

both conservatives and communists attempted to foment insurrections against democratic regimes in Latin America.

4. In 1989, to honor the service of the foreign debt, the country was required to pay more than half of the total income in foreign exchange from exports (Guerón 1993: 2–5).

5. Franklin Tugwell (1977: 216) presents an extensive inventory of irritating Venezuelan initiatives, including the promotion of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) as an autonomous forum, support for Andean restrictions on private capital, the sponsorship of the move to reassimilate Cuba in the Inter-American System, the hostility to the Chilean military regime, and the special condemnation of the U.S. 1975 Trade Act.

6. “[T]he assumption that we are inheritors of Bolívar has been an important factor in Venezuela’s foreign policy. But we must distinguish between Bolívar the dreamer of 1810 from the Bolívar who during the foundation of Bolivia then understood the forces of disintegration and anarchy” (Consalvi 1997: 143–45).

## 9

### Colombia

#### U.S. Subordinate, Autonomous Actor, or Something in Between?

Arlene B. Tickner

The “crude pre-theory” of foreign policy developed by James N. Rosenau (1996) assesses the weight of systemic, state-level (governmental and non-governmental), and idiosyncratic (or individual-level) variables as a function of the size/strength of a given country, the relative development of its economy, and the open/closed nature of its political system. Rosenau (1996: 183) predicts that in small, underdeveloped countries with either open or closed political systems, idiosyncratic and systemic variables will have the greatest weight in explaining foreign policy behavior. In keeping with Rosenau’s pre-theory, the major characteristics, trends, and underlying principles of Colombian foreign policy are analyzed in this chapter as a function of a specific systemic factor—namely, the country’s relations with the United States, the idiosyncracies of individual presidential administrations, and state-level variables, including the domestic political regime and the armed conflict.

At first glance, the study of Colombia’s foreign relations seems rather straightforward, given that these tend to reflect two conflicting views of the country’s place in the international system: (1) that its peripheral, subordinate status allows marginal leeway in foreign policy and warrants strict alignment with the hegemonic power, the United States; and (2) that the diversification of foreign relations, in combination with greater protagonism, would increase Colombia’s negotiating power and create relative margins of autonomy in its relations with the United States. Nevertheless, upon closer examination, it will become clear that Colombian foreign policy fails to fit

perfectly into these neat categories. Rather, the search for general principles is largely defied by the conjunctural, incongruous, and changing nature of the country's foreign relations. This chapter provides a general explanation and analysis of this scenario.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Many of the central features of Colombia's foreign policy exhibit a strong correlation with two distinct dynamics: the particular nature of the Colombian political system and the country's relations with the United States. These features include (1) the presidentialist and bipartisan character of Colombian foreign relations; (2) their personalized nature; (3) significant degrees of fragmentation in the formulation of foreign policy; (4) the existence of "parallel" diplomacies; (5) the centrality of international law; (6) closeness to the United States, combined with a low international profile; and (7) lack of input/interest on the part of public opinion (Drekonja 1983; Pardo and Tokatlán 1989: 83-86; Cepeda and Pardo 1989: 9-11).

As in the case of most Latin American countries, the presidentialist character of Colombia's political regime, the absence of a true division of powers, and the marginal role played by the legislature in international matters has historically granted the executive a significant degree of autonomy in the formulation of foreign policy. In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, formally charged with the planning and execution of the country's international relations, the Colombian president has an additional consultation mechanism, the Foreign Relations Advisory Committee (CARE), composed of all former elected presidents and several other members appointed by congress and the president. This committee is charged with advising the executive on diverse international issues of strategic importance. The original purpose behind the creation of the CARE was to forge an agreement between the Liberal and Conservative parties concerning Colombia's negotiations with the United States following the independence of Panama (Ardila 1991: 51). Since its creation in 1914, the CARE has thus constituted an important mechanism for nurturing bipartisan consensus concerning Colombian foreign policy that has remained intact throughout most of the country's history.

The extreme personalization of the Colombian political system, along with its presidentialist nature, has allowed for a marked distinction between the formal structure of the country's foreign policy apparatus and the actual execution of Colombia's external affairs, which has tended to revolve around an extremely personalized network of individuals directly associated with the president of the republic (Drekonja 1983: 206). In practice, this situation

is reflected in the predominance of varying foreign policy orientations, depending on the idiosyncracies of specific administrations, resulting in the absence of consistent, long-term state policies.

Colombian foreign policy has also been characterized by high degrees of fragmentation, derived from the centrality that economic diplomacy acquired in the country's international relations beginning in the early 1900s, and the perceived inefficacy of the Ministry of Foreign Relations in conducting the country's commercial affairs. In 1925, coffee accounted for approximately 80 percent of the country's total exports and 25 percent of its gross national product (GNP) (Randall 1992: 140), which largely explains why coffee became the central axis of Colombian foreign policy. The National Federation of Coffee Growers, a business association combining private and state sector attributes, was created in 1927, and quickly became a "state within the state" (Drekonja 1983: 201), acquiring a central role in establishing Colombia's coffee policy, while marginalizing the Ministry of Foreign Relations completely from coffee negotiations on an international level. According to Fernando Cepeda and Rodrigo Pardo (1989: 10), Colombian coffee diplomacy, exercised primarily by the Coffee Federation, contrasted sharply with those political diplomatic efforts executed by the Ministry of Foreign Relations: While the first was characterized by its efficiency and professional nature, the second was inefficient and markedly politicized.

