Plan Colombia's Strategic Weaknesses

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Introduction

In its initial formulation Plan Colombia consisted of a well-defined, multi-purpose comprehensive development strategy principally aimed at attacking Colombia’s most severe and immediate problems. The plan sought to address the need for profound social
and economic development of the areas most negatively affected by the long and violent conflict taking place in the country. ¹

As a development plan it seeked to achieve two additional and integrated goals. First, to act as a fundamental part of the peace negotiations policy that the newly inaugurated government was set to initiate with the Farc guerrillas, and second as a strategy for gathering international support for the government’s peace plan. From the very beginning, it was clear that the internationalization of the process in Colombia was a critical element. For quite some time the involvement of outside actors in Colombia constituted growing presence. Two seemingly diverse, but interrelated processes had been gaining increased international attention. The growth of narcotrafficking during the 90’s increased US involvement and stepped up pressures on the Colombian government not only in regards to interdiction, but also oriented to control the increased rates of coca leaf production. The other, the escalation of the armed conflict during the last years of the Samper administration that lead to perceive a potential collapse of the Colombian State, unable to respond to the increased military capabilities of the guerrillas.

However, the role that was expected the international community should play was not as clear. Discussions on Colombian foreign policy, or on the desired characteristics international involvement in Colombia had been largely absent. In the 1998 electoral campaigns these issues were notoriously left out.² None of the leading candidates developed a clear and organized understanding of what the Colombian government would come to expect from the international community, or how it would go about to achieve this. Then presidential candidate Andrés Pastrana developed an idea that would gather support to a government led peace negotiation process with the two guerrilla groups.

This paper intends to analyze to process that the development of Plan Colombia experienced, from the perspective of the Pastrana administration. We will argue that the change of directions and the multiplicity of diverse and often contradictory goals established for the plan were a consequence of differences in perspective and intentions within the Pastrana administration. “In trying to respond to diverse interests, the plan had an ambiguous character. On the one hand, it intends to attend the urgencies that the internal situation is pressing on Colombia, and on the other, it is responding to national and regional geopolitical interests of the United States”.³ This ambiguity not only reflects on the content of the plan, that went from a complement to the peace negotiation process to a U.S. inspired and controlled antinarcotics policy, but also to creating severe misgivings as to its true intentions. From what was substantially a plan for peace to becoming part of an anti-insurgency strategy. The variations seem to indicate a lack of clear vision as to how the various parts of Pastrana’s strategy should integrate to consolidate the fundamental goal that was the peace process. A

³ Socorro Ramirez,” La internacionalizacion del conflicto y de la paz en Colombia” in:El Plan Colombiay la Internacionalizacion del Conflicto, IEPRI,Universidad Nacional, Planeta, Bogotá, 2001. (P.74)
The multi-layered approach to peace was trying to solve numerous problems that Colombia was facing at the time. The most important was the prevailing perception that Colombia was approaching a “partial collapse of the state”. In 1998, Colombia was facing its most severe security, political and economic crisis. In recent years the Colombian military had sustained severe military losses in open confrontations with the Farc. U.S. anti-drug policy in Peru and Bolivia led to a concentration of the illegal drug trafficking industry in Colombia. Colombia was not only the exporter of 80% of the cocaine to the U.S. and Europe with coca plantations growing to more than 100,000 hectares in the last 5 years, and a U.S. imposed interdiction policy that was proving to be a failure. Pastrana’s intent to attack these problems by solving, through peaceful negotiations, the most pressing problem that the country faced proved to be too optimistic. In the end Plan Colombia was redesigned and redirected by the U.S. government. Plan Colombia became two different things. To the Pastrana administration, it was a plan for economic recovery, prosperity, and strengthening of the State. For everybody else it had become something else. And it became increasingly difficult to sell.

The first part of the paper, argues that the initial formulation of the plan that came out of the High commissioner for Peace office of the presidency suffered a first mutation due in part to institutional and personal rivalries within the Pastrana administration. Presidential leadership was strong in the presentation of the need for a plan to attack the root causes that were feeding the violent conflict in Colombia as a precondition for a negotiated peace. However, when it came to defining the specific details of the plan leadership seemed to be weak, or missing.

A second part focuses on the consequences of the Clinton administration involvement in the plan. For Colombia, and for the Pastrana administration, the U.S. commitment of $1.3 billion dollars was a considerable success. Colombia had passed to be the third biggest recipient of U.S. foreign aid after Israel and Egypt. However, U.S. involved its own internal political priorities and redefined the plan. There was Plan Colombia, but now it had become a different plan. President Pastrana, in accepting the funding, ended up accepting the new plan. The fact that in Colombia there were practically no discussions on the initial plan or of the subsequent changes explains the extent to which there was admittance that it could not have been avoided.

The third part focuses on the European component of Plan Colombia. While important in the initial formulation of the plan, it became less so in the U.S. version of Plan Colombia. While strongly supportive of the peace process, European countries were much not so fast in collaborating to the funding of the plan. And since the developmental aspects had been reduced, and attention to this aspect had withered in Bogotá, European support became more political than material. Pastrana needed European support to prove that Plan Colombia was not only a militarized anti-narcotics U.S. policy; and needed to prove it was not just a militarized plan in order to gather European support.
Plan Colombia’s original intent.

