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## WHEN MEASURES OF EFFECT APPLY TO A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT: LESSONS FROM COLOMBIA

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***Exercise Solo Flight***

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Insurgencies have become increasingly more relevant in the contemporary era; specifically, after the terrorist attacks on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Significant changes have been made within many of the world's armies' doctrine, training, and planning; yet, finding effective solutions to resolve insurgencies remains a monumental challenge.

The innumerable cases of operational success against conventional adversaries provide militaries the perspective that they may achieve their objectives, regardless of the threat. But, does not word '*success*' necessarily mean to have the ability to achieve what has been proposed? From the foundation of conventional war, to the insurgency, and not the adoption of the hybrid war, this evolution has led significant contributions in the development of new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) within military doctrines. It is the development of these TTPs, over time, that have shifted the definition of success to include a military social measure, to determine if and when a state-adopted policy is effective or not.

In regards to security in South America, many countries, such as Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, have contributed to a significant level of destabilization in the region. In addition, the appearance of communist-rooted insurgencies in these countries has generated a significant concern for the global community. This document will use Colombia as a case study, specifically the complex security issues it has experienced since the 1990s to the present. It will analyse and determine if the measures adopted by the government were effective in achieving its own objectives. This paper will prove that the November 2016 peace agreement between Colombia and the FARC is

due to an evolutionary process in military and governmental policy that occurred among the 1990s until present.

Despite the vast history as well as an overwhelming experience among states contributing to conflict, there are few studies that are primarily focussed on the measures of effectiveness related to the irregular war and complex environments. This paper will address exactly this issue by analysing the complex environment that was, and is, Colombia – the location of the oldest continuous guerrilla movement in the world that has caused a great deal of violence and trauma to the Colombian population until it finally signed a peace deal with the government in September 2016.

This paper will be divided in to three sections focusing on the methods in which the Colombian military forces won over the hearts and minds of its population. The first will evaluate the defense and security policies adopted by the Colombian government. It will determine that the measures adopted by Colombia can be determined to be a success. The second will demonstrate how economic support was a factor that significantly influenced the achievement of the military arm of the Colombian state's overall plan. The third will analyze how it was possible for the government to re-assert and consolidate control over its territory.

### **Concepts and End of State**

To determine the extent of the impact of security measures in the Colombian conflict it is necessary to take into account the Thompson's primary counterinsurgency

principle, which states that “the government must have a clear political aim.”<sup>1</sup> During his term in office of the President, Alvaro Uribe Velez (2002-2010), the end state was evident as it was the cornerstone for the Democratic Security Defense Policy (DSDP): to “strengthen and guarantee the rule of law throughout Colombia, through the reinforcement of democratic authority.”<sup>2</sup> It was accompanied by clear guidance in order to achieve its purpose by means of five strategic objectives:

1. Consolidation of the state control throughout Colombia.
2. Protection of the population.
3. Elimination of illegal drugs trade in Colombia.
4. Maintenance of a deterrent capability.
5. Transparent and efficient management resources.

This policy remained the cornerstone of governmental policy until the government of the current president Juan Manuel Santos. Even then, the current administration only made minor modifications, maintaining the same principal purpose: the peace. The continuity of the policy allow for a better analysis and understanding for evaluating the measures of effectiveness of Colombia’s policies.

Prior to addressing the subject of measures of effectiveness and their feasibility, the meaning of effectiveness should be made clear. According to the Doctor Sarah J. Meharg, from the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute; “Effectiveness is the term commonly used to refer to the goal-attainment of a measure, thus relating the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew, Mumford. 2010. Sir Robert Thompson's lessons for Iraq: Bringing the 'basic principles of counter-insurgency' into the 21st century. *Defence Studies* 10 (1-2): 179

<sup>2</sup> *Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security*. Bogota: Colombia: National printing, 2003

outcome of a process to its original goals.”<sup>3</sup> In her publication, “*Measuring effectiveness in complex operations: What is good enough?*,” she analyses two important points of view regarding measures of effectiveness: the narrative and quantitative perspectives. Taking Meharg’s model in account, this paper intends to go beyond the military aspect of the conflict and solution and focus on the political and social aspects of the country related to the conflict.

