
Plan Colombia: An Strategy Without A Solution

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Introduction

In the last few months mystery has surrounded the so-called 'Plan Colombia.' While day-by day the issue has become more a part of the national picture, there are many concerns which continue to surround it. The existence of various versions of the Plan, its strategies, its link to the obligations taken on with regard to the IMF and with the anti-narcotics assistance from the United States, all form part of these concerns.

It's a fact that most Colombians are almost completely unaware of the content of the Plan Colombia. The people who live in the regions which will be directly affected by it have heard little or nothing about its existence. Outside Colombia attitudes to the Plan are both expectant and reserved. The emphasis on the various strategies in the Plan has varied depending on whom in the International Community it is aimed at and what is being expected of them.

This document has as its central objective to un-pick some of these complexities by looking at the Plan and its pretensions in the context of the difficult situation in the country. This is characterised by the worsening human rights situation, the escalation of the armed conflict and the most serious economic crisis of the last few decades.

Background

The term 'Plan Colombia' is intimately linked to the current peace discourse of the President of the Republic of Colombia, Andres Pastrana Arango. The Plan was first talked about in December 1998 in Puerto Wilches. At that time the President said the following: 'The guerrilla will be able to participate in the development, design and execution of the projects in Plan Colombia.'^[1]

The initiative was first conceived by the ex-Foreign Minister and Member of the National Conciliation Commission, Augusto Ramirez Ocampo, using his knowledge and experience in the Central American process. It was conceived as a process simultaneous with the negotiations, which would enable projects that were linked to agreed accords to be financed as the process went along. It concentrated on rehabilitation and investment in the zones most affected by violence, by illegal crops or by environmental conflicts, using a process of articulation of affected communities with the State, from the bottom up.^[2] The proposed participatory methodology with the communities has been at odds with reality: this government has distanced itself almost completely from communities during its current term.

As an important element in the peace negotiation, Plan Colombia was part of the pre-agreements between the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and the government prior to the official installation of the talks on 7th January 1999. The Minister of the Interior, **Nestor Humberto Martínez**, and the Director of National Planning, **Jaime Ruiz**, along with the High Commissioner for Peace, took responsibility for explaining how Plan Colombia would fit into the future agenda for the negotiations.^[3]

A Change of Tack

A lot has changed since then to arrive at what is now known as Plan Colombia. The content of the current one differs substantially from the earlier version. In order to throw some light on these changes it is worth looking at the evolution of relations with the USA over the last few months.

In just a few months Colombia has become a focus for US foreign policy. Two elements seem to underpin this initiative: the drug-trafficking problem and the way that Colombia is perceived as a security threat in the hemisphere, because of an overflow of the armed conflict into neighbouring countries.

It was General Barry McCaffrey, Anti-Drug Tzar and the person responsible for tackling the drug lords, who sounded the alarm: the increasing involvement of the guerrillas in the drug-trafficking business meant that in order to stop the violence affecting the country and threatening the sub-region, it would be essential to fight the 'narco-guerrilla'. This would bring peace. The same McCaffrey, with senior officers of the Southern Command and the Republican Party, led the request for an increase in US military assistance to Colombia and the freeing-up of resources destined for the Army. There is just one final step from this point to the new Plan Colombia.

Thomas Pickering, Under-Secretary of State, encouraged the Government of Colombia to put together a plan that would permit a supplementary assistance package;^[4] high level officials demanded an integral strategy and State Department advisors helped to draw up a new version of Plan Colombia.^[5]

An important indication of the level of priority given to the counter-narcotics component in the new Plan was the fact that the Defense Minister Luis Fernando Ramírez, and the Commanders of the Military and Police Generals Serrano and Tapias were the first to be asked to explain the Plan to the Secretary of Defense of the USA, William Cohen, and to Congressional Representatives.^[6]

The Plan gained substance through the proposed Coverdell-Lewine-Glasely Bill (S1758) presented by these Republican Senators on 20/10/99. This requested an emergency supplemental for Colombia of US\$1.6b over three years. More than 70% of this was destined for different aspects of the fight against drugs.^[7]

The Colombian Government's disappointment at the postponement of the debate on the package until 2000 was happily relieved by President Clinton's announcement at the beginning of this year of his intention to request US\$1.6b of assistance from Congress over two years.

