

UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Acceptable Violence: Legitimacy and the Contradictory Outcomes of US State-building in Colombia and Mexico

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4xp6f4wd>

Author

Cohen, Marcelle

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Acceptable Violence: Legitimacy and the Contradictory Outcomes of US State-building in
Colombia and Mexico

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

by

Marcelle Cohen

Committee in charge:

Professor Fernando López-Alves, Chair

Professor Jon Cruz, Chair

Professor Sarah Thébaud

June 2024

The dissertation of Marcelle Cohen is approved.

Sarah Thébaud

Jon Cruz

Fernando López-Alves

May 2024

Acceptable Violence: Legitimacy and the Contradictory Outcomes of U.S. State-building in
Colombia and Mexico

Acceptable Violence: Legitimacy and the Contradictory Outcomes of U.S. State-building in
Colombia and Mexico

Copyright © 2024
by
Marcelle Cohen

DEDICATION

To my papuch, Gabriel Cohen (1958-2021) who taught me to care deeply about US security assistance in Latin America. To my mamita, Barbara Eriv, who always held me up.

To Luis Ignacio Sandoval (1943-2022), an indefatigable optimist and peacemaker, who taught me that the road to peace is pacata, retaceada, and gatopardista, but it is not perrata. Pacata means prude. Retaceada means to give grudgingly, in small amounts. Gatopardista means that everything changes just so that everything stays the same. And perrata is what each step towards peace is not: insignificant.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the process of conducting this research, I spoke to over a hundred people who shared their stories with me and who helped me to make sense of very difficult questions. I am profoundly grateful and indebted to them. This project would have never come to light without their kindness and generosity.

I connected with my project through the women of Alianza IMP (*Alianza Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz*) in Bogotá. Their tireless courage, determination, and vision first introduced me to the politics of peace-making in Colombia. CESIG (Center for Studies on Security, Intelligence, and Governance) in Mexico City welcomed me as colleague. They offered considerable support with interviews, referrals, and a space for data collection. I first met Luis Ignacio Sandoval at the National Peace Council in Bogotá in 2015. We cultivated a ritual of long talks over coffee and ice cream on Sunday mornings. He loved his brother very much and he had grandnieces and nephews living in Somerville, Massachusetts. He wanted to learn to speak English with them over Skype. In exchange, he would tell me about Colombia's war and peace. When I returned to Bogotá in 2017, Luis invited me to join him at significant historical events related to the peace process. Although Luis passed away in 2022, he will always be remembered by everyone who knew him for his unflagging enthusiasm, optimism, and lifelong dedication to peace. Manuel Balcazar, Laura Carrera Lugo, Mario Arroyo-Juárez, Cesar Restrepo, Paola Holguin, and others I cannot name also went far, far out of their way to meet with me on numerous occasions and answer my countless questions. I thank them, along with many others, including Alejandro Ponce de Leon, who also helped connect me with participants in this project.

This project would also not have been possible without my dissertation committee. My co-chairs are Fernando López-Alves and Jon Cruz. Without Fernando's clear, big picture vision, analytical precision, and comparative-historical knowledge, this project would have sunk hopelessly into a morass of unintelligible data points. Jon Cruz's enthusiasm, deep theoretical knowledge, and intellectual creativity inspired and shaped my ideas, fostering my inclination toward cultural approaches. His nurturing guidance kept me grounded with warm support. Fernando and Jon collectively imparted the significance of grand ideas and a historical perspective. Sarah Thébaud's sharp perceptiveness and clarity amidst my analytical confusions, and thoughtful attention to detail, were invaluable.

I also extend my gratitude to other professors who played pivotal roles in shaping my academic growth. Alan Kuperman taught me how to think critically about foreign intervention and conflict management. Yan Long inspired me with her rigorous interview methods and transnational theory. Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi gave me a framework for understanding political culture and offered great support. Miguel Centeno introduced me to the intricate realm of Mexican politics and state-building.

I thank the Policy, Law, and Governance Working Group at Berkeley for providing a stimulating and warm community, as well as providing feedback on my ideas. Additionally, I am deeply thankful for my SWAG writing group buddies, who kept me motivated, accompanied, and sane throughout the dissertation data collection and writing process.

I received generous funding for my fieldwork and writing from: the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC), the Graduate Division at UC Santa Barbara, the Department of Sociology at UC Santa Barbara, and the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law.

Finally, I would absolutely not have been able to do any of this without my friends and family. They have given me so much, balancing an isolating and absorbing endeavor with fun, love, and life's joy. My partner, Collin, who was infinitely patient, even in the depths of my dissertation madness. My *papuch*, who lives on in my heart, and whose early lessons about Latin American politics drive me still. My mom, who travelled to Mexico City to be with me during my fieldwork—who was there, and has always been there for me.

VITA OF MARCELLE COHEN
May 2024

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies, University of California, Berkeley, May 2010

Master of Global Policy Studies, University of Texas at Austin, May 2016

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2024 (expected)

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2016-2019: Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

2021-Teaching Assistant, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley

2023-2024: Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley

PUBLICATIONS

“The Politics Behind Symbolic Representations of Sub-State Violence in the Colombian Peace Referendum,” Unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2019. 265 pp.

“Narco-terrorists of Revolutionaries? Anti-settlement Frames and Peace Settlement Electoral Outcomes,” *In preparation for journal submission.*

“The Mérida Initiative and the Making of National Security Policy in Mexico.” *In preparation for journal submission.*

AWARDS

Dissertation Fellowship, UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 2022

Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2022

Flacks Fund for the Study of Democratic Possibilities, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2022

Dissertation Research and Writing Fellowship, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2021

Department of Sociology Seed Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2021

Department of Sociology Seed Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020

Chancellor's Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2016

Meadows Fellow, RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service, University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Crooks Fellow, *Robert S. Strauss* Center for International Security and Law, University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Graduate School Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Graduate School Diversity Recruitment Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2014

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Peace and Conflict

Studies in Comparative Historical Sociology with Professor Fernando López-Alves

Studies in Culture with Professor Jon Cruz and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi

ABSTRACT

Acceptable Violence: Legitimacy and the Contradictory Outcomes of US State-building in Colombia and Mexico

by

Marcelle Cohen

US state-building aid is provided to countries to reduce violent crime and terrorism. US money usually comes with pressure to conform with US strategic rationales, namely, building military and coercive capacity. This militant approach, however, has often produced mixed outcomes or fails entirely, leading to more bloodshed. Yet, only a few recipient countries reform their policies to effectively reduce violence. It is unclear why many recipients neglect to change their approach.

By using comparative-historical methods to analyze Colombian peace-building and Mexican military escalation, this dissertation examines why some countries who receive US state-building aid double-down on ineffective military policies, while others pivot to alternatives. Scholars attribute different state-building outcomes to legitimacy problems regarding recipient acceptance of initiative rationales. However, traditional lenses do not account for the closed-door negotiations that shape recipient decisions.

I offer a novel approach, drawing on sociological theories to capture how diverse recipient policy actors compete to translate initiative rationales and debate security decisions. Drawing on over 110 interviews, participant observation, and archival analysis of involved policy actors in Colombia, Mexico, and Washington, I argue that different outcomes partly depend on the *availability of alternatives in recipient decision-making*. Accordingly, there must be sufficient policy consensus, inclusion, knowledge, and

infrastructure for reform to be possible. As different factions of recipient security officials and politicians debate policy options, US initiatives overwhelmingly support militant projects, and thereby code militant approaches as the only “acceptable” solutions. Reform cannot succeed without *available alternatives* to shape perceptions of these policies as effective and feasible solutions, and thus influence decisions. Available alternatives not only enable domestic reform but can also influence changes in US rationales, increasing the likelihood of US cooperation to advance opportunities for reformers and contribute to reform efforts. By specifying why countries fail to pivot, this project illuminates ways to improve the sustainability of policies that effectively reduce violence related to crime and terrorism, and save lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Chapter 1: Legitimacy and Contradictory Outcomes in US State-building.....	1
A. Research Questions and Puzzle.....	3
B. Overview of the Argument.....	6
C. Theoretical and Practical Relevance.....	12
D. Research Design.....	29
E. Dissertation Overview.....	46
II. Chapter 2: Plan Colombia and Policy Legitimation in Colombia.....	48
A. Plan Colombia penetrates the violence crisis.....	48
B. The Uribe Administration (2002-2010).....	62
C. The Santos Administration (2010-2018).....	99
D. Conclusion.....	105
III. Chapter 3: Santos' Pivot to Peace Alternatives.....	108
A. High Consensus for Peace Alternatives.....	112
B. High Infrastructure for Peace Alternatives.....	126
C. High Knowledge for Peace Alternatives.....	145
D. High Inclusion for Peace Alternatives.....	156
E. Conclusion.....	184
IV. Chapter 4: The Mérida Initiative and Policy Legitimation in Mexico.....	188
A. The Mérida Initiative penetrates the violence crisis.....	188
B. The Calderón Administration (2006-2012).....	196
C. The Peña Nieto Administration (2012-2018).....	224
D. Conclusion.....	236
V. Chapter 5: Peña Nieto's Abandoned Prevention Alternatives.....	259
A. Low Knowledge for Prevention Alternatives.....	242
B. Low Infrastructure for Prevention Alternatives.....	250
C. Low Inclusion for Prevention Alternatives.....	257
D. Low Consensus for Prevention Alternatives.....	273
E. Conclusion.....	282
VI. Chapter 6: Comparing Legitimation in Colombia and Mexico.....	285
A. US Rationales and Policy Debates in Colombia and Mexico.....	285
B. The Availability of Alternatives.....	296
C. Conclusion.....	318
VII. Chapter 7: Acceptable Violence and Acceptable Peace.....	320
A. US State-building, Legitimacy, and Domestic Politics.....	322
B. US State-building Rationales and Conflict Management.....	326
References.....	340

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACORE	Colombian Association of Officers Retired from the Military Forces
AUC	United Self Defense Forces of Colombia
CCAI	Colombian Center for Coordination of Integrated Action
CIA	US Central Intelligence Agency
CISEN	Mexican National Intelligence Center
CNP	Colombian National Council for Peace
CNS	Mexican National Commission of Security
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Administration
DoD	US Department of Defense
DTO	Drug trafficking organization
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FBI	US Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
INL	US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
IPA	Inclusion for Peace Activity
IR	International Relations
JEP	Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace
MoD	Colombian Ministry of Defense
MPJD	Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity
NorthCom	US Northern Command
OACP	Colombian Office of the High Commissioner for Peace
OAS	Organization of American States
OTI	US Office of Transition Initiatives
PGR	Mexican Attorney General's Office
PCIM	Integrated Consolidation Plan for Macarena
PDET	Colombian Territorially-Focused Development Programs
PNIS	Colombian National Integral Illicit Crop Substitution Program
PRONAPRED	Mexican National Crime Prevention Program
SEDENA	Mexican Secretary of National Defense (Army, Air Force)
SEDESOL	Mexican Secretariat of Social Development
SEGOB	Mexican Secretariat of the Interior
SEMAR	Mexican Secretariat of the Navy
SouthCom	US Southern Command
SRE	Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs
SSP	Mexican Public Security Secretariat
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCAP	Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation

I. Chapter 1: Legitimacy and Contradictory Outcomes in US State-building

On June 20, 2010, Juan Manuel Santos won the Colombian presidential election with the most overwhelming victory in the country's history (Otis 2010). This extraordinary electoral win was driven by Santos' vow to continue the hardline military strategy pioneered by former President Alvaro Uribe. Uribe had departed from Colombia's longstanding tradition of peace negotiations and launched the country's most extensive offensive, strongly supported by the US security initiative, Plan Colombia. As Uribe's Defense Minister, Santos had cooperated with the US and presided over unprecedented military successes in the war against the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerrillas, leading to recovered territory and reduced violence. Despite numerous grave political and human rights scandals and waning military success, Uribe left office heralded for saving Colombia from the crisis of "narco-terrorism." In Santos' acceptance speech, the president-elect promised to "press forward attacking the enemies of the homeland" (see Otis 2010).

Despite ruling out negotiations at the outset, by 2012, President Santos had quietly initiated negotiations with the FARC, pivoting from a counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism approach to a peace-building strategy. President Santos thereby abandoned the political safety of a military consensus, and opened his tenure to deep debate and polarization. Despite strong political challenges, a final peace agreement was signed into law in November 2016, including provisions for land reform, alternative drug policies, and democratic participation to address root causes of the conflict. Despite facing initial

resistance from Washington, Plan Colombia gradually adapted to the peace process, offering increased support for peace-building.

By contrast, on July 1, 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto won the Mexican presidential elections by promising a fresh approach to the drug war (Kahn 2012; CNN Wire Staff 2012). The new president-elect called for the US to review the Mérida Initiative, the security effort that had backed his predecessor, President Felipe Calderón's unprecedented military campaign against Mexico's drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs) (CNN Wire Staff 2012). Calderón's military approach had led to a dramatic surge in violence and was broadly impugned as a failure. Peña Nieto thus committed to shift away from attacking cartel leaders and drug traffic, and to prioritize reducing violence. He proposed a national violence prevention strategy as his policy alternative to military confrontation.

Despite his promises to reform policy, Peña Nieto defunded prevention midway through his tenure. At the same time, the administration adopted many of Calderón's strategies. Peña Nieto's decision to maintain policy continuity resulted in unparalleled collective actions against militarization and state violence. Despite these challenges, Peña Nieto only expanded the military's open-ended role in DTO combat. By the end of his government, the homicides rates surpassed that of the previous administration. US support to prevention alternatives during the Peña Nieto administration remained relatively scant and continued to prioritize counter-narcotics mandates associated with high-levels of violence.

A. Research Questions and Puzzle

State-building is the US' leading foreign security cooperation model to resolve conflict and reduce violence related to drugs and terrorism. Since September 11, 2001, Washington has linked terrorist networks and illicit financing with weak institutions abroad, and invested billions each year to support local capacities (Isacson and Kinosian 2017). This aid is not a blank check. US initiatives leverage a standard set of strategic prescriptions and incentives to ensure that recipients make the “right” decisions, supporting a traditional path of strengthening state force. This militant approach, however, has often produced mixed or failing outcomes. After experiencing years of failure of military solutions to resolve violence, some recipients have pivoted to peace-building and violence reduction reforms. Others, however, have chosen to sustain military escalation, resulting in violence spikes dramatically higher than pre-US assistance levels. This raises the question of why, even after a decade of failing military policy, some countries that receive US assistance continue on this path, while other countries pivot to alternatives that better secure peace?

To account for differences in initiative outcomes, scholars flag tensions between initiatives and *legitimacy*—defined as recipient perceptions of how security should be done (Lake 2021; Hameiri et al 2017). International Relations (IR) scholars assess legitimacy as recipient acceptance of state-building prescriptions, using static measures of low public acceptance and normative state performance to explain failures in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq (Boege and Tanis 2020; Andrew 2012). These metrics, however, fail to explain recipient behavior itself (Campbell et al. 2020; Schomerus 2020). Indeed, studies establish that security perceptions and decisions depend neither on what publics inherently want nor

on what states deliver, but on the ways elites perceive violent problems and what state actions can and should be pursued (Rose 2020; Trenkov Wermuth and Bisca 2021; Matanock and García-Sánchez 2017; Lantis 2002). In state-building, research suggests that security decisions hinge on narrow and fractured recipient elites—including security officials, politicians, military officers, and civil society leaders (Rose 2020; Trenkov Wermuth and Bisca 2021; Hameiri et al. 2017; Cheng et al. 2018). These policy actors mediate between US-led prescriptions and contested domestic politics to authorize policies behind closed doors.

My dissertation uses a case comparative approach to specify and theorize these critically important, yet often concealed, social processes. I thereby provide novel theoretical and practical contributions that can be applied to improve the sustainability and success of policies that reduce violence in conflict-affected states. My analysis, which draws on sociological theories of legitimation, details how recipient elites negotiate which policies are considered “acceptable” and which are not, thereby influencing different state-building outcomes. Extending Weber’s insights linking elite values to social actions, Habermas (1992) demonstrates how government failures also transpire as legitimacy crises that force elites to reconsider previously-accepted policies. This is a dialogic process that engages debating views, whereby diverse elites vie to legitimate the “appropriateness” of their preferred solutions over a range of alternatives. Policy decisions depend less on one faction achieving total acceptance, and more on excluding opposition claims as feasible and desirable.

To investigate how recipient elites consider potential solutions, I compare Plan Colombia in Colombia and the Mérida Initiative in Mexico. These initiatives responded to

violent crises: in Colombia, narco-funded insurgencies controlled territory and attacked civilians. In Mexico, drug-trafficking organizations assaulted cities with high-powered weapons (Bailey 2011). While Plan Colombia's militant strategy initially reduced violence and enjoyed unprecedented public support, the state's heavy-handed approach committed severe human rights abuses, and conflict violence increased as armed groups gradually adapted to state strategies. Nonetheless, Colombians overwhelmingly considered this strategy as a national success. By comparison, in Mexico, the Merida Initiative's militant approach only yielded greater violence and popular discontent. Traditional IR approaches would expect Colombia to continue with the overall more popular and effective approach, and Mexico to pivot. But such approaches would be wrong in these cases: Colombia reoriented a publicly-favored and successful militant strategy to peace-building, while Mexico only escalated its ineffective and unpopular military solution. Several questions animate my empirical chapters. How did US rationales shape the ways Colombian and Mexican elites legitimized possible policies? What factors contributed to "acceptable" peace-building among Colombian elites? What factors led Mexican elites to authorize military escalation? In short, what are the central differences in legitimation that explain these divergent policy outcomes?

This introductory chapter will summarize the study's central argument. Drawing largely from interviews with over 95 influential policy actors, I argue that the different policy outcomes in Colombia and Mexico hinged on the *availability of alternatives in recipient decision-making*. I define these conditions as sufficient policy consensus, inclusion, knowledge, and infrastructure for reform solutions. In both Colombia and Mexico, as factions of militant and reformist actors debated policy decisions, US state-building

rationales better supported militant claims. Only in Colombia were there available alternatives that backed reformer claims, and provided sufficient legitimacy for sustainable reform. In Colombia, available alternatives also mobilized a shift in US cooperation that better supported this policy pivot. By contrast, in Mexico, a lack of available alternatives maintained limited US support for reform. Following a more detailed overview of this argument, I will describe the theoretical and practical relevance of the study, present my research design, and conclude with a guide to the subsequent chapters in the analysis.

B. Overview of the Argument

Explaining the puzzle of trajectories in Colombia and Mexico reveals the shortcomings of traditional approaches to explain how legitimacy in US state-building shapes recipient outcomes. This literature focuses more on initiative inputs and legitimacy outputs, measuring results based on static measures of normative performance and public support, to the detriment of processes of recipient adoption and decision-making. This study contends that beyond supplying resources for specific institutional activities, which may be deemed normatively successful or failures and receive support or not from recipient societies, US state-building rationales also provide cultural models for “acceptable” policy approaches to the recipient policy actors who decide outcomes. US initiatives thereby shape already existing recipient policy relations and debates for responding to violence. Therefore, the effects of US state-building on recipient decisions is not primarily reflected in how state-building activities perform or are publicly-regarded. Instead, initiative effects lie in how they

code recipient policy options, and the kinds of opportunities and constraints they exact on different groups of policy actors.

US state-building influenced competitions between domestic policy actors promoting either military or reform solutions by instating interpretations and institutional practices that defined which security policies could and should be pursued. By reformulating the boundaries of policy acceptability, US cooperation reconfigured the terrain in which national elites negotiated and authorized policy decisions in two ways. First, by broadly expanding policy opportunities for militant sectors. Second, by establishing significantly fewer policy opportunities for reformer factions, whilst also introducing considerable constraints.

While the resulting preponderance of military opportunities and reformer constraints was ultimately decisive in the case of Mexico, these effects did not determine Colombia's trajectory. That is because in Colombia, there were high levels of what I term as *available alternatives*. By enabling alternative ideas to become perceived as realistic, effective, and accepted options among fractious recipient elites, these specific historical policy relations and debates better positioned recipient reformers to navigate these constraints and translate change into state decisions. Available alternatives are necessary not only for achieving reform, but also for persuading changes in US rationales. These changes encourage a greater distribution of policy opportunities for reformers and also increase the efficacy of US cooperation for reform projects. Accordingly, available alternatives increase the likelihood for bilateral cooperation to make meaningful contributions. Available alternatives thereby act as key mechanisms that shape initiative implementation and enable state actions to pivot and ground policy change.

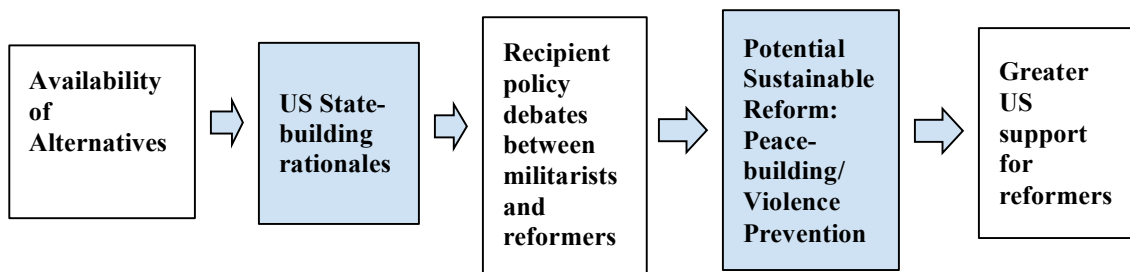
I identify four key conditions that allowed reforms to become legible as realistic and effective solutions, despite significant militant challenges. While these are all historical conditions, they are also variable, and can shift through the agency of recipient actors and their negotiations. First, available *consensus* refers to elite acceptance of alternative solutions—how broadly and to what extent diverse recipient actors, including militant actors, believe that alternatives solutions are a viable and effective means to resolve violence. No matter how deeply state and political elites have internalized militant perspectives, consensus for alternatives provides another option that counters their totalizing influence in decision-making. Consensus facilitates commitment from political leadership, and compromise and cooperation with militant elites, who accept alternatives as legitimate policy.

Second, available *infrastructure* refers to authoritative state institutions and structures, laws, and practices dedicated to alternative solutions. Infrastructure institutes reform within clear and accepted institutional mandates, roles, and normative practices. It thereby facilitates decisions by offering ready-made cultural scripts that embed decisions with bureaucratic routines and the taken for granted practices of the state. Available infrastructure also wields sufficient persuasive power to coordinate policy within the state, authorize budgets, and bureaucratically protect reform from militant challenges.

Third, available *knowledge* refers to clear and broadly-accepted policy models, methods, and expertise. Policy knowledge facilitates decisions for alternative solutions by framing a strategic problem and its causes within a reform framework, guiding implementation practices through expertise, and providing reform-oriented metrics for policy effectiveness and results. Policy outcomes depend not only on whether reformer elites

are clearly versed in alternative models and methods, but also on whether this expertise is widely regarded as valid by other elite factions, including by militant sectors.

Fourth, available *inclusion* refers to both *horizontal* and *vertical inclusion* of reformers within decision-making. *Horizontal inclusion* ensures that state reformers retain formal centralized control over decisions, resulting in outcomes that reflect their visions and interests. *Vertical inclusion* integrates the claims of reformer sectors in oppositional civil society. Vertical inclusion can transpire through either formal or informal routine, but must involve strong and cohesive mobilization. State and political elites must also perceive these actors and spaces as authoritative and credible. Vertical inclusion enables a common agenda and pressure on government and militant sectors, thereby magnifying demand and accountability for far-reaching developmental solutions.



Three central claims underpin this argument, derived from my theoretical framework and elaborated on more fully in the following sections. First, my approach conceives of US state-building initiatives as a cultural model with conflicting prescriptions regarding how security policy should be done. Initiatives transmit these policy ideas through specific mechanisms that enable cultural learning. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, scholars of international interventions underscore how initiative resources—such as money, military force, and political power—can move recipient state practices. However, I find that

many of the most influential aspects of US initiatives are often not even reflected in their budgets, but rather transmitted through ideas shared in bilateral meetings, workshops, trainings, consultations, knowledge-sharing, and intelligence-sharing. These ideas reframe understandings of policy problems, redefine institutional roles and goals, and provide logics and metrics that justify great expansions or contractions of traditional areas of state action. Plan Colombia and Mérida Initiative rationales defined consonant perceptions of the “correct” interpretations of problems and solutions. They explained violent problems and mobilize military solutions as inevitable and reasonable, whilst either subordinating, neglecting, or rejecting recipient reformer proposals.

Second, I contend that US state-building shapes recipient outcomes by reshaping the terrain of security decisions. My approach does not conceive of decisions as rational or strategic responses to normative performance or social acceptance/rejection. Rather, I conceptualize decisions as a deliberative and evolving process, involving a dynamic negotiation between different views. US state-building impacts these decisions by shaping which policy views are valued and which are not. Initiative models introduced and reinforced ample opportunities for militant policy actors to justify and promote their preferred solutions. At the same time, initiatives established far less opportunities and significant constraints for reform-oriented policy actors to champion and defend their proposed solutions. However, initiative policy ideas are not adopted hook, line, and sinker; rather, they are unevenly integrated through adaptation, negotiation, and resistance. In some instances, reform constraints produced through processes of initiative reception became fixed in state practices, impacting outcomes in successive administrations to come. In others,

reform actors repurposed initiative rationales to successfully resist military solutions and advance reform.

Third, I argue that available alternatives provide cultural resources—a cultural script, perceptions and beliefs, credibility, state routines, expertise, and access—for reformers to resist militant rationales, and justify and promote reform within both state policy and state-building initiatives themselves. In the absence of these cultural resources, reform actors lack sufficient support to sustain reform in the face of militant challenges. Although available alternatives develop and consolidate through historical processes, they do not guarantee reform through path dependency. Rather, available alternatives only facilitate more diverse interactions with initiative adoption, allowing recipient actors to more effectively counter the authority of militant perspectives in decision-making.

These processes of recipient adoption and decision-making bolstered and shaped Colombian and Mexican decisions to pursue unprecedented military escalation during the Uribe (2002-2010) and Calderón (2006-2012) governments. They also influenced divergent outcomes during successive administrations: Colombia's pivot to peace-building during the Santos administration (2010-2018), and Mexico's decision to abandon reform and continue military escalation during Peña Nieto's government (2012-2018). In Colombia, the presence of available alternatives allowed reformers to build and uphold a shared agenda. In Mexico, their absence enabled militants to contest reform and preserve military escalation.

Accordingly, despite facing considerably greater failures and less popularity compared to Colombia's joint military strategy, Mexico's frontal approach endured and reform was abandoned. Finally, available alternatives in Colombia not only facilitated lasting reform, but also prompted changes in US policy formulas, leading to more opportunities and fewer

constraints on reform. In Mexico, the absence of available alternatives maintained considerable constraints and few opportunities for reform.

This research applies a sociological perspective to elites-contests literature to examine how legitimation in US state-building influences recipient policy outcomes. The following sections further elaborate on the theoretical and practical significance of my approach.

C. Theoretical and Practical Relevance

Analyzing legitimacy in US state-building through a comparative-sociological lens has critical implications for the study and reduction of violence in conflict-affected states. I provide a novel theoretical framework that improves the specificity and accuracy of explanations for how legitimacy in US state-building influences recipient policy decisions.

Guided by the idea that problems of armed violence are caused by deficient institutions and “state fragility,” state-building approaches emerged as the leading paradigm for interventions to manage violence in the aftermath of the Cold War (Call 2008, 2011). September 11th, in particular, served to cement the salience of institutional weakness in international policy paradigms, connecting terrorist networks and illicit financing with [the Afghan] state’s incapacity to monopolize violence in its territory (Felbab-Brown 2018b, 2). As the United Nations (UN) and Washington expanded this framework, state-building replaced a global focus on peace-building. This paradigmatic shift represented a switch from engaging violence as a developmental and humanitarian problem—requiring the tools of negotiation to settle contests between warring parties and treat underlying causes of

conflict—to a framework that emphasizes developing good governance and strong institutions (Call 2008; Haider 2014:4). In practice, the framework prioritizes consolidating the state’s coercive capacity as the linchpin that enables other hallmarks of “effective statehood” (Hameiri, Hughes, Scarpello 2017:28), such as elections, the rule of law, and market-led development (Persson 2012:103). Academics and policymakers from across the political spectrum have thus understood state-building as an enterprise of restructuration intended to produce “a model of a stylized Weberian ideal of the state” (Finkenbush 2017:1; see also Call 2008).

Punctuated by spectacular failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, this state-building model has faced mounting criticism for falling short of its goals. Academic and policy research demonstrate increasing interest in the role of legitimacy as an indicator of stability and success in state-building. In the following sections, I provide a broad overview of the central ideas in this literature. I then introduce elites-contests approaches to state-building and sociological approaches to legitimation as correctives to address the neglect in conventional approaches to recipient adoption and decision-making processes. I conclude this section by proposing a sociological framework to legitimation in state-building and outline practical implications.

i. International Relations Approaches to Legitimacy in State-building

My analysis departs significantly from aforementioned IR literature, which has neglected to account for recipient behavior (Campbell 2020; Schomerus 2020). IR literature on legitimacy in state-building roughly falls under two schools of thought, each measuring

legitimacy and initiative impact through specific static *properties* linked to either normative performance or public support. The first perspective of normative performance primarily focused on markers of “good governance” that can deliver public favor. Studies accordingly propose that legitimacy in interventions emerges from “institutional capacity” and political order (Kaplan 2004; Kaplan 2005), liberal democracy and human rights (Rotberg 2004; Doyle 2001), rule of law (Ignatieff 2003), the provision of public services (Ciorciari and Krasner 2018; Dagher 2018), and “local ownership” or “local participation” (Richmond and MacGinty 2020; Hart 2001; Chandler 2004). From the second perspective of public support, legitimacy is primarily defined by how and why recipient societies interpret particular actors, institutions, and political processes, or relationships with these, as “legitimate” (Andersen 2012:207). These studies prioritize subjective beliefs, defining societies and states through intrinsic attributes. They signal that external state-building activities and mandates must establish robust state-society relationships and incorporate local knowledge to align with these attributes and thereby achieve legitimacy (Lake 2021; Richmond 2014; Krampe and Eckman 2020; Autesserre 2010; Lemay-Hébert 2009).

Taken together, these approaches focus on whether external initiatives develop the properties that characterize a recipient state as legitimate. These studies understand positive performance and societal perceptions as synonymous with security policy stability and success. To understand outcomes, scholars assess the extent to which state-building activities are either normatively legitimate or perceived as such by societal actors (Paris 2004; Barnett 2006; Doyle and Sambanis 2006). The focus is therefore on state-building inputs—such as initiative objectives and design—and legitimacy outputs, as opposed to processes of recipient state adoption and decision-making.

Neglecting processes of recipient state reception is a costly oversight, however, when other studies have established the need to examine diverse recipient state and political actors and their multifaceted responses, contested dynamics that generate unintended consequences (Long 2018). Indeed, policy scholars find that traditional, static measures of legitimacy are poor indicators of how recipient states actually decide to manage violence—and thus, ultimately, provide incomplete explanations of violent outcomes themselves (Rose 2020; Trenkov Wermuth and Bisca 2021; Hameiri et al. 2017:40-43; Cheng et al. 2018). By offering an a priori definition of legitimacy, normative performance approaches neglect to explain how legitimacy is created within reception processes and guides decisions. By largely conceiving of the state and society as distinct and internally homogenous entities, with fixed values and interests, the public support approach neglects to account for interactive processes through which these might change, leading to decisions to pivot policy.

Recognizing these deficits, many scholars of legitimacy in state-building have called for a relational approach (Andersen 2012; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2020). This perspective recognizes legitimation as a process, shifting the focus from static properties to dynamic relational processes socially constructed between different entities. Accordingly, studies have examined interactions between diverse forms of legitimacy between states, societies, and state-building interventions in recipient countries (Autuserre 2014; 2017; Volker Boege and Tanis 2020; Visoka 2020; Krampe and Ekman 2020; Grief 2021; Sending 2010). To my knowledge, none of these relational studies have yet put forth a theoretical framework that specifies recipient state policy choices.

In the following sections, I explain how I build on elites-centered literature and sociological approaches to legitimation to propose such a framework. This framework

departs from theorizing legitimacy as an end product that contributes towards policy stability and reduced violence. Instead, it focuses on legitimation as a process that can explain a significant driver of violent outcomes—state choices to pursue peace-building or military escalation.

ii. Elite Contests Approaches to State-building

To capture state-building outcomes, my project is guided by a growing relational-theoretical literature that centers the dynamics of initiative reception and response. This literature focuses on elites as the select group—by virtue of power and wealth—who is invested with the authority to make decisions and implement policies that affect a society and its institutions (Cheng et al. 2018:13). These are the actors charged with implementing initiatives to create security and build the state between international paradigms and domestic politics, populations, and problems.

Elites literature responds to conventional institutional IR (Krasner and Pascual 2005; Paris 2002; Gates 2010; Shapiro 2012) and Critical structural approaches to state-building interventions (Cammack 2004; Gill 1995; Robinson 2004) that portray outcomes as externally-driven. These traditional literatures converge in underscoring the power of donor leverage through either elite incentives (IR) or political-economic factors (Critical approaches). They focus on donor objectives and design, suggesting that outcomes are simply products of whether recipient states—depicted as unitary—were compliant with external incentives or demands. By contrast, elites-centered approaches theorize recipient states and societies as conflict-ridden, where diverse groups with asymmetrical levels of

power either accept, oppose, or selectively mobilize aspects of interventions to pursue their competing interests and agendas. They conceive of the relationship between security-focused interventions and recipient state responses as being far more complex and nebulous than aforementioned mainstream IR or critical approaches would suggest (Hameiri et al. 2017:40-41; Pérez Ricart 2016:59).

To understand outcomes, this approach analyzes how international interventions penetrate long-term social processes and relations and becomes a site of elite contestation. This literature understands that elite contests transpire in deeply constrained contexts that produce a “strong degree of path dependency surrounding interests and actions” (Cheng et al. 2018:17). These constraints not only arise from national historical conditions, but also from international interventions themselves. By acting as a source and purveyor of power resources, international interventions shape the options available to elites by constraining or enabling certain factions (Hensell and Gerdes 2012; Sending 2011).¹ Factions of elites may also maneuver aspects of interventions in ways to tilt opportunities in their favor by adopting, modifying, or resisting proposals (Hameiri, Hughes, Scarpello 2017:42-43; Cheng et al. 2018:51; Grimm and Weiffen 2018:267; Schroeder and Chappuis 2014). Studies have also suggested that recipient elites can also shape the preferences of external intervention actors by modifying their assessments of the potential costs associated with pursuing specific objectives (Grimm and Weiffen 2018:267).

¹ Theories of elite contests in state-building take ideas of “opportunity structure” from studies of social movements and contentious politics. These approaches cite Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (eds), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2006.

From this perspective, the pursuit of alternative solutions—such as peace and violence reduction reforms—are about elite struggles over how resources and power are distributed. This approach predicts that policy alternatives will be highly unstable if they do not distribute benefits in such a way that either aligns with entrenched socio-political relations, or co-opt violent actors through rent-seeking opportunities (Lee 2022). It suggests that by backing certain actors, state-building interventions can change elite incentives around military solutions and reform. However, elites studies underscore that historical national conditions and relations ultimately decide variation in state-building outcomes.

Elites contests theories recognize the significance of ideas and notions of legitimacy as aspects of intervention resources and drivers of recipient outcomes. Studies note that elite power derives from the legitimacy to control populations and resources. They suggest transformational outcomes are more likely when elites rely on maintaining societal support (Cheng et al. 2018:42). Studies also signal that dominant ideas exert constraints on available options. However, guided by political-economy and critical-structural approaches, this literature privileges material factors to explain outcomes. As a result, elites scholars analyze initiatives as sources of power, money, and coercive force. They also examine domestic structural factors, such as changes in wealth distribution, as the fundamental drivers shaping political spaces, elite preferences, and will for reform.

Unexplored thus far are initiatives ideas which other scholars have found exert far more influence on recipient choices than monetary aid or military equipment (Lindsay Poland 2018; Gill 2004; Pérez-Ricart 2016; Kuzmarov 2012; Ben Jaffel 2020; Centeno 1994). We know little about how recipient policy actors interpret state-building mandates and national policies, assess alternatives, negotiate competing claims, and make decisions

(Visoka 2020; Grief 2021; Andersen 2012). Although military equipment often garners attention as the most provocative element of US state-building models, studies have found that these alone fail to exert significant influence over policy-making. Helicopters and fighter jets tend to fall easily and quickly into disrepair (Lindsay-Poland 2017:55-56; Davidow 2004). US assistance is also channeled through consultations, meetings, trainings, technical assistance, and intelligence-sharing. These initiative resources may not always be reflected in budgets, but can have far more enduring effects on domestic policy processes. Even as these resources may have a relatively short-term operational impact, scholars have found that these both contain and diffuse doctrine, professionalizing national elites in “modernized” state systems, methods, policy orientations, institutional roles, and metrics into the organizational culture of recipient security agencies (Lindsay-Poland 2017; Gill 2004; Pérez Ricart 2015, 2018, 2019; Kuzamarov 2012; Ben Jaffel et al. 2020). Such “soft power” mechanisms can be understood in terms of the ideas and relationships they generate as these can shape the policy beliefs, frameworks, and strategies of recipients long-term. Finally, ideas available in recipient states and societies also shape how policy actors negotiate initiative reception and national choices. Accordingly, these conditions may also account for variation in state-building outcomes.

In the following section, I discuss sociological theories of legitimation. These approaches reveal how available ideas and notions of legitimacy mediate how elites and societies interpret their interests and preferences, and thereby also shape actions. Accounting for these processes helps explain outcomes that may deviate from what materialist conceptions would predict. Considering legitimation sheds light on why seemingly entrenched interests and coalitions might change to favor or oppose reform.

iii. Sociological Approaches to Legitimation

Rarely applied to international security issues, sociological approaches to legitimation provide a missing link between policy outcomes and available rationales in US initiatives and national histories. Literature on discourse (Volosinov 1973; Saussure 1915; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Habermas 1987; Austin 1975), representations (Lefort 2000), culture (Gramsci 1971; Bourdieu 1977; Lantis 2002), ideology (Althusser 1971), narratives (Krebs 2015; Chowdury and Krebs 2010; Falasca-Zamponi 1997), and frames (Goffman 1974, Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gamson et al. 1992; Gitlin 1980; Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000) is critical to understand how initiatives shape recipient reception and decision-making outcomes. Available ideas guide actions by providing ready-made and socially-shared explanations of reality. They influence how actors interpret problems and perceive “reasonable” solutions. Accordingly, available ideas may help facilitate, authorize, and defend specific strategies, while excluding those perceived as inappropriate, unfeasible, and counterproductive. By virtue of their control over the state, knowledge, and communications systems, ruling elites largely impose which ideas are dominant and mold a collective consensus for their desired state actions.

Habermas’ *Legitimation Crisis* (1992) serves as a launching point to understand these processes in contexts of state weakness, when social consensus becomes more vulnerable to dispute. He demonstrates that government failures can also transpire as legitimacy crises. Habermas builds on several of key insights from Weber, who conceived of legitimacy as a deeply historical and conflict-driven process, tied to different forms of

governance and resulting actions.² According to Weber (1978:947), political rule depends on legitimacy, as the social beliefs that sustain social acceptance of and compliance to state authority. However, Weber notes that legitimacy is precarious because it relies on rationales that either explain or justify elite rule (Centeno 2013:6). He explains that in contexts of rational-legal authority, legitimacy depends on bureaucratic and legal justifications, tying governing actions to specific objectives and results (Weber 1978:904-905, 987).

Habermas extends these ideas through processes of deliberation and consensus. He argues that “available legitimations” (Habermas 1992:69) delimit the bounds of possible government actions. *Rationality deficits*—or a shortage of policy solutions—are the result of political relations which constrain possible state practices to address crises (Habermas 1992:63). However, if government actions are unable to demonstrate that they are feasible, viable, or effective, governing rationalities also lose their efficaciousness to justify state actions. This forces state and political elites to reconsider previously-accepted policies. In these moments, social actors compete over the meanings, goals, and norms of state actions, and might succeed in redefining these to bring about political and social change.

However, Habermas introduces analytical space between government failures and legitimation crises. In Habermas’ formulation, an *administrative crisis* does not guarantee a *legitimation crisis*. Accordingly, he encourages reflection on the conditions under which administrative failures might lead social actors to either passively accept state failures or cause them to question state actions and demand transformative political change. Habermas’ own approach introduced the concept of a “motivation crisis” as a mediating condition. He

² Weber identifies charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal as three types of authority linked to specific forms of state legitimacy and actions. He contends that governing elites best operationalize and legitimize rule through legal-bureaucratic authority (Weber 1978:904-905). Legal-bureaucratic authority and legitimacy encourage particular, instrumental-rational motives for actions (Weber 1978:987).

proposed that legitimation crises hinged on a critical mass of society rejecting their moral and psychological socialization, and demanding justifications for the ruling socio-political order.

Habermas' attention to *motivation crises* underscores the transformative potential of social perceptions. However, scholars have signaled limitations in his approach, noting its failure to predict cases where transformative reforms do not succeed. They have accordingly reevaluated the relationship between administrative and legitimation crisis, suggesting other conditions that might explain why state failures might not translate into social demands, and why social demands may not result in reform. Wendy Brown (2008), for instance, draws on Foucault, contending that governing rationalities impose their own interpretations of reality, organizing social actors in a way that constrains the potential for dissent. Nancy Fraser (2015) draws on Gramsci's conceptions of hegemony and counter-hegemony to replace Habermas' moral-psychological definition of *motivation crises* with a political mediation.³ According to Fraser, these competing worldviews—held by the ruling class and its opposition—reflect entrenched assumptions about the roles and capacities of social agency, the state, justice, and the historical availability of viable and desirable alternatives (2015:172-73). They constitute a political commonsense that shapes how social actors experience, interpret and respond to administrative failures, and thus, whether a legitimation crisis transpires (2015:172-173). Fraser contends that the “contestatory potential” (2015:174), or the capacity to challenge the dominant justifications for state failures, hinges

³ In Fraser's interpretation of Gramsci, hegemony is power's cultural face. It refers to the discursive process by which the ruling class manipulates the dominant beliefs, perceptions, explanations, norms and values in society. Ruling elites thereby impose their worldview as taken-for-granted commonsense to naturalize their control. Counter-hegemony refers to discursive opposition that is sufficiently “robust” to challenge these dominant interpretations of social reality (Fraser 2015:172).

on whether prevailing political beliefs contain ideas from past struggles that offer alternative interpretations. Accordingly, the effectiveness of counter-hegemonic actors depends on their capacity to mobilize and build traction through alternative understandings that are “already available” (Fraser 2015: 174).

Just as Habermas invites reflection on the conditions that might provoke a legitimation crisis, Fraser invites reflection on the conditions which might provoke legitimation crises to result in passive or transformative outcomes. Fraser notes that while mobilization may successfully trigger a legitimation crisis, progressive and transformative political outcomes are far from guaranteed. Counter-hegemonic demands can be co-opted and re-appropriated by ruling agendas. A counter-hegemonic movement may be “sufficiently powerful” to delegitimize a political order, but “not powerful enough” to define the direction of political change (Fraser 2015:181).

Taken together theories also provide hints into the missing link between governing rationales and potential recipient trajectories. They call attention to the significance of competing social perceptions and debating views, the ideational power of state rationales, and significance of available historical alternatives. However, these theories can only take us so far towards specifying the processes that lead policy actors to select continued military-escalation or reforms in recipient countries. For one, they require a more precision notion of the conditions of legitimation that undergird transformational reform outcomes. Fraser points to “interpretive resources for transformative mobilization” and “sufficient power” (2015:183) of social movements without specifying how these conditions dictate policy processes within state institutions. Relatedly, these theories specifically focus on financial policies, when the government is openly revealed as abetting class domination. Security

policy is arguably even more closely contained within the rationales and validity claims of state and political bodies, which are authorized to make proactive decisions.

Furthermore, the general cultural-historical context of recipient states also differs. Sociological theories of legitimation are rooted within stable national political orders, with more ostensibly consistent elite and mass consensus. This literature often treats the ideational power of the ruling class as a monolith against oppositional social movements. These approaches, moreover, assume that legitimacy is more fully institutionalized within the political apparatus, thereby rationalizing rule. In conflict-affected recipient societies, however, legitimation processes are mediated by dynamic struggles between competing rationales within the state, civil society, and international interventions. Both administrative and legitimation crises can be perpetual, involving deliberations that divide ruling elites and society.

In the following section, I present my analytical framework, which draws from sociological approaches to legitimation and elites contests literature to bridge these gaps and explain the particularities of how legitimacy in state-building influences recipient outcomes.

iv. Sociological Approaches to Legitimation in State-building

I develop a sociological approach to legitimation in state-building by integrating elites contests theory with sociological approaches. While the former specifies how initiative resources, domestic, historical contexts, and elite divisions shape outcomes, the latter provides conceptions of legitimation as processes linked to the socialization of actors and contingent resulting actions. This research framework neither denies nor automatically

contradicts leading material factors in elites contests literature explaining why leaders make choices. Inequalities in power and wealth certainly dictate the abilities of different policy actors to shape political outcomes. My framework simply contends that legitimation processes are an overlooked and yet significant lens that complements and completes existing explanations. My approach thereby provides new insights on initiative effects and recipient reception. It captures how state-building rationales shape which policy views are valued and which are marginalized, and the conditions that influence different policy outcomes.

My approach invites reflection on state-building initiatives as policy rationales that intervene within conflict-affected democracies. Through this perspective, US initiatives represent a cultural model for “successful” statehood, intended to resolve administrative and legitimation crises through managerial relationships with Washington. Although neglected by traditional approaches, many studies flag such *cultural learning* as a highly pervasive and influential avenue through which international models are integrated into domestic policy processes (Centeno 1994:23; Pérez Ricart 2016, 2018; Mosse 2006:10-11). *Cultural learning* refers to how decision-makers are socialized on the correct goals, priorities, and acceptable costs and benefits of security policy. Amid a shortage of national solutions, US rationales provide frameworks through which national elites perceive violence and the acceptable bounds of policy solutions. Ultimately, they impose new restrictions on alternatives solutions, casting them as less effective and less reasonable than militant responses.

This approach conceives of initiative effects within the context of historical domestic policy relations and debates that shape recipient reception. Diverse recipient elites

receive initiative rationales within the constraints of their own institutional norms, mandates, meanings. Elites literature and sociological approaches both signal that processes of recipient adoption would be more so driven by conflict than by consensus. Within this landscape, cultural resources are unevenly distributed and past struggles shape new contestations. Policy actors justify and negotiate solutions at the crossroads of these dynamics. My approach takes preferred policy ideas as the idiom for loose coalitions of elites who either promote reform or back continued military escalation. Indeed, the pursuit of alternatives can cause rifts and changes in former coalitions, rendering these factions variable. By integrating a sociological lens to legitimation, my framework takes on a more expansive conception of actors relevant to reform processes than the elites literature. I account for oppositional social actors within influential civil society organizations and movements, along with high level position holders in politics, the military, and other recipient state institutions within the security system.⁴

In this process, US initiatives intervene in outcomes by shaping the terrain of these struggles. While US initiatives introduce various opportunities and constraints, these do not drive outcomes. Various recipient factions are active agents in reception processes and make meaning of initiative rationales. The result is a sort of “cultural syncretism” (see Chappuis and Schroeder 2014:140-141) that translates into social practices. My framework draws from Stuart Hall’s (2005) conceptions of encoding and decoding to understand how recipient responses to received initiative rationales can vary, resulting in social actions that either fully accept, reinterpret, repurpose, or resist policy rationales within policy

⁴ Higley and Burton (1989) provide precedence for a more expansive definition of elites in their work on democratic transitions, conceiving civil society authorities as affecting state outcomes.

negotiations depending on the social position and specific cultural meanings of recipient actors.⁵

My sociological approach to legitimation in state-building reveals that conditions within recipient states determine potential recipient responses, resulting in transformative potential or maintaining closure around militant rationales. Variable conditions of reception—what I call “available alternatives”—provide cultural resources for reformers to contest militant rationales and defend alternative solutions. By shaping whether transformative policy ideas become “acceptable” and “feasible” responses to violence, the presence of these conditions enables reforms to be realized in state decisions and actions, while the lack thereof obstructs reform. I identify four central conditions that reformers draw from to build transformative responses: consensus, infrastructure, knowledge, and inclusion.⁶ Available alternatives not only open the possibility for transformative responses, but also can reorient the frameworks of US rationales by persuading external actors of the appropriateness of these solutions.

⁵ According to Hall (2005), although messages have a “preferred,” dominant meaning intended by the *encoder* of a message. However, because *decoders*, or receivers of messages, are also part of meaning-making, these preferred meanings are not always successfully conveyed. Hall proposes three possible responses: 1) total internalization of the preferred reading; 2) negotiated meaning, with mixed acceptance and rejection of aspects of the preferred message; and 3) opposition to the preferred reading. According to Hall, decodings depend on the “meaning structures” (2005, 93) of the decoder and translate into social practices.

⁶ Though I derive these conditions inductively from case studies, these conditions echo with other analytical approaches and findings. Studies find that elite consensus on reform is necessary to achieve sweeping and sustainable social and political changes, such as democratic transitions (Higley and Burton 1989). Studies on peace and violence prevention have noted that successful reforms rest on formal state spaces and clear mandates that provide stability and authority (Pfeiffer 2014). Case studies find that existing laws enable governments to make the decision to open negotiations (Bermúdez Liévano 2020, 22). Both elites literature and conflict management literature also discuss horizontal and vertical inclusion (Pfeiffer 2014; Cheng et al. 2018).

v. Practical Relevance for Conflict Management

By specifying the ideational conditions that constrain or enable effective reforms, my study also contributes policy-relevant insights. Studies widely find that state-building has often failed to meet its proposed goals of resolving or even reducing violence (Rose 2020; Trenkov Wermuth and Bisca 2021). In Colombia, as the initial successes of the military strategy faltered, and the death toll climbed, the signing of peace secured a dramatic fall in violence, declining from 12,655 homicides in 2012 to 1,238 in 2016 (Indepaz 2021). By contrast, US state-building in Mexico has met explosive bloodshed far surpassing that in Afghanistan or Iraq—a death toll of over 300,000 lives (Felbab-Brown 2014). Bilateral strategies in both countries, moreover, have been linked to dramatic rises in state violence and humanitarian crises. For instance, Colombia’s army killed upwards of 10,000 civilians to boost military effectiveness indicators, which then justified increases in US aid (Delgado 2015). An estimated 2 million Colombians were also displaced between 2002-2008, at the height of Plan Colombia (Bailey 2011:8). Washington has also worked closely with high-level actors charged with a litany of abuses and corruption, such as General Montoya in Colombia and Génaro García Luna and General Cienfuegos in Mexico (Durán 2023; Ramírez and Hinojosa 2023).

Although reforms are far more effective than militant strategies, scholars find these alternatives often experience formidable “acceptability constraints,” including in the Colombian and Mexican cases (Lessing 2017; Hope 2016; Kalyvas 2015; Carpenter 2013; Brewer 2010; Muggah et al. 2018; Coyne and Hall 2017; Freeman and Felbab-Brown 2021; Felbab-Brown 2020). They argue that counterproductive policies respond less to strategic

considerations, and more to available policy ideas and shared understandings of appropriateness. My approach specifies overlooked and yet key policy actors, relationships, expertise, institutional roles, and practices that influence the success and sustainability of needed reforms. This information could support more effective initiative implementation that saves human lives. Beyond state-building, practitioners note that diverse policy options urgent to address criminal and terrorist violence are frequently absent from consideration. This study could benefit ongoing efforts to improve reform opportunities in other conflict-affected states.

D. Research Design

When I began my fieldwork, a Colombian government elected to continue a successful bilateral military campaign was instead completing a peace process that reduced the country's violence to a 40 year low (Arredondo 2019). Concurrently in Mexico, as the country experienced their highest homicide rates in two decades, a government elected on promises to reform a failing military strategy was defunding violence reduction policies (Wilkinson 2018). In the following sections, I discuss my case selection, data sources, and the analytical methods used to explore the legitimization processes that result in different state-building outcomes.

i. Case Selection

Plan Colombia in Colombia and the Mérida Initiative in Mexico represent two examples of a standard US state-building model, which involves joint strategies and extensive collaboration between US and recipient state security agencies. Plan Colombia's perceived successes made Colombia into both a laboratory and blueprint for US state-building in the 21st century, exporting its brand of policy frameworks and bilateral relationships to Afghanistan, Iraq, and countries throughout Latin America (Isacson and Kinoshian 2017). Among these cases, Mexico was the largest regional recipient of this model after Colombia. Mexican leadership explicitly sought to style their security practices in Colombia's image.

Within Washington, this model emerged as a leading foreign policy strategy in the post-Cold War period, and became dominated by military logics through Washington's global War on Drugs and War on Terror. State-building prescriptions run the gamut, including participation from a wide variety of US institutions reflecting multiple, and oftentimes contradictory, objectives. The central US institutions participating in Plan Colombia (1999-2018) and the Mérida Initiative (2007-2018)⁷ included: i) the State Department, and primarily the INL (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs); ii) the DoD (Department of Defense); iii) the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in Colombia; iv) the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) in Mexico; and v) USAID

⁷ Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative changed official names during the periods under study (Colombia 1999-2018 and Mexico 2007-2018). For the sake of simplicity and the fact of initiative continuity, I use these names to denote the persistence of bilateral security relationships, budgets, and programs throughout these timelines.

(United States Agency for International Development). Hard-side US actors have outsized influence through their command over initiative design, decisions, resources, and far more intensive and extensive cooperation with recipient institutions. By contrast, soft-side institutions, such as USAID, have far less clout, programming, and involvement in bilateral relationships. Hard-side US institutional actors dispute and freely veto soft-side practices.⁸ As a result, armed solutions fuel US foreign policy against drugs and non-state armed violence.

In Colombia and Mexico, US initiatives responded to problems of internal violence through counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism rationales that transferred billions of dollars in hard-side military and police assistance. Beyond each initiative's official, budgeted programs, hard-side assistance also unlocked far deeper bilateral military, or "mil-to-mil," cooperation and, critically, intelligence-sharing. Though cooperation for hard-side punitive approaches comprised the heft of each initiative, both Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative also included assistance for "soft-side" approaches. "Soft-side" assistance included human rights, democracy, justice reforms, and Colombian alternative development. It also included support for Colombian peace and Mexican violence prevention reforms. However, in lieu of a strategy of engaging political, social, and economic transformations to achieve peace, Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative were engineered to allow Colombia and Mexico to reclaim the territorial control, consolidate the rule of law, and eliminate illegal

⁸ Although I do not specifically analyze policy making in Washington, my interviews with US policy actors heavily referenced this institutional power imbalance, and my empirical chapters allude to plenty of examples. For a specific analysis of Washington's own institutional histories and power, disputes, and decision-making, Winifred Tate's *Drugs, Thugs, and Diplomats* (2015) provides a wonderful ethnography of Plan Colombia. According to Tate's interview with a former USAID staffer "AID is just told what to do, not to think too much. The job is to implement other people's ideas" (see 2015:156). In *The Mission*, Dana Priest (2003) provides a historical review of how military leaders have increasingly taken on a larger political role than diplomatic institutions in US foreign policy, making civilian solutions to policy problems "appear quaint" (p. 1).

armed actors via bolstering the capacity of state coercion and administration. In both countries, joint approaches designated the military as the leading protagonist to accomplish these objectives.

With Washington's close participation, these projects aimed to organize recipient state governance and force under similar objectives, interpretations of problems, guidelines for state success and failure, and policy instruments. Initiatives transmitted dominant counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism logics through high-level strategic planning, meetings, operational coordination, trainings, education programs, technical assistance, bilateral working groups, and intelligence-sharing. By and large, these resources channeled hard-side security actors in Colombia and Mexico.

Beyond sharing a comparable state-building model, Colombia and Mexico also share several key domestic characteristics, thereby ruling out other potential mechanisms. In both countries, US initiatives channeled weak security institutions that lacked a formal culture or a coherent strategy to manage their respective problems. In both, US initiatives also represented a rupture from long-standing policy traditions for responding to perceived crises, which involved more conciliatory, passive, or transformative approaches. Colombian and Mexican political leaders had often been at odds with military leadership, and had historically resisted a larger military role. Both militaries had also long been resistant to engage in anti-drug missions. Finally, in both Colombia and Mexico, security and foreign affairs are the domains of narrow and fractured political elites (Sumano 2019:210, 213; Tickner 2007:97-99; Pearce 2018). In both countries, closed networks of individuals surrounding the President make decisions on these policies, with little Congressional accountability (Sumano 2019:211; Tickner 2007:98). Because both Colombia and Mexico

lacked professional bureaucracies, decisions made on security were historically ad-hoc, varying by administration, and favored the faction of elite actors in power (Sumano 2019: 211; Delgado 2015:829). This has reduced the weight of alternative perspectives that extend beyond the visions and interests of elite groups (Tickner 2007:98).

Selecting these cases for comparison sheds light on particular gaps in both conventional approaches to state-building and policy studies on Colombia and Mexico. Conventional approaches might find case outcomes to be contradictory, expecting that Colombia would be more likely to maintain military escalation, and for Mexico to pivot.

First, as established, traditional approaches to legitimacy in state-building would mistakenly predict Colombia to maintain a publicly-revered and highly normatively “successful” policy, and Mexico to break from a rejected and failed strategy. Policy studies actually suggest that Colombia could afford to pivot policy precisely because it effectively weakened the FARC, whereas Mexico maintained an overwhelmingly militant approach due to the severity of its crisis. Plan Colombia’s military blows may have certainly convinced a once-powerful FARC to accept President Santos’ invitation to negotiate (Bermúdez Liévano 2020). Still, while this fact may have *facilitated* Santos’ decision to reject a widely supported mandate for ongoing military escalation in favor of a transformative alternative, it does not fully explain this decision. Within Colombia’s own history, political leaders have chosen negotiations in periods of both military strength and weakness. Past negotiations efforts have also collapsed due to military buildup, which radicalized the distrust of armed groups (Palacios 2007). Likewise, analysts have explained Mexico’s continued reliance on the military as the most expedient, cost-effective, and efficient option given the magnitude of cartel violence (Arzt 2015; Chabat 2010; Astorga and Shirk 2010; Rodriguez Lara and

Aguilar Romero 2020; Moloeznik and Suárez de Garay 2012). Still, this claim fails to adequately problematize “strategic” decisions to repeat policies that have been categorically linked to spectacular violence, with no institutional learning.

Second, traditional IR and Critical approaches may point to how differences in US money, military force, and political power might sway different outcomes. Elites contests theories also underscore these same material factors, but place greater weight on the recipient’s political-economy as the ultimate driver. Studies of Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative tend to replicate traditional IR and Critical literatures, favoring material forms of US leverage and neglecting recipient state politics. They examine policy formulation, security objectives, and interests in Washington, automating a seamless and unilateral process of US imposition (Ashby 2015; Paley 2015; Tate 2015; Tokatlian 2006; Carlsen 2018; Lozano-Vázquez and Rebolledo Flores 2015:246).

Comparison between the Colombian and Mexican case demonstrate that these conventional explanations are incomplete by their own measures:

1. Money

Conventional approaches identify US *money* as a principal driver of recipient outcomes.⁹ Colombia—a country with a fifth of Mexico’s economy and a third of the government budget—received over three times the amount of security assistance (Bailey 2011). Plan Colombia represents over \$10B during the period under study, roughly 10 percent of Colombia’s security budget (Beittel 2019:29). During the majority of this time, Plan Colombia assistance was largely “on auto-pilot” (Lindsay-Poland 2018, 84), distributed

⁹Notably, there exists a large gap between the noted budgets approved by US Congress, and money invested on the ground. Many respondents reported that much of the US budget was distributed to intermediary contracting firms.

through a mix of 80 percent hard-side and 20 percent soft-side. By contrast, the Mérida Initiative's \$3B during the period under study represents only two percent of Mexico's total security budget (Seelke 2019, 1). While Mérida began with an almost exclusive focus on hard-side assistance for operational institutions, the bilateral approach evolved to incorporate a strategy that also prioritized reforming civil punitive institutions, border security, and added assistance for prevention reforms.¹⁰ Accordingly, US money alone does not explain Colombia's pivot to peace-building, and Mexico's continuity with a military bilateral approach.

Indeed, policy research on Mexico has measured the Mérida Initiative's impact through its negligible budget, leading to the conclusion that Mérida was largely inconsequential over Mexico's policy continuity. They explain Mexico's continued reliance on the military option primarily through a) historically weak and corrupt police and justice institutions; and b) institutional inertia, stemming from historical path dependence on the military in counter-narcotics operations (Arzt 2015; Chabat 2010; Astorga and Shirk 2010; Rodriguez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2020; Moloeznik and Suárez de Garay 2012). At most, studies may signal that Mérida Initiative resources may have had "unintended consequences" (Shirk and Olson 2020:3) and "perpetuated the inertia" (Rodriguez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2020:75) of the military option.

However, these policy explanations are also incomplete. Notions of "path dependence" or "institutional inertia" do little to meaningfully explain why, among several policy paths vested with historical precedents, a purely frontal strategy was chosen to the

¹⁰ Since 2011, the Mérida Initiative also officially removed foreign military funding from the overall package—although the DoD continued to provide military funding and cooperation through its own accounts (Seelke 2019:2).

exclusion of others. My case study will demonstrate how Mexico's political leadership was bureaucratically innovative, and made clear choices about which institutions to build and which to neglect. Comparison with the Colombian case, moreover, reveals that historically weak and corrupt police and justice institutions alone do not dictate continued reliance on military solutions.

2. Military Force

Conventional approaches examine *military force* as a driver of recipient outcomes. By this measure, Plan Colombia included far more extensive and intensive military cooperation with Colombian forces compared to Mérida with Mexican forces. Plan Colombia involved an exceedingly intimate security relationship, including 800 military advisors embedded within Colombian brigades and division headquarters (Lindsay-Poland 2018:93-95). By contrast, Mexican authorities precluded any US boots-on-the-ground. While bilateral military cooperation increased with the Mérida Initiative, notably, unlike in the case of Plan Colombia, the DoD did not play a primary role in authoring Mérida (Seelke and Gracia 2019:20). Through strong US backing, the Colombian military became a regional security leader, and the most "proficient" institution within the Colombian state. US military resources thereby do not sufficiently explain why Mexico escalated a bilateral military strategy, while Colombia shifted.

Moreover, divergent outcomes cannot be solely attributed to particular differences in domestic military power. While Colombia has long authorized military force to manage its problem, Mexico had strong legal prohibitions around the military's internal role. Mexican armed forces have also been historically subordinate to the national Executive, and provided

with only a marginal role in decision-making (Centeno 1994:49). Civil-military relations in Colombia, however, have been historically fraught, rendering a somewhat autonomous military command over security decisions (Farah 1999; Delgado 2015:848). Colombian military actors had consistently and violently disrupted the political leadership's past attempts at peace negotiations.

3. Power

Conventional approaches cite asymmetrical power relations between donor states and recipient countries as a central driver of outcomes. Certainly, US pressure and patronage would hold sway within an economy that destines 80% of its exports north of a shared two-thousand mile border (Bailey 2011:149-151). However, Plan Colombia represented policy continuity with an abiding "special relationship" between Washington and Colombia, a security dialogue maintained for more than a century (Tickner 2007; Tokatlian 2000:36). The Mérida Initiative, by contrast, represented a rupture from Mexico's long-held doctrine of isolationism from its neighbor to the North, backed by strong principles of sovereignty and a collective, institutional rejection of US intrusion (Anaya Muñoz 2009:37; Tickner 2007:96-97). This Mexican nationalist and isolationist culture was most pronounced within the Armed Forces. While Mexican politicians struggled to convince security bureaucrats and military leaders to cooperate with Washington, Colombia was primed to be far more receptive and susceptible to US will. Accordingly, US political power alone does not explain why Mexico stuck to a militant bilateral strategy, while Colombia pivoted.

	Colombia	Mexico
US State-building Initiative	Plan Colombia (1999-2018)	Mérida Initiative (2007-2018)
	Hard-side Assistance: Counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism aid, policy ideas, and institutional collaboration for military confrontation, high-value targeting, and operational development, including military and police.	Hard-side Assistance: Counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism aid, policy ideas, and institutional collaboration for military confrontation, high-value targeting, and operational development, including military and police.
	Soft-side Assistance: Peace Reforms, Alternative Development, Human Rights, and Justice Reform	Soft-side Assistance: Prevention Reforms, Human Rights, Justice Reform
Key Differences in Traditional IR Approaches to Legitimacy	Normative Performance: High	Normative Performance: Low
	Public Support: High	Public Support: Low
Key Differences in Traditional Measures of US leverage	Money: ~\$10B, greater proportion US aid centered on force	Money: ~\$3B, proportion of US aid more evenly divided between force and other objectives
	Military Force: More military cooperation Colombia has a history of authorizing military force and greater military autonomy.	Military Force: Less military cooperation Mexico has strong prohibitions around military force and less military autonomy.
	Political power: Long history of pro-US state culture and enthusiasm for security cooperation.	Political power: Long history of anti-US state culture and rejection of security cooperation.

ii. Data Sources

To construct these case histories, my study triangulates national-level data collected through site visits to Bogotá and Mexico City from 2015-2022 and remote means, including interview, participant observation, and archival data. This data moves analysis beyond

empirical assessments of initiative programs and resources, and towards a more relational understanding of recipient reception and decision-making.

I began my research on the Colombian case in 2015, as a volunteer researcher for Alianza IMP (*Alianza Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz*), a women's rights and peace network involved with the Colombian negotiations. In this role, I interviewed activists, negotiations advisors, and conflict victims and gained insight on their challenges and opportunities in relation to Plan Colombia. I also attended and observed coalition meetings, events, and panels relevant to the peace process. As a Ph.D. student, I traveled back to Bogotá in 2017 to interview 23 state officials, politicians, and military officers on how they adopted Plan Colombia. I also observed related policy events, and analyzed archives of Plan Colombia-relevant documents. This thesis work underscored the conflicted politics between militarist and reformist actors and institutional legacies surrounding Plan Colombia, with profound implications for the peace process.

Beginning in Spring 2020, due to the global pandemic, I conducted interviews for both cases through Zoom, participant observation through live and recorded virtual events, and archival analysis through digital databases. In the summer of 2018, I conducted a six-week site visit in Mexico City. By 2020, I secured an institutional affiliation with CESIG (Security, Intelligence, and Governance Center) at ITAM university, which hosted me as a visiting scholar. Several faculty members of CESIG had worked on security policy at high levels in the Mexican national government, and agreed to support the project through interviews and interview referrals. During April-May 2022, I returned to Mexico and completed in-person interviews and participant observation.

1. Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews with around 41 Colombian, 38 Mexican, and 15 US “relevant” national level policy actors. By “relevant,” I mean actors who wield political authority over state security decisions and/or initiative implementation; influence security policy design, planning, and implementation within national agencies; or have the potential to constrain state actions through oppositional contestation.¹¹ Additionally, I interviewed 11 policy experts who were closely privy to these processes, either through personal or professional relationships with key policymakers, or by serving in consulting roles related to initiative implementation or security policy. Taken together, interviews included respondents in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of the Interior, Federal Police, National Intelligence, Departments of Justice, National Security Councils, Departments of Defense and Public Security, influential political representatives,¹² and leading think-tanks and civil society organizations. Interviews with US policy actors included representatives from US institutions, including the State Department, the DoD, USAID, contracted services, grant recipients, and one representative of a leading NGO. I used non-probability sampling to select key state and political actors, reflecting a diversity of policy positions (Oisín 2007; DeWalt & DeWalt 2002).

Interviews followed a semi-structured and open-ended format. This allowed each interview to focus on several, broad themes that provided objective points of comparison, while still heeding to each respondent's subjective political and institutional experiences and

¹¹ Importantly, I do not directly examine the role of economic, communications, or religious elites on their own. Rather, these groups are included in the analysis as part of a bloc of either militant or reformer elites.

¹² This includes politicians in leading political parties and interviews with two former FARC Commanders in July 2017, as they were transitioning to becoming members of their new political party in August 2017.

motivations. All interviews with Colombian and Mexican respondents were conducted in Spanish. Interview questions asked how actors concretely engaged with and understood PC and MI, detailing: bilateral interactions and initiative institutionalization; policy design and implementation, including negotiations, debates, considerations, strategies, and alliances; the policy opportunities and challenges respondents faced; their notions of policy success and failure; and the types of expertise that informs these notions. In-depth interviews allowed me to isolate relevant mechanisms, trace processes, and identify how recipients interpreted initiative rationales, assessed alternatives, negotiated objectives, and made decisions (Baker 2000, 792; Bloemraad 2012:513; Sending 2010). Interviews revealed that policy actors represented loose coalitions of shifting relations, depending on whether their policy preferences and actions were in line with promoting either reform-oriented or militant solutions at a particular point in time.

2. Participant Observation

I conducted participant observation of over 70 policy events. In-country and virtual events include Congressional sessions, government-sponsored policy symposiums, party-sponsored security forums, university- or think-tank-sponsored panels, civil society peace commissions, and NGO/social movement meetings. I recorded detailed field notes about policy ideas and participant interactions in these spaces. These gatherings often convened a wide range of key actors into a more informal setting, where it was possible to observe their deliberations with political in-groups, out-groups, and public audiences. In such events, state officials, politicians, and activists regularly provided public comment, engaged in telling side conversations, and collectively strategized on how to promote particular approaches to

conflict. This method allowed the study to move past the official line offered in interviews to the more behind-the-scenes reasoning that drives security policy decisions, policy logics, alignments, and tensions.

3. Archival Data

I conducted archival analysis of hundreds of initiative documents, including official State Department correspondences made available by the Digital National Security Archive; Congressional Research Service, Government Accountability Office, and USAID reports and evaluations; Colombian and Mexican legislative and budgetary reports; military press releases; executive memoirs; NGO documents; and media sources. Archival analysis provided complementarity and confirmation of interview and participant observation data, which may be susceptible to validity issues given the self-interest of political elites and policymakers of portraying their institutional actions and positions in an honorable light (Small 2011, 63; Pugh 2013). I gathered evidence on how Colombian and Mexican policy elites concretely implemented initiative guidelines and allocated budgets. Strategies and justifications around particular policy approaches, political deliberations, and US relations concerns were noted. The Digital National Security Archive, for instance, contains meticulous State Department cables that detail coalitions and identify specific actors who supported and rejected Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative throughout the span of policy formulation and implementation. Media sources not only contained information on specific events, but also extensive interviews with top-level decision-makers (some of whom did not respond to my own emailed invitations).¹³ Colombian peace-building, in particular,

¹³ This included interviews with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, and Peace Commissioners Sergio Jaramillo and Frank Pearl.

has been widely and closely studied. Many Colombian researchers, think-tanks, and policy actors across different sectors that participated or opposed the process have published their own empirical reports of these events.

iii. Data Analysis

I analyzed this data through a comparative-historical method of “most similar systems” (Przeworski and Teune 1970) to explore the relationship between legitimacy and policy-making in Colombia (1999-2018) and Mexico (2007-2018): two recipients of similar state-building models. Guided by a comparative-sociological approach, this study exploits both cross-country and temporal, within-country variation to account for policy effects and mechanisms that statistical measures overlook. A case-oriented logic renders detailed, sequential descriptions for comparative context: i) situating security policies in recipient political histories and strategic ideas; ii) detailing state-building rationales and how these were incorporated into recipient policy expertise, practices, and relationships; and iii) identifying the resulting policy opportunities and constraints various actors faced. My case analysis maintains a variable- and mechanism-oriented approach that provides sufficient external validity to develop generalizable theory for how legitimacy in recipient states influences military-escalation or peace-building and violence-reduction reforms.

I coded and analyzed interviews and observational data iteratively and in conversation with sociological and relational theories using abductive methods (Tavory and Timmermans 2014; Deterding and Waters 2021). Accordingly, I used the qualitative analysis software *ATLAS.ti* to apply flexible coding methods, using preliminary codes from

the central conceptual frameworks that guided my interview questions: US state-building rationales, initiative implementation, recipient policy perceptions, recipient policymaking, and policy opportunities and constraints. A second round of analytical coding applied emergent themes to test theoretical validity, accounting for alternative explanations and using negative cases to qualify theory. This first round of coding revealed patterns within and across cases, corresponding broadly to relationships between militant and reformer policy claims, engagement with US initiatives, and the dynamics under which policy actions became effective or ineffective. Conceptual themes emerged from comparison within and across cases, answering the question of what effects US rationales have and what conditions made reform more or less likely.

My data enabled me to assess the construction of legitimacy through interactions between initiatives and diverse recipients. I examined how recipients drew on US initiative rationales as legitimizing practices, linked them to other claims and notions of appropriateness, and invoked these logics in decisions. I noted which policy actors had the power to define decisions through these legitimizing practices, and who was excluded. This let me determine, for instance, that Colombian and Mexican decision-makers drew upon initiative notions of “development” and “prevention” to both authorize military action, and sideline reform bureaucrats. The data thus revealed that, in both cases, US prescriptions for managing crime and terrorism exerted similar effects on how recipient policy actors negotiated what state actions could and should be pursued.

My finding of similar initiative effects allowed me to isolate within recipient implementation processes the mechanisms of legitimation by which Colombia experienced peace-building and Mexico experienced failed reform. In Colombia, there were clear

alternatives to military action that Mexico did not have available. I thereby identified four key conditions of alternatives—consensus, inclusion, knowledge, and infrastructure:

Availability of Alternatives	Colombia	Mexico
<p>Policy Consensus: Availability of elite consensus for alternative solutions, describing how broadly and to what extent diverse recipient actors believe that alternatives solutions are viable and effective.</p>	<p>High level of consensus among policy elites that peace-building—including negotiations—can and should be pursued. Polarization among militants and reformers only expressed regarding the specific measures and scope that peace-building should involve.</p>	<p>Low level of consensus among policy elites as to whether and which alternatives can be pursued. Even as militant elites almost unanimously reject alternatives, there are low levels of consensus among reformer actors both as to which alternatives should be pursued, and what these should involve.</p>
<p>Policy Infrastructures: Availability of authoritative state institutions and structures, laws, and practices dedicated to alternative solutions.</p>	<p>High level of policy infrastructure for peace-building alternatives, including: the High Commission for Peace (Executive); Colombian Reintegration Agency; Peace Commissions (Congress); Peace Investment Fund; Special Programs for Peace Fund; National Peace Council (Executive and Civil Society); and constitutional laws authorizing peace negotiations.</p>	<p>Low level of policy infrastructure for alternatives. Infrastructure for prevention was only first established during the period under study, dispersed through institutions including the National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement, the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence; the Undersecretary of Prevention and Civic Engagement; The National Crime Prevention Program.</p>
<p>Policy Knowledge: Availability of clear and broadly-accepted policy models, methods, and expertise.</p>	<p>High level of policy knowledge for peace-building among a wide range of actors: bureaucrats, politicians, military, oppositional civil society organizations, and intellectuals.</p>	<p>Low level of policy knowledge for alternatives among a wide range of actors: bureaucrats, politicians, military, oppositional civil society organizations, and intellectuals.</p>
<p>Policy Inclusion: Availability of vertical and horizontal integration of reformers in decision-making.</p>	<p>Actors and bodies that promote peace-building are highly integrated at the top levels of government decisions and across state and civil society actors—from military actors to oppositional peace movement leadership.</p>	<p>Actors and bodies that promote alternatives are excluded from top levels of government decisions, low levels of policy inclusion for alternatives among militant actors, low levels of horizontal policy inclusion of civil society.</p>

Case Comparison	Colombia	Mexico
Availability of Alternatives	High	Low
US State-building Rationales	Counter-narcotics and Counter-terrorism	Counter-narcotics and Counter-terrorism
Recipient elite policy debates between militarists and reformers	US state-building rationales provide more support to militarist claims, while available alternatives support reformer claims	US state-building rationales provide more support to militarist claims, while the lack of available alternatives provides insufficient support to reformer claims
Outcomes	Sustainable Reform	Failed Reform
US Support for Reform	Increased	Maintained Low

E. Dissertation Overview

While this introductory chapter provides the conceptual thrust for the entire dissertation, the following chapters substantiate the empirical foundations of this research.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the Colombian case, in which the recipient policy trajectory was that of peace-building. Chapter 1 discusses how US rationales shaped the ways Colombian elites legitimized possible policies. It traces Plan Colombia’s implementation, which advantaged militant claims and constrained reformer claims. Chapter 2 discusses the conditions that contributed to “acceptable” peace-building among Colombian elites. It situates Colombian peace-building in the availability of alternatives in Colombian policy-making, which enabled recipient decision-makers to perceive negotiated approaches as feasible and effective solutions.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss Mexico as a case in which the recipient policy trajectory was that of military-escalation and abandoned reform. Chapter 3 discusses how US rationales shaped the ways Mexican elites legitimized possible policies. It discusses how

the Mérida Initiative largely reinforced militant claims and constrained reformer claims. Chapter 4 discusses the conditions that led Mexican elites to abandon reform and authorize military escalation. It situates this outcome within a lack of available alternatives in Mexican policymaking, which influenced perceptions of reformer solutions as ineffective, impractical, and irrelevant.

