
Part IV
Latin America

Security, Cooperation for Development and Conflict: Elements for Analysis of the Colombian Case

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Introduction

For at least four decades Colombia has been facing a complicated socio-political situation characterized by armed conflict between organizations of the extreme left and the government's armed forces. Towards the end of the 70s this confrontation expanded in scope and complexity with the entry of extreme right groups. Known in different sectors as paramilitary groups, these groups have links to criminal groups, especially organized drug traffickers, and have been accused of collusion with government players.

The 1991 constitution made the building of a modern democracy possible, since it established the foundations of biodiversity, individual freedom, the separation of church and state and the strengthening of civil society. This political scheme strengthened the process of decentralization, provided for broader social and political participation of individuals and established a more or less balanced separation of the different branches. In short, for the first time in history citizens were effectively drawn closer to the state.

From the moment this constitution was proclaimed, its opponents have not rested in

their efforts for a counter-reform to cut back on and limit the rights consecrated in the constitution and to bring the nascent political regime back, in some ways, to the centralist, authoritarian, exclusivist model of 1886. This is the movement to which President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's proposal belongs. His strategy proposes to clear the way "Towards a Communal State"¹ which re-concentrates and recentralizes many functions, its strengthening being an end in itself and not a result of increased legality and growing legitimacy.

This government promotes a model that de-institutionalizes the state structure, setting up parallel administrative mechanisms and ignoring the established mediation system. It uses nation-centered patriotic discourse and symbolism, dividing Colombian society in a Manichean manner. Its proposal for immediate reelections will strike a sharp blow against constitutionally-designed mechanisms for maintaining a balance among government branches.

The essence of the communal state has to do with the state's efforts to achieve a strategic victory in the conflict through setting in motion the so-called Democratic Security Policy, which hopes to gain territorial control

Latin America

and counteract and eliminate the risk represented by the FARC. It is still too early to assess the real impact of this policy's strategic goal, but it can be said that it has brought about a reconfiguration of the Colombian conflict that has meant, on the one hand, its worsening and intensification, and on the other, an expansion and aggravation of the so-called humanitarian crisis.

One of the most striking aspects of this policy has to do with the way in which it intensifies US intervention in Colombia. This is evident in Plan Colombia's evolution into Plan Patriot, and in particular, in the latent risk that this military offensive might become financially dependent on foreign aid.

US intervention has been facilitated by the recurring coincidence of President Uribe Vélez's discourse with the war on terrorism proclaimed by President Bush after September 11. Indeed, for the nation's leader, Colombia is not experiencing a social and political conflict but rather is host to terrorist groups threatening society. He is making this pivotal to his domestic policies and international relations.

Thus Colombia's foreign policy has aligned itself with unilateralism, contributing to the deterioration of international law and ignoring the recent tradition that led the country to preside over the Movement of Unaligned Nations in 1996. As a result, Colombia has become the most steadfast, reliable ally of the United States in the Andean region, a region characterized today by some as unstable and at risk, and by others as in search of independently constructed development alternatives.

In spite of the current government's wish to expand its agenda, Colombia's international cooperation has three basic, closely-interacting dimensions, much against the will of its contributors. Thus, on one front is aid

to the armed forces for its operation and modernization, in the framework of the anti-drug and counter-insurgency struggle. On another front is help in dealing with the growing humanitarian crisis, with its dramatic effects on a migrant or isolated population. And, finally, there are efforts to support a political solution to the conflict, in particular by strengthening the different expressions organized by civil society.

This paper intends to analyze the current situation of security, cooperation for development and conflict in Colombia. To this end, it will first refer very generally to the foundations of international cooperation with the country by both the United States and the European Union, and then look at their relationship with some essential aspects of the Colombian political context. The analysis will also rapidly weigh the contributions of the so-called Plan Colombia and the results of the war on drugs. Finally, some conclusions will be presented for discussion.

Diplomacy for war

The consequences of the Colombian conflict have become acute as the conflict intensifies and worsens. The concerns of the international community are to provide attention to the dramatic humanitarian crisis, whose maximum expression is the internal migration over the last decade of at least 2 million people, as well as to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Until 1998 the Colombian guerrillas looked to the international community for support, as long as the Colombian state stuck to its doctrine of self-determination and non-involvement in internal affairs in order to claim its right to deal with the conflict under its own authority. With the start of the dialogue on January 7, 1999, between President Andrés Pastrana's administration and the FARC (Fuerzas Revolucionarias de

Colombia), a strategy called diplomacy for peace was put into motion which sought the international community's backing for the negotiations.

At the same time the same administration initiated Plan Colombia in 2000 with financing from the United States — a plan that was denounced from the start by the FARC as proof of US intervention in the domestic conflict, even though at the beginning the plan did not include direct counterinsurgency action.

The panorama changed radically with the September 11, 2001 attacks and the election to the presidency of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who put into motion diplomacy in support of the domestic war, adopting as his own President Bush's new security doctrine and declaration of war on terrorism. At the same time Plan Colombia evolved from an anti-narcotics strategy into Plan Patriot, a counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist strategy — a US priority for its cooperation in Colombia.

With the September 11, 2001 attacks, security once again took on another meaning. The fear occasioned by the attacks, in both the US and the rest of the world gave credence to the theory that normal mechanisms for dealing with security threats are not effective against terrorism. Individual liberties and the legitimacy of democratic institutions were weakened and a tendency for exceptional measures was generalized throughout the world. State security acquired first priority to the detriment of human security and acknowledged civil liberties and guarantees, with the added complication that individuals were agreeing to this change.

The United States established a new security and national defense doctrine, defined as a preventive war doctrine, with which they definitively abandoned the

approaches prevalent during the Cold War and declared a head-on war on terrorism. This doctrine would be first used in March, 2003 in the war against Iraq, where the United States abandoned the international order that had emerged from the end of the Second World War and dealt a death blow to the fragile security system of the United Nations.

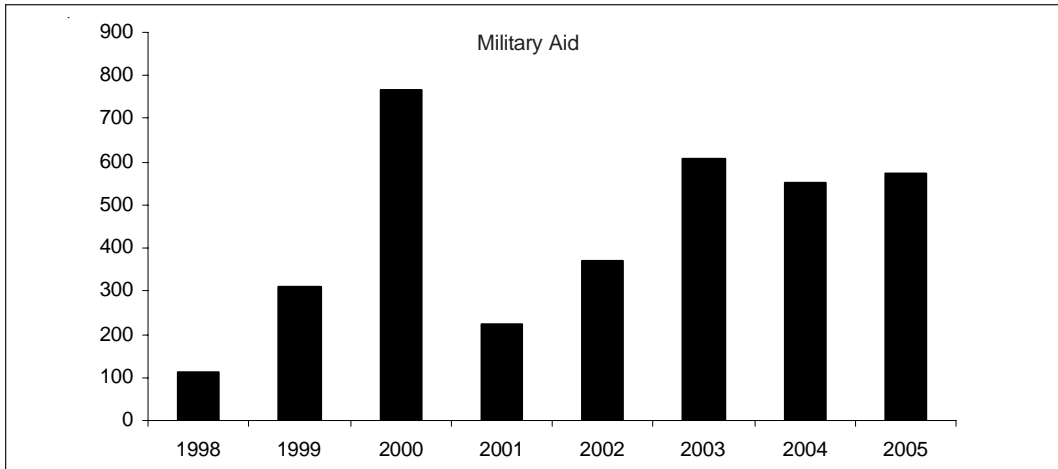
The new paradigm that Washington is trying to impose is characterized by growing unilateralism, profound subversion of international norms, and systematic militarization of disputes. A legitimate question worth asking is whether the underlying truth of this paradigm is not a strategy to seize the world's energy resources, as illustrated by the desire to seize Iraqi oil at any cost. Although the principles of non-intervention and non-recourse to force are still the bases of the international order, the United States appears not to feel any obligation to respect them when they represent a threat to its interests.

The preventive war doctrine and the war against Iraq signify a consolidation of the unilateral perspective, with a unipolar world vision, as opposed to multilateralism and multi-polarity. This concept of security has had a permanent impact on state public order policies, placing domestic security above other priorities such as democracy, human rights and economic and social welfare, and giving sufficient legitimacy to the restriction of individual liberties, as seen in the Patriot Act.

Colombia was the only South American country to back the United States, and although it did not form part of the military contingency under the coalition, it declared its full support for military intervention in Iraq. The domestic agenda was related directly to the American agenda and Plan Patriot evolved

Latin America

Graph 5. US Military Aid to Colombia, 1998-2005 (e) (millions US\$)



from Plan Colombia as a stronger intervention mechanism.

