

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS

VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA:  
BORDER SECURITY ISSUES

by

Raul F. Torres Aguilera

December, 1994

Thesis Advisor:

Thomas C. Bruneau

Thesis Second Reader:

Scott D. Tollefson

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VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA:  
BORDER SECURITY ISSUES

by

Raul F. Torres Aguilera  
Lieutenant Commander, Venezuelan Navy  
B.S., Venezuelan Naval Academy, 1981

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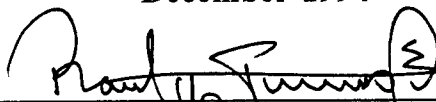
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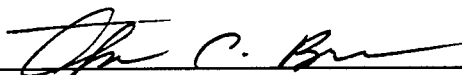
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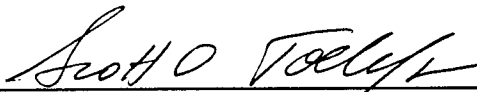


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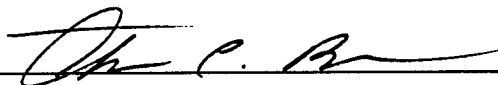
Approved by:



Thomas C. Bruneau, Thesis Advisor



Scott D. Tollefson, Second Reader



Thomas C. Bruneau, Chairman  
Department of National Security Affairs



## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the tension between cooperation and conflict in inter-American relations. Using the case study method, this thesis focuses on the level of integration between Venezuela and Colombia from 1983 through mid-1994. An extensive survey of historical materials and current press reports, the thesis assesses the vulnerabilities and sensibilities existing in the complex interdependence between the two countries and their perspectives for cooperation in the future. The thesis concludes that the prospects for cooperation are enhanced by: (1) the growing complexity of interdependence between Venezuela and Colombia; (2) economic integration between the two countries; and (3) continued democracy in each country. However, the inability to resolve the border security issues between Venezuela and Colombia will diminish the potential for successful integration between them.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global international relations have become more complex since the end of the Cold War. As the international system moves toward multipolarity, the steadily growing interaction of economic, political, social and military arenas has produced a web of complex interdependence. In Latin America, the trend seems to be one where the movement toward integration is virtually irreversible.

In order to understand the bilateral relation between Colombia and Venezuela, it is necessary to understand how the prospects for conflict and cooperation can be affected by the nature of their border security issues. Based on the theory of Keohane and Nye, this thesis argues that Venezuela and Colombia are involved in a complex interdependent relationship with a variety of linkages between the two countries: economic, diplomatic, immigration, and border security.

The level of interdependence has become more complex as the two countries have drawn closer together through economic integration. The economic integration programs initiated by Venezuela and Colombia are important steps in the search for harmony and cooperation in their bilateral relationship. However, the tension in both countries generated by conflicts in border security issues (the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela, illegal immigration, cross-border insurgency, and drug-trafficking) can affect the level of their economic integration.

This thesis examines the tension between cooperation and conflict in the Colombian-Venezuelan relationship from 1983 through mid-1994 and the security implications for the rest of the hemisphere. The research is based in the following hypothesis: the success of integration efforts between Colombia and Venezuela is directly linked to border security concerns, hence the inability to resolve the security issues will diminish the potential for successful economic integration. Nevertheless, the very process of integration between Colombia and Venezuela accentuates the complexity of the interdependence between the two countries by strengthening the current channels or forging new ones to resolve developing or protracted issues. As a result, as the theory of Keohane and Nye suggests, the greater the complexity in an interdependent

relationship, the less likely either country will resort to force or self-help to further its goals. One can conclude that it is highly unlikely that either Venezuela or Colombia will resort to force to settle their differences. However, although growing integration has made the utilization of force between the two countries less likely, both countries remain vulnerable and sensitive on numerous issues. The growth of interdependence does not remove issues from the bilateral agenda but accentuates them.

Using the case study method, each one of the border security issues listed above was analyzed using an extensive survey of historical materials and current press reports which permitted to assessment of vulnerabilities and sensibilities existing in the complex interdependence between Venezuela and Colombia and their perspectives for cooperation in the future. Overall indications are that both countries desire increased cooperation.

One of the greatest strengths of both Venezuela and Colombia lies in the fact that they are democratically ruled. The existence of a democratic system fosters greater levels of cooperation and promotes an environment that may result even the resolution of the maritime dispute, as well as the diverse border issues, through friendly and tolerant bilateral negotiations. There is ample evidence to show that democracies are the least violence-prone form of government. What is important to point out here is the relationship between democracy and stability. Democratic systems normally maximize and guarantee individual freedoms, promote pluralism and diversity, emphasize tolerance, and subscribe to the rule of law. However, where authoritarianism is the rule, there is a greater propensity and more fertile grounds for the emergence of violence.

The thesis argues in conclusion that it is imperative for Venezuela and Colombia to: establish an effective agenda for identifying the hierarchy of their mutual security interests; make effective bilateral decisions that will diminish the vulnerabilities and sensitivities existing in the two countries; and, to initiate further confidence building measures. Relying on the democratic systems existing in Colombia and Venezuela, the prospects for ongoing economic integration and cooperation appear to be good, and

although conflict will not entirely disappear, it can be managed through diplomacy and mutual respect.

The implications for the western hemisphere are also good. The new wave of integration, free trade, the spread of democracy and complex interdependence could bring a new era of peace, mutual trust and cooperation in Inter-American relations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, international affairs were characterized by a Cold War, superpower dominance, and bipolarity that tended to globalize and militarize all issues. In the Third World, small wars and instability were common. As the international system has moved toward multipolarity, the reduced risk of East-West conflict has given greater prominence to economic vulnerability, political oppression, terrorism, drugs, and illegal immigration as security issues. A steadily growing interaction of an economic, political, social, and military nature has produced a web of complex interdependence. That interdependence has exposed vulnerabilities as well as mutual responsiveness, including the desire to work out problems cooperatively.

In Latin America, the trend seems to be one where the movement towards integration is a stronger force than fragmentation. With the end of the Cold War, what constitutes a security threat is in the process of being redefined. Communism, now discredited, no longer constitutes a main threat. Instead, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and regional instability (especially in the Caribbean, i.e., Venezuela and Colombia) are coming to constitute some of the new security threats emanating from the South.

The main aim of this thesis is to examine the bilateral relations between Venezuela and Colombia by focusing on the tension between cooperation and conflict. The thesis topic is important because the manner in which Venezuela and Colombia deal with their bilateral security issues will have implications for regional integration and stability. The research is oriented by the following hypothesis: the success of border cooperation efforts is directly linked to border security concerns, hence the inability to resolve the security issues will diminish the potential for successful economic integration. This thesis makes use of the case study method and focuses on the level of integration between Venezuela and Colombia from 1983 through mid-1994.

In Chapter I, this thesis provides an historical perspective of relations between Venezuela and Colombia, beginning with the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1830.

Chapter II briefly sketches current relations between Venezuela and Colombia with a focus on the following issues: (1) the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela; (2) illegal immigration; (3) cross-border insurgency; and (4) drug trafficking. The case study will measure the potential impact of the aforementioned issues on policymaking of the two nations and the recent trend towards greater economic integration. The stage is set for Chapter III to focus on the security implications for the United States. Although there is an argument that with the end of the Cold War the United States will no longer care about Latin America, geography will make it difficult for the United States to ignore the region. Connected by land, it is inevitable that the problems of the region will continue to affect U.S. security. The thesis ends with some recommendations as to how the two countries can better manage border security policies in the future, in order to promote both political and economic cooperation between the two nations.

#### **A. THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THE THESIS**

In order to understand the bilateral relation between Colombia and Venezuela, one must take into consideration the development of inter-state relations in the international environment. Following World War II there emerged a variety of new approaches to the study of international relations. One of the approaches was based on the understanding, or observations that individual states possess vital interests and national objectives that are not necessarily always in harmony with the interests and objectives of other states.<sup>1</sup> Scholars also consider the importance and effects of ideological forces, such as radical, irrational, and emotional factors in the formulation of domestic and foreign policies.

In the process of studying the interactions between states, researchers have tried to establish a systematic grouping of findings, derived from empirical investigations, in an attempt to develop a set of general principles governing political behavior. Results have so far failed to yield a predictive model on interstate behavior based on a given set

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<sup>1</sup> Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., Nations in a Multipolar World, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1968, p. 623.

of circumstances at any given point in time. The development of such a model would prove invaluable as an aid to maximizing state interaction.

In the absence of such a model, a "theoretical scheme," or what is also known as an "analytical model," could be constructed to classify the various categories of states in the international arena, the different situations confronting these states, as well as the traditional responses manifested under these circumstances.

The disintegration of the bipolar system and the new possibilities that have presented themselves with the end of the Cold War have had important implications on the conduct of international relationships. One of the most serious implications or aftereffects has been the phenomenon of "limited violence" among the members of the international community.<sup>2</sup> The end of the Cold War, which brought to an end East-West confrontations along ideological lines, has left the states and the international system facing a series of destabilization factors such as violent political upheavals, border disputes, foreign sponsored insurrections, armed interventions, illegal immigration, racial and ethnic conflicts and drug trafficking.

