

THE LARGER LESSONS OF PLAN COLOMBIA: A CASE OF INNOVATION AND SUCCESS

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy and security concerns have been interests for the U.S. and Colombia and their traditional and long bilateral state relationships. Likewise, democracy and security objectives were addressed to design and implement the strategy under the label of Plan Colombia. By 2000, the United States of America and Colombia implemented Plan Colombia to disrupt, deny, and neutralize illegal drug production and trafficking in Colombia, by providing military aid and strengthening social programs through alternative programs and investment in physical infrastructure (RAMÍREZ, STANTON & WASH, 2005). Even though the former were the original goals stated by Plan Colombia, in practice this Plan enabled the Colombian government to rebuild the state-nation while fighting drug-trafficking. In retrospect, the situation in Colombia by the late 1990s was dramatically negative in terms of insecurity, ineffective governance, insecurity, and low-level of rule of law. In all these regards, Colombia was facing hybrid threats in terms of insurgency, terrorism, criminal bands, and kidnapping. Actors such as the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC, National Liberation Army or ELN, and the right wing United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia or *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) were involved in narco-trafficking and caused insecurity and endemic violence (REID, 2007).

As a result, the country faced an economic downturn, social inequality, wide violence, corruption, and low-level education. Likewise, poverty and internally displaced persons (IDPs), increased in rural areas, while environmental degradation reached peak levels. All of these were linked to illegal drug production and trafficking (PIZARRO & GAITÁN, 2006). In brief, legitimacy was at stake and therefore, the country's stability.

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Today, the strategic environment of Colombia has improved, to the point that now, the former FARC insurgency, the oldest and largest guerrilla of the world, is engage to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, as integral part of post-conflict peace consolidation. In this sense, Plan Colombia and domestic policies have achieved significant progress in the security environment and therefore, rule of law and governance were regained in Colombia. Along these 17 years in Colombia, the territorial recovery by means of interagency plans, including military actions and alternative social programs, have been implemented and executed in focus areas subjected to coca eradication, under the label of *Acción Integral* (Integral Action).

In reality, Plan Colombia became an indirect approach to strengthen democracy in Colombia. In 2002, two years after Plan Colombia initiated, President Uribe, labeling his governmental policy as *democratic security*, integrated civilian and governmental agencies actions in conjunction with the military strategy or *Plan Patriota* (2002-2006) in key rural areas affected by the insurgency and the AUC, because. By 2006, the new Plan was named Plan de *Guerra Consolidación* or Plan Consolidation (2006-2010), in order to achieve positive effects in this focus areas, applying more emphasis in social programs and rule of law, in focus areas, while the military action was directed to reduce guerrilla influence in rural areas. (Plan consolidación, 2009).

Similarly, under the President Juan Manuel Santos administration (2010-2014) this approach continued in terms of Plan *Bicentenario* (2010-2012). (Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, 2012). Also, *Plan Espada de Honor* or Sword of Honor, in four versions I/II/III/IV (2012-2016). The latter, the result of 4 strategic revisions, using a new methodology for evaluation purposes and implementing measures of effectiveness at strategic, operational and tactical levels, in order to disable and paralyze the FARC, ELN and criminal organizations, both militarily and financially. (Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, 2017). In short, Plan Colombia, indirectly, enforced internal political culture changes, such as the democratic security domestic policy (BRUNEAU, 2003).

Thus, this paper will argue that Plan Colombia and its military preeminence have been necessary to achieve military and non-military conditions while rebuilding the nation-state. Therefore, by studying the case of Colombia it is possible to draw its large lessons addressing security and democracy matters. Also, Plan Colombia and its military character and social component have been necessary to disrupt and neutralize the overwhelming and hybrid threat in Colombia. In brief, security was necessarily addressed first to pave the way for rebuilding rule of law and governance. By contrast, unresolved issues and new security challenges present in the strategic environment are noted.

By assessing Plan Colombia and the narrative of Colombia in the last 17 years, this paper will argue that the Plan has applied key elements of the U.S. military doctrine in terms of joint military planning and counterinsurgency to rebuild the security environment. Thus, this strategy has achieved success in meeting the bulk of the military conditions while it has enabled other non-military conditions to rebuild the nation-state. However, some neighboring countries of Colombia and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) have stated counterarguments against Plan Colombia, criticizing the greater military component along with its lesser social part.

