

## Spoilers in Colombia: Actors and strategies

Carlo Nasi

Colombia has experienced internal armed conflict since the late 1940s. In recent decades four different governments undertook peace negotiations with various rebel groups, seeking to find a peaceful settlement to the war. However, peace has remained an elusive goal. Spoilers threatened to derail every single peace process, even if only occasionally did they succeed. The identity of spoilers changed throughout the various peace negotiations. Depending on the peace process in question, spoiling activities were carried out by some rebel groups (or their splinter factions), the armed forces, the Colombian Congress, drug-traffickers, some entrepreneurs, right-wing paramilitary groups, and even the US government.

Stedman defined spoilers as "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it".<sup>1</sup> This definition will be slightly modified here by including non-violent means of sabotage. In other words, occasionally some individuals and groups attempt to undermine a peace process by resorting to devious (and partly illegal) tactics that stop short of violence: these leaders and parties should also be labelled as "spoilers".

This chapter begins with an introduction on the nature and evolution of the Colombian armed conflict in order to explain the context that has served as a background for different peace initiatives. Next it explores the peace negotiations of the governments of Belisario Betancur (1982–1986), Virgilio Barco (1986–1990), Cesar Gaviria (1990–1994), and

Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002), analysing the role, tactics, and relative success of spoilers in each case. It concludes with a short analysis of the impact of spoilers throughout the Colombian war.

### The Colombian conflict

One can identify two different, albeit interrelated, cycles of armed conflict in Colombia. The first one, whose roots can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, is closely connected to the birth and consolidation of the two main Colombian political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Although these two parties resembled one another in terms of social composition and ideology, they fiercely competed against one another to gain exclusive control over state resources and privileges. Between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, party élites often mobilized their mostly rural clientele against members of the other party during electoral contests, as well as in a series of violent clashes and civil wars.<sup>2</sup> Violence helped to forge partisan identities, in the sense that the memories of one's relatives killed by members of the other party resulted in deep hatred between Liberals and Conservatives.

The conflict between Liberals and Conservatives greatly escalated during the 1940s, a period of turmoil due to a series of urban strikes and also peasant mobilizations caused by the defective implementation of two agrarian reform laws.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the murder of populist politician and leader of the Liberal Party Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 triggered the most deadly cycle of bipartisan violence ever experienced in Colombia. Gaitán's assassination provoked the "Bogotazo", a massive urban insurrection of Liberals backed by the police that partly destroyed the capital city and spread out to other regions. Although violently suppressed by the army, the Bogotazo has been considered the only occasion on which Colombia has approached the brink of revolution.

Following Gaitán's murder, the bipartisan violence continued to escalate. In 1953, as the violence was spinning out of control, various Conservative and Liberal factions, the Catholic Church, the entrepreneurial sector, and the military forces backed a *coup d'état* by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who installed a dictatorship. But in 1958 Colombia returned to a restricted form of democracy. By then, Liberal and Conservative politicians had crafted a power-sharing agreement known as the National Front<sup>4</sup> (NF) that helped to bring the bipartisan violence to an end. Between the mid-1940s and the early 1960s the bipartisan violence had left a death toll approximating 200,000.

Colombia was heading towards a second cycle of violence. Beginning

in the mid-1960s, various (for the most part communist) revolutionary organizations were formed, seeking to overhaul Colombia's polity and socio-economic structure. This cycle has not ended yet, and its death toll exceeds 100,000 casualties. Different conditions account for the rise of insurgency in Colombia during the 1960s. The Cuban revolution, as well as the writings of Che Guevara and Régis Debray, helped to radicalize many university students and union members who joined revolutionary organizations. In addition, the country's vast territory, inaccessible mountains, thick forests, and a weak state presence in many rural areas facilitated the operation of rebel groups.<sup>5</sup>

During this second cycle of violence one observes a proliferation of rebel groups. In 1962 remnants of Liberal and Communist guerrillas of the previous cycle of violence established links with the Colombian Communist Party and formed the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In the mid-1960s the break-up between the USSR and China led to the formation of a Maoist guerrilla organization, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). In 1964 a group of students who were inspired by the Cuban revolution constituted the National Liberation Army (ELN). And after General Rojas Pinilla was defeated in seemingly fraudulent elections by Conservative candidate Misael Pastrana in the presidential contests of 1970, members his populist party *Alianza Nacional Popular* and a group of former FARC guerrillas created the *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M-19). Founded in 1974, the M-19 became the first urban guerrilla organization of Colombia. These rebel organizations differed in terms of strategy, location, and the social origins of their members.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, at least three new (albeit minor) rebel organizations were formed during the 1980s: the Socialist Renovation Movement (CRS) and Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) that were splinter groups of the ELN,<sup>7</sup> and the indigenous MAQL (Armed Movement Quintín Lame) that resulted from conflicts over land rights.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas in their early years the rebel groups had little offensive capacity and were heavily repressed by the state,<sup>9</sup> since the mid-1980s they have undergone a tremendous expansion. Not even the partly successful peace process of the period 1990–1994 (that led to the demobilization of the M-19, EPL, CRS, PRT, and MAQL) helped to contain the overall growth of insurgency movements. In fact, while in 1978 the guerrilla organizations had only 17 fronts operating in remote rural areas, by 1991 their number had increased to 80 fronts in 358 municipalities, and by 1994 to 105 fronts operating in 569 municipalities.<sup>10</sup> In 2001 the rebel groups maintained 103 fronts operating throughout the country, and apparently only in 2004 did the number of guerrillas begin to decrease.<sup>11</sup>

### Explaining the expansion of insurgency

Why did the Colombian insurgencies expand during this period? Some analysts put the blame on the political exclusions associated with the NF, a regime that was both rife with corruption and unresponsive to accumulating social demands. The NF prevented any political forces other than the Liberal and Conservative Parties from gaining access to the government, and reportedly various minorities were left with no choice but to join the revolutionary groups.<sup>12</sup> A significant anomaly of this approach is that the rebel groups gained strength precisely at the same time that Colombia experienced a political opening. Originally intended to endure 16 years (1958–1974), the NF was partly extended through informal inter-elite arrangements into the mid-1980s. However, from then on the NF was dismantled, and its final remnants were totally suppressed by the National Constituent Assembly of 1991. In other words, counterintuitively the expansion of insurgency coincided with a greater inclusion of hitherto marginalized political groups.

In any event, a nexus between political exclusions and insurgency exists. In spite of undergoing a democratizing trend, one could hardly characterize Colombia as a fully inclusive regime. Corruption, clientelism, and violence have often hindered the empowerment of political forces other than the traditional parties. Violence, in particular, has been used as a means of excluding some emerging political forces, especially those linked to the left.

