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**From Tragedy to Success in Colombia:  
The Centrality of Effectiveness  
in Civil-Military Relations**

*Thomas C. Bruneau & Richard B. Goetze Jr.*



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for Hemispheric Defense Studies**  
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**Cover Photo:** Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (fourth from left) and Colombian Minister of Defense Rodrigo Rivera (third from left) march with military leaders during a parade in Bogota on June 1, 2011. Photo credit: Fernando Vergara, Associated Press

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# **From Tragedy to Success in Colombia: The Centrality of Effectiveness in Civil-Military Relations**

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## ***Introduction***

In the late 1990s, Colombia was considered by many to be a failed state due to endemic crime, pervasive violence, and nation-wide terrorism that resulted in the displacement of the rural population and, due to rampant kidnapping, emigration abroad by professionals and the upper classes. During this decade, the Colombian government had a presence and exercised sovereignty over only 50% of the national territory. Today, Colombia is widely considered a success story, with ex-President Juan Manuel Santos having won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for successful negotiations with the main proponent of terrorism, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Today, the country is considered an exporter of security, having trained 17,000 security personnel from Central America and the Caribbean between 2013 and 2017.<sup>1</sup> Foreign dignitaries visit Colombia to learn the secret of its success. As Olesegun Obasanjo, ex-president of Nigeria states in the forward to a book about what he and other dignitaries from Africa learned during many visits to Colombia, “Colombia shows that security is the door through which much else follows, including in the economic domain.”<sup>2</sup> The success is due largely to the achievement of security by both the military success against the FARC, and other armed actors, and the extension of state presence by the military, the police, and other elements of the government throughout the country. It is crucial to stress that the extension of security, via the military and national police (which is under the Ministry of Defense in Colombia), took place under democratic auspices in a country of regular free and fair elections, a powerful judicial system, a hyper-critical media, and an active civil society.

This paper focuses specifically on the civil-military dimension of the achievement of security in analyzing the role of democratically elected civilians in defining a national security strategy, implementing it via the military and the police, engaging the population in the overall process, and generating the necessary resources domestically and internationally. The role of the United States in support of the Colombian state must of necessity be included in this analysis, but it must equally be emphasized that

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations” (Washington, D.C: CRS, February 8, 2019), p. 25. Juan Carlos Pinzón, “Colombia: Back from the Brink. From Failed State to Exporter of Security” Prism 5, No 4, (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Olesegun Obasanjo, “Foreword,” Dickie Davis, David Kilcullen, Greg Mills, and David Spencer, A Great Perhaps? Colombia: Conflict and Convergence (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), p. xxii.

the fundamental initiative and efforts leading to success were with the Colombians. This paper does not include the details of the military strategy as this has been described and analyzed extensively in books and articles.<sup>3</sup> Nor does it deal with the peace process, subsequent split between ex-presidents Álvaro Uribe and Juan Manuel Santos, and the current political situation. It focuses fundamentally on the dynamics of civil-military relations that brought a level of security to Colombia that had not been seen in half a century.



**Photo Caption:** International cooperation: From 2010 to 2014, Colombia’s Military trained about 20,000 Soldiers and police officers from 63 countries under cooperation agreements. [Photo: Mauricio Orjuela / Mindefensa]  
Photo credit: El Dialogo, U.S. Southern Command and Mauricio Orjuela, Colombian Ministry of Defense

There are two concepts that are central to the data and the argument in this paper, and, in our view, to any credible analysis of civil-military relations. The first is military effectiveness. In many cases, it is difficult to identify measures to assess or determine the presence or absence of military effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> However, in the case of Colombia, military effectiveness did not concern conflict with other states, but rather with domestic terrorist groups, at least one of which, the FARC, pursuing its 1982 “Strategic Plan for the Seizure of Power,” sought to take over the state by armed might. The measures of effectiveness in this case study of Colombia are clearly defined in the “Democratic Security Strategy” of President Álvaro Uribe which will be discussed below. We have determined that in order to assess effectiveness

<sup>3</sup> The most useful and reliable source we have found is David E. Spencer, et. al, “Colombia’s Road to Recovery: Security and Governance 1982-2010” (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, June 17, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> While military effectiveness is relatively easy to demonstrate in Colombia since the key elements were defined in a strategy that could then be measured, this is not normally the case as militaries have many roles and missions, most of which cannot be easily assessed. For our most recent effort to grapple with the issue of military effectiveness see Thomas Bruneau and Aurel Croissant, “Introduction” and “Conclusion,” in Bruneau and Croissant eds., *Civil-Military Relations: Control and Effectiveness Across Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019).

there must be specified tasks and/or missions, appropriate resources to accomplish those tasks/missions, and a means to evaluate whether those objectives and/or missions are being accomplished. For us, a fundamental aspect of civil – military relations should be in determining who establishes those tasks and/or missions for the military, who/how are resources provided, who/how are the objective criteria for evaluating accomplishment established, and finally who performs the evaluation. As we will see, it was a major challenge to reorient the military from an outward orientation, to focus on the FARC and other armed groups of the Left and the Right, and to achieve domestic sovereignty. And, the implementation of the “Democratic Security Strategy” of President Álvaro Uribe went very far in achieving effectiveness.

The second concept is incentives. An incentive is simply the reason a person, or in this case a state, does something. In only Chile and Colombia in South America do civilians have incentives to pay attention to national security and defense; that is, essentially issues involving the military.<sup>5</sup> This paper will demonstrate that the Colombian Government, with support of the United States, had incentives to battle the FARC and other armed actors, and to reorient the military from their focus on external conflict to prepare for, and win, the domestic conflict.

