



Iván Duque assumes the Presidency; August 7, 2018 at the Bolivar Square in Bogota, Colombia.(Presidency of the Mexican Republic)

Security Challenges of the New Colombian Administration

By David E. Spencer

Colombia faces one of the most complex security situations in its recent history, as it is simultaneously confronted by four intertwined security challenges—increased drug production, increased organized crime, peace negotiation complications, and a volatile border with Venezuela—that have formed a perfect Gordian Knot. The new administration led by President Iván Duque must cut this knot to maintain the security advances made by its preceding administrations during the past two decades.

Drug trafficking reached new records in 2017; during this year coca crops were estimated to extend to 209,000 hectares, with 921 metric tons of cocaine production annually.¹ By contrast, there were 136,000 hectares of coca producing around 500 metric tons of cocaine when the U.S. Congress deemed it enough of an emergency to implement Plan Colombia in 1999.² Many of the peasants who had hoped to benefit from reconstruction and crop substitution programs have instead opted for the higher profits and greater market security of coca cultivation. The increased cocaine production has caused a corresponding explosion of organized crime and violence, to include the presence of Mexican cartels, strengthened criminal groups; National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas; and an increasing number of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) dissidents. Progress on peace accord implementation has been weak; resources have been inadequate, and implementation has been inefficient and poorly coordinated. Further destabilizing Colombia's security situation, Venezuela's political, economic and social crisis, threatens to spillover and derail Colombia's peace process.

In many ways Duque's election in June, was a referendum on the country's unhappiness with the peace accord negotiated by his predecessor, Juan Manuel Santos, with the FARC guerrillas. Duque, representing the opposition coalition led by former president Alvaro Uribe, won a clear victory over former senator and Bogota mayor Gustavo Petro, 54 to 42 percent.³

However, the election also revealed how divided the country is over the peace agreement, not so much because of the voting percentages, but rather because of the significantly polarized platforms of the two leading candidates. One of the principle aspects that facilitated the enormous security gains of the pre-Santos, Uribe administration (2002–10) was the remarkable consensus that came together behind the President to prosecute the war against the FARC and ELN insurgencies, combat drug trafficking, and demobilize the so-called paramilitaries. An equally remarkable consensus developed in the United States among Democrats

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and Republicans in Congress that provided significant moral and material support to three successive Colombian presidents to combat drug trafficking and defeat terrorism through Plan Colombia. Disagreements over the peace negotiations with the FARC during the Santos administration shattered the consensus in Colombia. Surprisingly, the consensus in the United States has remained intact, but has grown fragile given the recent accelerated growth of coca crops and the fragility of the peace process. It may remain intact as the new Colombian administration's positions are closely aligned to the United States' concerns. However, these challenges may be greater than the time and resources allotted to President Duque. Reviewing these challenges in detail will help us understand what he is up against.

Increased Drug Production

Coca crop reduction is a top priority for the Duque administration. The 2016 peace accords agreed to end aerial spraying and replace it with crop substitution and voluntary eradication, with which the FARC had agreed to help. Experimentation with crop substitution in Catatumbo and Putumayo began in 2013 but did not go well. Coca crops expanded and money spent on the substitution programs failed to produce demonstrable results. Nevertheless, nationwide crop spraying effectively ended in the last quarter of 2015 as a demonstration of good faith by the government to FARC, but crop substitution and voluntary eradication did not start up until the end of 2016. As a result, coca crops shot up from around 78,000 hectares in 2012 to 209,000 hectares in 2017.⁴



On September 26, 2016 Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos signs historic peace agreement with the FARC.

Substitution and manual eradication simply have not been able to keep up with the explosion of coca cultivation. So far, the estimated 83,000 families that have signed up for the substitution program only control an estimated 49,000 hectares of coca, or 23 percent of Colombia's 2017 coca crop. As of August, first payments had been made to some of the families, and more than 26,000 (56 percent) hectares of a planned 50,000 for 2017 had been voluntarily eradicated and verified by the UN (12.4 percent of all of Colombia's 2017 coca estimate).⁵ Coca eradication goals for 2017 were 100,000 hectares of coca (50,000 via voluntary eradication and 50,000 via forced eradication). Last year the goal was 110,000 hectares of coca (40,000 voluntary and 70,000 forced). By the end of June, the combined results from 2017 and 2018 reported by the government were the forced eradication of 70,000 (58 percent of goals) and 26,000 voluntarily eradicated hectares (29 percent of overall target). Between voluntary and forced eradication they have reached just under 46 percent of their combined 2017/18 goals.⁶ What is clear, is that the efforts of the past two years are simply not keeping up with replanting as the overall crop figures continue to grow despite eradication. From 2016–17 they grew by 11 percent.⁷

