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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California



THESIS

**MAINTAINING THE VIOLENT STATUS QUO: THE
POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE COLOMBIAN
INSURGENCY**

by

Paul A. Beckley

June 2002

Thesis Advisor:
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**MAINTAINING THE VIOLENT STATUS QUO: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY
OF THE COLOMBIAN INSURGENCY**

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Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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ABSTRACT

The Colombian government has been unable to deal with its internal insurgency over the past forty years and as a result faces an increasingly violent situation today. This thesis seeks to understand how the interests of different elite actors have historically shaped the Colombian government's response to the insurgency, in an effort to break the stalemate that continues to undermine a unified elite response to their internal crisis.

When faced with insurgency, governments have three options. They can develop a counterinsurgent policy to militarily defeat the guerrillas, they can negotiate a political resolution by conceding to some of the insurgents' demands, or they can choose the violent status quo. The thesis demonstrates that Colombia has chosen the violent status quo, walking a middle ground, between counterinsurgency and peace. It shows that Presidential efforts to negotiate peace have been undermined by opposition from the military and status-quo elites in Congress. Similarly, efforts at comprehensive counterinsurgency have been undermined by the executive's fear of military protagonism and congressional opposition to the social and economic reforms that are a necessary part of such efforts. The resulting lack of commitment to either peace or counterinsurgency has resulted in partial successes followed by resurgence of guerrilla activity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Colombia is currently the world's leading coca producer, cocaine exporter and a rapidly emerging source of heroin. Additionally, Colombia is the US's leading supplier of illicit drugs, accounting for ninety percent of US cocaine and most of the heroin. According to the State Department these illegal drugs cost our society 52,000 lives and \$110 billion a year.¹ The linkage between drug trafficking and terrorist activity makes this issue particularly relevant. It is of significant concern to US national interests when, in the Western Hemisphere, Switzerland-sized portions of sovereign territory are surrendered to terrorists and narcotics traffickers with international ties. Additionally, Colombia is one of the US's most important trading partners in the region, with two-way trade reaching nearly \$11 billion in 1998. It supplies more than 330,000 barrels of crude oil per day, and together with Venezuela and Ecuador, furnish over 20% of US oil imports.² The failure of this state would be disastrous for the Andean region, particularly countries with tenuous political situations like neighboring Ecuador, who can little afford the potential spillover effects.

The US has promised over \$1 billion dollars in aid to Colombia. Behind Israel and Egypt, Colombia is now the third largest recipient of US foreign assistance. A debate currently rages amongst US policy makers. How should the money be most effectively spent?

Prior to 1990, moderate economic growth and democratic regime stability distinguished Colombia from its Latin American neighbors. However, by 1999, the country was in the midst of its worst recession since 1929, and its social problems were increasing. At fault, a worsening of the forty-year civil war, that created an atmosphere of uncertainty and violence, marginalizing the government, the political process, and causing a mass exodus that has placed pressure on the entire region. Throughout the Cold War, Colombia's commitment to democracy was a hopeful sign in a region marred by authoritarian and military dictatorships. Although plagued by high societal violence, not since *La Violencia* has the state appeared on the verge of collapse. Until 1997, Colombia enjoyed a stable economy, and like others in Latin America initiated a series of economic liberalization policies in the early nineties. Instead of the predicted boom from

these policies, however, a downward spiral resulted. After five years of growth between 4% and 5%, the economy slowed. By 1998, the GDP growth was only 0.6%. In 1999, the economy shrank by 4.5% and unemployment exceeded 20%, contributing to social conditions that now rival any of the world's trouble spots.³

Guerrilla attacks and paramilitary reprisals have the country on the brink of anarchy. In 1998, FARC advances led to unprecedented defeats for the Colombian Army and the concession of a large area, known as the *Zona Despeje*, to rebel control. It is estimated that the current period of political violence has claimed the lives of over 35,000 noncombatants.⁴ As a result of the increasing violence, more than 1.5 million people have been displaced in the past fifteen years, with an estimated 300,000 in 1999 alone.⁵

There are some that believe Colombia is simply a failed state.⁶ Governmental authority has eroded to the point where institutions no longer function. Stated simply, they believe that Colombia cannot deal with the insurgency because it lacks the authority to deal with anything. This characterization of Colombia, however, does not coincide with its economic performance. The ability of the central government to traverse the pitfalls that other Latin American states fell victim to in the 1980's was most impressive. Even with the recent economic woes, to include the lowest coffee prices in decades, the Colombian Central Bank and Pastrana administration appeared to effectively manage the crisis. Crafting economic policy in spite of the social upheaval proves that the insurgency has not existed because Colombia is a directionless nation, fractionalized to the point where no reasonable policies can be, or have been, implemented.

Others argue that the insurgency has lasted because defeating popular guerrillas in remote jungles and Andean terrain is militarily un-winnable, or that the Colombian state is inflexible and unable to negotiate a compromise.⁷ But, nearly all of Latin American's insurgencies have been defeated or settled peacefully. In fact, Venezuela fought a similar insurgency, in similar geographic conditions during the same time frame with an entirely different result. Secondly, the government **has** proved adept at compromising when faced with a significant threat to the regime, as exemplified by the establishment of the National Front in 1957, and the incorporation of the M-19 into the political process in the late 1980's. This raises the question of why the political class in Colombia has not been able to compose an effective military or negotiated response to its rural insurgency.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the Colombian state's response to its persistent insurgency. It argues that the insurgency continues because the elite has not committed itself to a resolution. To understand the elite response, it is necessary to identify the preferences and powers of the six most influential actors in the continuing internal war: 1) the executive, 2) the political class, 3) the economic interest groups, 4) the military, 5) the paramilitary and 6) the guerrillas. When faced with insurgency, governments have three options. They can develop a counterinsurgent policy to militarily defeat the guerrillas, they can negotiate a political resolution by conceding to some of the insurgents' demands, or they can choose the violent status quo. The thesis demonstrates that Colombia has chosen the violent status quo, walking a middle ground, between counterinsurgency and peace. It shows that Presidential efforts to negotiate peace have been undermined by opposition from the military and status-quo elites in Congress. Similarly, efforts at comprehensive counterinsurgency have been undermined by the executive's fear of military protagonism and congressional opposition to the social and economic reforms that are a necessary part of such efforts. The resulting lack of commitment to either peace or counterinsurgency has resulted in partial successes followed by resurgence of guerrilla activity.

Violence has been a continuous part of Colombian history. The status quo is broken only when the violence affects the interests of Colombia's actors. Colombia reacts politically and militarily when the war impacts the President's constituency, or the economic interest of Colombia's interwoven political and economic class. Urban civil unrest, or severe economic downturn will elicit a response from the government. To date, however, elite efforts to protect their own interests have prevented a decisive response. The military acknowledges the social aspects of the conflict and this has put them at odds with the civilian leadership. The elite, fearing military autonomy, has chosen to restrict counterinsurgent policy rather than relinquish control. At the same time, the elite have resisted the institutional restructuring required to negotiate an end to the conflict. The result is the maintenance of the violent status quo.

A. AREA OF RESEARCH

Most research on insurgencies focuses on winners and losers. This thesis explores the often-neglected category of the persistent insurgency. The persistent insurgency is defined as a, “revolutionary movement that mobilizes an average of at least one thousand armed guerrillas for at least a decade,” but does not topple the government.⁸ Colombia’s forty-year struggle fits this model. The thesis seeks to understand the state reaction to such an insurgency. In Colombia, the state’s inability to deal with the challenge to its central authority has created an environment in which the illegal narcotics industry has taken root and furthered the deterioration. This thesis examines the roots of the Colombian civil war in an effort to influence US policy. It identifies those actors whose preferences have not allowed for a resolution to the conflict and asks how US policy might elicit behavior conducive to a more favorable outcome.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What policies has Colombia produced to deal with its insurgency and how have they differed from the actions of other governments? In answering this central question several subsidiary questions emerge:

- i. How has the Colombian government handled its own insurgency over the past decades and how does this compare to the ways in which other governments have resolved their own insurgencies?
- ii. What are the preferences of key Colombian actors with respect to the insurgency’s outcome and what ability do they have to influence the outcome?
- iii. How has the changing international environment shaped the preferences of actors and defined the war?

C. SCOPE OF THE THESIS

This thesis places Colombia’s counterinsurgent policies and outcomes within the broader Latin American experience with insurgencies. It measures the impact of the civil war on Colombia’s political actors: the President, the Liberal and Conservative parties, the economic interest groups, the paramilitary groups, the guerrillas, and the Colombian Armed Forces. It attempts to determine when and how the state has reacted to the

insurgency. It assumes all actors to be rational and attempts to explain the rational underpinnings for persistent civil war in Colombia.

D. METHODOLOGY

This thesis relies on secondary sources and a political economy methodology. It focuses on five aspects: defining the actors, their goals, their policy preferences, their grouping preferences, and the interaction within the country's political and social institutions. An analysis of Colombian counterinsurgent policy and military spending demonstrates the lack of commitment to a military solution, and an analysis of several peace processes in Colombia highlights the unwillingness of the elites to commit to this solution.

E. CHAPTER OUTLINES

The second chapter centers on Colombia's counterinsurgency efforts against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombian (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN). It shows that the Colombian government, led by the Conservative and Liberal elites, never committed itself to ending the insurgency. The Colombian government not only failed to dedicate the resources necessary to a military response, but it also failed to implement the social reforms necessary for a successful counterinsurgency policy.

Chapter three discusses the multiple peace processes undertaken in Colombia and argues that the Colombian elite has ultimately displayed a similar lack of commitment to a political resolution of the armed conflict. Almost a decade before similar processes were successfully concluded in Central America, Colombia was signing cease-fire agreements with four guerrilla groups implementing a "model ahead of its time."⁹ But, while the Central American guerrillas laid down their arms, the Colombian insurgency has continued to grow. This chapter builds on the proposition by Mathew Shugart that successful negotiations of armed challenges to a regime require the regime to calculate that the costs of suppressing the rebels outweighs the costs of tolerating them, and the costs for the rebels to resist must outweigh the costs of participation. In Colombia's case, despite numerous attempts, superficial offers, and even partial apparent success, intransigent elites refused to reform the political system sufficiently to allow for a complete negotiated settlement. The majority of military and civilian elites judged the costs of incorporating the rebels to be greater than the costs of exclusion; as a result, they

offered few changes to the status quo that would lower the costs of participation for the guerrillas. In short, the elite have preferred the maintenance of the violent status quo to the uncertainty of institutional restructuring.

Chapter four explains why Colombian elites chose the policies they did. It argues that the civil war lingers because the regime has acted moderately militarily and intransigently politically when its interests were threatened. The continuation of the war is not the intention of any one single group. It is, instead, the by-product of the rational calculations of actors within the Colombian state. The pursuit of individual interests within the institutional context has resulted in a forty-year stalemate. This chapter examines the six political actors who have had the largest impact on Colombia's insurgent policies: 1) the executive branch represented by the President and his immediate advisors, 2) the Congress and the two main political parties that populate it, the Liberals and Conservatives, 3) the economic elites, 4) the Armed Forces, 5) the paramilitaries, and 6) the guerrillas. It outlines these groups' preferences and policy influence.

Finally, chapter five discusses the implications of this analysis of the Colombian insurgency for US policy makers. Colombia has been unsuccessful in coming to terms with its social conflict, despite massive aid provided by the United States as part of Plan Colombia. This thesis argues that no amount of US effort will end the insurgency without changing the interests of the Colombian elite. They must come to understand that political change and a comprehensive counterinsurgency program is in their interest.

¹ www.state.gov

² www.state.gov

³ State Department background note on Colombia:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/index.cfm?docid=1831#econ>

⁴ Salinas, p1

⁵ Salinas, p2

⁶ Several authors and US government official have claimed that Colombia has traditionally suffered from weak central authority and now appears on the verge of breaking down completely. See Dix, Bushnell and Rabasa.

⁷ A popular view expressed by officials in the Clinton administration was that the situation in Colombia was “militarily unwinnable” (see Dix).

⁸ Goodwin, p4

⁹ Chernick, p160

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II. COLOMBIA'S COUNTERINSURGENT POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

The study of guerrilla movements in Latin America has placed insurgencies into one of two categories: successes or failures. Researchers have attempted to explain why some guerrillas succeed and others fail. For example, in his exhaustive work on Latin American insurgencies, Wickham-Crowley lists three groups “winners,” “also-rans” and “losers”, but he concludes by defining only the elements of winning and losing insurgents. As it is not his purpose, he does not illustrate any difference between the also-rans and losers. (Wickham-Crowley 1992, p312) This chapter argues that there is a need to explain the third category, the also-rans or the “persistent insurgency” (Goodwin, 1996, p. 4). The persistent insurgency is defined as a “revolutionary movement that mobilizes an average of at least one thousand armed guerrillas for at least a decade,” but does not topple the government (Goodwin, 1996, p. 4). Colombia's forty-year struggle fits this model.¹

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the state's reaction to the persistence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN). The government has prevented the guerrillas from seizing power, but has also failed to decisively defeat them. For forty years, with varying degrees of effort, and success, the government has attempted to reclaim rural Colombia. The adaptive guerrillas, however, have consistently risen from the ashes. Why has Colombia's insurgency persisted? Some theorists suggest that the “indiscriminate violence of the armed forces of infrastructurally weak states” is the causal factor. This fails to explain why Colombia was unable to defeat the FARC or ELN while similarly repressive governments such as Venezuela or Peru were successful at countering their revolutionaries. It is equally inadequate in explaining why Argentina and Chile were successful in eradicating political opponents in their “dirty wars”²

Furthering the research on persistent insurgencies, this chapter focuses on Colombia's counterinsurgency efforts. It argues that the government's lack of commitment to ending the insurgency is a primary cause of the state's inability to defeat

the guerrillas. The state never developed a comprehensive national strategy. Elite interests precluded Colombia's Armed Forces from fully implementing a program. First, this chapter describes the necessary elements of a counterinsurgency campaign. Second, demonstrating the lack of commitment, this chapter focuses on Colombia's initial counterinsurgency efforts from 1958-1966 under the National Front government. Finally, it analyzes the resources devoted by Latin American governments to counterinsurgency, demonstrating Colombia's lack of political commitment in the last four decades.