Other analysts argue that the expansion of insurgency has been mainly due to economic exclusions. A flaw of this argument is that most economic trends were positive during the 1980s and 1990s, as they had been in the 1970s. Colombia's semi-orthodox economic policies averted radical adjustment measures or a debt crisis comparable to those that affected most other Latin American economies. Furthermore, between 1980 and 1992 the levels of poverty and inequality declined, while the real income of all social classes improved.<sup>13</sup> And contrary to what one would have expected, inequality did not increase substantially with the neo-liberal reforms of the early 1990s, according to the Theil index and Gini coefficients.<sup>14</sup> Only between 1995 and 1999 did Colombia experience a macro-economic crisis leading to a dramatic increase in poverty rates.

Just as in the previous case, economic exclusions do help to explain the expansion of insurgency. In fact, Colombia's positive economic trends did not alter the country's ranking as one of the most unequal in Latin America (which is the region with the highest levels of inequality in the world). Furthermore, a study by the Economic Planning Department of the Colombian government revealed that the most unequal municipalities (as measured by the Gini index) also corresponded to the most violent

ones, regardless of the fact that the rates of economic growth were positive.<sup>15</sup> Problems of land distribution have added fuel to the fire, as three major agrarian reform laws (the ones of 1936, 1944, and 1968) as well as more recent policy initiatives failed to change the structure of land rights in the countryside.<sup>16</sup>

The shortcomings of arguments related to both political and economic exclusions for explaining the expansion of insurgency have led other analysts to resort to the "greed thesis". Hence, authors such as Niño,<sup>17</sup> Rangel,<sup>18</sup> and Chernick<sup>19</sup> have linked the growth of insurgency to the upsurge of the cocaine trade in Colombia. According to these authors, during the 1980s and 1990s the Colombian rebel groups acquired substantial wealth by taxing the drug-traffickers (or by directly engaging in drug-trafficking), which has allowed the guerrilla organizations to recruit many landless/unemployed peasants.

Overall, if any of these explanations is taken on its own while neglecting the others there is a risk of oversimplifying a rather complex case. The expansion of insurgency in Colombia has been due partly to political and economic exclusions, and partly to the availability of drug-trafficking money. On top of this, the Colombian state has lacked the capacity either to generate economic opportunities in the countryside or to repress effectively the revolutionary organizations, which has facilitated the growth of insurgency movements. With this background, one can now consider the different peace initiatives that have been undertaken since the 1980s and the corresponding role of spoilers.

### Belisario Betancur's peace process

At a time when revolution had spread to Central America and violence was escalating in Colombia, President Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) made an initial attempt to find a bargained solution to the conflict. During his electoral campaign Betancur pledged to find a negotiated solution to an armed conflict that he conceived as a by-product of poverty, injustice, and a lack of opportunities for the underprivileged.<sup>20</sup>

Upon assuming office, Betancur formed various peace commissions that started negotiating with the rebel groups. By 1984 the government and the guerrilla organizations M-19, EPL, and FARC (but not the radicalized ELN) had already signed a truce. Subsequently, the government formed additional peace commissions that were put in charge of verifying the cease-fire as well as compliance with any peace accords.

However, within a short period of time the peace negotiations broke down due to both procedural mistakes and spoiling. In terms of procedural flaws, Betancur's facilitating commissions included spokespersons

of various social sectors who could not assume any commitments on behalf of the government.<sup>21</sup> For their part, the commissions that were put in charge of verifying the cease-fire lacked the expertise, resources, and personnel that were needed to perform an adequate job.<sup>22</sup> The proliferation of peace commissions helped to confuse who was responsible for what, and the accords did not specify under what conditions the truce with the rebel groups would give way to a permanent peace. In addition, different spoilers sabotaged the negotiations.

### The role of spoilers

Some authors mention that different entrepreneurs and politicians of the Liberal and Conservative Parties were opposed to Betancur's peace negotiations,<sup>23</sup> but this does not necessarily mean that they acted as spoilers. Whereas no documentation is available about spoiling activities carried out by these individuals, authors such as Chernick<sup>24</sup> argue that the army openly undermined Betancur's cease-fire orders and was partly responsible for the collapse of the truce with the rebel groups. This was due not only to the military's uncompromising stance *vis-à-vis* the guerrilla organizations, but also to the fact that Betancur generated hostility in the army by cutting down the military budget.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the rebel groups also acted as spoilers, thinking of the truce as an opportunity to create new fronts and expand both territorially and in terms of numbers of combatants. A former top leader of the M-19, for instance, openly admitted that during Betancur's tenure his group conceived the peace talks merely as "a [tactical] weapon of war".<sup>26</sup> In fact, after the Colombian army destroyed the guerrilla campground of Yaru-males, the M-19 sought to regroup and revise its military strategy, and the peace talks represented an opportunity to do so. Not surprisingly, in July 1985 the M-19 was the first rebel group to abandon the truce.

The truce with the EPL also broke down following the assassination of the organization's spokesperson, Oscar William Calvo.<sup>27</sup> Even though one might question the EPL's commitment to Betancur's peace process, this rebel group seems to have been a victim of spoilers rather than a perpetrator of acts of sabotage against the peace process.

The FARC nominally maintained a truce, and even formed the political party Unión Patriótica (UP) that participated in the presidential elections of 1986 and the congressional and local elections of 1988. However, the FARC did not disarm and demobilize, but rather coexisted with the UP. UP spokespersons openly argued that the FARC would not relinquish any weapons because they constituted the best guarantee for the "revolutionary transformation" of Colombia.<sup>28</sup> As the FARC/UP sought power through elections or violence, right-wing sectors accused the UP of

engaging in "armed proselitism" and waged a dirty war against this leftist party. As a result, between 1986 and 1995 right-wing paramilitary groups<sup>29</sup> killed over 2,000 members of the UP.<sup>30</sup>

Due to the high levels of impunity in Colombia, only a few individuals have been indicted for the crimes committed against UP members. Whereas some analysts consider the security agencies of the state as the main culprits for the systematic killing of UP militants,<sup>31</sup> military officers place blame on the drug-traffickers. According to a Colombian colonel, the Medellín cartel murdered scores of disarmed UP militants and whoever had connections with the FARC after the rebel organization stole money and took over some laboratories for processing cocaine that belonged to the drug kingpin Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha.<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion, even though different spoilers did sabotage Betancur's peace process, other factors also help to explain the breakdown of the peace negotiations. Betancur's procedural mistakes as well as the existence of ambiguities with regards to the cease-fire accords greatly facilitated the role of spoilers during the peace talks. All these factors eventually led to a resumption of war.

