

What is the war on (t) ERRORISM?

US foreign policy towards Colombia in the post-September 11 world: the end of the peace talks, the beginning of the new-old war

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Introduction

This paper seeks to analyze the changes of US foreign policy towards Latin America in general, and Colombia in particular in the post-September 11 world and its implications for the termination of the peace process. In order to explore the number of variables involved in such complex analysis the text is divided into two sections. Each section is based on a response to a particular question that will describe the most relevant facts and further deepen the discussion over the rationale and frameworks behind the policies. The questions are: *Does peace in Colombia comply with the US regional hegemonic aspirations?* The topics to be covered here are US interventionism before and after September 11, with special attention in identifying the flaws within the Drug War Framework, more specifically the implementation of Plan Colombia. The second question is: *Is Washington interested in brokering or supporting an eventual peace process in Colombia?*

A series of propositions will be discussed in order to make an analysis linking US foreign policy and its role in the escalation of the armed conflict. In addition, a brief account of the three-year old peace process in Colombia with particular emphasis on the January 10th impasse and how the process was finally terminated the night of February 20th.

This paper is an attempt to "de-classify" present policies in order to announce an unfortunate failure. In other words, this paper is a small contribution in understanding how the US at the beginning of the XXI Century became involved and actively contributed to the escalation of the internal civil war that used to be between Colombians.



What is the war on (t) ERRORISM?

First of all the word *errorism* does not exist in English or Spanish. Nor it is my own creation. My friend Javier Pinzón during a conference discussion last November created *errorism* as a way to explain to the audience the multiple challenges and constant contradictions that the war on terrorism possess. In sum, the fundamental *error* of US direct involvement in Colombia's internal war -beyond the devastating humanitarian, environmental, economic costs the Colombians are and will be paying- is that priorities and programs in the country may be increasingly determined according to military (strategic) and not political criteria (Isacson and Doyle: 2001). The war of *errorism* is thus, the supremacy of force and destruction rather than the creation of dialogical processes, a step away from the core assumptions of modernity.

Question No. 1. Does peace in Colombia comply with the US regional hegemonic aspirations?

US Interventionism before, during and after September 11: protect us from evil!

The US interventions in Latin America since the end of the XIX century have been conducted for a variety of reasons. These include helping in the anti-colonial struggle against the European colonization, and most recently to develop modernization projects, contribute to the nation-building processes, democratization, free-markets and reconstruction of post-war societies. In general, US interventions have been conducted to protect us (Latin America) from evil. The definition of evil correlates with what US -economic and political interests- perceives to be endangered at any particular moment. Thus, communism, psychotropic substances, illegal migration and more recently terrorism have been the leading motives under which diplomatic and military operations respond.

It is important to remember that a constant US interest is to preserve the stability of the region

and to secure the well functioning of capital flows and market economies. During the early 1990s, Latin America although low in list of the security threats was fast becoming the primary market for US products and services (McSherry, 2000). Consequently, it is not a matter of coincidence that the development of structural adjustment policies and neo-liberal macro economic maneuvers to integrate the region into the global market economy emerged with greater intensity during those years.

In fact, the fall of the Berlin wall provided reasons for a collective enthusiasm with regards to the future relationships between Latin America and the US. This was supported by the US mediation efforts to help resolve the Central American internal wars and the US support of the Southern Cone democratic transitions. However, such excitement was promptly transformed into skepticism, as drug production -especially in the Andean region- appeared to become the successful candidate for gaining the title of evil substitute in US foreign policy. Hence, the US war on drugs emerged as a convenient rationale for US military presence in the hemisphere. The US efforts to combat drug production in the Andean region, which were based on eradication, fumigation and interdiction (Walker: 2001) did not start with Bill Clinton and Pastrana's junior announcement of the famous "Plan Colombia". Nor was Colombia the first target of the unfortunate crusade by the US against the weakest chain of drug production. According to Walker (2001), Plan Colombia is "the operational descendant" of three former attempts to curtail drug production. The following chart illustrates the 'prehistory' of Plan Colombia.

What this table reveals is that the engagement of US from the second half of the 1980s was characterized by the following elements:

- Each operation was conducted based on the failed outcome of the previous policy. Which rather than showing success in eradicating crops in one country shows the increase of the production in a second or third country (Vargas: 1999).

US war on drugs operations prior to Plan Colombia

OPERATION	COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION	RESULTS
Blast Furnace	Bolivia- July 1986	President Reagan issued National Security Directive No. 221 identified drugs as a threat to the US & hemispheric security	Coca stopped growing in Bolivia, from 118,000 to 36,000 acres. It started to appear in Perú and Colombia.
Operation Snow Cap	Broadened to include Colombia and Perú and the other Andean Nations	To throw limited military resources the Cocaine trade of South America.	Perú's coca growing acres decreased from 230,000 to 84,000 Colombia's coca production rocketed from 165,000 to 334,000 acres ¹
Andean Drug Strategy by Bush Senior	Adopted by US in 1990 in Cartagena, Colombia. The strategy was focused on three key Andean countries: Bolivia, Perú and Colombia	Increase militarization (low intensity conflict) to combat drug production. Total cost of the operation \$2.2. Billion	Deeper involvement in the domestic affairs of Bolivia, Perú and Colombia.