Furthermore, there are at least a similar number of families, controlling a roughly equivalent number of coca hectares that are eligible for the crop substitution if the government is serious about having a real impact. However, the substitution program is enormously expensive for dubious results. If we extrapolate from the figures above, to voluntarily eradicate 100,000 hectares of coca, or roughly half of the 2017 crop estimate, the government would need to sign up a total of 166,000 families. Under the current program, each family receives a benefit package equivalent to \$11,000 per family during two years. In other words the amount needed would be \$1.8 billion total or roughly \$900 million per year. By comparison, the drug spraying operations funded

by the United States cost about 65 million dollars per year.⁸ So far, the Colombian state has not been able to provide that level of funding. From 2016–18 the Colombian government spent 525 billion pesos or roughly \$175 million on the program (less than 50 percent of the cost for the families currently in the program and far less than amount required to make a real dent in cultivation).⁹ Clearly something additional needs to be done, and the Duque administration is convinced that reviving spraying is the answer they seek.

Legislation to revive aerial spraying is already in the works. However, to avoid the accusations of collateral damage, the administration is talking about spraying with drones versus aircraft, although it is not clear whether such drones currently exist or if they will have to be invented (experimentation with off-the-shelf drones has not been encouraging).¹⁰ How to resolve the crop reduction problem while striking a balance between eradication and substitution is a conundrum which the Duque administration needs to make a top priority.

Narcotics Lead to Increased Organized Crime

The main reason Colombia is interested in reducing coca crops is to reduce the accompanying criminality and violence that is making governance of the rural areas and peace implementation so difficult. Violence inevitably accompanies the illicit drug trade because, since there is no law that regulates it, the only way to make sure that agreements are fulfilled is through force. It logically follows that where there is more at stake, the need for force is greater, so the violence accompanying drug trafficking is very high due to the enormous profits that are generated. Force is used to prevent rivals from taking over the business, to take business away from others, to enforce agreements and to resist the efforts of the state to disrupt the criminal enterprise.

As the global demand for illicit cocaine burgeons, in Europe, in Asia and even Latin America, criminal organizations that dominate the trade have become more sophisticated, often now resembling armies, in many cases using equipment and carrying weapons that are more advanced than those being carried by the police and militaries that confront them.¹¹

Colombia did initially experience a significant reduction of violence in the rural zones where the FARC had been dominant before demobilization. However, soon afterward guerrilla organizations, criminal organizations, the ELN guerrillas, and dissident FARC immediately began filling the vacuum. The levels of violence have been rising ever since.¹² One of the most disheartening developments is the growth of the dissident FARC.

When the FARC demobilized, the Colombian government anticipated that a small minority would refuse to adhere to the peace process. Just as anticipated, several hundred guerrillas did not join the rest in the demobilization camps. It was expected that these groups would devolve into purely criminal gangs without ideology that would be gradually hunted down and incarcerated. However, instead of shrinking, the dissidents have grown. An article in *Semana* magazine last July asserted that some of the 29 dissident groups were attempting to reconstitute the FARC.¹³ It indicated that the number of dissidents, reported as less than 500 shortly after demobilization, has now tripled to nearly 1,500. They are comprised of the initial group that never demobilized, those that demobilized and have now returned to the jungle, but more importantly, new members who have been aggressively recruited by the groups. According to *Semana*, the dissidents' objective was to reach 8,000 by the end of this year. This would be at least as many, if not more than the number of FARC guerrillas that demobilized in early 2017. Another source of potential recruitment are the thousands

of FARC militias that were never identified or demobilized with the main force.

