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TERRITORIAL CONSOLIDATION IN COLOMBIA: GOVERNING THE UNGOVERNED

Kenny Barry



Introduction

Colombia is no exception to the maxim that geography is destiny. Three Andean mountain chains slice through a dense tropical landscape to heights over 5,700 meters, forming disparate populations with strong regional identities. This territorial disconnection is exacerbated by a diffuse population that is linked only by an inadequate national road network—the product of centuries of underinvestment. Two-thirds of the rural population lacks ready access to the road network, while rural homes are an average 2.5 km from an all-season road (“Colombia: Recent . . .,” p. 17). The Nukak tribe of the Amazon region went undiscovered until 1988, highlighting the degree to which these regions remain isolated (Politis, p. 39). By the end of the twentieth century, geographic isolation had left more than half of the Colombian territory outside government control (Mundt and Ferris, p. 5). Although Colombia has sustained an uninterrupted constitutional rule, these pock-

ets of ungoverned and isolated space continue to undermine the integrity of the state. Illegal armed groups have operated with impunity in these areas since the mid-1940s, threatening internal security while exposing rural populations to violence and illegal economic activity (Hudson, p. 44). The failure of the central government to lead with authority complicates the development of a cohesive state as these areas are unable to identify with the nation as a whole. Territorial consolidation (hereafter referred to as “consolidation”) targets these isolated and historically victimized populations in an effort to integrate them with Colombian society through the commitment of military and civil institutions. Consolidation refers to the series of policies designed to clear security threats from unstable zones, hold security gains, and execute investments targeted at the social and infrastructural fabric of rural communities. The goal of consolidation is the systematic elimination of ungoverned spaces—a milestone that has eluded the government of Colombia since its inception.

I discuss how the nature of the armed conflict in Colombia over the past decade has led to the need for consolidation as a sustainable approach to internal security. Prior strategies, although successful in containing the hemorrhaging of peripheral territories, have failed to address the fundamental sources of armed violence. I outline the consolidation process, analyze the effectiveness of a consolidation pilot project in the Serranía de La Macarena region, and detail the institutional evolution of consolidation agencies. I conclude with a prognosis of consolidation policies to date.

The Limitations of Democratic Security

The contemporary model to recover ungoverned territories in Colombia is the product of an evolution of security strategies that began with the Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security) policy in 2002.¹ This policy envisioned regaining control of isolated zones where the state was historically absent through an enhanced military and police presence. This presence would combine security gains with the eradication of illegal crops to undermine the financial capacity of illegal armed groups and thus their ability to control territories (Meza, p. 2).

Between 1998 and 2010, the government of Colombia doubled the size and tripled the budget of its armed forces (Isacson, p. 3). Democratic Security accelerated this buildup, establishing a permanent police presence in every Colombian municipality² by 2004—a symbolic stage in the incomplete process of eliminating ungoverned spaces (Moreno). The infusion of security forces coincided with a 52 percent drop in the national homicide rate between 2002 and 2010 and a reduction in the total cultivated area of coca—a key ingredient in the production of

cocaine—by 41 percent between 2001 and 2003 (“Global Study on Homicide”; “Colombia Coca . . . 2011”). Widespread military intervention was improving security conditions and forcing illegal armed groups on the defensive—both strategically and financially.

Plan Patriota, a large-scale military offensive initiated in late 2003, sought to expand these gains as an element of Democratic Security. The plan was a marked shift from the government habit of neglecting sparsely populated regions as it targeted guerrilla strongholds in remote areas of southern Colombia (Isacson, p. 4). Initial military victories drove guerrillas from villages that had long been under adversary control, although guerrillas endured the offensive in the rural areas and roads beyond these towns where they remain a threat today (Isacson, p. 4). The cultivation of coca persisted or shifted to areas that remained ungoverned and improvements to security were situational and temporary; violence and illegal economic activity weathered the offensive.