- The military and economic engagement increased constantly as more countries were targeted and a more direct military participation developed. Hence, the war on drugs was a typical post-cold war operation characterized by low- intensity intervention and democracy assistance projects. Those operations serve also the following purposes: domestically it showed a 'tough' attitude towards drugs, necessary to justify to the taxpayers the billions of dollars that they have been paying ever since². Internationally, the war on drugs serves the purpose of maintaining US hegemony over the region in which regional security and internal order merge into one.

The hemispheric security agenda at the end of the 1990s was mainly based as a struggle

against drug production, traffic and consumption. In addition, Washington saw internal stability within a country as a determinant factor of the overall regional security. Therefore, Colombia, being the top coca producer and exporter with the highest level of instability in Latin America, was the ideal location to design, launch and implement a comprehensive, multi-billion counter-drug plan with Colombian politic and military decision-making elites³.

Plan Colombia and the "nation-building" project

By the end of the 1990s Colombia was not only the biggest supplier of coca to the US. A few of the main elements that characterized Colombia in 1999 included: an unemployment rate of 20%;

¹ Sharpe and Spencer. 2001. "Refueling a doomed war on drugs", NACLA, Vol XXXV, No3

² By 1997 US taxpayers paid \$290 million US dollars for the war on drugs. NACLA No. 2, Vol XXXI Sep/Oct 1997

³ For the purpose of this analysis the role that domestic politic, military and economic elites play in the development of US actions, based on their particular interests is not going to be fully addressed in this paper. However, the author does not intend to undermine the importance of that variable to comprehend how functional are several of the US interests for some segments of the Colombian society.



a decrease in foreign investment; 40% of the territory was not fully under the control of the armed forces, a lack of confidence in the Peace Processes initiated by President Pastrana Jr. in 1999; 2 million internally displaced people (the biggest humanitarian emergency in the Western hemisphere) and the biggest exodus ever experienced by middle class Colombians. Because a whole paper should be devoted to fully explain each of the root-causes of Colombia's protracted conflict, I will limit myself to briefly state some essential factors relevant to this analysis.

Colombia: counter-narcotics, counter-insurgency, and counter- democracy?

Colombia's conflict is a social, economic and political one. Initiated at the second half of the XX century by several former liberal leftover rebels from the liberal-conservative war who - at that time were being inspired under communist and/or socialist ideas and methods. By the mid 1980s, as a result of the inability of the state to protect its citizens, especially the middle class segments that were the most frequent targets of the insurgents, the paramilitaries, in collaboration with some elements of the armed forces were formed, claiming the right to privately attack the Colombian insurgents. The parties in the conflict experienced a qualitative change when the production, cultivation and exportation of illicit drugs started to become a funding source for their activities. Washington, in its efforts to understand the complexity of the parties involved in the conflict created the term 'narcoguerrilla'. It is true that the insurgents profit from the taxes of the land that is cultivated with coca, more than with processing or shipping. However, recent events such as the 42,000 kilometers that were given by the government to the rebels as a safe zone called 'El Caguán' showed airplanes tracks and several laboratories. Likewise, the paramilitaries have confessed to not only being involved with drug cultivation, but also directing major trafficking operations (Aranguren: 2001). In sum, as a result of the involvement of the armed

parties in the drug business, the political economy of the war has been permanently altered. The government is dealing with rich, heavily armed guerrilla groups (FARC and ELN). Moreover, the paramilitaries have managed to create a national project based on a national 'political' leader that claims to coordinate the different fronts with an incipient political discourse based on the defense of private property and free enterprise.

The multi-party, multi-issue complex situation in Colombia explains why for the administrations of Virgilio Barco (1986- 1990); César Gaviria (1990-1994); and Ernesto Samper (1994-1998), the drugs issue was one variable amongst the intricate series of challenges to restore order and security for Colombians. In fact, during the four years of Samper's government, the US mainly tried to influence the National Police and the Armed Forces in Colombia (Walker: 2001). It was not until Pastrana's Jr. arrival to the presidency in August of 1998 that drug control became a central theme of both US and Colombia domestic politics and foreign politics.

After US congressional approval in 1999, Colombia became the third largest recipient of US aid after Egypt and Israel. Colombian news coverage in US printed media was almost as notorious as the today's "America's New War" coverage in Afghanistan (Restrepo: 2001).

Walker explains how for both Colombian and US domestic leaders, Plan Colombia is not solely \$ 1.6 billion in military and social assistance. It is the comprehensive guide under which the country should be geared towards a "nation-building" process. This is why 20% of the aid is devoted to social, democratic, development and judicial reform, which USAID has been involved in since 1991.

