



Artículo de Reflexión

The United States international aid to the new stage of Colombia: a new era for bilateral and international cooperation



Ayuda internacional de Estados Unidos al nuevo escenario de Colombia: una nueva era de cooperación internacional y bilateral

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Abstract

Colombia and the United States have had a closed relationship since Twentieth century until now. This relationship has consisted of an international cooperation in terms of security, economy, justice and the fight against the illegal cultivation, their eradication, and drug trafficking. Thus, the objective of the present article is to analyze two of the latest programs which outline the bilateral cooperation between Bogotá and Washington: “Plan Colombia” and “Paz Colombia”. On the other hand, the challenges and opportunities as a feature in the new era of international cooperation for Colombia will be evaluated, taking into account the post-conflict context. Agreeing to the considerations above, the new stage will be determined, and a possible wide spectrum of international cooperation would start for Colombia.

Keywords: Bilateral cooperation, Plan Colombia, Peace Colombia, challenges, opportunities.

Resumen

Los Estados Unidos y Colombia han tenido una relación cercana desde el siglo veinte hasta la actualidad. Esta relación ha consistido en una cooperación internacional en cuanto a seguridad, economía, justicia, la lucha contra los cultivos ilícitos, su erradicación, y el narcotráfico. Por esta razón, el objetivo central de la presente investigación es analizar los dos principales programas de esa relación bilateral, “Plan Colombia” y “Paz Colombia”. Además, se determinaran los desafíos y oportunidades en la nueva era de cooperación internacional de Colombia, considerando el contexto del pos-conflicto. Por lo anterior, el nuevo escenario será determinado y un posible amplio espectro de cooperación internacional podría comenzar para Colombia.

Palabras clave: Cooperación bilateral, Plan Colombia, Peace Colombia, desafíos, oportunidades.

Introduction

The United States established diplomatic relationship with Colombia in 1822 when the South American country achieved his independence from Spain. Afterward, Colombia lived a democratic transition, becoming the oldest democracy in Latin America.

The last distinction captivated the U.S Government due to the American tradition in terms of republicanism (U.S Department of State, 2016).

In the half of the Twentieth century, Colombia experienced a recrudescence of violence regarding the internal armed conflict; the discrimination of alternative political parties and social movements in the political system; political persecution towards political candidates, political parties and supporters or members of political parties, social and political movements; murder of presidential candidates and state abandonment around all the Colombian periphery. (De la Rosa, 2012).

Thus, this stage of violence mutated in the direction of the illicit crops, which subsidized the groups outside the law and drug cartels in 80's decade.

Countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico that are part of the list of countries where drugs are produced, marketed and exported to the United States and Europe, present geographical and commercial conditions that explain the development of coca, marijuana and poppy crops, as explained by the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (2017):

one of the reasons that major drug transit or illicit drug producing countries are placed on the list is the combination of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that allow

drugs to transit or be produced despite the concerned government's most assiduous enforcement measures (p.7).

On the other hand, the report the report considers that the region presents some challenges regarding the fight against drug trafficking and its export to the United States and Europe:

The growing expansion of drug trafficking in Central America poses serious challenges to the region's limited capability to combat both the narcotics trade and organized crime. We are particularly concerned about the increasing presence of drug trafficking organizations in Central America that are fleeing more robust counternarcotics regimes elsewhere, especially in Mexico and Colombia. Often unimpeded, traffickers easily use long Central American coastlines for illegal maritime drug shipments. Even though there have been noteworthy seizures, a high proportion of drugs transiting Central America are not detected or seized (p. 8).

For that reason, the United States since 90's decade has increased the aids in Latin America, especially in Colombia to confront the illicit cultivation, as well as to stop the drug trafficking that has become into a public health through all the American population.

According to Rojas (2017), the US aids in Colombia were divided in:

First, the judicial cooperation: an extradition Treaty between Colombia and the United States of America.¹ Currently, both agree that

¹ Signed in 1979. It is not applicable internally. The approving Laws 27 of 1980 and 68 of 1986 were declared unenforceable. The Council of State by order of March 23, 1988, estimated that the 1979 extradition treaty is in force internationally but cannot be applied internally for lack of parliamentary approval (Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, 2018)

“the extradition treaty is maintained” and the Supremacy Court of Colombia “has jurisdiction over the extradition process”.

Second, bilateral economic relation: in terms of improving the investment environment, the agreement eliminates tariffs and other barriers to U.S. exports; expand the trade, and promote economic growth in both countries. On the other hand, the US investment in Colombia was primarily concentrated in the mining and manufacturing fields.

Third, assistance relation: U.S. programs provided support for the implementation of Colombian government reforms in land restitution; reparations for victims and vulnerable populations, including ethnic communities; public and private investments, in particular to foster a vibrant rural economy; reintegration of ex-combatants; promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law; protection of vulnerable citizens (such as human rights and labor activists); addressing global climate change and environmental issues in one of the most ecologically diverse countries in the world (U.S Department of State, 2018).

