

Plan Colombia and the Andean Regional Initiative

The Ups and Downs of a Policy

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, one of the issues that have contributed most significantly to defining Colombian political perspectives and its international relations, especially with the United States and the countries of the Andean Region, is the so-called Plan Colombia. The most ambitious plan ever of U.S. government cooperation with Colombia, through which an enormous military, financial, and political effort will be put into place to eradicate the production of illicit crops, cocaine and heroin, will have resounding consequences for the configuration of Colombian policy *vis-à-vis* these crops. In a very significant way, it will also affect “irregular” organizations, which challenge the country’s institutional stability through armed struggle.

It becomes clear that a plan of this magnitude will also affect Colombian perspectives at the international level regarding both aspects of the conflict. Within the realm of possibilities, is the expansion of illicit crops to neighboring countries, to varying degrees of course, as is the possibility of the relative failure of the Plan in Colombia. This will result in new orientations in U.S. policy towards the country.

To substantiate my arguments, I would like to touch on several topics, the first referring to the significant changes that have taken place in the structure of narco-trafficking. I will begin with the first half of the 1990s, a period characterized principally by the dismantling of the so-called Cali and Medellín “cartels” - the major axis for the production and export of illicit drugs. The second topic describes how changes in narco-trafficking organizations have, at the same time, been accompanied by modifications in the overall thrust of political action - illegal business managers have established alliances with numerous landowners and other powerful social sectors in order to finance armed paramilitary organizations of the extreme right. On a parallel track, a third process is related to the changes in the demand structure for illicit drugs. This change is identified by the role such drugs play in the financing of irregular organizations and the war in Colombia. The fourth is a brief description of the nature of Plan Colombia and its relationship to President Andrés Pastrana’s

(1998-2002) original proposal. The fifth refers to President George W. Bush's response to similar demands presented by the Andean countries, articulated in the Regional Andean Initiative. And finally, I will speculate about several possible perspectives that these new initiatives may generate, especially in reference to their organizational dynamic and their effects in the region, above all in Colombia.

Changes in Narco-trafficking Structures in Colombia

The decline of the large Colombian organizations, consequence of the death of Pablo Escobar, the capture of the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, and the relatively erratic survival of the so-called "Cartel" of the North of Valle, has resulted fundamentally in a profound change in the composition of these organizations.¹ Instead of a monopolistic structure, one encounters fragmented organizations whose size fluctuates between fifteen and twenty-five members, to the point that the National Police calculate that there may be between two and three hundred groups of Colombian traffickers.

Another important change is related to the physiognomy of the organizations; they involve young drug traffickers, better educated than their predecessors, relatively inconspicuous, who have diversified routes and export techniques that are difficult to detect. For this reason, their dismantling and capture is much more problematic.²

Parallel to this fragmentation, there has been a notable increase in the area under cultivation, and consequentially, in the supply of cocaine and heroin. In the past four years, an area of 35,000 hectares sown with coca in Colombia has expanded to 160,000 hectares, the latest figure recorded, and 6,200 hectares of poppy. This recent increase has coincided *grosso modo* with the number of hectares fumigated under Plan Colombia, so that for each hectare fumigated, another comes into production.

¹ In this section, I am using the work of López Restrepo and Camacho Guizado, 2001; and Pécaut, 2001.

² El Tiempo, September 9, 2001.

The new traffickers have strengthened former as well as new links with international organizations, especially in Mexico and Europe. Regarding Mexico, it is interesting to note that the Colombians, given the magnitude and size of their organizations, lack the operational capacity to control the entire marketing cycle. This has resulted in a process of delegation whereby the Mexican organizations take on significant responsibilities for sales in the United States. As a result, Colombian organizations partially forfeit this portion of value added in order to guarantee their security and to avoid capture and/or extradition. And given that they cannot administer the immense fortunes derived from increased production, they multiply links with European organizations, as has been documented by the Drugs Observatory of the European Union. Deals with Russian, Polish and Spanish mafias have been demonstrated. The advantages are evident since the European markets are highly solvent and ensure much higher prices for cocaine and heroin.

On the other hand, and as a result of lessons learned from the failures of their predecessors, they do not try, at least not directly, to influence national policy. In this sense, they are not political enemies of the Colombian state. The new organizations are, above all, forms of highly organized economic delinquency; however, by defending their business, they do not represent a direct political threat to the national government, as did the former powerful entrepreneurs of the business who, either through narco-terrorism or through penetration of state structures, confronted and accelerated the dismantling of the state itself. The new entrepreneurs are fundamentally rich, powerful, and organized delinquents who shun political activity.