If Plan Colombia's is part of the 'War on Drugs' and its main investment is in distributing 30 UH-60 Black haws troop carrying helicopters, 33 refurbished UH-1N "Huey" helicopters and three spy planes; why then worry about nation-building projects similar to the "Alliance for

Progress" during the 1940s? I believe a more appropriate question is - How do democracy and social and political assistance projects 'fit' within the "War on drugs" framework? What is the purpose of those programs? One possible answer is that under the rubric of military assistance the US can influence and reshape the country's politics. By financing groups that support and share a "free-market, free election" value system. In other words, "free markets make the world available to capital, and free-elections make it safe for capital, by creating a more stable, predictable world environment" (Klare: 2000).

Walker argues that USAID municipal and departmental efforts in reconstituting the state presence are intrusive to the internal affairs of Colombians. In addition, USAID is also actively involved in Alternative Development, which is the program that aims at enhancing the production of legal crops, reimbursing those peasants who voluntarily leave coca cultivation. According to the author, this program places USAID in a highly politicized and controversial position. For those peasants in the 300,000 acres of coca-cultivated areas who do not wish to voluntarily eradicate the crops, fumigation awaits. Beyond the obvious controversy that fumigation presents, it is questionable if Alternative Development is a desirable economic change for the coca-growers.

In sum, Plan Colombia was originally conceived to be fundamentally military assistance to the armed forces of Colombia to conduct and win the war against drugs. However, this military strategy enlarges its role in civilian institutions and functions creating provision of direct social control under the framework of electoral democracy (Mc Sherry: 2000).

Amongst the various criticisms posed to Plan Colombia from all sorts of governments and social sectors (such as the European Union, International NGOs, and various segments of the organized civil society in Colombia) the "weakest link", or the main flaw, within the

famous Plan is the doubtful division between counter-narcotic and counter-insurgency wars. In words of a US officer: "There is not much difference between counterdrugs and counterinsurgency. We just do not use the [word] anymore because it is politically too sensitive" (Mc Sherry: 2000).

I argue in this paper, that the post-September 11 policies towards Colombia did not create a major detour from the "war on drugs" operations. Instead, the post-September 11 juncture contributed to the gradual removal of the 'politically sensitive' atmosphere. Especially when asking to the US Congress for additional \$98 million for counterinsurgency now called "War on (t) errorism". The shift from 'war on drugs' to "war on terrorism" is the same war just played out more directly in a far less political sensitive world.

It is the first time, argues Kate Dole and Adam Isacson (2001), that the US would be funding operations directly aimed at combating the insurgents in Colombia, this is a significant new step in Colombia's rapidly worsening conflict. In addition, the strategy analyst Alfredo Rangel affirms that even with all the resources provided by the US to modernize Colombia's military forces, it is not possible to produce a stalemate between the parties. Following this reasoning, Adam Isacson states that the Colombian army "currently operates with 40 thousand men in combat, much more than three years ago, but far less than the ten to one ratio that is recommended by counterinsurgency doctrine" (Isacson: 2002).

Why is then the US getting involved in a confrontation that is unlikely to end by other means than a forthcoming political settlement? In order to respond this question, I will proceed to explain additional US economic and social interests help explain why the Clinton and Bush administrations have been so eager to increase military aid to Colombia. This discussion will be followed by a general identification of several 'flaws' that the former "War on Drugs" contain. This is followed by a comparative chart to illustrate the



changes between US foreign policy towards Colombia before and after September 11.

Which interests and whose democracy?

Two sectors will help illustrate the connection between US national strategic interests to boost military aid to Colombia: Oil and US military suppliers.

Oil: the convergence of US economic interests with the internal conflict

•The Colombian government and the oil production

Colombia is the 7th largest supplier of petroleum in the world and one of the major oil producers in the Western Hemisphere. According to Michael Klare (2000), Colombia increased production from 100,000 barrels per day to 844,000 in early 1999. Oil is Colombia's biggest legal source of income, \$4 billion annually in foreign sales. The government aims to increase the oil profit to further stimulate economic growth and development.

•The US government and the Colombian Oil

The US consumption in oil from 1997 to 2020 will rise from 18 to 25 million barrels per day. In 1993, the Clinton administration made the diversification supplies a major strategic objective, to reduce the dependency on supplies from the Middle East. Since the US is interested in ensuring security of oil supplies in non-middle eastern territory, Colombia and Venezuela have gained importance in the Western Hemisphere. But the relative stability that Venezuela offers is different from the situation in Colombia. Klare argues that the war on drugs, originally targeting the drug producers and the guerillas protecting the coca-growing operations, is not as threatening as the attacks on economic infrastructure perpetuated by the insurgents. For more than 10 years both major insurgent groups FARC and ELN have consistently

attacked Oxy and British Petroleum (BP) pipelines. "Between 82-99 ELN attacked the pipeline from Cañolimón to the Atlantic Coast 586 times"(Klare: 2000).

•Geography of the natural resources and the conflict

Colombia's two main producing areas are located in Cusiana (north central) BP, and CañoLimón (North East) Oxy. These places are located in the traditional stateless areas that are currently under the control of the guerillas or being disputed by paramilitaries. The foreign petroleum companies in Colombia are known for possessing extensive private security. The companies pay additional funds in security, which increases the overall costs of extracting oil in Colombian soil. Klare argues that while the US military aid is targeted for the southeast where the coca plantations exist, the equipment given to the military forces enhances government mobility and intelligence to cover the whole country.