B. COUNTERINSURGENCY THEORY

According to Wickham-Crowley there are five conditions necessary for a successful Latin American revolution: 1) there must be an attempt at revolution, 2) it must gain peasant and worker support, 3) the guerrillas must have military strength, 4) the regime must be characterized by a patrimonial or praetorian nature, and 5) the regime must lose US support. Therefore, an effective counterinsurgency campaign is one that denies any, or all, of these variables to the rebels. Once a revolution has been attempted it is obviously not possible to affect the first variable. Additionally, Wickham-Crowley notes that the weakest of these variables in accounting for revolutionary failure is the loss of US support. He states that the loss of support is a prerequisite for success, but does not explain revolutionary failure. To illustrate this he cites the examples of the lack of US support for the Argentine regime in the 70's and the withdrawal of US aid to Guatemala in the 80's. US aid fell to negligible levels when Argentina violently crushed its revolutionaries and when Guatemala was effective in reducing its guerrilla numbers. Consequently, successful counterinsurgency should focus on the remaining variables. It must deny guerrillas peasant support, destroy their military strength, and demonstrate the non-patrimonial nature of the regime.³

A multitude of different counterinsurgent strategies have been devised to deny support to the peasants and demonstrate the legitimacy of the regime. For example, the British experience in Malaya led to the development of the "winning the hearts and minds" campaign (Hoffman, 1992, p. 36). This focused on isolating the insurgents by convincing the local population that their security lay with the colonial government. The U.S. Army and Air Force joint doctrine statement on low intensity conflict (LIC) states: "The strategy focuses on building viable political, economic, military and social

institutions that respond to the needs of society” (Headquarters, Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force, pp. 2-14-2-15, 1988). Others argue that the objective is to “control the loyalty of the population -- not towns or villages or bridges, but political allegiance of the population...the struggle between the insurgent and the incumbent then, is over political legitimacy” (Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project, p. 11-1, 1986). In 1984, in an attempt to develop a strategy for the Salvadoran conflict, a U.S. bipartisan commission released the Kissinger Commission report. It advocated a policy that:

Depended upon building a legitimate social and political order there, based on social reform, respect for human rights, and the advancement of democracy through elections and the strengthening of basic institutions necessary for political development (Congressional Research Service, 1989, p. 1).

Furthermore, several authors state that there are four elements critical to successful counterinsurgency: 1) an effective overall command and coordination structure, 2) “legitimizing” measures, taken by the government to build public trust and support, combined with antiterrorist legislation sensitive to public sentiments, 3) coordination within and between intelligence services, and 4) collaboration among governments and security forces of different countries. (Hoffman, 1992, p. 8).

There are two common themes that all of these authors acknowledge: 1) no two insurgencies are alike and, therefore, understanding the insurgency is a precondition to an efficient program, and 2) “countering insurgents requires a coordinated political-military posture that incorporate[s] a full spectrum of social, economic, and psychological components into [a] security strategy” (Rempe, 2000, p.9).

In 1984, U.S. Army General Thurman initiated a study whose purpose was to determine which counterinsurgent strategies worked and which did not. It analyzed the internal wars that had been fought over the previous 50 years (a total of 69 wars) and concluded that no strategy was successful unless it took into account all of the aspects of general internal war. In short, to defeat an insurgency a government must wage multiple wars:

- A “legitimacy war” to attack or defend the moral right of an incumbent regime to exist.
- A more traditional police-military “shooting war” between belligerents.

- A “war” to isolate belligerents from their internal and/or external support.
- A closely related, “war to stay the course”—that is, the effort to provide consistent and long-term support to an ally.
- Intelligence and information “wars.”
- “Wars” to unify multilateral, multidimensional, and multi-organizational elements into a single effective effort. (Manwaring, 2001, p x)

The Legitimacy War centers on the moral right of a regime to govern. An effective program must reinforce the point that the government is politically strong and morally legitimate. In El Salvador both sides attempted to exploit this dimension. The insurgents identified the legitimacy of the regime as the primary center of gravity. President Jose Napoleon Duarte argued that:

If the Christian Democrats demonstrate in El Salvador that a democratic system can bring about structured changes peacefully, then the polarized choice between domination by the rightist oligarchy and violent revolution by the Left will no longer be valid (Manwaring, 2002, p.19).

Venezuelan President Betancourt also understood this point during his administration’s battle with the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* (FALN). The President knew that it was imperative that the guerrillas not gain widespread public approval. The counterinsurgency doctrine of Venezuela indicated very clearly that the central problem was designated as the maintenance of law and order. The Government insisted in maintaining throughout the insurgency that: “a democracy cannot afford to defend itself by other than the means authorized by the written law of the land.”⁴

The object of *the Shooting War* is to destroy the guerrillas’ military strength. The government must concentrate its force to be decisive and discriminate. “Experience affirms that military force should not be applied ad hoc. If military force must be inserted into a nationalistic milieu, it should be done overwhelmingly at the outset” (Manwaring, 2002, p.20). Small mobile highly specialized units have proven most effective. Specific examples of this form of effort include: the *Cazador* (Hunter) units of the Venezuelan Army and the Bolivian Ranger units that smashed Che Guevara’s guerrilla organization in 1968.

Wars to Isolate the Guerrillas are an attempt to politically, psychologically, and militarily separate the insurgent from his primary sources of support and sanctuaries.

The Briggs plan, applied by the British Army in Malaya, is an excellent example of this. One of its four objectives was to isolate the guerrillas from their food and information supply organizations, which are in the populated areas. Briggs concentrated on dominating the populated areas knowing that the guerrillas would eventually have to return from their remote jungle camps for food. If he could convince the local populace that he could provide security for them, they would be less inclined to support the guerrillas when they returned.

The War to Stay the Course describes the consistency with which the regime must deal with the insurgency. Whether relying on foreign assistance or domestically financing the war, evidence suggests that inconsistent application of resources significantly decrease chances for success. “Examination of the post-World War II conflict spectrum clearly indicates that when military, economic, and/or political aid to a client was withdrawn by an “ally” or coalition of allies during a conflict, or when any of this support was provided inconsistently, the possibilities for success in the general war were minimal” (Manwaring, 2002,p. 22).

The *Intelligence and Information War* is the fight to acquire, analyze, coordinate, and disseminate intelligence information. This was another key to the Venezuelan program. At first, “a principle problem of the counterinsurgency was the development of adequate intelligence, combined with the political capacity to employ the findings appropriately” (Taylor, 1965, p. 492). The Betancourt administration reorganized the police force, implemented a large-scale arrest program, and began to use the information gathered by loyal rural peasants.⁵ In August 1962, Army Col. Martín José Márquez Añez, formerly chief of the armed forces intelligence service (SIFA), became the first commander of the Police Academy. He centralized the intelligence gathering and ensured more effective dissemination. As insurgents stepped up their activities in late 1962, the police were better prepared to deal with them. For example, a massive arrest campaign, backed by criminal court action, sentenced 504 criminals to long terms in the El Dorado prison camp in the Guayana jungle.⁶ Following a train attack on September 29, 1962, all members suspected of involvement were immediately arrested.⁷ In conjunction with this effort, numerous insurgent plans and operations were uncovered, helping to provide much needed intelligence on the guerrilla’s activities.

Finally, *the War for Unity of Effort* is the struggle to overcome parochial bureaucratic interests, “turf battles,” and cultural obstacles to ensure that all efforts are centered on defeating the insurgency. The literature suggests that while there is no “one size fits all” strategy for counterinsurgency, a successful plan must battle the insurgents on these six fronts. This chapter now turns to an analysis of Colombia’s efforts to determine how well they fought each of these wars.

C. COUNTERINSURGENCY COLOMBIA (1958-66)

1. The National Front and Civilian Efforts

After assuming power in 1958, the National Front’s first President, Lleras Camargo, sought to put an end to the violence that still seethed in much of rural Colombia. He requested assistance from the United States in order to accomplish this. In response to this request, the Eisenhower administration sent a Special Survey Team to consider Colombia’s internal unrest. In 1960, the Special Team completed a preliminary report. The team determined that two destabilizing elements were operating in the countryside, bandits and communist guerrillas.⁸ The team recommended the following six-point program:

- Found a special counterinsurgency combat force from Lancero units within the Colombian Army.
- Institute an effective military intelligence service and reorganize the civilian *Servicio de Inteligencia Colombiana* (Colombian Intelligence Service [SIC]).
- Establish an effective government public information service with a covert psychological warfare capability.
- Initiate a so-called “attraction” program, coordinated through a Civil Affairs (G-5) section of the Armed Forces, in an effort to rehabilitate public opinion of Colombia’s security forces.
- Reorganize, train, equip, and deploy the National Police and rehabilitate their public image.
- Emphasize national development and rehabilitation programs, particularly land settlement and government-community “welfare self-help” projects.⁹

According to the Special Team bringing stability to Colombia required reform of that country’s social, political, and economic system.¹⁰ “Military solutions were secondary and largely a derivative of nation-building efforts that would entrench a

broadly respected, democratic society.” The National Front system had to reestablish confidence in government among Colombia’s demoralized population. “Restoring public faith in the government’s ability to maintain peace required it to reduce current, active violence, develop political stability based on democratic processes, and ensure equitable solutions to basic social and economic needs.”¹¹ Although this is what the team said, the Colombian effort took on a reserved and largely military role. Colombia’s policy subordinated all other public order forces to the military. However this was not a seamless transition. It was not until 1960, after resolving the interservice rivalries, that the military officially became responsible for the majority of Colombia’s counterinsurgency.¹²

The Lleras government initiated surprisingly modest programs to end the lingering violence. A testament to the lack of accomplishments was the report of the follow up US Special Team in 1962. After a twelve-day tour of four of Colombia’s eight brigades they concluded:

A lack of central planning and coordination had seriously affected all levels of the counterinsurgency effort in Colombia. Fragmentation of resources, lack of essential communications, transportation and equipment, reliance on static outposts, and improper use of military personnel in civil capacities placed the army on the defensive and allowed both subversive and bandit elements to acquire the initiative.

Inadequate collation and dissemination of intelligence at both an army and national level further hampered internal security operations, as did the lack of counterintelligence training. Civic action and psychological operations programs remained sporadic, no properly delineated relationship existed between the army and National Police, and broader social, political, and economic problems existed for which resolution seemed remote (US Special Team Report, Bohannon Papers, 1962, p. 11).

On the social front, President Lleras established the Rehabilitation Commission in 1958. The purpose was to help those disturbed by *La Violencia* to ease back into society through social programs and land redistribution. The federal government tried to coordinate relief efforts, track programs, assist those displaced by the violence, solve land title problems, and promote colonization of unused land. Working at the community level:

The administration dispatched 30 Welfare Teams, each composed of a doctor, nurse, several agrarian technicians, an engineer, veterinarian, home economist, and occasionally a public administrator. The government used these special impact teams as advisors in community development efforts, particularly project-oriented, small-scale undertakings that utilized agrarian credit assistance and co-op style local labor to build rural schools, mills, medical facilities, or “model farms (Rempe, 2001, p. 22).

The Commission was funded in 1958 and 1959 at only 3.9% of government expenditures, and land reform touched less than one twentieth of the rural population. By comparison, Venezuela is estimated to have affected land reform for one sixth of its rural population. “Between 1958 and 1968 the Acción Democrática (AD) regime established more than eight hundred agricultural settlements with a ‘full panoply of coordinated [government] services’ that ‘directly affected the lives of as many as 100,000 peasant families, bringing them slowly into the main channels of the national economy.’” (Rempe, 2001, p22) “Enough peasants received land and other benefits to forestall widespread support for guerrillas, of the FALN” (Goodwin, 1994, p. 18). In contrast, political bickering kept Colombia’s land reform program from being more effective and eventually shut it down. Conservatives saw it as a payoff to “former Liberal criminals” and fought implementation. Amid congressional criticism the Commission was terminated in 1959.¹³ In the end, the civilian government was unable to resolve these elite differences in order to address many of the underlying social issues of the insurrection.

2. The Military Role in Civic Action

Colombia’s armed forces had participated in several social projects, like the National Investigative Commission into the Current Causes of Violence, during the Rojas dictatorship (1953 -1957). They were keenly aware of the inequities that existed. As a result of this heightened understanding and frustration with unresponsive civilians, the Colombian military officers increased their interest in military civic action. In 1960, Commanding General of the Colombian Army, Ruiz Novoa, became a strident supporter of the use of the armed forces “as agents to mend the national social fabric and to develop the social infrastructure” (Rempe, 2001, p. 20). He understood that destroying guerrillas

was simply not enough,” the army must also “attack the social and economic causes as well as the historic political reasons for their existence” (Maullin, 1973, p. 20).

President León Valencia continued many of President Lleras’ programs. In 1962, he and General Ruiz Novoa, now Minister of War, attempted to implement change in Colombia. No longer relying on Congress for funding, they made extensive use of the US and its Alliance for Progress goals. The Colombian military and US Military Assistance Programs (MAP) and Mobile Training Teams (MTT) began a series of construction projects aimed at addressing longstanding social issues. On June 24, 1963, Presidential Decree No. 1381 commenced gravel-surfaced routes in the violence-ridden departments of Huila, Cauca, Caldas, Valle, Cundinamarca, Santander, and Tolima. Then in February 1964 the León administration, supported by MAP and Agency for International Development (AID) funding, established 19 health care centers in an attempt to reach approximately 100,000 people in rural areas particularly impacted by the *Violencia*. That same year, the Colombian air force and navy (again with MAP support) developed a “Flying Dispensary” to reach colonists and indigenous populations in remote regions by aircraft and two “Floating Dispensaries” along the Putumayo and Magdalena rivers. In communist-influenced regions or areas controlled by *violentos*, the Colombian army also undertook civic action programs such as construction of water wells and potable water systems, literacy training programs, development of youth camps, and construction of rural schools, as well as dispensaries to provide dental treatment and medicine.

These programs were initially successful, but they could not be sustained and achieve progress against the guerrillas for two reasons: 1) the funding came from the US and not Colombia, therefore, it did not force the elites to address the social concerns. Once US funding ran out, there was no political will to sustain these programs. 2) The Army was responsible for, and in many cases initiated, many of these programs, circumventing the political process. When the civilians eventually became threatened by the military, the former exerted control and ended the programs.

Furthermore, the Colombian government initiated extensive programs with very low domestic political support. Once the political backing of the military, President and US wavered, the programs were lost. “Partisan politics impeded rehabilitation efforts as

did “lack of funds, lack of personnel, and perhaps most of all, [a] lack of appreciation among certain elements of the ruling class in Colombia, of the magnitude and the critical importance of these needs” (Rempe, 2001, p. 21). Additionally, the failure of successive Colombian administrations to build and maintain an effective state presence in the countryside allowed insurgent forces to regain momentum. Ultimately, the ensuing security vacuum also consolidated the rise of the privatization of civil defense in the form of paramilitary forces.

3. Plan Lazo

The implementation and termination of Colombia’s Plan Lazo is due special attention because it clearly demonstrates the lack of political commitment to counterinsurgency on the part of Colombia’s political elite. As previously stated, frustrated with civilian leadership, the military took a more active policy role. With United States assistance it constructed Plan Lazo to deal with the increasing rural communist insurgency and leftist movements. Its ambitious aim was to eliminate the guerrillas through military force of arms as well as through social and economic programs. Its co-creator General Ruiz, a vociferous critic of the government, saw their inability to provide basic services as being the source of the insurgency.

Plan Lazo’s primary components were:

1. Tightening and integrating the command structure of all forces engaged in public order missions to clearly establish military responsibility for all operations
2. Creating more versatile and sophisticated tactical units capable of successful unconventional warfare operations
3. Expanding the military’s public relations and psychological warfare units to improve civilian attitudes toward the army’s public order mission
4. Employing the armed forces in tasks intended to contribute to the economic development and social well being of all Colombians, especially those subjected to guerrilla-bandit activity.

In July 1962, the Colombian army implemented Plan Lazo with two primary objectives. One was to eliminate the insurgency’s independent republics in the upper Magdalena Valley. Intelligence estimated that approximately 1,600 to 2,000 men remained active in 11 communist guerrilla groups. “The PCC attempted to both organize and strengthen these enclaves, establishing militia units in an effort to direct and control bandit and former Liberal-guerrilla paramilitary capabilities”(Rempe, 2001, p. 23).