Narco-trafficking and Violence

It is not implied in this analysis that drug traffickers are totally absent from national politics. Rather, involvement in this terrain occurs through their activities as financiers of extreme right-wing paramilitary organizations. Contrary to their predecessors, who acted as isolated groups of illegal businessmen defending private commercial interests, the most noteworthy form of political action of present-day drug dealers consists of establishing relations with the

wealthy and powerful of society who respond to guerrilla threats by organizing and financing the right-wing paramilitary. This kind of alliance is useful not only for protecting their fortunes as owners of land and other property, but also to seek legitimacy as defenders of the interests of the dominant classes in Colombia. There are many legal business people who consider an alliance with drug traffickers as the preferred option for confronting threats directed at them by insurgent organizations.

In this sense, the political role of narco-trafficking has been displaced: no longer is it the action of the narco-terrorist who plants a bomb, or kills state employees, journalists, or political leaders who oppose him; nor is it the person who tries to penetrate the State in order to influence political decisions in his favor. Although such activity is still visible, it happens with much less force than previously. Today's threat is of another kind, involving, basically but not exclusively, the creation of a third armed force in the conflict, a force designed to confront insurgent groups and whose preferred method consists of massacring peasants and social leaders whom the paramilitary suspect of being auxiliaries of the guerrilla.

Paradoxically, these organizations, while pretending to support state institutionality and the existing political regime, have moved over to the side of terrorism with their criminal activity. The result is increasing threats to the very institutionality and order they propose to defend. Both the Colombian and U.S. governments have recognized this fact:

A wealth of evidence exists to demonstrate that the self-defense groups contribute to the degradation of the Colombian situation by attacking the civilian population, especially peasants and the poorest. Although not well known, the self defense groups also attack functionaries of the state and political leaders [...] The assassination of civilians and so-called massacres, combined with other forms of terror and attack against the civilian population, are recognized war strategies of the self defense groups and constitute violations of International Humanitarian Law [...] They resort on many occasions

to the horrific practice of massacre; they assassinate and provoke the disappearance and displacement of thousands of defenseless civilians, especially unarmed peasants, workers, and other people living in rural areas. The self-defense groups and the guerrillas justify the killing of civilians by defining them as adversaries and consequently, as military objects.³

New Forms of Demand

Such processes have been simultaneously accompanied by a phenomenon involving changes in the international demand structure for cocaine and heroin. Here, the most important change to be observed is the intensification and diversification of markets. Demand in the United States has tended to decrease, as declared by the U.S. Department of State:

We have seen positive results from our collective efforts. According to present calculations, existing levels of consumption (that is to say, use of an illicit drug during the previous month) among people 12 years old and over stands at nearly 13.9 millions US citizens, or 6.4 percent of the population. This figure represents a decrease of more than 50 percent since 1979 when 14.1 percent of U.S. citizens were defined as drug users.⁴

At the same time, European demand is on the rise and Colombian exporters are increasingly privileging export to these markets. In Colombia, on the other hand, demand has diversified. What in previous years was mainly the purchase of production by narco-traffickers for export, as an economic activity, has been radically transformed.

Today in Colombia a three-pronged demand model has, in effect, been consolidated. Firstly, there is the traditional type developed directly by drug

³ Office of the Vice President of the Republic, Observatory for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, 2000, pp.3-4.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, *Drugs, Data and statistics* www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugabuse/toc.html

traffickers in their role as business people. Secondly, the relatively marginal activity of the FARC who impose taxes on direct producers and first-rung intermediaries in the commercial chain has been transformed today into pressure which, united to the third, that of paramilitary groups presently organized under the banner of the so-called AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*), increasingly drives the dynamic of cocaine and heroin production.⁵ From income received in this fashion, the irregular organizations finance their troops, and more significantly, they acquire arms for their struggle.

As a result, Colombian drug trafficking is now linked not only with consumer markets, but also has well established relations with international organizations involved in the illegal arms trade. In this way, two of the most powerful worldwide mafias are linked. In recent years, therefore, illicit drugs have become fundamental for fuelling the internal Colombian conflict and have put the country on the radar screen of the justice systems of other countries and of international justice organizations.

Plan Colombia

These fundamental modifications in the structure, dynamics, and significance of the drug trade in Colombia are at the root of changes witnessed in U.S. policy towards Colombia. After the decade of the 1970s, due to crop development and the export of marijuana to the United States, and later with the increased production and export of cocaine, the central policy of the United States towards Colombia has been to exert constant pressure for the eradication of these crops and suspension of their shipment.⁶ Nevertheless, pressure for change in internal political configurations did not constitute a fundamental part of this policy.