Fourth, Military cooperation: the modernization program of the Military forces incorporated access to technology, weapons, intelligence information and advice on the ground, by the first military power internationally.

All previous assistant packages and policies related to Colombia were included in the “Plan Colombia” and then, Peace Colombia”, the two most ambitious international policies made by United States Government to contribute to the new era of Colombia, which started in 1998 with the peace process carried out by Pastrana Administration and continue nowadays with Duque Administration.

Now, an accurate question arises as to why it

is important to study the Colombian plan and its evolution to peace Colombia. The key is in the context in which this covenant of cooperation between both governments is immersed: post-conflict.

This context is liable to fragile processes and decisions that may affect the future of relations between Bogota and Washington, having more consequences for Colombia and its process of restoration of past wounds.

The above has to do with the decision-making of the new governments of both countries, to restructure what has been agreed, returning to policies linked to controversies of conflict resolution questioned in general by the leading class and Colombian civil society.

For now, the evolution of the agreement and its positive and negative aspects will be analyzed, to finish expanding the logical reasons for the study of this bilateral cooperation agreement in times of reconciliation.

I. Plan Colombia and the bilateral cooperation

Colombia has lived more than 50 years of internal armed conflict and its evolution in terms of political and economic field had as a contrast the drug and social conflict, which shaped the life of the country by the end of the twentieth century.

As a result, the new era of internal fight against cartels, guerrilla and paramilitaries, induced to consider Colombia as a failed state² in the international scenario (Ramirez, 2017). For that reason, US aid focused on drug trafficking, the main source where these groups

² it must be made clear that Colombia was never a failed state, but it was an appellative used by the United States to enter the fight against drug trafficking and thus assert its interests.

obtained the resources to be able to generate violence.

“Plan Colombia” was the name of an ambitious program to manage the periphery state abandonment that was one of the main reasons of internal armed conflict, and second, to fight drug cartels, guerrillas, paramilitaries and their illicit economies.

“Plan Colombia” pretended that Colombian government manage successively a secure effective control over its territory, pursuit a strengthening democratic institutions, protecting human rights, providing substantial social and economic assistance to its citizens, and also making local, and national governance more transparent, participatory and accountable (Guevara, 2015).

The above was listed in 10 main strategies to overcome the intense conflict in Colombia (Ramirez, 2017):

1. Economic strategy to support the ability of the Colombian state to collect tax revenues and allow the country to have a viable counterbalancing economic force to drug trafficking.
2. A fiscal and financial strategy that sought austerity and adjustment through agreements with the IMF.
3. Peace strategy against drug trafficking, corruption, and the violation of human rights.
4. National defense strategy to restructure and modernize the armed forces and the police.
5. Judicial and human rights strategy to

overcome impunity and the humanitarian crisis.

6. Counter-narcotics strategy to stop the flow of drug money to the insurgent and other armed organizations.
7. A development strategy that seeks to preserve forest areas and end the dangerous expansion of illegal crops across the Amazon basin and Colombia’s vast natural parks of immense biodiversity.
8. Social participation strategy to develop accountability in local government, community involvement in anti-corruption efforts, and pressure over illegal armed groups to end kidnapping, violence, and internal displacement.
9. Human development strategy to guarantee more education and health.
10. International oriented strategy to share responsibility in the fight against illegal drugs.

All the assistance mentioned above, needed a public spending from the United States that exceeded the 9.600 million of dollars, whereas Colombian public spending surpassed the 131.000 Millions of dollars.

As a matter of fact, National Planning Department of Colombia (DNP in Spanish) did a statistic study of the 15 years of public spending of both governments, emphasizing in the military and economic sphere (DNP, 2016).

For that reason, Plan Colombia was divided

into three main phases (DNP, p.1 2016; Ministerio de Defensa, 2016):

The first called Plan for peace, prosperity and the strengthening of the State (2000-2006), focused its efforts on strengthening armed force capacities, the mechanisms of interdiction and eradication of illicit crops, providing support for alternative development of the regions affected by the armed conflict, and support the justice administration through the implementation of the Accusatory Oral Criminal System (DNP, 2016, page 1).

The second phase, framed in the Strategy for Strengthening Democracy and Social Development (2007-2009), channeled resources in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, the strengthening of justice and the promotion of Human Rights; The opening of the markets, the integral social development and the integral attention to displaced population (Rojas, 2007).

From this second phase, the Colombian Government initiated the process of nationalization of military equipment delivered within the PC³ framework.

Finally, the third phase called the Strategic Development Initiative for Colombia (2010-2015) continued to support the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and social programs for the vulnerable population, and democratic governance and respect for Human Rights (US Department of State, 2011).

As a general conclusion of the three phases, the public spending of both countries was redistributed in the subsequent graphics:

Graphic N° 1: Evolution of Plan Colombia Resources

Phases	Resources
Phase I 2000 - 2006	4.8 US Billions
Phase II 2006 - 2009	6.9 US Billions
Phase III 2010 - 2015	9.6 US Billions

Source: own elaboration based on information from Ministerio de Defensa y Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy.