### *A Failed State*

The Economist stated in its September 9, 2017 edition, “Just 20 years ago, Colombia was nearly a failed state. From 1992-99, two-thirds of the world’s kidnappings occurred there, and the FARC controlled up to a third of the country’s territory.” While there are numerous descriptions of the (in) security situation in Colombia prior to Álvaro Uribe assuming the Presidency on 7 August 2002, we find the succinct description by Ann Mason of University of the Andes in Bogotá balanced and well-documented.<sup>6</sup> Here we will paraphrase some of the main elements of the perilous situation in Colombia at the time of her writing that provide convincing evidence for the designation as “failed state.” The conflict in itself claimed over 28,500 homicides in 2002, two-thirds of which were civilian, the equivalent of a homicide rate of 66 per 100,000 people which was a 3.4% increase over 2001. More than 412,000 people were displaced by conflict-related violence in 2002, 20% more than the previous year, and eight kidnappings occurred daily. The two guerrilla movements that most threatened domestic security were the rural-based FARC, with Marxist roots, and the Cuban-inspired National Liberation Army (ELN). They thrived, for as Ann Mason states,

The persistence of entrenched economic, social, and land disparities during the 1960s and 1970’s were seized on by leftist movements motivated by revolutionary ambitions, social justice, and grievances against the political oligarchy, the economic elite, and landowners, and these were able to consolidate their presence and legitimacy

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<sup>5</sup> For more on this issue see Thomas C. Bruneau, “Civilians and the Military in Latin America: The Absence of Incentives,” *Latin American Politics and Society* Vol. 55, No. 4, (2013), pp. 143-160.

<sup>6</sup> Ann Mason, “Colombia’s Democratic Security Agenda: Public Order in the Security Tripod,” *Security Dialogue* Vol. 34, no 4, (December 2003), pp. 391-409.

in remote areas where central government presence was nominal to non-existent.”<sup>7</sup>

The lack of government presence is a key theme highlighted by most credible analysts of Colombia, including David Spencer who has researched and written extensively on the violence and conflict in Colombia.<sup>8</sup> The challenge of government presence is plainly obvious to all visitors to Colombia, as the country is divided by three distinct mountain ranges with half its land behind the easternmost ridge. Security strategies prior to the mid-1980s were haphazard, reactive, and largely counterproductive due to repression of civilians and social movements, which enhanced the numbers and legitimacy of the guerrilla movements. The FARC was a very serious opponent to any government, and had to be fought militarily on all fronts as well as ideologically.<sup>9</sup>



**Photo Caption:** In southwestern Colombia in 2009, members of the FARC killed nine members of the Awa indigenous community, claiming that they were informants for the police. Photo credit: Juan Arredondo, National Geographic magazine.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Mason, p. 393.

<sup>8</sup> See in particular his “A Long War,” in Dickie Davis, David Kilcullen, Greg Mills, and David Spencer, *A Great Perhaps? Colombia: Conflict and Convergence* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), pp. 17 – 44.

<sup>9</sup> For information on these points see in particular David Spencer, “FARC’s Transformation: The Combination of All Forms of Struggle,” and David Kilcullen, “Guerrilla and Counter-Guerrilla Warfare in Colombia,” in Dickie Davis, David Kilcullen, Greg Mills, and David Spencer, *A Great Perhaps? Colombia: Conflict and Convergence* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), pp. 125 – 148 and 61 – 88.

In the mid-1980s, starting with President Belisario Betancur, there was a failed truce which resulted in a largely successful retrenchment effort by the FARC. Then, as Ann Mason states, “Although succeeding President Virgilio Barco successfully negotiated the demobilization and incorporation into political life of a number of guerrilla groups, the growth of narco-trafficking, links between drug cartels and paramilitaries, and the territorial expansion of the FARC and the ELN contributed to a steady diversification and extension of criminal and conflict-related violence.”<sup>10</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the FARC had expanded territorially, with 15,000–17,000 soldiers in 60 fronts throughout the country, and a high capacity for terrorism and military action.” Ann Mason writes,

The FARC’s exponential growth has been matched only by that of the paramilitaries. State-sanctioned rural self-defense units that protected landowners from guerrilla actions, criminal gangs that worked with drug mafias, and vigilante organizations were loosely united in the mid-1990s in the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), an anti-subversive umbrella movement. A self-proclaimed counter-insurgency organization justified by the state’s incapacity to control the guerrilla threat, the 12,000 person-strong paramilitary movement’s *modus operandi* is terrorizing and eliminating anyone suspected of collaborating, or even sympathizing, with a leftist agenda. The incredible growth of the guerrillas and then the paramilitaries can only be understood in terms of the cultivation and trade in illegal drugs.”<sup>11</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, drugs had become the new fuel for the war in Colombia, forming the most important source of income for both the paramilitaries and the FARC who controlled nearly all areas of the country with coca and poppy cultivation.”<sup>12</sup>

In the context of rampant violence, almost a civil war between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, in 1998 President Andres Pastrana, following his campaign promise, insisted on making peace at any price with the FARC, leading to the establishment of a demilitarized zone (*zona de despeje*) of 42,000 square kilometers for conducting negotiations. The background to this astounding measure can be understood only in the context of the conflict and the total failure of President Samper, 1994-1998, who was alleged to have taken money for his electoral campaign from the Cali Cartel. Subsequently, his U.S. visa was revoked and Colombia was decertified as a “cooperating country” by the Clinton Administration. Pastrana’s good will initiative with the FARC, in granting them the *zona de despeje* to facilitate negotiations, led to a crisis with the military high command, and the FARC took advantage of the zone to strengthen their organization, military operations, and economic base. The violence perpetrated by the FARC was not limited to rural areas but also came to include major cities, including the capital, Bogotá. To show the elite that it too was vulnerable, the FARC detonated a car bomb at the El Nogal Club on February 7, 2003, killing 36 people and wounding 200. The authors of this report had

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Mason, p. 394.

<sup>11</sup> Anne Mason, p. 394.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Mason, pp. 394-5.

lunch there two weeks before the bombing.



**Photo Caption:** During the height of the violence in Colombia, the FARC attacked the El Nopal Club in Bogota on February 7, 2003. Security experts believe the attack was directed at elite members of Colombia society to demonstrate that they were also vulnerable to insurgent attacks. Photo credit: LatAm Threads.

