

THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION
DRUG POLICY PROGRAMME



TEN YEARS OF PLAN COLOMBIA: AN ANALYTIC ASSESSMENT

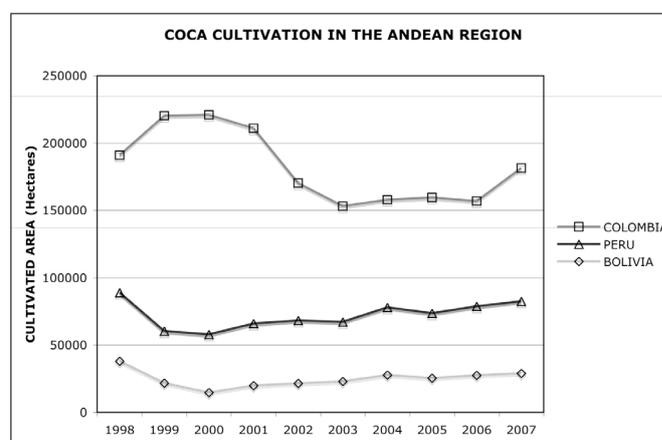
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INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade Plan Colombia has been the principal strategy addressing the complex dynamics of illicit drugs production within that country. It is based on the assumption that a reduction in the illicit drugs market worldwide can be tackled by focusing on supply control measures. Plan Colombia was originally proposed as a peace programme, but soon became a military strategy aimed at weakening the link between illicit drugs and insurgency. The results of this approach in terms of the decline of illegal armies, particularly guerrilla groups, may be considered as a success. In relation to coca cultivation and cocaine trafficking, however, the results show otherwise. The latest United Nations *World Drug Report* estimates that there has been a 27% increase in the area cultivated with coca in the period 2006-2007 (UNODC, 2008), and Colombia remains one of the major producers of cocaine in the world (See Graph and Table 1). This contradiction leads to a number of questions about the effectiveness of a predominantly military approach in tackling the drugs problem and the real impact of the supply control strategy on the international market of illicit drugs. This briefing paper consequently aims to present a critical assessment of Plan Colombia over the past ten years. It is argued that the strategy has failed to address the structural causes of illicit drugs cultivation: poverty, lack of opportunities and on-going conflict. In particular it discusses how the current emphasis on fumigation has a negative impact on the fragile and strategic ecosystem of the Amazonian region, as well as potential health problems for people who live in these areas. Moreover, it is also suggested that a militaristic approach to drug trafficking seems to contribute to the development of what can be called the 'markets of violence.' These are reflected in the increasing power of warlords, the growth of

diverse business associated with security and protection and disputes amongst illegal armies for control of activities related to illegal drugs. Finally, it is argued that while the power of guerrilla groups² - particularly the 40-year-old FARC group that controls some phases of the drug trafficking business - may be in decline, this situation needs to be analysed as part of their lack of political coherence and popular support. Indeed, as is discussed here, increased attention should be given to the developing power of paramilitary groups³ within Colombian politics and the emergence of a phenomenon that has become to be known as 'para-politics'.

GRAPH AND TABLE I: COCA CULTIVATION IN THE ANDEAN REGION (1998-2007)



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
BOLIVIA	38,000	21,800	14,600	19,900	21,600	23,000	27,700	25,400	27,500	28,900
PERU	51,000	38,700	43,400	46,200	46,700	44,200	50,300	48,200	51,400	53,700
COLUMBIA	102,000	160,000	163,000	145,000	102,000	86,000	80,000	86,000	78,000	99,000

SOURCE: UNODC - World Drug Report, 2008

THE DYNAMICS OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN COLOMBIA

The development of the illicit drug trade in Colombia can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s when cannabis crops were introduced into the country. Since then it has evolved and diversified. For example during the 1980s Colombian ‘cartels’ were responsible for the transformation of coca paste (imported mainly from traditional producer countries such as Peru and Bolivia) into cocaine, and most importantly for the distribution of the substance into the United States. By the 1990s, the areas cultivated with coca in Colombia had grown from 24,500 hectares in 1987 to 150,000 hectares in 1999.⁴ This increase in the cultivation of the coca bush was provoked by a myriad of factors at the regional level, particularly changes in the patterns of coca production in Peru and Bolivia. The combined strategy of a forcible eradication campaign and the increased interdiction resulted in a reduction of almost 85% of the coca cultivation in those countries.⁵ Nonetheless, as the worldwide demand for cocaine did not change, the so-called ‘balloon effect’ pushed the cultivation to other areas, this time to Colombia. In order to compensate for the decrease in coca production, Colombian drug traffickers - who controlled the distribution and smuggling of cocaine to the United States - opted for a ‘vertical integration’ of the business by introducing coca crops into Colombian territory. This situation coincided with economic changes relating to open markets during the 1990s including the end of protection for agricultural products. Thus, in this new context, farmers who depended on agriculture were drawn to coca cultivation as a means of subsistence.

At the social level, the increasing power of drug traffickers and their use of violence resulted in a number of prominent assassinations and terrorist acts. By 1991, and under the promise of a new Constitution, the then President Gaviria negotiated the surrender of many drug barons to the Colombian Justice, amongst them Pablo Escobar. With their apparent retirement, smaller trafficking groups in Colombia, new ‘cartels’ in Mexico and European criminal organisations filled the gap and took control over distribution (Thoumi, 2003). The illicit drug entrepreneurs chose those areas in which the state was weak or practically nonexistent. Most of these were under the control of guerrilla groups⁶ that initially fought back against the influence of drug traders. However, they soon realised they could reap benefits from the illegal trade by taxing the local and regional trade of coca paste and cocaine. In response drug traffickers brought their own private armies to repel the guerrillas. At this point, the Colombian army was already fighting guerrillas and this resulted in alliances between private armies and the Colombian army. This was the origin of what today are known as paramilitaries. Following the surrender of major drug barons in the 1990s, paramilitaries assumed control of the illicit drugs activities.⁷

Paramilitaries and guerrillas, however, are not the only groups in drug trafficking in Colombia. The drug trafficking business is a complex process involving diverse activities: cultivation, processing coca leaf

into coca paste, crystallisation of coca paste into cocaine, regional and national transportation of the different sub-products derived from coca, and international distribution of cocaine worldwide. A further important part of the drugs business process is related to ‘money laundering’ or other financial aspects of the drug trafficking business and phases that are closely connected to legal businesses. Consequently, different groups control various parts of the process, their power and revenues being proportional to the level of risk involved and the sophistication of the operation of their stage of the business. For example those responsible for the international distribution and transport, as well as money laundering retain the highest proportion of the revenue. Indeed, as shown by the 2008 *World Drug Report*, while the average farm-gate price of coca paste for 2007 was US\$963 per kilogram and the average price of cocaine in Colombia US\$2,198 per kilogram, it may reach US\$30,000 per kilogram and US\$46,900 per kilogram once it gets to the international markets⁸ of the U.S and Europe (UNODC, 2008).

The following section describes the origin and evolution of Plan Colombia within the framework of drugs policies in the country.

THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF PLAN COLOMBIA

Although the topic of drugs has been an ongoing issue for the international community, the development of drugs policies has experienced important transformations during the last forty years. In particular, the United States has played an important role in supporting supply-reduction initiatives in the Andean countries.⁹ In the case of Colombia, drugs policy has evolved following the ideals of the war against drugs and prohibition; hence, contrary to the general picture of U.S. coercion over Colombian policies, both countries have succeeded in institutionalizing a significant level of bilateral drug control programs based on shared views of the ‘drug problem’ (Guáqueta, 2005: 27).

During the 1980s and 1990s, Colombia and the United States furthered this collaboration by means of an increasing institutionalisation of prohibition and anti-drug cooperation. This relationship came to a low point when a scandal about drug trafficking money funding the political campaign of President Samper broke in 1995. As a result, the US decertified Colombia that year signalling that Washington regarded Colombia as a failing state in terms of its commitments towards effective drugs policy. This decision resulted in the cancellation or delay of portions of the US\$35 million US counter-narcotics assistance to Colombia.¹⁰ In response to this situation, Samper - eager to make it up with the anti-drugs efforts - implemented a number of policies against illicit crops cultivation, including increasing fumigation of illicit crops and alternative development projects.