### **Main Security and Defense Policies**

During the 1990s the security situation in Colombia was critical. The economy was floundering, foreign investment had declined sharply, and human security had deteriorated to the point where the majority of Colombians did not feel safe. As pointed by the writer Ann C. Mason, Colombia was a failed state.<sup>4</sup>

IN order to address the precarious situation, the measures implemented by the Colombian government during the period of 2002 to 2010, in terms of security, were drastic and radical. The government relied on support of the army forces as the main instrument on which this government policy was focused. The government took a more absolute hand in ruling the country than had previous administrations in order to deal defeat guerrillas and other agents generating violence within the state, specifically the insurgency of The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Jane, Meharg and Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute. 2009. *Measuring effectiveness in complex operations: What is good enough?*. Calgary, Alta.: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Ann C. Mason. “Colombian State Failure: The Global Context of Eroding Domestic Authority,” Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, Florence, Italy (April 10-14, 2001). [http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/faculty/mstohl/failed\\_states/2001/papers/mason.pdf](http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/faculty/mstohl/failed_states/2001/papers/mason.pdf).

The planning and execution of joint actions among governmental departments, comprised of the armed forces and other state agencies, became one of the principal strengths at the strategic level in achieving the objectives of the DSDP. The kinetic actions, resulting in a significant lethal impact, led to a constant and continuous weakening of the FARC armed structure. Due to the threat of direct action, the group's close relationship with the population was disrupted as they were forced to hold the defensive positions deep in the Colombian forests as a strategic rearguard. Colombia utilized and applied the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) doctrine on the Multinational Experiment (MNE 6) in irregular warfare and complex environment. This doctrine established a force structure and operation premise where "coalition forces require the ability to share information, establish a common situational understanding, synchronize efforts and assess progress. This must be done in concert with interagency partners, international organizations, and other stakeholders."<sup>5</sup>

In addition, aspects such as the "increasing of the Armed Forces which turned from 205.000 in 2002 to 288.000 in 2013,"<sup>6</sup> as well as the "police with an increase of 32%, turning from 110.000 in 2002 to 178.000 in 2013"<sup>7</sup> allowed the government to stabilize and bring control to state. There are many actions taken by the Colombian Army that resulted in operational successes against the guerrilla forces. Among them, a few significant impact that affected the guerrilla forces that require mentioning are: the decentralized and increased presence of state agencies and organizations amongst all the

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command, Multi-National Experimentation

<sup>6</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive Peace." *Prism : A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations* 5 (3): 111. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1710986918?accountid=9867>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 111

municipalities in the country; the successful execution of sustained, deep, and extended operations; the acquisition of better means of mobility, technology and intelligence; an increase in the legitimacy of the armed component in the military actions; and the winning of people's hearts and minds.<sup>8</sup>

From a military perspective, and according to Sullivan and Beittel's research published in their book *Latin America: Terrorism issues*, the apprehension of the highest FARC officers, the neutralization of their highest ideological ringleader Raul Reyes in 2008, as well as operations to free more than 25 military members, politician and civilians held by FARC in 2008, the death of "Mono Jojoy" in 2010, the neutralization of his military successor "Alfonso Cano" in 2011 shed light on impact of successful intelligence and the conduct of tactical direct operations.<sup>9</sup>

From the social perspective, data provided by the Organization of American States can be taken as reference to demonstrate the increased success of the Colombian government. In 2008, the Organization of American States presented a publication that studies metrics at the heart of the security program of the Colombian government and the adopted measures meant to gauge the impact of internal conflict. It noted: a reduction in homicide from 28.837% to 17.479%, a decreased in abductions from 1709 to 282, a