1. PLAN COLOMBIA

Briefly and before assessing Plan Colombia, Colombia's geography is addressed to explain the extension of that country, compared to two vivid scenarios for U.S. statesmen and military. Those are Iraq and Afghanistan. Colombia's territorial extension is 1,141,747 km². It is over the size of Afghanistan (647,500 km²) and Iraq (437,072 km²) together.

In addition, Colombia has territorial limits with Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Panama. Also, Colombia has maritime limits with: Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica. In brief, Colombia limits with 11 countries in the Caribbean and South America. Having said so, the Colombia's strategy position is a factor to explain the character of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Colombia. Besides, the reader may see the extent of Colombia while facing security issues in terms of criminal bands, narcotrafficking, insurgency, and terrorism.

In addition to the geography factor, the background of the U.S.-Colombia relations is presented. In 1990 President George H.W. Bush led the first Andean Drug Summit. It was executed in Cartagena-Colombia. The heads of state of the U.S., Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador signed the Declaration of Cartagena, to address political, military and economic actions related with counternarcotics efforts. In all these regards, the U.S.-Colombia relations have addressed mainly security challenges. At the same time, Colombia was classified by the U.S. Congress as a failed state. (FRECHETTE, 2007). As a result, former President Bill Clinton reached a political consensus and proposed the Plan Colombia initiative. It is important to note that the latter was first stated in Colombia by President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002), shaping domestic perceptions before the Plan was implemented. The former was key to favor public support and further success of the strategy. In consequence, for strategists in the U.S. and Colombia, Plan Colombia was a logical step in the light of the long and traditional bilateral relationships for many decades to address security issues (narcotrafficking).

As a result, from the Colombian's perspective, Plan Colombia was conceived like a domestic initiative to save the country. Originally, the Colombian government saw this Plan as a multinational endeavor not only from the U.S., but also from the European Union (EU) to promote economic and social development in Colombia. That circumstance played a major role for legitimacy in Colombia, as it will be explained below and noted in this paper as a key element. In the meantime, U.S. policymakers were highly concerned to address security in Colombia. According to Thomas R. Pickering, President's Clinton former Undersecretary of State. Pickering "Colombia as a failed state would harm American interests and those of its neighbors on many levels." (PICKERING, 2009, p. 71).

By 2001, President George Bush and the U.S. Congress, the latter under the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) (LEMUS, STANTON & WASH, 2005) continued supporting Plan Colombia. Specialized programs such as Air Bridge Denial (ABD) were established, by providing air assets, intelligence and funds to interdict illicit flights from the source zones toward the U.S. (FRECHETTE, 2007). Besides, U.S. and Colombian coast guard and navy assets were executing maritime interdiction in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific. Likewise, Colombian army, marine and national police units were executing drug eradication in country. As noted by Eduardo Pizarro and Pilar Gaitan, by 2003 Colombia became "the third largest recipient, after Israel and Egypt, of the U.S. military aid." (PIZARRO & GAITAN, 2006, p. 53).

Moreover, counternarcotics operations became essential to deny, disrupt, and undermine the economic leverage achieved by FARC. After Cold War, narcotrafficking became the main means of support for insurgency and terrorist activities. Likewise, insurgents of National Liberation Army or ELN and rightist paramilitaries AUC were involved with narcotrafficking in depth (CORUM & JOHNSON, 2003). In the late 1990s, those circumstances enabled insurgents-terrorists (FARC, ELN, and AUC) to expand their leverage while increasing violence, illegal activities, and corruption, while the statecraft was unable to contain this overwhelming and hybrid threat. Hence, Plan Colombia was the turning point of the U.S.-Colombia relationships. Crandall (2008) "Plan Colombia was an initiative to rescue Colombia under this bilateral agreement to provide funds and assets to wage the war on drugs." (p. 91). From the Colombia perspective, Plan Colombia was vital to correct the path of democracy in Colombia and necessary to building domestic capacity to recover nation-state. The latter was also true for the U.S. government, while containing drug trade effects on U.S. and region stability were the primary objectives. At the end, it was the beginning of a new chapter of U.S.-Colombia relationships continued after President Clinton and President Pastrana. Ultimately, those circumstances explain the imperative of Plan Colombia and its military character to address the security environment in Colombia and the U.S.