The relative weakness of the Ministry of Foreign Relations has facilitated the ascendance of distinct actors and institutions to fill this void over time. Traditionally, this ministry's activities have been concentrated in two areas: the resolution of territorial and border disputes, and the conduct of conventional diplomacy in international organizations. As will be discussed subsequently, the changing nature of Colombia's foreign relations has thus led to the creation of new public posts parallel to the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the ascendance of distinct state and nonstate actors in the formulation and execution of the country's foreign policy.

The existence of parallel diplomacies in the Colombian case is the result of all of the factors highlighted thus far. The inability of the Ministry of Foreign Relations to coordinate the country's foreign affairs has implied that distinct institutions and actors occupy roles of varying importance, depending on the issue area in question. As a result, foreign policy is often the result of diverse, uncoordinated, spontaneous actions taken by different players (Cardona 1997: 343).

The execution of conventional diplomacy by the Ministry of Foreign Relations has been characterized by the consistent application of the basic principles of international law, more than the satisfaction of specific political goals (Drekonja 1983: 65; Tokatlán and Cardona 1991: 9). The loss of Panama and the national humiliation caused by this event led Colombian policymakers to view international law as the principal means of guaranteeing the coun-

try's sovereignty, understood primarily in terms of its territorial integrity. Nevertheless, the strict application of juridical principles has at times led to political inconsistency. Following the onset of the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982, for instance, Colombia abstained, along with the United States, from voting on the application of the Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty (TIAR) in support of Argentina. This decision, based entirely on legal considerations,<sup>1</sup> marginalized the country from its Latin American neighbors (Palacios 1983: 63).

Another central characteristic of Colombian foreign policy is the country's alignment with the United States, in both economic and political terms. Following the independence of Panama, Colombia began to seek the satisfaction of its foreign policy objectives through a close affiliation with the United States. In addition to becoming a passive recipient of U.S. policy, the country's insertion into the international system became strongly conditioned by its links with Washington (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 84).

Finally, the lack of input and interest on the part of the population has been notorious in the case of Colombia's international relations (Pardo and Tickner 1998: 18–19). During many years subsequent to the loss of Panama, Colombia adopted an inward-looking, isolated stance in relation to the rest of the world. For the vast majority of the population, the nearly continuous existence of civil conflict since the late 1940s has compounded this historical predisposition, given that the challenges inherent to the country's external affairs seem to pale in comparison with the domestic situation.

### CONTENDING DOCTRINES: *RESPICE POLUM* AND *RESPICE SIMILIA*

#### Respice Polum

As mentioned previously, one of the most permanent characteristics of Colombia's international relations has been the impact of the United States on the country's foreign policy orientations. Gerhard Drekonja (1983) points to the independence of Panama in 1903, the deterioration of U.S.-Colombian relations, and Bogotá's subsequent efforts to normalize its ties with Washington, as the central backdrop through which Colombian foreign policy evolved. Before the loss of Panama, considered to be one of its richest provinces, the country had played an active international role, and was perceived as having significant potential on a global level given its strategic location and vast natural resources (Tokatlián 2000a: 33; Randall 1992: 98). Nevertheless, the "Panama syndrome" produced a national catharsis that led to a fundamental shift in Colombia's view of its own role in the world (López Michelsen 1989: 157)—namely, the incident highlighted the coun-

try's impotence alongside the United States. As a result, Colombian foreign policy became characterized by its introverted, low-profile nature.

Marco Fidel Suárez, in his capacity as a member of the CARE, minister of foreign relations, and then president of the republic (1918–1922), promoted the negotiation, signing and ratification of the Urrutia-Thompson Treaty, through which Colombia received a U.S.\$25 million indemnization from the United States in recognition of the losses incurred by Panama's independence. In essence, Suárez's role in this process reflected the president's conviction that U.S. hegemony in the continent was inevitable and that the normalization of Colombia's relations with Washington constituted a *sine qua non* of development (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 97). Not surprisingly, during the 1920s, both the country's domestic and international objectives revolved around the promotion of economic development and modernization. Policies designed to attract U.S. firms interested in investing in Colombia were consequently promoted, while U.S. experts were invited to participate directly in national development efforts.<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to align Colombia's economic interests with those of Washington became widely known as the *respice polum* doctrine. This term, coined by President Suárez himself, implied that the country should direct its foreign policy toward the "polar star" of the North, the United States (Drekonja 1983: 70–71). In practice, this principle led the country to adopt a pragmatic position of subordination toward the United States, "in explicit recognition that Colombia was located in the North American sphere of influence" (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 81).

The onset of the Cold War led to a strong bipartisan consensus<sup>3</sup> concerning the need to maintain and strengthen Colombia's "special relationship" with the United States, mainly due to the fact that both Liberals and Conservatives were ideologically committed to fighting communism both at home and abroad.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the economic imperatives that had underwritten the *respice polum* doctrine during the first half of the twentieth century were complemented by ideological and political goals related to the communist threat. The unconditional alignment with the United States that came to characterize this second phase of *respice polum* was manifest in specific actions taken on an international level. Colombia was an eager participant in the construction of the postwar hemispheric order. Undoubtedly, Alberto Lleras Camargo, Colombian president between 1945–1946 and 1958–1962, best exemplified this role: Lleras was an active participant in the 1945 San Francisco Conference, was appointed as the first general secretary of the Organization of American States (OAS), collaborated directly in the crafting of the original text of the TIAR, and was invited by U.S. president John F. Kennedy to participate in the elaboration of the Alliance for Progress. All of these activities were indicative of Washington's high degree of confidence in the firmness of Bogotá's alliance with U.S. objectives (Drekonja 1983: 75).