President Clinton said the following on the need for increased assistance:

"President Pastrana has responded with a bold agenda -- Plan Colombia. It provides a solid, multifaceted strategy that the United States should support with substantial assistance. We have a compelling national interest in reducing the flow of cocaine and heroin to our shores, and in promoting peace, democracy and economic growth in Colombia and the region. Given the magnitude of the drug trafficking problem and their current economic difficulties, neither the Government of Colombia nor its neighbors can carry the full burden alone."^[8]

Important international human rights organisations, such as the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and Amnesty International, reacted immediately, warning of the negative effects of the aid on the current human rights situation in the country, a position echoed by some Democrat Congressmen and women. Despite this, the US administration stamped its commitment firmly on the package with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to Colombia a few days later.

The Other Face of Plan Colombia

In total the Plan proposes a budget of US\$7.5b of which Colombia would provide \$4b. The remaining \$3.5b is expected to come from the International Community as a support to 'the peace efforts of the current government.'

This led to the drive for support to Plan Colombia directed at members of the European Union, a drive led by President Pastrana on his visit to the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Parliament at the end of October 1999. Bearing in mind the tendency of the EU to support social programmes, the Plan had a different emphasis.

President Pastrana presented Plan Colombia to the European Parliament in the following terms:

"It is an integral and unified strategy, directed at strengthening the central issues in the country, such as the search for peace, the reactivation of our economy and job-creation, the protection of human rights, reinforcing justice and increasing social participation. The end result will be the strengthening of the State, as a pre-requisite for peace and progress. We need your participation on all these fronts, but primarily we need you, your countries, all of Europe, to invest in peace, for peace, and to open your markets to that we can create jobs for peace. " [\[9\]](#)

The fundamental issues included in this quote refer to each of the strategies in Plan Colombia: the only one missing from this overall perspective is the anti-narcotics strategy.

According to Chris Patten, EU Commissioner for International Relations, the EU is willing to analyse the Plan and any concrete projects designed to support it, enabling the EU to look at how it might support social development in Colombia.[\[10\]](#)

The biggest push for the Plan in the EU scenario came some months later when José María Aznar, Prime Minister of Spain, committed himself to conveying the EU member states, Japan and Canada in a Donor Meeting for support to Plan Colombia. This will take place in Madrid in July. With this in mind, 44 social projects directed at zones affected by drug-trafficking or violence are being prepared. The cost is projected at US\$1.047b, of which 80% is expected to come from the international community.[\[11\]](#)

Under-Secretary of State Pickering himself has requested that Spain ensure the Donor meeting has support at the highest possible level.[\[12\]](#) This request is interpreted as the US government attempting to involve the EU in its Colombian anti-narcotics strategy, using the Plan as an instrument with which to draw them in.

Comparative Table -1995 Version of Plan Colombia and the Version presented to the EU

The best way to illustrate the conceptual changes, the reach and the content of the Plan is to compare the two versions. While it can be said that the second document includes a broader spectrum of elements for peace-building, it is clear that the document completely alters the original conception, that of a simultaneous process occurring alongside the negotiations, designed to promote specific projects in accordance with advances made in the negotiations.

The obvious question that arises from this new concept is what happens if the new strategies defined in the Plan end up contradicting the discussions at the negotiation table and any agreements it comes to? There has been a quick answer to this. The FARC have recently condemned the existence of the two versions of the Plan. They say that there is one version designed for the US government that 'places the fight against drugs at the same level as the fight against the guerrilla' and that the other version is 'reformist and paternalistic'. They conclude that 'the tedious analysis of

the English version of Plan Colombia leaves one with the impression that Pastrana is gradually burying the Colombian people's hopes for peace.'^[13]

First version of Plan Colombia <u>[14]</u>	Plan Colombia - version presented to the EU <u>[15]</u>
<p>Objectives and Activities of the Plan</p> <p>The Plan is directed at certain zones in the country with the objective of improving the economic, social and environmental situation through 'directed investment.' The zones would be: those critically conflictive zones, zones with illegal crops, zones suffering environmental conflict. The Plan is seeking to bring about economic, social, cultural and environmental transformation which will help build a viable and sustainable peace. This would occur through participatory methodology, a bottom-up approach involving the State and the communities.</p> <p>The activities are: productive processes, promotion of human capital and humanitarian attention, peace infrastructure, institutional development and strengthening of social capital; promotion of a sustainable environment.</p> <p>Although it considers that the strategy against drugs is an integral part of the peace policy, it doesn't include it as a specific theme.</p>	<p>Main Objectives and Strategies of the Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State - Plan Colombia</p> <p>The nucleus is the negotiation strategy with the guerrilla. This includes a process of construction of society and of a peace agreement, negotiated on the basis of respect for territorial integrity, democracy and human rights. It aims to strengthen the Rule of Law and the fight against drug-trafficking.</p> <p>The drug-trafficking theme is conceived as an alliance between producer and consumer countries based on principles of reciprocity and equality.</p> <p>This requires institutional reforms with emphasis on the Armed Forces; strengthening of an infrastructure that guarantees adequate health care and educational provision; strengthening of local government and of forms of citizen participation in the fight against national problems such as corruption, kidnapping and displacement.</p> <p>A better access to international markets is an indispensable factor for the economic development of the country, for the fight against drug-trafficking and for alternative development programmes.</p> <p>The Plan offers 10 strategies^[16] that are not specifically developed through the document, which largely focuses on five areas of action: the Peace Process, reactivation of the economy, the anti-narcotic strategy; the reform of the judicial system and the protection of human rights, democratisation and social development.</p>
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Plan Colombia forms an integral part of the Development Plan and complements the Integral Peace Plan.</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The primary aim is to build a State of Social Justice within reach of all Colombians.</p>