Following this reasoning the insurgents will be defeated in the south, and the confrontation in the north will be strategically divided between the government forces and the paramilitary actions. However, Klare highlights that the military aid allows mobility throughout the country, which means that the equipment is capable of monitoring and defending the northeast oil investments as well.

The alleged strategic military division between military and paramilitary in the north, on one hand; and Colombian US trained forces against insurgencies in the south, fails for simplicity and lack of inclusion of the paramilitary current attempt to win territory in the southern regions. However, the defense of the oil refineries and pipelines is a clear vital economic interest for the US. Perhaps, Colombia becoming a major oil supplier to the US for the next 20 years, is one of the most important reasons lying underneath the counter drug, counterinsurgency and counter-terrorists discourses?

Other variables contributing to the US military engagement Colombia

There is however, an element that invalidates the above-mentioned argument to a certain extent. If US primary interests are to control the supply of oil from Colombia, conditions of stability should be preferred over a total escalation of the conflict, especially in guerrilla-controlled areas such as the oil regions.

I suggest that vital to US economy is not only decreasing the Middle Eastern oil dependency but profiting from US weaponry industry sales. It is evident that among the sectors that benefit from the military assistance to Colombia are the US military suppliers such as United Technologies, Bell Helicopters, etc. However, such an argument has been contested by saying that the post-cold war arms sector is rather small in comparison to the auto, the construction and the US manufacturing sectors (Lazare: 2000).

Support for the US arms private sector is not the main reason for the US government to escalate the war in Colombia. Nonetheless, the role that those companies played in lobbying for the approval of Plan Colombia (Klare: 2000) was far from invisible. In addition, President's Bush request of additional funding for pipeline protection in February of this year, are variables worth examining to fully understand US military engagement in the Colombian internal war.

Challenges of the counter-narcotics strategy

Leaving aside the role of US economic interests in the development of US military training to modernize Colombian armed forces, the former "War on Drugs", if analyzed from within, faces a wide range of problems. Such flaws increase the chances for the counter drug and counter insurgency efforts to fail in at least two of the objectives that are openly disclosed to the public. Such as stopping the flow of cocaine and heroine to the US and more recently helping the Colombian military in defeating the insurgent organizations in Colombia. Before September 11

the main challenges that the "War on Drugs" faced included:

- The inability of this war to solve the drug problem inside the US;
- The incapacity of temporarily eradicating the cultivation one area without spreading it to other regions.
- The emphasis on attacking the weakest chain of the production and distribution in both countries: peasants in Colombia and Black, Hispanic and other low income groups in US neighborhoods
- The aid is conceived mainly to cooperate with and modernize the military sector in countries with fragile civilian democracies with a complicated history of abuse and corruption.
- The humanitarian, environmental and economic costs of escalating the armed conflict
 1. Spillover of violence, trade, production and displaced populations within Colombia to neighboring countries
 2. Fumigation activities have proven to destroy those crops financed by the Alternative Development programs. In addition, they have severe health consequences and pollute the environment.
- US trained counter-narcotics battalions will eventually be used for counterinsurgency operations.
- Risk that the US military aid would assist the paramilitaries who are proven to commit 70% of human rights violations and have openly declared their participation in illegal cultivation and trade efforts which contradicts the whole purpose of the war on drugs.

Before September 11 the main criticism of the 'war on drugs' was the blurred relationship between counternarcotics and counterinsurgency operations. In addition, aid was mostly conditional on the Colombian army reducing the frequency of human rights violations. One of the consequences of 'America's New War' is the imminent risk of eliminating the few guarantees to monitor the information of US activities in foreign countries and therefore preventing US aid from end up contributing to out-laws groups such as the paramilitaries from escalating the conflict.



The following chart attempts to illustrate in more detail the main changes between the post-cold "war on drugs" with the post- September 11 "war against (t) errorism".

Communism, drugs and terrorism are the grounds under which US interventions (directly and indirectly) to Latin America have been conducted. Because of the anti - communist efforts that led to excesses of US military actions in several countries such as Guatemala, controls and conditions -such as the Leahy Law (see table) - in the post-cold war against drugs were established. The 'Wars against Drugs and (t) errorism' are bound to fail for several reasons. First, drug control practices ignore the core problem of illicit drugs: the market system, in fact, the more interdiction the better the prices in the streets on New York. Second, the spread of production cannot be contained by military means alone. Third, the drug problem as interwoven with insurgency and paramilitarism as currently is in Colombia, cannot be solved before ALL parties sit down and start a negotiated settlement. Under the framework of the 'global crusade against terrorists' championed by Bush Jr., the minimal provisions to enter a negotiation, which are the status of being a political actor, have disappeared. Making it extremely difficult to re-start a negotiation process in the future. Fourth, modernization of the armed forces is a need in any developing country. However, Colombia's major need is make peace as attractive as possible to as all sectors in Colombia, not to promote the escalation of the war. Unfortunately, for similar or different reasons, the armed forces, the paramilitaries, the guerrillas, some presidential candidates, segments of the civil society, and the US are currently committed to escalating the conflict. The context of post-September 11 facilitates that military, win-lose solutions prevail over the goals of strengthening dialogical and participatory practices with societies and governments throughout Latin America.