#### Virgilio Barco and Cesar Gaviria's peace process

When Betancur's successor, Virgilio Barco, was elected president in 1986, the government was at war with all the rebel groups except for the FARC. Even the cease-fire with this guerrilla organization collapsed in 1987 in the midst of military clashes between the army and the rebels as well as the dirty war against the UP. But in 1988 Barco started a peace process that concluded during the tenure of his successor, President Cesar Gaviria, leading to the demobilization of 791 guerrillas of M-19, 2,149 of the EPL, 433 of the CRS, 205 of the PRT, and 148 of the MAQL.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile the war went on (and later intensified) with the two strongest rebel groups, the FARC and the ELN, as well as with a splinter faction of the EPL.

Various factors explain Barco's partial success. To begin with, his peace process coincided with the end of the Cold War, a period in which various guerrilla organizations started to question the validity of socialism. In addition, prior to the peace negotiations several rebel groups had incurred heavy military and political costs, which made them consider the option of a negotiated solution seriously.<sup>34</sup>

Barco also corrected procedural mistakes committed by Betancur. He redressed Betancur's error of appointing independent peace commissions, by making the government assume direct responsibility for both the peace negotiations and any verification tasks. To this end, the president

created the Office of the Peace Counselor, which under his direct supervision was put in charge of negotiating with the rebel groups.<sup>35</sup> And prior to sitting at the bargaining table, Barco launched his *Iniciativa Para la Paz* (Initiative for the Peace: IP),<sup>36</sup> a road-map for the upcoming peace negotiations with the rebel organizations.

In 1988 only the M-19 agreed to negotiate following the guidelines of Barco's IP. In a short period of time the government and the M-19 agreed upon a series of reform proposals that Barco was expected to submit to Congress and transform into laws. However, some MPs torpedoed the peace process by including an addendum to the reform proposals which prohibited the extradition of drug-traffickers. In other words, had the Colombian Congress approved the reforms agreed upon with the M-19, it would have also granted impunity for the drug-traffickers. This occurred at the same time as Barco was waging a "war on drugs", so the president was left with no choice but prevent the approval of the reform laws.<sup>37</sup> Henceforth, the peace negotiations survived only because the M-19 decided not to condition its demobilization on any political reforms.<sup>38</sup>

Eventually the M-19 demobilized, formed a political party, and participated in the 1990 presidential elections, but its top leader and presidential candidate, Carlos Pizarro, was gunned down while campaigning.<sup>39</sup> After this unpromising start, the experience of the M-19 started to change in a positive sense. Following an internal debate in which the M-19 considered going back to war, the organization decided to compete at the polls with its second-in-command, Antonio Navarro. Navarro obtained over 12 per cent of the votes, by far the best electoral performance of the left in Colombia.

The M-19 obtained additional political gains down the road. In the aftermath of the presidential elections, a student movement successfully promoted the formation of a popularly elected National Constituent Assembly (NCA) to reform the Colombian polity. Shortly afterwards the Supreme Court of Justice increased the stakes for any organizations committed to changing the *status quo* by removing any limits to the constitutional areas that could be reformed. Due to its early demobilization, the M-19 (but not the other rebel groups) was able to campaign and eventually elected 19 out of the NCA's 72 delegates. The M-19 outperformed the Conservative Party, hitherto Colombia's second-ranked political force. This was an extraordinary outcome for the recently disarmed M-19, and a key stimulus for other rebel groups that became optimistic about the prospects of obtaining political benefits through electoral politics.

The new government of President Cesar Gaviria also presented the NCA as a unique opportunity for the revolutionary organizations to introduce structural transformations in Colombia, and pledged to appoint

to the NCA spokespersons of those rebel organizations that demobilized in due time (which corresponds to the "departing train strategy" mentioned by Stedman). This facilitated the disarmament of the EPL, the PRT, and the MAQL. Eventually two delegates of the EPL (who enjoyed full voting rights) and one delegate from each of the rebel PRT and MAQL groups (who were only allowed to participate in debates) were appointed to the NCA.<sup>40</sup> In sum, Gaviria attained success by continuing Barco's policies.

#### *The role of spoilers*

There were a number of unsuccessful attempts to derail this peace process. As mentioned, the Colombian Congress was a spoiler in the sense that some MPs conditioned approval of the reform proposals the government had agreed upon with the M-19 on the non-extradition of drug-traffickers. Although this hindered the approval of the reforms, the peace process survived because the M-19 maintained its determination to abandon insurrection and embrace electoral politics.

Unlike what had occurred during Betancur's tenure, this time the security forces did not sabotage (at least overtly) the peace negotiations. This might partly be explained by the fact that the peace agreements did not entail any institutional transformations of the army (reforming the military was off limits, as the war with the FARC and the ELN went on). However, the government should also be credited for preventing spoiling actions. The first Peace Counselor appointed by Barco, Carlos Ossa Escobar, mended fences between the executive branch and military authorities. Later on the government asked some high-ranking military officers to cooperate with the Peace Counselor's Office in the design of the IP peace initiative.<sup>41</sup> Due to their early involvement in the crafting of the road-map for the peace process, the military forces had no incentives for sabotaging the negotiations at a later date. In addition, during the actual negotiations the Peace Counselors consulted on peace-related matters with the military forces on a regular basis,<sup>42</sup> which helped to secure the army's compliance.

For their part, the right-wing paramilitary groups sometimes carried out serious spoiling actions – occasionally in collusion with the armed forces. They were responsible for the murder of the M-19's chief commander, Carlos Pizarro, and for various other killings, including systematic attacks against members of the UP, but never admitted responsibility for these actions. As this peace process coincided with some clashes between the rebel groups and the drug cartels, it was easy for the government to blame the drug-traffickers for any assassinations of demobilized guerrillas.

The FARC also attempted to sabotage the peace process after accusing the rebel groups that had signed peace accords, especially the EPL and the M-19, of "treason of the revolution". For instance, the FARC unsuccessfully attempted to recruit demobilized M-19 guerrillas, so that they would merely switch from one rebel group to another.<sup>43</sup> The FARC was also responsible for murdering an important percentage of the approximately 400 demobilized EPL guerrillas who were killed in the region of Urabá. These killings were partly due to a decade-long deadly quarrel between both rebel groups that continued even in the aftermath of the EPL's demobilization.<sup>44</sup> The EPL resisted these provocations, probably because the government was not involved in the killings and even offered some protection to the demobilized EPL rebels. These were serious spoiling actions that threatened, but ultimately failed to derail, the peace process.

#### *Andrés Pastrana's peace process*

The latest attempt to find a negotiated solution to the Colombian armed conflict took place during the tenure of President Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002). President Gaviria (1990–1994) had attempted to arrive at peace agreements with the FARC and the ELN, but negotiation rounds held in Caracas (Venezuela) and Tlaxcala (Mexico) yielded no results. Then the rebel groups refused to negotiate with Gaviria's successor, President Ernesto Samper (1994–1998), after a scandal broke out revealing that the president had received funds from drug-traffickers of the Cali cartel. This was a practical rather than a moral issue for the guerrilla organizations: Samper faced such a deep legitimacy crisis that the rebel groups believed the government could not assume any credible peace-related commitments.