Graphic N°2 U.S cooperation in terms of % of defense budget

Years	percentage %
2000	35
2001	7
2002	15
2003	22
2004	17
2005	15
2006	14
2007	10
2008	7
2009	7
2010	6
2011	5
2012	4
2013	4
2014	3
2015	3

Source: own elaboration based on information from Ministerio de Defensa y Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy.

Now, the DNP study reflects the distribution of the PC budget, around the main spheres of the conflict.

First, the military sphere was distributed in:

³ Plan Colombia

Graphic N°3 Distribution of military budget in PC

Year	percentage %	Year	Percentage %
2000	100%	2010	75%
2001	95%	2011	90%
2002	90%	2012	80%
2003	95%	2013	85%
2004	85%	2014	85%
2005	85%	2015	80%
2006	90%	2016	80%
2007	90%		
2008	90%		
2009	90%		

Source: own elaboration based on information from Ministerio de Defensa y Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy.

Thus, in accordance with the graphic N°3, on average of 85% of the military budget was to cover the fight against the drug trafficking and the 15% to cover the external military financing (fight against the guerrilla and cartels; improvements in logistics, military systems, armaments and equipment (DNP, 2016).

Second, the distribution in the social and economic sphere of the PC budget:

Graphic N°4 Distribution of social and economic budget in PC

Year	percentage %	Year	Percentage %	Year	percentage %
2000	98% substitution of illicit crops	2006	98% substitution of illicit crops	2012	90% economic and social aid
2001	100% substitution of illicit crops	2007	98% substitution of illicit crops	2013	86% economic and social aid
2002	100% substitution of illicit crops	2008	80% economic and social aid	2014	85% economic and social aid
2003	100% substitution of illicit crops	2009	80% economic and social aid	2015	87% economic and social aid
2004	98% substitution of illicit crops	2010	85% economic and social aid		
2005	substitution of illicit crops	2011	87% economic and social aid		

Source: own elaboration based on information from Ministerio de Defensa y Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy.

According to the previous graphic, the substitution of illicit crops was the PC phase I main purpose, and in phase II and III, the purpose was the social and economic sphere.

These are the official data that demonstrate the positive aspects of PC. But, there are external visions of Plan Colombia's aid which are opposite to the official position by both governments.

One of these visions come from Colombian society, most affected by internal conflict, illegal cultivation, and drug trafficking.

These voices argue what really happen inside war on drugs. It means a tragic situation without an end, an incoherent pursuit of a way of a resolution against the internal conflict and an external public health inside the American and European society (Csete. et al, 2016).

Other external visions derive from authors as Bonikiwski and Gheihman whom as a first sight discuss the implications of Plan Colombia in an international scene, according to their specific struggles.

For example, Colombia is a nation in which the legitimization of the use of violence was absent in 80's decade, where the privatization of violence (guerrilla, cartels, paramilitaries), replaced the official offered by a state.

In addition, the illegal culture based on violence covered the Colombian society, due to the concealment of the illegal practices by the latter, which received economic and social payments in exchange for the silence or work opportunities within these criminal organizations, becoming Colombia, into a narco-state. That change formed a new set of nationalisms, altering the bases of a democratic State; mixing the political system with illegality, and at the same time, civic culture and decent work (Bonikowski, Gheihman 2015).

An effect of this lack of legitimization and new nationalism was the inattentive position of the government, unable of preserving the institutionalism in conflict zones of the territory and leaving these, without governability.

Non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International (p.1-5, 2000), who has been in the loop on the internal conflict of Colombia, and in the improvement of “Plan Colombia”, presented objections of the bilateral project. Thus, these are some considers analyzed from the points of the report:

1. Possible escalation of the armed conflict and the humanitarian crisis.
2. The paramilitary forces remain under the umbrella of the Plan, because of their strong presence in the place where the Putumayo pilot plan was established.
3. There are very large speculative interests on territories with petroleum resources that can be exploited thanks to the displacement of the population.
4. Plan Colombia does not assume the diagnosis about the root of the conflicts that the United Nations and other organizations have detected in terms of the impunity with which the forces responsible for violations of rights act.
5. Assuming the mitigating character of the included programs of attention to the possible displaced by the conflict, the plan already assumes in advance a lack of visibility of the military actions of the plan.

It seems that all the previous objections become real because despite of some decreasing numbers in terms of illegal troops before Havana Agreement, regarding 14% of reduction of troops capacity (Ministerio de

Defensa Nacional, 2013) and cultivations, regarding 28.9 % (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2018), people of Colombia still suffering violence and poverty, 28% of total population (world Bank, 2016).

In addition, in the international scenario, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights made some of recommendations, pointing them, to the end of the impunity of the paramilitary forces:

“urge the Colombian state to effectively combat paramilitarism and achieve its ultimate dismantling by capturing the trial and punishment of those who inspire it, organize it, command it, integrate it, support it, and finance it, including public employers linked to it” (, ODHACO⁴, recommendation n° 4. Cap. VIII, 2000).