Only after accusations indicating that the election of President Ernesto Samper appeared to have been favored by financing from the Cali “cartel,” did the Bill Clinton administration opt for toughening its policy. As such, it

⁵ Aranguren, 2001.

⁶ Camacho, 1988; Tokatlian, 1997 and 2001

proceeded to decertify Colombia on two occasions, revoke President Samper's visa, and radicalize its criticisms of the Colombian government. As part of the policy for the direct fight against drugs, given the changes described in the nature of the narco-trafficking organizations, the Clinton administration proceeded to strengthen the Colombian National Police Force and to build up its capacity for the task of eradicating the production of coca and heroin by means of aerial fumigation.

With the arrival of Andrés Pastrana in the Presidency in 1998, U.S. policy underwent another modification. Pastrana publicly presented his government's Development Plan, "Change in order to Build Peace, 1998-2002," which in essence constituted the principle axis of presidential policy. The heart of the Plan was based on recognition of the need for economic development as the basis for achieving peace; for institutional strengthening; for human capital development through education; for the strengthening of social capital through the promotion of associative enterprises; defense of the environment; and the substitution of illicit crops.

My purpose is not to go into details concerning the process that led to Pastrana's development plan being subjected to fundamental changes during negotiations between the Colombian and United States governments, changes based on requests for funding from the former and increasingly direct pressure from the latter.⁷ Suffice it to say that there were significant differences between the original versions and the final result known today as Plan Colombia. The first version, included in the development plan as Plan Colombia, "pointed out that the policy for peace involved political reform, negotiation with armed groups, and investments and actions for peace, among which 'the putting in place of a special plan for economic, social and environmental reconstruction in areas most affected by the conflict was included in Plan Colombia'".⁸ Regarding illicit crop policy, the Plan contemplated that:

⁷ See details in García, 2001 and Ramírez 2001.

⁸ García, 2001, p. 200.

The government has structured Plan Colombia to push forward action on three fronts: substitution of illicit crops by means of alternative development programs, attention to the problem of the displaced, and priority and focalized attention in areas where violence has become critical.⁹

Later on, based on its presentation to the U.S. Department of State and on suggestions from functionaries, the Plan underwent substantial modifications. In reality, the version submitted to the U.S. Senate is the “Plan for Peace, Prosperity and Strengthening of the State”,¹⁰ which in synthesis includes the following ten strategies:

- 1 Development of policies to deal with employment, to strengthen the state’s tax-collection capacity, and to expand international trade, accompanied by improved access to external markets, a crucial factor in the modernization of Colombia’s economic base.
2. Application of an austerity plan combined with fiscal and financial adjustments in order to promote economic activity and to recover Colombia’s prestige in international financial markets.
3. Initiation of peace negotiations with insurgent groups based on territorial integrity, democracy, and human rights, in such a way that it becomes possible to develop the rule of law and the struggle against narco-trafficking.
4. Implementation of a program for restructuring and modernizing the Armed Forces and Police in order to guarantee the rule of law and to provide security throughout the nation, all the while ensuring strict adherence to human rights and International Humanitarian Law.
5. Development of a plan for strengthening the justice system and human rights, with the objective of reaffirming the rule of law and of assuring equal and impartial justice for all.

⁹ García, 2001, p. 200.

¹⁰ During the first days of 2000, Andrés Pastrana presented the Plan to the European Union and the government of Japan. In this version, emphasis on military aspects was blurred, the order of priorities was modified and economic and social development took precedence over the anti-narcotics struggle. Presidencia de la República, 1999.

6. Implementation of an anti-narcotics strategy, together with other countries affected by the problem, in order to combat all links in the illicit drug cycle and to prevent the product of this illicit trade from fuelling the violence of the insurgent and other armed organizations.
7. Support for alternative development by implementing agricultural proposals and viable economic ventures that include protection of the environment in areas of tropical forest, and the fight against the expansion of illicit crops in the Amazon Basin and in vast areas of natural parks. The strategy includes sustainable, integral, and participatory production projects, and provides special attention to regions that combine a high incidence of conflict with low levels of state presence, fragile levels of social capital, and serious degradation of the environment, such as the Magdalena Medio, the Colombian Macizo, and the south-western part of Colombia.
8. Encouragement of increased social participation in programs developed by local governments, committing communities to anti-corruption initiatives and constant pressure on armed actors, so that kidnapping, violence, and internal displacement of individuals and communities can be overcome. This strategy includes collaboration with local business people and labor groups with the goal of promoting innovative production models and the strengthening of formal and non-formal institutions that encourage change in cultural norms fomenting violence. It also contemplates the promotion of pedagogical mechanisms and programs in order to increase tolerance, essential values of peaceful coexistence, and participation in public affairs.
9. Implementation of a program of human development that guarantees appropriate health and educational services for all vulnerable groups of the Colombian population.
10. Emphasis on international co-responsibility regarding the drug problem, integrated actions, and balanced treatment of all the links in the chain. This strategy considers that the role of the international community is extremely important in the peace process, in

accordance with the terms of International Law, and with the consent of the Colombian government.