During these two governments the armed conflict continued to escalate, which helped to generate a sense of war fatigue in Colombia. This was evident in 1997, when citizens deposited over 10 million symbolic votes in favour of "finding a bargained solution to the Colombian armed conflict".<sup>45</sup> Shortly afterwards, Andrés Pastrana of the conservative Nueva Fuerza Democrática won the 1998 presidential elections, arguably because most citizens believed that he was the candidate most likely to reach a peaceful settlement with the FARC.

Pastrana started peace negotiations with the FARC, but soon encountered all sorts of obstacles. To begin with, Pastrana had to overcome strong opposition from the military forces in order to comply with a precondition demanded by the FARC, which consisted of the demilitarization of five municipalities where the negotiations would be carried out.

Eventually the peace process got started, but the parties made little progress during three-and-a-half years of negotiations. On three different occasions the FARC unilaterally suspended negotiations, thereby causing serious delays in the peace process. In mid-1999 the parties did reach an agreement on a complicated 47-point joint agenda,<sup>46</sup> but afterwards they did not discuss any of its issues – except for holding some preliminary talks on how to redress unemployment in Colombia. In fact, in 2000 the government and the FARC decided to conduct the so-called *audiencias públicas*, a mechanism that indefinitely postponed any negotiations on the issues of the agenda while allowing citizens to submit proposals for “building the peace in Colombia”.<sup>47</sup>

From then on the negotiations between the government and the FARC revolved around the possibility of a cease-fire and a prisoner exchange, which were ultimately procedural issues about the conditions under which the parties would conduct peace talks. No agreement was ever reached on a cease-fire. From an early date the FARC stated that it would consider a cease-fire only after the government had implemented 80 per cent of any agreed-upon peace accords.<sup>48</sup> The government and the FARC did eventually reach a partial agreement on a one-off humanitarian prisoner exchange that took place in June 2001. But in February 2002 the peace process with the FARC broke down, due to a lack of progress at the bargaining table coupled with increasing levels of violence. The FARC’s kidnapping of a commercial airplane turned out to be the last in a series of provocations by this rebel group which led Pastrana to bring an end to the peace talks.

Upon assuming office, Pastrana seemed to gamble it all on the peace process with the FARC while neglecting the militarily weaker ELN. Only after negotiations with the FARC deadlocked did the government pay greater attention to the ELN. However, the negotiations with the latter rebel organization also ended in failure.

Following the example that the FARC had set, in March 1999 the ELN demanded the demilitarization of four municipalities (an area considerably smaller than the one conceded to the FARC) in order to carry out a national convention and define a peace agenda. Towards the end of 1999, after Pastrana eventually agreed to demilitarize the municipalities requested by the ELN,<sup>49</sup> the government was unable to deliver its promise because right-wing paramilitary groups (since 1997 grouped under the umbrella organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) prevented demilitarization both through violence and by sponsoring mass mobilizations and blockages of highways. When Pastrana’s tenure ended, the negotiations with the ELN remained stalled.

Why did Pastrana’s negotiations fail? They did so in part because of the government’s mistakes. Pastrana should have thought more carefully

about the risks of conceding a large demilitarized area to the FARC without establishing clear rules about its use. The enlargement of the bargaining agenda by the government and the postponement of any negotiations with the FARC due to the *audiencias públicas* were also careless actions.

On top of this, Pastrana repeated some of the mistakes made by Betancur. Pastrana appointed two novices as Peace Counselors, with little experience in negotiating with the rebel groups. Peace Counselor Victor G. Ricardo, in particular, mishandled relations with the military forces to the point that one minister of defence resigned and several top military officers refused to talk on the phone with him.<sup>50</sup> Ricardo’s replacement, Camilo Gómez, improved the relations between the Peace Counselor’s Office and the military, but tensions still remained high, which imperilled the peace process.

In addition, during the negotiations with the FARC the government appointed four subsequent bargaining commissions that were supposed to provide critical support to the Peace Counselor. However, the first three commissions included public figures who were only devoted part-time to the negotiations and could not assume any commitments on behalf of the government. Only the last bargaining commission, formed in June 2001, included state officials who were dedicated full-time to the negotiations, but by that point the peace process was doomed.

Apart from this, most of the parties acted as spoilers. The FARC acted as a spoiler, as did the right-wing paramilitary groups. The US government, in partnership with the Colombian government, also helped to escalate the war through Plan Colombia, a counter-drug/counterinsurgency initiative, while the military forces did not rein in the paramilitary groups. The following sections look more closely at the specific roles of the various spoilers.

#### *The role of spoilers*

##### *The FARC*

The FARC demanded as a precondition for sitting at the bargaining table the demilitarization of five municipalities, corresponding to 42,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Even if this precondition was originally intended to provide a conflict-free zone in which to conduct negotiations, the demilitarized area (DA) gave a series of important military, political, and financial advantages to the FARC. The DA became a safe haven where the rebel leaders feared no attacks from the army, and from which FARC commandos planned and carried out attacks elsewhere, returning afterwards for protection.<sup>51</sup> The DA also made it easier for the FARC to trade drugs for weapons.<sup>52</sup>

and to recruit and train new members.<sup>53</sup> In the DA the FARC also held many kidnap victims prisoner and negotiated ransoms with their family members. The FARC was the undisputed authority in the DA, where the rebel group administered some rough form of justice and debated political issues with national and international guests.

While exploiting the various advantages of the DA, the FARC gave few (if any) indications of being truly interested in finding a peaceful settlement to the Colombian war. Realizing that it could extract concessions from a government that had gambled all its prestige on the peace process, the FARC assumed a defiant attitude from the very beginning. In January 1999 the top FARC leader, Manuel Marulanda Velez, failed to appear at the ceremony for the installation of the bargaining table because of the risks posed by an alleged assassination plot. Marulanda's excuse was difficult to believe because the ceremony took place in the DA, which was under full control of FARC guerrillas. Pastrana was left alone as keynote speaker, sitting beside an empty chair that was designated for Marulanda.<sup>54</sup>

From then on the FARC repeatedly tested the government's patience. In both 1999 and 2000 the FARC unilaterally suspended the peace negotiations, while demanding from the government tougher actions against the paramilitary groups. In 2001, for a third time in a row, the FARC unilaterally suspended negotiations after the government tightened security measures around the DA, following the detention of three IRA members who had spent time there, presumably training FARC guerrillas in bomb-making techniques.<sup>55</sup>

During the second half of 1999, due to the slightly ambiguous wording of an agreement signed by Pastrana and Marulanda, the rebel group prevented the formation of an international verification commission that would have monitored both the activities of the FARC within the DA and compliance with any peace accords.<sup>56</sup> Later on the Colombian army obtained an internal document of a FARC summit held in March 2000, revealing that the rebels' aim to take power by military means had not changed, and that the peace talks merely facilitated advancing towards this strategic objective. This document also unveiled that the FARC was running short of middle-rank commanders, which helped to explain the FARC's strategy of kidnapping soldiers and policemen in order to force a prisoner exchange.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from this, the FARC's violence never abated throughout the negotiations. There were many expressions of international repudiation of the FARC's violent actions, and by 2000 domestic polls revealed that support for the peace negotiations had plummeted.<sup>58</sup> However, this rebel group did not change its behaviour. Perhaps the FARC deemed it unlikely that anyone would have preferred a full-fledged resumption of

war to the *status quo*. Eventually the negotiations broke down due to the cumulative effect of the FARC's abuses and a bargaining table that yielded no results in over three years of negotiations.