As the 1996 US elections approached, both the US and Colombia wanted to be seen as ‘tough on drugs’ and U.S. assistance for international efforts began to increase (Youngers, 2005). Thus, when in 1998 the newly elected Colombian president Andres Pastrana entered office, the issue of drugs was a crucial point in the diplomatic relationships between the two countries.

Pastrana had promised to end the 40-year conflict in Colombia by initiating a peace agreement with the guerrillas, particularly with FARC.¹¹ The Colombia conflict has its origins in the political disputes between liberals and conservatives during the mid-twentieth century. This itself was related to socio-economic inequalities, the lack of a land reform and the consolidation of illegal armies; both paramilitaries and guerrillas. Consequently, the idea of proposing a plan for social and economic aid for the rural areas in Colombia was a crucial aspect of the peace process. The plan for rural areas and peace, a sort of Marshall Plan, was named Plan Colombia (Vaicius, 2002) and aimed to address some of the structural causes of the conflict, such as inequalities in wealth distribution and poverty. In order to get some funds for his peace initiative, Pastrana went to the United States to promote his Plan Colombia, which in its original version included a number of aspects such as the development of productive processes, the promotion of human capital, the construction of a peace infrastructure, the strengthening of social capital and the promotion of environmental sustainability. It is important to note that in the first version of Plan Colombia there was hardly any mention of military strategies. Since Pastrana had committed himself towards a peace process in Colombia, neither was it directed towards drug trafficking issues. Although the Clinton administration initially supported a peace process in Colombia, the proposal still seemed too vague and not linked to some of the main concerns of the US political agenda.

A year later in 1999 the new Colombian Minister of Defence, Luis Fernando Ramirez, went to Washington asking for US\$500 million in military aid. This time the conversations stressed the importance of strengthening the role of the Colombian army in the fight against drugs, based on the evidence of the increasing participation of guerrillas in drug trafficking. The US Drugs Czar, Barry McCaffrey, who at the time was in charge of significant resources, welcomed this view. After visits to Colombia, American anti drugs officials suggested linking Plan Colombia to a wider strategy of strengthening the role of the state in the fight against drugs. In one week a new document was drafted in English by one of Pastrana’s advisors, Jaime Ruiz, which included suggestions from U.S officials. Supported by McCaffrey’s Office of National Drug Control Policy, this new adjustment to Plan Colombia was discussed by the U.S. Congress, which at the time was somewhat reluctant in supporting the Colombian army due to its alleged links with human rights violations and its associations with paramilitaries.¹² As a result of these discussions and adjustments, the final version of Plan Colombia entitled *Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State* became a six-year strategy aimed at eliminating drug trafficking and promoting social and economic development. This version emphasised increased military involvement

in the fight against drugs trafficking. The document was not available in Spanish until April 2000 and contained ten elements:

- an economic strategy
- a fiscal and financial strategy including austerity and economic adjustment measures
- a military strategy
- a judicial and human rights strategy
- a counter-narcotics strategy
- an alternative development strategy
- a social participation strategy
- a human development strategy
- a peace strategy
- an international strategy

In this way Plan Colombia, as a strategy against drug trafficking, became the legacy of President Pastrana (1998-2002). Initially he proposed a budget in which Plan Colombia required around US\$7.5 billion for three years, from which US\$4.8 billion would be provided by Colombia. It was intended that the international community would provide the rest of the money.¹³ By 1999, however, Colombia was plunged into its worst economic recession in recent history and it looked unlikely that it would be able to allocate the US\$4.8 billion as initially proposed. In response to this crisis, and despite the diverse concerns of a military emphasis of Plan Colombia, the United States made a contribution of US\$1.3 billion. It must be noted, however, that only 65% of that amount, US\$860.3 million, was directed to Colombia. The other 35% was earmarked as assistance for neighbouring countries and increases in US agencies’ Andean region anti-drugs operations.¹⁴ As part of this strategy the US government also supported the establishment of forward operating locations (FOLs), in Manta (Ecuador)¹⁵ and Aruba & Curaçao.

In order to gather the budget for Plan Colombia, under the auspices of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Spanish government, EU countries were asked to consider some ‘donations’. After a number of discussions it was decided that the EU aid, US\$1000 million, would be destined only for social development programmes and ‘crop-substitution’ programmes in various Colombian regions. Up to that point the EU had not publicly rejected Plan Colombia despite concerns of being perceived as the ‘carrot’ to the US military ‘stick’ (TNI, 2001:1). EU officials struggled with their positions during ‘an intensive and confused series of meetings’ with several Colombian delegations travelling through Europe.¹⁶ Concerns about the delicate situation of human rights, in addition to the difficulties in understanding the role of the US and Europe in the Plan and the lack of consultation with the civil society, led to a Resolution by the European Parliament in 2001 by which the participation of the EU in Plan Colombia was rejected by 471 votes.¹⁷ Despite this, the positions of the individual European countries have varied over the years depending upon relations with both the US and the Colombian governments. As a result, countries such as Spain and the United Kingdom have supported some of the aspects of Plan Colombia

throughout its ten years of operation.

Although the battle against insurgents and drug traffickers in Colombia has always been somewhat obscure, the support of the U.S. to Plan Colombia became the justification for combining the anti-insurgency agenda with the war on drugs. Furthermore, the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the collapse of peace talks in Colombia in February 2002 bolstered the position of those in the U.S. government arguing for a direct U.S. counterinsurgency role in Colombia (Youngers, 2005). After September 11, a list identifying terrorists groups around the world included three of the Colombian illegal armies¹⁸ and thus they became prominent in their association with illegal drugs and possible acts of terrorism.

Meanwhile in Colombia, the failure of negotiations between the Pastrana Government and guerrillas groups was perceived by the public as a serious defeat for Colombian institutions against the growing power of guerrillas. At the same time, there was a reduction in support for guerrillas, in particular FARC, due to its participation in kidnappings and human rights violations. Under these circumstances, when the new president Alvaro Uribe Velez (2002-2006 and 2006-2010) launched his platform of '*Democratic Security*' stressing a 'hard approach' against guerrillas groups and terrorism, the Colombian public broadly supported his views.¹⁹ The idea that the main problems of economic development, employment, income distribution and poverty are *caused* by violence and insecurity became the basis for this new definition of the problem. In this view, the Colombian state was perceived as a 'victim of terrorist groups funded by drug trafficking'; hence a war against 'drugs and terrorism' was seen as *the* solution for Colombian problems.²⁰

When the Colombian government asked the US for support in a war against 'narco-terrorism' the Republican government of George W. Bush willingly assured resources for the continuation of Plan Colombia. However, under President Uribe, the focus moved from the 'social' side of Plan Colombia toward an increasing militarization against insurgent groups. Curbing drug trafficking was seen as a way of weakening some of the financial sources of guerrillas dependent on coca cultivation. Indeed, the Colombian president has 'wholeheartedly embraced the language of counterterrorism, and his continuation of Plan Colombia has been pursued under the logic of counterinsurgency' (Ramírez, et al., 2005:11). His strategy was to 'push south' and recover those territories that had been occupied by guerrillas, involving potential military activities into border zones of the country. Amongst the main military offensives was Plan Patriota that sought to recover territories in the south of the country.