In order to put the Plan into practice, the Colombian government designed a financial strategy, the total cost of which is 7.5 million dollars with the Colombian government providing 4.0 million, the United States 1.58 billion, multilateral agencies 1.0 billion, and Europe and other countries 1.0 billion.

Later on, and due especially to pressures from the Republican lobby in the U.S. Congress and from the Clinton administration, the Plan underwent substantial changes. In essence, what had been a development plan was transformed primarily into an anti-narcotics strategy. The eradication of illicit crops, which had been the exclusive duty of the National Police, was reinforced by the conformation of three anti-narcotics battalions for the Armed Forces with the corresponding military equipment - helicopters, planes, arms, munitions and other complementary resources - charged with confronting irregular armed groups protecting illicit crops.

The Plan's anti-narcotics strategy can be summed up under the following objectives:

1. Strengthen the fight against narco-trafficking and dismantle its organizations through integrated efforts directed by the Armed Forces: (1) combat illicit crop production through continuous and systematic action by the Army and Police especially in Putumayo and the south of the country, fortifying the capacity of the Police to eradicate such crops; (2) establish military control over the south of the country for the purpose of eradication [...]; (3) re-establish government control over key drug-producing areas.
2. Strengthen the justice system and fight corruption: (1) strengthen the institutions of the Attorney General's office, the courts, the Ombudsman's office, and especially human rights units; (2) reinforce and train technical investigation units; (3)

support anti-corruption groups [...]; (4) reform the incarceration system; (5) apply extradition laws; and (6) implement a proposal to use verbal testimony in criminal cases [...] and elaborate rules for criminal procedures [...]

3. Neutralize the narco-traffickers' financial system and confiscate their resources: (1) strengthen anti-contraband efforts; (2) undertake an aggressive program for the confiscation of assets; (3) freeze and confiscate bank accounts and assets in Colombia and the exterior.
4. Neutralize and combat perpetrators of violence allied with narco-traffickers: (1) increase security against kidnapping, extortion and terrorism; (2) prevent the acquisition of arms by those groups benefiting from the drug trade, through coordinated international efforts.
5. Integrate national initiatives with regional and international efforts: (1) share information and intelligence with other security agencies in the country; (2) support and coordinate with regional and international operations and efforts.
6. Strengthen and extend alternative development plans in areas affected by narco-trafficking: (1) offer opportunities for alternative employment and social services to the population living in areas of cultivation; (2) promote mass information campaigns concerning the danger of illicit drugs.¹¹

Transformations in the Plan

An examination of these objectives and the priority assigned to them in the Plan, reveals that the first modification suffered by the Colombian government initiative was the transformation of a development plan into a primarily anti-narcotics plan.¹² In 2000, the U.S. Congress approved the sum of 1.3 billion dollars for the Andean Region, of which 862.3 million were

¹¹ Colombia, Office of the President of the Republic, 1999.

¹² Details on designated amounts and component parts are to be found in Desde Abajo, 2001.

designated to Colombia (the remainder going to Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia). Of the amount assigned to Colombia, 519.2 million (60%) constitutes new assistance for the Colombian Military and 123.1 million (14%) for the National Police. The remainder, 218 million, is reserved for alternative development, support of the displaced population, judicial reform, the strengthening of the judicial system, and the promotion of human rights.

The largest part of the military assistance is designated to the financing of three anti-narcotics battalions, the provision of Black Hawk and Huey helicopters with their respective equipment, and the supply of parts. The Police are also to receive helicopters of both varieties. In addition, the package contemplates technical assistance for the training of the battalions and the handling of the aircraft. To this end, the presence of up to 300 military personnel and up to 500 U.S civilians under contract is authorized.

Objective four of the anti-narcotics strategy is key to understanding how the transition from a policy of crop substitution and alternative development to a military strategy to fight insurgent groups took place. By signaling the functions, responsibilities, and resources assigned to different government departments, it becomes clear that the Armed Forces were primarily assigned the task of combating insurgents, paramilitary groups, and criminal organizations, as top priority. Recalling that the U.S. government had been insisting on the characterization of the insurgency as 'narco-guerrillas',¹³ the significance of this militarization of the anti-narcotics struggle is well understood.