The one puzzling aspect of the new FARC is although they talk of revolution, according to *Semana*, they do not seem to be interested in taking power, but instead in dominating the drug trafficking industry. They reportedly control routes in Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela, and assassinate community leaders advocating for voluntary eradication in exchange for government benefits packages.¹⁴

The real issue of concern is the nature of the relationship between the dissident FARC and the demobilized FARC. While it has been commonly asserted that there was little or no connection between demobilized and dissidents, recent events provide the basis to question that assertion. In April 2018, the Colombian *Fiscalia* (Prosecutor General) arrested FARC leader, Seuxis Paucis Hernández Solarte, AKA Jesus Santrich, for allegedly conspiring to traffic 10 tons of cocaine to the United States. Santrich was a member of the FARC High Command and the headquarters staff of the Caribbean Bloc. He was also one of the principal negotiators of the peace agreement in Havana, Cuba. His arrest was an enormous political embarrassment to the FARC. Santrich was slated to occupy one of the 10 non-competitive legislative positions, conceded to the FARC as part of the peace agreement for two electoral periods. After that, the FARC will have to compete for those positions. The FARC has not named a replacement to fill this seat.

The *Fiscalia* also arrested Marlon Marin, the nephew of FARC Secretariat member Ivan Márquez,¹⁵ who was also the commander of the Caribbean Bloc and another chief member of the peace delegation in Havana. The *Fiscalia* and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had overwhelming evidence that Santrich was going to provide the Mexican cartels with 10 tons of cocaine to ship to the United States.¹⁶ That cocaine was being provided, at least in part, by FARC dissidents.¹⁷

Although the public presumption has been that Santrich was acting alone and without FARC sanction, this is a probably a pleasant fiction that does not hold up under closer examination.

The FARC—particularly their leadership—is a highly disciplined organization that makes collective decisions and executes them according to a concise plan. Although the FARC may not always succeed, the movement has consistently demonstrated the ability to collectively execute plans designed by their leadership. Early each year, each FARC front, column and company held a conference, where they reviewed the past year’s activities, dissected successes and failures, and then made plans for the current year in accordance to the strategic plan. The resulting reports and plans were then submitted to higher headquarters for review and approval. This respect for hierarchy and adherence to strategy was among the reasons that the FARC proved so difficult to defeat.

In this context, it is very out of character for a long-time member of the FARC High Command, and one of the prominent peace negotiators to have carried out something like this without being instructed from above. This not only put his personal reputation at risk, but also the entire peace process. Had he acted alone, it would have been logical for his former comrades to abandon him; instead they jumped to his defense, advocating against his extradition, threatening that this would spell the end of the peace process.¹⁸

Furthermore, two prominent guerrilla leaders—Ivan Márquez, who is also designated to occupy a Senate seat, and “*El Paisa*,” a former FARC special forces commander known for his daring kidnapping operations, executions and arms trafficking, each left their demobilization areas and went to historical FARC regions in the Southeast where the FARC dissidents have established presence as well. It has been reported that Ivan Márquez is also being investigated for drug trafficking and

was probably working in concert with Santrich.²⁰ However, the evidence was not consolidated yet, when the *Fiscalia* decided to move against Santrich. Not surprisingly, it was Ivan Márquez, who was the most vocal in defense of Santrich.

In September 2018, the UN announced that seven additional prominent FARC leaders had abandoned the demobilization zones across the country, evading their security details in violation of the peace accords.²¹ Besides the aforementioned leaders, the deserters include Romaña, Albeiro Córdoba, Iván Alí, Fabián Ramírez Cabrera, Zarco Aldinever, Manuel Político, and Enrique Marulanda—all prominent first- and second-tier FARC commanders.²² Other sources indicate that as much as 60 percent of the demobilized guerrillas have left the demobilization zones, many of whom have joined the dissidents, ELN or criminal groups.²³ While it is too early to predict a collapse of the peace accord, and while other peace processes have gone through similar and even greater crises, these developments are certainly of great concern. The bottom line is that these events call into question FARC’s sincerity in terms of truly abandoning crime and points to a possible attempt to use narcotics financed politics to achieve what they could not on the battlefield, an increased share of political power.

Peace Negotiation Complications

Independent of the FARC or the FARC dissidents, narcotics is undermining the peace agreement in another important way. It is undermining the government’s ability to carry out the terms of the peace agreement, and perhaps more importantly to be sufficiently competitive to reduce the attractiveness of participating in the illicit market.

