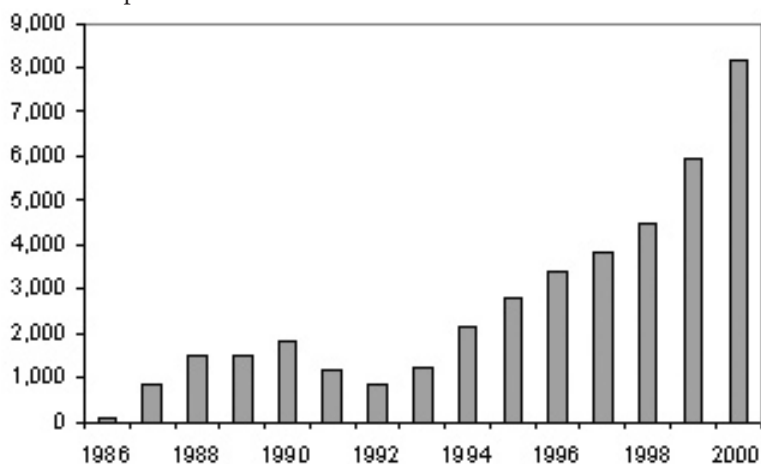
Source: Ministry of Defence, Los Grupos Ilegales de Autodefensa, December 2000.

cotics Services and Colombian authorities, in the manhunt and killing of Pablo Escobar, the head of the extinct Medellín Cartel (Bowden, 2001). Fidel Castaño's death in San Pedro de Urabá in early 1994 in an engagement with EPL dissidents – who had not demobilized in 1991 – put the younger Castaño brother at the head of a counter-insurgent project with national coverage and powerful regional and institutional allies.

This political profile of the AUC included proclaiming themselves an ally of the state in its counter-insurgent struggle, although it rejected the state's monopoly of force. This implied a strong affirmation of their right to self-defence. As an individual response to aggression, this sounded reasonable, but, as a collective strategy, it provoked a crisis of the state and a humanitarian crisis. The AUC's profile was also reflected in its rejection of peace negotiations on equal footing with the state. Rather, it favoured the surrender of insurgent forces without compromising on political reforms or redistribution of wealth. Likewise, they denounced kidnapping and extortion as limitations on freedom and as human rights violations, and criticized the state-oriented economic outlook emblematic of the insurgent groups' political projects, which they associated with the failure of the socialist system in the former Soviet Union. Paramilitary spokesmen also called attention to the creation of wealth and new jobs in the zones under their protection

compared to the backwardness, which, in their opinion, occurred in the regions where guerrilla are predominant.

Three circumstances, however, have obscured this counter-subversive mission. The first is the close tie between paramilitary groups and sectors associated with the drug traffic. One of the first tasks carried out by the paramilitaries was that of 'cleaning off undesirable elements' from rural lands, which were bought to legalize narcotics winnings (Reyes, 1994). In 1990, this purpose was complemented by of control of territories, where coca and poppy were grown, as can be deduced from the positive correlation between increases in number of armed men and areas planted with coca in Figure 2. The following circumstance concerned the use of violence against leftist or progressive politicians, human rights activist, peasants, union members and, in general, popular social leadership. This aspect of these irregular groups had devastating effects on the newly created possibilities for democracy in the decentralization process and the 1991 Constitution. The third circumstance was the failure to differentiate civilian population from combatants, which typified an irregular war. But this was the only way, according to their rationale, to vanquish the guerrilla. This practice has made the civilian population a key target for the paramilitary in its strategy to oust guerrillas from strategic territories, causing the displacement of over two million Colombians in the last eight years.

The CONVIVIR's short lifespan brought to light that there was a high demand for security on the part of several regional groups. Even though CONVIVIR was eliminated after an intense debate at the end of the Samper administration on its ties with common delinquency and paramilitary groups, it is significant to note that within a short period there were over 400 CONVIVIR throughout the country, which employed approximately 2000 retired army officers, according to figures from the Superintendence of Private Security Services (*Superintendencia de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada*)[10] The significant number of CONVIVIR in the Santander department, might point to paramilitary offensive, launched in early 1997 against the projected 'coexistence zone' (*zona de convivencia*) for the ELN in the Magdalena Medio (See Table 1).

