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Daniel Hawkins

Colombia: compromise or containment?

National state transformation and the formulation of nationhood

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A. List of acronyms and abbreviations

ACI	Andean Counter-drug Initiative
AUC	*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CEPAL	*La Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe*
CONVIVIR	*Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada*
ELN	*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*
FARC-EP	*Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército Popular*
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FN	*Frente Nacional*
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDOL	International Division of Labour
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
PSD	*Partido Socialista Democrático*
PSR	*Partido Socialista Revolucionario*
SPM	Society of Private Militias

1 Introduction

From the beginning of the post-Cold War period a trend has emerged that seeks to analyse international and global aspects of political economy. Indeed, with the demise of the USSR and the associated bipolar geopolitical view of the world economy, the gradual move out of the crisis-ridden Fordist growth model, and the emergence and consolidation of neoliberalism as a politico-economic project and ideology, there have been growing attempts to articulate the restructuring of the state and the new configurations of international politics. While in the past, internal conflicts and configurations were normatively separated from the international sphere, not warranting much attention within international relations, with the growth of world market integration there increased efforts have been given to analysing how domestic political programmes and the conflicts they impel are indeed linked to the structural changes taking place within the world economy. This normative redirection has created the need to analyse the complex relationship the national state now plays in the different political scales of world economic regulation. In line with this development, it is contended that it is pertinent to examine specific national state programs and projects and the relationships they have to those projects being adopted in other political scales of the world economy as well as the conflicts these strategies confront and indeed promote. This argument stems from the Marxist understanding that although in a capitalist state the whole of society is structurally dependent on the actions of capitalists, in each particular context there are a multiplicity of conditions that impose certain constraints on the actions and projects of the state (Jessop 1990, 2002a; Boron 2004: 286).
Following such argumentation, this working paper will focus on Colombia, analysing the reconfigurations of the national state as expressed most particularly through the emergence of the Uribe Government in 2002 and the way this administration illustrates both a continuation of a process of structural change within the Colombian state as well as the embodiment of key political, ideological and institutional divergencies. Specifically, the paper will examine the principle projects associated with this regime and the multifarious ties they have to, in general, neoliberalism, and in particular, US policies.

The theoretical basis to this paper will be an historical materialist state theory (Hirsch 2000; Jessop 1990, 2002a, 2002b) combined with regulation theory (Hurtienne 1989; Lipietz 1984, 1985) which is grounded in the ontological assumption that bourgeoise-capitalist societies are confronted with innate contradictions and associated social conflicts (Brand 2005), which however, can, in some cases, be temporarily overcome or harmonised through a process of societal-institutionalisation based on class compromises. From within this perspective, this paper will analyse four aspects of the political program of the present Colombian national government in an effort to outline the multi-scalar political relationships involved in what would traditionally be viewed as 'internal' national politics as well as determining the consequences (success or failure) of such a programme in terms of its institutional grounding and foundation on a general social consensus.
Firstly, an analysis will be made of the growing militarisation of the state as illustrated through the policies of Plan Colombia/Plan Patriota[1] as it is deemed

[1] The project 'Plan Patriota' was later renamed by the president 'Plan Victoria'.

that they are grounded in a discursive reformulation and subsequent regionalisation of Colombia's decades-long conflict. This section will also offer a brief summary of the recent developments of the Colombian insurgent group, Las FARC-EP, as this actor is the principle political and military 'target' of the above-mentioned policies as well as being, more broadly, the *raison d'être* of Álvaro Uribe's national political project, 'democratic security'. Secondly, a brief analysis will be made of the populist discourse of Colombia's President, Àlvaro Uribe Vélez, particularly with regard to the development of a link between security and the economy as it is the basis to his attempt to project a new national political imaginary grounded in communitarianism which consolidates the process of decentralisation as well as implicitly advocating the deinstitutionalisation of Colombian politics in line with market-based neoliberalism as a means of strengthening the national state's new regime of accumulation, termed by one scholar 'total market' (Estrada 2006). Thirdly, attention will be turned from the discursive and material aspects of the 'multi-scalar' political projects manifested through Plan Colombia and the Uribe Government towards an analysis that highlights the social impacts and reconfigurations such programmes have propelled. Finally, opening up the intricate connections between Colombia's illicit, narco-economy and the growth in paramilitary-guerrilla influence in various scales of Colombian political life will help to measure the social-political consequences of the Uribe Government's programmes. However, in order to attempt such an analysis, it is first necessary to outline the method that will be used to examine state reconfigurations and politico-economic transformations, both abstractly, and then specifically for the Colombian case.

2 Theoretical Method

2.1 The state, transformation and strategic-selectivity

This working paper, while adopting a broad historical materialist state theory combined with the regulationist approach to analysing capitalist development, will primarily use a method derived from the work of Bob Jessop (1982, 1990, 2000, 2001, 2002a) and this section discusses the reasons for such a selection.

The principle benefit of Jessop's work on the state is that it has the important objective of escaping essentialism, as he argues that concrete state forms stem from a "multiplicity of determinations" in which no single aspect can automatically be prioritised. Something may be explained as being casual only when this is understood as a contingent necessity (Taylor 1995: 260). Consequently, Jessop's work rejects generalisations regarding the most appropriate state form to resolve capitalism's innate contradictions. Instead, he regards the state as being a strategic terrain within which strategic considerations are struggled for (Ibid: 261). These struggles emanate from within social forces and thereby different states have different forms depending on the complex constellations of social groups, which in turn, are grounded in their historical, material, cultural, and ideological make-up. The state is therefore a "form determined constellation of the balance of political forces" (Jessop 1982: 149). This contention allows one to examine those transformations taking place in specific states, and particularly in the institutional ensemble of the state, as being specific effects of societal struggles. Consequently, his approach allows one to escape state-centred theories that imply that the state develops significant autonomy, outside of the pressures emerging within society, leading to the construction of its own separate identity and interests, distinct from those of wider society.

Structures do retain importance in Jessop's approach to state theory but they lose their functionalist overtones and economically reductionist aspects. Instead, structures are perceived as framing rather than bottling action, becoming part of a dynamic and dialectical process of structure/agential interaction, emerging as a convolution which affects strategic assessments and strategic conduct, both of which, thereafter, affect transformation within state structures (Taylor 1995: 262). Jessop thereby contends that in specific studies of capitalist states, empirical regularity can be grasped by analysing how effective accumulation strategies correspond to successful hegemonic projects (Ibid: 263). This necessitates an examination of the strategic projects that the state must confront and deal with; adopting a method that Jessop terms a strategic relational approach (Jessop 2002a). Herein, strategic selectivity becomes the means through which these projects are either given preference or rejected. Jessop defines this term as "the ways in which the state, considered as a social ensemble, has a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in specific spatio-temporal contexts through their access to and/or control over given state capacities" (Jessop 2002a: 40). This allows for a more elastic mode of investigation in which structural change is evidenced through a heterogeneous conglomeration of societal struggles which impact upon and, in turn, are affected by concrete changes within the state.

As well as allowing a concrete examination of the strategies found within the state, the Jessoparian approach also permits one to analyse and explore numerous dimensions of state crisis, whether it is a crisis of representation, a rational or institutional crisis, a crisis of legitimacy or hegemony, or indeed, an organic crisis (Jessop 1990: 346-47). This multifaceted approach to examining state crises is most appropriate in a concrete study of the Colombian national state which has been plagued by almost perpetual crises in the roughly two hundred years since its paradoxical shape was accorded political and territorial form.

Jessop's approach to examining the complexities of state action, capacity and structural and institutional transformation, while of great benefit in escaping essentialistic determinations, also poses certain problems, particularly when focusing on a peripheral state, such as Colombia. This is due to the fact that Jessop generally prioritises an analysis of the 'bourgeoisie capitalist state', focusing on the configurations and strategic projects synonymous with the Atlantic-Fordist era as well as the transformations that have taken and continue to take place within the corresponding post-Fordist era within those states that are regarded as sharing basic features of institutional design as well as being moulded by similar processes and regimes of social compromise and accumulation models. Colombia must be seen as having confronted widely divergent social, economic and political forces than those broadly associated with metropolitan capitalist countries. Consequently, the following section will attempt to offer a broad schematic outline of such differences between capitalist states.

2.2 Types of Capitalist states

The heterogeneity of national state power stems from the structural differences among national states and their institutional configurations. Firstly, whereas most 'metropolitan' national states have historically developed a centralised state apparatus, based on the 'formal' separation of the state from society and the authority obtained through the state's control of the monopoly of physical violence, resulting in the state's 'relative' autonomy from the specific interests of social forces even while it remains structurally tied to a bourgeois-capitalist system, in peripheral states, due to their vastly different capitalist and non-capitalist social relations, the same 'homogeneity' and relative autonomy of the state is often either missing or vastly different. The result is that in such countries there exist forms of social capitalist development which are not grounded in the specific economic and social structures found in developed capitalist societies (Brand et al., 2008).

Conceptually, this structural differentiation between 'metropolitan' and 'peripheral' states can be roughly illustrated via the use of the Gramscian concepts, organic revolution and passive revolution. Gramsci, when examining the manner in which structural changes in the productive sphere have a dialectical relationship with changes in the socio-political sphere, differentiated between two forms of social transformation or revolution. When there is a distinct break between what he termed the old and the new, whereby the inherent struggle between two potential or existing social modes of production results in the triumph and consolidation of one particular mode over another (for example capitalism over feudalism), the structures have been set for the hegemonic leadership of that social class which most embodies this dominant mode of social

production. This can be seen as being the case in Great Britain with the events that unfolded in the 17th and 18th centuries, culminating, firstly, in the Republic under the dictatorship of Cromwell, and finally in the Glorious Revolution (1689-1714) which brought about an Anglican Restoration and the creation of a parliament which exerted constitutional supremacy dominated by the emerging merchant and bourgeois class. This transformation culminated in the founding of the United Kingdom and thereafter in its imperial expansion (Gill 2003: 46).

The situation termed 'passive revolution' refers to a context in which there is a prevailing 'interregnum' between new and old modes of social production and the accompanying political systems. Herein, a new order is 'imported' even though it remains at odds with the prevailing social and political structures. This, while bringing about a new form of governance (i.e. a new state form), is not rooted in the hegemonic leadership of any one social class. Consequently, the national state-society structure (Cox 1983/93/2005: 56) remains relatively constrained in terms of the possibility of bringing about coherent and comprehensive socio-political transformation. Consequently, certain re-workings need to be made in order that a general historical materialist theory of the internationalised state can be stretched to, more appropriately, analyse the Colombian national state.