During that same period the Bush Administration launched the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) in 2002, which can be understood as an extension of Plan Colombia towards neighbouring countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela and Panama. Nowadays, the ACI is the primary U.S. programme that supports Plan Colombia and other activities for the continuation of the anti-drugs efforts in Latin America. Furthermore, Colombia received assistance from the

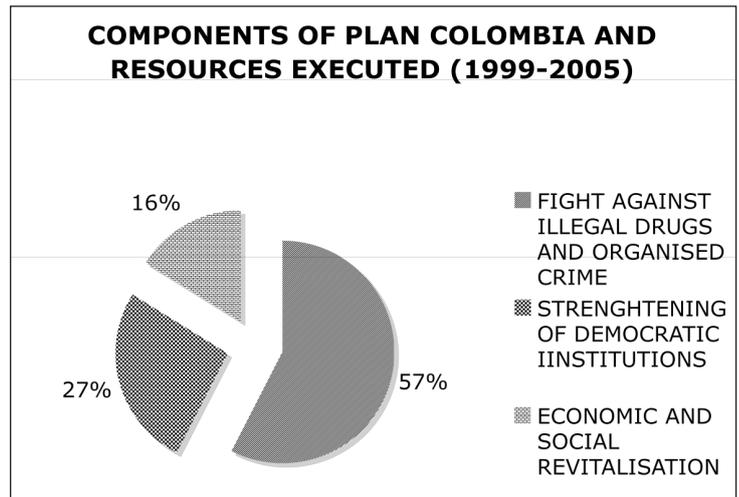
Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme and the Department of Defence's (DOD) central counter-narcotics account. ACI funding for Plan Colombia from 2000 to 2005 was approximately US\$2.8 billion. In total, during the last ten years (1998-2008) U.S. aid to Colombia has added up to US\$ 6,495 million, and has included the following allocations: Military and police aid (US\$5.5 billion); economic and social aid (US\$1.2 billion); military equipment (US\$1.3 billion); counter drug operations (US\$176 millions); and humanitarian and civic assistance (US\$871,975).²¹

At the regional level, Plan Colombia is perceived increasingly by some as a 'Trojan Horse' for securing a US military presence in the region. Fumigations in neighbouring countries have also created diplomatic tensions, as well as some military actions in border regions. In addition, the implementation of trade agreements and other neo-liberal measures have been interpreted as a way of assuring the participation of multi-nationals in projects of extraction of key natural resource enclaves such as gas, water, oil and bio-diversity (Estrada 2002; Gonzalez, 2002).

Therefore we can see how, throughout the last ten years, Plan Colombia has implemented several combinations of a 'carrot and stick' strategy. Figures from 1999 to 2005 reveal that the distribution of resources within the framework of contributions to Plan Colombia have been: the fight against illegal drug and organised crime (57.5%); the strengthening of democratic institutions (26.6%); economic and social revitalisation (16%).²² (See Graph and Table 2). This allocation of resources shows, however, an emphasis on the production side of the issue; mainly on eradicating coca cultivation. As mentioned above, when combining the fight against insurgents and the so-called war on drugs under the 'democratic security' agenda, the result has been an increase in militarization and enforcement activities. On the other hand, there have been some initiatives regarding the provision of 'alternatives' for farmers to replace coca crops and the restoration of the national economy. The following section analyses in detail these components over the last ten years.

GRAPHIC AND TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES IN PLAN COLOMBIA (1999-2005)

Source: Plan Colombia Progress Report, 1999-2005. National Planning Department (DNP) and Department of Justice and Security, September 2006. P.9



COMPONENT	Nation		U.S.		Total	
	Resources	Percentage	Resources	Percentage	Resources	Percentage
Fight against illegal drugs and organized crime	3,378	31.5%	2,787	26%	6,165	57.5%
Strengthening of Democratic Institutions	2,387	22.2%	465	4.3%	2,852	26.6%
Economic and Social Revitalization	1,185	11.0%	530	4.5%	1,715	16.0%
Total	6,950	64.8%	3,782	35.2%	10,732	100%

THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF PLAN COLOMBIA

From the aforementioned distribution of resources it is possible to analyse the four different components of Plan Colombia as follows:

a. Eradication of illicit crops

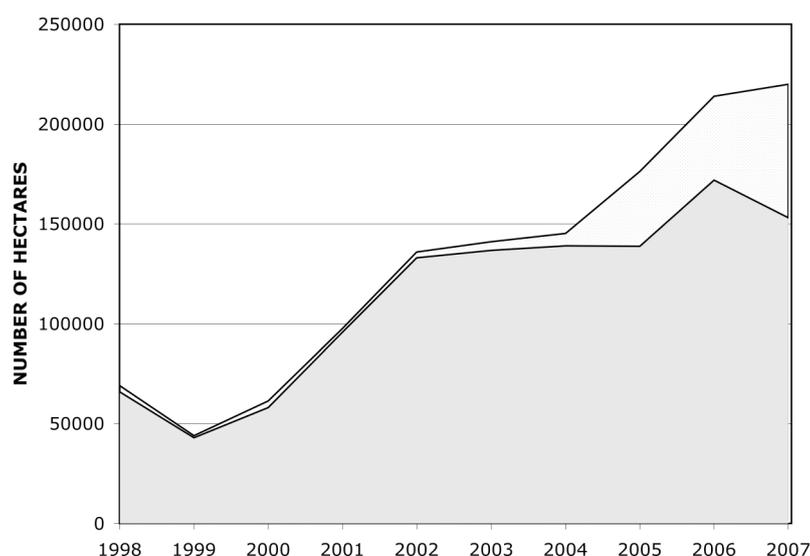
Eradication involves three main components: fumigation, voluntary manual eradication and enforced manual eradication. In addition, as part of eradication strategy, the use of a fungus to eradicate coca bushes has also been proposed although not yet implemented. Eradication by fumigation has been implemented since the 1970s (paraquat against cannabis crops) and also during the early 1990s on an experimental basis. As mentioned above, fumigation grew to be a fundamental part of the strategy against drugs in the late 1990s and the early part of this century. (See Graph and Table 3). Despite the questionable effects of aerial spraying during the previous years and the protests of farmers and peasants, fumigation was included in the Plan Colombia strategy.²³ The idea was to eliminate as many hectares as possible in the shortest time span, using a new, more effective concentration of Round-up ® (Transnational Institute, 2001). Roundup Ultra is based on glyphosate (41%) and Cosmo-Flux ®. Although the manufacturer assures²⁴ that the use of glyphosate has been tested as a secure alternative, some other studies from Colombian researchers have argued otherwise. At the local level, evidence has shown that the mixture of glyphosate used for aerial spraying can cause respiratory problems, skin infections, damage to the nervous system, and digestive problems if ingested (Nivia, 2002: 385). In addition, due to the wide spectrum of

the glyphosate and the increasing contamination of legal crops, the food supply for the zones have been seriously jeopardized because the fumigation has destroyed plants such as corn, fruits, and other crops for consumption, as well as affecting livestock. The effects have had negative impacts on the food supply of these zones and neighbouring countries (Garcia, 2002). Apart from the impact on the environment, some analysts have called attention to the impact that fumigations have on vulnerable sectors of Colombian population such as Colombia's indigenous populations and Afro-descendant communities.²⁵

However, 'aerial fumigation is not equal to eradication' (WOLA, 2008). Even though the chemical mixture is powerful enough, in practice coca bushes can be saved by the action of rain or by manual treatment. Also, coca is a perennial plant and it is easily renewed for the next harvest. In response to fumigations, the 'balloon effect' at the regional level has changed the dynamics of cultivation in the different departments of Colombia and has led peasants to move their crops towards more marginal and fragile areas. The effects of this strategy concern not only the Colombian eco-system but also may have repercussions on global warming and in the provision of oxygen from the Amazon rain forest. In spite of all these problems, the number of hectares fumigated is used as a measure of Plan Colombia success against illicit crops. As analysed by some experts, in 2004, 130,000 hectares were fumigated and that led to a decrease of 6,000 hectares of coca crops against the previous year; thus, it means that in order to eradicate 1 hectare it is necessary to fumigate 22 (Vargas, 2005a). Similar analysis questions the efficacy of this strategy due to the difficulties in measuring the real success of fumigation, the collateral damage effects, and the cost-benefit analysis of fumigation against

ERADICATION OF COCA BUSH (1998-2007)

GRAPH AND TABLE 3:
ERADICATION OF COCA CROPS IN
COLOMBIA
BY FUMIGATION AND MANUAL
ERADICATION



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
FUMIGATION	66,029	43,111	58,073	95,898	133,116	136,828	139,141	138,772	172,025	153,134
MANUAL ERR	3126	1046	3495	1745	2763	4220	6234	37,523	42,051	66,805

DATA FROM COLOMBIAN DRUGS OBSERVATORY AND NARCOTIC NATIONAL DIRECTION (1)

DATA FROM UNDCP (YEARS 2006-2007)

the eradicated areas; including the environmental, social and political costs of this approach. For instance, the reduction in the cultivated area needs to be contrasted with the development of more resistant and higher yield coca plants.