Paramilitary groups grew from 1998 onwards, during a presidential campaign and rapprochements between the Liberal candidate and the ELN and the conservative candidate and the FARC. A discussion was launched on a peace proposal with these insurgent groups. According to the Ministry of Defence, paramilitary groups comprised approximately 3800 men in 1997 but by 2000, they became 8150, marking an increase

Table 1. Number of CONVIVIR per Department, 1997

Santander		106
Cund/marca		83
Antioquia		65
Boyacá		64
Córdoba		19
Caldas		12
Cesar		8
Meta		8
Otros		49
TOTAL		414

Table 2. **Massacres Committed by paramilitary groups, 1997-2000/oct.**

Year	Massacre	Victims
1997	6	30
1998	16	111
1999	61	408
2000/oct.	75	507

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Los Grupos Ilegales de Autodefensa*, December 2000.

of over 100 per cent in less than three years.[11] This increase was not solely due to guerrilla offensive and increasing numbers of kidnappings, as sustained by those, who held that the paramilitary phenomenon resulted from a lack of security for big landowners, cattle raisers and rural property holders. The greater margin for paramilitary action was also part of a plan designed by those against the peace process. These sectors were made of cattle raising elites, rural elites, traditional local politicians, and others. Through a strategic alliance with groups in the Armed Forces and in the drug trafficking business these groups have neutralized negotiation for peace and potentially reformist outcomes, particularly those related with redistribution of rural assets.

If we analyze paramilitary groups in light of the massacres that they have committed, we can also observe increased activity from 1998 onwards. There were almost four times as many attacks against the civilian population between 1998 and 1999, increasing to horrifying levels in 2000. The largest paramilitary expansion of combatants and operational capability can be observed in Norte de Santander, Montes de

María in Sucre, Chocó-Urabá region, Antioquia, Magdalena Medio, Valle del Cauca, part of the eastern plains and southwestern part of the country, including Putumayo. Here the greatest number of displacements has occurred since 1998.[12] Magdalena Medio belongs to the regions where the AUC expanded its radius of action at the turn of the century. This aspect is worthy of analysis because it was encompassed in the AUC's military and political boycott of the negotiations by President Pastrana (1998-2002) and the ELN between 1999 and 2001.

The Magdalena Medio region and the paramilitaries

In 1995, human rights organizations began denouncing paramilitary groups' attempts at 'besiege' the city of Barrancabermeja.[13] At the time CREDHOS denounced the fact that pressure on this oil port came from north of San Alberto, west of Puerto Wilches, and east Sabana de Torres. It denounced the paramilitary's long occupation of the northeastern neighbourhoods. This was accompanied by pressure from south of El Carmen, Cimitarra, Puerto Parra y San Vicente de Chucurí. Credhos' 1996 report recorded the presence of paramilitary groups in Yondó, on the left bank of the Magdalena River, in southern Bolívar, in the rural areas of Barrancabermeja; 'and propaganda regarding the self-defence and paramilitary groups in the urban sector of this city, despite its militarization.'[14]

This latter point is important because a recurring complaint by human rights organizations and sectors of the population is that the paramilitaries take root precisely in highly militarized zones such as the Magdalena Medio and Urabá. This is what happened in Barrancabermeja upon the disappearance of over 25 of the region's inhabitants – allegedly incinerated – and the assassination of another 7 civilians by the United Self-defence Groups of Santander and Sur del Cesar (AUSAC) on May 16, 1998.[15] Up to now the impunity surrounding this massacre has been absolute, as occurs with most assassinations and disappearances. This was in spite of the very impressive deployment of Special Forces assigned to Barrancabermeja – the Second Mobile Unit attached to the Fifth Brigade of Bucaramanga – and an enormous increase in public expenditures for the strengthening of the judicial system including the police force.