Chapter 5 identifies the critical junctures that explain Colombia's pivot and Mexico's decision to escalate a violent military approach. I detail how state-building prescriptions penetrated the debates and tensions that traditionally guided strategic decisions, producing comparable opportunities and constraints for militants and reformers. In both cases, I find that initiative rationales around drugs and terrorism exerted legitimacy constraints on comprehensive alternatives to military-escalation. The key differences were the alternatives available in recipient policy-making. In Colombia, sufficient policy consensus, inclusion, knowledge, and infrastructure enabled reformers to reframe their approaches as "acceptable," and pivot policy. In Mexico, the absence of these conditions narrowed space for alternative claims. Through this comparison, I also find that available alternatives not only influenced positive reform outcomes, but also increased the likelihood for US cooperation to promote sustainable reform.

In my concluding chapter, I discuss how study contributes a novel sociological approach to studying legitimacy in US state-building, which captures both initiative effects and recipient behavior. This framework specifies why recipient countries choose violence, and identifies the actors, relationships, expertise, and practices that enable effective reforms. I thereby provide policy-relevant insights that could be applied to critically reduce violence and protect human lives.

II. Chapter 2: Plan Colombia and Policy Legitimation in Colombia

The following two chapters discuss the Colombian case, in which the recipient policy trajectory was that of peace-building. In this chapter, I first discuss how US rationales shaped the ways Colombian elites legitimized possible policies. I introduce Plan Colombia's implementation, which both responded to and deepened a long-standing schism between national militant and reformist actors over how to address Colombia's five-decade long conflict. I demonstrate how US prescriptions advantaged militant claims by: 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals as to counter-narcotics; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success. At the same time, US rationales provided far less support for reformer claims, and advanced logics that either subordinated, neglected, or rejected recipient reformer proposals.

A. Plan Colombia penetrates the violence crisis

Within weeks of the June 1998 election, President-elect Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) traveled into the mountains to propose negotiations to the top Commander of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda Vélez. Pastrana had inherited a crisis. Over the past two decades, the FARC's forces had jumped from 900 fighters and nine fronts to 12,000 to 15,000 combatants on 60 fronts (Méndez 2017:85). Long relegated to the jungle, the FARC were increasingly encroaching into urban areas. The central government had lost control over large swathes of the territory, and lacked funding to even buy boots or

gasoline for the Armed Forces. Leading up to the 1998 election, the FARC overran an army communications post and wiped out a 153-man military brigade (Méndez 2017:85). Only the last in a series of crushing military defeats, state leaders discussed the possibility that the FARC guerrilla might take over the capital of Bogotá (Eastman, interview 2022). At the time, Colombia was also the world's largest producer of cocaine (Vereinte 2010:81). Whilst right-wing paramilitaries controlled coca production, processing, and trafficking, the FARC's expanding military power had been partially funded through taxing coca production in their territories.

Pastrana had won the 1998 elections by campaigning as the "Candidate for Peace" (Méndez 2017:86). During an civil society-led referendum in October 1997, a quarter of Colombia's 40 million people had voted for a peace solution, representing more individual votes than any Colombian President has ever received during an election cycle (CLAS Research 2018; Ferrer 1997). The referendum pushed the Conservative Candidate Pastrana to embrace a sweeping platform, committing to negotiations with both the FARC and ELN (National Liberation Army) when his political rivals had only proposed talks with the latter (Méndez 2017:86). Pastrana's Caguán (1999-2002) peace process contemplated a sweeping, 12-point agenda to respond to the country's crisis, including: a new Colombian economic and social model, comprehensive agrarian reform, democratic reforms, human rights, a plan for narco-trafficking, and reforms for the Colombian Armed forces (Turriago Rojas 2016:167).

State elites broadly agreed that they needed US support. Pastrana requested foreign assistance for a "Colombian Marshall Plan," an "international investment fund for peace" (see Méndez 2017:94). Guided by the idea that rural grievances pushed *campesinos* into

the drug trade, the original draft for this Plan outlined large-scale social and economic development projects to alleviate poverty, inequality, and political exclusion in the countryside (Delgado 2015:844; Fajardo 2015). However, a year-long discussion with Washington translated this original plan into Plan Colombia's final draft: billions of US counter-narcotics aid for a sweeping military overhaul and mounting offensive.

Plan Colombia penetrated a long-standing schism between militant and reformist actors in the Colombian state, reflecting a divided consensus over the nature of the crisis and its solution. Since 1886, Colombian democracy had produced recurring agrarian violence that excluded the poor from resources and politics (López-Alves 2000:104-125). In the 20th century, national politics fractured into *La Violencia* (1948-1958), a ten-year civil war between the Conservative and Liberal Parties. Moderate elites within the two parties agreed to end the bloodshed with the National Front, a settlement to rotate government power. However, the system also gave way to a new era of subversive violence from groups both omitted from bipartisan compromise and subject to continued reactionary violence in the countryside. The FARC and dozens of other guerillas mobilized under the banner of leftist revolution in the mid-1960s. Until the late 1970s, Bogotá elites applied a mix of counterinsurgency and structural reforms to manage these groups, who mostly stuck to peripheral zones of little economic interest (González González 2014:382-383). However, guerrillas gained greater military strength and political relevance in the 1980s, eroding the state's ability to contain them (Dizard 2017:43-44). The FARC bombed oil pipelines and intensified a campaign of kidnapping, extortion, and selective killings that primarily targeted wealthy ranchers and landowners (González González 2014:382-383). In the vacuum of the state's absence, military brass

both accommodated and colluded with brutal paramilitary armies, funded by landowning elites, politicians, narco-traffickers, and multinational conglomerates (Ramírez and Restrepo 1988). Paramilitaries not only provided personal protection but were also offensive forces, responsible for massacres of rural communities suspected of sympathizing with the FARC.

The state's disintegrating authority introduced a fork in the road between reformist and militant notions of conflict management (Dizard 2017:43-44). Beginning in the early 1980s, two decades of consecutive Colombian governments across partisan lines complemented traditional counter-insurgency strategies with negotiations, amnesty, and electoral representation for guerrilla actors (González González 2014; Turriago Rojas 2016; CLAS Research 2018).¹⁴ Political leaders primarily interpreted leftist guerrilla violence as a product of *campesino* grievances, proposing sweeping democratic reforms, land redistribution, social programs, and economic overhauls. These reforms intended to demonstrate that the state was capable of correcting for its abandonment of the rural poor, thereby rendering guerrilla rebellion unnecessary. For instance, the Constitution of 1991 demobilized and granted political representation to the EPL (Ejército Popular de Liberación–Popular Liberation Army), the MRQL (Movimiento Revolucionario Quintín Lame–Quintín Lame Revolutionary Movement), and the PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores–Workers Revolutionary Movement), while also opening channels of democratic participation and redistributing national funds to rural areas (González González 2014:399-420).

¹⁴ Colombian State and guerrilla negotiations include the administrations of: Belisario Betancourt (1982-1986), Virgilio Barco (1986-1990), César Gaviria (1990-1994), Ernesto Samper (1994-1998), and Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002).

However, right-wing elites and military officers also consistently disputed these broad negotiations and reforms. Since the end of *La Violencia*, the “Lleras Pact” had commanded the Armed Forces out of politics and politicians out of military decisions (Dizard 2017:49). The Lleras Pact had thereby severed the military from peace matters, which fell under the jurisdiction of the President and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP). Nonetheless, the Armed Forces had policy preferences. One faction of the military recognized the social and political “root causes” of insurgency, and maintained some degree of openness to negotiations (Delgado 2017:832-825). Another faction, however, believed that “the war is winnable if the politicians give them a free hand and give up the idea of negotiations” (Delgado 2017:839). In the 1980s, coalitions of Conservative politicians, business figures, and rural landowners infuriated by government offers of amnesty to guerrillas teamed with military discontent (Dizard 2017:52). These sectors pushed for a more belligerent strategy to submit the FARC to the rule of law without “political treatment” (González González 2014:414). Generals and officials in the Ministry of Defense (MoD) joined in voicing highly public opposition to peace talks (Dizard 2017:56-57). To challenge agreements, opposition sectors portrayed the FARC as a narco-trafficking group, solely driven by the cocaine boom and not grievances (Ramírez and Restrepo 1988:53-64). The FARC’s rejection of the 1991 Constitution, in particular, marked a symbolic turning point, when increasingly more military officers and government officials began believing that “criminal violence lay at the root of Colombian social ills, and not vice versa” (Delgado 2015:845; CLAS Research 2018). Beyond rhetoric, Chief Commanders also rejected Presidential orders—such as demands to limit military movements—and military units colluded with paramilitary forces to disrupt peace

efforts. Military collusion was responsible for the political genocide of 3000 to 5000 representatives from the *Unión Patriótica*—the political party that the FARC had negotiated under President Betancur’s 1985 peace negotiations. During the Samper administration (1994-1998), recurring military defeats and weak civil governance dramatically escalated military’s skepticism and the numbers of colluding units (Dizard 2017:56-57).

Pastrana’s agenda departed from two central shanks: peace and drug war. On the one hand, state elites staked the administration’s reputation on the Caguán peace process with the FARC. As customary, the government facilitated talks by recognizing the FARC as a political actor, who had rebelled against the state due to root inequalities. This political status thereby entitled the FARC to negotiate demands and receive amnesty upon demobilization. The High Commissioner for Peace also granted the FARC’s request for a demilitarized zone the size of Switzerland and ordered soldiers to leave without consulting the Generals. The FARC and government officials jointly toured Switzerland, France, Norway to champion the process (González González 2014:432). A massive and influential peace movement organized also backed and participated in Caguán’s agenda.

On the other hand, the Pastrana administration scaled up military spending (Rojas 2015:69-70). Pastrana held a radical stance against drug traffic. He represented a sector of political elites who held that narco-trafficking was the primary driver of Colombia’s violence, believing that drugs motivated guerrillas through profits and fostered a loyal *campesino* constituency among coca growers (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Behind closed doors, cabinet elites discussed the need to cut drugs to weaken funding for the FARC’s military and political power. More than just an intellectual posture, the drug

issue was also deeply personal. While serving as mayor of Bogotá a decade before, Pastrana himself had been kidnapped by Pablo Escobar. The Cali Cartel had also contributed financing to President Ernesto Samper's successful campaign, which had narrowly defeated Pastrana's presidential bid in the 1994 election. Amid a military crisis, the revelation of his narco-scandal had depleted Samper's credibility to negotiate with the FARC (CLAS Research 2018). Amid an economic crisis, the scandal also resulted in US drug decertification and with it, the suspension of US foreign aid and capital flight (Rojas 2015:48-50).¹⁵ Pastrana's cabinet assumed office amidst discussions of the military's possible collapse (Ambrosi, interview 2022). Bereft of resources, Pastrana denied the MoD's plans to expand and train the army (Méndez 2017:89). Alongside strong commitments to the peace process, state elites who sincerely feared for their survival also sought foreign assistance to overhaul a weak military and win the drug war.

Respondents countered claims by analysts and US officials arguing that Washington imposed militarization, pointing out that Pastrana's decision to partner with Washington is the strongest evidence supporting the view that his goal for Plan Colombia was focused on military-counter-narcotics. The European Union prohibited armed weapons sales to Colombia and had instead focused on humanitarian concerns. In Europe, the FARC had also enjoyed a fair deal of diplomatic clout. By contrast, Washington saw Colombia through the lens of international cocaine empire. US views resonated with Pastrana's vision of guerrillas and narcotics as being one and the same problem.

Pastrana's first instructions to his team in Washington directed them to build the army.

¹⁵Drug certification is a US government tool used to rate the anti-narcotics efforts of drug-producing and transit countries and pressure greater cooperation and compliance with tougher counter-narcotics measures. Decertified countries face sanctions, including the withdrawal of US assistance and US opposition to loans from development banks (Spencer 1998).

The Embassy's first meetings were with US drug agencies. For Pastrana, US military assistance meant that if the peace process collapsed, Colombia could call upon the Army to deal with the guerrillas.

Plan Colombia extended a longstanding hard-side partnership between Washington and Colombia (Tickner 2007; Tokatlian 2000:36). For more than a century, Colombian political and economic elites had pursued this "special relationship" as the dominant means through which to defend national interests and secure economic growth (Tickner 2007:91; Tokatlian 2000:36). The Cold War consolidated a strong bipartisan consensus for this alliance, fusing national political and economic problems with US Cold War ideologies and aid (Historical Memory Group 2016:123; Tickner 2007:96). Although military brass had already experienced confrontations with guerrilla groups, US Defense exchanges and trainings enabled the Colombian Armed Forces to formally incorporate counterinsurgency principles (Cuervo Iglesias 2021:80). By the 1980s, narco-trafficking took center stage and reinforced a dependence on "US definitions, diagnostics, and repertoires of practices to face the problem" (Tickner 2007:97). US counter-narcotics agencies set up offices on the ground in Bogotá (US Embassy Colombia 2000a). The Constitution of 1991 enshrined the US extradition of Colombian nationals sought for drug crimes into Colombia's criminal procedural (US Embassy Colombia 2000a). The Clinton administration itself had already helped Colombian officials take down Pablo Escobar in 1993.

However, Plan Colombia's blurred lines between counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics were new to the bilateral security relationship. Pastrana's proposal challenged the traditional division of strategic roles. Since the 1960's, the Colombian Armed Forces

had only been authorized to contain the insurgency. Formally classified as a public security threat, drug-trafficking had traditionally been a responsibility of the police. US counter-narcotics assistance had been distributed to the Colombian police alone. At the same time, post-Cold War and pre-9/11, US counter-insurgency aid was off-limits. US Congress was still burdened by the legacy of Vietnam, and had directly experienced the carnage of covert US military interventions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, and Guatemala during the 1980s. US Democrats, in particular, were wary of a Colombian Army with a bad reputation for violating human rights.

Pastrana elites made great efforts to convince US policymakers that the FARC surpassed the abilities of the National Police (Tickner 2007:92, 100; Tate 2015:149). While initially, Congress and the State Department were “not yet prepared to understand this logic...in parallel, the ones who did understand very quickly was the DoD” (Eastman, interview 2022). Independent of Congressional discussions, the DoD increased cooperation and training to the Colombian Ministry of Defense (MoD) (Eastman, interview 2022). Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey also hoped to collapse distinctions between counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency. In July 1999, McCaffrey wrote a letter to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, claiming that “[i]ntelligence assessments have identified numerous deficiencies in training, force structure, leadership, intelligence, mobility and communications which must be corrected if the government of Colombia is to mount credible counter drug operations” (see Farah 1999). During their statements before Congress, State Department officials began to explain “Why Colombia Is Not the ‘Next Vietnam’” (Pickering 2000). Documents and statements also made frequent

reference to “narco-guerrillas” (see Stokes 2000:579), a term that both connects the FARC to the drug trade and identifies them as its main players.

Whilst counter-insurgency remained a third rail, counter-narcotics was a bipartisan darling. Fears of political fallout for seeming soft on crime trumped other concerns of US policymakers. The authors of Plan Colombia achieved a resounding consensus for a “Push to the South” strategy, targeting coca plantations within FARC-controlled territories, even though the paramilitaries, by far the greatest players in the cocaine trade, controlled traffic in the North.¹⁶ In 2000, the legislative authorization of \$1.32B in military aid—helicopters, weaponry, intelligence, logistical support, and training—relied on the promise that US assistance would only be used for counter-narcotics (Cooper 2001). Accordingly, Colombians were prohibited from using US aid to attack a FARC encampment. Nevertheless, bilateral programs converged with Colombia’s military expansion because they acknowledged that military support was essential to gain control over coca production zones (GAO 1999:2-3).¹⁷ Any initial pushback thereby became distilled into human rights conditions on 30 percent of military aid.

Just as Washington authorized military aid, it also cut down on political and social solutions. Bilateral plans had initially discussed Washington’s diplomatic support for

¹⁶ Even in 2001, the US Drugs Enforcement Administration reported that the FARC was not a main player in Colombia's drug trade, as they lacked the necessary access to international transportation, wholesale distribution, or foreign money laundering networks (Stokes 2000:578-579). Likewise, Klaus Nyholm, the Director of the UN’s drug control agency in Colombia, reported that “The guerrillas are something different than the traffickers, the local fronts are quite autonomous. But in some areas, they’re not involved at all” (see Stokes 2000, 578-579). Paramilitary leaders have admitted that drug-trafficking funds 70% of paramilitary operations and nearly 30% of the Colombian Congress were found to have ties to paramilitaries groups (Stanford University 2012).

¹⁷ US State Department support for aerial fumigation had been rising since 1996 (GAO 1999:18). Plan Colombia redirected aid away from the exclusively focusing on the National Police and to providing support for the military as well (GAO 1998:37).

negotiations and 50/50 split between military and soft-side aid. In contrast to counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics, Colombia's peace processes had long been fundamentally internal matters (Rojas 2015:32). At the beginning of his administration, Pastrana sent OACP representatives to convince State Department officials to directly engage (Méndez 2017:99). However, Washington stepped away from the peace process when reports of meetings between US officials and the FARC leaked to the press in January 1999.¹⁸ This sparked Congressional accusations that the Clinton administration had “legitimise[d] terrorist groups” (see Méndez 2017:103). In March 1999, US policymakers completely eliminated space for US participation after learning that the FARC had murdered three US citizens near the Venezuelan border (Méndez 2017:107). Congress also reappropriated USAID's original budget to buy more Black Hawk helicopters, dramatically cutting down on funding for alternative development programs aimed at helping *campesinos* transition from coca cultivation to substitute products following forced eradication. Proposed funding for rule of law and conflict resolution programs fell from \$10 million to \$1 million (Tate 2015:158). The 2000-2001 budget allotted nine percent to alternative development, three percent to judicial reform and human rights, and three percent to help the displaced, shifting the split of soft-side to roughly one-fifth of the military budget (Rojas 2015:46).

Washington's official line that there was no military solution to Colombia's armed conflict, and that military aid was fully compatible with US support for Caguán. DoD officials pushed a dominant narrative that a “modernized, more professional military

¹⁸ In November 1998, Peter Romero, Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Phil Chicola, Director of Andean Affairs, flew to a secret meeting with FARC Commander Arturo Leyva at his house in San José, Costa Rica (Méndez 2017:100). Another secret meeting between Chicola and FARC spokesman Raul Reyes followed in Colombia in December 1998 (Méndez 2017:103).

could more capably support counter-narcotics efforts and the pp [peace process]” (see Tate 2015:149). This view held that a powerful Colombian military could push guerrillas to submit to dialogue, and allow the Colombian government to negotiate from a stronger position with less concessions (Tate 2015:147). In reality, however, peace and counter-narcotics objectives were often at odds. While Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Pickering claimed that there was no possibility of US engagement in counter-insurgency, he also conceded that Colombian counter-insurgency efforts might increase in response to Plan Colombia (Pickering 2000). In August 1999, Pickering and McCaffrey traveled to Colombia and reportedly warned Pastrana that “United States might withdraw support if he continued to make ‘concessions’ to the guerrillas, but that aid might be ‘sharply increased’ if he presented ‘a comprehensive plan to strengthen the military, halt the nation’s economic free fall, and fight drug trafficking’” (Tate 2015:151). By June 1999, State Department leadership also concluded that the “FARC had no intention of doing a deal” (Shannon, interview 2020). Accordingly, State representatives stressed that “the peace process should not interfere with counter-narcotics cooperation” (see Rojas 2015:88), including operations in the agreed demilitarized zone. The Department also adopted a new stated goal, “to encourage Pastrana to step back from the policies he was ineffectively pursuing with the FARC and the peace talks” (see Tate 2015:147).¹⁹

The Caguán talks formally collapsed in February 2002. Even though Pastrana’s commitment to the process remained high throughout, by the second year of negotiations, the President and OACP had already begun to feel “trapped in a negotiation that was not going anywhere” (Eastman, interview 2022). Initially, the MoD cooperated with Caguán.

¹⁹ Tate interview with Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Defense Minister Rodrigo Lloreda had even defended the demilitarized zone at a US Congressional hearing in August 1998 (Méndez 2017:95-96). Within a year, however, Lloreda resigned, alarmed over government concessions and concerns that the FARC was exploiting the demilitarized zone to build military strength (Méndez 2017:106; Eastman, interview 2022). Seventeen high-ranking Colombian army officers also threatened to resign in a show of solidarity. While evidence demonstrates that the FARC was using the demilitarized zone to stage military operations, military escalation had also clearly “heralded intensified conflict rather than mere enhancement of the government’s position at the negotiating table” (Dizard 2017:59). US military support ultimately incited a sweeping cultural change among Colombian decision-makers, and put the government in a different political position. For the first time in the long history of the war, Colombian decision-makers now had a Plan B, an alternative to negotiations. In Washington, Caguán’s failure became Pastrana’s selling point for convincing US Democrats to authorize more military aid (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021a).

The collapse of Caguán coincided with the September 11th attacks and a new bilateral vision. By the end of Pastrana’s term, an anemic Colombian State had lost control over two-thirds of the national territory to the FARC, ELN, and right-wing paramilitary groups. The FARC’s expanded to a 20,000 member strong army, intensifying kidnappings and urban bombings. The general perception that a powerful FARC was overtaking populated areas aggravated public panic (González González 2014:430). Negotiations entirely lost public credibility, translating to the 2002 presidential election of hardliner Alvaro Uribe Vélez. The new President shared a tight ideological alignment with the Generals and a belief that drugs were at the root of the problem.

President Bush was also “a believer” (Gómez Alzate, interview 2022). According to Condoleeza Rice’s account, the Bush administration possessed new “clarity” on the Colombian problem: “from the administration’s point of view, the two tasks—eliminating the drug trade and eliminating the insurgency—were inextricably linked” (Rice 2017). However, the September 11th attacks also gave Uribe ideational leverage to renegotiate Plan Colombia. After years-long efforts to convince US policymakers, 9/11 produced a “much better understanding of the relationship between narco-traffic and political terrorism” (Ambrosi, interview 2022; Barco, interview 2022). As explained by Carlos Restrepo, a former director in the MoD, “what Bin Laden allowed was to remove a political defect in the United States, to understand that the problem in Colombia was not the drugs themselves, but how the drugs were articulated within an illegal armed system” (interview 2022). This understanding—summarized within new “narco-terrorism” coinage—stripped the FARC of their political status and resolved all bilateral ambiguity. The Bush administration designated the FARC as a terrorist group on October 31, 2001, thereby opening new channels of military funding (Eichensehr 2022:419; Priest 2013). The State Department helped convince US legislators to eagerly accept a counter-terrorism budget that expanded Plan Colombia to include trainings, technical assistance, and intelligence for military operations alongside aerial spraying and alternative development projects (Shannon, interview 2020; Barco, interview 2022). In exchange for Washington’s emphatic assistance, Uribe gave President Bush his “word” that he “was serious about defeating the FARC” (see Rice 2017).

In the rest of this chapter I will detail how Plan Colombia penetrated traditional security relationships and ideas in Colombia, providing support to both military and reformist actors and solutions throughout the Uribe and Santos administrations.

B. The Uribe Administration (2002-2010): Military Escalation and Success

i. Uribe's Military Escalation and Plan Colombia

Backed by US assistance to build Colombia's military coercive and administrative capacity, Uribe delivered the grandest military onslaught against the guerrillas in the long history of the war. The political heart of Uribe's hardline strategy was *Seguridad Democrática*, the Democratic Security doctrine. Uribe introduced *Seguridad Democrática* through a declared state of emergency and a permanent military crackdown. The policy's objective was to recover the government's territorial control, and "accept no less than the surrender of insurgents on both sides of the political divide" (Rice 2017). The "Democratic" in *Seguridad Democrática* invoked a conception of communitarian war, justifying a bigger defense budget and a war tax to: train and equip thousands of additional soldiers and police officers; create a new security force of up to 100,000 recruits; and enact a technocratic overhaul of the Ministry of Defense, including organizational and operational reforms (Leal Buitrago 2011:13). Operationally, the strategy involved: aerial fumigation of coca cultivation; "Plan Patriota" (2004-2006) a 18,000-soldier offensive into FARC-controlled territory; a "high value target" strategy to kill FARC leaders; and stabilization of conflict areas through government presence. Plan

Colombia not only boosted military expansion, but also supported militant claims over the strategy by 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success.

1. Clarifying Militant Roles and Strategic Goals

“Foreign Policy evaluated us as a failed state in 1998....there was no strategic clarity....the United States became a sponsor of the task and Colombia made the transformation.”

Carlos Restrepo (interview 2022), International Affairs Consultant, Ministry of Defense (1999-2003) and Director of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defense (2009-2016)

The new joint counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism mission clarified militant roles and strategic goals. In dividing political and military spheres, the “Lleras Pact” had long hindered the development of a grand national security strategy that specified the roles and missions of the military apparatus (Porch 2008:130). The Colombian charter broadly defines the role and mission of the Armed forces as defending sovereignty and territorial integrity (Cuervo Iglesias 2021:62). Beyond that, the Ministry of Defense—including the National Army, Navy, Air Force, the National Police, and civilian bureaucrats—lacked an institutional security policy and operational strategy was organized ad-hoc (Rojas 2015, 66). Until the Pastrana administration, officials formulated defense policy by accompanying the Defense Minister during meetings, transcribing the Minister’s speeches to construct a policy narrative (Restrepo, interview 2022). A lack of a formal policy notwithstanding, counter-insurgency was central to the military’s self-conception (Cuervo Iglesias 2021:79).

Throughout the 20th century, the Armed Forces had embraced National Security Doctrine, expressing a policy preference that ranged from emphasis on total military victory to a greater focus on national development (Dizard 2017:49; Delgado 2017).²⁰ By the 1990s, however, experts judged that one of the military's main problems was the absence of a policy vision adapted to the country's contemporary problems (Rojas 2015:59; Leal Buitrago 2011:7). A historical lack of resources had also made military strategy defensive (Restrepo, interview 2022).

Colombian Military forces had been reluctant to involve themselves in the fight against narco-trafficking (Rojas 2015:56). Official divisions between military and policing tasks had sometimes blurred under Colombia's hybrid forms of violence. Washington had often pressured the Colombian military for greater involvement. Some units had participated in the fight against Pablo Escobar. But, during much of the 1980s and 1990s, the military had avoided the mission, fearing that proximity between soldiers and traffickers would breed corruption (Dizard 2017:61-62). Soldiers had refused tasks such as eradicating coca cultivation and were happy to outsource bilateral counter-narcotics cooperation to the police (Restrepo, interview 2022).

Plan Colombia invited US counter-narcotics to join Colombia's plans for the military's strategic development. At the beginning of Pastrana's administration, top US and

²⁰ The counter-insurgency mandate's varied interpretations expressed factional differences within the Armed Forces around the instrumentality of force. A "Traditionalist" school was professionalized by Chilean and German forces between 1907 and 1930, and expressed an "enemy-centric" counterinsurgency vision that believed in total military victory over insurgencies (Delgado 2017:832-838). The 1970s dirty wars of the Southern Cone express this "Traditionalist" school most clearly. During the 1950s, a second faction had participated alongside the US in the Korean War, providing an ideational conduit to US military doctrine manuals and guidelines, including civil-military and psychological operations frameworks (Cuervo Iglesias 2021:82). This "Korean School" was guided by a "population-centric" counterinsurgency which also sought to gain popular support via economic and social development programs executed by local militaries (Delgado 2017:832-838).

Colombian officials and experts engaged in a series of meetings, seminars, and work groups to clearly define national security policy and institutional roles (Rojas 2015:65-66). In 1998, US General Charles E. Wilhem produced a comprehensive diagnosis of the Colombian military's problems and offered recommendations (Rojas 2015:60). The National Defense University in Washington outlined a plan for the Colombian government to take back national territory and become a proactive offensive force (Rojas 2015:60).

The release of US military aid in 2000—restricted exclusively to counter-narcotics activities—instigated a serious reflection within Colombia's military apparatus. Motivated by successive military defeats and an inability to respond to attacks against the population, the police, or themselves, the military developed a comprehensive strategy against narco-traffic and the guerrillas, introduced formal changes in military doctrine, and produced new “designs for a specialized mode of operations” (Restrepo, interview 2022). A permanent bilateral Defense and Security committee was created to identify the needs and requirements of the first counter-narcotics battalions and brigades, tasked with seizing cocaine, destroying processing labs, and securing aerial fumigation sites (Rojas 2015, 68). Civilian lawyers in the MoD established a general program, obligations, and means of coordination for counter-narcotics commitments (Ambrosi, interview 2022). In this way, the MoD integrated the bilateral logic of drugs as being at the root of the Colombian problem into the military's strategy and mission. Although the military's change of heart on counter-narcotics was motivated by sheer survivalism, modernization allowed the Armed Forces “to understand and see the benefit” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Counter-narcotics brigades quickly became the military's “favorite child” (Restrepo, interview 2022), receiving the best equipment, training, arms, and uniforms.

The US War on Terror's contribution to strategic clarity and roles is less straightforward. As discussed in the overview, counter-terrorism unlocked US military cooperation and resources for direct combat with the FARC. In the words of MoD officials, "Osama Bin Laden...thus created a window of opportunity" (Restrepo, interview 2022). High-level Washington officials report that the US Embassy was "intensely engaged" in consultations with Uribe as he formulated his national security strategy (Shannon, interview 2020). President Bush and President Uribe maintained a robust and fluid relationship characterized by the exchange of ideas. Chancellor Carolina Barco ensured follow-up on these ideas by maintaining close relationships with Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice (Barco, interview 2022). Counter-terrorism opened many more lines of institutional communication within the MoD. US Southern Command, or SouthCom, is the DoD's regional command that coordinates US military activity in the Americas. After assuming leadership of SouthCom, General James Hill promptly opened dialogue with Uribe. He visited Colombia within the first two weeks of his command and made 33 other additional trips during his two-year tenure (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021b). During the Uribe administration, the MoD was "fully aligned with Washington, DoD was working so closely that...there might have been discussion of how to implement, but there were no policy discussions" (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022).

Although Washington certainly shared ideas that influenced Uribe's military strategy, the War on Terror by itself did not bring about any major changes in military roles and objectives. Uribe's vision shared a significant level of continuity with the military's Cold War-era doctrine (Dizard 201:67-68). On the ground, the Armed Forces pursued a

traditional counter-insurgency mission rather than adopting formal counter-terrorism tactics (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022; Restrepo, interview 2022).

Despite the fact that US counter-terrorism efforts did not introduce a radical transformation of the Colombian military's counterinsurgency mission, US guidance played a crucial role in shaping counterinsurgency practices. A central example is Washington's practical and conceptual contributions to Uribe's "consolidation" policy, the *Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática*, understood to be the final strategic phase of counterinsurgency. Idea-exchange around "consolidation" began in 2004 and became increasingly prominent in 2006. SouthCom proposed consolidation as a means to secure territories and military gains after large-scale offensives against the FARC. At the time, US military Commanders had been concerned about the state's lack of credibility among populations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Isacson and Poe 2009:5). Consolidation moved strategy from relying solely on coercive operations during the first Uribe administration, to investments in roads, schools, hospitals, water treatment, and housing centers to satisfy the affected population's needs. Although this conception of "population-centric" counterinsurgency strategy dated back to the 1960's within the Colombian military, DoD officials offered their own revamped models from Afghanistan. The MoD adapted this model "and strengthened it with what we believed was required" (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022). According to one MoD official, the Colombian version envisioned a much stronger coordination with soft-side institutions to accompany the Armed Forces and "recover" conflicted areas. After receiving training at the Perry Center in Washington, MoD officials created the CCAI (Center for Consolidation and Integral Action) in 2004, an inter-agency coordination body. Ongoing SouthCom funding and training ensured that the CCAI was

guided by US processes for inter-agency coordination (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022; US Embassy Colombia 2004b). The MoD also closely reviewed General Patraeus' 2006 Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual (Eastman, interview 2022).

Namely, while counter-narcotics had brought political elites, military leaders, and Washington officials together under a common vision, the War on Terror's primary strategic contribution was to further refine and strengthen this shared consensus. Despite agreement on the war on drugs, Pastrana's political elites had also maintained the perceived reasonableness of negotiations, comprehensive reforms, and political recognition of the FARC. Pastrana's position had thereby split both bilateral and civil-military relations. During the Caguán peace process, the Colombian Minister of Defense and Commander of the Military Forces met with US security officials, sharing "the multitude of problems they face in trying to eliminate Colombian terrorist groups...venting their frustration" (US Embassy Colombia 2000b). US officials had remarked on Colombia weak penal codes and jail sentences, stressing that the government "had to take a very strong stand and make clear that they will deal with terrorism and violence as a crime, not a political issue" (US Embassy Colombia 2000b). When Caguán collapsed, September 11th allowed Uribe to "appropriate the [terrorist] issue" (Restrepo, interview 2022). Domestically, the narrative of a terrorist attack against a fully legitimate state provided Uribe with a framework that redefined the nature of Colombian conflict and filled in the policy blanks. This narrative decisively discredited the FARC's political project and broadly legitimized a military solution. For the first time in Colombia's history, newly available US counter-terrorism assistance provided Uribe with the backing he required to make this solution feasible.

2. Expanding militant practices, capacities, and expertise

The joint military strategy required new practices, expertise, and capacities to transform a weak, defensive army to a strong, offensive military. By the end of Uribe's first term in 2006, institutional changes were far-reaching and "dramatic" (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021d; Dizard 2017:67-68). The counter-narcotics mission increased training to the National Police and also provided tasked units with the most cutting-edge training within the Armed Forces. The counter-terrorism mission rechanneled US training, exchanges, and strategic advising towards counter-insurgency against guerrillas, effectively producing what Lindsay-Poland has described as a "war through military protegés" (2018: 93-95).

During Uribe's two administrations (2000-2010), the United States funded the military training of 77,276 Colombian officers and foot soldiers (Lindsay-Poland 2018:93-95). Higher level, specialized, and technical courses at the School of the Americas, West Point, and Randolph Air Force Base in Texas were especially useful for officers who rose in rank. US funding also sent senior officers to take courses in other countries, such as counter-terrorism training in Germany. US Special Forces provided infantry training on Colombian ground. US military advisors were embedded within Colombian brigades and division headquarters during Plan Patriota (Lindsay-Poland 2018:93-95). Eight hundred on-the-ground military advisors pointed to institutional areas that required growth. Colombian defense forces "understood and bought these ideas, adapting them to our experience" (Eastman, interview 2022). A history of mil-to-mil exchanges and educational opportunities for Colombian officers at West Point produced "cultural connections and similarities" that allowed militaries to "get each other" (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021d).

US training diffused the new capacities and doctrines that guided Colombian military action and embedded long-term within organizational culture. The Armed Forces acquired a vast range of skills. In particular, skills for mobility, intelligence, jointness, and technocratic administration strengthened the protagonism of military forces.

Mobility

Before Plan Colombia, the Armed Forces could not get to where they needed to go—neither to coca fields, nor to FARC camps. Local brigades were easily overwhelmed, overrun, and beleaguered. The military lacked ways of transporting armed troops up to the conflicted páramo, the alpine tundra in the Andean cordillera. Much of Colombia’s geography was—and still remains—inaccessible by anemic road infrastructure. Vast mountain ranges of the highlands, the lowland valleys, lakes, plains, swamps, rivers, deserts, and rainforests divided military reach.

US Blackhawk helicopters became the symbol of the Army’s new air power. US assistance tripled aircraft and doubled personnel in the military’s aviation brigade (Rojas 2015: 81). Coupled with Colombia’s own investments, Colombia jumped from 17 to nearly 200 helicopters distributed across the military, police, navy and Air Force within a little over a decade (Whitaker, interview 2022; Rojas 2015:80-81). New air technology and extensive training gave the military a significant tactical advantage. Mobilizing quickly allowed troops to target guerrillas and impede their movements through helicopter artillery and combat planes. Training in air intelligence and operations and flight infrared technology allowed the military to “conquer the night skies” (Restrepo, interview 2022; Lindsay-Poland 2018:93-95). In 2006, a joint training program enabled the MoD to “nationalize” aerial

support programs and assume control over a network of radars. Accordingly, the MoD came to know what was happening in their national airspace for the first time (Rojas 2015:191). Bilateral cooperation on the Air Bridge Denial program—involving the interception of trafficking planes through gunfire—trained officers on how to “completely eliminate the use of air space for coca traffic” (Eastman, interview 2022). In parallel, the Navy created a riverine counter-narcotics brigade.

Intelligence

Before Plan Colombia, security forces moved through the country “*como un ciego*” (Restrepo, interview 2022), like a blind man. The state spent lots of operational resources and achieved few “results” because the FARC was invisible and unknowable. Without the capacity for processing real-time intelligence, the Armed Forces received information that would become quickly outdated, neutering operational effect.

The War on Terror radically expanded intelligence capacities. Uribe created a network of civil informants, and US technical intelligence and training helped Colombian officials collect information to plan more precise operations (Rojas 2015:68). US experts built a nationwide intelligence computer system and regional fusion centers that produced tactical intelligence for local commanders. US aerial photographic capacity, intercepting equipment for phone calls, and other communications improved the quality of information collected (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022; Rojas 2015:83). Colombians adopted wide use of satellite platforms and standardized communications between forces (Eastman, interview 2022; Rojas 2015:83). New intelligence capacities radically upgraded military bases. While intelligence officers had once been peripheral actors in the MoD, Plan

Colombia made them “very important from one moment to the next” (Restrepo, interview 2022).

The most significant US contribution was to build a Colombian intelligence apparatus capable of targeting guerrilla leadership. A Washington Post report by Dana Priest (2013)—who interviewed over 30 US and Colombian officials—describes how a US Embassy Intelligence Fusion Cell that had been created to search for US hostages became transformed into a system for special operations.²¹ The Fusion Cell captured satellite maps of the jungle, monitored images of vehicles with tracking devices, and intercepted radio and cellphone communications. The National Security Agency decrypted and fused this information with tips from informant networks (Priest 2013). Towards the end of the first Uribe administration, Colombians had already learned how to triangulate the exact location of a FARC camp (Eastman, interview 2022). However, officers were still incapable of using this intelligence expediently within the time frame of an operation. At least 60 times, the US sent information to the Colombian Forces, who flew Black Hawks with troops into FARC camps. However, they failed to capture or kill senior FARC commanders due to the guerrilla’s early warning systems (Eastman, interview 2022; Priest 2013).

Things changed in 2006, when the Mission Chief of the US Air Force shared his idea to use smart bombs with then-Defense Minister José Manuel Santos. In June of that year, Uribe personally traveled to the White House to request this capability from Bush, “mention[ing] the recent killing of al-Qaeda’s chief in Iraq” (Priest 2013). The request materialized into a multi-billion dollar black budget program adjacent to Plan Colombia. The program combined smart bombs and CIA covert operations know-how, including

²¹ In February 2003, a plane of American contractors working on coca eradication became hostages after they crashed into FARC-held jungle.

training of Colombian Air Force support teams on using cutting-edge technology, such as radars, laser guided missiles, and night vision. “Round-the-clock” National Security Agency intercepts fed intelligence to Colombian officers before and during operations. CIA training also helped Colombian officials question thousands of FARC deserters. CIA databases kept track of these interrogations, allowing the government to build their knowledge of the FARC—their chain of command, standard travel routes, camps, supply lines, drug and money sources. As Carlos Restrepo, a former director in the MoD, noted, through new intelligence capacities “we learned the DNA of the FARC completely—who they were, where they were, what they did, how they moved...they were made absolutely visible” (interview 2022). US national security lawyers, moreover, helped Colombians rationalize these extrajudicial killings. When the Armed Forces killed Commander Raúl Reyes—considered number two in the FARC secretariat—one mile into Ecuadorian territory, the government drew on “a new interpretation of the permissible use of force against non-state actors like al-Qaeda” (Priest 2013). This authorization—which legalized attacks in other, non-cooperating sovereign territories—was the same that had been invoked to kill Osama bin Laden.

Jointness

Washington’s insistence on joint command mobile brigades “marked the most significant strategic shift for the [Colombian] military since the Second World War” (Dizard 2017:61-62). The MoD’s unified structure had long centralized decisions between the Military, Air Force, Navy, and National Police. The Ministry’s design had thus largely resolved bureaucratic competitions between security forces—over national budgets, US resources, and responsibilities—within the institution itself, preventing internal disputes from reaching

bilateral-level decisions (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Nonetheless, the relationship between the police and military was “very bad” (Restrepo, interview 2022).

Because the joint counter-narcotics strategy combined public and internal security issues, US training sought to develop new relationships between the military and police. Working together on the counter-narcotics mission became crucial in a context in which police had long had sole official jurisdiction over the counter-narcotics problem. US officials introduced concepts around joint operations, joint intelligence and communications, and joint force initiatives to combine military and police expertise (US Embassy Colombia 2010a). US training focused on “increasing their capacity to conduct joint operations in small, commando style units” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022; US Embassy Colombia 2010a). In the mid-2000s, the military forces activated their first joint command with all three branches and created a series of joint task forces to combine land, air and marine capabilities in the offensive (Cuervo Iglesias 2021:83). Within a few years, the Colombian Police and Ministry began to share information and develop systems to work together to recover state presence in national territory (US Embassy Colombia 2009c).

Technocratic Administration

Plan Colombia arrived in Colombia just as political elites were taking on the Defense sector’s “organizational transformation” (Restrepo, interview 2022). This modernizing push included a serious internal effort to develop analytic capabilities and technocratic bureaucratic practices. In the late 1990s, the MoD had begun recruiting increasingly more qualified young professionals, led by patriotic duty amidst the crisis. From Pastrana to Uribe, civilian leadership in the MoD ballooned from single to triple digits. The figure of

“national security professional” (Restrepo, interview 2022) rose in rank within the institution. Many Colombian officials within Uribe’s MoD had received education in administration, follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation in Western universities. Colombian officials studied a variety of administrative models—English, French, German, and US—to create Bogotá’s own model for “capability-based planning” (Restrepo, interview 2022). This included a “knowledge management system” and frameworks for counterinsurgency planning, execution, and strategic evaluations of campaigns, statistics, and geospatial analysis.

MoD requested US advice and assistance with this internally-led process wherever needed. In 2000, the MoD began from a starting place of no data and a lack of understanding of how to design indicators, monitoring, or evaluations. Colombians took inspiration from US formulas in Afghanistan and Iraq and US advisors provided tools for their implementation. As noted by former Vice Minister of Defense Jorge Mario Eastman, Uribe’s MoD found inspiration and vision in Plan Colombia as a blueprint for “North American technical capacity...to see a vision, establish it through strategies, organize ideas, and align the State towards certain objectives” (Eastman, interview 2022). DoD collaboration helped the MoD become “strict with government practices...including executing on the issues of indicators, accountability, strategic communications, planning with far more discipline” (Restrepo, interview 2022). In short, “before Plan Colombia, all of these elements were done intuitively, and after Plan Colombia, they became processes” (Restrepo, interview 2022).

3. Defining militant meanings of policy success

US contributions to new military capacities, expertise, and practices transformed the Colombian Armed Forces, enabling great victories on the battlefield for the first time in decades of guerilla warfare. Resuscitated from the brink of pronounced collapse, the State grew strong through military might and crumbled the FARC—once considered the best-funded insurgency in the world—into “its smallest and most vulnerable state in decades” (Priest 2013). The Uribe government measured this changing balance of power through greater guerilla kills and captures and reduced homicides, massacres, kidnappings, and “terrorist acts” (US Embassy Colombia 2004a). During meetings with US officials, Colombian bureaucrats displayed maps depicting recovered territories. As the conflict’s new center of gravity, “illicit drugs eradicated” became another clear indicator of success, with the stated goal to reduce coca cultivation by fifty percent (US Embassy Colombia 2004a).

The joint mission’s unprecedented “results” socialized an unprecedented vision for policy success: the belief that a military solution was more effective than a negotiated one and that the FARC’s military defeat was possible. Prior to Plan Colombia, only some factions of the Armed Forces believed in military defeat (Delgado 2017:833). By contrast, in the preceding decades, political leaders had typically assumed that comprehensive negotiations were required to ensure the demobilization of numerous guerrilla groups in the country. However, the bilateral mission hinged on the promise of military defeat and a new confidence to fulfill it. Accordingly, Uribe’s first Minister of Defense, Martha Lucía Ramírez, announced Seguridad Democrática through the declaration that “this war is winnable and for the first time in many years we have objective elements that indicate to us that we are effectively about to win it” (Beltrán Villegas 2015:50).

In her memoir, Condoleeza Rice describes her December 2002 visit to the new Uribe government. During this visit, Colin Powell explained that “America viewed the war on leftist guerrillas...as part of the Bush administration’s war on terror” (Rice 2017). He thereby announced that an increase to \$537 million in annual aid was conditional on “eliminating the security threat to the country by military means” (Rice 2017).²² Throughout the Uribe administration, the continuation of Plan Colombia’s flowing military budget relied on showing US policymakers that “they were winning” and “making the effort” (Eastman, interview 2022).

Uribe “took seriously his pledge to President Bush to hunt down the FARC’s leaders” (Rice 2017). He produced “results” that revived military morale and credibility in the military option. High-level officials in the Uribe administration would repeat Powell’s ideas, and discuss the “final fight against the FARC guerrillas” (US Embassy Colombia 2007e). US Generals praised Colombian leadership for having a “viable plan to end the conflict, a goal inconceivable a few years ago” (US Embassy Colombia 2007e). During the Uribe administration, decision-makers still believed that negotiations would eventually be necessary to fully disarm guerrillas that had the ability to hide among the population indefinitely. However, military results narrowed the expected terms of these negotiations to conditions of surrender and submission. By the conclusion of the administration, the prevailing belief in the MoD was that the “FARC had been defeated as a military organization” (Eastman, interview 2022).

²² The new American commitment put aid to Colombia at roughly the same level as aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

ii. Uribe's Military Policy "Success" and Reform Effort

"Plan Colombia is a great success."

-Francisco Santos, Vice President of Colombia (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021a).

Uribe's military successes became obvious as early as 2003, when an offensive pushed the FARC out of the province surrounding Bogotá. In 2004, military operations displaced the FARC from their heartland in south-central Colombia and into the country's peripheral mountains and deep jungle (Dizard 2017:64-65). The bilateral approach thus undermined the military strategy the FARC had followed since 1982 to take power: a spreading out of operations throughout the country, and a strategic deployment from the hinterlands and into the western Andes cordillera to encircle Bogotá (Delgado 2015:829). Before Uribe took power the FARC had an army of 20,000. By 2006, the military had cut its ranks by half (Delgado 2015:829).

Although the successes of a large-scale, time and resource-intensive offensive began to flag in 2005, the joint strategy adapted to secure military gains (Leal Buitrago 2011; Rojas 2015: 137-138; Isacson and Poe 2009:5). The Consolidation strategy launched operations to "hold" and "build" in territory recovered from the FARC during large-scale offensives, preventing the guerrillas from returning (Isacson and Poe 2009:5). US intelligence-sharing and operational advising for targeting forced FARC leaders to "fall like dominoes" (Eastman, interview 2022). Uribe thereby became the first president in the country's history to kill a member of the FARC Secretariat (Delgado 2015:842). The killing of at least two dozen rebel leaders motivated the FARC's senior leadership to flee abroad, and triggered mass desertions. Fears of targeting motivated remaining FARC members to

build sparser camps, move more often, and travel in smaller units that were no longer able to mount large-scale attacks (Priest 2013). By 2007, coca production and cultivation fell along with descending FARC membership.

Military successes delivered safer cities, safer roads, and safer oil pipelines. According to official statistics presented by the Uribe administration, homicide rates dropped by 45 percent, the threat of terrorism in the central urban areas had been extinguished, and kidnappings were reduced by 90 percent (Delgado 2015:828). Hundreds of mayors living in local exile returned to their communities, and the police presence expanded to conflict-affected villages for the very first time (Ariztabal Hoyos, interview 2022). Investor confidence grew and foreign capital flooded Uribe's Colombia, materializing in a robust economy.

Throughout his administration, Uribe maintained an unwavering commitment to a permanent offensive as the central shank of *Seguridad Democrática*. He signaled constant support to the Generals through a perpetual flow of new resources and personnel into the Armed Forces (Dizard 2017:64). Nonetheless, his administration's military approach also maintained a soft-sided face. A central logic of the joint counterinsurgency strategy was the need to "combine the legitimate use of force with the State's social action" (DNP 2007:46). By building popular support among communities in territories "recovered" from FARC control, Uribe's government aimed to challenge the FARC's historical claims of agrarian, *campesino* grievances—state abandonment, economic inequality, and political exclusion. Development programs and MoD human rights reforms were thereby imagined as means to prove government legitimacy among rural communities that had experienced little state

presence. Moreover, Uribe also took on negotiations initiatives to demobilize the paramilitaries, the FARC, and the ELN.

1. Development Programs

Uribe made *Acción Social* (Social Action) into an office within the presidency to centralize all social programs for conflict zones. Large-scale socio-economic development programs had been mainstays in Colombia's political history. *Acción Social* thus took on 31 ongoing programs from previous governments, including services for internally displaced children, families, and support to victims. However, according to the former Director of *Acción Social*, Luis Alfonso Artizabal, these past programs “had neglected to coordinate the security issue with the social issue” (interview 2022). *Acción Social* thus represented a break with policy tradition by integrating development with military action.

As part of the larger strategy, *Acción Social* became tasked with ministering the CCAI, the interagency coordination body responsible for the bilateral consolidation policy. Guided by US military support, the CCAI held weekly collective meetings with representatives from the military, police, and social ministries.²³ These meetings aimed to determine strategies for “recovering” conflict zones and restoring public services that had previously been administered by the FARC (Felbab-Brown et al. 2009).

Alongside SouthCom training and military advice, USAID aligned programs to support CCAI and the consolidation strategy (US Embassy Colombia 2007b). USAID maintained a “constant dialogue” with *Acción Social* and communicated directly with all

²³ CCAI included representatives from Office of the President, the Ministry of Defense, National Police, Military, Ministry of the Interior, and Justice, Social Solidarity Network, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Protection, Family Welfare Institute, and Registrar's Office (US Embassy Colombia 2004b).

CCAI agencies to discern how to intervene in territories “recuperated” by security forces (Ayalde, interview 2022). USAID officials accompanied *Acción Social* on trips into these zones to “think together” (Ayalde, interview 2022). Due to the CCAI’s problems with budgetary constraints and difficulties in engaging the top-levels of line ministries, USAID also provided technical support “to strengthen CCAI’s coordination role” (Felbab-Brown et al 2009, iv; US Embassy Colombia 2004b). Although USAID did not provide direct training to *Acción Social* bureaucrats, officials note that USAID consultants encouraged them to develop routines and methods outside of their traditional practices—including standardized processes, developing indicators, and conducting policy evaluations (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022).

USAID maintained a broad portfolio, touching on many “ways to ensure that the state could present itself in a way that wasn't dominated by the armed forces” (Shannon, interview 2020). The agency delivered small infrastructure projects—soccer fields, playgrounds, and school renovations (Hartzell et al. 2011; Isacson and Poe 2009:9). In addition to its work with *Acción Social*, USAID also engaged with the Ministry of Justice. Collaboration developed shared concepts to professionalize prosecutors and judges and “change to accusatorial justice a la americana” (Barco, interview 2022). USAID had programs for housing, education, and job training for displaced families and programs to protect local social and political leaders. Economic development programs prepared the banking system for small credits and support for people without paperwork.

Above all else, however, USAID’s focus was mainly on coca substitution and commercialization. As noted by a former official in *Acción Social*, “US government

cooperation was here to fight against drugs” (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022).²⁴ Folded into consolidation efforts, USAID provided job development, financial literacy, and technical assistance for coca *campesinos* to access markets and sustainable livelihoods through a substitute product: cork, cacao, coffee, or tourism. Crucially, joint efforts maintained a condition of “zero coca” for the areas where it intervened: conditioning all economic and social support on the proven eradication of coca in an entire area. Alternative development thus folded into the general logic of the military approach, serving as a complementary strategic element to disrupt guerrilla financing and regain territorial control (Vargas Meza 2011:2). The central objective of reducing illicit drug production created a close relationship between alternative development and the MoD, security forces, and hard-side US agencies. Social actions were highly dependent on and “very closely synchronized with the military” (Ayalde, interview 2022).

In policy panels on the subject, officials refer to this approach as “security first” (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021b). Part of the reasoning behind this approach emerged from the practical concerns of working in a conflict zone, where either contractors or *campesinos* were at risk of being killed (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021b). However, “security first” also meant that security priorities eclipsed socio-economic ones. Based on a strategy to disrupt the FARC’s plans and positions, the selection of alternative development programs was guided by military criteria rather than socio-economic need (Isacson and Poe 2009:30). Fused with the security strategy, Acción Social’s and USAID’s policy preferences folded in coherently with those of hard-side agencies, posing little by way of alternatives. Despite civilian leadership of the CCAI, the Directive Council was also

²⁴ Between 2000-2008, of the \$1.03B spent on economic and social assistance, \$500.5M went to alternative development, representing near 50% of non-military assistance (Felbab-Brown et al 2009:8).

overwhelmingly represented by security forces (Isacson and Poe 2009:30). Ongoing challenges with funding and interagency collaboration led to a situation where much of the management responsibilities were delegated to the MoD (US Embassy Colombia 2008c).²⁵ Although joint social development programs counted on mechanisms to consult with communities, these often experienced CCAI as a top-down model (Isacson and Poe 2009:33).

In the context of this unified security vision, conflicts between soft-side and hard-side approaches only arose when discussing eradication methods. Aerial fumigation was hugely controversial in Colombia. The INL funded massive fumigation operations operated by the military contractor Dyncorp, spraying glyphosate—the main ingredient in Roundup Weed Control—over coca fields, homes, schools, and waterways (Tate 2015:198). Aerial fumigation inflamed *campesino* grievances due to reports of damaged food crops, dead livestock, skin problems, and children dying of diarrhea from drinking contaminated water (Tate 2015:199). By 2007, during meetings with US generals, Vice President Francisco Santos “sought to stimulate new approaches in the fight against coca cultivation,” noting that the government was “under pressure to develop new strategies beyond the ‘stopgap’ of aerial spraying” (US Embassy Colombia 2007e). *Acción Social*’s Luis Artizabal had witnessed how aerial fumigation damaged food crops and relationships with communities, inhibiting consensual dialogues about substitution (Ariztabal Hoyos, interview 2022). Reports also demonstrated that aerial eradication lost effectiveness over time, as *campesinos* adapted production to smaller plots (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). *Acción Social* thus proposed to radically scale up manual eradication, positioning it as a less

²⁵ Civilian ministries—oftentimes representing vested interests—neglected to commit resources and implement policies (US Embassy Colombia 2008c; Felbab-Brown 2016).

expensive alternative than the aerial eradication carried out by US contractors (Ariztabal Hoyos, interview 2022). Even though *Acción Social* established a manual eradication program, US fumigation efforts continued simultaneously. According to MoD officials, Uribe ultimately supported spraying “because what was the alternative?” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Manual eradication was dangerous in territories laden with landmines. While glyphosate was a concern, the health risk would have to be balanced against the priority to eradicate.

Frictions over eradication notwithstanding, consensus “zero coca” and “security first” ran counter to social and rural development by preventing institutions from providing assistance (Felbab-Brown et al. 2009:iv).²⁶ In the words of former US Ambassador Anne Patterson (2000-2003), USAID support was “way behind other elements of [Plan Colombia] implementation” (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021a). Regardless of whether communities were subjected to forced manual or aerial eradication, programs failed to reach coca farmers, leaving them without social and economic opportunities (Vargas Meza 2011:4-5; Felbab-Brown et al. 2009:8). Instead, USAID social interventions became concentrated in areas of paramilitary demobilization. Even among the military establishment, the lack of basic civilian presence in former FARC-held territories became “a source of persistent low-level resentment” (Dizard 2017:66; Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022).

²⁶ The exception was the consolidation program in Macarena, the region historically the central operations area of the FARC (DeShazo et al 2009:2). Presented as both the flagship and most exemplary program of the consolidation strategy, in Macarena the Colombian government demonstrated a greater acceptance of “the *de facto* continuation of coca growing” so as not to risk local support for military intervention (Felbab-Brown et al 2009:24). In this territory, USAID and *Acción Social* were able to reach communities with small-scale productive projects. Yet, even in Macarena, external evaluators found that the program lacked stronger civilian presence and large-scale investments needed to address systemic structural obstacles to the marginalization of coca farmers (Felbab-Brown et al. 2009; DeShazo et al. 2009).

The consolidation strategy was established under the joint recognition that “stability and state presence will not be established with military and police operations alone” (US Embassy Colombia 2004b; Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022). However, as military gains advanced, the state’s neglect to provide basic services ultimately became less pressing (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:14; Dizard 2017:66).

2. Human Rights Reform in the Military

Against a record of gross violations and paramilitary collusion, human rights reform also became a way to build the state’s legitimacy. This reform was hard won. Although the 1991 Constitution had mandated that the Armed Forces take on the human rights agenda, the widespread implementation of human rights reforms did not progress until the conclusion of Uribe's second term in office (Mezú-Mina 2021:118).

During the Pastrana administration, civil leadership in the MoD had considered human rights as an important way to boost domestic and international credibility (Restrepo, interview 2022). Pastrana created a Human Rights Directorate within the MoD in 1999, and instigated reforms in military penal justice and investigations. While a pro-modernization faction of the military was open to reform, others were deeply resistant (Ambrosi, interview 2022). Even before Uribe launched his presidential bid, he signaled his allegiance by speaking at an event honoring two Generals that had been expelled from Army for collaborating with paramilitaries (Dizard 2017:63). As early as 2003, a report by the OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) declared that Uribe’s policies were “incompatible with human rights” (see Rey Ortíz 2015:35).

Plan Colombia was partially responsible for the government’s decision to consider human rights reform. Colombian human rights groups maintained close relationships with

US Congressmembers (Ambrosi, interview 2022). Pastrana had recognized that exposing Colombia to human rights criticism was a necessary cost in exchange for a big US payout. From the moment Uribe took office, the US Congress mandated the State Department to consult with human rights groups, annually certify that the Colombian security forces were cutting ties to paramilitaries, and ensure that the government was actively investigating abuses before releasing 30% of military assistance (Beittel 2021:34). Poor human rights conditions in Colombia also drove US legislators to pass the Leahy Law, which denied US assistance to individual military units responsible for severe abuses (Beittel 2021:34-35). Human rights vetting at the US Embassy in Bogotá ultimately became “a source of best practices for other embassies” (Beittel 2021:34-35).

US human rights conditions converged with the MoD’s new consensus that it was “critical to support the population in order to fight the guerrillas” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Civil officials organized human rights dialogues between security forces and communities to build trust. The MoD also feared both the “dishonor” and military consequences of Leahy decertifications (Ambrosi, interview 2022). These considerations, in part, stimulated “a permanent concern within the Ministry of Defense to improve performance in human rights” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Civil leadership drafted the first human rights manuals, doctrine, policies, statistics, training, standards, and protocols. The MoD also modified the rules of engagement towards women, Afro-Colombian, and indigenous communities.

However, the MoD did not commit to these human rights reforms until discovery of “false-positives” erupted into scandal (Mezú-Mina 2021:118; Bermúdez Liévano 2020:87; Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). In 2006, reports surfaced in reputable journal *La*

Semana that Uribe had assumed office demanding from the military “effective results in the least amount of time possible” (see Dizard 2017:63-64). At the height of Uribe’s offensive, one commander told the media that “the war is being measured in liters of blood” (Delgado 2015: 841). Uribe had tied his administration’s operational success to guerrilla kills, exacting severe pressures on brigade commanders. An “ever-present” expectation, the President became notorious for calling officers in the middle of the night to demand progress reports on the war, keeping detailed records down to the unit level (Dizard 2017:63-64). Scrambling to meet their due benchmarks, troops would often visit poor neighborhoods, luring young men, women, children away from their homes through the promise of stable employment at wealthy ranch estates. Officers would murder them, clothe their bodies in FARC fatigues, and pose them with guns to boost their tally. Generals rewarded higher kills through extra pay, vacation time, and career opportunities. Incompliance was punished with threats of expulsion from the army (Durán 2023).

Between 2002 and 2008, when US aid to Colombia was at its peak, the military killed an estimated 6,402 Colombians (Durán 2023; Beittel 2021:21). The MoD’s human rights reform was internally-led by Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos and General Padilla, who convinced Uribe (Goebertus, interview 2017).

Washington itself played a contradictory role in the false-positives and its aftermath. On the one hand, US human rights pressures partly influenced the MoD’s effort to reform the evaluation system used for counterinsurgency operations (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022).²⁷ By 2008, US military aid also declined in response to the scandal (Sheldon 2014).

²⁷ The role of US academic exchanges in this reform process were “not that important” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022).

On the other hand, prior to the revelation of the scandal, Uribe used higher body counts to leverage increases in American aid (US Embassy Colombia 2004a). A report by the human rights group Fellowship of Reconciliation finds a correlation between US assistance and army brigades responsible for extrajudicial killings (see Sheldon 2014). Compared with randomly selected units, a higher percentage of units that received US assistance between 2001 and 2003 also committed multiple executions (Sheldon 2014). Military leaders cited in the report explained that “there was an established policy to produce inflated kill-counts so as not to miss out on US aid” (see Sheldon 2014). US-trained General Montoya—indicted in 2023 for killing 130 civilians and demanding “results” at “at all costs”²⁸—was the former Head Commander of the Armed Forces, and had worked closely with the US “to turn the tide of the conflict against the FARC” (Durán 2023). As late as 2010, discussions between the MoD and the US Embassy continued to use guerrilla kills as a metric to gauge process (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). In these discussions, officials interpreted lower kill counts as a sign of waning success, blaming the Army’s new, “weak leaders” and their “reluctance to engage the enemy for fear of human rights abuses” (US Embassy Colombia 2010c).

Apart from the false-positives scandals, Colombian intelligence agents accused of illegally surveilling Supreme Court justices, political opponents, and civil society groups as during the Uribe administration have emphasized the importance of US resources, training, and guidance (DeYoung and Duque 2011). During their trials, these agents explained that they justified their illegal surveillance by claiming that the targeted individuals had sympathies with “terrorists.” They briefed US officials on their activities and “were

²⁸ This wording was used in tribunal court documents in General Montoya’s case.

organized through the American Embassy” (see DeYoung and Duque 2011). An Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch report argues that under the Uribe Administration, both state- paramilitary collusion and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Colombian armed forces increased overall (FORUSA 2010). *Campesinos* subjected to bilateral aerial eradication also reported that intense militarization increased encounters with checkpoints, detention, surveillance, coercion, and incidents of rape and torture (Tate 2015:192).

By 2008, the fall-out of national and international pressure from the false-positives scandal prompted both many dismissals and required courses in human rights within the Armed Forces (Mezú-Mina 2021:118; Cuervo Iglesias 2021:64). Civilian officials began reforming traditional body count indicators, taking on new metrics of higher arrests, reductions in guerilla kidnappings and murders, and measures of territorial security. However, the effort to socialize these indicators faced resistance from Commanders, who felt that it limited their freedom of operational action. Officials also perceived “trade-offs between human rights concerns and effectiveness” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Significant cultural changes in military operations did not take place until 2014, when the military campaign was already naturally shifting under Juan Manuel Santos’ peace negotiations. By the end of the Uribe administration, State Department cables recognized that Uribe targeted civil society organizations and “regularly paints them as supporters of terrorist organizations, which in turn fuels growing death threats against them” (US Embassy Colombia 2010a). Nevertheless, the Colombian military’s new capacity to “do” human rights built trust with collaborators, and became a key that unlocked increasingly greater cooperation.

3. Negotiations Initiatives with the Paramilitaries, the FARC, and the ELN

In parallel to *Seguridad Democrática*'s objective of a military victory, Uribe's Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP) also launched initiatives to negotiate with and demobilize right-wing paramilitary groups, the FARC, and the ELN. USAID's support to the OACP was significantly lower when compared to either military assistance or even to assistance for alternative development. USAID maintained relationships with the OACP, the Ministry of the Interior, and Local Peace Commissioners, offering training in negotiation, and some support with peace-related infrastructure projects, assistance to victims, landmines, seminars, and other events (IOM and USAID 2002a; 2002b; IOM 2003). USAID also provided small grants to dozens of civil society peace initiatives and provided accompaniment to national institutions to strengthen their capacity to engage these groups. Meager funding to these programs diminished in 2006, and redistributed towards state Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs (OIM and USAID 2006).

Peace Talks with the Paramilitaries

The Uribe administration continued dialogues with right-wing paramilitary groups that had been initiated during the Pastrana administration by the Bishop of Montería (Obdulio Gaviria, interview 2022).²⁹ Even though Colombia's Constitution had long authorized amnesties to encourage negotiations for rebel groups that had political objectives, right-wing paramilitary groups were not eligible for legal amnesty because they fought to uphold, rather than subvert, the governing order. Faced with the prospect of lengthy jail

²⁹ Uribe's decision to negotiate with the paramilitaries was, in part, motivated by a strategy to reach an agreement with the FARC (Yamhure, interview 2022). During the Pastrana administration, the FARC had justified mistrust of Caguán with the argument that demobilization would make them vulnerable to paramilitary attacks (Yamhure, interview 2022; Barco, interview 2022).

times for crimes against humanity under regular law, the government lacked a legal instrument to encourage talks with paramilitary that wielded immense political power and drug-related wealth while remaining armed (Brookings 2010).

Uribe navigated around these restrictions. First, the government pursued a series of modifications in Colombian law to facilitate peace negotiations with any armed group, irrespective of their political status. By 2003, the administration signed the Santa Fe de Ralito Accords with the AUC (United Self Defense Forces of Colombia), the largest paramilitary group (Verdad Abierta 2016). Many respondents argued that close ties between Colombian officials, the army, and these groups enabled a smooth process. The agreement demobilized around 35,000 paramilitary combatants. They were offered a comprehensive reintegration program, including job training, employment opportunities, a living stipend, humanitarian assistance, and psychosocial support (US Embassy Colombia 2007d; Rojas 2015:171). Notably, because the right-wing paramilitaries saw themselves as defenders of Colombia's law and order against communist guerrillas, they supported existing policies. This made negotiations around broader reforms unnecessary.

However, the Uribe administration's decision to treat paramilitaries like political actors drew widespread condemnation, culminating in debates around the Peace and Justice Law. The government proposed the Peace and Justice law after Congress rejected an "alternative punishment" bill that would have allowed demobilized combatants to forgo jail time. After three years of revision and debate with legislators, public audiences, experts, and civil society organizations, the Peace and Justice Law passed in 2005. The law defined a new transitional justice framework for the Ralito agreement. It offered amnesty for paramilitaries without criminal charges and offered reduced sentences of 5 to 8 years for

those accused of committing crimes against humanity in exchange for confessing and providing reparations for victims. The Peace and Justice Law also attempted to prosecute paramilitaries under the political crime of “sedition.” In the past, “sedition” had legally authorized amnesty and political participation for guerilla members (Verdad Abierta 2016). In 2007, the Colombian Supreme Court struck down this attempt, arguing that paramilitaries “cannot be assimilated to the concept of political crime” (see Verdad Abierta 2016). Numerous national and international human rights groups and European leaders also criticized the process, alleging that Uribe was “being soft on the right and tough on the left” (US Embassy Colombia 2006g; Rojas 2015:169-170).

The US Embassy maintained consistent political support for the paramilitary process and lauded its narrower focus on demobilization and reintegration (US Embassy Colombia 2004c). The Embassy formulated action plans to ensure the agreement’s “effective” implementation (US Embassy Colombia 2005a). In light of difficulties, USAID sponsored a database for tracking, monitoring, and evaluation (US Embassy Colombia 2007d). It also managed programs to employ former AUC combatants in picking and packing flowers for export (Ayalde, interview 2022). USAID assisted in creating processes to identify victims for reparation programs and collaborated on designing an interagency victim database (Rojas 2015:171-172).

However, US officials also pushed against Uribe’s efforts to authorize broad amnesties for paramilitaries. They pressured the administration to comply with the Supreme Court’s rulings, guarantee justice for gross human rights violations, and accountability for the AUC’s narco-trafficking (US Embassy Colombia 2004d, 2006a, 2006b). US legislators also threatened to condition US support on reducing the Peace and Justice Law’s leniency

(US Embassy Colombia 2005d; Ayalde, interview 2022). Accordingly, US Ambassador Wood advised Uribe's Vice President Francisco Santos to "demonstrate firmness by...jailing AUC commanders" (US Embassy Colombia 2005e). Uribe ultimately sponsored "firmer" terms in the 2005 Justice and Peace Law despite Peace Commissioner Luis Restrepo cautioning that harsher punishments and mandatory confessions would undermine his demobilization strategy and cause the AUC to abandon the process (Yamhure, interview 2022; US Embassy Colombia 2005e; US Embassy Colombia 2006f; US Embassy Colombia 2005c). Furthermore, even though Uribe had assured the AUC that they would be granted amnesty for drug trafficking, Washington's insistence also ensured that the peace process accommodated the extradition of AUC narco-bosses (Verdad Abierta 2016; US Embassy Colombia 2004c; Rojas 2015, 168; US Embassy Colombia 2006a).³⁰

Peace Talks with the FARC and ELN

Uribe had "reassure[d] the military that their efforts to defeat the FARC enjoy[ed]...complete support" (US Embassy Colombia 2008a). The President had also feared "undermining the morale of the Colombian military" (US Embassy Colombia 2008a), which had historically rejected peace processes with the guerillas. However, the Uribe also administration believed that military defeats would break the guerrillas' will to fight and force them to the negotiation table.

Uribe made numerous attempts to engage the FARC and ELN in dialogue. From 2004 to 2007, the government pursued a humanitarian agreement to negotiate the FARC's

³⁰While many AUC commanders were extradited to the US on narco-trafficking charges, Uribe and other administration officials still resisted some of the DEA's extradition requests on grounds of commanders following through with commitments of the peace process (US Embassy Colombia 2007a; Yamhure, interview 2022).

release of kidnapped hostages and to pave the way for talks on demobilization (Yamhure, interview 2022; Bermúdez Liévano 2020, 40; US Embassy Colombia 2007a). In 2006, Uribe issued “a series of landmark offers to the FARC” (US Embassy Colombia 2006d), including meeting their demand for a constitutional assembly in the event of possible negotiations. In 2010, the administration also contacted the FARC Secretariat to propose a secret meeting in Brazil and establish a peace agenda (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:41). The administration also inherited Pastrana’s contacts with the ELN guerrilla (Basurdo 2020:16-17). Civil society groups facilitated exploratory talks with ELN between 2002 and 2003, and then another eight rounds of talks between 2005 and 2007.

With each of these efforts repeatedly failing, Uribe confided to US generals that “a defeat of the FARC remained the one gift he really wanted now from the Colombian military” (US Embassy Colombia 2007c). Despite this strong rhetoric and the government’s belief that the guerrillas were ultimately uninterested in a process, Uribe retained an interest in reviving talks throughout his tenure (US Embassy Colombia 2007a; 2008b). Towards the end of Uribe’s final term in office, Peace Commissioner Frank Pearl concentrated on establishing communication channels and fostering trust with the FARC and ELN (US Embassy Colombia 2010d). He also prepared “roadmaps” that detailed plans on how to effectively pursue peace agreements with guerrillas, intending them to be utilized by the next administration (US Embassy Colombia 2010d).

US support for Uribe’s engagements with the FARC and ELN was mixed. US officials and officers acknowledged the Uribe administration's rationale for these dialogues (Eastman, interview 2022). However, as of 2006, State Department officials indicated that even though they expected Uribe might seek their involvement in future talks, they saw “no

reason even to contemplate such a step” (US Embassy Colombia 2006d). US officials also asserted that they “would expect the [Colombian government] to reject any discussions of national policy beyond the conditions of FARC reinsertion” (US Embassy Colombia 2006d).

However, Washington’s stance softened towards the end of the Uribe administration. In 2007, Washington released statements endorsing a humanitarian initiative with the FARC (US Embassy Colombia 2007a). US Democrats in Congress also met with facilitators and government officials to support these exchanges (US Embassy Colombia 2007a). In 2008, the US Embassy offered to at least consider providing funding for civil society groups involved in facilitating ELN mediations (US Embassy Colombia 2008b). By 2010, the US Embassy had recruited an academic to advise them on how to support ELN efforts (US Embassy Colombia 2010d). USAID also helped Peace Commissioner Pearl draft white papers to outline the ELN’s negotiating positions (US Embassy Colombia 2010d). Finally, USAID funded the International Organization for Migration’s efforts to help draft Frank Pearl’s “roadmap” documents (US Embassy Colombia 2010d).