The country also took part in many multilateral operations orchestrated by the United States. For example, Colombia was the only Latin American nation to send troops to Korea in 1951, and it also participated in a UN emergency force deployed to the Suez Canal in 1956. In addition, the country followed the lead of the United States in condemning the communist threat on a global level. At the 1961 meeting of Inter-American states in Punta del Este, a bipartisan Colombian delegation sustained that the existence of a Marxist-Leninist government in Cuba was incompatible with the security of the region, and favored the expulsion of that country from the OAS (Randall 1992: 270). Colombia supported U.S. military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 on similar grounds.

In exchange for its loyalty, the country received substantial military and economic assistance from the United States. Colombia was one of the three largest recipients of U.S. military assistance in Latin America and the second largest recipient, after Brazil, of U.S. economic aid between 1949 and 1974 (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 86). Nevertheless, several authors maintain that the consistency with which Colombia applied the *respite polum* doctrine in its foreign relations, although allowing the country to avoid certain costs and risks, in particular in its relations with the United States, also provided an exaggerated degree of certainty in Washington concerning Bogotá's international conduct, with which it failed to derive as many benefits as it might have from its "special relationship" with the United States (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 85; Drekonja 1983: 77).

### Respite Similia

Beginning with the presidency of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970), however, Colombia began to reorient its foreign policy toward its Latin American neighbors and other nations with the goal of diversifying its international relations. On an economic level, the country adopted an increasingly independent stance regarding its monetary and commercial policy, while modernizing the institutional apparatus responsible for economic and commercial diplomacy. The Lleras Restrepo administration implemented an economic development policy that consisted of (1) gradual liberalization of imports, combined with efforts to increase the country's exports; (2) export diversification and the promotion of nontraditional exports; (3) the depoliticization of decision-making processes through the creation of semiautonomous government agencies; and (4) the regulation of multinational activity in the country (Juárez 1993: 25–26). In 1966, the Colombian government rejected IMF demands for a massive devaluation of the Colombian peso, and instead it adopted a novel and highly successful crawling peg system of gradual devaluations. The results of this policy in economic terms were consider-

able. By the end of the 1960s, the per capita growth of the Colombian economy reached a historical 3.8 percent, nontraditional exports grew in comparison to products such as coffee, and the country's exports and imports increased at similar levels, offsetting potential balance of payments problems (Fishlow 1998: 327–28).

On a political level, Colombia modified its stance regarding diplomatic relations with socialist countries and resumed commercial relations with the Soviet bloc countries. The argument used to justify this shift was that increased trade relations with such nations did not imply Colombia's acceptance of their ideology (Randall 1992: 277). The country also began to participate in the construction of the Andean Group, whose first meeting was held in 1967.

This shift in Colombia's foreign policy orientation has been associated with the *respite similia* doctrine, a term coined by Alfonso López Michelsen, foreign relations minister under the Lleras Restrepo administration and later president of the republic (1974–1978). Literally, the term implied that Colombian foreign policy should revolve around relations with similar countries, especially in Latin America. Following this principle, Colombia sought greater interaction with its Latin American counterparts, as well as increased leeway in the international system vis-à-vis the United States. Such changes resulted from a combination of two factors: the "permissive" systemic conditions created first by détente and afterward, by the apparent decline of U.S. hegemony in the mid-1970s; and the personal conviction of key individuals, in particular López Michelsen, in terms of the need to create relative distance between the country's foreign policy positions and Washington.

As in the case of the Lleras Restrepo government, the López administration assigned increasing importance to those economic aspects of Colombian foreign policy, while challenging the thesis, upheld by the *respite polum* doctrine, that a permanent harmony of interests existed between Colombia and the United States. Tellingly, President López rejected Colombia's traditional role as a "pawn" in the Cold War (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 105–6). Consequently, this administration sought to "universalize" Colombia's diplomatic relations even further through a series of measures designed to reduce the country's traditional dependence on the United States: (1) active participation in third world forums such as the G-77, the New International Economic Order (NIEO) discussions, and, to a lesser degree, the Non-Aligned Movement;<sup>5</sup> (2) explicit support of Panamanian sovereign interests in the negotiation of the Panama Canal (or Torrijos-Carter) Treaty (1977), in addition to support for Cuba's reentry into the OAS; and (3) pursuit of multilateral versus bilateral strategies (Drekonja 1983: 81–82).

### The Hybrid Principle: *Ad Libitum Alternare Utrumque Principium*

The implementation of the *res pice similia* doctrine between 1966 and 1978 led to a moderate diversification of Colombia's economic and political ties on an international level, as well as a relative degree of autonomy in the country's relations with the United States. Nevertheless, following the López administration, the use of this foreign policy doctrine, as well as that of its precursor, *res pice polum*, became markedly transitory and interchangeable. In other words, Colombian foreign policy began to exhibit alternation between these two principles, depending on the administration, situation, issue area, and circumstances in question (Tokatlián 2000a: 37). Additionally, the impact of state-level factors on the country's foreign policy became stronger, in particular because of (1) the end of the National Front power-sharing arrangement, in place between 1958 and 1978,<sup>6</sup> and the progressive deterioration of the bipartisan system; (2) the intensification of the armed conflict between the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as growing political and social unrest; and (3) the ascendance of the drug problem.

Undoubtedly, the Turbay (1978–1982) and Betancur (1982–1986) administrations provide the most poignant examples of this “hybrid approach,” which I denominate *ad libitum alternare utrumque principium*—literally, “alternation between the two principles at will.” The government of Julio César Turbay Ayala was characterized primarily by the staunch anticommunist stance of the Colombian president. As a result, the growth in the scope and nature of armed activity in the country, in combination with unprecedented social and political demonstrations, became interpreted increasingly through the lense of the bipolar conflict (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 139).