<p>Plan Colombia links the different components of the Peace Policy to the type of conflict and the most affected zones.</p> <p>The Management of the Plan would be in the hands of the Peace Investment Fund (FIP). The FIP's objective is to finance investment designed to tackle the conditions that favour violence and to propitiate an environment favourable to negotiation and coexistence, through new and participative mechanisms.</p>	<p>In order to achieve this the Plan considers that overcoming the following is a basic requirement: the proliferation of drug-trafficking and the social, political and economic impact of globalisation.</p> <p>Achieving peace implies a process of construction which requires: the stabilisation of the State; the fight against drug-trafficking; reform and modernisation of institutions; strengthening of the economy and job-creation; support from the International Community.</p>
<p>Productive Processes</p> <p>The Plan seeks to improve the income levels of the population through alternative economic policies generated by a process of agreement with private enterprise, the commercial sector, the government and the active participation of the community: strategic alliances. The projects should take into account sustainable economic, social, environmental and institutional development.</p>	<p>Reactivation of the Economy - (Second Section)</p> <p>It starts with the current economic recession, the rise in unemployment and the negative growth of Gross Domestic Product, as relevant indicators of the situation, which in themselves contribute to the growth in the drug economy and other illegal activities.</p> <p>A central part of the strategy is the stabilisation of the economy and fiscal balancing. This needs financial assistance to cover security, anti-narcotics and social investment budgets. Within the stabilisation measures proposed by the government are: the freezing of public sector wages; the rationalisation of public finances and the privatisation of publicly- owned banks and businesses.</p> <p>The co-ordination of activities and financial support with institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank is a fundamental element of the government plan for structural and fiscal reform over three years.</p> <p>Private investment both internal and external and the promotion of external commerce are other fundamental elements proposed to combat unemployment, reactivate industry and modernise the agricultural sector (alternatives to illegal crops).</p>

	<p>On the strategic 10 year plan to increase export trade it is important to gain competitive advantages for products and to negotiate bilateral agreements to protect external investment.</p>
<p>Institutional development</p> <p>To design institutions through programmes that 'change the rules of the game', or stop reproducing and multiplying violence. The emphasis here is on strengthening local organisations and their participative mechanisms, strengthening both public and private institutions, the rolling out of decentralisation and building viable models of development using regional criteria.</p>	<p>Democratisation and Social Development (5th Section)</p> <p>This seeks to reduce the causes and manifestations of violence through strengthening civil society. A fundamental element is strengthening local participation in pressurising the guerrillas and other illegal armed groups in the fight against corruption, kidnapping and displacement, and the eradication of illegal crops.</p> <p><u>Humanitarian Assistance to the victims of violence</u>: based fundamentally on compensation mechanisms, concentrating assistance to children and eliminating anti-personnel mines.</p> <p><u>Assistance to the Displaced</u>: this seeks return and sustainability through social investment programmes, giving responsibility to local government and human rights NGOs, led by the Red de Solidaridad Social (RSS). Early Warning Systems will be implemented as prevention mechanisms and emergency humanitarian assistance would be guaranteed.</p> <p><u>Alternative Development</u>: Promotion of profitable, participative and integral alternatives in a schema of community participation and the building of strategic alliances (private investment) which will seek to improve living conditions of campesinos as a prerequisite for the abandonment of illegal crop cultivation. Three possible solutions are proposed for those working in illegal crop cultivation: relocation on land expropriated from drug-traffickers; work in small urban businesses; local reforestation programmes. It also seeks to support the conservation of fragile ecosystems, like the preservation of the Amazon Basin.</p> <p>The strengthening of local government, NGOs , businesses and communities is</p>