The resolution of these conflicts in the international environment is a complicated process, especially in those cases where there is a lack of appropriate channels to resolve these issues (as well as a lack of options). Often, these channels involve governmental agencies and institutions that are not completely effective. Likewise, the limitations imposed on international organizations further hinder the resolution of conflicts, making the process that much more complicated. However, despite all that has been said, existing conflicts between states in the Post-Cold War world are not necessarily impossible to solve. This is due in part to the fact that the political behavior governing the relationship between two States can vary. The ideal situation would be that the policies and capabilities developed to resolve conflicts be based on a mutual search for harmony and cooperation and on the use of rational, not violent or irrational methods.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 643.

This approach is of particular interest especially in those situations characterized by interdependence. In the case of Venezuela and Colombia, interdependence applies to a variety of situations characterized by reciprocal effects, some mutually beneficial, others not. The nature of the transaction, its intrinsic value and attendant costs, dictate the policy to be pursued and whether the costs exceed the benefits.

According to Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, the role of power in an interdependent relationship is a function of two variables: sensitivity and vulnerability.<sup>3</sup> In their book, Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition, they define sensitivity as "liability to costly effects imposed from outside before policies are altered to try to change the situation" and vulnerability as "an actor's liability to suffer costs imposed by external events even after policies have been altered."<sup>4</sup>

Sensitivity and vulnerability can encompass social, political or economic issues. However, of the two, vulnerability has the greatest strategic value and hence may be more relevant in determining outcomes. The degree of vulnerability shared by Venezuela and Colombia can be estimated by the effectiveness of the policies implemented by both nations designed to address border-related problems. In contrast, sensitive interdependence is the result of mostly unilateral actions taken independently by both countries before the affected actor has been able to adjust its policies.

The dynamics of interdependence between Venezuela and Colombia is complicated by the clear lack in hierarchy among multiple security issues.<sup>5</sup> The politicization of security issues tends to confuse the agenda and adds to the controversy surrounding these issues. The ambiguity in the identification of national interests in both countries raises serious problems for the top governmental leaders. The identification of national interests can vary according to the circumstances. The process of economic integration initiated

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition, Little, Brown and Company, Inc., 1977, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

recently between Colombia and Venezuela could be adversely affected by existing vulnerabilities and sensibilities concerning associated border security issues.

The case studies and historical background provided on each of the prevailing border security issues should prove helpful in achieving an understanding of the political behavior between two states as they attempt to harmonize relations and seek greater cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

This process of harmonization and increased interdependence presents a series of implications for U.S. security. The nature of these implications and the manner in which a progression towards greater interdependence between Colombia and Venezuela can affect U.S. interests and national security are amplified upon later in this study.

## **B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Strains between Venezuela and Colombia go back to colonial days and the sense of rivalry between "Santa Fe de Bogota" and "Santiago de Leon de Caracas" (the original names of the capitals of Colombia and Venezuela respectively). Despite sharing some common elements in terms of historical and cultural background, Colombia and Venezuela have diverged in their socioeconomic development. During the early part of the colonization period, unlike Colombia, Venezuela remained of marginal significance due to its lack of extractive resources such as gold and silver. Initial development of the area during the colonization period was hindered by the perceived lack of valuable resources, a dispersed native population, and the development of a deeply rooted resentment among the natives against their exploitation by Spanish slavers. As a result, Indian resistance throughout the region, lasted approximately a century. Cities and towns were initially limited to the coastal regions with very little effort made to extensively colonize the interior. Venezuela developed an agricultural based economy gaining a measure of prosperity through the production of cocoa and later coffee, which would dominate as an

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Frankel, International Politics: Conflict and Harmony, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969, p. 43.

export commodity until its replacement by oil during the early part of the twentieth century.

Regional power during the colonization period was centered at Santa Fe de Bogota. The discovery of gold and precious stones in Colombia provided a strong incentive to explore, colonize, and develop the coast as well the interior. The port city of Cartagena quickly became established as a major conduit for intercontinental trade, becoming one of three ports in the Spanish colonies (the other two ports were Veracruz, Mexico and Nombre de Dios, Panama) authorized to conduct such trade. The provinces comprising Venezuela were thus administratively and economically dependent upon and subordinate to a centralized regional government located elsewhere and at a great distance.

Prior to 1777, the region currently comprising Venezuela consisted of a varying number of independently governed provinces under the administrative jurisdiction of neighboring colonies. In 1526, administrative jurisdiction of the provinces was awarded to the Audiencia de Santo Domingo. In 1550, control was transferred to the Audiencia de Santa Fe de Bogota which was subsequently upgraded in 1718 to the Viceroyalty of New Granada.<sup>7</sup> At the time of its consolidation under the Viceroyalty of New Granada, Venezuela was made up of five provinces: Caracas, Cumana, Merida de Maracaibo, Barinas, and Guayana.<sup>8</sup> Political recognition of the region was delayed until 1777, when Caracas was designated as the seat of the Captaincy General of Venezuela with the power to exercise political-military authority. Judicial-administrative authority was extended in 1786 when the region was redesignated as the Audiencia de Venezuela.<sup>9</sup>

During the colonial days economic and demographic growth, combined with a sense of local identity and resentment against trading restrictions and discriminatory practices designed to favor a select minority, gave rise through time to growing feelings

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Research Division Library of Congress, Venezuela a Country Study, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

of nationalism. Venezuela's extensive coastline, proximity with non-Spanish colonies in the West Indies, and commercial contacts placed it in a position to absorb new intellectual influences, thus further increasing its disaffection with the colonial status quo. Discontent among merchants with the monopolistic trade charter granted to a Basque corporation known as the Real Compania Guipuzcoana de Caracas directly contributed to the first insurrectionary movement against Spanish control in 1749.<sup>10</sup> The movement was quickly suppressed. However, Venezuela would, in 1810, become the first Spanish colony to declare its independence. The transition to full independence was protracted over a period of several years characterized by clashes between the revolutionary forces, under the leadership of Simon Bolivar and loyalists. Bolivar, the liberator of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Panama became one of the leading symbols of the independence movement throughout Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

The fight for independence proved to be more costly for Venezuela than Colombia not only in terms of resources expended and destroyed but also in terms of human casualties. Venezuela sacrificed nearly one third of its population in the revolution struggle. In contrast, fighting in Colombia was less fierce and more localized. Additionally, the agricultural based economy of Venezuela was more vulnerable to war-time devastation and disruption than Colombia's mining economy.

In 1819, leaders from present-day Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama met in Angostura, Venezuela (Ciudad Bolivar) to discuss the political future of the region once full independence was achieved.<sup>12</sup> Consensus was reached to unite into a single Republic, Gran Colombia, with its capital in Santa Fe de Bogota. Simon Bolivar was elected President and Francisco de Paula Santander, a Colombian, was named Vice-president. A constitution drafted in 1821, at the Congress of Cucuta (Colombia), provided the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, editors, Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America, Boulder, CO, 1989, p. 295.

<sup>12</sup> Emil Ludwig, Bolivar, Alliance Book Corporation, New York, 1946, p. 163.

framework for a highly centralized government based on popular representation with a bicameral Congress, a President, and a Supreme Court consisting of five magistrates.<sup>13</sup> However, Venezuelan nationalism in the person of General Paez and centered politically in Caracas, combined with a strong resentment against the rule by a government with a center in Colombia, a former sister colony; perceived grievances and feelings of political inequality influenced Venezuela to seek separation from Gran Colombia in 1829. Whether justified or not, Venezuela believed that Colombia was deriving greater benefits, at her expense, from the political union between the two countries. Santander, now President after Bolivar's resignation, was accused of ignoring Venezuelans in designating his major political appointments. Although it is true that Venezuelans were somewhat excluded from filling major political posts, they did monopolize the top military commands as a legacy of their wartime participation during the struggle for independence. In the end, the break between Colombia and Venezuela was welcomed by both sides, and was accepted with only some minor skirmishes.

The breakup of Gran Colombia was precipitated by regional jealousies and mutual distrust between both countries. These are feelings which in one form or another have persisted over time and have influenced the way each country perceives the other and its people. For example, it is not uncommon for Colombians to perceive Venezuelans as aggressive, loud and hot-tempered based on a predominately African and Caribbean ancestry. Venezuelans, on the other hand, tend to perceive Colombians as cold, snobbish, and calculating with a tendency to put on airs as being more intellectual, based on their Andean and Spanish ancestry.<sup>14</sup> Commenting on the differences between these two

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<sup>13</sup> Federal Research Division Library of Congress, Colombia: A Country Study, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1990, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Child, Geopolitics and Conflict in South America: Quarrels Among Neighbors, Preager, New York, 1985, p. 153.

peoples, Simon Bolivar is reputed to have said that Venezuela was a barracks and Colombia was a law court.<sup>15</sup>

The boundary between Venezuela and Colombia was originally based on the existing boundary in 1810, which was not clearly defined. Under an 1842 boundary agreement known as the Pombo-Michelena Treaty, Venezuela had ceded its claim to the Guajira Peninsula to Colombia.<sup>16</sup> In 1881, both countries appealed to King Alfonso XII of Spain to arbitrate ongoing territorial disputes.<sup>17</sup> The resulting arbitration decision was rejected by Venezuela because of disagreement over the location of the source of the Rio Oro. Under a treaty signed in Bogota on April 24, 1894, but not ratified, Colombia ceded back to Venezuela certain territories, including a portion of the east coast of the Guajira Peninsula which had in 1891 been awarded to Colombia under arbitration. The border was not properly determined until 1932, in response to an arbitration award made on March 24, 1922, by the Swiss Federal Council, to which both countries had submitted their border disputes for arbitration.<sup>18</sup> Despite the border settlement, the countries continued to argue over their respective sovereignty claims to the Gulf of Venezuela and the area surrounding the Los Monjes Islands to the northeast of the Guajira Peninsula (Fig. 1). The areas in question are critical in controlling access to Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela and its underlying oil deposits as well as rights over any existing deposits which may extend into the Gulf of Venezuela.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Federal Research Division Library of the Congress, Colombia: A Country Study, U.S . Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1990, p. 273.