Why did the FARC spoil the negotiations? One can think of several possible and not mutually exclusive interpretations. A first hypothesis is that the military capacity of the FARC had been improving through the years in terms of troops, weapons, and financial assets. Why would a rebel group negotiate precisely at a time when its military and organizational capacities were at their best? Perhaps Colombia was not fast approaching a revolutionary situation, but probably the FARC believed that it just had to wait for ripe conditions for taking power.

A second hypothesis is that the FARC spoiled the negotiations because of a historic legacy of mistrust. How could the rebel group forget the massacre of its political party, the UP? From the rebels' standpoint, perhaps Pastrana did not offer any credible security guarantees.

A third hypothesis is that the FARC had become a profitable drug-trafficking enterprise, with no political ideology whatsoever.<sup>59</sup> So why should the FARC sign peace agreements and thereby renounce such a profitable business? In regards to this hypothesis, even admitting that drug-trafficking is essential to the FARC's finances, the possibility exists that the drug trade might be just a means for the rebels to fight. Otherwise, why do most rebel leaders not utilize drug profits for retirement on some remote island? And why do the rebels keep carrying out other hostile actions that provoke heavy military retaliations instead of assuming a lower profile, as most drug-traffickers do?

Finally, the FARC might have acted as spoiler because the whole context of the peace negotiations made it very unlikely that a successful peace settlement could emerge. If there was no realistic chance of reaching a peaceful settlement, why should the FARC not take advantage of a peace process that offered the possibility of reaping short-term military benefits? If this were the case, one should analyse whether and how other actors such as the Colombian and US governments, the military, and the paramilitary groups also entered the negotiations only tactically, thereby acting as spoilers.

#### *The Colombian/US governments*

When Pastrana first approached the FARC he announced a vast fundraising initiative aimed at financing peacebuilding: a sort of Marshall Plan for Colombia<sup>60</sup> favouring the underprivileged. However, Pastrana's initiative materialized in 1999 as Plan Colombia (PC), a US-led counter-drug policy that turned Colombia into the third-largest recipient of US military aid in the world and clearly targeted the FARC. From an early date the Clinton administration had manifested apprehension towards

Pastrana's peace initiative, fearing that the rebels would transform the DA into a gigantic "laboratory for processing and trafficking drugs".<sup>61</sup> In 1999 the US government suspended any contacts with the rebel organization after the FARC killed three American citizens, and after 11 September 2001 further hardened its position by labelling the FARC a terrorist organization.<sup>62</sup>

Although packaged as a mere counter-drug policy, for the most part PC was about counterinsurgency. In fact, PC did not target the Colombian drug cartels operating in various cities, nor the right-wing paramilitary groups that admitted receiving 70 per cent of their finances from drug-trafficking. PC clearly targeted the FARC's strongholds in the southern part of Colombia, spraying drug crops in the departments of Putumayo and Caquetá, which allegedly represented about 60 per cent of the rebels' income.<sup>63</sup>

According to American and Colombian officials, targeting the FARC's main source of revenues could actually push the peace negotiations forward, because only by forcefully reducing the FARC's finances would this rebel group seriously consider a bargained solution. But FARC spokespersons, European Union representatives,<sup>64</sup> and various NGOs and analysts criticized PC as a policy leading to military escalation. Retrospectively, PC did help to escalate the war.

Perhaps the peace negotiations were doomed from the start, in the sense that the FARC would not have relinquished drug-trafficking in the absence of PC, and anyhow the rebels had few (if any) incentives to turn in their weapons. But PC might have driven the FARC deeper into drug-trafficking. In fact, by providing an unprecedented boost to the Colombian military in terms of training, technology, logistics, and intelligence, PC might have started an arms race in which the FARC attempted to compete. Whether this was an intended or unintended spoiling action is debatable, but the point is that PC provided an important incentive to the Colombian government for waging war instead of finding a bargained solution to the conflict.

#### *The paramilitary groups*

Top paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño initially manifested a generic support for Pastrana's peace process with the FARC while assuming a far more radical stance in regards to any possible negotiations with the ELN. In mid-1998 Castaño declared that he would militarily defeat the ELN, a rebel group that he considered both weak and prone to engage in "terrorist behaviour".<sup>65</sup> In the end the AUC spoiled both peace processes, even if more so the one with the ELN than the one with the FARC.

The first act of sabotage of the peace process with the FARC occurred

in January 1999, when the AUC went on a killing spree that caused over 137 deaths precisely at the same time that the government and the rebels were starting negotiations.<sup>66</sup> As a result the FARC unilaterally suspended the peace talks only 12 days after they had begun, while demanding that the government fight the paramilitary groups.<sup>67</sup> The negotiations remained stalled for a five-month period.

Later on, in October 2000 when the government and the FARC were forging an agreement on a prisoner exchange, the AUC kidnapped six MPs in an attempt to prevent Congress from approving a law aimed at liberating FARC guerrillas.<sup>68</sup> When Minister of the Interior Humberto de la Calle went to talk with Castaño in order to liberate the kidnapped politicians, the FARC unilaterally froze the peace negotiations again, "until the president and the government clarified before the country and the entire world their official position towards paramilitary terrorism, and developed policies to bring it to an end".<sup>69</sup> From the FARC's standpoint, the fact that the government actually met and talked with paramilitary leaders was tantamount to complicity. The negotiations between the government and the FARC were only resumed in February 2001. In sum, the paramilitaries were involved in two out of the three occasions on which the FARC suspended negotiations, thereby producing serious delays in the peace process.