	<p>considered fundamental to the success of the plan and its strategies. They would be complemented by the creation of peace networks.</p>
<p>Peace Infrastructure</p> <p>The main objective is the development of infrastructure for improving and integrating productive activities in order to improve the living standard of the population. (communications, roads, river routes, small mines, rural electrification programmes, social infrastructure).</p>	<p>The Peace process - (1st Section)</p> <p>The main element is the negotiation process led by President Pastrana, seeking a peace agreement based on territorial integrity, democracy and human rights.</p> <p>It talks of a strategic alliance against drug-trafficking, corruption and the violation of human rights, characterising the conflict as one in which three actors participate: guerrillas, self-defence groups (paramilitaries) and the Colombian people in the middle.</p> <p>One element that illustrates the desire to progress in the negotiations is the legal creation of the 'zona de distension' (demilitarised zone), in order to facilitate peace talks with the FARC.</p> <p>Civil society participation is deemed necessary in order to pressure the armed groups on the issues of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the solution to the conflict.</p> <p>The success of the process is founded on three pillars: already agreed accords; partial accords that are achieved; converting into reality agreed accords. The success of the process will have an impact on the fight against drugs (dual pole of guerrilla-drug-trafficking)</p> <p>The role of the International Community is considered essential in the diplomatic and financial areas, and important with regard to bilateral support on the military and police fronts.</p>
<p>Development of Human Capital and Humanitarian Attention</p> <p>This is directed largely at populations affected by violence,</p>	<p>The Reform of the Judicial System and Human Rights (4th Section)</p> <p>This seeks to build an equitable and efficient justice system whose independence,</p>

<p>favouring investment programmes in humanitarian response and human rights promotion.</p> <p>Central elements include: efficient development of mechanisms that allow for financial compensation of victims; prevention of displacement, efficient attention to victims, improvement of emergency attention and the consolidation of alternatives for return and relocation.</p> <p>The generation of conditions to ensure adequate and normal growth of children is a central objective of the humanitarian strategy.</p>	<p>accessibility and transparency will re-establish confidence in the State.</p> <p><u>Consolidation of the Rule of Law:</u> Emphasises the investigation, processing and detention of drug-traffickers and the reduction of incidences of kidnapping and of common delinquency, including anti-violence programmes with the participation of the Armed Forces and the Police, the justice system and community leaders.</p> <p><u>Judicial Reform:</u> speeding up the system, a reduction in impunity, just results (including military cases in civil courts), one-off training of the Technical Investigation Corps.</p> <p><u>Protection and respect for Human Rights:</u> through implementation of international obligations, the introduction of a pedagogic model into the Armed Forces, the creation of institutional committees to fight impunity, legislative initiatives and protection programmes for human rights defenders.</p> <p><u>Elimination of corruption:</u> based on guaranteeing sanctions against those officials involved, the consolidation of the presidential anti-corruption programme and a greater transparency in government procurement and State support to local government.</p>
<p>Promotion of sustainable environment</p> <p>Seeks the management of the environment and of natural resources in order to achieve the necessary balance between the use and the conservation of resources, through a consensus-building schema between those actively participating in communities at the local and regional level. It considers implementing projects through civil society organisations in those zones where there is limited State legitimacy.</p>	<p>Anti-Narcotic Strategy (3rd Section)</p> <p>The fight against drugs is one of the government's central priorities. It is seen not only a national security threat but also as a threat to other countries. It is also considered to be the principle factor in generating violence in the country.</p> <p>Strengthening and modernising the Armed Forces and Police is considered an essential element in re-establishing the rule of law and protecting the security of citizens.</p> <p>The Anti-Narcotic Strategy is based on human values: the anti-narcotic operations of the Armed Forces and the Police must be adjusted to follow a code of conduct which respects human rights</p>

	<p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <p>to reduce the drug market by 50% in the next six years.</p> <p>to dismantle the drug-trafficking organisations</p> <p>to strengthen the judicial system</p> <p>to neutralise the financial system of the drug-traffickers</p> <p>to combat their violent allies</p> <p>to integrate national and international initiatives</p> <p>to strengthen alternative development plans</p> <p><u>Basic Components</u></p> <p>Joint activities of the Armed Forces and Police because of the relation between drug-traffickers and the illegal armed groups</p> <p>Respect for human rights in all operations</p> <p>Control of airspace and increase in river</p>
<p>Financing the Plan</p> <p>The Peace Investment Fund (FIP) would be the organisation responsible for management and administration of the resources. The sources of the capital were proposed as:</p> <p>Productive sector and civil society - Peace Bonds; voluntary contributions; incentives for the participation of the productive sector in the designed projects.</p> <p>International Community - Donations; soft credits; general preferences; the creation of a consultative group with the participation of developed nations,</p>	<p>Financing the Plan</p> <p>The sources of finance remain the same as in the first version</p> <p>Peace Bonds: \$US800m is sought through this route</p> <p>Financial Institutions: a credit of US\$900m from the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank</p> <p>USA: \$US1.5b requested from President Clinton, basically for the anti-narcotic strategy over two years.</p> <p>European Union: \$US1b from EU and its member states, basically for crop-substitution and human rights.^[17]</p>

financial and productive sector of the international community, in order to define support for specific issues.	
National Budget: redirection of resources previously designated for peace activities.	