2.3 Peripheral states and theoretical inadequacies

It is contended that despite Colombia's peripheral status, it does indeed fit into the general definition of a 'capitalist state' in that it is concerned or involved in creating, maintaining, or restoring the conditions necessary for capital accumulation in a particular situation (Jessop 1990: 354), as well as trying to instigate a process of "bourgeois societalization" in that the existing social order is rapidly being subordinated into the logic of capital accumulation and reproduction (Jessop 2002a: 23). Nevertheless, the manner in which it does so is deeply affected by the peculiarities of its historical evolution and the distinct nature of capital development within Colombian society and territory. The ever nascent presence of imperialist desires, deeply shaping and indeed structuring the degree of state transformation, as well as security and military imperatives, which due to the long-term fragility of the Colombian national state have come to forge certain parameters within which societal action can take place. Taking these not insignificant divergences between the Colombian national state and the abstract conception of a bourgeoisie capitalist state on board, the question becomes in what way can Jessop's work be integrated into a specific study of the Colombian national state which traditionally has been analysed from within the contours of peripheral-state theories?

While this paper does not converge with the arguments of overly structuralist interpretations of the capitalist system and the manner in which peripheral states are constrained by core-country exploitation,[2] it is contended that there are certain benefits associated with particular aspects of some state-centred approaches. Primarily, with respect to the Colombian national state, there is a need to understand different power relations dependent on the geo-political position of this 'socially constituted entity' in relation to external social and political forces (predominantly US-based social forces) as being of major

[2] In particular reference to Gunder Frank's Dependency Theory and Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory.

significance if one is to encapsulate the dynamics of state transformation within their wider structural enclosures. Furthermore, mediating concepts such as clientelism and populism do permit one to more adequately grasp the political 'institutionality' and historical specificity of Latin American political regimes and concretely, the Colombian national state, and the way they have structured state-society relations. However, in outlining these aspects, it should be made explicit that in no way does this working paper assume a state-centred epistemology wherein the state is seen as having autonomy from wider society. Furthermore, in examining the specificity of the Colombian national state and its present reconfigurations, this paper wishes to move beyond mainstream approaches of 'statehood' which are grounded in abstract dichotomies, in which peripheral states and their societies are stripped of their historical specificities and their low hierarchical positioning in the international division of labour and the intra-state political pyramid. Such approaches mimic economically-centred theories of development (most particularly modernisation theory) as they seek to de-historicize state development and delink the country studied from its external politico-economic relations and their structural hierarchies. Herein, a state's success becomes measured fundamentally on its ability to provide 'political goods' to its citizens, such as security, healthcare, education, public infrastructure, etc. In this way, states are categorised as either 'strong', 'weak', 'failed', or 'collapsed' and any other complexity becomes conveniently swept under the scholarly carpet (for an example of such approaches, refer to the failed state debate: Rothberg 2002, 2003).

As well as the problems inherent in such mainstream conceptions of state capacity, much critical theory of states also remains on uneasy theoretical and ontological grounding. Indeed, while the majority of critical theories of so-called peripheral states, such as Colombia, work within the framework of 'imperialism' in order to show how (most often) US Hegemony constrains state action; it is the contention of this thesis that such accounts rest on a fundamental fallacy. Firstly, not only do they operate under the assumption that the US state works outside and above society in the pursuit of its own specific interests, but even more problematic, they assume that this state is unified in action with its politico-military instruments sharing the primary task of opening out the possibilities for business and profit accrual of US banks and outward-looking companies (for an example, see: Petras 2005: 291). By adopting such normative positions such theories also render obsolete the capacity for peripheral state agency, coming to see them as mere pawns in the hands of the US predator state, instead of being actors that, while constrained by externally moulded structures, also retain significant possibilities to select and implement specific strategies and formulate them as state policies and projects.
In rejecting such arguments it must be underlined that the state, as a paradoxical social relation should never be seen as either unified in form or action because its very 'existence' stems from the perpetual class struggles of capitalism and therefore even the concrete institutions which form the state apparatus should be seen as heterogeneous amalgamations that are shaped and indeed change due to the specific contingencies and constellations emanating from within society and beyond which thereafter converge within the state. What more, the state's material existence and differential capacities are also heavily grounded in the historical trajectories of 'uneven' geographical capitalist development (Harvey 2003, 2006), and as such, an attempt should be made to both theorise on and conceptualise such movements.

2.4 Mapping capitalist development in time and space

The contradictions inherent in the reproduction of the capitalism-state relationship necessitate that in order to attempt an abstraction of the processes involved in the territorialisation of capitalism, one needs to be able to trace and differentiate between capitalist development in both historical time and space. This can be achieved by undertaking a periodisation of the history of capitalist development in an effort to focus on the particular periods of both relative continuance, or alternatively, relative transition, in the manner in which the capitalist mode of production is reproduced (as advocated by Jessop 2001b). In so doing, one can identify certain conjunctures as well as illustrating the way in which these conjunctures open-out possibilities for certain reconfigurations of relations between social actors and their interests, possible actions, alignments, and political strategies, linked as they are to structural changes.

Put simply, in such periodisations, one is enabled to, firstly, differentiate between one period of capitalism – even in all its particular heterogeneity – from another, by especially focusing on the "relative primacy" of the various contradictions within this period (Ibid: 289).

This has been the general position adopted by certain historical materialist regulation theorists, as they attempt to periodise capitalist development, highlighting the manner in which there is a gradual change in the institutional and hegemonic structures of capitalist regulation (in terms of the regimes of accumulation and the accompanying modes of regulation).[3] Through such perspectives have come conceptual differentiations of recent transformations of capitalism, namely Fordism and Post-Fordism. However, generally, such studies have primarily focused on the periodic changes in capitalist development within metropolitan capitalist economies, thereby, overlooking the extent to which such transformations occur in peripheral economies. Indeed, as a result of such academic preference for examining the three-pronged dialectics of capitalist regularities, crises, and subsequent changes in the wealthy economies, often such concepts escape their relativity and spatial specificity and, instead, become synonymous with, not simply national regimes of accumulation/ modes of regulation but 'world-wide' regimes of accumulation.[4]

As the objective of this paper is to offer an interpretation of the reconfigurations of the Colombian state, particularly as shown through the Uribe Government and its politico-economic program, an effort must be made to examine the degree to which any structural transformations associated with the emergence of a new hegemonic model of capitalist accumulation, influence diverse territorial and spatial spheres of the global political economy.

2.5 Geographically 'uneven' capitalist development and its impact on states and societies

When examining the periodical changes of capitalist development, regulation theorists highlight social compromises as being of fundamental importance in

[3] For a good overview of these two concepts see Lipietz (2001: 17-36) and Clarke (1988: 59-92).

[4] For an overview of this problem see: Lipietz (1984: 81-110).

attaining a relatively harmonious 'fit' between a regime of accumulation and a mode of regulation (Becker 2002). However, the manner and content of such compromises is inherently heterogenous and defiant of assumptions of 'universality'. Indeed, there cannot be any world-encompassing, single regime of accumulation because, above all, these compromises are the result of internal class struggle which is regulated, predominantly, by the national state (Lipietz 1984: 88-89). Herein, such perspectives propose that every social formation exhibits unique instances of social compromise, and as such, each social formation must be studied specifically in order to adequately determine the features (and periodic changes) of its capitalist development. Nonetheless, this approach also contends that there is no distinct separation between national capitalist development and capitalist development on the world scale. Rather, both scales can, to an extent, be seen as "two aspects of the same thing" (Ibid: 90). Nevertheless, their concrete manifestations are most heavily over-determined by struggles taking place in the national context (when 'formal' state sovereignty has been achieved).

What can bring about certain patterns and similarities between otherwise distinct national social formations is the "unequal allocation of social labour and of its products" (Ibid: 92). Through this we can make a general distinction between prevailing types of capitalist development within the global political economy, and then move onto a context-specific analysis of the further differentiations of development and their association with differences in state forms.

Although it has been argued that the system of a plurality of sovereign nation-states serves as the grounding basis to the capitalist system and that without such an international-institutional structure, the capitalist mode of production would not be able to reproduce itself (Hirsch 2000: 109), this system is itself structured in competition between and within these nation-states (Ibid: 110). This competitive dynamic shapes the way in which the division of labour is constituted internationally, and this itself has much to do with imperialism and the organisation of a geographical division of labour as a means of attaining a 'competitive' edge on the world market.

2.6 Fordism, Peripheral-Fordism and state regulation

The imperialist aspects have to do with the manner in which the contradictions associated with capitalism's territorial logic and its expansionary logic can be reconciled in an equally contradictory national social formation, i.e. to what extent can a national (territorially grounded) political project be reconciled with the spatial expansion needed for capital accumulation?

For a national state (or any other territorial-based political entity) to achieve some degree of social cohesion, it must in some way externalise the costs associated with such compromises to other territorial spheres, a process termed interiorisation (Jessop 1990, 2002a). This requires that certain patterns or structures of capitalist inter-state and social relations become politically institutionalised. Herein hierarchies of power (be they a mixture of military, economic, or political) assist in consolidating particular development paradigms that favour certain countries over others. In this way, the emergence and development of an international division of labour (IDOL) during the colonial period, in which the periphery acted as both a market for excess goods produced

in the core-capitalist centres as well as being a 'reserve' (raw materials and labour force) for capitalist production (Lipietz 1984: 96), can be seen as being, firstly a process, which then gradually evolved into a structure. Nevertheless, this social-geographical trading hierarchy did not remain static or monolithic. Instead, it periodically faced moments of systemic crises which required that new productive patterns and relevant IDOLs were formed, all of which were primarily rooted in the dynamic of competition and its territorial politicization by different national states.

The emergence of the Fordist productive mode (from roughly 1918) and its gradual culmination into the more consolidated Fordist-Keynesian regime of accumulation (1945-1965), which combined mass production with mass consumption, was primarily centred on the regulation of the wage relation (Jessop 2001) in its two aspects: firstly as a cost to capital, and secondly, as a source of consumption (purchasing power). Within which, via the institutional mechanism of linking wage increases to improvements in productivity, a 'virtuous circle' of intensive accumulation was set in motion.

In peripheral countries, however, the ability to incorporate such a dynamic growth paradigm was very much limited due to the historical processes and structures that had marked their social-class formations and in turn, the institutional capabilities of the states. Indeed, even though the regulation school prioritises the internal social dynamics of a country when examining the success/failure of its productive-regulative models, it also, generally, portrays capitalist development as being greatly path-dependent and irreversible (Jessop/ Sum 2006: 6). So while it proved possible for many core-country economies to develop a paradigm which displayed a relative harmonisation of departments I (production) and II (consumption), in most peripheral countries such economic growth via internal demand was thwarted due to four main factors, well illustrated by the dependency theorist, Theotonio dos Santos (1970/1996).