The design and development of Plan Colombia in its origin was led by the need to strengthen and reinstate state capacity as it was entering the peace negotiations with the FARC. The increased capacity of the guerrilla movements to inflict severe damage to the Colombian army, the continuos growth of all areas related to the drug trade, and the most severe economic crisis the country had confronted since the 1930’s all helped to created an extremely vulnerable situation. The relative weakness of the Colombian State had come as a consequence a growing international isolation, basically a product of US policy against President Samper, a loss of legitimacy of the political system, a practically nonexistent military strategy, and a lasting economic recession. 4

In assuming office, President Pastrana confronted the need to reconstruct internal state legitimacy and to get the national economy out of the recession. To achieve these goals the Pastrana administration designed two complementary strategies. First, to initiate peace negotiation processes with the FARC and the ELN. Second, to seek international assistance to help Colombia out of its economic crisis. In its own way, both strategies were connected to improved relations with the United States.

The need to recompose bilateral relations with the United States that had reached an all time low during the Samper administration was a primary concern of the government. However, US policy in Colombia had been increasingly concentrated in the war against drugs 5. And this had been made clear by the State Department to Pastrana shortly before assuming office by a list of seven points that an anti-drug policy should include. The illegal drug issue however, did not seem to be high among the administrations initial concerns.

The principal governmental concern was the peace negotiations with the FARC. The illicit drugs problem and the steady growth of coca leaf plantations of in south were not high on the government’s agenda. The new administration saw the solution to the growth of illicit drugs activity as an added benefit of the peace process. Pastrana saw the peace negotiations as the best way to combat illicit drugs. This view was developed as a means to gain American support with the peace initiative, connecting the drug problem with the peace process.

President Pastrana had had the intention of increasing international participation in resolving Colombia’s armed conflict since the electoral campaign. There he had called for international support in the different stages of the negotiation. He wanted that international presence help in the verification of agreements once these were reached. Once in office, Pastrana called for the industrialized countries to support a Marshall Plan for Colombia. This plan was first described as “The sum of educational, scientific,

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5 Russell Crandall: Explicit Narcotization: U.S. Policy toward Colombia During the Samper Administration. (Latin American Politics and Society, vol.43, number 3, Fall 2001 (p.95)
technical, cultural, economic and political resources to help develop the countries exiting capacities toward this end the Pastrana government created a special fund, the Fondo de Inversiones para la Paz. This fund would be financed by from the government, from civil society and from the international community.

The purpose for which the fund was established was to gather support for the negotiations through an intensive development policy especially geared toward the sectors of the population most affected by the violent conflict. It was understood the government could not go into the negotiation process without a strong support of the people closest to the conflict. It was thought that any development programs that came as a result of negotiations would be seen as something achieved by the guerrilla movement. The fund, and the main internal funding mechanism the Bonos de Paz (1998 Peace Bonds) which were collected only a few months into the Pastrana administration were in place largely before any specific development strategies were really in place. This is largely a testimony of the fundamentally political nature of the strategy.

The international component of the initial plan (then still the Plan Marshall para Colombia) was equally political. It was strongly felt that Colombia could not confront all its problems on its own. Colombia needed international support especially in regards to an economic recovery that was seen as a prerequisite for successful negotiations. This external support was principally to come from the United States and to a lesser extent from Europe based on a principle of co-responsibility. The co-responsibility argument stated that while Colombia had been for years paying a high price in the war against illicit drugs, the consumer countries were not only not doing enough to control drug demand, but also were not doing enough to help Colombia in their share of the effort. Inside Colombia it was further understood as a public demonstration of support for the Pastrana government.

The plan had been originally conceived as a complement to the peace negotiation process. The role that was expected from the international community, though it implied economic support, was mainly intended as supporting the negotiation policy. The extent to which the plan was part of, and subordinated to the peace process is made evident in its institutional arrangements. Largely informal, the office of the director of the plan was part of the High Commissioner of Peace’s staff. Its first director, Rodrigo Guerrero, an ex-mayor of Cali, was nominated to that post by Victor G. Ricardo, Pastrana’s first High Commissioner of Peace in September 1998. Though Guerrero acted as director of Plan Colombia, and was responsible for the first version of the plan, he was never actually hired, never had an office nor staff, and never received a paycheck. The elaboration of

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7 Interview by the author with Rodrigo Guerrero, in Bogotá, February 4, 2003.
8 Numerous authors deal with the co-responsibility argument as it was conceived in Colombia. See: Socorro Ramirez, (2001),
9 The degree of informality in the institutional setup of Plan Colombia, was expressed to the author by R. Guerrero in the interview. The name of the plan went from “Plan Marshall para Colombia” to “Plan Pastrana” then finally to Plan Colombia
the plan was mostly done with the collaboration of officials from the National Planning Department (DNP) and the ministry of agriculture.

The main initial components of Plan Colombia came from the Peace Bonds that were to feed the *Fondo de Inversiones para La Paz* (FIP) Fund. The peace bonds were a one-time tax that was charged to Colombian businesses as a contribution to the peace effort.

Though these bonds were subscribed in the second semester of 1999, the 100 million dollars that were collected could never be disbursed because the Fund itself had never been completely constituted according to law. A series of requirements, such as the formation a board of directors were missing. The money was there, but they could not spend it. This problem delayed the implementation of the initial projects.

President Pastrana made the official presentation of Plan Colombia in December of 1998 in Puerto Wilches. The Plan Colombia presented to the Colombian people was an alternative development plan that was oriented to aid the victims of the prolonged-armed conflict. The selection of Puerto Wilches as the site from where to launch to government’s plan was itself indicative of the plan’s intent. The initial location that had been chosen, the Caguan region, the area that was to serve as the base for the peace negotiations was discarded for fear that it might be seen as a concession, or a payment in kind to the secretariat of the FARC.