The paramilitaries undertook greater efforts to derail the negotiations with the ELN, especially after the government agreed to demilitarize four municipalities for this rebel group.<sup>70</sup> In order to prevent demilitarization from occurring, between 2000 and 2001 the AUC carried out a string of massacres and selective killings in areas where the ELN was influential (the most gruesome massacres were those of El Salado and Ciénaga, and in Barrancabermeja the AUC killed 145 people during a six-week period<sup>71</sup>). In addition, the AUC along with regional associations of cattle-ranchers and other local entrepreneurs promoted mass mobilizations and blockages of highways aimed at preventing the demilitarization of any territories.<sup>72</sup>

In mid-2000 Castaño also attacked a provisional camp where the ELN had met a few days earlier with the Peace Counselor, as well as the rebels' headquarters of El Diamante, precisely at the same time when ELN spokespersons were holding peace talks with government officials and civil society representatives in Geneva.<sup>73</sup> These military actions ruined the Geneva talks, which had begun with optimistic prospects about peace. In 2001, after Pastrana persuaded some local communities to allow the demilitarization of four municipalities to proceed, Castaño undertook yet another offensive against the ELN in those same areas,<sup>74</sup> leaving Pastrana with no option but order the military forces to retake the zones.



In short, the AUC prevented any progress in the peace talks with the ELN. Apparently the AUC thought that it could militarily defeat the ELN before any peace negotiations started, which was unfortunate: the ELN was far weaker than the FARC, and its interest in the bargaining table was (prima facie) more credible. In the end the AUC did not defeat the ELN, but this rebel group was prevented from engaging in peace talks.

#### The Colombian armed forces

On a few occasions the Colombian military forces threatened to spoil the peace negotiations by engaging in open confrontations with Pastrana. However, after some arm-twisting, the army often complied with the orders of the president. For instance, it was difficult for Pastrana to deliver his promise to the FARC of fully demilitarizing five municipalities due to strong opposition from the military forces. Pastrana had to spend approximately four months persuading the military top brass to comply with demilitarization. Later on the Colombian military manifested opposition to a prisoner exchange with the FARC, fearing that this would give a belligerent status to the revolutionary organization and also encourage kidnappings whenever the FARC wanted to free its imprisoned commanders.<sup>75</sup> Once again Pastrana overcame opposition of the armed forces, and a one-time humanitarian prisoner exchange occurred in 2001.

Apart from this, the military-paramilitary nexus was far more problematic for the peace process and might have encouraged spoiling actions. Although the government did always claim to be fighting with the same intensity both the rebel groups and the right-wing paramilitaries, this was not the case. Figure 10.1, elaborated with data from the Colombian Ministry of Defence, shows how during Pastrana's tenure the government fought against the rebel groups far more intensely than against the paramilitary groups.

One should add that reportedly in some regions the security forces turned a blind eye to (and sometimes collaborated with) the activities of paramilitary groups.<sup>76</sup> Maintaining this double standard in the midst of peace negotiations generated a great deal of suspicion from the FARC and the ELN, because the government seemed to tolerate (or at worst condone) a dirty war against some sectors seeking to change the *status quo*. The government might have claimed lack of capacity to fight so many irregular groups simultaneously. But after Plan Colombia strengthened the security forces significantly, how could the military look the other way when the AUC carried out massacres and extra-judicial killings?

As the peace process stumbled, not only the rebel groups but also the United Nations, the European Union, several NGOs, and at one point even the US government<sup>77</sup> demanded that Pastrana should fight the

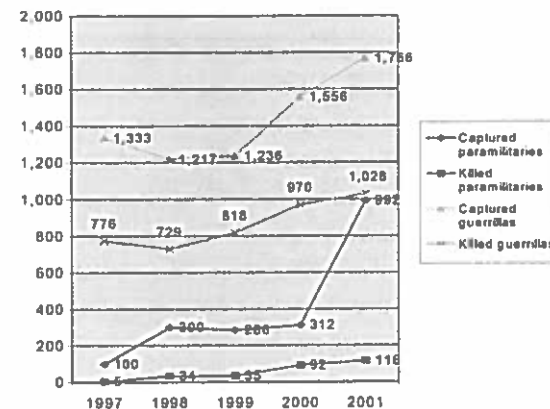


Figure 10.1 The war of the Colombian military forces against irregular armed groups, 1997-2001.

Source: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional de Colombia 2002. Informe Anual de Derechos Humanos y DIH 2001. Ministerio de Defensa Nacional de Colombia, pp. 99-100.

paramilitaries more decisively. In this regard, the government took some action. Following the first suspension of the peace talks by the FARC, Pastrana pledged to reactivate the anti-paramilitary bloc of the security forces, and later on (due to pressures from the US State Department) dismissed two Colombian generals who had been accused of having links with the paramilitaries. After the AUC spoiled the peace process with the ELN, the president also fostered Operación Dignidad, a military offensive against the paramilitaries. However, none of these actions remotely sufficed to contain the paramilitary groups, which grew in numbers and remained defiant throughout Pastrana's tenure.

#### Concluding remarks

In Colombia a wide variety of actors have attempted to spoil the various peace negotiations in the past two decades, albeit with different degrees

of success. Although the repertoire of spoiling actions has included mass mobilizations and other semi-legal actions, spoilers have increasingly resorted to violence in order to achieve their goals.

One could hardly place exclusive blame on spoilers for explaining why the peace processes of Presidents Betancur and Pastrana failed, or why the ones of Presidents Barco and Gaviria merely attained a partial success. In fact, no durable peace accord could have emerged from some ill-conducted peace negotiations. At the same time, though, spoilers contributed significantly to the failure of various peace negotiations.

It is no coincidence that the only partly successful peace negotiations in Colombia correspond to the ones in which the government resorted to spoiler management techniques. Perhaps Presidents Barco and Gaviria did not fully deter spoiling actions by the paramilitary groups and the FARC, but they did reduce the number of potential spoilers by preventing the military forces from sabotaging the peace process, and by lobbying rightist sectors (guerrilla leaders carried out additional lobbying efforts, which will not be elaborated on here). These two governments also offered some form of protection to demobilized guerrillas in order to contain the potential damage caused by spoilers. In the absence of such spoiler management initiatives, the peace negotiations would have fallen apart.

In any event, the war with the FARC and the ELN has continued. Should one consider the FARC and the ELN (and the AUC, which is presently undergoing a dubious demobilization process) as uncompromising "total spoilers" that cannot be either appeased or socialized? Is Colombia left with no options other than repressing or isolating these illegal organizations?

A problem with this prescription is that the government has resorted to coercive strategies for the past 40 years, but has been unable to defeat the irregular armed groups. The prospects of achieving victory remain dim, even after Colombia has received a great deal of US military aid through PC. The constant expansion of insurgency also suggests that isolation tactics have not worked that well. The rebel groups may be ideologically weak, and have been labelled by the Colombian government as "terrorist" or "criminal" organizations, but this has not reduced their power base in several depressed rural areas and urban shanty-towns.

Other things being equal, at some point the government and the guerrillas will have to return to the bargaining table. In this scenario it is important to address various aspects of the peace process other than spoilers, such as composition and role of the bargaining commissions, the agenda, the negotiation strategy, the security dilemma, the role of third parties, and so forth. Merely to focus on spoilers could make us forget that careless actions by different Colombian governments did contribute to failure in various negotiations.