From Plan Colombia to Plan Patriot: US cooperation with Colombia

The Colombian government has consistently leaned on the United States as its principal cooperation ally in its democratic security policy, arguing that security threats for Colombia are also security threats for the world. All this, as this article has been trying to show up to now, is a consequence of a global definition of terrorism after September 11.

In recent years Colombia has become the third largest recipient of U.S. aid in the world after Israel and Egypt, and the largest in South America, which has generated much distrust among its neighbors, especially Venezuela and Brazil. Total U.S. cooperation for Plan Colombia is US \$3.54 billion, of which 80% is for military aid (Graph 5) and the remaining 20% for social aid (Graph 6).

In October 2003, with much media fanfare, the Colombian armed forces

initiated their new war tactics with operations in the extensive Colombian jungle in the Amazon basin. Plan Patriot is defined as the largest, most ambitious military campaign the Colombian state has launched against the FARC since Operation Marquetalia² 40 years ago. Its goal is the strategic defeat of the FARC in its own historical area of influence. It hopes to create favorable conditions for the Colombian government for a new round of negotiations with the guerrillas — this time based on their strategic defeat.

This operation, defined within Plan Colombia's framework and in continuation of it, signified joint action by the Colombian state's coercive forces (army, air force, navy, police and Security Administrative Department [DAS in Spanish]) with US support and monitoring. The operation involves from 14,000 to 17,000 members of the armed forces in a geographical area of approximately 242,000 square kilometers, with a population of 1.7 million inhabitants, in a region known for its jungle and tropical rainforest. The

operation is clear evidence that Plan Colombia is really a counterinsurgency plan rather than a simple anti-drug plan. "In synthesis, US military aid today is clearly a counter-insurgency strategy with the name of Plan Patriot, a name adopted not so much because of the concept of sovereignty, but more as an extension of the Patriot Act. It opens up questions about growing US military intervention in the Colombian conflict, now not only with economic aid, but also with the the direct presence of troops and advisors in the area."³

The plan is also the setting for ideological, symbolic and communicative confrontation. Uribe's government and the armed forces present this operation as a sort of "final battle," framed within a military triumphalism that puts in doubt the FARC's frequently nourished myth of absolute invincibility. The game is facilitated by the absence of political control by the legislative bodies and state security organisms, and the impossibility of media coverage informing the public of the nature and results of operations for reasons of doctrine, costs, and the notion of social duty.

In response to Plan Colombia, the European Union devised a special program directed at sustaining Colombian peace efforts. With this approach it promised to contribute logistic or financial support to projects negotiated by the conflicting parties, advising that it would act on this basis as catalyzer for the UN and its specialized organizations (World Bank, IDB and European Development Bank), as well as the private sector, to back the Colombian government's financial efforts.

In this manner Europe made a meaningful contribution between 1998 and 2002. The ambassadors of the European Union participated in numerous conversations between the government and the guerrillas,

acting as escorts and privileged witnesses, and contributing to the FARC's acceptance of an international presence in the failed dialogues. They constituted an axis of "friendly countries" looking for a solution to the ELN (National Liberation Army) dilemma.

The European Union proposed, as one of the pivotal actions of its "Support Program for the Colombian Peace Process," aid in establishing true "peace laboratories" in some of the country's critical areas. This concept came out of observation of the widespread citizens' movements for peace, which in some regions have become social laboratories exploring, with the use of proper legal instruments, the paths Colombian society and local communities have to take to defuse the conflict and foster sustainable development.

The European Union uses the expression "peace laboratories" to synthetically designate the set of social participation and institutional strengthening processes. These processes, locally and regionally, seek to achieve economic, social, cultural and political transformations in the midst of conflict, in order to collectively build the conditions for a lasting peace based on a dignified life for all inhabitants.

The role the EU assigns to cooperation is that of an instrument of support for dynamics already existing in the Colombian civil society. Its specific function is to enable a structuring and deepening of experiences that are already underway, and thus help in resolving the conflict. In March 2002 the first peace laboratory started up in the middle Magdalena region with a budget of 34.8 million euros. At the end of 2003, approval was given to develop a second peace laboratory, with a budget of 33 million euros, this time for three regions: Macizo Colombiano (Cauca and Nariño departments), the eastern part of Antioquia department and North of Santander

Latin America

department. At present a third peace laboratory is being prepared.

The peace laboratories are an innovative strategy that coincides with the decentralization of European Commission services, which gives the European Delegation's office in Bogotá more capacity for decision-making and real-time handling of this complex model for development cooperation in the midst of conflict. Although the strategy may be innovative, administration and operation of these projects follows the classic lines of European cooperation, which limits the model's development possibilities.

In brief, the European Union's position is in principle a counterweight to US policies for hemispheric security and the war on drugs. Nevertheless, it conditions its cooperation with Colombia and the Andean nations to their capacity to autonomously resolve their domestic conflicts. And it is precisely this autonomy that some of these governments are not able to achieve, in terms of both consensus and domestic governability and their

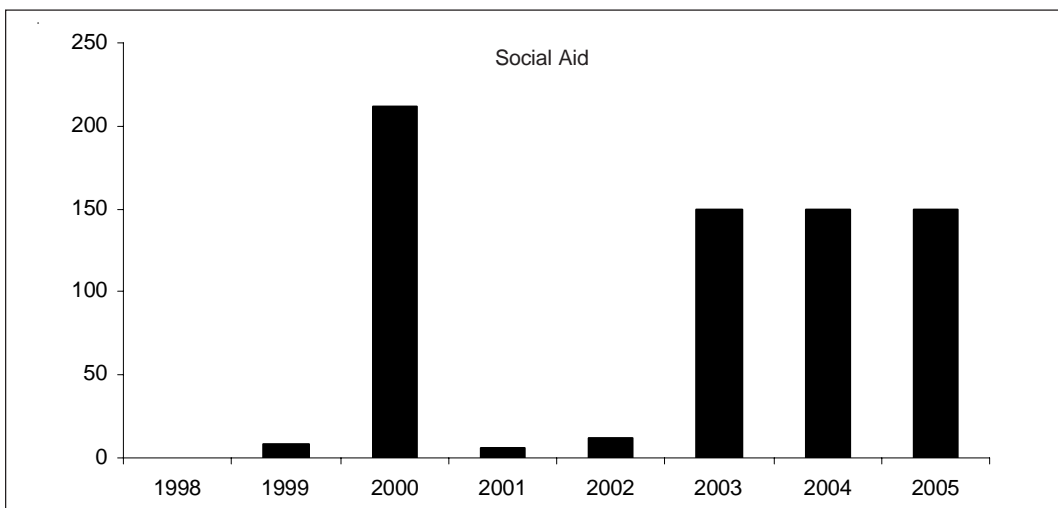
bilateral relations with the United States. The Colombian case illustrates the situation of a government that has not been able to get the consensus of the dominant elites to achieve domestic peace, and has no effective, autonomous policy for fighting drug trafficking.

Communal state and democratic security

The breakdown of peace dialogues with the FARC in February 2002, the economic crisis, the growing mistrust in politics and politicians and the atmosphere of public skepticism made it easy for an independent candidate to reach the presidency, with the surprising result of 53% of the vote in the first round. The election of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez for the 2002 - 2006 term signifies a decision by the Colombian state to undertake the military route as the solution to the domestic armed conflict.

In particular, the government has developed a legal offensive aimed at

*Graph 6. US Social Aid to Colombia, 1998-2005(e)
(millions US\$)*



modifying the national constitution. This would distance the state from the framework of a democratic system, transforming its foundations of law and legitimacy, so that the political regime would move away from the practices of the liberal democratic model and evolve toward a particular type of corporatism. This effort has failed thanks to the constitutional resistance by magistrates and the public ministry justice ministry .

Democratic security policy

Uribe Vélez's administration based its government strategy on setting in motion the Democratic Security Policy (PSD in Spanish), which "consists of the exercise of an effective authority that follows the rules, contains and dissuades violent elements and dedicates itself to respecting human rights."⁴

The Democratic Security Policy (PSD) includes development of the following objectives: territorial control and defense of national sovereignty, the fight against drug trafficking, the strengthening of the justice system, the development of depressed areas and areas in conflict, the protection and promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law, and an active foreign affairs policy.

The basic emphasis of this policy is its interpretation of the Colombian conflict, according to which, "here what we have is a defiance of terrorism against a community that has been strengthening its democracy more and more from day to day... and I see this in the face of an evolutionary process where democracy is permeating Colombian society. And that leads me to reject the idea of calling this phenomenon a war."⁵ This interpretation tries to eliminate the political nature of the insurgent groups, thus making it coherent with the international "war on terrorism" current after September 11, 2001.