Despite this support, US agencies also maintained skepticism of Uribe’s efforts until the end of the administration, preferring military confrontation. Because the US’ strong military role had profound “practical ramifications” for dialogues with guerillas, Colombian analysts advised the US Embassy that “Washington’s attitude should ‘move from stick to carrot’” (US Embassy Colombia 2006e). However, some conditions were also “unacceptable” in the bilateral climate (Yamhure, interview 2022). For instance, Frank Pearl discerned that both guerrilla groups demanded similar minimum conditions for a peace agreement, including “an agreement with the United States over illegal drug cultivation,

which they viewed as a social problem” (US Embassy Colombia 2010d). Even for the humanitarian agreement, the FARC insisted on the recognition of their political status. Both of these conditions were unattainable within the framework of a bilateral approach that relied on counter-narcotics and a “terrorist” adversary (US Embassy Colombia 2010b; Yamhure, interview 2022; US Embassy Colombia 2009d). In light of US skepticism, Peace Commissioner Pearl mostly kept the office’s work hidden from the US Embassy (McKinley, interview 2022). Frank Pearl “denied any new developments with the ELN” (US Embassy Colombia 2009b) to Embassy Staff, when other officials in the OACP reported otherwise.

iii. Conclusion: Uribe and “the Teflon Effect”

By 2010, the Uribe’s military strategy had racked up numerous scandals. In addition to ongoing reports of widespread human rights violations and mass displacement caused by military confrontations³¹, the false-positives scandal emerged in 2007, and the revelation of illegal surveillance of political opposition, democratic institutions, and civil society leaders surfaced in 2009. In 2006, investigator Claudia López (elected mayor of Bogotá in 2020) first uncovered *parapolítica*, or the parapolitics scandal, exposing ties between right-wing paramilitary groups and around 35% of Colombian politicians in Congress, intelligence services, the Constitutional Court, and the Presidency (González González 2014:46-60; Paley 2014; Hristov 2014). Legal investigations into *parapolítica* scandal resulted in the indictment of hundreds of politicians in Uribe’s circle (García 2023). In 2020, Uribe himself was detained as part of this investigation. The Peace and Justice Law demobilized the

³¹ Human rights organizations report an estimated 20,000 deaths and more than 2 million displaced between 2000-2008 (Bailey 2011:8).

country's most violent actors, cutting down on the brutality, massacres, mass displacement, and mass rape perpetrated by AUC fighters. However, according to an advisor who authored the process, "the peace process turned to shit" (Yamhure, interview 2022). Poor implementation meant that many former paramilitaries returned as criminal gangs, or "*BACRIM*," to fill the AUC's void in the drug trade (González González 2014:448). Human rights groups also impugned the process for denying truth, justice, and reparations for victims. After the Supreme Court denied Uribe's efforts to modify the Constitution and run for a third term, even MoD leadership and members of his own party began objecting to an effort contrary to "democratic institution-building" (US Embassy Colombia 2009g).

Plan Colombia also became a site of national opposition. *Campesino* groups flew to Washington to testify against aerial fumigation for poisoning their communities (Tate 2015). Peace movement leaders linked the false positives scandal to bilateral imperatives. The revelation of bilateral discussions over installing a US military base in Colombia to "fight narco-terrorism" unleashed a profound backlash from Congress (Gamboa, interview 2022).

Moreover, despite having achieved dramatic military victories against the FARC, by the end of the Uribe administration, Colombian and US officials discussed waning success (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). Vice Minister of Defense Jorge Mario Eastman alerted US Embassy officials that 2009 had been a "'disaster' from an operational perspective" (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). The FARC gradually adapted to a new kind of warfare, hiding in peripheral safe havens and operating in smaller groups. They continued to carry out attacks and high profile operations, killing a governor and local leaders (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). Security forces reportedly "struggled to counter" these new tactics (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). Just as the number of public forces killed increased by 25%, the

numbers of demobilizations, captures, and kills of FARC members fell (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). Between 2008 and 2011, the FARC gradually increased their military offensives from 200 in 2008 to 479 in the first ten months of 2011, gaining back some of their former territory (González González 2014:482).

Despite diminished success and serious national scandals, Uribe left office with an unprecedented 75% approval rating (McDermott 2010). Colombian media thereby coined the term “the teflon effect” to describe Uribe’s “extraordinary and surprisingly immune popularity” (Rey Ortiz 2015:7). Broad swathes of the Colombian public praised Uribe’s military solution for bringing security to Colombia. As a result, his legacy made him widely regarded as one the greatest and most competent leaders in the country’s history.

With US backing, Uribe was the first to make Colombians believe the war was winnable and that negotiated guerrillas represented unwarranted concessions by the government. The 2010 general election harkened an unprecedented political consensus. By the time of this political transition, no candidate—not even former guerrilla, Gustavo Petro of the left-wing Alternative Democratic Party—was willing to touch peace (US Embassy Colombia 2009a). Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018), Uribe’s former Minister of Defense, was expressly groomed and elected as his protégé to carry on his military legacy. For *Uribistas*—Uribe’s supporters—the fact that President Santos instead made peace with the FARC represented a dire betrayal to the military solution that Uribe had proven was most effective to resolve Colombia’s crisis.

C. The Santos Administration (2010-2018): Shift to a Peace Alternative

Santos entered office on a mandate to continue Uribe's military legacy. Elected President in 2010, Santos embodied years of close loyalty to Plan Colombia and to the Generals (Dizard 2017:75-76). He had even accompanied Uribe during his first visit with President Bush in the Oval Office. As the former Defense Minister, Santos, more than anyone else, represented the hardline strategy. His presidential victory speech promised that "time had run out" on the FARC and that there would not be the "slightest chance of negotiations" (see Rice 2017). At the start of his administration, Santos reassured US Ambassador William Brownfield that "he was not going to take his foot off the gas pedal" (Brownfield, interview 2022).

Santos initially maintained *Seguridad Democrática* and the militant terms of US cooperation. Due to US Congressional pressures to "nationalize" Plan Colombia, the monetary amount of US assistance had already begun a slow decline during the last years of Uribe's presidency. However, even as US funding was cut, the MoD maintained a highly fluid relationship with Washington that provided continuity to Plan Colombia. Santos' cooperation produced a stronger military apparatus and successes on the battlefield. Within the first 16 months of his presidency, targeting operations against the FARC's command killed several top leaders (Dizard 2017:75-76). The consolidation strategy "recovered" territories, and "zero coca" guided alternative development projects in conflict zones. By 2012, however, Santos had quietly begun talks with the FARC that traded targeting for dialogue, consolidation for comprehensive rural reforms, and forced eradication for a new national drug policy.

In the following sections, I will illustrate how, during the Santos administration, Plan Colombia retained and even strengthened many of the same elements of cooperation that had established a military solution as highly credible and viable among state and political elites during the Uribe years. Bilateral exchanges continued to support militant claims in the Santos administration by 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals; 2) expanding militant practices, capacities, and expertise; and 3) honing militant metrics of success. However, even though Plan Colombia nourished and refined a highly legitimate military strategy, the Santos administration decided to shift to peace. Santos' peace reforms thereby challenged and transformed many of the base rationales of both national security policy and the bilateral relationship.

1. Clarifying Militant Roles and Strategic Goals:

During the Santos administration, the military placed a greater emphasis on developing its “strategic” vision, further reinforcing a bilateral approach for combating crime. Historically, the military had been in charge of counterinsurgency, while the police had managed counter-narcotics. According to MoD officials, there was also “*no strategic clarity*” (Restrepo, interview 2022) within the institution. US cooperation had been an integral part of a continuous adaptation of security strategy since the Pastrana administration. Earlier stages of this evolutionary process had focused heavily on logistics, strategic planning, and operational planning, which reformulated these traditional roles. Under the Santos administration, bilateral cooperation was able to move away from logistics and devote more attention to strategic and operational planning. This renewed focus made military and police roles “much clearer” (Restrepo, interview 2022),

with the Army officially taking on additional law enforcement responsibilities.

Accordingly, in 2011, the MoD defined three official missions for the Colombian military, including citizen security, national defense, and public security.

Advances in the MoD's strategic clarity also elevated cooperation to a more "strategic relationship" (Restrepo, interview 2022). Defense authorities continued to work closely on counter-narcotics and consolidation, exchanging ideas in bilateral working groups and MoD offices dedicated to Plan Colombia cooperation. Colombian officials also made institutional changes to permanently incorporate these functions into the security apparatus (Isacson 2012:16). By 2012, evolutions in the MoD's strategic thinking also enabled them to spearhead new phases of the military campaign. Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón engaged in close dialogues with the Chief of SouthCom as the ministry transformed operations. MoD officials traveled to Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg) to adapt the US approach in Afghanistan and design a new model for offensives against the FARC. The MoD launched *Espada de Honor* (Sword of Honor) in 2012, targeting regions where the FARC's structures and drug operations were most prevalent. The campaign relied heavily on new capacities, including joint-military task forces with US advisors, intelligence, and air power (Isacson 2012:18). Unlike Consolidation, *Espada de Honor* lacked a civilian governance component. According to an MoD official, Colombian strategic vision had advanced so much that *Espada de Honor* represented "an improvement" on the US model, allowing Colombian officials to share the lessons learned with the DoD.

2. Expanding Militant Practices, Capacities, and Expertise

During the Santos administration, over a decade of US training, exchanges, and advice transformed a previously weak, defensive, and under-resourced military with a bad reputation into a leading force in security. While Uribe had focused on investing in equipment under Plan Colombia, the Santos administration allocated even more resources to training. Due to new practices, capacities, skills acquired, the Armed Forces nationalized key bilateral programs—such as the counter-drug brigade and the Air Bridge Denial program. Colombian officials also took over intelligence platforms that had been under Washington’s exclusive control. Increased mil-to-mil trust made intelligence-sharing move much faster. Targeted killing became even more “efficient” under Santos, with precision bombings that “neutralized 10-15-20 and even 30 guerrillas in one single hit” (Priest 2013; Spencer 2021).

Beyond just nationalizing programs, the Armed Forces also became an exporter of security knowledge. Defense Minister Pinzón established “Diplomacy for Security,” a plan to turn Colombia into the region’s premier security forces. The plan reflected the MoD’s ownership and control over security expertise. Early in the Santos administration, Washington began financing Colombian leadership in South-South exchanges related to building international security and fighting crime. MoD representatives traveled to defense ministries in Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa as Washington’s poster child for transformations in human rights, operational, and technical standards. The MoD also represented specialty knowledge in counterinsurgency, jungle operations, and counter-narcotics. In 2012, the new Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation (USCAP) program formalized these exchanges. Under USCAP, the DoD and the State Department sponsored the MoD to train regional Armed Forces and security personnel in counter-

narcotics and counter-terrorism (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022; Beittel 2021, 26).³² More influential and less modest countries like Argentina, who would have previously scoffed at the idea, eagerly sought training from the Colombian National Police (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021d). Notably, Mexico became a recipient of Colombian expertise under USCAP.

Colombia thus became seen as “the global interlocutor in the construction of international security in Latin America” (Restrepo, interview 2022). Regional leadership gave the MoD status, leverage, and credibility. International training led to more cooperation, memorandums of information, treaties, regionally standardized practices and processes. These relationships allowed the military sector to better promote their “vision, culture, and interests” (Restrepo, interview 2022). New international commitments allowed the MoD to further lock in a “continuous and articulated fight” against drugs and “terrorism” (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022).

On the management side of things, by the early 2010s, developments in technocratic administration had also transformed the MoD into a “reputable elite institution” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). During the Santos administration, security officials studied the DoD’s Office of Net Assessment as the “conceptual foundation” (Restrepo, interview 2022) for the MoD’s new Strategic Studies Directorate. The directorate elevated the ministry’s capacities to evaluate and monitor defense policies, plans, and strategies. Between 2010 and 2016, MoD officials escalated their efforts to develop an information management system to improve real-time operational decisions. The MoD’s

³² Colombia undertook several hundred activities in cooperation with Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, training almost 17,000 individuals between 2013 and 2017 (Beittel 2021:26).

technical sophistication became accredited by international standards. These recognitions opened the gate to new relationships with NATO and the European Union, including more training, intelligence-sharing, and operations that raised their professional standards even higher. One respondent described how regional military leadership had described the changes in how the MoD approached and managed problems as Colombia having adopted "US thinking" (Restrepo, interview 2022).

This boom in the MoD's managerial capacity vastly outpaced that of other agencies within the Colombian state, leading to consequences for decision-making. According to MoD officials, they were often the only agency with clearly defined policy direction, priorities, needs, and timelines. The MoD's advantages influenced the decision-making process at the highest levels of government. An MoD respondent shared an anecdote from an interagency meeting, where a state official from another agency scornfully remarked that "Defense just arrives and gives orders" (Restrepo, interview 2022). He explained that, because officials in civil ministries still managed policies through more intuitive and less ordered planning, they were often left to follow what the MoD proposed. According to my respondent, "the others had nothing to say, they had to comply with what we asked" (Restrepo, interview 2022).

3. Defining militant meanings for policy success

During the Santos administration, continued "results" under the bilateral military strategy continued to feed militant interpretations of policy success. Militant actors in the MoD, Colombian political circles, and the US government continued measuring progress through the take downs of FARC leaders and drug crops eradicated and seized. Militant

actors also believed that consolidation operations ensured peace by delivering state presence, public services, and socio-economic opportunities in “recovered” territories. The bilateral military approach continued to hinge on the promise of victory, insisting that the FARC could be defeated through political investment in this strategy. Indeed, militant actors interpreted the FARC’s willingness to negotiate as proof that the military strategy had broken their will to fight. While political elites had previously agreed on the need for comprehensive negotiations as a means to achieve peace, during the Santos administration, militant actors asserted Uribe’s new consensus: that a militarily defeated enemy could demand no concessions, and that negotiations should only be ones “of submission” (Ramos Maya, interview 2017). These militant interpretations turned Santos’ peace reforms into measures that were not only deemed unnecessary but also counterproductive.

D. Conclusion: Plan Colombia, Santos’ Military Successes, and the Pivot to Negotiated Peace

This chapter demonstrates how US initiatives shaped the ways that Colombian elites legitimized policies. US rationales coded militant strategies as the most appropriate and effective within a national political context that had been divided between reformers in political leadership and militants within the Colombian Armed Forces and right-wing political elites. By redefining the bounds of policy acceptability, US state-building reshaped the terrain of competitions between these Colombian policy actors and how these negotiated and authorized policy decisions. US cooperation expanded policy opportunities for militant sectors, 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals as to

counter-narcotics; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and defining militant interpretations of policy success. At the same time, US rationales provided far less support for reformer claims, and advanced logics that either subordinated, neglected, or rejected recipient reformer proposals.

Santos' military policy enjoyed some of the greatest successes of the long war. A 2011 high value targeting operation killed Alfonso Cano, the top commander of the FARC. In 2012, coca cultivation and production reached its lowest level (Grover 2018:2). In that same year, Obama and Santos jointly announced USCAP as an effort to deepen ongoing military cooperation (Beittel 2021:26).

And yet, despite these successes, concurrent to the security strategy, President Santos secretly sent a letter to Alfonso Cano on September 7, 2010, initiating a correspondence about a future peace (Bonilla 2016). In the same year, Santos began pushing the Victims' and Land Restitution Law, which proposed to provide comprehensive reparations for victims, return stolen land, and register land titles (USAID Colombia 2014:5). USAID provided support to help draft the legislation (Natiello 2023). Passed in 2011, the law was a first step towards creating favorable conditions for negotiation. The Victim's Law radically departed from Uribe's "narco-terrorist" discourse by recognizing the internal armed conflict, and also answered to the FARC's historical demands for agrarian solutions (Ambrosi, interview 2022). In 2012, Santos' team and the FARC delegation sat together at a negotiations table in Havana, Cuba for the first time.³³

³³ The Santos government also reached out to the ELN to initiate talks. Although informal talks began much sooner, formal negotiations began in Quito, Ecuador in February 2017 (Acosta 2018). The government and the ELN had four rounds of negotiations before President Santos suspended talks in January 2018, after the group was blamed for attacks that left seven police officers dead and 47 people injured (Acosta 2018). Santos ultimately reinstated talks in March 2018. According to Santos, the government and the ELN were about to

These talks lead to a final agreement in 2016. Santos thereby switched to a comprehensive strategy for negotiated peace that directly challenged and transformed a military strategy that enjoyed high-levels of national legitimacy and strong US backing.

Santos' switch to peace divided the political establishment, government agencies, and Colombian society in two. The decision incited a profound and highly organized backlash among those who denounced the President as a traitor to an accepted and effective military solution. However, peace reforms held despite this opposition. What factors account for the success of Santos' proposed peace reforms, even amidst a legitimacy crisis and widespread support for militarization? And what was Plan Colombia's role in these processes? In the next chapter, I explain how Santos decision-makers sustained peace reforms due to high: i) *consensus*, diverse elite sectors accepted negotiated solutions; ii) *infrastructure*, established institutions and laws integrated peace-building efforts; iii) *knowledge*, broad proficiency with peace frameworks and methods; and iv) *inclusion*, high-level decisions centered reformer officials, and engaged both civil society and military demands. Plan Colombia support for Santos' reforms was initially low but gradually increased. US support still often contradicted many aspects of the peace reforms, and often provided greater backing to militant claims. Despite contradictory US support, available peace conditions in Colombia ultimately allowed reformers to cohere around a clear alternative to offset legitimacy challenges and ground strategic change.

sign a ceasefire before he left office, but a politician from the incoming Uribe government “told the ELN not to sign with [Santos’] government, but with the next one” (see Caracol Radio 2021).

III. Chapter 3: Santos' Pivot to Peace Alternatives

Santos' government began with a promise to continue the legacy of spectacular militant success mapped by his predecessor, Alvaro Uribe. Supported by US intelligence-sharing, in his first year in office, the new President and Former Minister of Defense announced the killing of top FARC commanders "Mono Jojoy" and Alfonso Cano, demanding that guerrillas demobilize "or otherwise you will end up in a prison or in a tomb" (see BBC 2011). However, in 2012, President Santos offered the FARC amnesty and national reforms during secret peace talks in Havana, Cuba. In doing so, President Santos decided to abandon his electoral mandate and the political safety of a military consensus.

After eight years under Uribe's "narco-terrorist" narrative, the Santos administration pursued an interpretative "switch" (Haspeslagh 2021, 1) to authorize his talks. Santos' team drafted the *Marco Jurídico para la Paz* ("the legal framework for peace"), and the Colombian Constitutional Court invoked *delito político* (*political offense*). These frameworks reclassified the FARC as a belligerent force in an armed conflict, with pardonable "rights to rebellion" under national law and Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions. Under the objective to target structurally-rooted causes of conflict and guarantee non-repetition, the Colombian government and FARC rebels discussed provisions for land reform and titling, alternative drug policies, and democratic participation.

Four years of negotiations and 50 rounds of peace talks produced a final agreement with a six-point agenda. The agenda was a compromise between two opposing ways of seeing the conflict and its solutions: the government's focus on ending the conflict and disarmament, and the FARC's historical demands for social justice and systemic change.

For the first time in the world, victims were also invited to directly participate at the negotiation table. A robust peace movement also engaged directly in discussions. Once signed, the Havana agreement demobilized 13,300 combatants and made the FARC into a political party with a guaranteed 10 seats in Congress. It also instituted the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS), a nationwide project that allowed small-scale *campesinos* to voluntarily substitute drug crops in exchange for social investment. Finally, the accords created the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) as a transitional justice mechanism to try war crimes committed by the FARC, military, and business leaders alike.

Santos' decision to pursue peace with the FARC was deeply polarizing. For right-wing political elites and the military sector, his peace reforms betrayed an optimal solution and rewarded a defeated criminal group. In 2013, Uribe founded *Centro Democrático*, a political party meant to reflect a pure *Uribismo*, loyal to his ideas and policies. The new party was the natural ally of a discontented defense sector. *Centro Democrático* thus became a political vehicle to contest the Havana settlement, drawing on former counter-terrorist and counter-narcotics rationales to launch an ideological war.

When negotiations began in Havana, Washington had also transitioned from Bush's war on terror to an Obama presidency that was "quite determined to have a different approach" (Brownfield, interview 2022). All the same, Santos pursued talks for several years without much support from a "subdued" Obama administration (McKinley, interview 2022). However, in 2015, Obama appointed Bernard Aronson as a special envoy in Havana, thereby signaling "an unprecedented endorsement of the government-FARC peace talks" (CRS 2016). In 2016, Santos and Obama announced *Paz Colombia* (Peace Colombia),

authorizing a \$450M multi-year initiative that gave an official name to changes already underway in bilateral cooperation. USAID budgets grew just as military assistance was cut back, resulting in a 50/50 split by the end of Santos' government (Isacson 2021). Hard-side US agencies continued traditional military counter-narcotics and consolidation efforts, including coca eradication, interdiction, and assisting military operations. At the same time, USAID programs aimed to help the Colombian government become "more capable of successfully implementing a sustainable and inclusive peace" (USAID Colombia 2014). USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched *Colombia Transforma* (2014-2019) to promote the agreement's rapid implementation. The *Inclusion for Peace Activity* (IPA) (2016-2021) advanced the inclusion of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities in peace policy. Although US legislators maintained this soft-side aid throughout the Obama-Trump transition, the Trump presidency also further escalated a contradictory US response to peace that gave credence to Colombia's militant opposition and amplified national debates.

National divides exploded during the October 2, 2016 peace referendum. Expecting a positive result, the Santos government and the FARC had proposed the plebiscite to legitimize the final agreement and put the *Centro Democrático*'s opposition to bed. These two signatory parties—along with prominent leaders of the peace movement and third party politicians—united as a pro-settlement coalition to champion a "Yes" to the agreement's ratification. The *Centro Democrático* directed the anti-settlement "No" campaign, which convened influential defense sector representatives from ACORE (Colombian Association of Officers Retired from the Military Forces). Other notable leaders of the "No" included former President Pastrana, Evangelical groups, FEDEGAN (the Colombian Federation of

Cattle-Ranchers), and FARC victims' groups. The "No" challenged peace reforms through television, radio, and social media platforms. The public voted to reject ratification, with 50.2 percent of voters against and 49 percent in favor. The "No" victory authorized the militant opposition's claims as representative of public will. In the following weeks, government officials renegotiated the original settlement with anti-settlement representatives, who presented 455 desired modifications to the FARC (Segura and Mechoulan 2017).

Despite these challenges, both the Senate and the House unanimously ratified a final agreement in November 2016. The Kroc Institute declared this final agreement as "more comprehensive than any other agreement signed since 1989" (Heinzeker 2020). Ratification ensured the overall sustainability of the peace-building process through the Santos presidency and beyond. Peace reforms held despite the 2018 election of *Centro Democrático* President, Iván Duque, and despite the party's National Director, Fernando Londoño, vowing "tear to shreds that damned piece of paper that they call the agreement with the FARC" (see Semana 2017).

What accounts for Santos' decision and ability to pivot from a favored and successful military approach to an ambitious peace agenda? And how did Plan Colombia interact with these processes? In this chapter, I detail four central conditions that shaped the ways elites negotiated decisions and explain how comprehensive peace was perceived as a viable and effective alternative. First, peace efforts were enabled by high levels of *consensus*: despite polarization on the nature of reforms, diverse elite sectors accepted negotiated solutions as a legitimate way to end conflict. Second, peace reforms counted on high levels of *infrastructure*: established institutions and laws authorized and protected

reforms as routine state policies. Third, peace depended on high levels of *knowledge*: expertise and clarity among diverse elites brokered credibility and buy-in for peace actions. Fourth, peace reforms had high-levels of inclusion: decisions centered reformer officials and engaged oppositional civil society demands. Despite initial resistance, Plan Colombia eventually followed Santos' lead, offering significant support for the peace process. US assistance also penetrated policy debates in ways that were often either peripheral to peace reformer efforts, subordinated to militant goals, or adverse to peace claims. Accordingly, at times, contradictory US support also strengthened the claims of national militant actors that opposed the peace process. Available consensus, knowledge, infrastructure, and inclusion ultimately allowed reformers to cohere around a clear alternative to offset legitimacy challenges and ground strategic change.

A. High Consensus for Peace Alternatives

“All Colombians who have been presidents or who have worked in the government in the last 60 years, we have all wanted to make peace with the FARC. That was like the greatest aspiration of any leader in Colombia...The curious thing is that negotiations with the guerrillas in Colombia was always like a given. Nobody asks themselves, “Hey, why are you going to negotiate with people who are murderers, or whatever, or drug traffickers!?” No. It’s just a given. Why? Because we are a country that has suffered a lot, where there has been a lot of violence....I don’t know how to explain it sociologically, but when I was head of negotiations with the ELN, my dream was to make peace with the ELN. Better said, I did

not sleep because I was thinking about what I had to do to achieve that peace, I felt that this was the reason for my existence.”

–Jorge Mario Eastman, Former Vice Minister of Defense (2006-2008, 2010) and Former Chief of the OACP Negotiating Team with the ELN (2000-2001) (interview 2022)

The Uribe administration created an unprecedented consensus for a military solution. However, during the Santos administration, diverse decision-makers still agreed that negotiations with the FARC were necessary. The division among hardliners and reformers revolved not on whether to pursue peace-building per se, but on the extent and specifics of peace measures.

When I asked respondents who had worked in the Santos government to describe the motivations behind the President’s decision to make peace, they seemed perplexed at the obviousness question. Elena Ambrosi was both the Thematic Director of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP) and a member of the government’s negotiating team in Havana. “What motivated him?,” she repeated back. She continued, “I guess just that this has always been...here, we have always known that defeating the guerrilla militarily was impossible. If you look at every Colombian government throughout history, each one has had initiatives for peace. All Presidents think about [peace]...” (interview 2022). This explanation typified that of many respondents, who alluded to a long diplomatic tradition, describing Santos’ decision and commitment to make peace as “just a given” (Eastman, interview 2022). While right-wing politicians and defense sectors had historically challenged peace’s “common sense,” these groups had ultimately lacked either the resources or political support to make a military solution feasible.

The collapse of Pastrana's Caguán negotiations and the perceived successes of the Uribe administration undoubtedly disrupted this longstanding consensus. *Centro Democrático* politicians described how Pastrana was the last in a series of governments that had only negotiated with the FARC as "political equals because they erroneously believed they could change society through diplomacy" (Obdulio Gaviria, interview 2017). They argue that this "erroneous belief" led to Uribe inheriting a powerful FARC army and a state on the verge of violent collapse. The opposition noted that Uribe's unprecedented victories defeated the guerrillas, recovered national territory, and reduced crime. Uribe thereby proved the superior effectiveness and viability "the strong, armed presence of the state" (Ramos Maya, interview 2017). Paola Holguín was Uribe's former Security Advisor and a *Centro Democrático* Senator during the Santos Administration. She explained that the administration conclusively "succeeded in demonstrating that true peace is security" and that negotiations only amounted to "a process of State moral abandonment of responsibilities in the face of terrorism" (interview 2017).

Uribe's approach did indeed socialize a historical shift in how political elites thought of the utility of military force. However, this military consensus never altogether displaced traditional beliefs in the utility of negotiations. Ernesto Yamhure was a former advisor in Uribe's OACP. He described how, even during the Uribe administration, peace remained "a fundamental element for anyone who wanted to do politics in Colombia. It was a political bounty. Everyone perceived it as an incommensurable political pull" (interview 2022). As Uribe's Minister of Defense, Santos allegedly intervened with the Peace Commissioner's work in an effort to instigate talks with guerrilla actors. Many politicians did the same.

According to Yamhure, these interventions were all motivated by a shared desire to be “the one who managed to get these illegals to demobilize” (interview 2022).

Accordingly, rather than replace a belief in negotiations, Uribe only enabled a dual consensus within the top levels of government. Many in the Uribista opposition characterize Santos as an opportunist that maintained a hidden peace agenda but “faked... agreement with our policies...as a trampoline to the presidency” (Holguín, interview 2017). They describe Santos' process as a vanity project, fueled by his obsession with winning the Nobel Prize for Peace and securing a place in history. Close advisors maintain that Uribe was committed to military defeat and believed that it was possible. However, Uribe himself also shared an interest in making peace with the FARC throughout his administration. In 2006, the year of Uribe's fiercest military onslaught, State Department officials met Colombia's top analysts to discuss Uribe's negotiations efforts. They noted that “by all accounts...this is the way Uribe wants to pass into history” (US Embassy Colombia 2006d). According to Uribe's former defense officials, this dual policy logic was not “dichotomous...it was continuous” (Goebertus, interview 2017). The rationale “was to guarantee that we strengthened the military capacity and institutional presence of the state to put enough pressure on the FARC, to bring them to the negotiating table” (Goebertus, interview 2017).

Many officials transitioned from Uribe's MoD to Santos' OACP. Sergio Jaramillo, Uribe's former Vice Minister of Defense, became Santos' appointed Peace Commissioner. Jaramillo brought many members of his defense team to populate the peace office. These officials describe how, towards the end of the Uribe administration, civil bureaucrats and political elites witnessed the FARC's ability to adapt to the fiercest military onslaught. They argue that decision-makers increasingly came to believe that defeating the FARC militarily

would be impossible. Decision-makers had further realized that bombs and intelligence alone would be insufficient to motivate the FARC to join the negotiating table. As the Uribe's Vice Minister of Defense, Jaramillo had publicly rejected recognizing the FARC as a political actor, noting the "very big risk of creating perverse incentives" (see IRRC 2008:825-826). As Peace Commissioner, Jaramillo understood that the FARC had repeatedly refused to negotiate with an administration who had denied the armed conflict and had insisted on the "terrorist" narrative. Uribe officials had also come to realize that social investment was necessary to sustainably resolve violence (Brookings 2010). Towards the end of the Uribe government, in bilateral meetings, Uribe cited past negotiations efforts and emphasized poverty reduction and land restitution as necessary programs to enhance social cohesion and undermine "the terrorist's appeal" (US Embassy Colombia 2010b). Uribe had also lamented that the Constitution of 1991 prohibited amnesty for perpetrators of crimes against humanity (US Embassy Colombia 2010b). He noted that this prohibition had restricted his ability to negotiate a peace agreement.

At first, the Santos administration only invoked the political narrative of the "right to rebellion" to bring the FARC to the table. Government officials disagreed with the FARC on the root causes of conflict, with the government denying the FARC's claim that their rebellion was a necessary response to state repression and exclusion. While the FARC demanded sweeping reforms to address root causes of violence, the government prioritized measures to disarm the FARC and sever their ties to narco-trafficking. Despite maintaining these fundamental disagreements, over time, dialogue gradually produced a consensus over central conditions that "facilitate" the perpetuation conflict (Maya, interview 2022; Goebertus, interview 2017). The government's acceptance of these conditions shaped

Havana's six agenda items, proposed as socio-economic and political reforms needed to guarantee the non-repetition of long-standing cycles of violence. Although the government still prioritized drugs and disarmament, the team also cultivated a belief that the agreement "needed to have a transformative vision" (Maya, interview 2022). More specifically, the Government and the FARC found common ground on drug policy reform. While the FARC believed that counter-narcotics needed to fold into a larger set of socio-economic benefits for poor farmers, Santos was highly critical of the War on Drugs. He thought aerial eradication was counterproductive and that voluntary substitution should replace it as the first line of state action.

Political opposition to the accords challenged Santos' premise of "necessary" reforms, rather than opposing negotiations full stop. *Centro Democrático* politicians insisted on a "negotiation of submission" (Ramos Maya, interview 2017) to Colombian justice, keeping state policies untouched. Uribe elites maintained that terrorism and drugs were at the root of the conflict, not political exclusion or land distribution. Uribe elites thereby interpreted peace reforms and political recognition—which entitles the FARC to amnesty under Colombian law—as "concessions" and "rewards" for narco-terrorism. According to *Centro Democrático* politicians, these measures reinstated a dangerous national precedent where "being a criminal pays" (Holguín, interview 2017). As a result, Havana would become "the midwife for new violence" (Yamhure, interview 2022). Alfredo Ramos Maya was a Senator for the *Centro Democrático* from 2014-2018. He explained that Santos' approach would allow other "criminal bands...to one day ask for the same... 'Give me impunity with issues such as drug trafficking, linked to political crime... Give me state funding to practice politics without the need for any votes'And that will create weaker

institutions and make crime stronger. And this is then the great defeat of the state”
(interview, 2017).

Uribe’s strategy had “generated a lot of empathy with the military” (Marulanda, interview 2017). However, within Santos’ MoD, both civil officials and military officers accepted negotiations as a means to end the war. Whereas military displeasure had violently disrupted previous negotiations, Santos’ defense sector supported the negotiating team with intelligence and expertise. During the Samper government (1994-1998), a series of conversations between the military and civil society had begun changing how the Armed Forces perceived peace (Mezú-Mina 2021:14-15). General Jorge Rangel Mora had spent his entire military career fighting the FARC, and had climbed the ranks to become the Commander of the Military Forces under Uribe, where he authored the Plan Patriota offensive. However, General Mora had also introduced a new doctrine that pushed the military's focus away from achieving complete victory. Instead, it emphasized using force to weaken the enemy's resolve and bring them to the negotiation table (Mezú-Mina 2021:14-15, 92). Mora agreed to join the Santos’ negotiating team in Havana, completely convinced that “peace is the final objective of war” (see W. Radio Colombia 2021). Over that past decade, the military had also embraced the idea that “counter-insurgency is reform under pressure” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022), emphasizing the strategic importance of social and economic programs.

Although Defense officials were “convinced that we had to make peace,” they were also “convinced of...the FARC’s military defeat” (see W. Radio Colombia 2021). Military representatives had accounted for a demobilization process that would allow the FARC to become a political party. However, as Havana’s comprehensive agenda took shape, defense

actors increasingly questioned why the Colombian State would make such big concessions to a defeated organization.³⁴ Defense actors believed that continued military pressure would have made negotiations far “cheaper” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Military actors also believed that signing peace was ultimately meaningless without “a real solution to narco-trafficking” (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022). Defense actors contended that the agreement was poorly designed and unsustainable. They believed that reformers were driven by political motives rather than a genuine belief in the military's ineffectiveness. They suspected that Santos lacked a Plan B and had only made concessions solely to speed up the peace process. For all these reasons, Santos’ peace approach left defense actors feeling “demoralized” (Marulanda, interview 2017).

Centro Democrático representatives rechanneled military discontent into a force for political opposition. Reports surfaced that intelligence officers were collecting data on the government negotiating team, and selling it to *Centro Democrático* candidate Óscar Iván Zuluaga in the run up to the 2014 presidential campaign election (Dizard 2017:83). Retired military officers were also highly vocal in accusing Santos of “selling out” to terrorism (Dizard 2017:83). They joined the “No’s” campaign against the accords during the 2016 plebiscite. Many other agencies in the national government were also “quietly not supportive of the Accord” (Bernal et al. 2018:22).

³⁴ Several respondents described a “monolithic” institutional position within the Defense sector vis-a-vis the peace accords. However, Rodrigo Mezú-Mina—both an academic and an Air Force officer who participated in the Havana process—describes partisan rifts that emerged within the Armed Forces (2021:207-208). Defense sector representatives on the negotiating team also had their “differences” (see W. Radio Colombia 2021). General Oscar Naranjo—the former head of Uribe’s National Police—agreed with many more of the accord stipulations than did General Mora, including drug policy reform (W. Radio Colombia 2021; Mora Rangel 2021).

The “No” victory in the plebiscite victory allowed the opposition to suggest modifications to a final renegotiated agreement, which was later approved in the lower house by 130-0 and the Senate 75-0 (Murphy 2016). *Centro Democrático* legislators had left the House and Senate floors in protest, claiming that adopted changes were only “cosmetic” (see BBC Mundo 2016). Congress’ approval ensured that the opposition’s requested changes regarding political participation and amnesty were excluded from the final agreement.

After the final agreement passed, despite the opposition's desire for more significant changes to what they saw as a "bad agreement," many in the opposition still acknowledged the need for negotiation. Since Uribe first founded the *Centro Democrático*, the Santos government warned Colombian society of “*enemigos de la paz*” or “enemies of peace.” Widely accepted as a legitimate option, the peace processes exerted tight control over opposition discourse. Respondents in the *Centro Democrático* and the MoD carefully maintained that they were not opposed to peace. Rather, they only opposed overly generous concessions to terrorism, narco-traffic, and the agreement’s alleged weak design. Some respondents even asked to keep their comments off-the-record when they questioned some aspects of the agreement, jokingly suggesting they might be forced into “exile.”

Plan Colombia Support for Consensus

In the latter years of the Uribe administration, various State Department cables noted declining military success and increasing FARC attacks (US Embassy Colombia 2010c). However, until August 2010, the US Embassy solidly believed that military action was “seriously injur[ing]” the FARC (Brownfield, interview 2022). At the highest levels of the

State Department and the DoD, officials estimated that the FARC could be militarily defeated as an organization (Brownfield, interview 2022).³⁵ When Santos was inaugurated, the new Colombian president reassured Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Ambassador William Brownfield that he would continue to “hammer...hard” (Brownfield, interview 2022), exploring whether he could achieve a “negotiation of submission.” Havana’s far-reaching agenda had thus come as a “surprise” (Brownfield, interview 2022).

Washington's position on Colombia was firmly entrenched in a history of discrediting peace processes with groups perceived to be “anathema to our values or our interests” (McKinley, interview 2022). According to one US official, the FARC “certainly didn't fit into any paradigm of people we thought were legitimate” (McKinley, interview 2022). US officials were also “quite committed to Plan Colombia and what it had done” (Brownfield, interview 2022). During the Pastrana administration, US support was introduced as an alternative to a normative tradition of negotiations that supported long-standing militant claims. Thomas Shannon participated in Plan Colombia from a variety of senior positions in the US State Department. He explained that US support emerged from Colombia’s realization that “all efforts to end the violence in Colombia through negotiations had come to a dead end...that they had to find a new way, a different way” (interview 2020). In light of failed diplomacy, the Uribe administration had also envisioned US counter-terrorism aid as “the quickest road to peace” (see US Embassy Colombia 2009i). Throughout the Uribe government, the MoD “always maintained a *very, very aligned* dialogue” based on a “powerful shared understanding” with counterparts in the DoD and the

³⁵ Only leadership in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs believed that the Colombian government had to eventually negotiate with the FARC (Brownfield, interview 2022).

State Department (Gamboa, interview 2022). Even during the Santos administration, Colombian officials broadly believed that bilateral military action had forced the FARC to the negotiating table.

Unlike the “harmonious understanding” (Gamboa, interview 2022) of the military relationship, Santos’ peace process was initially a source of tension and “foot dragging” in Washington (McKinley, interview 2022). Early in the peace process, most State Department and DoD decision-makers did not believe in negotiations because they thought that they were succeeding through a military solution. Within these institutions, there was a predominant belief in the feasibility of the FARC’s military defeat and “a strong tendency to minimize their political ideology...the shorthand of terrorists and drug traffickers was commonplace” (McKinley, interview 2022).

US Ambassador Michael McKinley (2010-2013) took office about one month after Santos’ inauguration. He brought prior experience working with peace processes in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Once Santos made his intention to end the war clear, McKinley recognized that the peace process was crucial for ending a 50 year conflict. Although rarely discussed within US institutions, McKinley shared a belief that the FARC “was not a defeated insurgency” (McKinley, interview 2022). In his view, Uribe had only delivered “body blows” and the FARC had been militarily resurgent since 2008. McKinley's prior experiences also influenced his view that Colombia had two choices: Santos’ peace process or indefinite conflict with more casualties and loss of life. He also recognized the FARC as a “political movement” (McKinley, interview 2022), despite the group’s terrorist acts and drug-

trafficking activities. McKinley was actively “supportive [of the talks] in discussion in Washington” (McKinley, interview 2022).

According to McKinley, “President Santos created a new reality. By creating that reality, the US policy structure had to adapt” (McKinley, interview 2022). By the time negotiations began in Havana in mid-2012, Washington had grown more amenable. As the peace process showed progress, it gained even more US support. Even officials who had previously favored the military approach and doubted the peace process were now willing to consider Santos' peace initiative as a potential way to resolve the conflict, and “lined up” behind his decision (Brownfield, interview 2022). Skeptics were reassured by the fact that, at least, the Santos government was negotiating from a position of strength, backed by regional and multilateral support, the UN, and the Pope.

Because Colombia's counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics policy was so intimately entwined with Washington, many respondents and analysts note that the Obama administration's approval played a crucially influential role in shaping domestic perceptions of the peace process' viability. Among Colombian political circles, the major concern was the potential threat to US security assistance. Both analysts and officials who participated in the process believe that Washington's objection would have “generated discussions in political sectors who would consider that [the peace process] was putting us in a problem situation” (Maya, interview 2022). Conversely, US acceptance acted as a guarantee of “promising international conditions to open talks with the FARC” (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:28).

Obama officials amplified reformer claims. During the exploratory phase of the talks (2012), Ambassador McKinley acted as a “reinforcer” (McKinley, interview 2022). He

assisted Santos' efforts to convince key political actors of the merits of the peace process, hosting one-on-one conversations where these figures would ask questions to gauge Washington's stance. In these discussions, McKinley also delivered a bottom line that challenged opposition beliefs and urged political actors to reconsider policy, stressing that Colombia was "not defeating the FARC...what are your options here going forward?" (McKinley, interview 2022). Some people that McKinley spoke with became key parts of the negotiating team, like General Mora and General Oscar Naranjo, the former head of Uribe's National Police. Another, like Humberto de la Calle, became the Chief Negotiator of the peace process. During the negotiations process (2012-2016), US Special Envoy Bernie Aaronson played a similar role, providing "crucial political support that ended up being instrumental for other sectors to also join in" (Maya, interview 2022). During the implementation phase (2016-), USAID program rationales aligned behind Santos' messaging, claiming that the agreement created the conditions to strengthen the state's democratic presence and advance licit sustainable development.

Though "crucial," US backing was not sufficiently persuasive for an entrenched opposition that was "never going to accept this was a good idea" (McKinley, interview 2022). Accordingly, McKinley did "not spend [his] time trying to convince President Uribe if it was a good thing" (McKinley, interview 2022). He left the Embassy just as Uribe founded the *Centro Democrático* party, and political elites became more and more polarized. Obama announced Aaronson's appointment right after Uribe's 2015 visit to the US, during which he lobbied against the process (Bouvier 2015). At the time, Colombian reformers hoped that militant actors would receive Aaronson's appointment as a clear message that US leaders "are no longer interested in a military solution to the conflict and

are putting their full weight behind a diplomatic resolution” (Bouvier 2015). However, because Plan Colombia had first given militant claims teeth, *Centro Democrático* respondents decried what they perceived as Washington’s bait-and-switch.

Trump’s election put Washington’s commitments to peace into question. At the same time that USAID programs continued supporting a reformer consensus, Trump’s Washington also became a “reinforcer” of the opposition’s objections within Colombia’s implementation phase politics. High-ranking security officials in the Trump administration shared the MoD’s perspective of Santos’ “bad peace.” Accordingly, US officials argued that the military campaign “was causing the FARC great damage” (Spencer 2021), that peace reforms conceded to an enemy they considered unworthy (Embassy of Colombia in the US 2021d). US officials amplified opponent attacks against various aspects of the peace process, backed by the threat of withheld US funding. For instance, Washington officially maintained that the FARC was an international terrorist group, a designation that narrowed US aid for peace projects. Early in the process, US Ambassador Whitaker repeated the *Centro Democrático*’s accusations that the demobilized FARC was cheating (Isacson 2021). In 2017, Whitaker also threatened to cut aid if Colombian legislators backed the Special Jurisdiction for Peace’s (JEP) power to shield demobilized FARC leaders from extradition (Saba Pérez et al 2019).

Above all, Havana’s drug policy reforms represented the most significant source of leverage for militant actors who sought to wield US disfavor against the peace process. Far before Trump was even elected, Washington continued to view the issue through the lens of the war on drugs. Washington’s clear, hardline stance surpassed even that of the MoD, which believed that many coca farmers turned to illicit activities due to a lack of alternative

options. US views produced a “clash” with the Santos administration over the agreement’s terms, which hinged on the approval of a voluntary manual eradication program (Whitaker, interview 2022). During negotiations, Whitaker engaged Santos and other Colombian officials in discussions over restarting aerial eradication. In 2015, Whitaker also published an op-ed in Colombia’s most widely circulated newspaper, *El Tiempo*, announcing that “the majority of reduction in coca cultivation is due to aerial spraying” (see Bonlarron Martínez and King 2020). On September 13, 2017, Trump threatened to decertify Colombia “for failing...to forcibly eradicate coca energetically enough” (Isacson 2021). Although peace was already signed, US objections ultimately amplified significant tensions between Santos and militant actors on the eradication issue.

B. High Infrastructure for Peace Alternatives

“There aren’t two processes here: it’s not ‘Uribe’s attempts’ and ‘Santos’ process.’ It is the same process, which was never really interrupted.”

– Frank Pearl, Peace Commissioner under Uribe and Negotiator under Santos (see Bermúdez Liévano 2020, 150).

Perceptions of the Havana accords as a feasible and credible alternative were supported by high levels of peace infrastructure. For much of Colombia’s 20th century history, security policy lacked enduring professional structures and remained highly dependent on presidential administrations (Rojas 2015:66). Nonetheless, successive presidencies pursued peace policies that left residual institutional roles and practices

(Pfeiffer 2014:8). Despite militant challenges, the legacy of Uribe's own peace efforts also helped ground Santos' peace agenda within clear and stable mandates and normative state routines.

Santos appointed Sergio Jaramillo as the High Commissioner for Peace, charged with designing and managing a complex network of laws, national institutions and actors, and international allies to coordinate peace. First established in 1983, the post of Peace Commissioner's had since expanded into a permanent office within the presidency, authorized to regularly search for and advise on negotiations.³⁶ These official responsibilities include: reaching out to insurgents to initiate dialogues; overseeing and shaping the dialogues and agenda; establishing further administrative processes to execute these policies; and gathering civil society groups to coordinate efforts for national reconciliation and involve them in peace-building (Pfeiffer 2014:10). The OACP thus represented that peace was forever an option on the table. Under Uribe, the Peace Commissioner had been explicitly instructed to always keep "the door open" (see Brookings 2010) to the FARC. In the final year of Uribe's presidency, his transition team had developed communication channels and built confidence with the FARC to ensure that negotiations took place in the next administration (US Embassy Colombia 2010b). Santos' green light made the OACP into a giant office with enormous power to fulfill this project.

Law 418, or the Law of Public Order, is the legal framework that authorizes the Peace Commissioner to make peace decisions and also provides clear rules to regulate talks with armed groups. Since the Samper presidency (1994-1998), Law 418 has been modified

³⁶ While the Office of the High Commissioner of Peace was not officially backed by law as a fully formalized office until 1998, these institutional practices and actions sustained continuity through other mechanisms, such as commissions and committees integrated by the same designated authorities (Pfeiffer 2014:10).

by every government and extended by every Congress, passing with little debate or discussion. Uribista politicians backed Santos when he extended Law 418 in 2010 (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:22).

Well before meeting with the FARC in Havana, Jaramillo hosted a year of meetings with lawyers to develop the Legal Framework for Peace (or *Marco Jurídico para la Paz*). This constitutional reform enabled the legal conditions necessary to demobilize the FARC through the exchange of weapons for amnesty or reduced sentences. The legislation thus opened legal space for negotiations and established a mandate for a new transitional justice system—including a Truth Commission, a Unit to Search for the Disappeared, and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

The Legal Framework for Peace was also designed to insulate the peace process from challenges. The law recognized the armed conflict and the fact of *delito político*, or political offense. This recognition formally shifted the legal reality away from Uribismo’s “narco-terrorism” by invoking historical precedent. Colombia’s Constitution had authorized amnesty for “political offense” since 1858. For a century, governments had invoked “political offense” to pardon bi-partisan conflict between Liberals and Conservatives, and then to pardon subversive groups thereafter (Saldarriaga-González 2021:129-130; Cuervo Criales and Ovalle Páez 2020). Under the Constitution of 1991, the Council of Amnesties and Open Pardons demobilized M19, EPL, Movimiento Armando Quintin Lame, and PRT through a direct exchange between arms and amnesty, trading justice for “forgiveness and forgetting” (Saldarriaga-González 2021:130; Cuervo Criales and Ovalle Páez 2020:123-125). Moreover, the Constitution of 1991 had also offered groups with “altruistic objectives” the option to participate in politics.

Despite these strong precedents, Santos' Legal Framework for Peace had to address legal grounds for opposition objections. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Constitutional Court had set emphatic limits on the President's power to concede amnesties and pardons (Botero Marino and Restrepo Saldarriaga 2006:49-60). Court sentences reclassified predicate crimes to rebellion as ordinary crimes devoid of ideological objectives. Accordingly, homicides and personal injuries committed in combat were no longer considered as pardonable political offenses, nor were kidnappings to finance an offensive (Hérendez Barreto 2016). Concurrently, Colombia ratified a series of international instruments which obligated the state to investigate, judge, and punish certain classes of human rights violations and war crimes. The Rome Statute, especially, made amnesty unattainable without exchanging truth, justice, and reparations.

Opposition sectors cited these restrictions to challenge the Legal Framework for Peace and the applicability of "political crime." Retired military forces sent an open letter to the President deriding the legislation for "favoring terrorism" (López 2012:19). The proposed Legal Framework for Peace deepened a political rupture, directly informing Uribe's decision to establish the *Centro Democrático* party as "a united front against terrorism" (López 2012:18). However Uribe's own peace initiatives had also established a legal path through which to maneuver through these restrictions. The Supreme Court had struck down Uribe's attempts to attribute political status to right-wing paramilitaries, and thereby pardon paramilitary crimes as acts of sedition (Hérendez Barreto 2016; Paredes 2007). In response, Uribe opened Colombian legislation to open talks and offer amnesties without the requisite condition of attributing political intent. Moreover, until Uribe, Colombia had not yet developed a legal framework to respond to those responsible for

crimes against humanity (Brookings 2010). Uribe designed the Justice and Peace law to incentivize paramilitary demobilization through lower sentencing whilst also answering to the Rome Statute's demands for truth, justice, reparations, and non-repetition (Brookings 2010). Uribe's government had also prepared institutions to administer these new functions, including creating a National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation to attend to victims (Brookings 2010; Pfeiffer 2014:15-16).³⁷

Jaramillo invoked the Constitution of 1991 to defend the Legal Framework for Peace before Congress in 2012, passing with 70 votes in favor and 5 against (López 2012). Similar to Uribe, Jaramillo proposed an individualized criminal process to comply with the Rome Statute's "duty to prosecute" and repair victims for war crimes. International restrictions only apply to crimes against humanity and not crimes connected to rebellion. Accordingly, legal officials reclassified the FARC's drug profits as rebel financing for arms, uniforms, medicine, and sustenance to incentivize demobilization through lower sentences (Reyes, interview 2017; Semana 2013). In the aftermath of the negotiations process, Jaramillo defended Havana's transitional justice mechanisms on the basis that Uribe had "produced a draft bill that was far more lenient than anything we did" (Jaramillo 2018).

Santos officials also appealed to institutional precedent to justify other peace reforms. These reforms were vulnerable to opposition claims that a terrorist actor was manipulating Colombia's national agenda and imposing major, anti-democratic structural changes. The government team wished to avoid reforms that would be made subject to a legislative process beyond the negotiating table, thereby taxing a "high cost of legitimacy to

³⁷ Although the Peace and Justice Law only tried a small number of people for serious crimes, the Commission nonetheless raised awareness of reparations, pioneered historical memory initiatives, and created transitional justice mechanisms in the Attorney General, Courts, and the Ministry of Justice (International Crisis Group 2013).

the peace process” (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:116). Peace officials had to navigate a delicate balance, reviewing the FARC’s historical demands to “reduce claims to what is possible, to something that is, in any case, transformational, that opens the opportunity for peace...but that is still in line with democratic spheres that already exist” (Maya, interview 2022).

The National Constitutional Assembly of 1991 provided clear guidance for the agreement’s chapter on Political Participation. Government negotiators denied FARC proposals that surpassed this agreement’s guidelines for transforming guerrillas into political parties and encouraging citizen participation. National precedent notwithstanding, the FARC’s political participation still became a major sticking point during agreement renegotiations with “No” representatives. Santos officials further defended political participation by referencing similar measures in El Salvador, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Aceh, and Nepal (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:169).

Although Colombian governments had long ignored agrarian reform, legislation had authorized tools to title and develop land since the 1970s.³⁸ Havana’s chapter on agrarian reform built directly on Uribe’s designs for territorial consolidation and also folded into Santos’ ongoing projects for rural development (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:102-103).³⁹ The agreement’s measures for land expropriation promise to respect pre-existing property rights and laws (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:86, 97-101).

Even though Havana’s chapter on drug reform promises to reorient militant solutions, past policies also shaped and justified a new model. The accord introduced

³⁸ Land reforms include the National Rehabilitation Plan and the Investment Fund for Peace.

³⁹ Santos pre-existing land reforms included: 1) measures to replace individual subsidies with public investment in rural public goods, such as irrigation and credit; 2) a renewed interest in family farming, rather than agribusiness; 3) an emphasis on raising the living conditions of rural inhabitants, and; 3) the Victims’ and Land Restitution Law (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:73-74).

differentiated strategies for the various groups in the narco-chain. Havana maintains a policing approach for large drug organizations and strengthens a public health approach for consumers. The new National Integral Illicit Crop Substitution Program (PNIS) applies to small growers, overturning Uribe's "zero coca" policy and promising to transform coca farmers' living conditions via rural development, strong community collaboration, and participation on coca-substitution projects. PNIS anticipated opposition objections by maintaining key points of continuity with past policies. The Santos government invoked laws that prohibit providing public assistance to individuals involved in illegal activities to reject the FARC's request for coca substitution, conditioned on receiving prior social services (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:191-193). Although the PNIS prioritized voluntary crop substitution as a first line of action, it also stipulates forced manual eradication for growers who either reject substitution or breach compliance. In keeping with "No" demands, the government also maintained aerial fumigation as a "valid instrument" (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:197-200) of last resort within the agreement itself. However, the Santos government suspended aerial eradication through other legislation in October 2015, when a World Health Organization affiliate reclassified glyphosate as a probable carcinogen. This ban was subsequently upheld by the Constitutional Court, who conditioned the aerial eradication's return on submitting definitive proof that glyphosate does not represent a risk to human health.

The OACP was also authorized to redirect a variety of agencies and actors towards the peace agenda, including the security forces. The OACP hired officials to connect ministry functions and programs with the "administrative options" discussed in Havana (Maya, interview 2022). Santos recreated Uribe's CCAI as the Ministry of Consolidation

and placed it under the OACP. Santos also rechristened Uribe's "Colombian Agency for Reintegration," charging his "Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization" with the responsibility of managing the FARC's disarmament and reintegration (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:142).

After a period of relative inactivity during the Uribe administration, Santos began convening Peace Commissions in the Congress and Senate as early as November 2010 (Pfeiffer 2014:11). These Peace Commissions linked politics in Bogotá with the negotiations in Havana, assisting the OACP by consulting with different social sectors and generating inter-party compromises. Peace Commission representatives also met with Jaramillo to create pedagogy around the six agenda points in Havana. This collaboration led to the "Regional Tables for Peace." Representatives from these tables traveled to various regions for two years to engage with communities and provide input for the agenda in Havana.

In 2014, the OACP also began to regularly convene the National Peace Council, a deliberative and advisory body represented by diverse civil society groups and state representatives from across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches (Restrepo Jiménez and Leyva 2017). The National Peace Council organized civil society to defend the peace agreement through political actions, peace pedagogy, community outreach, and "an institutional architecture to implement the accords" (Consejo Nacional de Paz de Colombia 2015).

Santos also created a host of national institutions to implement peace reforms: the Post-Conflict Ministry, the Rural Development Agency, the National Land Agency, the Agency for Territorial Renewal, the Directorate for Illicit Crop Substitution, etc. The sheer

abundance of institutions devoted to accord implementation often resulted in overlapping roles, responsibilities, and mandates around peace (Bernal 2018:19).

Throughout the process, the United Nations and guarantor countries assisted negotiation and process administration. Their involvement conferred external legitimacy to nationally contentious issues, confirming that agenda items met internationally-accepted standards.

Extensive peace programs also counted on “a bulging wallet” (Aguirre and Riaño 2019). Just as Pastrana had founded the Peace Investment Fund, and Uribe had established *Acción Social*, Santos created the Colombia in Peace Fund (FCP). The FCP administered funding and offered service and personnel sharing to execute institutional changes, rural development projects, victims reparations, and peace pedagogy (FCP 2024; Aguirre and Riaño 2019; El Tiempo 1998). Santos also established APC Colombia to secure international funding, producing cooperation agreements with the United Nations, European Union, the World Bank, and Washington. Santos also proposed the Integrated System of Information for Post-Conflict platform to monitor peace spending (Aguirre and Riaño 2019).

In a nod to the MoD’s interests, the Havana agreement never touched on security sector reform. However, outside of negotiations, Santos justified redirected military roles and mandates to accommodate peace. According to defense officials, Santos appointed more political hires to reduce the MoD’s power. At the same time that Santos distributed funding for peace projects, the President also cut budgets for intelligence operations and stabilization efforts. He justified these cuts as part of a natural reordering of security spending during peacetime. When operations stagnated in 2016, defense actors followed a strategic mandate

to reflect “on a new version of the military” (Restrepo, interview 2022), oriented towards protecting the environment and building peace.

Following their victories in the 2016 plebiscite and 2018 general elections, Uribe promised that his party would respect the accord’s demobilization process but change measures for transitional justice and political participation. However, even with the “No” campaign’s renegotiations, Colombian laws guaranteed that the final agreement's core reforms were protected through Congress' approval. Well before the plebiscite, Santos’ team had studied various options for protecting the final agreement. The team decided to draw on the Constitution of 1991’s conception of peace as “a right and an obligation” (Semana 2017). They introduced a new article into the Constitution, prohibiting the next three administrations from modifying the accord. These protections ensured that militant actors would need to mobilize a herculean legal offensive of myriad legislative actions, statutes, and projects to break apart hundreds of implementation points one by one (Semana 2017). Santos’ Security Council thus proclaimed that the agreement was “irreversible” (Semana 2017). Additionally, Santos reformers organized an unprecedented international monitoring and verification system for all aspects of implementation (Reyes, interview 2017).

One of the opposition’s central objections was that Havana’s ambitious peace reforms were not only counter-productive, but also unworkable given the Colombian state’s notorious weakness. Indeed, despite Colombia’s peace infrastructure, past peace efforts were often hindered by a lack of political will and limited capacity to deliver services in marginal areas. While Santos’ peace reforms did move forward, they nonetheless faced these same challenges. Bureaucratic and legal obstacles impeded the government from making institutions and budgets available for peace activities quickly (Bernal et al 2018: 20-21).

Opposition resistance in security institutions further delayed implementation. For instance, the Prosecutor's Office was highly reluctant to apply the amnesty law, and military pressure also slowed the FARC's demobilization process. However, established infrastructure for peace sustained reforms despite these implementation problems.

Plan Colombia Support for Peace Infrastructure

Despite initial delays, direct US support to peace infrastructure helped improve the perceived viability of the accords during the negotiations and implementation phase. Up until Bernard Aaronson's appointment as special envoy in 2015, the negotiations had lacked a formal mediator. The government and FARC negotiating teams had assumed the responsibilities of convening meetings, requesting draft papers, and setting the schedule. More importantly, after three years, the talks had become somewhat frozen, leaving the more complicated and politically sensitive issues unaddressed.

Santos requested that Aaronson step into an informal mediation role. Because Aaronson was a symbol of Washington's commitment to the talks, Santos believed that he would serve as a "confidence builder" for the FARC, who was still wary of US intent. Aaronson was in constant communication with Peace Commissioner Jaramillo and Lead Negotiator De la Calle. He also advised Santos himself. Aaronson built trust with the FARC and helped broker compromises. He also created key mechanisms, including the formation of a special committee of lawyers to develop transitional justice reforms. In addition, even though negotiations did not touch on security sector reform, Aaronson negotiated a "very far-reaching security regime" (Aaronson, interview 2020). This arrangement created a new

institution headed by both a general and a senior leader of the FARC, and informed by a vision of root causes of conflict.

Obama also provided support to peace infrastructure through omission. For instance, in line with a traditional US approach, the Constitution of 1991 had enshrined the US extradition of Colombian nationals sought for drug crimes into the criminal procedural code (US Embassy 2000a). However, the government and the FARC had reached an agreement that would exempt guerrillas from extradition for drug crimes committed prior to the signing of the agreement, given they submitted to the transitional justice process. The Obama administration firmly believed in the effectiveness of extradition. Aaronson pushed back on Santos' promise to completely halt extradition for crimes that occurred after the agreement was signed. The administration also refused the FARC's requests to release certain members who had been previously extradited so that they could participate in Havana negotiations. In isolation of the peace agreement, Obama would have also pursued the extradition of additional FARC members. However, US insistence on post-accord extradition would have irreparably damaged the FARC's confidence in the government's word. The Obama administration thus decided that "peace was such an overriding value" (Aaronson, interview 2020), that they would quietly respect Santos' decision.

Washington's central contributions to peace infrastructure also addressed historical problems with implementation that made peace policy vulnerable to accusations of infeasibility. The 2016 announcement of *Paz Colombia* officially insured the peace's implementation with US resources. The US Embassy worked closely with Santos' plans for the accord's nationwide execution of the accord. They concentrated US technical assistance, training, and projects—such as building farm-to-market roads—in specific areas to “to show

that the programs could work” (Whitaker, interview 2022). The Embassy also “nudged” (Whitaker, interview 2022) historically resistant politicians and Colombian agencies to quickly allocate their budgets and implement reform in conflicted areas that had been long neglected and underserved. Against Colombia’s historical agrarian problem, poor records, disputed ownership, and unclear property boundaries, the Embassy also provided satellite imagery to collect records for land titles.

USAID programming also burgeoned into a vast portfolio throughout Santos’ second administration. USAID continued partnerships with national agencies to implement local projects in conflict regions around traditional issues, such as economic growth, justice, good governance, and alternative development (Chemonics International 2021; USAID 2021; USAID 2024; Findley et al. 2016; Conlon and Gallego 2016). However, USAID/OTI’s *Colombia Transforma* program was specifically designed to mitigate peace’s national legitimacy problems by addressing the deficiencies in the government’s historical track record of efficiently implementing structural changes, especially with regards to comprehensive agrarian reform.⁴⁰ *Colombia Transforma* focused on helping the government develop abilities to plan and carry out “rapid response” peace actions, under the logic that peace-building needed to deliver “quick wins” in the first three years of the agreement to prove itself and generate confidence (USAID Colombia 2014:3-6).

An external evaluation of *Colombia Transforma* found that the program made meaningful contributions towards these aims (Bernal et al. 2018). The national government still faced myriad problems with “arrival” in conflicted territories and *Colombia Transforma*

⁴⁰ *Colombia Transforma* was primarily aligned with implementing Chapter 1, Comprehensive Rural Reform. The program sought to encourage economic development and state presence in rural areas. During the Santos administration, support to other issues in the negotiation agenda was only “embryonic” (Bernal et al 2018:9).

faced myriad problems in “strengthening its bureaucratic capacity to execute” (Bernal et al. 2018:29-30). In light of these difficulties, program staff made an early decision to focus largely on sub-national government agencies. Unresolved historical issues—such as slow national procedures and timelines with regards to land tenure—also limited the scope and focus of *Colombia Transforma* (Bernal et al 2018:9). Nonetheless, the initiative helped national agencies plan their implementation strategies and even helped some to “arrive” (Bernal et al 2018:19). *Colombia Transforma* was especially beneficial for new, post-conflict national agencies. According to stakeholders, the program served as “‘entry door’ into territories for national government agencies, which did not know how to ‘arrive’ on their own” (Bernal et al 2018:20). Independent of the government, *Colombia Transforma* also delivered its own peace infrastructure that was efficient, transparent, and collaborative in rural areas that were lacking (Bernal et al 2018:10).

However US contributions to peace infrastructure were also complicated by the ongoing routines and mandates of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. As they sought ways to support the accords, officials in the US Embassy faced a central "challenge" (Whitaker, interview 2022). Peace reforms recognized demobilized FARC members as a new, legal political party and as private citizens. They necessarily included demobilized FARC within many areas of peace programming and administration. However, maintaining high levels of US military aid had long depended on recognizing the FARC as a terrorist organization. US counter-terrorism had thereby served as the “perfect legal framework to attack” (Ambrosi, interview 2022). The US government continued “to interpret with utmost strictness” (Isacson 2021) a US federal law that prohibited assistance to a group designated as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). The US Embassy “scrupulously” (Whitaker,

interview 2022) reviewed all forms of peace support—including services, events, resources, training, advice, and facilities—to ensure compliance.

Accord implementation only took off in 2017, when Trump took office. Both President Santos and Post-Conflict Advisor Rafael Pardo personally reached out to the US Embassy, making it “clear that they would have liked for us to lift the FTO designation” (Whitaker, interview 2022). According to Ambassador Whitaker, attempting to convince Washington to de-designate the FARC as terrorists “would have been like a suicide mission” (Whitaker, interview 2022). Instead of jeopardizing its “credibility,” the Embassy chose to request waivers for “really worthy initiatives” (Whitaker, interview 2022). Ultimately, the Embassy requested two such waivers, and both were approved on humanitarian grounds. The first was a small program that provided psycho-social support to recruited child soldiers. The second was prenatal counseling and care for pregnant FARC soldiers encamped in remote areas. Although Ambassador Whitaker instructed USAID Director Larry Sachs to “to be on alert for other similar cases” (Whitaker, interview 2022), no additional waiver requests arose. Within USAID programs, Colombian peace officials unanimously lamented the broad interpretation of the FTO restrictions, proclaiming them “unworkable in the context of post-conflict Colombia” (Bernal et al 2018:13). Restrictions barred USAID from offering any support to reintegration, or assistance to national programs for humanitarian demining, alternative development, or any event in which an ex-FARC member so much ate a snack (Isacson 2021; Bernal et al 2018:13).

Although USAID delinked development assistance from traditional “zero coca” requirements, disinterested US security officials also invoked FTO restrictions to justify the US’ total abstention from providing any support for the PNIS, the new national coca

substitution program. The State Department upheld this decision even though USAID officials recognized that national voluntary eradication was closely linked to rural development projects and considered it “‘make or break’ aspect in the long-term success of the Accord” (Bernal et al 2018: 9-10). The sluggish pace of the PNIS’ national implementation meant that coca farmers were slow to see money, substitute seeds, or services, while the drug market continued to fuel violence between security forces and drug organizations (Anaya 2018).

While USAID programs neglected to provide support for the voluntary eradication outlined in the agreement, US security agencies pressed forced eradication efforts, which defied the accords’ legal commitments. During the negotiation phase, pressure from US drug officials and the opposition had resulted in Santos’ decision to maintain aerial fumigation as an option of last resort within the accord. When coca production boomed during the implementation phase, Trump’s threats of US decertification also loomed large. Had Trump decertified, it would have led to a 30 percent reduction in US military assistance, and it would have implied that, by fully implementing the PNIS’s commitments, Santos would also have “‘failed demonstrably to meet its international counter-narcotics obligations” (Beittel 2021:27; Whitaker, interview 2022).⁴¹

As a response to US pressure, Santos revived forced eradication against small farmers in areas that had been set aside for voluntary crop substitution. Forced eradication led to *campesino* blockades, demonstrations, and clashes with security forces. William Brownfield (2017), Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law

⁴¹ The White House and the Office of National Drug Control Policy walked back decertification threats in both 2017 and 2018 (Whitaker, interview 2022; Beittel 2021:27).

Enforcement Affairs, repeatedly challenged the agreement's measures to protect coca farmer demonstrations in public forums, urging Colombian security forces to adopt "clear rules of engagement" to proceed with eradication. In October 2017, security forces killed seven unarmed protesters in Tumaco (Anaya 2018). Forced eradication vastly outpaced the PNIS, and the armed forces exceeded their goal of eradicating 50,000 hectares by the end of 2017 (Anaya 2018). Because peace's implementation was constitutionally safeguarded, militant elites contested the agreement through such proxy issues, which destabilized the agreement by challenging its commitments to the FARC. In the run up to the 2018 election, *Centro Democrático* respondents explained that they hoped to leverage Trump's insistence on eradication. During election campaigns, politicians measured the peace agreement's viability through hectares eradicated.

Considerable US support to peace infrastructure is also balanced against ongoing security cooperation, which was maintained through half of *Paz Colombia's* \$900M in 2017 and 2018. After brainstorming how to support accord implementation, the INL, DoD, and DoJ concluded that their programs should simply build on what was already being done to "increase security" (Whitaker, interview 2022) and control narcotics in areas formerly FARC-held areas. Peace thus only touched the dollar amount of assistance, but not the types of assistance offered.

US security cooperation played directly into national contests around peace implementation. Militant dissent within the state leveraged US counter-narcotics cooperation to undermine the peace accord. For instance, between 2017 and 2019, a joint operation by the DEA and the Colombian attorney general's office sought to entrap two top FARC negotiators, Iván Márquez and Jesús Santrich, into committing post-accord drug

crimes to authorize their extradition (Bonlarron Martínez and King 2020). *El Espectador* revealed this operation in 2020, including 24,000 phone intercepts and the wiretapping of President Santos' phone (Isacson 2021). The operation led to Santrich's April 2018 arrest, just before he would have been sworn in to Colombian Congress. Although Santrich was later released, continued US insistence on extradition and attacks by the attorney general ended in Santrich and Márquez deciding to leave Congress and return to arms under a new dissident FARC group.

US military cooperation also supported militant infrastructure at a time when Santos' peace agenda reduced defense budget allocations. An advisor in the MoD explained that the most significant US contribution was that, regardless of changed political tides, it was money that couldn't be controlled or influenced by Colombian politicians. He explained that: "In the beginning, everyone was happy with counterinsurgency. But then the Colombian Congress started to think that perhaps the military solution isn't quite so necessary anymore. And this put more pressure on the defense budget... But US money was protected from political interference... even if it is a small amount of money, it is very valuable in strategic terms because it would guarantee that the military would work effectively" (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022).

Additionally, the nature of US support to peace infrastructure differed from that of US military cooperation. Military cooperation was so intimate that US advisors were often posted within military brigades and had the authority to bypass bureaucratic procedures to make material requests on behalf of commanders (Lindsay-Poland 2018:93-95). Beyond simply collaborating, defense counterparts instituted mechanisms to review and analyze shared plans together. Defense officials argue that capacities gained through US cooperation

helped make the MoD the most “disciplined” and “efficient” institution in the Colombian state.

Because Colombia was not a priority country for the Trump administration, Congress maintained Obama’s original commitment to support peace accord implementation (Isacson 2021). With the signing of the Havana agreement, USAID developed “enormous muscle in Colombia” and had the ability to design programs with “whatever authorities they so desired” (Gamboa, interview 2022). However, while the relationship between the MoD and the DoD and State Department remained “super close” (Restrepo, interview 2022), coordination between USAID and national agencies could be “super challenging” (Gamboa, interview 2022). In stark contrast to military cooperation, Colombian officials noted that their discussions with USAID were only effective when restricted to particular areas of collaboration and specific technical support. Even as peace officials “attempted to harmonize” (Gamboa, interview 2022) programs bilaterally, USAID maintained its own development models, personnel, and resources that operated in total parallel to national development plans. Peace officials felt that USAID programs were more responsive to the business interests of contracting companies than to the goals of the peace accord. USAID programs like *Colombia Transforma* also lacked “visibility within the US mission” (Bernal et al 2018:9). Beyond USAID support, Trump also neglected to appoint a Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process (Saba Pérez et al. 2019). Finally, the Trump administration significantly lessened pressure on the Colombian government to follow through on peace accord implementation, whilst increasing pressure and resources for militant actions that violated the agreement’s terms.

C. High Knowledge for Peace Alternatives

Interviewer: *What were some of the reasons that you believe the negotiation with Colombia's largest guerilla group, which we know of as FARC succeeded in 2016 when peace processes in Colombia had previously failed time and time again?*

Sergio Jaramillo: *Yes. Well, the first thing I would say is that we did our best to learn from our own past mistakes. I am a big believer myself in the idea of lessons learned, if you know what you're doing... You can learn a lot from others, but you can learn the most from the mistakes you've made in the past.*

–Sergio Jaramillo, Peace Commissioner under Santos (The Pearson Institute 2020)

High policy knowledge was a key rationale that enabled the decision to pursue and sustain a comprehensive peace process. The OACP had over three decades of experience in negotiating peace reforms, which demobilized the April 19th Movement in 1990 (M19); the Popular Liberation Movement (EPL), Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), and the Armando Quintín Lame Movement in 1991; the Socialist Renovation Movement (CRS) in 1994; and the paramilitaries during the Uribe administration (Pfeiffer 2014:8). Two days after winning the presidential elections, Santos met with Uribe's former Peace Commissioner, Frank Pearl, to learn more about his attempts to dialogue with the guerrillas (Bermúdez Liévano 2020, 41). During the government transition, Pearl had also outlined "roadmaps" that informed Santos' team "on how to best pursue agreements...[defining] a desired end-state and the process to get there" (US Embassy Colombia 2010; Ambrosi,

interview 2022). Opposition leaders claimed that Santos was repeating a disastrous policy formula, proven unnecessary by Uribe's approach. However, Uribe's experiences also contributed to the wealth of institutional lessons that Santos' team could draw upon to design and justify negotiations and reforms.

Santos counted on a negotiating team that brought credibility and expertise to the peace strategy from a wide range of institutional perspectives. Sergio Jaramillo had studied the conflict with the FARC for decades. He had advised Pastrana's Minister of Foreign Affairs on the administration's program for peace diplomacy (La Silla Vacía 2021). Jaramillo had also directed the think-tank Ideas for Peace Foundation (*Fundación Ideas para La Paz*). As Uribe's Vice-Minister of Defense, Jaramillo had been a key author of Uribe's *Seguridad Democrática*.

As Santos' Peace Commissioner, Jaramillo moved over a team of lawyers from the MoD to the OACP to design the peace process' methodology and "conceptual strategy" (La Silla Vacía 2021). Humberto de la Calle was recruited to head the government delegation. De la Calle had acted as Minister of the Interior during the debates that drafted the 1991 Constitution. He had developed electoral norms to open political participation to demobilized guerilla groups and marginalized sectors of society. De la Calle had also implemented the legal benefits that had reintegrated the M-19, PRT, EPL, and Quintín Lame. Frank Pearl also became part of Santos' delegation team. As did Alejandro Eder, who had served both as Pearl's right hand man during Uribe's 2010 communications with the FARC, and also as a strategic advisor to Uribe's 2006 National Reintegration Policy (Segura and Mechoulam 2017:24). Santos' negotiating team was formed in the context of a broader national pool of experts in peace negotiations, conflict resolution, transitional justice, and

constitutional negotiation law. The negotiating team also counted on the input of these national experts throughout the talks. For example, *Universidad Nacional's* Center for Thought and Monitoring of Peace Dialogues provided the parties with ongoing technical and political expertise (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:24).

Before talks even began, Santos' team conducted rigorous analysis of the archives of past negotiations to identify key conditions that drove past successes and failures. They learned from a century's-worth of experiences in peace-making. This review enabled Santos' team to make some key decisions to ensure the success of negotiations, such as agreeing on a general discussion framework before talks began (The Pearson Institute 2020; Brookings 2010; Bermúdez Liévano 2020). The team also gleaned that a limited negotiation agenda would increase the probability of the agreement's success. They studied the FARC's historical demands to align these against their own internal evaluations of reforms that could effectively resolve the country's cycles of violence (Reyes, interview 2017; Bermúdez Liévano 2020:34). Despite opposition claims to the contrary, past experiences also revealed that guerillas would never agree to demobilize—nor be able to recruit the entire organization behind the cause of peace—without including political participation on the agenda (Gamboa, interview 2022; Sergio Jaramillo 2018). Santos' team thereby developed a preliminary agenda that quite closely anticipated the agreement's final framework (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:34). They also organized a clear procedural vision, detailing what goals should be achieved in each phase of the negotiation and what needed to be done to achieve it. The team established the government's narrative, red lines, rules of the game, tactics, and anticipated risks, including potential “legitimacy deficits” (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:33-34).