Puerto Wilches, in the Magdalena Medio region, was a place where alternative development projects were being implemented by the Proyecto de Desarrollo del Magdalena Medio headed by father Fransisco DeRoux. In this region there are no coca leaf plantations, but a strong presence of the guerrillas (FARC and ELN) as well as of the paramilitary (AUC). This was the precise symbolic imagery that was sought: alternatives of peaceful development as opposed to the violent conflict. The plan Colombia presented in Puerto Wilches “…didn’t have helicopters, nor fumigation, nor gringos up to that moment”  

In his speech at Puerto Wilches, President Pastrana laid down the fundamental view with which his government was approaching the negotiation process. In this speech Pastrana presents an “integral and integrating conception of peace” that is what defines Plan Colombia. Pastrana saw the peace negotiation process as “…the stage were, through a process of dialogue with the insurgents, it will be possible to identify and implement the necessary transformations required to make this integral peace”. The Puerto Wilches speech makes an open invitation to the guerrilla groups to participate in all aspects of implementing Plan Colombia. Pastrana invites them to take part in the preparation, definition, and implementation of the projects and programs of Plan Colombia. “….. My proposal is evident: the insurgency must take part actively in all

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10 Quoted from R. Guerrero: interview.
12 Quote from the Puerto Wilches speech, December 1998.
decisions of Plan Colombia”. In this presentation of Plan Colombia there are only scarce references to illegal drugs. For the most part, it is viewed in terms of ecological damage and coca crop substitution, and something that must be made in accordance with the guerrillas, as a product of the peace talks.

According to Jaime Ruiz, who was the director of the National Planning Department (DNP) at that time the Plan Colombia that came out of the Puerto Wilches speech is the one that was incorporated into the National Development Plan 1998-2000. For Ruiz Plan Colombia had three fundamental components: Peace negotiations war against drugs, and democratic institutional development. However in the DNP text there is a considerable difference in respect to combating coca leaf plantations.

The National Development Plan of 1998 defined the internal social conflict and the low economic turnout as the two most critical problems that Colombia was confronting. Plan Colombia was found under the heading of Strategies toward zones affected by the violent conflict. Here it is defined as a combination of humanitarian and developmental approaches that would act in three fronts:

1- Substitution of illicit plantations by means of alternative development projects.
2- Attention to population displaced by force.
3- Focalized actions in regions where violence has reached critical levels.

‘ … The plan constitutes the central axis of the peace policy. The main objective of the strategy was, at that moment, to create the necessary economic, social and environmental conditions to foster an integral peace and stimulate participation and social concertation’

Now Plan Colombia takes into account violence not only as a product of the armed conflict generated by the guerrillas as well as by the paramilitaries but also that generated by activities of illegal drug trafficking. However the illegal drugs issue arises only as a consequence of the violent conflict in areas where these two meet.

Plan Colombia would focus on five action areas: development of productive processes; protection and promotion of human capital and humanitarian assistance; institutional development and strengthening of social capital; construction of an infrastructure for peace; and promotion of a sustainable environment. There is a clear developmental approach that seeks to distance itself from a military security framework. The plan emphasizes a “new” approach that shifts away from a traditional security paradigm based on a “police- justice-prison model” to the one that develops interventions with an emphasis on preventive and pedagogical content as a strategy to reduce violence and promote social understanding.

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13 Interviewed by the author with Jaime Ruiz, former director of the DNP, and now at the World Bank, in Washington D.C., July 16.2002
15 Socorro Ramirez(2001) p.83
16 Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1998-2002 p. 381
A second difference in the text of the plan as formulated in the NDP is that all references to participation of the armed actors in the conflict, that was a central part of the Puerto Wilches speech, are now absent. Nowhere in the Plan Colombia text are there any references to the potential participation of the guerrillas in the design or implementation of Plan Colombia. Here, there is a view that through popular participation, and a stronger state presence in the areas most affected by the conflict, the state would succeed in eliminating popular support, as well any objective conditions, for the guerrillas. This would be achieved by an active participatory process at the local level in order to identify priorities, design and implement projects and programs according to those problems identified by the community.

“Thus conceived, Plan Colombia generates conditions to achieve peace, because it seeks at a regional level, and through a participatory model of administration to bring together the wills of society and all parts that are now confronted.”

These two different conceptions of how Plan Colombia was to be implemented, and the role that the guerrillas would play in it can be explained by institutional factors. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace produced the Plan Colombia version in the Puerto Wilches speech, prior to the formal initiation of the peace talks. The National Development Plan version came out of the Departamento Nacional de Planeacion (DNP) that was conceived and written by officials in that department with relatively scarce relations with the High Commissioner’s office. Strong leaders, both very close to president Pastrana, but each playing a different role within the administration headed both state agencies.

The National Development Plan 1998-2000 “ Cambio para Construir la Paz” however never left the ground. Although it was voted in the National Congress and signed into law on July 29, 1999 it was subsequently invalidated as unconstitutional by the Colombian Supreme Court, and was never replaced by a new bill. Plan Colombia became the government’s principal policy document and in the subsequent years played the part of a national development plan.

Diplomacy for peace

President Andrés Pastrana’s principal goal was the peace negotiation process. The fundamental aspects of his administration had been defined by the need to integrate the different actions in providing support for the process.

