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The Consequences of Plan Colombia: Domestic Drug Policies in Colombia

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The Consequences of Plan Colombia: Domestic Drug Policies in Colombia

A Policy Memo Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the
Environmental Studies Program



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Requirement for the degree of the
Bachelor of Arts

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is the Internal Conflict?

For more than 40 years Colombia has been fighting a war with drugs. Each President has made immense efforts to slow the process of drug trafficking. However without international help Colombia's society as a whole has been suffering from the consequences of illegal drug trafficking and illegal drug cultivation. Take for example the internal conflict that has brought nothing but chaos and violence to the Colombian society. For years Colombia has been experiencing internal conflict due to issues related to drugs, such as land displacement, absence of formal government regulations, and misallocation of resources and capital. Colombia's internal conflict is extremely complex because a majority of the violence stems from the armed conflict between the government and two guerrilla groups. The oldest and largest leftists guerrilla group known as the Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARC) was founded in 1966, although their roots stem further back. Also the second oldest and largest leftists guerrilla group in Colombia is known as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and they were founded in the 1960s as well following the civil war known as *la Violencia*. During *la Violencia* the FARC was manifested out of rural self-defense groups which were organized by the main Colombian Communists Party. As for the ELN, the guerrilla movement group was organized by students, who all

focused on making an impact on the oil industry by blowing up pipelines and kidnapping oil executives for ransom.¹

Both guerrilla movement groups sought to make an impact in Colombian politics. The FARC made an impact by orchestrating a cease-fire when members of its winning political party, known as Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union), were murdered by paramilitary groups. This ultimately eliminated the Patriotic Union as a viable party and as a result the FARC responded with violence in retaliation. The war got worst and the FARC refused to lay down its arms. Negotiations between the different presidents of Colombia and both guerrilla groups (FARC and ELN) continued over the years, as the groups fought the government for a fuller agenda of social and economic reforms. Following this further, during the 1980s and 1990s the violence became more intense and the internal conflict became more complex. According to William LeoGrande and Kenneth Sharpe in *Two Wars or One? Drugs, Guerrillas, and Colombia's New 'Violencia'*, both authors write that the "Intensification of the war was fueled by revenue from the drug trade. Estimates of how much money the FARC raises from taxing drug production and commerce in its zones of control vary enormously, from a low of about \$100 million a year to a high of \$500 million. Regardless of the amount, there is no doubt drug revenue has enabled the FARC to significantly expand its ranks, increase its firepower, and extend its area of operations."² For instance,

¹ William M. LeoGrande and Kenneth E. Sharpe, "Two Wars or One? Drugs, Guerrillas, and Colombia's New 'Violencia,'" *World Policy Journal* 17, no. 3 (Fall 2000): [Page 3], accessed December 20, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40209699>.

²Ibid.,. 4.

LeoGrande and Sharpe attests that in 1986 the FARC had grown to about 9,000 operating combatants on twenty-seven different 'fronts'. It is important to note that these operating combatants were local self-supporting and semi-autonomous units. By 1999, the FARC had about 15,000 operating combatants on about sixty different fronts and they also were active in about 40% of Colombia's municipalities. As a result, the FARC has successfully defeated the Colombian army and the internal conflict has started to reach neighboring countries.³ According to Brandi James in her piece titled *Examining the Impact of Illicit Crop Eradication on Education in Colombia* the FARC gained strength in rural Colombia as the organization began to grow immensely. Once they gained the appropriate strength in rural Colombia, the FARC began to demand what they considered "revolutionary taxes" from landowners. This demand fueled the war on drugs because it intensified the internal conflict and extended it between rural land owners and FARC insurgents. From that point on, mainly beginning in the 1980s, many Colombians involved in the drug business began buying up all the land in the rural areas. As a result, wars erupted because narco-landowners began recruiting paramilitaries to rid the areas of guerrilla influence. The landowners used their paramilitary groups to expel communities from areas where landowners would have liked to graze cattle or expand crop plantation.

³ Ibid.

Most of these private paramilitary groups received tacit and or overt support from the Colombian military.⁴

As the FARC forces continued to grow the drug industry in Colombia continued to grow as well making the FARC a powerful force in Colombia's society. Desperate for solutions the Colombian government realized their solution to calming the violence would come from ending the government's war on drugs. However, the Colombian government suffered from lack of funds and as a result would have to rely on the international community to help solve its domestic issue. Thus, in 1999 *Plan Colombia* was introduced by the Colombian government in hopes that U.S. involvement could end the expansion of the drug industry.

What is Plan Colombia?

In 2000, the Clinton administration passed a bill that allowed the United States to help the Colombian government by sending them a \$1 billion counter-narcotics aid package. Plan Colombia was created by the Colombian government and made the request that other nation states aid them financially in their war against drug trafficking in the Americas. Although the plan called for \$7.5 billion the Colombian government was only able to obtain \$1.5 billion. When the plan was derived Colombia had undergone elections for their new president and at that time civil society was suffering from economic repression, a debt and

⁴ Brandi James, "Examining the Impact of Illicit Crop Eradication on Education in Colombia," *Education in Emergencies & Post-Conflict Situations: Problems, Responses, & Possibilities 2* (Spring 2005): [Page 50].

unemployment crisis, and escalating violence and insecurity. Plan Colombia was considered a mechanism that focused on promoting peace, prosperity, democratization, and consolidation. Plan Colombia had a few main foci, such as the economic strategy, the peace process, the anti-narcotic strategy, strengthening of the state, and social development.⁵ Thus, the tangible question becomes what are the environmental, political, and social implications of Colombia's domestic drug policies? More specifically, what detrimental effects have manifested from the implementation of "Plan Colombia", Colombia's most recent anti-drug initiative?