In previous pages, the analysis was intended to explain the general context of US interventions in Latin America, with special attention on the

role of US foreign policy in Colombia. The second part of this paper will provide an analytical account from within. First, the analysis will focus on how the different parties involved in the Colombian conflict were affected by US "War on Drugs"; and second an assessment of the impact of "America's New War" in the further escalation or resolution of the Colombian conflict.

Question No. 2. Is Washington interested in brokering or supporting an eventual peace process in Colombia?

The thesis of how the military logic shared by the Colombian armed actors and US military assistance has failed to resolve both the drug production and the protracted conflict in Colombia was partially discussed in the first part of the paper. What need to be further assessed are the implications of US military aid and its impact in the dynamics of the internal conflict in Colombia. Thus, an interplay of propositions are suggested to identify in which ways US current foreign policy after September 11, is linked with the escalation of the armed conflict.

Proposition # 1

After September 11, priorities and programs in the region and in Colombia will be mostly conceived according to strategic and not political criteria.

Proposition # 2

The majority of US military aid has been concentrated in the southern Colombian battalions.

Proposition # 3

After September 11, Congressional oversight is at risk of diminishing the provisions to condition aid such as a decrease in the human rights abuses record of the military in Colombia (Isacson: 2001).

Proposition # 4

The end of the negotiations allows the paramilitaries units to enter southern Colombia and continue disputing territory with the guerrilla. (Reyes: 1997).

Proposition # 5

5.1 As the paramilitaries advance to the south, there are fewer guarantees -especially after

US MILITARY ENGAGEMENT IN COLOMBIA

<i>DURING THE WAR ON DRUGS</i>	<i>DURING THE WAR ON TERRORISM</i>
<p>The security threat to the Western Hemisphere is the widespread influx of drugs.</p> <p>Counter narcotics is the exclusive focus of why US military forces are helping</p>	<p>There is a global threat: terrorism. Colombia hosts 3 terrorist groups (FARC, AUC, and ELN) which have the ability to threat regional, hemispheric and even global security. Colombia is an example of how US is engaged in anti-terrorism in non- Muslim countries. President Bush II fiscal year is requesting around \$98 million for the pentagon to reshape the war on drugs into the global war on tERROR.</p>
<p>Congressional oversight of US military programs</p>	<p>Less likely that Congress will pay attention to the oversight of any terrorist-related programs. Use of the "Sept 11 "crisis to reverse mechanisms that prevented abuses of US policy in Latin America</p>
<p>Existence of some controls and conditions on military assistance</p> <p>Indirect participation of US involvement in the insurgent, government, paramilitary confrontation</p> <p>Interplay between politics, economics and military variables for designing foreign policymaking.</p>	<p>Real risk of giving aid without concern to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Human Rights · Non-proliferation of massive destruction weaponry · Transparency mechanisms <p>Eliminating the Leahy Law that limits aid to develop nuclear weapons; forbids aid to military coup governments, no-CIA recruitment of human right abusers and no policy of selective assassination. Clear decision to participate in the combat between insurgents now denominated "terrorists" on the side of the Colombian military. Even fewer guarantees that US aid won't be used to attack innocent civilians. Increase military involvement in foreign policymaking.</p>
<p>Militarization and law enforcement was targeted to the weaker chains of the production and distribution in the two countries</p>	<p>More restriction of civilian powers over military and extra presidential powers over the legislative and judicial branches ("Law of Security and National Defense") and in the US increase of new anti-terrorist measures against immigrants.</p>

September 11- that portions of US aid would indirectly contribute to increase-forced displacement, massacres, assassination and

all forms of human rights violations. "In January 2001 alone, 27 massacres were carried out by army-backed paramilitaries,



resulting in several hundred deaths" (Miller: 2001).

5.2 Targets of the paramilitaries consist of anybody holding a direct or indirect link with insurgents. As they conduct their actions towards the south, the thousands of civilians that lived within the DMZ for three years are potential targets. No international humanitarian is allowed to enter the territory (as of February 23rd), already 2,500 civilians were unofficially reported as having left the area because of fear of a paramilitary massacre.

Proposition # 6

6.1 The US military reports are increasing the portions of classified information in their reports, to a point that there is no knowledge of which battalions and how many people are being trained (Isacson: 2001). How are taxpayers and average Americans going to know if their money is involved in human rights violations in the name of combating terrorism?

6.2 Another factor that contributes to the decreased public accountability and transparency of US military operations overseas is the trend of using private contractors for many activities.

Proposition # 7

The degree of involvement shows signs of increasing as Bush Jr. requested an additional \$98 million for the 2003 budget for counter-terrorism purposes to shift for counter narcotics to counter insurgency. The US government is also volunteering to collaborate with intelligence activities (El Tiempo, February 23rd), which shows the degree of US involvement in the conflict and interference in national affairs.

Proposition # 8

By strengthening mostly the military and police sectors, the already weak democracy is at highest state of alert. Measures to provide Colombia's military with judicial functions have already been announced, such as detainment without due process, searches without warnings and the like (Richani: 2001).