Although initially effective, Democratic Security ultimately failed to secure Colombia’s marginalized territories through a purely militaristic approach. Many towns and villages remained unprotected despite a security presence in every municipality. Counternarcotic gains were short-lived as total coca cultivation increased by 15 percent between 2003 and 2007 (“Colombia Coca . . . 2011”). Further crop fumigation resulted only in environmental and economic devastation for farmers with no viable economic alternatives, food security, or crop substitution programs. Collateral damage from aerial fumigation campaigns eliminated any lingering rural support for a state that was both absent and destructive. Although the threat of state failure was erased, control remained incomplete.

Challenges of Ungoverned Territories

Interrelated issues of violence and illegal economic activity are amplified by the remoteness and inaccessibility of Colombia’s isolated regions. The Mapiripán Massacre of 1997 illustrates the dangers that result from weak governance in rural areas.³ Over a five-day period, the paramilitary massacre of at least 49 unarmed civilians was uncontested by

¹Democratic Security was based on former President Álvaro Uribe’s National Development Plan for 2002–2006: *Towards a Communitarian State* (Mejía et al., p. 3).

²Colombia has a unity system of government in which decentralized administrative divisions exercise only those powers granted by the central government. There are 1,122 municipalities (counties) within Colombia that constitute 32 departments (states). Each municipality contains a center of government that administrates surrounding villages and towns (“División Político-Administrativa . . .”).

Colombian security forces (“Former Colombian . . .”). Although hundreds managed to flee the region, telephoned pleas for help by those who could not escape were ignored by corrupt army and police forces (“War without Quarter . . .”). Even with a security presence nearby, the government failed to protect the basic human rights of its citizens. Although the event was well documented by human rights groups, it was not until ten years later that the military leadership was properly convicted for colluding in the massacre (“Former Colombian . . .”). Whereas paramilitary groups have been largely demobilized since 2006, successor groups and guerrillas continue to commit similar atrocities to exert power and influence over vulnerable communities.

Geographically isolated areas also provide optimal conditions for illegal economic activity and forced displacement. Colombia is second only to Sudan in the total number of internal displaced peoples—victims who are typically small farmers forced from their land by illegal armed groups (Mundt and Ferris, p. 5). Beyond an exercise of power, forced displacement strengthens the financial position of illegal armed groups who utilize confiscated land to cultivate coca and other lucrative crops (Mundt and Ferris, p. 5). Of the estimated 5.5 million people who have been displaced as a result of the endemic violence, 62 percent originated in rural areas (“Global Statistics”; Garay et al., p. 4).⁴ Inaccessible geographies are of strategic importance to narcotraffickers because they are insulated from counternarcotic efforts and displacement can be forced without resistance. Indigenous peoples constitute 12 percent of displaced peoples but less than one percent of the total population, reinforcing

the disproportional victimization of rural communities (Mundt and Ferris, p. 6). Even when state control is restored in these areas, numerous factors, including poor land titling, complicate the restitution of lands. By the mid-2000s, it was clear that a rethinking was needed to address the alarming side effects of weak government control.

The Consolidation Model

The concept of consolidation centers on the theory that remote areas are socially and economically insulated from the rest of the state, but that reintegration is possible through targeted and timely investments. The multifaceted clear-hold-build strategy of consolidation goes beyond a purely militaristic approach to coordinate military, police, and civil institutions in establishing a functional civilian state, freeing Colombian armed forces from the responsibility of building a state while waging a war (Devlin and Chaskel, p. 2).⁵ Given that security forces were already established in every Colombian municipality, the goal of consolidation was to recover, maintain, and strengthen this presence in targeted municipalities through a whole-of-government approach (Mejía et al., p. 4).

The three-part strategy begins with the recovery phase in which military forces, as sole representatives of the state, contain illegal armed threats. Once a basic level of security is established, police forces are introduced, access to justice improved, and quick-impact infrastructural projects executed as part of the transition phase. Quick-impact projects, including road rehabilitation and construction, are prioritized through civilian consultation and completed under military or police protection. These projects produce the requisite conditions for economic development while conveying the permanence of the state commitment to the region. The consultative element of the projects also improves trust in the state while engendering a sense of civic responsibility. In regions centered on the coca trade, eradication

³Mapiripán is a municipality in the Department of Meta that borders the consolidation pilot project in La Macarena region, sharing many of the same characteristics. The project is evaluated later in this article.