<sup>17</sup> Venezuela: A Country Study, p. 188.

<sup>18</sup> Border and Territorial Disputes, Gale Research Co, Michigan, 1982, p. 414.

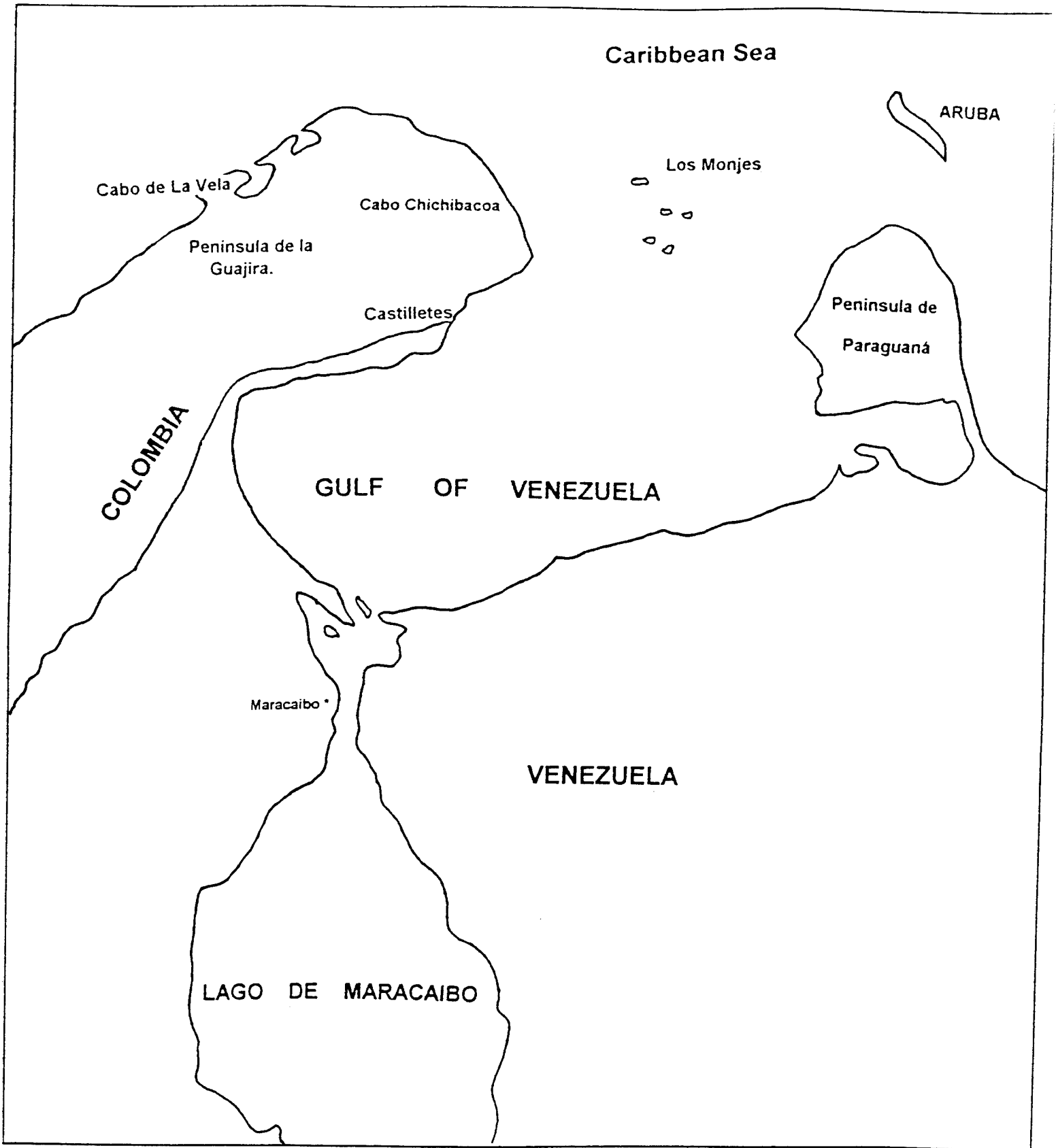


Figure 1. Location of the Los Monjes Islands to the northeast of the Guajira Peninsula (Gulf of Venezuela).

## II. THE BORDER SECURITY ISSUES

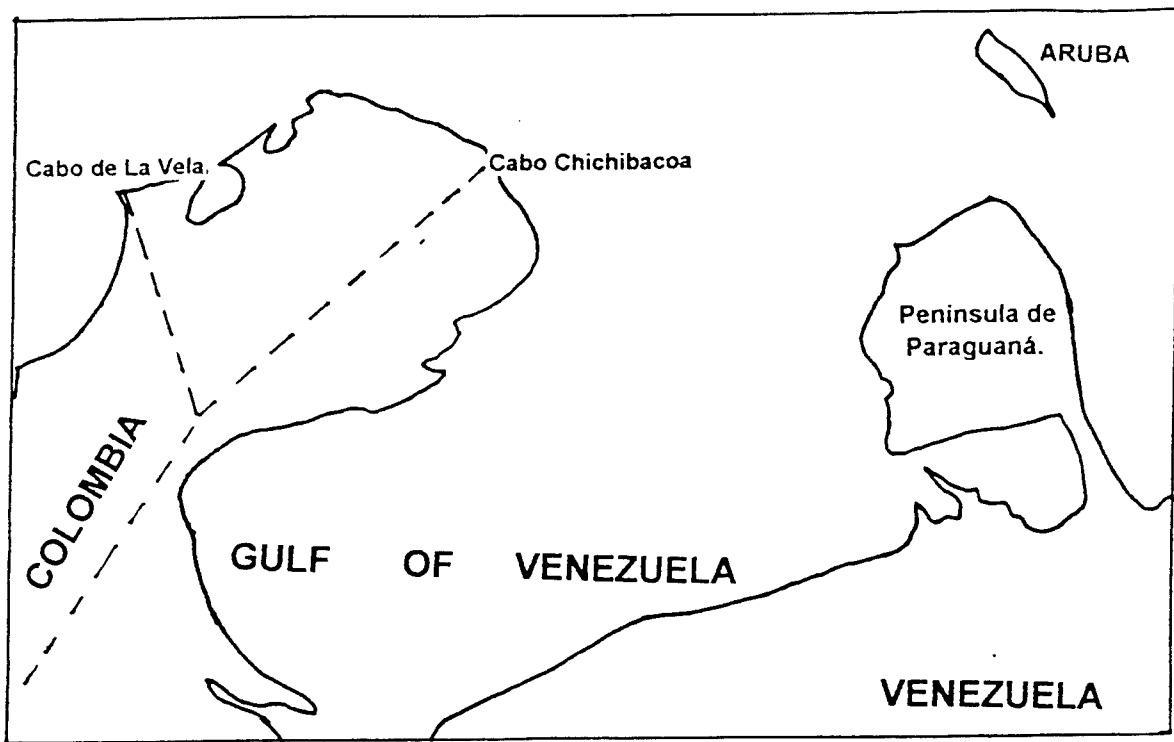
### A. THE MARITIME DISPUTE OVER THE GULF OF VENEZUELA

#### 1. General Overview

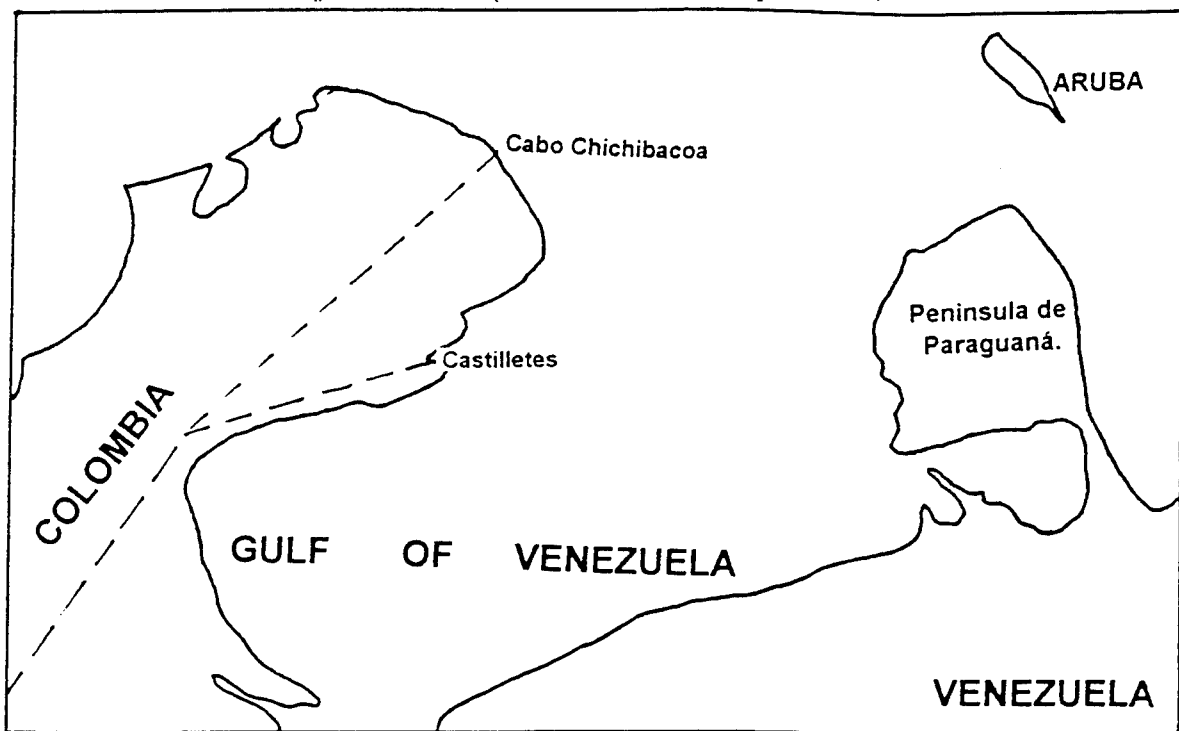
As is the case of many South American territorial disputes, the problem stems from the imprecise definition of the frontiers under Spanish rule. The Guajira Peninsula was not very attractive to the Spaniards because it lacked mineral resources and people, and development was very low. However, the demarcation of maritime borders between Venezuela and Colombia have gone through changes in response to border demarcations in the Guajira Peninsula. When the border with Colombia was established at Cabo de la Vela in 1810, Venezuela had a territorial sea limits of three nautical miles. If Venezuela had retained the original border at Cabo de La Vela, its corresponding territorial waters would have expanded from three nautical miles to twelve nautical miles in accordance with the later developing Law of the Sea. However, in respect to the Pombo-Michelena Treaty in 1842, the reduction of the western border from Cabo de La Vela to Cabo Chichibacoa, resulted in the loss of the corresponding littoral area and eventually also included a loss of: maritime jurisdictional rights of over 40,000 square kilometers of territorial waters, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, and the continental shelf (which makes up most of the loss in maritime jurisdiction). (Fig. 2).