1.1. OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Plan Colombia and the U.S. military doctrine introduced valuable inputs that enhanced the Colombian military, by considering not only equipment, air assets and logistic support, but also professionalization. As a result, Plan Colombia achieved a military transformation in Colombia. For instance, by 2000 the military in Colombia addressed challenges in terms of joint organization to improve the quality of military planning to produce effectiveness at the operational and tactical level while executing defense, offense, and stability operations. In addition, Plan Colombia and its military aid package including equipment and material, strengthened critical capabilities to the military such as command and control, air mobility, sustainability, interoperability, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Also, the extent of training and professionalization was significantly improved in military tactics in terms of special operations, search and rescue (SAR), and psychological operations (PSYOPs). Those core capabilities are essential to execute successfully military actions in the battlefield while increasing the extent of military professionalization in Colombia.

In particular, Plan Colombia on one hand strengthened the professionalism of the military not only in military tactics, but also in knowledge and practice of the Law of Armed Conflicts (LOAC). Another aspect is the focus of the Colombia military on the protection of the population, infrastructure, isolating the insurgents from the populace as a permanent priority. Toward this end, winning the heart and mind of the population became paramount for the military strategy, while providing military conditions to enhance rule of law and governance. Furthermore, for the first time in Colombia, the state is established in all 1,099 municipalities of Colombia, supported by military and national police forces (MARCELLA, 2009). To this end, military and police manpower has increased from 313,406 in 2002 to 437,548 in 2009 (39.61%). (Ministerio de Defensa, 2009). In consequence, the military and the national police paved the way to reestablish local authority in ungoverned rural areas in Colombia, while isolating the insurgency from the population. The latter became the virtual cycle, by employing the military Instrument of Power (IOP) first to really consolidate control of the entire territory, as a military condition to enable rule of law and economic development. Ultimately, control of the territory is an indicator of success in pursuing governmental legitimacy, contrary to the arguments stated by neighboring countries and NGOs.

Likewise, under the path of military transformation indicated above, conditions were met before to transit into joint military organizations in Colombia. The latter was gradually achieved while facing frictions and challenges, because of services used to plan and operate independently. Afterward, in 2004 Joint Task Force Omega was established to execute military operations in the largest base

area of the FARC². Then, by 2005 the Joint Command Number 1 or CCON-1 was established in the northern Caribbean region of Colombia. By 2009 Joint Command Number 2 was created, to conduct military operations in the Pacific region of Colombia (Fuerzas Militares activan Comando Conjunto Pacífico, 2009). As a result, for the first time in Colombia the military efforts are truly integrated in unified actions to deter, disrupt, and degrade hybrid threats, with close coordination with national police, *Fiscalía* or law enforcement members. In brief, Plan Colombia has enabled Colombian military transformation equal to the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 (Goldwater, 1986). That transformation was necessary to enhance military effectiveness while integrating interagency efforts to promote the rule of law and mitigate human rights violations. Lastly, military professionalization in Law of War, Human Rights have been essential to attain legitimacy in irregular warfare. Similarly, special operations and informational operations have been the paramount in offensive operations while reducing collateral damage. Collateral damage is a factor across the three levels of irregular warfare, as it has been learned in Colombia.

With Plan Colombia, the utility of air power in military operations illustrated the effects of both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. The former are executed by precision guided munitions (PGM) against high-value targets and air interdiction, minimizing collateral damage. The latter are carried out by means of airlift, PSYOPS, human-based intelligence and ISR; search and rescue (SAR), and medical evacuation. For instance, military operations have successfully planned and executed, by introducing joint military planning and operations. By 2008 joint Operation Phoenix or *Operación Fénix* was executed to neutralize the second top leader of FARC. This is the first time in the history of Colombia a Top FARC terrorist was killed as a result of military operations (Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, 2008). Then, Operation Jaque, a non-kinetic operation, successfully achieved the rescue of three U.S. and twelve Colombian military hostages retained by FARC over six years. The significance of this operation is that its goal was successfully accomplished while no single casualty was produced, whether friendly or insurgent. Likewise, the FARC leaders involved in this operation were captured (Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares, 2008). That illustrated the primacy of rule of law over military annihilation as a condition to strengthen legitimacy. It is a result of long-term and consistent efforts under military transformation in Colombia, which began with Plan Colombia.