In summary, Colombia in 2002 was characterized by Ann Mason in the following dire terms – “Coupled with urban terrorism, violence against politicians, journalists, human rights workers, and prosecutors, and drug-related criminality and corruption, at the start of the millennium Colombia remains awash in numbing lawlessness, insecurity, and violence.”<sup>13</sup> Before leaving office, and in order to respond to the drug trade, President Pastrana negotiated with the Clinton Administration a \$1.3 billion aid program in support of Plan Colombia. Two-thirds of the money was intended for military purchases used only for narcotics control in support of Pastrana’s Plan Colombia. As Philip Maclean stated in his 2002 article, “The future of Colombia lies in the hands of the person to be elected on May 26 as president for the next four years.”<sup>14</sup>

### ***President-Elect Álvaro Uribe and the Policy of Democratic Security***

In May 2002, two months after President Pastrana ended the failed four-year long peace negotiations and invaded the *zona de despeje*, Álvaro Uribe was elected president and took office 7 August. Whereas Pastrana’s presidential campaign platform promised peace with the FARC through negotiations, Álvaro

<sup>13</sup> Anne Mason, p. 395.

<sup>14</sup> Phillip McLean, “Colombia: Failed, Failing, or Just Weak?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 25, No 3, (Summer 2002), p. 133.

Uribe's was a hard line on bringing the FARC to the negotiating table through a military campaign. Uribe ran for the presidency, not as the candidate of either of the two major political parties, but as an independent. The other candidates promised more negotiations, whereas Uribe's position was that "violent groups can only be stopped when the state exercises authority and demonstrates to them that it is able to defeat them."<sup>15</sup> Public opinion having turned against negotiations with the FARC, and the failure of the *zona de despeje* ploy, Uribe won on the first round with 54% of the vote (vs. the next candidate with 32%). Uribe was faithful to his campaign promise of taking the war to the FARC. As Ann Mason wrote in the article published approximately a year after he took office, "Uribe has made law and order his priority. The strategic objective of changing the balance of military power in the armed conflict in order to force the armed groups to negotiate on terms favorable to the government, in combination with the increasing recalcitrance of the guerrillas, has dimmed the prospects for a return to the bargaining table during Uribe's tenure."<sup>16</sup>

Of necessity, considering the goal of the FARC in taking over the Colombian state, their multiple "fronts", military prowess, and the pervasiveness of violence by non-state actors which extended far beyond the FARC, President Uribe's strategy, which recognized that legitimacy of the national government was an essential center of gravity, would utilize the military and the police to fight the armed opposition and extend the domain of the state throughout the national territory. Considering the FARC success against the state's security forces in the Colombian Army base at Las Delicias and several follow-on attacks, Uribe's strategy of necessity required expansion, professionalization, and reequipping the military and the police.<sup>17</sup>

There is abundant literature on politics and violence in Colombia in English and Spanish. However, as would be expected in any situation characterized by violence, death, and disruption, there is minimal agreement on most important issues concerning the conflict. These basic reasons for the lack of agreement are exacerbated tremendously by several others. First, the sheer complexity in analyzing illegal organizations, be they drug cartels or armed organizations of the left or right, inhibits effective analysis. While they release information, it is strategically skewed in their favor and to the detriment of their enemies. Second, the focus on military campaigns and the use of intelligence results in the situation captured in the following phrase: "those that know don't speak, and those that speak don't know." Third, while the whole country experienced the conflict and violence, much of it took place in locations difficult to reach by all but the armed actors and the Colombian military and police. Fourth, the predominant role of private security contractors who are under no obligation to release what is defined as proprietary information to anybody. Fifth, the involvement of foreign states, especially the United

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<sup>15</sup> John C. Dugas, "The Emergence of Neopopulism in Colombia? The case of Álvaro Uribe," *Third World Quarterly* (Dec. 2003) Vol. 24, No. 6, p. 1128.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Mason, pp. 391-2. As Álvaro Uribe stated after the 2002 election in his memoir, *No Lost Causes* (New York: Cel-ebra, 2012), p. 132, "We now had an overwhelming democratic mandate to pursue democratic security."

<sup>17</sup> In Chapter 4 of *Colombia's Road to Recovery*, "Finding a Solution: The Government of Álvaro Uribe, 2002-2010". David Spencer et al, June 17, 2011, go into the details of this process. See pages 62-104.

States and to a lesser extent countries in the European Union, which given the sums of money involved, generated a virtual industry in the academic and non-governmental (NGO) world focused from distinct and opposing ideological perspectives on the role of different actors and the violence in general in Colombia. Sixth, until it became widely known that the FARC relied mainly on the production and sale of illegal drugs and were almost as ruthless as the paramilitaries in murdering civilians, a very effective strategy of the FARC was promoting its messages regarding the “root causes” and nature of the armed struggle.<sup>18</sup>

At first glance, since the FARC was forced to negotiate due to the successful military strategy of the Colombian state, there is surprisingly little research and writing on security and civil-military relations. But on further consideration, this is not surprising as until recently the study of civil-military relations was exclusively on democratic civilian control. Colombia, unlike all but Venezuela in South America, was not controlled by the military so there was little interest in Colombian civil-military relations. In attempting to overcome the subjective and often polemical material on our topic, in writing this paper, we have relied on what we personally saw and experienced in Colombia, and on scholars including Malcolm Deas and David Spencer, and those U.S. and Colombian officials in whom we have confidence for their informed and objective analysis.

Since the late 1950s there was no question about democratic civilian control in Colombia, but there was clearly a proven lack of military effectiveness. The Colombian Government, first under President Álvaro Uribe, 2002-2010, and then President Juan Manuel Santos, 2010-2018, who had been Minister of Defense under President Uribe from 2006-2010, achieved military effectiveness in forcing the FARC to the negotiating table and greatly diminishing violence in the country. We have identified eight crucial dimensions to help us assess the dynamics of the military success in Colombia. In each we will identify the issue, discuss some comparative experiences on how these eight are dealt with or ignored in other countries, and then elaborate on their importance in Colombia. The eight are as follows:

1. The Colombian government had clear incentives to enhance military effectiveness to fight the FARC and other armed non-state actors.
2. It also had clear incentives to develop a national security strategy with the goal of re-establishing legitimacy throughout the national territory, and fighting the FARC and other non-state actors.
3. One of the main reasons for #2 is the role of the United States which also had clear incentives to support Colombia, first in attempting to counter the drug trade and then after 9/11 to fight the FARC and other organizations that were classified as terrorists.
4. In order to fight the FARC and other domestic armed actors, the Colombian military had to be reoriented from an external perspective, which involved equipment and training not optimized

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<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that the highly regarded historian of Colombia at Oxford University, Malcolm Deas, in “The Colombian Conflict: A Historical Perspective,” in Bruce M. Bagley and Jonathan D. Rosen, eds, *Colombia’s Political Economy at the Outset of the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. 91-110, reviews and largely debunks many of the so-called “root causes” of the conflict.

for domestic operations, but which followed from the so-called *Lleras Doctrine* positing military autonomy regarding roles and missions, and including the equipment and training to support these newly adopted domestic roles and missions.