In light of historical civil-military tensions, Jaramillo sat down with the National Police to outline a clear plan for how to communicate with security forces (Mezú-Mina 2021:103).

Jaramillo built on broadly accepted knowledge to rationalize Havana's agenda. Before Uribe, presidents had consistently justified far-reaching peace reforms under the idea that these were needed to address protracted, structural drivers of violence. Within the administration itself, Santos officials drew on contemporary international research, including studies conducted by the Kroc Institute, to articulate this same position. However, Santos' team also used logic that could resonate more clearly with militant sectors. As Uribe's Vice Minister of Defense, Jaramillo had been an author of the consolidation strategy, which had broadly socialized the idea that military operations alone were insufficient to retake territorial control. At the time, Jaramillo had circulated required literature in the MoD, convincing top defense decision-makers "that winning the war was not to physically eliminate the enemy, but rather to achieve the legitimacy of the State" (Eastman, interview 2022; Bermúdez Liévano 2020:23-24). The MoD had conducted a wealth of evaluations and studies that had determined that communities only became "involved in illicit activities because they had no other options and that what [they] had to do was arrive with new options for the economy, labor, and education" (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022). Rebranded as "*paz territorial*" or "territorial peace," "consolidation" concepts became the guiding rationale behind Havana's global agenda (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:88). The government team thereby justified peace reforms through the need to provide solutions that could transform a lack of opportunities, poverty, drug problems, political exclusion, and victimization in communities that had once been under guerrilla control (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:88).

National expertise offered blueprints for Havana's reform models. For instance, the Constitution of 1991 guided plans for political participation and informed the government's red lines (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:115-116). Designs for rural development counted on recommendations from a team of former ministers, economists, and experts on land reform.⁴²

Each agenda item also counted on sub-commissions that reviewed policy options, and each sub-commission played both practical and legitimizing roles in the government team's decision-making process. For instance, the Technical Sub-Commission for Ending the Conflict directly engaged the MoD, which contributed protocols and models for ceasefire and disarmament. General Javier Flórez, Chief of Joint Command, traveled along with a group of officers and technical advisors from the OACP to establish contacts at the table and design the mandate of the sub-commission. Gradually, the group was joined by other high-ranking members of the Army, Navy, Air Forces, and Police. They were selected based on their specialized knowledge, which they could contribute to the processes of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating (DDR) the FARC (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:137-138). As part of the sub-commission, defense officials repurposed military software that had once been previously used to manage geographic information in targeting operations to map out the FARC's demobilization zones (Mezú-Mina 2021:216-217). Defense expertise thus expedited consensus by resolving some of the most difficult and complex conceptual and technical arguments before they reached the negotiation table. Many defense proposals—such as how the monitoring and verification mechanism would work and how to register

⁴² José Antonio Ocampo has a Ph.D. in Economics from Yale and had formerly served both as Minister of Agriculture and as Minister of Finance (Silla Vacía 2022). Also on the team, Juan Camilo Restrepo had also recently served as Minister of Agriculture and has a doctorate in Administrative Law from the Sorbonne (Silla Vacía 2023).

weapons—passed into the final agreement untouched by the negotiating team (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:136-137). However, military expertise not only enabled decisions but also helped legitimate the process overall. For instance, military planning ensured that disarmament processes ran smoothly and according to schedule, thus providing credibility for the first steps of peace’s implementation (Bermúdez Liévano 2018, 145-146). As will be further discussed in my section on *horizontal inclusion*, participation in the sub-commission also fomented military buy-in to the peace process.

Scientific knowledge also helped inform and justify more radical changes in national policy. With the notable exception of General Jorge Mora, the government team’s discussions on drug reform invoked “evidence that the strategies designed to reduce drug supply over the last three decades hadn’t worked as expected” (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:179). Scientific studies had demonstrated that, despite mass eradication, levels of cocaine production in the country had remained relatively stable. In addition to the testimonies of *cocalero campesinos*, experts had also published studies that linked aerial eradication to environmental and health problems (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:179-180). Evidence demonstrated that Uribe’s forced eradication had dissuaded some *campesinos*. However, studies also found that forced eradication had resulted in high levels of replanting, a lack of viable alternatives, and undermined trust in the State (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:179-180). National experts in the Advisory Commission for Drug Policy, diplomats, and international academics had urged Santos to create policies that differentiated between consumers, small growers, and large drug-trafficking organizations (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:179-180). Even though the US and the political opposition exerted pressure to keep aerial eradication as a last resort within the accord, additional scientific evidence overrode

these objections. In 2015, the Santos government suspended aerial eradication through legislation unrelated to the agreement, after the World Health Organization affiliate reclassified glyphosate as a probable carcinogen. The Constitutional Court subsequently upheld this ban, and they conditioned the aerial eradication's return on submitting definitive proof that glyphosate does not pose a risk to human health.

Government officials also drew on international expertise to validate internal decisions. The UN and other international groups provided input to negotiators and various sub-commissions throughout the peace process (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:26). Santos' team worked closely with several international experts who traveled to Bogotá to share lessons, approaches, and experiences from peace processes around the world. Shlomo Ben-Ami had participated in Camp David; Jonathan Powell in Northern Ireland; Dudley Ankersen served as a British diplomat in Latin America; William Ury founded the Negotiation Project at Harvard and authored *Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*; and Joaquín Villalobos was a former guerrilla commander who had participated in negotiations in El Salvador. These comparative lessons and concepts helped Santos' team reflect on their own methods. However, against an array of strategic decisions proposed by negotiators, government officials would also cherry pick international insights to validate their preferred actions (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:24; Bermúdez Liévano 2020:60-61). As one government advisor noted during an interview “more than in the design of the process, they were fundamental as a vehicle to persuade the President” (see Bermúdez Liévano 2020:60-61).

International expertise exerted comparable legitimating effects on defense actors. Defense officials and officers traveled to Europe for fifteen-day long trainings on cease-fire

mediations. In Barcelona, defense actors took courses on best practices, exercises, and planning around disarmament. Trained officers were then entrusted to return to the MoD to “maintain a conversation” and explain Havana’s objectives (Restrepo, interview 2022). For two years, Julian Hottinger trained active military and police on DDR, and coached the military team in the Technical Submission on Ending the Conflict (Mezú-Mina 2021:123). Even among officials who were unconvinced by Santos’ efforts, Hottinger’s reputation as one of the top advisors in mediation and negotiation, with experience in over 50 peace processes worldwide, created an opportunity to gain military buy-in. Among defense officials, Hottinger earned the nickname of “wise man” (Mezú-Mina 2021:122). In the words of one defense official, the opportunity to be trained by Hottinger was “one of the most beautiful things that has happened to me in my life” (Restrepo, interview 2022). Moreover, officers often participated in these DDR trainings alongside guerrillas (Mezú-Mina 2021:123). International training thus became an opportunity for defense actors to meet the FARC for the first time, helping them “reduce tensions” and keep a more “open mind” (Restrepo, interview 2022). The MoD gradually came to understand these specialized peace trainings as part of the institution’s larger professionalization process in cutting-edge security expertise.

Plan Colombia Support for Knowledge

Washington supported peace knowledge throughout all phases of the peace process. As discussed in the section on *consensus*, Ambassador McKinley's extensive experiences with peace processes across various African and Latin American countries enabled him to engage with Colombian politicians as a credible interlocutor during the exploratory phase of

the talks. He could address procedural questions and confirm the policy merits of negotiations. With regards to Santos' team, McKinley acted as "a sounding board...[for] a discussion of concepts" (McKinley, interview 2022). Jaramillo's team met with the Ambassador to discuss their ideas for the framework and structure of the talks. The team shared the first document that laid the foundation for opening the talks, the agenda points, and sequencing. As the US Special Envoy, Aaronson proposed tactical strategies for moving forward and reaching agreements during negotiations. US expertise helped fine-tune the programmatic scope of the agenda proposals.

Except for discussions related to extradition, US officials, guided by a principle of respecting Colombia's sovereignty, were careful to stay out of discussions pertaining to the peace agenda's design. According to Aaronson, Washington "didn't presume to tell [the government] how to shape the peace" (Aaronson, interview 2020). Nonetheless, US models played an indirect role in shaping "territorial peace," the global rationale behind the government's negotiating agenda. During the Uribe administration, US exchanges helped make "consolidation" hugely influential within the MoD. As Uribe's Vice Minister of Defense, Jaramillo himself had worked closely with US officials to draft this approach. The consolidation model inspired the peace process' design and guided conversations around agenda items (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:49-51). In particular, the bilateral Integrated Consolidation Plan for Macarena (PCIM) provided a blueprint that all parties in negotiations could agree on to design "territorial peace" (Bermúdez Liévano 2020: 49-51).

During the implementation phase, Washington supported knowledge management around "territorial peace." The US Embassy offered tactical input. Ambassador Whitaker raised "the big spot theory," which the US had employed in Iraq, to advise Santos to

concentrate reform efforts in key areas to showcase progress (Whitaker, interview 2022). However, despite having the benefit of broad conceptual familiarity and credibility among decision-makers, many national institutions still lacked know-how for reaching territories with no prior government presence. Established institutions that worked on PCIM continued replaying similar difficulties, “call[ing] into question how much learning took place” (Bernal et al. 2018:18). New, post-accord agencies “did not know how to ‘arrive’ on their own” (Bernal et al. 2018:20). USAID/OTI’s *Colombia Transforma* continued the legacy “consolidation” strategies, proposing exchanges, shared lessons, methodologies, indicators, standardized processes, and best practices. Though *Colombia Transforma* was largely redirected to subnational government, the program also helped national institutions improve their ability to plan their “entry” into abandoned territories (Bernal et al. 2018:19). The program also maintained an extensive database on program processes and results, detailing each activity’s impact and lessons learned (Bernal et al 2018:11-12). However, *Colombia Transforma* also neglected to consistently communicate about or encourage national agencies to analyze or share lessons regarding the factors that influenced outcomes and how to adjust strategies based on those factors (Bernal et al. 2018:9). An external evaluation found “very little evidence of an effort to review with them the factors that led to success and are worth repeating in their own future endeavors, or those that undermined progress and should be avoided” (Bernal et al. 2018:11-12).

The US Embassy also hosted expert training for MoD representatives in the Technical Sub-commission for Ending the Conflict. However, unlike aforementioned European technical trainings in ceasefire and disarmament, US training focused on preparing strategies and models for negotiations with the FARC (Mezú-Mina 2021:124;

Restrepo, interview 2022). One of the main advisors and trainers on peace issues was Dr. David Spencer, a professor at the DoD's William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (William J. Perry Center 2023). Before accepting a position at the Perry Center, Spencer had been Director of Combating Terrorism at Hicks and Associates, where he supported SouthCom projects for Plan Colombia. From 2014 to 2017, Spencer also worked as the Colombia desk officer of the Secretary of Defense Counternarcotics & Global Threats. After the peace process, Spencer published pieces in which he questioned the timing of negotiations and suggested that if military operations continued, the military might have "gained more advantages at the negotiation table" (Spencer 2021).

US counterparts also continued supporting knowledge exchanges for militant paradigms. Despite budget cuts and a peace process, US counterparts maintained a traditional focus on military training, exchanges, and advising for counter-narcotics and counterinsurgency strategies during the Santos administration. As discussed in Chapter 2, during this time, the MoD became a leader in expert technique, exporting security models through South-to-South military exchanges. Domestically, while other national agencies struggled with planning, the MoD had the greatest capacity to define policy directions, needs, priorities, and strategies. This policy knowledge had strengthened the MoD's hand and empowered defense actors to call the shots around consolidation's implementation.

The US Embassy also engaged in more substantive interventions to discredit the national policy expertise that supported drug policy reform. As discussed, the Constitutional Court upheld the suspension of aerial eradication based on studies by the WHO indicating that glyphosate was a probable carcinogen. A key condition was that this ban would hold unless a different study proved otherwise. Furthermore, the Court stipulated that aerial

fumigation could potentially resume if the government designed a program that demonstrated it could mitigate any potential harm to human health.

During the Santos presidency, Ambassador Whitaker proposed a bilateral effort to prepare a government approach that could meet the Court's criteria. While this effort experienced minimal uptake under Santos, it gained momentum under the next administration, led by President Iván Duque's *Centro Democrático* party. Whitaker brought in scientists from the US Department of Health and Human Services to Colombia. They commissioned university studies, comprehended technical design, and shared information with the Colombian government to develop a program that could meet the court's criteria. The Colombian government formulated a 600-page long plan that was rejected through another court ruling.

D. High Inclusion for Peace Alternatives

i. High Horizontal Inclusion for Peace Alternatives

High levels of horizontal inclusion for peace reformers also enabled the acceptance of alternative policy. Although Colombian State actions are highly dependent on executive will, as a pro-peace President, Santos largely controlled decisions under a clear line of action. The OACP was not only included in policy decisions, but in charge of them. Santos delegated Jaramillo as the lead for peace policy, giving the OACP ultimate authority over the agreement agenda. Ultimately, this decision-making model contained the vision of

negotiated peace to that of peace reformers in government, reducing the logic and influence of militant views in reform.

Peace's inclusion during the Santos administration was shaped by national precedent. The Peace Commissioner had consistently worked alongside the President, maintaining a direct line as an official advisor. Even Uribe had positioned the Peace Commissioner's office just a few steps away from his own. Uribe's Peace Commissioner had enjoyed extraordinary powers over entrenched militant groups—including those aligned with Uribe himself. In 2006, a State Department cable noted that Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo was authorized to “produce truth about paramilitary crimes including their links to regional political, economic, and military elites...at a high political cost, since many of the congressmen involved are members of President Uribe's coalition” (US Embassy Colombia 2006c).

Historically, the Peace Commissioner's authority came paired with the military's exclusion from decision-making. The OACP operated with complete autonomy from other bodies—especially the MoD. Moreover, past governments had generally restricted participation in negotiations to civil elites—including public officials, mediators, and politicians with relationships to the guerrillas (Mezú-Mina 2021:17). A few Presidents had offered advisory roles to retired military. However, as captured by Otto Morales, former president of the peace commission (1991), decision-makers considered active duty to be “crouching enemies of peace” (see Mezú-Mina 2021:150). As a result, the MoD's involvement had been frequently restricted to receiving updates from the Peace Commissioner about ongoing conversations with guerrillas. Even then, peace officials in the Pastrana administration had often refrained from informing the military about their activities

“for fear that they would do something” (Eastman, interview 2022). During the Uribe administration, the Peace Commissioner had also kept peace policy “an absolute secret” (Eastman, interview 2022). Although the OACP met with anti-dialogue sectors, historically, Congress’ role was also highly restrained (Dizard 2017:68-69). Political dissent against the agreements had often manifested violently and through coalitions between military officers and right-wing political elites.

During the Santos administration, Jaramillo was responsible for deciding who to include in peace policy. From the beginning, peace reformers were conscious of a fundamental dilemma (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:86-87). On the one hand, including more actors with divergent visions would make it more difficult to reach an agreement. On the other hand, a decision based on broad consensus would help guarantee more sustainable policy. The Santos government convened a smaller group during the preliminary dialogues in early 2012. In light of polarization, the OACP concluded that the option of gradually informing and persuading different actors about the importance of talks was too risky (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:120-121). Studies estimate that the Peace Commissioner only informed around 15-20 government officials about initial exploratory meetings with the FARC—including the President, his brother, five negotiators, six advisors, the Director of the National Police, three intelligence officials, and the emissary (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:120-121). This small circle decided the entire negotiation agenda within six months, excluding “harder sectors” (see Bermúdez Liévano 2020:86-87, 120-121).

Talks only opened to a broader and more diverse delegation by the end of 2012, once the framework had already been agreed upon. According to an MoD official, Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón advised the President that it was important to include military

forces and police at the table because “they are the ones who had carried the burden of the conflict on their shoulders and they cannot understand” (Restrepo, interview 2022). Moreover, they had detailed knowledge of the “enemy” that would be necessary for organizing DDR processes. When FARC commanders began to invite more radical representatives, the Santos delegation also appointed two representatives recommended by the MoD and ACORE (the Colombian Association of Officers Retired from the Military Forces). The first was General Mora, Former Commander of the Armed Forces and author of Uribe’s *Plan Patriota*. The second was General Oscar Naranjo, former Director of the National Police. In 2014, the government also invited active-duty military to participate at the table for the first time in history in the Technical Sub-commission for Ending the Conflict (Mezú-Mina 2021:1-2). ACORE also maintained frequent contact with President Santos and consulted with government negotiators and lawyers regarding plans for the transitional justice system, which contemplated that military officers face trial (Mezú-Mina 2021:15-16). At the same time, Santos appointed unofficial facilitators to pursue a fluid dialogue with prominent *Centro Democrático* elites through informal meetings and events (Mezú-Mina 2021:171).

Despite these involvements, militant participation in decision-making was both limited by and subordinated to the say of the Peace Commissioner and other reformers involved. Various respondents noted that General Mora’s memoir about his time on the negotiating team faithfully portrayed the military’s experiences in Havana. In his book, Mora describes how he persistently voiced opposition, critique, and dissent while serving on the negotiating team. However, he also explains that Santos and Jaramillo made secret agreements with leaders from various sectors before discussions reached the broader, formal

group. Described by Mora as the “real negotiating team,” this reduced circle of peace reformers would then present decisions to the other members as “fait accompli” (2021). According to Mora’s memoir, this informal system made debate at the negotiating table “nothing more than a pantomime or a kind of theater for public consumption” (2021).

Military participation in the Technical Sub-commission for Ending the Conflict also limited military say to technical designs. According to one MoD official, the sub-commission was a closed space where the military team sat with the FARC team to define “terms, mechanisms, operational conditions, procedures...[for a] reintegration process, period” (Restrepo, interview 2022). The sub-commission would then bring “pre-agreement” proposals to the negotiating team, who ultimately made the final decision. The Santos administration left many major concerns MoD unanswered. At least initially, the government team had also denied the sub-commission’s requests for information about other agenda items, such as plans for political participation and comprehensive rural reform (Mezú-Mina 2021:212). Although defense representatives gradually contributed their proposals for other agenda items—such as justice, historical memory, and victims—these were also contingent on negotiator approval.

Santos also exerted tight controls over military dissent. Santos also used intelligence services to collect information about possible spoilers (Mezú-Mina 2021:11-12). Santos dismissed many officers who rejected his measures to suspend bombings and operational offensives (Mezú-Mina 2021:176). One respondent claims that he had been dismissed for too vehemently insisting on future problems down the road.

Limited military participation produced contradictory effects for the legitimacy of the process among militant groups themselves. On the one hand, the subcommittee brought

together active duty military with civil leaders. Teamwork and camaraderie calmed tensions and military distrust (Mezú-Mina 2021:182-183, 202). Analysts note that seating guerrillas and military in dialogue also represented the peace processes' "first act of reconciliation" (Mezú-Mina 2021:8). Among reformers, military participation offered greater certainty to the process, and assurances that defense would comply (Mezú-Mina 2021:12, 134). Among active-duty military, their participation increased the process' credibility (Mezú-Mina 2021:12, 134). At least initially, sub-commission representatives felt that their recommendations were "highly relevant" (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). The sub-commission's "Bilateral and Definitive Model for ceasefire and ending hostilities" constituted 108 pages of the final 312 page agreement (Mezú-Mina 2021:17). While not all their recommendations were adopted into the final document, military officers believed that they had "contained bad decisions" (see Mezú-Mina 2021:131-132). Seating the military alongside the FARC in the sub-commission also made the MoD team more receptive. As described by one representative: "*My vision on the matter has been quite clear for a long time, but what it did help me was to lower the tension...to open my mind, to try to understand a little within some things that are unacceptable to me...at least to find ways of resolving [the conflict]*" (Restrepo, interview 2022).

On the other hand, despite these gains, military participation ultimately resulted in overall military discontent. Dr. Rodrigo Mezú-Mina is an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who took part in the technical sub-commission and wrote his dissertation on the subject. He explains that while military perceptions of the process and relationships with reformer officials improved within the sub-commission Havana, distrust back in Bogotá only grew (Mezu-Mina 2021:219). The MoD failed to socialize the accords and "erroneous" views

prevailed within the institution. Discussing “the peace process... was perceived as a strategy to ‘brainwash’ uniformed officers and convince them of something that wasn’t good for them” (Mezú-Mina 2021:133-134). Over time, the sub-commission team also concluded that Santos “was willing to jump over [their] recommendations to get things signed” (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). Participants concluded that they had only been invited to simulate their own influence. Santos’ decision to dismiss dissenting representatives further “radicalized” military officers away from the process (Mezú-Mina 2021:11-12).

As military dissatisfaction mounted, the political opposition also gained more formal influence over the negotiating agenda. Santos’ informal channels of communication failed to bring the opposition closer to the government’s vision (Mezú-Mina 2021:171). Founded as a political party in 2013, the *Centro Democrático* organized a formal platform to mobilize dissent in Congress and at the polls. Santos retained the presidency during the 2014 elections in a second round run-off against *Centro Democrático* candidate, Oscar Zuluaga. Nonetheless, the party gained 19 seats in the Chamber of Representatives, and 20 in the Senate, including Uribe himself (Beittel 2021:6-7). Party politicians seized on tensions between the generals and Santos reformers by presenting themselves as natural allies of the military. This political platform emboldened active-duty military officers to openly critique the process during the plebiscite and the run-up to the 2018 election (Mezú-Mina 2021:148-149). This alliance resulted in electoral victories that allowed for a renegotiation of Havana’s agenda in line with a militant vision.

And yet, reformer’s retained control over the negotiated agenda’s vision. Analysts note that if General Mora decided to leave the negotiations, his departure could have blown

up the peace process (Mora 2021). This is because Uribe's sector "felt respect and guarantees from having [him] there supervising the process" (Mora 2021). However, General Mora decided to stay and ensure the process' continuity, despite feeling like he had been cornered into a "dead end" (Mora 2021). Active-duty military also largely followed executive orders during negotiations and implementation. Post-referendum negotiations with the opposition "No" campaign did result in changes made. However, in the perspectives of *Centro Democrático* and military elites, their most significant requests were "never taken into account" (Torrijos, interview 2017).

In the end, the defense sector faced serious trade-offs. Whilst military command celebrated that individual soldiers were ultimately spared of jail-time, officials noted that the final design of the transitional justice system nonetheless "polluted the legitimacy of the army" (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022; Torrijos, interview 2017) by equalizing the military and guerrilla war crimes under amnesty laws. Among reformers, the inclusion of the military and "No" campaign elites in renegotiations was perceived as a way to justify that debate and representation in the development of the accord were thorough and democratic, reinforcing the legitimacy of the process.

Plan Colombia Support for Horizontal Inclusion

For a long time, Washington supported a model that positioned the military at the center of decision-making. The US had backed military leadership over the "consolidation" strategy, and a practice of civil-military coordination where Defense "arrived and gave orders" (Restrepo, interview 2022) to other institutions. However, in parallel to these ongoing bilateral security efforts, Bernie Aaronson's 2015 arrival in Havana unquestionably

validated a model that prioritized reformers in shaping policy decisions. As the special envoy, Aaronson was “permanently in meetings” (Ambrosi, interview 2022) with Jaramillo and lead negotiator Humberto de la Calle. He mediated decisions between government reformers and the FARC.

Concerned over mounting vitriol, Aaronson also reinforced Santos’ informal efforts to invite the political opposition into the negotiations agenda. He spent time with Uribe in both Colombia and Washington in an effort to “build a bridge between him and the government to...incorporate some of his legitimate concerns” (Aaronson, interview 2020). He arranged a couple of meetings between Uribe, *Centro Democrático* politicians, Jaramillo, De la Calle, and Defense Minister Luis Carlos Villegas. Aaronson explained that, despite the government’s sincere effort, these meetings failed to “integrate the *Centro Democrático* and President Uribe in any way... that would give them a reason to support the process” (Aaronson, interview 2020). By this time, some of the agenda items that the *Centro Democrático* felt most strongly about had already been negotiated, such as counter-narcotics. The government team was reluctant to reopen discussions because they doubted that Uribe would support them, regardless of any changes made. Moreover, with regards to Uribe, “it was not clear that he was really looking to find solutions” (Aaronson, interview 2020).

Although the signing of peace preserved reformer decisions, the Trump administration also offered more formal channels for Uribe elites to influence the implementation phase. *Centro Democrático* politicians aimed to leverage US pressure and withheld US funds as a way to wrestle control over domestic decisions. During the Trump administration, the Colombian right established “a semi-direct line to the White House”

(Orozco 2017). In April 2017, Santos spoke with Trump over the phone, urging him to uphold Obama’s \$450M pledge, while Uribe and Pastrana personally met with the new President at his Mar-a-Lago resort (The Caravel 2017). Uribe also maintained “constant communication” with the US Congress (Silva 2017). In letters to US policymakers, Uribe accused Santos of neglecting to attack coca production “to please the terrorist FARC” and that peace reforms had turned Colombia into Venezuela (Uribe Vélez 2017). US legislators like Marco Rubio echoed Uribe’s talking points verbatim, urging Washington to “continue to support Colombia’s efforts to combat terrorism and narcotics” (see Silva 2017). As discussed in previous sections, Washington provided an inroads for militant elites to shape the agreement through proxy issues, such as eradication and extradition.

ii. High Vertical Inclusion for Peace Alternatives

“And perhaps Santos’ vision is not far-reaching, is it?Well, that's why the movement and the political struggle continues, to use the peace accords as a foundation to achieve more far-reaching transformations.”

–Luis Ignacio Sandoval, Redepaz (interview 2017)

Both national and international supporters of the agreement claim that Havana was “perhaps the most participatory process ever in history” (see Segura and Mechoulan 2017:27). A robust peace movement ensured that policymakers answered to peace not just as a political agreement, but also as a democratic process. The inclusion of progressive civil society groups magnified the scope, demand, and accountability for far-reaching

developmental policies. The movement provided public legitimacy that challenged militant claims.

The high inclusion of civil society in peace reforms during the Santos presidency built on a rich history of mobilization. In Colombia, movement pressure had consistently ensured participation in peace processes. Peace processes had also catalyzed movement-building. While protests demanding negotiated solutions began in the late 1970, collective peace actions boomed in the 1980s (Villarraga Sarmiento 2013:29; Fernández et al. 2004). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, civil society groups started to engage directly in government peace efforts. The Constitution of 1991, especially, opened peace dialogues and encouraged a surge and diversification of peace movements (Villarraga Sarmiento 2015:45).

In the 1990s, diverse actors and organizations also grouped together into myriad, broad national networks, consolidating demands for negotiated solutions and national reforms. Peace networks thereby gained greater influence in both public opinion and the national agenda. The Network of Universities for Peace organized academics across private and public universities, which built a strong, cross-disciplinary research tradition in peace and conflict. Academics from the “Escuela de los Violentólogos,” the School of “Violentologists,” became highly influential. The network Media for Peace organized journalists to produce press for peace. The Network of Business Owners for Peace organized investments for peace. *La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz* (The Women’s Pacifist Route for Peace) grew to include hundreds of women’s organizations across social lines, including indigenous, Afro-Colombian, mestizo, white, rich, poor, rural, urban, and academic women. Redepaz (the National Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against the War) organized victims, human rights groups, artists, churches, academia, and the private

sector to participate directly in national pedagogy and policy-making (Díaz Basurdo 2020:15-16). Redepaz coordinated many highly influential national actions, including the 1997 Mandate for Peace.⁴³ This informal referendum convened over 10 million Colombians to vote for peace, directly influencing President Pastrana's decision to assume comprehensive talks with both the FARC and ELN (Basurdo Díaz 2020:51).

After a significant legislative push for better “institutional infrastructure for peace,” the peace movement pressured the Samper government to create the National Council for Peace (Restrepo Jiménez and Leyva 2017:6, 28-29). The MoD and the OACP had backed this legislative effort, recognizing civil society support as an opportunity to advance peace. Inspired by participatory experiences in South Africa, the National Council for Peace (CNP) was intentionally created to act as an influential forum, where diverse social leaders discuss proposals and design policies to ensure “a comprehensive vision of peace-building” (Jiménez Restrepo and Leyva 2017:31). The CNP's “comprehensive vision” is predicated on the belief that simply disarming combatants is insufficient to build peace. Instead, it emphasizes the need for social, political, and economic reforms to address the underlying conditions that contribute to violence. The CNP is a formal and semi-autonomous state body that serves in an advisory capacity (Jiménez Restrepo and Leyva 2017:34). It does not have decision-making power. However, civil society leaders sit alongside high-level decision-makers, including the Peace Commissioner, the Attorney General, legislators, and the President himself. Regional and municipal councils for peace accompany these functions at the sub-national level.

⁴³ Redepaz has also coordinated other influential national events such as Peace Week (1994-2007); The Children's Mandate for Peace (1996); the One Hundred Cities for Peace Project (1999-2001); the Territorial Constituent Assemblies project; Territories for Peace, etc. (Villarraga Sarmiento 2013).

If peace policies had acted as a conduit to bring civil society claims into the national agenda, war had served as a pretext to neuter these demands. Many respondents in the peace movement noted that the armed left had long justified the entrenchment of reactionary state politics, freezing the country's social struggles within a persisting status quo. As Fernán González González explained, the FARC's rebellion "*ends up serving the reaction....because any proposal for change is delegitimized...From there, any attempt for reform is blocked*" (interview 2017). Over time, maintained civil society pressure increasingly decoupled developmental and social justice claims from affiliations with armed struggle. However, during the Uribe administration, the looming figure of "terrorism" had again criminalized social protest and justified the persecution of civil society organizations (Hernández Barreto 2016:7). Uribe only convened the CNP after a member organized a challenge, forcing him to comply with the law (Jiménez Restrepo and Lleyva 2017:42). Uribe's consolidation projects also neglected to consult with civil society (US Embassy Colombia 2007b). Demonization and reduced political space severed the peace movement from influence over the national agenda and fragmented groups against each other (Villarraga Sarmiento 2013:77; Eastman, interview 2022).

However, civil society actions during the Uribe administration also stand as a testament to the peace movement's strength. Despite reduced policy access, increasingly more women, Indigenous communities, victims' groups, and human rights organizations formulated peace demands. While established networks continued demanding a negotiated solution, claims also adapted to solutions that were not contingent on one, such as forced displacement, reconciliation, drug policy reform, DDR, and security sector reform (Llorente and Mantilla, interview 2022; Basurdo Díaz 2020:19; Villarraga Sarmiento 2013:49-50).

Civil society pressure played a role in the inclusion of truth, justice, and reparations in the Peace and Justice Law. Although civil society experienced tense relationships with Uribe's security sector, Uribe's peace agencies—such as the Reintegration agency—maintained fluid relationships with groups. The Peace and Justice Law created the National Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, convening government and civil society representatives into an advisory body, including members like Ana Teresa Bernal Montanez, Director of Redepaz, and Patricia Buritica Cespedes, Director of the Women for Peace Initiative (US Embassy Colombia 2005c). In 2009, Uribe approved this commission's proposal to establish a “broad dialogue with civil society, unions, the media, and political leaders across the country to formulate a ‘minimum accord’ that could serve as a basis for [FARC] peace talks” (US Embassy Colombia 2009f). Between 2005-2007, a civil society-led mediation initiative reignited exploratory talks between the Uribe government and the ELN that had fallen apart in 2003 (Díaz Basurdo 2020:16-17; Villarraga Sarmiento 2013:78).

Santos officials had already identified the need for citizen participation reforms as a key agenda item before negotiations even began. One respondent had worked with the negotiating team on the chapter for political participation. She explained that the Constitution of 1991 and past mobilization efforts had successfully expanded “what political participation means” (Maya, interview 2022). Accordingly, “it was very difficult [for negotiators] to see [citizen participation] as separate from political participation” (Maya, interview 2022). Negotiators proposed measures to “redefine the relation between state and society” (see The Pearson Institute 2020:4; Bermúdez Liévano 2018:122-123). These measures were conceived both as means for reparations and as solutions to the historical exclusions that perpetuate violence. Havana included a participatory planning process within

PDETs (Territorially-Focused Development Programs) to shape reforms in the regions hit hardest by the conflict. Havana also safeguarded mobilization and created a pathway for social collectives to found political parties at the grassroots, local, and regional level (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:122-123).⁴⁴ Although overruled by the “No” campaign, the original agreement had also proposed “Special Territorial Circumscriptions for Peace,” which allocated special seats in Congress for residents of the regions hardest hit by the war (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:125-127).

Havana also invited civil society to directly participate in negotiations. Government officials had rejected the FARC’s initial proposals to offer extensive and direct public participation, arguing that public audiences had impeded fragile discussions in Caguán (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:127). They had initially considered that civil society participation would be more suitable for the implementation phase. Nonetheless, the parties created three channels for public participation. First, direct consultations invited guests to the negotiations, including various Colombian policy experts and business leaders (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:51). Second, between 2012 and 2016, the OACP organized 28,393 national forums, 25,278 regional forums, and 8,274 virtual forums outside the negotiations table (Basurdo Díaz 2020:46; Sarmiento Santander et al. 2016:6). Third, the parties committed to reviewing and, wherever possible, integrating proposals sent by citizens through a submission system of online forms and regular mail (Bermúdez Liévano 2020:128-129). The organization Fundación Ideas para la Paz (Ideas for Peace Foundation) thus systematized 67,371 ideas for negotiators to consider at the table (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:51-52). Sixty victims and twelve volumes-worth of victim’s proposals also traveled to

⁴⁴ Havana’s safeguards for mobilization included guarantees for public protest, security for social leaders and activists, and access to communications.

Havana, making Havana one of the first peace processes in the world to ensure their participation (Bermúdez 2018:248-249; Jaramillo 2018).

There are conflicting reports on how many of the proposals from these formal channels were included in the final accord. Yesid Reyes was Santos' Minister of Justice from 2014 to 2016. He noted that all proposals were deliberated and evaluated to determine whether or not they should be included (Reyes, interview 2017). Another study found more varied responses (Segura and Mechoulan 2017). A UN staffer who was closely involved in the process reported that the final accord incorporated around 73 percent of proposals (Segura and Mechoulan 2017: 28). While some government officials reported that the drafting commission continuously reviewed proposals, others stated that they began to disregard proposals as negotiations became more demanding (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:28). Some analysts also observed that the negotiations lacked a follow-up mechanism for civil society demands (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:30).

Beyond Havana's formal participation channels, shared goals between peace advocates and Santos reformers also produced direct civil-society relationships. The OACP recruited civil society representatives into formal positions and consulting roles. Peace organizations also maintained fluent and cooperative relationships with other national institutions, ranging from the Ministry of the Interior to the National Police. Fundación Ideas para la Paz, which published a series of influential studies on security sector reform, maintained a conversation with Peace Commissioner Jaramillo, who had previously directed the Foundation himself (Llorente and Mantilla, interview 2022). Many peace advocates were also respected and influential national figures. While conducting my fieldwork, I befriended Luis Ignacio Sandoval, a prominent activist in Redepaz. He invited me to attend the FARC's

final disarmament ceremony in Mesetas in June 2017. When we arrived, Luis introduced me to President Santos, Peace Commissioner Jaramillo, and Chief Negotiator de la Calle. Due to Luis' standing, they all took a moment from the surrounding crowd to shake my hand.

An “enormous bubbling of social movements” (Robledo, interview 2015) also responded to Santos' peace project and opened participation further. After facing persecution and fragmentation under Uribe's military approach, civil society peace initiatives boomed just as Santos opened talks in Havana (CINEP 2016). Organizations also retook regional tables, permanent assemblies, special commissions, campaigns, pacts, referendums, and commitments that they had established in the 1990s. They built on their historical experiences and lessons to connect their demands to the government. Universities, unions, and social organizations hosted peace panels, talks, and conferences. Local groups spearheaded their own peace-building services, community dialogues, acts of reconciliation, and negotiations. Established networks like REDEPAZ also trained new peace groups to strengthen their capacities for activism. Prestigious universities and peace research centers provided extensive and authoritative studies of the Colombian conflict, as well as lessons from peace processes in Guatemala, Peru, and South Africa. Several prominent activists and government officials cited acclaimed reports from CINEP and the National Center for Historical Memory to support their arguments for land reform and transitional justice measures. After two years of sustained pressure, a broad alliance of organizations pushed Santos to reactivate the CNP (Jiménez Restrepo and Lleyva 2017:34).

In response to militant opposition, the inclusion of civil society translated a far-reaching negotiations agenda into democratic demands. The CNP represented groups ranging from victims groups, business leaders, judges, church leaders, retired military

officers, and universities (Jiménez Restrepo and Lleyva 2017:65). These representatives validated the accords and assumed a pedagogical role to generate trust across various social sectors (Jiménez Restrepo and Lleyva 2017:44-45). Leaders in the peace movement were visible as respected policy experts, and heavily supported government efforts on the television, radio, and regular newspaper columns. Security experts who had once supported Uribe signed joint statements with NGOs that approved Santos' model for drug reform (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). The experience of regional forums provided evidence of a match between citizen proposals and the FARC's more comprehensive demands for access to land, credit, rural education, employment, and the demilitarization of state services (Robledo, interview 2015). Local groups, which had established authority among communities, contributed popular proposals to the agenda and socialized the accord (Villarraga Sarmiento 2015:40). The OACP also spearheaded "La Conversación Más Grande del Mundo" (The World's Biggest Conversation), a plan to mobilize and train civil initiatives to support national peace pedagogy (Díaz Basurdo 2020:45).

Accordingly, when the agreements failed on a political level, civil society pushed back. In the aftermath of the October 2016 peace referendum, militant opposition seized on the "No" victory as proof of public will. Many respondents credited "surviving the 'No'" with the fact that civil society came together with the Santos government and staged massive pro-peace mobilizations to demonstrate democratic demand. Established campaigns helped new national-level groups that emerged in Bogotá after the plebiscite by providing them with access to discussions, communication, networks, media attention, and legal support. These new networks included *Paz a la Calle* (Peace in the Streets), *El Avispero* (the Wasp's Nest), *Voces de Paz* (Voices of Peace), *Defendamos la Paz* (Let's Defend Peace), *Viva la*

Ciudadanía (Long Live Citizenship), and *Campamento de la Paz* (Peace Camp) (Basurdo Díaz 2020:56-58). #*AcuerdoYa*, or #*AccordsNow* used social media to educate the public about the signed agreement and the ideological positions behind the “Yes” and the “No,” filling the gap left by the government’s insufficient efforts to socialize the accords (Basurdo Díaz 2020:31-32).

The peace movement maintained public demand and support for the accord throughout the implementation phase. Groups organized workshops, panels, forums, and sustained media pressure. Redepaz’s efforts turned the Pope’s planned visit in September 2017 into a symbol of national reconciliation and blessing for the accords. NGOs like IFIT (Institute for Integrated Transitions) and *Rodéemos el Diálogo* (Embrace Dialogue) maintained bridges and dialogue with militant actors to diffuse polarization and promote follow through on agenda items.

In addition to reinforcing the process, civil society inclusion also pushed Santos’ peace reforms to adopt a more transformative vision. Although Santos officials celebrated the agreement as a shift away from narrow elite politics, peace activists had concerns about Havana’s “neoliberal understanding of participation” (Suárez Gómez, interview 2017). Many peace activists did not believe that Santos was truly committed to comprehensive reforms and genuine participation. Respondents explained that Santos represented a traditional sector of center-right, urban elites who viewed peace primarily as “a business deal” to take the FARC off the table and make Colombia more appealing to multinational investment (Sandoval, interview 2017; Gamboa, interview 2022). Moreover, militant accusations that Santos was gifting away a democratic order to a terrorist FARC put peace officials in the position of walking back promises of structural change, and instead

emphasizing the accords' *potential* for future transformations. Jaramillo himself noted that the peace agreement “does introduce some change itself directly, such as stopping a war...But mainly it creates a framework for change and it has to be taken advantage of, it's not going to happen on its own” (The Pearson Institute 2020:4).

Civil society groups emphatically viewed peace as an opportunity for “revolutionary democratic transformation” and “an opening to change political forces...[from the state's] culture of counter-insurgency” (Redepaz 2017b). They understood their role as an alternative force, responsible for making structural reforms accountable to sectors historically excluded from power. Movements ultimately broadened the agreement beyond the initial agenda set by the negotiating parties, and answered social demands for transformational change.

Measures to include women and of marginalized communities represent two key examples of this process. The women's peace movement had decades of experience in developing concepts to build democratic alternatives and “deconstruct patriarchal orders, neoliberal orders, military orders” (Robledo, interview 2015; Chaparro González and Martínez Osorio 2016:26-28; Gómez Correal, interview 2015; Bouvier 2016:12). Although women's inclusion had been overlooked by the negotiating parties, Havana motivated various, fragmented women's organizations to converge around a collective demand. Victims, ex-combatants, indigenous movements, and Afro-Colombian activists coordinated actions together at the National Summit for Women and Peace, the Peace Commission, and the National Peace Council, and sent 801 proposals to the table (Mujeres Populares Diversas para la Construcción de la Paz 2015). The collective called for the agenda to encompass

“not just social justice for peace but gender justice” (Mujeres Populares Diversas para la Construcción de la Paz 2015).

A year of pressure pushed Santos to invite two women to the negotiation team: María Paulina Riveros, Director of Human Rights in the Ministry of the Interior; and Nigeria Rentería, High Commissioner for the Equality of Women (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:291). After continued pressure, the table announced the creation of the first sub-commission on gender in the world in June 2014 (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:291). The sub-commission was mandated to develop a gender focus for all agenda items. It invited a group of 14 women and two representatives from the LGBTQ community to Havana to share their proposals. The gender focus resulted in 120 measures to close historical gaps in social equality. These measures included formal guarantees ensuring women’s access to land and politics, establishing a Special Jurisdiction for Peace to study sexual violence and its non-repetition, and creating of a new institution to follow-up on the new gender focus’ implementation (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:292-293; Segura and Mechoulam 2017:16-17). The agreement’s designs for the Truth Commission mirrored proposals authored by networks like *la Ruta Pacífica*.

While all of the sub-commission's recommendations were reviewed by the negotiating table, not all of them were ultimately adopted. Furthermore, Havana’s “gender ideology” became one of the “No” campaign’s most effusive targets.⁴⁵ Nonetheless,

⁴⁵ *Centro Democrático* politicians allied with the Evangelical Church to campaign against measures to reduce discrimination for the LGBTQI community. Following the post-plebiscite renegotiations with the “No,” Santos’ team clarified that peace’s implementation should respect religious freedom and count on church participation, and removed some explicit references to gender and the LGBTQI population. However, the agreement ultimately maintained a “respect for equality of non-discrimination” and “affirmative measures to promote equality” for these communities as principles and practices of implementation (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:293-295).

participants noted that women's participation significantly elevated gender issues into a priority for the government and FARC delegations (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:16-17). For instance, one respondent had been invited to participate at the sub-commission in 2014. By 2015, generals had invited her to speak at the National War College and share ideas for how to incorporate women's concepts of "human security" into the defense sector's post-conflict practices (Salamanca, interview 2015).

Similar dynamics repeated in efforts to include Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups. Despite having shouldered a disproportionate impact of the conflict, these communities were also initially excluded from the negotiating table in Havana. Afro-Colombian and Indigenous organizations came together to form the Ethnic Commission for Peace and the Defense of Territorial Rights to lobby the negotiating table. The table rejected the Ethnic Commission's proposal to create a special submission in Havana. While some reports suggest that this rejection was due to the entire the agenda having already been agreed upon, other reports state that the government team feared that these traditionally leftist organizations would ally with the FARC (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:297; Segura and Mechoulan 2017: 29-30). The Ethnic Commission nonetheless enlisted both international and grassroots community pressure to secure an audience at the table on June 27, 2016. The result was the inclusion of an "ethnic chapter" in the agreement. This chapter marked the only instance where civil society representatives were directly involved in negotiating and drafting a section of the final agreement (Segura and Mechoulan 2017:29-30).

The "ethnic chapter" inserted guarantees to rights and reparations for communities. Because Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities often reside in conflicted land, organizations could assert valid claims for greater participation in rural development and

land rights (Bermúdez Liévano 2018:299). As a result, these claims strengthened guarantees requiring dialogue before coca eradication in cultivation zones where Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities live. One defense official noted that, for the first time, community say trumped that of the MoD. She explained, “*You began hearing many communities start saying, ‘You cannot not eradicate here. You cannot come in here. Here, we are the ones who say what to do, and how to do it. You only support us in doing what we want.’ ...[W]e went from a ministry of very strong thinking—which came and did—to a ministry where...you had to consult with the communities in advance. With indigenous people, with Afro people, with minorities...They were gaining more and more spaces in their processes...*” (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022).

Civil society’s role, as both a reinforcer of democratic demand and a collective voice for transformational change, was instituted into the implementation phase. The post-accord process brought in many new state bodies to organize vertical and horizontal deliberative processes. The accords created both a committee and a commission for follow-up and monitoring of accord implementation, which were required to maintain dialogue with civil society groups (Restrepo Jiménez and Leyva 2017:7). The 2018 Opposition Statute established guarantees for the participation of movements and conditions for gender equality in Congress (Glynn et al. 2021: 11). The National Council for Reconciliation and Coexistence was charged with designing a shared vision for reconciliation and coexistence between public officials, organization leaders, and social movements (Restrepo Jiménez and Leyva 2017:7; Glynn et al. 2021:11).

Plan Colombia Support for Vertical Inclusion

Before the Santos presidency, Plan Colombia primarily engaged with civil society groups through human rights reform and alternative development programs. US officials and policymakers had direct relationships with Colombian human rights groups. These relationships had translated into human rights conditions on military assistance, which recruited civil society into an oversight role. Within this role, human rights organizations reported military abuses to the US Embassy. Embassy staff would take this information as an indicator to conduct site visits, interview witnesses, and consult with other organizations to vet military units. The US Embassy also facilitated exchanges between the Colombian government and human rights groups to pressure investigations for state abuses.

However, the Embassy's engagement with human rights groups was also balanced against military priorities and interests in Bogotá and Washington. As one US official noted, staff would receive "ten stories about any incident" (Anonymous US 5, interview 2020), and the accounts of Colombian military officers had clout. Furthermore, the DoD and US law enforcement "thought that vetting got in the way of the operations they needed to do" (Anonymous US 5, interview 2020). Accordingly, US security agencies often complicated the work of human rights. In the context of Uribe's allegiance to the generals, respected Colombian organizations "voiced appreciation for the US role in encouraging a broad-based human rights dialogue" (US Embassy Colombia 2006f). However, they also stressed the need for more USAID support to establish "effective channels for dialogue" with state officials and strengthen their "participation in and impact on the formulation and implementation of public policies" (USAID 2006).

During the Uribe administration, USAID alternative development programs were also mandated to consult with affected communities. USAID officials, contractors, and national civilian employees were directed to enter communities once coca eradication had occurred and once these areas were considered safe enough for preliminary rounds of discussions about the community's needs. USAID projects and activities ranged from providing economic livelihoods to transition from coca, providing best practices for transporting cacao on tertiary roads, and repairing broken bridges to enhance access to schools and clinics. Communities that received social services found that USAID programs strengthened their participation in the definition and management of local and regional programs (Rojas 2015:196-197).

However, many communities and NGOs also condemned alternative development for reducing their participation in development (Rojas 2015, 216-217). Under this model, the military always remained "far ahead" of civil state and USAID services, thereby denying opportunities for consultation (US Embassy Colombia 2007b; Vargas Meza 2011:5). Affected Colombians built alliances with US NGOs and mobilized as victims of US policy. Hundreds met with US officials in Bogotá and Washington to propose an alternative model that prioritized alternative development over counter-narcotics in crop substitution policies (Tate 2015:193). Washington officials largely dismissed the testimonies of *campesinos* as purely "anecdotal and hence unacceptable policy knowledge" (Tate 2015:193). Instead of consultation, *campesinos* often faced criminal prosecution and a radical imbalance between coercive force and community needs (Vargas Meza 2011:2-3).

During the Pastrana and Uribe administrations, US support to the peace movement was fractional in comparison to these human rights and alternative development programs.

USAID's "Strengthening Peace in Colombia" initiative funded a variety of national-level peace organizations through small grants and activities. USAID financed domestic initiatives such as Redepaz's *Semana por la Paz* (National Peace Week), university research on peace negotiations, peace media, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peace activities, and even a project to formulate a gender focus for future peace negotiations, research on peace negotiations (IOM 2002; IOM and USAID 2002; IOM 2003). However, the breakdown of Caguán peace talks and the rising popularity of Uribe's presidential campaign caused USAID to re-evaluate the focus of this engagement (IOM 2002:5). US support turned to community-based initiatives that promoted peace-building, reconciliation, and conflict resolution at the local level (USAID 2007; IOM and USAID 2006).

Santos' peace agenda radically expanded US engagement with peace organizations. US support channeled activities that amplified peace's democratic demand. USAID funded a variety of national peace organizations that had been prominent in the peace process on issues ranging from PDETs, gender, and land reform. With USAID resources, *la Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* trained regional women's organizations to participate in legislative processes and gain "feminist policy influence" (Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres 2018). USAID officials participated in and funded national-level meetings between the OACP and 41 organizations, including with REDEPAZ (Encuentro Nacional de Educación Para la Paz 2016). These meetings developed a plan for deliberative citizen action and a national agenda for peace education. USAID also funded research initiatives in universities and institutes like CINEP and *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (CINEP/PPP 2019). After the accord was signed, USAID assisted tens of thousands of victims in documenting and sharing their

testimonies with the Truth Commission (Natiello 2023). They also supported victims' organizations in presenting cases to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

USAID/OTI's *Colombia Transforma* also developed activities with long-excluded local civil society groups, academic networks, and grassroots organizations in areas newly free of FARC control, "to highlight the significant roles that each play in the post-Accord process" (Bernal et al 2018:2). This included helping them define how to participate in governance decisions and advocate for Accord implementation around land reform (Bernal et al 2018:31-32). By incorporating community planning processes into rural development programs, even organizations in regions that had previously endured forced eradication and were ideologically opposed to US assistance, reported that Washington had "learned from the shortcomings of Plan Colombia" (Bernal et al 2018:16).

After lobbying by organizations in the Ethnic Submission, the US Congressional Black Caucus pushed for the inclusion of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous demands in the accord (Natiello 2023). US programs also helped the Ethnic Commission formulate communication strategies, guidelines, and priority issues for the Ethnic Chapter (Castro et al 2021:37). USAID's "Inclusion for Peace" (IPA) initiative also distributed \$50M from November 2016 to June 20, 2021 to the implementing partner IOM to support the Ethnic Chapter (Castro et al 2021:12).

By improving the capacities of organizations and the national officials to "engage constructively" (Castro et al. 2021:29), the IPA enhanced government compliance with a more far-reaching peace. The IPA offered training, technical assistance, and personnel-sharing to organizations that were not receiving assistance from the government (Castro et al. 2021:34-35). The aim was to help organizations plan reforms, build trust, and engage in

dialogue with implementation authorities around policy decisions (Castro et al. 2021:37-38). USAID assistance with media strategies helped the Afro-Colombian National Peace Council to become a visible and respected entity in various deliberative spaces. USAID facilitated meetings to share knowledge and discuss a strategy for Indigenous land reform, and assisted organizations in designing a protocol for inter-ethnic relations and the construction of a gender-inclusive territorial peace (Castro et al. 2021:38-39). The IPA also trained public officials on how to strengthen gender and ethnic approaches in national-level policy (Castro et al. 2021:29). The program bridged various interests to build consensus for these interventions. The discussion and improved understanding of these approaches within government organizations, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Truth Commission, facilitated the integration of this agenda into other policy areas and budgets.

Despite strong political opposition to the accord's implementation, beneficiaries observed that the visibility and recognition gained through participation in the peace process and support from USAID assisted organizations in sustaining territorial reforms (Castro et al. 2021:39-40). Communities came to “recognize the government...as an ally to further their projects” (Castro et al. 2021:34). National agencies assimilated these programs within their routine functions and “considered it an opportunity to fulfill their mission objectives, to the point that the agencies identified with the [IPA’s] goals and commitments” (Castro et al. 2021:30).

These examples of US support to civil society inclusion in the peace process are indisputable. However, leading peace activists also nearly unanimously stressed that Washington instilled the militarist model and empowered the militant sectors that exclude them from policy, legitimize reactionary state tactics, rationalize small-scale social

investments, and antagonize their vision of transformational change. Even during the Santos administration, Washington continued to fuel these hard-side solutions. The results were often contradictory. For instance, at the same time that USAID supported ethnic inclusion, US security officials also opposed social dialogue around eradication.

E. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how Colombian reformers pivoted policy to far-reaching peace reforms despite the perceived effectiveness and popularity of a bilateral military solution. I argue that four central conditions provided reformers with cultural resources that enabled these factions to navigate militant constraints and challenges, and render comprehensive peace reforms legible as viable, effective, and desirable alternatives. First, reformers mobilized peace efforts through high levels of *consensus*: despite opposition regarding the substance of peace policy, diverse elite sectors accepted negotiated solutions as a legitimate way to end conflict. Second, reformers mobilized high levels of *infrastructure*: historical institutions and laws authorized and safeguarded reforms as routine policies. Third, reformers leveraged high levels of *knowledge*: clarity and expertise among diverse elites produced credibility and purchase for peace actions. Fourth, reformers leveraged high-levels of inclusion: reformer officials headed decisions and engaged oppositional civil society demands. US assistance continued engaging in policy negotiations in ways that were often either peripheral to peace reformer efforts, subordinated to militant goals, or adverse to peace claims. Contradictory US support accordingly also bolstered the claims of militant actors by coding these solutions as the most acceptable. Nonetheless,

reformers also leveraged available alternatives to persuade changes in Plan Colombia. Although initially resistant, Plan Colombia eventually aligned behind Santos' vision and offered greater support to the peace process.

Although most peace agreements collapse within five years, Colombia's peace reforms ultimately held despite significant political challenges (Lombo and González Penagos 2021). As nine out of ten demobilized FARC guerrillas remain committed (Isacson 2021), accord implementation faced significant blows from militant opposition in Bogotá and Washington. The 2018 election of *Centro Democrático* President Iván Duque and a Senate majority promised to deliver "modifications" (Rojas 2018) to the agreement. Under Duque, implementation accordingly took on a harder line. The administration reshaped national plans for rural reform, subtracting community input and adding a significant military component (Isacson 2021). Duque refocused rural development programs from small, independent farmers to large-scale agribusiness (Zhakarov 2018; Felbab-Brown 2018a). The government also suspended peace talks with the ELN begun under Santos (Long 2018). Overall, implementation slowed down considerably, due to a lack of action by the Executive branch and Congress (O'Brien and Quinn 2024; Glynn et al. 2023; Isacson 2021).⁴⁶ The approaches that lagged behind the most were far-reaching gender and ethnic measures and transformational proposals to democratize land access, protect rights, and increase political participation (Glynn et al 2021:7). The administration halted the PNIS' drug reforms and violated commitments to deliver development assistance before eradication to coca-growing families (Isacson 2021). The Trump administration supported

⁴⁶ The Colombian government met 86% of the commitments that had to be completed in 2017, but only 61% of those in 2018, 43% in 2019, and 50% in 2020 (Isacson 2021). Notably, the Kroc Institute reports that in 2018, implementation also turned from short-term to medium and long-term commitments (Glynn et al. 2021:5).

forced eradication and discontinued any US pressure on accord implementation “except to spray” (Aaronson, interview 2020; Whitaker, interview 2022). During the Duque administration, US Ambassador Whitaker threatened Colombian senators and house representatives with cuts on US assistance if they did not eliminate the Special Jurisdiction for Peace’s (JEP) power to shield the FARC from extradition (Alsema 2019).

Despite these considerable militant blows, President Duque embraced a more centrist, moderated approach to the accords than that portended by his electoral mandate (Ghitis 2018). His government administered many important milestones for accord implementation. At the outset of his administration, Duque nodded to the necessity of many measures in the agreement, such as DDR and victims’ rights to truth, justice, and reparations (Rojas 2018). His government mobilized considerable and complex state resources and processes, including implementation budgets, institutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks (Glynn et al. 2023; Isacson 2021). The new transitional justice system fulfilled its mandates, surpassing the operational powers of previous peace agreements throughout the world (Glynn et al. 2021:14; Lombo and González Penagos 2021). The administration demonstrated active “enthusiasm” for some rural reforms, developing a land registry, infrastructure, social programs, and technical assistance for *campesinos* (Isacson 2021; Glynn et al. 2021:9-10). Duque also formalized Special Transitory Peace Voting Districts to improve the representation of victims and their territories in Congress (Glynn et al. 2021:11). Due to the continuation of peace implementation, US program support for peace reforms were also maintained throughout the Duque administration.

The 2022 presidential election of Gustavo Petro decisively reinstated a peace vision to the center of governance. A former leftist guerrilla, Petro took office under his proposal

for *Total Peace*. Curiously, Petro’s new national plan mobilized an “unlikely coalition” (Freeman and Holmes 2023). Lawmakers from traditional and conservative parties passed legal frameworks to increase negotiations with drug-trafficking organizations and leftist guerillas, such as the ELN, heavily enlisting civil society to broker deals. Petro’s national development plan also increased funding for the Havana’s Accord implementation by 36%, accelerating land reform and distribution (Freeman and Holmes 2023; Justice for Colombia 2024).

IV. Chapter 4: The Mérida Initiative and Policy Legitimation in Mexico

The following two chapters discuss the Mexican case, in which the recipient policy trajectory was that of abandoned reform and military escalation. In this chapter, I first discuss how US rationales shaped the ways Mexican elites legitimized possible policies. I introduce the Mérida Initiative's implementation, which reinforced a militant monopoly over security policy, and deepened a policy vacuum around reform. I demonstrate how US prescriptions advantaged militant claims by: 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals as to counter-narcotics; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success. At the same time, US rationales provided far less support for reformer claims, and advanced logics that either subordinated, neglected, or rejected recipient reformer proposals.

A. The Mérida Initiative penetrates the violence crisis

Felipe Calderón's 2007 met with George W. Bush to devise the Mérida Initiative strategy during a time of perceived crisis. Upon taking office in 2006, the Calderón administration had found that their state had been "captured by organized crime" (Calderón 2020:222-226; Calderón 2008; see Thomson 2008). They concluded that the DTO problem had produced a wave of extreme violence, which consumed Mexico's young democracy after nearly two decades of the the government's failure to implement a proactive strategy. The administration's initial strategic assessment concluded that "organized crime would be

an easily resolvable problem....[through] overwhelming force” (Ortega, interview 2020).

Local police were either too corrupt, inept, or under-resourced to meet the threat of criminal groups armed with military-grade weapons and hefty cash bribes. Calderón debuted his presidency by donning fatigues and massively escalating military troops over urban areas and land routes.⁴⁷

The Calderón strategy presided over both a new problem of violence and a new bilateral frontal solution. Since the aftermath of the 1910 Revolution, the quasi-authoritarian PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) had delivered strong, centralized control and relative stability under corporatist, one-party rule for seventy years. The PRI had defined Mexico’s foreign policy through strong principles of sovereignty and a collective, institutional rejection of US intrusion (Anaya Muñoz 2009:37; Tickner 2007:96-97). The so-called “Leviathan on the Zócalo” (Knight 2012)⁴⁸ had accomplished order through a system of clientelism, patronage, and populist reforms that had kept labor, peasant, and popular interests in check. It had thus also largely held the reins on DTOs through a rent-seeking system of informal pacts (Knight 2023).

Unique in Latin America, PRIista political elites also subordinated their armed forces through an informal civil-military “pact” (Centeno 1994:48-49). This arrangement historically marginalized the *militares*’ role in decision-making—both in defining security issues and in selecting the most appropriate solutions. Mexico’s Constitution further

⁴⁷ Although it was Calderón who first launched the drug war, it was his predecessor, President Vicente Fox (2000-2006), who launched an initial crackdown on cartels, in lieu of the PRI’s non-confrontational yet profoundly corrupt approach. Fox’s new strategy was intended to both pragmatically address violence and establish political distance for his PAN (*National Action Party*) party from the ghost of the PRI’s unscrupulous past (Lessing 2017:203).

⁴⁸ The Zócalo is the name for the main square in Mexico City, which houses the national presidential palace, head of the federal executive.

restricted the military's role in public security—including counter-narcotics efforts. In exchange, the PRI establishment rewarded the military with near total autonomy in internal affairs. Divided into the powerful military (SEDENA) and less powerful Navy (SEMAR), both departments of the Armed Forces each freely decided on personnel, budget, operational planning, and internal discipline (Dizard 2017:139).

The PRI's separation of civil and military spheres critically defined Mexico's security apparatus. Through autonomy, military elites developed exclusive institutional expertise and practices around security issues. By contrast, civil elites sent students to the US to develop technical specialists in economics and civil engineering, instating "professional" public policy cultures at the Ministry of Finance, Bank of Mexico, Communications, and Transportation (Ai Camp 2002). These *técnicos* brokered GATT and NAFTA, and became leaders in the OECD, the IMF, and the World Bank. Civil leaders demonstrated little interest in developing security specialists and professional bureaucracies, and learned to manage social conflict and drug violence through power, coercion, and personal loyalties. Following the "*lógica del cacique*" (Tello Peón, interview 2020), or "logic of the cacique," police forces served as personal bodyguards to political and economic bosses (Migdal 1988). National institutions such as the *Dirección Federal de Seguridad* (Federal Security Directorate) and *Policía Judicial* (Judicial Police) were all just "personal relationships" (Tello Peón, interview 2020). A lack of civil expertise and corruption unleashed inter-agency suspicions, rivalries, and Presidential decisions to dissolve civil institutions. Military institutions were often left to manage security problems.

Mexican civil bureaucrats credit "our great American friends" (Tello Peón, interview 2020) with supporting them through first efforts in institution-building. Officials who later

served under Calderón were professionalized through US counter-narcotics cooperation and bureaucratic models (Arzt 2010:362). US counterparts leveraged pressure and mutual interests to promote institutional ideas and policy change (Pérez Ricart 2019b:4). The DEA helped build CISEN, Mexico's first centralized intelligence center, in 1985, the Institute for Drug Control in the early 1990's, and aided the first efforts towards a Federal Police. Bilateral security exchanges had produced policy experts and specialists among Mexican security bureaucrats: a "new category of actors with a specific body of knowledge and a significant symbolic capital" (Pérez Ricart 2018:4). In 1990, for the first time, a high-level bilateral group at the level of Secretary of States was founded to make decisions and create "a shared assessment of the problem" (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022), resulting in the Salinas government establishing the first National Program on Drug Control.

While security officials and military officers had long kept civil society out, Mexico's democratization movement nonetheless disrupted the PRIista security system in the 1990s. Diverse civil groups demanded reforms against impunity⁴⁹, intransparency, and corruption in authoritarian police, military, and justice agencies. Human rights organizations litigated against violent state abuses,⁵⁰ allying with Amnesty International, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States to crack into impermeable Mexican

⁴⁹ The justice system had a 98% collapse rate in cases. Insufficient training for police and military resulted in the release of many suspects because they could not properly detain them or produce admissible reports (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020).

⁵⁰ Violent, military force had been an endemic tool of PRIista state-making during the 20th century, used against: "rebellious strongmen in the 1920s and 1930s and against electoral opposition in the 1940s and military and secret police repression of labor movements during the 1940s and 1950s, students in the 1960s, and rural rebellions during the entire period" (Pansters 2012:15).

institutions. Prominent opposition intellectuals called for judicial reform and rule of law (Rubio et al. 1993).

Seven decades of PRI rule formally concluded in the 2000 election of the first opposition party president, Vicente Fox. Despite Fox's neoliberal economic platform, leftist activists⁵¹ voted for the center-right PANista (*National Action Party*) politician and former Chief Executive of Coca-Cola because he was the only candidate who committed to civil society demands to build more open and accountable institutions (Acosta, interview 2021). Nonetheless, Fox's attempts to establish greater control over the military and civil security apparatus largely foundered (USIP 2023:62).⁵² The new democracy thus left many authoritarian institutional legacies intact, including a hermetic Armed Forces and politicized civil law enforcement institutions (Trejo and Ley 2020:145).

Democracy's abandoned promises culminated in a polarizing 2006 election, whereby conservative PANista Felipe Calderón narrowly defeated social-democratic PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*) candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. López Obrador had campaigned to halt the neoliberal structural reforms that had been implemented by every PRIista and (thus far, one-and-only) PANista administration during the prior two decades. Calderón's win ensured that Mexico avoided the statist and leftist responses of the "pink tide" that washed through the rest of Latin America. Calderón's razor thin victory of 0.56

⁵¹ Including Jorge Castañeda, Adolfo Aguilar, former members of the Communist party, and ex-guerrillas (Acosta, interview 2021).

⁵² World Bank, Inter-American Bank, and USAID funds supported Fox's (2000-2006) reforms of the Judicial Branch (Office of Democracy and Governance 2002:78-79; World Bank 2005). Fox also advanced the Public Security Secretariat (SSP, 2001), modified the Attorney General's office (PGR, 2001), and passed an initiative to create a Preventative Federal Police (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2019:69). The Special Prosecutor for the Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP) was created with the intention to apply transitional justice models to victims of Mexico's Dirty War. In 2004, Fox's *Mexico Seguro* (Safe Mexico) program introduced plans for a national prevention strategy.

percent, however, did not reassure Conservative elites in Mexico nor Washington officials of an imminent political threat. In a parallel inauguration ceremony held in Mexico City's *Zócalo*, López Obrador declared himself "Legitimate President" before legions of sympathizers. Mass protests in the capital forced Calderón to fly in by helicopter, walk through a back-door chamber, and surround himself by a military unit to attend his own inauguration. Throughout the 2006 election cycle, US Embassy cables reported deep concern over "populist rhetoric" (US Embassy Mexico 2006a). Contested election results affirmed the State Department's resolve to "strengthen Calderón's weak hand...to reinforce his agenda and leadership" (US Embassy Mexico 2006b).⁵³

While security issues were largely absent from the campaign, Calderón declared a drug war in the midst of the post-electoral legitimacy crisis (Trejo and Ley 2020:159). Although he could justify this decision through grisly events, such as decapitated heads flung on nightclub dance floors (Wordpress.org 2006), Calderón's announcement arrived when homicide levels were at their lowest recorded levels ever (Perez Esparza et al. 2020:179).⁵⁴ Democratization had certainly ruptured the PRIista informal pacts that had long kept DTO violence in check.⁵⁵ However, even when crime rates had been at their highest

⁵³ Despite much controversy over the reliability of these results, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) had declared Calderón the winner.

⁵⁴ Violence during Mexico's period of democratization had actually been steadily declining for two decades. Between 1990 and 2007, homicides had decreased from 19 to 9 per 100,000 (Muggah et al. 2016:32; Heinle et al. 2015; Esparza et al. 2020).

⁵⁵ Mainstream, scholarly accounts overwhelmingly locate Calderón's state crisis at the convergence of increased political pluralism and changes in the global drug market at the tail of the century (Lessing 2017; Astorga and Shirk 2010). These studies explain that the state's ability to manage the drug trade within the political hegemony of the PRI began to erode during the 1990s, under the growing pressures of Mexico's democratization. Previously harmonious PRI-cartel arrangements officially ruptured in 2000 with Fox's presidential election. Political fragmentation translated into turf wars among DTOs and heightened violence. As the Mexican state grew weak from PRIista cohesion lost, DTOs grew strong. Fortuitous shifts in global drug routes and the advantages of NAFTA's free trade flows armed and enriched DTOs, overturning the Mexican State's coercive upper hand.

during the early and mid-1990s, social and political pressure focused on democratic opening, transparency, and human rights as opposed to concerns with security.

Rather than responding to domestic pressures, Calderón looked abroad to find policy inspiration to address a legitimacy crisis. Through Plan Colombia, Uribe's hawkish, right-wing administration had centralized power, recovered state authority, and garnered unprecedented political cohesion and popular acceptance—and all without having to adopt large-scale structural reforms. Shortly before taking office, Calderón and his security officials visited Bogotá to review the Colombian model for frontally combating the drug trade (Beltrán Enviada 2006). The Uribe administration's policy lessons for Mexico were clear. Of particular importance was both the role of US assistance and of “net[ting] some big fish” (Lessing 2017:221, 226). This referred to a strategy of targeting DTO bosses to demonstrate state authority and establish public support. Past experiences with US security cooperation ensured that top heads in Calderón's cabinet were already tuned in to these hard power paradigms (Arzt 2010:262).

In the months between his July 2006 presidential victory and December 2006 inauguration, Felipe Calderón hosted a series of meetings with Washington officials, communicating that it was necessary for Mexico to develop a strategic relationship “similar to the one...built under Plan Colombia...to face down the threat cartels posed” (Shannon, interview 2020). During a first meeting with the US President in November, Calderón told Bush, “If Jack Bauer's got it, I want it” (Deare 2017:248). The Mérida Initiative thus not only ensured that Calderón received the same shipments of Blackhawks as Colombia, but also collaborated with and received the same counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism

training from many of the same State Department officials who developed and implemented Plan Colombia (Shannon, interview 2020).

The Mérida Initiative was premised on defining a common vision to jointly strengthen Mexico's institutions and combat DTOs (U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation Task Force 2018: 10). The Mérida first began with a narrow focus on military equipment transfers and developed relationships, trainings, intelligence-sharing, and technical assistance with military institutions. By 2010, however, the initiative expanded to a civilian-led focus. Added strategies included police and justice reform and "culture of legality" programs, which involved collaborations with institutions outside of the traditional security apparatus. The idea was that all these strategic "pillars" needed to be balanced to make [Mexico's] security system function" (Andión, interview 2020). Indeed, focusing on discourse on Washington, some analysts changed claimed that Mérida Initiative represented a sea change in traditional US foreign policy, having "evolved from a repressive military doctrine to a more sophisticated strategy aimed at improving civil society participation, good governance, the rule of law and anti-corruption" (Finkenbusch 2018: 21).

In the rest of this chapter I will detail how Mérida penetrated traditional security relationships and ideas in Mexico, providing support to both military and reformist actors and solutions throughout the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations.

B. The Calderón Administration (2006-2012): Military Escalation and Failure

i. Calderón's Military Escalation and the Mérida Initiative

The joint strategy appointed the Mexican Armed Forces to combat DTOs and concentrated resources to build military coercive and administrative capacity. Undergirded by new streams of US counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics funding, Calderón dramatically increased the Armed Forces' budget and operations, including large-scale and indefinite territorial occupations, street combat, drug seizures, and high-value targeting, or kingpin (Hope 2016:6). The military's mission was to either support or entirely replace state and local police forces—deemed as too inept, corrupt, and under-resourced to take on criminal groups armed with military grade weapons. Notably, Calderón proposed the military's protagonism as a regrettable stop-gap measure until the administration strengthened civil law enforcement. However, the military's role in the strategy also reinforced the influence and clout of the Defense sector that set policy continuity in motion. The Mérida Initiative supported militant claims over the strategy by 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success.

1. Clarifying Militant Roles and Strategic Goals

The new joint counter-narcotics mission clarified militant roles and strategic goals. Since the revolution, Mexico's Constitution has prohibited military force in “public security”—understood as social problems that should be managed by civilian authorities.

Mexico's defense structure was thus designed for conventional warfare: strategic planning, studies, and analysis contemplated by an external aggressor (Mexico Institute 2016). Drug-trafficking did not register as a problem requiring military intervention until 1987, when the de la Madrid administration issued a national security classification (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2019:69-70). The Supreme Court only passed Article 89 of the Constitution in the early 1990's, authorizing the military's "participation in civilian actions in favor of public security aiding civilian authorities" (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2019:69-70). Nonetheless, this norm still limits military power in counter-narcotics to policing activities: arrests and justice under the law. Due to such legal restrictions, military activities were confined to rural areas, and largely absent in cities (Mexico Institute 2016).

Despite these prohibitions, US cooperation had long encouraged expanding the military's counter-narcotics role, perceiving military institutions—SEDENA (the Army and Air Force) and SEMAR (the Navy)—to be far less corrupt than civilian counterparts in the police and public prosecutor's office.⁵⁶ Even under US pressure, however, the military's role was limited, ad-hoc, and informal for over half a century (Benítez Manaut and Deare 2021). Joint efforts were contained to eradication campaigns targeting *campesino* producers, as

⁵⁶ Although US coercion often motivated counter-narcotics cooperation, historically, Mexican leaders also exploited these missions to satisfy political interests (Pérez Ricart 2019b). Joint eradication operations had allowed the central government to keep certain sections of the Mexican armed forces occupied, control the enrichment of local elites, insert state presence in marginal areas, and acquire new military equipment (Pérez Ricart 2019b:7). From 1970-1990, the DEA's main contact in Mexico was the Policía Judicial Federal, which were trained in compatible practices, techniques and strategies, including kingpin operations (Pérez Ricart 2020). Especially after the corruption related death of DEA agent Kiki Camarena in 1985, this reinforced the pressure to zero in on the military as an "uncontaminated" (Pérez Ricart 2020) institution.

opposed to operations against trafficking organizations.⁵⁷ Mexico's nationalist and isolationist doctrine was at its most pronounced in the Armed Forces. Even as officers received US anti-drugs training, such overtures never advanced mil-to-mil cooperation at the highest levels (Centeno 1994:49; Guevara Moyano, interview 2020). Fearing that narco-money would corrupt the institution, the military had consistently resisted their ever-growing role in counter-narcotics campaigns since the 1980's (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2019. 67; Centeno 1994, 49-50). Mexico's political establishment also favored a limited military role. The military's role in the drug war did not increase substantially until the preceding Fox administration—with the caveat that street combat that became routine after 2006 *was still relatively rare*. As Jorge Castañeda, the head of the SRE (Secretariat of Foreign Affairs) under Fox explains (2010:2):

Mexico's political system has, since the 1920s, deliberately ensured that the army is useless. There is a tremendous consensus in the country on this matter. We want an army that is corrupt, poorly trained, poorly equipped, and totally useless. Why? Because these armies don't overthrow their governments.

By adopting the new frontal strategy, top security officials in Calderón's cabinet understood that they needed "transition to a new security system" and "change the whole political wheel" (US Embassy Mexico 2009c). Because cartels had historically been more or less "successfully" managed through the one-party political machine, there had been no state need to develop any "security or intelligence culture" (Tello Peón, interview 2020). The Calderón administration thus faced an aimless political class with no training or

⁵⁷ Bilateral counter-narcotics missions involving the armed forces had been mostly restricted to poppy and marijuana eradication in the mountains until 1996, when the Zedillo government also involved the military in interdiction (Sánchez Lara Rodríguez and Aguilar Romero 2019).

capacity “to understand and know the problem” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). One official recounted how, as violence began to erupt, the President asked his cabinet to investigate its causes, and there were “zero” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020) national specialists to be found. To understand their heretofore “non-existent problem,” the cabinet turned to Colombia: to learn “what narco-traffic is and the strategy of a Latin American government” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Uribe passed on his own advisor and renowned military strategist, Joaquín Villalobos, who became the strategic ideologue behind Calderón’s military crackdown (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022; Wilkinson 2010). Colombia’s policy lessons also made kingpin a clear strategic objective (Lessing 2017:221, 226). Colombian officials also advised Calderón that the “United States can be a very effective partner” (Shannon, interview 2020).