Some Observations on the Plan

Although the Plan recognises the need to consolidate the Rule of Law, the analysis it makes of the situation in Colombia, and the strategies proposed to meet that, leave out fundamental aspects and thus appropriate solutions: social inequality; rampant poverty; persistent human rights violations and the impunity that accompany them; lack of respect for IHL; the degradation of the conflict and the role of the paramilitaries in that degradation; the effects of the application of counter-narcotics up to now; the need for profound political reform and reform of public powers; and building real and effective participation by the citizenry. These are some of the relevant aspects omitted from the Plan, resulting in an incomplete and biased analysis.

The consolidation of the Rule of Law appears to be connected to a focus on security and stability that ignores the need for democratic legitimacy (despite referring to it in a number of places) as a fundamental pillar of the Rule of Law.

The Plan's analysis, conceived for 'Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State', is centred on the destabilising power of drug-trafficking, leaving out the structural and situational causes of all the violence that the country is living through (common violence, economic and social violence, violence derived from the armed conflict, violence resulting from the counter-insurgency model being applied, violence resulting from the anti-narcotics fight, etc). In the same way it tends to lump together the armed actors, without differentiating between objectives, methods and aims.

In the economic arena some fundamental aspects are omitted: the effects of globalisation and market liberalisation on Colombian productive sectors; the concentration and centralisation of income and capital; inadequate income distribution; the poor results of the privatisation process; the reduction of resources destined for health and education.

These missing elements make it impossible to analyse the basic causes that are affecting Colombian society. This results in a formula for macro-economic development combined with a paternalistic approach to the most disadvantaged sectors. It doesn't touch on the causes, thus maintaining and deepening the current model.

The Peace Process

The Peace strategy contained in the Plan is based exclusively on the negotiations with the FARC. No other alternatives are included if this dialogue process doesn't produce the expected results, nor does it touch on how it might link up with the ELN proposal for a National Convention, if this materialises. It also fails to consider experiences and initiatives of other kinds, such as peace events that dynamise the process from the bottom up and create a culture of peace.

The strategy makes no reference to what the objectives of the process are, nor to the political proposal that the State may make to the negotiation table. It gives the impression that the process is limited to ending the armed conflict. This leaves out not only the economic and social causes that are part of the origin of the conflict (which the government has recognised on more than one occasion), but also the need to learn from earlier experiences of negotiation in the country. These did not go further than demobilisation, with no impact on the economic, social and political structures and therefore, the existence and the dynamics of the conflict.

Although the central role of civil society is recognised, there is no definition of the real possibilities for effective participation, nor any kind of criteria or mechanism for representation of social organisations in the process. This contrasts with the importance given to the factor of 'pressure on the armed actors' that civil society can bring to bear for a political solution and respect for IHL. Thus it seems to take an instrumental approach, maintaining a schema that concentrates the negotiation process in the centres of power.

The list of protagonists in the conflict is also surprising: the guerrilla, the self-defence groups (paramilitaries) and the rest of the Colombians, without any allusion to the State. This leads one to question the characterisation of the conflict and those who are defined as actors. The paramilitary issue generates similar confusion. Mention is made of the continuing fight against them without specifying what measures, and it also adds that other pacifying measures are not ruled out. What are these alternatives? Is there a possibility of according political status to the paramilitaries and opening a negotiation process with them?

"The participation of the International Community is a vital element for the construction of peace.". However, this is limited to a list of actions, without defining the role with relation to the proposed strategy. One is left with the impression that within the Plan, economic support is considered to be the most important contribution.

Economic Plan

The economic stabilisation measures contained in the Plan can be summarised as follows:

Balance of payments: cuts in public spending, widening of VAT base, tax on financial transactions, controls on tax evasion.

Salaries and Jobs: freezing of public sector wages, reduction in bureaucracy and in spending other than investment.

Institutional reform: reform of social security and of pension funds (privatisation as far as possible)

Privatisation: state banks and businesses, with the aim of increasing productivity and financing the fiscal deficit.

Social support: construction of a social support network to alleviate the negative impact of the fiscal adjustment on the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Hoping for resources from the international financial institutions.