In parallel with the implementation of aerial fumigation, the Colombian government has encouraged manual eradication programmes. During the first phase of Plan Colombia, there were some agreements for voluntary eradication in exchange for alternative crops and development projects. However, these promises were rarely honoured and thus voluntary eradication largely failed.²⁶ In response to this, the Uribe Government proposed the use of forced manual eradication, undertaken by Mobile Forced Manual Eradication Groups (Grupos Móviles de Erradicación Manual Forzosa, GMEs). The strategy resulted in the eradication of 92,850 hectares in 84 municipalities located in 20 departments.²⁷ Some of the GMEs have been formed on the initiative of former paramilitary leaders and have been comprised of demobilised paramilitary combatants (WOLA, 2008). Although less damaging to the environment, manual eradication does not solve the problem of the relocation of illicit crops. Furthermore, the UNODC (2007) reported that 15% of the total number of hectares manually eradicated in 2006 was later replanted.

Finally, the supply-side dominance of current approaches has encouraged the idea of using biological agents to control coca crops. For example, during 2000 the U.S. Congress planned to use the fungus *fusarium oxysporum* as a biological control agent to kill coca crops in Colombia and another fungus to kill opium poppies in Afghanistan. The plans were ultimately dropped by the then President

Clinton who, not unreasonably, was concerned that the unilateral use of a biological agent would be perceived by the rest of the world as biological warfare (Bigwood, 2003). The possibility of this chemical and biological warfare against illicit crops has generated enormous controversy, and a number of researchers have raised their concerns about the potential effects of this measure (Sicard, 1999; Gonzalez, 2002). However, the lack of clarity in the possible ways of implementing these experimental programmes, and the fact that the war on drugs is so closely related to the war on terrorism, suggests that this discussion is not yet over.

b. Alternative development

The provision of alternative options for dissuading farmers from getting involved in coca cultivation has been attempted since the mid-1980s in south Colombia and other Andean countries. It was generally acknowledged that an impoverished agricultural sector in need of land reform and suffering the effects of open markets and competition was a fertile ground for the development of illicit crops (De Rementeria, 2001). In fact, coca was seen as *the* alternative to the difficult conditions for agricultural production in these zones. Coca plants introduced by some drug traffickers represented a resistant crop that, since traffickers also bought the harvest, soon generated income within these zones (Vargas, 1999). It was thus not surprising that many farmers took this option as a way to complement their household economies and their lack of viable options.

Consequently during the 1990s, and based on the experiences of Peru and Bolivia, Alternative Development (AD) was aimed at providing a legal alternative to the eradicated crops. However, the conditions

of rural areas in this region, and particularly in Colombia, need to be addressed in an integral way, by tackling structural issues of inequalities, land tenure, and development infrastructure. When mixing the ‘development’ agenda with enforced activities against drugs production, the results can be contradictory. The population tend to associate AD with repressive activities such as fumigation, interdiction and military repression (WOLA, 2008; Centre for International Policy, 2006; Universidad de los Andes, 2000; Vargas, 2005b). The main problem is that AD projects are not linked to wider development projects, such as the development of infrastructure, roads, technical assistance. Neither are AD projects part of social programmes directed at dealing with the consequences of violence and conflict generated by the illicit drugs economy.

Regardless of the acknowledgement by institutions and international agencies of the importance of effective alternative livelihood projects, these initiatives are under-funded and are not integrated with strategic actions at the national and international level. As shown by interviews with nearly 1400 coca farmers during 2002-2006, the UNODC found that ‘only 9% of the coca farmers reported having received any kind of assistance to stop growing coca plants.’ Even worse, some alternative livelihood projects are being fumigated, thus, the investment and expectations have been completely wasted. On the other hand, as argued by Vargas (2005b) the fact that AD programmes are linked to eradication strategies means that their success is measured in the number of hectares eradicated, rather than indicators related to the economic profitability of these projects and their effects in the livelihood of farmers.

In addition to AD programmes, the Uribe’s administration created a Presidential Program Against Illicit Crops (PPCI). Within this initiative, similar examples of AD programs can be found. For example, the Product Projects Program (PPP) has been proposed in order to launch projects that are self-sustaining and profitable and offer alternatives for legal, stable employment, and improve food security for peasant communities. Another project created under the Uribe administration is the Forest Warden Families Program aimed at protecting the Natural National Parks whilst providing a source of income to peasant, Afro-Colombian and indigenous families in the process of voluntary eradication of coca plants with economic incentives equivalent to US\$ 1836 per family paid out over an 18-month period. However, the complexity of these zones and the fact that these people are in the middle of a conflict for territorial control make it difficult to assess the impact of this programme. Indeed, as with many other Alternative Development projects, the people involved may be replanting coca when the benefit is over.

In summary, these initiatives are bound to fail because they are not linked to wider development plans to assure their continuity. Neither do they seem to be proportional to the eradication initiatives, particularly when considering the effects of fumigation and the forced eradication of peasants’ livelihood.²⁸ Other problems, as evaluated by independent researchers are:

- Lack of property titles or effective measures to protect land rights
- The failure to recognise the diverse cultural and economic characteristics of indigenous, Afro Colombian and peasant communities in the design of the projects
- Development objectives at odds with the conservation of protected ecosystems
- Corruption in government institutions operating in the rural sectors
- Violation of labour laws
- Mistrust of government authorities among communities due to the coincidence of AD projects while being the subject of fumigations (WOLA, 2008)

c. Democratic security

As noted earlier, the emphasis of Plan Colombia changed under the government of President Uribe. In this second phase, its aim has been to ‘defeat the ‘narco-terrorist’ threat.’²⁹ In a widely publicised ‘democratic security’ strategy and based on the results of Plan Patriota, the Colombian military claims that FARC ranks have been reduced from 18,000 to 12,000 in 2006. Moreover, the capture and killing of many of the main guerrilla leaders, including the death of Manuel Marulanda Velez ‘Tirofijo’ the octogenarian head and main leader of the FARC in March 2008,³⁰ seem to suggest a significant degree of organizational collapse. The recent military success in rescuing hostages and in intercepting communications between guerrilla leaders further supports the idea that there is a decline in the effectiveness of guerrilla groups. However, it must be noted that this decline is also related to the lack of social support of their activities as shown by both general demonstrations against FARC and the international condemnation of their involvement both in kidnapping and drug trafficking.