US counterparts sharpened the Armed Forces’ focus on the new security strategy. SEDENA’s⁵⁸ isolationism initially forced US officials to seek out alternatives. Concerned with institutional survival, SEMAR (the Navy) perceived bureaucratic advantages and was unified in their desire to take on this collaborator role.⁵⁹ SEMAR was thus integrated into the fight against organized crime for the first time in its history (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Competitions over military resources and prestige would cause SEDENA to gradually follow suit, increasing bilateral coordination and reinforcing their role in the counter-narcotics mission.

⁵⁸ SEDENA’s first meeting with the DoD included “three hours of a brief in which essentially they said that they were continuing to prepare for our invasion of Mexico” (see Deare 2017:266). At the time, top leadership in SEDENA had long-opted for zero relationship with the DoD (Deare 2017:253-254, 266).

⁵⁹ Also called *Marina*, in Mexico, SEMAR is an institution co-equal to SEDENA, reporting separately to the President. However, SEMAR had been in a far more historically precarious institutional position than SEDENA, facing threats to become fused into the Ministry of Defense. SEMAR’s officers wished to maintain an independent secretary (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara 2017).

The main problem for the new military role and strategy was that “no one really knew exactly what the armed forces are supposed to do” (Payan and Cabrera 2016).⁶⁰ The military’s new mission brought them closer than ever to civilians, without clear rules or training on how to engage in “public security” responsibilities. Ambiguous authorizations, moreover, exposed the military to accusations of constitutional breaches of jurisdictional authority and human rights violations. Without such rules, the ability of security institutions to receive greater resources and judicial protections operated within legal limbo (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara and Aguilar Romero 2019:63). Because Mexico was not legally legible as a country at war, the Mexican Armed Forces did not have access to the same type of US federal expenditures.

New military roles thus led to a shifting normative arena, and efforts to formalize military actions against organized crime. The Calderón administration first posed the military’s much expanded role in public security as an “emergency” measure (García Luna 2018:11). They invoked Article 89 to classify organized crime as a threat against domestic security, and Mérida as *“direct assistance—not to military power—but to military in support of public security”* (Ortega, interview 2020; US Embassy Mexico 2009a).⁶¹ Mérida thus “opened the valve” (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020) to US Congressional resources previously restricted as war material. Midway through his administration, Calderón and SEDENA teamed up on a proposal to reform the National Security Act and grant presidential authority to “appoint the military as the primary agent responding to a

⁶⁰ While there are two laws (1986 Law of the Army and the Air Force and the 2002 Law of the Navy) that authorize the armed forces to participate in “internal security,” no regulations define what these duties actually mean.

⁶¹ As one official conceded: “Although this is a bit like fair cheating. Because, in the end, a nine millimeter bullet is used...to kill the enemy, right?” (Ortega, interview 2020).

crisis” (US Embassy Mexico 2009a, 2009b). The drafters used the US Patriot Act as their model for parts of the bill, believing it to provide “a credible foundation to enhance the authorities of the military and the intelligence community” (US Embassy Mexico 2009a).

Once adopted, the Mérida Initiative acted as an “air traffic controller” (Sarukhan, interview 2020) that synchronized security efforts on both sides of the border under the same objectives to target organized crime. Accordingly, institutional rationales and activities inside agencies realigned to the joint counter-narcotics mission. As part of Mérida implementation, SEDENA and SEMAR had to justify why they were soliciting certain types of support to make their operations and investigations against *narcos* more efficient (Arzt, interview 2021). First established as a “mechanism to harmonize and assimilate” processes, halfway through the administration, Mérida became a “midwife of a strategic relationship and of ambitious intelligence exchange” (Sarukhan, interview 2020). Despite historic nationalisms in and redirections of the Mexican Armed Forces, DoD representatives report no pushback on the new mission, institutional receptiveness to US recommendations, and mutual understandings over developing new capabilities (Deare, interview 2021; Verga, interview 2021).

2. Expanding militant practices, capacities, and expertise

If Mérida clarified military confrontation and kingpin within Mexico’s strategic agenda, then bilateral cooperation also provided tools to assimilate the new mission. Executive powers started a war without capacities to produce information, design strategies, or calculate potential consequences.⁶² In a context of nascent security bureaucracy, US

⁶² One of many dozens of reported examples and anecdotes involved Calderón’s first act as president: sending troops to Tierra Caliente, in Michoacán in December 2006. As one official recounted, military authorities in

know-how helped “develop capacities and specialists” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020) across a variety of security areas—ranging from ATF workshops on firearms and explosives to DoJ trainings on oral justice. DoD conferred frequently with officers at the deputy assistant secretary and country-desk level, and scheduled regular visits with Army and Navy representatives to ensure progress in various capabilities (Verga, interview 2021).

While formally outside of the Mérida Initiative itself, however, increased cooperation between agencies ultimately led to the initiative’s most productive and enduring contribution: intelligence-sharing. High-level decision-makers were sent to learn FBI and DEA intelligence practices during two-month long courses in Miami. Mid-level officials working tactical operations took year-long trainings. Mérida built Binational Intelligence Fusion Centers in Mexico City and Monterrey to train officials in the same “cutting-edge learnings” (Ortega, interview 2020) of US facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq. US officials hosted planning exercises, developed joint strike forces, joint assessments, and kingpin operations rehearsals (US Embassy Mexico 2009c). The US flew planes over the Pacific, sharing intelligence from intercepted phone calls (Benítez-Manaut, interview 2021). Towards the end of the Calderón administration, Washington paid for Pegasus software so that Mexico could intercept their own calls (Benítez-Manaut, interview 2021).

As one former CISEN official noted, bilateral intelligence served as “magnificent schemas through which to persecute kingpins” (Gameros, interview 2020), organizing state actions according to *capos* beheaded. US intelligence expertise was uniquely directed

charge of this offensive reported “*great frustration, insatisfaction, and complaint because they sent them to Michoacán without intelligence, without information....In short, “Go to San Jerónimo!” “Sure, and what am I doing in San Jerónimo? What am I doing and what is the mission?” “Just go to San Jerónimo!” And then later they arrived in San Jerónimo and asked [the government] “and what am I doing here? Who am I looking for? How many of them are there, what weapons do they have?”....And the government replied “We don’t know!”*”

towards teaching Mexican counterparts how to “turn actionable intelligence into operations against high-value targets” (US Embassy Mexico 2009c). Mexican officials learned how to search for targets, and to use operations to generate more intelligence that could dismember other DTOs (Pérez Ricart 2019a; Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Institutions charged with tactical-operational responsibilities thus benefited by far the most in these new capacities and expertise. In the context of a nascent national police force and intense bureaucratic competition, military institutions became the greatest beneficiaries of all.

SEMAR

SEMAR’s new goal to “neutralize organized crime” revealed certain institutional limitations. While still lacking, the joint mission crucially relied on developing an interface compatible with US intelligence-sharing. Although SEMAR had previously outlined war plans to expand their intelligence capacities, civil leadership had historically shown little interest in funding these efforts. As the preferred agency of Washington counterparts, however, SEMAR’s projected Naval Intelligence Unit was easily greenlit.

Intelligence-sharing propelled immense cultural changes within SEMAR. SEMAR leadership decided to “start from zero” (Ortega, interview 2020) to design their new practices, create capacities, and train experts. The US impressed as having “the best intelligence practices in the world” (Ortega, interview 2020). A working group with CIA and DEA counterparts socialized SEMAR’s leadership in their models to define kingpin targets, strategize, and carry out operations. US know-how helped the institution “understand processes” and learn how to produce intelligence for their own objectives (Ortega, interview 2020). Authorities looked to and collaborated with Colombia for a more

relevant example. The Colombian model helped SEMAR leadership understand how to penetrate criminal organizations, detect insiders, and establish operational security. Intelligence soon became the most important role in the institution. Parallel to Mérida, SEMAR intelligence agents signed treaties with the CIA, the DEA, and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency to meet US control and security standards, and share kingpin operations information.

SEDENA

SEDENA was initially far more resistant to sharing intelligence with US counterparts. Although Presidential mandate first triggered cooperation, SEDENA officers soon found that training with the most well-equipped and cutting-edge military in the world offered unprecedented opportunities (US Embassy Mexico 2010b; Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). Soldiers sent to the US for Blackhawk training returned “*very happy* to learn how to pilot a helicopter for the first time in their lives!” (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). Officers loved Washington's “ghee whiz” (Isacson, interview 2021) technologies and gadgets, and enjoyed taking terrorism operations courses at the Perry Center and Quantico. During the Calderón administration, a once hermetic SEDENA began to request intelligence exchanges and specialized training for the first time (US Embassy Mexico 2010b). By the time Peña Nieto came to power, SEDENA adapted SEMAR's Intelligence Unit model, building the *Nueva Subjefatura del Estado Mayor de Inteligencia* to better align with US counterparts (Ortega, interview 2020; Balcázar, interview 2021).

Perceived institutional advantages also fueled a sweeping shift of bureaucratic “mentalities” within the Army (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020; Andi3n, interview 2020).

While officers may have resented patrolling poor neighborhoods and running roadblocks in the fight against crime, US intelligence for high-value targeting offered institutional prestige,⁶³ promotions, and medals (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020; Hristoulas, interview 2020; Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020; Isacson, interview 2021). A once homogenous SEDENA began to express a split between a “traditional” and “pro-modernization” faction, who recognized benefits in US drone imagery, communications interceptions, and intel on the movements of top leaders (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020; Hristoulas, interview 2020). Critically, US intelligence-sharing had also enabled SEMAR to conduct far more “efficient” operations than SEDENA (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020). In the next section, I will discuss how SEMAR’s bilateral advantage convinced SEDENA of expanding capabilities through “relationships with *the gringos*” (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020).

3. Defining new militant meanings for policy success

Dependent on new intelligence-sharing capacities, the new mission defined specific interpretations of success. Aligned to DEA metrics, access to US intelligence produced perceptions of positive “results” within Mexican institutions (Andión, interview 2020; Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022; Balcázar, interview 2021; Ortega, interview 2020; Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020; Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020). Calderón directed security and justice institutions to organize institutional objectives and practices around the capture of DTOs (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020). While the PGR created the first bounty program for captured *capos*, Calderón distributed the names of different targets

⁶³ For example, cooperation unlocked NATO’s internationally-recognized standards for military professionalism and capacity (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020).

among military institutions and the federal police (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020). Within a few short months of receiving US support, institutions yielded criminal captures. Such “successes” only generated more enthusiasm for cooperation (Andión, interview 2020). Over the course of the administration, institutions extrajudicially killed or imprisoned the majority of US-identified high-value targets (Andión, interview 2020; Pérez-Ricart 2019).

Mexican agencies were intensely reliant on US intelligence and US information critically enabled criminal captures (US Embassy Mexico 2009g). Intelligence cooperation thereby became the currency for bureaucratic control over operations, credit for successes, and, subsequently, greater prestige and bigger budgets (Ortega, interview 2020; Balcázar, interview 2021; Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). Kingpin “results” produced mediatic and Presidential favor (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022; Balcázar, interview 2021). Operational decisions moved through Calderón’s intensive interest in tactical minutia and DTO organizations, memorizing their networks and actions in particularly concrete detail (Balcázar, interview 2021; Islas, interview 2021). An advisor to Calderón confided to Washington officials that the President is “so committed to high-value target operations that it can centralize the decision-making process too much” (US Embassy Mexico 2009c). The “hunger for results” (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022) motivated bureaucratic competitions to exploit US intelligence and secure institutional benefits. In this race to become the “most successful” (Balcázar, interview 2021), military institutions were to be the clear winners.

ii. Calderón's Military Policy Failure and Reform Efforts

With Colombia as the blueprint, Calderón officials had expected this military strategy to crush criminal organizations. In Colombia, kingpin has atomized large cartels into smaller criminal groups, more inconspicuous and manageable through traditional law enforcement. In Mexico, however, powerful organizations challenged national forces into violent confrontations. Moreover, kingpin took down DTO leaders, once-consolidated organizations splintered into violent internal power struggles between mid-level leaders who battled for control over the remaining parts (Pérez Ricart 2019a). By 2010, the national homicide rate reached record levels (USIP 2023:60). Events of extreme state abuses⁶⁴ demonstrated that, despite prohibitions on conventional wartime practices, military force did not adapt to a policing role.

For the first two years of his administration, Calderón and Washington interpreted the high death toll as a marker of strategic success. Calderón's top advisor Joaquín Villalobos drew on his experiences in Uribe's Colombia, explaining that the mounting body count reflected cartels warring to "self-destruction" (see Benítez Manaut 2014:61). US officials readily adopted this argument to defend the frontal strategy (Lessing 2017:231).

However, critiques of the strategy's violence would soon overwhelm the tenability of this strategic justification. Critiques began circulating in top media networks as early as 2008, and only proliferated thereafter (Gutiérrez Guerrero 2008; Guerrero 2012). Experts warned Calderón directly that using the Armed Forces would only divide criminal

⁶⁴ Examples include the March 10, 2010 military killing of two students from the elite university Tec de Monterrey, and the attempt to cover-up the incident by disguising their bodies as members of a criminal organization.

organizations into violent infighting (Benítez-Manaut, interview 2021). By 2009, high-ranking advisors in Calderón’s own cabinet acknowledged the military’s failure to “deal systematically with the problem” (US Embassy Mexico 2009f), and linked kingpin strategies to DTO power vacuums and competitive violence (Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020; Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Researchers within SEMAR studied their tactical operations, finding that force used against the cartels had increased violence (Islas, interview 2021).

Starting in 2009 and gaining momentum in 2010, reformers within Calderón’s government thus demanded a shift in the frontal strategy, and centered the reduction of homicide rates in the state’s agenda. Against rising violence, bilateral cooperation also underwent a process of “thinking the problem through together to understand what to do” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020; US Embassy Mexico 2009d). The Mérida Initiative moved spending away from direct military assistance, and refocused on reforming punitive civil institutions, rethinking high-value targeting, and new social prevention approaches.

1. Reforming Punitive Civil Institutions

Part of the strategic “learning process” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020) was realizing that beyond simply capturing *capos*, officials needed to also “create more effective” (US Embassy Mexico 2009d) civil police and justice institutions to keep DTOs in prison and control their finances. Top Mexican security officials credited US Ambassador Carlos Pascual for “forcing GOM attention to operational shortfalls” (US Embassy Mexico 2009f), and for influencing government decisions to prioritize professionalizing the police and judicial institutions (US Embassy Mexico 2009f). Similar to Colombia, Mexico introduced a

new accusatorial justice system through a 2008 constitutional reform. The new system was intended to process DTO cases more efficiently than the traditional inquisitorial system. Due to resistances from consecutive Attorney Generals however, the new judicial model did not take root until 2011, when Marisela Morales Ibañez was appointed head of PGR (Attorney General's Office). Morales Ibañez maintained "excellent ties to USG interlocutors" (US Embassy Mexico 2009f),⁶⁵ and consulted with US Attorney General Eric Holder to design procedures for stronger cases and convictions. She organized a team in the US Embassy, who convinced Mexican policymakers to create a federal witness protection program modeled after US procedures (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020). Mérida-funded *Proyecto Diamante* (Project Diamond) trained public prosecutors, police, and expert witnesses in the oral processes, roles, and techniques of accusatorial justice, including new legal technologies, facilities, and labs. By the end of the *sexenio*, 80 percent of PGR staff were trained in the new model.

Despite these efforts to "intellectually modernize" (Andión, interview 2020; Morales Ibañez, interview 2020) justice institutions, the great majority of PGR bureaucrats rejected reforms. Many public prosecutors believed that the new system would displace them from their historical command over investigations. Police also understood that they would gain this power. These perceptions "generated a great battle" (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020) between institutions that prevented Mérida from "changing the thinking" (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020) of justice agencies.

While justice officials rejected the reform of established practices, the Federal Police was still a nascent institution that remained open to the lessons of Washington counterparts.

⁶⁵ Secretary Hillary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama awarded Morales Ibañez with the International Women of Courage Award in 2011 for her work in combating organized crime and corruption.

Calderón passed the General Law of the National Public Security System to lay the foundations for police reform. He placed the Federal Police under the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP), and tripled forces to nearly 37,000 officers (Dizard 2017:167-168). Concurrently, the SSP became extremely powerful under Génaro García Luna. García Luna was the DEA's most trusted person in Mexico, appearing in photographs shaking hands with Obama and Hillary Clinton (Hinojosa and Ramírez 2023). His policy influence earned him the title of “architect of Mexico's war on drugs” (Halpert and Debussman Jr. 2023).

Recognizing “the failures of the blunt force approach,” Garcia Luna used Mérida to develop a force “capable of gradually replacing the military's role in public security” (US Embassy Mexico 2010b). Mérida trained the Federal Police on US models for how to collect and process evidence, working investigations in specialized groups (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020). US aid built 32 state-level centers and trained polygraph operators to vet police forces (Balcázar, interview 2021). Assistance also inaugurated a Federal Police command and intelligence center, setting up information-sharing databases (US Embassy Mexico 2010b).

However, joint reforms of the Federal Police did not shift national priorities from armed confrontation to the investigation and prosecution of crimes. The DEA worked closely with the Federal Police to execute kingpin operations (Pérez Ricart 2019a). Alongside operational commanders in SEMAR and SEDENA, SSP and PGR staff also traveled to Bogotá to learn from the bilateral intelligence model (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020). Discussions between Garcia Luna and the Presidency centered on kingpins rather than police development (Islas, interview 2021). Washington also preferred funding intelligence capacities that strengthened the police's power to persecute (Islas, interview

2021). The Federal Police thus conducted operations through “the reactive use of tactical-operational intelligence” (Balcázar, interview 2021), prioritizing criminal captures over preventative policing.

Fueled by US intelligence and kingpin objectives, operational-institutional competitions further disincentivized a more preventative policing strategy. The military’s “support role to public security” meant that SEMAR and SEDENA were to protect and provide information to the Federal Police. As the only institution authorized to detain suspects, however, the Federal Police would also “receive all the applause” (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022). Bureaucratic jealousies and resentments undermined this official distribution of responsibilities. As the former US Ambassador Carlos Pascual reported in 2010, “Mexican security institutions are often locked in a zero-sum competition in which one agency's success is viewed as another's failure, information is closely guarded” (US Embassy Mexico 2010b). While each was handed their own list of kingpin objectives, institutions would rival each other in the rush to produce captures, and to thus secure aforementioned benefits of Presidential acclaim and policy influence. Under the pressure of military authorities, Calderón scaled back plans to share information between military and civil institutions (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). While the US provided information that was tactically useful for “capturing and detaining ‘bad guys’” (Gameros, interview 2020), decision-makers still lacked conceptual tools to reflect on civil and military roles.

Finally, even as both governments invested heavily in police development, they also continued a parallel growth of the military role. While García Luna was undoubtedly the clear winner in the competition over budget, political space, and influence over the Presidency, military influence, budgets, and power also ascended. Federal Police

development had started from a place of near bureaucratic zero. Well into the end of the administration, key advisors still debated over basic elements of the police's design and what it should be doing. Calderón decision-makers concluded that the growing military role was "inevitable" (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020) while civil institutions were built. As violence spiraled, so grew the appeal of simply sending in military force to quickly control territory (Balcázar, interview 2021). Even within the Federal Police itself, there was a split over those who believed they could truly handle the mission alone, and those who believed they lacked the necessary training or firepower, and thus needed the military's support (Hristoulas, interview 2020).

Despite Washington's investments in civil institutions, Washington officials also encouraged consensus for a growing military role. The Federal Police also emerged as the greatest winners of sheer amounts of Mérida training and engagement during the Calderón *sexenio* (USIP 2023:82). Furthermore, even as Calderón grew more attached to the military's "usefulness" (Balcázar, interview 2021), State Department bureaucrats linked rising violence to growing military involvement, and backed top Calderón advisors who advocated for developing strong, civilian law enforcement institutions (US Embassy Mexico 2009f). However, the DEA preferred to work with SEMAR, who they found to be more trustworthy and efficient (Pérez Ricart 2020). Pentagon leadership, especially, pushed for a military response to the problem (Anonymous Mexico 1, interview 2020). Even as they worried about the potential consequences of an indefinite military role, against lacking civil institutions, more pro-reform factions in the State Department gradually accepted that the Armed Forces were "the only solution" (Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020).

2. Rethinking Kingpin

Members of Calderón's security cabinet also led efforts to rethink the kingpin strategy. Reform efforts included a working group of officials and analysts put together in 2009 by Guillermo Valdés, the Director of CISEN (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020; Lessing 2017:231-235). This CISEN group gradually drew in a larger network of state reformers who sought ways to reduce violence (Lessing 2017:232). In Washington, Mexican Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan spoke directly to US agencies to communicate that kingpin was not working. For a short time, U.S officials eventually accepted proposals for a *conditional* targeting policy: capturing only the most violent DTOs first, and thereby incentivizing other groups to scale down their aggression. Mexican officials also suggested shifting intelligence-sharing away from only targeting the *capo*, to breaking up the entire organization and thus preventing violent infighting (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020).

Despite some "limited operational changes" (Lessing 2017:231-235), broader adoption of these proposals ultimately failed. The few oppositional voices were hard pressed to invite other decision-makers on either side of the border to reflect on and revise policy. President Calderón, for one, had heavily invested in demonstrating success under the metrics of the frontal strategy. Politicians ultimately could thus not "stomach politically anything that looked like a backing away from the kingpin strategy" (see Lessing 2017:234). In 2011, his communications team launched a campaign equivocating conditional targeting with "pacting with criminals" and "validat[ing] the outdated argument that crime can be 'managed'" (Poiré 2011). The DEA, the FBI, and the Department of Justice also "remained *very very very* convinced that kingpin is the correct approach" (Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020).

Within institutions, established incentives also stunted new kingpin proposals. Mérida training had directed institutional capacities and know-how towards capturing *capos*, as opposed to analyzing the whereabouts of the entire DTO structure. The proposed strategies involved patient intelligence collection, and less urgency to capitalize on targeting “opportunities” (Balcázar, interview 2021; Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022). Kingpin’s easy metrics of professional success heavily discouraged operational institutions from adopting a more cautious and restrained policy.

Moreover, the shared objective to target kingpins authorized Washington counterparts to bypass any centralized decisions to change strategic course. At the same time as new proposals were in bilateral discussion, the DEA, CIA, and FBI also maintained their own intelligence contacts within Mexican institutions to enable rapid operations that capitalized on time-sensitive targeting “opportunities” (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020). US intelligence-sharing thus directly challenged redirecting kingpin towards violence reduction. In March 2011, a high-level DTO operative gave the DEA the trackable cell phone data of Miguel and Omar Treviño—the two most wanted Zeta kingpins. US agents shared this information with a Federal Police intelligence unit that they had vetted, funded, and trained. Nevertheless, this unit also had longtime problems with leaks (Thompson 2017; Evans 2021). The Treviños quickly learned they had been betrayed and launched bloody vengeance on the town of Allende Coahuila to root out snitches and their families. A weeks-long massacre left dozens, and even possibly hundreds dead (Thompson 2017).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ While the DEA declined internal investigations of the leak, the agency nonetheless takes credit for sharing intelligence with SEMAR that eventually led to the capture of the Treviño brothers during the Peña Nieto sexenio (Thompson 2017). Paul Knierim, a DEA supervisor in Mexico who served as a liaison with the corrupted Federal Police Unit, was since promoted to the DEAs Deputy Chief of Operations in Washington (Thompson 2017).

3. The Rise of Social Prevention Approaches

The administration's debates around prevention reform developed from conceptual and institutional vacuums within Calderón's strategy. Calderón's National Development Plan 2007-2012 first contemplated *crime prevention* as the social face of his frontal strategy, involving an array of actions to improve public spaces, education, and provide drug treatment. Calderón left these proposals untouched until midway through his tenure, when the administration defined *crime prevention* as the soft-sided face of reactive law enforcement (SSP 2009).⁶⁷ This conception posited improved police-society relations and citizen participation as crucial tools to better *contain* narco-trafficking and terrorism and *socialize* "a culture of legality" (SSP 2009:2, 9, 7, 22). *Prevention* was imagined as community reporting to improve police intelligence and accompany criminal operations, prosecutions, and investigations (SSP 2009:2).

Limited to policing, the first building blocks of *prevention*'s bureaucratic architecture emerged within the bounds of traditional public security institutions. Calderón created SUBSEMUN in 2009 to disburse prevention funds to police forces in high-crime localities. This support provided equipment, professionalization, infrastructure, and technical assistance in policy design and operations (Suárez de Garay and Espriu 2014:82-83).

By 2010, however, *prevention* became a vehicle for actors and claims outside of traditional security domains to penetrate bilateral approaches. *Todos Somos Juárez* (We are

⁶⁷ The 2009 National Strategy for Crime Prevention and Fight against Crime announced *prevention* as a complement to the frontal strategy (SSP 2009:22-25). In the same year, Congress passed Calderón's reform to the General Law of the National Public Security System, which amplified the constitutional meaning of public security to include crime prevention (López-Betancourt and Fonseca-Luján 2013:70).

all Juárez), the *Centro Nacional de Prevención del Delito y Participación Ciudadana* (the National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement), and the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence introduced *social prevention* into the national agenda. While new prevention models moved joint strategies beyond the conceptual and institutional bounds of traditional policy, militant solutions still retained the central focus of the bilateral agenda.

Todos Somos Juárez

Spiraling violence made Ciudad Juárez emblematic of the spectacular failures of the military approach. Between 2008 and 2009, Calderón deployed 8,000 troops to patrol Juárez and target kingpins (Booth 2012). By 2009, Juárez became the most violent city in the world, representing 30% of Mexico's narco-related homicides (IFIT 2023:11). On January 31, 2010, 15 high school and college students were shot down at a party in the Villas de Salvácar neighborhood. Although Juárez was occupied by federal forces, law enforcement took over 50 minutes to arrive. The massacre inflamed pressures to revise Calderón's strategy. Critiques came not only from political opponents and oppositional civil society groups, but from conservative media, business leaders, and even members of Calderón's own PAN party (Díaz Cepeda 2020:30; US Embassy Mexico 2010a).

While many studies attribute this reckoning with Calderón's decision to change course, Villas de Salvácar only hastened an ongoing strategic evolution.⁶⁸ Long before the massacre, Calderón's cabinet had concluded that they needed to "turn several of the most violent cities" (US Embassy Mexico 2009d). The PAN's major losses during the 2009

⁶⁸ Many studies argue that the Villas de Salvácar massacre caused Calderón to contemplate *Todos Somos Juárez*, (see IFIT 2022; Lachica Huerta 2020; Díaz Cepeda 2020; Seelke and Finklea 2017).

congressional elections proved that rising violence was a political liability (US Embassy Mexico 2010b). During meetings with US counterparts, Mexican officials regretted “strategic miscalculations” (US Embassy Mexico 2009d) that had initially prioritized Mérida’s equipment transfers. They requested Washington’s help to fix Juárez first—the city where Calderón had introduced the greatest show of force, and had thus staked his political reputation.

Calderón’s legitimacy crisis created an opening for solutions from outside the traditional security system. Dr. Arturo Cervantes Trejo was a technical secretary in the Ministry of Health. During his doctoral studies at Harvard, Cervantes Trejo had completed a dissertation that applied a public health lens to analyze homicidal violence in Chicago. Upon returning to Mexico in 1998, he designed “Violence as a public health problem... a theoretical, methodological, and empirical instrument to analyze the causes of death across Mexico” (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2020). The project’s team recruited one former security official to translate public health findings to Generals and intelligence officers. However, their search for stakeholders and interlocutors within various security agencies had butted against repeated rejections for years.⁶⁹

An opening emerged when Cervantes Trejo presented the “mortality atlas” at a forum hosted by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE), and attended by US Ambassador Pascual. At the time, Pascual had already concluded that “the military is a blunt-edged instrument ill-fitted to combat organized criminal syndicates” (US Embassy Mexico 2009f). Pascual’s piqued interest led to a series of meetings at the Ambassador’s home, where the team’s data demonstrated that “the logic of war generates more violence” (Arroyo-Juárez,

⁶⁹Until Juárez, Trejo’s team was rejected by officials in CISEN, PGR, and SSP.

interview 2022). During their final meeting, Pascual proposed Mérida’s Pillar IV to add a public health-informed *prevention* focus as a needed *complement* to frontal strategies.

At a time when the Mexican government searched for ways to reduce violence in Juárez, Pascual persuaded decision-makers through new ideas and the money to back them. Pascual became a driving force for the public health approach among security authorities in both Mexico and Washington. Before Pascual, a lack of interested partners in the Mexican government had excluded USAID from Mérida’s portfolio (Anonymous US 2, interview 2021; Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). Pascual’s leadership made Calderón “a bit more open to all solutions” (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022). Accordingly, Mérida hosted seminars where New Orleans Police Chiefs and intelligence specialists who worked in Afghanistan, Ireland, and Israel spoke to Mexican security officials about how to reduce urban violence. Crucially, moreover, Pascual also organized Calderón’s permission for new actors at the table.

Back at *Los Pinos*⁷⁰, Calderón convened a multi-agency team—inviting Arturo Cervantes Trejo to sit alongside traditional security players and think about how to use *prevention* to address the root causes of violence (Betancourt, interview 2021). In addition to the Ministry of Health, new guests also included representatives from the Ministries of Education, of Economy, and of Social Development, or SEDESOL. Scientific evidence shaped the claims that emerged as most influential. Although only *some* actors at the table considered that prevention had anything to do with social policy, SEDESOL’s representative—Enrique Betancourt became a leading policy author. Betancourt’s

⁷⁰ As with the White House, *Los Pinos* is both the official, physical residence and metonym for the Mexican presidency.

background in urban planning and spatial analysis put social development in dialogue with the public health model. By narrowing prevention interventions to “micro-units” and “individuals” where crime and violence was most concentrated, a *targeted* strategy gained favor as the most bang-for-your-buck joint approach (Betancourt, interview 2021).⁷¹

Juárez thus pivoted the dominant meanings and practices associated with *prevention* towards social and public health models. In February 2010, Calderón announced *Todos Somos Juárez*, a bilateral \$400M law enforcement initiative integrated with new commitments in health education, employment, social development, and community involvement (Seelke and Finklea 2017:22). Betancourt became a point person for Pillar IV and was also promoted as the Deputy General Director of Social Policy in the Presidency. From this position, he replicated Juárez’s prevention model in Acapulco and Guerrero.

The National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement and the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence

While Calderón first established the National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement to implement the administration’s *crime prevention* agenda, non-traditional actors leveraged the new institution to ground *social prevention* in laws and bureaucratic practices. Laura Carrera was appointed as the National Center’s first Director while she was also heading the new National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against

⁷¹ Betancourt explained how representatives at the Ministry of Health and SEDESOL used spatial analysis to promote *targeting* in Ciudad Juárez: “We very quickly said, ‘Okay, look. We understand that....when you go to Juarez, you could more or less have a normal life in 90 percent of the city...so instead of saying, okay ‘let’s just throw money at Juárez, let’s focus on...the micro-places....even within these neighborhoods, not every kid has the same level of risk. So you start targeting places and then within these places you target people” (interview 2021).

Women.⁷² Her academic training as an anthropologist and work with local women's activism in Juárez led Carrera to understand *social prevention* as a policy that engaged communities in a process of cultural transformation. This lens emphasized child development, learned behaviors, and socialized beliefs. As National Commissioner, Carrera had transformed violence against women into a public security issue, and plugged Mexico into a broader conversation around prevention in Latin America. She organized a regional forum "*Mujeres Seguras en Ciudades Futuras*" ("Women's Security in Future Cities"), which was attended by the Secretary of the Interior. He invited Carrera to define the new National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement.

Despite being given an institutional platform, Carrera found that policy voids nonetheless restricted a new social prevention agenda. National Center staff hosted discussion tables to socialize prevention concepts to legislators, and invited them to develop legislative proposals. While initially proposals only reinforced a policing, *crime prevention* framework, an internal lobbying process convinced more legislators to consider social development, education, cultural attributions, and also jurisdictions beyond operational security institutions. The 2011 approval of the new General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime made social prevention available through new streams of resources, centers, and educational opportunities for state elites across all levels of government. The National Center created a catalog of 16 programs appropriate to the new normative guidelines. The new law made social prevention a function of Mexico's public security system.

⁷² Long before Calderón's war, Ciudad Juárez was globally infamous for the unresolved murders and rapes of hundreds of women and girls. Although Juárez activists lobbied for federal prevention since the late 1990's, Congress only approved the National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women a decade later.

While Mérida was ultimately unresponsive to Carrera's petitions for assistance, the National Center received support when Enrique Betancourt assumed leadership in 2012. As the point person for Pillar IV, Betancourt collaborated with the US Embassy to align USAID programs with the President's prevention vision and strategy. Officials jointly invested in analyzing prevention models that had been tried in the US, Colombia and Chile.

By the end of his administration in 2012, the President publicly declared that Mexico was "ready to pass from a reactive to a preventative model" (see Rosas 2012; Calderón 2020). Reformer efforts pivoted the broader narrative towards interventions that could conceive of violence, not simply under the lens of international drug markets, also as a problem of state absence and under-served urban youth (see Rosas 2012). Traditional security institutions that had once rejected new prevention schemas—such as the SSP—published studies to correct for "a lack of understanding that has contributed to the stigmatization and criminalization of youth living in conditions of violence, poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion" (García Luna 2012:9). Security issues also extended to broader jurisdictions for the first time. Established non-traditional institutions—such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Economy—became tasked with thinking about how to orient their practices to reduce crime and violent behavior. New non-traditional institutions emerged to instate social issues within public security.

Such changes, however, ultimately failed to permeate top security decision-making circles consumed with the rationales and incentives of the frontal strategy. In policy discussions, reformers found that decision-makers pitted prevention against higher commitments to reactive approaches. Even well into *Todos Somos Juárez*, however, the US Embassy perceived "no 'softening' of the administration's resolve to confront the DTOs

head on” (US Embassy Mexico 2010b). The administration deployed 2,000 additional Federal Police elements to Juárez (Díaz Cepeda 2020:26). Mexican and US decision-makers had largely accepted prevention to reduce violence, and thus send “a signal to the rest of the country that the fight against organized crime can be won” (US Embassy Mexico 2009d). Accordingly, far from representing a drastic change in policy, Juárez prevention model was a political tool to “sustain the confrontation into the next administration” (US Embassy Mexico 2009d).

iii. Conclusion: Calderón’s “Lost Culture War”

Javier Sicilia: *“Why don't you recognize that we can do other things than this policing and military machine?”*

President Calderón: *“I am open to revising the strategy. But as long as there is no clear alternative, I have to stick with it.”*

–Javier Sicilia, *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad*, and President Felipe Calderón, Chapultepec Peace Dialogues 2011 (Presidencia 2011).

By the end of the administration, Calderón’s frontal strategy was widely repudiated. Media elites in Mexico City listed the death count of “Calderón’s drug war” on the front page of *Milenio* and *Reforma*. Soap operas featured corrupt security officials in the narco-war (Hinojosa and Ramírez 2023). López Obrador, Calderón’s political rival in the contested 2006 election, launched a popular campaign decrying “No More Blood!”. Congress rejected the administration’s proposals to legalize military combat against DTOs (US Embassy Mexico 2009a).

The greatest challenge, however, came directly from the victims of militant approaches. The *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad* (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity), or MPJD, surfaced in 2011, following the murder of poet Javier Sicilia's son by a local DTO. MPJD consolidated a national network of alliances between local citizens movements, peripheral human rights organizations, victim-led organizations, and state reformers (Gallagher 2015:88-89). The movement challenged government denial of military abuses and official statements explaining violence exclusively through criminal rivalries and criminal deaths (US Embassy Mexico 2009e; Gallagher 2015:98). Rather, MPJD made victim's worthy of rights and claims on policy, and the state responsible for treating drugs as a national security problem (Presidencia 2011). MPJD's national momentum forced Calderón to meet with Sicilia and other critics in academia, NGOs, and civil society in a series of public debates. The most famous was 2011 "Peace Dialogues" at Chapultepec, where oppositional actors demanded "the creation of alternative strategies," including: deep reforms of security institutions, civil participation, social policies, and the gradual retreat of the military from the streets (Presidencia 2011). MPJD's influence secured Executive proposals for cannabis legalization, legislative proposals for civil society representation at the National Council for Public Security, commitments from Presidential candidates of the 2012 general elections, and the early passage of the Victim's Law in the next administration.⁷³

Even as violence began declining from a record high in the last year of the administration, the unpopularity of Calderón's strategy became enshrined within conventional wisdom as failure (Buchholz 2020). Former officials locate "great defeat of the

⁷³The 2013 General Law of Victim's authorized the National System for Attention to Victims (Villagran 2013).

Calderón government” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020) in a “lost culture war” (Espino, interview 2020; Morales Ibañez, interview 2020; Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020; Ortega, interview 2020). Many cabinet members maintain that military protagonism was “the only option” (Espino, interview 2020) against the overwhelming violence of organized crime. Calderón’s fallen legacy would ultimately elect the PRI political opposition, Enrique Peña Nieto, as president in the 2012 elections. The narrative of “Calderón’s failure” also provided political cover for Peña Nieto to bypass accountability for their own role in both militarizing Mexico and escalating violence.

C. The Peña Nieto Administration (2012-2018): Continuity of the Frontal Approach

i. Peña Nieto’s Military Escalation and the Mérida Initiative

Peña Nieto’s government began by promising change. Elected President in 2012, the PRI candidate declared that he “would not measure success by the number of drug kingpins captured or eliminated, or by the amounts of cocaine confiscated, measures that are popular among DEA officials or in the US Congress” (see Hernández 2020, 51-52). Peña Nieto’s cornerstone *Mexico en Paz (Mexico at Peace)* strategy announced that the administration was “absolutely convinced that you cannot fight violence with more violence” (see Mexico Institute 2013b). The incoming government promised to reduce violence by 50 percent within 100 days (Chabat 2019:994). Returning security forces to their barracks, Peña Nieto flagged *prevention* as the policy alternative.

The government proposed parallel changes of bilateral policy. Expressing outrage over US intrusion, Peña officials delayed the Mérida Initiative for a year. In 2013, the administration decreed the “*ventanilla única*,” a “single window” to centralize and monitor all US assistance in SEGOB before it passed on to other institutions. Secretary of Government Miguel Angel Osorio Chong met Janet Napolitano in Washington, declaring Mérida’s “new stage” (see Mexico Institute 2013b) and greater US investments in prevention.

Despite these promises of departure, Peña Nieto’s government adopted many of Calderón’s strategies within two years of taking office. Peña made high-value targeting the linchpin of his “new” approach. The development of civil law enforcement institutions stalled, and military institutions were given an even greater role and open-ended role in DTO combat (Hope 2016:8). Peña Nieto also hired Colombian General Oscar Naranjo as a top advisor to continue the Colombian model, and there many exchanges between the Colombian Ministry of Defense, SEDENA, and SEMAR (Acosta Giraldo, interview 2022). Finally, mid-way through the *sexenio*, the administration completely defunded prevention reforms.

Moreover, in spite of Peña’s rhetoric and Mérida’s shift to the four pillar strategy, US cooperation also assumed many of the same characteristics and effects as seen under Calderón. Bilateral cooperation remained largely on auto-drive through the political transition. The new government soon found that *ventanilla única* was “inefficient” (Basáñez, interview 2020), and opened fluent exchanges between operational institutions (Deare, interview 2021). Against cuts in Mérida’s military aid, the Pentagon funded their own mil-to-mil programs, reporting being “very content” with “business as usual” (Anonymous

Mexico 1, interview 2020). Steady intelligence-sharing and trainings made the military relationship even stronger. As with Calderón, bilateral cooperation thus continued supporting militant claims in the Peña Nieto administration: 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals; 2) expanding militant practices, capacities, and expertise; 3) honing militant metrics of success; and 4) sidelining reform in civil punitive institutions. Peña Nieto's policy continuity with Calderón also produced policy failure and rising violence. Nonetheless, Peña Nieto government also completely abandoned initial commitments to prevention alternatives.

1. Clarifying militant roles and strategic goals

“...the war against narco-trafficking has been very positive for the armed forces. They have had few casualties and it has given them a lot of financial and political power. They have a strong interest in carrying on.”

–Anonymous interview with expert on the military (see International Crisis Group 2018:24)

“The military has been searching for a mission for decades now. And now they found their mission!”

–Anonymous interview with expert on the military (interview 2020)

The military's role in the counter-narcotics mission only magnified under Peña Nieto. Just as attention to the Federal Police stagnated, the Armed Forces received substantial increases in budgets and institutional power. While SEMAR expanded their presence from 19 ports to 113, SEDENA truly rose as king. General Salvador Cienfuegos, who had become good

friends with Peña Nieto while he was still governor of the State of Mexico, was appointed Secretary of SEDENA. Peña Nieto scattered military battalions throughout the entire country, and created the military police. During the Calderón *sexenio*, the Armed Forces operated in a liminal, “supporting” role to public security institutions. Military petitions pushed Peña Nieto to integrate *seguridad interior* (internal security) into military doctrine: an official role halfway in between public security and national security (Dávila Morlotte, interview 2022).

Greater clarity developed from a cultural shift within SEDENA regarding the perceived benefits of the bilateral mission. The Calderón *sexenio* divided the once-homogenous and resistant SEDENA into a 50/50 split. Mid-level ranking officers were concerned that overstepping traditional roles would make the Army more prone to corruption (Guevara Moyano, interview 2020; Hristoulas, interview 2020). Higher-ranking officers, however, had seen SEMAR grow through kingpin captures, and sensed potential in pursuing “better relationships with the gringos” (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). In 2015 and 2016, General Cienfuegos gave a series of unprecedented interviews explaining that the military’s policing role was a mistake and that officers only followed the president’s command reluctantly (Dizard 2017, 168).⁷⁴ While Washington-based analysts often cite these statements as proof that SEDENA rejected their internal security role, military experts and officers in Mexico question Ciefuegos’ sincerity (Dizard 2017:168; International Crisis Group 2018:24; see Mexico Institute 2016; Anonymous Mexico 1, interview 2020). The military’s public security mission fulfilled a decades-long vacuum left from the Cold War. As one retired general put it, during the Peña Nieto *sexenio*, officers became increasingly

⁷⁴ These interviews were unprecedented for breaking a traditional separation of the military from making policy pronouncements.

accustomed to the new mission and its “*poder, plata y prestigio* (power, money, and prestige)” (see Dizard 2017:168). If Cienfuegos publicly refuted the new mission, behind closed doors, military officers openly professed enthusiasm, creating commemorative plaques for the internal security role (Anonymous Mexico 1, interview 2020).

Routine cooperation removed traditional taboos and enhanced focus on the bilateral mission. During the Calderón administration, constitutional concerns had limited direct mil-to-mil contact, and off-shored intelligence-sharing to the CIA, Department of Homeland Security, DEA. During the Peña administration, relationships between SEDENA, SEMAR, and NorthCom (US Northern Command) consolidated into an “institutionalized” mechanism for cooperation (Deare, interview 2021). A Bilateral Defense Working Group became a key forum to negotiate joint strategic goals among senior level staff (see Mexico Institute 2016). Security decisions were also far less centralized and the Armed Forces were far more autonomous under Peña Nieto, growing one-on-one relationships of “permanent exchange” (Dávila Morlotte, interview 2022) between militaries. Over the course of the administration, conversations within SEDENA shifted from rejecting US cooperation, to reflections on how to best cooperate with the US, and then again to questions of what more officers could be doing with the US Army. At the end of the administration, General Cienfuegos shared his reflections with Craig Deare, a former assistant US defense attaché in Mexico and a military historian, declaring: “*The closest institutional governmental relationship between the US and Mexico should probably be either commerce or foreign relations. But I will tell you now that the very best institutional relationship is between the militaries*” (interview 2021).

Legal changes also clarified and protected the Armed Forces’ role. While military pressure initially led to Peña Nieto’s decision to authorize the internal security role, militant

policy interests grew more powerful throughout the administration (Dizard 2017:169). Reforms to the Military Justice Code allowed officers to search and seize homes and conduct electronic surveillance (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2016). While Peña's attention to the Federal Police floundered, the bilateral mission increasingly made military institutions more operationally "effective" (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022). More and more, "public security" issues were reclassified as issues of national and internal security (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022).

Most significant of these efforts to regularize and define the military's role was the *Ley de Seguridad Interior* (The Internal Security Law). As described by Cienfuegos, the law proposed to "give society certainty about what we do, how we do it, and when we should do it" (see Dizard 2017:169-170). Despite a year-long legislative debate and overwhelming pushback from a coalition of civil society groups, a strong government push passed the law through Congress in late 2017. Nonetheless, such opposition was not in vain. The Supreme Court rejected the law's constitutionality a year later. The judges argued that, far from clarifying, the law only obfuscated the military's role through vague terms that ensured "the absence of conceptual limits on the interpretation of internal security" (see Angel 2018).

Notably, although the military's assignment to public security grew increasingly established, joint and national training neglected to adapt officers to a policing role. Trained through national security doctrine, military personnel remained unknowledgeable of law enforcement practices. Military institutions did not abide by national policing codes or UN decrees. Data on arrests and confrontations reveal that SEDENA operations thus were "poor substitutes for civilian policing" (USIP 2023:81). Lacking training on conducting investigations, officers often tortured and sexually violated detained suspects, and

extrajudicially killed civilian victims (USIP 2023:81). Operations were also often highly lethal.⁷⁵ Captain Benjamín Grajeda Regalado, former head of the *Gendarmería*, explained that Mexican Armed Forces continued thinking through “*occupation frameworks...the first thing I do is establish a control area, and from there I expand my operations to control everything that happens there. I’m not necessarily thinking about respecting human rights...I’m in combat...As a police you have to follow the whole chain of custody, detainment, interrogation...the military does not have any idea of any of that. No sense of that at all*” (interview 2022).

2. Expanding militant practices, capacities, and expertise.

“You know, the 5th Army, US Army North, and San Antonio, said that the specific types of requests that they began to get and which continued over the years started moving away from broad level classroom sorts of things...[T]hey began asking for very specific courses and whether it was riverine operations, or close quarter combat... And then again as they were exposed, as they had a training exercise and they saw how the US did something, they said... ‘what is that?!’ And he said, ‘oh we call that this!’ And they go back and say: ‘we want some training on this.’”

–Craig Deare, Former assistant US defense attaché in Mexico and military historian (interview 2021)

As was also the case under the Calderón administration, US trainings and intelligence-sharing advanced military ownership over the counter-narcotics mission.

⁷⁵ From 2007 to 2021, SEDENA reported the deaths of 5,125 “aggressors,” versus the detainment of 4,242 civilians during operations (USIP 2023:81).

Despite any trepidations officers may have had to cooperate with Washington and patrol poor neighborhoods, US intel on kingpins also continued bringing in medals and recognitions. Both military and political elites welcomed “expanding the transfer and operation of intelligence platforms to identify priority objectives” (Dávila Morlotte, interview 2022). During Peña Nieto’s administration, SEDENA adapted SEMAR’s intelligence unit model to improve bilateral exchange. Increasingly, Northcom both brought SEDENA units across the border and sent personnel down to Mexico, training the Army in patrolling techniques, artillery skills, and intelligence collection (Deare, interview 2021). Such tactical developments thus remained the beating heart that both sustained military enthusiasm and fortified their position in the counter-narcotics role.

Being trained by the world leader in irregular warfare under the War on Drugs and the War on Terror resulted in significant changes in SEDENA’s skillset. SEDENA learned how to execute crucial functions in the internal mission, such as quick intelligence turns and how to operate in urban environments (Deare, interview 2021). Bilateral trainings resulted in “more refined tactics, techniques, and procedures” (Deare, interview 2021), making the institution more proficient in combat. The DoD increasingly began to receive requests for highly specialized courses, taking the initiative on expanding their role and using the particular training opportunities that “training with the best on the planet” (Deare, interview 2021) had to offer. Increasingly, if they saw how the US military was doing they wanted to mirror it.

From 2007 to 2020, the DOD and Department of State trained around 25,000 members of the military (USIP 2023:63). According to USIP reporting on US assistance, “even as overall assistance to Mexico pivoted to civilian-led security strategies after 2011,

the DOD expanded tactical training for the military, reinforcing the influence and strength of SEDENA and SEMAR” (2023:63).

3. Defining militant meanings for policy success

“Before, it was thought that targeting the right people under kingpin was the appropriate strategy. If we had time to sit and think, we would have easily realized that disappearing a kingpin only generates the rise of whoever is stronger and more violent (sicarios). And this produces more violent and fragmented cartels. And more difficult to take on. In consequence, we have looked to change the detention of organizations.”

–Jesús Murillo Karam, Former Attorney General of Mexico, 2013 (Mexico Institute 2013a)

“[T]he Peña Nieto administration has adopted the same non-strategic high-value targeting that defined the previous administration....[T]his interdiction posture mostly continues to be undertaken on a non-strategic basis as opportunistic intelligence becomes available and without forethought, planning, and prepositioning to avoid new dangerous cycles of violence and renewed contestation among local drug trafficking groups.”

–Vanda Felbab-Brown (2014, iv)

The Peña Nieto administration also adopted the same markers of strategic success. Any marginal gains to reform high-value targeting during the Calderón era were completely wiped when the new administration took power. Along with US counterparts, top decision-makers enthusiastically maintained kingpin as a bilateral priority, prioritizing *capos* beheaded (Dávila Morlotte, interview 2022). Within operational institutions, this particular

metric was also sustained through continuing bureaucratic rivalries and the rush to seize intelligence opportunities. For the most part, joint intelligence capacities neglected to provide conceptual tools to create new indicators, assess possible alternatives, or better understand and prevent violence.

4. Sidelining Civil Institutional Reform

The development of civil punitive solutions also stagnated during the Peña Nieto administration. Much of Mérida assistance for civil institutions was rendered impotent: thousands of digital voice recorders languished uselessly in warehouses and unmaintained surveillance video systems collapsed into disrepair. Extravagant, Mérida-funded big screens hung on the walls of the Federal Police intelligence division, officials unclear as to what purpose they served (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022). While the new Attorney General established a “constant relationship” with US counterparts for DTO investigations, bilateral trainings for the new accusatorial system “failed to land” (Benítez Tiburcio, interview 2022). Despite the hundreds of millions invested in the Financial Intelligence Unit since Calderón, financial oversight for money laundering remained more “lip service than action” (see Mexico Institute 2019).

The political transition further diluted US assistance, wiping many Mérida programs, trained officials, and even entire institutions. Under Peña Nieto, the PGR became the FGR (Fiscalía General de la República) and the SSP was replaced entirely by a far less autonomous and powerful CNS (*Comisionado Nacional de Seguridad*, National Commission of Security). Subordinated under SEGOB, the CNS was forced to negotiate budgets with high-level officials disinterested in police development (Islas, interview 2021;

Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022). Having expelled former SSP personnel, new CNS bureaucrats were “recruited from zero...[facing] a steep learning curve” (Hernández Aldaco, interview 2021). Newcomer officials lacked indicators, program research protocols, and follow-up (Hernández Aldaco, interview 2021). While the Federal Police survived the transition, Peña Nieto’s designs for the new *Gendarmería*—an *intermediate* body half-way between military and civil force—diverted state focus and resources. The administration added less than 1000 Federal Police officers to the ranks. Much of US support was neutered as civil institutions started from zero, under-financed, and lacking political power.

Strong “cultural inertias” (Benítez Tiburcio, interview 2022) and internal resistances also weakened Mérida implementation. While the Peña administration invested significant political capital and resources to accusatorial justice reforms, the majority of public prosecutors rejected their new role and “never understood why the system should change” (Morales Ibañez, interview 2020; Benítez Tiburcio, interview 2022; Seelke and Finklea 2017:18). While the Federal Police were already “good at catching bad guys” (Islas, interview 2021), a group of CNS officials in the Prevention Unit attempted to design the first preventative policing practices. The INL sent CNS officials to travel around the world and learn from different models: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Colombian National Police, the Chilean *Carabineros*, and the United Kingdom’s Scotland Yard. Mérida also arranged partnerships with Yale and the University of Texas to reflect on basic premises for reform: what police capacities should be developed, how forces should be structured, what priorities they should have, and how to plan for medium and long-term goals. Inspired by a speech made by Chicago’s Chief of Police, CNS officials created the Police Management and Strategy Unit. The INL supported this Unit’s mission to train police

commands through “a different vision” (Islas, interview 2021), including administrative and data analysis skills. After some prodding, CNS prevention officials convinced INL to expand Mérida trainings beyond operational capacities, teaching police how to use intelligence to understand and predict violence. However, while INL shifted, national police trained in operations remained “unconvinced” (Islas, interview 2021). Superiors at the Secretariat of Government (SEGOB) also held “a different idea for the security agenda” (Islas, interview 2021). While reform efforts moved slowly and against significant pushback, the Federal Police continued receiving comparatively far more trainings for the blunt-force approach (Carrera Lugo, interview 2022).⁷⁶

Although much abated by better coordination between agencies, persisting bureaucratic competitions over US kingpin intelligence, national budgets, and power also perpetuated operational logics (Hope 2016:7). Infighting also crippled plans for the *Gendermería*, which had proposed an alternative focus on proximity with the population and environmental protection (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022). After battling with General Cienfuegos, Secretary of Government Osorio Chong convinced Peña Nieto to put the *Gendarmería* under civilian control. However, military institutions then denied sending trained personnel, cutting the proposed *Gendarmería* from 40,000 officers to 5000 (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022; Dizard 2017:167-168). By the end of the administration, political elites halted funding to the *Gendarmería* and redirected spending towards General Cienfuegos’ proposed Military Police, which took over public security tasks.

As civil security institutions were overturned and funding cut, the Armed Forces remained immune to political reengineering and enjoyed escalating budgets. Finding police

⁷⁶ It took two years to train seven Police chiefs at the federal level, and chiefs at the state level had only begun to be trained in the last year (Islas, interview 2021).

development and resources lacking, more and more police officers came to believe that they were incapable of managing the DTO problem. The administration culminated in a general consensus that the Federal Police needed the military (Hristoulas, interview 2020; Dizard 2017:167-168).

D. Conclusion: The Mérida Initiative, Peña Nieto's Military Failures, and the Continuity of Military Escalation

This chapter demonstrates how US initiatives shaped the ways that Mexican elites legitimized policies. US rationales coded militant strategies as most appropriate and effective within a national political context that reinforced a militant monopoly over security policy, and deepened a policy vacuum around reform. By redefining the bounds of policy acceptability, US state-building reshaped the terrain of how Mexican policy actors could legitimize policy decisions. US cooperation expanded policy opportunities for militant sectors, 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals as to counter-narcotics; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success. At the same time, US rationales provided far less support for reformer claims, and advanced logics that either subordinated, neglected, or rejected recipient reformer proposals.

At first, Peña Nieto's policy continuity seemed to be working. Homicides fell by 11 percent in 2013, and an additional 10-15 percent in 2014 (Hope 2016:9). During public appearances in Washington, Peña officials congratulated themselves on resolving the

problem by professionalizing the police, instating rule of law, and “preserv[ing] peace through peace” (see Mexico Institute 2013a, 2013b).

By fall of 2014, however, the administration’s scandals and rising violence belied the illusion of effective policy. In Ayotzinapa, drug gang murdered of 43 students from a rural teacher’s college with full complicity from the local police. State lies and the Attorney General’s egregious bungling of investigations sank the federal government in mass unrest and international condemnation.⁷⁷ Also in 2014, a military search for methamphetamine labs in Tlatlaya ended in the extrajudicial execution of at least 15 and maybe as many as 22 alleged criminals. Far from an isolated incident, by 2016, around 700 civilians had been killed during military counter-narcotics operations (Hope 2016:2). In 2017, journalists uncovered that Peña Nieto was using Pegasus intelligence-sharing spyware to intercept the phone calls of 15 thousand civilians, including political opposition, activists, and victims (Lakhani 2021).

Moreover, violence also began to rise in 2014, inviting widespread criticism that the government had only repeated the policy failures of his predecessor (Rosario Marroquín 2014; Hope 2016; Vanda Felbab-Brown 2014). By 2016, the reported number of civilian victims produced by the Armed Forces had equaled Calderón’s grim tally (Hope 2016:2). By the end of the Peña Nieto government, the homicides rates surpassed that of the previous administration (Woody 2018). Peña Nieto’s policy continuity resulted in unprecedented collective actions against militarization and state violence.

Despite experiencing a legitimacy crisis of his policies, Peña Nieto abandoned initial commitments to proposed prevention alternatives. While national prevention programs

⁷⁷ UN and OAS (Organization of American States) investigations concluded that the Federal government had lied in its own investigation of the Ayotzinapa case (Díaz Cepeda 2020).

suffered their first massive cuts in 2016, decision-makers fully eliminated funding for the National Prevention Program in 2017 (México Evalúa 2015a). What factors account for the failure of Peña's proposed cornerstone alternative reforms, even in the face of the political and legitimacy crisis of military solution? And what was Mérida's role in these processes? In the next chapter, I explaining how Peña Nieto decision-makers abandoned prevention reforms due to low: i) *knowledge*, reformers lacked clear policy schemas ii) *infrastructures*, nascent reform institutions and organizations dispersed efforts; iii) *inclusion*, top-level decisions excluded reformers; iv) *consensus*, military institutions rejected prevention reforms, and further deterred decision-makers. While Mérida support to reformers remained comparatively scant, US assistance reinforced militants as they centralized power over decisions, and insulated escalation from legitimacy challenges.

V. Chapter 5: Peña Nieto's Abandoned Prevention Alternatives

“My government will reformulate the strategy based on the paradigm of democratic and citizen security, which proposes to address the origins of violence and offer alternatives.”

–Enrique Peña Nieto, 2012 (see Chabat 2019:993)

Peña Nieto's government began with a promise of prevention and a pivot away from a disgraced military solution. Whereas prevention practitioners during the Calderón administration had struggled to claim prevention as a legitimate response to crime and violence, Peña's National Development Plan 2013-2018 introduced the new *México en Paz* (*Mexico at Peace*) strategy to “reduce violence and recover the peace and tranquility of Mexican families” (SEGOB 2013). Peña's proposals invoked UN-inspired conceptions of “human security” and “citizen security,” which recognize security as a human right that must be co-produced between the state and social actors (SEGOB 2014). The administration officially instituted factors such as weak social capital, citizen engagement, marginalization, and social exclusion as root causes of violence, to be made subject to prevention management.

Accordingly, the National Plan for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime proposed *“to establish objectives, priorities, principles, guidelines, action areas, and programs that link the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies for the prevention of violence and crime at all three levels of government and to integrate the participation of the social sector, to build communities that are more secure, cohesive and inclusive”* (see Hope and Guerrero 2014, 3). The government established the National

Crime Prevention Program, or PRONAPRED, as prevention’s policy, federal budget, and crown jewel of Peña Nieto’s promise to alter the course of security (Hope and Guerrero 2014:3). They built the Undersecretary of Prevention and Citizen Participation as the institution to manage PRONAPRED. Further, the administration also proposed prevention as a comprehensive approach. Peña Nieto enlisted SEDESOL, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Finance, and SEGOB to create the program (Chapa Koloffon and Ley 2015:9). The Executive Secretary of the National System for Public Security was charged with coordinating prevention across various agencies. SEGOB sent out the message that the administration wanted to “greatly deepen” (Benítez Tiburcio, interview 2022) prevention issues and trainings across Executive institutions. Even in hard-side institutions—such as the Federal Police— *social prevention* was discussed as a needed approach (Carrera Lugo, interview 2022). Peña Nieto hired reformer officials that had worked on Calderón’s *Todos Somos Juárez* and in the National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement to leadership positions both within his Undersecretary of Prevention and also across public security institutions.⁷⁸

Under Pillar IV, the Mérida Initiative supported Peña Nieto’s expanded prevention agenda through USAID programs that targeted specific locations on the border. Contracts with consulting firms Tetra Tech, Chemonics, and DAI represented the largest USAID prevention projects during the sexenio (GAO 2019:27). These programs included the Crime

⁷⁸For instance, Peña Nieto recruited Laura Carrera, former Director of the National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Engagement under Calderón, to become the General Coordinator for Federal Police Development. Mario Arroyo Juárez, a key architect of *Todos Somos Juárez*, became a Chief Director in the CNS and Federal Police, and an honorary member of the National Public Security Council. Luis Herrera-Lasso had worked closely with the kingpin strategy as the Director of Analysis at CISEN under Calderón. He was hired as the General Director of Strategic Action for PRONAPRED after publishing opinion pieces in *El Universal* critiquing the frontal approach and proposing the need for a community-centered approach (Herrera-Lasso, interview 2021).

and Violence Prevention Program and *Juntos Para la Violencia* (JPV), or *Together for Violence Prevention*.

Despite this promising start, the political establishment decided to abandon prevention reform halfway into the Peña Nieto administration. While the government authorized around \$771M to fund PRONAPRED from 2013 to 2016, they completely eliminated this prevention spending for the 2017 fiscal year (Martínez Palomares 2019:ii). National cuts fractured prevention efforts entirely, redirecting management to a piece-meal local level. At the same time as Peña Nieto's prevention agenda collapsed, decision-makers chose to escalate a military solution that had become associated with failure and soaring violence.

What accounts for the decision of Peña Nieto elites to abandon prevention reform and continue a military escalation in a legitimacy crisis? And how did the Mérida Initiative engage with these processes? In this chapter, I detail four central conditions that shaped the ways elites negotiated prevention decisions and explain how federal reforms failed to become perceived as a viable and effective alternative. First, there were low levels of *knowledge* for prevention alternatives: both prevention bureaucrats and decision-makers lacked conceptual and strategic clarity on reforms, making prevention programs vulnerable to charges of inadequacy. Second, prevention reforms suffered from low *infrastructure*: insufficiently formalized roles and practices challenged prevention's authority and stability in state decisions and actions. Third, prevention reforms experience low *inclusion*: decision-makers excluded prevention bureaucrats from influencing security policy decisions, and also neglected to bring in civil society claims. These exclusions restricted prevention's policy scope and the demand behind reform. Fourth, prevention reforms experienced low

consensus at the top: while prevention was never truly a priority for decision-makers, a growing preference for military escalation entirely displaced prevention from the national agenda. While Mérida offered a degree of support for these problems, US assistance penetrated policy debates in ways that were often largely peripheral to prevention reformer efforts, subordinated to militant goals, and often even often adverse to reform claims. While reformers received marginal support, Mérida also strengthened the hand of militant claims. These processes ultimately led to the decision to defund prevention and insulated military escalation from legitimacy challenges.

A. Low Knowledge for Prevention Alternatives

“And the question at the time—and I think, to some degree, still is—who needs prevention? What is prevention? What really works in prevention?”

— Enrique Betancourt (interview 2021), Executive Director, National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation (2012-2013) and Director Citizens Security Initiative, Chemonics International (2014-Present), on the origins and development of prevention in Mexico and the Mérida Initiative’s Pillar IV.

Low policy knowledge was a key rationale that guided the decision to defund prevention. Throughout the Peña Nieto administration, prevention officials struggled with a lack of clarity over what to do and how to do it. In the Undersecretariat of Prevention and Civic Engagement, green prevention bureaucrats improvised federal programs from a policy void (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). Lacking prevention expertise, training, or established

policy models to reference, officials designed practices from a place of “confusion regarding what is and what is not prevention” (Chapa Koloffon 2015; Ayala and López 2016; Anonymous US 2, interview 2021).

Program designs thus lacked know-how on selecting intervention models, goals, indicators, or evaluation guidelines (Gameros, interview 2021; Hope and Guerrero 2014:10). Selected frameworks lacked analyses of violence, links to methods, or defined notions of what crimes were subject to prevention management. Selected places and populations neglected to match the geographic and social concentrations of the problem (Hernández 2020:55-56; Suárez de Garay et al. 2017).⁷⁹ Lacking “a culture of generating and using evidence” (Reisman 2016), prevention bureaucrats selected actions that neglected evidenced-based practices (Chapa Koloffon and Ley 2015).⁸⁰ The problem of “missing evidence” (Reisman 2016) resulted in programs that often responded more to the political interests of governors and mayors than to prevention objectives (México Evalúa 2015). Conceptual ambiguities dispersed the prevention budget into thousands of small and aimless initiatives as diverse as funding for cooking classes, Zumba, street lights, and public parks that produced electoral favor but left homicide rates untouched (México Evalúa 2015).

Critiques from policy research groups and academics prompted prevention bureaucrats to make changes. The General Director of Strategic Action assembled a team to review agency practices (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). While in the first year officials had

⁷⁹ Yucatán was selected as opposed to much more violent municipalities in Chihuahua like Aldama and Allende, when Yucatán was indicated as a peace index in 2015 as one of the most peaceful places in the country. Prevention programs neglected incarcerated populations, who are “key to prevention” (Suárez de Garay et al. 2017).

⁸⁰ Prevention actions favored activities centered on personal values and culture of legality over evidenced-based solutions, such as providing scholarships and academic assistance (Chapa Koloffon and Ley 2015).

simply disbursed resources blindly, by the third, officials began forceful internal efforts to develop data collection and evaluation systems, and ensure that prevention resources were spent on deliberate actions (Gameros, interview 2021). Political elites cut PRONAPRED just as prevention directors finished revising new guidelines (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021).

Beyond conceptual problems within prevention reform itself, the choice to defund prevention was driven by decision-makers who by and large never “understood the purpose of prevention programs” (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021).⁸¹ This lack of understanding reflected a broader issue regarding the ways in which policy expertise was distributed within Mexico’s security apparatus. Historically, the PRIs separation of military and civilian affairs, and negligible investments in developing civilian security specialists, produced a knowledge void around civilian solutions. Civil institutions had no culture of designing or evaluating security policies, and no understanding of what was most effective to reduce violence. Politicians also “lacked the training and skills to understand the problem and how to resolve it” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Within the Executive and Legislative branches, there was no practice of synthesizing and organizing information for decision-makers in ways that presented and evaluated potential alternatives (Balcázar, interview 2021). Moreover, the exclusion of civil society engagement in security had historically expunged social policies from public security conceptions. Despite reformer efforts during the Calderón administration to socialize social prevention concepts, security elites still lacked a tradition of considering social variables to understand and measure violence (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). Academic circles in Mexico had also neglected to study

⁸¹ During the Peña Nieto administration, at least one decision-maker—Executive Secretary of Public Security Alvaro Vizcaíno—did “come to understand the role of prevention” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021).

organized crime or public security prior to Calderón. The first analyses of violence only appeared in *Nexos* magazine in 2009.

While civilian solutions operated in a policy void, military expertise monopolized security policy. Historically, military institutions were the sole producers of knowledge on security issues. Civilian security bureaucrats sought specialized educations at the only security and defense programs available: the Navy's CESNAV's Institute or the Army's Defense College.⁸² Limited studies available on security policies were also often published by military universities, and advanced their institutional perspectives and interests to manage security. Guided by military doctrine and training, prevention informed-perspectives, such as criminology and epidemiology, “simply do not exist” (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022). Civilian security expertise has thus been “*very militarized*” (Balcázar, interview 2021)—guided military precepts and expertise on the state's use of force. The security system lacked conceptual tools to formulate indicators or invest budgets in ways that deviated from reactive state action. Decision-makers also lacked methodologies to discern between when central state force should be used or not (Balcázar, interview 2021).

Military dominions over security knowledge made prevention illegible as a solution. As violence spiked again in 2014, Peña Nieto officials did not know how to understand its causes or how to address it (Islas, interview 2021). Crisis only narrowed whatever available space there had been for officials to consider and reflect on new models. Instead, political elites referred to the established expertise of military institutions. While PRONAPRED officials communicated prevention through the rubric of long-term processes, security officials invoked short-term operational indicators unsuited to measure contributions

⁸² Other universities in Mexico did not begin to offer degrees on security issues until midway through the Peña administration.

towards safer conditions and environments (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021; Betancourt, interview 2021). The administration cited program deficiencies and a lack of “results” as the official justification for the decision (Anonymous Mexico 2, interview 2021). Evaluated through its capacity to prosecute criminals and reduce crime, *prevention* was incapable of being proven as viable or effective.

Mérida Initiative Support for Knowledge

During the Peña administration, Mérida’s USAID programs focused on offering national prevention bureaucrats assistance with program monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing (USAID Mexico 2014; 2016b; 2017; 2018). The Crime and Violence Prevention Program began in 2012, and disbursed \$17.3 million to spearhead a “knowledge management process” for Mexican partners, share technical expertise, and socialize evidence-based approaches (Anonymous US 2, interview 2021). Just as PRONAPRED was being cut down in 2016, even larger USAID grants committed to producing knowledge and “focused and evidence-based programming” (Betancourt 2017). *Juntos Para la Violencia* (JPV), or *Together for Violence Prevention*, sought to change how decision-makers “identify the causes of violence, implement specific solutions for appropriate and effective targeting of those causes, and ensure knowledge management” (Reisman 2016). In 2016, moreover an influential USAID-commissioned report by Harvard professor Thomas Abt reviewed over 1400 studies on violence prevention models, flagging *cognitive behavioral therapy* and *focused deterrence* as the most evidenced-informed approaches.⁸³ These prevention findings

⁸³ *Cognitive behavioral therapy* uses clinical psychology to reorient the thought patterns of offenders. Developed by David Kennedy in Boston in the 1990’s, *Focused Deterrence* mobilizes law enforcement, social services, and community stakeholders to communicate with offenders with the offer of help or the threat of consequences to stop violent behavior.

offered partners model practices for collecting and using disaggregated and geographically-specific data on “the places, the people, and the social behaviors” (Betancourt 2017).

Mérida interventions ultimately generated a body of prevention knowledge available to national policy. Bilateral training efforts supported consultants and prevention counterparts to articulate models to stakeholders (USAID Mexico 2016b:33). USAID resources funded experts to help develop content for Mexico’s National Prevention Program, including community policing, youth, and social interventions in urban areas (USAID Mexico 2016b:59). At the same time, prevention bureaucrats accompanied USAID consultants in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Mérida programs (USAID Mexico 2016b:18:28). USAID programs also developed national learning platforms—such as e-book and an online community—listing evidenced-based practices and methodologies for policy-making (USAID Mexico 2014:6, 7, 16). Bilateral contests called upon subnational governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector to submit proposals for the National Prevention Program (Herrera-Lasso, interview 2021; USAID Mexico 2014:6). Winning practices were documented and systematized into the national repertoire (Herrera-Lasso, interview 2021; USAID Mexico 2014:6).

Nonetheless, these conceptual contributions failed to translate into national state practice. Initially, USAID consultants struggled to “speak the same language” (USAID Mexico 2016b: 33) as counterparts who were only newly becoming acquainted with prevention approaches. Severe coordination problems continued as the Undersecretariat of Prevention’s consistently lacked “clarity about what it wanted to do...or, how or when or where” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). Faced with persistent federal coordination problems, US officials decided to reduce support for trainings and expertise for national-

level bureaucrats and refocus locally (USAID Mexico 2016a:9; Anonymous US 3, interview 2021; Gameros, interview 2020).⁸⁴ Peña Nieto’s prevention cuts further reinforced USAID’s decision to eschew a national vision (USAID Mexico 2017:5).⁸⁵ Budget reductions halted progress towards USAID’s national-level indicators, including “tools incorporated to design implementation of the national policy on violence and crime prevention” (USAID Mexico 2017:7).⁸⁶ The “local systems framework” became the dominant operating model, targeting “decision-making structures” in 10 pilot cities (Reisman 2016; USAID Mexico 2017:6).

Importantly, the focus on municipal leadership had already become a widely-accepted principle in US violence prevention. A *targeted* strategy had gained favor as the most bang-for-your-bilateral-prevention buck during the Calderón administration, concentrating interventions to “risky” “micro-units” and “individuals” as opposed to large-scale federal reforms (Betancourt, interview 2021). A granular logic was designed to socially engineer “stronger and more resilient communities that can withstand the pressures of crime and violence” (USAID Mexico 2014:5). The conception was that city-level pilot programs would then promote policy change by “spread[ing] ideas from one municipality to another” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). However, even USAID programs themselves

⁸⁴ Reports on bilateral coordination on prevention were mixed. On the one hand, one representative who worked on *Juntos Para la Violencia* (JPV) reported that the project involved a “*very well-oiled and very aligned*” (Betancourt, interview 2021) collaboration. On the other hand, a USAID-commissioned report on the project notes challenges coordinating with federal officials, and laments unmet expectations in the relationship (USAID Mexico 2016a:9). Evaluations of Tetrattech’s Crime and Violence Prevention project report similar challenges with federal relationships (USAID Mexico 2015: 19-20).

⁸⁵ Additionally, the decision impacted Mérida prevention plans in more than 50 cities nationwide.

⁸⁶ While USAID programs officially maintained national-level indicators, metrics were redirected to register improvements in local institutional and technical capacity (USAID 2018:26-28). For instance, initiatives measured under the indicator of support to national policy design include tools for municipal evaluation and data collection (USAID 2018:26-28; USAID Mexico 2017:12-13).

identified the shortcomings of such a localized approach to produce wider changes in policy and violence. As one report states: *“While understanding how to address crime and violence prevention at the community level is necessary for generating proven and effective solutions, the effort to document, share learning, and build capacity nationally has led to wider replication, and potentially to more significant impact”* (USAID Mexico 2016b:33).

USAID programs were also guided by logics other than prevention design, results, and impact. USAID prevention programs contracted out to for-profit consulting firms. Under this business model, program priorities turned on “keeping the client happy and getting paid” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). During program discussions, photo-ops took precedence over prevention design. As one consultant explained, in lieu reflecting on *“what we’re doing, what the impact would be.... It became very much about who’s going to be saying what publicly on stage and ‘let’s check off some boxes’”* (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). Checked boxes measured programming through descriptive indicators that could project a good image, such as numbers of courses given and attendees present. By contrast, programs eschewed indicators that could measure changes in trainee expertise, technical planning, and follow-up. In the perspective of Manuel Gameros, Former Director Strategic Planning at the Undersecretariat, Mérida resources and exchanges amounted to little more than “a series of conversations” (interview 2020), lecturing at-risk populations on how to behave (USAID 2014:8). Meanwhile, Mérida rejected Undersecretariat proposals for more enduring projects. Consequently, according to Gameros, “the word is simulation. Because they simulated that something was being done, but it was not really being done” (interview 2020).

Finally, while USAID prevention knowledge failed to reach decision-makers, hard-side US interventions exerted influence over the militant metrics and logics that dominated national decisions. A much greater share of Mérida assistance was distributed through trainings and expertise to execute DTO captures. US intelligence-sharing became a key driver in defining short-term operational successes as the key metric of Mexico's drug war, interpreting positive "results" in the Executive and across security bureaucracies. As Peña Nieto's 2014 violence crisis landed, these bilateral operational logics consumed security decisions.

B. Low Infrastructure for Prevention Alternatives

Despite institutional growth under Peña Nieto, prevention was still a fresh reform administered under nascent bureaucracies and laws. Insufficiently formalized roles and practices challenged prevention's authority and stability in state decisions and actions. Prevention lacked grounding in state routines and norms that could sustain reform within the taken-for-granted functions of the security system.