In terms of the country's foreign policy, the Turbay administration not only returned the country to its traditional status as a U.S. “pawn” in the Cold War but also converted Colombia into an active “soldier” in the struggle against communism. Notwithstanding this general trend, however, Colombian foreign policy became visibly ambiguous during this period. In the case of Nicaragua, for example, the country's original stance toward the 1979 revolution largely contradicted Turbay's later foreign policy tendencies. The country sided with the Sandinistas in the revolution, in addition to the other Andean Pact members, and Mexico and Costa Rica, while opposing any form of external (namely, U.S.) intervention in this situation. The Sandinistas were eventually recognized as a belligerent group by these countries in 1979. In 1980, Nicaragua initiated efforts to reclaim its sovereignty over the archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia, originally ceded to Colombia in 1928 through the Esguerra-Bárcenas treaty. This claim, interpreted in Bogotá as both unfounded in terms of international law principles and unjustifiably aggressive, given Colombia's earlier support of the Sandinistas

during the revolution, led to increasingly strained relations between the two countries. The situation became complicated even further by Nicaragua's attempts to distance itself from the United States, and the implantation of the “socialist” model in that country.

On the other hand, Colombia's relations with Cuba during the Turbay administration were strained from the very beginning. In 1979, the country actively blocked Cuba's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. In early 1980, the M-19 guerrilla movement seized the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Bogotá, holding a number of ambassadors and other officials captive for a month. The crisis was resolved with the departure of the guerrilla members to Cuba, which tended to confirm the Colombian government's suspicions that Cuba was directly aiding armed actors in the country. In 1981, Colombia broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

The ascendance of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1981 provided a prime opportunity for Colombia to align its foreign policy with that of the United States even further given the ideological affinities characterizing both executives. As a result, the country adopted a high anticommunist profile on an international level, in consonance with U.S. foreign policy imperatives, that reached its maximum expression in Central America and the Caribbean (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 140). While gaining the favor of the United States, this posture tended to isolate the country diplomatically from its Latin American neighbors. Colombia's decision to abstain from voting on the application of the TIAR in the Falklands/Malvinas war (1982) provided a poignant statement of the distance created by the Turbay administration between Bogotá and other countries of the region.

The first years of the Betancur administration (1982–1986) constituted a staunch contrast with the Turbay period. During his inaugural address, President Betancur boldly expressed his determination to develop an “independent” foreign policy. In addition to announcing his decision to make the country a full member of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Colombian president called for a meeting of Latin America's leaders in order to discuss possible solutions to the debt crisis (Bagley and Tokatlián 1987: 178). For some authors (Cepeda and Pardo 1989: 79), the fact that the debt crisis failed to affect the Colombian economy as severely as other Latin American countries, in combination with Betancur's own personal disposition, facilitated a more assertive foreign policy, which allowed Colombia to break with a long tradition of unrestricted alliance with the United States.

During President Reagan's visit to Colombia in late 1982, Betancur urged him to abandon U.S. interventionism in Central America and proposed the renegotiation of Latin American debt (Bagley and Tokatlián 1987: 178). The Colombian president was also critical of U.S. drug policy and consequently refused to fumigate illicit crops, as well as to enforce the extradition treaty that the two countries had signed in 1979. Betancur worked to reestablish

friendly relations with the countries of the region as well. In addition to recognizing Argentina's sovereignty in the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, Colombia sought to reverse the hostile posture that the Turbay administration had adopted toward Nicaragua and Cuba.

Two instruments, the Cartagena Consensus and the Contadora Group, illustrate the degree to which multilateral political strategies tended to dominate Colombian foreign policy during the first half of the Betancur administration. In mid-1984, the Colombian president sponsored a Latin American debtor's meeting in Cartagena, with the goal of creating a unified, regional position toward the debt problem and its possible solutions.<sup>8</sup> In turn, the country became a central figure in the Contadora Group, created by Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama in January 1983 with the goal of countering U.S. interventionism in the Central American crisis through the constitution of an alternative regional conflict resolution mechanism. The active role that Colombia acquired in the Contadora Group reflected the perception that the country's domestic situation was in many ways interrelated with the Central American crisis and that the promotion of multilateral initiatives for resolving the latter could resonate in the assurance of regional and local support for Betancur's domestic peace initiatives, which included the declaration of a general amnesty (Cepeda 1985: 18).

By mid-1984, following the enthusiastic application of the principles of *resipice similia*, both internal and external restrictions weighed on Colombian foreign policy, ultimately forcing the country to resort to a more subdued international stance. On the domestic level, international reserves diminished, and the country's commercial deficit and external debt both rose, creating a liquidity problem that was ultimately confronted through an economic monitoring agreement signed with the IMF (Bagley and Tokatlián 1987: 197). The assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in 1984, which highlighted the salience of the drug problem in the country, led the Betancur administration to begin extraditing Colombian nationals to the United States and to harden the government's antidrug strategy. Such shifts brought Bogotá, once again, much closer to Washington's posture toward this problem. Finally, the M-19 invasion and destruction of the Palace of Justice in November 1985, which led to the death of nearly one hundred persons, also created a marked shift in the government's peace policy that coincided with setbacks in the Contadora process itself.

#### COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD: ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND DRUGS

##### *Apertura*, Modernization, and Economic Diplomacy

The foreign policy of the administration of Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) exhibited a relative degree of continuity with that of Betancur's government.