Political Implications

Industry Effects on Colombian Politics

For decades the Colombian political system has been more vulnerable to the power of the illegal drug industry in comparison to the Colombian economy. Moreover, the illegal drug industry has had to develop and rely on the support of social and political networks in order to protect its investments, to prevent the government from jailing traffickers and extraditing them to the United States. According to Francisco E. Thoumi, extradition has been the main source of conflict between drug traffickers and the government. Drug traffickers have used all available resources to fight the extradition of their insurgency members. In

⁵ Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 1], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.

fact, during the late 1980s the conflict began to worsen because narco-terrorism erupted and many prominent politicians, including several presidential candidates were assassinated. Thoumi points out an example of how the drug industry has attempted to use politics to its advantage. “In the early 1980s, members of the Medellín cartel tried to obtain power directly and developed a strong support base, spending some of their wealth in public works. Pablo Escobar “bought” a politician and got himself elected to the Colombian Congress as a backup. Carlos Lehder established a small nationalist party that did not prosper. The Medellín cartel invested heavily in rural land and promoted the formation of self-protection paramilitary. The Medellín cartel did not hesitate to use violence against the public who opposed it or who simply tried to enforce laws as their duties required. The need to influence government policies also induced traffickers to develop links with politicians. Their wealth allowed them to make large political contributions. Not surprisingly, jointly with the large financial conglomerates, they became the main contributors to political campaigns.”⁶ Moreover, the illegal drug industry became the largest funding source for elections, and notably the industry contributed heavily to the 1982 election. Then in 1994, the Samper campaign received large amounts of funding from the drug industry. As a result, the Samper campaign became the main political and international issue that crippled the government and produced an unprecedented political crisis.⁷ However, it is

⁶ Francisco E. Thoumi, "Illegal Drugs in Colombia: From Illegal Economic Boom to Social Crisis," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 582 (July 2002): [Page 111-12].

⁷ *Ibid.*, 112

important to understand the significance of Colombian politics in relation to the illegal drug industry. Although it may seem as if the illegal drug industry does benefit from Colombian politics, it does because the politicians indirectly help the cartels gain social recognition among the citizens. As Thoumi mentioned many drug traffickers who contribute to Colombian politics use their political elites as a “joker” that they can pull out when needed for later.

Geopolitics of Plan Colombia

Many critics describe Plan Colombia as a United States authored and promoted policy directed toward militarily eliminating the Colombian guerrilla forces and repressing the rural peasant communities that support the ‘narco-guerrilla’ forces. However, key policy makers in Washington are concerned with five key geopolitical issues. These issues, they argue, have the potential to adversely affect US imperial power in the region and beyond. First, the Colombian insurgency question becomes part of a geopolitical matrix that challenges and modifies US hegemony in northern South America and in the Panama Canal Zone. Second, oil production is indirectly affected by the geopolitics of Plan Colombia. For example, supply and prices are linked to the challenge in the region and beyond. Third, James Petras writes that core conflicts with the empire are found mainly in Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador (the radical triangle) but there is growing leftists and nationalist discontent in key adjoining countries, particularly in Brazil and Peru. Fourth, successful resistance in the radical triangle has already found an echo in countries farther south, such as Paraguay and Bolivia following the successful political struggles of Ecuador,

Venezuela, and Argentina. Last, the strength of the oil diplomacy and independent policy of Venezuela's president Chavez has shattered the US strategy of isolating the Cuban revolution and further integrated Cuba into the regional economy. Moreover, Petras writes that "in more specific terms the conflict between the radical triangle and US imperial power focuses attention on the fact that much of what is described as 'globalism' rests on the foundations of the social relations of production and the balance of class forces in the nation state. The recognition of this fact has particular relevance to the US-FARC conflict in Colombia. The assumption here is that without solid social, political and military foundations within the nation state, the imperial enterprise and its accompanying global networks are imperiled. Thus there is a need to look rather closely at the nature of its proxy war in Colombia in which Washington through its client regime attempts to destroy the guerrillas and decimate and demoralise their supporter in order to restore the local foundations of imperial power."⁸

II. PLAN COLOMBIA

Different Aims of Plan Colombia

As mentioned before, when it was initially developed, Plan Colombia had five main focuses: the economic strategy, the peace process, the anti-narcotic strategy, the strengthening of the state, and social development. The economic

⁸ James Petras, "Geopolitics of Plan Colombia," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 52/53 (December/January 2000-2001): [Page 4618], Accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4410105>.

strategy was derived in hopes that the Colombian government could stabilize its economy by cleaning up its banking system and rebuilding its national budget.⁹ Additionally, the Colombian government wanted employment to be generated by a mixed economy with an emphasis on the role of national and international private enterprise. However, even with increased tax reforms the indebted state did not have sufficient resources to implement an effective war on terrorism and drugs. The government insisted that the reduction of narcotic trafficking would increase the repatriation rate of illegal revenue generated from drug trafficking in the state.¹⁰

