

## U.S. Interests and the Colombian Peace Talks

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Through much of recent Colombian history, the United States has been an immense influence in shaping the country's reality, with most of U.S. policy directed to the intent of solving the intense conflict between armed groups and the Colombian government. Much of this effort has also been promoted to protect U.S. national interests as a sort of lateral benefit. Given the weight of U.S. national interests in the situation however, it is important to examine how U.S. policy and goals in the country fit with the history and development of an eventual peace agreement that includes one of the last groups of communist fighters in Latin America, and the agreement developments on agrarian reform and political participation for the ex-guerrillas-to-be.

The United States' priorities in the country range from the strengthening of democratic institutions to drug trade eradication efforts and counter-terrorism initiatives, objectives that have been pursued with the expansion of security and armed pressure on insurgent groups. This effort, most notably expressed since the late 1990s by Plan Colombia, is regarded as a success by the U.S. government based on statistics that show a decrease in kidnappings, homicides, amount of land used for narcotics cultivation, and membership numbers of insurgency groups, most prominently the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*). This has been accompanied by a presumed expansion of the rule of law in areas previously marred by conflict and devoid of government presence.<sup>1</sup>

Despite such a lauded stage in the pursuit of the country's stability, there has been a radical change in the Colombian government's way of dealing with a conflict that refuses to end. By entering into a conflict resolution process with the guerrillas, the administration of President Juan Manuel Santos is taking an approach that strongly contrasts with that of his predecessor, Álvaro Uribe. Issues such as displacement, the statistics of which remain steadily high,<sup>2</sup> continued drug production and exportation, neo-paramilitaries on the rise, obstinate guerrilla resistance, high homicide rates,<sup>3</sup> and unresolved inequality<sup>4</sup> seemingly call for this new strategy. Important concessions from both negotiating parties currently permeate the political and social climate, striving for a middle ground that aspires for the commencement of a long-term peace

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<sup>1</sup>"Plan Colombia." Bogota, Colombia - Embassy of the United States. Accessed March 26, 2016.  
<http://bogota.usembassy.gov/plancolombia.html>.

<sup>2</sup>"Internally Displaced Persons (number, Low Estimate)." Data World bank. Accessed March 22, 2016.  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IDP.TOTL.LE/countries/1W-CO?display=graph>.

<sup>3</sup>"Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)." Data World Bank. Accessed April 26, 2016.  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>.

<sup>4</sup>"Poverty, Inequality and Drugs in Colombia." Poverty, Inequality and Drugs in Colombia. Accessed March 16, 2016.  
<http://www.abcolombia.org.uk/mainpage.asp?mainid=76>.

consolidation. However, the interests of the U.S. and Colombian economic elites have been a major element preventing the conflict's resolution.

## Traditional Conflict

The armed struggle in Colombia is based on land and its use. Among the diverse economic interests tied to it are multinational agricultural and extractive industries,<sup>5</sup> as well as those of traditional local oligarchs represented in coffee cultivation and cattle ranching.<sup>6</sup> Coca cultivation is also an ubiquitous economic interest in the conflict scenario, involving large landowners, the peasantry, the FARC and other guerrilla elements, as well as government representatives and paramilitary forces. Coca is a main source of income for many actors of the conflict, given that the rural area's economy is largely based on it because of its profit potential. The concentration of land is immensely unequal after seven decades of conflict in Colombia; around 1 percent of landowners own more than half of all rural land.<sup>7</sup> Land has been a cause of the feud between guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary forces, with the continuous presence of a government and army often partial towards the latter. In the *parapolitica* scandals of the last 10 years, government officials have been linked to drug-trafficking paramilitaries through financial and electoral support in exchange for influencing policy, managing key government duties of supervision, regulation and enforcement, and in general furthering the interests of these groups and their supporters.