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17 ibid, p.382
18 The extent to which personality factors might have weighted in within the Pastrana administration was brought up by R. Guerrero in the interview. The influence of two very strong characters had, and a president with a leadership style that was noticeably inattentive to detail might explain the differences in approaches.
Diplomacy for Peace constituted a fundamental part of this strategy. In it, the Pastrana government saw the possibility of support from the international community to the peace negotiations, though the precise form this participation would have was yet undetermined. In a presentation before Congress, Foreign minister Guillermo Fernandez de Soto defined the objectives of diplomacy for peace as:

*Recovery of Colombia’s international presence, internationalization of the peace process, obtaining increased international cooperation and political solidarity; And to obtain an objective understanding, on behalf of the international community, of the characteristics and actions of the groups outside the law that operate in Colombian territory* 20

In the National Development Plan 1998-2002 the Diplomacy for Peace strategy was defined in terms of gathering international support for the peace negotiations.21 Once Pastrana was elected President, he put forward a proposal to “internationalize peace to de-internationalize to conflict.” The first form that this international collaboration took was in the creation of the Peace fun (Fondo para La Paz); the second was to articulate an active presence of the international community in the peace process.22

Pastrana pursued an active international agenda that started during the 1998 presidential campaign. The main objectives of his international policy were first to reconstruct bilateral relations with the United States that had been at an all time low during the Samper administration. Pastrana further needed to interest the US in the peace process. Acknowledging that the war on drugs was the central focus of US-Colombia relations, Pastrana related the peace process to the fight against drugs, with the argument that once the Farc were reintegrated into society, they would act as important allies in the implementation of programs for eradication and crop substitution. This notion, that the peace negotiation process would help bring illicit drug cultivation to a halt was more in accordance with the spirit of the Puerto Wilches speech than that of the NDP, revealing an overly optimistic understanding of what the peace process could actually produce.

Pastrana was seemingly successful in developing a close relation with President Clinton. Clinton met with Pastrana in Washington before Pastrana assumed office, and later received him on six occasions in the following two years. A number of high level American officers, both form the White House and from Congress visited Colombia in the following months.

20 Memorias Al Congreso: 2001-2002, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Bogotá,. The latter part was in obvious relation to European countries and their ties with the FARC and ELN.
21 Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, punto 5
22 In the National development plan the place given to the foreign participation is defined as bounded by “the principle of non intervention in internal political matters and in principles of international cooperation” and it clearly states that all political initiatives remain solely in the hands of the Colombian government “thus, corresponding to the international community only a an assistantship role, according to the petitions that the government formulates, and the dynamics of the process” (p.126)
A special personal connection developed that won an important support for the Pastrana government as well as it helped revitalize traditionally good diplomatic relations between the two countries.

A second focus of diplomacy for peace policy involved a more active role in international multilateral agencies. President Pastrana addressed the UN General Assembly in September of 1998, met with UN High commissioner for Human Rights and proposed that they send delegates from the UN commission, as guarantors, to the demilitarized areas where the negotiations with the FARC were to take place. Pastrana traveled extensively presenting his diplomacy for peace in a series of bilateral and multilateral forums.

The main objective was to gather international support for his peace negotiation policy. How that support was envisioned to materialize remained imprecise. Basically there seemed to be two principal ideas. First, politically it was seen as important to obtain international backing for the government’s peace policy that implied recognition of the legitimacy of the Colombian State. Second to contributions to the Peace Fund.

The Foreign affairs minister Fernandez de Soto, in a presentation of the government’s foreign policy achievements defined as the most significant achievement of the government’s foreign policy had been “the advance of diplomacy for peace that had replaced the guerrilla diplomacy”. The objective of this strategy that was developed before the governments and international organizations was to alter the traditionally favorable perspective that some countries from the European Union had of the guerrilla groups in Colombia. The intention was to foster consciousness of the violations of human rights and to international humanitarian law. This helped gather political support for the peace process. The political backing obtained in the international community was realized in the constitution of a Group of Facilitator Countries in the negotiations with the FARC (Canada, Cuba, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Venezuela). A second, smaller group, the Grupo de Amigos, was formed to help in the process with the ELN (Cuba, Spain, France, Norway, and Switzerland).

A further achievement was the consolidation of the internal consensus of the government’s foreign policy based on the notion that Colombia should develop a strong international support as it was due according to the principle of co-responsibility. This internal aspect of the government’s external policy served further consolidate the internal consensus around the peace negotiations with the guerrillas as it was seen as gaining international support.

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23 Socorro Ramirez (2001) p.79
25 These groups played an important role during the later period of the negotiations, especially in the second part of 2001 and first months of 2002, when the process was facing its most pressing problems.
The second Plan Colombia (US version)

The principal issue on the bilateral US-Colombian agenda for a long time has been the war on drugs. The special relationship that President Pastrana was able to develop with President Clinton was not enough to alter that. However, Pastrana was successful at first in relating to drug war to the peace process, and in involving the US in this policy. In a way the peace negotiation policy of the Pastrana government and the new Clinton administration antidrug aid to Colombia developed in parallel processes that end up intertwined.

The failure of U.S. drug policy in the 90’s, centered on the persecution of the drug cartels and interdiction, as well as a changing scenario of the coca cultivation that had tended to move away from Peru and Bolivia and concentrate in Colombia, was a source of concern in the United States. In this sense the arrival of Pastrana to the presidency was an opportunity to re-examine U.S. policy. The Clinton administration saw in Pastrana a welcome change from the Samper administration; Pastrana was reliable and understood the value of constructing solid, long-term relations with the U.S. “This did not mean, however that the United states failed to make it clear to Pastrana that he too would have to comply with U.S. led counternarcotics efforts.”

The drug issue was an important internal issue in U.S. politics and especially with regards to Colombia. Congress had exerted pressure on the Clinton administration concerned that the emphasis on peace negotiations would distract Colombian attention from the anti drug programs already in place. “To that end, U.S. Congress passed a resolution that would cut off counternarcotics assistance to Colombia if Pastrana’s peace initiatives- especially the proposed plan to grant the Farc a demilitarized zone – interfered with coca eradication efforts.” While the anti-narcotics policy was not a central concern of Pastrana, but rather subordinated to the peace process, U.S. pressure on this issue was no less prevalent. To an important extent the Clinton administration made it clear to president Pastrana that any support to the peace negotiations would come in hand with further applications of anti-narcotics.