The second part of the plan focused on creating peace within the society. The explicit intentions of the peace process were for the government to establish internal sovereignty; achieve genuine acceptance of a democratic regime with peaceful contest for power; end human rights violence committed frequently by guerrilla groups; and eliminate guerrilla involvement in the narcotics business. The former president at the time, Andres Pastrana, met with the leader of the oldest guerrilla group in Colombia known as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Pastrana promised to negotiate a peace settlement with the guerrillas. Three

⁹ Ibid., 2.; Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Coletta Youngers, "Ten Years of Plan Colombia: An Analytic Assessment," In *Briefing Paper Sixteen*, [Page 3], Oxford, United Kingdom: The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme, 2008, accessed December 3, 2014, http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf.

¹⁰ Ricardo Rocha Garcia, "Drug Trafficking and its Impact on Colombia: An Economic Overview," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 28, no. 55/56 (2003): [Page 285].

months (November 1998) after the inauguration of Pastrana, in a violent offensive within which no cease-fire agreement occurred, the President declared an area of the country, most inhabited by the FARC, as a *zone de distensión*, a zone in which all armed and security forces were prohibited from entering. The purpose of this demilitarized zone was to guarantee the necessary security to negotiate a peace agreement before the end of the president's term. However, in February 2002 the peace process ended because FARC violence continued to escalate.

Without a doubt, the economic difficulties of the state can be attributed to the increased illegal acts of the guerrillas. For instance, the guerrillas caused major businesses to become bankrupt because they committed a massive amount of kidnappings. Additionally, extant insecurity contracted investment levels, while at the same time oil pipeline sabotage reduced export levels. Also, the guerrilla groups targeted the state's infrastructure by destroying electrical substations, transmission lines, bridges, aqueducts, and other various nation related pieces of infrastructure. Ultimately, the president aimed to obtain a cease-fire and a peace accord from the guerrillas with the intentions of transforming the guerrillas into political parties, forcing them to become unarmed participants in the democratization process.⁶¹¹

¹¹ Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 4], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.; Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Coletta Youngers, "Ten Years of Plan Colombia: An Analytic Assessment," In *Briefing Paper Sixteen*, [Page 7], Oxford, United Kingdom: The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme, 2008, accessed December 3, 2014, http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf.

The third part of the plan focused on an anti-narcotic strategy. After the Cold War the U.S. government began to shift its attention to the security issues that were caused by the drug war in Latin America. The drug problem in Colombia was considered an international issue, not just a domestic issue, because the U.S. and other countries were subjected to the increased imports of illicit drugs and the increased percentages in drug users, specifically cocaine addicts. The United States was and still is the biggest consumer of the illegal drug production manifesting in Colombia. The aim of this strategy was to reduce the production of the drug industry by fifty percent within a time frame of five years. The strategy was broken up into three phases: each phase focused specifically on destroying the industry one area at a time throughout the state. The strategy aimed to halt the agriculture to consumption process by use of eradication of crops, aerial fumigation, and foreign aid to create alternative development programs to supplement the income of coca growers.¹²

The fourth part aimed to strengthen the state. In order for the government to establish a peaceful and successfully controlled society, the military, police, and judicial system had to be reformed and strengthened. The president adopted several programs to complete this goal, such as the Presidential Program Against Corruption in the public and private sectors, as well as the Program for

¹² Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 3], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.; Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Coletta Youngers, "Ten Years of Plan Colombia: An Analytic Assessment," In *Briefing Paper Sixteen*, [Page 5], Oxford, United Kingdom: The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme, 2008, accessed December 3, 2014, http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf.

Witnesses and Threatened Persons. Also the president hired a Commissioner for Human Rights. The aid gathered from the international community would also be used develop these initiatives as well as provide training programs for law enforcement to battle narcotic expansion and violence associated with drug trafficking in the state. The president intended to use the military and the police to construct and maintain peace by modernizing and professionalizing the system. The goal of this strategy also consisted of obtaining more mobile forces that would be better trained to handle offensive operations. By making the military more career focused the president hoped to transfer the army into a voluntary corps that would have a more permanent place in society. Lastly, the United States would assist in the reorganization of the judicial processes by creating and training specialized enforcement units.¹³

Finally, the last part of the plan aimed to implement a social component in which assistance was sent to the municipal and community level for development of special grassroots programs. The Colombian government assumed that violence and corruption would eventually end with the increase in civil support for a better, more accountable and controlled local government. The grassroots programs served as a specific function that enabled the development of a tolerant democratic collective conscience. These grassroots groups would be

¹³ Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 4], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.; Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Coletta Youngers, "Ten Years of Plan Colombia: An Analytic Assessment," In *Briefing Paper Sixteen*, [Page 7], Oxford, United Kingdom: The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme, 2008, accessed December 3, 2014, http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf.

