



Country Report: The Republic of Colombia

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Alaina J. Del Real

Honors Adviser: Professor William Lucas

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Abstract

These four country reports, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, covered the current popular and official climate between the country and the United States, important cultural sensitivities and economic challenges facing the country.¹ Each report analyzed how the U.S. is portrayed in the national media, the official stance and policies toward the U.S. The economy section stands separate from the political and social, covering the national economy, trade, and debt, if it poses an obstacle for the nation. Each report builds upon media reports, Congressional briefings, State Department Press Releases, and international organization's documents.

Colombia maintained its position as the US's key South American ally. As Plan Colombia's bilateral effort ends, US-Colombian relations transfer away from the "War on Drugs" and turn towards social works and development. President Santos faces presidential elections in May 2014 and peace talks with the FARC.

¹ The current climate referred to the public perception and attitude toward the United States and Americans, in the government and society.

I. Introduction

The Republic of Colombia has maintained very strong ties with the US throughout much of its national history. Since the early 2000s, the US and Colombia maintain strong ties with bilateral counternarcotic and counterterrorism efforts. Colombia remains a strategic economic and political ally for the US in South America.

Colombia prides itself in maintaining one of the longest running democracies in Latin America, only marred by half a century of armed internal conflict. In an effort to resolve this long internal conflict, Colombia has carried out various peace talks and negotiations, with entities like the FARC, ELN, and M-19. As of April 2014, the peace talks with the FARC are one of the last obstacles for internal peace. The US supports Colombia's "efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, foster socio-economic development, address immediate humanitarian needs, and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism."² As a strong ally, the US has spent a considerable amount of time and aid for Colombia's counternarcotic efforts and capacity building.

II. General Overview

On July 20, 1810, the citizens of Bogota (Present day capital of Colombia) formed the first representative council, an act of civil rebellion against the Spanish crown.³ Under the leadership of Simon Bolivar, the former Viceroyalty of New Granada fought the Spanish for independence and united with the Southern independence movement led by Jose San Martin.⁴ Gran Colombia declared full independence in 1813 and formed a government in 1819 with Bolivar as president and Francisco de Paula Santander as vice president. Bolivar and Santander's followers continued to disagree over key political issues, resulting in two political parties Liberals and Conservatives.⁵ The Republic of Colombia gained official joint independence from Spain under the Gran Colombia flag in 1822.⁶ In 1830 Gran Colombia collapsed, and three nations formed

² U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Relations With Colombia." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Relations With Colombia." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm> (accessed May 1, 2014). (accessed May 1, 2014).

³ Michigan State University. "Colombia: History." >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. Michigan State University. "Colombia: History." >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. <http://globaledege.msu.edu/countries/colombia/history> (accessed May 1, 2014). (accessed May 1, 2014).

⁴ Eileen Findlay. "Colombia." Lecture, Latin American History Since Independence from American University, Washington DC, March 1, 2014.

⁵ Santander's followers became the basis of the Liberal party and Bolivar's followers the Conservatives.

⁶ U.S. Department of State. "U.S. Relations With Colombia." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm> (accessed May 1, 2014).

Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.⁷ Both the Liberal and Conservative political parties fought for power throughout the 19th and 20th century, a trend in the region.⁸ From this conflict arose two civil wars, the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1903) and the more recent La Violencia (1946-57). Both Civil Wars wreaked havoc on the nation and left deep residual effects on the nation. After eleven years of violence, former Conservative President Laureano Gomez (1950-53) and former Liberal President Alberto Lleras Camargo (1945-46) created the National Front in 1957. The National Front established a power-sharing agreement between the parties and ended partisan violence. In 1957, the National Front stipulated that Colombia's presidential elections rotated every four years and the two parties had parity in all other positions, elected and appointed. The Colombian government phased out the agreed power sharing in 1978.⁹

Throughout the 1980s, various guerilla groups surfaced and presented an obstacle for the Colombian government. These guerilla groups, like the infamous FARC, surfaced long before they achieved national and international attention. In 1984, Conservative President Belisario Betancur negotiated a cease-fire with the FARC and another guerilla group named M-19. Becantur suppressed an M-19 attack on a government building and pushed through a Peace Agreement in 1989. With the 1989 agreement, M-19 played a key role in shaping the future constitution. The FARC maintained the ceasefire until 1990, after the assassination of 2,000 to 3,000 demobilized FARC members.¹⁰ The 1990s assassination play a big role in deterring many FARC members from agreeing to a Peace Agreement.