The second major objective was to eliminate the approximately 150 bandit gangs in Cauca Valley region.¹⁴ Following some initial success, but lacking the resources to continue to maintain control, the army organized the first civilian self-defense units (*autodefensa*) here and directed them to relieve army units of some patrolling and local garrisoning. These units also were established in several urban areas as a “wave of kidnapping had created apprehension among the wealthy.” Although it is standard counter insurgent procedure to arm a militia, the Colombian government allowed excesses to be committed by these *autodefensas*, exacerbating the problem.¹⁵

Understanding that intelligence was critical to the successful conduct of counterinsurgency operations, a major effort was undertaken to improve intelligence gathering under Plan Lazo.¹⁶ To successfully combat the insurgency the military knew it must make improvements in this critical warfare area.

The U.S. Special Team in 1962 evaluated the Colombian intelligence apparatus and found that it “still remained unprepared for the exigencies of counterinsurgency operations” (Rempe, 2001, p.24). No intelligence briefing had been provided to President Lleras. “The civilian SIC had proved inefficient and incompetent, the intelligence section of the National Police (F-2) suffered from training deficiencies, lack of direction, and no clear mission, while military intelligence as it existed provided little more than “classified news reporting” (Maullin, 1973, p. 100). The military, recognizing the importance of better intelligence became aggravated by the lack of civilian response. They began to unilaterally issue directives creating improved intelligence capabilities. These improvements had moderate immediate success. Ultimately, however, they masked the decision-making problems in the National Front government.

President Lleras’ solution was to implement the Administrative Department of Security (DAS). The DAS performed intelligence and counterintelligence functions and coordinated counter subversive actions among all security forces, while the F-2 section of the National Police concentrated on antibandit (criminal) measures. This agency, however, was under funded and not popular among many government officials. Many politicians, fearing that a strong intelligence agency would be used against them, resisted the attempts to integrate and strengthen the intelligence communities.

The Colombian Army, realizing the need for improved intelligence and not satisfied with Bogotá's response, obtained US assistance. The US efforts began to institute a more effective military intelligence organization in Colombia with a two-man U.S. Intelligence MTT in February 1961, followed by a second, three-man Intelligence MTT in May 1962 and a permanent Mission intelligence advisor. The US Intelligence MTT proved more successful, giving several short-term training programs for interrogators, mobile intelligence groups, and Localizadores teams.¹⁷

This led to one of the most noteworthy military aspects of Plan Lazo: the adoption of counter guerrilla warfare techniques relying on sophisticated intelligence gathering.

The Colombian armed forces used hunter-killer teams, composed of 25 veteran officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and civilians (heavily armed), trained to operate in the field for long periods of time, and to fight and penetrate hostile groups as well as work with informants. Army tactical units acquired a "*comando localizador*," or unconventional warfare shock group, which clandestinely killed or captured guerrilla and bandit leaders (Rempe, 2001, p. 25).

These tactics proved highly successful. Against urban radical groups, they killed or captured roughly two-dozen people associated with the United Front of Revolutionary Action (FUAR) and Workers-Students-Peasants Movement (MOEC). In 1962 they managed to kill 388 rural bandits and guerrillas. Casualty ratios went from about even to 7:2 in favor of Colombia's security forces.¹⁸ There was, however, still the need for a national integrated intelligence agency. It was painfully clear to the US Special Teams that only a coordinated politico-military response would end the insurgency. Therefore, good intelligence supplied to all the arms of the government was necessary.

Although the León administration (1962- 1966) did form a central intelligence committee consisting of the three military services and the National Police, no "substantial progress towards the establishment within the Colombian Government of an interagency intelligence committee that could coordinate intelligence produced by all agencies having a collection capacity" was made by mid-1964 (Maullin, 1973, p. 111).

Further aggravation with the government's inability to establish a central intelligence agency led the Colombian armed forces in 1963 to develop and issue Internal Security Directive 001. It integrated all three military services, the National Police, and

DAS, through a Joint Operations Center (JOC). This established an intelligence agency that considered both military and national intelligence requirements. Additionally, the United States provided vehicles, radios, and other equipment to II Brigade in the Guajira area in an effort to establish a surveillance-intelligence net that could monitor Colombia's northern coast for subversive agents and contraband.

The equipment produced an initially successful communication and civil defense early warning network in an attempt by the government to increase its rural presence. The Ministry of Government prepared a plan in November 1962 for a communications network in the Llanos-Amazonas regions. The intent was for the military, police, and border elements to utilize the system for security purposes, while simultaneously allowing the central government to maintain closer links with its territorial areas. Employed in violence-afflicted regions as a means of gathering intelligence and providing early warning against bandit or guerrilla attacks, these nets were supported by groups that had suffered considerable economic dislocation in the violence. Eleven separate networks, consisting of up to 100 citizen-band radio sets existed in the spring of 1965. Sets were distributed to farms, civilian defense centers (net control stations), and military civil defense monitor and repeater locations. "Based on the success of the original nets, Colombia's security forces scheduled another 47 for installation in 1966-68" (Rempe, 2001, p.17). These networks never materialized. After achieving moderate success, funding for Plan Lazo was reduced and it slowly ended. Due to several factors (most of them political) the architect General Ruíz was forced to retire.

4. The End of Plan Lazo

The developmentalist nature of the army's counterinsurgent policies raised critical issues in Colombia, as did General Ruiz's outspoken nature. He began a bitter political battle with Colombia's elite. On several occasions he brazenly criticized the President's policies, once publicly and directly in front of President León. He began to demand change to the status quo by attempting to build a corporatist state that would promote social reform with an increased role for the military. This threatened the elites. Rumors of an impending coup began to circulate. Military support for the General was divided. Some saw his criticism as self-serving. Members of Colombia's political and economic elite were united however, and able to oust the General.

Early in the León administration, civil unrest, labor disputes and escalating guerrilla activity were increasing divisions among political and economic elites. However, fearing a return to military rule, these disagreements were set aside. The industrial association, Asociación Nacional de Industriales (ANDI), called for a meeting, the *Gran Comisión*. The producer associations, unions, and government officials formed the commission to consider economic, labor and administrative reforms. Several days later, on January 27, 1965, Ruíz was forced to retire. It is widely acknowledged that President León asked for the General's resignation in response to the increasing pressure from these groups.¹⁹

It would be an overstatement to say that all social programs were eliminated from the Army's purview. They were however, significantly reduced after the forced resignation of General Ruíz. There are several reasons for this: 1) Civilians reduced the military's share of the overall budget. In 1962 their share was 25.8%. In 1965 it was reduced to 24.9%.²⁰ It would not rise again until 1968. With reduced money available the Army needed to prioritize its spending. 2) In 1967-1968, a harder-line attitude surfaced within the military that emphasized military rather than social solutions to the insurgency. General Pinzón who replaced General Ruíz reflected an emerging Armed Forces position that the remaining guerrillas were bandits and subversives. This coincided with the emerging Communist threat and US attitude. 3) The Alliance for Progress program ended and the US turned its attentions toward Southeast Asia. 4) Finally, due to a fall in coffee prices, poor exchange rates, balance of payment problems and high inflation, economic conditions in Colombia worsened. It was difficult to fund any programs, and for the elites military civic action was a low priority.

In sum, the successes of the US-aided counterinsurgent programs of the 1960's allowed the National Front government to avoid seriously addressing the needs of the country. With considerable US support, security forces halved the level of violent death from the pre-National Front period.²¹ As a result, the violence problem was temporarily controlled, but the underlying causes were not addressed. Colombia was able to reduce its problems to a tolerable level, but it did so without implementing any significant changes or investing any significant resources of its own.

D. DEFENSE SPENDING

This section compares the defense spending of three Latin American countries that dealt with insurgency with Colombian spending. It contrasts the spending levels during times of peak guerrilla activity to demonstrate the lack of commitment on the part of the Colombian government. First, it demonstrates that there is a correlation between internal conflict and rising defense expenditures.²² Second, it assumes that rises in expenditures during periods of peak guerrilla activity demonstrate policy choices and that those corresponding increases were intended to maximize counterinsurgent effectiveness. Finally, it demonstrates that Colombia committed considerably less towards its counterinsurgent campaign.

How have Latin American countries facing large-scale insurgency reacted with respect to their defense budgets? To answer this the defense budgets of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia and Venezuela during years of peak guerrilla activity have been examined. The results are in Figures 1-3. The data has been collected for years 1960-2000.

What might seem like a straightforward analysis is complicated by the numerous military spending studies that make claims using different data. Some studies compare military spending as a percentage of the national budget whereas others compare military spending expressed as a percentage of a country's GDP. This study uses the latter because it is the best measure of the social and economic impact of the war. This thesis argues that the Colombian elite did not commit themselves and the best way to measure that commitment is through illustrating the financial weight they were willing to bear. Government revenues in Colombia are traditionally low. Military spending as a percentage of the government's budget demonstrates where the government is placing its resources. It does not demonstrate society's tolerance for the war. In other words, it is the amount of money as a percentage of the country's economic output that demonstrates the level of commitment.

As a percentage of GDP, Colombia's spending is remarkably steady during years of peak guerrilla activity. By comparison, El Salvador, in 1984 committed almost three times the amount of its GDP to military spending. This is additionally telling, as El Salvador is a nation with far fewer resources to spend. Nicaragua, involved in a major

civil war, committed almost six times more of its resources than Colombia has ever committed. Many authors have claimed that military solutions will not work in Colombia and point to the Turbay administration as proof. They cite the increased militarization and human rights abuses committed during that time. This study does not dispute the latter claim, but certainly any militarization as evidenced by the figures below, from 1978-1982, was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in resources committed by the Colombian state. The Turbay administration used US resources to fund the counterinsurgent effort.

The level of US assistance is significant because of the relief it provided to the Colombian taxpayer. Unlike Venezuela, which received negligible US counterinsurgent assistance, the Colombian Ministry of Defense budget relied heavily on US aid from 1964-1967.²³ In the two peak years, the US contributed 11 and 15% respectively to Colombia's defense budget.²⁴ The desired effect was to improve counterinsurgent effectiveness. This is what occurred, but the contention here is that the unintended consequence was to alleviate the Colombian political system from having to fund the war and solve its own problems.

Venezuela differs from El Salvador and Nicaragua and is similar to Colombia, as it also did not have high levels of military spending. A closer look at Venezuela's counterinsurgency program explains why. First, following the Perez dictatorship, Venezuela's civilian elites (like the Colombian elites after their experience with the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship) had a healthy fear of the military. The Betancourt government was concerned with bringing democracy back to Venezuela and any military spending must be viewed in that light. Second, Venezuela relied heavily on the civilian police and reform issues to defeat the guerrillas. Levels of spending for the police and agrarian reform for example, increased dramatically. Civilian elites in Colombia were either unable to unwilling to carry out the kind of non-military reforms necessary for a successful counterinsurgency effort.

There are other noteworthy observations on Colombia's spending that further highlight how little of their funds went to counterinsurgency. First, there is a correlation between the amount of money spent per person in the armed forces and the quality of the force.²⁵ From 1960-1968 the Colombian Armed Forces increased between 73 and 258%

depending on the source.²⁶ In either case Colombia's manpower expanded dramatically during the insurgency. This manpower increase, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding budgetary increase. The military's share actually decreased from 1960-1965. Colombia only spent \$2126 per person in the armed forces in 1965. By comparison, Venezuela spent \$5911 per person. Second, Colombia stands out among Latin American nations because of where it spends its military budget. Eighty percent of its budget from 1965-1967 was spent on personnel costs, salaries, daily wages and supplements. In contrast, the personnel costs, for Latin America's five largest countries averaged only 68%. In Colombia, less than 1% went to capital investment (construction of bases), and 16% to operations and procurement. That 16% had to be spread over counterinsurgency and other national defense issues. For example, border disputes with Venezuela were a major concern.²⁷

E. CONCLUSION

Colombia never developed a truly national counterinsurgency strategy. The economic and political elite refused to allow a counterinsurgency program to be implemented. They did not commit themselves to winning the legitimacy war. By allowing violence to go unchecked and losing control of the paramilitaries they have damaged the moral right of the incumbent regime to govern. Although several effective tactics were implemented, the shooting war became a stalemate. Both the indiscriminate violence and the inconsistency with which the Army has dealt with the rebels have led to the deadlock. They have failed to isolate the rebels from their support, particularly from collecting "revolutionary taxes." They have failed miserably in their effort to stay the course. Both US and domestic funding for the insurgency has varied widely. They have been unable or unwilling to establish an effective central intelligence network. Finally the war that all the others hinge on -- the unity of effort -- has been lost. The regime has been unable to forge a single effective national strategy comprised of the proper social, economic, political and military elements.

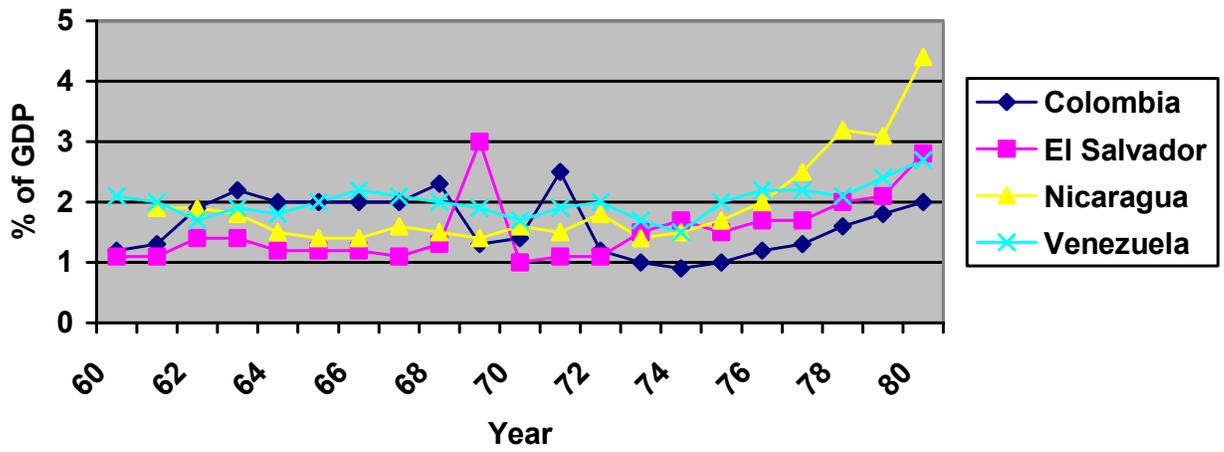


Figure 1. Military Budgets of four Latin American countries as a % OF GDP (1960-1980)