At the Peña Nieto administration's outset, preliminary infrastructure stifled prevention's implementation. Reformers had only made the first steps to institute social prevention during the latter years of Calderón's presidency. Prevention reformers then faced a foundational problem of creating programs and resource streams from the ether. To enact these proposals, reformers engaged in an arduous lobbying effort, socializing prevention concepts to policymakers to authorize the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime. Calderón's new National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen

Engagement coordinated prevention reforms, inviting other institutions to redirect their practices. During Peña Nieto's political transition, prevention bureaucrats found that Calderón's new legislation was still incomplete, obstructing them from implementing reforms on a national scale (Gameros, interview 2020). Prevention programming was delayed for over a year as prevention officials developed new legal frameworks and, moreover, as the administration decided how to reassign prevention responsibilities.

The political transition also reshuffled Calderón's tenuous prevention infrastructure into a more fractured system with less control over internal policy decisions. Peña Nieto's prevention expansions still amounted to less than one percent of the national security budget, newly stretched over several ministries (World Bank 2023; Seelke and Finklea 2017:8). Peña Nieto weakened prevention's autonomy and influence by appointing the new Undersecretariat of Prevention and Civic Engagement to lead reform. Effectively neutered under Peña Nieto, the National Center for Crime Prevention had consolidated internal prevention decisions as an independent body with a direct line to the Calderón presidency (Carrera Lugo, interview 2022). Peña Nieto redistributed prevention coordination and decisions to an intermediary power by placing the Undersecretariat of Prevention under the Executive Secretariat of Public Security, whose priorities lay elsewhere (Gameros, interview 2020). Executive Secretary Alvaro Vizcaíno abandoned state commitments to train government officials in social prevention approaches, and spent the social prevention budget on police cars and uniforms (Chapa Koloffon 2015).⁸⁷ Cut out of centralized decisions,

⁸⁷ FORTASEG, for instance, was granted a much greater budget than PRONAPRED. Although the FORTASEG fund was traditionally designed for governors to buy police cars and uniforms, during the sexenio, it was decided that 20 percent of FORTASEG resources should be spent on social programs for training and attention to people and prevention programs. There were states that spent all their resources on hardware purchases, with no oversight from the Secretariado Ejecutivo.

prevention ministries competed over policy jurisdictions and fragmented scant prevention budgets into scattershot programs.

The administration also failed to systematize a common agenda for prevention actions. While prevention programming relied on inter-agency coordination, prevention lacked authority with other institutions, who either “did not understand” (Herrera-Lasso, interview 2021) or denied to translate prevention into bureaucratic practices. While soft-side institutions⁸⁸ were newcomers to public security issues, hard-side operational institutions were historically severed from social policies. Prevention reformers struggled to “shift the mindset” (Betancourt, interview 2021) of soft-side officials guided by the incentives, inertias, and interests of extant programs. They also failed to introduce new metrics and methods into hard-side strategies (Felbab-Brown 2014:13-16; Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). Lacking legal frameworks to enforce prevention compliance, police resisted collaboration, and SEMAR and SEDENA altogether rejected any approaches outside their doctrine. Discoordination with other agencies produced “public policy process problems” (Betancourt, interview 2021): incoherent and unsustainable prevention efforts.

Weak mandates also rendered prevention subject to the whims of the political system. The *sexenio* cycled through four different Undersecretaries of Prevention. Only the first Undersecretary, Roberto Campa Cifrián, demonstrated interest in advancing the institution’s power. Campa Cifrián was able to secure the prevention budget by convincing Congress and maintaining close relationships with powerful actors in the Ministry of Finance. However, years of unstable leadership followed Campa Cifrián’s departure in early

⁸⁸Soft-side institutions who coordinated with prevention included the Ministries of Health, Education, Economy, and Social Development.

2015.⁸⁹ For the remainder of the administration, the Undersecretariat of Prevention responded more so to the particular interests of political elites than to the objectives of national prevention proposals (Jaime 2015; Hernández 2020:59-60). Peña Nieto left the agency without leadership for five months. New appointments thereafter corresponded with election cycles, lacked any prior professional relation to security and crime prevention issues, and were even at political odds with the agency's mission. Later fired due to allegations of corruption, Arturo Escobar's appointment in September 2015 was particularly contentious, having only interacted with security policy thus far through his 2008 legislative proposal to apply the death penalty for perpetrators of kidnapping (Mexico Evalúa 2015; García 2015). The Undersecretariat entirely lost credibility among civil society analysts who had once partnered with Campa Cifrián to improve programs. Future Undersecretaries also lacked the alliances required to obtain agency resources from financial officials and legislators (Gameros, interview 2020).

Prevention's infrastructure challenges culminated in the government's decision to defund the 2017 prevention budget. Scattered budgets, disassembly, and discoordination represented institutional decisions to reject a nascent prevention agenda from becoming established within state routines. At a higher-level of Executive decision-making, these challenges only aggravated the program design problems that authorized cuts. Insufficiently formalized prevention roles and practices also led to "ignorance" (Anonymous Mexico 2, interview 2021) among decision-makers over established policy jurisdictions. Upon slashing the budget, top officials explained that prevention "was basically just a Rescue of Public Spaces program" (Anonymous Mexico 2, interview 2021), which traditionally fell to the

⁸⁹ Following scandals in Ayotzinapa, Peña Nieto reshuffled Campa Cifrián to head the Undersecretariat of Human Rights.

Secretariat of Agrarian, Land, and Urban Development. Lacking anyone with sufficient political caché to oil ministry relationships and maintain resources, the agency had no one to defend it. With the federal prevention budget gutted, prevention reformers sought out informal institutional channels, consulting directly to state and municipal governments to maintain scattered trainings for local police and social services.

Reformers note that, among decision-makers, prevention's incoherent agenda gave rise to the clearer logic of "let's just arrest our way out of this situation" (Anonymous Mexico 2, interview 2021). Prevention's structural breakdown contrasted with growing state investments to create, maintain, and strengthen hard-side infrastructure. Military institutions, in particular, enjoyed a direct line within the Ministry of Finance, and were spared the bureaucratic challenges of persuading policymakers for greater budgets. Congress also rubber stamped the military's budget requests, with legislators rarely asking any questions about what the money was for. New intelligence units, in particular, dissolved many prior administrative hoops and automated the military's budgetary growth (Ortega, interview 2020). As decision-makers defunded PRONAPRED, defense spending grew by 69 percent over Peña Nieto's administration (Carvallo 2022).

Mérida Initiative Support to Infrastructure

Prevention's national infrastructure problems both shaped and were mirrored by the bilateral agenda. First, USAID collaborations lacked routine roles and practices.

Relationships and exchanges between USAID consultants and prevention bureaucrats were largely sporadic and superficial (USAID Mexico 2016a:9; Anonymous US 3, interview 2021; Gameros, interview 2020). USAID collaboration with the Undersecretary of

Prevention was hampered by inability to “secure commitments and establish clear expectations about results” (USAID Mexico 2014:10). Meanwhile, Mexican prevention officials found that exchanges with Mérida’s projects were stifled by USAID’s own bureaucratic practices and operational guidelines (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021; Carrera Lugo, interview 2022). Undersecretary bureaucrats gradually learned how to adapt to USAID program conditions and criteria, enabling a more fluid relationship (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). During Peña Nieto’s administration, USAID projects also proposed bilateral working groups to develop more formal collaboration mechanisms (USAID Mexico 2016a:9; USAID Mexico 2017:10; USAID Mexico 2014:7). Nonetheless, meetings with federal prevention bureaucrats continued being mostly limited to specific issues that emerged.

Mérida neglected to invest in national prevention infrastructure. USAID did not distribute resources or share personnel with the national government. Against growing national cuts, Mérida aid was never channeled into prevention’s budgetary vacuum. Instead, the great bulk of Mérida’s prevention aid was funneled directly into the “corporate infrastructure” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021) of US consulting firms. According to a former consultant, a \$30M USAID contract would only filter down \$1M to in-country programs. The Undersecretariat of Prevention would “rubber-stamp” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021) these programs in exchange for easy credit and repute. USAID funded and managed research reports that featured the Undersecretariat as partner, and allowed the agency to give opening remarks at USAID-run workshops (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021).

National prevention's political vulnerability also disrupted Mérida support. The turnover of two Undersecretaries of Prevention within one year further truncated communication with counterparts, and delayed or canceled Mérida programs (USAID Mexico 2016b: 34-35, 63). Coordination problems with federal elites led US consultants to decide that prevention aid would be better spent working with mayors. Prevention's budgetary cuts at the national level also forced Mérida programs to redirect locally.

Mérida prevention programs also reflected discoordination between Mexican government agencies. Mérida's design neglected to embed collaboration mechanisms between prevention and other initiative mandates. USAID's work was siloed within social agencies, and disconnected from both military and justice and law enforcement approaches. Each initiative mandate maintained its own set of actors, goals, and mindsets for what reducing violence and "creating a safer Mexico" meant in practice. This "lack of a common problem definition" (Betancourt, interview 2021) among US agencies segregated prevention from the broader agenda, and produced an ambiguous roadmap for prevention responses.

Finally, Mérida's comparatively outsized investments in hard-side infrastructure supported national decisions to slash a shallow and inchoate prevention agenda. In contrast to bilateral prevention routines and practices, US-Mexico cooperation was internalized in the daily workings of many hard-side security prevention agencies. Hard-side programs and operations were entirely dependent on both US funding and exchanges, to the extent that these agencies would "be hobbled without constant intelligence sharing with their US counterparts" (Hope 2016:10). Bilateral intelligence-sharing was so ingrained within the daily functions of Mexican agency operations that it was on auto-pilot, fortified by a lack of

centralized oversight and sustained on autopilot as prevention was cut. New bilateral intelligence units helped dissolve the administrative oversight that hampered bureaucratic functions in prevention agencies.

C. Low Inclusion for Prevention Alternatives

i. Low Horizontal Inclusion for Prevention Alternatives

Prevention reformers faced “bureaucratic exclusion” (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021) from the table of Peña Nieto’s national security decisions. Accordingly, they had little opportunity to propose policy ideas, explain programs, lobby for resources, or even to contest funding cuts. Throughout prevention’s short-lived tenure, prevention reform was subordinated to security decision-makers with conflicting priorities. Reformers had little power over internal decisions, let alone any centralized power to coordinate prevention with outside institutions. Prevention reformers only first learned that Peña Nieto had gutted prevention after the decision had already been made (Anonymous Mexico 2, interview 2021). Decision-makers neglected to seek any input from bureaucrats or even conduct their own evaluation before canceling prevention.

Prevention’s exclusion during the Peña Nieto administration was shaped by national precedents. The historical disconnection of civil powers from security issues designated military authorities as the de facto authors of security decisions. National law first officially broadened decision-making by appointing the National Security Council as the central deliberative body in 2005. Despite these legal changes, Calderón had harkened to a narrower

tradition by using the National Security Cabinet to make decisions.⁹⁰ Unlike the Council, the Cabinet was populated overwhelmingly by operational institutions and exempt from Congressional oversight. Effectively barring representatives outside of hard-side, the Cabinet's vision was far more "securitized" (Balcázar, interview 2021). During Calderón's Cabinet meetings, state force was by-and-large the only tool considered to resolve problems. One of the only exceptions was *Todos Somos Juárez*, which extended high-level security decisions to institutions outside the traditional hard-side apparatus. Their inclusion validated perspectives of the violence problem as one of state absence, and integrated new commitments to health education, employment, social development, and community involvement into the security agenda. Other than *Juárez*, however, operations dominated Calderón's National Cabinet discussions.

The Peña Nieto administration also favored the narrow National Security Cabinet. A significant number of top-level officials from the Calderón administration maintained influential positions and pushed similar policy ideas (Hope 2016:10).⁹¹ Consistent, professional service allowed military leadership to "endure through ideological changes" in the new administration and maintain "continuity in objectives" (Grajeda Regalado, interview

⁹⁰ The National Security Cabinet (*Gabinete de Seguridad Nacional*) included the Presidency, SEMAR, SEDENA, SEGOB, the SSP, CISEN, and PGR. Mexican National Security Law, however, designates a larger decision-making body called the National Security Council (*Consejo de Seguridad Nacional*) which also includes the Secretariat of Finance (*Secretaría de Hacienda*), Secretariat of Infrastructure, Communications, and Transportation (*Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes*), Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*), and the Secretariat of the Civil Service (*Secretaría de la Función Pública*). Officials note that even when the National Security Council did meet during Calderón, Cabinet members would absorb conversations with the names of various DTOs and kingpins. Council members who lacked familiarity with these operational targets had difficulty participating in conversations.

⁹¹ Surviving top-level officials included the Head of the Navy, Admiral Vidal Soberón (Chief Advisor of Calderón) and national security commissioner and nominal chief of the Federal Police, Monte Alejandro Rubido, (Undersecretary for Crime Prevention in the SSP); Minister of Finance, José Antonio Meade (both administrations) (Hope 2016:10; Chabat 2019:996).

2022). Peña Nieto also, however, accorded even greater policy power to military officers, who had felt unheard during the Calderón administration. Calderon's arrangement had distributed say so to Génaro García Luna's SSP, tasked with developing a Federal Police that could eventually replace military forces. Peña Nieto removed himself from security policy's day-to-day, dissolved the SSP, and subordinated civil public security agencies (the new CNS and the Federal Police) under SEGOB (Secretariat of the Interior). Under Peña Nieto, civil and military authorities still maintained a "constant tension...between different ways of perceiving public security" (Hernández Aldaco, interview 2021). However, civil authorities at SEGOB—newly charged with public security on top of standing responsibilities to manage other social, gender, political, partisan, ethnic, and administrative issues—soon became overwhelmed. Military institutions easily seized more power to decide policy. Peña Nieto would defer to General Cienfuegos, as opposed to the Secretary of the Interior, during meetings about the narco-problem (Anonymous Mexico 1, interview 2020). General Cienfuegos influenced the President to unequivocally back the Internal Security Law, authorizing the military to officially take over security operations.

Peña Nieto also narrowed decision-making by convening fewer joint decisions, demanding less coordination, and granting operational institutions more autonomy to embed decisions within bureaucratic routines. In turn, these changes created fewer opportunities to question the overall direction of state policy. As Luis Esteban Islas explained, "*Decisions had to be made within split seconds. And not necessarily with, nor with the adequate knowledge of the security issues, nor with the sufficient capacity, nor the sufficient interest on the subject. So that creates strategic planning problems. 'Where do the resources go? What do we want and where are we going?' Like that compass, that great compass of where*

we're going, starts to break down and slow down. At the same time, the operational part became faster and more efficient” (Islas, interview 2021).

Peña Nieto’s government thus decided to gut prevention within a closed circuit of reactive state logics. Decision-makers neither represented prevention institutions, nor articulated claims on reform’s behalf. Just as had been the case during Calderón’s government, policy debates among top decision-makers largely turned on how to best conduct operations, as opposed to rethinking the aims and direction of policy. Bureaucratic competitions for “results” and for managerial control produced little incentive to invite more views to the table and screened out any analysis that transcended the institutional interests of representatives. Within these circles, voices who questioned policy remained quiet—either fearful of jeopardizing their careers or simply because they sensed proposing alternatives would be futile against the predominance of operational concerns. Narrow decision-making evacuated any considerations of prevention, and of any other solutions that fell outside the purview of tactical-operational logistics.

Mérida Initiative Support for Horizontal Inclusion

Mérida crucially helped reformers achieve instances of horizontal inclusion for prevention alternatives. In 2010, US Ambassador Carlos Pascual convinced Calderón to invite public health officials at the decision table for the first time, and negotiate security policy alongside traditional players. The President’s invitation helped overcome traditional problems of defining violence and solutions from disparate understandings, and reduced “kicks under the table” (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022) from operational institutions.

During the Peña Nieto administration, however, disinterested decision-makers largely evaded overtures from USAID consultants to take on prevention programming. Although formally outside of the bilateral prevention agenda, only one program secured the buy-in at the top. As all other US prevention initiatives were forced to redirect locally, USAID-funded Civic Justice⁹² programs achieved nationwide roll-out amidst prevention's federal collapse. Crucially, however, Civic Justice's expansion hinged on bypassing the Undersecretariat of Prevention, as opposed to including prevention bureaucrats. Instead, USAID consultants capitalized on a prior working relationship between a staff-person and Alvaro Vizcaíno, Executive Secretary of Security at SEGOB. This "direct line of discussion" (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021) to higher seats of power ensured that Civic Justice work thrived through collaboration and coordination at the National Security Council.

USAID's highly selective access to Peña Nieto decision-makers contrasts with hard-side US institutions, who maintained direct communication with the few institutions and officials who made security decisions in Mexico. Peña Nieto's tendency to decentralize decision-making to military institutions was matched by increasingly close one-on-one bilateral military relationships. In addition to fluid exchanges, a Bilateral Defense Working Group worked as a key forum to negotiate joint strategic goals among senior level staff (Mexico Institute 2016). Accordingly, US hard-side actors were even granted say so. DEA agents retained the power to voice kingpin priorities, share information, and reconcile preferred strategies with decision-makers. These directives fueled the operational pressures

⁹² While the program had not originally been conceived under the joint prevention agenda, the model gained bilateral traction through the work of municipal advocates. USAID-contractors saw a political opportunity to achieve greater access to national policy and healthier bilateral relations by funding the project.

that rationalized and reproduced militant state practices, and excluded consideration of alternative solutions.

ii. Low Vertical Inclusion for Prevention Alternatives

The government's limited inclusion of civil society also constrained reach, demand, and accountability for prevention alternatives. As prevention was defunded, decision-makers paid little mind to citizen advisors at the National Council of Public Security who demanded more concrete prevention proposals, resources, trainings, and forceful implementation of the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence (Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública 2017). While prevention policies were up-and-running, very few civil society efforts were directed towards prevention, and civil society input in state prevention was scarce. One of the most meaningful contributions was from México Evalúa, a policy research group that developed prevention divisions charged with “producing knowledge” (Jaime, interview 2022) for state authorities in light of flawed policy designs. Beginning in 2014, México Evalúa published a series of reports and secured news-hour television spots critiquing prevention (México Evalúa 2015; Chapa Koloffon et al 2014; Chapa Koloffon and Ley 2015). They hosted public forums inviting European Union and national prevention officials to debate the policy's future (México Evalúa 2016). They issued suggestions to improve information quality using hotspots, statistics, and geo-referencing techniques. México Evalúa's feedback eventually secured an informal but ongoing dialogue with a receptive Roberto Campa Cifrián, the first Undersecretary of Prevention. Because prevention

bureaucrats accepted that “80-85%... were valid critiques” (Gameros, interview 2021), these conversations prompted new institutional priorities around knowledge management.

Ultimately, however, budding state-society exchanges ultimately collapsed after Campa Cifrián’s departure. The Undersecretariat of Prevention’s new interim manager took offense to civil society critiques and rejected dialogue. México Evalúa’s prevention efforts also faced other hermetic institutions, who refused to even share open evidence on violence. Unable to even assess policy data, actors found themselves stripped of their “political weapons” (Le Cour 2021) to make prevention proposals and hold decision-makers accountable to prevention policy. Lacking federal influence, México Evalúa pivoted to work with local police on both *crime prevention* and *social prevention* frameworks (Jaime, interview 2022).

The marginal inclusion of civil society in Peña Nieto’s national prevention policies was informed by historical exclusions. The PRI’s corporatism and co-optation had long kept civil society out of security policy, and furthermore, out of political affairs in general. However, Mexico’s democratic transition produced two different types of organizations concerned with issues of violence. First, leading human rights organizations first consolidated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These groups organized in response to both the Dirty War⁹³ and state neglect and corruption during the devastating 1985 earthquake.⁹⁴

⁹³ While the Mexican government did not adopt the military dictatorships and scale of political genocide as its regional neighbors during this time, the 1968 Tlateloco massacre of several hundred protesting students and the kidnapping, torture, and killing of suspected subversives during the next two decades exemplified the state violence of Mexico’s Dirty War.

⁹⁴ The 1985 earthquake killed more than 10,000 people, destroyed downtown Mexico City, and demonstrated the mismanagement, indifference, and corruption of state officials who exploited international humanitarian supplies for personal profit (Centeno 1994:75).

Second, corporate, conservative groups first emerged in the mid-1990s to push a law and order agenda against local DTOs and government collusion (Gallagher 2015:92-93).

When crisis struck during Calderón's *sexenio*, both types of organizations found themselves ill-equipped to either understand an unprecedented violence problem or challenge the transformed political reality of the frontal approach. In response, most civil society groups continued business as usual, failing to react and adapt their strategies. Killings, tortures, and disappearances committed by DTOs escaped the organizational visions of human rights groups that had only rendered state abuse legible (Olson 2012). Other groups, however, came up against the existential reckoning that they "could not be a security and justice organization...without passing through drug policy" (Ramírez, interview 2019). These groups assumed a long process of reorienting their organizational frameworks and practices to an unknown policy landscape. Organizations lacked the "studies, understanding, or information to be able to interpret what was happening...and make policy proposals" (Jaime, interview 2022). Organizations also lacked both the expertise to evaluate the government's response, and experience with organizing a drug policy reform agenda (Sánchez, interview 2021). To develop goals and understand "the horizons of advocacy," groups invited international experts, established transnational alliances with reform-oriented think-tanks, and translated European resources (Sánchez, interview 2021). México Evalúa was only first founded during the Calderón administration, and started by enlisting the few people in Mexican civil society who studied security issues with developing basic indicators to interpret violence (Jaime, interview 2022).

Most civil society groups took nearly a decade to develop a formal agenda, resulting in largely sporadic advocacy efforts against state policies during most of the Calderón

administration and even well into the Peña Nieto administration.⁹⁵ MPJD (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity), which gained traction in 2011, was the exception to the advocacy vacuum. As noted in the previous chapter, MJPD emerged through a web of coalitions between local movements, more peripheral human rights organizations, emerging victim-led organizations, and bureaucrats (Gallagher 2015:88-89). Alliances with transnational organizations based in the US supported the MPJD to develop theoretical frameworks, technical information, and analysis (Castillo, interview 2021). The MPJD famously organized through a “caravan of dialogue” (Castillo, interview 2021) that marched across the country and the border, and secured a debate with the President himself in the Chapultepec peace talks. MPJD pressure also produced legislative responses for more inclusion. Congress authorized the figure of “citizen advisor” (*consejero ciudadano*) into public security legislation towards the end of the Calderón *sexenio*, creating a mechanism for citizen participation via civil society representatives at the National Council for Public Security.

More and more oppositional civil groups broke through historical silos around the DTO problem, reaching deliberative spaces with the Peña Nieto administration. Directors of policy research groups and former top security officials offered technical proposals as select “citizen advisors” during sessions of the National Council of Public Security. Human rights and drug reform advocates shared their views by inviting state officials to attend forums and during one-on-ones with legislators. They testified before Congress during dialogues for cannabis decriminalization, the Internal Security Law, and victim’s rights commissions. They sent proposals to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and organized forums with

⁹⁵ Some organizations did not finish systematizing evidence linking militarization to new problems, like arms trafficking and drug regulation, to their original goals until the very end of the Peña *sexenio*.

SEDENA, demanding greater transparency for transnational weapons trafficking. Groups went over the technical details of increasing access to justice with attorney generals, and sent human rights reports to the Inter-American Court to heighten pressure on state officials. Reformer security experts circulated their proposals in leading news journals and think-tanks, taught classes at the National Defense College, and held informal conversations with military officers. In 2013, CIDE university created the first academic program to study prohibitionist drug policy and its damages from a social science and public health perspective. Towards the end of the Peña Nieto administration, CIDE also published the first database linking military confrontation to violence, and disseminated publications to policymakers and civil society coalitions. State officials and legislators began mimicking the discourse and retweeting the publications of CIPMEX, the first research center on peacebuilding policy.

At the same time as some civil groups became perceived as legitimate actors with legitimate claims, their policy influence was largely in rhetoric only. Traditionally hermetic state institutions and officials maintained closed doors. A top government official who worked under Peña Nieto explained that the President followed corporatist PRIista tradition and “believed that civil society should only exist to applaud him” (Anonymous Mexico 3, interview 2022). My interviews with other state officials confirmed what civil society respondents called “a very long and very tragic history in Mexican institutions” (Hootsen, interview 2021): generalized suspicions and perceptions of civil society organizations as destabilizing forces, with ties to criminals. The Peña Nieto administration barely regarded formal mechanisms of inclusion, convening the National Council of Public Security less than ten times (Presidencia 2022). This gave citizen advisors few opportunities to voice their

proposals and zero opportunities to vote on decisions (Presidencia 2022). Protected by the Executive, overwhelming pressure from human rights groups failed to translate into any military accountability for human rights violations, and officials failed to observe the Court rulings that demanded it (Gallagher 2015; Dizard 2017). Even the most well-respected and well-connected security experts lacked policy influence over the Armed Forces (Benítez-Manaut, interview 2021). Civil groups often experienced more success through legislators, but few representatives expressed shared understanding of problems and awareness of “the existence and viability of alternative policies” (Ramírez, interview 2019; Centro Gilberto Bosques 2014). While the Internal Security Law passed Congress, proposals to regulate cannabis froze. Access to legislators was also highly informal, often depending on personal friendships between advocates and representatives, as opposed to professional alliances. Ultimately, Mexican civil society’s role in defining security and justice policy was mostly reduced to monitoring and oversight of reforms, and testifying in Congress (Mexico Institute 2019). As Edna Jaime, Director of México Evalúa concluded, burgeoning gestures of inclusion were thus more of “an act of deference, so that we would shut our mouths a bit...*They did not take our views into account. They simply only opened the door for us to be able to say ‘we have included civil society.’ It was pure simulation....*” (Jaime, interview 2022).

Unsurprisingly, the government’s prevention agenda largely neglected to bring in the various demands and projects of an emergent civil society. Only select policy research groups and former officials aligned their claims behind Peña Nieto’s prevention proposals, articulating their claims in the same technical language as bureaucratic programming. Lacking either a clear and comprehensive alternative state project, or inclusive deliberative

spaces to express their demands and share information, civil society groups mostly organized around disparate demands with little plug into government practices or considerations. Groups experienced little common ground and little capacity to communicate issues more broadly across sectors.

Accordingly, reformist civil groups splintered into niches of perceived “contrary logics” (Acosta, interview 2021). Security analysts were divided from human rights groups. Many civil projects—such as proposals for transitional justice or drug liberalization—became lost in translation. Civil groups still caught in the long process of diagnosing and assessing the policy problem lacked consensus over even the basic causes of violence, and faced confusion over what solutions could apply. With “no model to follow” (Hootsen, interview 2021), many organizations also faced paralysis over making policy proposals and imagining solutions. While examples of Portuguese drug legalization and Swiss prison abolition had been useful for developing organizational goals, Mexican organizations soon found that European models of success could not be easily transposed into local conditions. Groups disagreed over basic strategies, such as whether to recognize Mexico as having an armed conflict, and whether to involve the international humanitarian legal system. In 2014, the MPJD fell apart in 2014 due to disagreements over how to conceive the state and different ideas of justice.

Civil organizations cohered more so in reaction to state policy problems, as opposed to government proposals for alternative solutions. *Seguridad Sin Guerra* (Security Without War) emerged as one of the leading examples of a collective response, organized to counteract Peña Nieto’s attempts to pass the Internal Security Law.⁹⁶ Civil security and

⁹⁶ The other main example is *Fiscalía Que Sirva*, a collective of academics, human rights defenders, victims, and private citizens who organized for an independent attorney general and against impunity.

justice organizations easily unified against perceived militarization, and worked with representatives to make counter-legislative proposals. Although unsuccessful in stopping the Internal Security Law from passing through Congress, *Seguridad Sin Guerra* representatives provided amicus briefs and information to the Supreme Court, and consulted with the judges that overturned the decision. After freezing the Internal Security Law, groups in *Seguridad Sin Guerra* began to fragment upon finding that they lacked sufficient commonality with regards to other public security proposals.

Merida Initiative Support for Vertical Inclusion

Mérida's support for vertical inclusion was mixed. On the one hand, the Obama presidency shifted priorities and funneled resources to directly support civil society, despite strong resistances in the Mexican Executive (Benítez-Manaut, interview 2021; Finkenbusch 2018:214-215). During the Calderón administration, this shift resulted in = *Todos Somos Juárez's* "Participation Councils," which included local social movements, academics, and business groups (IFIT 2022:11-12). Ciudad Juárez's "Security Table" seated civil society representatives alongside state officials and security forces to define and monitor state actions to reduce violence, and promote a "culture of legality" (IFIT 2022:11-12). Civil society participation in Juárez was crucial to maintain pressure for local authorities to continue prevention programming (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2021). During the Peña Nieto administration, USAID program staff continued encouraging alliances between academics, compliance monitors, and local authorities to produce diagnostics and evaluations for municipal prevention programs.

At the same time, however, Mérida support failed to bridge the issues that kept civil society out of national policy. Regarding prevention policy itself, Mérida support to civil society was restricted to local agendas and neglected to distribute aid to national-level civil society organizations who pressed decision-makers for prevention alternatives (USAID Mexico 2017; Jaime, interview 2022). Within this local civic engagement, Mérida support also neglected to bring in alternative claims into prevention policy. *Todos Somos Juárez*, for instance, excluded resources and representation from organizations who protested frontal approaches (Díaz Cepeda 2020:31; Lachica Huerta 2020). Mérida’s selectiveness generated rifts between groups in the movement who either received or did not receive US support (Díaz Cepeda 2020:31; Lachica Huerta 2020). During the Peña Nieto administration, local USAID prevention programs also enjoyed the closest relationships with think-tanks and universities, rather than with advocacy groups. Relationships with civil society also were imagined under the logic of “community resilience” (Finkenbush 2018:215-216), whereby the main role of civic engagement was to support state agencies on the ground by providing operational information through local knowledge, enlisting the community to enforce the law.

Beyond prevention policies, Mérida’s selectivity with civic engagement was also repeated with other national-level reform agendas. Mérida neglected to engage with nascent national movement groups who protested frontal policies, like the MPJD. Neither did Mérida support civil society initiatives for drug reform and international arms trafficking. While Mérida did provide funding for groups who worked on these issues, contracted projects were limited to issues of police development and anti-corruption. Even then, these

civil society grants tended to favor Stanford and Yale over universities like CIDE (Hernández Aldaco, interview 2021; Atuesta, interview 2021).

Instead, US aid, consultations, and exchanges were largely directed towards traditional human rights, and corporate elite organizations (US Embassy Mexico 2009h; Gallagher 2015:214). Many of these groups pushed for the same inquisitorial-to-accusatorial transformation in the Mexican justice system that Mérida funded and trained, despite deep resistances within the federal judiciaries themselves (Atuesta, interview 2021, Sánchez, interview 2021). US Embassy officials organized dialogues between these groups and unresponsive elites in the federal government (US Embassy Mexico 2009e, 2009h). Even as Executive leaders refused international investigations into extrajudicial killings, US military aid itself generated new forms of accountability on the Mexican armed forces by stressing human rights performance in high-level communications and trainings within both executive and defense agencies (US Embassy Mexico 2009h; Touliere 2020; Anaya Muñoz 2009, 2014; US Embassy Mexico 2009e). While loosely followed, fifteen percent of Mérida aid to police and military institutions were ostensibly conditioned on investigation and prosecution of offenders.⁹⁷ Human rights conditions produced joint scrutiny by bringing together US and Mexican NGOs alongside the State Department to monitor and evaluate the Mexican government (Finkenbusch 2018:217-218). As violence against journalists in Mexico reached a historical high, Mérida also funded programs and hosted government meetings for press freedom that supported journalists to enforce and improve state protections (Beiser 2017; M25; Acosta, interview 2021).

⁹⁷Government incomppliance with human rights did not always cause Washington to withhold conditional funds (Human Rights Watch 2011). Beyond Mérida funding, bilateral DoD funding was not subject to human rights conditions (Seelke and Finklea 2015:24). Washington also stopped subjecting Mérida funds to human rights conditions in 2016 (Seelke 2019).

A 2010 US Embassy cable describes Mexican civil society as a “nascent force with significant but unrealized potential for bringing about needed social and political change” (see Finkenbusch 2018:217-218). Rhetoric notwithstanding, US engagement also contained civil society input within the realm of monitoring and oversight of reforms undertaken by Peña Nieto’s state. The selective logic of Mérida’s civic engagement suggests that Washington was not necessarily interested in supporting civil claims that transgressed the range of approaches already available in state policy. Merida’s preference for local civic engagement on prevention did not help civil society groups integrate as a collective force under a comprehensive project for social and political change.

Ultimately, stigma around Mérida aid also became another source of fragmentation between civil society groups. Progressive groups like MPJD avoided collaborating with organizations who received Mérida aid, US invitations to forums, and US petitions to suggest policy recommendations. Progressive organizations interpreted US support to mean that recipient organizations were not truly invested in an oppositional agenda, and merely being used as “civil society pawns” (Castillo, interview 2021) to legitimize the frontal bilateral strategy as a whole. Indeed, Mérida support to a military coalition far outweighed US support to civil society counterforce, collectively united in asking policymakers to “reconsider their proposals... and open the discussions to include other alternatives...strengthened by the breadth of perspectives” (Guevara Bermúdez 2017:14).

D. Low Consensus for Prevention Alternatives

“It is very difficult to show up to say: ‘Hey, let’s prevent!’ Because the rest of the state says: ‘Prevent what?...People are dying every day. So what do you mean with prevention?’”

–Enrique Betancourt (interview 2021), Executive Director, National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation (2012-2013) and Director Citizens Security Initiative, Chemonics International (2014-Present)

If reformers during the Calderón administration first set the “normative” imperative behind prevention, then Peña Nieto’s buy-in positioned prevention as “an important issue” (Gameros, interview 2020) across the state’s security conversation. At the beginning of his government, “Peña Nieto was convinced that he had to invest in prevention” (Gameros, interview 2020). Certainly, Peña’s pursuit was partly persuaded by a political interest to distance himself from Calderón’s failed *mano dura*. At the same time, Peña’s decision was also driven by the sincere belief that prevention would be “a good investment” (Gameros, interview 2020). Over the course of the administration, however, prevention reformers would lose this claim in the national debate. Low consensus among decision-makers as to whether prevention should be pursued ultimately drove the choice to defund reform.

First, despite the incoming administration’s heavily pro-prevention rhetoric, prevention was never truly “the main conversation in the policy narrative” (Betancourt, interview 2021). From the start, limited buy-in from decision-makers established the reform as “something nice on the side” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021). As one Peña Nieto official reflected, “the budget shows you where the [government’s] love is” (Islas, interview

2021).⁹⁸ Even under Peña Nieto’s initial expansions, prevention represented less than one percent of the national security spending and around 13.7% of the public security spending, with much of it invested in police units as opposed to social programs (World Bank 2023; Seelke and Finklea 2017, 8; Chapa Koloffon and Ley 2015:11)⁹⁹. A failure to organize consensus for prevention allowed the Executive Secretary to divert resource streams, complicated budgetary negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, cut coordination with other institutions, and prioritized politics over prevention policy goals. Low consensus always kept prevention far from perceptions of important and strategic policy that could change the context of Mexican crime and violence.

Among decision-makers, resistance to prevention was partly informed by a “dilemma of prevention versus reaction” (Betancourt, interview 2021). Reformers came up against decision-makers who understood prevention as a mutually exclusive alternative to military proactiveness, impotent to “prevent” a violence crisis already in motion. For reformers this belief presented an obstacle that made prevention “a very difficult concept to translate into action” (Betancourt, interview 2021). Since the Calderón administration, reformers had negotiated acceptance and common ground by avoiding conceptions of prevention as a replacement of, or even as a challenge to, reactive policies. Instead, deliberations promoted understandings of prevention as only a useful tool to reduce violence within a broader traditional public security strategy. By compromising policy goals and

⁹⁸ Translated roughly from “*el amor se ve en el presupuesto.*”

⁹⁹ This 13.7% included the Creditable Police Subsidy (*Subsidio para la Policía Acreditada*, SPA), the implementation of the new Penal Justice System, the Contribution Fund for Public Security (*Fondo de Aportaciones para la Seguridad Pública*, FASP), and maximum public security funding for the Fund for Municipal and District Strengthening (*Fondo para el Fortalecimiento Municipal y de las Demarcaciones*, Fortamun).

programming into *violence reduction*, prevention thus never surpassed status of ancillary social initiatives, neither diverted the frontal bottom line, nor interfered with hard-side institutional practice.

During the Peña Nieto administration, federal debates pitting prevention against reaction would derail an already tenuous consensus. Discussions around prevention also involved institutional “voices that [were] constantly contesting each other” (Betancourt, interview 2021). On one side of the debate, bureaucrats at the Undersecretary of Prevention and some top officials across SEGOB, the Federal Police, and the CNS considered that prevention may be useful to reduce violence. On the other side of the debate, military actors completely rejected prevention as “irrelevant” (Herrera Lasso, interview 2021). Since the Calderón administration, the Armed Forces had felt “very frustrated” and believed they were only “losing” because of mismanagement of civil powers who “put political and civil breaks” (Espino, interview 2020) on military action. Military actors believed that federal spending should only go towards hard-side solutions, and perceived solutions outside of confrontations as a misguided “stepping back and not engaging the DTOs” (Deare, interview 2021). For them, the solution to the crisis was more money so that they could make good on their new mission. At the start of the administration, military personnel warned reform-oriented decision-makers in the incoming Peña Nieto administration that changing tack from military offensive would only push homicides up.

Against the problem of renewed spiking violence in 2014, however, the compromise of *violence reduction* ensured that prevention could never be “proved as a solution” (Enrique Betancourt, interview 2021). Aggravated crisis only deepened perceptions of prevention’s impotence. A failure to develop prevention—or any other meaningful alternative—to the

military also meant that when violence deteriorated, civil reliance on the military and their will only deepened. The policy interests of the military establishment only gained in power as the Peña Nieto's administration also lost political ground with Ayotzinapa and corruption scandals (Dizard 2017:169). Civil elites began to heed the military warnings, began to "understand that some of the practices that they had discarded had actually been strategic...so they started to resume. They began to once again call upon people that had had experience with the previous [administration's practices], to retake some issues" (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022). While prevention was gutted, decision-makers considered that more resources were needed for combat.

The political needle also failed to push consensus towards saving prevention. Despite sweeping social discontent, a strong victim's movement, and academic critiques, and even though all parties and presidential candidates broadly called for change, "opposition was more muted...most of the proposed transformations were either extremely vague or a variation on the Calderón theme" (Hope 2016:7). Governors across the political spectrum depended on the military police's presence for order in their states (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). Under threat of their departure, General Cienfuegos ensured the governors' support for greater military budgets and legal protections (Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, interview 2020). Prevention was thus pushed outside the realm of perceived political benefits through its failure to provide anything of immediate political value. The political and mediatic spectacles of captured kingpins accorded military accomplishments with greater persuasive power.

If the gutting of prevention in 2017 represented the breakdown of prevention's tenuous consensus, then the 2017 civil-military push for the Internal Security Law

represented militant control over the national security consensus. At the beginning of the administration, Peña Nieto's political establishment had felt pressured to incorporate Internal Security into national policy. The perceived consequence of not making this "concession" was "far more pressure from the military to make legislative changes" (Dávila Morlotte, interview 2022). By 2017, the President himself declared the "urgent need" (Presidencia 2017) for an Internal Security Law as he inaugurated the 11th Brigade of the military police alongside Cienfuegos. Ultimately, despite the widespread recognition during the Peña Nieto administration that military confrontation generated more violence, even officials who were highly critical of the frontal approach came to understand that "the military is the only option" (Islas, interview 2021).

Mérida Initiative and Support for Consensus

US diplomacy was a driving force behind the initial consensus for prevention reforms. During most of the Calderón administration, USAID lacked a portfolio in Mexico due to disinterest from the political establishment. Security authorities had rejected repeated efforts by Dr. Arturo Cervantes Trejo to consider a public health focus. At a time when the Mexican government searched for ways to reduce violence in Juárez, US Ambassador Pascual persuaded decision-makers through new ideas and the money to back them. Pascual's leadership made Calderón "a bit more open to all solutions" (Arroyo-Juárez, interview 2022).

The legacy of *Todos Somos Juárez* indirectly informed Peña Nieto's proposals for prevention reforms. After *Todos Somos Juárez*, the US Embassy continued working closely with reformers who became major architects behind prevention within Mexican decision-

making circles. Enrique Betancourt, who was the point person for Mérida’s Pillar IV, was also invited to the President’s office to head reform. Betancourt’s role was also “very important” during the Peña Nieto transition, ensuring that officials “embraced many of the things that we triggered” (interview 2021). Betancourt also ensured prevention’s “continuity” during the Peña Nieto administration as Director of the USAID-funded Citizen Security Project. In this project, Betancourt ensured “ideas were...aligned with what the government was already doing, which was an evolution of what [his] team had put together years before” (interview 2021). Mario Arroyo Juárez was a member of Dr. Cervantes’ Trejo’s team and became a major recipient of USAID assistance, funded to design and negotiate a public health approach for *Todos Somos Juárez*. Under Peña Nieto, Arroyo Juárez became a Chief Director in the CNS and Federal Police, and an honorary member of the National Public Security Council, where he advocated for prevention reform.

Ultimately, however, USAID prevention consultants faced significant problems securing “the buy-in of key decision-makers” (USAID Mexico 2014:10) during the Peña Nieto administration. Only USAID’s Civic Justice programs managed to pique the interests of those higher up in the political establishment. As discussed in the section on infrastructure, Civil Justice finally achieved a “positive working relationship” (Anonymous US 3, interview 2021) with Alvaro Vizacaíno, Executive Secretary of Public Security, thus ensuring a nation-wide roll-out. USAID consultants speculated, however, that Civic Justice’s success could not necessarily be interpreted as an example of the government’s buy-in for prevention reform. Rather, the project’s stated objective—to relieve pressure from judicial institutions and policies by processing non-violent misdemeanors—may have attracted authorities interested in freeing up operational capacity.

Moreover, despite the US' decisive role, Washington's own buy-in was also marginal. As was the case with Peña Nieto, the Obama government's investment in prevention was mostly rhetorical, representing approximately five percent of Mérida funding. Trump's presidency only reduced Washington's demand for prevention. Even during Ambassador Pascual's leadership, US prevention programs were imagined as a potentially useful opportunity to reduce violence through social programs and restore the credibility of a larger hardline strategy. For Washington reformers, while "demonstrating results from a strategy that is broader than arrests and raids" (US Embassy Mexico 2010a) was certainly the concern, broad strategic change was not. After Pascual, US Ambassadors lacked involvement in pushing prevention issues forward with Mexican security authorities, and remained uninvolved with Executive decisions to defund prevention (Wayne, interview 2020).

Beyond prevention alternatives, Washington also ultimately closed doors to other alternatives that Mexican civil decision-makers did agree on. Despite Mérida's language of co-responsibility, conceptual inertia in Washington around Mexico as the bearer of "the problem" often stunted creativity around solutions. For instance, Mérida interventions focused on Ciudad Juarez while neglecting DTO activity in El Paso (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). Relations became "complicated" (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020; Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020) when officials requested greater US accountability on money laundering and gun-trafficking commitments. US agencies had developed a successful process for tracking money laundering among classified "terrorist" groups after 9/11. Washington failed to apply these techniques to "drug-trafficking" because the DEA and Coast Guard were structured around a "toys paradigm" (Anonymous Mexico 4,

interview 2020) that privileged helicopters, speedboats, and interceptor ships over cybersecurity and money laundering specialists. The US Treasury Department and Office of Foreign Assets Control failed to communicate with Mexican bureaucrats over investigations. Although the Obama administration had little political room to maneuver on gun control, limited bureaucratic and legal channels accomplished some “minor victories” until Operation Fast and Furious’s gunrunning broke out in scandal.¹⁰⁰ “Differences of opinion” (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022) persisted in the Peña administration, as US counterparts argued that gun trafficking should be resolved by Mexican border control, rather than by US reforms or discussions with weapons manufacturers.

Finally, while Mexican officials understood the US’ insatiable consumption of narcotics to be at the root of their crisis, Washington did little to curb demand. Even during Calderón, the US war on drugs had been, at best, a secondary priority, assumed in service of their primary objective to combat DTOs (Espino, interview 2020; Anonymous Mexico 4, interview 2020; Deare 2017:247). However, these initial positions evolved as even Calderón himself came to understand drug control as a public safety issue. At the 2012 UN General Assembly, Calderón proposed cannabis legalization, arguing that that punitive model only led to cycles of violence and profit. By comparison, such bilateral disagreements never extended to the operational level, where there was a mutual desire for “results” (Grajeda Regalado, interview 2022).

The narrow vision of US reform was diluted by the rest of the state, which continued a frontal approach and encouraged a military consensus. If Mexico’s security elites were concerned with reducing violence, then officials in Washington were far more concerned

¹⁰⁰ The 2009-2011 US operation allowed Mexican DTOs to buy firearms to track their organizations.

with stopping drug flows and migration. DEA agents upheld a strong institutional belief that capturing capos would ultimately “resolve the problem” (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). As Vanda Felbab-Brown, an analyst at Brookings explained, kingpin “is the thing that the DEA knows how to do...that’s how officials at the DEA get promotions” (interview 2020). The agency inflated assessments of Mexico’s crisis to request greater budgets (Valdés Castellanos, interview 2020). While White House documents eschewed the kingpin strategy, the US military, law enforcement, State Department, and most policy-makers were “deeply concerned” (Anonymous US 4, interview 2019) by any proposals to demilitarize strategy. While the Mérida Initiative invested heavily in developing civil punitive institutions, Peña Nieto’s failure to develop these meaningfully meant that the US security community favored his growing reliance on the military role. Ultimately, Washington also perceived it as a giant opportunity to “capitalize on these cracks in the door” (US Embassy Mexico 2010b; Isacson, interview 2021), and build a relationship with a historically closed off military. Even among more critical officials who link military strategy to growing violence, widespread belief in Washington echoed the idea that there was no alternative. As one respondent explained: “*There doesn't seem to be a better strategy. Like even though it's not that awesome, like the kingpin thing—like the, the, like going at the cartels with the military and like, you know, using the Marines to capture the leaders and extradite them to the United States*” (Anonymous US 1, interview 2020).

E. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how Mexican policy elites abandoned reform and maintained a military solution despite its perceived ineffectiveness and unpopularity. I argue that a lack of four central conditions impeded Mexican reform efforts, resulting in insufficient cultural resources for reformers to navigate militant constraints and make prevention reforms legible as viable, effective, and desirable alternatives. First, reformers faced low levels of *knowledge* for prevention alternatives: both prevention bureaucrats and decision-makers lacked clear concepts, expertise, and strategies for reforms, rendering prevention programs susceptible to accusations of inadequacy. Second, reformers confronted low *infrastructure*: prevention reforms lacked sufficiently formalized roles and practices, challenging prevention's authority and stability in state decisions and actions. Third, prevention reformers experienced low *inclusion*: prevention bureaucrats and oppositional civil society were marginalized from security policy decisions, restricting prevention's policy scope and the demand behind reform. Fourth, prevention reformers faced low *consensus* at the top: a tentative consensus for prevention among decision-makers was easily displaced by internal pressures for military escalation. While Mérida offered some support for these problems, US assistance also engaged with policy negotiations in ways that were often largely peripheral to prevention reformer efforts, subordinated to militant goals, and often even often adverse to reform claims. While reformers received marginal support, Mérida also heavily bolstered militant claims. Altogether, these processes resulted in the government's decision to defund prevention and shielded military escalation from challenges to its legitimacy.

The new president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, better known as AMLO, assumed office in December 2018. Famously, AMLO had been Felipe Calderón’s political rival in the hotly contested 2006 election, and had subsequently headed “¡No Más Sangre!” or “No More Blood,” a popular campaign repudiating the military strategy. AMLO’s 2018 electoral sweep under the new, left-wing Morena party had campaigned on a promise of “*abrazos no balazos*” (“hugs not bullets”) and to “get rid of the army” (Sheridan 2020). Broadly supported by a flurry of oppositional civil society actions, AMLO’s National Peace and Security Plan 2018-2024 accordingly proposed an alternative model to address the root causes of conflict, including measures for anti-corruption, economic reform, human rights, transitional justice, and broader peacebuilding (Felbab-Brown 2019).

Despite these campaign promises, dependence on the Armed Forces to resolve the crisis has only grown. AMLO intensified Calderón and Peña Nieto’s security legacies, achieving what both had failed to do and finally formalizing the military’s expanded role in public security (Diario Oficial de la Federación 2020). Contrary to Mexico’s Constitution, AMLO’s May 2020 decree set no clear objectives and omits language subordinating the armed forces to civil authorities (Pérez Correa 2020). In addition to the record numbers of troops deployed to patrol cities, raid drug labs, and protect strategic infrastructure, the Mexican Armed forces took over tasks once handled by civilian agencies, rationalized as the “most efficient” (Arana and Anaya 2020) solution.

According to many analysts and respondents in this study, under AMLO, the military has gained unprecedented political power over civil institutions and state decisions at large, affecting both the direction of internal policy and of US cooperation. As military power expanded, AMLO dismantled the Federal Police and collapsed prevention policy into social

policy, which primarily became a matter of cash transfers to families. The AMLO government abandoned efforts to improve the quality of information for prevention policy, just as military generals directed their clout towards academic institutions. One respondent reported an instance of intimidation towards a group of academics, whereby military officers “wanted to tell *us* what they believe national security *is* and *how we should be teaching it!*,” redefined around “*fighting narcos!*” (Anonymous Mexico 1, interview 2020). Meanwhile, civil solutions lack any “kind of strategic coherence or clarity” (Canales, interview 2021). While the bilateral relationship between SEDENA and SEMAR only grew, this lack of civil clarity impeded US support to these channels, leaving US officials “just waiting to have somebody to talk to them” (Canales, interview 2021). Although the 2021 Bicentennial Framework was proposed to revamp US security cooperation with less focus on militarization, it continued to rely heavily on the kingpin strategy (Olson 2022).

Moreover, despite receiving significant support from oppositional civil society groups during his campaign, AMLO shut down public dialogue and launched a smear campaign against these organizations, labeling them as representatives of foreign interests. This delegitimization prompted other decision-makers to shut their doors. Echoing the sentiment of many civil society leaders, Edna Jaime of México Evalúa remarked that: “We feel like we have a knife to our necks” (Jaime, interview 2020). Fearing budget cuts and legal repercussions, these groups were left to fend for their own survival, thereby collapsing the collective power of coalition groups and rendering groups unable to evaluate and contest policy decisions. These processes have further cemented the military as the only option.

VI. Chapter 6: Comparing Legitimation in Colombia's Peace-building and Mexico's Abandoned Prevention Reforms

Despite an “effective” and publicly-favored bilateral military policy in Colombia, the Santos government pivoted to peace. Despite a “failed” and publicly disfavored bilateral military policy in Mexico, the Peña Nieto government abandoned prevention reform and doubled-down on the military approach. This chapter identifies the critical junctures that explain Colombia's pivot and Mexico's decision to escalate the military strategy. I detail how state-building prescriptions penetrated the debates and tensions that traditionally guided strategic decisions, producing distinct opportunities and constraints for militants and reformers. In both cases, I find that, on balance, initiative rationales around drugs and terrorism empowered militant solutions and exerted legitimacy constraints on comprehensive alternatives. The key differences were the alternatives available in recipient policy-making. In Colombia, sufficient policy consensus, infrastructure, knowledge, and inclusion enabled reformers to reframe their approaches as “acceptable” and pivot policy. In Mexico, the absence of these conditions narrowed space for alternative claims. Available alternatives not only influenced positive reform outcomes, but also increased the likelihood for US cooperation to offer opportunities for sustainable reform.

A. US Rationales and Policy Debates in Colombia and Mexico

In both cases, US prescriptions for managing crime and terrorism exerted similar effects on how recipient policy actors negotiated what state actions could and should be

pursued. US initiatives involved high-level bilateral meetings, intelligence-sharing, trainings, technical expertise, and shared programming that socialized a broad range of recipient actors into notions of “appropriate” security administration, methods, institutional roles, and metrics. Cooperation thus shaped the terrain through which elites negotiated policy decisions. My data demonstrated that, in both Colombia and Mexico, US initiatives overwhelmingly advanced militant claims and practices, while also fostering conditions that largely either subordinated, neglected, or rejected recipient reformer proposals.

i. US Policy Rationales and Military Escalation in Colombia and Mexico

In both Colombia and Mexico, US counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism cooperation favored Colombian and Mexican state and political actors who pursued military solutions. Uribe and Calderón each leveraged US cooperation and introduced historically unprecedented military escalations in Colombia and Mexico. Despite both the successive proposals for change by the Santos and Peña Nieto governments, and the decrease in the monetary value of US military assistance, ongoing smooth bilateral relationships continued to strengthen favorable conditions for militant actors to center their claims and practices in security decisions. These opportunities included not only the development of military strategies, but also the reinforcement of lasting changes to institutional doctrine, culture, and power. US cooperation thereby exerted similar effects in Colombia and Mexico: by 1) clarifying militant roles and strategic goals as to counter-narcotics; 2) expanding militant capacities, functions, and expertise; and 3) defining militant interpretations of policy success.

1. Clarifying military roles and strategic goals

US cooperation provided new security missions that clarified militant roles and strategic goals in Colombia and Mexico. In both cases, the political class had traditionally been at odds with decisive military action. Historically, Colombian political leaders' repeated attempts to engage in comprehensive peace processes had faced resistance from military and right-wing political elites who preferred stronger military action. In Mexico, political leaders had traditionally feared the prospect of a powerful army and limited the military's involvement in public security matters. In both countries, state and political elites lacked clarity over military roles, debating the appropriate extent of military involvement in internal security and law enforcement. In particular, in both cases national elites had traditionally conceived of counter-narcotics to fall outside of official military responsibilities. Both armies had also pushed against US pressure to take on a larger role in counter-narcotics. Finally, both countries had also lacked well-established national security policies, and they were in the early phases of developing a professional security culture.

US cooperation shaped the development of each country's strategic vision. Fueled by perceived bureaucratic advantages, security forces in Colombia and Mexico assumed new roles and objectives through a shared understanding with Washington. In Colombia, the introduction of a new bilateral mission defined an unprecedented agreement between political leadership and military elites, diverging from the longstanding political consensus for a peace alternative. In Mexico, the new bilateral mission encouraged political elite decisions to formalize and advance military authorities for the first time, drawing from Colombia as a strategic blueprint.

Throughout the successive administrations of Santos in Colombia and Peña Nieto in Mexico, US cooperation further solidified strategic clarity for military action. In both countries, the bilateral mission granted the military increased official responsibilities in law enforcement and greater authority in strategic planning processes. As a result, defense institutions gained more prestige and political power compared to other institutions.

2. Expanded capacities, functions, and expertise

In both Colombia and Mexico, US cooperation enabled militant actors to expand their capacities, functions, and expertise to assimilate their new missions. Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative helped defense sectors to develop these from a starting point of virtual zero. While the defense sectors in each country expanded their unique skill sets, bilateral cooperation provided unprecedented institutional opportunities and incentives that reinforced military protagonism and oriented state actions towards war-making in both cases.

For instance, during both the Uribe and Calderón administrations, bilateral intelligence-sharing for high-value targeting emerged as a skill set and practice. US intelligence cooperation not only brought about cultural transformations within both defense sectors but also presented opportunities for them to exert increased control over state policy. In Colombia, as the effectiveness of Uribe's large-scale military offensives began to wane, US cooperation built an intelligence apparatus capable of targeting a guerilla leadership that had thus far eluded intensive operational efforts. The effectiveness of these capabilities allowed Uribe to revitalize a military solution. In Mexico, longstanding requests from defense institutions to expand intelligence functions had been previously denied by a

disinterested political leadership. US cooperation not only influenced Calderón's decision to greenlight these requests, but also helped build a new security system centered around intelligence functions. Guided by US know-how, military institutions ultimately benefited the most from new intelligence capabilities and secured a new, privileged position over state policy.

During the Santos and Peña Nieto administrations, US cooperation continued to enhance military capabilities that enabled the defense sector to advance their reputation, leverage, and credibility. In both countries, these opportunities further "nationalized" the bilateral mission and reinforced military leadership over security problems. In Colombia, these developments allowed the defense sector to more effectively advance their interests and visions, both through new international commitments and among national institutions with considerably lower capabilities. In Mexico, these developments heightened military enthusiasm for and control over counter-narcotics policies, coinciding with a political transition that compelled weak civil law enforcement institutions to essentially begin from scratch.

3. Defining militant interpretations of policy success

Bilateral cooperation defined new interpretations of policy success just as improved military capabilities delivered on these new metrics. Achieved "results" oriented political leaders and defense institutions under a shared consensus for a military solution. During Uribe's Colombia, US counterparts pressed for and helped advance an unprecedented vision for policy success. Battlefield victories and destroyed coca crops aligned the Colombian military and political class under the belief that defeating the guerrillas through military

means was both favorable and possible. During Calderón's Mexico, US cooperation guided political and military elites through the shared metric of DTO captures. Executed captures consumed policy decisions into a tunnel vision quest for military "results."

These bilateral visions of military success continued to drive elite consensus during the Santos and Peña Nieto administrations. Despite Santos' pivot to negotiations, many Colombian political circles, MoD officials and officers, and US government counterparts continued to measure success through the promises of military victory. Their insistence on the feasibility of the drug war and the FARC's military defeat challenged the premises of Santos' peace reforms. Despite Peña Nieto's initial promises to reform a counter-productive kingpin strategy, decision-makers and their US counterparts maintained Calderón-era metrics that fixed security priorities on *capos* beheaded.

Notably, one significant difference in initiative reception processes between Colombia and Mexico was bureaucratic competition between hard-side operational agencies. Both countries had historically fraught relationships between their militaries, the National Police (Colombia), and the Federal Police (Mexico). In both cases, US aid and cooperation was a source of competition between these institutions to build their respective capabilities. However, in Colombia, these competitions were managed through the MoD's unified structure, which centralizes decisions between the Military, Air Force, Navy, and National Police. With some exceptions, the Ministry's design thus largely resolves bureaucratic competitions between security forces—over national budgets, US

resources, and responsibilities—within the institution itself.¹⁰¹ The MoD’s structure thereby largely prevented internal disputes from reaching bilateral-level decisions, and prevented competing demands (Anonymous Colombia 3, interview 2022). By contrast, Mexican forces are organized within their own agencies, resulting in severe bureaucratic competitions over US resources.

While the policy effects were clear within each individual case, the comparative implications are murkier. On the one hand, less bureaucratic competition made the Colombian MoD into a singularly powerful and premier institution, with a strong influence over Colombian security policy decisions. On the other hand, in Mexico, bureaucratic competition became absolutely fundamental to security policy decisions, incentivizing a singular focus on the kingpin strategy and reinforcing the military's role in the counter-narcotics mission.

ii. US Rationales and Reform in Colombia and Mexico

US initiatives also provided support to reformers who proposed solutions aiming to either soften military policy or offer alternatives for resolving violence. At times, US cooperation offered a critical opening for reformers to promote their claims against militant closure during the Uribe and Calderón administrations. In Colombia, despite a strong allegiance between the political establishment and the generals, reform-friendly officials and activists mobilized US pressure to advance human rights reforms within the Ministry of

¹⁰¹ Because the Colombian National Police could request both DoD and INL resources, the latter acted as a backchannel for US government funds that triggered some internal policy disputes within the Ministry of Defense.

Defense. In Mexico, US Ambassador Carlos Pascual organized a crucial window for reformers to promote a social prevention agenda within Calderón's hermetic security decision table, and persuaded receptiveness from political leadership.

However, far more often, US cooperation during the Uribe and Calderón administrations engaged with national reformers in ways that were peripheral to reform efforts, subordinated to militant goals, and adverse to reformer proposals and initiatives. The overall effect was that US initiatives often either sidestepped reform, or even introduced and reinforced obstacles for reformer actors to advance alternative solutions, while providing opportunities for militant actors to advance their claims.

1. Sidelining reformer efforts

US cooperation to reform-oriented institutions in Colombia and Mexico was comparatively far more marginal in dollar amounts, quality, and intensity of cooperation. In practice, US support for reform was often tangential to the efforts of soft-side or reform actors in Colombia and Mexico. In Colombia, development officials in *Acción Social* observed that while US cooperation was useful, they did not receive direct training, and assistance was primarily restricted to small infrastructure projects. The impact was diluted by middlemen contractors and slow timelines, lagging far behind US support for military action. US support for peace efforts with the FARC and ELN was significantly lower than that provided for development, differing by orders of magnitude. The US Embassy did not extend assistance to the Peace Commissioner's ongoing initiatives until the end of the Uribe administration. In Mexico, prevention reformers in the National Center for Crime Prevention struggled to navigate USAID's bureaucratic procedures. They were unable to secure

funding, leading to Washington's absence from their efforts to ground social prevention in laws and programs altogether.

2. Subordinated to militant goals

US cooperation to reformers was often subordinated to military goals. In Colombia, joint alternative development programs during the Uribe administration serve as a clear example: breaking with historical precedent by obeying military strategy rather than socio-economic needs and relying on prior military action. US interactions with human rights reformers were also often vetoed by bottom-line military priorities and interests in Bogotá and Washington. In Mexico, Washington offered extensive cooperation to develop Calderón's law enforcement agencies with the aim of gradually replacing the military's role in public security. However, support for the Federal Police predominantly prioritized replicating military strategies rather than attending to police development, and many US agencies ultimately favored cooperation with defense institutions.

Within the context of a hardline national agenda, the subordination of US cooperation to military objectives meant that national elites could leverage reform assistance as a justification for escalating military-led efforts. This was especially evident during periods when military solutions faced political vulnerability. In Colombia, alternative development justified a highly controversial and contested policy of aerial eradication. US and Colombian defense institutions wielded human rights reform as a rationale to strengthen military cooperation when Uribe's military establishment faced a horrific human rights scandal. In Mexico, key decision-makers in Washington and Mexico City viewed prevention primarily as a tool to uphold a politically unfeasible military confrontation, rather than as a

means to question military action. Calderón complemented US prevention assistance by escalating militarized police units in Ciudad Juárez.

3. Adverse to reformer proposals and initiatives

US cooperation also actively opposed reform proposals and initiatives, becoming a tool wielded by national militant actors against reformers. In Colombia, throughout most of the Uribe government, US officials rejected OACP efforts to dialogue with the FARC and ELN, clearly communicating their expectations for the administration to uphold a hardline stance favored by defense officials and right-wing elites. Under the guise of the War on Terror, US Embassy officials also provided guidance, resources, training, and follow-up to Colombian intelligence agents who illegally surveilled Supreme Court justices, politicians, and civil society groups who opposed the military strategy. In Mexico, vested militant interests in Washington and Mexico City collaborated to thwart attempts by security officials to rethink the kingpin strategy in favor of violence reduction goals. US agencies reinforced institutional incentives within defense institutions that heavily discouraged new proposals. Additionally, cooperation practices directly authorized US counterparts to bypass any centralized decisions to change course.

During the Santos and Peña Nieto administrations, US cooperation replicated many of these same dynamics, engaging with reformers in ways that were often either peripheral, subordinated to military goals, or actively opposed to their efforts. Accordingly, in many respects, US cooperation empowered national militant actors and their desired solutions during a period when national reformers were presented with a policy opening.

However, there were also key differences in US support for reformers between these two successive administrations. The variations observed cannot be primarily attributed to factors within US policy, such as the presence of a US government supportive of reforms. Certainly, these cases both demonstrated that a friendly US administration can potentially increase the chances of reform outcomes. The Obama administration was indisputably more supportive of domestic reform efforts than either the Bush or Trump administrations. Accordingly, in Colombia, analysts claim that a serendipitous political alignment between Santos and Obama enabled favorable international conditions for the peace process. During the Calderón years, a pro-reform US Ambassador under Obama also crucially enabled prevention efforts.

However, my case analysis complicates and conditions this conclusion. For one, I demonstrate that Santos' peace effort preceded substantive support from the Obama administration by several years. Moreover, Obama's support only arrived after a long process of persuasion, which hinged on both Santos reformers the presence of a US ambassador that deeply understood peace policy and defied the visions and interests of the great majority of US diplomats and security officials engaged in Plan Colombia. Washington's support for prevention in Mexico also hinged on domestic reformers who first persuaded the US Ambassador during a crucial moment when political elites were open to new policy ideas. Second, my analysis demonstrates that far less helpful Ambassadors also served under the Obama administration in both Colombia and Mexico, suggesting that amenable US Embassy leadership was highly contingent. Although US leadership could be impactful, the routine workings of bilateral cooperation yielded far more consistent and enduring effects. Both Plan Colombia and Mérida Initiative programs ran largely on

autopilot, without much political interference. Finally, both Santos and Peña Nieto coincided with comparable periods of the Obama and Trump presidencies, both sharing two years (2016-2018) with an unfriendly US government. And yet, these cases received very different levels of US support for reform.

In the next sections, I detail how key conditions internal to these recipient cases not only crucially enabled national reform to succeed in Colombia and fail in Mexico, but also created divergent opportunities for US cooperation to contribute positively to reform efforts.

B. The Availability of Alternatives

Despite similar patterns in the effects of US cooperation within national policy debates, Colombia pivoted to peace and Mexico abandoned prevention reform, doubling down on a failed military solution. What are the central differences in legitimation that explain these divergent policy outcomes?

This analysis explains different outcomes by centering how US initiatives shaped recipient elites negotiations regarding what policy actions could and should be pursued. As different factions of militant and reformer recipient officials debated policy options, US interventions overwhelmingly supported militant projects, often coding militant approaches as the only “acceptable” solutions. Crucially, however, levels of elite acceptance for military solutions do not account for divergent outcomes. If that were the case, then we would again expect Colombia to have continued the military strategy, and Mexico to have discontinued escalation. Unlike in Mexico, in Colombia, there was never any debate around the legitimacy of the military’s internal role. While diverse Colombian state and political elites

broadly accepted the war's success, even Mexican militant elites believed that kingpin and the frontal strategy was not working. While in Colombia, militant elites emphatically defended the rationales of the drug war, in Mexico, even militant elites critiqued these policy logics. Although Colombian and Mexican militant elites received similar advantages from US cooperation, Mexican militants still experienced considerably less strategic clarity or expanded capabilities compared to their Colombian counterparts.

Rather, the critical difference between the two cases was the availability of alternatives in recipient policy-making, which guided whether reform was accepted or rejected. I identify four key conditions—consensus, inclusion, knowledge, and infrastructure—which conditioned perceptions of alternative solutions as desirable and feasible solutions, and thus influenced decisions. Colombia veered policy to peace-building through high levels of: i) *consensus*, diverse elite sectors accepted negotiated solutions; ii) *infrastructure*, established institutions and laws justified, routinized, and integrated efforts; iii) *knowledge*, broad proficiency with peace approaches; and iv) *inclusion*, high-level decisions centered reformer officials, and engaged civil society demands. By contrast, Mexico escalated militant US prescriptions and eschewed reform due to historically low: i) *consensus*, militant actors rejected reforms and deterred decision-makers; ii) *infrastructures*, nascent reform institutions and laws dispersed efforts; iii) *knowledge*, reformers lacked clear schemas; iv) *inclusion*, top-level decisions excluded reformer officials and civil society. In Colombia, available peace conditions ultimately provided cultural resources for reformers to reinterpret, renegotiate, and oppose initiative rationales, unite around a clear alternative, and defend reform from legitimacy challenges. In Mexico, the absence of available alternative

conditions allowed militants to gain control over policy decisions, isolate reformers, and insulate both escalation and abandoned reform from legitimacy challenges.

While shaped by US cooperation, available alternatives are intrinsic to long-term, but variable policy relations and debates in Colombia and Mexico. The availability of alternatives not only determined whether sustainable reform was possible, but ultimately also determined the ways in which US initiatives contributed to either empowering or constraining reform. As discussed, US cooperation was peripheral, subordinated, and actively opposed to reform efforts during both the Santos and Peña Nieto administrations. However, available alternatives in Colombia also encouraged increased levels of US support for Santos' sustainable reform by persuading US actors that peace was an acceptable solution. Policy actors also managed to persuade some modifications to US policy in Mexico. However, in Mexico, a lack of available alternatives ultimately maintained low levels of US cooperation for reform, and reinforced militant control over policy.

1. Consensus: High Consensus in Colombia and Low Consensus in Mexico

Colombia and Mexico expressed key historical differences around available consensus for alternative solutions. In both cases, militant elites had secured unprecedented consensus for military solutions during the previous administrations of Alvaro Uribe and Felipe Calderón. However, in Colombia, historically high levels of consensus for alternatives enabled diverse elites to accept negotiated peace as a necessary solution, thereby compromising militant challenges. In Mexico, low consensus shaped elite perceptions of prevention as an ancillary, and ultimately irrelevant policy, thus subordinating reformers to militant views.

In Colombia, Santos' peace decision was the result of a longstanding belief that a negotiated solution was essential to defeat the FARC. This approach was not only widely accepted, but also represented a chief aspiration across state and political leadership for decades. Even as Uribe had organized considerable political backing for a military solution for the first time, negotiations had still retained an "incommensurable political pull" (Yamhure, interview 2022). Save for defense officials, decision-makers in the Santos administration reflected a decisive and largely unified political commitment to a comprehensive negotiated solution. While defense actors and right-wing politicians disagreed with the far-reaching scope and specifics of reforms, even these militant factions accepted some form of negotiated solution as necessary to end the conflict.

By contrast, in Mexico, Peña Nieto's prevention consensus had been built on shallow and shaky ground. Consensus for prevention was both far less diffuse and far less ingrained into the thinking, goals, or interests of the state and political class. Reformers had only first organized a normative imperative for prevention during the previous Calderón administration, seizing a political opportunity presented by the severity of the crisis. While few political leaders and state officials were even familiar with prevention, defense actors altogether rejected prevention as irrelevant and counterproductive. Even among officials advocating for reform, there were significant disagreements over the fundamental specifics of what prevention should involve. Although Peña Nieto's initial buy-in had been partly motivated by a sincere conviction that prevention would be a "good investment" (Gamerós, interview 2020), his investment had always been marginal.

These varying levels of consensus shaped different trajectories of policy debates in Colombia and Mexico. Because negotiations were a "just a given" (Eastman, interview

2022) in Colombia, they never had to be proven as a solution. Due to prevalent acceptance of comprehensive negotiations during the Santos administration, it was the militant elites who found themselves compelled to challenge established norms. Further, militant elites were forced to direct their opposition towards the specifics of reforms, rather than outright rejecting negotiations. Ultimately, the unanimous approval of political elites in Congress overcame militant objections to certain measures in the accords, thereby ensuring the durability of a comprehensive peace agreement.

By contrast, in Mexico, prevention was always cast in doubt. Peña Nieto's limited initial investment further undercut the opportunity to build a broader consensus behind the prevention agenda. Faced with skeptical, and even hostile, decision-makers, reformers found themselves forced to frame prevention as a supplementary reform that would not disturb the military status quo, all in an effort to sustain precarious support. This tenuous compromise ultimately proved too fragile to withstand the increasingly predominant influence of militant interests and visions in interpreting an aggravated crisis. Lacking either broad or cohesive political support, perceptions of prevention's impotence informed the decision to gut prevention.

US Support to Consensus

These cases demonstrate that available consensus for alternatives drove US cooperation provided to national reformers. While high consensus in Colombia ultimately moved US buy-in to Santos' process, low consensus in Mexico was mirrored by marginal US support.

In Colombia, US military support had historically acted as an alternative to a normative tradition of negotiations. High level US officials had supported long-standing militant claims and were committed to a military strategy to defeat the FARC. Initially, Santos' pivot became a source of tension with Washington, which dismissed the main rationales of the peace process.

However, after some "foot-dragging" and a process of convincing, US cooperation found itself forced to adapt to Santos' shift to a "new reality" (McKinley, interview 2022). Washington's willingness to consider peace only materialized after the peace process had demonstrated progress, thereby unlocking important opportunities for US support. Washington's approval failed to convince an ardent militant opposition within Colombia. Nonetheless, US favor provided needed reassurance to many other political and state elites, including those from hardline sectors. This reassurance played a role in boosting domestic political support for the process by alleviating concerns that opting for peace might jeopardize US cooperation or introduce external obstacles, making the process unfeasible. US officials also directly reinforced national reformer claims whilst discrediting those of the opposition.

Policy actors in Mexico had first created an opening for prevention reform during the Calderón administration by persuading the US ambassador to support their vision. In turn, US backing persuaded the Presidency to accept prevention. During the Peña Nieto administration, however, Washington mirrored Peña Nieto's own marginal interest in and limited vision for prevention, also imagined as a small addition to hardline strategy. Prevention was not even a topic of discussion among high-level counterparts, and the US Embassy remained unengaged when the Executive decided to defund prevention. USAID

lacked sufficient influence to encourage increased buy-in with Peña Nieto officials, and their attempts fell flat.

At the same time, in both cases, Washington's acceptance of alternative strategies was often contingent on maintaining continuity with key aspects of a bilateral military strategy that countered reformer consensus. Many high level US officials involved in Plan Colombia tolerated, rather than actively committed to the peace process. The US' hardline stance created opportunities for militant actors to exploit US interests to disrupt national consensus for certain reform measures, thereby amplifying national tensions. In Mexico, the US Embassy's lack of involvement with promoting prevention contrasts with top US officials who favored the political class' growing reliance on the military vision, which played a part in the decision to defund prevention efforts.

2. Infrastructure: High Infrastructure in Colombia and Low Infrastructure in Mexico

The Colombian and Mexican cases demonstrated significant historical differences around available infrastructure for alternative solutions. Both Colombia and Mexico reflected a historical lack of formal, professionalized bureaucracies and policy cultures. However, Colombia's peace agenda was highly integrated within clear and accepted state mandates, state roles, and normative practices that both informed and facilitated decisions, and also protected reform from challenges. By contrast, Mexico's prevention agenda lacked stable grounding in state decisions, rendering reform vulnerable to established militant practices.

In Colombia, despite historically weak implementation, peace was nonetheless a routine matter. Comprehensive peace policies had been thoroughly authorized and embedded into state decisions through myriad institutions and laws over decades. During the Santos administration, the OACP, in particular, exerted a centralized power to design and coordinate a complex network of laws, national institutions and actors, sizable state budgets, and international allies at the service of peace policy, including defense institutions.

In Mexico, prevention was a green reform administered under nascent institutions and laws. Reformers had only first begun instituting prevention during the latter years of the Calderón presidency, launching a lobbying effort to establish the first federal social prevention laws, programs, and resource streams from scratch. They invited other institutions to coordinate their practices for the first time. In Peña Nieto's security system, prevention reformers lacked autonomy or formal authority over their own internal agenda, let alone that of other security agencies. Subordinated under the traditional security system, prevention responsibilities were undefined, jurisdictions limited, and budgets anemic.

The variations in infrastructure significantly influenced the course of policy debates. High infrastructure in Colombia not only provided a normative order that guided peace decisions, but also enabled Santos reformers to leverage state conventions to institute a broad range of peace decisions and insulate these from militant challenges. Reformers strategically aligned peace proposals within existing legal and institutional frameworks to justify proposals. This approach either narrowed the space for debate or eliminated it entirely, rendering peace decisions into routine procedural affairs. The authority to redirect wide variety of agencies and actors at the service of a far-reaching peace agenda advanced the agenda's credibility, diffused tensions, and brokered compromises around contentious

aspects of reform. These institutional powers also subordinated military roles and mandates to accommodate reform and safeguard peace from future political challenges.