5. In order to increase military effectiveness and to ensure democratic civilian control over the greatly expanding and strengthened military, the Colombian Government under President Uribe and then President Santos, reformed, strengthened, and staffed the civilian-led Ministry of Defense.
6. President Uribe and members of his cabinet made personal visits throughout the country on the weekends to engage with and inform the population about his strategy to spread state control over the territory and draw support away from the FARC and other armed non-state actors.
7. Following from #6, the government first decreed and then was successful in passing in the Colombian Congress three extraordinary security taxes on the richest individuals and businesses in Colombia that helped pay for the much expanded and professionalized military and their equipment.
8. These funds were increased by financial support from the United States. Both sets of funds, those from the so-called war taxes and those from the United States, were administered by the civilian-led Ministry of Defense (MOD), which increased its legitimacy and power vis-a-vis the military. The United States also provided other support to include intelligence, training and education which also increased the effectiveness of the Colombian military. The combination of these eight dimensions resulted in simultaneously enhanced democratic civilian control and military effectiveness. Together, they constitute what can be termed a “virtuous cycle” vs. a “vicious cycle” which is prevalent in many new democracies in their civil-military relations.

### ***Incentives to Enhance Military Effectiveness***

Latin America, but for Chile and Colombia, is widely known as a “zone of peace.” There have been very few wars, and the last significant conflict was the Chaco War between two relatively unimportant countries, Bolivia and Paraguay, in the 1930s. Therefore, as David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas have correctly argued, civilians lack incentives to know about or do anything about national security and defense.<sup>19</sup> Or, as a Brazilian Minister of Defense was quoted as stating, *O Brasil não tem inimigos* (Brazil has no enemies). However, as we previously have argued, in both Chile and Colombia, with possible external enemies in the former, and domestic enemies in the latter, civilian politicians in these two countries do have incentives to become aware of and respond to issues of national security and defense.<sup>20</sup> While it is anecdotal, we think it is very significant that in South America the only Ministers of Defense that have become presidents of their countries in contemporary history are Juan Manuel Santos

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<sup>19</sup> David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Neglect Defense Policy in Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* Vol. 42, No 3 (2007) pp. 76-100.

<sup>20</sup> Bruneau, 2013.

in Colombia and Michele Bachelet in Chile (Marta Lucía Ramírez, who was Uribe’s first Minister of Defense is now the Vice President of Colombia).

President-elect Uribe had real and obvious incentives for being interested and active in national security issues and for enhancing military effectiveness. Indeed, the FARC posed an existential threat to the Colombian government. It was on his hardline campaign platform, following the failed policy of President Andres Pastrana regarding negotiating with the FARC, which followed a long string of previous failures, that Uribe was overwhelmingly elected president in the first round of the elections on 26 May 2002. One can speculate, as many have, that it required Pastrana’s policy of good will towards the FARC being proven a clear and total failure that further legitimated Uribe’s hardline policy. As if to demonstrate the immediacy of the threat, Uribe’s inauguration as President on 7 August 2002 in Bogotá was welcomed by the FARC with a mortar attack that killed 15 civilians.



**Photo Caption:** President Uribe’s inauguration ceremony on 7 August 2002 in Bogotá was the site of a FARC mortar attack that killed 15 civilians. Photo credit: Colombia Reports

### ***Incentives, Process, and Contents of President Uribe’s Democratic Security Policy***

In any situation where military force is envisioned, a strategy is a fundamental necessity. There is a huge literature, much of it following the guidance of Carl von Clausewitz, on military strategy. Unfortunately, the dictum from Alice in Wonderland, “If you don’t know where you are going any road will take you there”, most often applies, and many countries don’t have real strategies. Probably the best historian of war and strategy, Professor Hew Strachan of Oxford University, has demonstrated the absence

of such by both the U.S. and Great Britain in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> In the case of the U.S., issuing an annual National Security Strategy (NSS) is a legal requirement stipulated in Section 603 of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. The stipulation, at least since the end of the Cold War, is followed mainly in a void. Since passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, only the Reagan and first Clinton administrations complied with the annual requirement. The U.S. Congress has not taken any action to remedy that situation. During both the George W. Bush administration and the Barack Obama administration, only two NSS were produced by each eight-year administration. Virtually all other countries with which we are familiar, if they produce something similar, called Defense White Books, National Security Strategy or Policy, the documents are not very useful.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of President Uribe and his Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DSP), the situation is very different. The DSP must be seen in its entirety to appreciate its comprehensiveness and, consequently, the huge efforts it would take to implement and evaluate it.<sup>23</sup> The DSP analyzes the situation that the military had to confront and defines the responsibilities of different government actors, including the Ministry of Defense (Articles 63-65). The question is why was Uribe's DSP so different from other strategy documents and in fact implemented? First, the incentive was demonstrated by overwhelming public support in his election after the failed strategy of negotiations tried previously by President Pastrana. Second, in a meeting on July 31, 2002, one week before he assumed office as the President of Colombia, Uribe and his cabinet met with U.S. government officials who made it clear that the U.S. Congress, if it was to continue providing funding to Colombia, would have to be confident that President Uribe had a plan to reduce illicit drug production, subdue the FARC, and cut down on violence in the country (the authors of this paper were participants and made presentations on strategy development in that meeting). The responsibility for developing a national strategy was assumed by Minister of Defense Marta Lucía Ramírez and a small group of civilians headed by Sergio Jaramillo. It took the small group a year to develop the DSP. The document was exceptional in that it clearly laid out the Uribe government's objectives and contained a detailed matrix of what was to be accomplished. This matrix provided a tool that the Colombian population could use to evaluate the Uribe government's effectiveness.<sup>24</sup>

The Uribe government was very sensitive to the possible perception that the U.S. government developed the DSP. Nobody in the U.S. government wrote or made inputs into the drafting of the DSP. Nor

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<sup>21</sup> See Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Bruneau attempts to explain why this is the case in Thomas Bruneau, "Challenges in building partner capacity: Civil-military relations in the United States and new democracies," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* Vol. 26, No. 3 (2015), pp. 429-445.