These measures correspond with commitments made to the IMF. Last December the IMF approved the Economic programme presented by the Colombian government. The fiscal aims for the middle of this year contained in the Memorandum of Obligation and the corresponding technical memorandum, which must be complied with, correspond fully with what is contained in the Plan:

- Economic growth
- Increase in competition
- An end to smuggling
- Increase in exports and inward investment
- Transparency of state contract system (?)
- Permanent trade preferences
- Agreements on protection of investment
- Crop substitution

To begin with the inefficiency of the agricultural sector doesn't come solely from internal conditions. The principal factors which contribute to its poor performance are the opening of markets and the devaluation of the peso. This introduces competition with huge subsidies for the developed nations and protectionism in their markets.

Additionally, industry lost its dynamism and its contribution to GDP diminished. This produced a loss of investment and with a few notable exceptions, a failure to manage modernisation processes. In the short term it is impossible to hope for a significant increase in exports from the industrial sector or for the recuperation of the internal market.

The privatisation programme includes profitable businesses which provide important public services, ISA and ISAGEN, and the cleaning up of the state bank before sale. This means a socialisation of losses. On the other hand it proposes that the resources generated through privatisation be directed at covering the fiscal deficit and toward the assistance programmes for the most vulnerable sectors. The danger in these budget changes is that temporary resources will finance permanent spending, creating an illusion of a smaller fiscal deficit in the short term which will end up being a much bigger hole in the future.

In other strategic sectors, such as coal and oil, introducing flexibility equates to removing conditions and making concessions to foreign investors for the exploration and exploitation of resources. In the area of the environment and

sustainability, the proposed projects expose the lack of importance given to indigenous cultures and territories (the struggles of the Embera and the U'was are sufficiently illustrative).

Unilateral preferences conceded by developed countries, such as the Andean GSP and the Andean Trade Preference Agreement, although resulting from the acceptance of the principle of co-responsibility in the fight against drugs, is tending to introduce more and more conditions of other kinds, and now steps are being taken to dismantle them.

With regard to increase in competition, this is not a simple issue. Until there is structural change or a change in economic model, the lack of demand because of the reduction in buying power of the population and the imbalances in income distribution will continue to affect the recuperation of the internal market and improvement in living standards.

The export of manufactured goods and the development of export-oriented technology are for the time being a complete illusion which is not backed up by any development plan.

The Anti-Narcotic Strategy

The central objectives of the anti-narcotics strategy can be summarised as follows:

Strengthening the anti-narcotics fight based on building up and co-ordination of the Armed Forces and the Police

The elimination of large scale production using forced eradication methods

Breaking of links between armed group and drug-trafficking organisations

Strengthening of alternative development plans.

There is an obvious coincidence between the objectives of the Plan and the anti-narcotics plan of the US Drug Tzar Barry McCaffery.

"The Colombian anti-narcotics strategy consists of reducing the production of illegal drugs through a combination of the application of the law, aerial detection methods by the army, eradication of crops and economic development alternatives. However, despite the efforts in identification and eradication, crops continue to increase under the protection of drug-cartels in areas outside the government's control." [18]

This shows the identical nature of the Plan's priorities and the components of the US aid package.

In effect the use of force in military and police operations is the main element, without differentiating between the different stages of production, distribution

and commercialisation of illicit substances. This demands a deeper analysis of the structural elements present in the problematic, and of the distinctions between the internal armed conflict and drug-trafficking.

The forced eradication of illegal crops starts from the premise that it will affect supply and temporarily stop production, and thus reduce consumption. However, in reality, it has been shown that the way in which production moves around means that demand is not affected. On the contrary, it causes a greater negative impact on the environment.

Forced eradication through fumigation isn't new in Colombia. 25 years of this model shows the failure, not only in terms of supply reduction (between 1992 and 1998 the number of hectares devoted to growing coca leaf has grown by 40,000 to more than 100,000), but also in terms of the negative effect on the legitimacy of the State, social order, the armed conflict and the damage to the environment which fumigation has caused.

The schema proposed by the Plan leads one to conclude that there is no state policy on illegal drugs. This vacuum is filled by the indiscriminate use of force in the anti-narcotics fight, a product of the bilateral agenda with Washington.

The formula of fumigation plus alternative development in the Plan is incoherent. Fumigation via aerial dispersion has a massive effect and legal crops are equally affected, resulting in a waste of effort and further frustration for the affected growers. On the other hand the Plan considers the possibility of using biological control agents as a method of eradication knowing that there is insufficient knowledge about their effects on other species.