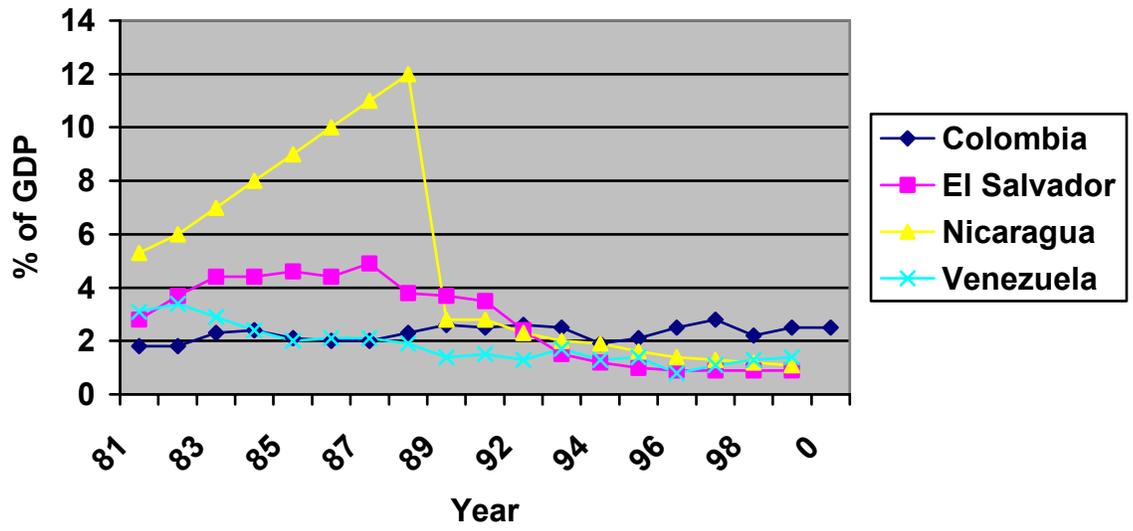


Figure 2. Military Budgets of four Latin American countries as a % OF GDP (1981-2000)

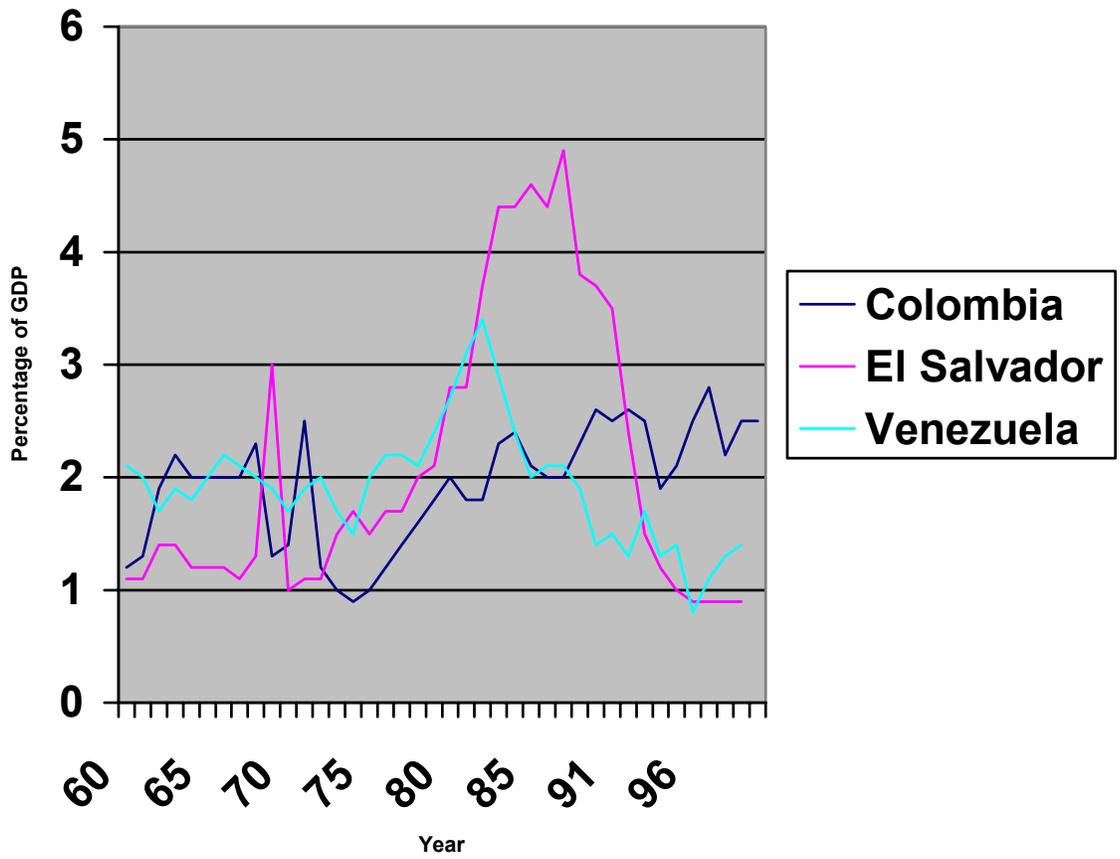


Figure 3. Military Budgets as a % of GDP of three Latin American countries 1960-2000

Table 1. Colombian Military and Police Spending Trends (1994-1998)

Year	Police	Military	Total
1994	3.7%	-6.5%	-3.1%
1995	13.3%	12.1%	12.6%
1996	11.3%	29.4%	23.0%
1997	5.6%	13.2%	10.8%
1998	9.5%	-8.9%	-3.2%

Figures above are percentage increase or decrease from previous year:

Table 2. Breakdown of Colombian Defense Spending

Figures below are percentage increase or decrease from previous year:

Year	Personnel	General	Transfers	Operating	Investment	Total
1981	9.8%	-7.2%	5.2%	4.6%	-35.9%	0.4%
1982	7.3%	-12.3%	-4.7%	-0.2%	-12.9%	-1.0%
1983	17.2%	49.4%	26.7%	25.6%	121.6%	31.1%
1984	5.4%	-42.0%	1.9%	-5.7%	138.2%	8.2%
1985	-2.5%	12.6%	-6.8%	-1.8%	-33.6%	-8.6%
1986	3.4%	-29.1%	-4.4%	-3.7%	19.9%	-0.1%
1987	6.3%	30.4%	5.9%	8.9%	1.0%	7.4
1988	5.2%	17.8%	0.6%	5.6%	45.7%	12.6%
1989	2.9%	-14.9%	4.9%	0.8%	20.7%	5.3%
1990	4.8%	7.0%	2.3%	4.4%	-15.3%	-0.7%
1991	1.8%	59.7%	12.5%	12.1%	-49.7%	-1.6%
1992	16.7%	30.9%	8.9%	17.2%	50.7%	21.0
1993	15.0%	49.1%	26.8%	24.9%	54.9%	29.2%
1994	12.8%	-19.9%	30.7%	9.4%	-64.5%	-3.1%
1995	8.5%	3.6%	29.7%	14.0%	-9.8%	12.6%
1996	2.2%	7.4%	37.3%	15.1%	173.8%	23.0%
1997	15.2%	10.7%	-18.6%	0.7%	92.2%	10.8%
1998	6.9%	21.7%	9.7%	10.3%	-60.0%	-3.2%

¹ Goodwin and Castro discuss these aspects of ending insurgencies, which insurgencies are successful and which are defeated. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*, Chapter 12, analyzes the successes and failures, concluding that regime type and peasant support play crucial roles in guerrilla success.

² For summation of human rights violations and indiscriminate government repression see Amnesty International web site, Archives annual reports 1960-70

³ See Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*, Chapter 12

⁴ Jones, p79

⁵ Taylor, p492

⁶ Ibid, p488

⁷ Taylor, p488

⁸ Rempe, p5

⁹ Ibid, p6

¹⁰ Rempe, p7

¹¹ Rempe p8

¹² Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics*, p75

¹³ For summary of land reform see Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution on Latin America*, pp117-229, and Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics*, p66

¹⁴ Rempe, p17

¹⁵ Maullin p66

¹⁶ Rempe, p23

¹⁷ Rempe, p24

¹⁸ Rempe, p25

¹⁹ Both Hartlyn, *Producer Associations and Policy in Colombia*, pp 116, and Maullin pp 70-79 cite these groups as the force behind the resignation. Hartlyn specifically mentions the commission.

²⁰ Authors table, Loftus study and Maullin p 83

²¹ Ibid

²² Loftus, p40

²³ Wickham-Crowley, p38

²⁴ Source US department of Defense; Republic of Colombia, *Diario Oficial*, 1964-1967

²⁵ Loftus, *Latin American Militar Expenditures*, p4

²⁶ Three different sources showed three different numbers, The statesmen's yearbook 1947-1969, Loftus Study, *Latin American Expenditure*, Maullin *Guerrillas, soldiers and Politics*,

²⁷ The Loftus study included Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile and Colombia.

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III. PEACE INITIATIVES

A. INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter argued that the Colombian elite did not commit themselves to achieving military victory. This chapter demonstrates that, despite multiple peace processes, the Colombian elite has ultimately shown a similar lack of commitment to a political resolution of the armed conflict. Serious negotiations began in 1982 when the government attempted to negotiate a peace, offering general amnesty and pardons to the guerrillas. Almost a decade before similar processes were successfully concluded in Central America, Colombia was signing cease-fire agreements with four guerrilla groups implementing a “model ahead of its time.”¹ But, while the Central American guerrillas laid down their arms, the Colombian insurgency has continued to grow.

This chapter builds on the proposition by Mathew Shugart that successful negotiations of armed challenges to a regime require: 1) the regime to calculate that the costs of suppressing the rebels outweighs the costs of tolerating them, and 2) the rebels to calculate that the costs to resist outweigh the costs of participation. In Colombia’s case, despite numerous attempts, superficial offers, and even partial apparent success, intransigent elites refused to reform the political system sufficiently to allow for a complete negotiated settlement. In short, the elite have preferred the maintenance of the violent status quo to the uncertainty of institutional restructuring. Colombia has been unable to reconcile the conflict because the guerrillas concluded that: 1) the negotiations lacked the reforms necessary to make them relevant political actors, and 2) the government’s inability or unwillingness to control political violence, from all factions, made political participation an even more unrealistic proposition for nascent parties. The reasons for this can be traced to elite calculations that: 1) relevant reforms would almost certainly lead to the breakdown of the traditional clientelist political system, thus, threatening the elite societal position, and 2) the cost of suppression would remain low due to external financing and moderate economic expansion.

Over the past decade, the calculations of certain actors such as the paramilitaries and guerrillas have shifted dramatically with the infusion of drug money and the end of the Cold War. This has clouded the consistency with which Colombia has dealt with the

conflict. Reforms have been initiated and peace negotiations signed, but the war continues. The one variable that has not changed is the preference of the economic and political elite. They have chosen to maintain the status quo.

1. Peace Processes in Comparative Perspective

Addressing the inclusion of armed actors, Shugart generalized Robert Dahl's concepts on the political inclusion of the opponents of a regime by comparing the "costs of armed conflict versus costs of electoral competition for each side" (Shugart, 1992, p. 124). "The decisions by regime and rebel leaders alike to seek a democratic 'exit' from a conflict are based upon rational calculations of the possibilities and limitations inherent in playing the competitive electoral game versus continuing armed conflict" (Shugart, 1992, p. 121). More succinctly, the calculation of the costs for both sides is based on the rational decisions of the actors involved, constrained by the institutions in which they operate.

The regime must consider the choice of **tolerating** its opponents in the political process versus continued **suppression** via military or institutional political means. The rebels concomitantly, must calculate the costs of **participating** in the electoral process or continuing its armed **resistance** to the regime. For example, if the current regime operates in an open democratic electoral system and enjoys broad popular support, then considerations for including the participation of an unpopular but well-armed rebel group would outweigh suppression.

For instance, this was the situation the Venezuelan political elites faced from 1960-1966. Following in the wake of the Cuban revolution, Venezuela faced an insurgency that by 1963 was of military significance.² During the insurgency President Betancourt had to balance his attempts to preserve the newly established democracy and restricting the rights of those who sought to subvert it through force. His ability to keep a broad base of peasant support enabled him to tolerate the rebels' political participation and to allow "highly vehement and vocal" opposition to exist. The very 'openness' of the Venezuelan electoral system provided a political space for the moderated opponents of the regime, weakening any attractions that the radical left might have held for them.³ As a result of this "openness", the government was able to deny the guerrillas public support.

Conversely, a paternalistic regime operating in a restrictive system facing a popular uprising would, according to the proposition, choose to suppress the rebels, as was the case in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴ Lacking broad appeal, the Salvadoran elite chose to suppress the rebels, but the costs of the war and international opinion forced them to reconsider. The Cristiani government, facing a military stalemate and increasing international pressure, assessed that the cost of suppression outweighed tolerance. The country was dependant on US aid, and this was put in jeopardy by continued suppression and mounting evidence of human rights abuses. Also, the domestic cost of the war was staggering. In 1988, analysts believed that without stabilization economic collapse was imminent.¹ The estimated cost of the war on domestic sectors reached over \$1.5 million. Between 1980 and 1990 the GDP of EL Salvador grew by on .2% and GDP per capita declined .8%.² The elites themselves were directly affected as the agricultural and industrial sectors, of which they were heavily involved, declined 1.1% and 0.2% respectively.³ These factors reoriented the government. It became open to negotiations despite the lack of widespread public appeal.

The calculations of both sides must include the institutional context that will make players relevant, since political institutions affect the cost of participation. As Shugart notes:

Without electoral institutions with low barriers to the rebels' electoral relevance, the incentive for the rebels to incorporate will be low unless compelled by other factors such as unsustainable military burdens or severe international pressures on themselves (Shugart, 1992, p. 125).

In other words, institutional change must be effected in order to lower the costs for the rebels to participate. Colombia's rebels must be guaranteed relevance by ensuring their physical safety and adopting minority-oriented political reforms such as a closed-list proportional representation system at the local level.

This is where Colombia failed. This chapter's examination of Colombia's efforts to negotiate a peace shows that the elite were repeatedly unwilling to change the existing

¹ Gantiva and Palacios, p 96

² http://www.worldbank.org/cgi-bin/sendoff.cgi?page=/data/countrydata/aag/slv_aag.pdf

³ http://www.worldbank.org/cgi-bin/sendoff.cgi?page=/data/countrydata/aag/slv_aag.pdf

rules to facilitate participation by the guerrilla. Chapter four explains *why* the elite were unwilling to do so.

B. THE COLOMBIAN PEACE PROCESSES

Colombia's efforts at peace have lacked the political will and overt confidence building concessions necessary to assure peace. Reforms that have been enacted have been the initiatives of individual presidents undertaken "behind the backs" of the traditional political elite, and consequently the results have been negligible.⁵ In short, Colombia never developed a comprehensive and consensual state strategy towards peace.⁶ Most notably, steps were not taken to ensure the safety of those competing in the political arena. Although some reforms have been enacted, non-compliance with new laws and the inability of the state to enforce its rule have ensured the continuation of a restrictive two-party system.

1. Betancur 1982-1986

The first real attempts at peace began when Conservative Belisario Betancur was elected president in 1982. During the presidential election peace was a centerpiece of the debate and his platform.⁷ The populist President entered talks with all the major guerrilla groups. The negotiations led to a truce with the FARC and parts of the ELN from 1984 to 1987. During this truce the FARC formed the Patriotic Union (UP), to give itself a political voice. In the 1986 election it managed to elect 14 senators and congressmen. They also proved a strong local force winning forty council seats. However, the agreement was undone following massive political violence against UP officials and a corresponding FARC ambush of an army unit in Caquetá.⁸ Additionally, the President signed a 10-month truce in August 1984 with the urban revolutionary movement M-19. In November 1985, however, the M-19 broke off the talks and seized the Palace of Justice in Bogotá. The Armed Forces attempted to retake the Palace by force and over 100 people, including 11 Supreme Court justices, were killed in the fighting.