In the war on terrorism, the government posits that citizens should cooperate in a determined manner with the state in this war, given that "security is also a result of the citizenry's efforts. The active participation of citizens and all sectors of civil society in cooperating with administering justice and supporting the authorities is an essential part of strengthening democracy. But above all, citizen cooperation rests on the principle of solidarity, upon which the social state of law is founded."⁶

Thus, since his electoral campaign Uribe Vélez has proposed that "We should all support the police force, basically with information. We should start with a million citizens. Without paramilitarism. With local security fronts in the neighborhoods and commercial centers. Networks of people on watch along the highways and in the fields. All coordinated by the police force which, with this help, will be more effective and totally transparent. A million citizens, lovers of peace and promoters of coexistence....Monday will be *Reward Day* when the government will pay citizens who helped the police the previous week to prevent a terrorist act and capture the culprits."⁷ This aspect, as will be seen later, is very controversial, because it has meant getting civilians involved in the conflict, either as informants or as those accused by informants of being the presumed authors of antipatriotic behavior or terrorists.

In addition, within the framework of the PSD the government defined one of its priorities as adapting the constitutional and regulatory framework to giving the armed forces greater legal capacity in handling public order disturbances. In the Democratic Manifesto, the president put forward the notion that, "we need an antiterrorist statute that will facilitate arrest, capture and searches. Unlike in my student years, today political violence and terrorism are the same thing...."⁸ Once in office as President of

Latin America

the Republic, and taking as an excuse the terrorist attacks of the FARC on August 7, 2002, Uribe Vélez declared a “state of domestic upheaval,”⁹ and then proceeded to dictate the first PSD measures.

Later the executive set in motion measures restricting civil liberties by means of mass arrests,¹⁰ the creation of “rehabilitation and consolidation areas,”¹¹ and constitutional reforms such as the “anti-terrorist statute.”¹² This new legal framework, later declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, set forth three types of measures. The first was the subordination of civil authorities to military authorities, to the point of granting police duties to the military. The second was to restrict the rights of citizens for the purpose of re-securing an area, with the possibility of decreeing curfews, military reserves, and programs for registering the population. An officer would then be empowered to gather and verify information about the homes and regular occupations of people who lived, transited or came into the area. Finally, a coordinating office would be created in the area with the public prosecutor’s office, the attorney general’s office and the military, for the

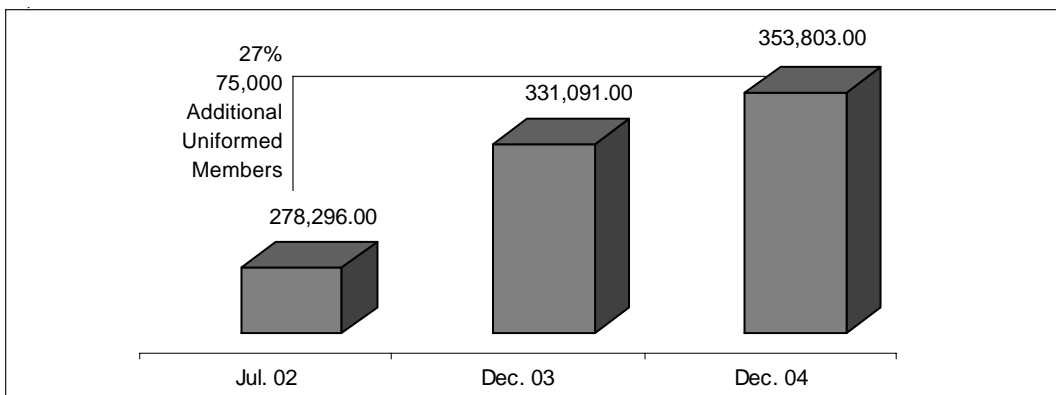
purpose of carrying out operations more effectively.

The PSD continued with the so-called modernization of the armed forces, initiated under Plan Colombia, which aimed at increasing force numbers, operational structures and logistic and operational capacity. **Graph 7** shows a significant increase in uniformed members of the police force, which illustrates the dilemma faced by the current government. Having concentrated its entire strategy on the military front, with a critical social situation, it must now guarantee the resources to sustain this strategy.

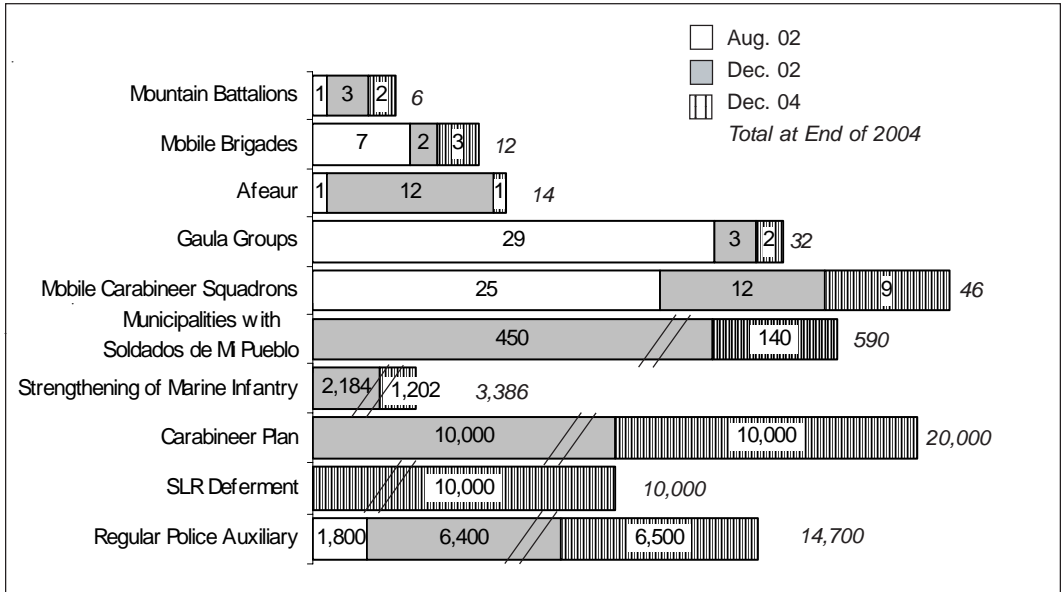
Graph 8 gives an official balance of increased force numbers and new operational units created up to December 31, 2004, showing very clearly the emphasis President Uribe Vélez’s government is placing on strengthening the military establishment.¹³

With respect to operational figures, the government reports are overly optimistic, recording a major increase in fallen combatants among the illegal armed groups. Likewise, they report an increase in arrests and desertions by, and a reduced, almost non-existent number of casualties among government troops. The difficulty with these figures is that they serve

Graph 7. Uniformed Police Force Members



Graph 8. Increments in Fighting Forces



as publicity for the military and therefore need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Critical points of the Democratic Security Policy

The PSD is not a strategy for strengthening human and citizen security as a basic principle of the social foundation of law. It limits itself to consolidating the state's presence militarily, without dealing with civil and institutional consolidation. The central executive branch sets priorities, ignoring local and regional authorities and not concerning itself with safeguarding democratic processes and civil liberties.

Resolving the conflict and building reconciliation require a sustained strengthening of the state, not focusing on quick, spectacular results. Territorial control achieved in this way could be artificial and short-lived; it could come at the cost of the civil population's security,

due to the constant threats it faces and its treatment by the armed forces as an "enemy".

The PSD is escalating the conflict, aggravating the country's humanitarian crisis,¹⁴ and provoking migration, confinement, arbitrary arrests and murders. The civil population has also been turned into a target by each side.

The military strategy has focused on occupying and dislodging the FARC from areas considered their rear guard, without taking into account the factors at play in these areas, such as colonization, illegal crops, fragile ecosystems and the absence of institutions. On the contrary, for these areas there should be an integral policy for dealing with drug trafficking, agrarian affairs and the rapid destruction of the environment.

Aside from this, by mixing together drug trafficking and insurgency in the same bag, the PSD generates confusion that may be at a

Latin America

high cost for the Colombian state. Defeat of drug trafficking may not mean defeat of the insurgency, and in turn, persecution of the insurgency does not guarantee reduced drug trafficking, much less its elimination.