Proposition # 9

Exacerbating the civil conflict will spill violence into neighboring countries and will increase drug trade and production. Economic uncertainty will enlarge as the socio-economic crisis will continue destabilizing the Andean

region and add to the already economic and political instability of Latin America.

Proposition # 10

Building on the above-mentioned points, there are few signs that the US government will be committed in the near future in the civil restoration of Colombia, through political rather than military/authoritarian means.

Proposition # 11

It is clear that US will not attempt to commit a serious number of US soldiers in the field for fear of severe public criticism. However, the more the involvement in Colombia increases, the more plausible this risk will become. In addition, the political costs of increasing the risk of involvement (in one way or another) with the paramilitaries, who have already been candidates for an International War Crime Tribunal (Ramírez: 2002).

Proposition # 12

One of the main shortcomings of the 'strategic paradigm' is its ineffectiveness of complex thinking in terms of integrating a series of variables different than giving priority to military calculations (Pizarro: 2002). For this reason, even if my paper proves to be mistaken after a definitive victory of any of the armed actors, the social and economic catastrophe, which occurs after a civil war, will require the application of political, economic and humanitarian processes to gradually transit from civil war to civil society.

Proposition # 13

Leaving aside the fact the war-like situation and its decision to escalate it is ethically regrettable; negotiation in Colombia is a necessary step to start weaving a fragmented society that has been trapped in the confrontation without voice for decades.

Proposition # 14

If the US and other international countries are willing to commit themselves in the reconstruction of Colombia, it is recommended to protect and empower civil society development *on their own terms*. Learning from post-colonial practices such as the class -division created between the expatriates and the Bosnians without major economic improvement or political ownership after billions of dollars in post-war reconstruction.

Chronology of the Peace Process

The above-presented propositions will be contextualized with a description of a general chronology⁴ of the peace talks between the

Colombian Government and FARC. Particular emphasis will be given to the January 10th impasse and how the process was permanently aborted on February 20th.

Chronology of the Peace Process between Colombian Government and FARC

1998

June 9th: The elected president Andrés Pastrana meets with "Manuel Marulanda Velez "Sureshot" Farc's main leader.

October 23rd: Pastrana orders the demilitarization of 5 municipalities in \$42,139 square kilometers as the safe heaven for the negotiations.

December 14th: First impasse. Farc request the removal of the military personal at the Cazadores Battalion in San Vicente del Caguán.

1999

January 7th: Official inauguration of the process with national and international guests in San Vicente del Caguán. "Sureshot" did not attend claiming security reasons.

January 17th: FARC announced the first impediment of the dialogue pending a real commitment by government to combat paramilitaries.

March 10th: FARC acknowledges the assassination of three US citizens by their forces.

May 1st: Pastrana and 'Sureshot' met again in the neutral zone.

May 25th: The document "Common Agenda for Change" is agreed. This is the central document that will guide the subsequent negotiations.

November 18th: Farc reject a international commission to monitor the process.

December 20th: Farc announces a unilateral truce for Christmas and New Years Eve until Jan 10th

2000

January 13th: Dialogue is started

Febrero 2nd: The government Peace Commissioner at that time, Victor G. Ricardo, and his staff together with FARC spokesmen travel to Sweden, Norway, Italy, The Vatican, Spain, Switzerland and France.

April 26: Pastrana accepts the resignation of Víctor G. Ricardo and appoints Camilo Gómez, until then his private secretary.

April 29: FARC announced its Political Movement called "Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia. Movimiento Bolivariano por la Nueva Colombia (MBNC).

May 16th: The government suspends meetings between various countries and Farc for being accused of putting a bomb on the neck of a Colombia peasant woman.

September 18th: Government suspends talks after insurgents kidnap an airplane landing in El Caguán after escaping from prison.

2001

February 8th and 9th: Pastrana and 'Sureshot' celebrate the third summit to save the process.

October 7th: After the kidnap and assassination of the ex minister of Culture Consuelo Araújooguera, president Pastrana announced the reinforcement of military controls surrounding the DMZ.

October 17th: Farc withdraw from the table and request the end of controls over the zone, as well as the suspension of flights over the De-militarized- Zone (DMZ).

December 24th: The High Commissioner for Peace, Camilo Gómez, after travelling to DMZ announces that the talks would be resumed by both parties.

⁴ Based on the February 20th chronology published by El Tiempo



2002

January 3rd and 4th: After a very tense two-day meeting, the parties do not reactivate the negotiations due to Farc's request of eliminating the aerial, terrestrial, and fluvial controls over the DMZ. A new round of talk's for the 9th is announced.

January 9th: The High Commissioner announces the rupture of the negotiations. Pastrana confirms the end of the dialogue and assures that controls over DMZ are not negotiable. A 48-hour deadline is provided for Farc to proceed with evacuating the territory.

January 10th: After a UN petition, Pastrana modifies the 48-hour deadline so that international mediators could attempt to save the process. The only condition, in case of **no agreement, the deadline of returning the DMZ would be February 2nd at 9:30pm.**

January 11: UN and Farc extend their encounter until the next day, without reaching an agreement.