The 1990s reshaped Colombia's society, government, and economy. Throughout the 1990s, Colombia faced constant violence and corruption due to drug cartels and drug lords such as Pablo Escobar. International investigators attribute various political assassinations in the 1990s to Pablo Escobar.¹¹ When Escobar escaped from prison, the violence escalated to unprecedented such levels that ignited vigilante groups to seek justice. Escobar's 1993 assassination only quelled some of the violence.¹² Narco-trafficking remains a violent obstacle for every Colombian politician and official.

⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. "Colombia." Central Intelligence Agency.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html> (accessed May 8, 2014).

⁸ Michigan State University. "Colombia: History." >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. <http://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/colombia/history> (accessed May 1, 2014).

⁹ Michigan State University. "Colombia: History." >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. <http://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/colombia/history> (accessed May 1, 2014).

¹⁰ Michigan State University. "Colombia: History." >> globalEDGE: Your source for Global Business Knowledge. <http://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/colombia/history> (accessed May 1, 2014).

¹¹ Virgin Media. "The Crimes." Crime and Investigation. <http://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/pablo-escobar/crime> (accessed May 1, 2014).

¹² Virgin Media. "The Crimes." Crime and Investigation. <http://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/pablo-escobar/crime> (accessed May 1, 2014).

In 1991, Colombians approved a new constitution that kept the presidential, three-branch system of government, but created new positions and departments. Under the 1991 Constitution, Colombia created new positions to combat social problems. These new positions ranged from Inspector General, a Human Rights Ombudsman, a Constitutional Court, and a Superior Judicial Council. Colombians reacted favorably to the new constitution and made only one amendment in 2005 allowing for a second consecutive Presidential term.¹³

III. Politics

A. Divided Government

Current political forecasts predict a 40% possibility of a divided government with President Santos running for reelection. Santos will need successful peace talks with the FARC to increase his subpar 30% approval rating.¹⁴ Former President, and supporter of Santos, Uribe withdrew his support for Santos and openly criticizes Santos' security policies.¹⁵ Santos lost Uribe's support when he moved to open relations with Venezuela, reversing all of Uribe's policies.¹⁶ Uribe transferred his support to Oscar Ivan Zuluaga, a fellow CD party member and former economic minister. This transfer coincides with Uribe's declaration to seek a seat in the senate. Should Santos win the May 2014 election, he faces a very hostile or divided senate.¹⁷

B. Plan Colombia: US-Colombian Bilateral Efforts

Contemporary Colombian politics are greatly affected by narcotrafficking and the financial crisis of 2008. The US started supporting Plan Colombia in 2001, a comprehensive plan to rid Colombia of its internal unrest.¹⁸ Plan Colombia initially spanned six years of intensive military and civilian efforts to take back rural areas of Colombia.¹⁹ Experts debate the effect of Plan Colombia on the drug trade. The latest estimates illustrate a 50% drop in cocaine production from 1999's 680 tons to 2011's 345 tons.²⁰ Plan Colombia continues to operate within Colombia today.

¹⁴ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,3.

¹⁵ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,3

¹⁶ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,15

¹⁷ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,4

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State. "The Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI)." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2012/187926.htm> (accessed May 1, 2014).

¹⁹ Peter DeShazo, Johanna Mendelson Forman, and Phillip McLean, *Countering Threats to Security and Stability in a Failing State: Lessons from Colombia*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, DC, September 2009.

²⁰ Colombia Politics. "Plan Colombia: A success?." Colombia Politics RSS. Colombia Politics. "Plan Colombia: A success?." Colombia Politics RSS. <http://www.colombia-politics.com/plan-colombia/> (accessed May 8, 2014). (accessed May 8, 2014).

The US has heavily funded Plan Colombia since its inception. Initially, Colombia received 860 million USD in the first fiscal year of Plan Colombia (2000-2001), but this steadily rose to 8 billion USD since inception.²¹ Plan Colombia was never officially authorized by Congress, but under the 2000 Military Construction Appropriations Act of 2001 (P.L. 106-246), the US began providing aid.²² The majority of the US aid is military, meaning the US must verify Colombia's human rights record. In August 2012, the State Department verified that the "threats and attacks against human rights defenders, land activists, trade unionists, journalists and other vulnerable groups continued to be a concern... Armed Forces and civilian authorities could do more to investigate allegations of collusion with illegal armed groups, which persist."²³ With the State Department's confirmation, the US continued to fund Plan Colombia until 2008. In 2008, the US began systematically turning over control of Plan Colombia operations to Colombian counterparts.²⁴ Colombia nationalized many of the programs and continued with the Plan Colombia mission.