² By 2002, that area was a safe haven for FARC and the ground for drug trafficking, terrorism, kidnapping, and source for logistics. For decades the state-nation failed to provide effectively governance. As a result, that area became favorable for insurgency by considering vacuum of legitimacy, population support while fertile lands were suitable to cattle as well as both legal and illegal crops. This area is the size of Switzerland.

2. THE KEY ELEMENTS OF PLAN COLOMBIA

2.1. NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, LEGITIMACY, AND POPULATION

Alvaro Uribe was elected President of Colombia in May 2002, after Plan Colombia was implemented two years earlier, the latter under the mandate of President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002). Uribe's administration was able to develop a comprehensive domestic policy to integrate Plan Colombia while procuring a political culture change in Colombia. For example, he stated that democracy was vital to Colombia while security and rule of law were prerequisites to achieve, territorial control and governance in country. He successfully experienced that when he was governor of Antioquia, the second largest economic, industrial, and politic state of Colombia (Frechette, 2007).

In particular, this paper will argue that specific conditions in Colombia enabled President Uribe to instituted *democratic security* policy in 2002. First, the former President Pastrana wore out all his political capital to achieve the peace with the FARC, between 1999 and 2002³. Then, negative outcomes that political peace process convinced the populace in Colombia of the real political objectives of the FARC guerrillas to take the power and establish a Marxist regime, and therefore democracy was at stake. As a result, the population's expectations pointed out strong leadership in person of President Alvaro Uribe. In other words, set of conditions in 2002 were fertile ground to President Uribe, his leadership, and to legitimate his "*security democratic*" policy (FRECHETTE, 2007). The same was true by 2010, for President Santos in order to achieve the conditions and results at the strategic level for the peace process developed until today. In other words, political consensus while executing a continuous and institutional effort during 3 administrations.

2.2. U.S. MILITARY DOCTRINE AND PLAN COLOMBIA

Even though Plan Colombia addresses military aid and social component, this paper will assess Plan Colombia from a military perspective. To this end, there are key elements identified in the U.S. military doctrine that were introduced into the strategy. Today the military mission confronts broad and complex challenges that demand knowledge of warfare, analysis of the operational environment, and application of operational art to attain the set of military

³ President Pastrana dictated the so-called "distension zone" or demilitarized zone requested by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), as a condition to maintain the peace talks for three years, while the FARC used as a safe haven in increasing its terrorists activities, narcotrafficking and kidnapping.

conditions instituted by the political conductor and to translate the strategy into military actions. In addition, contextual factors such as doctrine, technology, civil-military relations, concepts of Just War traditions, war termination and conflict resolution are contextual factors that today influence the military mission. To this end, those concepts are encapsulated in the U.S. military doctrine and labeled as counterinsurgency COIN and stability operations (Counterinsurgency Operations, 2009).

U.S. military doctrine, introduced by means of Plan Colombia and the military strategy or *Plan Patriota*, have provided the ground for the Colombian military capability to advance with the strategy, by focusing in governance and the population, while securing the environment in the light of U.S. counterinsurgency and stability operations doctrine. Likewise, Plan Colombia introduced the military concept of unified action. Joint Publication 1 remarks that unified action “is a broad term referring to the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort”. (Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, 2007). It was valuable to balance, at the strategic level, the use of all instruments of power to attain a strategic goal. However, this concept has not fully developed by civilians and military at the tactical level in Colombia. Yet local government stewards are reluctant to be involved with military, by considering it may violate the concept of neutrality in light of the Law of Armed Conflicts⁴. Therefore, this is one of the weaknesses of the top-down execution of the strategy.

Furthermore, Counterinsurgency Operations were renewed within the execution of *Plan Patriota*. Paradoxically and in spite of the professionalism of the military in Colombia and its broad experience, the threshold between the theory and the practice were significant. Military practice was supported by individual experience and skill, rather than military doctrine and integrated civil-military strategy. In the past, Colombian military doctrine and strategy was focus on conventional warfare, with lack of counterinsurgency and stability operations concepts. As a result, the military conducted and executed annihilation warfare. By the 1990s ineffective long-term military solutions were addressed while the rise of human right issues undermined the legitimacy in Colombia⁵. That situation was improved after Plan Colombia was established. The Plan made significant changes

⁴ I observed that situation in small municipalities in the Caquetá region which was part of the former DMZ in 2008, when I was assigned to Joint Task Force Omega.