In addition to this, spoiler management techniques will be essential for attaining success in any future peace negotiations. These techniques will be useful if most of the warring factions develop a genuine interest in finding a peaceful settlement to the war, and spoilers constitute relatively marginal groups. However, the obstacles to peacemaking and peace-building will be insurmountable if the major warring factions engage in peace negotiations while believing that they are better off with the war.

## Notes

1. Stedman, Stephen J. 1997. "Spoiler problems in peace processes." *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 5.
2. Wilde, Alexander. 1982. *La quiebra de la democracia*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, pp. 39-41; Hartlyn, Jonathan. 1988. *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 18-20.
3. Sanchez, Gonzalo. 1985. "La violencia y sus efectos en el sistema político colombiano", in *Ocho ensayos sobre la Violencia*. Bogotá: CEREC. Centro Gaitan Sánchez.
4. Dix, Robert H. 1987. *The Politics of Colombia*. California: Hoover Institute Press, p. 314.
5. Chernick, Marc. 1999. "Negotiating peace amid multiple forms of violence: The protracted search for a settlement to the armed conflicts in Colombia", in C. Arason (ed.) *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*. Washington, DC and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Stanford University Press, p. 169; Bejarano, Jesus A. 1995. *Una agenda para la paz*. Santafé de Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, p. 85.
6. In terms of strategies, whereas the FARC was originally a self-defence organization, the ELN embraced Cuban-style *fujimayo* and the EPL the Maoist "prolonged popular war" strategy. In terms of areas of operations, the FARC took root in the southern plains, the ELN in the north-eastern region, and the EPL in north-western coastal areas; Bejarano, *ibid.*, p. 85. As for the social composition of the rebel groups, the FARC was the only truly peasant guerrilla organization, while militants of the M-19, the ELN, and the EPL were for the most part students, dissidents of the Liberal Party, and urban middle-class professionals; Chernick, *ibid.*, p. 164.
7. Comisión de Superación de la Violencia. 1992. *Pacificar la paz*. Bogotá: IEPRI/CINEP/Comisión Andina de Juristas Seccional Colombia/CECCOIN, pp. 112-115.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106; Peñaranda, Ricardo. 1999. "De rebeldes a ciudadanos: El caso del Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame", in J. G. Ricardo Peñaranda (ed.) *De las Armas a la Política*. Santafé de Bogotá: TM Editores/IEPRI.
9. Bejarano, note 5 above, p. 85.
10. Peccaut, Daniel. 1997. "Presente, pasado y futuro de la Violencia en Colombia", *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 36, No. 144, p. 596. Colombia has 1,071 municipalities.
11. UNDP. 2003. *El Conflicto, callejón con salida. Informe nacional de desarrollo humano Colombia - 2003*. Bogotá: UNDP, p. 83; UNDP. 2005. "El pie de fuerza de las FARC: Cifras vs. realidad", in *Boletín Hechos del Callejón No. 4*. Bogotá: UNDP; UNDP. 2005. "¿Cómo va el ELN?", in *Boletín Hechos del Callejón No. 5*. Bogotá: UNDP.
12. Bejarano, note 5 above, pp. 85-86.
13. Altimir, Oscar. 1998. "Inequality, employment, and poverty in Latin America: An overview", in V. Tokman and G. O'Donnell (eds) *Poverty and Inequality in Latin America*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press; Muxley, Samuel. 1995. *Poverty and*