Whether or not FARC are in decline needs to be analysed carefully. Some argue that a complete overthrow of FARC is unlikely due to the rugged territory and the capacity of FARC to disperse into smaller groups or units, and due to the fact that the FARC themselves are internally divided.³¹ Although contradictory opinions may arise on this matter, the popular perception about President Uribe’s approach against the guerrillas has increased his popularity. Widely publicised, the military actions and the capture or killings of some of the FARC leaders have left the impression that the war against insurgency can be won. However, this military success should not detract from the possibility of pursuing a peace process. Indeed the ‘hard approach’, far from creating the conditions for negotiation, may lead to polarisation and increasing conflict between the different parties. On the other hand, the fragmentation of FARC does not necessarily mean the disappearance of violent actors, who in this new context may rather opt to become drug traffickers, ‘no longer using the profitable business as a means for overthrowing the Colombian government but as an end in itself.’³²

In addition, the situation of human rights remains a salient issue in the evaluation of Plan Colombia and the democratic security

strategy. Although, from the outset Plan Colombia included funding for programmes to strengthen human rights, and the implementation of innovative mechanisms such as the Early Warning System (EWS) aimed to alert about potential attacks to towns, the situation has still not particularly improved. The number of internally displaced people was 3.7 million persons (IDP) in 2005, including a major representation from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.³³ This situation poses a major humanitarian crisis, and although some programmes have been put in place, still, resources are limited. As reported by WOLA, the U.S. budget for displaced people is small. For example, for every US\$1 spent on direct assistance to an IDP in the financial year 2006 USAID budget, US\$50 was spent on direct assistance for reintegration of a demobilized paramilitary. In addition, the number of assassinations of union members and human rights activists, which so far in 2008 has reached 39, shows the deplorable state of human rights in Colombia.³⁴

At the regional level, these military strategies have also impacted neighbouring countries. For instance, several complaints from the Ecuadorian government about fumigations and military incursions in their territory reached a boiling point, when in March 2008 Colombian troops crossed into Ecuador whilst chasing FARC guerrillas and ended with the bombardment of the FARC unit in Ecuador.³⁵ The response of countries such as Venezuela and Nicaragua expressing their solidarity with Ecuador against Colombia placed the region on the brink of an international confrontation. Although military conflict is unlikely, this episode showed some of the possible implications of the 'pushing south' strategy of Colombia in Latin America. In this militaristic strategy, the role of private security companies is also worrying. The participation of private armies and security companies such as DynCorp, Triple Canopy, and Blackwater USA in activities related to fumigation and military training remains a controversial issue in the implementation of Plan Colombia. In addition to the private armies the growing power of local warlords and their role in controlling military resources suggests a process of 'marketisation' of the conflict in Colombia. Elwert (1999) defines these dynamics as 'markets of violence'³⁶, and this concept may help to understand how conflicts are interlinked with market dynamics in which certain actors retain the exercise of violence and therefore benefit from the conflict itself.

Whilst guerrilla organizations may be on the decline, negotiations with other illegal armed groups such as paramilitaries remain a controversial issue.³⁷ President Uribe's concession of alternative sentences for their crimes has been criticised by many organizations, both in Colombia as well as internationally.³⁸ For many analysts the Uribe administration's application of the 2005 Justice and Peace Law to the demobilization process is highly controversial. Since paramilitaries have been involved in massacres and human rights abuses, the concessions given to them may be interpreted as an endorsement of their methods. Moreover, the fact that some paramilitaries leaders have disarmed does not imply the complete demobilisation of paramilitaries as demonstrated by the emergence of a new generation of paramilitaries and other violent actors.³⁹

Overall, a major concern for the current situation in Colombia is the rise and consolidation of the participation of paramilitaries in the official government. This participation is the product of alliances between paramilitary leaders with politicians and increasing evidence of their direct participation in politics and national institutions. However, as Lopez (2008) argues, the 'para-politics' phenomenon is not the product of spontaneous relationships between paramilitaries and politicians. Rather, 'it is the outcome of agreements for mutual benefit amongst criminal organisations, drug traffickers and politicians, aimed to acquire power through political representation'. Recent investigations have revealed that 29% of members of the Colombian Congress have been detained, accused or are under investigation for their links with paramilitary groups; 90% of whom are part of the emerging political parties that have supported President Uribe.⁴⁰ Apart from their participation in the Congress, their influence extends to the control of key institutions such as the Department for Security Administration (DAS), as well as some relevant offices such as the Department for Land Reform and to the appointment of senior civil servants.⁴¹ In 2005, the Colombian Comptroller Office (*Contraloría*) reported that as a result of forced displacement, drug traffickers and paramilitaries are now controlling 48% of the most productive land in the country.⁴² The war and the displacement of people has become a 'way of acquiring lands to benefit large land-owners, drug traffickers and private businesses involved in development for large scale projects to exploit natural resources.'⁴³ Apart from the implications for the legitimacy of the current government, the 'para-politics' shows a new configuration of power in which drug trafficking influence is gradually laundered through political representation and its links with legal business. In spite of these revelations, the increasing power of 'para-politics' in Colombia seems to be assuring the place that drug traffickers in the 1980s always dreamt: to be acknowledged as part of the establishment by allowing them to enjoy the benefits of their illegal activities and by endorsing their violent methods.⁴⁴

d. Economic development

Since its inception, Plan Colombia has included an economic development element. However, although some signs of success are starting to appear, the situation of equality and wealth distribution still needs to be addressed. As evaluated by the current government of President Uribe, the politics of security and defence have improved the security conditions necessary to recover the national and international 'confidence' in Colombian institutions and its economy, thereby, providing a 'favourable context for external investment'. From 2006, the economy grew by around 6.4%, the highest rate in the last twelve years. Unemployment decreased from 15.7% in 2002 to 11% in November 2006, inflation was 4.5%, one of the lowest values ever, and other indicators of poverty diminished from 57.5% in 2002 to 49.2% in 2005.⁴⁵

In general, the rates of unemployment have decreased and people feel confident about the future of the economy. Although these results cannot be attributed only to Plan Colombia, this has not been an obstacle for President Uribe's promotion of its continuation. Uribe's

hopes for the economic recovery are focused predominantly on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The FTA aims to eliminate most tariffs and barriers to commerce between both countries. As the US is the most important commercial partner for Colombia, this agreement will have a number of effects, both positive and negative. On the one hand, it will enable competition and the development of markets for Colombian industry and exporters. On the other hand, for an economy based on natural resources and not very well equipped for competition this FTA may enhance the inequalities between social sectors, and worsen rural poverty.

During 2007, President Uribe travelled to the U.S. with the aim of urging Congress to approve the US-Colombia Free Trade Promotion Agreement. However, the House Democratic leadership questioned the decision due to what was widely regarded as the deplorable state of human rights within the country. Thus, Congress proposed binding its approval to measurable results concerning human rights violations and the role of paramilitary groups in these abuses. Some others have warned that the refusal to approve this agreement may be interpreted as an ‘insult to the United States’ strongest ally in South America.’⁴⁶

However important the FTA may seem for the purpose of economic recovery, it is important to consider previous economic measures in the context of illicit drugs cultivation. Similar economic adjustments during the 1990s could have contributed to the increase of coca cultivation in Colombian territory. In fact, these neo-liberal measures involved in the FTA will benefit only certain sectors of the population, specifically upper and middle classes who have both education and resources to compete in this new scenario. As most Colombians live in poverty and their local economies are based on non-competitive agricultural practices, it is foreseeable that they may be excluded from these economic projects and the benefits of the agreement. The economic recovery in itself will not create the conditions for the end of drug trafficking and the Colombian conflict. As discussed by Rubio (2005), illegal armed groups are expanding their influence by targeting areas in which investment and natural resources can provide benefits. Their aim is to establish ‘protection taxes’ and to benefit from the ‘development’ produced by these resources.⁴⁷ In addition, the links between drugs trafficking money and legal business in Colombia are quite flexible, the FTA may be an opportunity to ‘launder’ illicit revenues through legal mechanisms.