Barco continued to emphasize the nonideological nature of the country's international relations, intensified efforts to diversify them, asserted Colombia's independence in relation to the United States, and alternated frequently between the two central foreign policy principles described earlier. However, Colombian foreign policy during this period also differed noticeably from that of the previous administration on a number of issues.

Colombia's independence in relation to the United States was asserted primarily through explicit emphasis on foreign economic diplomacy and the expansion of commercial and diplomatic relations with other regions of the world, rather than those political measures characteristic of the Betancur period. The diversification of the country's external relations was viewed essentially as a means of increasing its international negotiating capacity. The Colombian president also took measures to modernize the country's foreign policy apparatus. A foreign service statute created in 1968 but never applied was finally passed into law, in an attempt to professionalize the Ministry of Foreign Relations. In addition, the Presidential Advisory was created with the goal of enhancing the coordination of strategic aspects of the country's domestic and foreign policy. The markedly pragmatic nature of Colombian foreign policy during the Barco government was derived primarily from the personal style of the president himself, characterized by the primacy of technical rather than political considerations in the design of public policy (Pardo and Tokatlián 1989: 199).

Colombian economic diplomacy between 1986 and 1990 revolved mainly around export diversification, the expansion of the country's economic relations, and the maintenance of positive relations with international financial institutions (Cardona 1990: 11-12). In the mid-1980s, coffee continued to represent a significant percentage of the country's export earnings, approximately 50 percent. By 1990, however, coffee's share in Colombian exports had dropped to around 20 percent and was replaced by nontraditional products, such as flowers, as well as petroleum and coal. In effect, by the decade's end, no one product represented more than 30 percent of the country's foreign trade (Juárez 1993: 3).

In February 1990, the Barco administration launched its Program of Modernization and Internationalization of the Colombian Economy, designed to promote economic growth, reduce inflation, and reform the country's commercial structure through a gradual process of *apertura* (openness) and internationalization of the Colombian economy. Two of the primary motors of this process included export-oriented growth and economic integration. In addition to attempts to resuscitate the Andean Group, President Barco, along with his Venezuelan counterpart, Carlos Andrés Pérez, initiated an ambitious program of integration in February 1989, designed to expand the scope of bilateral relations beyond border disputes (the Gulf of Venezuela, in particular) that had traditionally been prioritized.<sup>9</sup> The Group of Three

(G-3) was also created in the same year, primarily with the goal of increasing political-diplomatic cooperation among Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico.

In a number of ways, the election of César Gaviria (1990–1994) marked the continuation of those foreign policy strategies implemented during the Barco administration. Many former officials of the Barco government were reappointed by the new Colombian president, while Gaviria also gave priority to Colombia's foreign economic relations over the political realm as a means of asserting greater autonomy and gaining enhanced negotiating capacity in the international system. Like Barco, Gaviria saw the reform of the country's foreign policy establishment as imperative to achieving these goals. Not only did the Gaviria administration continue to implement the modernization and internationalization program launched during the previous government; this process was actually accelerated through the introduction of swifter tariff reductions and a more extensive liberalization of the Colombian economy. Economic integration was viewed as a central instrument of the internationalization process. In consequence, the Colombian government continued to participate actively in regional integration schemes such as the ALADI, G-3 and the Andean Group, while signing a number of new bilateral trade agreements with neighboring countries.

An integral part of the modernization of the state during this period included institutional reforms designed to create greater efficiency and effectiveness in the public sphere. One result of this process was the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Trade in 1991, charged with the centralization of Colombian foreign economic policy.<sup>10</sup> In comparison to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, this new ministry was conceived in markedly different terms: In addition to being smaller and based on a horizontal organizational structure, the hiring of personnel was largely linked to technical criteria, rather than those political considerations that traditionally dictated the distribution of diplomatic posts (Sanz de Santamaría 1993: 47). The Colombian president also divided the Presidential Advisory into specific issue areas, leading to the creation of the Presidential Advisory for International Affairs in 1990. Finally, international relations offices were gradually created in the great majority of the other ministries. The end result of these changes was to presidentialize Colombia's international relations even further, to marginalize the Ministry of Foreign Relations from strategic areas of foreign policy decision making, such as foreign trade and relations with the United States, and to impede the effective coordination of Colombia's foreign affairs.

Notwithstanding efforts undertaken during both the Barco and Gaviria administrations to diversify Colombia's international economic relations, these remained concentrated in the United States and, to a lesser degree, Europe. For example, by the end of the Gaviria period Colombia continued to export 35 percent of its products to the United States, while 40 percent of its imports originated in that country as well. The approval of the Andean

Trade Preference Act (1991) in the United States and the Special Cooperation Program in Europe (1990), designed to assist drug-producing nations in the Andean region to diversify their commercial relations, reinforced this tendency (Tokatlíán and Tickner 1996: 109). In macroeconomic terms, although economic growth remained stable, the acceleration of the apertura process during the Gaviria administration aggravated the country's balance of payments. Between 1992 and 1994, for instance, imports grew at 33.9, 48.7, and 22 percent, respectively, while exports increased at -3, 3.1, and 19.2 percent (Banco de la República 2001). Foreign investment levels were also static until 1996.