⁴Figures from the government of Colombia estimate the number of internally displaced peoples in Colombia closer to 3.9 million. The significant variation is due in part to differences in methodologies. The Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement estimate of 5.5 million people includes those who have been displaced on multiple occasions separately while government figures do not include those displaced because of government actions, such as intraurban displacement, military force, and crop fumigations (Mundt and Ferris, p. 5).

⁵In 2012, resources were committed to territorial consolidation by 27 civilian institutions, including the Ministry of Transport; the Ministry of Housing, City, and Territory; and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (“Informe de Gestión 2012”).

is coordinated with food security and technical and financial assistance programs that ease transitions to the legal economy. Increasingly, the emphasis of eradication programs is on incentivizing voluntary transition (Isacson and Poe, p. 37). Civilian agencies also conduct social infrastructure investments to improve education, health, and safety indicators to national standards. Stabilization is the final stage in which the institutional capacity of municipal and departmental governments is expanded and populations are further integrated into Colombian society. During this stage, the military begins a permanent transition of security responsibilities to police forces as the sequence is repeated elsewhere.

La Macarena Integral Consolidation Plan: A Localized Success

Several factors qualified the Serranía de La Macarena region of south-central Colombia as the ideal area in which to test the theoretic consolidation model as a pilot program. For one, the region has a storied history of government neglect. For decades, guerrilla and paramilitary groups were the only visible authority, binding local populations to the illegal economy and stripping them of their civil rights. In the absence of the state, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) even provided infrastructure and services to strengthen their influence (“Colombia: President . . .,” p. 11). In 1999, President Andrés Pastrana ordered the creation of a 42,000-km² demilitarized zone as a means of facilitating peace negotiations with FARC leaders, encompassing four of the six municipalities in the Department of Meta, in which the Plan de Consolidación Integral de la Macarena (PCIM) (La Macarena Integral Consolidation Plan) operated (Kline, p. 55; DeShazo et al., p. 4).⁶ The FARC proceeded to utilize the vacuum of state presence to tighten its grip on the region, exploiting it as a strategic

⁶In 2011, the PCIM added the municipalities of Cartagena del Chaira, La Montañita, and San Vicente del Caguan in the Caquetá Department before reorganizing as the Macarena–Caguán consolidation zone later that year. This article focuses only on those municipalities in Meta (La Macarena, La Uribe, Mesetas, Puerto Rico, San Juan de Arama, and Vistahermosa).

control point and economic base. Control had been so complete that a guerrilla-run complaints office replaced central law enforcement (Mance). FARC’s influence had even endured the dissolution of the zone in 2002, as citizens had guerrilla-issued ID cards as recently as 2005 (Isacson and Poe, p. 11). Between 2004 and 2005, Meta was the largest coca-producing department in Colombia, revealing the depth of the drug economy in the region (“Colombia Coca . . . 2010”).