responsible for the rebuilding of the nation's infrastructure by carrying out several projects which included the building of roads and schools, a health unit, water service, and other major projects. Through the social development process the Colombian government would implement eight programs: Families in Action; Employment in Action; Youth in Action; Roads for Peace; Countryside in Action; Humanitarian Attention; Human Rights; and the Transparency and Peaceful Living Together program. The Families in Action program allowed families with the poorest economic status to obtain cash subsidies with the requirement that families had to adhere to health and education expectations. The Employment in Action program provided employment for unskilled workers to build urban infrastructure. The Youth in Action was a program geared towards providing semi-skilled individuals between eighteen and twenty-five years with training and employment. This program was directed towards the seven cities with the highest unemployment rates. The Roads for Peace program targeted the construction and improvement 6,650 miles of roads in 260 counties, thus generating directly and indirectly about 105,00 jobs. The Countryside in Action program developed social and economic sustainable production projects to benefit small and middle-sized agriculture producers. The Humanitarian Attention program addressed the needs of the victims of violent guerrilla attacks and those of the people who were displaced due to violent situations. As mentioned before, a Commissioner for Human Rights was hired in order to promote the continued development of a human rights culture. Lastly, the Transparency and Peaceful Living Together program aimed to provide legal property rights in areas where eradication pacts

were made to remove illegal crops. This program also supported the development of democracy in the public administration and citizen control over government and violence.¹⁴ Given the above overview of what *Plan Colombia* did it is relatively easy to examine the implications that can be drawn from the outcomes of the proposal.

Different Methods to Seize Drug Trafficking

Aerial and Forced Eradication

First, it is important to understand what is meant by aerial spraying. In Colombia, the aerial spraying of chemicals, specifically herbicides, occurs in order to cut off the supply of raw materials used to produce illegal substances. The aerial spraying of herbicides physically destroys the natural state of the plantations. However, successful interruption of the raw materials used for drug production only last about four months to a year. Moreover, aerial spraying does not permanently affect the production of raw drug materials, because four to twelve months is needed to regenerate crops that were partially destroyed or to plant new crops. Yet, policy makers fail to recognize the fact that forced eradication only raises the price of raw materials. Thus, farmers plant new sites in order to keep up with the high demand for production and processing.

¹⁴ Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 4], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.

Among other issues, the eradication projects have had an environmental impact on the land and on the health of civilians. According to different studies the mixtures used in the aerial forced eradication project are considered harmful to the environment, especially to amphibians. Through follow up studies run by the Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense it has been confirmed that the spray mixture killed fifty percent of the amphibians that were exposed to it within ninety-six hours. Moreover, it is important to note the negligence stemming from the involvement of the U.S. government. For example, the U.S. State Department has not provided adequate information about the location of and risk to sensitive water bodies that suffer adverse consequences from eradication. Additionally, the department has done nothing to address whether other species are likely to be harmed from aerial spraying. As said by Puentes, the AIDA's Legal Director, "given the number of unanswered questions about the safety of the spraying, and considering the precautionary principle and the international obligation not to cause impacts to the territories of other States, the Colombian government should halt spraying immediately, and instead implement more effective and environmentally safe alternatives for coca eradication".¹⁵

Alternative Development Programs

According to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime Colombia has the world's largest and most successful national alternative development program.

¹⁵ Anna Cederstav and Astrid Puentes, "Plan Colombia's Environmental Impacts, Report to U.S. Congress," *Earth Justice*, Last modified February 14, 2007. Accessed December 3, 2014. <http://earthjustice.org/news/press/2007/plan-colombia-s-environmental-impacts-report-to-u-s-congress>.

The annual budget for the program is close to \$85 million. These programs with the support of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has helped more than 150,000 farmers switch from illicit crop cultivation to alternative livelihoods that have created more than about 150,000 jobs. Additionally through the national and international supermarket chain, sixty farm enterprises have switched to selling products worth \$40 million, such as coffee, cocoa, palm hearts, chocolate, honey, and other legal cash crops. Mr. Yury Fedotov, the executive director of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, commented on the use of the alternative development programs by stating that “many of the alternative development models developed in Colombia are worthy of replication in other countries. I can only express my admiration for all of the local farmers who - with a lot of courage and conviction - have left behind the violence generated by coca bush cultivation to embrace a better future. We at UNODC are proud to be a part of this development.”¹⁶

In 2000, the United States Agency for International Development in Colombia developed an alternative development policy. Of the \$869 million allocated for the counter-narcotics initiative, \$42.5 million was distributed for the alternative development programs throughout the country. The main goal of the alternative development programs was to create legal income and employment

¹⁶“Colombia: From Illicit Drugs to Sustainable Livelihoods,” UNODC, last modified September 26, 2011, accessed December 25, 2014, http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2011/September/colombia_-from-illicit-drugs-to-sustainable-livelihoods.html.

opportunities for small farmers through small projects.¹⁷ Funding for farmers would continue under the circumstances that farmers commitment to the eradication of their illicit crops and commitment to not plant illegal crops again in the future. It is important to note that the program has had three different phases.