President Betancur's peace initiative began with attempts at granting amnesty. He spent enormous political capital getting it passed in the Congress. His work did not represent a consensual attempt at peace, but a break in the traditional elite between those that foresaw the need for political opening and those who continued to resist.

The amnesty was approved due to the political will of an initially popular president and the acceptance of an alternative discourse by sectors of both traditional parties after almost two years of public debate; however, the amnesty did not translate into an endorsement of a more extensive program of negotiations or a consensus on the amnesty's significance in the search of peace (Chernick, 1988, p. 61).

For their part, the guerrillas saw amnesty as an attempt by the government to force an admission of defeat. Since they were in too strong a position militarily and politically to admit defeat, they turned down the offer, choosing to resist until more demands were met.

Betancur felt that his legitimacy was linked to the peace process and political reform. Therefore, he formed the National Peace Commission and -- over the objections of the Congress -- began negotiating with the guerrillas. In doing this he strengthened the guerrillas' position, granting them more de facto authority than they would normally have warranted, and he weakened his own political position vis-à-vis other political actors.⁹ This further alienated members of the military and party elites, but the President had little choice. No other actors appeared ready to move towards peace. Betancur believed that "an elite consensus was impossible" (Chernick, 1988, p. 64). While this policy did make considerable headway in negotiations, because of the lack of his own political machinery and constituency to gain support for his policies, Betancur was unable to translate these negotiations into actual reform. This is shown by the 1984 agreement with the FARC.

In 1984, the FARC was politically weaker on the national level than the M-19. Their support was generated locally and regionally, and this made their calculation for political inclusion different. Although they wanted reform at the national level they were willing to accept participation at the local level, and this was what they got.

In July 1983, the FARC proposed a truce and the government agreed to effect a democratic opening. The two major institutional reforms considered were: 1) the vice-presidencies in all legislative assemblies and commissions would be reserved for the leading majority party other than the two traditional parties, and 2) governors and mayors would be chosen through direct elections. The cease-fire agreement, drafted by the Peace Commission, and signed in 1984, gave "its assurance that the government has the firm intention to: (a) promote the modernization of the nation's political institutions..."¹⁰

The State never explicitly agreed to the FARC's desired reforms. The vague promises added to Congressional debate about what was actually offered. This further slowed legislation. Congress did not pass the law ensuring direct elections of mayors until 1986, and it was not until the 1991 constitutional assembly --where many political elites abstained-- that the guarantee of direct elections for governor was ensured.¹¹ By then the truce was broken, and the UP was a shambles. Even if direct elections for governor had been allowed earlier there was little hope for the FARC as a viable national political party. "No major reforms were made to the electoral process, which consisted of intense intra-party competition and in which elections depended on the ability to deliver private goods to constituents."¹² The President saw the cost of suppression outweighing toleration, but economic and political elites had yet to agree. Even though, legitimacy problems and international pressure for human rights abuses were raising the costs of suppression, they were only willing to accept reforms less costly to the status quo.

Given the isolated nature of the FARC's political support it made sense to tolerate the UP. As a result of the direct elections of mayors, in 1988, the UP won several seats in municipalities. However, these were regions where the FARC was traditionally strong. Therefore, it was not much of a concession on the part of the elites, and far less than what they apparently promised.¹³ More unfortunately, the regime not only failed to fully implement reform they also failed to protect the political candidates.

In the first half of 1986, the FARC stated that 165 militants of the UP were assassinated. Over the next six months the national press reported that 33 additional assassinations of UP militants occurred. These included one senator, one representative and five councilmen. 1988, more than 450 members of the UP had been assassinated including a former presidential candidate. "The new government of Virgilio Barco, which took office in August 1986, deplored the killings but otherwise remained disturbingly passive" (Chernick, 1988, p 76). The rising political violence was becoming a significant obstacle to peace. The state was unable to protect its citizens, and those with the means began to protect themselves. With the release of its annual report in 1986, Amnesty International blamed much of the political violence on the Colombia state security forces themselves. The state responded by defending itself and its position. It is impossible to conclude who was correct, but what it does say is that the government did

little to minimize the violence against the rebels it was also fighting. This inability or unwillingness of the state to assert itself and protect the political process made it impossible for true democratic participation.

2. Barco 1986-1990

Liberal President Virgilio Barco succeeded Betancur. He also ran on a platform of peace, but his stance insisted that the negotiations be limited to two fundamental issues: the guerrillas must 1) disarm, and 2) reincorporate into society. Unlike Betancur, who had avoided the issue of disarmament in negotiations with the guerrillas, Barco made it a centerpiece of his negotiations. The tolerance for the guerrillas grew thin under Barco's administration, and with it military suppression increased. During his Presidency the most fundamental progress towards peace occurred when the M-19 agreed to lay down their arms in exchange for amnesty and guarantees of participation in the political process.¹⁴

As the Barco administration strengthened its position vis-à-vis the guerrillas, the government was weakened by an escalating war with the increasingly powerful drug cartels. Therefore, when M-19 leaders expressed an interest in talks, the President agreed to make major concessions in return for demobilization. After hastily forming a political party the M-19 successfully participated in the 1990 presidential and 1991 parliamentary elections, winning 12.48% of the Presidential vote and 9 out of 100 available Legislative seats.¹⁵

The M-19 had national aspirations and refused to participate until the regime assured them that institutional reform would take place. The regime was unwilling to accept the rebel's offer. The negotiations started with Betancur continued under Barco, but accomplished little in the first three years. The government position hardened. The FARC's defection and an increasing drug war changed the calculations of both sides.

The cost for the rebels to resist began to increase. Benefiting from the truce with the FARC, the military was able to effectively concentrate on the more vulnerable urban movement. Several leaders were assassinated and jailed as the M-19 took to the mountains. Additionally, the M-19 found it difficult to entice urban Colombians to join the revolution. Leader Navarro Wolf expressed the rebels' cost-benefit calculation as follows:

Two things changed in Colombia. One, we discovered that Colombia is a much more urban country than we had originally believed—that people from the city are reluctant to take up armed action in the mountains. Second, the country began to open up politically, which for us came as a great surprise (Boudon, 1996, p. 283).

President Barco, weakened by an increasing war with the drug cartels began to make some major concessions. “The M-19 militants were afforded preferential access to the political system and guaranteed a role in drafting a new constitution.”¹⁶ The government was beginning to feel the economic costs of continued suppression, as well as the effects of the battle with the drug cartels. The President and his supporters calculated that they had to tolerate the rebels and open the political process. Again, however, the decision to tolerate the rebels is not a consensual one, as the Constitutional Reform process demonstrates.

3. Gaviria 1990-1994

The Gaviria administration continued with the Barco model for negotiations, but also called for the most far-reaching political reforms in Colombia since the National Front. Backed by an “ample but poorly organized student movement,” Gaviria bypassed the established political class and succeeded in holding a referendum on reforming the constitution.¹⁷ His negotiations with several smaller guerrilla groups -- the People’s Liberation Army (EPL), the Quintín Lame group, and the Revolutionary Workers’ Party (PRT)-- were successful as the groups all laid down their arms and were represented in the Constituent Assembly. To the great surprise of most, the Democratic Alliance M-19 received 26.4% of the vote, or nineteen delegates, to the Constituent Assembly, and its leader, Antonio Navarro Wolff, became one of three co-presidents of the assembly, as well as a member of President César Gaviria’s cabinet.

Both the process and the results of the efforts to reform the Constitution, demonstrate that Colombia’s elite largely decided to opt for the status quo. Colombia’s opening occurred against the will of most of the decision makers. Populist leaders and visionary reformers, appealed directly to the people to institute the 1991 reform, and the result was a continued two party domination of the political scene.

“Some have judged the convening of the 1990 Constituent National Assembly as a ‘coup of public sentiment’ against the enemies of constitutional reform in Colombia, in particular the members of the traditional political class” (Bejarano, 2000, p. 56). President Gaviria was backed in his drive for reform by a student movement and the M-19 and Movement of National Salvation. The traditional parties were mainly absent from the process; in fact, the process for change was aimed at them. In the middle of the sessions of the Constituent Assembly a decision was made to disband the previously elected Congress.¹⁸

As a result, of excluding the traditional parties 74% of the eligible voters in Colombia abstained from the referendum. Furthermore, the armed forces, FARC, ELN, and large numbers of the Conservative and Liberal parties did not participate. Because of the absence of the traditional groups, there was high participation of many of the marginalized sectors of society, such as indigenous groups and other ethnic and religious minorities. While many saw this as a positive sign it succeeded in further alienating the traditional elite.

Although the reform began with very high hopes, the cost of conducting them without the consent of the dominant sectors of society soon became apparent. Colombia’s parties still enjoyed a great deal of support. The traditional patron-client political machinery was still delivering to its supporters. The two traditional parties were able to continue to dominate and eventually exclude other sectors despite many of the electoral reforms.

One way that they continued to dominate was simply to ignore the new rules. In 1994, Colombian voters were offered more alternatives at the polls. There were 319 lists for 102 Senate seats and 692 lists for 161 House seats. The Liberal Party presented 47 percent of the Senate lists; the Conservative Party, 11.7 percent; and civic, independent, or coalition groups, 41 percent.¹⁹ Senators were elected in a nationwide district, and representatives in each of the 32 departments and the federal district of Bogotá. Although reforms ensured that lists were formally closed, national party directorates tolerated the formation of multiple lists. This decision continued the practices of the intra-party system, where an overwhelming number of candidates who headed lists were

elected. Because the open list system favors those with access to public funds. The electoral results revealed that little had changed. The proportion of Liberal senators declined from 54.9 percent in both 1991 and 1994 to 49 percent (50 seats), and that of the Conservatives (including Pastrana's Nueva Fuerza Democrática) fell from 24.5 percent to 22.6 percent (23 seats). In the House, the Liberals retained their majority with 53.4 percent of the seats, with the Conservatives taking 25.5 percent.²⁰

This is not meant to judge the 1991 Constitution as a whole. It is only to assess objectively the results of the political restructuring. There is ample evidence to imply that the reforms have done very little to ensure the political relevance of any third party. Leaders are allowed to circumvent the rules, and institutions continue to marginalize sectors of the society. Without the promise of political participation there is little incentive for the rebels to end their armed resistance.

While the government was dealing with the M-19, they also continued negotiations with the FARC and the ELN, and EPL, with much less success. Talks were begun and suspended several times with no headway. The guerrillas attempted to show a united front by joining other guerrilla groups in the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinator (CGSB). Calling for a broader agenda than disarmament and reincorporation -- one that would include social and economic reforms -- they insisted on keeping their forces in the areas where they had the most influence. In September 1991, the government and the CGSB met in Caracas, Venezuela, but negotiations were suspended when the FARC ambushed a senator's motorcade. Resuming in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in March 1992, discussions were again suspended after the EPL kidnapped and killed a former government minister.²¹

4. Samper 1994-1998

Again, peace was a central part of the presidential race in 1994. After a closely fought contest the winner, Ernesto Samper, in his inaugural address announced that his newly appointed peace advisor had 100 days to report the prospects for peace. With this statement and the establishment of the National Reconciliation Commission he reestablished the political legitimacy of the guerrillas, branded as bandits by the Gaviria government after the end of the Tlaxcala talks. However, allegations of connections to the Cali drug cartel undermined the Samper administration, which became preoccupied

with its own survival. The peace process took a back seat as drug scandals and rebel military challenges to state authority grew.

5. Pastrana 1998-2002

A coalition of the Conservative Party and dissident Liberals and independents helped elect presidential candidate Andrés Pastrana in July 1998 on a platform of peace negotiations. In his first peace initiatives, he withdrew government forces from five municipalities in southern Colombia and established the demilitarized zone, or *zona de despeje*. He began talks with the FARC within the zone, in January 1999. He personally traveled to the zone to open the negotiations, but was slighted by FARC leader Marulanda, who failed to appear.²²

Eighteen days after they had started, the FARC then suspended the negotiations, demanding that the government curtail the activities of the paramilitary groups. Demanding equal treatment with the FARC, the ELN, in April 1999, hijacked an airplane to press its demands. Negotiations with the FARC resumed in May 1999. As Chalk notes, “the negotiations were, in a sense, a continuation of those of 1991–1992 in that the stated objectives of the two sides had not changed much over the intervening years” (Chalk and Rabasa, 2001, p. 37). The government continued to seek the demobilization of the guerrilla forces, while the guerrillas wanted to discuss a broad-ranging social, economic, and political agenda and defer the issues of demobilization and security guarantees.²³

6. Reform under Pastrana

The issue of political reform is still a major political issue in Colombia. As in the past, President Pastrana was unable to garner congressional support for reform. Liberal independent congresswoman Ingrid Betancourt presented a package of political reforms, designed to restructure Colombian politics by attacking the "antiquated and corrupt practices" of the traditional political parties and the political class.²⁴ In order to get her support for the coalition government, Pastrana backed her proposal. The Pastrana administration, however, vacillated over whether to promote the package through constitutional reform via the Congress or, as preferred by the newly elected Senator Betancourt, through a plebiscite.²⁵ The government opted for the congressional route, and Senator Betancourt began gathering the signatures required for a plebiscite.

In the process of forging a legislative coalition among Conservatives, Liberals, and independents, the original reform package was considerably diluted. The government proposal includes, among other items:

1. Provisions expanding the President's powers to manage the peace process
2. Mandating single party lists in electoral districts
3. Requiring an increased percentage of votes for parties and movements to receive electoral recognition
4. Tightening congressional rules against nepotism
5. Allowing voters to express their preferences for candidates within a party list
6. Altering the means of electing the National Auditor and Attorney General.²⁶

Here again, Colombia's elite is debating the same question. Unable to get them to tolerate a true political opening, reformers attempt to by pass them and turn directly to the people, or, reforms are diluted and insufficient to make rebels relevant political actors.

C. CONCLUSION

Colombia failed in peace negotiations where El Salvador and Venezuela succeeded because the regime has not made the institutional changes that would lower the costs of participation for the guerrillas. The times when guerrillas did choose participation the negotiations did not include the regime's major political actors, and agreements were not fulfilled or unimpeded violence prevented any real political participation. Colombian elites never fully committed themselves to the path of peace.

Colombia, unlike Venezuela and El Salvador, never developed a consistent official state strategy for peace. From Betancur to Pastrana the executive has vacillated between military repression and political reform and inclusion. The negotiations were inconsistent, never defining what was or was not negotiable.²⁷ However, elite actors outside of the executive were consistent in their opposition to any real reform. During negotiations one M-19 leader remarked:

The oligarchy did not believe in peace. We were very conscious of the history of betrayed amnesties in Colombia, beginning with the assassination of Liberal guerrillas following the amnesty of 1953.²⁸

The guerrillas were conscious that elite desires were not uniform. The intransigence on the part of economic and political elites mixed with the aspirations of real reformers led to an ill-defined national strategy, and broken promises that continue to affect negotiations to this day.

Colombian elites have chosen a path that does not include tolerating those segments of society that threaten the regime. This includes the armed forces as well as the guerrillas. Choosing to walk a path between suppression and toleration, the resultant strategy has been directionless. Civilians have vacillated on a military strategy. Military repression of the guerrillas, as argued in the preceding chapter, did not come with increased military budgets, training, and a well-developed counterinsurgency plan. Civilian vacillation led to increased military autonomy, and abuses on the part of the military. Civilians also vacillated on a political strategy. Political toleration was never fully implemented, or negotiated with all the players resulting in the state's failure to provide protection for political participants or offer reforms to entice participation. While decrying the murders of hundreds of UP candidates the government remained passive.