Afterwards, the Spanish Treaty of 1891 (known as the *Laudo Espanol*), further reduced the western border from Cabo Chichibacoa to Castilletes. The loss of land was exacerbated by the additional loss of territorial waters through an unfortunate interpretation over the "mogotes" (archipelagos) Los Monjes; which further extended the loss of maritime and submarine areas, including the loss of some rights over the mouth of the Gulf of Venezuela (which previously had been exclusively Venezuelan). ( Fig. 3).

Later in 1922, arbitration by the Swiss Federal Council failed to solve the maritime dispute over the waters of the Gulf of Venezuela. In 1941, the Treaty on Border Demarcation and Navigation of Common Rivers (*Santos-Lopez Contreras*) was signed,



**Figure 2.** Reduction of the Venezuelan western border from Cabo de la Vela to Cabo Chichibacoa in the Guajira Peninsula (Pomo-Micelena Treaty of 1842).



**Figure 3.** Reduction of the Venezuelan western border from Cabo Chichibacoa to Castilletes in the Guajira Peninsula (Spanish Treaty of 1891).

addressing among other issues the border demarcation along the Guajira Peninsula<sup>19</sup> but did not address the extension of the maritime boundary into the Gulf of Venezuela. The Santos-Lopez Contreras Treaty was criticized extensively by Venezuelans who felt too much territory had been granted to Colombia.

Although several treaties such as the Spanish Treaty of 1891, the Swiss Federal Council of 1922, and the Treaty of Border Demarcation and Navigation of Common Rivers were signed defining the ground border between Venezuela and Colombia, the extension of the maritime boundary into the Gulf of Venezuela was never clearly established. With the development of the Law of the Sea and its concepts, a new challenge emerged centered on the final resolution of the issues.

Central to the dispute is the ownership of the Los Monjes Archipelago; possession of these islands provides the legal basis for extending the maritime frontier into the key mouth of the Maracaibo Basin and possible oil areas in the Gulf of Venezuela itself.<sup>20</sup> Since 1528, Los Monjes Archipelago have been under control of Venezuela beginning with the Provincia de Venezuela, the Captaincy General of Venezuela, the Department of Venezuela and finally the Republic of Venezuela.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, after several intents to annex the Archipelago to Colombia, in 1952 the Colombian Foreign Affairs Minister sent a diplomatic letter to the Venezuelan Ambassador in Bogota recognizing in "an indisputable way" the Venezuelan sovereignty over Los Monjes.<sup>22</sup> The diplomatic letter also stated that because Colombia recognized Venezuelan sovereignty over the Archipelago it would not oppose nor challenge in any form the legal authority of

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<sup>19</sup> Colombia: A Country Study, p. 273.

<sup>20</sup> Child, Geopolitics and Conflict in South America: quarrels among neighbors, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> "Los limites entre Venezuela y Colombia: Documentos Oficiales que los han establecido," Ediciones de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, Caracas, Venezuela, 1993, p. 526.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Venezuela to exercise sovereignty over Los Monjes. The ramifications of this decision by Colombia can be considered as a critical mistake in the conduct of foreign affairs since it effectively and irrevocably granted Venezuela an important legal basis to defending its maritime and submarine rights over the Gulf of Venezuela.

The relative political compatibility of both governments to settle this issue has played an important role in the various outcomes. When both countries shared a similar type of government at a given time, relations tended to improve. Conversely relationships tended to deteriorate if one was a democracy and the other a dictatorship. For example, the Los Monjes islands were militarily occupied by Venezuela under the dictatorship of General Marcos Perez Jimenez (1953-1958). This action was taken in response to Colombian arguments calling for the extension of the continental shelf off the Guajira Peninsula into the waters adjacent to the Gulf of Venezuela; and their observations that the Los Monjes do not possess their own territorial sea nor continental shelf. Based on this argument, the boundary proposed by Colombia would bisect the entrance to the Gulf of Venezuela at a point equidistant between the two countries. This would place the Los Monjes islands within Colombian territorial waters, allowing it to expand its national territory into the Caribbean based on a 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone around the islands.<sup>23</sup> At stake also are the control and rights to estimated oil reserves of close to 10 billion barrels in possible offshore deposits.<sup>24</sup>

The position of Colombia in denying any territorial sea to Los Monjes is generated in response to the proximity of the islands to the Colombian mainland. The archipelago (or the closest island) is located only 19 miles from the Colombian coast. Therefore it is impossible for both countries, Colombia and Venezuela, to claim 12 miles of territorial sea within the area. Additionally, some Colombian jurists have argued that Los Monjes should be considered keys rather than islands because they are "crag" surrounded by sea which would not admit nor support any kind of human settlement. Venezuela refutes this

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<sup>23</sup> Colombia: A Country Study, p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

concept, arguing that Los Monjes can not be considered keys because they are not coral formations. More importantly, during the high tides the islands are never covered. This is the main factor in considering Los Monjes islands with legal rights to a territorial sea and continental shelf. This has been the main obstacle in reaching a settlement. Colombia recognizes Venezuelan rights to territorial seas but is unwilling to recognize similar rights over the continental shelf.<sup>25</sup>

## **2. The Dispute and Analysis of Concepts**

The maritime perspective stresses that the control of the oceans is the best way to project power. The oceans of the world traditionally have been classified under the following definitions: internal waters, territorial seas, and high seas. Each country has its own preference for maximizing the benefits derived from the Law of the Sea. However, in the case of Venezuela and Colombia their interests over the maritime dispute of the Gulf of Venezuela makes more difficult the application of different concepts stated in the Law of the Sea.

The present section examines the application of concepts such as territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf, and exclusive economic zone. Colombia and Venezuela have been trying to settle the issue for more than 30 years. Both nations differ with the application of concepts because any final decision over the dispute will have a very important impact on their national interests.

### ***a. Territorial Sea***

The territorial sea is a belt of ocean which is measured seaward from the baseline of the coastal or island nation and is subject to its sovereignty. At present it is internationally accepted as a distance of 12 nautical miles from the coast.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Los Limites entre Venezuela y Colombia: Documentos Oficiales que los han establecido, p. 526.

<sup>26</sup> The Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations, NNP q (Rev. A), FMFM 1-10, Washington, D.C., 1989, pp. 1-13.

If this concept is applied to the case of Colombia, the extension of its territorial seas by 12 nautical miles would place the Colombian boundary several miles from the center of the Gulf of Venezuela. Venezuela applies this concept by measuring 12 nautical miles along the prolongation of the existing land border in Castilletes (Fig. 4). The different applications are based on the distinct approaches whereby the Colombians argue that the coastlines involved are opposite and the Venezuelans argue instead that they are not opposite but adjacent. Using the Venezuelan interpretation, a wide corridor would bisect the center of the Gulf. This corridor would in fact constitute a partial or complete area considered as a contiguous zone, where the individual states would exercise powers that differ from those exercised over the territorial seas. For Venezuela it is very important to preserve this corridor or navigation canal without any restriction from Colombia that could potentially impede or obstruct the necessary communication from Lake Maracaibo. This an issue of extreme importance to Venezuela.

The location of Los Monjes in the northern part of the Gulf of Venezuela represents another problem further complicating the demarcation of both nation's territorial seas. Los Monjes are islands. Furthermore, they generate territorial sea, and as discussed previously, they are only 19 nautical miles from the Colombian coastline. When the concept of territorial sea is applied to this case, both nations find their territorial seas overlapping one another. In this case, given the situation that there are only 19 nautical miles, each nation should technically enjoy only 9.5 nautical miles of territorial sea.