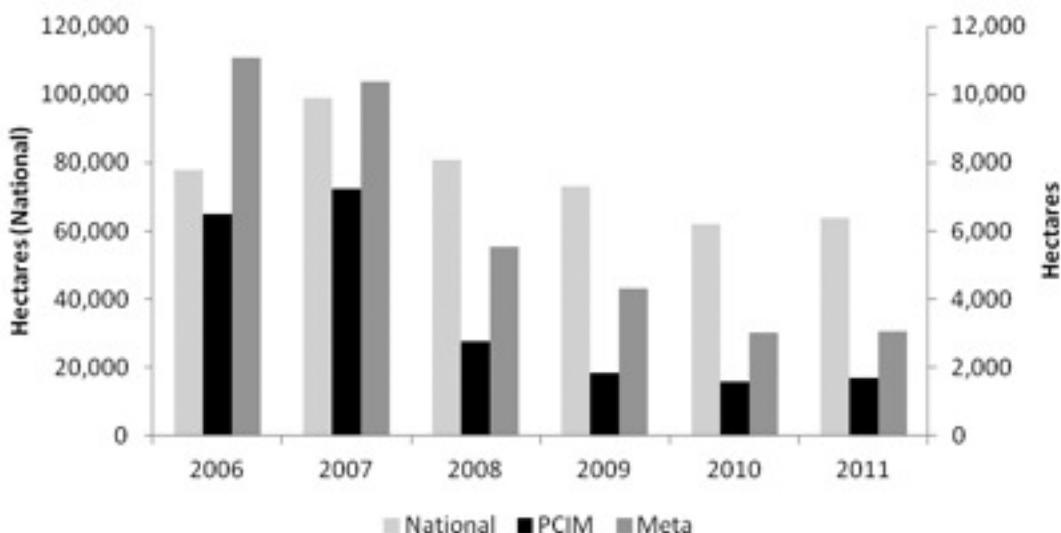
Beyond these factors, the region’s proximity (300 km southeast) to Bogotá and unique ecologic features functioned as a symbolic opportunity to solidify consolidation as the new security and rural development doctrine (Hartzell et al., p. 15). A limitless agricultural market was underutilized by a region in which agriculture was the clear engine of growth. (The rural population in the PCIM zone is 2.8 times that of the urban population [Salinas Abdala, p. 5].) The economic potential of the region’s three national parks (Sierra de La Macarena, Cordillera de Los Picachos, and Tinigua) went unexplored, functioning only as security liabilities—not ecotourism destinations (DeShazo et al., p. 4). Coca cultivation was destroying not only the socioeconomic fabric of the region but also its natural environment; for every hectare of coca, 1.6 hectares of deforestation occurred (Jaramillo, p. 8). Through the PCIM, the Colombian government hoped to permanently recover this ecologically and economically significant confluence of the Andes and Amazon. The following sections analyze the effectiveness of the consolidation model in the PCIM zone.

Security and Judicial Conditions

Intelligence maps reflecting security conditions at the submunicipal level depict the success of military operations in the PCIM zone (Isacson, p. 13). Between 2007 and 2011, the percentage of the territory in the recovery phase was reduced from 80 percent to 46 percent (Balcázar, p. 8). In 2006, there were 220 confrontations between illegal armed groups and military forces, although by 2009 this number had dropped to 38 (“Diagnósticos por . . .”). These data coincide with the expectation that violence increases during the recovery phase

Figure 1

Coca Cultivation in the PCIM Zone



Sources: “Colombia Coca . . .” [2010–2011]; “Cultivos de Coca . . .” [2007–2012]

and dissipates as the military weakens the structures of illegal armed groups. A series of civilian surveys conducted by the United States Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives in 2007 and 2008 reaffirmed this trend. Although rural citizens were predominantly more negative about economic and security conditions than their urban counterparts, noteworthy improvements occurred over the following years as a result of PCIM investments (Hartzell et al., p. 10). By 2009, military and police forces were permanently rooted in each municipal center (Isacson, p. 6). Moreover, the percentage of stabilized towns in the PCIM area increased from 9 percent in 2007 to 17 percent in 2011, signifying a rapidly expanding region in which civilian agencies could act freely (Balcázar, p. 8).

Despite these advances, threats to security continue to impair the progress of consolidation. Although the homicide rate in the PCIM area decreased by 46 percent between 2006 and 2010, it remains 2.6 times higher than the overall departmental rate and 3.7 times higher than the national rate (del Pilar . . .). Correcting this culture of violence will require more

than just military successes. The judicial system remains similarly troubled as a shortage of judicial officials restricts investigations to drug trafficking and terrorism, resulting in impunities that compromise the ability of Colombia to govern with legitimacy (Isacson, p. 12). As of 2009, there was only one judge per 28,200 people in La Macarena region, well below the nationwide average of one judge per 12,500 (Molano, p. 10). Deploying critical judicial resources will require reassessing the incentives for professionals to relocate to relatively undesirable consolidation regions. Until then, an underdeveloped judicial system will continue to compromise the rule of law.