In the first phase, which lasted from 2001 until 2004, a crop substitution model was used to create alternative employment opportunities baed on private-sector investments. This model ran of the condition of 'zero coca' in the areas of intervention. For this phase of the policy Putumayo was used as a pilot city for the program and the city was accompanied by a military offense as part of helping eradicate drugs successfully. In the second phase, which lasted from 2005 until 2008, the the United States Agency for International Development in Colombia decided to change its approach by moving from a focus on crop substitution to working with communities to create a culture of legal economic practices.¹⁸ For instance, the programs were geared toward strengthening the productive sector, building good governance and institutions, while at the same time maintaining the prior condition of 'zero coca' tolerance in intervention areas. According to Ricardo Vargas Meza of the United States Agency for International Development in Colombia, the "USAID's concept of community as a social construct - involving processes of individualization and incorporation of private enterprise - did not reflect the structure and customs of traditional smallholder

¹⁷ Ricardo Vargas Meza, USAID's Alternative Development Policy in Colombia: A Critical Analysis, issue brief no. 38, Drug Policy Briefing (n.p.: Transnational Institue, 2011), [Page 1].

¹⁸ Ibid,. 2.

communities in the intervention areas.” Lastly, the third and most recent phase, which lasted from 2009 until 2013, was a reformulation of the policy of phase two.

National Development Plan

The national development policy, entitled “*Toward a Communal State*” (2002-2006), was fully developed in 2002, during president Álvaro Uribe’s first term in office, with the idea that the internal armed conflict in Colombia was worsening, mainly because armed groups had access to resources from drug trafficking. Therefore, the national development policy was proposed as the fight against terrorists, drug trafficking, and transnationally organized crime groups. The focus of the national development plan consisted of a symbiosis between illicit crops and insurgency that directly affected the guerrilla groups’ power to control territory. Additionally, the policy forced on illicit crops and their relationship with the conflict because the drug problem was identified in the areas of production. By tackling the socio-economic issues behind illicit crop production the Colombian government is able to solve the growing security problem that stems from drug trafficking. Ricardo Vargas states that this emphasis on the plan “is very different from that of international cooperation agencies, which believe Alternative Development should focus on tackling problems caused by poverty and marginalisation in certain regions. This approach sees drugs control as a tool for promoting human development and the reduction of illicit crops as the result

of an integral development process.”¹⁹ Moreover, the domestic drug policy implemented during the president’s first term in office combined the use of dissuasive force with Alternative development programs.

III. DETRIMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

When considering the effects of *Plan Colombia* many significant implications can be drawn from various literature. For example, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime the number of hectares occupied by coca decreased from 102,000 hectares (in 1998) to 78,000 (in 2006). However, in 2007 the areas increased to 99,000 hectares. Despite the eradication of over 800,000 hectares cultivation continues to increase. According to the U.S. coca cultivation increased from 136,200 hectares (in 2000) to 157,200 hectares (in 2006) even as between 1999 and 2005 *Plan Colombia* has cost the United States about \$10 billion. According to the UN, Colombia still produces about 60% of the world’s cocaine.²⁰ Plan Colombia was supposed to cut Colombian cocaine production in half within ten years. Pineda and other authors have suggested that

¹⁹ Ricardo Vargas, "The Anti-Drug Policy, Aerial Spraying of Illicit Crops and Their Social, Environmental and Political Impacts in Colombia," *The Journal of Drug Issues*, Winter 2002, [Page 2], Accessed November 27, 2014, <http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/archives/archives/vargas/jdpi.pdf>

²⁰ Phillip S. Smith, "Plan Colombia Turns 10: Looking at the Effects of Bill Clinton's Signature Drug War Project," *Drug War Chronicle*, no. 640 (July 15, 2010), Accessed December 3, 2014, <http://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/2010/jul/15/plan-colombia-ten-years-later.>; Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Coletta Youngers, "Ten Years of Plan Colombia: An Analytic Assessment," In *Briefing Paper Sixteen*, [Page 1], Oxford, United Kingdom: The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme, 2008, accessed December 3, 2014, http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf.

levels of coca production have actually increased since the eradication program began. Also they suggest that the main focus should not be on the eradication of crops but it should be geared towards the processing and commercialization in the export market and the laundering of drug profits, because most of the big profits are in these areas.²¹

Social Implications

Effects of Aerial Eradication on Education

As mentioned before, the effects of aerial eradication on illicit crops are detrimental to the Colombian society. More specifically, illicit crop eradication has affected the education of children through internal displacement. According to Brandi James in *Examining the Impact of Illicit Crop Eradication on Education in Colombia*, Colombia's society has been experiencing an increase in displaced people for over thirty years. More than three million Colombians have been displaced since 1985. As a result, Colombia has been recognized as the country with the largest internally displaced persons population, leading both Afghanistan and Syria.

²¹ James Petras, "Geopolitics of Plan Colombia," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 52/53 (December/January 2000-2001): [Page 4620], Accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4410105>.; Carolina Pineda, "Plan Colombia: A Political, Economic, and Cultural Analysis of Coca and Poppy Eradication Projects in Putumayo, Colombia," *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (June 21, 2011): [Page 75], Accessed November 13, 2014, <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1187&context=totem>.