⁵ Those arguments were based on personal contact experience of the author as a Colombian Air Force officer for twenty years. His background in counter-narcotics operations and counterinsurgency operations, provide the authority to assert that the military doctrine in Colombia is focused in conventional warfare rather than irregular warfare. Currently and in spite of the practice of the counterinsurgency operations, there is no current operational doctrine addressing this matter. The military culture relies more in the experience and the skills, and lesser in the formal knowledge regarding counterinsurgency and stability

in the military strategy, by introducing the U.S. military tenets and elements of counterinsurgency operations (Counterinsurgency Operations, 2009). In addition to counterinsurgency, the U.S. military doctrine addresses Stability Operations and noted as “missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of power, to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.” (Joint Operations, p. GL-26). *Plan Patriota* implicitly has introduced some of those concepts, by assessing the achievements of the set military conditions.

In sum, there is a close and consistent link between the U.S. military doctrine and Plan Colombia. The new military strategy introduced new elements that have been stated in the U.S. military doctrine in terms of COIN and stability operations to establish military objectives and conflict termination criteria, which became vital elements of the strategy. In this specific case and circumstances the U.S. military doctrine in COIN and stability operations was suitable to attain challenges in the security environment. As it was explained before, this strategy has shown significant progress in the security environment for the first time in Colombia. Hence, it is justifiable to assert that Plan Colombia and its military preeminence have been essential to build governance and rule of law in Country in the light of U.S. military doctrine. Nevertheless, COIN is still necessary while further steps should be taken, to strengthen interagency (IA) and stability operations.

2.3. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN COLOMBIA

Plan Colombia has been a key element to strengthen the security democratic policy, by illustrating how appropriate Civil-Military relations are essential and necessary to build security, law or rule and governance. For the first time, at the strategic level, the statesmen in Colombia understood that security is a complex matter that necessitates the integration of civil and military actors to develop a policy to integrate and coordinate efforts to the same end (unified policy). Secondly, this new concept enhanced the military at the operational level to manage simultaneously security issues while enabling governance and rule of law led by the civilian authority. As a result, the primacy of legitimacy has been demonstrated before the eyes and expectations of the population. Nonetheless, during prior experience and before Plan Colombia, civil-military relations were a factor that negatively affected security in Colombia, as explained briefly below.

After the period of military rule in Colombia, between 1953 and 1958, the military were alone fighting the bulk of the security problems in Colombia. The

operations doctrine. On the other hand, this tenets and elements of the U.S. doctrine were introduced in the Colombian national military strategy in the light of the *Plan Patriota*.

civilians had assumed for over forty years, and before the implementation of Plan Colombia, that security was not their responsibility. Thus, the misguided policy that the civilian should be apart from national security issues, the latter considered as solely a military matter while civilians conduct politics, the judicially, matters, and legislation. According to Marks (2002) “There, the lack of concern by the ruling elite played a key role. For decades following *La Violencia*, the insurgents remained largely out there, out of sight, out of mind, patiently building an alternative society. No one much cared.” (p. 4). In brief, the politicians in Colombia believed that the security environment lay in military success alone (FRECHETTE, 2007).

Because of these factors, Civil-Military relations are essential in execution of Plan Colombia. This contextual factor has influenced the approach of Plan Colombia in terms of interagency effort under the label of *Social Action*, because of the necessity to integrate common efforts to build rule of law and governance while the focusing on protecting the population. For example, the interface between civilians and military is a key element to identify the populace’s behavior, what are their needs, expectations, and more importantly, understanding Colombian culture as part of a larger political solution. (McFate, 2005). According to Hooker (2003) civil-military relations are essential to policy making and the interagency process to attain realistic goals and the integration of means, by unifying efforts to procure common goals. That is possible throughout interagency plans and actions to attain success in the mid-term, by considering the current situation in Colombia.