For the specialist Martin Jelsm, the fact that the US administration has been categoric in saying that the anti-narcotics fight is not negotiable and that the peace process must not be allowed to interfere with anti-drug co-operation has led the government of Andres Pastrana to design a 'plan plagued with contradictions, which tries to bring about a compromise between mutually exclusive issues, drugs and peace. '[19](#)'

Judicial system, human rights and human rights protection

The principle fields of action are:

The processing of drug-traffickers, kidnappers and other delinquents which include the commitment to comply with multilateral laws and extradition procedures.

Improvement to investigation and speeding up the process.

Human rights protection is based on compliance with international obligations, the creation of inter-institutional committees for the follow-up of serious cases and the protection programme for human rights defenders.

Elimination of corruption

Expropriation of property belonging to drug-traffickers

Blocking of drug-trafficking routes

Campaigns directed at prevention of drug consumption

The Plan starts from the need to build an independent, fair, accessible and efficient justice system, as a fundamental contribution to regaining confidence in the legitimacy of the Rule of Law. However, the central aims of the strategy seem to be more a statement of good intentions than a practical plan for achieving the goals. With regard to human rights the limited initiatives proposed do not correspond with the magnitude of the problem and the responsibility of the State in dealing with it. Additionally, the majority of the proposals are linked more to the problem of drug-trafficking than they are to judicial reform and protection of human rights.

The diagnosis does not take into account important pending judicial issues such as the integral reform of the criminal code, the structuring of a medium and long term criminal policy, the qualification of forced disappearance as a crime, the military penal code being brought into force, the compliance with the Constitutional Court ruling on use of the military courts, and the total removal of the 'faceless justice system'. These are aspects that without doubt would have a positive effect on recuperating confidence in the justice system and the reduction in levels of impunity. They would also demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to comply with international human rights recommendations.

The theme of protection starts from false premises. In the first instance it removes responsibility for the serious, persistent and systematic human rights violations in the country. Human rights do not depend on the existence of a pedagogic model for human rights, although this is an important element in generating a culture of respect.

Secondly, the Colombian government, despite being subject to the scrutiny of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights operating in Colombia, continues to fail to implement the numerous and repeated recommendations on human rights from the different UN organs. The proposed plan does not provide a strategy for complete implementation of the recommendations which would be a step forward in overcoming the problem and a significant support to the development of the peace process.

Thirdly, the inter-institutional committees designed to promote the investigation and trial of serious violations, such as human rights and IHL, are not a solution to the problem (although they can contribute). They have already been seen to be inefficient and incapable of achieving their objectives.

Fourthly, the programme for protection of human rights defenders is based on a premise that is ultimately curative, and thus incomplete. It leaves out

prevention of attacks as a fundamental element of protection.

The strategy omits any reference to the dismantling of paramilitary groups and the investigation and trial of those responsible, or to how to break the links between these groups and the Public Forces. In the same way it completely ignores the issue of integral reparations for the victims of the conflict and of human rights violations.

Democratisation and social development

The main aims are:

Local and community participation

Humanitarian assistance

Assistance to internally displaced people

Alternative sustainable development of fragile ecosystems.

In essence this heading retains the proposals in the 1998 version of the Plan, with a dependency focus. Without diminishing the immediate benefits that these initiatives could have for the communities most affected by violence, their inclusion in the new Plan owes more to attempts to alleviate the effects of the new elements such as the economic and anti-narcotics strategies, than to finding a structural solution to the problems.

With regard to local and community participation the initiative contrasts with the reality of almost total ignorance by the government of the problems and proposals of communities and social organisations. It responds to demands with force. It is enough to say that the Plan itself is almost totally unknown by a wide sector of the population yet the Plan includes them as an important element in fighting drug-trafficking, corruption, kidnapping and violence. Are these really the only issues that are relevant for communities and social organisations?

With regard to internal displacement, despite the fact that there is a legal instrument for it, official policy is lacking in the area of prevention. Additionally the government has not fulfilled a series of signed agreements with different displaced communities which include issues such as return, security, and development, thus creating further displacement.

Delivery of humanitarian assistance to the displaced has been hampered further by problems of co-ordination between the different state entities responsible for the issue, with a general failure to meet the basic needs of the displaced.

The projects for alternative, sustainable development of fragile environments are not viable while the current anti-narcotics strategy remains in place.

Financing the Plan

The Financial Aid package, or credit for Colombia for 1999-2002, is US\$6,900m. One of the main problems that the Plan mentions is that of the growth of the external debt. The \$US 6,900m will be a new debt, the payment of which will depend on future growth. \$US 4,000m will have to be provided by Colombia itself. This will come either from the new debt, or from the privatisation process or from the Peace Bonds which businesses and high income sectors will be obliged to buy. The only certain possibility is the first one, as the other two are only macro-economic assumptions with a high degree of uncertainty. There is no available money from current state finances because of the problems with public finances.