How one views the progress on the peace accords depends on whether one takes the view of a glass half empty or a glass half full. Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute has been monitoring and analyzing peace implementation. In August the Institute

reported that, compared to other peace accords, progress in Colombia was advancing at an average pace.²⁴ Of the 578 stipulations in the accord, 61 percent had been acted on to some degree and 39 percent had not yet been implemented at all. Of the 61 percent of the enacted stipulations in the peace accord, about half had been fully or intermediately implemented (21 percent and 9 percent respectively) and half minimally implemented (31 percent).²⁵ Implementation has been relatively successful in terms of the concentration, disarmament, and demobilization of FARC combatants. Where there are significant concerns is in security and protection for human rights advocates and social leaders; the slow pace of long-term political, economic and social integration, and required implementation legislation. There have also been

significant difficulties to implement gender, ethnic, and territorial approaches that are key features of the peace agreement.²⁶

The Kroc Institute puts a positive spin on the progress of the peace accord. However, the disappearance of 60 percent of the demobilized guerrillas from the concentration zones, (an estimated 4,200 of the 7,000 that are estimated to have demobilized) and several top leaders of the FARC calls into question this positive view. This is especially true given the evidence that most of these demobilized members are returning to an illegal life with either the dissidents, ELN or criminal bands. It is precisely the government's failure to fully implement the provisions of the accord as identified by the Kroc Institute, that are providing justification for abandonment of the demobilization zones by the former guerrillas.



Venezuelans cross the border between Ecuador and Colombia in search of new opportunities. (VOA)

The Duque government has repeatedly stated that it will not abrogate the peace accord, but has also said that it wants to modify the peace accord to make it viable. One of the major areas where it wants to make the greatest modification is in the treatment of drug trafficking activities. A great triumph for the FARC was when the Santos government agreed to make the crime of drug trafficking by FARC members an offense connected to the conflict; in other words, a crime that was eligible for much reduced penalties and no extradition under the transitional justice agreement known as the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, or “JEP” by its Spanish acronym. Duque wants to go back on this agreement and make drug trafficking activities ineligible for the JEP. He also wants to make drug trafficking organizations ineligible to receive peace benefits as was proposed by some of the militarized criminal bands, and considered by the Santos government.

This could produce a major change in the peace accord, as a large proportion of the FARC fronts were involved to some degree in drug trafficking as a primary source of financing. Large numbers of these fronts’ personnel were dedicated to controlling and taxing the illicit business in their areas of operation. While Colombian justice would not likely go after the low-level guerrillas, virtually all of the cadre in these fronts were heavily involved in directing and controlling the illicit business. This could ultimately derail the peace agreement.

One of the things that many analysts keep forgetting is that this is really the first peace agreement that has been implemented in the world in the context of such a large parallel narcotics economy that can be accessed by nearly anyone. Narcotics undermines the government programs because it is more consistent, reliable, and pays at least as much or more, than the government social and development programs which are not as well run, and are significantly underfunded, and inconsistent. Unless the Duque administration makes

significant progress against coca cultivation and the drug industry, it is very possible that further progress on peace implementation will be difficult at best, if not impossible.

Volatile Border with Venezuela

The immediate threat from neighboring Venezuela is mass migration that is overwhelming Colombia’s humanitarian and social institutions. However, it is more than just a humanitarian crisis as desperate, unattended migrants are being aggressively recruited by illicit organizations, causing a surge of criminal activity along both sides of the border. These problems are being fed by Venezuelan government mismanagement that has produced hyperinflation, resource scarcity, and economic depression.

In the past couple of years more than 2.3 million people have migrated from Venezuela. This is nearly 8 percent of Venezuela’s entire population. This does not include illegal migration or those still in transit, which means the number could be much higher. Some estimates place the figure as high as 4 million.²⁷ This is the largest mass migration in recent history on the continent—not due to war, but due to economic collapse and scarcity of basic needs, especially food. The top destinations of Venezuelan migrants in 2017 were Colombia, the United States, Spain, Chile, and Peru. Colombia absorbed the most—more than the next two highest combined.²⁸ The Red Cross has reported that from 2014–18 more than a million Venezuelans sought refuge in Colombia.²⁹