<sup>23</sup> The DSP can be found in its entirety by accessing the website listed here: Republic of Colombia, Democratic Security and Defense Policy," Bogotá, April 2003. Available in English at <https://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/.../Seguridad%20Democratizada.pdf>, accessed April 30, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> For progress as of July 2007 see Georgetown University's Political Database of the Americas, <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/>. The Colombia national strategy can be accessed here: [http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Security/citizenssecurity/citizenssec\\_e.html](http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Security/citizenssecurity/citizenssec_e.html). Accessed April 1, 2019.

for that matter did the U.S. write Plan Colombia.<sup>25</sup> The first semi-final draft to be shared with the U.S. government was provided directly by MOD Ramírez to the authors of this paper for their comments and feedback. That semi-final draft was provided the same day that the Bush (43) administration released its first National Security Strategy. Initially, the DSP draft was vetted at only the very highest levels within the Colombian government. The authors were at a conference in Bogotá with the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command and all the Colombian Generals and Admirals several months later. It became evident that all but the three highest-ranking Colombian Generals and Admiral had not yet been informed of the DSP. Andrés Villamizar, one of the drafters of the DSP, was present at the meeting, called Minister Ramírez, and got permission to brief the Generals and Admirals on the existence and contents of the DSP.

### ***Incentives for U.S. Support to Colombia***

This is a non-trivial issue for a variety of reasons. First, U.S. involvement in Colombia was for many visualized in terms of yet another Vietnam. That is, through gradual involvement to support what was often viewed as a corrupt and alien regime, the U.S. would become totally identified with that regime and send U.S. troops to die for the cause of the corrupt regime. There was some basis of support to this perception in that the president prior to President Pastrana, President Ernesto Samper (1994-98), was alleged to have received financial support for his presidential campaign from drug cartels. Second, as the major producer of cocaine and through the international fame of Carlos Escobar in the Medellín cartel and the Cali cartel in the media, it was thought by many in the U.S. that Colombia was run by *narcos* for the benefit of *narcos*.

What is most important in the issue of security and civil-military relations is U.S. government policy. Drawing on the succinct analysis of Stuart Lippe who was a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) for 25 years and the senior advisor to the Department of State on issues involving Colombia and the implementation of Plan Colombia from 2000 to 2013, we can highlight with credible inside information the main themes or reasons for what became very heavy U.S. involvement. Overall, Colombia was perceived as the murder, kidnapping, and extortion capital of the world.<sup>26</sup> And, in the mid to late 1990s there was concern in Washington that Colombia might collapse and become a narco-state. With this general view as the backdrop, Lippe describes the motivations whereby the U.S. Government developed a policy to support Colombia, first under President Pastrana and then President Uribe. Lippe highlights six unusual circumstances that motivated the U.S. government. First, the proven weakness of the Colombian Army against the FARC raising the specter of a narco-supported terrorist group taking power in Bogotá. Second, coca cultivation was rapidly expanding. Third, there was a crack cocaine epidemic in U.S. cities. Fourth, 2000 was an election year in the U.S. and neither political party wanted to

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<sup>25</sup> Stuart Lippe. "There Is No Silver Bullet and Other Lessons from Colombia." *InterAgency Journal* 5, no. 3 (2014), 23–35. <http://thesimonscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/IAJ-5-3Fall-2014-23-35.pdf>, p. Accessed March 28, 2019. For general information on Plan Colombia, Wikipedia is a useful source.

<sup>26</sup> Lippe, p 32.

be seen as unconcerned about the largest exporter of drugs to the U.S. Fifth, with Pastrana replacing the discredited President Samper, the former wanted better relations with the U.S. Sixth, with the collapse of the USSR, there were no large international security issues to distract policy makers. The combination of these factors resulted in bipartisan support for Plan Colombia, and with the election of Álvaro Uribe and his DSP and the proof of seriousness and resultant success in terms of the following issues, continuing support until today. This will be dealt with later in this paper. It is important to note that initially U.S. support was limited to support related exclusively to the reduction of drugs. After 9/11, support was also authorized for the conflict against terrorist groups like the FARC and ELN.

### *Overcoming the Lleras Doctrine*

On 9 May 1958, following the five-year military dictatorship of General Rojas Pinilla, President-elect Alberto Lleras Camargo gave a speech in the Teatro Patria the contents of which became known as the *Lleras Doctrine*. In his speech, he distinguished between the role of politicians and that of the military. The result was that civilians never became interested in security, even as their country sunk into violence. For example, when the authors began working with Colombia in the early 2000s, they found that there were no non-government organizations (NGO) or think tanks, or civilian academic programs focused on security and defense. And, as a corollary of the lack of civilian interest and involvement, the military defined what they wanted to do, which, not surprisingly, was mainly in terms of traditional state-on-state conflict. Consequently, until the late 1990s the largely self-regulated armed forces focused mostly on external roles, stimulated by a specific notion of professionalism. The Colombian Army, which was the only Latin American military that fought in the conflict in Korea, was shaped by its involvement alongside the U.S. which led it to follow a model of professionalism that emphasized external defense and “going through the ranks.” The external defense roles were primarily with regard to Venezuela and the Gulf of Maracaibo and Sandinista Nicaragua with regard to the San Andres and Providencia Islands. Going through the ranks signified emphasis on training and education courses in Colombia and abroad, professional development, and essentially social activities. Officers established their standing vis-à-vis civilian society by pursuing MBAs and law degrees. Meanwhile, the army was used to acculturate the masses into Colombian society through a system of conscription. The internal conflict was a matter of “*orden publico*” in which the police, once in a while with the support of the Army in its few mobile battalions (BRIMs), would pursue the armed insurgents.<sup>27</sup>