This dynamics indicates that what the Armed Forces refer to as 'state security' takes precedence over the safety of citizens. How else can one explain the decoration for Distinguished Services to Public Order and Valour received by general Martín Orlando Carreño, commander of the

assigned Fifth Brigade in the Magdalena Medio and south Bolivar in early 2000 in the midst of a paramilitary incursion into Barrancabermeja? This territorial incursion reflected sustained increases in violent-death rates since 1998, which reached a terrifying 250 assassinations in 2000 (see Figure 3). State security forces were not made accountable to these sums. General Carreño's decoration was given in recognition of the disarticulation of FARC's mobile column in the so-called Berlin operation.[16] The FARC's column was mostly composed of underage male and female combatants, some of them still children. Instead of being reported as another tragedy Colombia's in armed conflict, the recruitment and eventual killing of children and adolescents was heralded as a 'victory'. It did not arouse sadness and reflection.

Meanwhile, paramilitary attacks against so-called 'guerrilla collaborators' have been fierce in Barrancabermeja, precisely the zone under the jurisdiction of the Fifth Brigade. Between 1999 and 2001, approximately 800 people accused of belonging to or supporting the guerrilla, were assassinated in this port, presumably by paramilitary squads. Many of them were community leaders, neighbourhood leaders, union members, peasants and human rights activist. If state security and citizen safety stand against one another and if, in order to preserve the former, we have to sacrifice the latter, as could be deduced from the way the Armed Forces and the Police operate –, there is obviously a political problem which must be resolved.

However, within the concept of security held by the Armed Forces, it seemed that 'the enemies of my enemies are my friends', even if this meant disregarding what is known as the 'social state of law', or simply, the state monopoly of justice and coercion, which is essential to democracy. The failure of the armed authorities to act when confronted with paramilitaries, raised widespread feelings of perplexity. This perplexity can be seen in the many testimonies regarding the paramilitary of marginal Barrancabermeja neighbourhoods in December 2000 and the assassination of young men and adults considered guerrilla sympathizers:

The occupation ended at 4:00 in the afternoon when the tanks under the command of the police colonel José Manuel Villar, in charge of state security forces for the port, entered the zone. The agents entered the house and talked to ten paramilitaries who were controlling it, they checked their weapons and gave them five minutes to 'get lost'. This was the end of the story according to a dozen of the local human rights organizations.[17]

The police colonel has a different version.

Thanks to people's calls, we avoided a great tragedy since the imminent death of twenty people had been announced. I had no Christmas celebration since we worked around the clock. That's our job.[18]

The discrepancy between the version of the armed authorities and the human rights organizations has made the inhabitants wary of the paramilitaries-authorities relationship. It has had serious repercussions for contesting and collecting additional judicial evidence. An overwhelming silence signals people's doubts regarding the authorities, confirmed by one army officer in charge of security in the Barrancabermeja La Paz neighbourhood:

People in this neighbourhood have kept quiet on the situation. The problem is that citizens do not back their complaints with information. One asks them what house they (the paramilitaries) were in or which way they went and they do not volunteer the information.[19]

According to this officer, citizens are to blame for this impunity because they do not pursue their accusations. The question is, however, who would dare to do so given that the authorities are under suspicion of being partial towards the accused. Furthermore, it is not the citizenry's duty to follow clues and gather intelligence for the authorities. Colonel Villar, the port's police commander, also testifies to the degree of police impotence and passivity as an institution:

We verified the places, went in and did not find any armed men'. Nonetheless, it was common knowledge that the AUC planned to transfer some of their men from south Bolivar to Barrancabermeja. This happened on 22 December when over a 100 combatants arrived by the Magdalena river to bring about a strategy of war and death to the city. They believe that from this oil port they can block the ELN's Magdalena Medio supply corridors.[20]

This occupation made its immediate mark. In January 2001, human-rights organizations reported over 40 assassinations in the port. This figure exacerbated the 567 homicides committed during the previous year and 50 disappearances since 1998.[21] If we consider the homicide rate of Barrancabermeja, we catch a glimpse of paramilitary reaction to a coexistence zone for the ELN. The homicide rate per 100,000, that fluctuated between 10 and 14 in the 1990s, jumped to over 250 in the year 2000, according to conservative estimates.[22] These terrifying figures illustrate the freedom and impunity of these irregular organizations.