Coca Eradication

In La Macarena region, coca is synonymous with neglect. Legal crop production thus symbolizes the level of commitment by the government to this sparsely populated region that has historically fallen victim to the influence of, and in some instances outright control by, illegal armed groups. Between 2007 and 2010, PCIM investments led to a 77 percent

decline in coca cultivation, outpacing reductions of 55 percent at the departmental level and 38 percent nationally (Figure 1). The negligible outflow of coca cultivation from La Macarena region to surrounding municipalities implied that producers were permanently transitioning to alternative economic activities. Between 2005 and 2010, potential cocaine production in the region was likewise reduced from 120 metric tons of pure cocaine (19 percent of the national total) to 11 metric tons (3 percent of the national total) (“Colombia Coca . . . 2010”). These figures are widely cited to justify the efficacy of consolidation as a counternarcotic mechanism.

The success of counternarcotic efforts in the PCIM area can be explained, at least in part, by differences in strategy. Many producers value shedding the stigma associated with the illegal economy despite the reality that transitions are unlikely to result in brighter economic futures (Hartzell et al., p. 9). Consolidation, therefore, emphasizes temporary food security, technical assistance, and manual eradication in order to minimize economic and environmental adversity. In 2006, only 15 percent of coca eradication in the PCIM area was done manually compared with 85 percent through aerial fumigation campaigns conducted by the National Police. A clear transition occurred as consolidation advanced, however, with 62 percent of coca eradication executed manually between 2008 and 2009 (Mejía et al., p. 25). This shift was much less notable at the national level, as only 40 percent of coca eradication was performed manually during the same period (“Colombia Coca . . . 2010”). The PCIM was attacking the structural causes of coca production to achieve permanent reductions in coca cultivation.

Alternative Development

Coca eradication is only a stage in the process of transitioning coca-based economies into productive facets of Colombian society. Certain resources must be available in order for these transitions to occur, however, including food assistance, technical training, available credit, and navigable roads with access to markets. Between 2007 and 2009, 50 percent of the COL\$ 422 billion in PCIM investments

was targeted at infrastructure, including road rehabilitation and construction projects that are instrumental in connecting producers to markets and local populations to the rest of Colombia (“Colombia Coca . . . 2010”; Hartzell et al., p. 20). During that same period, the cultivated area of legal crops in the PCIM zone expanded by 44 percent compared with a 9 percent increase at the national level (Mejía et al., p. 31). This differential suggests that such consolidation investments were providing the necessary resources for alternative development to occur.

A key challenge in La Macarena region will be ensuring that the farmers who risked the transition to the legal economy are the ones who receive the benefits. A hectare of land in Vistahermosa, a historically dangerous municipality in the PCIM zone, increased in value from \$270 in 2002 to \$4,200 in 2011 (Hartzell et al., p. 40). This increased land value puts heightened pressure on landowners to sell to large-scale agricultural investors, further increasing the concentration of land holdings. As of 2010, 49 percent of registered landowners owned 97 percent of titled lands in the Department of Meta (Salinas Abdala, p. 19). It is uncertain whether this concentration of land is cause for concern or an acceptable consequence of the upsurge in land values. Although the PCIM has decisively enhanced security, reduced coca cultivation, and promoted alternative development with investments totaling COL\$ 515 billion between 2007 and 2011, long-term issues of judicial capacity and land inequality will weigh heavily on consolidation efforts going forward (“Colombia Coca . . . 2011”). I shift focus from the applied aspects of consolidation to its institutional framework at the national level.