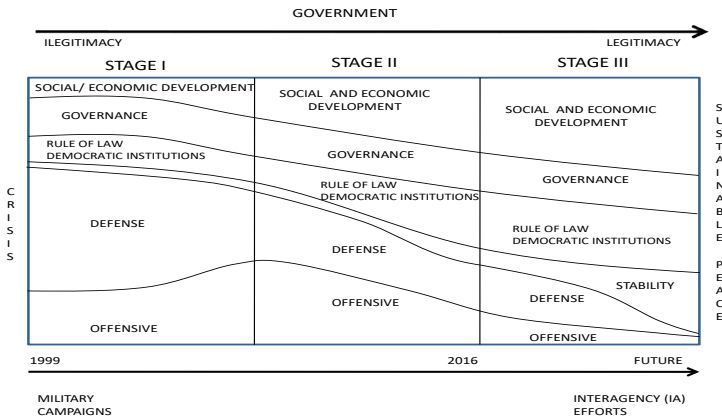
Furthermore, the presence of other government agencies (OGAs), international government agencies (IGOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been active in rural areas; prior to the arrival of Colombian military and other governmental agencies. For that reason, interagency actions are essential, because those organizations have achieved a comprehensive picture of current issues and they already have been in touch with the population building mutual confidence, before military arrive to areas of operations (HAWLEY & SKOCZ, 2005). For instance, in Colombia, several NGOs and other governmental agencies are integrated in the early alert system or *Sistema de Alerta Temprana* (SAT). The origin of this system was part of line of action instituted by the USAID in conjunction with the Colombian government. This system was established in the early 2000s is under the direct purview of the Interior Ministry and coordinates closely with the Ministry of Defense. To this end, locally and regionally these organizations work independently and close to key leaders and civilian populace to identify risks, social issues, internal displaced movements, and security issues. As a result, that security issues will be addressed as key inputs for military to take urgent actions to prevent and mitigate violence from non-state actors such

as insurgency, terrorists, and criminal bands. In particular, at the tactical level, military unit commanders have a responsibility to respond effectively to these alerts addressed by SAT (ORTIZ, 2001).

In short, effective civil-military relations will enhance the planning process at the national and operational level, in unifying and integrating civil-military actions, with the likelihood of close contact with the populace at the tactical level while improving the security environment.

2.4. VISION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Figure 1. Strategic Environment and weight of effort.



Source: own authorship.

Figure 1 is introduced to illustrate the integration of military effort along with rule of law, democratic institutions building, and governance and social economic development to facilitate conflict resolution. Externally, lines of action are drawn to attain the military conditions and non-military conditions in light of level of legitimacy and interagency efforts. Besides, in this model government integrates and synchronizes the other instruments of power to attain effective long-term solutions through the *democratic security* policy. In Brief, Figure 1 illustrates and provides justification for Plan Colombia and its military character in the past 17 years. While this Plan continues to be necessary to support social programs thorough USAID supported by multilateral organizations, in other words by means of robust interagency organizations and actions, in the framework of the new chapter *Plan Peace Colombia*.

Ultimately, by assessing Plan Colombia and the current strategic environment is possible to assert that in light of both political and military culture Colombia is approaching the final quarter of Stage II (See Figure 1). Similarly, this Figure 1 suggests that future strategies should keep the track while emphasizing in social and economic development, including the private sector and the academic sphere. Government should balance the economic and informational IOP to continue providing good, services and physical infrastructure to attain basic needs of populace. Rule of law as well as democratic institutions are essential to attain legitimacy, while increasing pluralism and participation of the population. Nevertheless, democratic institutions should be supported by military to execute social programs in rural areas where coca eradication is achieved. To this end, stability operations are increasing while protecting the population (defense operations) and neutralizing the hybrid threat in Colombia (offensive operations).

In addition to the key elements analyzed above, the vision of conflict resolution is addressed to build the concept of viable peace in Colombia. The importance of this matter is that it involves concepts of Just War (*jus in bello*) and conflict resolution. Just War traditions are essential to attain legitimacy both in Colombia and regionally/internationally and to build the ground for conflict resolution for viable peace. In particular, the rules that guide the conduct of military and how it employs force in warfare are important (*jus in bello*). (ROBERTS, 2002, p. 117).