In general, the evaluation of Plan Colombia needs to stick to analysing its effect on the reduction of illicit crops and the drug trafficking in Colombia. As previously mentioned, the strategies against coca cultivation are highly questionable since Colombia is still one of the major producers of cocaine worldwide. Although the decline of the FARC and the negotiation process with paramilitaries are normally presented as the positive outcomes of Plan Colombia, the fact is that this does not necessarily mean that drug trafficking in Colombia is decreasing, nor that the conflict is coming to an end. Nonetheless, the aforementioned achievements publicised by the Uribe administration in terms of ‘democratic security’ and economic

recovery, have become the basis for a continuation of the strategy. Indeed, for the second and potential third term of Uribe as President, a ‘consolidation strategy’ has been proposed. The *Strategy for the Strengthening of Democracy and Social Development 2007-2013.*⁴⁸ has six components

- War against drugs and terrorism
- Strengthening of Justice and Human Rights
- Internationalisation of the economy
- Social programmes
- Attention to displaced people
- Demobilization, rendition and reintegration

OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

If the main purpose of Plan Colombia as proposed ten years ago was to reduce the supply of illicit crops, recent results suggest that it has failed. For example, while estimates from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) state that the number of hectares under coca had fallen from 102,000 in 1998 to 78,000 in 2006, in 2007 this area had increased to 99,000 hectares.⁴⁸ As such, despite the fumigation of 710,352 hectares and a manual eradication of 93,000 hectares, the area of cultivation seems to be increasing again. More strikingly, according to US estimates, while fluctuating during the six-year period, land under coca cultivation actually increased from 136,200 hectares in 2000 to 157,200 hectares in 2006 (WOLA, 2008). It is also worth noting here that between 1999 and 2005 Plan Colombia cost almost US\$10 billion.⁴⁹

At the international level, it is accepted that there has been some measurable progress in terms of Colombia’s internal security. This has been signalled predominantly by a decrease in the levels of drug related violence within the country.⁵⁰ However, while Colombian government reports focus on the fight against money laundering, achievements in terms of seizures of chemical precursors for coca production and the seizure of drug traffickers’ assets,⁵¹ these outcomes have not affected the price, purity and availability of cocaine, and heroin, in the US (Walsh, 2008). Furthermore, according to the UN, Colombia still produces a staggering 60% of the world’s cocaine (UNODC, 2008). The limited effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the availability of coca leaf has much to do with the fundamental economic dynamics of the illicit trade. As touched upon earlier, the difference between the value of the coca leaf at the farm gate and the retail price of cocaine in markets outside Colombia is enormous. Thus, even if the price of coca is significantly increased, the resulting change in the retail price of cocaine would be negligible and if necessary easily absorbed by criminal organizations.⁵² As Boyum and Reuter point out, there are thus serious doubts over the merits of crop eradication as an

effective enforcement strategy (Boyum and Reuter, 2005). It is also worth noting that, even if successful in the short term, eradication efforts can actually encourage continued or new illicit production by making the activity more profitable.

In 2006 members of the Centre for International Policy, which has been monitoring U.S. policy toward Colombia since the late 1990s, visited the country in order to assess the impacts of Plan Colombia (Isaacson, 2006). They visited the department of Putumayo, which was the major target for the implementation of Plan Colombia, and found that while the security situation seemed to have improved due to the efforts of President Uribe in increasing military presence in previously abandoned areas, the guerrilla presence and their grip on Putumayo's rural zones had not really changed. In addition, since 2000, U.S. funded airplanes have sprayed herbicide over 155,534 hectares, making it the second most fumigated department of Colombia. As the evaluation states: 'the stick of fumigation has been strong and swift but the carrot of alternative development aid has not only been smaller but it has been slower to arrive' (Isaacson, 2006:5). Most of the criticism has been directed to the emphasis put on the military side of the strategy. Four out of five dollars in US aid goes to Colombia's armed forces, police and fumigation programmes, whereas non-military programmes of social development have a lower priority. Although almost US\$60 million has been spent in alternative development projects, and some of these projects show certain success, particularly cooperatives, assistance to indigenous communities and other small projects; the general effect is of frustration. In the absence of better economic conditions, coca cultivation is returning to Putumayo as the only economic option for many families. Even after intensive fumigations, the area cultivated by coca in the Putumayo-Caqueta region has increased from 17,220 hectares in 2006 to 20,950 hectares in 2007 (UNODC, 2008). Cultivation is now concentrated in smaller plots and drug traffickers are slowly returning to the zones. Similar results can be seen in other areas of the country such as in the Central region. Here there has been an increase of almost 76% in the number of hectares cultivated with coca in the period 2006-2007 (UNODC, 2008).

CONCLUSION

From this assessment of Plan Colombia we are able to draw a number of conclusions regarding the impact and implications of source country strategies.

Firstly, Plan Colombia demonstrates the negative consequences of combining the war on drugs and the war against terrorism. While politically useful in Bogotá, experience within the country reveals how a predominantly militaristic strategy has been unable to deal effectively with the complexities of the drug trade, including the social and

cultural aspects of illicit crop production. Furthermore, Plan Colombia has shown how addressing the originally discrete, yet what have grown to be inter-related, problems of violent 'Revolutionary' politics and the illicit drugs trade via a single strategy can have deleterious consequences. As such, the misleading association between drug trafficking and insurgency represented in the politically popular phrase 'narco-terrorist threat' needs to be reconsidered and separated.

Secondly, events in Colombia demonstrate that attempts at crop eradication, be they manual or via fumigation, have not had a significant and sustained impact on the illicit cocaine market, particularly within the US. A key explanation for this is that such enforcement actions are in the main directed at the weakest link in the chain: coca farmers. Beyond their lack of effectiveness, the negative consequences of eradication policies targeted at coca producers discussed here also make it clear that a distinction must be made between farmers and those involved in the more lucrative aspects of the trade like the processing and trafficking of cocaine. Law enforcement efforts should focus on various activities of the latter. While the effectiveness of such efforts are undoubtedly questionable with regard to reducing the overall size of the drug market,⁵³ well targeted disruption of the trade may be effective in weakening the power of criminal groups or reducing the flow of illegal earnings to armed groups (IDPC, 2007). However, in the case of Colombia, and indeed all other drug-producing countries, it is important to note that the impact of any supply-side intervention will ultimately depend upon global market developments. Put simply: as long as demand remains high, supply will continue.

Thirdly, it is clear that a military approach against drug trafficking fails to achieve democratic stability and peace since the increasing militarization of the anti-drugs efforts can have devastating effects in terms of displaced population, intensification of the conflict and the escalation of the violence; all of which can also impact upon neighbouring countries. Moreover, as has been demonstrated in this brief, the emphasis on the 'stick' strategy and the application of enforcement actions can lead to the abuse and violation of human rights. The humanitarian crisis of internally displaced people, the ongoing assassinations of human rights activists and union members, the impunity for crimes and massacres committed by both guerrilla leaders and paramilitaries, represent crucial aspects that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. A commitment from the Colombian government and the international community on the topic of human rights is necessary to achieve real 'democratic security' and to establish the basis for the peace process.

Finally, the case of Plan Colombia should be used as a learning experience about 'what not to do' when addressing complex social and political situations involving the illicit drug trade and internal conflicts in some producer countries. The emphasis on the military option contributes to the polarisation of the population, the discrediting of the political options in conflict solving, and the increasing power of warlords benefiting from the escalation of the internal conflict and the development of 'markets of violence.' While it is tempting to use

the template of Plan Colombia in drug related conflicts around the world, such as in Afghanistan, it is crucial to recognise the limitations of a supply-control strategy in the overall purpose of curbing the international drugs market. Indeed, it is important to understand that national conflicts are rooted in unresolved problems that are fuelled by the illicit drug trade. It does not, however, necessarily cause them. As a result, caution is required in order to avoid a cure that may ultimately be worse than the disease.

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ENDNOTES

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- Guerrilla groups emerged during the 1960s following a Marxist ideology, and during the last forty years they have got control over vast areas of the country, especially those zones in which the state is weak or even in-existent. Amongst them, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia: FARC –Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia –formed in 1964, is the largest group with membership estimated to be 15000 and 16000. FARC operates mainly in rural areas and in some urban centres. With changes in the source of funding the FARC saw in illicit crops a way of getting some resources, thus, they initially taxed the business in areas under their control, yet, they became more involved in other aspects of the business such as cultivation and processing as well as some activities of distribution. In addition, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional – National Liberation Army - ELN is Colombia's second largest guerrilla force. Their zone of influence used to be the north-eastern departments around the oil industry, although they have been repelled by paramilitaries.
- In a more general sense the term 'paramilitaries' encompasses various types of illegal rightwing armed groups associated to legal armies, and their origin can be traced back in the long-standing political conflict that divided Colombia during the second half of Twentieth century. However, their current status is associated to the creation of private armies funded by some drug traffickers and landowners aimed to repel guerrillas. The largest paramilitary organization, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Auto-Defensas Unidas de Colombia -AUC) was formed in 1997 as an umbrella organization for a number of local and regional paramilitary groups operating in the country, although many groups did not join them.
- This is an indicative number based on UNODC. Other sources, such as the ONDC claim different amount of areas cultivated by coca. This divergence reflects the difficulties in dealing with numbers in a complicated and dynamic phenomenon. However, we will be using these figures as a guide for the analysis.