All the recommendations were rejected by former government of Alvaro Uribe which has been involved in a “false demobilization”⁵, where his administration headed by high commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo fabricated the montage, giving homeless people the paramilitary equipment and costume to transformed them in false paramilitaries and convinced the Colombian society with good numbers of demobilized troops (Serrano, 2012).

Then, because if both governments did not follow the recommendations, objections and suggestions from nongovernmental organizations, and from multilateral organizations (In addition of being involved in illicit processes), what is or has been the motivation of the United States to continue facing the war on drugs, if it has been seen that

⁴ Office in Colombia of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights by its initials in Spanish

⁵ In some paramilitary fronts, such as Cacica la Gaitana, Nutibara, Heroes de Granada, Ortega

this has not generated a 100% of favorability in the international community? We will analyze this question below.

II. The motivation behind the USA's aid in Colombian internal armed conflict.

From an official position in 2016, United States through USAID program has a real motivation respecting the following:

“Colombia has endured more than 50 years of armed conflict, perpetuated by widespread illegal drug production and trafficking. Violence, instability, and the internal displacement of entire communities, plagued the country as a result of territorial control by illegal armed groups” (p. 1).

On the other hand, USAID established that they are:

“Committed to Colombia's development, peace, and security; and for that reason, the United States launched Plan Colombia in 2000. Through Plan Colombia, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has helped Colombia to promote social and economic development, rule of law, human rights, reintegration of ex-combatants, support to victims and vulnerable populations including Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities, climate change mitigation, and low-emissions development” (USAID, p. 1 2010).

Although the numbers of Colombian Internal Armed Conflict still decreasing (as previously mentioned), and the United States with the intermediation of Plan Colombia, has helped to reduce that numbers (according to the previous graphics), there is another point of view, which

suggest other motivations behind the USA's aid to Colombia during 15 years of Plan Colombia.

This research takes four hypothesis of that motivation, following the line of several authors who argue:

First, inside the Senate of the United States, the principal objective of the USA's aid is the economy, and public health.

One example is the poor results to decrease the internal consumption of drug and the discharge of responsibilities to the illegal cultivation and drug trafficking towards countries such as Colombia (Rincon, Correa, Leon, 2016).

Second, maintain the favorable interests through its American base world order due to the indirect aggravation of inequality and poverty in regions such as Latin America, using sometimes violence through its military expenditure to dissuade the social claims who wants to divert its particular social and political model (Moreno, 2016).

Third, the armament market is part of the American economy. For that reason, the military interventions help to sustain the armament industry and retain the political and social deviations to the United States (Cox, 2014).

The maintenance of status quo is imperative for the administration, security and the cost-effectiveness of investments (Cox, 2014).

Fourth, the motivation against a specific illegal cultivation has taken precedence in the US fight in Colombia. Coca cultivation and eradication takes one important piece of US budget in Colombia's aid, unlike other illegal crops such as marihuana.

This strategy was built with Colombian government support, using glyphosate spraying

in crops of cocaine (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, 2012).

According to recent researches of the Lancet Commission of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Csete, J. et al. 2016), the spraying of glyphosate in coca crops has produced public health problems in Colombian rural communities nearby the cultivations sprayed.

Therefore, in a previous sentence⁶, the constitutional court of Colombia prohibited the glyphosate, arguing “We look for an alternative form with another non-toxic chemical, or it is carried out under strict controls and minimizing the potential negative effects it may have on ethnic communities.” (*Corte Constitucional*, 2017).

The last verdict made by Colombian Constitutional Court had a negative acceptance in United States Government and Senate because they defend the eradication of coca cultivation with glyphosate (Development of this topic in chapter three).

Generally, Plan Colombia had an impact, helping Colombian military forces to combat against terrorism and illegal cultivation.

On the other hand, the Plan contributed to the social and economic restoration of Colombian society (according to official numbers), both urban and rural society, framed by violence, poverty, and displacement.

In spite of the fact that, Colombian situation about internal conflict seemed unfinished. since the announcement of the end of the internal armed conflict between FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) and the Colombian government, in 2012, a new era of bilateral cooperation begins and new funds

to carry out the agreement remains imperative due to the effort of the Colombian government to achieve the peace.

“Peace” Colombia is the new program in which the United States bet for maintaining the aid for the eradication of illegal crops and drug trafficking in Colombia.

Now, let’s take a look to the process of Havana peace agreement and then, the acquisition of Peace Colombia program and its procedure.

III. Peace Colombia and the bilateral cooperation

Before the analysis of Peace Colombia and the new bilateral cooperation between Colombia and the United States, is imperative to describe the different steps of peace agreement of Colombia.

Once the new president of Colombia was elected in 2010, Juan Manuel Santos started a secret process of negotiation with FARC guerrilla in Havana.