Firstly, the bulk of national income was obtained from exports and this was needed to purchase the inputs required for further production (whether they be slaves in colonial times or heavy machinery during the import-substitution period). Secondly, the domestic labour force was 'super exploited' and could therefore not contribute sufficiently to internal consumption. Thirdly, much of the consumption needs of the exploited workforce were obtained from the informal economy, which helped to both compensate their poor wages and cushion against the effects of economic crisis (see also: Castells/ Portes 1989). Finally, in many mineral-rich countries of the periphery, ownership of such resources was in the hands of foreign companies and as such a large part of the "accumulated surpluses were sent abroad, constraining both domestic consumption and future investment" (Dos Santos 1970/1996: 168).

These factors are also considered by Hurtienne (1989), as he argues that despite the fact that in certain large Latin American countries there was a significant transfer of the Fordist productive paradigm, i.e. large-scale industrialisation, there was no consistent mode of regulation that accompanied such a productive transformation. Consequently, the core ingredient of the regulation of the wage relation in advanced country Fordism (which, according to Lipietz did not include Britain), instituted via collective bargaining agreements in a tripartite manner was not so clearly evident in the peripheral-Fordist model. Instead, there was a

gradual rise in wage differentials and a stagnation of minimum wages (Hurtienne 1989). Furthermore, at that time in Latin America there was no real drive to modernise agriculture or push forth the development of domestic technological markets, which became constraining factors in attaining productivity increases, despite the relatively high degree of Fordist industrialisation in more highly populous Latin American countries. Indeed, by way of confirming the extent to which such countries set about industrialising, Oliveira (1994: 53) shows that by 1960 in Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, "factory employment in enterprises of 100 or more people constituted half or more of the total industrial labor force." In Colombia alone, by 1982, formal employment in the public sector accounted for 21.2 percent of the country's labour force (Ibid, 54).

This paradigm of Fordist industrialisation in a general setting of mass informality in the region led to different forms and modes of state regulation in the organisation of production and distribution. As well as this, the growth of a mass consumer class in Atlantic Fordist societies which culminated in what Lipietz (2001: 18) terms the formation of an "hour-glass society", which symbolises the emergence of national social formations that comprised a few poor, a few wealthy and many in the middle (Ibid: 18-19), was far from evident in the Latin American peripheral context. In Latin America, with a complex interplay of capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production and social configurations, class identities, in terms of a person's access to power-related resources and general life chances were, evidently, vastly different (Portes/ Hoffman, 2003). Nonetheless, this does not lead to the claim that in this region there was no improvement in much of the population's access to material resources and opportunities. Indeed, as illustrated in a 1989 study by CEPAL, the 1960s-1980s was a period of significant social, occupational, educational, and geographic mobility for the citizens in the region (cited by Oxhorn 1998: 215).

Unfortunately, any positive changes in regional wealth distribution were unceremoniously laid to rest with the arrival of the debt crises in the 1980s. The process of regional industrialisation through import-substitution policies dissolved in the face of the structural budgetary constraints such a systemic event produced. It was not until Mexico defaulted on its debt-repayment obligations in August 1982 that the real magnitude of the crisis became evident (Raffer/ Singer 2001: 158). Thereafter, a wave of anxiety spread throughout the region and in the world's financial centres, and a new policy direction was called for. This was widely known as The Washington Consensus and its original focus was on Latin America and the need for the region to adopt a new development strategy grounded in world market integration via competitiveness (Cammack, 2005). The result of such measures was a general rise in inequality (Portes/ Hoffman 2003), a broad consensus to downsize the public sector, liberalise the economy, and more deeply, to de-politicize the realm of economics (Cammack 2005; Robinson 2004). This led to a major reconstitution of Latin America's class structures, well illustrated in the study of Portes and Hoffman (2003), which, elaborated on a 1985 study by Portes,[5] focused on how economic and state restructuring impacted upon class formation in the region during the neoliberal politico-economic turn.

[5] See Portes (1985: 7-39).

This complex interweave of economic and state restructuring led to the emergence of new processes of class formation on different social-spatial scales. But, more than merely propelling great structural change in the capitalist social relation in Latin America, such developments fundamentally altered the direction of global capitalism, culminating in its geographical restructuring, well captured by the term neoliberal globalisation (Harvey 2000: 23) which implies both the restructuring of social relations and political systems (Hirsch 2000). This transformation is propelled by a new (or re-emerging) international division of labour that is based on world market integration through geographical competition (whether it is regional, national or local). However, in terms of issues of spatial governance and regulation, such a transformation is also deeply linked to what a number of scholars have termed the 'internationalisation of the state' (Brand 2007; Cox 2002; Robinson 2004), and the reconstitution of state-military relations. The next section shall examine the newly configuring state-military relations within the neoliberal paradigm as a way of outlining the manner in which 'security politics' are grounding contemporary state-society relations before, then, in section 2.8, moving into a brief illustration of the scalar reconfigurations of contemporary national states.

2.7 The military and its role in the consolidation of neoliberalism

Numerous authors have emphasised the manner in which the Uribe Government has consolidated a process of intense state militarisation in Colombia (De la Torre 2005; Estrada 2002). However, this growth in military structures should be seen as one of the main features of both the regionalisation/ internationalisation of politics as well as being one of the key aspects of contemporary global capitalism. As such, it is pertinent to outline the way in which the military is becoming an intricate part in the present neoliberal order.

One scholar has argued that the present post-Fordist era is grounded in a restructuring of the state in line with the paradigm set within what has been termed a 'Schumpeterian Competition State' (Jessop 2002a), in which innovation and competition become the crucial features in the drive to expand the scope for entrepreneurial activity through the extension of commodification into spheres of social life that were previously protected or isolated from the capitalist system, a process which is intimately related to the capital-labour relation and the innate competition and class struggles existent within. However, in doing so, often scarce attention is paid to the way in which the military realm works to implement such a paradigm.

Considering that neoliberal globalisation has now in many ways acquired structural dominance as the pre-eminent 'world view', having attained the political acquiescence necessary to ensure the reproduction of the 'market economy', Ana Ceceña (2004: 21) argues that we are now entering a new phase of neoliberalism in which the military becomes the key sphere within which social undiscipline and dissatisfaction with market-based rules is rendered impotent. Herein, not only is there a profound reorganisation of work, but there is also a major re-conception of territory, as it becomes incorporated into the notion of 'productive geography' (Ibid: 23). Due to such developments, territory becomes caught up in the same restructuring that is affecting workers, as 'competitive advantage' becomes the key terminology to structure state action, bringing

geopolitical considerations back to the forefront of foreign policy and leading to a new drive of accumulation through dispossession (Harvey 2003, 2006), which is heterogeneous in so far as it depends on the 'competitive advantages' and opportunities for capital expansion certain states/regions possess. Within this, without any unified alternative policies, the neoliberal hegemonic state model comes to see social insubordination as the main threat to the established order (Ceceña 2004: 29). This 'securitization' of politics becomes one of the key aspects in the tense intertwining of economic liberalisation with neoconservative ideology and rhetoric which seeks to construct or re-legitimise a 'national imaginary' and tie this to a political territory, thereby sidestepping the social fragmentations associated with a pro market-based economy. To uncover this political objective, certain aspects of discourse-analysis will be used. These will particularly focus on how discourse is used to shape the parameters within which concepts such as 'danger' and 'security' are perceived, thereby leading to a political construction of 'identity' that becomes central to the overall state program of unifying through difference, as it operates both within the spatial confines of national territory as well as being constituted by representations derived from arenas outside the nation's territorial demarcations, leads to the promotion of a certain political conception of an 'imagined community' that seeks to legitimise the dominant state projects and policies. Here, the concept of compromise will be analysed as a means to determine the extent to which, in the specific case of Colombia, it can be seen as operating beyond the structures of military coercion.

3 Plan Colombia and National State Transformation

3.1 The historical fragility of the Colombian national state

The Colombian national state has often been regarded as one of the preeminent examples of a 'failed state' (Browitt 2001; Fischer 2004). Historically, the Colombian national state has continuously failed to attain any firm degree of national territorial authority. The causes for such a lack of even 'formal' territorial sovereignty are manifold but can be condensed into four primary reasons. Firstly, the combination of a colonial system of extractivism that continued after formal independence together with, at the most, haphazard attempts to institute a system of agrarian property rights. This has resulted in continuous processes of re-colonialisation whenever certain raw materials have taken off as new economic bonanzas (for example: rubber, tagua, coffee, emeralds, marijuana, and more recently, cocaine) as well as culminating in the perpetuation of the colonial system of latifundistas.[6] Following this, the Colombian national state has never adequately developed an institutional presence in much of the nation's territory. Instead, often implementing only its repressive arm, the state's military apparatus, in certain regions which have actively challenged the state's rhetorical hold on political power. This can be seen in the still predominant argument that Colombia's long running insurgency should be resolved militarily instead of politically.

Secondly, this lack of territorial sovereignty stems from the historical growth in partisan sectarianism (between the traditional Conservative and Liberal parties), resulting in the turn of the century Guerra de mil días[7] (1899-1902), which resulted in approximately 100,000 deaths (Villegas/ José 1979: 125), and La Violencia[8] of the pre- and post-World War II period which left around 180,000 dead (Castillo Gómez 2006: 191). Both these episodes of rapacious violence left an indelible mark on Colombia, as being not a unified nation but rather a nation trapped in a power struggle between two elitist parties.

This destructive bipartisan political feud was reformulated with the signing of the bipartisan political pact, el Frente Nacional (The National Front), which ensured the relatively harmonious distribution of central political control between the Liberals and the Conservatives, both of whom had up until then remained vividly hostile to each other. After their own political destruction had appeared possible through the escalation of the bloodshed of La Violencia and the formation and growth of numerous 'outlawed' opposition movements such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) and the Socialist Democratic Party (PSD), the leaders of both traditional parties, Laureano Gómez (who had escaped the bloodshed of La Violencia and was residing in Franco's Spain) and Alberto Lleras Camargo, signed

[6] In English this term refers to large-estate owners.

[7] In English "The Thousand Day War".