During the early 2000s, Colombia dramatically increased its counternarcotic efforts. The Uribe administration negotiated the complete demobilization of multiple guerilla and paramilitary groups, and built up the military and police force. Uribe, controversially, increased aerial spraying despite reports that declare "spraying does not prevent, although it may discourage, the replanting of illicit crops."²⁵ After various Ecuadorian farmers complained that the spraying blew into their crops, Uribe's emphasis on aerial eradication increased tensions between Colombia and Ecuador.²⁶ Colombia and Ecuador resolved the conflict out of court in an agreement that stipulated Colombia must pay 15 million USD in compensation and not spray the 10 km wide border. Both Colombia and Ecuador are doubtful that this agreement will be followed, but the signing will strengthen Ecuadorian-Colombian relations.²⁷ By the end of his first term, Uribe dramatically changed the Colombian political, economic and social landscape with his hard-line counternarcotic policies.

²¹ Colombia Politics. "Plan Colombia: A success?." Colombia Politics RSS. <http://www.colombia-politics.com/plan-colombia/> (accessed May 8, 2014).

²² June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 29.

²³ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2013: Colombia." Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/colombia?page=3> (accessed May 8, 2014).

²⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Report on Multiyear Strategy for U.S. Assistance Programs in Colombia*, Report to Congress, April 2009.

²⁵ June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 30.

²⁶ INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. "Aerial Herbicide Spraying (Ecuador v. Colombia) Case removed from the Court's List at the request of the Republic of Ecuador." . <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/138/17526.pdf> (accessed May 8, 2014).

²⁷ *INCSR*, 2013 op cit.

C. Uribe

Due to his success and popularity, Uribe convinced Congress and the public to amend the 1991 constitution's one term limit.²⁸ In his second term, Uribe signed into effect the "Democratic Security" policy, which would dramatically increase public security.²⁹ From 2002 to 2008, Colombia and the State Department reported an 83% drop in kidnappings, 40% in homicide, and 76% in terrorist attacks.³⁰ The second largest guerilla group, the AUC demobilized completely under Uribe, but Uribe failed to satisfy victims in terms of reparations and punishments for combatants.³¹ A March 2008 killing of FARC's Commander Jorge Briceño raid silenced all critics.³² The March raid was Uribe's crowning moment and had solidified his political influence in Colombia. At the end of his second term, pro-Uribe factions pushed for another amendment to the constitution's term limit and for Uribe to run for a third term. After months of debate, the Colombian courts voted seven to two to deny a referendum.³³ Uribe directed his political clout to his handpicked successor, Juan Manuel Santos.

D. Santos

Santos campaigned on continuing Uribe's hardline counternarcotic and public security policies, as well as further social and economic reform. Unlike Uribe, Santos emphasized human rights and denounced any threats made to activists or trade unionists.³⁴ Santos attempted to fulfill his campaign promises with new anti-corruption and labor reform laws that garnered massive support among the middle and lower classes.³⁵ However, Santos reversed his popularity gain with a controversial judicial law. The proposed law would increase or transfer substantial judicial powers to the military courts.³⁶ In another move towards social reform, Santos and Congress approved the 2011 Victims' and Land Restitution Law, which compensated and

²⁸ June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 4.

²⁹ June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 4.

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Charting Colombia's Progress," March 2008.

³¹ Latin American Working Group, "The Other Half of the Truth," June 2008.

³² June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 4.

³³ "Uribe acepta el fallo y asegura que seguirá trabajando por su país 'desde cualquier trinchera,'" *ABC*, February 27, 2010.

³⁴ Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) blog, "With FTA Secured, Colombia Takes Steps Backwards on Human Rights," December 20, 2011.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Colombia," July 13, 2011.

³⁶ Jose Miguel Vivanco, "Colombia: Letter to President Santos Criticizing the Expansion of Military Jurisdiction," October 25, 2012,

restored land to victims of internal violence.³⁷ Estimated costs for the implementation plan reach 30.5 billion USD, but the US announced a 50 million USD input into the implementation.³⁸

In 2012, Santos announced the continuation of peace talks with the FARC. In June 2012, Congress passed a peace framework law that labeled leftist fighters as combatants, who are eligible for a reduced punishment.³⁹ Santos faces an obstacle in terms of punishment, where the majority of the populace desire the FARC to served time in prison, while the FARC refuses to agree to any peace agreement that would imprison the leadership.⁴⁰ Despite the initial popularity of the Peace Talks, negotiations have stalled.⁴¹ Santos will head into the May 2014 Presidential elections with his last power play for popularity at a standstill.