### The Role of Drugs in Colombian-U.S. Relations

The salience of the drug issue in Colombian-U.S. relations beginning in the 1980s reinforced the dependent relations between these two countries. In the specific issue area of drugs, the Colombian political system became "penetrated," in Rosenau's terms (1996: 185), adding weight to the impact of U.S. pressures on Colombian domestic and foreign policy. As mentioned earlier, one important objective of Colombian foreign policy during the Barco period was to increase the country's autonomy on a global level, especially through economic strategies. On the drug front, the country inaugurated an unprecedented strategy of confrontation that brought Colombia much closer to U.S. counternarcotics recipes, for which it earned praise from Washington as a faithful ally in the "war on drugs." However, on an external level, the Barco government was firm in identifying the drug traffic as an international problem that needed to be met with concerted multilateral efforts.<sup>11</sup> Colombia also undertook an extensive advertising campaign in the United States designed to improve the country's image, illustrate the costs associated with the "drug war," and impress on the U.S. public that drug consumption was largely responsible for this problem (Cardona 1990: 15). This active stance was matched on a domestic level when U.S. intromission was perceived to be overly excessive. For example, when a report leaked in late 1990, with information that Washington was determined to deploy an aircraft carrier battle group off the coast of Colombia in order to interdict drug shipments, the Colombian president adamantly rejected this measure, and the plan was subsequently abandoned.

In the area of drug diplomacy, Gaviria's policy orientation differed dramatically from the hard-line approach advocated by the Barco administration. The reasons for this shift lie primarily in the social, political, and economic costs of the campaign of terror and violence inaugurated by the Colombian drug cartels in order to impede the extradition of drug traffickers to the United States.<sup>12</sup> The Gaviria administration's response was to establish a clear distinction between narcoterrorism and the drug traffic, two related

but distinct manifestations of the drug problem. Hence, government efforts became largely concentrated on domestic problems, and foreign policy only became important to the extent that it satisfied specific domestic objectives (Tokatlían and Tickner 1996: 108). The Colombian government enacted a plea-bargaining system in 1990, in which those individuals accused of drug-related crimes would receive reduced jail sentences in exchange for their voluntary surrender and confession of their crimes. Nearly a year later, the 1991 Constitutional Assembly, under significant pressure from the country's drug trafficking organizations, voted to prohibit the extradition of Colombian nationals altogether.

The escape of Medellín cartel leader Pablo Escobar from prison in July 1992 led to increasing U.S. intolerance of the Colombian government's drug strategy. Although Escobar was ultimately killed in December 1993 by Colombian security forces, the permissive conditions surrounding the Medellín cartel leader's imprisonment, which were brought to light following his escape, led to growing apprehension in the United States concerning the effectiveness of the plea-bargaining system. Washington's uneasiness was intensified in May 1994, when the Colombian Constitutional Court decided to legalize the consumption of certain illegal drugs for personal use. This controversial decision came shortly after a series of public declarations by the country's general prosecutor, Gustavo de Greiff, that the war against drugs had failed miserably and that the consumption and traffic of illicit substances should be legalized (Tokatlían 2000b: 68).

#### The Samper Administration and the Breakdown of Bilateral Relations<sup>13</sup>

Although the Gaviria administration's propensity to stray from U.S.-inspired counternarcotics dogma led to a steady deterioration in U.S.-Colombian relations, Colombia continued to be considered a "showcase" for U.S. efforts in the region (Matthiesen 2000: 261-62). Nonetheless, with the inauguration of President Ernesto Samper in August 1994, the bilateral relationship experienced a severe breakdown following revelations that his presidential campaign had received financial contributions from the Cali cartel. A drawn-out series of accusations and denials concerning this allegation, labeled Proceso 8,000, polarized the country and irrevocably damaged the legitimacy and credibility of the Samper government on both the domestic and international fronts. Increasingly, the United States began to refer to Colombia as a "narcodemocracy" and a "narcostate," rather than a determined "ally."

At an initial meeting in New York, between officials from both countries in June 1994, Samper was given a U.S. document with a series of new and stricter criteria to be used to evaluate Colombia's antidrug performance in

the 1995 certification process.<sup>14</sup> The implicit message set forth in the document was that the Gaviria administration's performance had not been completely satisfactory and that the standards for judging compliance toward the future would be applied more stringently. Colombia was subsequently certified for reasons of U.S. national interest in 1995. U.S. pressure led to a series of developments in Colombia's counterdrug policies: Rosso José Serrano was appointed head of the National Police in December 1994 and subsequently embarked on an aggressive campaign against corruption in this institution, an intensive antidrug effort was initiated, the main protagonists of the Cali cartel were successfully jailed, and crop eradication efforts were intensified dramatically.

The increasing importance of the drug issue in Colombian-U.S. relations, in combination with Samper's lack of legitimacy, also led to the ascendance of a series of new "players" in the foreign policy decision-making process, most important, the director of the National Police and the General Prosecutor's Office. Both actors established close relations with all three branches of the U.S. government, and often acted independently of the Colombian executive.<sup>15</sup> Given the growing complexity of the bilateral relationship, as well as the president's own weakness, Samper convoked a weekly meeting of presidential advisers, ministers of justice, defense, foreign relations, and foreign trade that sought to centralize all information regarding Colombia's relations with the United States, as well as to preserve a minimum degree of coherence in the formulation of foreign policy. Nevertheless, given the absence of formal policy coordination mechanisms, most notably in the Ministry of Foreign Relations, each Colombian institution achieved a great degree of leeway in establishing direct relations with U.S. counterparts.

As speculations in Colombia grew regarding Samper's level of awareness and involvement in the campaign scandal, U.S. policy toward the country became markedly aggressive and intransigent, reducing the country's margins for international action even further. Although arguably the U.S. government may not have identified Samper's removal from power as an explicit policy objective, the weakening of the Colombian president clearly became the policy of some, if not many, State Department officials (Franco 1998: 53). In June 1996, Samper's U.S. visa was revoked, with which direct relations with the Colombian president were precluded altogether. Notwithstanding the Samper government's vigorous compliance with the exigencies of U.S. antinarcotics policy, Colombia was decertified in 1996 and 1997, although economic sanctions were not applied.