***b. Contiguous Zone***

A contiguous zone is defined as an area extending seaward from the territorial sea in which the coastal or island nation may exercise the control necessary to prevent or punish infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration, and sanitary laws and regulations that occur within its territory or territorial sea. As is internationally accepted, the contiguous zone extends 12 nautical miles from the base-lines used to measure the

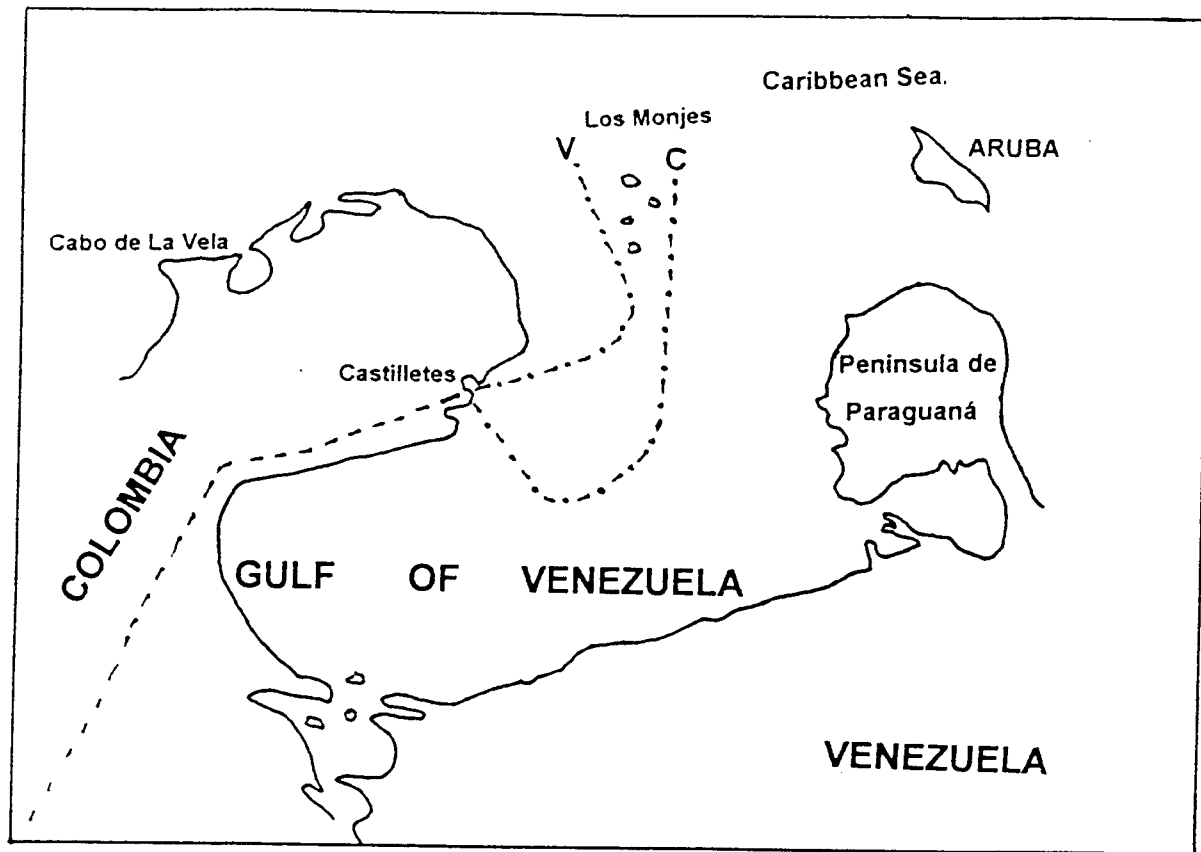


Figure 4. Application of the concept of Territorial Sea by Venezuela (V) and by Colombia (C).

territorial sea.<sup>27</sup>

The application of a contiguous zone to a Colombian territorial sea boundary north of Castilletes would not impede Venezuelan access to the Gulf of Venezuela. Traditional superpowers and maritime-expansionist nations such as the United Kingdom in the past and the United States at present, have resisted any attempts by other nations to extend their territorial seas particularly in situations that could affect their navigation rights. For Venezuela it is vital to its national interests to keep its navigation rights over the Gulf of Venezuela and ability to control the adjacent maritime areas off its coasts, hence Venezuela's ongoing concern with Colombian intentions in reference to the status of its territorial sea.

*c. Continental Shelves*

The juridical continental shelf of a coastal or island nation consists of the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baseline used to measure the territorial sea where the continental margin does not extend that distance. The continental shelf may not extend beyond 350 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea or 100 nautical miles from the 2,500 meter isobath, whichever is greater. Although the coastal or island nation exercises sovereign rights over the continental shelf for purposes of exploring and exploiting its natural resources, the legal status of the superjacent water is not affected. Moreover, all nations have the right to lay submarine cables and pipelines on the continental shelf.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps this is the one concept that has presented the greatest difficulty to reaching an agreement. Colombia claims the use of a half line as the only method and herein lies the fundamental difference between the two countries. The use of the half line is not the only method available but simply one among several other options that could be pursued in resolving this issue. The demarcation of the continental shelf between two

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-18.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-23.

adjacent or opposite coastlines should be solved by mutual agreement and in conformity with the international law. Additionally, it is important to stress that the half line method will not result or lead to the principle of equity in the case of the Gulf, hence Venezuela's rejection of this method. For example, the precedent adjudicated by the International Court of Justice in reference to the dispute between Denmark and Holland against Germany concerning the demarcation of the continental shelf in the North Sea made it clear that the use of the half line method was not an exclusive procedure in resolving this type of dispute.<sup>29</sup> This decision provides a legal reference for Venezuela's continued position against the use of the half line method. Additionally, the existence of Los Monjes islands in the area precludes the use of the half line method and constitutes another important factor in the continued rejection of this method (Fig. 5). The location of Los Monjes in close proximity to the Colombian coastline impedes the application of the concept of continental shelf between the Venezuelan islands and the Colombian mainland. The use of this concept in overlapping territorial seas would not make any sense (Fig. 6). However, the projection of Los Monjes territorial sea to the Caribbean should not be in any case disqualified. There are those that argue that Los Monjes should be Colombian territory because their proximity to Colombia's mainland. However, this alone is insufficient based on historical precedence as exemplified by Colombia's possession of the islands of San Andres (located about 120 nautical miles east of the Nicaraguan coast and 430 from the Colombian), Providencia (located about 150 nautical miles from Nicaragua and 460 nautical miles from Colombia) and other keys such as Quitasueno Bank, due north of Providencia; Roncador Key, due east of Providencia; and Serrana Bank, north of Roncador and east of Quitasueno (Fig. 7). In this case, Colombia is currently exercising both territorial sea and continental shelf against Nicaraguan claims.

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<sup>29</sup> Ruben Carpio Castillo, "Geopolitica de Venezuela," Editorial Ariel-Seix Barral Venezolana, Caracas, Venezuela, 1981, p. 148.

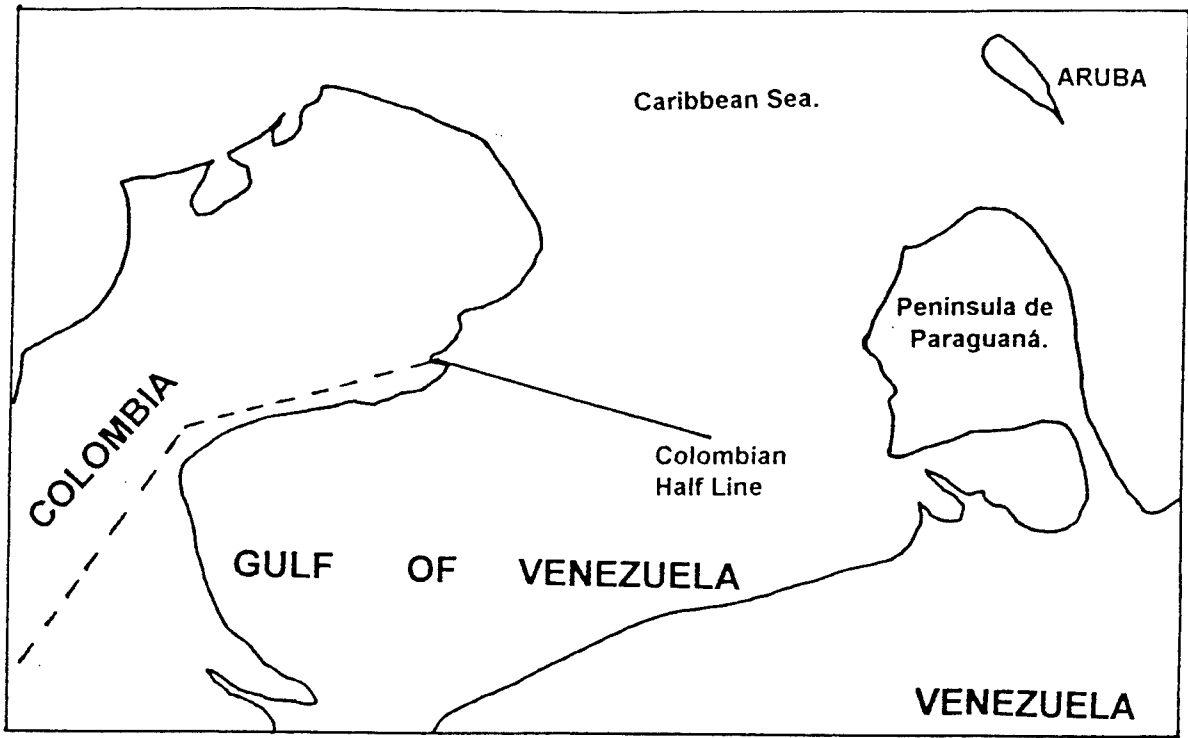


Figure 5. LMC = Half Line Method Proposed by Colombia.