C. Current US-Colombian Relations

After a 2013 meeting in the Oval Office between Santos and Obama, Obama remarked that US-Colombian relations continue to extend beyond Plan Colombia and security. Obama assured the public that the US will continue to support Colombia in their war on drugs and Peace Talks.⁴² In his speech, Obama called for greater cooperation in the social sector, such as building and improving schools in Colombia. Santos' recent success in bringing the FARC to the negotiation table signaled a beginning of more inclusive political US-Colombian relations.

Congress supported Obama's statement in a 2013 bipartisan letter to the State Department. In the letter, 62 Congressmen called for a new US policy that emphasized development, human rights, and peace in Colombia.⁴³ This letter further set the tone of US-Colombian relations going forward. Despite the positive and optimistic tone in the letter, Congressional hopes for a greater adherence to human rights and labor rights fell in 2014. In a 2014 follow-up assessment of Colombia's adherence to the workers' rights stipulation in the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), one US Congressman reported that Colombia imprisoned and persecuted various labor union leaders.

³⁷ Darcy Crowe, "Colombia Tries to Heal Wounds of Long War--President Santos Moves to Build on Security Gains of His Predecessor to Address Root Cause of Conflict: Land Ownership," *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2011.

³⁸ USAID/Colombia, "Fact Sheet: Victims Programs: Institutional Strengthening Activity," August 2012.

³⁹ June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 9.

⁴⁰ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,12

⁴¹ The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad. "Colombia's FARC wants to avoid 'Nuremberg' scenario." Latest News. <http://www.nst.com.my/latest/colombia-s-farc-wants-to-avoid-nuremberg-scenario-1.583168> (accessed May 3, 2014).

⁴² The White House. "Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia After Bilateral Meeting." The White House. The White House. "Remarks by President Obama and President Santos of Colombia After Bilateral Meeting." The White House. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/03/remarks-president-obama-and-president-santos-colombia-after-bilateral-me> (accessed April 8, 2014).

⁴³ Washington Office on Latin America. "U.S. Congress Supports Peace in Colombia." Washington Office on Latin America. http://www.wola.org/commentary/us_congress_supports_peace_in_colombia (accessed February 8, 2014).

After the discovery, US Congress launched a larger investigation into unlawful persecution and imprisonment of labor union leaders.⁴⁴ However, the 2014 anti-union violence in Colombia, three Democrat Congressmen sent a letter to Colombian Attorney General Luis Eduardo Montealgre.⁴⁵ The three Democrats expressed concern over the violence and its ramifications for labor rights and rule of law, despite the signed and congressionally approved US-Colombian Labor Action plan. Colombia's relations with the US Congress continue to sour over the loose adherence to the FTA guidelines and questionable labor rights. The US Congress focuses much of its foreign policy efforts in Colombia on counternarcotic efforts, labor rights, and human rights.

IV. Economy

The Colombian economy suffered from the global recession in 2008. Within the years 2009-2010, the fiscal debt expanded on an average of 3.6% of Colombia's GDP. Unemployment reached double digits in 2010 and stayed around 10% since 2010.⁴⁶ Santos faces continued economic troubles that weaken his popular and political support. Following current trends, Colombian public sector debt should reach 30% of the GDP by 2015.⁴⁷

A. Para-politico Scandal

The Para-politico scandal, a big blow to foreign direct investment, hit in 2006 and dismantled a large portion of the pro-Uribe political block in Congress. This scandal resulted in one company, US-based Chiquita Brands, paying fines for paying protection fees to one of the local paramilitary organizations.⁴⁸ Chiquita is not the only US-based company that faced fines for paying for protection. Another portion of the investigation found over 150 Congressmen potentially collaborating with paramilitary groups.⁴⁹ This scandal has placed much pressure on other multinational firms operating in Colombia and has discouraged many multinationals from opening branches in Colombia.

B. Uribe's Economic Policies

⁴⁴ Justice for Colombia. "Justice for Colombia news: US Congress looks into imprisonment of trade union leaders." JFC News. <http://justiceforcolombia.org/news/article/1567/us-congress-looks-into-imprisonment-of-trade-union-leaders> (accessed February 4, 2014).