Also, Plan Colombia has addressed resources to strengthen the Colombian military and law enforcement professionalism in Human Rights. Since 2002, for military every year academic sessions and practicum are dedicated to human rights and the Law of Armed Conflicts (LOAC), while the National Attorney-General or *Fiscalía General de la Nación* as well as the judicial groups of the National Police investigate and execute the judicial procedures to legitimate every military action in country, when insurgents are killed or captured. Also, the *Fiscalía* supersedes military justice when cases of human right violations occurred, involving Colombian military or police. As a result, these principles are implicit in the Plan Colombia strategy, by procuring the minimum use of force and protecting the integrity of civilian population, their infrastructure and environment.

In short, it is important to recognize that military conduct in war lays in ground of legitimacy, constrains and decision making process, by considering the counterproductive effects of military actions *vis-à-vis* military advantage. This holistic approach is a key factor while facilitating the conflict transformation and stable peace (conflict resolution). To this end, the Colombian government, in the light of the democratic security policy, a Justice and Peace law was approved.

By 2005, the Colombian government stated the Law 975 of “Justice and Peace” as mechanism to achieve a viable peace and the vision of conflict resolution in

Colombia. This Law is resulting from the security achievements of Plan Colombia and the military strategy under the label of the *Plan Patriota* in security matters and by considering the building of rule of law, because this law address not only peace process with the insurgents and AUC, but individuals that find legitimacy and the conditions to choice and initiate a legal life after a judicial process. Also this law involves the victims of the conflict to meet justice, to obtain the truth and the facts of the crimes in the light of the conflict. Finally, this law enforces the reparation of the victims by mean of monetary and/or material repositions from the offenders (Ley de Justicia y Paz, 2005).

Moreover, in the light of the Law 975, the government implemented the *Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado* or Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Program (DHAP). The Defense Ministry is chief of the program and address alternatives and social options to former insurgents and their families, by including technical education, temporal housing and integration with the private sector to develop economic projects. This Program links the military achievements and legitimacy in the battlefield, rule of law conducted by the *Fiscalía* or National Attorney-General and the private sector (Directiva No. 015, 2016). As a caveat, DHAP should be managed by some other government agency, by considering the scale and character of this program. In addition, other executive action was made under the *Programa de Acción Social* or Social Action Program (SAP).

By 2005, the Colombian government created the SAP in order to enhance the High Commissioner for the Peace and his administration to manage resources and budget coming from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, to develop social programs in focus areas, where population experience extreme poverty, while minimizing the impact of narcotrafficking and violence. The SAP executes close coordination with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Presidential Sanction 2467, 2005). In short, Plan Colombia has enhanced the building of the vision of Conflict resolution in Colombia by strengthening the military professionalism in terms of human right indoctrination as well as the concepts of Just War in the *Plan Patriota* to facilitate conflict resolution. Moreover, the USAID by means of economic aid have supported domestic social programs such DHAP and SAP to foster alternative programs to population in rural areas.

2.5. LARGER LESSONS OF PLAN

First, by means of Plan Colombia, key elements were introduced to change military culture. The military transformation in Colombia was necessary to address the hybrid threat in Colombia. This transformation included military training to develop combat and non-combat skills. Also, the Plan provides

air, brown water, and land assets necessary for enhance mobility. Likewise, intelligence platforms were provided along with core capabilities in terms of precision air attacks and special operations to complement conventional military during defense and offensive operations.

Second, Plan Colombia is a fertile ground for the military to draw successful lessons to address COIN and stability operations. Gradually, joint military organizations have been implemented to strengthen command and control, which was necessary to address military objectives and execute mid-term military campaigns. In the mid-term, extending the state's control of territory was necessary to protect the populace and infrastructure. As a result, today the military need to develop more skills to work along with civilians while facing dynamic and irregular threats. Moreover, the military role needs to be expanded to address full range of military operation such as stability operations while governmental and other agencies lead long-term social programs and provide infrastructure, in rural areas where nation-state presence is still ineffective (RAMIREZ et al, 2005).