The FARC has been labeled a terrorist organization. Its precepts, however, have a wider claim in history. The FARC's most important historical issues are founded on aspirations for agrarian reform, as well as on impeded political participation, goals that have then been backed with violence and the pursued obliteration of the Colombian government since the advent of the mid-20th century and that today are central aspects addressed at the Havana talks. Also ideologically opposed to a national economy based on the exportation of natural resources tilted to multinational interests and their assertion of control over land and resources, the FARC has attacked numerous industrial megaprojects, such as pipelines and dams.<sup>8</sup> Such attacks have become a hurdle to the interests of multinational companies such as Oxy, Pacific Rubiales Energy, Goodyear, Nestle and many others,<sup>9</sup> and has pitted the guerrillas against local and

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<sup>5</sup> "Multinational Banana Corporation Displaces Afro-Colombian Peace Communities." Upsidedownworld.com. Accessed March 26, 2016. <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/colombia-archives-61/2895-multinational-banana-corporation-displaces-afro-colombian-peace-communities->

"Mining and Post-Conflict in Colombia." Upsidedownworld.com. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/colombia-archives-61/4925-mining-and-post-conflict-in-colombia>.

<sup>6</sup> "Colombia's Killer Networks: The Military - Paramilitary Partnership and the United States." Hrw.org. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/killer2.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> "Annual Report: Colombia 2013." Amnesty International USA. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/annual-report-colombia-2013?page=2>.

<sup>8</sup> "List of Attacks Attribute to FARC." | Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing - eBooks | Read eBooks Online. Accessed April 26, 2016. [http://www.gutenberg.org/articles/List\\_of\\_attacks\\_attributed\\_to\\_FARC](http://www.gutenberg.org/articles/List_of_attacks_attributed_to_FARC).

"Security Situation Worsens in Norte De Santander." RSS. 2012. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiareports.com/security-situation-worsens-in-norte-de-santander/>.

<sup>9</sup> "Investor Alert: Colombia's Government Is Engaging in Peace Talks With Leftist Guerrilla Fighters." Forbes. October 19, 2012. Accessed April 26, 2016.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2012/10/19/investor-alert-colombias-government-is-engaging-in-peace-talks-with-leftist-guerrilla-fighters/#37e1ce477ca8>.

foreign stakeholders.

Often given to fomenting public unrest, previous Colombian president, Alvaro Uribe, has recently made calls for “civil resistance” to President Santos’ peace deal. The personification of the “hard line approach” to guerrillas, Uribe’s ideal tableau would be the total elimination of the leftist guerrillas, without being heard or considered in the fabrication of a new country. A true ally of Washington, and a representative of wealthy landowners, his radical approach and obvious discomfort with inclusive social reforms should not be surprising. His calls have been repudiated by numerous political figures as the country’s parties plunge into a polarization that transcends rhetoric; governability has been complicated through continuous absences from congress appointments of members of the Uribe-led party, Centro Democrático.<sup>10</sup>

Although Washington's purported objectives have targeted curtailing drug production, intervention in this regard has been a failure. It has been suggested recently in mainstream media that Plan Colombia was not about counter narcotics but rather about counter-insurgency.<sup>11</sup> Seen from this perspective, Plan Colombia has been a successful operation in terms of weakening these groups. The definition of success has been uniquely equated to the retreat of the FARC’s dominion of influence. To understand the continuity of the conflict, however, it is necessary to evaluate factors that are present apart from the guerrillas.

Key beneficiaries from displacement, and from guerrilla absence, are mining and agro-industrial conglomerates. Gold mining, for instance, is a very lucrative activity -- often compared to the potential of coca production. Government agencies have issued permits for land exploitation that overlap ethnic territories and peasant settlements. This causes continued social strife, human rights abuse, and social suffering for the marginalized.<sup>12</sup> A controversial example of this was the connection of Chiquita Brands International with paramilitary elements involved in forced displacement and land seizure.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, the U.S. military and aid initiative known as Plan Colombia has focused on increasing security with the aim of fortifying a decaying state, creating a militarized project by modernizing the Colombian army, and strengthening U.S. presence in the region through military bases,<sup>14</sup> in addition to the formation of a strong alliance, and technical support exchange. Some its most direct and important consequences are the consolidation of U.S. companies’ interests in Colombia through the progressive removal of the guerrillas, as well as the

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<sup>10</sup> "Uribe Calls for 'civil Resistance' in Colombia." Latinnews.com. May 11, 2016. Accessed May 17, 2016. [http://www.latinnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=68840&uid=17952&acc=1&Itemid=6&cat\\_id=802035](http://www.latinnews.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=68840&uid=17952&acc=1&Itemid=6&cat_id=802035).