⁴⁵ Washington Office on Latin America. "U.S. Congress Supports Peace in Colombia." Washington Office on Latin America. http://www.wola.org/commentary/us_congress_supports_peace_in_colombia (accessed February 8, 2014).

⁴⁶ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,17

⁴⁷ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,19

⁴⁸ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,19

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch . "World Report 2013: Colombia." Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/colombia?page=3> (accessed May 8, 2014).

Under Uribe, the Colombian government carried out open market-based economic policies. Throughout much of Uribe's presidency, Colombia enjoyed a fairly stable economy and economic prosperity. Hoping to foster greater foreign direct investment and multinationals, Uribe extended permanent tax reductions to favored companies.⁵⁰ Uribe defended the tax reductions, but the 2008 global recession wiped away any economic growth gained. Various economists blame Uribe's fiscal policies for Colombia's slow recovery.⁵¹ In 2009, Uribe's Colombia stood with an 11.9% unemployment rate and a rising affordable housing shortage.⁵² During Uribe's presidency, Colombia relied heavily on the US and neighbor Venezuela for exports, but in 2009 Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez placed an embargo in reaction to Uribe's narcotics trafficking policies.

C. Santos' Economic Policies

Santos planned to combat the growing economic troubles by increasing regional relations with Venezuela and Ecuador. After intensive correspondence, Venezuela removed the 2009 embargo on Colombia, revitalizing the Colombian economy. Colombia also expanded relations with a large portion of countries in the Western Hemisphere. In April 2012, Colombia hosted the sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, where President Obama and President Santos signed the U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which was approved by the U.S. Congress in October 2011.⁵³ Recent developments, such as an increase in cheap imported US food and supplies, turned many workers and farmers against the FTA. Despite the current critical public, the US and Colombia praise the FTA as another affirmation of US-Colombian relations.

In the global market, Santos faces a plummeting currency exchange rate. On April 22nd, 2014, Santos planned to increase purchases of US dollar, a response to the peso rallies. The Colombian peso plummeted 0.8% to the lowest level of emerging market currencies.⁵⁴ April's currency exchange rate is the lowest since 2009, despite higher than expected industrial output and retail

⁵⁰ *Interpress Service*, "COLOMBIA: FINANCIAL SCANDAL A HURDLE TO URIBE'S RE-ELECTION.," November 28, 2008, sec. The Americas.

⁵¹ *Interpress Service*, "COLOMBIA: FINANCIAL SCANDAL A HURDLE TO URIBE'S RE-ELECTION.," November 28, 2008, sec. The Americas.

⁵² *Interpress Service*, "COLOMBIA: FINANCIAL SCANDAL A HURDLE TO URIBE'S RE-ELECTION.," November 28, 2008, sec. The Americas.

⁵³ June Beittel. *Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Services, 2012, 12-13.

⁵⁴ Bristow, Mathew, and Andrea Jaramillo. "Colombia Boosts Pace of Dollar Purchases to Curb Peso Rally." *Bloomberg*, April 22, 2014.

sales.⁵⁵ Santos sees potential for Colombia to hit 5% growth for the 2014 fiscal year, a 0.7% jump from the 2013 fiscal year's 4.3%.⁵⁶

D. Current US-Colombian Economic Relations

Following the FTA, Santos and Obama signed a 2013 bilateral Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA).⁵⁷ Both Santos and Obama marketed the agreement as an economic deal that aimed to add jobs in both nations. Despite the promotion, the ECA focuses more on ensuring sustainable trade and environmental laws. Nevertheless, the ECA acted as another step in shifting US-Colombian economic relations away from a counternarcotic focus and towards a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership.

In April 2014, Santos and Obama signed a "tributary treaty" that allowed both nations to pursue tax evaders in either country. The treaty stipulated that the IRS and its Colombian counterpart will exchange tax related information in an effort to track down evaders. Colombian officials and political reports claim that the major focus of this exchange will be on stopping drug cartels.⁵⁸ As the US transfers the majority of the power in Plan Colombia to the Colombian government and military, this new exchange provides the US an indirect method of counternarcotic efforts. This recent development demonstrated a strong affirmation of US-Colombian relations and their commitment to further economic relations beyond the FTAs.