The PSD grants strong primacy to the United States over the Colombian state's autonomy in designing and developing this policy, with overdependence on US ideology, technology and financing. This not only affects sovereignty but also endangers the policy's continuity should foreign aid be withdrawn.¹⁵

By placing a military victory over the guerrillas at the top of the state's priorities, and making the war everyone's affair, involving civilians in military intelligence tactics such as surveillance, control and information — with the aphorism that citizens cannot remain neutral in the conflict — civilians are involved as if they were combatants with commitments and obligations. This broaches the possibility of abandoning or sacrificing the fundamental deliberative nature of democracy. "It would appear necessary then to remove temporarily from the liberal government its constituent instability to ensure public order; it's the old republican argument by which to preserve liberties one must restrict them, and to guarantee democratic stability one must suspend, neutralize minimize or ignore human and citizen rights."¹⁶

Coca cultivation and drug trafficking

Coca cultivation, cocaine production and drug trafficking are today one of the central problems confronting society and the Colombian state. Indeed, the country has become the principal cocaine producer and exporter in the world, and one of the largest for heroin.

The problem of illegal cultivation involves various aspects of the country's political,

social and economic situation. On the one hand, the dynamics of the domestic conflict were transformed when illegal armed groups were linked to drug cultivation, processing and trafficking. On the other hand, a large part of the agricultural system and the peasant economy lack public and social services, production infrastructure and communications, and is without access to credit and marketing for their products. In this context producers have turned to coca and poppy cultivation to earn and survive, even though this is against the law. Money from drug trafficking has touched politics and civil and military authorities at local, regional and national levels, giving rise to unceasing cases of corruption every day.

The problem of coca cultivation, cocaine trafficking and the destination of funds derived from this illegal business has become one of the main pivots of Colombia's international relations. In fact, from before September 11, 2001, after the end of the Cold War, everything indicated that drug trafficking would replace communism as the source of evil.

The problem lies in the growth of cocaine use in the United States, Europe and other emerging markets (Asia and Latin America) and the huge amounts of money handled in this business, which involves, in addition to cultivation and processing, an extensive chain, from raw materials and chemical precursors to banks and financial entities, where the money from this activity is presumably laundered.

From the 1980s the United States has defined what would constitute the basis of its anti-drug policy. This policy puts emphasis on restricting supply (cultivation, production, processing, transporting and trafficking) and not demand (retail distributing and use) — firstly because this restricting takes place outside its borders, and secondly because in budget terms it appears to be more economical. The policy would lead to fewer

available psychoactive substances in consuming countries, higher prices for them, and reduced purity — all of which should reduce consumption.

At the same time, the effect on producing countries would be “reduced prices for illegal cultivation in the production areas, the decreased power of traffickers, containment of the violence generated by drug trafficking in the most sensitive sectors of the population linked to these crops, and reduced environmental destruction generated by illegal plantations in fragile, valuable areas.”¹⁷

The results of the anti-drug policy are not consistent with the initial proposal, and although achieving the goal of reducing cultivated areas is getting closer, thanks to constant spraying, that of reducing the supply of cocaine in the world market is still very far off.

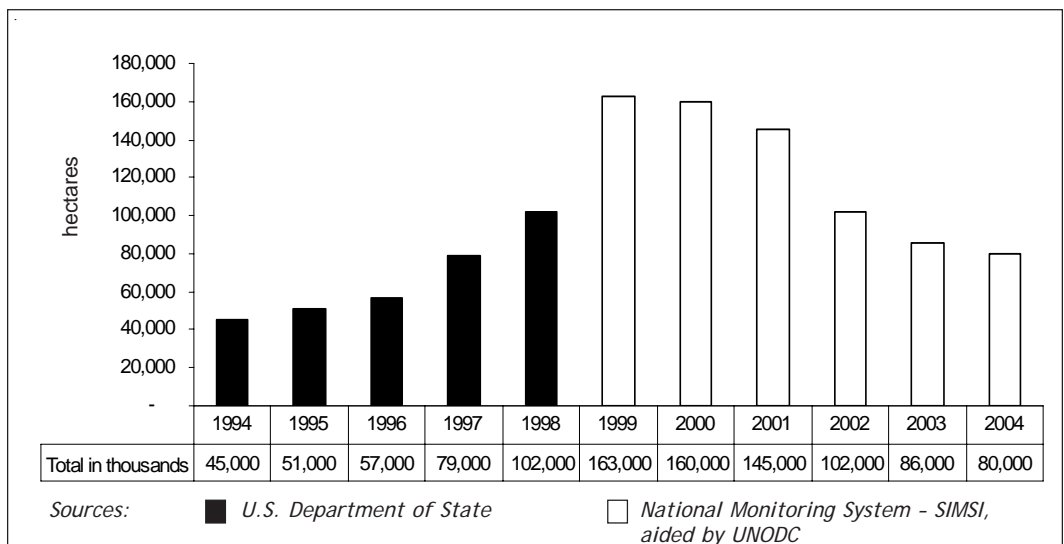
In the case of Colombia, the latest UNODC¹⁸ report shows 80,000 hectares planted to coca for 2004, which according to this source means a reduction of only 6,000

hectares compared to the previous year’s estimates, after having fumigated 136,000 hectares in the same year. (See **Graph 9**) This is like saying that in order to eradicate one hectare of coca, 22.6 hectares must be sprayed, and to wipe out the area currently under plantation, about 1,988,800 hectares would need to be sprayed, which would mean immeasurable social and environmental cost.

The figures and analysis of this report demonstrate a few interesting phenomena. On the one hand, even though the cultivated area diminished, the number of lots smaller than three hectares increased, rising from 50% of the cultivated area to 69%. On the other hand, the number of families linked to coca cultivation also increased from one year to the next. In addition, monitoring showed that coca cultivation has expanded and is found in 23 of the country’s 32 departments.

The anti-drug policy and fumigation are criminalizing small peasant coca producers,

Graph 9. Coca Cultivation in Colombia, 1994-2004 (in hectares)



Latin America

leading to migration and environmental damage. This pattern maintains the classic dynamics of Colombia's colonization process, whereby the peasant "civilizes" an area and then has to move to another, fleeing from persecution and cutting down more forests, which then become pastures that sooner or later end up in the hands of the landowners. Thus the war on drugs focuses on the weakest players, the peasant and indigenous population, without getting to the bottom of the complex network of the illegal drug industry.

These practices allowed for the restructuring of criminal organizations, "organized Colombian drug criminals efficiently diversified production and processing of drugs, while the governments fought it with actions that had no serious effect on the illegal industry or the growing power of domestic traffickers."¹⁹

In conclusion, massive fumigation of illegal crops, after almost two decades and more than 150,000 hectares, has up to now shown major limitations as a mechanism for effective eradication. The effects on the environment and health are ominous. Drug cultivation is a social problem more than a legal problem. The anti-drug policy in use today with Plan Colombia presents a serious weakness by centering its drug war on political and military organizations, overlooking the new characteristics of illegal globalization, with ever-more organized cartels. The guerrillas are not at the core of the drug trafficking problem.

Negotiation between the National Government and AUC paramilitaries

Paramilitary groups, organized under the name of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, emerged with the support and encouragement of the state, dating from the late 1960s. In the 1980s civilian groups began operations to

aid the counterinsurgency effort, with the supposed collusion of the armed forces, until 1989, when the law, which allowed these forces, was revoked. During President Samper's administration, Defense Minister Fernando Botero Zea decreed the creation of the Rural Security Cooperatives (CONVIVIR, in Spanish) which served as a legal umbrella organization for the Self-Defense Forces until they were declared illegal.²⁰

From the subsequent creation of the United Self-Defense Forces in 1997 as a federation of the different regional factions, the AUC has had the most growth in number of combatants and the strongest and bloodiest impact ever on Colombian society. It has reached the point where "today the country is confirming that, after an offensive involving the worst type of criminals, a substantial part of the territory and daily lives of millions of people, as well as the politics, economy and local budgets, in addition to an unknown amount of power and influence in key institutions such as the Congress, is in the hands of paramilitaries."²¹

Following 18 months of dialogue, on July 1, 2004, in Santa Fe de Ralito, formal negotiations were initiated between the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia and the government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. The negotiations were preceded by an announcement by the AUC of a supposed total cease-fire since December 1, 2002, and of the Agreement of Santa Fe de Ralito, signed by the parties on July 15, 2003, establishing an understanding for reaching progressive, total demobilization of the group. The AUC is considered the illegal armed group with the most growth since 1998, and has a presence today in almost all the national territory.

In the negotiations the paramilitaries unceasingly insisted on recognition of the political nature of their organization and their right to legal benefits, something that has

been conceded to other political players in other negotiations. In particular, they hope to avoid extradition to the United States for drug trafficking. This point of view has been promoted by Uribe Vélez's government in the Congress of the Republic and is on the verge of being made into law.