Undoubtedly, the case of Samper provides a telling example of the extent to which external pressures can constrain the foreign (and domestic) policy of a peripheral country. Not only was the Colombian president himself ostracized by the United States, both domestically and internationally; increasingly, Colombia became identified as a pariah state within the global



community. The political costs of this reduced status for the country's foreign policy were significant. During his entire period, the Colombian president received only two official state visits by neighboring heads of state in Venezuela and Ecuador. Ten of Samper's twelve international trips were taken in his capacity as president of the Non-Aligned Movement, not as president of Colombia, and were designed to counteract the U.S. nonrecognition (Ramírez 2000: 181-82). In addition to improving Colombia's international image, the presidency of the movement sought to increase the country's visibility, diversify its political and commercial relations, and increase its international negotiating power (Ramírez 2000: 161). On all of these counts, Colombia's efforts proved insufficient to overcome U.S. opposition.

### The Pastrana Administration From Pariah to Friend

The election of Andrés Pastrana in 1998 was considered a prime opportunity for reestablishing a cooperative tone to the bilateral relationship. Pastrana established a clear distinction between Colombia's domestic priority, which revolved primarily around seeking a peaceful solution to the armed conflict, as well as U.S. interests in the country, based essentially on the drug problem. As in the case of Gaviria before him, the Colombian president prioritized those aspects of the country's foreign policy deemed crucial to resolving urgent domestic needs. In consequence, in June 1998 Pastrana presented a peace plan, in which he maintained that the cultivation of illicit substances constituted, above all, a social problem that needed to be addressed through a type of "Marshall Plan" for Colombia (Pardo and Tickner 1998: 24). In an interview in July, the president-elect also stated that narcotics, although an important aspect of Colombian-U.S. relations, had monopolized these for too long, and should be replaced by more important topics such as trade relations (Farrell 1998: 27).

Before his inauguration, Pastrana met with U.S. president Bill Clinton in Washington. One of his primary goals was to press for an "opening" of the bilateral agenda beyond the issue of drugs. During Pastrana's first official visit to the White House in late October 1998, Clinton made an explicit pledge to support the peace process with the FARC<sup>16</sup> and to work with other international institutions to mobilize resources to support this objective. In December 1998, Colombian defense minister Rodrigo Lloreda and his U.S. counterpart, William Cohen, also signed an agreement designed to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> This arrangement paved the way for the training of the first of several special counternarcotics battalions of the Colombian Army. Simultaneously, the United States stepped up its military assistance to Colombia, which reached U.S.\$289 million for 1999.

By September 1999, the changing domestic climate in Colombia, as well as growing skepticism among key U.S. officials regarding the viability of the peace process, led to an important shift in the Colombian government's foreign policy strategy. Namely, with the presentation of Pastrana's "Plan Colombia" in the United States, the Colombian president no longer anchored his appeals for U.S. assistance to the peace process but, rather, to the drug issue and the country's inability to confront this problem alone (Office of the President of the Republic 1999). Thus, following initial attempts to gear Colombia's foreign policy toward domestic priorities (peace), rather than U.S. concerns (drugs), President Andrés Pastrana was forced to resort to a "drug war logic" in order to secure sorely needed U.S. support.<sup>18</sup> In practice, this shift signaled the return to the rationalized subordination characteristic of the *res pice polum* doctrine in Colombian foreign policy. However, contrary to previous periods, in which Colombia's subservience was exchanged for relative economic and commercial benefits, the Pastrana administration's acquiescence in the "drug war" was conceived primarily as a means of increasing the country's domestic military strength.

In addition to Plan Colombia, the Pastrana administration placed strong emphasis on a "Diplomacy for Peace" initiative that sought to engage foreign support for the peace process with the FARC that was officially ended on February 20, 2002. However, these two pillars of foreign policy efforts have worked at cross-purposes. Increasing U.S. military involvement in Colombia has led to a deterioration in the country's relations with its Latin American neighbors, in particular the Andean countries, reducing the possibility that key regional actors might serve as facilitators in future attempts at peace. In addition, the members of the European Union have shied away from committing significant resources to Colombia as a direct result of what is perceived as an excessive U.S. military presence in the country and its potential for escalating conflict in the region. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, which lacks sufficient know-how in those topics highlighted by Plan Colombia and Diplomacy for Peace, such as the armed conflict, Colombian drug policy, and economic and social development, has been largely marginalized from crucial aspects of the country's international relations.

### CONCLUSION

This brief overview of Colombian foreign policy lends itself to several concluding remarks. Caught between the enticements of reward for good behavior and the call for independent action, Colombian foreign policy has seemingly swayed between full acceptance of U.S. tutelage and the search for an autonomous place in the international system. However, these two pat-

terns have not been applied consistently, nor are they mutually exclusive. As a result, what is commonly referred to as "Colombian foreign policy" is often the product of partial, uncoordinated actions that vary dramatically depending on the specific problems, governments, and historical moments in question.

The causes underlying this ambiguous foreign policy are varied but are largely related to (1) the centrality of individual-level variables, most notably the personalized nature of Colombian politics and variation among presidential preferences and those of the executive's closest advisers; (2) the incapacity of the Ministry of Foreign Relations to coordinate the country's foreign relations and the consequent absence of medium to long-term foreign policy strategies; (3) the historical role played by the United States in certain issue areas; and (4) the changing nature of the armed conflict.