Internal Displacement

Pursuing this further, scholars argue that many Colombians have been forced to seek refuge among the targeted guerrilla groups because *Plan Colombia* has caused adverse social issues, such as forced internal displacement, economic crisis, and food shortage. Also according to a Human Rights Watch on Colombian child soldiers, many youth have been forced to join guerrilla groups due to starvation. Caroline Pineda claims that the abandoned and impoverished areas in Colombia offer little viable economic alternatives and civilians, desperate for income, have moved further into the Amazon jungle or to the Pacific Coast in order to continue cultivation. In the same way Katrina Kosec in *The Ones Who Preserve Our Identity: Women, Children and Plan Colombia*, she states that “migration necessitated by food and work shortages, personal danger, or other actors has emptied entire indigenous territories”. Local indigenous leaders reported that vacating their communities was the only alternative response to the arterial spraying projects led by eradication efforts Graham.²²

Social Reactions and Responses

In light of the above overview of conclusions drawn from the outcomes of *Plan Colombia* it is easier to understand how and why many Colombians have reacted to the adverse situation. According to CNN, Marta Lucia Ramirez, a

²² Daniel Graham, "The Environmental Consequences of Plan Colombia," *The Arizona Journal of Environmental Law and Policy*, April 25, 2012, [Page 2].; Kosec, Katrina. "The Ones Who Preserve Our Identity: Women, Children, and Plan Colombia." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Winter 2003, 46-48.

former Colombian minister of defense and one of the designers of the proposal, said that “the agreement has helped her country to strengthen democracy and government institutions. It has also increased the Colombian government’s ability to fight what she calls ‘narco-terrorism’...but the high drug demand in the U.S. makes it difficult to eradicate production at home.” She was also quoted saying that she “believe[s] that the American strategy against drugs is not enough. It’s probably a failure.”²³ Many others have also said that they believe that the proposal is causing a balloon effect, in which coca producers are steadily moving from place to place. In some cases they are just relocating around Colombia and in others cases they are relocating to neighboring countries thereby causing border conflicts. Overall Colombia elites are unsatisfied with the outcomes of *Plan Colombia*. Additionally CNN reports that security experts say “Plan Colombia has improved security, but it has fallen short on its original goal of reducing drug production in the region. In what is known as the balloon effect, increased army attacks against drug traffickers in Colombia has moved coca and poppy crops elsewhere. And the quantity of the drug production from the Andean countries like Bolivia, Peru and Colombia is the same as 10 years ago”.²⁴

Many Colombian elites have given negative responses to the adverse situation. However both governments have done a great job at ignoring the sentiments of the natives especially considering that more than 20 million

²³ Rafael Romo, "Plan Colombia Revisited: Mixed Results for U.S. Anti-drug Initiative," *CNN World*, Last modified January 17, 2011, Accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/americas/01/17/colombia.us.drugs/>

²⁴ Ibid.

Colombians (45.5% of the pop.) live below the poverty line and 16.6% suffer from extreme poverty. Natives are appalled by the U.S and Colombian government's attempt to provide an alternative supplement for the income received from trafficking cocaine. In other words, both governments attempted to provide alternative income opportunities other than those opportunities gained from trafficking cocaine. City officials, such as Manuel Alzate Restrepo, the mayor of Puerto Aziz, Southern Colombia believe that the U.S.-Colombian pact to provide alternative assistance is useless because 950 USD (2 Million Pesos) is not enough for a small family of five to live off of for a year compared to how much they would make if they cultivated coca leaves. With that said officials believe it will be impossible to stop farmers from cultivating because these farmers have large families to take care of. Additionally, natives are less willing to give up cultivation because of the lack of government implementation of newly developed pact proposition.²⁵

Environmental Implications

Health Issues

The human health consequences of forced eradication have been extremely severe. According to Graham, Colombian physicians from areas that have been sprayed have observed an increase in respiratory, skin, and gastrointestinal illness from Colombians that have been exposed to the spray. Physicians also

²⁵ Gerard Ungerman, screenwriter. *Plan Colombia: Cashing In on the Drug War*. Directed by Audrey Brohy. Free Will Productions, 2003.; Journeryman Pictures, prod. *Colombia Frontline*. Journeryman Pictures, 2008.

observed other reactions attributable to spray exposure, such as headaches, vomiting, fever, dizziness, and red eyes. In August of 2001 a European Human Rights Organization visited Colombia and was able to verify skin conditions, such as rashes and dry skin, in both children and adults who were directly exposed to the aerial spraying. They also concluded that these people were most likely directly exposed to the spraying while they worked on their land or played in their backyards. Interestingly, a Colombian health department also concluded that they had observed a number of cases in which patients were experiencing skin, respiratory, digestive, and ocular complications. Even worse, studies have found that Ecuadorian communities living near the Colombian borders have also suffered from the same illnesses as Colombian patients after having been exposed to spray during the aerial fumigations that occurred in that region. Besides physically affecting humans negatively, aerial spraying has also directly affected individuals' livelihoods. For example, the aerial spraying has significantly contributed to the destruction and failure of legal crops. Local farmers have also witnessed the eradication of their banana, yucca, and corn crops.²⁶

In 2002 a report titled *"Report on Issues Related to the Eradication of Illicit Coca in Colombia"* was submitted to the United States Congress in light of the health issues caused by forced manual eradication and aerial eradication. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, in 2002 the United States Embassy received a complaint of multiple cases of poisoning from the spraying of coca plants in Colombia. Two hospitalized children were tested by

²⁶ Daniel Graham, "The Environmental Consequences of Plan Colombia," *The Arizona Journal of Environmental Law and Policy*, April 25, 2012.

toxicologists in order to discover if the accusations were true. One child was found to be suffering from poisoning by an organophosphate insecticide.²⁷ This is just an example of one in many cases in which Colombian natives have suffered from the consequences of coca eradication.