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- ¹ Chernick, p160
² Jones, p74
³ Goodwin, p21
⁴ Shugart, p126
⁵ Bejarano, p 57
⁶ Tokatlian, p333
⁷ Boudon, p282
⁸ Chernick, p175
⁹ Chernick, p64
¹⁰ Aape, 495-498
¹¹ Bejarano, p62
¹² Shugart, p133
¹³ Shugart, p134
¹⁴ For a recap of the Barco administration's dealings with the M-19 see Chernick, Boudon, and Martz, pp243-263,
¹⁵ <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Elecdata/Col/Elesenado90.html>
¹⁶ Boudon, p282
¹⁷ Bejarano, p56
¹⁸ Bejarano, p55-57
¹⁹ Hoskin, *Can Colombia Cope*,
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v010/10.1hoskin.html
²⁰ http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v010/10.1hoskin.html
²¹ Chernick, pp. 180-183
²² Chalk, p 37
²³ Chalk, p44
²⁴ http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v010/10.1hoskin.html
²⁵ http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v010/10.1hoskin.html
²⁶ http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v010/10.1hoskin.html
²⁷ Chernick, p77
²⁸ M-19 interview, 1986

IV. COLOMBIAN POLITICS: ACTORS AND PREFERENCES

A. INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters illustrated the path chosen by Colombian policymakers. The analysis showed that attempts at peace and military solutions fell short because they lacked governmental commitment. This chapter explains why the policies were chosen, and who chose them. Colombia's government consists of a cadre of interwoven elites who make policy. For forty years, extra governmental actors have unsuccessfully attempted to penetrate this circle. The result is the guerrilla war.

To end the conflict, the government has had three options from which to choose: 1) a comprehensive counterinsurgent program aimed at defeating the guerrillas militarily, 2) negotiating a peace through institutional concessions leading to political inclusion, and 3) maintaining the violent status quo, by protecting the current regime. First, this chapter examines the governmental actors: 1) the executive branch represented by the President and his advisors, 2) the Congress, 3) the Armed Forces, and 4) the economic elite. It demonstrates the preferences of each actor. The President, under public pressure for a solution, has frequently opted for peace but has been undermined by military opposition to negotiations and an unwillingness of the Congress and economic elites to consider the political and social reforms necessary. The Armed Forces, in contrast, have opted at times for a comprehensive counterinsurgency solution, but found opposition not only from a status-quo minded Congress and economic elites who block the social reforms required for a real counterinsurgency effort but also from an executive branch unable to coordinate such a policy and fearful of the protagonism such a strategy might afford the military. Second, the chapter considers the preferences of the extra-governmental actors: 5) the paramilitaries, and 6) the guerrillas. These two groups are applying pressure on the system in an effort to break the stalemate. Their choices are whether to continue to resist or participate in the democratic process. Restraining all actors is Colombia's institutional history, which has proven resistant to change.

B. THE EXECUTIVE

Colombia's most powerful governmental body is the executive branch. Although weakened slightly by the 1991 Constitutional reforms, the Presidency is still the most organized and efficient office in the government. Through the use of decree-laws, appointments, and budgetary controls, it is the center of Colombian policy making. The executive preference is to govern effectively and increase the efficiency of the Colombian state. Since by most measures the Colombian state does not govern efficiently this orients him toward significant reform. However, the president's desire to conduct reform is often shaped by his personal inclinations, relationship to the voters, and economic conditions; his ability to carry out reform is limited by his interaction with other key actors within the institutional constraints of the Colombian system.

1. Presidential Preferences and Abilities: Personal, Political and Economic Factors

His personal backgrounds, as well as the political and economic factors that contributed to his rise to power shape the president's desire for reform. For example, inside connections helped President Turbay rise to power. Described as a lifelong backroom politician, he was given high marks as a political boss and he governed with the support of the political machines. He was also elected with high abstention and inter-party conflict. Voters were increasingly dissatisfied with the political system at this time. They viewed him as part of the establishment and therefore, part of the problem. Additionally, deteriorating economic conditions ensured few government funds would be available for social programs. This was not a Presidency geared towards reform.¹

By contrast, President Betancur, a noted maverick, and the first Conservative to be elected President in thirty years, was inclined to initiate reform. He saw himself as an outsider and a populist. Born of humble beginnings, he had been jailed several times during the Rojas dictatorship for opposition. He campaigned specifically for reform and earned large portions of traditionally Liberal urban voters. It was his ability to take the urban vote away from the Liberals that ensured his victory. He came to office under worsening economic conditions and high urban unemployment. Voters were clambering for change. In a more democratic system, the atmosphere would have been ripe for

reform. Although hampered by economic conditions such as balance of payment problems and government debt, he still attempted to reform the system

Contrasting styles and times contribute to the ability of the President to initiate reform. President Turbay attempted to work from within the system, while President Betancur attempted to implement a populist-backed reform agenda. However even a President with a penchant for reform, like President Betancur found Colombia's institutional barriers a formidable obstacle.

2. Institutional Constraints to Reform

Further complicating the President's attempts at reform are institutional constraints such as the Constitutional provision that the President cannot succeed himself. Given the pace of Colombian politics a single four-year term is insufficient to accomplish the enormous social restructuring necessary for a meaningful peace or counterinsurgency strategy. The result is political discontinuity. Colombian voting patterns also contribute to this pattern. As with most Latin American nations there is dissatisfaction with the ruling party at the national level. The Presidency has alternated between parties, or more importantly, presidential platforms regarding the insurgents have alternated between soft-line and hard-line approaches. In 1998, one of the keys to President Pastrana's victory was his open stance on the peace process. His demonstration that he was the most willing candidate to negotiate with the guerrillas might have been the difference in the election. In 2002, President Uribe was elected because of his tough stance on the guerrillas. It is difficult to put into practice the essential confidence building policies with this level of discontinuity. It is even more difficult when the legislative body is not oriented toward reform.

C. THE CONGRESS

The President's principal governmental challenge comes from Congress, which has been dominated by the Liberal and Conservative parties since its creation. The legislative branch is not a dynamic body and appears strongest when attempting to block legislation. There are four reasons for this. First, the nature of congressional elections leads parties in congress to be responsive to their local voter rather than the national constituency that motivates the president. Second, an advanced degree of party factionalism as a result of an ideological vacuum undermines programmatic politics and

policy innovation in the Congress; third, a high level of patron-client ties that have been reinforced by the extraordinary level of societal violence reinforces the dominance of the traditional political class and also undermines the basis for programmatic politics in Congress. Fourth, the closed nature of the parties and fusion of economic elites and party leaders creates a Congress that resists social and economic reforms. As a result, the Congress is a status quo actor that blocks the reforms necessary for both successful peace negotiations and effective counterinsurgency. In response, the President has often found it necessary to turn to other actors, like groups in civil society or the United States, in an effort to circumvent the Congress.

1. Diverging Constituencies

The President has been the force behind the reform movements since the National Front years. The key rationale for this is that the President is the only actor in Colombia with national level policy interests. Peace initiatives and the level of violence in the country top the concerns of the majority of Colombians. The conflict was the single biggest issue in the 1998 and 2002 elections.² Yet, little was done in the way of real reform outside of the executive branch. This is primarily because the President and Congress have different constituencies, and therefore different interests.

Congressional elections are decided regionally and consequently, are rural affairs.³ Seventy-four percent of Colombians and 80% of industry reside in only four of the 32 departments: Cundinamarca (Bogotá), Antioquia (Medellín), Valle De Cauca (Cali), and Atlántico (Barranquilla).⁴ The remainder of the departments is sparsely populated but still represented. Members of Congress are elected on a proportional basis, but each department is assured at least two Representatives and two Senators. Of the 114 Senators and 199 Representatives, 43 and 81 respectively are from the four industrial departments.⁵ Given the demographics presented, this means large portions of Congressional candidates must appeal to small numbers of rural voters. This has traditionally been accomplished by delivering on patron-client relationships. It is more important to rural voters to access the clientelist goods than to have agrarian reform passed. Additionally, peasants have been more poorly organized than urban labor. In the early seventies attempts were made to organize regional juntas and participate in land invasions. The government established the *Acción Comunal* (AC) to help organize them,

however, they have not been able to apply pressure on Representatives.⁶ Parties in rural Colombia are not representing issues as much as delivering from the public trough.

By contrast, the presidential candidate must appeal to the national majority. This is principally the urban voter, which means advocating those reform issues that resonate among the middle and working classes. Most often, this has meant advocating peace talks to put an end to guerrilla violence, but at times of voter frustration with the guerrillas it has meant taking a harder-line stance. The urban voter includes organized labor and student movements. Traditionally weak in Colombia these groups have, at times, made their presence felt. They were particularly vocal during the Betancur through Gaviria administrations.

Presidential candidate Betancur's platforms in 1978 and 1982 showed the effect of the urban vote on the Presidential elections. The Conservative ran as an antiestablishment candidate, and appealed widely to urban voters. Although in 1978, he lost the close election, he garnered 43% of the urban vote, compared to 22% by the Conservative candidate in 1974. In 1982, he won the election with 44% of the urban vote. More importantly, the normally high majority of pro-Liberal urban voters fell from 61% in 1974, and 50% in 1978, to just 38% in 1982.⁷

At the same time the Liberals were losing ground to the Conservatives and other party candidates in the Presidential elections, they actually gained two seats in the Chamber of Representatives. This demonstrates the difference in urban and rural voter choice. The Liberals were able to still appeal to rural voters while losing the urban vote.

The President and the Congress have very diverse concerns. The Congressional ruling party relies on clientelism to ensure their dominance in the rural areas. The President comes to office attempting to improve the efficiency of the Central government. These two contrary strategies place the Executive and Legislative branches strongly at odds, explaining much of the inability of the Executive to fulfill his reformist agenda.⁸

2. Factionalism

Since the days of the National Front, it is difficult to discern an ideological difference between the two parties. They have been described as "rival bands fighting over literal loot."⁹ This characterization probably overstates the case, but many of the

previous ideological disputes between federalism and the disestablishment of the Church have faded over time. Colombia's political system has muted the party disagreements and accentuated the inter-party rivalries.

For example, political opposition has been non-existent in Colombia. During the National Front opposition was unconstitutional. This was followed by constitutional reform Article 120 that required the ruling party to give "equitable representation" to the largest minority party.¹⁰ The minority party does not present the majority with substantial alternative programs for policy. Parties simply share the spoils. The fight for power then takes place within each party. The leader of the party, the one who controls the electoral lists, and political jobs, is the one who pulls the levers of the political machinery. This has further splintered Colombia's parties. Without a cohesive party platform Congress cannot initiate legislation. The political elites are reduced to preventing those initiatives that threaten their interests.

3. Clientelism

How did the elite group maintain such dominant control over a country? They achieved, and continue to achieve success, because of strong patron-client ties that have been slow to break down in Colombia. First, Colombia's parties are less class-oriented and more regionally based than many Latin American parties. This has helped to avoid some of the class struggles that existed in other countries. Regional voting patterns cut across class lines. There have been several studies conducted that analyzed Colombia's voting patterns. One such study found that regional patterns have changed very little in the last 70 years. A careful analysis of the votes cast for Congressional elections found that from 1931 to 1982, 673 municipalities (67% of the electorate) voted consistently for the same party. The other 33% switched their vote between Conservative and Liberal candidates with third party candidates receiving little attention. Being able to control a region for fifty years has helped reinforce the system that provides goods to the faithful.

Second, the Conservative and Liberal machinery has existed for centuries and touched virtually every aspect of public life. Family connections and cliques known as *rosca*s provide the framework for the system. The party boss or *gamonal* hands out jobs, fringe benefits, and educational and career opportunities. In return, votes are cast for the "correct" candidate. This is all made possible by the access to public goods. Colombian

Congressmen are much more autonomous with respect to district appointments and discretionary funds than are their counterparts in the US, for example.¹¹ Changing this facet of Colombian politics has been extremely challenging. Several fruitless attempts have been made to restructure this system and allow third party candidates access to voters.

Congressmen have been characterized as more interested in positions than policy, but this does not make Congress a powerless institution¹². It can restrict the President in several ways. First, it has in the past tried Presidents in front of the Senate for discretions in office. Second, it has the power to affect the appointment of individuals to Ministries and other government posts. Appointments to the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (INCORA), for example, have been subjected to Congressional pressure. Finally, Congress has the ability to delay Presidential legislation. Major agrarian, constitutional and urban reforms have been held up for years. Congress' most effective weapon is simply not acting. Congress is concerned with maintaining the status quo while the President wants change. This is because they serve entirely different constituencies.

4. Closed Party Elites

The term political elites refers to Colombia's full-time politicians, party bosses, cabinet members, and local and regional elected officials. This class is fairly small in Colombia for several reasons. First, for most of Colombia's history there were constitutional requirements for higher education to hold public office. This in a land where as late as 1984 only 2% of 20-24 year olds even enrolled in higher education.¹³ Additionally, for certain offices (the Senate for example) prior public office experience was a prerequisite. Finally, because of the practice of electing alternates, or *suplentes*, the same people ran for several offices. It was possible to be the mayor of Bogotá and a council member for the town of Tolima. This ensured a small pool of political candidates.

There is considerable fusion between political and economic elites. Colombian Presidents have been prominent business leaders and directors of economic interest groups. For instance, President Ospina Perez was the director of FEDECAFE. Presidents Lleras and Pastrana were presidents of *Celanese Colombiana*, one of the

country's largest textile manufacturers. A look at Colombia's *Quién es Quién* shows the overlap between the heads of major industry and political office. Furthermore, nearly 90% of cabinet members had university degrees in a country where less than 1% has earned them.¹⁴

The political elites also maintain close control over the media. Colombia's major papers all have close ties to Liberal and Conservative families. They are often used as vehicles to promote party ideas and have been accused of being entirely partisan.¹⁵ The political elite are tightly grouped and wedded to the economic interests in Colombia. The picture drawn here is of an extensive political web spun by a small group.

5. Presidential Strategies for Circumventing Congress: Allying with the United States

When unable to achieve his policy initiatives domestically, the President has consistently turned to the United States for aid in funding his initiatives. This has cost the Colombian government a degree of autonomy. President Turbay, for example, managed to obtain much needed financial and military assistance in return for his considerable foreign policy support. During his administration President Turbay: suspended diplomatic relations with and resisted Cuba's candidacy to the UN Security Council; sent troops to the Sinai as peacekeeping forces during the Middle-East peace process, openly criticized the recognition of the FMLN as a representative force in the Salvadoran conflict, and entered discussions about a possible US base on the San Andrés island.¹⁶ Domestically, President Turbay aligned himself with Washington's anticommunist stance and assumed a hard-line against the guerrillas.

President Betancur initially broke from this traditional alignment. He distanced himself from the US in an attempt increase his role as an independent arbiter. During the 1983 invasion of Grenada he intervened on behalf of the Cuban contingent so that it would be allowed to leave the island. His negotiations with guerrillas and the intervention in Central America through the Contadora Group rankled Washington. However, this distancing was short lived. As explained in the previous chapter, President Betancur met with considerable resistance at home. Unable to get Congress to pass his reforms, he lost support. Domestic turmoil, including the escalating drug war and guerrilla violence, forced him to turn back towards the US. US aid did come and it was used to fund operations against the guerrillas and drug dealers.