<sup>11</sup> "A New Plan for Colombia." The Economist. January 23, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21688936-juan-manuel-santos-seeks-support-peace-washington-new-plan-colombia>.

<sup>12</sup> Raul Zibechi. "Mining and Post-Conflict in Colombia." Upsidedown. July 07, 2014. Accessed May 10, 2016. <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/colombia-archives-61/4925-mining-and-post-conflict-in-colombia>.

<sup>13</sup> "Multinational Banana Corporation Displaces Afro-Colombian Peace Communities." Upsidedownworld.com. Accessed March 26, 2016. <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/colombia-archives-61/2895-multinational-banana-corporation-displaces-afro-colombian-peace-communities->.

<sup>14</sup> Lindsay-Poland, John. "Pentagon Building Bases in Central America and Colombia." Fellowship of Reconciliation. January 27, 2011. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://forusa.org/blogs/john-lindsay-poland/pentagon-building-bases-central-america-colombia/8445>.

heightening of relations with a country favorable to U.S. policies - one that is strategically located in the geopolitical map of Latin America. It is relevant to review U.S. foreign policy and aid when evaluating Washington projections in Colombia.

## **Overview of Federal Budget Justification for Peace Colombia**

President Obama has requested \$450 million USD from Congress for new aid to Colombia for 2017 under "Peace Colombia," a proposal that enjoys widespread bipartisan support.<sup>15</sup> Peace Colombia, which targets military and developmental aims, is the next stage of Plan Colombia. Its funding constitutes an increase of \$125 million USD from the current year, reversing the trend of recent years, which have seen a progressive diminishment in financial aid. Five security programs focus on specific aspects of the Peace Colombia package.

There is a \$46 million USD augmentation in aid toward the Economic Support Funds (ESF) program, totaling \$187.3 million USD intended to strengthen the presence of the state in conflict zones, its democratic institutions and processes, the fostering of economic growth within an environmentally sustainable framework, options and support for victimized populations and minorities, and support for the Colombian government's priorities and initiatives.<sup>16</sup> Adam Isaacson of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) sees the funding increase in this category as insufficient; in Isaacson's view, the needs of a peaceful Colombia warrant more emphasis and support on the program than what has been proposed.<sup>17</sup> Stress on this program would correspond to the peace process principles of empowering disenfranchised populations through agrarian reform and enhancing economic alternatives to the drug trade.

A second program within Peace Colombia is the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE), which has been allocated \$143 million USD, an increase of \$26 million USD from this year. The objective of INCLE is to reinforce law enforcement through the funding of the police and its expansion into rural areas in order to counteract criminal organizations. The program would also support manual eradication and other drug interdiction strategies.<sup>18</sup>

A third aspect of Peace Colombia is the Defense Department's counter-drug programs with \$44.6 million USD, a de-escalation of \$7.3 million USD from this year's funding. Without publicly stated objectives, it is presumed that this account is purely oriented towards military and police reinforcement to support drug-interdiction projects.<sup>19</sup>

The purpose of the Foreign Military Funding (FMF) program, which enjoys an increase of more than 50 percent to a total of \$38.5 million USD in the proposed budget, is to ensure that advances in security are irreversible and to maintain U.S.-Colombian military ties after an accord

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<sup>15</sup> Norman, Jack. "Crunching the Numbers of Obama's Peace Colombia Proposal." *Colombiareports.com*. February 24, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiareports.com/161768-2/>.

<sup>16</sup> Department of State. "Congressional Budget Justification." Pg. 93. *Usaid.gov*. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/9276/252179.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Isaacson, Adam. "'Peace Colombia': What's New About It?" *Washington Office on Latin America*. February 16, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. [http://www.wola.org/commentary/peace\\_colombia\\_whats\\_new\\_about\\_it](http://www.wola.org/commentary/peace_colombia_whats_new_about_it).