Landscape and Ecological Issues

The spraying has had a detrimental effect on the landscape of Colombia. Studies have also shown that spraying has caused Colombia's landscape to deteriorate. Aerial spraying has inflicted severe conditions on the terrain, such as soil infertility, blockage of vegetation regeneration, erosion, deforestation, desertification, and groundwater contamination. It has also interfered with the biological operations of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Furthermore it has contaminated many rivers. Fumigation processes have affected a number of species, such as earthworms, fungi, microbes, fish, birds, horses, cattle, poultry, dogs and other vital species. The adverse effects of the fumigation process can be felt throughout the jungle. Consequently, in efforts to avoid fumigation farmers have moved deeper into the rain forest thereby driving wildlife away.²⁸

Additionally, Ricardo Vargas asserts that the second part to the eradication policy, the *Supply Reduction Policy* portion, is a complete failure and it promotes

²⁷ Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Report on Issues Related to the Aerial Eradication of Illicit Coca in Colombia, Rep. (2003). Accessed December 13, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/rpt/aeicc/26581.htm>.

²⁸ Ricardo Vargas, "The Anti-Drug Policy, Aerial Spraying of Illicit Crops and Their Social, Environmental and Political Impacts in Colombia," *The Journal of Drug Issues*, Winter 2002, [Page 13], Accessed November 27, 2014, <http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/archives/archives/vargas/jdpi.pdf>.

crop displacement. He gives an example of efforts to eradicate illegal crops stating that “ at the time, the problem simply shifted from the lowlands to the highlands and, thus from a strategic consideration to an environmental one. It negatively affected the ecological balance in water-producing woodland areas, since new illicit crops were planted to replace those that had been eradicated.”²⁹ Moreover, a continuous cycle is manifested in which natural woods are cut down; marijuana or coca crops areas planted; forced eradication with the fumigation of herbicides occurs; migration to better preserved and harder to control areas in the zone’s middle thermic floors (middle level of Colombia’s ground surface); then the cycle continues again.

Continuing this further Vargas asserts that the first effect is deforestation, which in some cases shows a ratio of one hectare of cultivated coca equaling one and one half, and even two hectares, of slash and burn. The repositioning and spread of coca crops has meant the deforestation of between 152,700 to 203,000 wooded hectares.³⁰ According to Vargas a technical paper was issued by a consortium of Colombian enterprises directly and indirectly involved with the environment, in which four serious risks to the environment were laid out. However, it is important to note that tebuthiuron is a nonselective broad spectrum herbicide of the urea class. Vargas writes:

²⁹Ibid,. 15.

³⁰ Ibid,. 28.

1. The residual effect exerted by tebuthiuron's high persistence can cause soil infertility and block the natural regeneration of vegetation for a prolonged period of time, favoring erosion and desertification processes at the core of the ecosystems exposed to it.³¹

2. Tebuthiuron's nonselectivity affects the first link of the trophic chain constituted by vegetation (autotrophes), interfering, to different degrees, with the various links in the web of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, since plant death and the alteration of species variety causes a reduction in the availability of foodstuff and modifies niches and habitats.³²

3. Tebuthiuron's high mobility amplifies the area exposed to its effects, since it is transported via rainfall towards surface water or through leaching to groundwater. Severe precautionary measures are required, given that most of the areas in which the country's groundwater aquifers are located have not yet been identified, nor has their degree of vulnerability been determined.³³

4. Considering the characteristics of the Amazonian edaphological (is concerned with the influence of soils on living things, particularly plants) landscapes and taking into account the area's precipitation (40mm to

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid,. 29

50mm at a time), the rainfall intensity surpasses the soil's seepage capacity. Therefore, a sheet of rainwater is formed, favoring the herbicide's movement to areas outside those of application and in the direction of surface water, with subsequent damage to terrestrial and aquatic plants.³⁴

IV. COLOMBIA MOVING FORWARD

It is important to note that some progress has been made because the guerrilla groups, such as FARC have been weakened and operate with only half the strength with which it started out at the beginning of the proposal. Drug related violence and criminality has dramatically decreased and the Colombian state has been strengthened. This includes the transformation of the military, which has doubled in size. However, a lot of lives have been lost in the fight to decrease drug trafficking efforts across the Americas. In 2010, it was estimated that about 21,000 fighters from both sides and about 14,000 civilians have been killed.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mauricio Solaún, "U.S. Interventions in Latin America: Plan Colombia," Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, April 24, 2002, [Page 4], accessed November 29, 2014, <http://acdis.illinois.edu/publications/207/publication-USInterventionsinLatinAmericaPlanColombia.html>.; Phillip S. Smith, "Plan Colombia Turns 10: Looking at the Effects of Bill Clinton's Signature Drug War Project," *Drug War Chronicle*, no. 640 (July 15, 2010), Accessed December 3, 2014, http://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/2010/jul/15/plan_colombia_ten_years_later.