The military equipment, until the late 1990s, included Brazilian armored cars, but not helicopters, for the Army; Mirage and Kfir jets, but not close air support gunships, for the Air Force; and submarines and frigates, but not patrol boats, for the Navy. Personal testimony through interviews and the experi-

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<sup>27</sup> The authors are indebted to one of the very few “defense intellectuals” in Colombia, and one time Ministry of Defense official, Andres Villamizar, whom we interviewed in Bogotá on March 20, 2003. For background information and the content of what emerged as the Colombian Military’s (COLMIL) intellectual framework for counter-insurgency see Jorge E. Delgado, “Colombian Military Thinking and the Fight against the FARC-EP Insurgency, 2002-2014,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 38, No. 6, (2015), pp. 826-851.

ence by the authors during annual seminars at the Colombian War College between 2000 and 2005, demonstrates that Colombian military doctrine was primarily oriented towards external defense. And this is supported by interviews with young Colombian officers indicating that the academies were teaching almost exclusively about external defense roles.

The heavy focus on external defense began to change in 1998 following FARC successes in 1996 and 1997 in overcoming the Colombian National Police and the Army, including Army elite units at Las Delicias and Patascoy and follow on defeats. In the face of these defeats, two Army officers, General Fernando Tapias Stahelin and General Jorge E. Mora Rangel became head of the armed forces and head of the Army, respectively. They had been among the few that had proven themselves as warfighters while commanders of Mobile Brigade (BRIM) units. It should also be noted that while the military took the initiative, President Pastrana, already aware of the failure of the *zona de despeje* ploy, was supportive in terms of filling other staff positions, planning to professionalize the armed forces, and purchases of equipment with which to fight the insurgents. There were, in short, some initial changes in the military even before Uribe was elected president and forced change in the whole military.<sup>28</sup>

Colombia has been a democracy since at least 1958. There are no suggestions of military blackmail or coups. But, in line with the *Lleras doctrine*, there were also few indications of civilian interest or engagement in that which involves the military and security. In most countries in the region, this did not matter. It obviously did in Colombia, and it was in this context that Álvaro Uribe mounted his presidential campaign. Ultimately, through a huge expansion, professionalization, equipping, and forcing the military to fight jointly, the FARC was defeated militarily.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Ministry of Defense (MOD)***

A ministry of defense (MOD) can be the platform or institution in contemporary democracies where the legitimacy of civilian decision-makers, achieving power through free and fair elections, meets the professional expertise of the military. Bruneau has researched and written on nascent and reformed MODs since studying them first in Portugal and Spain in the early 1990s, and later in Central and South America. While those in Iberia, even as new democracies are robust in terms of staffing and resources mainly due to the demands of NATO membership, those in most other newer democracies are mere facades. In all of Latin America, only Chile and Colombia have MODs that are important to national security and defense planning and implementation.<sup>30</sup> For example, Mexico, where the armed services reign supreme, doesn't even have a MOD; those in El Salvador and Guatemala are headed by active duty generals; and, in Brazil only one of the 12 civilian ministers of defense since the creation of the MOD in 1999

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<sup>28</sup> The background to and the major themes of the change, see Andrés Villamizar, *Fuerzas Militares para la Guerra: La agenda pendiente de la reforma militar* (Bogotá: Fundación Seguridad & Democracia, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Lest one doubt that it required a military victory to deal with the FARC, obligatory reading is Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle, "Was FARC militarily defeated?", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2017), pp. 524-545.

<sup>30</sup> See Bruneau, 2013. On the more general topic, see Thomas C. Bruneau and Richard B. Goetze, Jr., "Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control", in Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson, Eds, *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

(Nelson Jobim, 2007-11) knew anything about national security or defense, and there were no civilians in any of the relevant offices. Today in Brazil, the Minister of Defense is a retired general. In Argentina, the MOD staff that knew anything about national security and defense were marginalized and replaced by students on internships. There was not much to control in any case as the Argentine military was intentionally so weakened legally and economically after the transition from the military government in 1983 that the MOD is irrelevant.



**Photo Caption:** Marta Lucia Ramirez was the Colombian Minister of Defense from 2002-2003 and developed the Democratic Security Policy. As of this writing, she is Vice President of Colombia. Photo credit: Colombia Reports

In Colombia, the 1991 Constitution first stipulated the requirement for a civilian minister of defense. However, in a meeting with President Uribe's first Minister of Defense, Marta Lucía Ramírez on April 4, 2003, she made a telling comment to the authors. She said at that time that Colombia has a civilian minister of defense but not a civilian ministry of defense. In short, soon after President Uribe assumed power and began to implement the DSP, the MOD in Colombia was similar to other façade MODs throughout the region. At the request of Minister Ramírez, the authors performed a detailed study of the civilian side of the Ministry, which confirmed the Minister's observation. While the 2003 DSP was written by civilians in the MOD and not surprisingly strongly emphasized a central role for the MOD in coordinating national security and defense to implement the government's national security policies (articles 63-65), the key positions were occupied by active duty or retired military officers. Civilian salaries were about two-thirds the salaries in other ministries (because the MOD was still as-

sumed to be staffed by active duty or retired military officers) which resulted in quick turnover of the two vice-MODs for example.

Initially, the military leadership did not accept that the Minister of Defense was in the chain of command from the President to the Commander of the Colombian military. During a meeting in the MOD's office in which Goetze was a participant, retired officers representing the military command articulated that the Minister was not in the chain of command. The Minister called the President for clarification and he supported the Minister's contention that she was in the chain of command between the President and the military command. President Uribe tasked Minister Ramírez to gain greater control over government funds associated with defense, including those that went directly to the services as rotating funds. General Mora and Minister Ramírez had frequent substantive disputes over a number of issues, including resource allocation. These disputes became public knowledge with intense and negative media coverage. As a result of these public confrontations between Minister Ramírez and General Mora, President Uribe eventually removed both of them from their positions.