The suggestion here is not that the US forced Colombia to adopt certain policies. The implication is that Colombian Presidents have found it easier to obtain aid by aligning themselves with the US than to deal with the Colombian political system. There are certainly other considerations that drove the Betancur policy to adopt a tougher profile. The impact of the M-19 assault on the Palace of Justice in 1985 and the increase in violent deaths at the hands of death squads obviously had an impact. However, the acquisition of funds also influenced the considerations.

The consistent choice of Colombian President's to appeal for US assistance, rather than deal with the immutable interests of Congress, has contributed to the stalemate in three ways. First, as explained in chapter two, US assistance lifted the burden of the conflict from the Colombian government, and allowed them to avoid making many difficult decisions. The analysis of military spending showed that Colombia did not pay the economic price expected from an insurgency of this size. Tax-burdens remained low and the economy continued to grow. The US helped alleviate the economic hardships of the war that might have forced elites to open up the political process. Second, this aid has helped give ammunition to the anti-imperialist rhetoric of guerrilla groups. Guerrilla recruitment numbers have correspondingly increased with US counter drug and counterinsurgent efforts. Finally, US aid has influenced Colombia's categorization of the conflict. During the Cold war the guerrillas were Cuban and Soviet influenced communists. This helped the Army view them as an external threat, thereby avoiding the many underlying social concerns. During the heavy US anti-drug push, the Colombian government stressed the "narco-guerrilla" component of the war. Now, post 9/11 the guerrillas have been labeled terrorists. Every one of these labels has strong lines of truth, but it has often masked serious social concerns of Colombians. This has allowed the elites to avoid addressing the societal and economic inequalities that make Colombia such fertile ground for guerrillas.

D. ECONOMIC INTEREST GROUPS

Although, it is hard to categorize Colombia's economic interest groups and their level of influence, there are three generalizations that have remained true over the forty year conflict: 1) when united, the economic interest groups have exerted undue influence on the system, 2) with a few exceptional periods the economic impact of the war has not

been felt by these groups keeping their interest in military options or peace negotiations low and divided, and 3) they are united and opposed to reforms that would jeopardize the status quo.

There is a wide range of interest groups, and this thesis cannot cover them all. It focuses on two groups that stand out as the most powerful and active in influencing government policy over the entire forty-year war. They are: 1) the rural bourgeoisie represented by the *Federación de Ganaderos* (FEDEGAN), the *Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia* (SAC) and the Colombian Coffee Growers Federation (FEDECAFE), and 2) the industrial bourgeoisie represented by the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI).

The interest group influence is felt in two ways. One, they are part of the governmental decision making process at times. The most striking case is FEDECAFE. It sets coffee prices and even has negotiated international agreements.¹⁷ Members of the government are appointed and sit on the board. The other is through their control over economic activities provided by favorable governmental regulations. For example, ANDI has, by law, considerable control over labor union activity. They have called for, or ended strikes to exert influence.

The influence of these groups when united is hefty. The forced resignation of General Ruiz, the reformist architect of Plan Lazo, has already been recounted. Another illustration was the resistance to land reform. In 1958, the National Front creator President Lleras came to power seeking to reform the agrarian sectors. He had considerable prestige and political capital due to his role in the National Front agreement. The US's Alliance for Progress program added financial and international clout to the program. Yet, reform legislation was not passed until 1961 and it was noticeably less than what was expected (Chapter 2). The ranchers of FEDEGAN played an instrumental role in thwarting this legislation. They exerted pressure on Congress to delay the legislation, and when it did pass they exerted pressure on the *Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria* (INCORA) during implementation.¹⁸

The important economic interest groups, until recently, felt little effect from the war, and therefore, have supported the status quo and opposed the reforms that have been part of government counterinsurgency and peace plans. Their preferences were to keep

trade flowing and Colombia's economy growing, while reducing government involvement in economic affairs and keeping the tax burden low.

Until recently, they have succeeded in attaining these goals. Average growth between 1950 and 2000 was 4.2%, the highest rate in Latin America.¹⁹ Colombia has honored every one of its international economic agreements, and has never defaulted on any loan. It remained immune to the notorious debt crises of the 1980s, while maintaining a low, steady inflation rate, and a strong independent central bank. In 1999, Colombia's tax burden as a percentage of its GDP was 10.6%. Venezuela's was 12.8%, El Salvador's was 12.6% and the US' was 19.5%.²⁰ This is extraordinarily low for a country in the midst of a major internal conflict. Additionally, in 2000, the Congress resisted President Pastrana's efforts to raise taxes.

Thus, far the war has not cost this segment of society enough to force them to change their position. They have kept the violent status quo by lending their support to the political parties during times of crisis. They resisted attempts by the military to overrule the civilian authorities, and blocked potentially destabilizing political, economic, and social reforms, which heightened social tensions. Furthermore, they have favored violence as a means of crushing opposition groups. They have urged the government to take a harder position, and have formed self-defense groups adding to the delegitimation of the regime.

E. THE ARMED FORCES

The Colombian Armed Forces have considerably less political significance than their South American counterparts. There are many possible reasons for this. First, the army has historically been a professional force oriented largely toward external missions. Second, the military's one modern day experience with governing under General Rojas (1953-1958) divided the military and left it committed to avoiding overt participation in politics. Finally, the military has been held in unusually low regard by the country's elites, who are reluctant to turn to the military for solutions to the country's problems.²¹ The military's preference is to end the insurgency by means of a coordinated national counterinsurgent strategy.

The modern history of Colombia's armed forces began at the turn of the century under President Reyes following the War of a Thousand Days. Reyes instituted the

reforma militar bringing several foreign missions to Colombia, beginning with the Prussian-trained Chilean missions. In 1907, the *Escuela Militar* was established. At this time, Colombia like its neighbors (due in large part to the civil war) was domestically focused. Its size, however, was relatively smaller. Its budgets shrank until 1932, when a war broke out with Peru over the Amazon-Putumayo region. With the war the size, image, level of professionalization and missions changed. It also began the influence of the United States, with a US mission being sent to Colombia in 1940, six years after the war's end. The war with Peru and the US influence were key factors in constructing a military focused on external missions. This helped produce an apolitical force.

In the 1950's, the Colombian military attempted to maintain this external focus, participating in the Korean War and several other peacekeeping missions. Domestically, it preferred to not to involve itself in the escalating violence between the two parties, seeing itself above the fray. However, the political violence between the Conservatives and Liberals increased steadily until the parties were unable to maintain control. The military felt it was being dragged in. In 1953, General Rojas, the leader of the Army, deposed President Gomez in the name of defending liberty.

At this point, the Colombian forces appeared to be taking a similar path as others in the region. "Under the banner of 'The People's Armed-Forces' Binomial,' General Rojas aimed, it seemed, to build the kind of personal political support enjoyed by his contemporary in Argentina, Juan Peròn."(Maullin, 1973,p62) However, a division formed in the armed forces between those who saw their role as apolitical and those who supported Rojas. The civilians exploited this rift, and agreed to make peace and overthrow Rojas. During Rojas's Senate trial the military's low self-esteem was evident as he "felt compelled time and again to defend the military against charges in the press that all military men were 'crude sergeants who barely know how to read and write'"(Dix, 1987, p. 136).

Since the Rojas coup, the military has not gone completely back to the barracks. Their main concern remains the country, and the end of the war. From their perspective, this means the defeat of the guerrillas, but not through brutal repression. They have shown themselves fully aware of proper counterinsurgent techniques and the need to address social concerns.²² Their preference is to increase their autonomy regarding

military affairs and the handling of the insurgent threat. They view social reconstruction as part of their mission and seek a comprehensive counterinsurgent policy to eliminate the guerrillas. They have shown restraint with regard to official subordination to civilian control.

However, despite formal subordination to civilian control, the military has consistently opposed presidential peace processes because this elevates the status of the guerrillas, whom they consider an illegitimate force. For example, the resignation of President Samper's peace commissioner in 1995 came because of conflicts over the peace initiatives. The commander of the Armed Forces saw him as pro-guerrilla and attempted to obstruct his work.²³ Later that year, without consulting President Samper, the commander rejected the site (La Uribe) offered by the rebels for peace negotiations. Military opposition to peace negotiations has also been expressed through their support historically for paramilitary forces targeting the guerrillas. In the 1980s, the military lent support to the paramilitary assassination campaign against FARC sympathizers who had organized under the umbrella of Unión Patriótica in order to participate in the political process as part of Betancur's peace negotiations.

Civilians have feared military intervention and have dealt with this by asserting a "negative" control over the military – allowing them a certain degree of autonomy in dealing with the guerrilla but stopping them when they seemed to be assuming too much protagonism. A more positive form of control would have created a national security decision making process that integrated both civilians and the military, enabling the two to agree upon a coordinated response to the insurgency. The failure to do this has created the situation where counterinsurgency threatens civilian interests and peace processes threaten military interests. Each actor has the power to block the strategies that threaten their interests, but no ability to reach a consensus on a shared strategy to address the crisis – hence, the maintenance of the violent status quo. A shared strategy arrived at through an institutionalized process of civil-military dialogue would create a situation where the civilians could maintain control over the policy process and have no need to fear increased military protagonism if counterinsurgency is chosen, nor military undermining of their programs if peace negotiations are chosen.

F. EXTRA-GOVERNMENTAL ARMED ACTORS

1. The Calculations of the Guerrillas

The guerrilla groups all had in common the belief that it was virtually impossible to bring about major political change based on orthodox, non-violent methods. To the guerrillas, peaceful protest was useless. They were unable to achieve their goal, which was to penetrate the political system. At different times they have concluded that the cost of resistance was too high, and have attempted to negotiate a peace. Calculations changed considerably after the Cold War ended.

With the end of international communism, the FARC and ELN began to look for financing elsewhere, whereas the urban M-19 chose to negotiate peace with the government when their external sources of financing dried up. The business of kidnapping, extortion, and drugs have provided the resisting guerrillas with an astonishing income. The Colombian government estimates guerrilla income to be over \$900 million dollars. To put this in perspective the National Coffee Federation, the country's largest business, earned \$521 million.²⁴ The FARC has established businesses and institutions in the areas that it controls. It is involved in the legal exploitation of mines and receives income from investments in farms, hotels, drug stores and other legitimate firms. This income has ensured that the FARC can finance a long-term war.²⁵

In addition to the increased income, there is a long-term memory of past negotiations that inhibit future calculations for peace on the part of the guerrillas. The FARC, who signed peace agreements and formed the Patriotic Union (UP), saw its members assassinated. The M-19's peace agreement met with a similar fate. Decimation at the hands of right wing death quads has altered calculations for peace. In light of these attacks, it is no surprise that today many members of the FARC and ELN are suspicious of the government's ability to ensure their safety, should they agree to a peace accord with the Pastrana administration.²⁶

What are the guerrillas currently after? The FARC appears to be changing their tactics. In the early 1990's they concentrated forces and attacked armed forces bases. Almost all targets were military, but that seems to have changed.

In a radio exchange intercepted by the military, Comandante 'Romana' (alias of Henry Castellanos, the feared commander of the powerful FARC

53rd Front) was heard to say: "Bring them all down - bridges, pylons and the dam. Make urban attacks so that the oligarchy feels the war."²⁷

The FARC have blown up some 200 electricity pylons across the country so far this year, attacked water reservoirs that feed Bogotá's seven million inhabitants, and set off bombs in cities.²⁸ The guerrillas want to hit the cities, and put more pressure on the elites. This appears to have been a miscalculation. It has placed the pressure on the urban Colombian who already wants change. The urban Colombian's initial response in 1998 was to elect a President in favor of peace, but the subsequent intransigence of the guerrillas in the peace negotiations and their increasingly violent tactics have led to a change of heart. In 2002, the Colombians elected a combative President committed to increasing Colombia's military force and asking for more US assistance. Given the context of the post-9/11 world it should not be difficult to acquire the funds. The guerrillas have the resources for a long fight, but without the real possibility of a revolution they will eventually be brought to the table. If negotiations offer little or no actual change, as this analysis predicts, the insurgency will persist.

2. The Roots of the Paramilitaries

As the FARC and other guerrilla groups gained strength in rural Colombia, they exacted "revolutionary taxes" from landowners who lived in these areas. This continued unabated from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Without state protection the landowners, or in some cases, peasant organizations created self-defense groups in an attempt to protect themselves. This brand of paramilitary group, known as *convivir*, was institutionalized by the Colombian state in the early 1980s. They received official government sanction and military assistance. The *convivirs* were ostensibly disbanded in 1989 after many were accused of unjustified violence, but this is not a genie easily put back in the bottle. In addition to the *convivirs*, the last decade has seen the strengthening of other types of paramilitary groups that are much more powerful and influential.²⁹

These other paramilitary groups have their roots in the 1980s when drug trafficking brought incredible profits to Colombia. The drug barons bought large portions of land to assist in the laundering of money. In fact, they bought more land in a just a few years than INCORA had redistributed in 30. The new "narco-landowners" were reluctant to continue paying revolutionary taxes to the guerrillas. The drug traffickers'

response was to form the *Muerte a Secuestradores* (MAS). In 1981, leaflets were dropped at a Cali soccer match heralding the transformation from guerrilla attacks to death squad attacks against the rebels.³⁰ Over the next three months the MAS claimed more than 100 assassinations in retribution for M-19's kidnapping of the sister of a cartel member."³¹ Death squad violence peaked in 1989-1990 with 350 of 370 civilian deaths and the assassination of Liberal Party Presidential candidate Luis Galán.

The largest of the self-defense groups is the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). Drug trafficking provides much of their financing. Leader Carlos Castaño admitted in the Colombian newsweekly, "We finance ourselves with what the coca growers produce, I have to recognize this, I charge them a 60% tax on what they earn." Although they are fighting the guerrillas, they have adopted many of the same techniques to gather funds. Taken at their word their preference is to see the end of the guerrillas. Theoretically, they will disappear once the war ends. In an open letter to President Pastrana, dated 19 March 2000, they stated their support for the peace process:

We support and respect the process of political negotiation that is under way. We are not an obstacle to peace, as the subversives try to portray as before the country and the international community.³²

Whether or not the paramilitaries will disband with the end of the conflict is open for debate. What is less debatable is their role in the increasing violence that helps perpetuate this conflict. Arming militias is a common counterinsurgent practice. Colombia, however, has proven that they are unable to successfully use this tactic. The inability to control this militia has led to the downfall of the government's international and domestic prestige. The government must prove its ability to control these groups or stop them.

G. POLICY FORMULATION

How do these described interests play themselves out in Colombian policy? The system is exclusionary and therefore, without the extra-governmental interests there would be little inclination to address any issues aimed at restructuring society. Thus, the impetus for change begins with the guerrillas and paramilitaries. The guerrillas' demands vary. Some are seeking political relevance. Some desire to destroy the existing state. Others prefer to maintain regional control and reap the benefits from the drug money.