These negotiations signify a quest for the legitimacy of a Colombian state discredited internationally for the supposed relations of state players with the AUC. In addition, with the PSD, the state's decision for a definitive military confrontation with the insurgency makes it unnecessary to activate the paramilitaries and opens the way for their demobilization, at the same time concentrating military efforts on a single enemy, the guerrillas and the FARC. Finally, the paramilitaries' power is so great now, with military, economic and political control over vast regions of the country, that some social sectors are encouraging their reintegration to society and the legalization of the properties they acquired through terror and money from extortion and drug trafficking.

The self-defense forces are now demanding at the negotiation table the country's acknowledgement of their work in containing the insurgency, and proclaimed that "the crimes of the guerrillas and the lack of state presence for decades left civilians no alternative over the last 22 years but to take up arms and defend our lives, liberty, honor and goods with whatever we had at hand, without military training or much less a vocation to fight. However, very shortly we discovered the invaluable solidarity of our Colombian people, who opened their arms to us to join in the fight, and laid on our shoulders a tremendous responsibility for the security and social welfare of their families and themselves, constituting out of nothing a *"de facto state"*, a state lacking legality but not legitimacy, to replace the

absent state. It was never our idea to build this goliath. We had to stand it up and force it to walk out of physical necessity and because God, in our consciences, told us that this was the right road, that the country demanded this sacrifice, and that eventually better times would come, along with the acknowledgement by the official Colombia of *"the other Colombia"* that the self-defense forces helped save and preserve from death, loss of liberty and the Communist scourge."²²

Negotiations with the paramilitaries faced various obstacles before they could get the support of Colombian society and the endorsement of the international community. The first obstacle concerned the inherent incoherency of the paramilitaries' discourse. The promise of a ceasefire has been repeatedly broken and there is evidence that the paramilitaries have continued murdering, extorting from and dislodging the civil population. As Alfredo Rangel stated, "to all of the above must be added the wars between paramilitary groups, which haven't ended, and which have led to hundreds of deaths in the last few months, an ongoing violation of the truce the government has always demanded for initiating and holding peace talks — without the government having made any sort of public warning to those groups who break the truce and continue negotiating."²³

On the other hand, the Self-Defense Forces have continued their criminal activities, especially in relation to cocaine cultivation, processing and marketing. This fact has led the United States to view the negotiations with skepticism, as expressed by its ambassador, who stated, "I have a deeper concern ... I'm not sure that the goal of the self-defense forces is political, or that they have a political program. They have only a narco-terrorism program and a single agenda: destruction."²⁴

Latin America

One very important obstacle is that of judging the crimes committed by the paramilitaries and providing reparations to the victims. The paramilitary leaders have defiantly warned that they will not spend a single day in jail. The national government introduced a bill in 2003 called the "Penal Alternative Law," which had to be quickly retracted because it sanctified absolute impunity, violating international agreements and the very laws of Colombia. To date it is not known how the government will deal with prosecuting the authors of crimes against humanity or if it can grant amnesties and pardons for crimes classified as common crimes under penal law.

Some Conclusions

By making counter-insurgency a priority, the anti-drug and anti-terrorist fight model based on coinciding interests of the US and Colombian governments could mean the strengthening of an excluding, authoritarian political regime linked to illegal mafia-type activities with solid local bases in regions of Colombia.

The long-term perspectives for success of this strategy giving military priority to solving the Colombian armed conflict, as set forth by the Democratic Security Policy of President Uribe Vélez, are not fully clear. The complex, deep-rooted interrelationship between the different illegal armed players and the drug trade gives them enormous economic power and tremendous capacity for long-term resistance. On the other hand, it is not easy for the government to keep up a military operation of this magnitude for very long. Anyway, it has only been the Plan Colombia contribution (financed by the U.S. government) that has made it possible to set up and maintain this operation up to now.

This is the backdrop to negotiations with the AUC and against which Plan Patriot should

be analyzed against. While discussions are held about how to reincorporate into society those who are accused of some of the worst crimes in the country's recent history (probably within a framework of impunity), a major military campaign is being waged in the south against the FARC, with still unfore-seeable results in terms of a solution to the conflict. Nonetheless, the fact is that the humanitarian crisis is getting worse, and even though official statistics show reduced migration numbers, other numbers demonstrate an intensified, worsening confrontation.

The increased number of families and geographic expansion of illegal crops, in spite of the reduced area under cultivation, along with deteriorating social indicators, are evidence of not only the social crisis facing Colombia, but also the failure of the economic model in effect since the start of the 1990s.

Today the role of the international community and international cooperation is essential in helping Colombia resolve its dilemma. It could follow in the footsteps of the US, which has, especially since 1998 and more actively since 2002, supported a solution to the military conflict involving modernizing and operationalizing the armed forces — a solution set in the framework of counterinsurgency and the war on drugs. Currently this cooperation is bolstering the war diplomacy crusade that identifies President Uribe Vélez with the war on terrorism by President Bush's government. But international cooperation is also advanced by universal ethical values that requires the continuation of aid for the growing humanitarian crisis and efforts in support of a political solution to the conflict, even at the risk of going against the current Colombian government. In particular, it should aim at strengthening

the different organized groups in civil society.

European cooperation faces a delicate paradox. On the one hand, it supports political negotiation, but the Uribe government is ruling that out. On the other hand, it pushes for multilateral commercial negotiation with the Andean Community, just when this regional block is facing problems.

In order for the idea of a negotiated solution to succeed, the international community must contribute to making it a serious process, with clear objectives. Its goal must be the end of hostilities and reincorporation of combatants into civil life. This means support for a negotiation agenda with ample participation.

The nature of the Colombian conflict requires making an effort to support and strengthen local and regional social processes aimed at fostering participation, compromise and institutional strengthening in the midst of this conflict. The purpose would be to generate political, cultural, social and economic changes capable of fomenting coexistence and sustainable development.

The idea is to support initiatives from civil society groups and organizations with various purposes, one being to articulate, harmonize and concretize efforts among public, private and communal sectors for building collective regional projects. A second purpose is to

generate sustainable development based on a culture of peace, and a third is to promote participative, pluralistic democratic processes.

Attention must still be paid to the human rights situation, and a priority task will be to maintain pressure on the Colombian government to abide by and implement the 27 recommendations in the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

European Union cooperation must be careful to avoid becoming the social component of the Democratic Security Policy, especially with respect to the peace laboratories. The Uribe Vélez administration, in order to meet its commitment of contributing its share of funds, has taken out a US \$30 million loan from the World Bank for a peace and development program for developing these peace laboratories. However, the government's plan does not fully comply with the strategy formulated by the EU for supporting peace in Colombia.²⁵

Finally, it is very important that international civil society entities set up some sort of system for monitoring and reflecting on the Colombian situation, as their contribution to the dialogue and to construction of an agenda for resolving the Colombian conflict.

Notes

- ¹ Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2002-2006, "Hacia un Estado Comunitario," Presidency of the Republic, National Planning Department, Bogotá, 2002.
- ² Operation Marquetalia was an operation launched by the Colombian army in 1964, where peasant guerrillas of liberal party origin and incipient Communist Party influence were able to break through the net and flee with their families and belongings. This event became the founding myth of the FARC.
- ³ The Plan Patriot, Codhes informa, Boletín informativo de la Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, No 50, Bogotá, August 31, 2004.
- ⁴ Presidency of the Republic, National Planning Department. Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2002-2006, "Hacia un Estado Comunitario," Bogotá, 2002. Page 31.
- ⁵ TALK by Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the

Latin America

Republic of Colombia, in the forum "Is the War being Won?", Bogotá, July 28, 2004.