“U.S. policy during the Pastrana administration might seem less narcotized, and to a certain extent this is true. But a large part of this denarcotization evolved only because Pastrana agreed to implement and support the basic tenets of U.S. drug policy. We can therefore characterize U.S. policy during the Pastrana administration as “Implicit Narcotization”.

26 Diego Cardona (2002) op. cit.
28 INL figures indicate that overall there were no real reduction in coca cultivation substitution. Eradicated crops in Bolivia and Peru were almost equal in size to the growth of coca cultivation in Colombia. See: Adam Isacson, (2002) Colombia’s human security crisis, <http://www.ciponline.org>
30 ibid.
31 Ibid.
Pastrana visited Washington in October 1998. Pastrana was seeking to gather support for his Marshall Plan. There he found few that would listen. Pastrana obtained no concrete pledges of support and no money. However, progress began to take form in respect to the drug policy changes that Washington had begun to introduce. A meeting in December 1998 of a working group headed by the U.S. secretary of defense William Cohen and Colombia’s defense minister Rodrigo Lloreda signed an agreement that promoted greater cooperation between the two countries militaries. In this meeting the creation of a new Colombian counternarcotics battalion was accorded. The battalion composed of 900 men vetted from human rights accusations would be based in Trés Esquinas, in the heart of the southern coca cultivation region.

Participation of the Clinton administration in the peace process was interpreted as yet another signal of Pastrana’s good will in Washington. In December 13-14 1998, State Department representative Phil Chicola met secretly with the Farc’s Raul Reyes in Costa Rica. However on February 25, 1999, the U.S. indigenous rights activists working with the U’WA Indians in the northeastern department of Arauca were abducted and later assassinated by the Farc. On the 12 of March Raul Reyes, a member of the secretariat of the Farc, ended all possible direct U.S. involvement in the peace process.

In March the peace process was all but lost. The Farc had stalled negotiations, and there were few prospects of reaching any agreements in the short term. The resignation of minister of defense Rodrigo Lloreda over the continuation of the Despeje and the military crisis that followed produced a change of perspective over what could be expected from the peace negotiations. In July, Luis Fernando Ramirez, the new defense minister, visited Washington and requested $500 million in military aid. Up to that point this was an unheard of sum of money. While U.S. policy was centered on anti-narcotics, there was a growing concern on the capacity of the Colombian State to control an increasingly complex conflict. From a military point of view, there was concern over what was called Colombia’s ambiguous war, that Colombia was facing simultaneously not one but three wars: one with two guerrillas groups, a second with the drug traffickers, and a third with the paramilitaries. All three affected the Colombian State, and U.S. interests and concerns.

State Department James Rubin warned that if the Farc disliked being branded as terrorists, they should start bringing the culprits to justice and refrain from acts of terror such as these. Equally intense reactions appeared from the House of Representatives. Representatives Benjamin Gilman, then president of the House International Relations committee, and Congressman Dan Burton expressed reservations about the capacity to bring the assassins to justice and on the administration policy toward Colombia.

The continuation of guerrilla attacks, the rise in kidnappings (and the suspicion that the demilitarized zone was being used as a haven where they could be kept), and the

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33 Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz (March,1999): Colombia’s Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the crossroads. U.S. Army War College, Carlisle,PA.
34 Andelfo Garcia, op.cit
increase in coca cultivation in the southern part of the country, all led to Colombia being considered a critical situation to the Clinton Administration. In the south the increase in coca was largely taking place in areas that had been under FARC control for many years. This situation made it possible for the FARC to find increased sources of funding, no matter what the real nature of its relation with the coca cultivation process was.

The alarm on the Colombian situation was set off by Drug Czar McCaffrey’s visit to Colombia in July 1999. McCaffrey was convinced of the need for urgent action in Colombia. McCaffrey’s office was instrumental in setting the U.S.1 billion dollar mark as a signal of the extent that the U.S. should worry about the country. Later decisions tended to revolve around that figure.

In early August, Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering visited Colombia; he was the highest State Department official to do so. “Pickering returned to Washington convinced that the United States needed to do more to stop the bleeding, a point of view that put him in agreement with Barry McCaffrey’s earlier call for a massive increase in aid. Indeed, the Pickering McCaffrey partnership would form the underpinnings of the Clinton administration’s new policy toward Colombia.”

On August 10, 1999, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright published an op-ed in the New York Times titled “Colombia’s struggles, and how can we help.” Secretary Albright distances the Clinton administration from accusations that United States was being pulled into Colombia’s violent conflict. The article centers the attention on the growing drug industry in Colombia, as well as on the growing difficulties that the Pastrana government is having in being capable of controlling the situation. In the article, secretary Albright stresses the need for a strategy that includes an integrated approach to encounter narcotrafficking that include eradication, interdiction, illicit crop substitution, economic development and reform of the penal justice system. “The efforts to stop drug trafficking are related to the search for peace because the rebels and the paramilitaries are involved with the drug traffic.” Finally, in what constituted the basis for the development of Plan Colombia, Albright stressed the disposition of the Clinton administration to a long-term commitment to Colombia.

The increasingly alarmist view that developed in relation to the Colombian situation. The growing coca cultivation, the stalling of the peace process, and the persistent levels of violent conflict, led to a determination to produce a long term, integrated plan to salvage Colombia and renewing of the war on drugs strategy.