The quantity of Venezuelan refugees is overwhelming Colombia’s absorptive capacity. Additionally, where Colombian policy was initially very generous toward Venezuelan migrants, since February 2018, it has become increasingly restrictive. The current rules lock out many Venezuelans from the formal economy, so that a large proportion are now working informally. This makes them easy prey for armed groups and criminal organizations. Venezuelan youth are being recruited by both along

the border which operate their enterprises on both sides of the frontier.³⁰

These criminal enterprises have a first and second degree cyclical impact on Colombia; they directly impact Colombia with violent criminal activity, and they sustain Venezuela's humanitarian crisis that, in turn, impacts Colombia through an immigration crisis. Many analysts have been dismayed at the ability of the Venezuelan government to stay in power. Historically, many governments have collapsed in the face of similar onslaughts of social protest and international condemnation. Yet, the Venezuelan government continues to survive. Why?

First, the Venezuelan opposition is not as unified as it needs to be, and they are riddled with elements that have been compromised by the regime. Once in power, Chavez found that it was easier to control the opposition by co-opting them with money, rather than to repress them. Many are still receiving benefits from the regime. This makes it impossible for the opposition coalition to be effective, both because significant sectors within the opposition refuse to take a hard line against the regime, and because these same actors keep the government apprised of all of the opposition's plans.

Second, the basic needs emergency in the country has increased the government's control. The government keeps track of those who oppose the government, and those who do not vote for the official candidates or support them. These people do not receive their weekly Local Supply and Production Committee (CLAP) boxes of basic needs supplies.³¹ If one cannot emigrate, receiving

a CLAP box can literally determine the difference between life and death. These boxes keep people in line. However, even those who receive the boxes still experience hunger, so they only keep the population in line to a certain degree. Furthermore, the opposition members who do not receive the CLAP boxes are essentially forced to leave; with only the loyalists and those without options remaining behind.

Generally, there are two factors that are keeping the Venezuelan government in power. The first factor is support from China and Russia, seemingly aimed at foiling U.S. policy interests in the region. Even though Venezuela is not repaying their loans,

these countries continue to extend credit to Venezuela, for the only apparent reason of sustaining an opponent of the United States in power. Besides money, Russia also sends humanitarian support, such as large shipments of wheat.³² The thinking may be that as long as Venezuela irritates the United States, the superpower will pay less attention to Russian and Chinese activities elsewhere. Equally critical to propping up the Venezuelan government is the second

Generally, there are two factors that are keeping the Venezuelan government in power. The first factor is support from China and Russia, seemingly aimed at foiling U.S. policy interests in the region.

factor: criminalization of the State. Venezuela has driven its economy, and its oil industry, into the ground through mismanagement and undisciplined spending; meanwhile, criminal enterprise has systematically taken over. For some years it has been well known that elements of the Venezuelan government, with the encouragement of Hugo Chavez, and now Nicolás Maduro, have increasingly gotten involved in drug trafficking. This may have started out as a way of generating personal wealth, and of generating untraceable money for clandestine activities. However

now, drug trafficking seems to be a major source of regime income. Colombian cocaine is shipped by land through Vichada and Arauca departments, across the border into Venezuela and flown from that country to the United States and other destinations. This was facilitated by the Chavez' regime's shutting down of U.S. drug trafficking monitoring radars that operated on its territory by agreement with previous regimes. According to deserters it is also known that the Venezuelan government and military officials have been involved in trafficking cocaine from Bolivia to Venezuela and then on to other destinations, including Cuba.³³ Moreover, the government's involvement has not been limited to drug trafficking, but has extended to nearly all imaginable types of illegal activity.

Whether it is drug trafficking, illegal mining, money laundering, or other criminal enterprises, both the government as a whole, and government officials individually, have been and are heavily involved. Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA, essentially bankrupt as an oil company, has reportedly become a huge money laundering mechanism for criminal profits.³⁴ Therefore, as the regime's money is increasingly from criminal activity, their dependence on the licit economy is much reduced. So, in the short and maybe even mid-term, the Venezuelan government is not vulnerable to traditional international measures such as economic sanctions or other forms of isolation. However, the pressure on Venezuela's legal economy does have an impact on Venezuela's population, particularly those not associated with the regime.