Figure 3 shows that violent death rates in the region averages over 100 in 1999, with a slight decline the following year. Noticeably,

Figure 2. Changes in homicide rate in some of the Magdalena
          Medio municipalities (Santander province), 1999-2000.
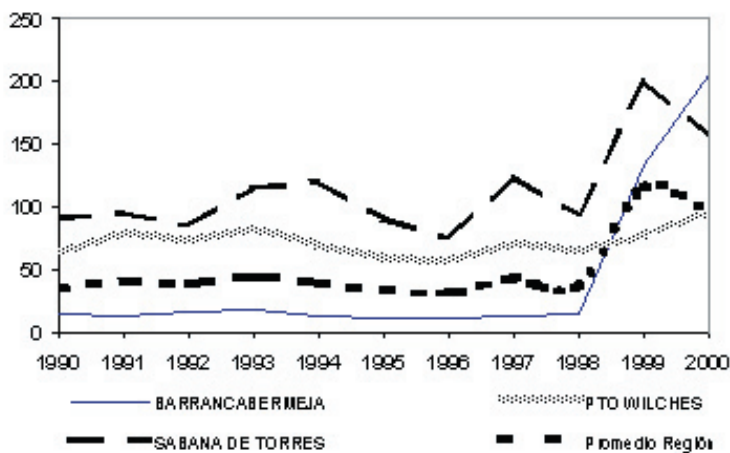
Source: based on data from the National Police, and Observatorio de Derechos Hu-
      manos (Vice-presidency of the Republic), *Panorama Actual del Magdalena
      Medio*, May 2001.

Sabana de Torres's 100 violent deaths throughout the decade doubled
in 1999.[23] This municipality is supposedly 'pacified' and 'without guer-
rillas'. It is located in a zone under paramilitary influence. Human
rights NGOs in Barrancabermeja have information regarding 'social
cleansing' campaigns and persecution of young unemployed people
in this municipality. Even so, this indicator seems extremely high and
merits closer and more detailed scrutiny. The effects on violent death
rates in AUC's campaign to control riverbanks are also noticeable in
Puerto Wilches.

   A deal between the government, paramilitaries, and the ELN on a
possible 'zone for coexistence' for political negotiation led to protests
and roadblocks against the presidential decision in favour of the zone.
This mobilization evolved in diverse episodes throughout 2000. Though
we are not examining this collective action, we will analyze some aspects
of the paramilitaries' calls to mobilize the region's inhabitants.

Paramilitaries and mobilization against a 'coexistence zone' for the ELN

The first social mobilization against a zone for the ELN took place
on February 2000, after the President announced an agreement for

such in Magdalena Medio. What happened in Morales, south Bolí-var, highlighted the dynamics of urban areas in this region prior to the roadblock between the country's interior with the Atlantic coast. Collective action against the coexistence zone with the ELN blocked overland communication between these two regions for several weeks.[24] On February 2, as the central government agreed to the coexistence zone, rumour spread summoning to attend an assembly in the town plaza at 6:30 in the afternoon.

During this meeting a possible march against the coexistence zone was discussed. Its attendance was a paramilitary 'order': only one person per household could stay home while the rest must go to the plaza. Over a thousand men, women and children attended. An armed paramilitary commander went on an improvised stage and with a megaphone in hand introduced himself as a member of the AUC. He said 'We're not a group of outlaws; rather we are here to support and organize your communities.' The commander informed the audience regarding a letter sent from the municipalities of San Pablo, Simití and Santa Rosa 'containing precise orders on how to proceed.'

The paramilitary asked questions and requested answers in chorus from inhabitants in the plaza. He asked if the audience knew the co-existence zone, to which he expected a simple yes or no. The assembly answered 'no'. So, he explained: 'It is a new government where everyone will have to do what the guerrilla says; we will be set adrift.' He then talked about how nefariousness of the FARC's coexistence zone in San Vicente del Caguán had been.