At the end of the year 2012, both, Colombian president and guerrilla leaders announced from Norway, the beginning of official negotiation in Havana, Cuba (Segura & Mechoulam, 2017).

During the negotiation, six essential points that represented the roots of the internal armed conflict were developed between government and guerrillas negotiators (Havana Agreement, 2016):

1. Integral rural reform
2. Political participation
3. End of conflict
4. Solution to the illicit drug problem
5. Victims
6. Implementation, verification, and validation

⁶ T sentence 236-17

After four years of negotiation, both corners with the approval of the international community signed in Havana the agreement to end the conflict.

Afterward, in Cartagena Colombia, the official event was made to present to the world the end of more than 50 years of violence (United Nations, 2017).

The next step was to validate the agreement with a plebiscite where Colombians will vote yes or no to the implementation. The “no vote”, was the winner respond to the agreements and the restructuration of peace started to reunite Colombian society, alienated in that time.

Mutually, government and guerrilla had a reunion with the opposition to the administration, to incorporate the concerns about what was agreed (*Alto Comisionado para La Paz, 2016*).

The US Congress and administration started to reevaluate the aid to Colombia in this new stage of bilateral cooperation, according to that restructuration.

Peace Colombia is the name of a renovate Plan Colombia, in which US government assistance will focus under three pillars (Office of the Press Secretary, p. 1 2016):

1. Consolidating and expanding progress on security and counter narcotics while reintegrating the FARC into society
2. Expanding state presence and institutions to strengthen the rule of law and rural economies, especially in former conflict areas; and
3. Promoting justice and other essential services for conflict victims.

US Congress approved \$391,253,000 million of dollars and a top of \$450 million of Dollar, from October 2016 to September 2017, divided in:

\$187.3 million through the US Economic Support Fund; \$143 million for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; \$38.5 million in Foreign Military Financing; \$21 million for Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related Programs; and \$1.4 million for International Military Education and Training (Norman, 2017).

Nevertheless, Included in the total are commitments of \$20 million for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, \$19 million for human rights and \$4 million for biodiversity (Norman, 2017).

On the other hand, the secretary of state made some restrictions to certify the plan (Norman, p. 1 2017):

1. That the Peace Tribunal and other judicial bodies are “independent” and can sentence “perpetrators of gross violations of human rights ... to meaningful sanctions;”
2. That military personnel responsible for the several thousand “false positive” murders, “including those in command authority,” are removed from office while being prosecuted and sanctioned;
3. The Colombian government works to “dismantle illegal armed groups, taking effective steps to protect the rights of human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, and other social activists, and protecting the rights and territory of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.”

Although the approval of Peace Colombia, Trump Administration put the bilateral relations in check, after a wake-up call for the increment of coca cultivation in Colombia.

The Memorandum to the Secretary of State remarked on:

“The extraordinary increase in coca cultivation and cocaine production in the last three years”... and he ends arguing his administration “will leave the open option of designating Colombia as a failed country in the fight against drug trafficking if it does not show “significant progress” in reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production” (White House, p.1 2018).

In contrast, the Colombian government surprised due to Trump report, respond through its chancellery and other presidential stages:

“A historical relationship based on success, based on trust, cannot be destroyed at any moment” and “The authorities of consumer countries have a fundamental responsibility with their fellow citizens and with the world to reduce consumption and attack trafficking and distribution organizations in their own countries.”(Cosoy; p. 1, 2018).

Until now, US administration has not taken any reprisal and urged to the Colombian government to re-use the glyphosate spraying to decrease the coca cultivations.

Peace Colombia is not the only plan to face post-conflict in Colombia. International cooperation either for States or Non-governmental organizations has been a support for the Colombian government, which has done vital efforts to acquire some international aid to start the new era of Colombian society.

In head of the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia (APC-Colombia, acronym in Spanish), the fundraising has been distributed into two programs:

First, the program called “Fondo Colombia en Paz” (Peace Colombian Fund), where multilateral organisms and European Union get involved.

Second, bilateral aid which collects the most funds that come from United States, European Union, and countries such as Canada, France, and Scandinavian (Gomez, Perrone, Ríos, 2016).

APC (p. 9-10 2016) report suggests the amount of fundraising to face the post-conflict. The official number averages the 3.3 million of Dollars in five years, divided into three areas:

1. Peace building – 69%.
2. Sustainable rural development – 24%.
3. Conservation and environmental sustainability – 3%.

Thus, Colombia manages some possibilities of post-conflict financing, but these aids are not sufficient, taking into account that the amount of these funds, come from the United States, and depends on structured criteria and also a good bilateral cooperation between two countries.

More than fifteen years have passed and the bilateral relation between Colombia and the United States has had a rollercoaster road, where the mutual respect has prevailed, and the commitment to move forward the fight against illegal cultivation and drug trafficking.

Nevertheless, some challenges and opportunities will appear in the new era of bilateral cooperation if there is no change about the bilateral form in which both governments are facing this next step of Colombian internal conflict.