[8] In English "The period of Violence". La Violencia is generally held as beginning on 9th April 1948 when the populist presidential candidate, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, was assassinated in Bogotá, bringing about what is popularly referred to as el Bogotazo, a revolutionary storm that swept both Bogotá and the country's provinces. This wide social-political insurrection, while being more deeply rooted in the events of 1930 when Conservative rule came to dramatic end, held the country in turmoil until the formation of the National Front (1958-1974) whereby the two political parties agreed to rotate the presidency on a four year basis.

the Pact of Sitges, formally inaugurating this exclusionary democratic system for the next 16 years. Hereby, the institutional prohibition of any political participation in Colombian life to those groups that did not align themselves with either the Liberal or Conservative parties ensured that any political expression of radical change was shut out and repressed through state-of-siege legislation (Hylton, 2003). Afterwards, both these parties put away their fundamental political differences of the past and adopted a relatively cohesive political rhetoric based on fervent anti-communism (Ibid: 69).

Thirdly, these historical developments of a fragmented political system together with the recent political drive of decentralisation have led to a continuous rise in regional and local clientelism, traditionally via caciquism[9], and more recently neo-caciquism[10] as new territorial boundaries are formulated and institutionalised politically, especially through the articles 356 and 357 of the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991, and which operate in a largely independent manner from the centralised political authority of the Colombian state, allowing the possibility for illegally-armed factions to attain direct and 'formally' legitimate political power (Hernández Soto 2004).

This process of ambivalent political decentralisation and clientelism is compounded by the historical geographical fragmentation of Colombia. The country's enormously diverse and difficult topography has ensured the relative socio-economic alienation of the majority of the departments from one another. Colombia is divided by three mountain ranges and further split by the Magdalena and the Cauca rivers (Hylton 2003: 56). The vast tracks of tropical lowlands in the south-east cross the equator and are intersected by the Amazon and Orinoco basins. These topographical constraints led to a very local basis to political power grounded in clientelism and local factional fights which ensured that at the national level, harmonious partisan politics was always a difficult affair. Indeed, only in the Caribbean, which was historically linked to the Liberal Party, and in Antioquia which was staunchly Conservative, was there any semblance of seeming political partisan continuity (Ibid: 69).

Demographically the majority of the country's population lives in the cooler mountainous regions, and due to the long and painful roads, passing over and between the Andes, the expansion of large-scale commerce between the various departments and regions has been constrained enormously (Jorge Orlando Melo 2007: 143-147). Indeed, while particular regions and their people, especially Antioquia, have been synonymous focal points for petty enterprise (Aquiles Echeverri, 1980), culminating in their country-wide depiction as master traders and business people, the integration of a nationally-unifying economic development model has never been adequately implemented. Furthermore, in terms of developing on the back of large urban cities, Colombia experienced an urbanisation process that was significantly more gradual compared to other Latin American countries, with none of the four principal cities (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali,

[9] Caciquism refers to the interlocution and political dialogue between local leaders (originally indigenous tribal leaders) and regional or central government officials.

[10] This term is representative of the manner in which political decentralisation in Colombia which began in the 1980s and became institutionalised in the 1991 Political Constitution, permitted the emergence of 'new' local leaders who assumed the role of intermediaries between the central government and their newly recognised municipalities.

and Barranquilla) boasting a population of more than half a million in 1940 (Hylton 2003).

Considering these historical structures that have traditionally constrained the development of a cohesive national political culture and identity, the question must be asked as to what extent recent Colombian Governments, and especially the present Uribe Government, have attempted to overcome such political fragility and fragmentation, and whether these attempts are actually grounded in more than rhetoric, instead encapsulating gradual, yet decisive, discursive, material and institutional change within the national state. In other words, to what degree have contemporary Colombian Governments succeeded in strengthening the Colombian national state via articulating and thereafter promoting an 'imaginary political community', grounded in a Colombian nation?

In order to confront such indagations, the paper shall now move onto examining one of the most important recent political projects of the Colombian state, Plan Colombia, as it offers a broad illustration of contemporary state reconfiguration in line with geopolitical competition, whereby the military assumes the task of 'containing' social insurrection, as well as acting as a discursive grounding to the formulation of a Colombian national unity and, on a separate political scale, reifying the parameters of US national unity. Indeed, this policy can be seen as the preeminent national/regional institutionalisation of US-based national security issues.

3.2 The multi-scalar institutionalisation of Plan Colombia

The formal approval of Plan Colombia by the then US President, Bill Clinton, on 13th July 2000 initiated the concretisation and bilateralisation of a plan that had been implicit in US Foreign Policy since the end of the Cold War. With the categorical reformulation of Pastrana's original Plan Colombia (published in May 1999), reshaping the focus from one of finding peace and ending Colombia's decades-long internal conflict towards a plan focusing on drug trafficking and the strengthening of the military, the US Government intensified its 'war on drugs', solidifying its already two-decade long focus on a 'source-country' approach[11] which, by targeting the cultivation of the coca leaf was presumed to reduce supply as drugs would become more expensive and dangerous to both grow and sell. Despite the widespread literature that has continuously documented the failings of such an approach,[12] it is contended that what was at stake was not so much the ability of the US national state to stem the tide of inflowing illicit drugs, rather, it was the propagation of a political discourse that acted on the

[11] The fumigation of illicit crops began in Colombia in 1978 and it was in 1986 that the then US President Ronald Reagan first stated that illicit drugs were a national security threat.

[12] Indeed, even after close to 20 years of fumigation programs in Colombia and with the extreme intensification of fumigation actions under the Uribe Government, the World Drugs Report, recently launched by the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC) stated that in Colombia for the year 2005 there had been 86,000 hectares of cultivated coca which marked an increase of 6,000 hectares from the 2004 level (or an 8% rise). Refer to:
http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2006/wdr2006_chap3_cocaine.pdf (19th July 2006). Furthermore, with regard to the supply of cocaine, 2005 marked the year in which Colombia set a new record of productivity, estimated at 640 metric tonnes of cocaine, compared to the 1996 level of 300 metric tonnes, an increase of more than double in only 10 years. See: Alberto Rueda (27th June 2006) "Menos coca, más cocaine", in El Tiempo, www.eltiempo.com.co

possibilities the global trade in illicit drugs brought to a nation that was striving to find a new 'external' danger with which to replace the now defunct anti-communist (anti-Soviet) ideological and political rhetoric. This discourse had assisted in the formulation of a national identity grounded on a dichotomous 'frame of reference' in which everything supposedly communist — collective property, premeditated slavery, class rule, dictatorship — became the antonym to everything supposedly American - private property, liberty, equality, self-government…(Hanson, cited by Campbell 1998: 143-144).

It was under George W. Bush that the 'war on drugs' really took form, coming to occupy a key part in his 1989 address to the nation. This, coupled with the fact that coca leaf cultivation was isolated to the Andean region of South America meant that it was more suitable to the traditional US discourse of differentiating 'American national identity' to a 'foreign' and dangerous 'other'. This long-term ploy of US Foreign Policy is said to be based on articulating danger in a manner in which its boundaries become constituted by the separation of the 'domestic' and 'foreign'. So drugs became perceived as a threat to US territory and sovereignty and those individuals and groups that initiated and consolidated the cultivation and production of illicit drugs came to be regarded as both 'foreign and remote' as well as key threats to the US State and the American nation (Campbell 1998: 184-186).

The initial institutionalisation of Plan Colombia as the principle policy of the US led, bilateral 'war on drugs', became in January 2001 part of the Andean Regional Initiative, helping to further consolidate the political objectives of US Foreign Policy. However, there was a major reworking and expansion of this Plan after the contingent events that reshaped both US and global security prerogatives in 2001.[13]

In line with the contention that specific political strategies and projects exist in and grow from discourses (Jessop 2002: 34), it is argued that after 11 September 2001 the US Republican Government took advantage of the 'room to manoeuvre' such an event had laid out and utilised the discourse of 'global terrorism' as a means of gaining legitimacy for certain policies that may otherwise have faced considerable difficulty in attaining Congressional and public approval. So it was that the discourse of 'narco-terrorism' attained prominence and the two main guerrilla groups of Colombia (the ELN and Las FARC-EP) were given 'new' public identities as they were represented not as politically and ideologically-driven domestic insurgents but rather as global terrorists that survived and prospered due to the drug trade. It is argued that this discursive transformation of actors is premised within unequal power relations wherein those groups who control the ideological terrain, through their regulation of state institutions and the public realm of information, also largely determine the way in which some meanings are propagated whilst others are expelled from the mainstream public discourse. In so far as certain discourses become institutionalised these discourses then have specific effects on power and the way it is linked to action and how these discourses come to constitute 'valid knowledge' (Brand 2005: 157). In other words, meanings can be ascribed, changed and reiterated by those controlling the ideological realm, a process which significantly handicaps the degree to which any counter views can achieve validation. Indeed, this understanding of discourse

[13] In specific reference to the Twin Tower Attacks in the USA on 11th September 2001.

sees its production and reproduction as being innately embedded in rules of exclusion which work to set out certain divisions, differentiating 'true' knowledge from that which is deemed as 'untrue' (Leonard 1997: 96).

So it was that Las FARC-EP[14] was discursively transformed from being a peasant-based, anti-oligarchy, anti-imperialist, armed social-political movement that had grown from tiny beginnings to a stage of displaying significant military and political might, to becoming a terrorist movement that threatened 'Colombian democracy,' economic development and supposed state legitimacy, using the drug trade as its business of choice. This discursive shift that restructured the way in which the Colombian guerrilla groups were perceived, dramatically changing them from being regarded as 'insurgent' movements to 'narco-terrorists' also dramatically altered the manner in which the Colombian conflict was represented, characterising it as essentially a sub-product of narco-trafficking, rather than a conflict rooted in the historical inadequacies of the Colombian state in confronting and dealing with the problems faced by Colombian society.

Now that a discursive link had been drawn between drugs and Las FARC-EP, Plan Colombia could be slightly redefined within the framework of 'security politics' and the 'global war against terrorism' (Estrada 2002: 34), effectively becoming the primary policy vehicle for what Estrada claims to be 'the consolidation of US Hegemony in the region based on overcoming its principal obstacle: armed insurgence and in particular the FARC-EP guerrilla group (Ibid: 40). So it was that the fragile peace talks between the Colombian Pastrana Government and Las FARC, that had begun in 1998, and that were premised on the very controversial decision to withdraw the Colombian Army from a vast swath of Colombian territory,[15] leaving it under the effective control of Las FARC,[16] faced increasing pressure from key social forces both in the USA and Colombia. Indeed, Fajardo (2002: 70-71) argues that specific ultra-right neoconservative groups in the USA which were intimately linked to the military-industrial complex and the Colombian far right and led by the Heritage Foundation and many Republicans in Congress had given strong support to the Alliance Act[17] as well as continuously calling for the removal of el despeje.[15] In line with this pronounced discursive shift from tackling the drug supply to confronting Las FARC-EP militarily, US aid to Colombia (as part of Plan Colombia) amounted to US$2.909 billion for the years 1997-2003, with 82% of this total during from the years 1999-2003 and the vast majority being channelled to the military.[18]

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[14] This working paper focuses on Las FARC-EP in discussions of Colombia's guerrilla groups due to its much larger size and to the fact that it controls significant amounts of Colombian territory (approximately 1/3 of Colombian territory), whereas the second largest guerrilla group – el ELN (comprising roughly 3,500 fighters) – does not base its strategy on the seizure and control of territory.