By contrast, in Mexico, weak infrastructure stymied prevention actions and rendered reform vulnerable to the more established incentives of the security system. Reformers faced a lack of power or credibility to make decisions, manage implementation, or secure resources for prevention. These challenges arose from resistant decision-makers and agencies, which refused to translate reforms into bureaucratic practices, and even diverted prevention resources towards hard-side objectives. The Executive used resulting policy discoordination and disassembly to justify the decision to defund prevention entirely, and double down on hard-side efforts.

US Support to Infrastructure

Differences in available infrastructure shaped how US support influenced national policy debates during the Santos and Peña Nieto administration. High infrastructure in Colombia transformed US support, inviting critical contributions to reform. Low infrastructure in Mexico impeded US cooperation.

In Colombia, US administrative support to peace institutions lagged until the peace process was well underway. Prior to Santos' peace process, US cooperation to alternative infrastructure had been overwhelmingly peripheral, subordinated to military objectives, and opposed to reform. However, Santos' extensive peace agenda prompted a surge in US programming to align with these changes. New US programs responded directly to Santos' nationwide execution of the accord. Clear formal routines, practices, and commitments

enabled Washington to provide cooperation that specifically targeted some of the agreement's central political vulnerabilities. US cooperation "nudged" historically resistant politicians and Colombian agencies to quickly allocate their budgets and implement reform. Washington also designed programs that targeted historical problems with slow implementation to generate confidence and counter militant accusations of infeasibility.

In Mexico, low prevention infrastructure resulted in a far reduced set of opportunities for US support. Lacking formal roles, practices, routines, and misalignments not only directly obstructed US programs, but also shaped mirror problems in US prevention cooperation. At the same time, the Mérida Initiative also neglected to connect prevention to other initiative mandates or practices in military and law enforcement approaches. Just as Peña Nieto decided that discoordination justified gutting national prevention, USAID's discoordination with federal elites justified the decision to cut US national-level programs.

Notwithstanding these differences, both cases notably demonstrated similar tendencies regarding US support to infrastructure being peripheral to reform efforts. Similar to prevention programs in Mexico, Colombian reformers experienced challenges "harmonizing" (Gamboa, interview 2022) USAID programs that maintained their own models, personnel, and resources. Like Mexico, Colombian officials sensed that USAID programs were more responsive to the business interests of consultants than to reformer goals. As with prevention programs in Mexico, USAID programs for peace also lacked visibility within the US mission overall. In both cases, US cooperation for reform paled in comparison to the breadth, intensity, and intimacy of military cooperation. However, high infrastructure in Colombia made these ongoing deficiencies lack as much national impact, whereas low infrastructure in Mexico amplified problems in US cooperation.

In both cases, military goals superseded Washington's support to reform infrastructure. In Colombia, US security officials invoked ongoing mandates for counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics to legally restrict cooperation to make-or-break peace measures. In Mexico, military priorities obstructed a "common problem definition" (Betancourt, interview 2021) among US agencies for reform, and isolated prevention responses.

Finally, in both cases, US support provided to militant actors often directly challenged reform infrastructure. In Colombia, while USAID programs neglected to provide support for voluntary eradication, militant opposition leveraged ongoing US counter-narcotics cooperation to successfully undermine the peace accord's legal commitments. When Santos' peace agenda reduced defense budget allocations, bilateral military cooperation served to push back against these cuts, offering resources that could not be usurped by reform-oriented policymakers. In Mexico, Washington's outsized investments to hard-side infrastructure reinforced the militant practices and institutional incentives that sidelined coordination with prevention reform.

3. Knowledge: High Knowledge in Colombia and Low Knowledge in Mexico

The Colombian and Mexican cases demonstrated critical differences in available knowledge, or clear and broadly-accepted policy models and methods for alternative solutions. In both Colombia and Mexico, civilian knowledge of national security issues historically lagged behind that of the military establishment. However, in Colombia, reformers guided and justified a comprehensive peace process through high levels of policy

expertise. In Mexico, low prevention knowledge impeded reformers and informed the decision to defund prevention.

In Colombia, reformers drew on over three decades of institutional lessons, encompassing both successes and failures in negotiating peace. This experience lent credence to the idea that far-reaching social reforms were effective solutions to violence. Santos' OACP and the government negotiating team offered expertise from a wide spectrum of institutional perspectives, experiences, and issues, ranging across both the peace and defense sector alike. Every aspect of reform design also counted on thorough technical input of national experts, national universities, think-tanks, and the international community.

By contrast, in Mexico, green prevention bureaucrats improvised reforms from a void, unfamiliar with what prevention even involved or aimed to do, what populations or crimes it should target, what worked best, and how to do it. Low knowledge among prevention officials reflected a broader historical rift between military and civilian security expertise. While the defense sector was the sole producer of policy knowledge around violence problems, civilian solutions had long lacked any specialists or models. Accordingly, a history of military research, indicators, and processes shaped the policy-thinking of decision-makers.

These sweeping differences in alternative policy knowledge explain divergent outcomes. In Colombia, broad proficiency with peace negotiations allowed reformers to define every step of the policy process, justify these decisions as optimal, and thus better insulate the process against key areas of militant challenges. Historical institutional lessons decided a clear procedural plan, set goals, necessary steps, the government's narrative, red lines, rules of the game, tactics, and anticipated risks, including potential "legitimacy

deficits.” Additionally, these lessons guided strategies for effectively engaging defense actors in the process. Past policy experiences served as blueprints for many reform models, but for those without national precedent, like drug reform, scientific studies, expert recommendations, and international guidelines were crucial for designing and justifying these reforms. Reformers leveraged knowledge that was widely accepted in defense circles and which fused military and social policies. This approach aimed to resonate with security actors and rationalized Havana’s far-reaching agenda. Technical sub-commissions also leveraged the expertise of defense officials and officers directly. Military expertise and specialized peace training not only expedited highly complex decisions at the table and ensured a credible implementation process, but also helped foment military buy-in.

In Mexico, low knowledge compounded a negative feedback loop that justified defunding prevention. First, lacking prevention expertise, experience, training, or established policy models to reference, officials designed practices without know-how on selecting intervention models, goals, procedures, indicators, or evaluation guidelines. Second, low knowledge among decision-makers also impeded prevention from ever becoming legible as a viable or effective solution. Policy-making ignored scientific discussion, and completely dissociated social indicators from political evaluation. This dynamic resulted in poorly designed and poorly substantiated programs, rendered vulnerable to political attack from decision-makers who measured prevention programs using traditional military indicators.

US support to Knowledge

Available knowledge in Colombia and Mexico also determined the ways that Washington could support reformers within national policy debates. While high available knowledge in Colombia enabled US cooperation to contribute to reform efforts, low available knowledge in Mexico impeded opportunities for US support.

In Colombia, the peace process was overwhelmingly conceived and driven by national expertise, enabling domestic reformers to leverage opportunities from external support. Knowledgeable US officials could engage credibly with diverse Colombian actors, address procedural questions and confirm the policy merits of negotiations. High knowledge also enabled US officials to assist Santos reformers in discussing concepts, frameworks, and tactical strategies that facilitated progress in peace talks. More indirectly, national reformers leveraged US models that were widely accepted by defense actors, thereby serving as a credible source to authorize a comprehensive agenda. During the implementation phase, US programs shared know-how that helped national institutions to improve their ability to plan accord implementation.

In Mexico, US programs specifically focused on targeting knowledge problems in prevention—including sharing lessons for program design, methods, models, techniques, and evaluation. Nonetheless, a lack of “clarity” among prevention bureaucrats disrupted bilateral coordination, and hindered the integration of these lessons into national practice. Peña Nieto’s decision to defund prevention further halted US training and expertise for national prevention bureaucrats and implementation, thereby undermining opportunities for broader replication.

In both cases, there were also areas where US contributions to reformer knowledge were peripheral to ongoing efforts. In Colombia, USAID programs neglected to review with national implementation agencies what led to success or what hindered progress, or analyze how to adjust their strategies accordingly. In Mexico, business incentives in USAID programs often superseded a focus on best practices, design, results, and impact.

In both Colombia and Mexico, US cooperation also directly opposed reformer knowledge. In Colombia, US contributions to military policy knowledge for counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics increased during the Santos administration. While other national agencies struggled to plan implementation, the Ministry of Defense had the greatest capacity to define national policy directions, needs, priorities, and strategies. More directly, the US Embassy launched a research campaign to challenge the national policy expertise authorizing drug policy reform. In Mexico, while USAID prevention knowledge failed to reach decision-makers, a much greater share of US cooperation was distributed through training and expertise to execute kingpin captures. US assistance thereby reinforced the militant metrics and logics that dominated high-level national decisions and ultimately abandoned reform.

4. Inclusion: High Inclusion in Colombia and Low Inclusion in Mexico

a. Horizontal Inclusion: High Horizontal Inclusion in Colombia and Low Horizontal Inclusion in Mexico

Colombia and Mexico presented significant historical differences around available horizontal inclusion. Both Colombia and Mexico reflected personalist democracies, in which the top leader has outsized say over policy. But Santos delegated decisions to the peace commissioner while Peña Nieto delegated decisions to the military. In Colombia, reformers retained high levels of centralized control over decisions, resulting in decisions that reflected their visions and interests. In Mexico, reformers were completely excluded from strategic decision-making processes, resulting in decisions that reflected the interests and visions of militant authorities.

In Colombia, Santos' peace bureaucrats assumed a traditional authority over the peace agenda. Working alongside a pro-peace presidency, peace bureaucrats were not only included in peace decisions, but in charge of them. Historically, peace authorities had completely excluded hostile defense authorities and right-wing powers from peace reforms. The Santos administration opted to break with a historical pattern of excluding military actors, offering them a limited say in peace. However, peace reformers retained power and influence over these militant factions, controlling dissent. Reformers exercised final say over the shape of agreements, who to include in decision-making processes, and when and to what extent they should be involved.

By contrast, in Mexico, prevention bureaucrats were completely excluded from policy decisions. Peña Nieto recurred to traditional decision-making processes that were dominated by hard-side operational institutions. Moreover, Peña Nieto granted even greater policy power to military leaders. He also narrowed decision-making by convening fewer joint decisions, demanding less coordination, and giving operational institutions more autonomy to integrate decisions within bureaucratic routines. During the Peña Nieto administration, military authorities operated as the de facto authors of security decisions. Decision-makers neither represented prevention institutions, nor articulated claims on this reform's behalf.

Differences in horizontal inclusion shaped policy debates in Colombia and Mexico, leading to divergent policy trajectories. In Colombia, high levels of inclusion largely contained negotiated peace to the visions of government peace reformers, and restricted the logic and influence of militant views. Even a modest level of military involvement managed to alleviate tensions among certain defense officials and officers. However, right-wing sectors also leveraged military discontent to secure formal say over the negotiating agenda. And yet, reformers ultimately retained control over the peace agenda, guiding a comprehensive vision that defense authorities and opposition politicians were obligated to follow.

In Mexico, Peña Nieto's government decided to gut prevention within a closed circuit of reactive state logics. Narrow decision-making evacuated any considerations of prevention, or of any other solutions that fell outside the purview of tactical-operational logistics. Policy debates turned on how to best conduct operations, producing few opportunities to even question the aims and direction of policy. This structure also

incentivized tight militant control over the violence problem. Prevention reformers had little opportunity to propose policy ideas, explain programs, lobby for resources, or to contest funding cuts. Decision-makers neglected to seek any input from prevention bureaucrats before cutting reform.

US support for Horizontal Inclusion

Available horizontal inclusion shaped key opportunities for US support in each case. High horizontal inclusion in Colombia unlocked new channels of US support that reinforced Santos' reformer-centric decision-making model. Low horizontal inclusion in Mexico both impeded US efforts to support reformers during the Peña Nieto administration, and ultimately reinforced a militant decision-making model.

During Uribe's Colombia, Washington had helped build a model that positioned the military at the core of decision-making. However, Santos' decision to make peace the strategic heart of his approach prompted high-level US officials to turn to reformers as the central authors of decisions. US cooperation not only directly assisted reformers in making top-level decisions but also, in these processes, diminished the importance of the concerns raised by militant actors.

In Mexico, US authorities largely contained prevention within implementation activities, and neglected to represent prevention at senior levels of decision-making. The Peña Nieto administration largely evaded USAID's overtures to open communication channels between federal prevention bureaucrats and decision-making bodies. High-level US counterparts continued turning to security institutions as the central authorities.

In both cases, US support actively opposed reformer efforts by opening opportunities for militant decision-making. In Colombia, militant actors leveraged Washington policymakers to influence peace implementation through avenues that were not available to them domestically. In Mexico, USAID's highly restricted access to Peña Nieto decision-makers contrasts with hard-side US institutions, who consistently shared operational directives and incentives with the select militant officials who enclosed national policy.

b. Vertical Inclusion: High Vertical Inclusion in Colombia and Low Vertical Inclusion in Mexico

The Colombian and Mexican cases demonstrated marked historical differences around vertical inclusion for alternative solutions. Both Colombia and Mexico reflected a history of exclusive state elites resistant to implementing comprehensive reform. In both cases, military agendas had also fragmented collective demands and restricted collective spaces. However, in Colombia, the peace process offered a project and a channel for participation. High inclusion of oppositional civil society groups magnified demand and accountability for a far-reaching developmental peace. By contrast, In Mexico, the exclusion of civil society fragmented public calls for alternative solutions.

In Colombia, the high inclusion of civil society in peace reforms during the Santos presidency built on a rich history of mobilization. For over three decades, Colombian movements had consistently participated in the country's peace processes, pushing an exclusive political elite to embrace broader reforms. Government peace efforts had also sparked waves of national collective actions, where diverse groups united behind a common

demand for peace and effectively advocated for comprehensive state solutions. The peace movement exerted significant influence and credibility through informal and formal channels, ranging from large national peace networks to state bodies that invited social leaders to participate alongside high-level decision-makers. This history socialized a political belief that civic participation is valid and constructive, and the Santos administration incorporated these measures both within reform and the negotiations process itself. Beyond these formal channels, shared goals encouraged direct institutional and informal relationships between Santos reformers and peace advocates. The peace process also set off a surge of social movement activity. Groups reclaimed historical spaces of deliberation and assembly, drawing on abundant experience, expertise, and a well-established capacity to communicate clearly and broadly across various sectors. They built expansive agendas and connected them to government proposals.

In Mexico, low vertical inclusion during the Peña Nieto administration reflected a tradition in which hermetic government institutions had historically excluded civil society, not only from security policy, but also from political affairs in general. Organizations lacked the tools to comprehend the new violence problem or to contest the new frontal approach. Civil society struggled to react and adjust their strategies, resulting in largely sporadic advocacy efforts throughout most of the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations. Nevertheless, heightened pressure from civil society progressively led to the opening of both formal and informal channels for discussions with various institutional actors and policymakers, encompassing a broad spectrum of policy issues. Even though civil society gained more credibility, they still faced suspicious state institutions and officials, a lack of shared understanding with policymakers and, ultimately, closed government doors.

Different levels of vertical inclusion shaped policy debates, impacting the demand and accountability for an expansive alternative solution in each case. In Colombia, high civil society inclusion fostered strong, coherent, and cohesive public demands for peace, pushing the government's own vision to expand into a more far-reaching and transformative agenda. As a result, the peace process adopted measures in which the say of marginalized communities trumped that of powerful security institutions and right-wing elites. By aligning with government reformers, civil society actions also filled a crucial legitimacy gap. When militant challenges pushed the accords into a political crisis, civil society translated far-reaching reforms into democratic demands.

In Mexico, low vertical inclusion meant that the government's prevention agenda largely neglected to bring in the various demands and projects of an emergent civil society. Lacking either a clear and comprehensive alternative state project or inclusive deliberative spaces, civil society groups mostly organized around disparate demands disconnected from government practices and considerations. Similar to the lack of clarity in state institutions, fragmented groups had little capacity to communicate a common vision, articulating seemingly irreconcilable views of problems, policy solutions, and strategies. Civil organizations came together momentarily more in reaction to state policy issues rather than articulating a clear democratic demand for a transformative and comprehensive agenda. The government successfully contained civil society action to the oversight and monitoring of ongoing Peña Nieto's projects. Higher-level decision-makers paid little mind to the few select groups who aligned their claims behind the government's prevention proposals, directly obstructing channels for them to make demands and hold decision-makers accountable.

US support for Vertical Inclusion

Available vertical inclusion for alternatives in Colombia and Mexico also drove the types of US support provided to reformer civil society groups. While high vertical inclusion in Colombia during the Santos administration expanded opportunities for US support, low vertical inclusion in Mexico during the Peña Nieto administration contained cooperation.

Prior to Santos' peace process, US support to civil society groups had been largely subordinated to militant objectives or adverse to their claims, particularly in areas related to human rights reform and alternative development. Santos' peace process dramatically expanded US engagement with peace organizations. US cooperation was redirected towards activities that amplified peace's democratic demand, accompanying established formal and informal channels for citizen participation. Moreover, US cooperation opened new channels for civil participation to long-excluded sectors, helping communities to organize and become visible in deliberative spaces, define their participation in governance decisions, and advocate for accord implementation. US cooperation also strengthened consensus, capacities, and understanding within diverse national implementation agencies to dialogue with these groups and incorporate their agendas, enhancing government compliance with a more far-reaching peace.

By contrast, during the Peña Nieto administration, US support failed to bridge the issues that kept civil society out of national policy. US support focused on building connections between local civil society groups and local authorities, but it overlooked national-level civil society organizations that advocated for prevention alternatives. The Mérida Initiative also neglected to engage with nascent national movement groups who

protested frontal policies, or civil society initiatives working on reforms outside of government offers, like drug reform and international arms trafficking. The selective logic of US cooperation suggests that, similar to Peña Nieto, Washington restricted its support for civic engagement to monitoring and oversight of projects carried out by Peña Nieto's government, particularly those already aligned with established bilateral policies, such as democratic freedom and human rights.

Notably, in both cases, civil society actors noted other aspects of US cooperation that directly challenged their claims. During the Santos and Peña Nieto administrations, Washington's support to hard-side solutions far outweighed that to civil society, opposing social dialogue. Groups in Colombia and Mexico alike criticized US cooperation for strengthening the militant sectors that sideline them decision-making, justify reactionary state tactics, rationalize limited social investment, and antagonize their vision of transformational change.

E. Conclusion

Comparing successful peace in Colombia and failed prevention in Mexico, underscores the significance of available alternatives—sufficient consensus, infrastructure, knowledge, and inclusion. These pre-existing, local conditions are crucial for alternatives to become perceived as viable and desirable strategies, ultimately translating into policy changes. This comparative analysis not only demonstrates how available alternatives increase the likelihood for sustainable reform, but also underscores how these conditions increase the potential for US assistance to support these changes. In Colombia, Santos

reformers transformed the policy narrative, and so also redefined the terms of US support in their favor. Conversely, in Mexico, Peña Nieto's failure to develop a meaningful alternative—whether prevention or otherwise—allowed national elites to wield US cooperation to perpetuate a growing dependence on a military solution.

VII. Chapter 7: Acceptable Violence and Acceptable Peace

This dissertation specifies the role of legitimacy in influencing policy decisions within recipient countries of US security cooperation. The main research question asks, why do recipient countries continue military escalation or pivot to alternative reforms? My primary finding is that US initiatives can help shape heavy, if not insurmountable, legitimacy constraints on alternatives, making it difficult for these measures to gain acceptance or traction. However, specific historical policy relations and debates better position recipient reformers to navigate these constraints and ground sustainable change. I define these conditions as “available alternatives.” They enable alternative ideas to become perceived as realistic, effective, and accepted options among fractious recipient elites, and thus translate into state decisions. I determine that available alternatives are necessary not only for achieving reform, but also for increasing the likelihood for bilateral cooperation to also contribute towards these policy changes.

Focusing on legitimacy, this dissertation demonstrates how US cooperation influenced policy decisions in Colombia and Mexico in the early decades of the 21st century. I argue that US initiatives not only provided structural and material resources, but also cultural frameworks that coded which solutions were “acceptable” into recipient policy relationships, thinking, and practices. My findings illustrate two key ways in which US cooperation thereby reconfigured the terrain in which national elites negotiated and authorized policy decisions. First, US cooperation broadly expanded policy opportunities for militant sectors. US initiatives enhanced the clarity of institutional roles and strategic goals, advanced capabilities and expertise, and promoted interpretations of policy success that

strongly supported militant policy visions. Second, US cooperation not only established significantly fewer policy opportunities for reformer factions, but also introduced considerable constraints. Cooperation with reformer factions was largely peripheral to their efforts, subordinated to military priorities, and supported recipient actors, claims, and practices that actively opposed reform. Under this model, both Colombia and Mexico adopted an unprecedented military approach during the presidencies of Uribe and Calderón.

Available alternatives determined whether reformers could pivot policy during successive administrations. I identify four key conditions that allowed reforms to become legible as realistic, feasible, and effective solutions, despite significant militant challenges. First, available *consensus* refers to elite acceptance of alternative solutions, which counters the influence of purely militant perspectives. Second, available *infrastructure* instates reform within clear and accepted institutional mandates, roles, and normative practices that facilitate decisions and protect these from militant challenges. Third, available *knowledge* refers to clear and broadly-accepted policy models, methods, and expertise that guide and justify reform, even among militant sectors. Fourth, available *inclusion* refers to both *horizontal* and *vertical inclusion* of reformers. *Horizontal inclusion* ensures that state reformers retain centralized control over decisions, resulting in outcomes that reflect their visions and interests. *Vertical inclusion* integrates the claims of reformer sectors in civil society, who magnify demand and accountability for far-reaching developmental solutions.

In Colombia, the presence of available alternatives allowed reformers to build and uphold a shared agenda. In Mexico, their absence enabled militants to contest reform and preserve military escalation. Accordingly, despite facing considerably greater failures, less

popularity, and less political elite buy-in compared to Colombia's joint military strategy, the frontal approach endured and reform was abandoned.

Finally, available alternatives not only facilitated lasting reform, but also reshaped the policy opportunities and constraints set by US initiatives. US cooperation continued to share policy prescriptions that delineated the boundaries of acceptability for reform during each successive administration. However, available alternatives in Colombia redefined the overall policy formula, leading to more opportunities and fewer constraints on reform. In Mexico, the absence of available alternatives maintained heavy constraints and few opportunities for reform.

This concluding chapter situates my sociological approach within the broader scholarship on legitimacy and US state-building. I analyze issues raised by the puzzle of why recipient countries choose to maintain bilateral approaches that are disfavored and highly ineffective, even by the standards of their own metrics. At the same time, I explain why recipients choose to veer strategic course from bilateral approaches that are more normatively effective and publicly revered. I then outline implications of the dissertation findings for policy and debates about US state-building rationales and conflict management.

A. US State-building, Legitimacy, and Domestic Politics

This study contributes a novel, sociological approach that improves the specificity and accuracy of explanations for how legitimacy in US state-building influences recipient policy decisions. This framework captures how external policies shape recipient politics, and how recipient politics respond, producing unexpected policy outcomes. This approach is

cultural because it addresses legitimacy as a culturally constructed process between recipient state and political actors embedded at the intersection of US interventions and historical institutional relationships and debates. It understands policy outcomes as a product of negotiation between these diverse and sometimes conflicting views, however one-sided these negotiations may turn out to be in practice.

My framework departs from existing International Relations approaches, which explain outcomes through initiative design and analyze legitimacy through static measures of normative state performance and public opinion. Accordingly, these approaches assess the extent to which initiatives establish these measures, considering them to be equivalent to policy stability and success. My own findings demonstrate how initiatives with comparable designs can lead to highly divergent policy outcomes, which cannot be explained by differences in either performance or public support for US initiative strategies. Traditional metrics would lead us to expect opposite policy outcomes: Colombia's continuity with a highly "effective" and publicly-favored bilateral military strategy, and Mexico's pivot from a highly ineffective and discredited joint military solution. Only the early phases of each subsequent government align with IR's expectations. In Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos initially pledged continuity, while in Mexico, Peña Nieto promised change. And yet, Santos championed a comprehensive peace effort and Peña Nieto gutted prevention.

To better capture these surprising trajectories, this dissertation's approach builds on a growing relational-theoretical elites literature. This literature calls attention to how external interventions penetrate long-term social processes and relations, becoming a site of contestation between recipient policy actors with irreconcilable agendas. This study does not reject the traditional factors considered by this relational scholarship—such as how initiative

money, resources, and power may constrain or enable specific factions and thereby shape outcomes. Certainly, all of these factors also shaped my findings. But my analysis also demonstrates that having ample military power, resources, and interests, even when backed by strong geopolitical pressure, is not solely sufficient to dictate decisions. Indeed, Colombian militant sectors were far more empowered through these factors than Mexican militant sectors, and yet it was Colombia that pivoted to an alternative. Accordingly, even strong military interests were ultimately proven to be malleable.

I thus expand the explanatory power of relational literature by examining initiative ideas, which despite being largely overlooked, other studies have found to wield far more influence on recipient choices (Lindsay Poland 2018; Gill 2004; Pérez-Ricart 2016; Kuzmarov 2012; Ben Jaffel 2020; Centeno 1994). While global security governance is typically neglected by sociologists, my approach draws on sociological theories of legitimation to detail how recipient elites negotiate which policies are considered “acceptable” and which are not, thereby influencing different state-building outcomes. I thereby conceptualize US state-building initiatives as a cultural model constituted by multiple, and often conflicting institutional relations, rationales, and practices that penetrate existing policy relations and debates for responding to violent crises. This dissertation demonstrates how this reception process shaped unprecedented governance paradigms, redefining “appropriate” policy strategies, objectives, roles, metrics, expertise, and interpretations. I show how this reception process not only enabled a new brand of security politics, but also constituted state and society actors and relationships by reshaping the terms of policy debates and acceptability around specific solutions. In both cases under study, initiative adoption served as a vehicle that brought political elites and state elites far closer

to the policy views of military generals. At the same time, these processes also reconfigured traditional demands around reform, and even unintentionally foregrounded new actors who rose to challenge these militant perspectives. This study demonstrates how these changes determined which factions of national actors would benefit from increased opportunities for acceptance of their desired policies, and which sets of actors would find their credibility and agency constrained.

My approach also specifies the social mechanisms by which this cultural model was transmitted to diverse recipient political groups and actors. My findings reveal that reception processes certainly involved elements of compliance with traditional concepts of imposition (Cammack 2004; Gill 1995; Robinson 2004), normative influence (Paris 2002; Finnemore 1996; Sikkink 2011), and bureaucratic incentives (Krasner and Pascual 2005; Paris 2002; Gates 2010; Shapiro 2012) favored by dominant IR and Critical approaches. However, my analysis demonstrates that state responses were neither unitary nor purely externally driven. US initiatives channeled actors, strategies, and goals unevenly. Recipient adoption of initiative models was also far more nebulous and variable than these theories would suggest. There were certainly instances in which recipient elites simply complied with US will and example. However, national actors within and outside the state also redefined their objectives and actions selectively, and in ways that could either align with, oppose, or repurpose US models. Diverse factions of national actors cherry-picked US prescriptions to justify and authorize decisions. The overwhelming reliance on coercive action within US security frameworks did not automate military responses. In Colombia, reformers leveraged widely-accepted US military frameworks to authorize peace. In Mexico, just as military

elites invoked bilateral concepts to justify greater military action, reformers also drew on US security frameworks to promote alternatives.

My framework allowed me to identify how domestic conditions of reception shape whether alternative policy ideas become perceived “acceptable” and “feasible” responses to violence. These recipient conditions thereby either enable or obstruct reforms from being realized in state decisions and actions. Beyond flipping a traditional focus on initiative design as the explanation for recipient outcomes, this approach also captures a surprising effect: the impact of recipient policy on initiative design itself. My findings suggest that US initiative frameworks are liable to remain quite fixed in bureaucratic routines if not for changes in recipient policy. Recipient policies have the power to reshape US cooperation by introducing new policy ideas backed by strong recipient demand, empowering friendly actors in the US policy establishment to speak up and against the grain. Recipient policy shifts thereby create pressure within the US state to comply and rethink its priorities. Even if the resulting changes in US policy design are not entirely radical, they can still generate critical opportunities and remove constraints for recipient actors that would have otherwise found their actions impeded. This process, in turn, opens the potential for significant social and political change.

B. US State-building Rationales and Conflict Management

By responding to the puzzle of why recipient states fail to pivot from failing and counterproductive military policies, this framework also builds on debates around conflict resolution. Across a variety of disciplines, scholars of conflict management have challenged

a predominant view in mainstream political science literature, which presumes that rational and autonomous actors decide the sustainability of peace policies. Scholars have found that domestic decisions to uphold counterproductive policies may be less influenced by strategic considerations, and more by the availability of policy ideas and shared understandings of appropriateness. Studies have specifically examined how militant rationales like “counter-narcotics” and “counter-terrorism” can derail peace options. Some analysts have demonstrated how “terrorist” definitions can impeded the initiation of peace processes through demonization, banishment, international impartiality, freezing of international peace-building assets and actors; stigmatization of insider mediator political communities; and authorization of exceptional measures (Haspeslagh 2020; De Goede and Sullivan 2015). Other studies have documented how counter-narcotics rationales have thwarted consideration of alternative reforms through institutional inertia, legal constraints, geopolitical pressure and dependencies on relationships with resistant US drug agencies, perceived political risks, obfuscation of underlying causes of conflict, and a lack of clear policy goals or a theory of change (Hope 2016; Lessing 2017; Kalyvas 2015; Carpenter 2013; Muggah et al. 2018; Felbab-Brown 2020).

This study’s comparative-sociological approach, which focuses on fractious actors and mandates, far more closely delineates how US policy ideas shape recipient policy outcomes, and thus offers a number of analytical insights with practical implications for conflict management. While the above dynamics were evident in the Colombian and Mexican cases, they alone do not account for the different trajectories. Beyond state-building, scholars have also noted that other conflict-affected states face comparable challenges rooted in militant rationales and a neglect of alternative options. This study offers

policy lessons that could support ongoing efforts to advance reform opportunities in these contexts.

Fundamentally, my analysis illustrates how US counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism rationales can reduce the political space for comprehensive reformer claims and inclusive reform. These rationales frequently disqualify the claims of state reformers, leading activists, and marginalized communities most affected by violence who petition for demilitarization, citizen participation, and social development. At the same time, it also highlights how these rationales can develop lasting political opportunities for militant factions, even when such views had been previously marginalized from state responses.

In Colombia and Mexico, political leaders had consistently rejected military solutions to internal security problems. Reframing policy under counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism not only unlocked billions of US military aid, but also brought domestic militant factions and their claims to the forefront. In Mexico, the lack of alternatives meant that policy simply enclosed around militant perspectives. In Colombia, even as leaders shifted to peace, militant factions retained considerable clout. They leveraged post-9/11 rationales to disrupt peace solutions that had been traditionally accepted without question by the mainstream political establishment. They championed these ideas during their 2018 campaign for the general election and secured control over both the presidency and Congress, where they continued to challenge and endanger the peace process.¹⁰² A great many countries in the world receive US counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism aid

¹⁰² The Kroc Institute reports that while the Colombian government fulfilled 86 percent of its commitments to the peace process in 2017, implementation began to lag under the new Centro Democrático administration. The government only fulfilled 61 percent of its commitments in 2018, 42 percent in 2019, and 50 percent in 2020. The report notes the “lack of action on different points of the agreement by the executive branch and the Congress” (Kroc Institute 2021).

(ForeignAssistance.gov 2024), thus potentially stripping other reformer elites of powerful cultural resources for decision-making and shaping the context of future struggles. By demonstrating how such ideas are adopted into national debates around reform, my study provides a tool for how these rationales may produce obstacles for peaceful solutions in other recipient democracies.

By examining policy opportunities and constraints, my framework not only complicates our perspective of military aid's impacts on reform, but also complicates perspectives of US assistance for human rights, humanitarian needs, and civic participation, which are often discussed as fundamental measures of legitimacy in the state-building literature. Other studies have examined how even well-intentioned forms of humanitarian aid, like famine relief, can inadvertently prolong conflicts by falling into the hands of warmongers, whether state armies or insurgent militias (Polman 2011; Narang 2015). My analysis explains why, despite large-scale investments, even aid that ends up in the hands of reform-oriented actors can have unintended consequences. During Uribe's Colombia, hard-side actors in Washington and Bogotá leveraged human rights rationales to authorize increasing collaboration with a military notorious for abuses. In Calderón's Mexico, prevention ideas were explicitly conceived as a tool to sustain a military confrontation that had become politically untenable. Within a larger framework that disproportionately favors militant views, any form of assistance can become an instrument of war.

Nevertheless, I demonstrate that recipient adoption of counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism frameworks alone does not inevitably thwart reform. To the extent to which these were adopted within recipient politics, US rationales were far more deeply integrated within Colombia's political and security establishment than Mexico's. While in Colombia, counter-

narcotics and counter-terrorism became a blueprint and mantra for diverse political and security elites, in Mexico, these actors continuously questioned military strategies. And yet, only Mexican elites sensed that they had “no alternative.”

The likelihood of reform does not alone hinge on levels of elite acceptance of a military solution, but rather on whether alternative claims were accepted or rejected. My framework identifies key actors, relationships, institutional arrangements, expertise, and practices that enable effective, developmental reforms to become sustainable in decisions. My analysis of available alternatives offers several practical lessons:

First, this study suggests that these conditions are highly interdependent and, therefore, should be comprehensively addressed by national and international policy interventions. While I treat these conditions separately for analytical purposes, in practice, they often overlap and mutually reinforce each other in on-the-ground interactions. By only observing the Colombian case, one might infer that consensus serves as the linchpin influencing all other conditions. For instance, I demonstrate that, similar to the Mexican case, lower consensus during the Uribe administration resulted in a neglect of formal channels for vertical inclusion, and increased fragmentation among reform-oriented civil society groups. Colombian analysts note how lacking political will frequently incapacitates the country’s array of available infrastructure (Jiménez Restrepo and Lleya 2017:32-33). In Mexico, increasing consensus for prevention also crucially mobilized higher levels of infrastructure, vertical inclusion, and horizontal inclusion during the Calderón administration. However, comparison with the Mexican case also reveals that consensus for alternatives can easily crumble without the policy knowledge, infrastructure, and inclusion

to sustain it. Vulnerability within any of these available conditions renders reform susceptible to militant challenges.

Second, while these conditions were all historically rooted in long-term policy relations and debates, they are also subject to change over time. Having a national precedent for available alternatives certainly increases the likelihood of reform across the board. Yet, this variability also implies that these conditions are responsive to policy interventions.

Certain conditions exhibited more variability and, consequently, might be more amenable to change or intervention than others. Available consensus and inclusion shifted the most in each case throughout the periods under study. My findings indicate that maintaining consensus for reform at the Executive level is crucial to counter militant opposition from within the state and political establishment. Differences between these cases suggest that despite ardent militant opposition, even acceptance of specific measures within a larger reform can suffice to sustain policy changes. Moreover, garnering political support for reform projects from other political factions can critically bridge legitimacy gaps during militant challenges.

My findings suggest that state leaders tend to recur to traditional decision-making practices, be they inclusive or excluding of reformers. However, prevention's trajectory during the Calderón presidency in Mexico demonstrates that even minimal consensus within the Executive can easily facilitate new settings for horizontal inclusion that invite non-traditional actors and perspectives to the table. Long-standing histories of mobilization result in higher levels of vertical inclusion, perceived as credible and accepted among state and political elites. This, in turn, can facilitate even entirely unprecedented and far-reaching reform measures, exemplified by the new ethnic and gender-based approach within

Colombia's Havana accords. Mexico demonstrates how a historical lack of vertical inclusion can result in a civil society that is highly fragmented, untrained, and spurned by elites. However, my findings demonstrated how new spaces for vertical inclusion can nonetheless proliferate quickly, gain access to the top levels of government, and provoke a state response.

By comparison, available infrastructure is more dependent on longer-term processes, and therefore less amenable to interventions. Both Colombia and Mexico created new reform-oriented institutions and laws during the period under study. However, only in Colombia were these new infrastructures legible as routine matters of the state, and imbued with sufficient authority and stability to facilitate decisions, coordinate reform, and protect it from challenges. Despite being less malleable, instances of infrastructural growth coincided most closely with increases in elite consensus. This suggests that reformers can capitalize on these moments of heightened openness to strengthen legal and institutional commitments to alternatives.

Notably, although I find that authoritative institutions and laws are necessary for sustainable reform, my findings differ from studies in conflict management that credit policy collapse on institutional design problems, and suggest institutional fixes (Walter 1997). My analysis of reform infrastructure focuses on decision-making and only accounts for implementation processes insofar as they relate to a continued commitment to reform. This study does not directly evaluate the quality or intensity of implementation. However, the flaws in Colombian peace implementation are well-documented: many measures were

slow to arrive and, sometimes, reportedly even ill-conceived and counter-productive.¹⁰³ But the Colombian case demonstrates that flawed implementation alone does not necessarily upend reform solutions. Although, in Mexico, weak implementation served as a justification for Peña Nieto elites to cut prevention, in Santos' Colombia, peace infrastructure protected reform despite weak implementation.

The question of whether policy interventions are effective for alternative knowledge is less straight-forward. In the periods under study, alternative policy knowledge experienced minimal shifts and also demonstrated a low correlation with other alternative conditions. Policy outcomes depend not only on whether reformers are deeply versed in alternative models and methods, but also on whether this expertise is broadly validated by various elite factions, including militant sectors. Such was the case in Colombia. In Mexico, however, low available knowledge not only plagued prevention reformers, but also reflected a greater historical void in civilian security expertise that hindered non-military solutions. Policy interventions could focus on developing educational spaces, research, and professional training to encourage the growth of reform specialists and knowledge-sharing for alternatives. Yet, strengthening the validity of alternative knowledge may also require longer-term processes that target militant sectors and broadly socialize alternative frameworks.

Challenges may not solely arise from limited adaptability to interventions, but rather reflect broader problems around the general acceptability of alternative knowledge. While Colombian reformers counted on an ample array of international models and methods to

¹⁰³ For instance, analysts point to rising coca cultivation that funds new armed groups, increasing attacks against human rights defenders, environmentalists, and social leaders, and increasing violence responding to the agreement's proposal to return of stolen land (Beittel 2021:22).

develop and defend peace policies, Mexican reformers struggled to find suitable policy models. Although peace-building is considered to be authoritative policy expertise for political conflicts with leftist rebels, alternative methods and models are not typically accepted to manage violence that is classified as terrorist or criminal. Unlike peace-building, prevention is a relatively new area of policy research, often directed towards small-scale, community-level interventions rather than large structural changes. Despite sharing underlying root causes of violence, methods like negotiations and socio-economic reforms, which can reduce narco-related violence, are less commonly accepted (Felbab-Brown 2020; Lessing 2017).

Third, my study suggests that the likelihood for US initiatives or other external policy initiatives to empower sustainable reform largely depends on pre-existing, high levels of available alternatives within the recipient country. This was the case for all available conditions under study. Whereas in Mexico low consensus, infrastructure, knowledge, and inclusion disrupted opportunities for US support to reformers, in Colombia, available conditions enabled national elites to leverage US support in their favor. External interventions in countries that lack available alternatives can lead to far greater, prolonged harm than good.

This is not to say that external policy interventions could not have some productive effect on reform under certain conditions. Even when available alternatives are limited, specific contingencies offer policy windows. External interventions could capitalize on these moments to support reformers. The case of *Todos Somos Juárez* during the Calderón administration bears note. US diplomacy became a driving force behind the initial consensus for prevention within an overwhelmingly militant agenda. However, this opportunity relied

on the groundwork laid by actors within Mexico who had been advocating for social prevention alternatives at the national level for years. They were prepared to persuade US Ambassador Pascual with their policy ideas. Uptake also depended on the acute political crisis of Calderón's frontal strategy, making the President more receptive to alternative solutions.

Notably, even with a fortuitous window, the extent to which external interventions can facilitate sustainable reform in cases with low available alternatives is also relatively limited. Reforms are fragile when they are not sustained by enduring domestic processes. Although *Todos Somos Juárez* became a direct catalyst for greater vertical and horizontal inclusion, these gains were ultimately short-lived and soon overtaken by more traditional routines.

While limited available alternatives can neuter the capacity of external initiatives to facilitate sustainable reform, interventions can thwart reform in cases of high availability. Available alternatives alone do not guarantee sustainable reform, but only make it more likely. Colombian reformers reported that, had Washington not reversed its position, the peace process might have been saddled with insurmountable obstacles. Perhaps lacking knowledge for prevention in Mexico would not have been so decisive had it not been for the disproportionate US expertise funneled into hard-side institutions, fixing state objectives to these metrics. Beyond comprehensive alternatives, the collapse of Mexico's efforts to rethink the kingpin strategy evidences the difficulty of even changing course within the bounds of the frontal strategy itself.

Recognizing that standard US state-building models have faced substantial limitations in establishing the needed conditions for peace and reform abroad, policy

researchers have encouraged research that looks beyond traditional tactical and technical concerns (USIP 2024). Because these traditional concerns have failed to provide information necessary to reorient policy, researchers propose focusing on how power dynamics in partner states shift through US engagement, creating winners, losers, and trade-offs (Cheng et al. 2018). A key policy implication of this study is that the most meaningful contributions that US cooperation, in particular, can offer to support sustainable reform involve backing reformer factions far more and militant factions far less. While there may not be a perfect US policy formula, policy outcomes depend on supporting reform-oriented actors who can promote the necessary conditions for policy change. Outcomes also depend on reducing hard-side support to militant actors who would frustrate reform from taking root. They also depend on providing different kinds of support, which recruit militant actors into reform-oriented paradigms by coding these as reasonable and acceptable solutions.

Although intervention designs are more often driven by ideology and interests than scholarly evidence (Cheng et al 2018: 82-83), the question of violence and the obligations of US state-building is at the heart of this study. Certainly, Colombia's peace is not perfect. Accord implementation has not gone entirely smoothly. In areas where the FARC demobilized, new armed groups filled the power vacuums instead of the government in a land grab over coca production and natural resources (Jenssen 2018). Attacks on Colombian human rights defenders, environmentalists, and social leaders increased in response to the agreement's return of stolen land (Beittel 2021:22). However, when the military strategy's initial successes began to falter and violence rose, the signing of the peace agreement also marked a significant decline in violence, with the number of homicides dropping from 12,655 in 2012 to 1,238 in 2016 (Indepaz 2021). The signing of peace marked the end of a

conflict that had taken over half a century of the country's politics, 260,000 Colombians killed and 80,000 more missing, 8.2 million displaced, and countless brutalized and raped (Isacson 2021). The agreement committed the government to address the main structural causes of the long armed conflict hand-in-hand with communities.

The comparison with Mexico is stark. Although national homicides had declined significantly under preceding presidencies, the death toll skyrocketed during Calderón's first year in office, leading to 121,669 homicides throughout his presidency (Calderón et al. 2019: 3).¹⁰⁴ During the Peña Nieto administration, the country's violence climbed to the highest levels in recent history, taking another 150,000 lives (Calderón et al. 2018:5-6). A great portion of Mexico's surge in violent crime is attributed to drug-related violence from both criminal groups and government counter-narcotics efforts (Calderón et al. 2019, 40-41).

There are many reasons for the selection of these counterproductive policies. Other authors have extensively explored how militant agendas and US initiatives are heavily integrated with right-wing and neo-liberal extractivist projects that seed self-perpetuating interests (Paley 2015; Gill 2008; Hristov 2014). Relatedly, scholars have explored how military aid may advance political elite and military corruption that fuel military policies (USIP 2023).

This study finds that a likely contributing factor is how US rationales influence decision-making, overwhelmingly favoring actors who promote hardline solutions and


¹⁰⁴ Homicides had declined significantly under both presidents Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) and Vicente Fox (2000-2006).

frustrate solutions associated with far more lasting reductions in violence.¹⁰⁵ The 2019 passage of the Global Fragility Act signals a modest attempt to change a traditional US approach to conflict stabilization and prevention, proposing greater engagement with a broad cross-section of leaders and marginalized communities and increasing collaboration with USAID (Graff 2023; Hume 2023). However, US reactions to crises abroad betray the stickiness of entrenched security systems, interests, and thinking in Washington that heavily favor military factions and solutions abroad. Washington's investment of \$135 million for a Prevention and Stabilization Fund in 2023 pales in comparison to the tens of billions spent on military aid in this same fiscal year (Graff 2023).

My study suggests that available alternatives in recipient states push US foreign policy to overcome traditional foreign policy decision-making routines. Whereas Colombian reformers succeeded in shifting Washington's approach towards the peace process, in Mexico, Washington officials continued to favor policies credited with contributing to the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Changing these reactive routines are necessary not just for reducing violence, but also a more democratic solution that goes beyond the views of those in the Executive, defense institutions, and right-wing political powers. These issues are ever

¹⁰⁵ Studies find that military confrontation, high-value targeting, and law enforcement strategies rarely bring about a lasting reduction in violence (Olson and Hyde 2016). Militant success may not only be short-lived but also short-sighted. Analysts note that the successes of Plan Colombia and prior versions of US counter-narcotics policy broke up Colombian monopolies over the drug trade, and instead left a power vacuum that allowed Mexican DTOs to grow powerful and violently compete over commercial routes to the US (Shirk and Wallman 2015). Kingpin continues to fragment DTOs and push violence into new cities in Mexico. Under the presidency of Iván Duque, a militant Centro Democrático President, Colombia set records for drug interdiction in 2019 and 2022 and arrested thousands of traffickers (Beittel 2021:36). And yet the net cocaine supply increased (Beittel 2021:36). The US Government Accountability Office's own internal evaluation of US counter-narcotics strategies concludes that eradication "may not be an effective long-term approach to reduce the cocaine supply" (Grover 2018). Alternative development programs have only worked through highly considerable and prolonged political and financial investment, accompanied by widespread job creation, comprehensive rural development programs, educational opportunities, health services, and negotiated and staggered eradication with farmers, contingent on other forms of income production (Felbab-Brown 2016). Even with DTO violence, studies find that negotiations can successfully reduce violence (see Felbab-Brown 2020; Carpenter 2013).

more hauntingly urgent as we swing in the balance of what it means to give military aid not just to Mexico, but to Afghanistan, Israel, Ukraine—in unbearable loss of life, in strengthening militant power, in quelling the voices who might offer a more peaceful, humane, and just alternative.



References

- Acosta, Luis Jaime. 2018. "Colombia suspende negociación de paz con guerrilla del ELN." *Reuters*, January 29 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/colombia-guerrilla-idLTAKBN1FI1N3-OUSLD>).
- Aguirre, Daniela and Riaño, David. 2019. "Así se está moviendo la plata de la implementación de la paz." *Verdad Abierta*, February 11. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (<https://verdadabierta.com/asi-se-esta-moviendo-la-plata-la-implementacion-la-paz/>).
- Ai Camp, Roderic. 2002. *Mexico's Mandarins: Crafting a Power Elite for the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Alsema, Adriaan. 2019. "US ambassador threatened aid cut if Colombia's congress backs war crimes tribunal: report." *Colombia Reports*, April 17. Accessed on September 23, 2023 (<https://colombiareports.com/us-ambassador-threatened-with-aid-cut-if-colombias-congress-backed-war-crimes-tribunal-report/>).
- Althusser, Louis. 1971. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Anaya, Ricardo. 2018. "Colombia's Two Anti-Coca Strategies Are at War with Each Other." *The Economist*, February 20. Retrieved on June 23, 2024 (<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2018/02/20/colombias-two-anti-coca-strategies-are-at-war-with-each-other>).
- Anaya Muñoz, Alejandro. 2009. "Transnational and Domestic Processes in the Definition of Human Rights Policies in Mexico." *Human Rights Quarterly* 31 (1): 35-58.
- Andersen, Morten Skumsrud. 2012. "Legitimacy in State-Building: A Review of the IR Literature." *International Political Sociology* 6: 205-219.
- Andrew, Gilbert. 2012. "Legitimacy Matters: Managing the Democratization Paradox of Foreign State-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 60 (4): 483-496.
- Angel, Arturo. 2018. "Las 5 razones por las que la Ley de Seguridad Interior es inconstitucional, según amparos." *Animal Político*, May 16. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 (<https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/05/5-razones-ley-seguridad-interior-es-inconstitucional/>).
- Arana, Daira and Lani Anaya. 2020. "De la militarización al militarismo." *Nexos*, November 16. Retrieved on November 15, 2021 (<https://seguridad.nexos.com.mx/de-la-militarizacion-al-militarismo/>).

- Arredondo, Juan. 2019. "The Slow Death of Colombia's Peace Movement." *The Atlantic*, December 30. Retrieved on January 18, 2023 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/12/colombia-peace-farc/604078/>).
- Arzt, Sigrid. 2010. "US-Mexico security collaboration: Intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation, pp. 351-369 in *Shared responsibility. US-Mexico policy options for confronting organized crime*, edited by Eric L. Olson, David A. Shirk, and Andrew Selee. Washington D.C.: Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Arzt, Sigrid. 2015. "Police Reform in Mexico: A Never-Ending Story," pp. 257-275 in *Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Violence in the Americas Today*, edited by Bruce M. Bagley and Jonathan D. Rosen, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Ashby, Paul. 2015. *NAFTA-Land Security: The Mérida Initiative, Transnational Threats, and U.S. Security Projection in Mexico*. Canterbury, England: University of Kent.
- Astorga, Luis, & Shirk, David. A. 2010. Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.-Mexican Context. *UC San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies*. Retrieved January 7, 2020 (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8j647429>).
- Austin, J.L. 1975. *How to Do Things with Words: Second Edition*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Autesserre, Séverine. 2010. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Autesserre, Séverine. 2014. *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Autesserre, Séverine. 2017. "International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness." *International Studies Review* 19(1): 114–32.
- Ayala, Mónica and López, Alan. 2016. "Prevención del delito: crónica de una muerte anunciada," *Animal Político*, September 15. Retrieved on August 5, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/prevencion-del-delito-cronica-de-una-muerte-anunciada/>).
- Bailey, John. 2011. "Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative: Policy Twins or Distant Cousins," pp.143-155 in *National Solutions to Trans-Border Problems?*, edited by Isidro Morales. London, UK: Routledge.
- Baker, C.D. 2000. "Locating Culture in Action: Membership Categorisation in Texts and Talk," pp. 99-113 in *Culture & Text: Discourse and Methodology in Social Research and Cultural Studies*, edited by A. Lee and C. Poynton. St Leonards, NSW, Australia:

Allen & Unwin.

Barnett, Michael. 2006. "Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States after War." *International Security* 30 (4): 87-112.

Basurdo, Tania Carolina Diaz. 2020. *Iniciativas, Acciones Colectivas, Movimientos Sociales, Redes y Plataformas: Análisis de la Movilización Social por la Paz en Colombia a Partir de los casos Redepaz, Red Territorios por la Paz, Común Acuerdo y Paz a la Calle*. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Externado de Colombia.

BBC. 2011. "Top Farc rebel leader Alfonso Cano killed in Colombia." November 5. Retrieved on July 11, 2023 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-15604456>).

BBC Mundo. 2016. "Colombia: el Congreso aprueba el nuevo acuerdo de paz con las FARC y las divisiones se trasladan a las presidenciales de 2018." BBC.com, December 1. Retrieved on Friday September 15, 2023 (<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-38165978>).

Beiser, Elana. 2017. "In absence of fresh military conflict, journalist killings decline again." Committee to Protect Journalists, December 21. Retrieved on April 13, 2020 (<https://cpj.org/reports/2017/12/journalists-killed-iraq-crossfire-murder-mexico/>).

Beittel, June S. 2016. "U.S. Foreign Assistance as Colombia's Peace Talks on Cusp of Completion." *Congressional Research Service*, July 20. Retrieved on May 17, 2023 (<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IN10454.pdf>).

Beittel, June S. 2019. "Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations." Congressional Research Service, February 8. Retrieved on August 20, 2023 (https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20190208_R43813_9758abc0f91e1daea9f6a526ebe6ea1858d0d4e8.pdf).

Beittel, June S. 2021. "Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations." Congressional Research Service, December 16. Retrieved on July 5, 2023 (<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R43813.pdf>).

Beltrán Enviada, Claudia Herrera. 2006. "Calderón, dispuesto a aplicar el modelo de gobierno de Alvaro Uribe." *La Jornada*, October 4. Retrieved on April 14, 2021 (<https://www.jornada.com.mx/2006/10/05/index.php?section=politica&article=018n1pol>).

Beltrán Villegas, Miguel Ángel. 2015. *Las FARC-EP (1950-2015): Luchas de ira y esperanza*. Bogotá, Colombia: Ediciones Desde Abajo.

Benford, Robert and David Snow. 2000. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611-39.

Benítez Manuat, Raúl. 2014. "Mexico-Colombia: U.S. Assistance and the Fight against Organized Crime." pp 47-70, in *One Goal, Two Struggles: Confronting Crime and*

Violence in Mexico and Colombia, edited by Cynthia J. Arnson and Eric L. Olson with Christine Zaino. Washington D.C: Wilson Center Latin American Program.

- Benítez Manaut, Raúl and Craig A. Deare. 2021. "Mexican Military Culture." *Florida International University*. Retrieved on April 20, 2022 (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raul-Benitez-Manaut/3/publication/354062497/Mexican_Military_Culture/links/612298321e95fe241aebfdcd/Mexican-Military-Culture.pdf).
- Ben Jaffel, Hager, Alvina Hoffman, Oliver Kearns, and Sebastian Larsson. 2020. "Collective Discussion: Toward Critical Approaches to Intelligence as a Social Phenomenon." *International Political Sociology* 14 (3): 323-344.
- Berger, Peter L. and Luckmann, Thomas. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Bermúdez Liévano, Andrés. 2018. *Los debates de La Habana: una mirada desde adentro*. Barcelona, España: IFIT. Accessed on May 25, 2023 (<https://ifit-transitions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Los-debates-de-La-Habana-Una-mirada-desdeadentro.pdf>).
- Bermúdez Liévano, Andrés. 2020. *La fase exploratoria del proceso de paz: una mirada desde adentro*. Barcelona, España: IFIT. Accessed on May 25, 2023 (<https://ifit-transitions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/La-fase-exploratoria-del-proceso-de-paz.pdf>).
- Bernal, Luis, Adam Isacson, and María Victoria Whittingham. 2018. "Evaluation Report: Colombia Transforma Program Mid-term Performance Evaluation." USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives, May. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T7WK.pdf).
- Betancourt, Enrique. 2017. "Target Interventions to Reduce Homicides in Mexico." *Chemonics*, March 30. Retrieved on September 24, 2021 (<https://chemonics.com/blog/target-interventions-to-reduce-homicides-in-mexico/>).
- Bloemraad, Irene. 2012. "What the textbooks don't tell you: moving from a research puzzle to publishing findings," pp. 502-520 in *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, edited by Vargas-Silva, Carlos. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Boege, Volker and Tanis, James. 2020. "One—The Hybridization of Legitimacy in Processes of Peace Formation: the Bougainville Case," pp. 19-43 in *Local Legitimacy and International Peacebuilding*, edited by Oliver P. Richmond and Roger MacGinty. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bonilla, María Elvira. 2016. "Dígale a Cano y Catatumbo que quiero hacer la paz con ellos": el mensaje de Santos que abrió el camino hace 6 años." *Las2Orrillas.com*,

- September 11. Retrieved on September 11, 2023 (<https://www.las2orillas.co/digale-a-cano-y-catatumbo-que-quiero-hacer-la-paz-con-ellos-el-mensaje-de-santos-que-abrio-el-camino-hace-6-anos/>).
- Bonlarron Martínez, Cruz and Evan King. 2020. “How the U.S. Is Quietly Undermining Colombia’s Fragile Peace Process.” *In These Times*, December 23. Retrieved on June 3, 2023 (<https://inthesetimes.com/article/colombia-war-on-drugs-peace-process-trump-biden-dea>).
- Booth, William. 2012. “In Mexico’s Murder City, the war appears over.” *The Washington Post*, August 19. Retrieved on May 22, 2021(https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/in-mexicos-murder-city-the-war-appearsover/2012/08/19/aacab85e-e0a0-11e1-8d48-2b1243f34c85_story.html).
- Botero Marino, Catalina and Restrepo Saldarriaga, Esteban. 2006. “Estándares internacionales y procesos de transición en Colombia,” pp. 45-108 in *¿Justicia transicional sin transición? Verdad, justicia y reparación para Colombia*, edited by Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes, María Paula Saffon Sanín, Catalina Botero Marino, and Esteban Restrepo Saldarriaga. Bogotá, Colombia: DeJuSticia.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. “Symbolic Power.” *Annales* 32: 77-85.
- Bouvier, Virginia. 2015. “New Support From U.S. As Colombia Peace Talks Resume: Letter from Bogota.” United States Institute of Peace, February 25. Retrieved on August 8, 2023 (<https://www.usip.org/blog/2015/02/new-support-us-colombia-peace-talks-resume>).
- Bouvier, Virginia. 2016. “Gender and the Role of Women in Colombia’s Peace Process,” New York, New York: UN Women.
- Brewer, John D. 2010. *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Brookings. 2010. “Peace Building in Colombia: A Discussion with Colombian High Commissioner for Peace Frank Pearl.” *The Brookings Institution*, March 9 transcription of interview with Frank Pearl. Retrieved on May 20, 2023 (<https://www.brookings.edu/events/peace-building-in-colombia/>).
- Brown, Wendy. 2008. “With Reason on Our Side...” *Theory & Event* 11(4). Accessed on January 7, 2024 (<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/with-reason-on-our-side/docview/210789304/se-2?accountid=14522>).
- Brownfield, William. 2017. “Assessing the Colombia Peace Process: The Way Forward in U.S-Colombia Relations.” International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs, August 2 Hearing before Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights,

- and Global Women's Issues. Retrieved on June 25, 2023 (https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/080217%20Brownfield_Testimony.pdf).
- Buchholz, Katharina. 2020. "Number of Homicides in Mexico on the Rise." *Statista*, January 21. Retrieved March 7, 2023 (<https://www.statista.com/chart/20572/homicide-investigations-homicide-rate-mexico/>).
- Calderón, Felipe. 2008. "Mensaje del Presidente Calderón sobre Seguridad en el marco de su Segundo Informe de Gobierno." Presidencia, August 25. Retrieved on May 20, 2020 (<http://calderon.presidencia.gob.mx/2008/08/se-que-mexico-enfrenta-un-gran-problema-de-seguridad-este-es-un-cancer-que-se-ha-venido->).
- Calderón, Felipe. 2020. *Decisiones Difíciles*. Mexico City, Mexico: Debate.
- Calderón, Laura Y.; Heinle, Kimberly; Rodríguez Ferreira, Octavio; and Shirk, David A. 2019. "Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico: Analysis Through 2018." San Diego, CA: *Justice in Mexico*, Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of San Diego.
- Call, Charles T. 2008 "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State'." *Third World Quarterly* 29 (8): 1491-1507. Accessed June 19, 2019 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802544207>).
- Call, Charles T. 2011. "Beyond the 'failed state': Toward conceptual alternatives." *European Journal of International Relations* 17 (2): 303-326. Accessed June 25, 2019 (<https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/10.1177/1354066109353137>).
- Cammack, Paul. 2004. "What the World Bank Means by Poverty Reduction, and Why It Matters." *New Political Economy*, 9 (2), 189-211.
- Campbell, Susana, Dan Honig, and Sarah Rose. 2020. "Creating an Accountability Framework that serves the Global Fragility Act's Mission." Center for Global Development, January. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 (<https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/global-fragility-act-accountability-framework-12120.pdf>).
- Caracol Radio. 2021. "¿Qué le impidió al expresidente Santos lograr la paz con el ELN." *Caracol Radio*, May 4 (https://caracol.com.co/radio/2021/04/06/politica/1617669281_967509.html).
- Carlsen, Laura. 2018. "Effects of militarization in the name of counter-narcotics efforts and consequences for human rights in Mexico," pp. 76-94 in *Beyond the Drug War in Mexico: Human rights, the public sphere, and justice*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Benjamin T. Smith, and Peter Watt. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Carpenter, Ami C. 2013. "Changing Lenses: Conflict Analysis and Mexico's 'Drug War'." *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 55 (3): 139-160.
- Carvalho, Tomás Andres Michael. 2022. "Infographic: The Militarization of Public Security

- in Mexico.” Wilson Center, August 4. Retrieved on April 28, 2022 (<https://diplomacy21-adelphi.wilsoncenter.org/article/infographic-militarization-public-security-mexico>).
- Castañeda, Jorge. 2010. “Mexico’s Failed Drug War,” in *Economic Development Bulletin No 13*, Cato Institute, May 6, 2010. Retrieved on April 15, 2021 (<https://www.cato.org/economic-development-bulletin/mexicos-failed-drug-war>).
- Castro, Manuel Fernando, Bibiana Quiroga, Sonia Rodríguez, Alejandro Espitia, Mauricio Aguilar, Juana Oberlaender, María Angélica Sarmiento, Oscar Quiroz, Camila Chavarría. 2021. *Inclusion for Peace Activity: Performance Evaluation*. USAID, USAID/Colombia Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning activity. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X83N.pdf).
- Centeno, Miguel A. 1994. *Democracy Within Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Centeno, Miguel A. 2013. “Max Weber and the Latin American State,” draft in *Max Weber: Una mirada iberoamericana*, CIDE. Accessed on January 10, 2024 (https://cenmiga.scholar.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf3936/files/Max_Weber_Lat_in_Am_State_apr2013_0.pdf).
- Centro Gilberto Bosques. 2014. *Reunión de la Comisión de Equidad de Género, Niñez y Juventud del Parlamento Latinoamericano*. Reunión de la Comisión de Equidad de Género Niñez y Juventud del Parlamento Latinoamericano, Serie América Latina y el Caribe 113. Retrieved on April 2, 2022 (<https://centrogilbertobosques.senado.gob.mx/docs/seriealatina113.pdf>).
- Chabat, Jorge. 2010. “La respuesta del gobierno de Calderón al desafío del narcotráfico: Entre lo malo y lo peor.” *CIDE* 196: 1-18.
- Chabat, Jorge. 2019. “La Seguridad en la Política Exterior de Peña Nieto: El Invitado Incómodo.” *Foro Internacional* 3-4 (237-238): 989-1020.
- Chandler, David. 2004, “The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the ‘Liberal Peace’.” *International Peacekeeping* 11(1): 59-81.
- Chapa Koloffon, Lilian. 2015. “Los míticos 140 mil mdp en prevención social.” *México Evalúa*, November 12. Retrieved on April 12, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/los-miticos-140-mil-mdp-en-prevencion-social/>).
- Chapa Koloffon, Lilian, Leonel Fernández Novelo, and Sandra Ley. 2014. “Prevención del delito en México ¿dónde quedó la evidencia?” *México Evalúa*, January 2014. Retrieved on February 3, 2021 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/prevencion-del-delito-en-mexico-donde-queda-la-evidencia/>).

- Chapa Koloffon, Lilian and Sandra Ley. 2015. *Prevención del delito en México ¿Cuáles son las prioridades?* México Evalúa, June. Retrieved on February 3, 2021 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/prevencion-del-delito-en-mexico-cuales-son-las-prioridades-2/>).
- Chaparro González, Nina and Margarita Martínez Osorio. 2016. *Negociando desde los márgenes: la participación política de las mujeres en los procesos de paz en Colombia, 1982-2016*. Bogotá, Colombia: Dejusticia.
- Chemonics International. 2021. *Justice for a Sustainable Peace Activity, Final Report*. USAID, July 30. Retrieved on June 23 (<https://chemonics.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/JSP-Final-Report.pdf>).
- Cheng, Christine, Jonathan Goodhand, and Patrick Meehan. 2018. *Securing and Sustaining Elite Bargains that Reduce Violent Conflict*. London: UK Government Stabilisation Unit.
- Chowdury, Arjun and Krebs, Ronald. 2010. "Talking about terror: Counterterrorist campaigns and the logic of representation." *European Journal of International Relations* 16(1):125-150.
- CINEP/PPP. 2019. *Transformaciones del Conflicto Armado y Conflictividades Sociales en San Andrés de Tumaco*. Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz. Retrieved on July 3, 2023 (https://www.cinep.org.co/publicfiles/PDFS/20190928_TransformacionesConflictoTumaco.pdf?).
- Ciorciari, John D. and Krasner, Stephen D. 2018. "Contracting Out, Legitimacy, and State Building." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12(4): 484-505.
- CLAS Research. 2018. "Colombian Peace Process in Comparative Perspective." Georgetown University, Center for Latin American Studies. Retrieved July 5, 2018 (<https://clasresearch.georgetown.edu/Colombia-docs>).
- CNN Wire Staff. 2012. "Mexico's Peña Nieto calls for 'new debate' on the drug war." CNN, July 7. Retrieved on January 2, 2024 (<https://www.cnn.com/2012/07/07/world/americas/mexico-elections/index.html>).
- Conlon, Michael and Gallego, Juan. 2016. "Colombia: Cacao for Peace (CFP)." USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, July 29. Retrieved on June 20 ([https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgain/api/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Cacao%20for%20Peace%20\(CFP\)%20Overview_Bogota_Colombia_7-28-2016.pdf](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgain/api/api/report/downloadreportbyfilename?filename=Cacao%20for%20Peace%20(CFP)%20Overview_Bogota_Colombia_7-28-2016.pdf)).
- Consejo Nacional de Paz de Colombia. 2015. *Declaración del Consejo Nacional de Paz: La construcción de Paz es de todos y todas, todo el tiempo, en todas partes*. Bogotá, Colombia, Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris.

- Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública. 2017. "Dr. Mario Arroyo Juárez." Invitado Permanente de la sociedad civil, 43 Sesión Ordinaria, Palacio Nacional, Ciudad de México, December 21. Retrieved on March 23, 2022 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ETGn8NVi_o).
- Cooper, Marc. 2001. "Plan Colombia." *The Nation*, March 1. Accessed May 2, 2015 (<http://www.thenation.com/article/plan-colombia>).
- Coyne, Christopher J and Hall, Abigail R. 2017. "Four Decades and Counting: The Continued Failure of the War on Drugs." *CATO Institute, Policy Analysis* 811.
- Cuervo Críales, Beatriz Del Pilar and Sergio Arturo Ovalle Páez. 2020. "Contextualización Histórica y Normativa del Delito Político en el Marco del Conflicto Armado Colombiano," *Nuevo Foro Penal* 93-135.
- Cuervo Iglesias, Margarita. 2021. "Waging War, Preparing for Peace: Military Change in the Colombian Army, 2010-2018." Doctoral Dissertation, Universität der Bundeswehr München. Retrieved on June 6, 2023 (<https://d-nb.info/1270599852/34>).
- Dagher, Ruby. 2018. "Legitimacy and post-conflict state-building: the undervalued role of performance legitimacy." *Conflict, Security & Development* 18 (2): 85-111.
- Davidow, Jeffrey. 2004. "The US and Mexico: The Bear and the Porcupine." Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers.
- Deare, Craig A. 2017. *A Tale of Two Eagles: The US-Mexico Bilateral Defense Relationship Post Cold War*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- De Goede, Marieke and Gavin Sullivan. 2015. The politics of security lists." *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 34(1):67–88.
- Delgado, Jorge E. 2015. "Colombian Military Thinking and the Fight against the FARC-EP Insurgency, 2002–2014." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (6): 826-851.
- DeShazo, Peter and Phillip McLean, and Johanna Mendelson Forman. 2009. "Assessment of the Government of Colombia Project: *Plan de Consolidación Integral de la Macarena (PCIM)*." Center for Strategic & International Studies, Assessment Report. Retrieved of June 13, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACN234.pdf).
- Deterding, Nicole M. and Waters, Mary C. 2021. "Flexible Coding of In-depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach." *Sociological Methods & Research* 50 (2): 708-739.
- Dewalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. 2002. *Participant observation*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- DeYoung, Karen and Duque, Claudia J. 2011. "U.S. aid implicated in abuses of power in

- Colombia.” *The Washington Post*, August 20. Retrieved on September 6, 2023 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/us-aid-implicated-in-abuses-of-power-in-colombia/2011/06/21/gIQABrZpSJ_story.html).
- Diario Oficial de la Federación. 2020. “Acuerdo por el que se dispone de la Fuerza Armada permanente para llevar a cabo tareas de seguridad pública de manera extraordinaria, regulada, fiscalizada, subordinada y complementaria.” Secretaría de Gobernación, November 5. Retrieved on February 8, 2021 (https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5593105&fecha=11/05/2020#gsc.tab=0).
- Díaz Cepeda, Luis Rubén. 2020. *Social Movement and Latin American Philosophy: From Ciudad Juárez to Ayotzinapa*. London, UK: Lexington Books.
- Dizard, Jacob Goodman. 2018. *The paradox of militarization: democratic oversight and military autonomy in Mexico and Colombia*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved on August 21, 2020 (<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/fe7cd90-61d7-4cae-b1ff-2532b72ce9e1>).
- DNP (Departamento de Planeación Nacional). 2007. *Colombia’s Strategy for Strengthening Democracy and Promoting Social Development (2007-2013)*. Retrieved on June 12, 2023 (<https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Justicia%20Seguridad%20y%20Gobierno/Colombiasstrategy.pdf>).
- Doyle, Michael. 2001. “Peacebuilding in Cambodia: Legitimacy and Power,” pp. 89-112 in *Peacebuilding as Politics*, edited by Elizabeth M. Cousens and Chetan Kumar. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Doyle, Michael and Sambanis, Nicholas. 2006. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Durán, Diana. 2023. “Former Head of Colombian army charged in killings of 130 civilians.” *The Washington Post*, August 30. Retrieved on September 6, 2023 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/08/30/colombia-mario-montoya-false-positives/>).
- Eichensehr, Kristen E. 2022. “Contemporary Practice of the United States Relating to International Law.” *American Journal of International Law* 116 (2): 417-422.
- El Tiempo. 1998. “Pastrana Lanzó el Plan Colombia.” *ElTiempo.com*, December 20. Retrieved on July 2023 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-822891>).
- Encuentro Nacional de Educación Para la Paz. 2016. *Pensar en educación para la paz: Apuestas del Encuentro Nacional de Educación para la paz*. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (https://www.culture-of-peace.info/EDUCACION_PARA_LA_PAZ_FINAL.pdf).

- Evans, Michael. 2021. "The Allende Massacre in Mexico: A Decade of Impunity." *National Security Archive*, March 18. Retrieved on March 6, 2022 (<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/mexico/2021-03-18/allende-massacre-decade-impunity>).
- Fajardo, Luis Eduardo. 2003 "From the Alliance for Progress to the Plan Colombia: A Retrospective Look at U.S. Aid to Colombia." Crisis States Programme Working Papers Series 1 (28). Accessed May 14, 2015 (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28249/1/WP28LF.pdf>).
- Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. 1997. *The Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Farah, Douglas. 1999. "U.S. Ready to Boost Aid to Troubled Colombia." *Washington Post*, August 23. Accessed December 17, 2019 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/aug99/colombia23.htm>).
- FCP. 2024. "Fondo Colombia en Paz." Retrieved on September 10, 2023 (<https://fcp.gov.co/>).
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2014. "'CHANGING THE GAME OR DROPPING THE BALL?' Mexico's Security and Anti-Crime Strategy under President Enrique Peña Nieto." Latin America Initiative, Foreign Policy at Brookings, November 7. Retrieved on March 19, 2020 (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/changing-the-game-or-dropping-the-ball-mexicos-security-and-anti-crime-strategy-under-president-enrique-pena-nieto/>).
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2014. *Mexico's Security and Anti-Crime Strategy under President Enrique Peña Nieto*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2016. "Who pays for peace in Colombia?" *Brookings*, September 29. Retrieved on June 13, 2023(<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/who-pays-for-peace-in-colombia/>).
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2018a. "Death by bad implementation? The Duque administration and Colombia's peace deal(s)." Brookings, July 24. Accessed on January 2, 2023 (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/death-by-bad-implementation-the-duque-administration-and-colombias-peace-deals/>).
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2018b. "The Threat of Illicit Economies and the Complex Relations with State and Society." pp. 1-12 in *Organized Crime and Illicit trade: How to Respond to this Strategic Challenge in Old and New Domains*, edited by Comolli, Virginia. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2019. "AMLO's Security Policy: Creative Ideas, Tough Reality." *Brookings*, March. Retrieved on February 21, 2020 (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/amlos-security-policy-creative-ideas-tough-reality/>).

- Felbab-Brown, Vanda. 2020. "Bargaining with the Devil to Avoid Hell? A Discussion Paper on Negotiations with Criminal Groups in Latin America and the Caribbean." IFIT.
- Felbab-Brown, Vanda and Joel M. Jutkowitz, Sergio Rivas, Ricardo Rocha, James T. Smith, Manuel Supervielle, Cynthia Watson, Management Systems International. 2009. *Assessment of the Implementation of the United States Government's Support for Plan Colombia's Illicit Crop Reduction Components*. USAID. Retrieved on July 5, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacn233.pdf).
- Fernández, Carlos, Mauricio García Durán and Fernando Sarmiento. 2004. "Movilización por lapaz en Colombia 1978-2002." *Revista Controversia* 18-23.
- Ferrer, Yadira. 1997. "Colombia: Mandato ciudadano por la paz ganador en elecciones." *Inter Press Service*, October 27. Retrieved July 7, 2018 (<http://www.ipsnoticias.net/1997/10/colombia-mandato-ciudadano-por-la-paz-ganador-en-elecciones/>).
- Findley, Michael G., Oliver Kaplan, Alejandro Ponce de León, and Joseph K. Young. 2016. "USAID Regional Governance Activity (RGA) in Colombia, 2015-2019: Baseline Report." USAID, December 8. Retrieved on June 23, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XBPW.pdf).
- Finkenbusch, Peter. 2017. *Rethinking Neo-Institutional Statebuilding: The Knowledge Paradox of International Intervention*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Finkenbusch, Peter. 2018. "Building Institutional Capacity: Knowledge Production for Transnational Security Governance in Mexico." *Global Crime* 19(3-4): 211-27.
- Finnemore, Martha. 1996. "Norms, Culture, and World Politics: Insights from Sociology's Institutionalism." *International Organization* 50:325-47.
- FORusa. 2010. "Military Assistance and Human Rights: Colombia, U.S. Accountability, and Global Implications." July 1. Retrieved April 20, 2015 (<http://forusa.org/sites/default/files/uploads/militaryaid100729web.pdf>).
- ForeignAssistance.gov. 2024. "ForeignAssistance.gov." US Department of State and USAID. Retrieved on January 2, 2024 (<https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>).
- Fraser, Nancy. 2015. "Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism." *Critical Historical Studies* 2(2): 157-189.
- Freeman, Mark, and Vanda Felbab-Brown. 2021. "Negotiating with Violent Criminal Groups: Lessons and Guidelines from Global Practice." IFIT, March.
- Freeman, Will and Steven Holmes. 2023. "Petro's Total Peace Plan Turns One: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 30. Accessed on

January 15, 2024 (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/petros-total-peace-plan-turns-one-good-bad-and-ugly>).