The Institutional Framework of Consolidation

2004–2010: Bureaucratic Limitations

Consolidation was set in motion in 2004 with the establishment of the Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral (CCAI) (Center for Coordination of Integrated Action) by presidential decree. The CCAI was given the complex task of coordinating the action and resources of public, private, and international entities to meet

the needs of consolidation zone populations. The presidential decree located the CCAI within the Office of the Presidency and therefore gave the agency a symbolic endorsement that avoided the politicization of the legislative process. A directive council composed of two defense ministry officials and the director of Social Action⁷ maintained direct contact with President Álvaro Uribe while managing CCAI strategies (Devlin and Chaskel, p. 5). The composition of the directive council granted the CCAI military legitimacy and high-level political influence, whereas a distinctly social focus was supplied by a subsidiary executive committee composed of 12 agencies and ministries deemed pertinent to consolidation, including the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Transport (Devlin and Chaskel, pp. 5, 7). The CCAI had successfully transformed consolidation from a military theory to a well-balanced bureaucratic structure.

In 2004, CCAI investments were targeting 4 percent of Colombians across 12 percent of the territory. By 2009, this coverage had extended to 10 percent of the population across 20 percent of the territory (Devlin and Chaskel, p. 10). Improved government presence coincided with a reduction in the homicide rate in consolidation zones from 80.5 per 100,000 people in 2003 to 57.1 per 100,000 people in 2009 and a 36 percent drop in the number of incidents of forced displacement (“Plan Nacional . . .,” p. 24; Molano, p. 25).

While the political momentum of consolidation was producing results in targeted areas, the limited institutional capabilities of the CCAI were adversely affecting operations. Since the CCAI was established by presidential decree, it lacked an independent budget and had only limited legal standing, inhibiting the agency’s ability to engage key government institutions in the consolidation process. The CCAI was forced to lobby participating ministries to divert resources from existing budgets without any consequence for denying funds (Isacson, p. 5). The Ministries of Education, Interior and Jus-

tice, and Transport declined to assign delegates to executive committee meetings, suggesting that consolidation was perceived as a distraction by agencies with nonparallel objectives (Devlin and Chaskel, p. 9). This incomplete government engagement compromised the multifaceted nature of consolidation.

Attempts made to correct these design flaws were ultimately ineffective. A 2009 presidential decree requiring government agencies to honor CCAI demands and devote resources to consolidation efforts was an empty threat with no enforcement mechanism (Isacson, p. 5). The CCAI had no political clout, with neither an official budget nor consolidation-related budget lines in relevant ministries (“Colombia: President . . .,” p. 12). Although consolidation was widely assumed to be the clear security solution in Colombia, the government lacked an institutional framework with the proper incentives to execute it.

2010–2012: Rethinking Consolidation

August 2010 marked a distinct shift in central government leadership and the bureaucratic energy behind consolidation. President Juan Manuel Santos, a key proponent of consolidation as Defense Minister, understood the urgent need to improve the visibility and institutional structure of consolidation. The designation of consolidation as a high-priority item within the 2010–2014 National Development Plan—approved by Congress in mid-2011—coincided with a formal review process involving 60 government agencies to better integrate consolidation as a permanent internal security and development strategy (“Bases del Plan . . .,” p. 561; Isacson, p. 16; “Waiting for Consolidation,” p. 14). This reform process, begun shortly after the inauguration of Santos, culminated in the establishment of the Unidad Administrativa Especial para la Consolidación Territorial (UACT) (Special Management Unit on Territorial Consolidation) in November 2011 as one of four agencies within the newly formed Department of Social Prosperity. Beyond replacing the CCAI, the UACT would enhance the administrative and financial autonomy of consolidation as an integral component of Colombia’s sixth largest ministry (“Proyecto de Ley . . .,” p. 144). Consolidation

⁷Social Action was an agency within the Office of the Presidency that coordinated international and domestic aid to victimized populations within Colombia until it was reorganized as the Departamento para la Prosperidad Social (Department for Social Prosperity) in November 2011.

had the independent budget and legal footing that it lacked under the CCAI.