[15] Known in Spanish as la zona de despeje and amounting to 42,000sq km.

[16] Despite the fact that this was already under effective FARC control prior to the agreement it is interesting to note that the inhabitants of this vast region (approximately 100,000 people) were never asked whether or not they wanted the 'demilitarised zone'.

[17] This act being a US Law of Congress that assisted in the formulation of Plan Colombia.

[18] Indeed, for the years 1997-2003, US Aid to Colombia was disproportionally divided between military aid – US$2.4 billion – and aid for economic and social programs, all of which were related to policies of antinarcotics control – US$509 million, source: www.ciponline.org/colombia/aid.03.html.

Under the respective governments of Uribe and Bush this trend has only been intensified with President Bush, on 15th February 2005, calling for an amount of aid to Colombia roughly equal to that of 2004 levels: $579.6 million. Breaking down this amount, $427.5 million would be channelled to Colombia's military and police with the remaining $152.2 million going to economic and social assistance programmes.[19] Even despite the recent changes to the degree of US financial input in Plan Colombia for the current year (2008 – whereby the overall US contribution was cut by almost 10 percent, with the military component being reduced to US$308 million, down from the nearly $450 million of the 2006-2007 phase, while the economic-social component increased by almost $140 million, amounting to $236 million for 2008, see Maseri, 2007), this realignment of energies can be put down to the 2007 bipartisan political reconfiguration of power forces in the US as the Democratics took unanimous control of Congress. Nonetheless, as a relatively medium-term political project, Plan Colombia has been synonymous with a significant strengthening of the military/police state apparatuses in Colombia and the new combined effort to prioritise a military campaign against Las FARC-EP. Indeed, Colombia, with its long history of civil wars and civilian and political insurrection, has always had a difficult time in establishing any degree of central military control, and prior to the augmentation of the armed forces, associated with the gradual transformation of the state and Plan Colombia, the size of the Colombian army in respect to population size was significantly smaller than that of its neighbours, Peru and Ecuador (Hylton 2003: 56). Consequently it is pertinent to expand the focus from solely the concrete elements of Plan Colombia and its gradual design and implementation, towards an examination of the way in which the bolstering of the spheres of 'state security' are also associated with broader political objectives.

3.3 Plan Colombia: more than a policy of war?

From the moment of its official signing, Plan Colombia has been synonymous with the augmentation of the role of the military-police apparatus in Colombia as well as widening the scope of US regional military involvement, particularly in the internal Colombian conflict. As well as this, it has become the key sphere within which numerous US and Colombian legal caveats and constitutional restrictions have been sidetracked to enable increased US-Colombian military collaboration and a wider breadth for the exercising of presidential powers.[20]
However, it would be naïve to associate Plan Colombia only with a growth in Colombian and by implication, regional militarisation. Instead, the breadth of this plan lays in its intricate alignment to numerous other global and locally grounded projects.

Numerous authors have analysed the close connection Plan Colombia has with the broader project of establishing and consolidating a neoliberal world order, with particular emphasis on the Latin America-Caribbean region (see: de la Torre

[19] Data obtained from: http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aid06.htm (9th June 2006).

[20] Whilst it is not possible to list the entire number of Constitutional and legal changes related to Plan Colombia in the US and Colombia, it is of interest to note that the very signing of Plan Colombia by Bill Clinton was done using a presidential waiver on the grounds of 'national security'. With this waiver the president could overrule the human rights conditions which had been attached by US Congress to the aid and which the Colombian military had not been able to meet (Livingston 2003: 159).

2005; Estrada 2002). Both Estrada and De la Torre emphasise the manner in which Plan Colombia operates in harmony with the IMF's policies of economic and fiscal adjustment. These policies, grounded in the rhetoric of The Washington Consensus (in both its old and more recent versions – which prioritise fiscal discipline, the redirection of public expenditure priorities, tax reform, trade and interest rate liberalisation, privatisation, state deregulation, and the security of private property rights) function within a global neoliberal, financial-based logic in which civilisation becomes structured around the market.[21] It is argued that Plan Colombia thereby functions as both the coercionary arm as well as the means of compromise to such a project. Or, in the words of Estrada, 'without the resources of Plan Colombia, the adjustment measures of orthodox neoliberalism would have to be much more drastic' (Estrada 2002: 45).

So it is that Plan Colombia stretches out to entail various dimensions beyond its primary focus of destroying Las FARC-EP and lowering the quantity of drugs produced in Colombia. Indeed, as already mentioned, since 2002, all US funds forming part of Plan Colombia have actually been blanketed under the regional program – the Andean Counter-drug Initiative (ACI) – which also includes counter-drug aid for Colombia's neighbouring countries. However, Colombia remains the central target of this project, exemplarily illustrating the various components that fall under its influence. This integration of Plan Colombia into broader neoliberal policies and hegemonic objectives, structured within the public discourse of the 'war on drugs' and the 'war on global terrorism' should also be aligned with the domestically grounded developments within Colombia, primarily, their association with the present Colombian Government, headed by the president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, as well as being linked to the specific 'internal' military project implemented by this government as a means of consolidating its broader programme of democratic security.

3.4 The military and authority: reducing the 'limits of the possible'

Heightening the discourse of terrorism and narco-guerrillas and explicitly moving away from any notion of a 'war on drugs' towards the intensification of the 'war against Las FARC-EP', the most recent re-modelling of Plan Colombia has come about with the Uribe Government's Plan Patriota.[22] This intensification of the war against Las FARC-EP and its supposed civilian collaborators is illustrated through the mobilisation of approximately 20,000 Colombian armed soldiers in the country's south combined with the gradual implementation of a surveillance program whereby the government is creating a one-million-strong force of civilian informers in urban regions and a peasant-based pseudo army of between 20-25,000 people. However, this new plan not only means an increase in Colombian military personnel in the traditional zones of Las FARC's stronghold, it also has led to the profound privatisation of the war in Colombia and an exacerbation of externalities resulting from this policy which is implicitly tied to domestic restrictions on US national security objectives which therein become diverted to the domestic policy framework of Colombia.

[21] For a more detailed overview of how neoliberal ideology and financial dominance are restructuring the basis to social life, see Gill, 1998, pp.5-26.

[22] The Uribe Government began the implementation of this plan in April-May 2004.

Plan Patriota continues a pattern of Colombian governmental subservience to the dictates of the power bloc of Washington's military faction, a fact underlined when one considers that of the US$1.3 billion initially provided by the US Government as part of Plan Colombia, US$1.130 billion was spent before even one Colombian official saw the money. Furthermore, the funds provided by the World Bank as part of the Plan were to be channelled by Washington to the Society of Private Militias (SPM).[23] As part of this strategy to privatise the war against Colombia's guerrilla groups, the US Congress, on 9 October 2004, lifted the previous restriction which limited the number of US soldiers allowed to operate in Colombia from 400 soldiers to 800. As well as this, the number of US security contractors permitted to work in Colombian territory climbed from a 200 personnel limit to 400.

This strategy of legalising and increasing the activities of private security/military groups within supposedly sovereign Colombian territory speaks a great deal about the structural power the US military holds over and within the Colombian national state as well as propelling the entrance of the military sphere into the broader discourse of neoliberalism and its advocacy of privatisation, efficiency, and social discipline. It is a trend which seeks to avert political and democratic accountability by privatising key factions of a military-based strategy to transform the Colombian national state in a way which increases the opportunities for capital accumulation on a grand scale while rendering any potential social/political opposition null and void. Indeed, Colombia's guerrilla groups can herein be perceived as being long-term obstacles, not only to Colombian political stability, but, even more pervasively, to Colombian economic growth, most specifically that related to mineral/resource extraction and large-scale agro-industrial development.

However, as well as outlining the military aspects of such projects, attention must also be given to the specific national political turns that have also occurred with the ascendance to power of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who formally took office as Colombian President on 7th August 2002.

3.5 President Uribe: Neopopulism and the end of bi-partisan Colombian politics?

The Uribe Government and its political project of 'democratic security' become much clearer when viewed from within the gradual structural changes that have taken place within Plan Colombia over the same period. Indeed, it is argued that with the ascension of Uribe to the presidency in 2002, Colombia began what one author has termed the first period of real populist rule in over 100 years (De la Torre 2005). However, Uribe's style of populism is contrasted to the traditional style of populist leadership, which focuses on internal development and the integration of the masses into the political sphere. Instead, Uribe is seen as a new

[23] Numerous US security firms are said to comprise this group, including: Dyncorp (recently taken over by the Computer Science Corporation), La Arinc, The Rendon Group, Northrop, MariTech, TRW, Matcom, and Alion – the last of which provide information and surveillance which is then passed on to Souhtcom and the CIA. These firms are contracted by numerous branches of the US Government such as the State Department, Pentagon, or US-AID. Refer to: Calvo, Hernando Ospina, 'Colombia: como en Iraq, un conflicto privatizado. Los negocios de las sociedades militares privados', in Le Monde Diplomatique, (November 2004, http://www.prensarural.org/calvo2004.htm).

type of populist that is characterised by 'caudillism in neoliberal dressing' (Ibid: 16). This form of leadership abandons what Cox (1987) has termed the neo-mercantilist developmental form of state, instead shifting from an anti-imperialist stance and focusing on down-scaling the state through the privatisation of the public sector and reorienting development towards a predominantly, financial market-based economic form of regulation.

The Uribe political project therefore incorporates the Rousseauan idea of 'communitarism' based on direct democracy and anti-institutionalism with a neoliberal ideology concerning the efficiency and competitiveness of the private sector, both of which are framed within the broader notion of 'democratic security' and the militarisation of social life. It is in this sense that the present process of Colombian state reconfiguration can be seen as the ultimate push towards the consolidation of a neoliberal order in Colombia wherein 'democratic security' - as it is manifested in and through Plan Colombia - becomes the "sine qua non when thinking of policies and the unravelling of the domestic economy" (Estrada 2006: 280).