- Gallagher, Janice Kreinick. 2015. *Tipping the Scales of Justice: The Role of Organized Citizen Action in Strengthening the Rule of Law*. Doctoral Dissertation, Cornell University. Retrieved on August 29, 2020 (<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/items/d716ed54-6745-43d8-8a5d-1a2324def31d>).
- Gamson, William and Andre Modigliani. 1989. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *The University of Chicago Press* 95(1):1-3
- Gamson, William, David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson. 1992. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18:373-393.
- GAO (Government Accountability Office). 1998. "Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia Face Continuing Challenges." United States General Accounting Office, Report to Congressional Requesters, N° GAO/NSIAD-98-60. Retrieved on May 24, 2023 (<https://www.gao.gov/assets/t-nsiad-98-103.pdf>).
- GAO (Government Accountability Office). 1999. "Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow." United States General Accounting Office, Report to Congressional Requesters, N° GAO/NSIAD-99-136. Retrieved on May 24, 2023 (<https://www.gao.gov/assets/nsiad-99-136.pdf>).
- García, Sara. 2023. "Paramilitary Commander Salvatore Mancuso Reveals AUC's Connections in Colombia." *Insight Crime*, May 23. Retrieved on September 8, 2023 (<https://insightcrime.org/news/paramilitary-commander-salvatore-mancuso-reveals-aucs-connections-in-colombia/>).
- García Luna, Genaro. 2018. *Seguridad con Bienestar: Un nuevo modelo integral de seguridad*. Booktique. Retrieved on April 23, 2021 (https://www.casede.org/BibliotecaCasede/Novedades-PDF/Seguridad_GENARO_GARCIA_LUNA.pdf).
- Gates, Robert M. 2010. "Helping Others Defend Themselves," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 89 (3). Retrieved July 25, 2019 (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-05-01/helping-others-defend-themselves>).
- Ghitis, Frida. 2018. "Colombia's Duque Tests the Political Center, Angering Everyone." *World Politics Review*, November 29. Retrieved December 4, 2018 (<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/26864/colombia-s-duque-tests-the-political-center-angering-everyone>).
- Gill, Lesley. 2004. *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Gill, Stephen. 1995. "Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 24 (3), 399–423.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1980. *The Whole World Is Watching*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glynn, Adam, Allen Hicken, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Daniel Pemstein, David Altman, Eitan Tzelgov, Jan Teorell, Jeffrey Staton, John Gerring, Kelly McMann, M. Steven Fish, Matthew Kroenig, Michael Bernhard, Michael Coppedge, Staffan I. Lindberg, Svend-Erik Skaaning, and Yi-ting Wang. "Five Years of Peace Agreement Implementation in Colombia: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities to Increase Implementation Levels, December 2016 - October 2021." Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- González González, Fernán. 2014. *Poder y Violencia en Colombia*. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de la Javeriana.
- GAO (United States Government Accountability Office). 2019. "U.S. Assistance to Mexico: State and USAID Allocated over \$700 Million to Support Criminal Justice, Border Security, and Related Efforts from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018." Report to Congressional Requesters, GAO-19-647. Retrieved on October 27, 2019 (<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-647.pdf>).
- García, Dennis A. 2015. "PGR pide orden de aprehensión contra Arturo Escobar." *El Universal*, November 25. Retrieved on September 8, 2022 (<https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/nacion/politica/2015/11/25/pgr-pide-orden-de-aprehension-contra-arturo-escobar>).
- Graff, Corrine. 2023. "What's the State of Play on the Global Fragility Act?" USIP, March 29, 2023. Retrieved on December 31, 2023 (<https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/whats-state-play-global-fragility-act>).
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Grief, Isaac Toman. 2021. *A Claim-Making Model of the Legitimation of Post-War Governance*. York, UK: University of York.
- Grimm, Sonja, and Brigitte Weiffen. 2018. "Domestic Elites and External Actors in Post-Conflict Democratisation: Mapping Interactions and Their Impact." *Conflict, Security & Development* 18(4): 257–82.
- Grover, Jennifer A. 2018. *Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some*

- Positive Results, but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach.* GAO, Report to the Caucus on International Narcotics Control, U.S. Senate, GAO-19-106.
- Guerrero, Angela, and Alejandro Hope. 2014. “‘Mexico at Peace’... an Incomplete Approach.” *WOLA*, June. Retrieved on April 7, 2020 (https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/WOLA_RPT_MEXICO_PEACE_FNL2.pdf).
- Guerrero Gutiérrez, Eduardo. 2008. “¿Buen o mal gobierno? Narcotráfico y violencia en México.” *Buen Gobierno* 5 (julio-diciembre): 8-27. Retrieved on April 1, 2021 (<https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=569660527005>).
- Guerrero Gutiérrez, Eduardo. 2012. “La estrategia fallida.” *Nexos*, December 1. Retrieved on April 1, 2021 (<https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=15083>).
- Guevara Bermúdez, José Antonio. 2017. *Seguridad interior, ¿seguridad para quién?*. Seguridad Sin Guerra. Retrieved on June 24, 2021 (<https://www.cmdpdh.org/publicaciones-pdf/cmdpdh-seguridad-interior.pdf>).
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1992. *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Haider, Huma. 2014. *Statebuilding and peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility*. Topic Guide Supplement. Revised edition with A. Strachan. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Hall, Stuart. 2005. “Encoding/Decoding.” pp. 90-103 in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Halpert, Madeline and Bernd Debusmann Jr. 2023. “Mexico’s ex-security minister Genero García Luna convicted of drug trafficking.” BBC News, February 22. Retrieved on March 27, 2023 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64726724>).
- Hameiri, Shahar, Hughes, Caroline, Scarpello, Fabio. 2017. *International Intervention and Local Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Haspelslagh, Sophie. 2020. “The Mediation Dilemma of (Not) Talking to Terrorists.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 26(4): 506-526.
- Haspelslagh, Sophie. 2021. “The ‘Linguistic Ceasefire’: Negotiating in an Age of Proscription.” *Security Dialogue* 52 (4): 361-379.
- Hart, Vivien. 2001. “Constitution-Making and the Transformation of Conflict.” *Peace and Change* 26 (2): 153-176.

- Hartzell, Caroline, Robert D. Lamb, Phillip McLean, Johanna Mendelson Forman, and Maria Cristina Olano. 2011. *USAID/OTI's Integrated Governance Response Program in Colombia: A Final Evaluation*. USAID. Retrieved on June 3, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr882.pdf).
- Heinle, Kimberly, Cory Molzahn, and David A. Shirk. 2015. *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2014*. Justice in Mexico Project, University of San Diego. Retrieved on April 2, 2021 (<https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/media/publications/Drug%20Violence%20in%20Mexico,%20Justice%20in%20Mexico%20Project%20Report,%202015.pdf>).
- Heinzekehr, Hannah. 2020. "Kroc Institute releases fourth report, 'Three Years After the Signing of the Final Agreement in Colombia: Moving Toward Territorial Transformation.'" Kroc Institute, June 16. Retrieved on September 15, 2023 (<https://kroc.nd.edu/news-events/news/kroc-institute-releases-fourth-report-three-years-after-the-signing-of-the-final-agreement-in-colombia-moving-toward-territorial-transformation/>).
- Hensell, Stephan, and Felix Gerdes. 2012. "Elites and International Actors in Post-War Societies: The Limits of Intervention." *International Peacekeeping* 19(2):154–69.
- Hernández, Gerardo. 2020. "La política de seguridad en México entre 2012 y 2018. De la confrontación a la prevención del delito." *Espiral* 27 (77): 43-79.
- Hernández Barreto, Camilo A. 2016. "El delito político en el marco del proceso de paz con las FARC-EP." CINEP 87, February-May: 7-10. Retrieved on June 13, 2023 (https://www.cinep.org.co/publi-files/PDFS/20160502b.delito_politico87.pdf).
- Higley, John and Michael G. Burton, 1989. 'The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns'. *American Sociological Review* 54(1), 17–32.
- Hinojosa, Maria and Ramírez, Peniley. 2023. "USA v. García Luna." *Lemonada and Futuro Media*. Retrieved on March 30, 2023 (<https://lemonadamedia.com/show/usa-v-garcia-luna/>).
- Historical Memory Group. 2016. *Basta Ya! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity*. Bogotá, Colombia: National Center for Historical Memory.
- Hope, Alejandro. 2016. "Plus Ça Change: Structural Continuities in Mexican Counternarcotics Policy." Brookings Institute, 1-16. Retrieved April 13, 2019 (<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-Mexicofinal.pdf>).
- Hristov, Jasmin. 2014. *Paramilitarism and Neoliberalism: Violent Systems of Capital Accumulation in Colombia and Beyond*. London, UK: Pluto Books.
- Human Rights Watch. 2011. "Neither Rights Nor Security: Killings, Torture, and

- Disappearances in Mexico's 'War on Drugs.'" November 9. Retrieved on May 15, 2020 (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/11/09/neither-rights-nor-security/killings-torture-and-disappearances-mexicos-war-drugs>).
- Hume, Liz. 2023. "The Global Fragility Act Takes Another Step Toward Conflict Prevention But Bigger Strides Remain." *Just Security*, April 10. Retrieved on January 2, 2024 (<https://www.justsecurity.org/85897/the-global-fragility-act-takes-another-step-toward-conflict-prevention-but-bigger-strides-remain/>).
- IFIT (Instituto para las Transiciones Integrales). 2022. "Banco de experiencias para la construcción de paz en México." March. Retrieved on May 23, 2021 (<https://ifit-transitions.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/banco-experiencias-final-html-reduced-1.pdf>).
- Ignatieff, Michel. 2003. *Empire Lite. Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. London, UK: Vintage.
- Indepaz. 2021. "5 años del acuerdo de paz: Balance en cifras de la violencia en los territorios," November 24. Retrieved on January 18, 2023(<https://indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/5-anos-del-acuerdo-de-paz-1.pdf>).
- International Crisis Group. 2018. "Building Peace in Mexico: Dilemmas Facing the López Obrador Government." *Latin America Report* 69: 1-46.
- IOM (International Organization for Migration). 2003. "Strengthening Peace in Colombia." Eighth Quarter Report, April-June. Retrieved on June 1, 2022 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdaby499.pdf).
- IOM and USAID. 2002a. "Strengthening Peace in Colombia." Fifth Quarter Report, July-September. Retrieved on June 2, 2022 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdabx339.pdf).
- IOM and USAID. 2002b. "Strengthening Peace Through Civil Society Initiatives at the Community Level." Sixth Quarter Status Report, January-March. Retrieved June 2, 2022 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdabw833.pdf).
- IOM and USAID. 2006. "Strengthening Peace Program in Colombia." 21st Quarterly Report, July- September. Retrieved on October 10, 2023 (<https://corpora.tika.apache.org/base/docs/govdocs1/303/303867.pdf>).
- IRRC. 2008. "Interview with Sergio Jaramillo Caro." *International Review of the Red Cross* 90 (872): 823-833. Retrieved on May 17, 2023 (<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/irrc-872-interview.pdf>).
- Isacson, Adam. 2012. "Consolidating 'Consolidation': Colombia's 'security and development' zones await a civilian handoff, while Washington backs away from the

- concept.” WOLA. Retrieved on May 15, 2023 (https://www.wola.org/files/Consolidating_Consolidation.pdf).
- Isacson, Adam. 2021. “A Long Way to Go: Implementing Colombia’s Peace Accord after Five Years.” WOLA, November 23. Retrieved on May 23, 2023 (<https://www.wola.org/analysis/a-long-way-to-go-implementing-colombias-peace-accord-after-five-years/>).
- Isacson, Adam, and Abigail Poe. 2009. “After Plan Colombia: Evaluating ‘Integrated Action,’ the next Phase of U.S. Assistance.” *International Policy Report*, December. Washington D.C.: Center for International Policy.
- Isacson, Adam and Sarah Kinoshian. 2017. *Putting the Pieces Together: A Global Guide to U.S. Security Aid Programs*. Washington DC: WOLA.
- Jaime, Edna. 2015. “¿Quién para prevención?” México Evalúa, January 12. Retrieved on August 5, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/quien-para-prevencion/>).
- Jenssen, Thale. 2018. “10 things threatening the peace in Colombia.” Norwegian Refugee Council. Retrieved on February 1, 2019 (<https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/march/10-things-threatening-the-peace-in-colombia/>).
- Justice for Colombia. 2024. “UN Security Council reaffirms full support for Colombia peace process.” *JusticeforColombia.org*, January 29. Retrieved on January 31, 2024 (<https://justiceforcolombia.org/news/un-security-council-reaffirms-full-support-for-colombia-peace-process/>).
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. “How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime—and How They Do No Not.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1517-1540.
- Kaplan, Richard. 2004. “Partner or Patron? International Civil Administration and Local Capacity-Building.” *International Peacekeeping* 11 (2): 229-247.
- Kaplan, Richard. 2005. *International Governance of War Torn Territories*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Khan, Carrie. 2012. “Mexico’s Election: A Fresh Face For an Old Party.” NPR, June 26. Retrieved on January 2, 2024 (<https://www.npr.org/2012/06/26/155783473/mexico-picks-a-president-amid-drug-war-weak-economy>).
- Knight, Alan. 2012. “Narco-Violence and the State in Modern Mexico,” pp. 115-134 in *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Knight, Alan. 2023. “State, Society and the Neoliberal Turn in Mexico, c. 1980-c.

- 2000,” pp. 99-140 in *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: The Neoliberal State and Beyond*, edited by Miguel A. Centeno and Agustin E. Ferraro. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Krampe, Florian and Eckman, Lisa. 2020. “Post War Legitimacy: A Framework on Relational Agency in Peacebuilding,” pp. 215-239 in *Local Legitimacy and International Peacebuilding*, edited by Oliver P. Richmond and Roger MacGinty. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Krasner, Stephen D. and Pascual, Carlos. 2005. *Addressing State Failure*. Foreign Affairs 84, 153-163.
- Krebs, Ronald R. 2015. *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kroc Institute. 2021. “El Acuerdo Final de Colombia En Tiempos Del COVID-19: Apropiación Institucional y Ciudadana Como Clave de La Implementación.” South Bend, IN: Matriz de Acuerdos de Paz Iniciativa Barómetro.
- Kuzmarov, Jeremy. 2012. *Modernizing Repression: Police Training and Nation-Building in the American Century*. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- La Silla Vacía. 2021. “Juan Camilo Restrepo Salazar.” *Lasillavacia.com*, February 12. Retrieved on August 3, 2023 (<https://www.lasillavacia.com/quien-es-quien/juan-camilo-restrepo-salazar/>).
- La Silla Vacía. 2021. “Sergio Jaramillo Caro.” *Lasillavacia.com*, February 12. Retrieved on August 3, 2023 (<https://www.lasillavacia.com/quien-es-quien/sergio-jaramillo-caro/>).
- La Silla Vacía. 2022. “José Antonio Ocampo.” *Lasillavacia.com*, June 29. Retrieved on August 2, 2023 (<https://www.lasillavacia.com/quien-es-quien/jose-antonio-ocampo/>).
- Lachica Huerta, Fabiola. 2020. *Shattering the Everyday, Rearranging the Ordinary. The categories, temporalities, and spatial dimensions of an acute event: the case of the Villas de Salvárcar*. Doctoral Dissertation. Ann Arbor, Michigan: ProQuest.
- Lake, David. 2021. “Why State-Building Didn’t Work in Afghanistan.” *Political Violence at a Glance*, August 21, 2021. Retrieved on August 22, 2021 (<https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2021/08/17/WHY-STATEBUILDING-DIDNT-WORK-IN-AFGHANISTA/>).
- Lakhani, Nina. 2021. “Fifty people linked to Mexico’s president.” *The Guardian*, July 19. Retrieved on July 19, 2021 (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/jul/19/fifty-people-close-mexico-president-amlo-among-potential-targets-nso-clients>).
- Lantis, Jeffrey S. 2002. “Strategic Culture and National Security Policy.” *International*

Studies Review 4 (3): 87-113.

- Leal Buitrago, Francisco. 2011. "Una visión de la seguridad en Colombia." *Análisis Político* 73: 3-36.
- Le Cour, Romain. 2021. "Documentar, medir, incidir: las herramientas civiles para reducir la violencia." *Animal Político*, September 4. Retrieved on August 18, 2022. (<https://www.animalpolitico.com/lo-que-mexico-evalua/documentar-medir-incidir-las-herramientas-civiles-para-reducir-la-violencia/>).
- Lee, Melissa M. 2022. "International Statebuilding and the Domestic Politics of State Development." *Annual Review Political Science* 25: 261-281.
- Lefort, Claude. 2000. "Dialogue with Pierre Clastres." Pp. 207-235 in *Writing: The Political Test*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lemay-Hébert, Nicolas. 2009. "Statebuilding without Nation-building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutional Approach." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3 (1): 21-45.
- Lessing, Benjamin. 2017. *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lindsay-Poland, John. 2018. *Plan Colombia: U.S. Ally Atrocities and Community Activism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lombo, Juan Sebastián and Javier González Penagos. 2021. "'No pudieron hacer trizas el Acuerdo, aunque lo quisieron': Juan Manuel Santos." *El País*, November 23. Retrieved on November 23, 2021(<https://www.elespectador.com/politica/no-pudieron-hacer-trizas-el-acuerdo-aunque-lo-quisieron-juan-manuel-santos/>).
- Long, Gideon. 2018. "Colombian politics drifts as Iván Duque faces reality of government." *Financial Times*, December 3. Retrieved December 4, 2018 (<https://www.ft.com/content/0fb63f5e-f1fc-11e8-ae55-df4bf40f9d0d>).
- Long, Yan. 2018. "The Contradictory Impact of Transnational AIDS Institutions on State Repression in China, 1989-2013." *American Journal of Sociology* 124 (2): 309-66.
- López, Magda Beatriz. 2012. "Marco jurídico para la paz ¿un marco estrecho?" *CINEP*, 76: 19-20.
- López-Alves, Fernando. 2000. *State Formation and Democracy in Latin America, 1810-1900*. Durham, NC: Duke Press.
- López-Betancourt, Eduardo and Roberto Fonseca-Luján. 2013. "The closure of the Federal Public Security Secretariat: another 'turn of of the screw' in the Security Policy of the Mexican State." *Revista Criminalidad* 55(1): 67-79.

- Lozano-Vásquez, Alberto and Rebolledo Flores, Jorge. 2015. "In Search of the Mérida Initiative: From Antecedents to Practical Results," pp. 239-256 in *Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Violence in the Americas Today*, edited by Bruce M. Bagley and Jonathan D. Rosen. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Martínez Palomares, Jorge Carlos. 2019. "The Impact of the Mexican Government's Budget for Crime and Violence Prevention Programs on Intentional Homicides." Master's Thesis, Texas A&M University. Retrieved on October 29, 2021 (<https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/186275>).
- Matanock, Aila M. and García-Sánchez, Miguel. 2017. "The Colombian Paradox: Peace Processes, Elite Divisions, and Popular Plebiscites." *Dædalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences* 146 (4): 152-166.
- McDermott, Jeremy. 2010. "How President Alvaro Uribe changed Colombia." *BBC News*, August 4. Retrieved October 5, 2018 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-10841425>).
- Mendez, Alvaro. 2017. *Colombian Agency and the making of US Foreign Policy*. London, UK: Routledge.
- México Evalúa. 2015. "Preocupa a sociedad civil el nombramiento de Escobar como Subsecretario de Prevención y Participación Ciudadana," *Comunicado de Prensa*, September 9. Retrieved August 2, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/preocupa-a-sociedad-civil-el-nombramiento-de-escobar-como-subsecretario-de-prevencion-y-participacion-ciudadana/>).
- México Evalúa. 2016. "Expertos nacionales e internacionales planterán propuestas para prevenir el delito y la violencia." Press Release, February 25. Retrieved on August 5, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/expertos-nacionales-e-internacionales-plantaran-propuestas-para-prevenir-el-delito-y-la-violencia/>).
- Mezú-Mina, Rodrigo. 2021. *Militares y procesos de paz: El caso de Colombia desde la experiencia de las negociaciones con las FARC en La Habana, Cuba*. Doctoral Dissertation. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes.
- Migdal, Joel S. 1988. *Strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Moloeznik, Marcos Pablo and Suárez de Garay, María Eugenia. 2012. "The militarization process of the public security in Mexico (2006-2010)." *Frontera norte*, 24(48): 121-144.
- Moose, David. 2005. *Cultivating Development*. New York, NY: Pluto Books.
- Mora Rangel, Jorge Enrique. 2021. *Los Pecados de la Paz, Vivencias y convicciones de la*

guerra y la paz en Colombia. Bogotá, Colombia: Planeta Colombiana.

- Muggah, Robert and Iлона Szabó De Carvalho, Nathalie Alvarado, Lina Marmolejo, and Ruddy Wang. 2016. "Making cities safer: Citizen security innovations from Latin America." *Igarapé Institute*, Strategic Paper 20. Retrieved on April 2, 2021 (<https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/viewer/Making-Cities-Safer-Citizen-Security-Innovations-from-Latin-America.pdf>).
- Muggah, Robert, Juan Carlos Garzón, and Manuela Suárez. 2018. "La 'Mano Dura': Los costos de la represión y los beneficios de la prevención para los jóvenes en América Latina." *Instituto Igarape*, Artículo Estratégico 36.
- Murphy, Helen. 2016. "Colombian peace deal passed by Congress, ending 52-year war." Reuters, November 30. Retrieved on September 15, 2023 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-peace/colombian-peace-deal-passed-by-congress-ending-52-year-war-idUSKBN13P1D2>).
- Narang, Neil. 2015. "Assisting Uncertainty: How Humanitarian Aid can Inadvertently Prolong Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 59 (1): 184-195.
- Natiello, Peter. 2023. "Colombia's Descent to Socialism: Assessing Gustavo Petro's Presidency." USAID, July 27. Retrieved on August 18, 2023 (<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/jul-27-2023-colombias-descent-socialism-assessing-gustavo-petros-presidency>).
- O'Brien, Jena, & Quinn, Laurel. 2024. "Six Years of Implementation of the Colombian Final Accord: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Political Phase." Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.
- Office of Democracy and Governance. 2002. *Achievements in Building and Maintaining the Rule of Law: MSI's Studies in LAC, E&E, AFR, and ANE*. USAID, PN-ACR-220. Retrieved on April 10, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnacr220.pdf).
- Oisín, Tansey. 2007. "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-probability Sampling." Cambridge University Press 40 (4): 765-772.
- Olson, Jared. 2022. "How AMLO Has Fueled Mexico's Drug War." *Foreign Policy*, June 23. Retrieved on May 16, 2024 (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/23/mexico-drug-war-amlo-lopez-obrador-demilitarization-national-guard-human-rights/>).
- Olson, Joy. 2012. "Organized Crime as Human Rights Issue: Where is the Outrage?" *Revista, Harvard Review of Latin America*, Winter. Accessed May 7, 2021. (<https://archive.revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/organized-crime-human-rights-issue>).

- Orozco, Cecilia. 2017. “‘Colombia doesn’t know which Trump it will have to face’: Adam Isacson.” *El Espectador*, October 28. Retrieved on September 19, 2023 (<https://www.elespectador.com/politica/colombia-no-sabe-a-cual-trump-tendra-que-enfrentar-adam-isacson-article-720331/>).
- Otis, John. 2010. “Colombia’s New President: A Win for the U.S.” *Time Magazine*, June 21. Retrieved on January 2, 2024 (<https://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1998279,00.html>).
- Paley, Dawn. 2014. *Drug War Capitalism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Palacios, Marcos. 2007. “Plan Colombia: ¿anti-drogas o contrainsurgencia?” Bogotá, Colombia: Cátedra Corona 12, 11-26.
- Pansters, Wil G. 2012. “Zones of State-Making: Violence, Coercion, and Hegemony in Twentieth-Century Mexico,” pp. 3-42 in *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Paredes, César. 2007. “¿Sí es posible concederles estatus político a los paramilitares?” *Semana*, July 25. Retrieved on July 15, 2023 (<https://www.semana.com/online/articulo/si-posible-concederles-estatus-politico-paramilitares/87269-3/>).
- Paris, Roland. 2002. “International Peacebuilding and the ‘Mission Civilisatrice’.” *Review of International Studies* 28 (4): 637-656.
- Paris, Roland. 2004. *At War’s End*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Payan, Tony & Correa-Cabrera, Guadalupe. 2016. “Mexican Armed Forces and Security in Mexico.” Baker Institute for Public Policy, May 31. Retrieved on March 9, 2023 (<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/mexican-armed-forces-public-safety#:~:text=More%20recently%2C%20in%20April%202016,%2C%20legislative%2C%20and%20judicial%20branches>).
- Pearce, Jenny. 2018. “Elites and Violence in Latin America: Logics of the Fragmented Security State.” LSE Latin America and Caribbean Centre, Violence Security, and Peace Working Papers 1: 1-30.
- Pérez Correa, Catalina. 2020. “AMLO’s Broken Campaign Promise: Demilitarizing Mexico.” *Americas Quarterly*, December 9. Retrieved on February 3, 2021 (<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/amlos-broken-campaign-promise-demilitarizing-mexico/>).
- Perez Esparza, David, Shane D. Johnson, and Paul Gill. 2020. “Why did Mexico become a violent country? Assessing the role of firearms trafficked from the U.S.” *Security Journal* 33, 179-209.

- Pérez Ricart, Carlos. 2016. *Las agencias antinarcoóticos de los Estados Unidos y la construcción transnacional de la guerra contra las drogas en México (1938-1978)*. Fachbereich für Politik-und Sozialwissenschaften. Berlin, Germany: Freien Universität Berlin.
- Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. 2018. "U.S. pressure and Mexican anti-drugs efforts from 1940-1980: Importing the war on drugs?" Pp. 33-52 in *Beyond the Drug War in Mexico: Human rights, the public sphere, and justice*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Benjamin T. Smith, and Peter Watt. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. 2019a. "La Kingpin Strategy: ¿qué es y cómo llegó a México?" *Nexos*, October 21. Retrieved on April 1, 2021 (<https://seguridad.nexos.com.mx/la-kingpin-strategy-que-es-y-como-llego-a-mexico/>).
- Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. 2019b. "The Role of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in Mexican Drug Policy Design (1940-1968)." *Frontera Norte: International Journal of Borders, Territories and Regions* 31 (1): 1-22.
- Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. 2020. "Taking the War on Drugs Down South: The Drug Enforcement Administration in Mexico (1973-1980)." *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 34 (1): 82-113.
- Persson, Anders. 2012. "Building a state or maintaining the occupation? International support for Fayyad's state-building project." *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security* 1 (1): 102-118.
- Pfeiffer, Silke. 2014. "Infraestructura de Paz en Colombia." Berlin, Germany: Berghof Foundation. Accessed on May 2023 (www.berghof-foundation.org/infraestructura-de-paz-en-Colombia-es.pdf).
- Pickering, Thomas. "Press Briefing on President Clinton's Upcoming Trip to Colombia." U.S. Department of State. August 25, 2000. Accessed May 1, 2015 (http://www.state.gov/1997-2001-NOPDFS/policy_remarks/2000/000825_pickering_brief.html).
- Poiré, Alejandro. 2011. "10 mitos de la lucha por la seguridad." *Presidencia Felipe Calderón Hinojosa*, May 27. Retrieved on May 23, 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjmxrJn0bfQ>).
- Polman, Linda. 2011. *War Games: the Story of Aid and War in Modern Times*. New York City, NY: Viking Press.
- Porch, Douglass. 2008. "Preserving Autonomy in Conflict: Civil-Military Relations in Colombia," pp. 127-153 in *Global Politics of Defense Reform*, edited by Thomas Bruneau and Harold Trinkunas. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Presidencia de la República. 2017. "Inauguración de la 11/a. Brigada de Policía Militar y su

- Unidad Habitacional Militar.” *México, Presidencia de la República Enrique Peña Nieto*, November 29. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRz2s2iJwn0&t=6s>).
- Presidencia. 2022. “Gobierno de México, Enrique Peña Nieto.” Retrieved on May 3, 2022 (www.gob.mx/ejn).
- Priest, Dana. 2003. *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s Military*. New York, NY: *W.W. Norton & Company*.
- Priest, Dana. 2013. “Covert action in Colombia: U.S. intelligence, GPS bomb kits help Latin American nation cripple rebel forces.” *The Washington Post*, December 21. Retrieved on July 23, 2023 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2013/12/21/covert-action-in-colombia/>).
- Przeworski, Adam and Teune, Henry. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York, NY: Wiley-Interscience.
- Pugh, Allison. 2013. “What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis.” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1: 42–68.
- Ramírez, Socorro and Restrepo, Luis Alberto. 1988. *Actores en conflicto por la paz. El proceso de paz durante el gobierno de Belisario Betancur 1982-1986*. Bogotá, Colombia: Siglo XXI Editores, Cinep.
- Reisman, Lainie. 2016. “3 Questions with Lainie Reisman: Preventing Crime and Violence in Mexico’s Roughest Places.” *Chemonics*, May 2. Retrieved on October 21, 2021 (<https://chemonics.com/blog/3-questions-with-lainie-reisman-preventing-crime-and-violence-in-mexicos-roughest-places/>).
- Restrepo Jiménez, Isabel and Santiago Leyva. 2017. “El Consejo Nacional de Paz en Colombia: ¿una potencial infraestructura de paz para apoyar las negociaciones de paz y la implementación de los Acuerdos?” *Universidad EAFIT* 7, May: 1-88.
- Rey Ortiz, John Jairo. 2015. *El Uribismo, Un Fenómeno Político de Cuatro Dimensiones*. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Facultad de Ciencia Política y Gobierno.
- Rice, Condoleezza. 2017. *Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.
- Richmond, Oliver P. 2014. *Failed Statebuilding: Intervention, the State, and the Dynamics of Peace Formation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Richmond, Oliver P. and Roger MacGinty. 2020. *Local Legitimacy and International Peacebuilding*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.

- Robinson, William I. 2004. *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, Gerardo. 2017. *Seguridad nacional en México y sus problemas*. Puebla, Mexico: Fundación Universidad de las Américas.
- Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, Gerardo and Montserrat Aguilar Romero. 2020. "The Mexican Armed Forces in public security: path dependence and power conflicts." *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad*, 15(1): 61-78.
- Rojas, Diana Marcela. 2015. *El Plan Colombia: la intervención de Estados Unidos en el conflicto armado colombiano (1998-2012)*. Bogotá, Colombia: IEPRI.
- Rojas, Juan Carlos. 2018. "'No acabaré con los acuerdos, pero sí haré modificaciones': Duque." *El Tiempo*, June 2. Accessed on January 2, 2023 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-colombia-2018/presidenciales/entrevista-de-yamid-amat-con-ivan-duque-candidato-presidencial-del-uribismo-225870>).
- Rosario Marroquín, José. 2014. "La prevención del delito durante el primer año de gobierno de Enrique Peña Nieto." *Café Político*. Retrieved on January 21, 2021 (https://mx.boell.org/sites/default/files/cp_penannieto_delito.pdf).
- Rosas, Tánia. 2012. "Urge programa para prevenir delitos Enrique Betancourt." *El Economista*, August 6. Retrieved on November 4, 2021 (<https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Urge-programa-para-prevenir-delitos-Enrique-Betancourt-20120806-0041.html>).
- Rose, Sarah. 2020. "Elite Incentives and Power Dynamics in Fragile States." *Prism* 8 (4): 85-98.
- Rotberg, Robert I. 2004. *When States Fail*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rubio, Luis, Beatriz Magaloni, and Edna Jaime. 1993. *A la Puerta de la Ley: El Estado de derecho en México*. CIDAC. Retrieved on April 10, 2021 (http://www.cidac.org/esp/uploads/1/A_la_puerta_de_la_ley_PDF.pdf).
- Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres. 2018. *Encuentro de formación y capacitación jurídica a mujeres para la exigibilidad y la incidencia, "Trenzando poderes y saberes para una vida libre de violencias y en paz en el territorio"*. Retrieved on July 6, 2023 (<https://rutapacifica.org.co/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cartilla-practica-territorios.pdf>).
- Saba Pérez, Kenia, Laura Cossette, and Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli. 2019. "The Fight for Inclusion: Advocating for a Gender Sensitive Implementation of the Colombian Peace Accords." WOLA, Latin America Working Group Education Fund. Retrieved on

- August 1, 2023 (<https://colombiapeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Advocating-for-a-Gender-Sensitive-Implementation-of-the-Colombian-Peace-Accords.pdf>).
- Saldarriaga-González, Yuri Shirley. 2021. “La Nueva Configuración del Delito Político en Colombia a Partir del Acuerdo Final de Paz de 2016.” *Novum Jus* 15 (2): 121-129.
- Sarmiento Santander, Fernando; Henao Izquierdo, Laura Constanza; Hernández Barreto, Camilo Andrés; Huertas Linares, Jesus David. 2016. “Informe especial. Movilización por la paz en Colombia : una infraestructura social clave para el posacuerdo.” Bogotá, Colombia: CINEP/PPP.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1915. *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by C. Bally and M. Sechehaye. Translated by W. Baskin, Wade. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Schomerus, Marieke. 2020 “Accountability Under the Global Fragility Act,” USIP Conflict Prevention and Fragility Working Group. October 23. Retrieved on <https://www.usip.org/programs/conflict-prevention-and-fragility-working-group>.
- Schroeder, Ursula C., and Fairlie Chappuis. 2014. “New Perspectives on Security Sector Reform: The Role of Local Agency and Domestic Politics.” *International Peacekeeping* 21(2): 133–48.
- Seelke, Claire. 2018. “Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007-2019.” Congressional Research Service, July 23. Retrieved on August 12, 2019 (<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1228554/>).
- Seelke, Clare Ribando. 2019. “Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007-2020.” Congressional Research Service, June 28. Accessed November 18, 2019 (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10578.pdf>).
- Seelke, Clare Ribando, and Edward Y. Gracia. 2019. “Mexico: Background and U.S. Relations.” Congressional Research Service, May 2. Retrieved on February 3, 2020 (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R42917/47>).
- Seelke, Clare Ribando, and Kristin Finklea. 2015. “U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond.” Congressional Research Service, May 7. Retrieved on June 18, 2019 (https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc627094/m1/1/high_res_d/R41349_2015May07.pdf).
- Seelke, Clare Ribando, and Kristin Finklea. 2017. “U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond.” Congressional Research Service, June 29. Retrieved on January 21, 2022 (<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41349.pdf>).
- SEGOB (Secretaría de Gobernación). 2013. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013-2018. Diario Oficial de la Federación*, May 20. Retrieved on April 5, 2020

https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5299465&fecha=20/05/2013#gs.c.tab=0).

- SEGOB (Secretaría de Gobernación). 2014. *Programa Nacional para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y Delincuencia 2014-2018*. *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, April 30. Retrieved on April 5, 2020 (http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5343087&fecha=30/40/2014).
- Segura, Renata and Delphine Mechoulan. 2017. “Made in Havana: How Colombia and the FARC Decided to End the War.” International Peace Institute. Retrieved on May 18, 2023 (<https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/IPI-Rpt-Made-in-Havana.pdf>).
- Semana. 2013. “‘No se debe sacrificar la justicia para tener la paz’: Sergio Jaramillo.” *Semana.com*, July 24, 2013. Retrieved on July 26, 2023 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/no-debe-sacrificar-justicia-para-tener-paz-sergio-jaramillo/351991-3/>).
- Semana. 2017. “Hacer trizas” el acuerdo con las FARC: ¿es posible?”. *Semana.com*, May 8. Retrieved on September 15, 2023 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/uribismo-hara-trizas-acuerdo-acuerdo-con-farc-esta-blindado/524529/>).
- Sending, Ole Jacob. 2010. *Learning to Build a Sustainable Peace: Ownership and Everyday Peacebuilding*. Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelson Institute, Report 4.
- Sending, Ole Jacob. 2011. “The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power,” pp. 55-68 in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding*, edited by Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Shapiro, Andrew J. 2012. “A New Era for U.S. Security Assistance,” *Washington Quarterly* 35 (4): 23-35.
- Sheldon, Oliver. 2014. “US military aid to Colombia had a ‘significant impact’ on increased extrajudicial killings by Armed Forces.” *Colombia Reports*, June 20. Retrieved on September 6, 2023 (<https://colombiareports.com/amp/us-military-aid-colombia-significant-impact-increase-extrajudicial-killings-armed-forces/>).
- Sheridan, Mary Beth. 2020. “As Mexico’s security deteriorates, the power of the military grows.” *Washington Post*, December 17. Retrieved on March 3, 2021. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/mexico-losing-control/mexico-military-security-drug-war/>).
- Shirk, David and Eric L. Olson. 2020. “Violence and Security in Mexico and Implications for the United States: Frequently Asked Questions.” Wilson Center, January.

- Retrieved on April 2020 (https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/FAQs_Violence%20and%20Security%20in%20Mexico%20and%20Implications%20for%20the%20United%20States.pdf).
- Shirk, David and Joel Wallman. 2015. "Understanding Mexico's Drug Violence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1348-1376.
- Sikkink, Kathryn. 2011. *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics*. New York: Norton.
- Silva, María Alejandra. 2017. "Uribe and U.S. Congress: A Troubling Alliance." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, December 5. Retrieved on August 8, 2023 (<https://coha.org/uribe-and-the-u-s-congress-a-troubling-alliance/>).
- Small, Mario L. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature," *The Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 57-86.
- Snow, David, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden, Robert Benford. 1986. *American Sociological Review* 51(4):464-481.
- Spencer, Bill. 1998. "Drug Certification." *Foreign Policy In Focus*, September 1. Retrieved On August 14, 2024 (https://fpif.org/drug_certification/).
- Spencer, David. 2021. "Epilogue," in *Los Pecados de la Paz, Vivencias y convicciones de la guerra y la paz en Colombia*, by Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel. Bogotá, Colombia: Planeta Colombia.
- SSP (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública). 2009. "Programa Nacional de Seguridad Pública 2008-2012." *SEGOB, Diario Oficial de la Federación*, March 23. Retrieved on April 2, 2021(https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5084548&fecha=23/03/2009#gsc.tab=0).
- Stanford University. 2012. "United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia." Mapping Militant Organizations. Retrieved May 9, 2015 (http://web.stanford.edu/group/mapping_militants/cgi-bin/groups/view/85).
- Stokes, Doug. 2003, "Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia." *Review of International Studies* 29: 569-85. Accessed April 20, 2015 (<http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/200310-02.pdf>).
- Suárez de Garay, María Eugenia, Alejandro Agudo Sánchez, Lilian Chapa Koloffon, and Paulo Octavio Gutiérrez Pérez. 2017. *Prevención del delito en México: ¿Cómo se Implementa? Una evaluación de acciones financiadas por el Pronapred en Guadalajara*. México Evaluá, April. Retrieved on April 3, 2022 (https://www.mexicoevalua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Prevencion_delictiva_Mexico_Como_se_implementa.pdf).

- Suárez de Garay, María Eugenia and Alejandro Espriu. 2014. “¿Nuevas estrategias, programas y Acciones? De la política de prevención de las violencias, el delito y la delincuencia en la administración Calderón (2006-2012),” pp. 73-98 in *Balance e impacto de las Políticas públicas federales en materia de seguridad bajo la gestión de Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006-2012)*, edited by Nauhcatzin T. Bravo Aguilar and José Guillermo García Murillo. Zapopan, Jalisco: Universidad de Guadalajara.
- Sumano, Abelardo Rodríguez. 2019. “Mexico’s National Security Paradoxes and Threats in a Geopolitical Context.” *Politics & Policy* 47 (1): 207-232.
- Tate, Winifred. 2015. *Drugs, Thugs, and Diplomats: U.S. Policymaking in Colombia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- The Caravel. 2017. “Uribe and Pastrana Meet with Trump at Mar-a-Lago.” *TheCaravelGu.com*, April 26. Retrieved on September 19, 2023 (<https://www.thecaravelgu.com/blog/uribe-and-pastrana-meet-with-trump-at-mar-a-lago>).
- The Pearson Institute. 2020. “Episode: Perspectives on the Colombian Peace Process, featuring Ambassador Sergio Jaramillo Caro, Former Colombian High Commissioner for Peace.” *Root of Conflict Podcast*, January 27. Retrieved on May 14, 2023 (<https://thepearsoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/Root%20of%20Conflict%20Podcast%20-%20Sergio%20Jaramillo%20Episode%20Transcript.pdf>).
- Thompson, Ginger. 2017. “How the U.S. Triggered a Massacre in Mexico.” *ProPublica*, June 12. Retrieved on March 6, 2022 (<https://www.propublica.org/article/allende-zetas-cartel-massacre-and-the-us-dea>).
- Thomson, Adam. 2008. “Drug Cartels ‘threaten’ Mexican democracy.” *Financial Times*, July 13. Retrieved on April 23, 2021 (<https://www.ft.com/content/9a8272f6-510d-11dd-b751-000077b07658>).
- Tickner, Arlene B. 2007. “Intervención por invitación: Claves de la política exterior colombiana y sus debilidades principales.” *Colombia Internacional* 65: 90-111.
- Tokatlián, Juan Gabriel. 2006. “After Iraq: Next Colombia? The United States and (In)Security in South America,” pp. 239-258 in *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, edited by Brian Loveman. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Touliere, Mathieu. 2020. “Exigen a FGR investigar presunta implicación de calderonistas en operativos para dispersar armas.” *Proceso*, June 11. Retrieved July 6, 2020

<https://www.proceso.com.mx/633973/exigen-a-fgr-investigar-presunta-implicacion-de-calderonistas-en-operativos-para-dispersar-armas-rapido-y-furioso>).

- Trenkov Wermuth, Calin and Bisca, Paul M. 2021. “Global Fragility Act: A Chance to Reshape International Security Assistance?” USIP, January 21. February 1, 2021 (<https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/01/global-fragility-act-chance-reshape-international-security-assistance>).
- Trejo, Guillermo, and Sandra Ley. 2020. *Votes, Drugs, and Violence: The Political Logic of Criminal Wars in Mexico*. 1st ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Turriago Rojas, D. 2016. “Los procesos de paz en Colombia, ¿camino a la reconciliación?” *Actualidades Pedagógicas* 68:159-178.
- United States Embassy Colombia. (Obtained from Digital National Security Archive, Der Spiegel, and El País).
- 2000a. “2000 Terrorism Report (Colombia).” Cable, December 5.
- 2000b. “Colombian Terrorism—Defense Officials Paint Bleak Picture.” Cable, July 13.
- 2004a. “Codel Frist’s Meetings in Bogotá.” Cable, January 7.
- 2004b. “GOC Initiates Interagency Social Assistance Projects.” Cable, May 18.
- 2004c. “The AUC Peace Process: Avoiding Another Caguán.” Cable, May 24.
- 2004d. “Uribe’s Meeting with Inter-Agency Delegation.” Cable, February 10.
- 2005a. “Colombian Prosecutor Begins to Implement Justice and Peace Law; Key Steps Remain.” Cable, September 12.
- 2005b. “National Reconciliation Commission Gets Underway.” Cable, September 23.
- 2005c. “Peace Commissioner’s Concerns about Demobilization Law.” Cable, February 23.
- 2005d. “U/S Burns Meets with Peace Commissioner Restrepo.” Cable, August 5.
- 2005e. “VP Santos Seeks Advice on Explaining Justice and Peace Law to Public.” Cable, July 18.
- 2006a. “Ambassador Delivers Strong Message on Extradition and Justice and Peace Decree; GOC Promises More Extraditions.” Cable, September 1.
- 2006b. “Clarifying Decree on Justice and Peace Law.” Cable, August 14.
- 2006c. “GOC Peace Commissioner on Paramilitary Links to GOC Officials, ELN, and the FARC.” Cable, November 29.
- 2006d. “FARC Talks Coming Soon? Some Think So.” Cable, May 25.
- 2006e. “Possible GOC-FARC Talks: View from the Colombian Left.” Cable, June 21.
- 2006f. “U/S Burns Meets with Human Rights Groups.” Cable, November 1.
- 2006g. “Vice President Santos on FARC, ELN and Paramilitary Demobilization.” Cable, July 31.
- 2007a. “Ambassador Brownfield’s September 21 Meeting with GOC Peace Commissioner.” Cable, September 25.
- 2007b. “GOC Continues Efforts to Reestablish State Presence.” Cable, November

- 14.
- 2007c. "General Peter Pace's September 13 Meeting with President Uribe." Cable, September 27.
- 2007d. "INL A/S Patterson Meets with Reintegration Czar Frank Pearl." Cable, February 7.
- 2007e. "Joint Chiefs Chairman General Pace Meets with Vice President Santos." Cable, January 29.
- 2008a. "Assistant Secretary Shannon's July 7 Meeting with President Uribe." Cable, July 15.
- 2008b. "GOC Considers Ways to Revive ELN Talks." Cable, February 14.
- 2008c. "GOC Faces Challenges in Expanding State Presence in Macarena." Cable, September 24.
- 2009a. "Ambassador Discusses Drug Policy, DCS with Polo Democrático Candidate Petro." Cable, December 9.
- 2009b. "GOC Takes Soundings on ELN Peace Talks." Cable, October 29.
- 2009c. "Lessons Learned from Plan Colombia." Cable, June 8.
- 2009d. "'No Chance' of FARC Peace Talks as Peace Commissioner Restrepo Resigns." Cable, March 6.
- 2009e. "The Uribe Coalition: Less Than Solid." Cable, July 15.
- 2009f. "Uribe Conditions Peace Talks on Verifiable End to FARC Criminal Acts." Cable, April 2.
- 2010a. "Colombia Scen setter for Codel Lemieux (February 17-19)." Cable, February 12.
- 2010b. "Deputy Secretary Steinberg's January 12, 2010 Meeting with Colombian President Uribe." Cable, January 2.
- 2010c. "Fight Over Democratic Security: Colombia Conflict Update for October-December 2009." Cable, February 8.
- 2010d. "Peace Commissioner Lays Out Way Ahead on FARC, ELN." Cable, January 7.
- United States Embassy Mexico. (Obtained from Digital National Security Archive, Der Spiegel, and El País).
- 2006a. "Candidates and Their Own Reforms." Cable, February 22.
- 2006b. "Strengthening Calderón's Weak Hand." Cable, September 1.
- 2009a. "Calderón Seeks Legal Authorities for Military Counter Narcotics Deployments." Cable, July 23.
- 2009b. "Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair's Meeting with General Galván Galván." Cable, October 19.
- 2009c. "DNI Dennis Blair's October 19 Meeting with Jorge Tello and Guillermo Valdes." Cable, October 26.
- 2009d. "Elements of GOM Policy Team Interested in Focusing Together on Improving Security in a Few Key Cities." Cable, October 5.
- 2009e. "Embassy Engages Civil Society on Human Rights Presaging Future Partnership." Cable, September 24.
- 2009f. "Mexico's Attorney General May be on his Way Out." Cable, August 28.
- 2009g. "Mexico: More Interagency Cooperation Needed on Intelligence Issues." Cable, November 10.

2009h. “Scenesetter for A/S Valenzuela (6-8 December).” Cable, December 1.
2009i. “SSP to Replace Military as Primary Security Player in Ciudad Juarez.”
Cable, December 10.
2010a. “Calderón Visits Juarez, Announces New Strategy.” Cable, February 13.
2010b. “Scenesetter for the Opening of the Defense Bilateral Working Group,
Washington, D.C., February 1.” Cable, January 29.

Uribe Vélez, Alvaro. 2017. “Message to the authorities and the Congress of the United States of America.” Twishort, April 16. Retrieved on September 19, 2023 (<https://twishort.com/pUUlc>).

USAID. 2006. “USAID Consultation with Colombian Civil Society Organizations Regarding the 2006-2010 Human Rights Program: Conclusions and Recommendations.” Retrieved on July 2, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADF376.pdf).

USAID. 2007. “Strengthening Peace Program.” Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacj914.pdf).

USAID. 2018. “USAID presents ground-breaking research on violence prevention and its effectiveness.” *Monthly Success Story*, September. Retrieved on September 7, 2022 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TDCM.pdf).

USAID. 2021. “Community Development and Licit Opportunities (CDLO).” Retrieved on June 24, 2023 (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/CDLO_FactSheet_7.21.21.pdf).

USAID. 2024. “Investing for Peace Fund.” Retrieved on June 23, 2023 (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/ACUMEN_English_FactSheet_1.19.24.pdf).

USAID Colombia. 2014. “Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2014-2018: A Path to Peace.” USAID, June 13. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 (<https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/USAID-Colombia-CDCS.pdf>).

USAID Mexico. 2014. “Mexico Crime and Violence Prevention Program (CVPP).” Prepared by Tetrattech, Quarterly Report (Jan-March), April. Retrieved on September 7, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K2HZ.pdf).

USAID Mexico. 2015. “Mexico Crime and Violence Prevention Program (CVPP II).” Prepared by Tetrattech, Quarterly Report (July-September 2015), October. Retrieved on September 5, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KXHC.pdf).

USAID Mexico. 2016a. “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia (JPV).” Prepared by Chemonics, Quarterly Report April-June. Retrieved on September 8, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00M8PN.pdf).

- USAID Mexico. 2016b. “Mexico Crime and Violence Prevention Program (CVPP II).” Prepared by Tetrattech, Final Report (February 2015-February 2016), February. Retrieved on September 7, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KZCQ.pdf).
- USAID Mexico. 2017. “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia (USAID/JPV).” Annual Report, 2016-2017, October. Retrieved on September 8, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T2MP.pdf).
- USAID Mexico. 2018. “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia (USAID/JPV).” Annual Report, October 2017-September 2018, October. Retrieved on September 6, 2021 (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TNMK.pdf).
- USIP. 2023. *Elite Capture and Corruption of Security Sectors*. Washington D.C.: USIP, Working Group on Elite Capture and Corruption of Security Sectors.
- USIP. 2024. “Security Sector Governance and Reform: Building Peaceful Security.” Retrieved January 9, 2024 (<https://www.usip.org/programs/security-sector-governance-and-reform>).
- Vargas Meza, Ricardo. 2011. “USAID’s Alternative Development policy in Colombia: A critical analysis.” *Transnational Institute*, Drug Policy Briefing 38. Retrieved on July 3, 2023 (<https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/brief38.pdf>).
- Verdad Abierta. 2016. “Del Acuerdo de Santa Fe de Ralito al No contra las FARC.” *VerdadAbierta.com*, October 5. Retrieved on September 6, 2023 (<https://verdadabierta.com/del-acuerdo-de-santa-fe-de-ralito-al-no-contra-las-farc/>).
- Vereinte, Nationen. 2010. *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- Villagran, Lauren. 2013. “The Victims’ Law in Mexico.” *Wilson Center*, January 11. Retrieved March 13, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-victims-law-mexico>).
- Villarraga Sarmiento, Alvaro. 2013. *Biblioteca de la paz, Serie Proceso de Paz en Colombia 1980-2013*. Bogotá, Colombia: Fundación Cultura Democrática.
- Villarraga Sarmiento, Alvaro. 2014. *Biblioteca de la paz, Serie Proceso de Paz en Colombia 1982-2014*. Bogotá, Colombia: Fundación Cultura Democrática.
- Visoka, Gëzim. 2020. “International Intervention and Relational Legitimacy,” pp. 44-66 in *Local Legitimacy and International Peace Intervention*, edited by Oliver P. Richmond and Roger MacGinty. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.

- Volosinov, V.N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. New York, NY: Seminar Press.
- W. Radio Colombia. “Los puntos claves del General Mora para estar en desacuerdo con el Proceso de Paz.” La W Radio, November 26, transcription of Interview with General Mora. Retrieved on May 23, 2023 (<https://www.wradio.com.co/2021/11/26/el-general-jorge-enrique-mora-habla-sobre-su-libro-los-pecados-de-la-paz/>).
- Walter, Barbara. 1997. “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement.” *International Organization* 51(3):335-364.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by Roth, Guenther and Wittich, Claus. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wilkinson, Daniel. 2018. “Violence and Opacity under Peña Nieto.” *Los Angeles Times*, October 16. Retrieved on January 10, 2023 (<https://www.latimes.com/espanol/mexico/la-es-violence-and-opacity-under-pena-nieto-20181016-story.html>).
- Wilkinson, Tracy. 2010. “A top Salvadoran ex-guerrilla commander advises Mexico’s conservative president,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 22. Retrieved on April 6, 2021 (<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-oct-22-la-fg-mexico-guru-20101023-story.html>).
- William J. Perry Center. 2023. “Dr. David Spencer.” William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. Retrieved on September 27, 2023 (<https://wjpcenter.org/wjpc-employees/david-spencer/>).
- Woody, Christopher. 2018. “Violence in Mexico is still setting records—and the embattled president just reached a grisly milestone.” *Business Insider*, April 23. Retrieved on January 2020 (<https://www.businessinsider.com/mexico-violence-homicides-under-pena-nieto-2018-4>).
- Wordpress.org. 2006. “Mexico: Drug Cartels a Growing Threat.” November 2 Retrieved on April 2, 2021 (<https://www.worldpress.org/americas/2549.cfm>).
- World Bank. 2004. “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of US \$30 Million to the Banconacional de Obras y Servicios Públicos, S.N.C. (BANOBRAS) with the Guarantee of the United Mexican States for a State Judicial Modernization Support Access to Justice Project.” Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Management Unit, ReportNo: 27946-MX. Retrieved on April 10, 2021. (<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/958641468756287267/text/279460MX.txt>).
- World Bank. 2023. “Military expenditure (current USD)-Mexico.” Retrieved on April 7, 2023 (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD?locations=MX>).

Zakharov, Joshua. 2018. "A Long Way from Havana: The Colombian Peace Process Stumbles." Fund for Peace, August 17. Retrieved December 4, 2018 (<http://fundforpeace.org/global/2018/08/17/a-long-way-from-havana-the-colombian-peace-process-stumbles/>).

Participant Observation, Recorded and In-person Events

Colombia

2015. "Asamblea de Paz." Meeting, Bogotá, June 25.
2015. Centro Histórico de Memoria. Panel, Bogotá, June 18.
2015. "Consejo Nacional de Paz," Centro Histórico de Memoria, Bogotá, June 26.
2015. "Congreso de Paz." Bogotá, July 18 and 19.
2015. "Conversaciones de Paz del punto de vista de género." Panel, Bogotá, August 3.
2015. "Encuentro Nacional de Paz." Bogotá, July 29.
- Alianza IMP. 2015. "Incidencia Política: Proceso de Elecciones Bogotá." Bogotá, July 29.
- Alianza IMP. 2015. "National Annual Organizational Meeting." Bogotá, June 23 and 24.
- Alianza IMP 2015. Routine organizational meetings. Bogotá, June-August.
- Brademas Center. 2021. "Sustainable Colombia: Politics, Planet and Democratic Security: A Conversation with President Alvaro Uribe Vélez." Zoom, New York University, May 6.
- Citizen Diplomacy Alliance. 2020. "World Watch: Spotlight on Colombia with Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg U.S. Ambassador to Colombia." September 3, Zoom Event.
- Centro de Memoria Histórica. 2015. "Proceso de Comunicación de Aliadas por la Paz." Bogotá, August 1.
- Centro Democrático. 2017. "Foros por Colombia. Propuestas para aliviar la crisis de Salud." Bogotá, July 19.
- Centro Democrático. 2017. "Foros por Colombia. Tierras: Propiedad y Minería Criminal." Popayán, July 27.
- Colectivo Pseudo. 2017. "Del Arte a la Memoria." June 23, Bogotá.
- Colombian National Government. 2015. Event for women guerrillas in Chiquinquirá prison. Chiquinquirá, July 8.
- Colombian National Government. 2017. "Final Disarmament of the FARC." Mesetas, June 27.
- Embassy of Colombia in the United States. 2021a. "Plan Colombia Part One: The Security Perspective." April 13. Retrieved on May 2, 2022 (<https://www.colombiaemb.org/post/plan-colombia-a-roadmap-for-the-future-of-u-s-colombia-relations>).
- Embassy of Colombia in the United States. 2021b. "Plan Colombia Part Two: The Implementation." April 19. Retrieved on May 5, 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRbRCBLf13k&t=1834s>).
- Embassy of Colombia in the United States. 2021c. "Plan Colombia Part Three: Bipartisan Support." April 28. Retrieved on May 7, 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMLcjWHIbjU>).

- Embassy of Colombia in the United States. 2021d. “Plan Colombia Part Four: The Road Ahead.” May 6. Retrieved on May 10, 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7yGD4Mox1w>).
- Equidad Social. 2015. “Nuevos Feminismos Colombianos.” Bogotá, July 14.
- Jaramillo Caro, Sergio. 2018. “Peace and Justice: The Case of Colombia.” Yale, October 25. Retrieved on (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8LhmfOVMoc>).
- National Council for Peace. 2015. Organizational meetings. Bogotá, Thursdays and Fridays, June-August.
- Pecaut, Daniel. 2017. Informal Talk. Bogotá, August 2.
- Redepaz. 2017. “Democracia Hoy.” Bogotá, August 2.
- Redepaz. 2017. “Jornada para la Paz.” Bogotá, July 21.
- Red Nacional de Mujeres Insurgentes y Combatientes. 2015. “Aprendizajes y retos para los Procesos de desarme, desmovilización y reintegración de mujeres combatientes.” Bogotá, August 8.
- Rodeemos el Diálogo. 2017. Meetings and brunches with presentations. Bogotá, Sundays, June-August.
- Uniandinos. 2015. “Desmovilización.” Bogotá, July 28.

Mexico

- CESIG. 2021. “La Construcción e Implementación de la Estrategia de Policía de Proximidad y Consejos Ciudadanos para la Paz como el Eje de la Política de Seguridad Pública Municipal en SLP.” ITAM, Zoom, January 13.
- CESIG. 2021. “Tráfico de armas de Estados Unidos hacia México: Diagnóstico y Propuestas.” ITAM, USMEX, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Zoom, February 23.
- CESNAV. 2021. “Seminario Hemisférico: La Prospectiva como Instrumento de Anticipación y Construcción de Futuros para la Seguridad Nacional.” Secretaría de Marina, Escuela de Guerra Naval, Zoom, July 7, 8, 9.
- CIDE. 2020. “El papel de las Fuerzas Armadas en la seguridad pública.” Zoom, December 11. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSdWopkRDzA>).
- Clements Center for National Security. 2021. “U.S.-Mexico Relations: Achievements and the Road Ahead.” UT Austin, Zoom, April 21.
- COLMEX. 2014. “¿Es posible prevenir la violencia? , La experiencia del Gobierno de Enrique Peña Nieto.” Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz, January 14. Retrieved on December 17, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lh3oqflarI&t=30s>).
- COLMEX. 2018. “La paz en México sí es posible.” Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz, January 16. Retrieved on December 8, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-pZB8dH0RU>).
- COLMEX. 2018. “Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz: ¿Olvido, verdad o justicia?” July 17. Retrieved on December 7, 2020 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrXLwQDY_no).
- Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública. 2017. “Participación del Dr. Mario Arroyo Juárez, Invitado permanente de la sociedad civil al Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública.” 43 Sesión Ordinaria, December 21. Retrieved on April 22, 2022 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ETGn8NVi_o).
- Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública. 2019. “Participación del Dr. Mario Arroyo

- Juárez, Invitado permanente de la sociedad civil al Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública.” 44 Sesión Ordinaria, July 8. Retrieved on April 22, 2022 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3bMHka_jfQ).
- Brookings Institute. 2017. “Trade, Security, and the US-Mexico Relationship.” May 25. Retrieved on September 17, 2020 (<https://www.brookings.edu/events/trade-security-and-the-u-s-mexico-relationship/>).
- Forum on the Arms Trade. 2021. “Improving Oversight and Transparency in U.S. Small Arms Trade.” June 25, Zoom. Retrieved on June 25, 2021 (https://www.forumarmstrade.org/events.html#Event_2021June25).
- London Metropolitan University. 2021. “Journalism and human rights in Mexico: how to preserve voices of the killed.” Global Diversities & Inequalities Research Centre seminar, Zoom, July 8 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbTt8C7bhjY>).
- Mexico Evalúa. 2015. “Edna Jaime habla sobre prevención del delito en Azteca Noticias.” July 7. Retrieved on April 20, 2022 (<https://www.mexicoevalua.org/edna-jaime-habla-sobre-prevencion-del-delito-en-azteca-noticias/>).
- Mexico Institute. 2012. “A Stronger Future: Policy Recommendations for U.S. Mexico Relations.” Wilson Center, July 11. Retrieved on October 18, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/stronger-future-policy-recommendations-for-us-mexico-relations>).
- Mexico Institute. 2013a. “Transforming Justice in Mexico: Discussion with Mexico’s Attorney General Jesús Karam. Wilson Center, September 10. Retrieved on September 24, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/transforming-justice-mexico-discussion-mexicos-att>).
- Mexico Institute. 2013b. “Mexico: Commitment to Security and Justice.” Wilson Center, April 18. Retrieved on September 24, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/mexico-commitment-to-security-and-justice>).
- Mexico Institute. 2016. “The Evolution of U.S.-Mexico Military Cooperation.” Wilson Center, October 18. Retrieved on August 5, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-evolution-us-mexico-military-cooperation>).
- Mexico Institute. 2019. “Where Do We Go from Here?: Merida 2.0 and the Future of Mexico-U.S. Security Cooperation.” Wilson Center, January 17. Retrieved on August 20, 2020 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/where-do-we-go-here-merida-20-and-the-future-mexico-us-security-cooperation>).
- Mexico Institute. 2021. “The Future of US-Mexico Relations.” Wilson Center, February 3. Retrieved on February 9, 2021 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/future-us-mexico-relations>).
- Pacific Council on International Policy. 2019. “Mexico’s New Security Strategy and Prospects for US-Mexico Security Cooperation.” Zoom, March 14 (<https://www.pacificcouncil.org/activities/mexicos-march-referendum-prospects-us-mexico-security>).
- Paz Sin Armas. 2021. “Paz Sin Armas y presentación de Libro.” Zoom, October 12.
- Presidencia. 2011. “Diálogo entre el Presidente Calderón y el Movimiento por la Paz.” Presidencia de la República Felipe Calderón, June 24. Retrieved April 25, 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyUB765itNY>).
- Programa de Política de Drogas y México Unido Contra la Delincuencia. 2021. “En

- resistencia: la defensa de la vía civil.” Facebook Live/MUCD1, November 17 and 18.
- Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana. 2021. “Militarización, militarismo y sistema político en México.” Universidad Iberoamericana y México Unido contra la Delincuencia, Zoom, February 17. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GihuDp_7TSU).
- Signoret, Patrick. 2021. “Kingpin strikes and criminal group conflict.” USMEX Seminar, Zoom, March 3.
- USMEX. 2021. “Cultivo de amapola en México y la cooperación en seguridad con Estados Unidos.” UC San Diego, Zoom, March 12.
- USMEX. 2021. “Different Name, Same Path? What to Expect of the U.S.-Mexico High Level Security Dialogue.” UC San Diego, Zoom, October 15. (<https://usmex.ucsd.edu/webinars/index.html#Different-Name,-Same-Path?-What>).
- USMEX. 2021. “Humanitarian Protection in the Mexico and Central America: A State of Emergency.” UC San Diego, North and Central American Task Force on Migration, Zoom, July 15.

Interviews

Colombia

- Juanita Acosta Giraldo, Advisor for Minister and Viceminister of Defense, Ministry of National Defense (2010-2014); Advisor for International Cooperation, Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (2008-2010); Advisor for International Affairs, Ministry of Defense (2003-2005), October 24, 2022
- Elena Ambrosi, Technical Director and Member of Negotiating Team, OACP (2012-2017); Human Rights Director, Ministry of Defense (2009-2012); Advisor in Human Rights and International Affairs, Ministry of Defense (2000-2007), February 2, 2022
- Anonymous Colombia 1, Security Analyst, July 15, 2017
- Anonymous Colombia 2, Peace Advocate, July 21, 2017
- Anonymous Colombia 3, Advisor, Ministry of Defense, August 24, 2022
- Anonymous Colombia 4, Senior Diplomat, April 22, 2022
- Luis Alfonso Ariztabal Hoyos, General Director and Senior Advisor to President, Presidential Agency for Social Action & International Cooperation (2002-2009), June 11, 2022
- María Teresa Arizabaleta, Ruta Pacífica, August 1, 2015
- Carolina Barco Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002-2006); Colombian Ambassador to the US (2006-2010), February 16, 2022
- Myriam Criado, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, Agora, Red Nacional de Mujeres Excombatientes de la Insurgencia, October 7, 2015 and August 1, 2017
- Ochy Curiel, Tremenda Revoltosa, July 31, 2015
- Jorge Mario Eastman, Advisor, Ministry of Defense (2010-2015); Vice Minister of Defense (2006-2008, 2009-2010); Presidential Advisor on Communications (2006-2009); Chief Government Negotiator with ELN, OACP (2000-2001), February 16, 2022
- Alejandro Gamboa, General Director, Agencia Presidencial de Cooperación Internacional de Colombia (2014-2017); Director of Special Projects, Ministry of Defense (2007-

2008), February 8, 2022

Sofía Gaviria, Senator, Liberal Party (2014-2018); FEVCOL (Federación Colombiana de Víctimas de las FARC), July 20, 2017

Diana Sofía Giraldo, Fundación Víctimas Visibles, August 9, 2017

Juanita Goebertus, Coordinator of Transitional Justice and Member of Negotiating Team, OACP (2012-2016), National Security Advisor, Presidency (2010-2012); Advisor on International Policy and Affairs, Ministry of Defense (2006-2009), September 1, 2017

Camilo Gómez Alzate, High Commissioner for Peace, OACP (2000-2002); President's Private Secretary (1998-2000), March 7, 2022

Diana Marcela Gómez Correal, Academic and Peace Activist, July 28, 2015

Fernán González González, CINEP, July 25, 2017

Paola Holguín, Senator, Centro Democrático Party (2014-2018); National Security Advisor, Presidency (2003-2008, 2009-2010), July 5, 2017 and August 9, 2017

Federico Hoyos, Congressional Representative, Centro Democrático Party, July 26, 2017

Fanny Kuiru, MUTESA, July 1, 2015

Francisco Leal Buitrago, Academic and Peace Activist, La Paz Querida, July 7, 2017

Marco León Calarcá, Commander, Spokesperson, and Delegate for the Peace Accords, FARC, August 2, 2017

María Victoria Llorente and Jorge Mantilla (joint interview), Fundación Ideas para la Paz, October 14, 2022

Claudia López, Senator, Green Alliance Party, July 26, 2017

Olga Marín, Commander, FARC, August 2, 2017

Coronel John Marulanda, Security Advisor, Centro Democrático, July 9, 2017

Martha Maya, IFIT; Chief of Staff, OACP (2014-2016), Liaison for Peace Process, Ministry of the Interior (2012-2013), February 8, 2022

Aida Patricia Moya Rojas, Alianza IMP, August 1, 2015

José Obdulio Gaviria, Senator, Centro Democrático Party (2014-2020); National Security Advisor, Presidency, August 2, 2017 and August 17, 2022

Alfredo Ramos Maya, Senator, Centro Democrático Party (2014-2018), July 26, 2017

Cesar Restrepo, International Affairs Consultant, Ministry of Defense (1999-2003); Director of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defense (2009-2016), November 3, 10, 18, 2022 and December 7, 2022

Yesid Reyes, Former Minister of Justice (2014-2016), August 4, 2017

Jorge Robledo, Senator, Polo Democrático, July 21, 2017

Angela María Robledo, Peace Commission; Green Party, July 31, 2015

Rosa Emilia Salamanca, CIASE, July 8, 2015

Luis Sandoval, REDEPAZ, August 1, 2015; June 21, 2017; July 26, 2017; and August 8, 2017

Andrei Suárez Gómez, Rodeemos el Diálogo, June 29, 2017

Coronel Carlos Velasquez, Presidential Candidate, Conservative Party, August 2, 2017

Juan Carlos Vélez, “No” Campaign Director and Senator, Centro Democrático Party, July 25, 2017

Ernesto Yamhure, Advisor to the Peace and Justice Process, OACP (2003-2010), August 25, 2022

Mexico

Marieclaire Acosta, International Center for Transitional Justice/Justicia Transicional México, September 28, 2021 and October 14, 2021

Anonymous Mexico 1, Consultant for Operational Security Institutions, 2020

Anonymous Mexico 2, Senior Peña Nieto Government official, 2021

Anonymous Mexico 3, Senior Peña Nieto Government official, 2022

Anonymous Mexico 4, Senior Calderon Government Official, 2020

Daira Arana, Causa en Común (2018-2019); Consultant, Secretaría de Gobernación (2018); International Committee of the Red Cross, Armed Forces Program (2012-2017), November 12, 2021

Mario Arroyo-Juárez, Civil Society Representative in National Public Security Council (2017-2019); Head of Planning, Prospective, and Private Security Unit, Comisionado Nacional de Seguridad (2012-2014) March 22, 2022 and April 7, 2022

Sigrid Arzt, Technical Secretary to the National Security Council (2006-2009), July 29, 2021

Benito Andión, Director of Mérida Initiative Mexico, Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (2009-2010), July 28, 2020

Laura Atuesta, CIDE, Programa Política de Drogas, December 2, 2021

Manuel Balcázar, Advisor for Naval Intelligence Unit, SEMAR (2015-2016), Deputy General Director for National Security Affairs, Presidency (2007-2012), March 4, 10, and 30, 2022

Miguel Basáñez, Ambassador of Mexico to the US (2015-2016), July 22, 2020

Raúl Benítez-Manaut, Security Analyst, CASEDE, September 20, 2021

Mariana Benítez Tiburcio, Undersecretary of Juridical and International Affairs, PGR (2012-2015), March 29, 2022

Enrique Betancourt, Executive Director, National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation (2012-2013); Deputy General Director of Social Policy, Presidency (2011); Deputy General Director of Policy Implementation, Social Development Secretariat (2007-2011), November 5, 2021

Rodrigo Canales, Chief of Staff, Mexican Embassy in the US (2014-2015), June 14, 2021

Laura Carrera Lugo, General Coordinator, Federal Police (2016-2018); Executive Director, National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation (2011-2012), March 15 and 22, 2022

Marco Castillo, Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad; Global Exchange, June 10, 2021

Mauricio Dávila Morlotte, Technical Secretary to the National Security Council (2013-2015), June 16, 2022

Luis Espino, Presidential Speechwriter on Security Issues (2007-2012), July 24, 2020

Ricardo Gállego, Fray Julian Cruzalta, and Ignacio Cuevas (joint interview), Iglesias por la Paz, April 7, 2022

Manuel Gameros, General Director of Strategic Planning of the Social Prevention of

Violence and Crime, Undersecretary of Prevention and Citizen Participation (2013-2018); General Coordinator of Information, CISEN (2008-2011), August 27, 2020

Benjamin Grajeda Regalado, Head of the Gendarmerie (2016-2019); Commissioner in the Federal Police (2014-2019); Commissioner in the National Security Council (2009-2014), April 20, 2022

Iñigo Guevara Moyano, Military Analyst, July 3, 2020

Daniel Hernández Aldaco, Public Security Risks Deputy Director, CNS (2016-2017), June 16, 2021

Luis Herrera Lasso, General Director of Strategic Planning, Undersecretary of Prevention and Citizen Participation (2013-2018); Director of the School of Intelligence for National Security, CISEN (2008-2012); Designer of Intelligence Fusion Groups, CISEN (2010), June 24, 2021 and July 15, 2021

Jan-Albert Hootsen, Committee to Protect Journalists, July 26, 2021

Anathasios Hristoulas, Academic Consultant to Federal Police and Navy; Professor for Federal Police, Navy, Army, and CISEN, July 29, 2020

Luis Esteban Islas, Undersecretary of the Planning, Prospective, and Private Security Unit, CNS (2014-2018), External Advisor and Consultant, SEMAR (2010-2014), June 21, 2021

Edna Jaime, México Evalúa, April 4, 2022

Ana Kourchenko, IFIT, March 3, 2022

Jorge Lule, CMDPDH, November 11, 2021

Martha Maya, IFIT, February 8, 2022

Mauricio Menschoulam, CIPMEX, April 5, 2022

Marisela Morales Ibañez, Attorney General, PGR (2011-2012), July 15, 2020

Javier Oliva, Military Analyst and Professor, Estudios Navales de SEMAR and Colegio de Defensa Nacional de SEDENA, April 13, 2022

Admiral Carlos Ortega, Founder and Head of Naval Intelligence Unit, SEMAR (2008-2014), July 29, 2020

Alejandro Poiré Romero, Secretary of SEGOB (2011-2012); Director, CISEN (2011); Technical Secretary of the National Security Council and the National Security Cabinet (2010-2011), December 3, 2021

Tanía Ramírez, México Unido Contra la Delincuencia, May 3, 2019

Gerardo Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, Security Analyst, September 28, 2020

Luis Rubio, México Evalúa, November 8, 2021

Lisa Sánchez, México Unido Contra la Delincuencia, December 2, 2021

Arturo Sarukhan, Ambassador of Mexico to the US (2007-2013), August 4, 2020

Jorge Tello Peon, Top National Security Advisor (2008-2011), Presidency; Technical Secretary of the National Security Council and National Security Cabinet (2009-2010), Presidency; Executive Secretary, SNSP (2009), July 23, 2020

Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, Director, CISEN (2007-2011); Member of the National Security Council and National Security Cabinet (2007-2011); Coordinator of the High Level Bilateral Working Group in Mexico-US Security Cooperation (2007-2011), August 26, 2020

Julian Ventura, Founder of the Mérida Initiative Bilateral Implementation Office, Undersecretary for North American Affairs, Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (2009-2012); Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy to the United States of America

(2007-2009), January 19, 2022
Giselle Yáñez Villaseñor, CMDPDH, October 19, 2021

United States

Bernie Aaronson, United States Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process (2015-2017), June 3, 2020

Anonymous US 1, Non-partisan US government Analyst, March 13, 2020

Anonymous US 2, USAID Consultant, October 15, 2021

Anonymous US 3, USAID Consultant, September 10, 2021

Anonymous US 4, Policy Analyst, March 14, 2019

Anonymous US 5, Senior Officer, State Department, April 27, 2020

Liliana Ayalde, USAID Mission Director, Colombia (2005-2008), June 16, 2022

Enrique Betancourt, Director Citizens Security Initiative, Chemonics International (2014-Present), November 5, 2021

William Brownfield, Assistant Secretary of State of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (2011-2017), US Ambassador to Colombia (2007-2010), Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Drugs and Law Enforcement (2001); Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs (1999-2001), May 10, 2022

Rodrigo Canales, Building Effective Resilient, and Trusted Police Organizations, INL/Mérida Initiative Research Grant, June 14, 2021

Craig Deare, National Defense University, September 16, 2021

Vanda Felbab-Brown, Brookings Institute, April 10, 2010

Adam Isacson, Washington Office Latin America, December 6, 2021

Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia (2010-2013), February 15, 2022

Thomas Shannon, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (2016-2018); Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (2005-2009); Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council (2003-2005); Deputy Assistant Secretary of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the Department of State (2002-2003); Director of Andean Affairs (2001-2002); US Deputy Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (2000-2001), Department of State, April 21 and 28, 2020

David Shirk, Justice in Mexico Project, May 4, 2020

Earl Wayne, US Ambassador to Mexico (2011-2015), May 14, 2020

Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador to Colombia (2014-2019); Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America, Department of State (2011-2013); Director of Andean Affairs, Department of State (2008-2011); February 10, 2022

Peter Verga, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, Department of Defense (2008-2010), July 21, 2021