Since that time the MOD has become robust, particularly under the leadership of Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos, 2006–2010. By robust, we mean it is the institution that develops and implements the DSP and follow-on national security strategies. It does this through two extremely gifted and capable vice ministers of defense, whom at the time of Santos were Sergio Jaramillo and Juan Carlos Pinzón, supported by an excellent staff of civilians familiar with security and defense issues. It is very important to note that Juan Manuel Santos was conversant with issues in national security and defense,



**Photo Caption:** U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine Corps Gen. Peter Pace, Colombia's Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, and Chairman of Colombia's Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Freddy Padilla hold a press conference in Bogota, Colombia, Jan. 19, 2007. Photo credit: Defense.gov.

and when he was elected president, Pinzón replaced him as MOD. The lower level civilian staff has benefited from short courses on national security and defense in the U.S. and probably in other countries.

There are several reasons for the transformation which we have learned from our Colombian colleagues and informed officials in the U.S government. Some of these are the following, in no particular order of priority: the commissioning of a study by the authors of this paper on the MOD as it was structured and staffed in 2003 and 2004, which was used by a team under Vice MOD Sergio Jaramillo to reform the MOD; the awareness that to retain capable civilian staff, their salaries would have to be at least commensurate with those in other ministries; the decision by President Uribe to channel the funds from the “war taxes” and from the U.S. (topics to be covered in later sections of this paper) through the MOD (not the armed services); the awareness that to change the focus of the military from external to domestic combat would require a strong institution to implement President Uribe’s commitment; the awareness that to impose “jointness” on the military would require a strong institution led by civilians and not a senior officer from one of the services; the awareness that the legitimacy of fighting a domestic enemy would require a civilian-led institution; and the emphasis by the U.S. government, including the U.S. Congress, that a civilian led MOD was crucial for continuing financial support from the U.S..

### ***Educating and Informing the Colombian Population***

In fighting any war, and most certainly one against a domestic insurrection, almost a civil war, the active support of the population is important. In most countries, including Colombia in 2002, the following observation of Hew Strachan is relevant.

If electorates are not informed about and involved in the making of national strategy, they cannot be expected to identify with the objectives of that strategy. Their perceptions, that they believe soldiers are victims, not victors, and that they themselves belong to societies that are inherently casualty-averse, become self-fulfilling prophecies because of the poverty of informed debate. That in turn both undermines deterrence and inhibits national leaders from timely action. If potential opponents believe that democracies are inherently risk-averse and unlikely to use force, then democracies’ defense policies lack deterrent strength, as both Saddam Hussein and Vladimir Putin seem to have concluded in 2002 and 2013 respectively.<sup>31</sup>

To overcome this situation, and it must be emphasized again that civilian elites and the population in general were not interested in issues of national security and defense, President Uribe travelled all over the country participating in *consejos comunitarios* on Saturdays. The meetings are designed to give ordinary citizens the chance to speak face-to-face with Uribe and his cabinet ministers, who accompany him. The president himself moderates the gatherings, which are marathon affairs that last

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<sup>31</sup> Page 24 of “Strategy and Democracy.”

from 10 to 14 hours and are broadcast by the public television station Senal Colombia.”<sup>32</sup> According to *El Tiempo* of June 2, 2008, six years into Uribe’s presidency, he had made 200 such visits involving more than 150,000 people in 108 municipalities in 32 departments. In most instances, the population had never had contact with the government in Bogotá, let alone with the President of the country accompanied by ministers who took down the people’s demands, and President Uribe saw that they were fulfilled. The director of the National Federation of Municipalities, Gilberto Toro, recognized Uribe’s accomplishments. “This strategy allowed Uribe, like no other President in Colombia, to have direct communication with the representatives of local communities. The distance between the national and the local government was eliminated for the first time,” Toro wrote.<sup>33</sup>



**Photo Caption:** President Uribe conducts a town hall meeting in Quibdó, Colombia in August 2008. Uribe made a public relations campaign central to his efforts to restore security and democracy in many parts of the country. Photo credit: Miguel Ángel Solano - SP.

The point with Uribe’s visits throughout the country was to demonstrate concretely that the government was interested in the population and their problems, for which he assumed responsibility for action to resolve the problems. Very often the problems were based on the lack of security, from either the left, including the FARC, or from the Self-Defense Forces (AUC). In this way President Uribe developed support for the DSP and, as we shall see in the next section, the funds to implement it.

<sup>32</sup> John C. Dugas , 2003, p. 1131

<sup>33</sup> Available at <https://www.eltiempo.com>. Accessed April 3, 2019.

### *Security Taxes and Financial Support from the U.S.*

It is obvious that a robust policy of security and defense requires money, lots of money. The most concrete datum of the irrelevance of military effectiveness in general in Latin America is the extremely low percentage of gross domestic product assigned to defense, and the very high percentage of this small percentage going to personnel. For example, according to *Jane's Defense Budgets, 2012*, in Brazil 1.3% of GDP went to defense and of this 73% was for personnel.<sup>34</sup> In order to increase military effectiveness to combat the FARC and other armed actors, initially, on 8 September 2002, a month after assuming office, President Uribe decreed a wealth tax of 1.2% on the top earners and corporations' liquid assets. But, what is even more important, especially in the context of this paper, in 2003, in 2006, and again in 2009, the Colombian Congress passed legislation imposing similar taxes, with the last one in 2009 applicable to 2011-2014, after President Uribe had left office. The data on the four taxes is displayed in Table 1, page 480 of the Flores-Macias article. His conclusions summarized here, are extremely important.

Initially, the country's fiscal and security conditions promoted the government to declare a state of emergency to adopt the tax by decree. Moreover, elite cohesion among government and business sectors contributed to generating a consensus behind the tax through cooperation mechanisms and linkages between government and business. Finally, improving perceptions of the government's ability to provide security further defused opposition.<sup>35</sup>

By 2010, when Brazil and Argentina were committing 1.6% and 0.9% respectively of the GDP to defense, Colombia was 3.6%.