The Uribe Government, with strong support from the US Government, sought to consolidate national support for Plan Colombia and 'democratic security,' both of which are premised on the destruction of Las FARC-EP and the consolidation of the private, market-based economy at a national level. Indeed, following the US lead of increasing the channelling of state revenue towards the war against Las FARC-EP, Uribe, under the banner of 'democratic security', outlined a national tax which affected Colombia's GDP to a level of more than 169.5 billion Colombian pesos, or close to 1 percent of Colombian GDP for the year 2003.[24] With this tax, the government hoped to accumulate around US$823 million,[25] with an estimated 70% coming from Colombia's principal economic groups (Estrada 2002: 46).[26] This tax illustrated the government's reversion to the old 'impuesto al patrimonio' (patrimonial tax) that was eliminated in 1986 only to be reintroduced, partially, within Uribe's 'democratic security' programme up until 2006 when it was formally reintegrated into the national tax regime (Ocampo Gaviria et al 2007: 393). Within this reasoning the intensification of the internal war, illustrated through Plan Colombia, is explained via the arguments that Colombia's insecurity and violence is the primary cause of its unstable and patchy economic growth, its high levels of poverty and income inequality and high unemployment.27 This rationale of representing Colombia's vast inequity and social polarisation as stemming from the violence perpetuated by 'illegally-armed' groups is the core argument with which the government justifies its growing defence budget which

[24] The equivalent to approximately US$697 million (a number corresponding to the exchange rate as of August 2nd, 2006).

[25] Figure found after converting 2 billion Colombian pesos to US dollars on 2nd August 2006.

[26] According to Estrada, initial estimations calculated that these groups comprised around 250,000 individuals, which also underlines the high concentration of income and property within Colombia. See Estrada 2002, p. 46.

[27] According to a recent World Bank study – World Development Indicators 2006 - Colombia's economy fell five places from its 2003 position at number 118. Furthermore, despite the fact that more than half the population is categorised as poor, Colombia is regarded as a medium-income nation, see: www.theworldbank.org (May 2006).

in 2004 amounted to 4.3 percent of GDP and was projected to reach up to 5.8 percent by 2006.[28]
The Uribe Government's 'democratic security' can hereby be seen as based on protecting the property rights of transnationals and other key economic groups. This added security to capital comes at the expense of social and political freedom for the majority of Colombia's citizens as numerous restrictions on civil rights are incorporated into permanent legislation. Indeed, given that the intensification of Colombia's internal conflict has become a strategy to impel economic growth through the attainment of investment stability and the protection of private property rights, elements which seem to necessitate the repression of non-capital social interests, it would seem appropriate to ask, how is this strategy conducive to general social and capital reproduction, (remembering of course that capitalism is grounded in the reproduction of labour-power)? Could it be that the Uribe Government's 'democratic security' program, consolidated by explicit US support in the form of Plan Colombia, is but a progressive step towards attaining political consensus via social militarization and national territorial securitization?

3.6 The Uribe Government and the discursive cultivation of compromise

While it appears easy to connect the growth of militarisation and the explicit reformulation of social-rights-based legislation (as exemplified in the 1991 Political Constitution) towards 'capital-oriented' legal reforms, with a growth in repressive and exclusionary politics, in the context of Uribe's second-term presidential election win in which he consolidated his political and popular platform, the connection becomes very ambiguous and contentious.[29] Perhaps then it is more pertinent to examine the way in which the Uribe Government has managed to weld together popular support in a highly militarised and socially polarised context.

When examining the strategic strategies and projects that achieve form within the state, Jessop identifies the concept of 'compromise' as being of utmost importance in order to understand why some projects attain state backing while others remain stagnant and indeed excluded from the state apparatus. For him "economic hegemony exists where a given accumulation strategy is the basis for an institutionalised compromise between opposed social forces for coordinating, governing or guiding activities within and across different institutional orders around the pursuit of a particular economic trajectory" (Jessop 2002a: 30). In line with this argument, it could be proposed that the Uribe Government has been pushing towards an accumulation strategy which is based on a 'total market' political constitution which becomes the present focus for a new regime of accumulation. This push, which is structured within 'democratic security' and the

[28] Indeed, for 2008, the Ministry of Defense has been allotted 3.4 billion Colombian pesos, principally to renovate transport as well as compensate for the incorporation of 13,000 additional members (of the 37,000 planned for by 2010) of the numerous state 'security' apparatuses (police, army, etc), see: Ivonne Venegas M, "Gasto militar del 2008 crecerá tanto que se teme por finanzas del Gobierno y balanza comercial" El Tiempo, 19 de diciembre, www.eltiempo.com

[29] After successfully pushing for a Constitutional Amendment which allowed for presidential re-election, Uribe, on the 28th of May 2006, obtained 62% of the national vote and was confirmed as president for a consecutive term with a considerable consolidation of his power base.

protection of capital has become tied to a discourse wherein the state propagates feelings of patriotism and national pride as a means of overcoming the distinct social, cultural and political rifts that have dominated Colombian society ever since its independence, while also focusing on ameliorating social discontent by implementing or adjusting already existing social-based political programmes that focus on 'subsidising' health, education and social housing for specific fractions of the population in a manner that does not question the structural aspects of these people's poverty but rather focuses on 'temporarily' placating their concrete material needs (Bonilla 2006).

Uribe's neo-populist rhetoric has cleverly attacked the bipartisanship and clientelism of traditional 'oligarchic' rule without making any definitive steps to dismantle these structures. His Rousseauan 'communitarianism' is a discursive tool used to cultivate a 'sense' of direct democracy in which the corruption and collusion of politicians and state bureaucracy is overcome by putting the people (or in Uribe's words, el pueblo) in direct contact with their devoted, hard-working leader. This 'national project' is seen as reformulating the state's mode of representation via the cultivation of discourses that equate 'big government' with clientelism and corruption, countering such rhetoric with discourses outlining the benefits of an 'efficient' and 'productive' state which is geared towards serving the practical needs of Colombian nationals.

Uribe has been a consistent advocate of the downscaling of the state bureaucracy and the reformulation of state institutions into competitive companies, modelled on the private sector (De la Torre 2005: 50). Indeed, he has stated that "state companies are the property of the community. For this reason they should be considered and administered like the most important private companies, submitted to the most rigorous indicators of austerity, productivity and competitivity" (Uribe Veléz 2002: 269). Hence, the communitarian state project is grounded on the reduction of the public administration, the rationalisation of its functions, and the general diminishment of the public sphere even while its operational capacity is said to improve, based on increased efficiency.[30] Indeed, under Uribe's communitarian state model, the government loses its direct regulatory control of the economy and its ability to finance social investment and infrastructure, becoming instead the body which enables the creation of specific programs which thereafter fall on the responsibility of the citizens (De la Torre 2005: 47), something very much in accordance with the regulation model adopted by the Thatcher Government in Britain during the 1980s (see: Jessop 2002c; Leonard 1997).

Uribe's communitarian state is therefore intimately connected with the neoliberal state model save for its populist rhetoric, anti-institutionalism and focus on direct democracy. But as already mentioned, in the context of Colombia, a country that is regarded as being one of the great failures of the nation-state system, Uribe's goal of putting the people in direct contact with the state through his program of Communal Government Councils (consejos comunales del gobierno), has generated enormous popular backing even if the concrete achievements of such a

[30] During Uribe's first period as President (2002-2006), his government closed 33 public entities, restructured numerous others, and made redundant roughly 27,000 public employees. See Giraldo 2006, pp.137-160.

program are yet to match its discursive power.[31] Furthermore, the seeming effectiveness of Uribe's 'war on Las Farc-EP', particularly in 2007/2008 in which this guerrilla group suffered a decrease in combatant numbers of 3,170 (desmovilizations) as well as significant successful army operations that killed or captured members of this organisation's Secretariat, particularly the death of the second in command, alias Rául Reyes in February 2008 and Joaquín Gómez in the month following, has culminated in a personal popularity rating of the president never before witnessed in this country (82% approval in a Gallup survey published in the national newspaper, El Tiempo, on the 24th of January 2008). These military achievements together with his 'firm', and at times inflammatory, rhetoric defying the political attacks of his two neighbouring colleagues, Rafaél Correa of Ecuador and Hugo Chávez Frias of Venezuela, have managed to, at least temporarily, reaffirm popular support for the Colombian President, even in the midst of what some scholars have termed the country's most profound political crisis in the Republic's history – the ever-growing 'para-política'[32] (Santana Rodríguez 2007/2008; López 2008).

In summation, Uribe's formula of a communitarian system of government enables a popular basis to a broader political project that has culminated in the push towards a neoliberal hegemony within Colombia; one that, while structurally tied to globally-oriented capital fractions and solidified by the structural power of the US, particularly with regard to its appropriation of Plan Colombia, still needs to be seen as a project that has also emanated from within the dominant social forces of the country, coming to be seen in the words of Estrada as a project of 'globalised localism' (Estrada 2006: 248). After asserting the local basis to such a project, it is also necessary to analyse the impact the Uribe and indeed the US political programmes have had within Colombian society.

[31] These councils were designed by Álvaro Uribe during his tenure as Governor of Antioquía as a means of harmonising the relations between municipalities, departments, and the central government. However despite their vast popularity, as of April 12th, 2004, of the 1,642 projects (council works) agreed upon during these councils, only 11% have been resolved with 66% still in process and 23% still awaiting formal ratification. Refer to: De la Torre, (2005: p.61).

[32] This is the popular term used in reference to the scandal involving the supposed collaboration between local, regional and national politicians and paramilitary groups.

4 The Domestic Consequences of Plan Colombia

4.1 Plan Colombia, 'democratic security' and social consensus

In Colombia the growth of the military-police apparatus has also led to an exacerbation of social militarisation and the alienation of the community. Colombian society, reconstructed within the prevailing discourse of democratic security and the communitarian state, and stifled within the military-police authoritarian structures legitimised and propelled through Plan Colombia, has become vastly removed from any Eurocentric-based notion of civil society as being an integral aspect of state rule. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the historical fragmentation and non-existence of the Colombian state in much of the national territory, together with the associated power disputes as numerous armed factions vie for control of such spaces, has led to the need for a large number of Colombians to organise themselves in what one author has termed 'sub-state groups' (Fischer 2004: 188), whether they be legal or otherwise. Consequently, while for Gramsci, hegemony can be seen as the predominantly consensual leadership of society by a social group that maintains the strongest links to the dominant economic mode of production as well as managing institutional domains and defining an ideology that harmonises its particular interests with the general interests of the national community, in Colombia, such universal social integration into the neoliberal hegemonic project, which has its foundations in the local power bloc that helped to formulate and consolidate the Uribe Government's ascension to power and the 'democratic security' project,[33] becomes but a shallow and ahistorical discourse. The local contingent of the new neoliberal world order has sought to formulate a neoliberal-based communitarian ideology as a means of obtaining a façade of social legitimacy. However, the authoritarian nature of the present Colombian state model shines through all too pervasively within the intermingling projects of Plan Colombia/Plan Patriota and 'democratic security'.