- 5 In Peru, the Fujimori administration had declared a frontal war against the guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) that was established in areas of coca cultivation such as Alto Huallaga, thus an aggressive policy to shoot down illegal planes and manually eradicate coca cultivation was implemented. In Bolivia efforts to curb coca production led to the controversial Law 1008 of 1988 restricting the cultivation of coca for traditional purposes. In addition, President Banzer launched in 1997 his Plan Dignidad (Plan for Dignity) aimed to comply with Washington demands for a significant reduction of coca cultivation. The effects at the socio-economic levels of the reduction of coca cultivation were devastating. See Thoumi, F. (2003) *Illegal Drugs Economy, and Society in the Andes*. Woodrow Wilson Centre Press: Washington, and John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London.
- 6 These territories correspond to the Amazonas ecosystem; rich in natural resources, water, biodiversity, animals, plants and traditional indigenous cultures.
- 7 It is estimated that 70% of the AUC funding comes from its participation in the drugs trade and that they handle 40% of Colombian cocaine exports. See Livingstone, 2003.
- 8 These prices correspond to data collected in 2006. Prices at the retail level can be twice or three times these values. See World Drug Report, 2008.
- 9 This major involvement in drugs policy initiatives can be understood within the context of the end of the Cold War. As argued by Isacson: 'With neither external nor internal threats to justify large security forces, many of the region's militaries budgets began to shrink' (2005: 21). When drugs became a matter of national security, as declared by President Reagan's National Security Directive No. 221 (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 1994: 548), the necessity of keeping a military presence in certain regions was justified. During the administration of George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) the war on drugs declared by the US government led to an increasing counter-drug foreign military assistance and the Andean strategy was developed, within the idea in which drugs can be eliminated by curbing cocaine production in the coca source countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia (Isacson, 2005: 23).
- 10 The drug certification process had its origins in the Nixon administration and it was the formal manner in which the U.S. government declared whether a government was fulfilling its commitments on the drugs issue. However, it is by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 that 'certification' was included as a mechanism to compel closer drug control cooperation by other governments; threatening economic sanctions. See Walsh (2008) *US Drugs Policy: At What Cost? Moving Beyond the Self-Defeating Supply -Control Fixation*. Statement of John Walsh for the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress. June 19, 2008. Certification meant relations were good; decertification signalled that relations were bad. Indeed, U.S.-Colombian relations were at their most 'narcotized' moment, and the drug certification process was the glaring manifestation of this. See Russell, C. (2001) 'Explicit narcotization: U.S. policy toward Colombia during the Samper administration'. In *Latin American Politics and Society*, Fall 2001.
- 11 Prior to his election as President, Pastrana had been in conversations with FARC leaders, then, when he was elected he proposed the provision of a 'buffer zone' or 'zona de despeje' as a precondition for the peace process. This zone comprised territories in Meta and Guaviare, and in proportion it corresponds to the size of a country such as Switzerland. For some, these prior-agreements inclined the elections in his favour and it was said that FARC had contributed to his election. At the national level the general public was suspicious of this measure as well as some politicians such as the then Minister of Defence, Rodrigo Lloreda, who resigned in protest. The increasing abuses to human rights by guerrilla groups and their lack of political coherence caused the opposition to this measure.
- 12 Before Plan Colombia most of the resources for the war against drugs were assigned to the National Police, because the war on drugs during the most of 1990s was focused on the urban areas and overthrowing the drugs cartels. In addition the army was linked to the abuse of human rights due to their association with paramilitaries, and their involvement in massacres and intimidation to union members and human rights activists in the country; perceived as left-wing sympathisers.
- 13 In addition, for the first phase of Plan Colombia Japan provided loans totalling US\$170 million; the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the World Bank provided US\$300 million loan and Canada made a contribution of US\$40 million. See Livingstone, G. (2003)
- 14 Source: Ciponline - Sum of the Package Aid for Colombia. <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aidsumm.htm>. Accessed: 15 July, 2008.
- 15 In 1999 the Ecuadorian government of Yamil Mahuad Witt made an agreement with the United States for the construction of a military base in Manta and that Ecuador would allow its use for military purposes for ten years initially. It is argued that this Base de Manta would replace the military bases in Panama that were devolved to the Panama Government in 1999 based on the agreements signed by Torrijos and Carter. See Manuel Salgado Tamayo, *La Base de Manta, el Plan Colombia y la Iniciativa Regional Andina*; en Estrada (ed.) (2002) *El Plan Colombia y la Intensificación de la Guerra: Aspectos Globales y Locales*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia: Bogotá.
- 16 For a detailed analysis of this process, see TNI (2001) *Europe and Plan Colombia: Chronicle of a Commitment with an Uncomfortable Plan*. Debate Papers No. 1 Drugs and Conflict. Transnational Institute, April 2001.
- 17 European Parliament Resolution 12, Plan Colombia B5-0087/2001
- 18 Two left-wing guerrilla groups: FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia); ELN (National Liberation Army) and one paramilitary group: AUC (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia).
- 19 At the time of Uribe's election the country was struggling with the economic crisis, the insecurity in using roads and highways across the country, the number of kidnappings, killings and other forms of violence. President Uribe inherited Plan Colombia as a military plan against drug trafficking and he drew upon it as a way to further his own political platform aiming to achieve regain control of territories and restore the trust on the authority of the State.
- 20 This simplistic view however has been contested by a number of researchers and experts (Novoa, E., 2002; Fajardo, D. 2002). Moreover, as argued by Thoumi, F. (2005a), it cannot be asserted that the Colombian society has not participated and benefited from the drug trafficking activities. However, the construction of the problem does not include this acknowledgement. Instead, the link between insurgency and drug trafficking became the identifiable enemy to be combated.
- 21 Source: Ciponline, 2008. Just the Facts. <http://justf.org/Country?country=Colombia&year1=1998&year2=2008&funding=All+Programs>
- 22 National Planning Department (DNP) and Department of Justice and Security (DJS): Plan Colombia Progress Report, 1999-2005.
- 23 The increasing fumigation program has had complex consequences for the health and safety of people in these zones, and it has brought consequences at the social and political level. The discontent amongst communities and the negligence of their views in central government brought a number of 'marchas' and protests by coca farmers. As a response, the government increased their military approach and it was said that FARC had been behind the 'cocalero movement', thus, it contributed to the stigmatisation of farmers, rather than the acknowledgement of their role as political actors in the drug trade business. See Ramirez, C. (2005)
- 24 The Report by the OAS Interamerican Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) also states that the mixture is safe enough. See WOLA, 2008.
- 25 Beyond the argument about the level of toxicity carried by the fumigation mixture, the political agenda involved in the application of this strategy makes it difficult to sort out the controversy over the health effects of the use of glyphosate herbicides often based on anecdotal evidence gathered from people living in the areas subject to fumigation versus the scientific evidence obtained from laboratory experimentation (Sherret, 2005).
- 26 Throughout the history of drugs policy in Colombia there have been several attempts to find agreements between the government and communities involved regarding the eradication of illicit crops. The first experience to sign a pact with the state for the eradication of opium poppy was undertaken in May 1992 by the Paez indigenous community in the Department of Cauca. However, the state never fulfilled the obligations entered upon. Later on in 1996, in response to the social protest which mobilised 20000 people against forced eradication, new pacts were signed. Treaties endorsing the manual, voluntary eradication of illicit crops were proposed including areas such as Putumayo, Caquet, and Catatumbo. Unfortunately, once again this unique opportunity was wasted due to the state's incapacity for fulfilling the agreements. Until then, the control of illicit crops by paramilitaries and guerrilla was not as significant, thus, it would have been a great chance to reach agreements directly with the communities. Further analysis in Vargas, R. (2001) *Eradication Pacts: Trust or Black Mail?* In TNI, Debate Papers, April 2001
- 27 The strategy changed toward using forced manual eradication by 'bringing' 862 peasants from other zones of the country (mainly from the coffee zone) to uproot the plants, while 1147 policemen patrolled the operations; but then guerrilla groups attacked them. Subsequently, the government authorised fumigation in other National Parks as the solution for the eradication targets. These operations have been heavily criticised by environmental groups worldwide because they fail to comply to the regulations about health, human rights and also, due to the alleged use of banned chemical substances and unauthorised fumigations in other national parks. See WOLA, 2008.
- 28 For example, as evaluated by WOLA (2008), nearly 45% of the alternative development budget in the first phases of Plan Colombia was invested in the departments of Putumayo, Meta, Guaviare and Caqueta. However, there are almost no ongoing projects in these departments, although in 2006 they accounted for 48% of the area under coca cultivation and 42% of the area subject to fumigation.
- 29 Colombia, Department for National Planning (DNP) Plan Colombia Progress Report 1999-2005.
- 30 The official announcement of his death was produced in May 24, 2008. However, it seems that he had died of a heart attack a couple of months before, in March, 2008. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7419016.stm>
- 31 It is argued that the many leaders of FARC diverge in their views about peace negotiation, political ideologies and strategies. See also CRS Report for Congress RL32250, November 9, 2007. Colombia: Issues for Congress
- 32 Sanchez, M. (2003) Colombia's Success, Time to Rethink Drug Strategy. The Washington Post July 11, 2008.
- 33 According to the nongovernmental Consultancy for Human Rights and the Displaced (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, CODHES). In <http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/colomb14884.htm>
- 34 In http://www.wola.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=viewp&id=731&Itemid=33. Accessed: 15 July, 2008.
- 35 See Molano, Alfredo. *El Bombardeo*. El Espectador, Abril 6, 2008.
- 36 'Markets of violence are understood as economic areas dominated by civil wars, warlords or robbery, in which a self-perpetuating system emerges which links non-violent commodity markets with the violent acquisition of goods. Violent and non-violent trade become so entwined that the system-specific opportunities for profit give direction. [...] These violent open spaces offer excellent breeding and selection conditions for the evolution of new forms of organised crime and organised terrorism, which both may also affect peaceful industrial countries.' See Elwert, G. (1999) *Markets of Violence*. Contribution to the reader 'Potentials of Disorder' edited by Jan Koehler and Christoph Zuercher at Manchester University Press.
- 37 By the Law 975 of 2005 the Colombian Government proposed the re-integration of paramilitaries and an amnesty for those who abided by their conditions. The problem is that paramilitaries are accused of a number of crimes such as: serious abuses and violations of human rights, massacres, and the systematic extermination of left-wing activists and members of NGOs and human rights organisations.
- 38 The United States and the international community are aware of the implications that paramilitaries can have in terms of human rights impunity, drug trafficking power, money laundering and the legitimacy of the Colombian institutions. See CRS Report on Colombia: Issues for Congress. November 9, 2007.
- 39 Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, *Human Rights and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* 2006, March, 2007; International Crisis Group, 'Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia's Uribe', October 20, 2006.
- 40 See Romero, M. (ed.) (2007) *Parapolítica: La Ruta de la Expansion Paramilitar y los Acuerdos Políticos*. Fundacion Nuevo Arcoiris, CEREC, ASDI. Series Conflicto y Territorio. Available in Spanish: http://www.nuevoarcoiris.org.co/sac/files/libros/Libro_parapolitica.pdf Accessed: July 16, 2008.