Coca production and trafficking in Colombia feed a vicious cycle that makes the border crisis with Venezuela even more acute. Increased criminality creates increased chaos in Colombia and generates money that strengthens the Venezuelan regime. Thus strengthened, the regime maintains policies which perpetuate the humanitarian crisis, increasing the impact on Colombia through mass

migration as well as the increasing numbers of desperate Venezuelans who are being recruited by Colombian criminal and terrorist organizations. Additionally, propped up by Chinese and Russian money and aid that fill the gaps, the regime can sustain itself in the short and perhaps even mid-term. No one should be surprised at the longevity of the regime compared to similar regimes in the past. The criminalization of the Venezuelan state has changed the rules.

The final question is whether or not Venezuela poses a conventional threat to Colombia. Could Venezuela attempt a conventional war to distract its population from the internal crisis? On paper, Venezuela's military looks formidable. Under President Chavez it acquired large amounts of mostly Russian, but also some Chinese military equipment, to include advanced tanks, armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft missiles, artillery, helicopters, and aircraft, particularly the Sukhoi SU-30 fighter. However, it appears that most of this weaponry might be useful to intimidate the political opposition in Caracas; it looks good on parade, but not much more.

In 2008, Chavez ordered ten battalions to the Colombian border to up the ante with that country, after the latter raided a camp just inside Ecuadorean territory, killing Raul Reyes, one of the members of the FARC secretariat.³⁵ The battalions never did fully arrive, and elements of them were strewn for weeks along the entire route between Caracas and the border. Although this was ten years ago, this was also at the apex of Venezuela's power. So, if they were unable to mobilize adequately in 2008, it is not likely they could do any better today. Subject to the same politicization and mismanagement as the rest of the country, it is highly improbable that Venezuela could mobilize, much less sustain, a conventional conflict with Colombia. This conclusion is supported, for example, by the many videos being circulated on social media of Venezuelan troops looking for food in garbage cans

like much of the rest of the population.³⁶ They have no time to prepare for training or war with Colombia; it takes all of their energy just to survive.

A more likely, but also equally irrational scenario is that after some kind of escalation of tensions between Colombia and Venezuela, the Venezuelans would carry out some sort of single strike against an either symbolic or economic target within Colombia. Venezuela's SU-30s are capable of such a strike against which Colombia is vulnerable. Government buildings in Bogota are obvious political targets, and Colombia's oil refineries are potential economic targets. Colombia's F-21 Kfir fighter aircraft are outdated, and totally outmatched by Venezuela's modern SU-30s. Furthermore, Colombia has little anti-air defense. However, Colombia has a highly developed irregular warfare capability and could carry out guerrilla-style raids nearly at will against Venezuelan forces, lines of supply, communications and infrastructure. So, while a conventional strike from Venezuela is possible, it would produce consequences that the regime could not control, and therefore is highly unlikely. Unless things suddenly change, Colombia need not waste time and resources on worrying about this threat.

Conclusion

The Colombian government faces a complex mix of internal and external security challenges: implementing peace, criminal organizations, old and new terrorist organizations, and external pressure from a neighboring Venezuela in crisis. All of these are complicated by an exploding narcotics economy caused by a well-intentioned but inadequate crop substitution and manual eradication program in place of the old spraying program. Without narcotics trafficking, or with a much reduced drug trafficking industry, the situation would probably be manageable. But, given the current levels of narcotics cultivation and trafficking, will the Duque administration be able to successfully overcome these threats?

Certainly, the Duque administration seems to be saying the right things. However, so far that is all it has seemed to be, just talk. No substantial new policies have been forthcoming. This is unlike the presidency of Duque's mentor, Álvaro Uribe Velez who, from very early in his 2002 administration, implemented a series of revolutionary initiatives that quickly began to turn the security situation around.

A significant obstacle to this kind of revolutionary policy has been the reduction of state funds due to inflation and a stagnating economy, while there has been a simultaneous increase in obligations due to the peace accords. So, in effect, strengthening of one policy area, has necessarily meant the weakening of another. These trade-offs have caused Duque some problems in a political game where his best outcome may be to minimize losses, rather than maximize gains. Having to deal with problems that he inherited from the Santos government, Duque has claimed that he is not at fault. True or not, now that he is in charge these have become his problems. He has to make the tough choices to find the solutions and bear the blame or glory of their outcome.