<sup>18</sup> Department of State. "Congressional Budget Justification." Pg. 109. *Usaid.gov*. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/9276/252179.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Norman, Jack. "Crunching the Numbers of Obama's Peace Colombia Proposal." *Colombiareports.com*. February 24, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiareports.com/161768-2/>.

is signed.<sup>20</sup> This point has sparked some curiosity among analysts because its purposes are vaguely stated. A goal may be to continue strengthening the armed forces in the face of regional political instability caused by national and foreign factions that are against both countries' government policies.

The last U.S assistance program in the package is for Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR). Its proposed \$21 million USD funding, represents an increase of \$17 million USD. This increase is mostly intended to provide funding for a Norwegian initiative in the removal of land mines.<sup>21</sup>

## **The United States and the Peace Agreement**

Apart from its professed goals of anti-terrorism, and drug trade elimination, the most important aspect of U.S.-Colombian military support policy is to allow for Washington's economic and political projections. Colombia represents a niche of vast economic resources with important industries in the mining and agropecuary sectors.<sup>22</sup> It has a customary policy of openness to foreign investment, allowing foreign corporations to exploit natural resources, compete for markets, and privatize state-owned enterprises.<sup>23</sup> The United States is Colombia's biggest trading partner, with large conglomerates in the country. The export of unprocessed commodities such as oil and gold, among others, interests these businesses -as does the country's agropecuary potential. The U.S. and Colombian governments promote such exploitation under the banner of generating economic growth and development.

Central to all of this, the United States benefits from the 2012 free trade agreement, which has pit Colombian and U.S. producers in an unequal battle for markets that has produced a sharp decline in Colombia's exports of agricultural products.<sup>24</sup> This policy worsens displacement, poverty, and the drug trade. The controversial free trade agreement has prompted generalized strikes demanding its removal throughout the country.<sup>25</sup>

Parallel to this, political alliance is an important part of U.S. interest in Latin America. While the leftist base has recently suffered setbacks throughout the southern cone, its overall presence personified by Cuba and Venezuela cannot be debated, along with its expansion in the past decade in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil. With strong roots in the Colombian

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<sup>20</sup> Department of State. "Congressional Budget Justification." Pg. 120. Usaid.gov. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/9276/252179.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Norman, Jack. "Crunching the Numbers of Obama's Peace Colombia Proposal." Colombiareports.com. February 24, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiareports.com/161768-2/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Colombia Economy Profile 2014." Indexmundi.com. Accessed April 26, 2016. [http://www.indexmundi.com/colombia/economy\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/colombia/economy_profile.html).

"Cuentas Económicas Nacionales Trimestrales." Dane.gov. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/cuentas-economicas/cuentas-trimestrales>.

<sup>23</sup> "Economy of Colombia." Traveldoc.com. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://www.traveldocs.com/world-atlas/Colombia-atlas49>.

<sup>24</sup> Suarez, Aurelio, and Fernando Barberi. "Efectos Del TLC Colombia-EE.UU. Sobre El Agro, Los Rostros Y Las Cifras." Pgs. 114-118. Policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org. Accessed April 26, 2016. [http://policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Efectos\\_TLC\\_Colombia\\_EE.UU.\\_sobre\\_el\\_agro.\\_Cifras\\_y\\_Rostros.pdf](http://policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Efectos_TLC_Colombia_EE.UU._sobre_el_agro._Cifras_y_Rostros.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> "Colombians Plan 'pots and Pans' Protest." Stream.aljazeera.com. August 26, 2013. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/201308262247-0023005>.

conflict, the leftist influence continues as a dissonant component in U.S. plans for South America. The policies of Venezuela, for one, have been at odds with the U.S. vision of development. Called by some “the Israel of Latin America,” Colombia is the United States’ strongest ally in the region, the largest recipient of U.S. aid in the hemisphere for years, as well as a backer of Washington-encouraged free market policies.<sup>26</sup>