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<sup>8</sup> *Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security*. Bogota: Colombia: National printing, 2007  
[https://www.oas.org/dsp/documentos/politicas\\_publicas/colombia%202.pdf](https://www.oas.org/dsp/documentos/politicas_publicas/colombia%202.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Mark P. Sullivan. and Beittel S. June. "LATIN AMERICA: TERRORISM ISSUES\*." *Current Politics and Economics of South and Central America* 6, no. 1 (2013): 12,13.  
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1622681575?accountid=9867>.



decrease in attacks against civilians from 32 to 4, and guerrilla attacks targeting military units were reduced from 1645 to 646.<sup>10</sup>

However, it is generally accepted that measure of effectiveness are difficult to evaluate at the time of their happening, especially in complex counterinsurgency operations; “the literature is sparse in its examination of trends and indicators of effectiveness during counterinsurgency operations.”<sup>11</sup> The security and defense policies cannot be measured themselves to make a determination of success. Rather, they must be integrated with economic, technology and consolidation variables to facilitate the construction of. These indicators, in this case, are represented through the achievement of the government established objectives. A quantitative measure of effectiveness can be drawn in the Colombian example as there were present a number of significant fact-based metric, such as the reduction of 25% of FARC troops during 2014 or the arrest to killing of 55 leaders from the same group.”<sup>12</sup>

By evaluating the strategies taken by the government during 2002 until today regarding defense and security it is evident that the Colombian government achieve strategic successes by deciding to adopt a policy centered on counter-insurgency. Acting to combat the principles of the irregular warfare, they were able to avoid an escalation in the violence, reduce the FARC’s military power and establish a more secure environment

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<sup>10</sup> Organization Americans states “*Republic of Colombia, Defense Minister, Defense and Security Policies*,” last accessed 1 November 2016, <http://www.oas.org/csh/spanish/documentos/colombia.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> James, Clancy and Crossett, Chuck. 2007. "Measuring Effectiveness in Irregular Warfare." *Parameters* 37 (2): 89. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/198030362?accountid=9867>.

<sup>12</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive Peace." *Prism* : 111.

for Colombians. The peace deal between the FARC and the Colombian government only demonstrate the effectiveness of the policies adopted.

### **Main Economic Plans**

From a historical perspective, the economic plan enacted by the Colombian government between 1990 and the present had a significant contribution to the achievement the peace with the FARC. Specifically, Colombia experienced two relevant economic measures that are considered to have directly contributed to the military defeat the FARC, while simultaneously increasing governmental support of the civilian population. The first is generating a protective atmosphere to small-scale entrepreneurs who generate companies to achieve economic, and the second was a program focused on social development.

Having established that security is the basis of the economic and social development for a nation, Colombia, under the measures taken in 2002, created a virtuous cycle in which the country was aimed at gaining high security standards to achieve more social and economic objectives. As stated by David Kilcullen & Greg Mills, as they studied the internal conflict in Colombia, “security improvements helped the economy development, creating a virtuous cycle of governance, growth and stability.”<sup>13</sup> Military improvement contributed to the economic and social power of the

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<sup>13</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive peace." *Prism* : 112. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1710986918?accountid=9867>.

government which was achieved under two programs: the first, was the “Plan Colombia,”<sup>14</sup> the second was an increase on the defense budget of the nation.

### **Plan Colombia**

Plan Colombia “was a determining factor in the return of government control to wide areas of the country.”<sup>15</sup> Its direct impact was that economic support triggered an increase in strength and legitimacy for the Military Forces in Colombia as well a striking blow against the FARC. The plan originally accounted for \$10.6 billion in the “*Colombia Strategic Development Initiative*,” however, due to the subsequent actions by the US government after the September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the external support was enhanced in the pursuit of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and policies that would lead to increased democracy worldwide.