The novel yet frightening nature of such authoritarianism is that it has exacerbated a transformation of not only the politico-economic trajectory of the state but also an abrupt alteration of the military realm in Colombia. Indeed, although the Colombian state could never whole-heartedly claim that, in the Weberian sense, it had a monopoly over the means of physical violence, with the escalation of the Colombian conflict as part of Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota, and the associated increase in the national budget devoted to defence, the dominion of violence has become as decentralised as the government's economic program.

The failure on the part of both the US and the Colombian governments with regard to their shaping of this plan is that they have continuously overlooked the structural roots to the existence of the Colombian insurgent forces as well as the expansion of the narco-traffic economy, both of which have become mechanisms

[33] Estrada argues that Uribe's Presidential win of 2002 was due to the support of Colombia's principal economic groups as well as certain leaders of industry, the major media networks, sections of the Church, strong Congressional support, sectors from within the high courts, right-wing intellectual groups, as well as full US backing. Refer to: Estrada 2002, p.45.

for dual self-reproduction. While the Uribe Government and the key forces of influence within it have fashioned a self-fulfilling discourse which negates the very existence of an internal conflict, preferring to conjure up the notion of a local facet in the global war against terrorism, the historical evolution of the Colombian guerrilla groups lends considerable weight to a counter theory. Indeed, moving beyond perspectives that disassociate political territorial conflict from capitalist territorial development, it is argued that, conversely, particularly in peripheral capitalist state societies, violence can often be seen as a structural part of capitalist accumulation.

In 'normal' circumstances, the progression and growth of capitalism is seen as an insurmountable process wherein property becomes a private possession which then impels the proletarianisation of the property-less masses, converting these people into salaried workers as well as consumers. However, the contention is that in Colombia, as well as in numerous other countries, this process did not take place in such a homogenous, 'natural' manner. Due to the fragility (or indeed non-existence) of an internal domestic capitalist market, social leadership has historically rested with the country's oligarchy who were often vacant landowners rather than capitalists. This dominant group, instead of expanding its dominion through market-based growth and profit accumulation, utilised violence as the means through which to acquire property and rent. It is within this framework that the bloodiest era of contemporary Colombian history, La Violencia, should be analysed, coming to be seen as a strategy through which thousands of rural peasants were violently uprooted from their lands, allowing the dominant elites to obtain wealth which was in no way tied to economic accumulation, but rather was part of a project whereby power of force became justification for action. Indeed, it could be seen as illustrative of the way in which violence can also be a factor in strategies of primitive capital accumulation.

Las FARC-EP has its origins in this long-founded social and political inequity and as such should be seen as at least representing, historically, a long-term movement of insurgency rather than merely being equated as a new terrorist, apolitical organisation.

The disregarding of this historical development and settling on the continued strategy of using military violence as the means of suppressing socially-grounded resistance movements and fast-growing illicit activities, may have helped to consolidate the economic dominance of the social groups comprising Colombia's neoliberal order, but it has not achieved its goal of destroying FARC-EP resistance, despite persistent government propaganda outlining the success of the new Plan Patriota strategy. The failure to wipe-out Las FARC-EP, even despite recent military successes and growing desertions, and the continued prominence of Colombian coca/cocaine cultivation and production has left the political project of 'democratic security' and Plan Colombia resting on quite uneasy footing. However, holding that national identity construction is always set within the indispensable reproduction of an external danger or threat in order to perpetuate the state's continued necessity, the 'failure' of the project of 'democratic security' could be seen as fundamental to the Colombian national state's broader role of reproducing an 'imagined political community'. Indeed, such an interpretation finds breadth when placed alongside the pronouncements of President Uribe during his Presidential inauguration on the 7th August 2006, in which he accorded new political and discursive prominence to attaining peace, stating that "we have

given all our energy, with severity, to rescuing the [country's] security. We do not hesitate in giving all our energy, with generosity, to obtaining peace". However, the notion that security and peace may not be entirely commensurate goals is displayed later in this oration when Uribe says, "We are not stopped from fear at negotiating peace. I confess that something different worries me: the risk that not arriving at peace may mean a backward step in security".[34]

Uribe, in giving new importance to the search for peace after four years of military intensification and violence against Colombia's guerrilla groups and their supposed sympathisers, validates the contention of Jessop that "since a state of peace occurs in a given territorial realm, the state apparatus which secures this peace comes to signify both dominance over territory and the territory itself" (Jessop 2002a: 348), while also laying out certain caveats that implicitly realise the necessity of reproducing or maintaining the existing 'threats' to the state project as a means of ensuring its own continuance. Furthermore, while the apparent failure of the explicit goals of Plan Colombia and 'democratic security' has led to much debate throughout the region, some of its more implicit objectives have become all too pervasive.

4.2 Colombia: narco-trafficking and the drift from militarisation to paramilitarisation

Just as it has been argued that Plan Colombia, structured within the power of the US military has helped to consolidate the new local and indeed regional regime of accumulation, heightening the decentralisation of politics, the economy and to a degree, the military, so too has it allowed for the expansion and decentralisation of the narco-economy. This ubiquitous but much too understudied economy has dramatically restructured Colombian social and political life as well as greatly assisting the process of consolidating the present neoliberal, financial-based world order. The sheer size of the global market in illicit drugs[35] and the key role played by Colombia in the two predominant drug markets of cocaine and heroin[36] shows the extent to which Colombia has become webbed within two separate yet intermingling economies, that which is regulated and that which operates in a clandestine fashion. It is important to emphasise the interpenetrative nature of both these markets, moving away from a conventional analysis that categorises trade in illegal/non-regulated goods and services as based in stagnant, non-leaking containers (Nordstrom 2003: 330). As argued by Castells (1996), trade in goods and services that are formally prohibited enables the extraction of considerable value-added profit and furthermore, whatever the extent of illegality is, eventually all illicit money must be laundered into legality. Consequently, it

[34] "Discurso del Dr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez en la ceremonia de posesión como Presidente de la república de Colombia para el período constitucional 2006-2010". Found at: http://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/discursos/discursos2006/agosto/posesion.htm (29th August 2006).

[35] Estimated (for the year 2003) to be in the value of approximately US$13 billion at the production level, $94 billion at the wholesale level, and $322 billion based on retail prices, taking seizures and other losses into account, see UNODC 2005, p.127.

[36] Colombia is the world's major source of cocaine, producing an estimated 640 mt per year for the year 2004, according to a study by UNODC, see: El Tiempo (27th June 2006), 'Menos coca, más cocaína', www.eltiempo.com.co, Furthermore, while Colombia is not the world's key player in heroin production, it is by far the biggest cultivator of poppy seed in South America.

becomes difficult to make clear distinctions between 'legal and illegal, state and non-state, or local and international' commercial and financial networks (Nordstrom 2003: 332). Instead, it is argued that formal global markets are implicitly shaped by the structures and transformations of illicit economies (Ibid).

In Colombia, with its historically-based social and political inequity and the military/authoritarian structures that have been consolidated through Plan Colombia and 'democratic security', the interpenetration of the illicit economy into social and political life has been profound. Moreover, connected to this process is the rise and politicisation of paramilitary groups since the beginning of Uribe's first presidential term. Indeed, Uribe has had a notoriously close relationship with the development of Colombia's paramilitary factions, being one of the first persons to publicly advocate the creation of 'private security and vigilance cooperatives' (Convivir) during his term as Governor of Antioquia.[37] Subsequently many of these groups formed and then evolved into death squads, that they were outlawed by the Colombian national government in 1999. However, countering the growing power of paramilitary factions within Colombia requires more profound policies based on examining the historical contexts of their emergence. Indeed, even the highly controversial reconciliation program of the Uribe Government, La Ley de Justicia y Paz,[38] has been heavily criticised as a political prop-up program of the government, benefiting those implicated in heinous massacres and forced displacements, while not adequately searching for mechanisms of compensation for the victims. In line with this argument, the Uribe Government has recently tried to redirect the social development programs within Plan Colombia from small-scale peasant-oriented initiatives towards a focus on large-scale industrial projects, many of which would take place in zones in which paramilitary groups have significant land holdings (Ramírez et al., 2005: 121).

The intricate connections between the structures of paramilitary power and the business of drug trafficking and political back-scratching have become all too visible under the Uribe Government. Despite the decision of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC – United Self-defence Forces of Colombia) to unilaterally cease conflict in November 2002, in the three years following in various regions of paramilitary influence (the north, east and parts of western Colombia) there were more than 2300 assassinations. Furthermore, it is estimated that narco-traffickers, many of whom are intimately connected to past paramilitary groups have appropriated around four million hectares of the country's most fertile land, buying this land in 403 of the country's 1039 municipalities, or 38% of the total (De Lima 2005: 8).

The connection of paramilitarism and the new regime of accumulation fit in well with the previously mentioned idea of primitive accumulation through violence. While the seeds of paramilitary wealth extend well into Colombia's legal/illegal economies, influence in the highest spheres of governance also appears to be increasing, with numerous scandals coming into the public domain over the past

[37] These services were first established during the presidency of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) and were authorised by the Decree No. 356. See Garzón, Juan Carlos, 'La complejidad paramilitar: in Rangel (2005: 66).

[38] In English 'The Law of Justice and Peace', approved on the 22nd of June 2005 and which had the official aim of constructing a reconciliation process, based on the demobilization of what the government terms actors in the country's conflict.

two years, culminating, as of April 2008, in the incarceration of 29 parliamentarians, the investigation of 51 congressmen/women as well as a number of mayors, governors, military personnel and diplomats on charges of colluding with paramilitary groups and individuals for electoral or economic gain. Indeed, as such only two political parties have escaped the legal barrage – el Polo Demócratico Alternativo and the Movimiento Mira – while the nine pro-Uribe political parties have been the most severely hit by such an historic legal campaign. The results of such a political storm have included heated debate over the very legitimacy of State institutions, predominantly the Congress, which previous to these investigations had been the focal point for numerous political reforms such as the presidential re-election, the labour reform (Ley 789 of 2002), to name but a few.