Demobilization of the FARC is in Washington's interest. U. S. policymakers push open trade, access to markets, and the privatization of national goods; the FARC are focused on rural redistribution and strong government policies against foreign enmeshment in the development of the Colombian economy.<sup>27</sup> Guerrillas have militarily targeted industrial infrastructure such as oil pipelines and taxed contractors working in conflict zones they manage.<sup>28</sup> This behavior represents vexing inconveniences for corporations with industries in rural areas. U. S. priorities in the region have traditionally been carried out in conjunction with the very political elites and the social circles that are the FARC’s traditional opponents.

### Land Reform in Peace Talks

According to Isaacson, no restitution of lands from the current landholders is mentioned in the peace treaty currently under discussion.<sup>29</sup> The middle ground for rural reform revolves around the reinforcement of an already existing law -- Act 160 of 1994 --that regards denominated “peasant reserve zones” as rural spaces legally reserved for peasants. Isaacson says that an issue is agreeing on the number of these reserves: seven so far despite the 50 the FARC hopes for. According to Alfredo Molano, a National University of Colombia sociologist whose research is devoted to the Colombian conflict, these zones are designed to prevent land concentration since titles to the land would have specific legal limits.<sup>30</sup>

Looking on are the multinationals. Demobilization of the guerrillas appeals to them. In the figure of the “Zidres”, the Colombian government is prepared to grant access to large agro companies to exploit land, with the condition of associating with the local peasants, who out of options only become their rural employees.<sup>31</sup> These factors are troublesome to the achievement of stability in the region; multinationals have a poor record in guaranteeing human rights, are instead associated with pollution and social turmoil, and usually are holders of immense

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<sup>26</sup> Arnault, Chris. "Did Colombia's War on Drugs Succeed?" Aljazeera.com. May 22, 2014. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/05/did-colombia-war-drugs-succeed-201452264737690753.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army." Stanford University. August 15, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/89>.

<sup>28</sup> "Emails Show Colombia's FARC Intensifying Extortion Despite Peace Talks." Emails Show Colombia's FARC Intensifying Extortion Despite Peace Talks. September 29, 2014. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/colombia-farc-intensifying-extortion-despite-peace-talks>.

<sup>29</sup> "17 March 2016\_ Understanding the Colombian Peace Process." Livestream - William J. Perry, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. March 17, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. 34:09. [http://original.livestream.com/chds/video?clipId=pla\\_54f440f0-4a73-4fbd-96a8-eebf4d9ff96c](http://original.livestream.com/chds/video?clipId=pla_54f440f0-4a73-4fbd-96a8-eebf4d9ff96c).

<sup>30</sup> "De La Guerra a La Democracia - Alfredo Molano." Canal Cultura. February 01, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. 11:43. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rrGHPwct4A>.

<sup>31</sup> Molano, Alfredo. "Despunta Otro Conflicto: Empresarios vs. Colonos." E!Espectador. November 14, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/despunta-otro-conflicto-empresarios-vs-colonos>.

influence over governments in the name of profit.<sup>32</sup> Molano points to the case of Cargill, an American multinational, which created at least 25 anonymous businesses to purchase an otherwise-illegal amount of land. Through this process, and in violation of Act 160 of 1994, Cargill acquired about 39,759 hectares (98,205 acres) of land intended for peasants; the law prohibits such a large acquisition of land by a single entity in these reserves.<sup>33</sup>

## **The FARC's Political Participation**

Another customary issue has been the guerrillas' aspiration to political participation, represented now in the FARC's projected recognition by the Colombian government as a political party. With leftist-strongholds still present throughout Latin America, it is peculiar that Washington would support the political recognition of dissenting political factions by supporting the Havana process, which could ratify the transformation of FARC into one. The FARC are currently listed as a terrorist organization in Washington's book.<sup>34</sup> Despite its prospective legitimization as a political party, the FARC nevertheless will have to stand incarceration of important leaders, restricted office eligibility, and extremely low popularity in several Colombian circles, factors that combine to limit political maneuverability. Referring to the FARC's potential political success, President Santos has expressed certain doubts as to whether they will ever attain ultimate power due to their "antiquated beliefs and obsolete ideas". Santos has also said that without the FARC, the left in Colombia would have more space and popularity.<sup>35</sup>