Conclusions

In terms of strategy, the Plan can be reduced to two points: the economic and the anti-narcotic strategies.

In the economic strategy the Plan proposes a stabilisation plan which is very similar to Structural Adjustment, with serious consequences in the short term on top of the current difficult job situation and unequal income distribution.

The external debt will increase, the privatisation programme will pay for social security, and losses will become a social burden. This is justified as 'the sacrifices of today will provide growth and better income distribution tomorrow'. Even if this were true, it can be objectively stated that the proposed economic policy will not contribute in the short or medium term to peace and social cohesion, even if an agreement is reached between the armed actors in the war.

The anti-narcotics proposal is in essence short-termist and militaristic. This impedes using a different perspective to look at possible alternatives, in which reaching agreement with the communities might prevail over the use of force. There are other aggravating factors such as breaking the distinction between the anti-drug war and the counter-insurgency war; ignoring the non-combatant character of the civilians involved; weakening fundamental rights that are supposed to be defended; negative effects on the environment. As Ricardo Vargas states: '...peace-building in Colombia has become the anti-narcotics strategy of the USA.'

The Plan is moving in two parallel planes in the international arena:

1. The financial and political support of the USA in the anti-narcotics fight. The resources requested by President Clinton from the Congress will be destined primarily toward shoring up the anti-drug war and everything related to it. As mentioned previously this will impact on the armed conflict
2. The resources and support from Europe are directed at political support for

the peace process and the financing of reconstruction projects as a result of the war.

A peace strategy founded solely on the negotiation process with the FARC will be equally short-term as it doesn't deal with the serious and complex problems embedded in the armed conflict and it contradicts the anti-narcotics strategy proposed.

The issue of judicial reform and human rights lacks a sensible strategy. On the one hand it includes an incomplete list of intentions and on the other it is focused on the judicial issues of the anti-narcotics strategy. In the area of democratisation the panorama appears to be equally discouraging. There is a lack of analysis of the deep structural problems of the State and its responsibility for the serious, persistent and systematic human rights violations which impede the free exercise of democracy. This means that there is instead an attempt to lessen the effects through humanitarian assistance and alternative development programmes that in themselves run counter to the anti-narcotics strategy.

To sum up, the proposals in Plan Colombia are more of the same - more debt, more militarisation, more environmental damage through forced eradication of crops, more human rights violations, more interference from the USA, more conflict, all in the name of Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State.

Brussels, February 2000

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Footnotes

- 1.. El Espectador, 6/1/99 "Plan Colombia on the Table" (Plan Colombia sobre la mesa)
2. Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, President's Office, Department of Planning, Plan Colombia, Puerto Wilches, December 1988
3. El Espectador, Idem.
4. 'Colombia needs a broad national strategy to confront its problems..and Pastrana has promised to design one quickly. Although the US is ready to help Colombia in its fight against illegal forces, we are relying on Colombians to take the initiative.' (press report, Washington 17th August 1999)
5. El Espectador, 11/10/99; 14/11/99
6. . El Espectador, 3/10/99

7. Dewine/Coverdell Introduce Anti-drug Legislation to promote la Peace and Stability in Colombia, 20/10/99, Press - US Embassy in Colombia, www.usia.org
8. President Clinton's statement on assistance to Colombia, 11th January 2000, US Embassy, op.cit
9. Speech by President Andres Pastrana Arango, visit to the European parliament, Strasbourg, 26th October 1999
- 10 Euro Notes. Letter from the European Commission Delegation to Colombia and Ecuador, No. 20, page 3
- 11 El Tiempo, 10/2/99
- 12 El Colombiano, 10/2/99
13. IPS Press Agency, 25/1/2000, "Colombia seeks help from USA and Davos".
14. Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, President's Office, Department of Planning, Plan Colombia, op.cit
15. Plan Colombia: Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State
16. The ten strategies are: Economy (international commercial expansion, fiscal and financial, increase economic activity and recuperate prestige); Peace (peace agreement); National Defence (restructuring and modernisation of the Public Forces); Judicial and Human Rights (rule of law); Anti-narcotics (combat all parts of the cycle); Alternative development (increase profitable and protective projects for the environment); Social participation (development of local responsibility and citizens' participation); Human development (adequate health and education services for the vulnerable sectors); International strategy (integrated and balanced action on drugs).
17. El Tiempo, 10/2/2000
18. US Embassy, 19/7/99
19. Ricardo Vargas Mesa, Fumigacion y Conflicto - Politicas anti-drogas y deslegitimacion del Estado en Colombia, TNI and Accion Andina, 1999

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