In synthesis, the new strategy has two dimensions: on the one hand, it is a question of preventing the FARC from protecting illicit crops or from supposedly defending their own crops, from which they obtain a substantial part of their income; and on the other, it is an attempt to reduce this organization's sources of funding. Later on, due to the growth of the paramilitary organizations, and to their own recognition that they also generate profits from narco-trafficking and control production areas, the U.S. and Colombian authorities proposed that

¹³ Camacho, 1988.

the radius of the Plan be broadened in order to direct it against such organizations. Until now, however, aerial fumigation has been concentrated in the area of Putumayo, a stronghold of the FARC.

Since the end of the year 2001, given the worsening of the armed conflict, President Pastrana insisted that the destination of assistance contemplated in the Plan should not be limited exclusively to combating narco-trafficking. In practice this meant that the Plan's entire military, logistical and financial apparatus could be reoriented to the counter-insurgency struggle. Pastrana's arguments were designed to prove to the United States that the Colombian guerrillas' terrorist activity affects the export of Colombian oil to the United States (Colombia occupies the 10th place in the orders of suppliers of crude to the U.S.). Therefore, Pastrana requested that U.S. military personnel trained Colombians in the protection of oil installations, several of which are owned by American companies.¹⁴ One could speculate about whether these arguments - an appeal to concrete business interests instead of the traditional rhetoric about the war on drugs, political stability, and peace in Colombia - will bear fruit. In any case, this new twist in reasoning was noteworthy.

Given that this modification implied a change in the original legal provisions of the U.S. Congress, debates within this body intensified in 2002 and the Colombian Ambassador in Washington, Luis Alberto Moreno (1998 to date) took forceful initiatives in this regard.¹⁵

Although it is early to make a concrete prognosis, two historical facts indicate that this tendency may be the route to be followed. On the one hand, the existence of a waiver, by which the President of the United States can bypass, with justification, the ban on providing funds to units of the Armed Forces accused of involvement in human rights violations, may be one path for introducing new exceptions to the original limits of the Plan. And a worsening of the conflict in Colombia could very well justify such a measure.

¹⁴ World Associated Press, January 23, 2002.

¹⁵ El Espectador, 5A, January 20, 2002.

Secondly, two significant studies point in the same direction. One of them from the Rand Corporation, an influential think-tank of United States researchers,¹⁶ suggests that the United States ought to reconsider whether the distinction between anti-narcotics policies and counter-insurgency policies is sustainable, and if Colombia and its allies will be successful in the war against drugs if the Colombian government cannot exert territorial control. As a consequence, according to the authors of the study, the main effort of the Colombian government should be directed towards overcoming a focus on criminality related to drugs and should substitute it for a political-military strategy.¹⁷ The other study, authored at the Hoover Organization, another influential think-tank shaping U.S. policy, puts forward a similar point of view. According to this study, the principle weakness of U.S. policy towards Colombia is the separation between the anti-narcotics and the counter-insurgency struggle. The authors maintain that the only way to be successful is to cut existing links between organized crime and political subversion.¹⁸

In addition, a sector of the Republican caucus in the U.S. Congress has exerted pressure in the same direction. All of which is to say that there is a series of powerful forces that may strongly influence this change in the overall thrust of Plan Colombia. This third modification is undoubtedly as relevant as the former and greatly contributes to further complicating the already complex panorama of the Colombian armed conflict.

A First Evaluation of the Plan

In August 2001, the office of the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR), the state organism charged with control over the use of the financial resources of the Nation, published a first evaluation report of Plan Colombia. It is worth quoting *in extenso*:

¹⁶ Rabasa and Chalk, 2001.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Buscaglia and Ratliff, 2001.

From this first effort of the CGR, the following conclusions are briefly outlined:

- New resources, available in July 2001, only amount to 2.051 billion dollars, which is to say, about 27 percent of the total amount envisioned in the Plan. This means that success in the short term, of the initially defined goal of 7.5 billion dollars, will be difficult to reach.
- Nearly 58 percent of the resources obtained for the Plan is the result of internal and external debt, an inadvisable strategy given the critical situation of the national public debt.
- In general, the goals of the social-economic programs are modest *vis-à-vis* current needs, meaning that objectives end up being rhetorical. The majority of foreseeable activities are of an assistentialist nature, which means low probability for self-sustainability - they respond to a sense of emergency rather than the self-directed generation of resources.
- Up until now, forced eradication has not been a disincentive for the expansion of illicit crops. It would seem that the incentive to produce responds more to the powerful stimulus of a wealthy market rather than to losses provoked by eradication. Consequently, the study of other methods for the eradication of illicit crops becomes highly recommendable.
- Huge differences exist among diverse information sources regarding calculations about direct investment by the Colombian state in the anti-drugs struggle. According to DIRAN, *Dirección de Antinarcóticos de la Policía Nacional*, such activity has signified an expenditure of approximately 2.5 billion pesos during the past six years, while other entities estimate much greater sums. As a result, combined efforts among diverse actors are required to determine the reality of the situation. From whatever angle, the sums removed from the provision of goods and services for citizens' wellbeing are huge.
- The environmental component has not received adequate consideration, to the point that aerial fumigation for illicit crop