IV. Challenges and opportunities in the new era of cooperation between Colombia and the United States

Colombia and the United States will face in this new era of bilateral cooperation some challenges that would cause a modification in the development of cooperation between them.

For that reason, some of these challenges were cited by US Secretary of State in the requirements to certify the plan.

Nonetheless, the challenges are determinant in the international arena (international cooperation) and sometimes will be match up as follows: efficiency of government; non-completion of a peace agreement by Colombian government or FARC guerrilla; mismanagement of the eradication of illicit crops; corruption and Human Rights.

IV. I Efficiency of government

Undoubtedly, an efficient government is essential to carry out the decisions of a nation and also, to gear the international relations of these nations.

Colombia, presents a score of 1.9 (where 1 is inefficient and 7 is efficient) about the efficiency of government in the public sector, according to the 2018 survey of the World Economic Forum.

As a result of this survey, the way in which Colombian government is spending the public revenues will be the reflection of international aid spending in the country. For that reason, it is important to Colombian government to have better results in internal public expense.

In the international scenario, trust is an important piece to cooperate in diverse fields. There are four different forms to evaluate that trust (Koch, 2018):

Rational-personal:

This is a cost-benefit reasoning, in which cooperation depends on a rational choice, as public health conditions of American citizens, to US government.

Social-cultural understanding:

This is a key point in international trust.

Having an agenda as clear as possible in terms of economic and Democracy, that benefits the trust in the international scenario.

General – personal relationships:

Have a good political and economic relationship, regardless of the national decisions or interests of each country, always with the intention of improving the aspects that are considered necessary to obtain a full level of democracy.

Historical-institutional relations:

The historical decisions regarding joint struggles affected the trust. For that reason, during more than twenty years of bilateral relation, the United States and Colombia have not taken into consideration, that the foreign policy of both countries has affected the way in which they have wanted to combat the internal conflict and its external consequences.

All the last forms to evaluate trust in international cooperation make us foresee a critical statement:

Why if conditions on trust are overvalued in the cooperation between the two countries, an unequivocal relationship is still posed, with policies that do not take into account socio-political traditions, or the conditions to carry them out, or the way in which the Colombian government carries out the public policies referring to the internal conflict.

The above refers to the fact that Colombia has presented a very low rating in terms of efficiency in public spending and in its tradition of corruption in its public institutions throughout the internal conflict.

As a consequence, why haven't they sought an alternative joint policy to solve a dilemma that, despite the existence of an agreement

between the Colombian government and the FARC, it is not clear how Colombia and its allies will reconsider the post-conflict that will be more difficult than the conflict itself?

Thus, this challenge is presented as fundamental when it comes to managing the next stage of bilateral relations between both countries.

IV.II Non-completion of the peace agreement by Colombian government or FARC guerrilla

Until now, both the Colombian government and FARC guerrilla have respected the historical agreement. The delivery of weapons to United Nations, the birth of Special Justice for Peace, the creation of the new political movement of old FARC guerrilla (revolutionary alternative force of the common) are the important steps of Teatro Colón Agreement.

However, an emergent phenomenon has started since the sign of the Agreement: The presence of FARC dissidents in the Colombian borderline with Ecuador and Venezuela. Official data estimates that there are more than 1200 dissidents that will become in a threat to the peace stability (Fundación Ideas para La Paz, 2018).

This is or would be one of the most important challenges in Colombian post-conflict and also in the new stage of bilateral relation with the United States, in the way in which Trump administration will not want that Colombia does not comply what was agreed in the peace Colombia plan, where the government committed to abide what was agreed in Havana, in addition to the demands of the US government to support peace in the nation.

The demands of the United States government are not jeopardize what was achieved because:

“emboldened organized criminal groups and huge inflows of illicit earnings will erode citizen security, increase corruption, foment increased illegal immigration, and destabilize neighboring states and Colombia itself, thus undermining the legacy and legitimacy of the peace accord” (Brownfield, p.1 2017).

IV.III Mismanagement of the eradication of illicit crops

The challenge of managing the eradication of illicit crops is one of the precautions of United States administration in Colombian post-conflict. As was stated previously, US administration leading by Donald Trump, criticize the way in which Colombia was carried out the eradication of illicit crops such as coca cultivation.

According to the point four of Teatro Colón Agreement, the solution to the illicit drug problem, will be treated in several approaches, as High Councilor of Peace argued (Oficina Del Alto Comisionado para La Paz, 2016):

First, rural development approach:

“Creation of the National Integral Program of Substitution and Alternative Development of the hand of the communities affected by the crops and with the national, departmental and local authorities”.