- ⁶ Presidency of the Republic, National Planning Department, Op. Cit. P. 31.
- ⁷ Democratic manifesto of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, presidential candidate of Colombia, 2002 - 2006, Points 38 and 39. http://www.dnp.gov.co/03_PROD/CONPES/Manifiesto_Democrático.htm#5
- ⁸ Democratic Manifiesto de Álvaro Uribe Vélez, presidential candidate of Colombia, 2002 - 2006. Op. Cit. Point 33.
- ⁹ Decree 1838 of August 11, 2002, establishing the "state of domestic upheaval."
- ¹⁰ The most frequent complaint of arbitrary action with respect to mass arrests is that they were carried out without any prior court order or evidence. On occasions the arrest warrants are written out during or after the arrest, and arrests are made based on the indications of masked men/women or the testimony of reformed guerrilla fighters or members of the informant network. The most recent and most scandalous case is that of sociologist Alejandro Correa de Andreis, assassinated last September 17, after having been detained for a month for supposed ties with the guerrillas. Everything points to this accusation as having cost him his life.
- ¹¹ Decree 2002 issued on September 10, 2002, dictating public order control measures and defining rehabilitation and consolidation areas.
- ¹² Legislative Act No 2 of December 18, 2002. The most controversial points of this statute were: registering of the population, citizen arrests through administrative channels (without prior court orders), granting of police duties to the armed forces, and violation of the right of impunity (interception of communications, violation of correspondence).
- ¹³ In Graph 3, "afeaur" stands for Agrupación de Fuerzas Especiales de Asalto Urbanas (Group of Special Urban Assault Forces).
- ¹⁴ For more examples, consult the periodic bulletins of CODHES at www.codhes.org.co.
- ¹⁵ El Tiempo, September 25, 2004, p 2. This is a medium-term hypothesis, given that the U.S. Congress approved an aid package of US \$580 million for 2005.
- ¹⁶ URIBE DE HINCAPIE, María Teresa. "El Republicanismo Patriótico. Reelección: el embrujo continúa. Segundo año de Gobierno de Álvaro Uribe Vélez." Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo, September 2004, P 15.
- ¹⁷ TOKATLIAN, Juan Gabriel. Globalización, Narcotráfico y Violencia. Siete ensayos sobre Colombia. Editorial Norma, Bogotá, 2000. Page 94.
- ¹⁸ UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AGAINST DRUGS AND CRIME. Colombia. Coca Cultivation Monitoring in 2004. June, 2005.
- ¹⁹ TOKATLIAN, Juan Gabriel. Op. Cit. P 112
- ²⁰ The department where the largest number of CONVIVIR was promoted was Antioquia, where the governor at that time was the current President of the Republic Álvaro Uribe Vélez.
- ²¹ SIERRA, Alvaro, El Tiempo, September 25, 2004, Page 11.
- ²² SPEECH by the Chief of Staff of the AUC, Commander Salvatore Mancuso, at the official opening of negotiations between the national government and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.
- ²³ RANGEL, Alfredo, El Tiempo, November 7, 2003.
- ²⁴ INTERVIEW with Mr. William Wood, Ambassador of the United States of America in Colombia. *Cambio Magazine*, June 28, 2004
- ²⁵ Conpes Document No. 3278. <http://www.dnp.gov.co/archivosWeb/conpes/3278.pdf>

United States Security Cooperation Policy in Latin America

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For many it seems obvious that Latin America almost never appears on US President Bush's government agenda. Many people talk of neglect or say that the policy for the region is on "autopilot". But this is not at all the case, though rare indeed are the occasions in which the Bush administration has expressed its concern for Latin America:

The new threats of the 21st century recognize no borders. Terrorists, drug traffickers, hostage takers and criminal gangs form an antisocial combination that increasingly seeks to destabilize civil societies.

- Donald Rumsfeld, United States Secretary of Defense at a meeting of defense ministers. Quito, November 2004

Terrorists throughout the area of the Southern Command are bombing, murdering, kidnapping, trafficking drugs, transporting weapons, laundering money and smuggling human beings.

- General James Hill, Southern Command, March 2004

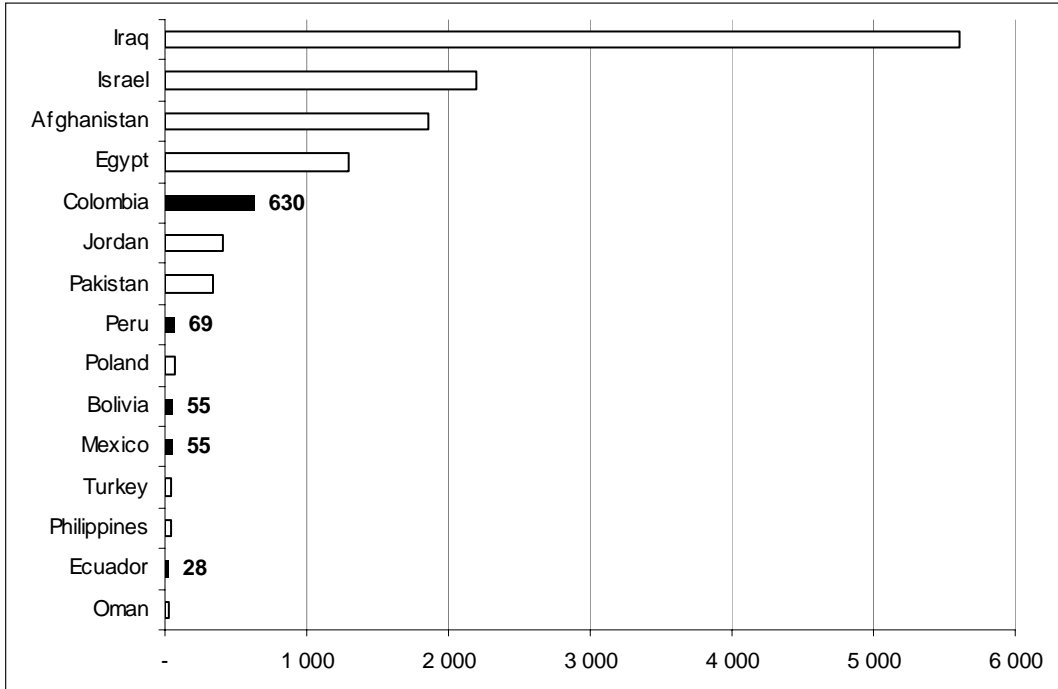
This is why Latin America still ranks, after the six Middle Eastern countries, as the region receiving the most US military and police aid. In fact, of the fifteen top military aid recipient countries in the world, five are Latin American. (See **Graph 10**.)

Latin America receives more US military aid than Europe, Africa, Asia, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia and the Pacific, and heads the world ranking in terms of number of soldiers and police officers receiving training. Between 2001 and 2004 the United States trained 34,525 Colombian soldiers and police officers, more than for any other country in the world with the possible exception of Iraq. On the average almost 40% of all military students trained by the United States were Latin Americans.

Latin America has held this prominent position since the Cold War. Of course the priorities and pretexts have changed, going from anti-Communism, to anti-drug policies to anti-terrorism. But one thing is constant — this military aid has consistently promoted the role of the region's armed forces in domestic policy. Even though the mission of the armed forces is defense against outside threats, the United States has always encouraged Latin American armies to take on

Latin America

*Graph 10. Estimated US Military and Police Aid 2005
Millions of US\$*



missions within their borders, among their own people.

In the era of national security and counter-insurgency doctrine, U.S. instructors taught that the enemy mingles with the civil population, and that it is almost impossible to distinguish between a peaceful reformist and a Communist guerrilla. The School of the Americas was a key piece in that era. Instruction manuals that were used for up to fifteen years recommended espionage in “suspicious political groups,” saying that “these groups must always be considered possible enemy agents”. What happened in Latin America during the Cold War is well known. When the armed forces strengthened their intervention in domestic politics, dictatorships and dirty wars resulted.

The United States did not abandon its military influence within the countries of the region when the Cold War ended. The war on drugs filled the void, giving the region’s armed forces new missions within their own borders, all in the name of banning drugs: forming military reserves, carrying out domestic espionage, tapping telephones, making forced searches, bringing down suspicious aircraft, eradicating crops, patrolling rivers, and in some cases, capturing and interrogating civilians.

These roles are not inherent to the armed forces in US territory. For 130 years, the Posse Comitatus Law in the United States prohibited the intervention of the armed forces in domestic security, except in cases of emergency. It is a law that has worked well. Very differently, however, US military aid

regularly encourages the adoption of military missions that would be in violation of that law.

The War on Terrorism

At present there is already a new domestic threat — terrorism. Perhaps Latin America does not seem to have much to do with the war on terrorism, although Guantánamo and Plan Colombia do form a part of the matter. But the designers of United States security policy for Latin America have left no doubts in anyone's mind that their primary mission in the region is the war on terrorism.

But this war on terrorism does not seem to be very significant in the region. There are only four terrorist groups on the list of foreign terrorist organizations at the State Department, three in Colombia, and what remains of the Luminous Path in Peru. It appears that in some countries there is financing activity by some Muslim groups, especially the Hezbollah, but no active terrorist cells have been found. The presence of two or three known Muslim terrorists has been detected, mainly in Central American countries, and there is speculation about the possibility of terrorists entering the United States along the clandestine routes used by illegal immigrants and drug traffickers. But the answer to these threats is not necessarily military. In fact, the dismantling of clandestine networks is more the work of the investigative police than the armed forces.