- 41 Since the election of President Uribe, there have been a number of scandals involving the armed forces, such as the discovery that both the FARC and drug traffickers have infiltrated the armed forces and that demobilised paramilitaries were conducting drug trafficking operations from prisons. In October 2007 the Attorney General charged six army officers for faking terrorist attacks shortly before Uribe's inauguration that were blamed on the FARC including a car bomb which killed one civilian and injured 20 soldiers. See OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia, 'Tenth Report to the Secretary General'. October 31, 2007. International Crisis Group, *Colombia's new Armed Groups*, May 10, 2007; and US Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotic Control Strategy Report 2007*, March 2007.
- 42 Contraloría Delegada para el Sector Defensa, Justicia y Seguridad, Dirección de Estudios Sectoriales. Luis Bernardo Florez, Vice-Contraalor General de la Nación, *Desplazamiento Forzado: un Impacto Territorial*, 2005. Quoted in WOLA, 2008.
- 43 United Nations, E/CN/4/2000/83/Add.1, paragraph 23. Quoted in WOLA, 2008
- 44 For further analysis of the implications of the current negotiation with paramilitaries under President Uribe, see Ramirez, M.C., Stanton, K., and Walsh, J. (2005) *Colombia: A Vicious Circle of Drugs and War*. In Youngers, C. and Rosin, E. (ed) (2005) *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of US Policy*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder (Colorado) and London.
- 45 Colombian Government. 'Strategy for the Strengthening of Democracy and Social Development 2007-2013.' Draft for discussion. January 2007.
- 46 Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Say No to Free Trade,' July 18, 2007. Quoted in CRS: Colombia: Issue for Congress, November 2007, p.3
- 47 The recent scandal of multinational Chiquita and their links with paramilitaries proves that protection and security are a source of revenues for illegal armies. Chiquita might have paid about \$1.7m between 1997 and 2004 to the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in return for 'protection'. Also, they paid to FARC in response to extortions and security. See BBC World/Americas. March 17, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6452455.stm> Accessed May 9, 2008.
- 48 As discussed by Thoumi (2005b) these discrepancies are nevertheless undermined by the use of 'data by agencies and groups to support positions that have been formed previously and manipulate them for political or ideological purposes.' The fixation with numbers fails to acknowledge the influence of illegal drugs regarding not only the size of the illegal industry, but also on the structure, institutions and values of the societies involved.
- 49 Source: Plan Colombia Progress Report, 1999-2005. National Planning Department (DNP) and Department of Justice and Security, September 2006. P.9.
- 50 CRS Report for Congress RL32250, November 9, 2007. Colombia: Issues for Congress.
- 51 See National Planning Department (DNP) and Department of Justice and Security (DJS): Plan Colombia Progress Report, 1999-2005. Op. Cit. Colombian Government. 'Strategy for the Strengthening of Democracy and Social Development 2007-2013.' Draft for discussion. January 2007.
- 52 It has been noted that since the coca leaf constitutes only around 2% of the retail price of cocaine, it is relatively easy for drug traffickers to absorb this higher cost. This figure is taken from the 1994 study by James Painter, *Bolivia and Coca: A Study in Dependency*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Similar conclusions about the percentage value of coca leaf are reached by Kathryn Ledbur, 'Bolivia: Clear Consequences' in *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of US Policy*, edited by Coletta A. Youngers and Eileen Rosin (2005), Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder (Colorado) and London.
- 53 Indeed, it has been calculated that it would require a quintupling of import prices to effect a doubling of retail prices. (See Boyum and Reuter, 2005) These figures are based on research by the RAND Corporation. For example, a 1988 RAND Report demonstrated that interdiction efforts, using armed forces resources, would have almost no effect on cocaine importation into the United States. See Reuter, Peter H.; Gordon Crawford, Jonathan Cave, Patrick Murphy, Don Henry, William Lisowski, Eleanor Sullivan Wainstein (1988). 'Sealing the borders: the effects of increased military participation in drug interdiction'. Throughout the 1990s and 2000 this statement has been confirmed by further studies of the RAND corporation and independent researchers.