### **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

GDP is an important metric for states to measure their economic status. It is a manner for states to measure the success of their economic policies, but it is also a metric of their military spending. In a reciprocal fashion, as GDP rises, more money can be spent on stabilizing the country if it is tied to a percentage point of GDP. In Colombia, “the defense budget rose from three percent of GDP to over four percent during the 2000s, partly financed through a 1.3 percent “Wealth Tax” on businesses and well-off

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<sup>14</sup> Name for the US aid package since 2000 to Colombia, was created as a strategy to combat drugs and terrorism contribute to peace, mainly through military means. The US government began granting large amounts of aid to Colombia in 2000 under the Clinton administration. Since the beginning of Plan Colombia, the US has given Colombia over \$5 billion with the vast majority going to Colombia's military and police.

<sup>15</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive peace." *Prism : A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations* 5 (3): 111. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1710986918?accountid=9867>.

Colombians.”<sup>16</sup> This increased military budget would allow the military to invest heavily in intelligence equipment, resulting in a more effective and technologically driven Armed Force as it sought to identify locations and target the FARC.

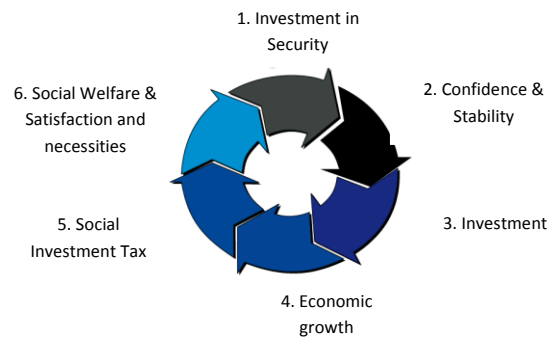
The Colombian government through its Ministry of National Defense created structures known as “The Virtuous Circle of the Defense” or by its Spanish name: “El Círculo Virtuoso de la Defensa.” These structures demonstrate that security is an essential factor, not just for the economic development, but also for the social development. Achieving an increase of the private investments and having the ability to promote and expand development to remote areas within the state allowed the government to counteract the influence and the reliance of its citizenry on the FARC for their economic survival. The government was able to influence areas that had been controlled by the FARC for many, allowing the population stop supporting the FARC in illegal cocaine crops in favor of viable legal jobs and career opportunities in the agricultural industry.

Kilcullen and Greg, studying Colombian economics have determined that “foreign direct investment rose to \$19 billion by 2012, enabling further spending on security. Economic growth averaged five percent during the ten years from 2002, enabling fresh investment in infrastructure.”<sup>17</sup>

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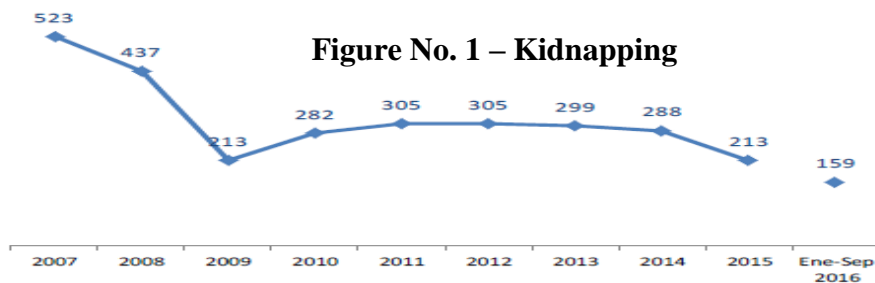
<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 111

<sup>17</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive peace." *Prism* : 111.



Source: Defense Ministry of Colombia “Achievement of security and defense policies”.<sup>18</sup>