So it is not clear what the "war on terrorism" means in a Latin American context. But the current message of the Bush administration is:

The world changed after September 11, and now we are all facing threats without borders or states, and the region's armies must play an active role in administering poorly governed territories.

In the annual document the State Department sends to Congress for justifying its foreign aid budget, the word *terrorism* appears as a justification for military aid in the program descriptions for 16 countries in the hemisphere. In this sense, it mentions:

Aid for antiterrorist programs brought Argentine officers to the United States for valuable antiterrorist training.

The request for Bolivia includes equipment and training for the new Antiterrorist Unit of the Bolivian Army.

Military aid will train Dominican forces to provide them with response capacity against terrorist threats.

The problem here is that an imprecise definition of terrorism could unleash abuse. The Cocaleros blocking highways in Bolivia, and the political party to which they belong — are they terrorists? The Honduran peasants marching and setting up blockades to stop illegal logging of forests — are they terrorists? The Mapuche Indians who ravaged large landed estates in Chile — are they terrorists? When Álvaro Uribe, speaking before a military audience, brands human rights groups as the "mouthpiece of terrorism," is this rhetorical exaggeration or is it a threat?

We do not want non-violent political groups to be the victims of repression in the name of anti-terrorism. We also don't want anything similar happening to states that defy United States policy. For years Cuba has been on the official list of states sponsoring terrorism, although it has been a long time since it has done anything of the sort. Some members of the Bush

Latin America

administration — especially the faction talking about a new “axis of evil” in Latin America — claim that Venezuela is helping the Colombian guerrilla.

Radical populism

But this is just part of the effort to confront what Condoleezza Rice calls “a negative force in the region,” the influence of Hugo Chávez and what Bush’s people call “radical populism”.

As General Hill said:

The traditional threats are now complemented by an emerging threat best described as radical populism. Some leaders in the region are tapping into deep-seated frustrations in order to reinforce their radical positions, inflaming anti-U.S. sentiment.

Chávez heads the list of “radical populist” threats in the region. Also frequently mentioned are Evo Morales and Daniel Ortega. Other elected leftists such as Kirchner, Lula and Vásquez are not on the list — at least, not at the moment.

The concern here is that the security policymakers in Washington may come to see the region’s military as a counterweight to radical populism. We are saying in all the forums in Washington that the “containment” of radical populism is not, and should not be, a goal of U.S. military aid for Latin America. We do not wish to go back to the time when the armed forces were playing a highly political role, moving against civilian leaders who, in their opinion, had violated the constitutional order. I imagine that the vast majority of military officers in the region would not want to take on that role either.

I say this without expressing any opinion on Chávez. We do have some reservations

about some of the steps Hugo Chávez has taken. But a military response to radical populism would make the situation a hundred times worse.

Effective sovereignty

General Hill added that the phenomenon of radical populism is “pitted against states in the region with generally weak institutions and economies in trouble. The resulting fragility of state control could lead to lawless or poorly governed areas and populations.” (See **Box 4**)

This concern over “lawless areas” is something we often hear about. For those in charge of security policy in the White House, the vast empty, forgotten areas of Latin America — strategic jungles, navigable rivers, unpopulated coastlines, often-crossed though unmonitored borders — all are places where the “bad guys” can organize, recruit, look for funding and plan their attacks.

Rumsfeld talks of “seams”, saying that terrorists “find protection in border regions

Box 4. Latin America: “Lawless Areas”



or areas outside the government's reach. They see, check out and look for vulnerable areas with weaknesses and seams in our collective security arrangements that they can take advantage of."

Curiously enough, there is no plan to provide economic aid for governing and extending the rule of law to these forgotten areas. It appears that the Bush administration is not interested in non-military governability. Bush's foreign aid request for 2006 considers a hefty cutback in aid for development and health in the region.

Instead, the Pentagon under the direction of Rumsfeld talks of an emerging doctrine they call "effective sovereignty" — that is, military aid has to help governments in the region exercise sovereignty over their own territory. It seeks to direct military aid to the lawless areas, and to erase the dividing lines between the roles of military and police forces in these areas, giving the military a new role in the domestic politics of the region's countries.

Incipient initiatives

Outside of Colombia, we are barely seeing the start of "effective sovereignty". A third of the region's military aid not going to Colombia has not changed much in the past few years, ranging between about \$300 to \$350 million annually.

However, there are incipient initiatives such as:

- Exorbitant aid for border security in Mexico.
- A new annual exercise, "Panamax", carried out in Panama with the participation of various armed forces in the region, to simulate a coordinated response to a terrorist threat in the Canal.
- In 2006 "Lasting Friendship" begins, a joint operation for strengthening

the coordination and patrol capacity of the region's armed forces. It will start in the Caribbean with the participation of Panama, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the Bahamas.

- The countries that have sent personnel to Iraq are receiving increased military aid, especially El Salvador.
- Many in Bush's administration have also shown their desire to provide more aid to the countries in the region with "*mara*" (gang) problems. But they are still undecided as to what to do, how much aid to assign, if the aid will be military, and what agency will head the program.

The "Brakes"

In spite of these new doctrines and programs, we should not expect much more in the way of short term military aid. There are several "brakes" to the possible expansion of this aid.

First, many of the major countries in Latin America do not share Bush's enthusiasm for the war on terrorism and "effective sovereignty." This was noted in Quito last year. It is difficult to convince leaders who are saying, and rightly so, that they are not interested in creating a new domestic role for their armies, after spending two decades trying to institutionalize civil control over the armed forces and police.

Second, US law itself contains a strong brake. Since 2003, it has been illegal to give non-antinarotics military aid to countries not guaranteeing immunity for US soldiers in the International Criminal Court. Now there are eleven Latin American countries that cannot receive aid outside of their anti-drug budgets. (See Box 5.) And this has reduced both military aid increments and the number of trainees throughout the region.

Latin America

There may perhaps be a third, even stronger “brake” — there is simply no money. After two major tax cuts, thanks to George W. Bush, and given the cost of the war in Iraq, the US budget has racked up an enormous deficit of more than 4.5% of the GDP. This has been criticized by the International Monetary Fund itself.

Box 5. Countries not permitted to receive non-antidrug military aid until they grant International Criminal Court immunity to US military personnel

- Barbados
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- Paraguay
- Peru
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

Colombia

In spite of the above, Colombian aid will probably not vary significantly in 2006. This does not mean that it will increase, though; but possibly 2007 will bring the first cuts in this budget.

In Colombia, antiterrorism — or actually, counterinsurgency — is the primary mission. From the start of Plan Colombia in 2001, Colombia has received \$4 billion in U.S. military aid, of which 80% (\$3.2 billion) has been assigned to Colombia’s armed forces and national police.

In addition to the record level of crop spraying, the United States is supporting a wide variety of military activities that would

have been unthinkable in 2000. For two years now a program of more than \$100 million has sought to support military units defending the Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline, which is partially owned by Occidental Petroleum of Los Angeles.

The United States has financed a battalion of commandos whose mission is to seek out guerrilla group leaders. US personnel have helped create mobile brigades and special forces, marine infantry river units, and other special units throughout the country. Above all, there is very strong support for the Patriot Plan, a massive offensive with already one and a half years of fighting in the old guerrilla rear in the country’s southern jungles. Since this offensive requires a large presence of soldiers and US contractors for logistic support, advice, and intelligence, last year Congress approved a Southern Command request to double the number of US soldiers in Colombia from 400 to 800, and to increase the number of contractors from 400 to 600.

And what lies ahead? There is some disappointment in Washington over the results of Plan Colombia. The price and availability of cocaine has not changed after five years, and crop spraying was not able to reduce coca production last year. Although Uribe’s administration has been able to lower the incidence of violence, this is not due to US military aid, which had centered on eradicating crops and protecting oil pipelines. But the figures on violence have not improved this year, because the guerrillas have stepped up the pace of their activities.

The Bush administration is asking for a 2006 Colombian budget similar to that of 2003, about \$750 million, with \$600 million for the armed forces and police. This budget proposal will start debate in House committees, and there will be attempts by the Democrats to cut military aid on the floor in Congress. There is no knowing if

these attempts will succeed this year, but that is a possibility. What is certain is that there will be a heavy debate.

NGOs dealing with US policy in Colombia have drawn up a document called “Blueprint for a New Colombia Policy” giving ten detailed recommendations on how a new strategy for the region should look.¹

Economic aid opposition

To sum up, the question must be asked, “Why is the emphasis of US aid military?” Why is it so difficult to sell the idea of economic and social aid in Washington?