New Rural Development Plan

As of August 2013, recently re-elected President Juan Manuel Santos has vowed to the Colombian people the restoration of land rights to those deserving individuals that consider themselves victims of the drug stricken conflict. The year 2014 marked the end of Colombia's national development plan, known as *Prosperidad para Todos 2010-2014* (Prosperity for All). The plan was designed by President Juan Santos in order to reduce poverty, increase incomes, generate employment opportunities, improve security and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources through Colombia. More specifically, the plan sought to foster more sustainable economic growth, while at the same time promoting equal opportunities for all citizens without considerations of their ethnicity and social status. Ultimately the plan would have ended all violence and conflict associated with drugs in order to repair the social fabric of Colombia.³⁶ However, with the rise of drug production in Colombia President Santos has had to develop a new plan to tackle the issue. However, in order to make this plan successful President Santos has come to a peaceful negotiation with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) about a land reform agreement.

Once written up the agreement will be known as the Rural Development Plan, as it is the first step in bringing internal peace to the state of Colombia. The purpose of the project is to build the capacity of the institutions in order to administer and manage programs that retribute land to the victims of the drug

³⁶ "Eradicating Rural Poverty In Colombia," Rural Poverty Portal, last modified 2012, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/en/country/approaches/tags/colombia>.

infused internal violence. Additionally, the programs will help extend land titling in prioritized or mostly undeveloped rural areas. Ultimately, the goal is to promote sustainable rural development that in turn will enable beneficiaries of land restorations to retain and make productive and efficient use of their new land. The plan is estimated to receive about \$65,000,000 in funding.³⁷ The plan extends to cover housing programs, the provision of tap water, technical assistance and training, access to education, formal land titling, infrastructure, and soil recovery. The document states that the purpose of the agreement is to reverse the effects of the internal conflict and restore land to the victims of dispossession and forced displacement.³⁸

Conclusion

Thus, the question becomes how exactly do we start the process to slow down the production of the drug market in Latin America. The obvious answer would be to provide sufficient assistance to the citizens who survive to enable them to support their families without participating in the production of drugs. However, the obvious answer is not necessarily a sufficient long term solution, especially when the drug market has strengthened and expanded over the past

³⁷ "Land And Rural Development Project: Colombia," USAID Land Tenure and Property Rights Portal, accessed December 19, 2014, <http://usaidlandtenure.net/project/land-and-rural-development-project-colombia>.

³⁸ Patricia Grogg and Constanza Vieira, "Key Land Reform Accord in Colombia's Peace Talks," editorial, Inter Press Service News Agency, last modified May 27, 2013, accessed December 20, 2014, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/05/key-land-reform-accord-in-colombias-peace-talks/>.

twenty years. Given the above responses to *Plan Colombia* it is easier to understand why the environmental and social implications are considered to be adverse. In short, studies have found that the U.S. involvement in the Colombian drug war has had no effect on preventing or decreasing the levels of cocaine production throughout the Americas. In fact, it is also evident, as expressed in the Colombia citizens' sentiments, that the involvement of the United States government in the Colombian drug industry, is considered negligent. Additionally, the plan has inflicted terrible effects on the Colombian society, such as displacement, destruction of ecosystems and landscapes, as well as different human health issues. Additionally, it has caused a balloon effect causing insurgencies to relocate through the state, and neighboring borderlands, ultimately causing corruption. With the displacement of farmers the insurgencies have to constantly relocate and recruit new farmers. Although it may sound unrealistic one solution to the drug problem would be for Colombia to decriminalize cocaine and other illicit drugs. Even though it is entirely illegal for the Colombian government to put on their blindfolds and ignore the situation, the government and especially the society would benefit from the revenue that could potentially be put back into the economy for more development. If the current policies that the Colombia and United States is applying to these issues do not solve the problem, then Colombia should follow by example and mirror the legalization politics adopted in Colorado and other U.S. states. It seems as if the state is benefitting economically from the legalization of marijuana and we can assume that violence has also decreased because the drug is widely available.

In conclusion, many authors argue that coca production is not the driving force of contemporary Colombian guerrilla violence. Ultimately, they offer evidence that concludes that the relationship between coca production and violence is weak and data suggests that coca cultivation is not a major factor in explaining the differences in guerrilla groups' levels of violence.³⁹ Moreover, authors assert that evidence suggests that current U.S. foreign policies to apprehend the drug trafficking issue are counterproductive.⁴⁰ If trends suggest that there is a positive relationship between coca production and guerrilla violence, why is the government worried about interfering? For instance, since the coca exports have increased in Colombia, guerrilla violence has decreased. If this is the case why does the Colombian government allow the U.S. to continuously be involved? About 50% of Colombians live in poverty and 60% are unemployed, with these numbers the Colombian government should be focusing their efforts on improving socioeconomic conditions for the society.⁴¹

³⁹ Jennifer S. Holmes, Sheila Amin Gutierrez de Pineres, and Kevin M. Curtin, "Drugs, Violence, and Development in Colombia: A Department-Level Analysis," *Latin American Politics and Society* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): [Page 160], accessed December 8, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4490481>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,. 160

⁴¹ Rafael Romo, "Plan Colombia Revisited: Mixed Results for U.S. Anti-drug Initiative," *CNN World*, Last modified January 17, 2011, Accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/americas/01/17/colombia.us.drugs/>

V. ENDNOTES

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