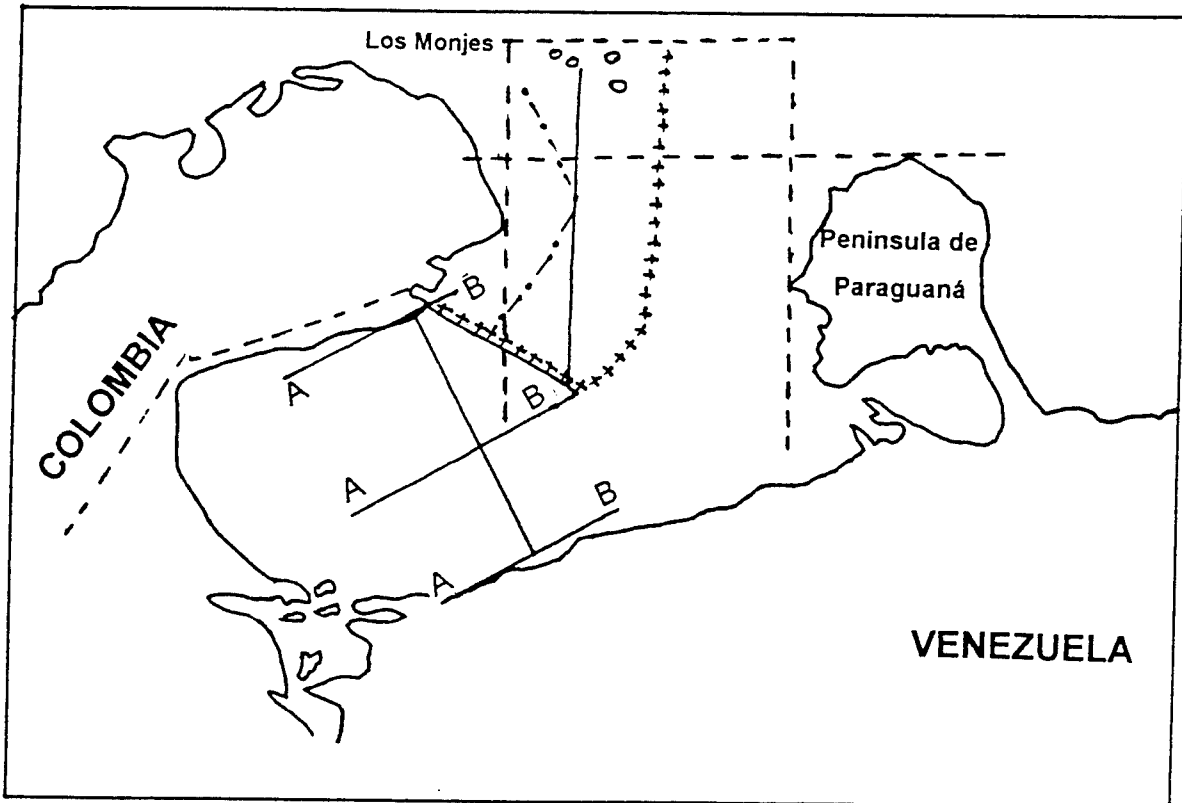


Figure 6. This figure represents the proposed Territorial Sea (A) and the proposed Continental Shelf (B) by Colombia.

*d. Exclusive Economic Zone*

Exclusive economic zones (EEZ'S) are the resource-related zones adjacent to the coast and extending beyond the territorial sea. The coastal or island nation may exercise jurisdiction in the zone over the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations, and structures having economic purposes; over marine scientific research (with reasonable limitations); and over some aspects of marine environmental protection (primarily implementation of international vessel-source pollution control standards).<sup>30</sup>

In the Gulf of Venezuela, the exclusive economic zone (pending demarcation) with Colombia is small but still very important for Venezuela, given the special economic characteristics of the area.

**3. Recent Events**

In the mid 1960's, during Colombian President Lleras Restrepo's administration, it was alleged in Venezuela that Colombia had granted certain U.S. oil companies prospecting concessions in Venezuelan territory, specifically, in the Gulf of Venezuela. Caracas protested that the Gulf was an inland waterway whose waters were "traditionally and historically Venezuelan."<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the two governments agreed to engage in talks on the delineation of marine and submarine areas. In 1968, the Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister defined his government's position on the subject as uncompromising and unwilling to concede any arguments in favor of Colombia's claim.<sup>32</sup>

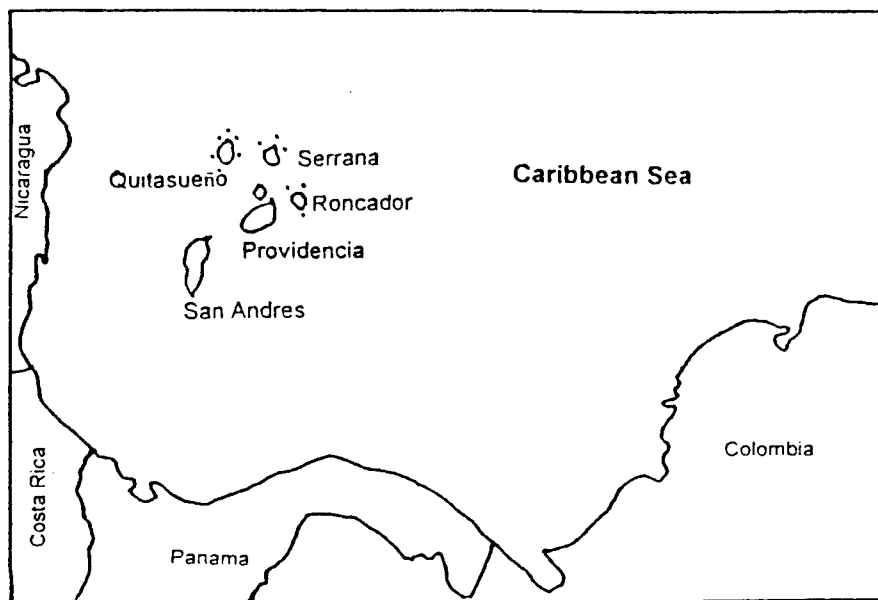
A series of unsuccessful negotiating attempts followed during the remainder of the 1970's and 1980's. Talks continued until 1980, when a tentative agreement was reached on a draft treaty (Hypothesis of Caraballeda) over the delineation of marine areas (Fig. 8). The draft treaty allowed for the passage of all Venezuelan/Colombian merchant vessels and that of their warships and non-commercial state owned vessels. It reaffirmed

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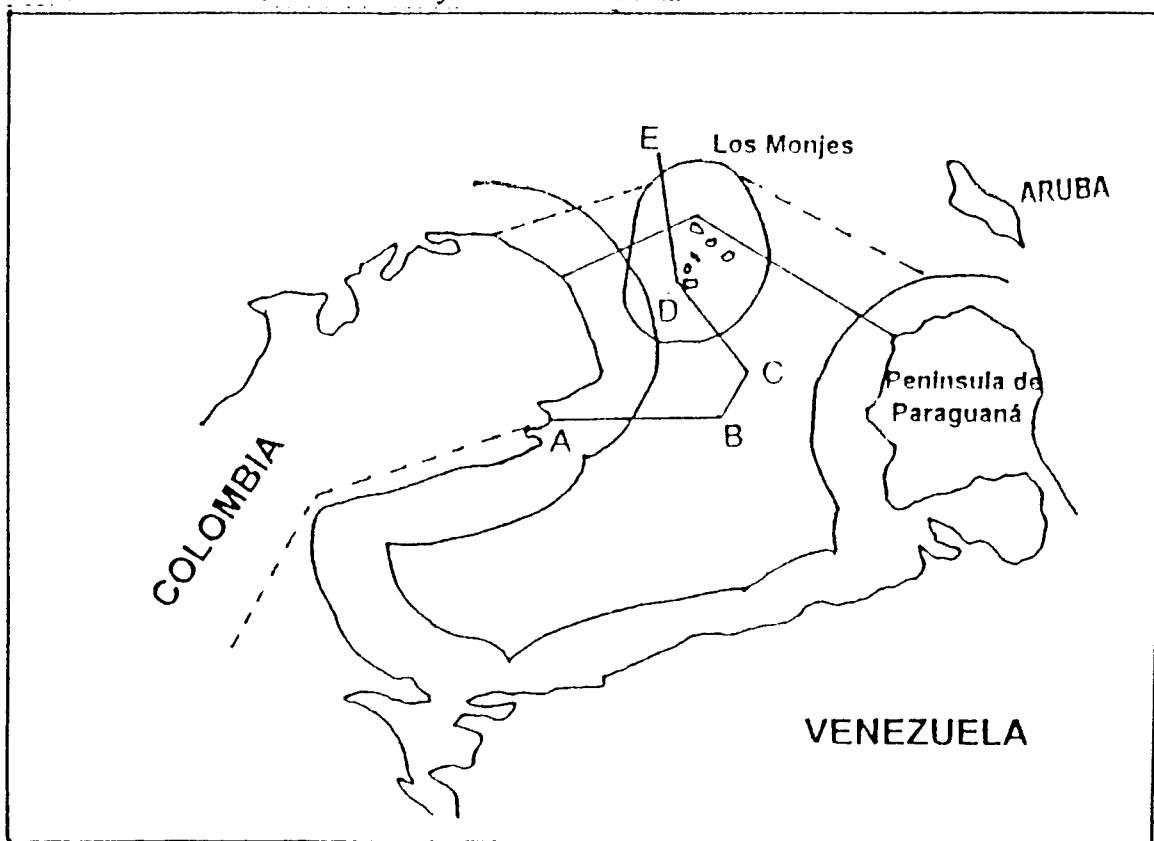
<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-20.