The fact that the first edition of the official version of Plan Colombia as such came out first in English, is only an indicator of the process that was followed. Ambassador Pickering left Colombia with the message that the Clinton administration

36 Madeleine Albright, “Colombia’s struggles, and how we can help”, in The New York Times, August 10,1999, p.17A.
37 Ibid
was willing to increase substantially the aid to Colombia, if the Colombians presented a comprehensive and integrated plan to strengthen the military forces, prevent economic collapse, and fight against illegal drugs. Ambassador Pickering explained it clearly: “the peace process must help sustain, and not interfere with anti-narcotics cooperation.” The plan that the Clinton administration was asking came out of the original versions of plan Colombia.

The third version of Plan Colombia came out in September 1999, as a result of a redesign of the original text only with a different arrangement of priorities. While in the first two versions the plan was a basic component for the peace process, the third version is fundamentally an anti-narcotics plan. The emphasis is no longer on social participation for an integral peace, but on the sustained effort to control and substantially reduce coca cultivation. “The main interest is not on the eradication of illegal crops with the participation of the guerrillas, but in dismantling of the close ties of the drug traffickers with the armed group outside the law.”

In the new plan the strategic reasoning was inverted. Instead of FARC collaboration to eradicate coca fields in areas under their control as part of the advances in the negotiations, now coca eradication is postulated as a strategy to deflate the conflict. With less money coming from the drug trade, the guerrillas would have less to fund their organization and their fighting. As they become weaker, the paramilitaries would have less reason of being. “The prospects for bringing the guerrillas and the paramilitaries to the table for serious peace negotiations are enhanced because they have less justification and less ability to wage war against the state and against each other”.

The Plan Colombia: Plan for Peace, Prosperity, and the strengthening of the State was presented by the Colombian government to the Clinton administration in the second semester of 1999. The plan, allegedly authored by Jaime Ruiz, was fundamentally a remake of the DNP version, accommodated to the pressing suggestions made by the U.S. government. The plan is centered on the war on drugs. The military aspect of the plan gave rise to numerous concerns that the plan was the beginning of U.S. intervention in the internal conflict in Colombia. Not with standing, it did provide for an increased militarization of the drug war, and a substantial increase in U.S. military presence in Colombia.

The Plan Colombia aid package for 2000-2001 was prepared by an interagency working group (deputy committee) setup by the Clinton administration to coordinate U.S.

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38 Quoted from Socorro Ramírez, op cit.
39 Plan Colombia, Plan para la paz, la prosperidad, y el fortalecimiento del Estado, Septiembre 1999.
42 Interview with Jaime Ruiz, Washington, July 2002. Though Ruiz argues that no real changes were made and that the DNP plan was left intact. G. Marcella (quoting Ambassador Kamman,) sustains that the plan was written by Ruiz in a week. Ibid p.13
43 see various articles in: Jairo Estrada Alvarez (Editor) (2001) Plan Colombia: Ensayos Críticos, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.
policy for Colombia. Colombian officials worked closely with this group. “Truth is that the United States put up the funding for the plan, and that made it possible for them to redefine the plan according to their vision of the problem and to their self-interests”\textsuperscript{44} The 7.5 billion-dollar plan called for a substantial commitment from the international community. The United States committed 1.3 billion dollars in the Plan Colombia Aid Package for 2000-2001. 4.0 billion was to be the Colombian contribution, but this was not new money but an estimation of the costs that the war on drugs was already costing the country. The DNP came up with this amount, but this was a purely speculative (or political) figure for they had really no way to estimate actual costs.\textsuperscript{45} The rest would come from international multilateral lending agencies and from the Europeans.

The plan that was supposed to be fundamentally a development plan became a militarized anti-drugs plan. While according to the Pastrana administration only 25% of the 7.5 billion dollars were to go to security forces, Clinton’s bill was the opposite, 80% went to police and the military\textsuperscript{46}

The European strategy:

Once the plan Colombia was approved the Pastrana government initiated a precise strategy to gain European political support to Plan Colombia, now modified by the approval of the U.S. aid package. Now the task was to secure the funds for the social component of Plan Colombia. Pastrana presents to EU a document that centers on the social aspects of Colombian development and on institutional strengthening that makes no reference to the nature or scope of the military aspects of the aid package. It is these conditions that the interested European countries are gathered, not as members of the group of friends of the peace process, but as a table of donors for plan Colombia.\textsuperscript{47}

President Pastrana needed to show that Plan Colombia was not exclusively a militarized anti-drug policy in order to get European collaboration, it needed European support to prove that the plan was not exclusively militaristic. This seemed to be the fundamental problem in regards to European collaboration. The Pastrana administration never had a clear concept of what it expected from European donors. In respect to the peace process there was a structured participation in the conformation of the group of friendly countries that acted as facilitators of the dialogues. It seemed that the most important aspect of European support was to be more political than economical. What the government needed to show was that Europe too was behind Plan Colombia.\textsuperscript{48}

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\textsuperscript{44} quoting of a confidential source in: “El Plan Colombia” Documentos sobre el Plan Colombia, Semana, July 31 de 2000, Bogotá
\textsuperscript{45} Interview with Jaime Ruiz,
\textsuperscript{46} Adam Isacson: Colombia’s human security crisis....... 
\textsuperscript{47} Marco A. Romero, “La nueva internacionalizacion del conflicto y los procesos de paz.” In: Plan Colombia; Ensayos críticos........
\textsuperscript{48} In several interviews with past government officials that were directly involved in the European part of Plan Colombia the notion that the actual donations were not as important as the political statement came up repeatedly. Most suggested the they never were too enthusiastic about getting any substantial
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A fourth version of plan Colombia came out at the beginning of 2000, a few weeks ahead of the Donors Table in Madrid and was destined to another type of public. The “Plan Colombia: Institutional Strengthening and Social Development 200-2002” was a special version that was produced out of earlier restricted circulation drafts made by the consulting group to the peace process in mid 1999. This version of the plan was seen as more appealing to other donor countries such as the Europeans and the Japanese. This document emphasizes the more social aspects of Plan Colombia. In this version the framework is a wider.