eradication does not include, as is required by law, a management plan minimizing or mitigating environmental damage. It would seem that the crop substitution programs have not taken environmentally sustainable agriculture alternatives into consideration.

- It is conceivable that 50 percent of what is forecast in the Plan will not be completed during the tenure of the Pastrana administration. For this reason, effective continuity and implementation will require the explicit commitment of the next government and more vigorous collaboration from the international community, especially from European countries.¹⁹

The panorama, to say the least, is dramatic, not only because the level of implementation has been low, but also because a substantial portion of the resources emanate from public debt, and as a result, further burden the depressed Colombian economy. It is also rather alarming that the Colombian government has assigned significant resources to eradication to the detriment of the satisfaction of other needs of the Colombian population, and that it has done so without meaningful consideration of the environmental effects of aerial fumigation. The report referred to above is truly a contrast with the Plan's rhetoric.

The Andean Regional Initiative

It is logical to expect that a plan, like the one just described, should affect neighboring countries. On the one hand, it can be assumed that the eradication of Colombian crops means that, if international prices for cocaine and heroin do not fall, the most likely scenario, these crops will be displaced within Colombia's borders, and likewise, to neighboring countries.²⁰ In Peru, in particular, it is feared that producers will recover abandoned plantations and attempt to substitute the supply from Colombia. And Ecuadorian and Venezuelan authorities fear that resistance to the Plan by the Colombian guerrilla will lead them to cross their borders.

¹⁹ Colombia. Comptroller General's Office, 2001, 4-5.

²⁰ U.S. Embassy in Colombia, 2001, 10

As a response to concerns and pressures from the Andean countries, the Bush administration designed the Regional Andean Initiative, the principal goals of which are: 1) to promote and support democracy and democratic institutions; 2) to foster sustainable economic development and trade liberalization; and 3) to significantly reduce, at source, the supply of illicit drugs in the United States, while at the same time, reducing U.S. demand. The conceptual framework for these goals is derived from the following diagnosis:

The Andean Region represents a challenge as well as an important opportunity for United States foreign policy during the next few years -- significant U.S. national interests are at stake. Democracy is under pressure in all of the Andean countries and doubts increase concerning the capacity of democratic governments to offer basic services and greater prosperity. Economic development is slow and progress towards trade liberalization is inconsistent. The Andes continue to produce virtually all of the world's cocaine and an increasing amount of the heroin, thereby representing a direct threat to our public health and national security. All of these on-going, persistent problems are inter-related. Weak economies produce political malaise that in turn threatens democracy, as well as ensuring a labor force for the production and trafficking of narcotics and for the illegal armed groups. Weak democratic institutions, corruption, and political instability discourage investment, contributing to slow economic growth and providing fertile terrain for the appearance of illicit drug traffickers and other groups operating outside the law. Trade in illicit drugs also has the effect of distorting the economy and discouraging legitimate investment. None of the Region's problems can be resolved on its own. Instead, they must be attacked in a coordinated manner, together with appropriate public diplomatic initiatives, in order to make progress on our goals for the Region. For this reason, the Department of State proposes to designate nearly 880 million dollars worth of funds from fiscal year 2002 for the Administration's Regional Andean Initiative.²¹

²¹ U.S. Embassy in Colombia, 2001, p. 2.

Clearly the central axis of the Initiative is to fight drug trafficking, since it supposedly constitutes a double threat to the United States. On the one hand, export to the U.S., threatens the public health of citizens; while on the other, such criminal activity destabilizes the Region and creates a problem for national security. As a result, the National Drug Control Strategy constitutes the central part of the Initiative, and by implementing this strategy, the United States hopes to:

... reduce the illicit production of coca by 20 percent by the end of 2002 (base year: 1999) and 40 percent by the end of 2007. This includes a reduction by 30 percent in the Colombian production of coca and the elimination of the illegal production of coca in Bolivia by the end of 2002.²²