While consolidation appeared to be developing as a key priority within the Santos administration, the political energy of the strategy under Uribe had dissipated. Even though the UACT corrected the flaws of the CCAI, firmly structured plans introduced institutional rigidities that stifled creative thinking and limited the capacity of the UACT to react to the rapidly changing conditions in consolidation zones (Isacson, p. 17). Mention of consolidation in high-level speeches was less frequent as attention shifted to emerging priorities in land restitution⁸ and peace talks (Isacson, p. 17). Resources were being siphoned from consolidation just as it was gaining designation as a national priority. Between 2010 and 2011, investments in consolidation zones dropped by 61 percent, from COL\$ 320 billion to COL\$ 125 billion (“Colombia Coca . . . 2011”).

Consolidation operations were also jeopardized by management turmoil. In September 2012, Álvaro Balcázar, an expert in rural development and former director of the PCIM, was asked to resign as director of the UACT along with all of his top staff due to a failure to comply with a trivial transparency requirement (Isacson, p. 17). Although the implications of this management turnover on the progress of consolidation remain unclear, the loss of continuity and experience during the pivotal early stages of the UACT was certainly a setback.

The latest reduction in the number of consolidation zones from 15 to 8 is likewise a cause for concern (García Villegas et al., p. 15; Unidad Administrativa . . .). Although this reduced footprint may result in a more efficient allocation of investments, it may also be indicative of consolidation playing a smaller role going forward as limited resources are distributed to fewer regions (Hartzell et al., p. 17). In territories where the UACT withdrew, expectations were raised and populations again abandoned. Consolidation zones were given the hope of integration with Colombian society and left with only renewed risk of being controlled or influenced by illegal armed groups.

⁸The Victims Law, enacted by President Santos in June 2011, seeks to return land to internally displaced peoples and provide financial compensation to victims of human rights infractions (“Colombia: Victims . . .”).

Prognosis

Although the consolidation model is inherently flexible, it is uncertain whether the success of the PCIM pilot project will translate to the unique environments of Colombia’s seven other consolidation zones. Coca producers in the PCIM zone valued participation in the legal economy above the economic cost of transition. In regions with a strong culture of illegality or where transitions to legal production are even more difficult, consolidation may not be a realistic counternarcotic mechanism. Populations in the PCIM region also embraced the presence of the state and viewed consolidation investments as an opportunity to reduce the isolation and insecurity of their communities (Hartzell et al., p. 11). Conversely, historically corrupt governments in consolidation zones, such as Montes de María, have generated strong distrust toward state institutions (“Waiting for Consolidation”). This distrust creates societies that are unwilling to be governed by the state or integrated with the rest of Colombia, severely restricting the potential impact of consolidation. The possibility remains that unique conditions in La Macarena region led to the successful application of the consolidation model.

Two critical issues need to be corrected in order to increase the likelihood of success in other consolidation zones. The first is correcting the overextended role of the military. Consolidation hinges on the successful transition of control from military to civilian institutions as the security situation progresses. In the Montes de María consolidation zone, the military has been providing health services and educating children, putting the military at risk of being perceived as synonymous with government (“Waiting for Consolidation”). The risk of human rights violations is also perpetuated when military forces operate alongside civilian populations (Poe and Isacson, p. 4). The consolidation process should be closely overseen to ensure that military operations are gradually phased out as civilian institutions begin operating freely during the stabilization phase.

The other pressing issue for both consolidation and the Santos agenda is the restitution of lands for displaced peoples. Land has

underlain Colombia's continuous armed conflict and added complexity to consolidation efforts. The restitution of lands signifies a close to this conflict, but this end is often distant in regions where land is being returned. More than 80 percent of Colombians do not plan to return to the land from which they have been displaced, citing poor security conditions as the primary reason for their reluctance (Mundt and Ferris, p. 7). Unless security in these isolated regions improves, the vast majority of displaced peoples will never return home. Consolidation is a means of establishing sustainable security con-

ditions in regions where restitution is occurring whereas restitution is a means of restoring communities to their preconflict equilibria. Parallel execution of restitution and consolidation would increase the political profile of consolidation beyond the zones in which it operates while serving as a means to return millions of Colombians to their rightful lands. The infusion of political energy that would result from parallel execution may be necessary to ensure that consolidation remains the primary policy utilized by the central government to permanently recover ungoverned spaces.

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