The integral peace policy, that had taken form in the DNP version of the plan, is the central part of the strategy. It was based on three premises, negotiations, political reform, and a development for peace strategy. Plan Colombia was part of this third premise, together with the policy for prevention and attention to displaced persons, and the alternative development plan for illicit crop substitution. This version or presentation of Plan Colombia had four basic components: economic and social recovery, peace negotiations, anti-narcotics strategy, and institutional strengthening and social development. In relation illegal crops and their relation to the violent conflict he plan calls for action on different fronts that include interdiction with the collaboration of the international community, increasing state capacity in justice, defense and police institutions and the promotion of alternative development and illegal crop substitution.

This version of Plan Colombia sustains that the international community must play an integral part in sustaining Colombia’s efforts, under a basis of co-responsibility in the fight against drug traffic, the protection of human rights and the environment. The financing of the plan would come from the through the members of the Peace process support group.

In August 2000, the first of three meetings with the expected donor countries takes place in Madrid of the Mesa de Donantes, where there is representation of 27 countries and international agencies. The goal was to collect one billion dollars in pledges. Though the government did not get that figure, there were promises of up to US$600 million and a show of support to the peace process. Spain pledged 100 million dollars; Norway 20, Japan 70, 131 from Unicef, and 300 in credits from multilateral lending agencies. In the second session in October 2000 in Bogotá, Japan,

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49 Andelfo Garcia, (2001) Plan Colombia y Ayuda Estadounidense……..
50 “Plan Colombia: fortalecimiento institucional y desarrollo social 2000-2002” Reporte al Grupo de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz
51 ibid.
52 Reunion del Grupo consultivo y de apoyo al proceso de paz, Julio 7, 2000. Madrid,
53 Marco A. Romero, “La nueva internacionalizacion del conflicto y los procesos de paz.” In: Plan Colombia; Ensayos criticos………
In Madrid Plan Colombia not only met with moderate support, but also with severe criticism. The Parallel tables of Madrid, composed of human rights groups, and numerous social movements condemned the militarization implicit in the American plan, warned about the negative consequences that it could produce in relation to the peace process, the environmental damage, and the deterioration of human rights indicators. The alternative tables rejected Plan Colombia since it is considered a plan for was not peace, and it was done without democratic participation and discussion.

The plan was understood as an U.S. strategy to militarize the war against drugs, giving it a regional dimension. The plan overlooked the peace negotiation process and rather focused on war. “In sum, Europeans perceived that they were being called upon to pay the expenses of a war that they did not perpetrate, did not expand, and did not mess up.”

The ambiguous nature of the plan further helped suspicion on whether to lend to the Colombian strategy. Europe was left between the need to help Colombia in both the peace process, which it supported unequivocally on the one hand, and to end up involved in military anti-insurgency and security strategy on the other. The ambiguity of it all is well summed up in the idea of “a virtual contribution to a virtual plan.”

By 2001, The EU had decided not to support Plan Colombia, and concentrated its efforts to aid Colombia, from outside the plan. It even became common use to talk about the peace process rather than Plan Colombia. The former had a positive, legitimate connotation, while the later was inevitably linked to U.S. repressive and interventionist strategies. The European Union, as well as European governments individually maintained political and economic assistance all through the crisis in the negotiation process up to its breakdown in February 2002.

The European presence in aiding Colombia through the peace process was mostly diplomatic. With the French presidency of the Group of Friends, as well as the intense involvement of the UN envoy James Lemione, the efforts to avoid the breakdown, as well as to establishing communication channels with the different parts involved, constituted an indispensable presence. Even toward the final days of the negotiation process (and maybe because of it) the European Commission announced the disbursement of the first installments for specific project in the Magdalena Medio.

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55 Marco A. Romero, La nueva internacionalization ………
56 Joaquin Roy, “European perceptions of Plan Colombia: A virtual contribution to a virtual war and peace plan?, SSI. U.S> Army War College, North-South Center University of Miami, May 2001
57 Ibid.
The fact that the aid would go to the Magdalena Medio Development Corporation had itself special connotations. First, it makes reference to the Puerto Wilches speech type of development plan that was one the Europeans could better relate to. Second, it was clearly not part of Plan Colombia’s *Push to the South* strategy, which was the focal point of the U.S. version of the plan. Third, it is a development project that was already functioning, led by a Colombian NGO with close ties to European organizations and working in a region where there the violent conflict has been traditionally strong, but with no coca fields.

The differences between actually subscribing to Plan Colombia’s projected economic assistance or to differentiate the aid as non-Plan Colombia related, rather putting it in terms of aiding peace process did not make much of a difference for the Pastrana administration. “Apparently not happy with the two complementary approaches developed by Bogotá to sell the same product the same product to two different audiences (basically, the Colombian population ands the U.S. Congress), Colombian authorities eagerly responded to Colombian concerns over the original plan by inviting Brussels to propose a *Special plan for Colombia*, an invitation the Europeans were ready to take”

In Bogotá it was seen as a characteristic European eccentricity, what was important was that the government could show that Europe was supporting Pastrana, and indirectly his strategies. Furthermore, in some cases specific European funded projects collided with the operations of Plan Colombia. When aerial fumigation started in the south, conflicts between massive spraying of large areas tended to collide with small, alternative cultivation projects that were in the areas. 59 The basic issue was the Pastrana administration could claim that Plan Colombia was complete, that it received universal backing and that Colombia was not only no longer alone in the world, but rather that now the world was paying attention to Colombia’s problems, had assumed the principle of co-responsibility, and was willing to help. 60

**The Spanish Agenda**

Spain played central role in aiding the Pastrana administration sell plan Colombia in Europe. President Pastrana was successful in developing a good personal and working relationship with Prime Minister Pedro Aznar. In Colombia, Spanish cooperation was considered the most valuable and reliable source of support. The bilateral relations, which had been growing in the last decade, were considered vital for the prospects of Plan Colombia in Europe. Colombia continued all through the Pastrana years with an intense bilateral relation with Spain principally in commerce and investment. 61 However Spanish responses to Plan Colombia were complex, confusing and at times seemingly contradictory. 62

59 Interviews with Jaime Ruiz, Alvaro Soto (DNP), and G. de Francisco (former Consejero de Seguridad). De Francisco related the case of a small palm field project, funded by German NGO’s located in the middle of vast extensions of coca cultivations that were affected by the spraying.