The events of September 11 have highlighted two key factors that account for Colombia's international relations at present: the U.S.-led global "war against terrorism" and the domestic armed conflict. Washington's classification of all three of the country's armed actors (FARC, ELN, AUC) as terrorists who are also involved in drug-related activities, in combination with the intensification of the Colombian crisis, have led to a full alignment of Colombian foreign and domestic policy with U.S. goals, comparable perhaps only to the Cold War years. This tendency will most likely continue during the next several years, irrespective of the specific policy orientations of incoming president Alvaro Uribe Vélez<sup>19</sup>

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Given the marked power asymmetry between Colombia and the United States, as well as the salience of drugs and counterterrorism on the U.S. international agenda, to what extent does Colombian foreign policy simply mirror U.S. policy?
2. How can one explain the following "paradox" between Colombian and Mexican foreign policy: Historically, both countries lost significant portions of territory to the United States, while drugs figure prominently in each of their contemporary agendas with Washington. Yet, Colombia and Mexico chose markedly different paths, the first characterized by rationalized subordination and the second, only recently, that of independence and autonomy.
3. To what degree does the personalized nature of politics in Colombia hamper the achievement of more consistent, coordinated, long-term foreign policy strategies?

### NOTES

1. However, Colombia was one of the only peripheral countries to vote against the veto power of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, on international law grounds, when this organization was created in 1945.
2. The Kemmerer Mission (1923) was the first of several groups of economic experts invited to Colombia for this purpose.
3. Although bipartisan consensus was a nearly permanent feature of Colombian foreign policy before the Cold War as well, on several occasions the Conservative party criticized the Liberal governments for their staunch pro-American stance, in particular during World War II.
4. The Bogotazo of April 9, 1948, which followed the assassination of Liberal political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, sparked anticommunist fears in the country and led Colombia to break off its relations with the Soviet Union.
5. Colombia attended its first Non-Aligned meeting in 1970, during the administration of Misael Pastrana (1970-1974). In 1974, the country acquired observer status, and in 1983, it became a full member.
6. The first open presidential elections took place in 1974; parity between Conservative and Liberal Party posts in the presidential cabinet and the public sector was preserved until 1978. Article 120 of the 1886 Colombian constitution, however, mandated that the majority party offer adequate representation to the second-place party, with which power sharing continued until the Barco administration (1986-1990).
7. Diplomatic relations were resumed once again in 1991, during the administration of César Gaviria.
8. Notwithstanding Betancur's efforts, a debtor's cartel was never formed among the countries of the region.
9. See Diego Cardona et. al. (1992) for an extensive discussion of Colombo-Venezuelan integration during the Barco and Gaviria administrations.
10. The creation of the Ministry of the Environment one year later attested to the importance, at least in formal terms, of environmental issues in domestic and foreign policy as well.
11. In 1990, the presidents of Colombia, Perú, Bolivia, and the United States met at the Cartagena Drug Summit to discuss joint strategies for addressing this problem.
12. This situation reached its apex on August 18, 1989, when Liberal presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán was assassinated by gunmen supposedly hired by the Medellín Cartel.
13. A more comprehensive discussion of Colombia's relations with the United States during the Samper and Pastrana governments appears in Tickner (2002).
14. Personal interview with Ernesto Samper Pizano, former president of Colombia, Bogotá, September 4, 2000.
15. Personal interview with Rodrigo Pardo García-Peña, the former Colombian minister of foreign relations and director of *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, August 24, 2001.
16. One aspect of the peace process that was received with a certain degree of alarm in Washington, however, was the creation of the demilitarized zone the size of Switzerland in five municipalities located in southern Colombia.
17. Beginning in the mid-1990s, military cooperation was dramatically reduced as a result of the Colombian Army's participation in human rights violations.

18. In June 2000, the U.S. Congress approved an aid package corresponding to the period 2000–2001, in which the Colombian Army received U.S.\$512 million and the National Police, U.S.\$123 million.

19. Uribe was elected in the first round of Colombian presidential elections on May 26, 2002.

# 10

## Ecuador

### Foreign Policy on the Brink

*Jeanne A. K. Hey*

Ecuador's international reputation has hit rock bottom.

—General Paco Moncayo (*Latin American Research Review*  
[LARR], May 19, 1998: 3)

General-turned-politician Moncayo uttered this statement during a dispute between then-president Fabian Alarcon and the Constituent Assembly. He could hardly have guessed how much lower the political circumstances, and Ecuador's international reputation, could go. With the new millennium came the ouster of Ecuador's second constitutionally elected president in four years, the abandonment of the national currency, and regional rumors about the viability of Ecuador's democracy.

Ecuador entered the 1990s under President Rodrigo Borja, a center-left politician who joined most of Latin America's leaders in moving toward neoliberal economic reforms (Hey and Klak 1999). The conservative Sixto Duran Ballen, elected in 1992, found he shared his predecessor's primary dilemma: how to placate and serve an increasingly impoverished population while also servicing the foreign debt and pleasing international creditor institutions. With the election of populist Abdala Bucaram in 1996, Ecuador added political instability to its list of crises. Known as "el loco," Bucaram incensed his domestic opponents, alienated his supporters, displayed corruption and nepotism, and engaged in bizarre behaviors. Citing "mental incapacity," the legislature ousted Bucaram in early 1997. Vice President Rosalia Arteaga presided just long enough for the congressional deputies to revise the constitution so that their own speaker, Alarcon, could assume the presi-