- Inequality in Latin America: The Impact of Adjustment and Recovery in the 1980s*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 28-38, 64.
14. Stallings, Barbara and Wilson Peres. 2000. *Growth, Employment, and Equity: The Impact of the Economic Reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC and Santiago: Brookings Institution Press/UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, pp. 120-123, 131.
  15. Departamento Nacional de Planeación. 1998. *La paz. El desafío para el desarrollo*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo/Departamento Nacional de Planeación, p. 41; Rangel Suárez, Alfredo. 1998. *Colombia, guerra en el fin de siglo*. Santafé de Bogotá: TM Editores/Universidad de los Andes Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, p. 36.
  16. Reyes, Alejandro. 1996. "Una propuesta de paz que toma en cuenta el cruce de conflictos en Colombia", *Colombia Internacional*, No. 36, October-December, p. 29; Bejarano, Jesús A., Camilo Echandía, Rodolfo Escobedo, and Enrique León Queruz. 1997. *Colombia. Inseguridad, violencia y desempleo económico en la áreas rurales*. Santafé de Bogotá: Universidad Externado/FONADE, p. 252.
  17. Nieto, Rafael. 2001. "Economía y violencia", in Jorge Londono de la Cuesta and Fernando Cubides (eds) *Colombia: Conflicto armado, perspectivas de paz y democracia*. Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, p. 106.
  18. Rangel Suárez, note 15 above, pp. 4-5.
  19. Chernick, note 5 above, pp. 166-167.
  20. García, Mauricio. 1992. *De la Uribe a Tascala: Procesos de Paz*. Bogotá: CINEP, pp. 48-49; Ramírez, William. 1990. "Las fértiles cenizas de la izquierda", *Análisis Político*, No. 10, p. 9.
  21. Bejarano, note 5 above, p. 86.
  22. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
  23. García, note 20 above, p. 48.
  24. Chernick, note 5 above, p. 176.
  25. Interview with a Colombian former colonel, Bogotá, 2000.
  26. Interview with a former top commander of the M-19, Bogotá, July 2000.
  27. Comisión de Superación de la Violencia, note 7 above, p. 100.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  29. In Colombia the term "paramilitary groups" is commonly used to identify a loosely connected network of private right-wing militias, and not entities like the police force. In the early 1980s some drug-traffickers, cattle-ranchers, and rural entrepreneurs formed these private militias in order to settle scores with the revolutionary groups. In earlier decades the Colombian armed forces had also promoted the formation of self-defence organizations in places where the guerrilla groups were strong. Even if presenting themselves as self-defence organizations, in the mid-1980s the paramilitary groups started murdering individuals who were perceived as having affinity with the rebel groups. See Romero, Mauricio. 2003. *Paramilitares y Autodefensas 1982-2003*. Bogotá: IEPRI.
  30. Chernick, note 5 above, p. 177.
  31. Comisión de Superación de la Violencia, note 7 above, p. 118.
  32. Interview with a Colombian colonel, Bogotá, July 2000.
  33. Comisión de Superación de la Violencia, note 7 above, p. 266.
  34. *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 108-109, 115.
  35. García, note 20 above, pp. 50-51.
  36. Presidencia República de Colombia. 1988. *Iniciativa Para la Paz*. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional.
  37. García, note 20 above, pp. 113-115.
  38. The M-19 demobilized in exchange for a few particularistic benefits, though, such as subsidies for education and credits for reinserted guerrillas. Ramírez, William. 1991. "Las nuevas ceremonias de la paz", *Análisis Político*, No. 14, September-December, García, note 20 above.
  39. Bejarano, note 23 above, p. 118.
  40. Ramírez, note 38 above, pp. 12, 15, 30-31; Comisión de Superación de la Violencia, note 7 above, p. 100.
  41. Interview with a former Peace Counsellor, Bogotá, July 2000.
  42. *Ibid.*
  43. Interview with a former top leader of the M-19, Bogotá, July 2000.
  44. For a review on this see Nasí, Carlo. 2006. "Colombia's peace processes 1982-2002: Conditions, strategies and outcomes", in Virginia M. Bouvier (ed.) *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War*. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace.
  45. Valencia, León. 2002. *Adiós a la política, bienvenida la guerra*. Bogotá: Intermedio.
  46. This was a synthesis of a 12-point bargaining agenda that the FARC had set forth since 1998 and a 101-point agenda that the government submitted in 1999. Contrary to what one would have expected, the expansion of the agenda was proposed by the government's negotiators.
  47. *Semana*. 1999. "El ajedrez del caguán", *Semana*, No. 895, 26 July.
  48. *Semana*. 1999. "Tirofijo se destaca", *Semana*, No. 872, 15 February; see also *Semana*. 2000. "¿Cese al fuego?", *Semana*, No. 929, 19 February.
  49. *Semana*. 2000. "Se instalan mesas de trabajo en el sur de Bolívar", *Semana*, No. 929, 19 February.
  50. *Semana*. 1999. "¿De salida?", *Semana*, No. 871, 8 February; *Semana*. 1999. "Los otros damnificados", *Semana*, No. 875, 8 March; *Semana*. 1999. "Nuevo round Llorede-Victor G.", *Semana*, No. 886, 24 May.
  51. *Semana*. 2001. "Inlambia", *Semana*, No. 975, 6 January.
  52. *Semana*. 1999. "La paz amada", *Semana*, No. 873, 22 February; *Semana*. 1999. "Los negocios de las FARC", *Semana*, No. 879, 5 April.
  53. *Semana*. 1999. "Del despeje al despojo", *Semana*, No. 885, 17 May; *Semana*. 2000. "La inocencia armada", *Semana*, No. 970, 2 December.
  54. *Semana*. 1999. "Falla con excusa", *Semana*, No. 871, 8 February.
  55. *Semana*. 2001. "La IRA y las FARC", *Semana*, No. 1007, 17 August.
  56. *Semana*. 1999. "El diálogo que no fue", *Semana*, No. 900, 30 August.
  57. Interview with a Colombian general, Bogotá, 12 August 2003.
  58. *Semana*. 2001. "Gesto humanitario o táctica política?", *Semana*, No. 976, 13 January.
  59. Estimates indicate that between 40 per cent and 80 per cent of the FARC's finances are derived from drug-trafficking. See *Semana*. 2001. "Golpe maestro", *Semana*, No. 984, 10 March; *Semana*. 2001. "La prueba reina", *Semana*, No. 987, 31 March. On the FARC's involvement in drug-trafficking see Ferro, Medina, Juan Guillermo, and Graciela Uribe Ramón. 2002. *El Orden de la Guerra, Las FARC EP: Entre la Organización y la Política*. Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano, pp. 96-103.
  60. *Semana*. 1999. "Creo en la palabra de tirofijo", *Semana*, No. 869, 25 January.
  61. In a 1998 meeting with FARC delegates in Costa Rica, functionaries of the State Department actually told the rebel group that drug interdiction efforts in Colombia were not negotiable. See *Semana*. 1999. "La lucha antinarcofónicos no es negociable", *Semana*, No. 872, 15 February.
  62. *Semana*. 2001. "La hora del garrote", *Semana*, No. 1011, 13 September.
  63. *Semana*. 2000. "El cheque del tío Sam", *Semana*, No. 924, 15 January; *Semana*. 2000. "Guerra a la coca", *Semana*, No. 927, 4 February.
  64. *Semana*. 2000. "El malestar europeo", *Semana*, No. 958, 9 September.
  65. *Semana*. 1998. "Habla castaño", *Semana*, No. 850, 14 September.
  66. *Semana*. 1999. "Ojo put ojo", *Semana*, No. 872, 15 February.

67. *Semana*. 1999. "Paras bajo fuego", *Semana*, No. 873, 22 February.
68. *Semana*. 2000. "El pulso", *Semana*, No. 965, 28 October; *Semana*. 2000. "Llegó la hora de negociar con las AUC", *Semana*, No. 966, 4 November.
69. *Semana*. 2000. "Y ahora qué?", *Semana*, No. 968, 18 November.
70. *Semana*. 2000. "El otro despeje", *Semana*, No. 923, 8 January.
71. *Semana*. 2000. "La caldera del diablo", *Semana*, No. 930, 26 February; *Semana*. 2000. "La barbarie", *Semana*, No. 971, 8 December; *Semana*. 2001. "A sangre y fuego", *Semana*, No. 982, 24 February.
72. *Semana*. 2000. "Bomba de tiempo", *Semana*, No. 947, 24 June; *Semana*. 2001. "La resistencia", *Semana*, No. 977, 20 January.
73. *Semana*. 2000. "La piedra en el camino", *Semana*, No. 953, 5 August.
74. *Semana*. 2001. "La batalla", *Semana*, No. 989, 11 April.
75. *Semana*. 1999. "El golazo del canje", *Semana*, No. 872, 15 February 1999; *Semana*. 2000. "El canje", *Semana*, No. 963, 14 October.
76. In 1999 the report E/CN.4/1999/8 on Colombia by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights mentioned that "paramilitary groups do not act against the government and many of their actions are done in connection with military and civilian authorities". The report blamed the Colombian authorities for their "lack of will" to fight the paramilitaries efficiently. In 2000 the report E/CN.4/2000/11 on Colombia by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights referred to the "direct participation of military personnel in the organization of new paramilitary blocs". It also denounced a collusion between the army and the paramilitary groups. In 2001 the report E/CN.4/2001/15 on Colombia by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights mentioned the "possible direct participation" of members of the Colombian army in the massacres of Ovejas and El Salado that were carried out by paramilitary groups. In 2002 the report E/CN.4/2002/4 on Colombia by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights again denounced the existence of links between members of the Colombian army and the paramilitary groups. The UNHCHR also accused the Colombian army of failing to protect the victims. These reports are available at [www.hchr.org.co/documentoseinformes/publicos.php3](http://www.hchr.org.co/documentoseinformes/publicos.php3).
77. See the Colombia Project of the Center for International Policy, available at [www.ciponline.org/colombia/timeline.htm](http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/timeline.htm).