V. Society

A. Human Rights and Displacement

Colombian society altered greatly throughout the internal conflict with the FARC and various uprisings. The Human Rights Watch list more than 4 million Colombians as internally displaced at a steady rate of 100,000 per year.⁵⁹ In the same report, the Human Rights Watch claims that the demobilization victories the Santos regime speaks of are mirages. A large portion of the demobilized later joined militant groups that employed FARC's tactics. Critics point to Colombia's demobilization plan as a reason for poor reintegration.⁶⁰ These new militant groups

⁵⁵ Bristow, Mathew, and Andrea Jaramillo. "Colombia Boosts Pace of Dollar Purchases to Curb Peso Rally." *Bloomberg*, April 22, 2014.

⁵⁶ Microsoft. "Colombia president sees potential for 5 pct growth in 2014." MSNMoney. <http://money.msn.com/business-news/article.aspx?feed=OBR&date=20140414&id=17524500> (accessed April 20, 2014).

⁵⁷ Rico. "United States and Colombia Sign Environmental Cooperation Agreement." *States News Service*, April 17, 2013.

⁵⁸ Rico. "Colombia court approves tax agreement with United States." *Today Colombia*, April 7, 2014.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2013: Colombia." Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/colombia?page=3> (accessed May 8, 2014).

⁶⁰ Jonathan Morgenstein, *Consolidating Disarmament: Lessons from Colombia's Reintegration Program for Demobilized Paramilitaries*, United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 217, Washington, DC, November 2008.

continue to terrorize the local populations that are far removed from Bogota and the Santos government.

B. Civil Unrest

The 2008 global recession added an additional strain to Colombian society. Colombia faced a severe drop in demand and inflation which sparked a substantial amount of tensions between unions and employers. The Human Rights Watch claims that over 2,900 trade union leaders were killed since 1986.⁶¹ Colombian basic goods became too expensive for many of the lower class Colombians, but Santos has failed to provide an effective response.⁶² Due to the recent slow economic growth and rising costs, many Colombian farmers and factory workers carried out strikes. Colombian farmers and factory workers in the energy sector blame the Santos administration for rising input costs. Santos lost a substantial amount of approvals for his poor handling of these riots that turned deadly.⁶³ Should Santos win reelection, he will be unable to enact true reform to answer the protests calls for change, due to the very divided and hostile senate.

C. US-Colombian Media Relations

The US enjoys very favorable coverage in Colombian media, a trend which began in the 1990s with the bilateral US-Colombian counternarcotic efforts. Colombian newspaper giant, *El Tiempo*, reported on the US the most in the 1990s during the hunt for Pablo Escobar and other cartel leaders.⁶⁴ Recent reporting trends depict a steep drop off in mentions or articles on the US in 2005 to 2007. After the 2008 financial crisis, *El Tiempo* annually increased reports on the US, ranging from entertainment to economic policies and counternarcotic efforts. *El Tiempo* reports on a wide variety of US-centric topics, from Colombian students attending a science symposium⁶⁵ to US foreign policy towards Russia.⁶⁶ A Cali newspaper, *El País* offers a slightly more realistic view of the US, with reports on the failed execution and economic woes.⁶⁷

In terms of actual rhetoric and portrayal of the US, Colombian media presents a realistic, if not overly kind, US to the Colombian masses. Few Colombian news sources reported on the negative effects of the FTA, which overwhelmed small Colombian businesses with cheap US

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch . "World Report 2013: Colombia." Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/colombia?page=3> (accessed May 8, 2014).

⁶² "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,19

⁶³ "Political Risk ." In *Colombia: Country Report*. East Syracuse: The PRS Group, 2013,12

⁶⁴ Diario El País S.A.. "Buscar | El País." Buscar | El País.

http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/search/apachesolr_search/EEUU (accessed May 6, 2014).

⁶⁵ *El País*, "Obama y Merkel alertan de más sanciones a Rusia," May 2, 2014.

⁶⁶ *El País*, "Obama y Merkel alertan de más sanciones a Rusia," May 2, 2014.

⁶⁷ Diario El País S.A.. "Buscar | El País." Buscar | El País.

http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/search/apachesolr_search/EEUU (accessed May 6, 2014).

imports. The majority of the negative reports on the FTA came from US sources.⁶⁸ Colombian newspapers focus their reports on the US in three main categories: entertainment or society, counternarcotic efforts, and the US government.

⁶⁸ Wyss, Jim. "Colombian labor unions say their plight is being overshadowed by trade deal with U.S. ." *Miami Herald*, April 9, 2014, sec. Colombia.

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Darcy Crowe, "Colombia Tries to Heal Wounds of Long War--President Santos Moves to Build on Security Gains of His Predecessor to Address Root Cause of Conflict: Land Ownership," *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2011.

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INCSR, 2013 op cit.

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