## **Other Aspects at the Talks**

Other components of the agreement link U.S. and FARC interests. Both have committed to the elimination of drug trade, an enterprise in which the FARC could prove valuable, since they have knowledge of the trade's functioning, are committed to encouraging alternative trade, and their unification with other major Colombian forces could make eradication efforts more effective. Furthermore, decommissioning the weapons now in the FARC's possession and ending the armed conflict involving the guerrilla group could bring to a close the issue of insecurity for industry in rural spaces.

At any rate it is important to understand, as Molano has stated, that the Havana talks are mainly aimed at stopping armed conflict; an accord will not be an absolute solution to the conflict. That the conflict will continue, albeit not as an armed one,<sup>36</sup> is most evident in the

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<sup>32</sup> "Colombia: Where U.S. Policy Kills." Witness for Peace. Accessed April 26, 2016.

[https://witnessforpeacesw.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/colombia\\_multinationals\\_factsheet.pdf](https://witnessforpeacesw.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/colombia_multinationals_factsheet.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Alfredo. "¿Simplificando Con Baldíos?" Colombia: Por Una Paz Estable Y Duradera. June 24, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiaporunapazestableyduradera.blogspot.com/2013/06/alfredo-molano-simplificando-con-baldios.html>.

Cohen, Steven. "Multinational Grabs Colombia Land through Loophole in Property Laws: Oxfam Report." Colombia Reports. September 28, 2013. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://colombiareports.com/worlds-largest-land-trader-circumvents-colombias-property-laws-oxfam-intl-report/>.

<sup>34</sup> "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." U.S. Department of State. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> "Santos Afirmo Que No Cree Que Las Farc Lleguen Al Poder." El Universal Cartagena. February 24, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. <http://www.eluniversal.com.co/colombia/santos-afirmo-que-no-cree-que-las-farc-lleguen-al-poder-220003>.

<sup>36</sup> "De La Guerra a La Democracia - Alfredo Molano." Canal Cultura. February 01, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. 5:54.

exclusion from the Havana conversations of discussion regarding Colombia's economic policy; the severing from the talks of this major area of disagreement in the conflict between the guerrillas and the Colombian government obviated a potential obstacle to a signed accord. The post-accord stage is set for continued political resistance against U.S. and other foreign interests by affected communities in Colombia's peasant base---which has been the largest draft pool for the FARC---as well as by indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the generalized optimism surrounding the Colombian peace talks, which began outside of Oslo and continue in Havana, their most relevant achievement would be the exit of the FARC as an armed force. This could bring some transformation but would not fully address critical root causes of the conflict, which remain. Among these are the vast exploitation of land by multinationals and big landowners, and structures encouraging the development of their industries that ignore the claims of the peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities that inhabit these regions.

In the current order of things, the interests of elites supported by Washington and the Colombian government remain most stable. Although they seem irreconcilable, some U.S. policies---including open markets, enhanced regional influence, and the ongoing availability of natural resources in Colombia for U.S. companies---could continue in the face of some of the longstanding claims of a leftist armed group. An accord would be oblivious to the continuation of dependence on natural resources as Colombia's main economic driver. Such a policy would have consequences such as the hindered development of national industries and the continued addiction to exploitation of finite natural commodities in Colombia and reliance on their volatile markets, along with its social implications.

With these conditions, it is difficult to imagine a country in peace. More sensible might be thinking of Colombia as continuing in a conflict in which underlying issues will be discussed democratically rather than with guns, within an atmosphere set on strong ongoing security measures. The FARC have historically been recognized as a political voice through the sole initiation of the talks. Their demobilization would signal a historical change that projects the reconciliation of a nation. It is a component of Colombia's continuous coming of age that will set the stage for new developments.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rrGHPwct4A>.