They are wholly at odds with the interests of the paramilitaries who either want to compete with the guerrillas for territory and profits, or simply want to protect their livelihoods and end the insurgency. The state must react to the conflictual interests of these marginal groups. When faced with this clash, the government must choose one of three options: military victory, political inclusion or neglect of the problem and maintenance of the status quo. The military provides counterinsurgent solutions and have blocked presidential solutions at times. The President initiates policy. If the policy is markedly redistributive, then Congress and those affected economic interest groups resist its passage and implementation. If they cannot amend or defeat the policy then they will challenge it in court.

The 1960's agrarian reform illustrates this system well. Rural unrest caused by the guerrillas started the question of land reform. The Colombian and US militaries devised a comprehensive counterinsurgency program that included addressing longstanding land distribution issues. The Alliance for Progress supplied funding and stimulus to the government. President Lleras initiated the *Acción Comunal* program and Law 135 of 1961 was passed (Dix, 1987, p. 187). The Law created INCORA, which was responsible for redistributing public and underutilized private lands to landless peasants. Members of Congress and interest groups like SAC tried to stop the legislation. Failing in this attempt, they placed "deliberate restrictions on INCORA's budget, limited its ability to expropriate land; and landowners' use of the cumbersome legal procedures required for expropriation often made it possible to delay or even avoid expropriation" (Dix, 1987, p. 188). By 1970 less than 1% of Colombia's agricultural land had been affected.³³ The result was moderate reform and the maintenance of the status quo.

H. CONCLUSION

Despite the changes in the strength and tactics of the guerrillas and paramilitaries in the 1990s, the Colombian elite has continued to demonstrate its historical inability to opt either for a decisive counterinsurgency policy or a meaningful peace process. In order to effect meaningful change in Colombia those actors must come to understand that it is in their interest to transform the system. With the country's downward economic spiral since 1999, all segments of the population have begun to feel the pain. The system appears ready to adjust. The President has shown that reforms, albeit slight, have been

possible. Guerrilla and paramilitary violence has demonstrated the need to end the conflict. For there to be an end, the economic and political elite must implement change.

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- ¹ Restrepo, p279 Hartlyn, p122-126, Martz, pp186-187
- ² El Tiempo, Gran Encuesto, Online, <http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/proyectos>
- ³ Mainwaring and Scully, pp 5-20
- ⁴ http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/aag/col_aag.pdf, Dix pp59-60
- ⁵ Demographic data from Dix, *The Politics of Colombia*, pp59-62, Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia*, p145, Table 3.3, and authors calculations from El Tiempo, on line results 2002 elections
- ⁶ Dix discusses the peasant movements and the land invasions that were successfully dealt with in the 1960s and 70's. Also mentioned are the regional juntas, Acción Comunal (AC), that were established to help bring government services to rural Colombia. This was incorporated into INCORA.
- ⁷ Mainwaring and Scully, pp 20
- ⁸ Mainwaring and Scully, p21
- ⁹ For this view, see Dix pp94-95, reference Martinez, *Raiz y Futuro de la Revolucion, 1963*
- ¹⁰ Osterling, p171
- ¹¹ Discussion of Colombia's party elites, Dix, pp 90-97, Osterling pp160-165
- ¹² For this view see Dix,
- ¹³ World Bank, *World Development Report*, 1984
- ¹⁴ Dix, *The Politics of Colombia*, p70
- ¹⁵ Dix, p91
- ¹⁶ Tokatlian, p337
- ¹⁷ Hartlyn, *Producer Associations and Policy in Colombia*, p 112
- ¹⁸ Hartlyn recounts the influence of FEDEGAN, *Producer Associations and Policy in Colombia*, p120-123
- ¹⁹ http://www.colombiaemb.org/colombian_economy.htm
- ²⁰ http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2001/pdfs/tab5_5.pdf World Bank Tax Policies Chapter 5.5
- ²¹ Dix, *The Politics of Colombia*, pp135-139 and Ruhl *Colombia Armed Forces and Society*, discuss the Armed Forces position in society and account for their lack of intervention vis-à-vis it counterparts in South America.
- ²² Perceptions based on interview of two Colombian officers conducted on January, 2002
- ²³ Rachani, p52
- ²⁴ Richani pp25
- ²⁵ Richani pp20-45
- ²⁶ Summation of paramilitaries, Crandall, *The End of Civil Conflict in Colombia, The Military, Paramilitary and Guerrillas*, p4
- ²⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_1998000/1998304.stm
- ²⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_1998000/1998304.stm
- ²⁹ Summation of paramilitaries, Crandall, *The End of Civil Conflict in Colombia, The Military, Paramilitary and Guerrillas*, pp5-7
- ³⁰ Kevin Jack Riley, *The Implications of Colombian Drug Industry and Death Squad Political Violence.*
- ³¹ Kevin Jack Riley, *The Implications of Colombian Drug Industry and Death Squad Political Violence.*
- ³² “Apoyamos y respetamos el proceso de negociación política en curso. No somos un obstáculo para la paz, como pretende presentarnos la subversión ante el País y la comunidad internacional.” Translation by the author From www.cip.org
- ³³ Dix, *The Politics of Colombia* p188

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V. CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that the interaction of six actors decides Colombia's political path: 1) the executive, 2) the political class, 3) the economic interest groups, 4) the military, 5) the paramilitary and 6) the guerrillas. The center of government policy, the President is interested in effective governance, and he responds to the interests of the largely urban Colombian voter. However, he is institutionally constrained by a Congress that opposes the political, social, and economic reforms that would be necessary for either a comprehensive counterinsurgency policy or an effective peace process. The Congress receives its inputs from Colombia's economic elite and highly exclusionary political class. The desire of both these groups is to maintain the status quo. The president has also been constrained in his efforts to negotiate peace by an Armed Forces that is committed to the defeat of the guerrillas. Though one might expect an alliance of the military and president to formulate an effective counterinsurgency program, this option has been blocked by Congressional opposition to reform and unwillingness to provide the resources needed for such an effort. In addition, the president has often not been a consistent ally of the military in such an approach, for a variety of reasons: fear of military protagonism, voter preferences for peace, and a need to devote energy and resources to other more pressing problems facing the country. The guerrillas are interested in changing the status quo. Their calculations to resist or participate in the political system are dependent on government policy. The paramilitary have risen in response to the guerrillas and the government's inability to enforce its rule. The interplay between the paramilitary and guerrillas has produced extraordinary violence.

Chapter two focused on Colombia's counterinsurgency and the restraints imposed by civilian leadership. It argued that a lack of governmental commitment caused the war to linger. Colombia failed to implement social reform or to devote the resources necessary for successful military operations. Congress held up land reform. The closed National Front system did not allow for sufficient representation. Fear of a military takeover caused the elite to suppress ambitious military leaders at the expense of productive programs. An analysis of Colombia's military spending does not indicate that

it was involved in an intense internal conflict. In sum, the political and economic elite curbed military responses.

Chapter three demonstrated that the Colombian elite displayed a similar lack of commitment to a political resolution of the armed conflict. It built on the proposition that successful negotiations of armed challenges to a regime requires the regime to calculate that costs of suppressing the rebels outweighs the costs of tolerating them, and the costs for the rebels to resist must outweigh the costs of participation. In Colombia's case, despite numerous attempts, superficial offers, and even partial apparent success, intransigent elite refused to reform the political system sufficiently to allow for a complete negotiated settlement. In short, the congressional and economic elite preferred the maintenance of the violent status quo to the uncertainty of institutional restructuring.

Chapter four explained why the policies were chosen, and who chose them. It argued that the civil war lingers because the regime acted moderately militarily and intransigently politically when its interests were threatened. This chapter examined the six political actors who have had the largest impact on Colombia's insurgent policies: 1) the executive branch represented by the President and his immediate advisors, 2) the Congress, or two main political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, 3) the economic elites, 4) the Armed Forces, 5) the paramilitaries, and 6) the guerrillas. It outlined the groups' preferences and policy influence.

A. OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

Colombia has just elected President Alvaro Uribe Velez. In a landslide victory he has become the first presidential candidate to win outright in the first round in a Colombian election. His intention is to expand the military and civilian militia. The US has pledged its support. Aid to Colombia increased from \$65 million in 1996 to over \$1 billion in 2000. The current strategy is to deny the guerrillas a major source of funding by attacking coca production in Colombia. The bulk of US aid has gone to training and equipping the Colombian Army counter narcotics brigade to undertake counter narcotics fumigation missions in two provinces where coca has now spread.

If these missions are successful and cut funding to the guerrillas, the cost for the guerrillas to resist will be increased. However, it will not affect the cost of

participation. That is the focus of this thesis. If the guerrillas do lay down their arms in large numbers and the political system does not change others will continue to resist. A consistent pattern has emerged since the National Front. Colombia's voters choose an executive to respond to an insurgent threat. He either chooses a military solution or peace negotiations. He is unable to get a factional and status quo oriented Congress to fully support his policies. The US intervenes and has some apparent success, only to have the guerrillas rise from the ashes.

The responsibility for the conflict lies with the people of Colombia, however, based on this analysis, US policy must focus not just on the insurgency but also on correcting the deficiencies in the Colombian system. The Colombian military must be strengthened to combat not just drugs, but the paramilitary and the guerrilla. A comprehensive counterinsurgent plan must be crafted with the full support and backing of domestic politicians that focuses on building infrastructure and extending the state's presence. Programs that alienate the rural farmer are counterproductive. This does not mean that eradication is counterproductive. The drug industry does lead to instability, but until the state can make its presence felt in these areas by protecting the citizens and clearing the areas of guerrillas and paramilitaries then counter narcotics will be ineffective long-term.

Furthermore, the US should support those peace initiatives that will strengthen Colombia's democracy. The evidence presented suggests that there are longstanding political grievances that have not been addressed and until they are there will be little incentive for the guerrillas to cooperate. The political violence must be brought under control by focusing on civil policing, and a more effective intelligence agency. This thesis has set forth the framework that should inform the debate on what is to be done, but ultimately Colombians must make the changes.

Finally, the US should also encourage the Colombians to invigorate their national security decision-making process to make it a true locus for civil-military dialogue. This will allow the two sides to reach a consensus on a solution and guarantee civilian control over the process, whether it be a counterinsurgency program, peace negotiations, or some combination of both. Only in this way will the Colombians be able to overcome what this thesis has shown to be a major obstacle to

a decisive solution to the insurgency: divergent elite interests that operate within a political framework that facilitates the blocking of initiatives but does nothing to encourage the dialogue and compromise necessary to forge a unified state response.

Appendix. CARTA ABIERTA AL PRESIDENTE PASTRANA DE LAS AUC, 19 DE MARZO DE 2000

Colombia, marzo 19 de 2000

Carta Abierta.

Doctor:

Andrés Pastrana Arango
Presidente de la República
Santafé de Bogotá

Señor Presidente.

Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, en un gesto de buena voluntad, y como aporte sustancial al ambiente de concertación que debe rodear este proceso de paz, hemos determinado retirar nuestros efectivos militares del Municipio de Tiquisio en el Sur de Bolívar, y de sus corregimientos; Puerto Coca, Tiquisio Nuevo, Ventura, Quebrada del Medio, Dos Bocas, Colorado, Caño Guacamayo, Solís, Aguas Negras, Puerto Rico y el Sudán.

Esta extensa región, representa un espacio de seguridad y movilidad suficiente para realizar la convención del Eln. Su ubicación y facilidad de acceso, la hace propicia para tal evento.

De la misma manera, se ha dispuesto una importante disminución en la intensidad de nuestras acciones ofensivas contra la subversión en todo el territorio nacional. Esta actitud de regulación militar de las AUC podría ser indefinida ó definitiva en la medida que las Farc y el Eln procedan en esta misma dirección.

Apoyamos y respetamos el proceso de negociación política en curso. No somos un obstáculo para la paz, como pretende presentarnos la subversión ante el País y la comunidad internacional.

La sociedad Colombiana y la opinión pública internacional, saben de nuestra independencia absoluta del Estado y sus Instituciones. Por tal razón, difícilmente habrá un proceso de concertación nacional válido, mientras un actor determinante del conflicto continúe excluido del actual proceso de negociación política, como es nuestro caso.

Nos suscribimos del Señor Presidente, reiterando nuestra sincera voluntad de paz y esperando una pública definición del Gobierno sobre el papel de las AUC en el proceso de paz.

ESTADO MAYOR
AUTODEFENSAS UNIDAS DE COLOMBIA

Common agenda for Colombian government talks with the FARC, May 6, 1999

1. A Negotiated Political Solution

A political solution to the serious social and armed conflict is being sought, one which will bring a new Colombia through political, economic, and social change, creating consensus to build a new state, founded on social justice and conserving national unity.

Acts of peace will occur as the negotiations advance. This means that all Colombians must commit to the construction of peace without regard to economic, social or religious interests, or political parties.

2. Protection of Human Rights as a responsibility of the State

- 2.1 Fundamental rights
- 2.2 Economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights
- 2.3 International human rights treaties

3. An Integrated Agrarian Policy

- 3.1 The democratization of credit, technical assistance, and market access
- 3.2 Redistribution of unproductive land
- 3.3 Recuperation and distribution of land acquired through drug-trafficking and illegal enrichment
- 3.4 Stimulating production
- 3.5 Integral ordering of territory
- 3.6 Illicit crop substitution and alternative development

4. Exploitation and Conservation of Natural Resources

- 4.1 Natural resources and their distribution
- 4.2 International treaties
- 4.3 Protection of the environment based on sustainable development

5. Economic and Social Structure

- 5.1 Revision of the economic development model
- 5.2 Income redistribution policies
- 5.3 Expansion of internal and external markets
- 5.4 Stimulating production through small, medium and large-scale private enterprise
- 5.5 Cooperative support for the economy
- 5.6 Stimulation of foreign investment that benefits the nation
- 5.7 Social participation in economic planning
- 5.8 Investment in social welfare, education and scientific research

6. Justice reform, fighting corruption and drug trafficking

- 6.1 Judicial system
- 6.2 Control institutions
- 6.3 Mechanisms to fight corruption
- 6.4 Drug trafficking

7. Political reform to broaden democracy

- 7.1 Reform of political parties and movements
- 7.2 Electoral reforms
- 7.3 Equal opportunity for the opposition
- 7.4 Equal opportunity for minorities
- 7.5 Mechanisms for citizen participation

8. State reform

- 8.1 Congressional reform
- 8.2 Administrative reform to improve the efficiency of public administration

8.3 Decentralization and strengthening of local power

8.4 Public services

8.5 Strategic sectors

9. Agreements about International Humanitarian Law

9.1 No child involvement in the conflict

9.2 Land mines

9.3 Respect for the civil population

9.4 Respect for international agreements

10. Armed forces

10.1 Defense of sovereignty

10.2 Protection of human rights

10.3 Combating self-defense groups

10.4 International treaties

11. International relations

11.1 Respect for non-intervention and free self determination

11.2 Latin American regional integration

11.3 Foreign debt

11.4 Treaties and international state agreements

12. Formalizing the agreements

12.1 Democratic instruments to legitimize the agreements

(Signed)

For
V́ctor
Fabio
Maria

the
G.
Valencia
Emma
Mejía

government:
Ricardo
Cossio
V́lez

Nicanor
Rodolfo

For
Raúl
Joaquín
Fabián Ramírez

Restrepo
Espinosa

the

Santamaría
Meola

FARC-EP:
Reyes
Gómez

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