In order to meet the proposed goals, 731 million dollars have been assigned to the Initiative, 399 million (54.48%) of which correspond to Colombia. Of this amount, 252.5 million or 63 percent will be directed to military assistance and to the National Police, and 146.5 million or 36 percent to economic and social assistance. The military component is designated basically to maintaining the thrust created by Plan Colombia, in other words, to ensuring equipment maintenance, munitions, fuel, training of military and police troops, and the expansion of aerial fumigation of illicit crops.²³ Regarding the military component, the Initiative presumes:

That the capacity of the Andean Armed Forces to successfully carry out essential missions in support of democratic institutions; to control international borders; and to back up anti-drug efforts, has declined significantly during the [1990s]. In general, the Andean Armed Forces have demonstrated limited capacity to undertake the endeavors required of them. In addition, they are still influenced, to a certain degree, by historic regional rivalries, which do not represent, however, real present-day threats to national security. The majority

²² U.S. Embassy in Colombia, 2001, 8.

²³ Desde Abajo, 2001.

has to deal with the pressure of deteriorated and obsolete equipment that is continually more difficult and costly to maintain and operate. They would benefit enormously from a modest injection of support for security measures in the form of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET), and from increased contact with the U.S. military in general. The impact in terms of professionalism, respect for human rights, and combat-readiness, would be appreciable. We need to continue working with the Armed Forces of host countries, the Organization of American States, and the Inter-American Defense Board in order to ensure subordination to legitimate civilian authority, adherence to constitutional norms, and respect for human rights ...²⁴

It is still very early to define the course of events that will evolve from the Initiative. Nevertheless, with it, President Bush was trying to show not only his interest in contributing to a reduction in the supply of cocaine and heroin in his country, but also in reaffirming the hegemonic role of the United States in relation to political stability in the Region. In reality, by limiting the effort to Colombia, not only does it not satisfy the interests of the other countries, but also leaves the door open for unilateral actions by one of them and the possibility to upset the regional balance of power and stability. It would not be surprising that, in the absence of a financial and political initiative by the United States, one of the Andean countries opts, for example, to reach out to international markets in the search for arms to defend itself against eventual threats emanating from the activities of Plan Colombia.

Finally, the Andean Regional Initiative coincided with the events of September 11, 2001 and their consequences, worldwide. Even if the Region as such, and the war on drugs, in particular, have lost political space in the list of U.S. government priorities, terrorist activity has produced a relatively strong reaction on the part of the U.S. government as far as the irregular armed groups in Colombia are concerned. Guerrillas and paramilitaries have moved to the

²⁴ U.S. Embassy in Colombia, 2002, 12.

front of the list of organizations denominated as terrorist, and fighting them is linked with the U.S. military policy to confront terrorism on a worldwide scale. The two tendencies, the relative loss of interest regarding the war against drugs, on the one hand, and the drugs-terrorism link, on the other, operate to produce a precarious balance of interests and efforts. As is to be expected, all of this will have particular repercussions in Colombia and the Andean region, and one of them could be, as indicated above, the re-orientation of Plan Colombian financing to the counterinsurgency military struggle. As such, the impact of a decision of this nature in the Regional Initiative and the reactions among countries in the Region, are still to be seen.

The International Drug Complex

In this final section, I would like to explore a few ideas of a methodological nature in order to arrive at an approximation of what may be the future of Plan Colombia and the Andean Regional Initiative. I will suggest that their conversion could result in a new configuration, different from that referred to as the Industrial Military Complex during the Cold War in the United States,²⁵ and denounced by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) in his departing speech as president.

The Industrial Military Complex is a system, whose dynamic is based fundamentally on its own reproduction. Its internal mechanics are geared towards political-military decisions being sustained by the demand for goods, equipment, and personnel, which, in turn, stimulates industrial production and employment of ex-military personnel and experts. It also represents the reason for the existence of certain state bureaucracies. In this sense, the reproductive needs of the industrial apparatus and of state bureaucracies become important stimuli for the development of military war policies. In these conditions, policies tend to reproduce themselves and to have a broader focus, moving beyond even the initial needs.

²⁵ Galbraith, 1985.

Referring to the case at hand, the implementation of a model of this type leads one to think that policies associated with the war on drugs, and in particular, with Plan Colombia and the Andean Regional Initiative, could become as addictive as the illicit drugs they attempt to combat.²⁶ Consequently, one of my hypotheses is that a step may be being taken to complement the International Drug Complex with the Military Industrial Complex.