Third, Law of War and human rights were addressed as critical factors to enhance legitimacy in the mid-term. By law, the *Fiscalía* or Attorney General addresses all military actions in urban and rural areas investigating friendly and adversary casualties. The law also states that the military cannot retain civilian insurgents for more than seventy-two hours. During this time, the military is accountable for the physical and mental integrity of the insurgents until they can be delivered to the *Fiscalía*. In other words, the civilian judicial system always overrides military authority in the battlefield. That is an imperative for viable peace.

Fourth, Political culture in Colombia was changed. For the first time in Colombia, national leadership and close military-civilian relations were modified to address security, rule of law, and governance. In addition, in Colombia public opinion has always perceived *democratic security* policy supported by Plan Colombia. In other words, Plan Colombia has not been assessed as an U.S. intervention in Colombian domestic policies. In consequences, political culture was changed by internal political forces while population shifted to support the government, because of populace and private sector acknowledged that security was necessary to achieve rule of law and governance, while providing favorable conditions for social and economic development. In consequence, a virtual cycle was initiated to rebuild nation-state where security was the initial step in the near-term to carry out a long-term solution.

Fifth, set of conditions for viable peace and conflict resolution were created. The government instituted laws and created governmental agencies to promote

alternative social programs to demobilized insurgents and populace in rural areas subjected to coca eradication. On one hand, former insurgents have found alternatives, for them and their families, to achieve social development and technical education. On the other hand, the Colombian government, by means of the DHAP and SAP, has executed execute the Law 975 necessary to build a viable peace in light of internal conflict resolution. As a result, insurgents and paramilitaries were able to meet a legal option and correct the path in the civil society. Likewise, this governmental action has provided reparation and compensations for victims. Moreover, victims have known the truth regarding genocides and assassinations of their relatives. Those are conditions essential for conflict termination and viable peace in the long-term.

Finally, the war on drugs requires long-term efforts, multilateral and multinational efforts. Even though there is significant progress for Colombia in this matter, drug production and trafficking are still at an unacceptable level. Furthermore, in Bolivia and Peru, coca production and trafficking are increasing while narco-trafficking routes toward the U.S. and Europe from Colombia are more active in Colombia's other neighboring countries. The latter in absence of a multinational approach to conditions and security issues, related to narco-trafficking.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Plan Colombia has operated, perhaps not perfectly, but well enough to make a significant difference in the strategic and operational environment. Even though Plan Colombia aimed to disrupt, deny, degrade, and neutralize drug production and trafficking, it resulted in a paradigm that has enabled the Colombian government to rebuild the nation-state. There was a political culture change which was internally enforced through the *democratic security policy* instituted by President Uribe from 2002 and supported in great manner, by President's Santos administration, until today. It means, continued line of strategic effort during 17 years.

For the first time in Colombia, 3 administrations have integrated civilian and military efforts to address security matters, while providing the conditions to strengthen rule of law and governance. However, future strategies in the near and mid-term should emphasize more social and economic development, in conjunction with international aid and support. Today's challenges require innovation to sustain long-term social programs, by integrating the private sector to leverage social and economic development. Also, international cooperation and responsibility is vital, by addressing transnational crime organizations connected with drugs-tarfficking. In the meantime, the military is essential to address the dynamic security environment as well as the supporting element of civilian

authorities in the territories, by means of interagency planning and execution. Hence, those efforts should be led within an interagency (IA) environment, to achieve long-term social programs in focus areas, to achieve the control of the territory.

Therefore, long term solutions are vital to undermining narcotrafficking, corruption, and social issues, while military efforts are essential to providing the security environment and to support rule of law and governance.

Ultimately, Plan Colombia was a factor to foster internal enforcement and procure political culture change as well as military transformation in Colombia. Contextual factors and culture were encountered during the last 17 years to achieve success. As a result, it is vital to address one final question. Could the Plan Colombia strategy bring success in other scenarios such as Afghanistan and Iraq? The short answer is that one single strategy does not fit in every scenario. In other words, there is no simple solution to respond complex problems. However, statesmen and military leaders may consider the lessons learned in the case of Colombia as points of reference to renew or reinforce strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan, always considering culture and contextual factors to identify realistic goals. Next, the challenge is finding the approach to influence political culture and military change to attain legitimacy as it is understood by a specific culture. That was the case for Colombia. Implementing political culture and military transformation is only one way to conduct a strategy to achieve an end state, albeit a time consuming one.

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