January 12th: At the end of a meeting between James Lemoyne (UN Delegate) and Farc, the insurgents read a 14 point declaration in which they implicitly comply with the controls over the zone.

January 13th: President Pastrana rejects Farc proposal. Hours later, Farc ratifies the rupture requested the devolution of the municipalities under the DMZ. International countries express concern.

January 14th: "Friends of Colombia" ambassadors travel to the DMZ in an attempt to rescue the talks. Five hours before the deadline, Farc accepts the guarantees to continue with the process. The diplomats, the Catholic Church and the UN support the decision. The only pending action is Pastrana's ratification.

February 14th: In a meeting at El Cagúan, based on the agreed timeline of the peace process, the presidential candidates, Horacio Serpa, Luis Eduardo Garzón and Ingrid Betancourt criticize the series of terrorists acts committed by Farc and request to both the guerrillas and the Government to avoid a further escalation of the war.

February 19th: President Pastrana suggest that Army and guerrillas should be in separated territories in their first announcement of the concrete steps to undertake an eventual truce. High Commissioner Camilo Gómez clarified that the government is NOT talking about an additional DMZ.

February 20th: As a result of the series of attacks over the energy infrastructure, bombs and other atrocities between January 10th and February 20th; and, as a response to Farc's kidnap of a commercial airplane and capture of Senator Turbay; President Pastrana declares during the afternoon the cessation of the peace process, announcing a deadline of 12:00 pm. An estimated number of 15,000 army men will enter and retake the DMZ. The political status of Farc members is permanently removed. Farc, Eln and Auc (paramilitaries) are terrorists and will be combated by the Colombian Armed forces. UN, EEUU, the European Union all supports Pastrana's decision. Farc, blames the government decision and announces willingness to talk with the subsequent elected government in August 2002.

Beyond the facts: who is profiting (what) from this war?

A chronology, although useful in providing a dimension over time, isolates certain landmarks that fall short in explaining the dynamics of the conflict, especially a multi-issue, multi-party confrontation such as the civil war in Colombia. Four elements that are absent and deserve attention in explaining why during the three

years of a formal peace process the conflict escalated to unknown precedents include:

First, Pastrana's formula of 'negotiating in the midst of war' clearly permitted both Farc and the government to improve their military capacity. Second, Plan Colombia contributed to the increased militarization of the public opinion in addition to the insurgents' intransigence to honor a serious peace agreement. Frustrated members of the middle class and right wing

politicians are currently promoting the military option (Richani: 2001). Third, Plan Colombia helped in ameliorating the minimal 'trust' between FARC and the government to start a serious negotiation process. The US military support to the Colombian armed forces increased the government's confidence in at least producing a stalemate, thus improving their position in an eventual negotiation. Fourth, Colombian civil society played a pivotal role in creating the conditions that led to the 1998 negotiations after 10 million Colombians manifested their willingness to end the war. This incredible social asset of organized civilians for peace was minimized and underutilized by both warring actors (Farc and government). Fifth, the request of the paramilitaries to gain political status and gain an eventual seat at the negotiated table. The paramilitaries never supported the negotiations. In the three years of peace process they gained national unity and an incipient political discourse, while benefiting from the war and drug industry and being responsible of 70% of the massacres and the forced human displacement in Colombia.

An analysis of US foreign policy after September 11 and its implications in the termination of Colombia's peace process have the risk of omitting the Farc's role of in the termination of the dialogues. During the three-year negotiation, while profiting from the political status of dialoging with the government of Colombia and other European countries, Farc utilized the demilitarized territory to further develop their illegal activities, thus growing stronger both economically and militarily. The duality expressed by Pastrana as he declared a "total" commitment for peace, at the same time that Plan Colombia was being implemented was a behavior that Farc mirrored. However, Farc's achievements after 40 years of continuous armed struggle is that they are militarily and financially strong but politically extremely weak. The decline of political support used to be a matter of Colombians as a result of having been subjected to continuous human rights abuses. However, at the end of this peace negotiation, criticism has extended to other European

nations that used to sympathize with the organization's social and economic demands for radical change. The risk of losing their traditional European allies and the political status are some of the costs that Farc are already paying. Moreover, Farc's recent attacks against the Colombian infrastructure and innocent civilians, which led to the rupture of the negotiations, produced a generalized disappointment. Ideologically center and center-left intellectuals within Colombian society such as Arturo Alape, Eduardo Pizarro, Marco Palacios, all agree how Farc missed a historical political momentum to create the new Colombia that they once claimed to be the center of their struggle. On the other hand, the US perception of Farc has not changed much. As was stated in the first part of the text, the insurgents have been categorized as 'narco - guerrillas' and more recently 'terrorists'. In addition, they are directly attacking US economic investments in Colombia. Moreover, ideologically speaking, Farc originally Marxist inherited a 'natural' mistrust over the chief country in advancing 'free market and global capitalism' in the world.