<sup>31</sup> Border and Territorial Disputes, p. 415.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 7.** Colombia's possession of the islands of San Andres, Providencia, and other Keys such as Quitasueño Bank, Roncador Key and Serrana Bank.



**Figure 8.** Hypothesis of Caraballeda in 1980. A, B, C, D, E = Delineation of Territorial Sea proposed by Colombia.

Venezuela's possession of Los Monjes Islands, recognized limited Colombian rights in the Gulf, and also provided for the joint development of oil fields extending across the boundary between the two countries.<sup>33</sup> Opposition to the treaty was widespread in Venezuela on nationalistic grounds and was also opposed (although to a much lesser degree) by some circles in Colombia. Due to a lack of consensus in both nations, the treaty was never ratified and further talks on the issue were suspended later that year. Afterwards, the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice accepted a plea to nullify the 1941 Santos-Lopez Contreras Treaty. This action was viewed with much concern by Colombians, who interpreted the action to mean that the Venezuelans were preparing to take a much tougher negotiating stance. Colombia's concerns continued to increase over Venezuela's aggressive posture favoring Argentina during the Falkland Island conflict, the demonstrated limited applicability of the Rio Treaty in deterring and resolving a potential crisis, the purchase of twenty four F-16 fighters from the U.S. in 1984-1985, and the increasing number of border incidents.<sup>34</sup> Tensions between both countries continued to increase in regards to another important source of friction, illegal immigration of Colombians to Venezuela.<sup>35</sup> The border between Colombia and Venezuela is 2,200 kilometers in length. Most of it is either sparsely populated or heavily forested, particularly along the southwest portion. However, the border south of the Guajira Peninsula is one of the most populated in Latin America. In contrast to typical Latin American border zones, it is not an "empty" area where the frontier cuts through a region low in population density. This stretch of Colombian-Venezuelan border is populated by a rather homogeneous mestizo group that shares many ethnic traits and family ties with Colombians.<sup>36</sup> This makes it relatively easy for Colombians to be assimilated when they

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<sup>33</sup> Venezuela a Country Study, p. 188.

<sup>34</sup> Geopolitics and Conflict in South America, p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

cross. There is a significant difference in the standard of living and per capita income (as well as much higher rate of unemployment) in Colombia. Additionally, smuggling activities along the porous border makes this area difficult to control. Specifically, the contemporary context of illegal activities have taken on an emphasis of drug and arms running.

The drugs cartels have developed an extraordinary technology (including the use of fiber glass mid-jet submarines) to ship drugs to vessels in the Caribbean sea and then to transport the merchandise to United States or to European markets.<sup>37</sup> Maracaibo and other coastal provinces in Venezuela have changed with the cocaine traffic. There has been a boom in real estate prices despite a recession and residents have complained in the press about the presence of hired gunmen (equipped with landing strips and four-wheel drive vehicles) who work for large haciendas in Zulia. Venezuelans acknowledged that without radar to control its land and sea area their porous borders with Colombia make drug smuggling easy.

Tensions finally peaked in mid-August 1987 with an incursion into Venezuelan waters at the mouth of the gulf by a Colombian corvette, the Caldas, in conjunction with overflights by Colombian Mirage fighters. The presence of the Colombian corvette was interpreted by Venezuelan authorities to be an attempt to assert Colombia's claims to sovereignty of the area. In reality it may have represented a symbolic gesture to bring international attention and pressure to bear upon Venezuela to resolve the dispute with a compromise. Venezuela responded immediately with a diplomatic protest. In addition, F-16 fighters and ground troops along the border were placed on alert pending the failure of a diplomatic resolution and withdrawal of the Colombian vessel. For a short time open hostilities appeared imminent. As a result there has been no resumption of formal talks on the delineation of maritime waters until recently, when former Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez stated "that Colombia had legal rights in about 10 percent of the Gulf

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<sup>37</sup> "Narcotraficantes emplean alta tecnologia," Diario El Espectador, Bogota, Colombia, (EFE), February, 1994.

of Venezuela." This announcement (along with the popular discontent caused by his austerity program) provoked a coup attempt in February, 1992, by a faction of the Venezuelan Army known as "the Bolivarianos," which among other things had rejected any territorial concession to Colombia.

In December 1993 with talks on resolving the territorial difference on hold, at least until after the new Venezuelan President took office in February, 1994, exchanges between the two governments became noticeably irritating. The tension originated with an incident on November 1993, when four members of the Venezuelan National Guard were wounded in an ambush, apparently by Colombian guerrillas, near the Venezuelan border post of Cutufi in Tachira state. A week later five Venezuelan guardsmen were killed in another ambush in the remote Alto Apure region, bordering on Colombia's Arauca Department. These incidents provoked a protest note from the Venezuelan Foreign Minister, in which he reproached the Colombian government for doing nothing about these recurring "aggressions planned in Colombian territory."<sup>38</sup> Later, in 1994 President Caldera mentioned the renewal of talks on the sea boundary dispute but despite Caldera's apparent commitment to seeking solution, no consensus or basis for understanding was reached during the first six months of bilateral negotiations between the two countries.

## **B. ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION**

### **1. General Overview**

The illegal immigration of Colombians to Venezuela constitutes a serious source of friction in bilateral relationships between the two nations. This is true especially for Venezuela as the receiving country must shoulder the economic burden derived from this social phenomenon.

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<sup>38</sup> "Government sends Communique to Colombia on Border Attacks," Daily Report: Latin America, FBIS-LAT-223, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Washington, D.C., December 4, 1993, p. 54.

The economic costs for Venezuela include: resources for satisfying the immigrants basic necessities, the displacement of native workers, the increase in indexes of national unemployment, the additional burden on public and social services, and the mounting costs incurred with the increase in crime.

The precise number of illegal immigrants in Venezuela is unknown. However, it is estimated that the number varies between 500,000 and 3,000,000 with more than 70 percent of the illegal immigrants originating in Colombia.<sup>39</sup> Many of the illegal aliens enter Venezuela via the infamous "green roads," others have used bribes offered to border officials in exchange for entrance and/or false documentation, and still others initially enter as tourists and never legalize their status, but continue to live and work with tourists cards, usually gaining employment in low paying jobs.<sup>40</sup> In Venezuela, this situation is complicated by legislation which allows foreign women (who give birth to children while residing in Venezuela) to remain indefinitely in the country. The large flow of Colombian workers to Venezuela may be considered to be an important phenomenon of the twentieth century in terms of its socioeconomic impact. During the most recent years, the massive immigration of Colombian workers has been characterized by consisting primarily of "illegals," starting from 1970.<sup>41</sup> Colombia became the supplier of workers to Venezuela during this period of quick economical development. However, this migration was uncontrolled and without legal procedures.

## **2. The Origin and Nature of the Problem**

Venezuela experienced an economic boom during the 1970's as a result of rising oil prices. This in turn prompted an urban migration as people from rural areas moved into the cities in search of higher wages. This in turn created a vacuum in the agricultural

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<sup>39</sup> Venezuela a Country Study, p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Los de Afuera: Un Estudio Analitico del Proceso Migratorio en Venezuela, CEPAM, Caracas, Venezuela, 1985, p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis y Fronteras: Relaciones Fronterizas Binacionales de Colombia con Venezuela y Ecuador, Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1989, p. 139.

sector which was filled primarily by Colombian migrants. It is also important to note the impact of political instability throughout the region on immigration. In Latin America the 1970's were characterized by a series of repressive dictatorships. (i.e., Chile, Argentina and Peru). Political violence was common in countries such as Colombia<sup>42</sup> and Uruguay for different reasons as well as in other Latin American countries. Many of the politically and economically displaced equated Venezuela with the famous legend of El Dorado,<sup>43</sup> a land of gold. Many of the immigrants who have come to Venezuela have done so in search of a better life and in some cases to flee political persecution.

Venezuela per capita income has been one of the highest throughout Latin America.<sup>44</sup> In 1988, per capita income was equal to U.S. \$3,250. By 1991, in response to lower oil prices, it had declined to U.S. \$2,730. However, despite this decrease it is still one of the highest in the region and thus an inducement for continued economic migration from less developed countries.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, since 1958, Venezuela's relative political stability and democratic government have also served as an additional inducement for immigration.

The large and sudden influx of immigrants resulted in a commensurate growth in the rates of: poverty, unemployment, crime, and also resulted in a degree of general social deterioration. This "natural invasion" was directed mainly at the large cities where, based on hopes and expectations, most immigrants looked forward to a better way of life. However, those hopes were dashed when faced with the harsh reality of living in poverty (often under unsanitary and unhealthy conditions) and in newly formed shanty towns

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<sup>42</sup> "Sin Política Migratoria Seguirá la Problemática de los Indocumentados," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, March 7, 1987.

<sup>43</sup> Venezuela a Country Study, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Almanaque Mundial 1992, Editorial América, S.A., U.S.A., 1991, p. 295.