> Your daughters, for example, will be forced to be women of the guerrilla fighters. Are you going to let the ELN become strong again when we have almost broken it? We are not asking for anything, we are here solely to ask you for your moral and physical cooperation to go on this march. We are here because the people have asked us to protect them.

Regarding logistics and organization, the paramilitary commander said: 'We need to set up a committee and we're counting on the support of the municipal administration, cattle raisers, and other groups'. He also mentioned support by the governor of Bolívar. His speech was also tinged with humour. For example, he asked 'The insurgency elected the president we have, right or wrong' The assembly responded 'no'. The paramilitary leader said: 'That's not important, anybody can make a mistake', to which the audience laughed. The paramilitary assured them 'The President handed over half the country to the guerrilla.'

And he posed another question: 'are you going to let him give them the south of the Bolívar department, yes or no?'

The assembly answered 'no' in chorus.

The president of the Morales municipality Community Action Committee (Junta de Acción Comunal – JAC) also supported the mobilization against the coexistence zone. Lastly, the paramilitary commander gave organizational instructions:

We need a committee made up of the Municipal Administration, cattle raisers and other groups, plus a secretary. We will to tell the president that we do not want this coexistence zone.

The commander's conception of a 'people' did not differ much from what is known as 'local powers'. These coercion entrepreneurs merely defended the *status quo*. With the support of the assembly's attendance, its opponents were threatened with being banished.

Nobody moves because we are going to count heads. All of you must back the march and there has to be at least one person per household. We have already foreseen and arranged the place and exit route, which will be notified to you at a later date. Nothing will happen to those who do not cooperate, but they must leave Morales because they refuse to defend the interest of the people.

The municipality had 23,000 inhabitants, out of which approximately 7000 lived in town. Around 6000 persons attended the march. Compulsory or not, demonstrations against a coexistence zone of the ELN in Bolívar evidenced that the paramilitary groups had both the fire power and capability to mobilize. Surprisingly, there was a counter guerrilla garrison in Morales. It had 50 well-equipped soldiers, entrenched in the town's main plaza in a cement bunker painted in camouflaged colours and surrounded by sandbags. They were totally passive.

Conclusion

Through its account of the emergence and development of paramilitary groups in Colombia, this article has sought to spotlight the context of political transformation wherein these groups developed. This research highlight their reactive nature to anticipated changes in decentralization and political liberalization of the 1980's, 1991 Constitution, and democratization and integration, which were part of different peace policies of the two decades under study. The text has also underlined the impact of peace negotiations between government and guerrilla groups to state structures. The negotiation's mechanisms have threatened to dissolve the cement that linked the old order. This could be observed

in the polarization of the Executive and regional elites regarding peace matters. The relationship between centre and regions has become much more difficult. Still, the president's reformist pretensions could not effectively fulfil demands for local and regional democracy.

Likewise, in the past 20 years, the presidency and Armed Forces have differed when addressing the inclusion of guerrilla groups through a process of negotiations. This diversion has caused several crises between civilians and the military. In these differences between the central government and local elites, and between the government and Armed Forces on how to attain the country's pacification, drug trafficking leadership has contributed to the formation of the federation of irregular armed groups that constitutes the AUC. Democratic aspirations and hopes for change and social justice held by diverse regional and social sectors, cornered by crossfire and death, have faced serious challenges, despite reforms and attempts to improve access to institutional power.

Interestingly, the Colombian state has weakened as a *result* of the political process surrounding peace negotiations; its weakness was not the *cause* of armed confrontation. Indeed, the divergence between region and centre and between the military establishment and the national authorities over peace negotiations has allowed the *coercion entrepreneurs* to emerge and paramilitary groups in diverse regions of the country to gain strength. In this sense, the state's crisis has resulted from peace negotiations with the guerrilla groups, rather than violence and displacement of civilian populations. This raises several questions regarding potential future negotiations. How to avoid the future activation of the above mechanisms, should there be renewed approaches and negotiations? How to involve sectors opposed to a negotiated settlement in a new political process, which might produce positive results? How to deal with coercion entrepreneurs such as the AUC in prospective negotiations with the guerrillas?