There are two major issues that must be raised here. The first is the generation of funds through the so-called war taxes on the elite and businesses, which was novel in Colombia where the percentage of taxes had traditionally been low and defense was even lower, and the second is the sum of these Colombian-derived funds in relationship to funds from the United States in support of Plan Colombia and follow-on programs. As Flores-Macias demonstrates in his article, the rate of taxes to GDP in Latin America, approximately 14-18% of GDP, is very low in comparison, for example, to Europe, where it is between 20 and 50%.<sup>36</sup> And historically, taxes in Colombia were similar to other Latin American countries in being very low. In short, the creation of a "war tax" in Colombia was unprecedented. As Flores-Macias states, "During the first four years of Uribe's presidency, these resources funded an increase in the size and professionalization of the military.... As a result, armed forces personnel increased by

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<sup>34</sup> *Jane's Defense Budgets*. Accessed May 27, 2013. For global comparisons see Thomas Charles Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson, "Civil-Military Relations in Brazil: A Reassessment," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* Volume 2. (2014), Pp.107-138.

<sup>35</sup> Gustavo A. Flores-Macias, "Financing Security Through Elite-Taxation: The Case of Colombia's 'Democratic Security Taxes'", *Studies in International Development*, Vol. 49 (2014), pp.477-500; p. 478. See as well the excellent article on the war taxes and state building in Diana Rodriguez-Franco, "Internal Wars, Taxation, and State Building," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 81, no 1, (2016), Pp. 190-213.

<sup>36</sup> Flores-Macias, p. 477.

about 36% and combat forces by 45% during Uribe's first term in office."<sup>37</sup>

While the financial support from the United States to Colombia was and is very important, it must be kept in perspective by including the four "war taxes" imposed by Colombians on richer Colombians. Again, drawing on Flores-Macias, the war tax filled the gap left by decreasing resources from Plan Colombia. "In 2010, revenue from the security tax represented about four times Plan Colombia's military funds. By compensating for the loss of resources in foreign assistance, the security tax played a key role in preserving the government's room for maneuver," wrote Flores-Macias.<sup>38</sup> It is obvious that we are drawing on Colombian scholars for the above data on the war tax and U.S. assistance. The position of the two Colombian scholars is supported by Stuart Lippe who states that, "between 2000 and 2006, the Government of Colombia spent \$20 billion on the military and police (not including pensions and other non-military expenditures), while the United States provided \$3 billion."<sup>39</sup>

### *Ongoing Support to Colombia by the United States*

A crucial piece of the virtuous circle of democratic civilian control, military effectiveness, popular mobilization and funding is the continuing support of the United States. Today Colombia is privileged by the U.S. in a great number of areas. Colombia is the only Latin American country included in the government-funded United States Institute of Peace. It is the only country in Latin America that has a U.S. government-funded Ministry of Defense Advisor (MODA). It is the only country in Latin America that is an official partner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 2017, Colombia received \$384 million from Department of State accounts and another \$106 million in Department of Defense accounts. Colombia is the single largest recipient of U.S. funds in Latin America.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the publicized preferences noted above, all of which concern security, Colombia also benefits from a variety of military and police assistance and training programs that are not so widely publicized.

While there is no single reason for the special and close relationship between the U.S. and Colombia, the following can be suggested. First is the success in forcing the FARC to negotiations through military pressure and tremendous improvements in all indicators of security. The reduction of coca cultivation and the production and export of cocaine has been a failure. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) statistics, coca cultivation is significantly higher now than it was at the beginning of the Uribe administration.<sup>41</sup> Even so, Colombia no longer poses a threat of a narco-state run by terrorists which was a major concern at the beginning of the century. Second is the role of Colombia in exporting security. Formalized by President Obama and President Santos at the

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<sup>37</sup> Flores-Macias, p. 479.

<sup>38</sup> Flores-Macias, p. 481.

<sup>39</sup> Stuart Lippe, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> "Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: CRS, February 8, 2019), p. 33 and Peter J. Meyer, "U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY 2018 Appropriations," Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: CRS, May 9, 2018), Summary.

<sup>41</sup> For comparative data see [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/colombia\\_report\\_2003-09-25.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/colombia_report_2003-09-25.pdf) and, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/.../coca-crops-in-colombia-at-all-time-high--unodc-rep...> Accessed May 5, 2019.

Sixth Summit of the Americas in April 2012, the Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation has resulted in Colombian military and police training 17,000 individuals from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America.<sup>42</sup> And third is the fact that Colombia is a key ally in a region where the ALBA countries of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, Brazil under the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), and Argentina under the Kirchners were anything but reliable allies. Today, with the social, political, and security disaster that is Venezuela, having a stalwart ally in Colombia has to be a relief to the U.S. Administration. If the goal of the U.S. in Latin America is building partner capacity, then Colombia is a success story.



**Photo Caption:** U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Admiral Michael G. Mullen greets Colombian President Dr. Alvaro Uribe Velez at the presidential palace in Bogota, Colombia on January 17, 2007. In the background are William Brownfield, U.S. ambassador to Colombia, and Dr. Juan Manuel Santos, the Colombian Minister of Defense, Photo credit: Defense.gov.

### ***Conclusion***

In sum, President Uribe implemented a strategy of reestablishing government legitimacy throughout Colombian territory, strengthening a civilian Ministry of Defense with influence in defining and implementing strategy and resource allocation, taking on the FARC, mobilized the military and the population, and developed support in society. It is particularly important, in terms of civil-military relations,

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<sup>42</sup> Congressional Research Service, 8 February 2019, p. 25.

not only that the DSP was written by civilians in the civilian-led Ministry of Defense and put forth a central role for the Minister of Defense, but they also had authority over the funds from Colombia and from the U.S. This control enhanced the clout of the civilians in the Ministry vis-a-vis the military on whom they were dependent for success. Colombia does not have an issue of democratic civilian control of the military establishment. While there obviously remain serious problems of coca growing and export, some FARC fronts and other guerrilla groups yet to be demobilized, and human rights issues, the country is incredibly less violent and more propitious to investment bringing development than it was at the beginning of the century. It is, finally, an excellent case study of the importance of military effectiveness combined with democratic civilian control resulting in a virtuous circle which is rare not only in Latin America but in the world.





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