“The program will be developed with the active participation of the communities that will play a role in the design, execution, and monitoring of its implementation. P.1”

Second, the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking approach:

“Creation of a comprehensive strategy to

dismantle and prosecute, in a targeted manner, drug trafficking networks in the territory, strengthen the fight against money laundering in all sectors of the economy and establish strict controls on the production and trafficking of inputs for the production of narcotics and, proposing new actions to combat corruption associated with drug trafficking” P.1

Third, consumption with a public health approach:

“It will be addressed with a focus on human rights and public health. State institutions will be articulated and a process will be coordinated with communities and families to carry out rehabilitation and consumer insertion actions” P.1

This is a challenge that won’t be evaluated rapidly because, is required a political and social transition, as well as a constant effort to implement the point four of Teatro Colón Agreement in the communities most disadvantaged and affected by illicit cultivation.

Besides, Trump administration believes in the sprinkling with glyphosate, as the best form to eradicate illicit crops, and it seems that new administration leading by Duque is specifying to return to the technique presented by US administration.

IV.IV Corruption

With certainty, corruption will be a menace to the post-conflict in Colombia. The implementation of the Teatro Colón Agreement and the international aid to carry it out are threatened by the mismanagement of financing. The most affected by corruption are the peace territories⁷ and according to “Transparencia por Colombia” (2016):

⁷ Territorios antiguamente dominados por las FARC y abandonados por el Estado Colombiano

First, between 2010 and 2016, 187 verified corruption facts were identified in the 17 departments, which host 69 peace municipalities (27 zones) and 58 consolidation municipalities.

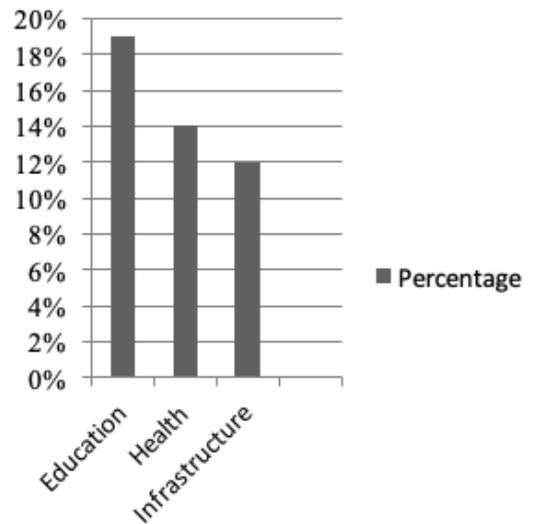
Second, 7 departments account for 63% of corruption events: La Guajira, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Chocó, Antioquia, Bolívar and Cesar.

Third, Nariño, La Guajira, and Valle Del Cauca presented the biggest events of corruption (30%) followed by Antioquia and Chocó (18%).

Fourth, Municipalities such as Tumaco, El Bagre, Nechí, San José del Guaviare and Arauca, concentrate 20% of the acts of corruption of the territories of peace.

On the other hand, the most affected areas by corruption are:

Graphic N° 5 social areas affected by corruption in Colombia



Source: personal elaboration based on data by Transparencia por Colombia, 2016

Analyzing the previous data, it seems that corruption has been one of the most important

fighters of the Colombian government in last decades.

Therefore, since the sign of peace agreement, the administration has called to face this massive challenge that afflicts Colombian society, strengthening the institutionality in all the municipalities, and involving the citizens to participate in social decisions, as the Minister Counselor for the Post-Conflict Oscar Naranjo expressed:

“Only through the strengthening of institutionality at the national, regional and local levels, added to an active model of citizen participation, will it be possible to have a post-conflict” (Semana, p.1 2015).

For that reason, corruption is a real challenge to accomplish the peace agreement, taking into account that the public funds must be coopted by public functionaries and State contractors, which would distort the international aid, an also will generates a malaise to the Trump administration.

IV.V Human Rights

Historically, since the Colombian internal armed conflict started, the violation of human rights has been a persistent issue.

Human Rights Watch expresses in an academic way the situation of Colombia since 2002 (p.1):

“Colombia’s civilian population continues to be the victim of serious abuses committed by guerrillas and successor groups of paramilitaries, which emerged after an official paramilitary demobilization process, carried out a decade ago”.

Also argues, “The violence associated with the internal armed conflict in Colombia has led to the forced displacement of more than 5.7 million Colombians, and each year more than

200,000 new people leave their homes, which has generated the world’s second largest population of internally displaced persons”.

In addition, “It is common for human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, and other community activists to face death threats and other types of violence. Although the government of President Juan Manuel Santos has systematically repudiated these attacks, the lack of results of the investigations implies that there are very few cases in which those responsible are arrested”.

Unquestionably, Human rights are part of the materialization of peace in Colombia and depends on the ability of the government to deal with this topic, thus, peace will be reached by Colombian society.

There is an academic Hypothesis by Cortez 2016, which public policies, regarding the development of peace, are capable to recover human rights lost by time of violence or internal conflict.

It means that, government must turn its efforts to work in the restoration of human dignity and human and socioeconomic development, all involve inside in a rights approach:

“This approach allows us to go beyond identifying human rights with the internal armed conflict and violations, to a broader view that conceives them from the human aspiration to have their basic needs met in conditions proper to human dignity” (Cortés, p. 143 2016).