61 Diego Cardona “La politica exterior de la Administracion Pastrana” …………. 

62 Joaquin Roy, “Europe:Neither Plan Colombia nor Peace process……….”
Several factors help explain Spain’s position in relation to Plan Colombia. First, in that Spanish policy toward Latin America has become part of an “internal” foreign policy, to the extent that the special relationship with Latin American helps maximize Spanish negotiating power within the E.U. Second, the role that the increase of Spanish direct investments has played in Latin America in general and more specifically in Colombia since the political and economic reforms of the 1990’s. And third, that Spain, unlike any other country in Europe has the potential to be most affected by the worsening of the Colombian situation, not only in respect to their investments in the country, but by increased flows of illegal migration and indirect consequences of illegal drug traffic.

Spanish policy towards Colombia has had two severe problems. First, it has suffered a lack of coordination between different state agencies that tended to act separately according to each agencies functional specificity. The impact of Spanish foreign policy was reduced as a consequence of the limited resources available and in that these ended up being dispersed in various programs decided independently from one another. Second, Spain sought a mediator role in the peace process between the Pastrana administration and the Farc. This was based mostly on prior experience of its mediations in the violent conflicts in Central America. Spain was able to obtain considerable prestige. However, Spanish diplomacy was confronting a substantially different situation in Colombia.

Spain’s special relationship developed with Latin America in general and with Colombia in particular was a relevant part of the role the Spain was willing to play. Spain pledged $ 100 million or the 2000-2003 period, a third of the sum committed by the EU and other European countries. The most important contribution to Pastrana’s European Strategy however, was the help in presenting the strategy to the rest of the European Countries.

Conclusions

The intentions that had led the Pastrana administration proved to be fragile. Lack of clarity in the pursued objectives, excessive confidence on expected outcomes of the peace negotiation process, and a complicated foreign scenario, helped

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66 Joaquin Roy, Europe: Neither Plan Colombia nor peace process…. (p.17)
67 In the interview with Mauricio Cárdenas, who was put in charge of the European Component of Plan Colombia, Spanish help in getting the Madrid Mesa de Donantes together came up as the most valuable of collaborations, even more so than the amounts pledged.
the loss of vision as to where the plan was supposedly oriented. The developmental character was lost in the initial stages, to U.S. anti-drug pressures. The alternative development geared to accompany voluntary eradication programs either never got off the ground, or got caught between the peace process and the increased aerial fumigation. In any case, focus on the social aspects of the plan in the southern region of Putumayo was all but lost as soon as the Plan was redefined by the Clinton administration. The emphasis was increasingly geared toward security issues defined in a more classical sense of military anti-insurgent strategies.

The September 11 attacks, the end of the peace talks in February 2002, and president Uribe’s electoral victory in May of that year, consolidated this shift of priorities. Terrorism has become the central issue in the Bush administration, placing anti-drug policies as a secondary priority. Counter-insurgency, which was all but eliminated from U.S. policies, reappears as the limitations separating anti-narcotics aid from counter-insurgency were lifted. “In the blink of an eye, the U.S. Andean counterdrug policy has started to morph into a counterterror and counterinsurgency strategy.”

President Uribe’s Democratic Security Strategy constitutes a radical departure of Pastrana’s negotiation with the Farc. Key elements in the new strategy are the reconstruction of republican legitimacy and a solid defense of the legitimate institutional order, through both military pressures on the Farc and a potential negotiation at the end. It differs from the prior negotiation process, for here negotiations would come only as a means to obtain definitive demobilization of the insurgents and not to negotiate the transformation of the political and institutional orders.

The analysis of the different moments and stages of Plan Colombia as it went from its initial formulations as an alternative development plan to an antidrug and antiinsurgency strategy leave important lessons for the future of plans like Uribe’s. Not withstanding the differences of perceptions and objectives, there are three aspects in which the two share important similarities. First, in both the international dimension is fundamental aspect. This in two ways: as political and economic support, and as a presence of limits of what is acceptable and what is not. This, is also dependent on a shifting global scene, over which Colombia has no control. As with Pastrana’s strategy, Uribe’s will be watched for possible increases in human rights violations, that would trigger strong opposition from the U.S.. Second, in that concrete and observable results will not be seen in the short-term, will make it difficult for the government to maintain sufficient support of the strategy. The urgent need for positive results, can take the Uribe administration off-track with the probable results of redefining the strategy with a dispersion of programs, with little coherence, geared toward maintaining public consensus. Finally, Uribe, just as Pastrana and others before him, remains a virtual hostage of the U.S. and its strategic definitions.

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68 Julia E. Swieg, “What kind of war for Colombia?” in Foreign Affairs, September/October 2002 (http://www.foreignaffairs.org/)
69 Hernando Gomez Buendia, Seguridad: Veremos Resultados (II), Semana, Enero 20, 2003 (No.1.081)