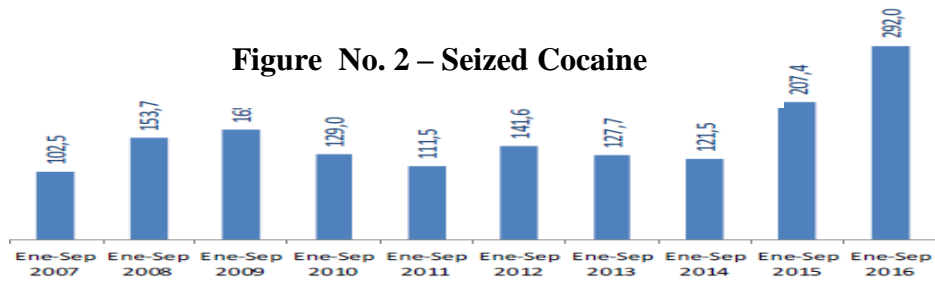
Some of the most important achievements obtained by the Colombian Government during the last 15 years can be observed by applying “Plan Colombia” resources, as reported by the Defense Ministry of Colombia in its annual report. These graphs indicate a significant reduction in criminal activities as well an increase in human security:<sup>19</sup>



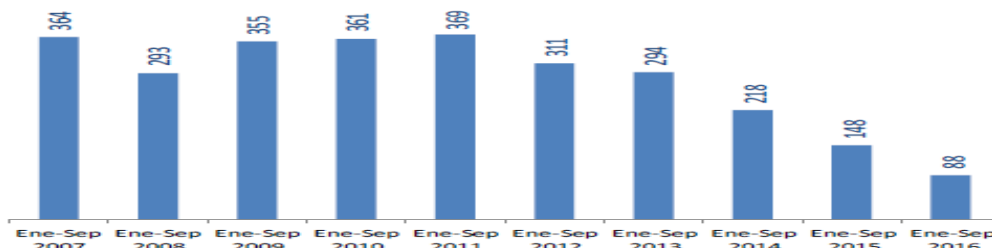
Source: Defense Ministry of Colombia “Achieve of security and defense policies.” – PISDP, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, “Logros de la Política Integral de Seguridad y Defensa para la Prosperidad – PISDP,” 2016. Free translation. “security and defense policy achieves-PISDP,” 2016. Last accessed November 29 April, 2017

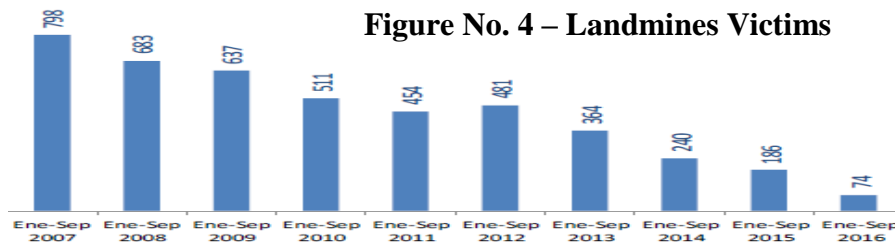
<sup>19</sup> Ibid

**Figure No. 2 – Seized Cocaine**

Source: *Ibíd.*

**Figure No. 3 – Military People Murdered**

Source: *Ibíd.*

**Figure No. 4 – Landmines Victims**

Source: *Ibíd.*

These statistics show a continual decrease of three important conflict areas related to Colombia: kidnapping, the assassination of public force members by the guerrilla and criminal groups, and victims of land mines. The current figures are the lowest figures related to violence since the 1990s. The seized of cocaine and the reduction of crops, is significant as cocaine was the main source of financial sustain of FARC. Economic measures taken by the Colombian government had a secondary effect of achieving a weakening in the financial support of FARC.

### **Relevant Consolidation Plan**

War is devastating and violent. The most affected in nearly all wars, especially in internal conflicts, are the innocent people immersed in the “crossfire.” However, the Colombian government needed to develop a plan focused on improving the situation of the civilian population.

The national plan of consolidation adopted by the national government integrates a measure to partially compensate the harm caused by ‘agents of conflict.’ In doing so the government looked to reduce the impact and extent of the large collateral civilian damage that has occurred over the previous decades. It also aimed to provide support to ‘communities’ which is an indirect way to support the individual victims of the conflict through collective programs. The Colombian government’s goal was to win over the population’s hearts and minds.