Duque is not a career politician, but is rather a technocrat and intellectual; this is perhaps simultaneously a strength and weakness. He seems to think that if he can just craft a sufficiently cogent argument, he can convince his opponents of its merits and overcome their opposition. Additionally, he seems to be reluctant to say hard things in an attempt to be friends with everyone. He is not the master political brawler like his mentor Uribe, who could outmaneuver his opponents at every turn, and he is not the coalition builder that was his immediate predecessor, Santos, who orchestrated multi-partisan legislation and policies by doling out quotas of the resulting power to the members.

Duque has renounced Santos' methods because of the real and perceived corruption that it attracted, and he is too nice to practice Uribe's methods. His virtue is his personal morality and his native

intelligence. However, that leaves him vulnerable to political spin by those who would do him harm. Gustavo Petro, Duque's rival who lost the presidency to him, has used just about any less popular proposal or law to call for social protest, such as Duque's defense of public university education, and most recently, the raising of taxes.³⁷ These social protests are becoming larger and increasingly violent. If Duque does not react with intelligent strength, they will make it impossible for him to govern.

This is the key to his success or failure—Duque needs to get out of his comfort zone and demonstrate strong leadership, break a few political eggs (not laws), and not be afraid to assume the consequences. So much of politics is perception, and so far the perception of President Duque has been as a consummate moderate, neither satisfying his would-be supporters, nor pacifying his opposition. His first 100 days have not been decisive. If he does not change the perception and get out in front of the issues, he will lose the support not only of his opponents, but his would-be supporters, becoming a lame-duck president, only holding the line against the security problems until a more decisive government from either side of the political spectrum replaces him, or the country is overwhelmed. PRISM

Notes

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² United States Government Accounting Office, "Drug Control: Coca Cultivation and Eradication Estimates in Colombia," GAO-03-319R Coca Estimates in Colombia, GAO Code 320115, January 16, 2003, available at <<https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03319r.pdf>>.

³ "Resultados Electorales 2018," Colombia.com, June 17, 2018, available at <<https://www.colombia.com/ecciones/2018/resultados/presidente.aspx?C=P2>>.

⁴ Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Coca

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⁵ Fundación Ideas para la Paz, *En qué va la sustitución de cultivos ilícitos: Desafíos y recomendaciones para el nuevo gobierno* [How is Crop Substitution Doing: Challenges and Recommendations for the New Government], Informe 05, August 2018.

⁶ CNN Español, "Colombia llega a niveles de récord en cultivos de coca y producción de cocaína, según informe de EE.UU" [Colombia Reaches New Record Levels in Coca Cultivation and Production of Cocaine, According to U.S. Report], CNN Español, June 25, 2018, available at <<https://cnn.espanol.cnn.com/2018/06/25/colombia-coca-cocaina-record-niveles-altos-estados-unidos-ondcp/>>; "El plan para erradicar 110.000 hectáreas de coca en Colombia este año" [The Plan to Eradicate 110,000 Hectares of Coca in Colombia This Year], El Tiempo.com, available at <<https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/plan-del-gobierno-para-erradicar-cultivos-de-coca-en-colombia-en-2018-236160>>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Notes from a meeting with the Colombian government on crop substitution attended by the author on March 8, 2017.

⁹ Op cit Fundación Ideas para la Paz.

¹⁰ David Alejandro Mercado, "Drones no fumigan coca con la rapidez esperada" [Drones Don't fumigate Coca as Quickly as Expected]: Luis Pérez," ElTiempo.com, December 1, 2018, available at <<https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/medellin/luis-perez-dice-que-los-drones-no-fumigan-la-coca-con-la-rapidez-esperada-300436>>.

¹¹ Brazil is now the second largest consumer of cocaine in the world, after the United States. See United Nations Office on Drug Control, "World Drug Report 2018," UNODC.org, available at <<https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/>>.

¹² "Este año van 3.491 asesinatos: lanzan alerta por aumento del 7%" [This year there have been 3,491 murders so far: an alert is sent because of increase of 7%], El Tiempo.com, available at <<https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/narcotrafico-enemigo-de-la-paz-asegura-fiscal-general-207270>>.

¹³ *Semana* magazine was given access to government intelligence for this article. Editorially, *Semana* has been supportive of the peace accord, so the intelligence was compelling for them to publish this article. Furthermore, this information squares with other reports viewed by the author.

¹⁴ "El Plan Para Refundar las Farc" [The Plan to Reorganize the FARC], *Semana.com*, July 15, 2018, available at <<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/>>

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