I believe it is because of a deeply rooted ethic in the United States that disdains the act of giving without receiving anything in exchange. It is seen as dependence rather than charity. This is combined with a strong disbelief in the possibility of the state playing a true role in national development.

This ethic is reflected in a very common attitude towards foreign aid. When right-wing ex-Senator Jesse Helms described aid as “money thrown down a rat hole,” he

was speaking for a hefty segment of US society.

But the Marshall Plan was not a rat hole. Neither was the Green Revolution or the Alliance for Progress. To sell Washington on the idea of generosity in foreign aid, we have to talk more about the benefits this brings to US citizens. This money has to be seen not as aid — a word with a bad connotation in the US — but as an investment: an investment in stability, friendship and goodwill, as well as in security.

The US is learning the hard lesson in Iraq that there is a big difference between occupying a territory militarily and really governing it. If the Bush administration really wants to face the challenge of the lawless areas in Latin America, it is going to have to make sure that this lesson has been learned and applied. That would mean a much less militarized approach, strengthening civilian capacities without creating new roles for the armed forces in the domestic politics of Latin American countries.

Note:

¹ Although a printed Spanish version is not available, a digital Spanish version can be found at the Center for International Policy webpage (www.ciponline.org/colombia/0503blueprintesp.pdf).

International Cooperation and Security

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Normally, when we think of “cooperation” we are thinking of its economic component — donations or “soft” loans — and a one-way process in which there are contributing countries or institutions on one side, and recipient countries and institutions, or counterparts, as they are sometime euphemistically called, on the other. A look at global and Latin American problems in the broadest context of international agendas shows us this perception of cooperation is obviously rather limiting and reductionist.

We therefore need to conceive of international cooperation as something necessarily going beyond this reductionist approach. Seeing it in the multifaceted space of international agendas presupposes giving relevance not only to its economic aspect, but also its political aspect. And seeing it, also, in the light of the possibility of reciprocal interaction, may get beyond the classic one-way aid scheme of “contributors-recipients.”

Let us look, first, at the complex issue of the region’s security. The security threats posed by the Colombia situation have been discussed clearly and with a profusion of quality information. For instance, North American military aid has been mentioned

within the context of Colombia’s domestic conflict as one of the factors that has made its resolution problematic.

However, if we look beyond this specific reality, we can see that in the wider Latin American context, security threats are more diverse and complex. Here it is the endogenous factors that have the most weight, even when we think of military expenditures and, in particular, arms purchases. Thus, Latin American military purchases reached more or less \$20 billion in 2004. In a single year, this figure exceeded North American military aid to Colombia over a five-year period, with interest. The arms expansion, on the contrary, is concentrated outside of Colombia, in three South American countries: Brazil, Chile and Venezuela. This is undoubtedly a relevant fact that has, indeed, both endogenous and exogenous explanations that go beyond foreign military aid; and we are talking undoubtedly about different, larger magnitudes.

A central aspect of the region’s security has to do with lawlessness deriving from institutional crises, incompetent rulers and popular uprisings leading to situations like the ones experienced in several of the region’s countries, such as Bolivia and Ecuador last

year. We are apparently talking here about the concept of security in its wider sense of “comprehensive security,” since it deals with situations having direct impact on the daily realities of the people, on the predictability of their daily lives. It is more than obvious that the dire indicators of income distribution, and the fact that more than 50% of the Latin American population lives in poverty, constitute a threat to the region’s collective security.

The set of factors conspiring today to constitute threats to security is multiple. There is a situation we could classify as an “emergency” of long-term institutional crises, and a lack of clear directions for which the answer, without a doubt, is not international cooperation. International cooperation cannot be seen as the magic wand for everything or the way to respond to problems stemming from the black holes that abound in our societies and institutions. Indeed, if this were so, we could talk about the infinite number of needs in our societies and how international cooperation might be helpful.

Nevertheless, I would like to put forth a different point of view here, which is not necessarily antagonistic but is, undoubtedly, distinct. It is important to point out that in addition to the catalogue of critical aspects in the historical, institutional, economic and social evolution of our countries, there is another list, a parallel list, leading in a diametrically opposed direction. And the fact is, developments have been going reasonably well for Latin America in the past few years. Not everything is poorly done in Latin America and it is good to say this. I would like to summarize, briefly, some aspects of reality I feel should be the subject of discussion and analysis.

There are four important aspects that, in my opinion, come under the “credit” and not

“debit” ledger in the situation we see in Latin America nowadays, and which are directly related to the issue of security.

1. The first of these is that *the major focal points of global tension*, happily, are not found in Latin America nowadays. There are, obviously, focal points of tension in the Latin American region. Who has not thought of Haiti’s institutional and humanitarian situation and, of course, the crisis — not only political — of our brothers in Bolivia? In spite of this, we know that the large focal points of tension are in other regions of the world. The critical news items on CNN every day are generally not about Latin American countries. This single fact means that we in Latin America can think of ourselves as being better off than just being a “recipient” of international cooperation; we can think of ourselves as a contributor to global political and economic cooperation. This approach is absolutely essential and worth highlighting.
2. In the last few years Latin America has started to become an international player with some weight in setting the global security agenda. This is clear, for instance, in areas such as the banning of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the search for new ways to improve and perfect mechanisms for ensuring the pacific use of nuclear energy, and, of course, the aspects found in the almost constitutional basis of organizations like the OAS. This organization, in spite of its crisis, has the explicit goal of controlling defense spending among its member countries. Thus, Latin America constitutes a pivotal point of reference for this issue on the global scene, together with Europe, the other region in the world where there

Latin America

is a substantial degree of consistency and coherence anchored in multilateralism. Obviously our region carries much less weight, but its strategic sense leads reasonably to a direction that sustains and is able to sustain political and economic cooperation in terms of a global approach to security and peace.

3. Third, democracy. Latin American democracy is in a state of crisis, and we know it. Large numbers of citizens have lost their confidence in it or would eventually be willing to concede to other types of political processes for the sake of their material well-being. To a certain extent, this is to be expected after years of deferential political life. However, I would venture to say that this democracy, so accurately and justly criticized, is not just “formal”. Some 25-30 years ago the scenario for the region was of systematic, massive human rights violations in all respects: forced “disappearances,” torture, limited freedom of expression, etc. Today the scenario is different — not perfect, but, yes, reasonably better. It is a context in which established governments may find themselves in a crisis responding to social movements, but within the framework of democracy. These social movements would have been repressed 20 or 30 years ago with blood and fire, ending political instability with a stroke of the pen and imposing false “governability” sustained by fear and repression.

In this setting of weak, harried democracies, it is significant that the crisis in the Andean countries has been generating democratic institutions that play a very positive role in handling the difficulties we are facing. Obviously these institutions — such as ombudsman offices or constitutional

courts — are not enough for the size of the region’s political crisis. But nobody can deny that in difficult situations like those facing Colombia, Peru and now Bolivia, the institutions established over the last ten years, such as ombudsman’s offices or constitutional courts, have played a very important role in defending values and democratic principles, as well as preserving spaces that may find themselves threatened under specific circumstances. Of course, this is somewhat limited for handling the demands and needs faced by democratic institutions.

4. The fourth aspect that I should mention, though briefly, concerns the efforts made in Latin America and in particular South America to achieve economic, physical, and, eventually, political integration. Much has been said and written on this, so I won’t do more than mention it as one of enormous importance and weight about which significant progress has been made — although still insufficient — in the last decade.

These four aspects have not been chosen at random but rather in relation to a series of social, political and economic considerations. They mark the route as well as short and medium-term tendencies. But the important thing is to note that these are aspects of reality that must be explicitly incorporated into the international cooperation agenda — but not in the “classic” sense, where some give, on the one hand, and others receive, on the other. But rather in the sense that they may lead to recovering and stimulating the self-respect of a continent that not only has to look at the models of other countries and regions, but also has to tell itself, “we have been doing something for the last 25-30 years”.

This leads to the building of an approach to political cooperation that makes comprehensive security a fundamental ingredient. Latin America should be not only a recipient region for aid, but also a partner and counterpart in a global security agenda in which crucial items such as the collective defense of democracy and multilateralism are important for the Latin America of today.

In Latin America there are lines of action that must be reinforced. Cooperation should not be seen as a kind of life-saver to offset situations and tendencies that are adverse,

destructive and erosive of peace, democracy and the principles that are apparently in crisis. On the contrary, it should provide reinforcement, consolidation and strengthening of existing institutions, which need to be improved and made more efficient. It should also go into positive processes that, in many cases, we Latin Americans have to demonstrate.

Nowadays gloom tends to mark our days. Nevertheless, the path we have is one of light and this is what we must reinforce.