All these events seem to highlight the progressive deregulation of the spheres of politics, the economy, and the military in Colombia, which have combined to tear at the fabric of national state sovereignty despite the Uribe Government's intentions of strengthening a traditionally debilitated state by forming a national project which aimed at bringing the entire Colombian territory under central government rule. The national political program of reclaiming state control over vast tracts of Colombian territory which have historically developed as relatively autonomous 'shadow' states, chose a US-directed and predominantly funded military program (Plan Colombia) as the means of reducing the cultivation of coca (via an intensification in fumigation programs) in areas under de-facto FARC-EP control as well as weakening the military capacities of the Colombian guerrillas. Nonetheless, it appears more plausible to argue that the political growth of paramilitarism in Colombia has only been strengthened under this government's mandate.

Colombian paramilitary groups have spawned and prospered due to implicit and continued collaboration from sectors of the US Government, the Colombian Government and military-police apparatus as well as numerous transnational companies operating in Colombia.[39] This complex web of societal militarisation, which has been legitimised through the augmentation of Plan Colombia and the country's militarisation, has strengthened the authoritarian nature of the national state, bringing about a situation in which social acquiescence is achieved not through consensus but rather through fear. The complex process of narco-paramilitary influence in vast regions of Colombia and in acute structures of the political system perpetuates the possibilities for the expansion of corruption in all areas of daily life as well as severely constraining any efforts of social resistance.

These growing structures of coercionary power within Colombia become incorporated into the disciplinary neoliberal program of economic, political and judicial reform, helping to secure the new regional regime of accumulation and

[39] Some companies that have been publicly accused of collaborating with paramilitary groups and the Colombian Army in the harassment and assassination of numerous unionists, political activists, indigenous people, and other members of Colombian society, in the past two decades are: BP, Occidental Petroleum and Coca-Cola. Furthermore, in late 2007, Chiquita was ordered by the US Supreme Court to pay $25 million in fines for having paid paramilitary groups in the Urabá and Magdalena regions of its operations, as well as being signalled by the Colombian General attorney for investigation into its collusion with such illegally armed groups, see: López, N.A (2007), "Multinacional Chiquita y a otras 3 bananeras serán investigadas por dar recursos a los paramilitares", in: El Tiempo, 17**th** December, www.eltiempo.com

consolidate the dominance of the Colombian social forces that form part of the global neoliberal order.
Specific war-centred legislation has been enacted under the Colombian Governments of Pastrana and Uribe which is geared towards maintaining social control. To be sure, the Uribe Government, in line with the redirection of Plan Colombia, instituted the Law of Antiterrorist Statute, which makes it legitimate to view any form of social protest as a form of terrorism, harking back to the Military doctrine of the 1980s which focused on the 'internal enemy', characterising civil society members as potential 'subversives' (Ediciones NCOS 1995: 15ff). Such political instruments attempt to 'unite national acceptance' by effectively removing any possibilities for social dissent (Caycedo 2002: 621). This has led to the present situation of militarily and judicially imposed social subservience, well encapsulated in the words of one of Colombia's highest ranking officials, General Fernando Tapias, as he says, 'Today the support they have [the state and the army] of the civil population is basically a result of fear' (cited by Caycedo 2002: 621).

After sketching the implicit link between state militarisation, paramilitarisation and the new 'total market' regime of accumulation, it is fitting to move onto a general evaluation of the economic program of Uribe and the degree to which it has impelled economic growth and development in Colombia.

4.3 The Uribe Government's economic program

The Uribe Government, in accordance with its neoliberal political grounding, has focused on instituting an economic development model that fits well with the paradigm of a national state geared towards global competitiveness. This model has as its primary logic the impulsion of policies that ensure "the provision of optimal conditions for the valorisation of capital within a nation-state framework" (Hirsch 2000: 113). Herein the state must mobilise the country's productive resources towards world market competition, as this, it is argued, becomes the only way of bringing about national economic progress. To this end, the Uribe regime has centred on removing any domestic constraints to Colombia's integration into the world market as well as focusing on foreign investment as being the key strategy for expanding capitalist activity.

The Uribe Government's politico-economic project has been successful in opening up the possibilities for transnational capital investment and the centralisation of capital. Indeed, only in the first quarter of 2007 as many as 20 national companies were taken-over by foreign firms, a fact that should be viewed alongside the quadrupling of foreign investment in Colombia between the years 2000-2006.[40] And while this dramatic rise has its roots in the gradual easing of national restrictions on foreign investment that began in the 1990s, it is also emblematic of the emphatic efforts of the Uribe Government to encourage FDI in Colombia, with the president directly participating into bilateral trade negotiations with the USA as well as offering personal appointments to numerous directors or CEOs of major foreign firms in order to accelerate investment possibilities. Nonetheless, while the frenetic activity of transnational/national capital in Colombia during Uribe's term as president has transformed the previously dire

[40] Increasing from US$10.991 billion for December 2000 to US$41.595 billion for September 2006, refer to: 'Se Vende', Cambio, (6th March 2007), at: http://www.Cambio.com.co.

image Colombia had as a potential investment location, this has not necessarily resulted in emphatically positive economic figures. Indeed, while FDI has increased so too have the capital-outflows (repatriated profits) of MNCs, increasing from US$655 million in the year 2000 to US$2.433 billion in 2004 and again to US$3.565 billion in 2005.[41] And on top of this Colombia's trade balance for 2006 was a deficit of US$143 million, something that has not occurred since 1998. Furthermore, the consolidation of investment opportunities for capital has not spilled over into improving the employment opportunities of the Colombian labour force. Indeed, 2006 Governmental figures show that even though the economy grew by a better than average 6%, unemployment also rose, from 10.4% in December 2005 to 11.8% in the same period of 2006, while informalisation has consistently grown over the past five years in all of the 13 principal Colombian cities.[42] And these poor results come even after the Uribe Government's reforma laboral (labour reform – law 789 of 2002) and la reforma al regimen de pensiones (pension regime reform – law 797 of 2002), both of which had the respective objectives of flexibilising the labour market through reducing labour costs and reducing the net value of public sector pensions.

Far from demonstrating a successful economic project built on stimulating economic growth and distributing the gains nationally, these figures speak of the growing neoliberal trend of concentrating wealth and thereby augmenting the gap between rich and poor, something which has ensured that Colombia remains one of the countries with the highest levels of income inequality in the world. Indeed, in Latin America, Colombia only manages to better Brazil in terms of its level of income equality, attaining a Gini coefficient measurement of 0.576 compared to the latter's 0.591 (Bonilla 2006: 107).

[41] Ibid.

[42] Refer to: DANE (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadistica), 'Encuesta Continua de Hogares, población ocupada total: informal y formal', found (January 2007), at: http://www.eldane.gov.co.

5 Conclusion

5.1 National state reconfiguration through Plan Colombia: artificially cultivated consensus and a fragmented hegemony

The deep military basis to the neoliberal project in Colombia means that one must be hesitant of using the term 'hegemony' as defined by Gramsci when speaking of its consolidation and reproduction. Specifically in Colombia, state transformation is premised on the subjugation of those social forces opposed to neoliberal dominance, rather than attempting to incorporate their needs into a broader political and social program. In such a model, legitimacy and consensus are obtained through the military (Ceceña 2004b: 31), with many decentralised armed terror forces ready to step in when social apathy breeds into protest. This Colombian project of neoliberal-communitarianism, grounded in military power and autonomy is emblematic of the New World Order, which is said to be based not on successful cooperation but rather on military violence and social discipline (Brand 2004: 279-280). Consequently, it becomes pertinent not to talk of a consensual hegemony when thinking of the new neoliberal world order, but rather, to understand such a project as being characteristic of a 'fragmented hegemony' in that the externalities associated with such a globally-expansive order are generally passed off to the Southern countries, as there, as shown with the Colombian example, state projects and accumulation strategies do not involve a significant degree of societal consensus, while the dominant metropolitan countries (and specifically, the USA) have not shown any desire to share responsibility for the management of these negative impacts (Ibid).

In a sense, the irreconcilability of associating a term such as 'hegemony' with the locally-grounded but regionally-directed neoliberal project has ensured that the specific policies of the Colombian national state have become structured within a growing but disjointed military apparatus. More pointedly, in the Colombian example, military violence and coercion, under the umbrella of 'democratic security' and Plan Colombia, become the *raison d'être* of state action.

Despite the widespread popularity of Uribe's leadership, and his ability to attain and then strengthen his control of the state system, this does not necessarily correlate into a hegemonic project. For hegemony entails more than a well received populist discourse combined with dominance of the central political apparatus; rather, in line with the argument put forward by Jessop, it necessitates a successful economic strategy, a concise and effective reordering of the state, and overwhelmingly, success in the pursuit of popular capitalism (Jessop 2002c).

Apart from the failure of the Uribe Government to instigate a truly national program of economic growth and wealth distribution, the prime aspect that highlights the inability of this national government to meet its public objectives rests on its ineffectiveness in attaining territorial control of the nation. While the Uribe Government rose to power and consolidated its control of the state apparatus through its communitarian project of 'democratic security' which had the goal of establishing state presence and control, via military conquest, in what had been vast areas that operated under guerrilla or paramilitary control, this

target has not been acheived. Instead, the historical fragmentation of the Colombian national state has continued, although its form has been reshaped. With the exacerbation of the process of political decentralisation which began in the 1980s combined with the forfeiting of the national government's control of macro-economic policy to the IMF, the national government has further fractured its ability to formulate and promote a truly national project. Although these processes have assisted in what could be termed the reformulation of micro-powers and the demise of the traditional Liberal/Conservative bipartisan political power base, the emerging forces have not been adequately unified by a general project; rather they have exacerbated the disjointedness of the national state and attempted, through the often illegal and otherwise pseudo-legal possession of local centres of political control, to consolidate their own power regimes, irrespective of the resulting conflicts this may entail.

Furthermore, the role the US Government has played in augmenting the Colombian conflict through its insistence on implementing clearly unsuccessful policies of eradicating the supply of drugs by attempting to destroy coca cultivation and the guerrilla groups it charges as controlling such activities, has pushed forth a process of societal militarisation, bringing the political realm in Colombia to be structured in the military realm, affecting not a rescaling of politics but a splintering of political scales, to such an extent that today in Colombia the national state could be seen as operating within a hollow form of political democracy, one which accords primacy to large-scale capital interests (particularly finance) and the parasitic pseudo-state forces that feed off and assist them at the expense of the wider interests and needs of Colombian society. Military repression and the associated cycle of primitive accumulation has laid the groundwork for the consolidation of the 'total market' regime of accumulation which has necessitated the discursive formulation of apparent class-based compromise even while it has become apparent that this consensus is based not on constructively searching for compromise, but rather, on attaining acquiescence via instilling fear of dissent.

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