For now, the end of the Andrés Pastrana's Conservative government and the beginning of Alvaro Uribe's Liberal presidency (2002-2006) has ended twenty years of peace negotiations between five administrations and the different guerrilla groups. The two largest – the FARC and the ELN – are still armed, meanwhile, the confederated paramilitary groups of the AUC continue as an anti-subversive force, despite extradition warrants by the US against its leaders, who are accused of smuggling illicit substances into the US. It is difficult to predict how internal leadership problems within the AUC, will evolve.

The current government's proposal to strengthen the state and law enforcement does not leave room for a negotiated solution to Colombia's armed conflict. On the contrary, it pretends to repair the fissures caused to the institutional apparatus as a consequence of negotiations with the guerrillas. Thus, the government's unrestricted support of the Armed Forces and the reestablishment of mutual reliance between the central government and the diverse regional sectors has affected insurgent operations. Within this framework, according to AUC leaders' announcements, there would be a gradual cutback of their different fronts depending on the government's effectiveness in neutralizing them. However, existing ties between these groups and illicit crop growing and traffic, as and the possibility that they be extradited to the United States, does not make AUC leaders' reinsertion into civilian life not easier. Add to this the charges they might face for assassinations and atrocities committed against the country's unarmed population. What will be the fate of these groups should President Uribe's democratic security policy be successful?

Notes

[1] Rosario University, Faculty of Political Sciences, Bogotá.

[2] See Goldstone, 2001 and Goodwin, 2001, for recent papers with a global perspective and sound theoretical foundations.

[3] Consociationalism is a political behaviour pattern in divided and heterogeneous societies, subject to real or potential violent conflict. Conflict is avoided through wide cooperation among elites, in an open political regime that stresses coalitions, agreements and constitutional instruments among opposing sides in order to attain political stability (Lijphart, 1977). Although Colombia does not exactly fit into this definition, it has been analyzed as a relatively successful example in the Third World (Dix, 1980; Hartlyn, 1988). The 1958 pact, called *Frente Nacional* (1958-1974), implied a constitutional agreement on presidential alternation between the Liberal and Conservative parties for a 16-year period and a one-to-one distribution of cabinet posts and state bureaucracy, including judiciary power. The pact was later extended for 4 more years. Political participation was restricted to these two parties in 12 years, leading to an institutional and political inertia earning until early 1990s.

[4] Specialized literature distinguishes between force, violence and coercion. The first is defined as the ability to cause harm against human lives and material assets. The second is the effective use or implementation of this capability. Coercion is the threat, potential use or reminder of the fact that violence is a real possibility (Volkov, 2000). Although in Anglo-Saxon literature specialists in the use of violence are called 'violent entrepreneurs', the translation of this term into Spanish would render it ambiguous and so we have chosen to the English term in the paper.

[5] *La República*, 19 Feb. 1988, p. 4 A.

[6] *El Tiempo*, 17 August 1984, p. 5 B.

[7] *Ibidem.*

[8] *Ibidem.*

[9] *La República*, 19 February 1988, p.4 A.

[10] *Revista Alternativa,* Number 8, 'CONVIVIR, embuchado de largo alcance', March-April 1997, Bogotá.

[11] The Defence Ministry refers to the paramilitary squads as illegal self-defence groups.

[12] *CODHES Informa,* 'Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento', Number 35, 17 April 2001, CODHES, Bogotá.

[13] CREDHOS, 'Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos', Barrancabermeja, June 1996, quoting the human rights report of the previous year, p. 19.

[14] *Ibidem.*

[15] *La Revista de El Espectado*, 'Los Guardianes de Barrancabermeja', Number 28, 28 January 2001

[16] *El Tiempo*, 22 Jan. 2001, p. 4, section 1.

[17] *La Revista de El Espectador,* 'Los Guardianes de Barrancabermeja', Number 28, 28 January 2001.

[18] *Ibidem.*

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