In sum, this analysis suggests the need to transcend the traditional series of condemnations towards one of both warring actors in spoiling the talks, and to examine why war as an entity benefits the actors in the current confrontation. The common denominator between paramilitaries, militaries, Farc, the government, and even frustrated civilians is the consensus that an armed confrontation is necessary to define the balance of power for an eventual negotiation. Each side is convinced that the defeat is attainable. This is why both groups - the government and Farc- during the peace process increased their military and economic might. The Colombian government mainly through US foreign aid; Farc through extortion, ransom and selective kidnapping and drug cultivation taxes and trade. The logic of military confrontation, which is the development of the war of (t)ERRORISM, is now shared by the governments of Colombia and the US attempting to link Colombia's internal war to the global framework of combating terrorism. Not only has



this military win-lose framework proven to be ineffective, but also in the eventual case of defeat of Farc by the government forces, a myriad of problems would still challenge the restoration of the country.

What to do with the violence generated by other insurgent forces, criminal groups and the violence perpetuated by the paramilitaries as they gain political and financial independence from their traditional partner (the armed forces). And more importantly, the social, economic and political factors that helped fuel conflict in the first place would be exponentially more challenging as the economic crisis, and social fragmentation is escalated through the war.

Closing thoughts

In conclusion, the general pattern of US foreign relations for Latin America in general, and Colombia in particular in the context of "America's New War" will continue to provide military training to combat the drug trade and subsequently to defeat terrorism not only in Muslim countries but elsewhere. It is important to highlight that this is not a new war let alone a brand new world order that emerged the morning of September 11. The "US global crusade against terrorism" will intensify the degree of involvement in cases such as Colombia, the former Soviet Republic of Georgia and the Philippines, benefiting from the popular response given to Bush to "hunt and smoke out" terrorists and terrorism from the face of the earth. Two major consequences are the decrease of political sensitivity after September 11. In other words, the risk in increasing classified information and the tendency to decrease controls and conditions of US military assistance. For example, the decision to approve the change from counter-narcotic to counter-insurgency can be easily determined under the current context, than under the "war on drugs" atmosphere. Second, the increased tendency of classifying US military reports. This trend when combined with the myriad of documents coming from respectable Colombian and International sources, proving the implicit collaboration

between segments of the Colombian Armed forces with the paramilitaries, raises the fear that US assistance could be employed to strengthen a very dangerous group that commits crimes against humanity.

With regards to Colombia, Pastrana's decision to terminate the process with Farc was supported inside and outside the country by different actors such as EU, the US, and the UN to name a few. Even if those who are now supporting a military dispute as a way to gain a better position to an eventual negotiation are proven to be accurate, the social, economic and political consequences will be incredibly challenging at that point.

One plausible reference model of how the US assisted a country in terminating its civil war to enter the peacemaking and post-settlements stages is El Salvador. Hence, it is understandable that policy makers in the US might have El Salvador in the back of their minds when defending Pastrana's decision. After two billion dollars invested in the Salvadorian army (\$1 million per day) it only produced a military stalemate, 70,000 casualties and 1 million of refugees (Isacson: 2001). The majority of them settled in the Northern Virginia area where I also live, constantly reminding me of the role of US in peacemaking efforts in Central America.

My first recommendation for policy makers that might be using comparative studies between El Salvador and Colombia would be to keep a map of both countries at hand. Not only is Colombia fifty-three times the size of El Salvador, but the amount of money required to fight against 17,000 men and women from Farc, 11,000 from the paramilitaries and 3,000 from ELN is much higher than the amount of money invested in the Central America country. This is merely the economic calculation of producing at least a stalemate and ending a 40-year old conflict, as opposed to a twelve-year old civil war. However, the real and the **ethical** calculation is that of the number of casualties, refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples in addition to the economic and political deterioration that will

result. All consequences that mostly Colombians will be paying in the generations to come.

The goal of having the monopoly of the armed forces in the whole territory is an understandable one, because it is at the core notion of what a modern state is. However, the costs of modernizing the Colombian army, as a preferred mechanism of dealing with Colombia's root problems will draw Colombia back in its quest to establishing a state democratically constructed by its society. The war on (t) errorism is based on the need to defend all that is civil, democratic and commendable. Despite how deplorable are the actions of aggressors from Saudi Arabia or the jungles of Colombia, the war on (t) errorism is undermining the fundamental elements required for the construction of dialogical processes within

societies that want to form active citizens as opposed to passive consumers. The increased tendency of military involvement in foreign policymaking (Isacson: 2001) grounds this otherwise philosophical appeal. With a military, non-civil framework to guide the relationships between Latin America and the US in the subsequent years, the already fragile, easily corrupted and unstable democracies in the region are at great danger. Now that war is the route that Colombian and US leaders have chosen, the peacemaking community has at least two paths: the first one is to change careers, it is never too late. The second path is to start thinking how to design a complex peace process model that will challenge the way peace processes have been conceived so far and that will hopefully design mechanisms for popular decision-making processes based on a civil not warlike paradigms.

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Other relevant sites

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http://www.state.gov/www/global/narcotics_laws/fs/colombia.html

· Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/>

· U.S./Colombia Coordinating Office

<http://www.igc.org/colhrnet>

· Washington Office on Latin America

<http://www.wola.org>