With the successes of the Colombian economic plan, the majority of population refused to support guerrillas in logistics. With the success of the social plan, the government aimed at reducing support to FARC intelligence and operations. In essence, reducing the FARC’s influence and increasing the population’s view of the government reduced the ability of guerrillas to rely on a complacent or enabling population to commit crimes and conduct military action. Without the population to support them, they were forced to leave more populated regions and hide in remote areas.

Colombia has been characterize and recognized for being a regional leader in democracy, because of the significant role taken by the population in the decision making

of the government. As described by Sarah Meharg, as she studied measuring effectiveness in complex operations and the inclusion of the population in making national decisions, “some sectors that move the recipient populations to the center of the decision-making and implementation process to increase effectiveness.”<sup>20</sup> This philosophy led to the understanding that before accomplishing any national goal, the benefit of the civilian population is always considered.

Defense Minister Santos announced a “Strategic Leap” that was called the “National Consolidation Plan” (NCP). It was aimed at concentrating military and civilian efforts to building an effective state presence in the high-priority areas strategic to the FARC.”<sup>21</sup> The NCP adopted by the government in 2009, which is still in effect today, involves three main objectives:

1. Integrate the peripheral regions to economic and social life of the country, considering them as the most affected by the conflict and violence.
2. Guarantee the protection and respect of the rights in all the national territory.
3. Establish and effective presence of the government agencies and institutions.<sup>22</sup>

Although these goal have not been achieved in their fullest, they are benchmarks that well are nearing completion. Currently 80% of the rural population count on the government to provide the basic necessary support to generate economic and social development. It is also possible to affirm that a majority of security is guaranteed in the

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<sup>20</sup> Sarah Jane, Meharg and Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute. 2009. *Measuring effectiveness in complex operations: What is good enough?*. Calgary, Alta.: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute. 5

<sup>21</sup> Peter, DeShazo. Johanna Mendelson Forman, and Phillip McLean. 2009. *Countering threats to security and stability in a failing state: Lessons from Colombia*. Washington, D.C: CSIS Press.

<sup>22</sup> National Politic of Consolidation Balance, “Fundacion Ideas para la Paz.” 2011 [http://static.iris.net.co/fundacion/upload/documents/Documento\\_2964\\_20120808.pdf](http://static.iris.net.co/fundacion/upload/documents/Documento_2964_20120808.pdf) Last Accessed 30 April 2017



national territory because of the peace deal signed by the government with the FARC in September 2016. The Colombian people depend on the presence of state agencies in the local regions across the entire national territory.<sup>23</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Globally, national Armed Forces have been and continue being a relevant factor in providing security and stability required by all states to continue to develop their social and economic activities. However, it has been extremely difficult to performance measures to determine the efficiency and effectiveness that security forces play in development of other functions. This being said, it is possible to say that the better the security, the better the economy. This is largely due to the confidence and stability which attracts private investments to safe and secure locations, generating stronger economic growth.

Because of the multiple measures taken by the Colombian government, including social, economic, and military programs, the monuments achievement of peace was reached by undermining the FARC's financial and military strengths in 2002-2011. The measures adopted demonstrate the effectiveness of the Colombian government's military, economic and social programs. The guerrilla leaders were weakened to a point where they relinquished military means in favor of political means to establish peace with the government. The Colombian population started to perceive advantageous security processes and the general development of the country as a governmental success, "as in

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<sup>23</sup> Its equivalent in the counties of United States.

earlier periods, low-profile U.S. assistance helped—but the talent, energy and leadership that drove success were all Colombian.”<sup>24</sup>

The Colombian government actions to combat the FARC establish parameters and a metric that may be applicable to other similar conflicts worldwide. Not nonconventional, or irregular, conflicts might find their solutions in the Colombian example, but provides a reference were governments can take a comprehensive approach programs to resolve a complex conflict.

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<sup>24</sup> Kilcullen, David and Greg Mills. 2015. "Colombia: A Political Economy of War to an Inclusive peace." *Prism* : 111.

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