The United States has claimed since started the bilateral relation with Colombia, to urge the government, to act systematically about the violations of population’s rights.

For that reason, this issue is the most controversial in terms of the internal conflict in Colombia, as the efforts made by the

government and its international allies to create an effective security system for citizens and their leaders, journalists, judges, and the public forces has not ended the homicides and persecutions towards these actors of the conflict.

However, in the second instance, opportunities join in the challenges to play a role in international cooperation because opportunities depend on the way in which challenges will be confronted according to some dynamics that made a structure of political opportunity strong or weak.

In political science, and as Tarrow quote in 1997, a structure of political opportunity is referred to some external or existing dimensions (not necessary formals, permanents or national) of political environment that encourage or discourage the collective action among people.

The above assumes that the theory of the structure of political opportunity (SPO) discussed in the present analysis entails to a ramification of political science known as social movements which study the features of mobilization of people according to a collective objective.

Nonetheless, the present research seeks to analyze the structure of political opportunity from the point of view of the opportunities in international cooperation and bilateral cooperation of Colombia in its new era referred to the post-conflict.

Now, to analyze this structure of political opportunity is crucial to use the matrix of multidimensional SPO. This matrix includes as categories: SPO systematic, SPO relational, SPO international. On the other side, contain the emergent opportunity and the emergent threat. The following graph presents the SPO matrix:

Graphic N° 6 Matrix of structure of political

Categories		Emergent Opportunity	Emergent Threat
SPO Systemic	Opening of the government	X	
SPO Relational	Coherence of the elite	X	
SPO International	Stability of political alignments	X	
	Repression / Facilitation	X	
	Step to change	X	

Source: personal elaboration based on own data and Tarrow matrix, 1997

According to Tarrow (1997), the majority of the categories approved in emergent opportunity means that it is considered an ideal chance to carry out a social mobilization.

Nevertheless, in this analysis, the chance is referred to a growing opportunity to establish an international cooperation or bilateral cooperation because:

First, there is an opening of the government in Colombia. It means the opportunity that all the international actors' looks in a different way the commitment of Colombia to enhance the post-conflict and thus, everyone in the international scenario possibly will the chance to cooperate with Colombia.

Second, there is solidarity in political terms, from elite. It is understood as a coherence of the elite (no divisions), determinant to the interaction with the international actors (making the proviso that this could change if the polarization becomes more intrinsic in the most important decisions of the country).

Third, there are new allies in the political system, available for starting new international cooperation.

Fourth, there is an increment of facilitation, instead of repression from elites, allies, and

society which contributed to an international cooperation.

As a result, there is a step to change in which the emergent opportunity to maintain and acquire international cooperation to the post-conflict.

An example of the above, is the commitment from Colombian government to do transparently the peace agreement (with international support), and pass the difficult exam to be part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as president Santos claims in Paris, after the signing of the agreement of accession to this multilateral organization:

“Entering the OECD is going to be of great help for Colombia to continue advancing, continue to reduce poverty, so that even more investment arrives and to guarantee a more just, more inclusive, and sustainable development.” (Presidencia de la Republica, 2:45, 2018).

Notwithstanding, the structure of opportunities can disappear if the new government does not face the challenges mentioned above with an alternative approach that has been worked on; if it does not improve the negative numbers in terms of human rights, institutional transparency, and security, which are evaluated internationally.

V. Conclusion

More than fifteen years of bilateral cooperation between Colombia and the United States made a strong relationship which has had a rollercoaster road, with opportunities and challenges.

Although the US aid has not had one hundred percent of echo in the development of human rights, corruption, the total eradication of illicit crops and in the socioeconomic sphere

of Colombia (according to the first chapter of the article), the bilateral cooperation remains the same and US administration is committed to helping Colombian society with the new post-conflict scenario.

In addition, this commitment was reflected in the decision of US Congress and administration to increase the aid funds to Colombia through the Peace Colombia Plan, producing a new era of bilateral cooperation between both countries who hold one of the best political relationships in the western hemisphere.

It is known that the post-conflict era in Colombia presents some challenges such as, the efficiency of the Colombian government, the possible non-completion of peace agreement, and the eradication of illicit crops, corruption, and Human Rights violation.

Besides, some opportunities as opening regime, coherence of elite, stability of political alignments, more facilitation from elites, allies and society which contributed to a wide spectrum of international cooperation to face the post-conflict era.

However, the opportunities will face a change of direction if the new government does not begin to reflect on how the fight against the internal conflict has been carried out, and if this has been truly effective in its process.

On the other hand, we must reflect on whether the help of strategic allies such as the United States has been effective, especially in the fight against drug trafficking and illicit cultivation, because in 20 years of cooperation some numbers have been reduced, but the root of the problem continues to grow, harming Colombian's citizens of the periphery.

As a consequence of that, the contribution of the present article is to search an alternative policy carried out by both countries, where the

security and well-being of the Colombian people come first, to the Colombian government and also the North American government's interest.

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