The notion of an International Drug Complex has been developed by Hans T. van der Veen, based on the consideration that:

Just as individuals can become addicted to drug use, so the societies in which we live can become addicts of the profits generated by the drug business. And this would appear to be equally true of the agencies designed to control drugs [...] within and between social forces at both extremes of the law, the dynamic is not one of reciprocal control, but rather of mutual reinforcement, either through concerted actions or through more systematic interactions. In this scheme, a 'community of interests' develops - a coalition of groups with created psychological, moral, and material interests - between drug managers and state security agencies or the power elites that control them. Such mutual support takes on different forms and is expressed at multiple levels that change with time and space. Nevertheless, the consequence of this collusion is something that advances the interests of both groups, to the detriment of the societies in which they appear. According to this focus, the drug industry and the state agencies that pursue it are not necessarily in opposition. Rather they develop a dynamic that is more or less inter-related and interdependent - a kind of 'coalition' in which they contradict and support each other and in which the interests of both are served, independent of the democratic control exercised by citizens and sometimes by the government itself.²⁷

²⁶ Baum, 1977.

²⁷ van der Veen 1999, 2000.

One of the most visible foundations of the institutionalization of the International Drug Complex, and related to the Industrial Military Complex, is the construction of an ideology, according to which political complementarities between drug traffickers and the Colombian guerrilla go beyond economics. This is expressed by the notion of 'narco-guerrilla' outlined above. Given this relationship, the war on drugs, then, should be centered on the struggle against the insurgent groups. Tasks of supply reduction, traditionally assigned to civilian and police institutions, take on new priorities, resulting in the organization of a system of resource, arms, and military personnel provision.

Upon examining the components and tendencies described in Plan Colombia, the stated hypothesis can be sustained and believed, if the following considerations are taken into account:

Of the 519.2 million dollar package for military assistance, 328 million are included for helicopters, 208 million for 16 Black Hawks for the Army and 120 million for Hueys. In this regard, it is pertinent to point out that the final approved version includes 18 Black Hawks (16 for the Army and two for the Police). Of the 115.6 million dollars approved for the Police, 26 million are included for two Black Hawk helicopters.²⁸

The amount of this outlay necessarily provokes considerable pressure from the manufacturing industries whose managers rely on their political representatives in the government and the U.S. Congress to obtain prerogatives in the production of the equipment. The same can be said about the numerous organizations of ex-military and ex-members of security bodies, who survive, precisely, on military expenditures.²⁹

²⁸ García, 2001, 259.

²⁹ Cambio, 2000, October 2; Castro Caycedo, 2001.

A final reflection

The purpose of the preceding comments is to provide a panorama both of the transformations experienced in Colombian drug trafficking as well as recent policies designed ultimately to confront it. The first point stresses the transformational dynamic adopted by the illegal drug barons whose new organizational structures make them more difficult to detect and combat. As a result, the war against drugs needs to deal with new strategic demands. And secondly, the result of the aerial fumigation policy has led to an expansion of illicit crops in other regions of the country, a fact registered by the government of the United States:

Even though we stress our point of view to the Region that the corrosive effects of production and trafficking have been spilling over Colombia's borders for years, we do not believe that Plan Colombia results either in the flight of a significant number of refugees, or in a significant increase in trans-border operations by the FARC, ELN or the AUC. We do believe, however, that the result will be an important dislocation of the cocaine industry. Traffickers will undoubtedly try to relocate as their operations in the south of Colombia are disrupted. We believe they will attempt, at first, to relocate in other attractive areas within Colombia, and then try to return to their traditional areas of cultivation in Peru and Bolivia. However, if their operations are contained, they could well attempt to move more crops, processing and/or trafficking routes to other countries like Ecuador, Brazil or Venezuela.³⁰

It is nothing more than the implicit recognition that the war against drugs, as presently implemented, is producing a "hydra effect", i.e., the process by which the elimination of one head sprouts many more.³¹ The play between increased repression and higher prices permits such a premonition. And it

³⁰ U.S. Embassy in Colombia, 2001, 10.

³¹ Bertram et al., 1996.

would appear that a perverse sort of community of interests between militarization of the war on drugs and the interests of narco-traffickers is being created.

As is clearly recognized by both the Colombian and United States governments, an inextricable relationship exists between the production of illicit drugs and the poverty of Colombian peasants, and between this production and the expansion of irregular armed groups of the extreme left and right, both of which feed off drug profits. This means that strategies need to be varied and integrated. Even if the initial phase of Plan Colombia stressed poverty eradication and support for alternative development in production areas, the dynamic of U.S. policies accelerated the transformation of the Plan from a socio-economic to an anti-narcotics strategy, with the later introduction of a counter-insurgency component. It is exactly for this reason that the very dynamic of the Industrial Military Complex can be expected to accelerate and combine with that of the International Drug Complex. And the consequences will be an expansion of illicit crops and exacerbation of the Colombian conflict.

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