<sup>45</sup> World Development Report 1993: Investing in Health, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 238.

(barrios) in the periphery of major urban centers such as Caracas, Maracaibo, Valencia, etc.

The frontier region between Venezuela and Colombia is one of the most populated and trafficked in Latin America.<sup>46</sup> In the state of Táchira (Venezuela), an average of more than 120,000 people and 10,000 vehicles cross the border on any given day. The boundary between Venezuela and Colombia is difficult and nearly impossible to monitor. This has contributed to the high incidence of drug trafficking, often smuggled in vehicles or on individuals.

Drugs are also brought in by air and dropped into Venezuelan territory. Due to the large influx of immigrants, there are several regions along the border where the immigrant population has come to outnumber the local Venezuelan population. For example, in 1981 it was estimated that between Casigua and the Venezuelan Guajira (Zulia), for each 24,000 Venezuelans there were 140,000 Colombian illegal aliens. The analysis of the social, political, and economical conditions (in both Colombia and Venezuela) could easily provide a simple answer to the unidirectional migratory flow (west-east).

Beginning in the early 1980's, the economic crisis suffered in Venezuela resulted in the growth of a xenophobic feeling often directed at illegal aliens. By this time the influx of illegal aliens had assumed alarming proportions and increasingly was considered by the Venezuelan government as a factor affecting national security and social stability.

Control of the border falls under the jurisdiction of the National Guard. The National Guard is not only responsible for illegal immigration and drug trafficking but also for smuggling activities and confronting guerrilla attacks. The practice of smuggling in the Colombian-Venezuelan border involves the transport of gasoline and foods. In Maracaibo (Zulia), the Venezuelan National Guard has captured large amounts of gasoline

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<sup>46</sup> Child, Jack, Geopolitics and Conflict in South America: Quarrels Among Neighbors, p. 154.

being smuggled in trucks across the border into Colombia.<sup>47</sup> Despite continued success, fuel smuggling continues to be a growing problem.

Additionally, the food smuggling problem is graver still. Small, isolated Colombian towns (i.e., Cucuta and Maicao) survive only by smuggling and extracting foods from Venezuelan frontier towns (i.e., San Antonio de el Táchira). The current Venezuelan economic crisis and the abrupt devaluation of the bolívar (Venezuelan national currency) are partly responsible for the consolidation of the Colombian peso. Colombians travel in mass to buy foods and goods in Venezuelan border towns.<sup>48</sup> In respect to this phenomenon, the Venezuelan National Guard generally responds with acts of repression, the merchants increase prices, and (in spite of the higher prices) there are not enough goods available and the merchandise is frequently not resupplied. As a result, the region has developed many problems. The amount of food that is illegally shipped to the other side of the Venezuelan border is not exactly known, but, it is estimated that there are thousands of tons smuggled on a daily basis. During the month of June 1994, when President Caldera (Venezuela) decreed the control of currency exchange and suspended economical constitutional guarantees (due to the strong economical crisis), the commerce of illegally smuggling food towards Colombia proliferated.<sup>49</sup> In border towns like Paraguaipoa (Venezuela) a great mobilization of food towards Colombia was observed every weekend. Substantial amounts of provisions (i.e., oil foodstuff, sanitary paper, milk, rice, and various other products of primary necessity) were shipped by smuggling means toward Colombia and placed for sale in the main streets of Colombian border towns (i.e., Maicao and Cucuta).

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<sup>47</sup> "Contrabando de Gasolina en la Frontera," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, July 13, 1994.

<sup>48</sup> "Desabastecimiento en la Frontera por el Contrabando de Extracción," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, May 22, 1994.

<sup>49</sup> "Suspensión de Garantías Incrementa Contrabando de Alimentos hacia Colombia," El Nacional Caracas, Venezuela, July 5, 1994.

Of course, this environment of illegal activity along the border region between the two nations stimulates the illegal exodus of Colombian immigrants toward Venezuela. The ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs from Colombia, Mrs. Noemí Sanín de Rubio recently admitted that the number of illegal Colombians in Venezuela is approximately 700,000.<sup>50</sup> However, in 1981 the Ambassador from Colombia, Mr. Cornelio Reyes, calculated the number of illegals to be around two million.<sup>51</sup> Even so, if the number of Colombians legally residing in Venezuela is added in, the figure could be much higher in both counts.

In 1987, during the Gulf of Venezuela crisis, when the Colombian corvette "Caldas" penetrated Venezuelan territorial waters, the Colombians residing in Venezuela submitted a letter of protest to the Colombian President, Mr. Virgilio Barco.<sup>52</sup> That letter was subscribed to by more than 12,000 signatures and declared "consider it fully that there are more than three million (3,000,000) Colombians living in this generous country and your anti-Bolivarian attitude places us in a very uncomfortable situation."

The Venezuelan Institute of Frontier Studies, has also reported on (with great concern) the enormous mass of Colombians, in one form or another, that reside in Venezuela. This Institute, after conducting several analysis concerning the immigration issue has arrived at the conclusion that after former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez implanted the politics of open doors (by earth, by sea, or by air) with Colombia, the Colombian population in Venezuela could easily pass the figure of five million (5,000,000).<sup>53</sup>

In order to have an idea of what this means to Venezuela, it is necessary to remark that this alarming amount of immigrants easily surpasses the total population of Denmark,

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<sup>50</sup> " Hacia un Estado Colombiano en Venezuela," El Globo, Caracas, Venezuela, November 1, 1993.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Reporte Especial del Instituto de Estudios Fronterizos, Caracas, Venezuela, 1993.

overcomes the population of Norway and Finland, and is equivalent to the population of both Panama and Costa Rica. For this reason, in Venezuela it is considered that the mass of Colombians residing in the country could constitute "a Colombian state in Venezuelan territory."<sup>54</sup>

The concept of "a Colombian state in Venezuelan territory" is also reinforced by the legal frame that establishes the new Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia of 1991.<sup>55</sup> New constitutional dispositions in Colombia establish the following points: (1) the children (if born in a foreign country) are considered Colombians by birth if the father and mother are both Colombian citizens; (2) No Colombian by birth will be deprived of his nationality. The qualification as a national Colombian is not lost by the fact of acquiring another nationality; and (3) A Colombian, although having given up the status as a Colombian national, will be judged a traitor if that act is against the national interests of Colombia, in an external war.

Additionally, it is necessary to add to this the negative effect of Presidential Decree #1911, of October 24, 1991, signed by former President Pérez, which ordered the maternities and Venezuelan authorities to accept the birth of children of illegal aliens as Venezuelan citizens with the only requirement being the presentation of two witnesses.<sup>56</sup> However, it maintained the requirement of a series of diverse and complicated steps for citizenship for the children of legitimate Venezuelans.

The effects of Presidential Decree #1911 were so alarming for Venezuela that it obligated the Republic General Attorney, Dr. Ramón Escovar Salom, to solicit its consideration for rejection by President Velásquez in 1993. Previously, in March of 1992, Dr. Escovar Salom had solicited the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice to nullify

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<sup>54</sup> "Hacia un Estado Colombiano en Venezuela," El Globo, Caracas, Venezuela, November 1, 1993.

<sup>55</sup> David Bushnell, The Making of Modern Colombia, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>56</sup> "Diálogo en Colombia," El Nuevo Pais, Caracas, Venezuela, November 23, 1993.

Presidential Decree #1911. An example of the undesirable effects is seen in a social study conducted in the frontier state of Táchira. The study showed that of a total of 2,188 births that occurred between October 24, 1991, and March 31, 1992, 385 (or 18 percent) corresponded to solicitations for citizenship executed by undocumented Colombian parents.<sup>57</sup> The execution of Presidential Decree #1911 constituted a true social problem that created belts of penury and illegal migration of Colombian delinquents. The addition of these two factors added another serious obstacle for the security and development of Venezuela. The actions taken by Republic General Attorney Dr. Escovar Salom against Presidential Decree #1911 created ill feelings in Colombia and made him appear to be a notorious enemy of that country.

In reality, the Venezuelan General Attorney had sufficient juridical foundation against Decree #1911 based on the following arguments: (1) it is a right of Venezuelan national sovereignty to decide on who constitutes its nationals; (2) Decree #1911 is against the Venezuelan National Constitution, the Civil Code, and the Law of Foreigners; (3) the decree offers special privileges (concerning Venezuelan law) to illegal aliens not available to Venezuelan citizens; (4) the decree was not in accordance with the law consecrated in the Venezuelan National Constitution concerning children and knowledge of their parents; (5) it favors the traffic of minors (in age); and (6) it stimulated the growth of illegal immigration to Venezuela.<sup>58</sup>

The Colombian answer to the nullification of Presidential Decree #1911, ordered by President Velásquez (Venezuela), did not take long in appearing. Several representatives of the Colombian government and members of its diplomatic body expressed their rejection of the decision and new position taken by the Venezuelan government. Mr. Jose Dagond, the Consul from Colombia in Venezuela, tried to defend

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<sup>57</sup> "El 17% de Nacidos en el Táchira son de Padres Indocumentados," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, July 7, 1993.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Presidential Decree #1911 by manifesting that Venezuela had violated the universal and fundamental laws of children.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. Recent Events

The situation of uncertainty in the frontier region between Venezuela and Colombia tended to worsen in response to persistent complaints about human rights abuses and violations against Colombian nationals deported from Venezuela.<sup>60</sup>

Every year, an unknown but increasing number of Colombian citizens are deported upon detection in having entered Venezuela in an illegal manner. Like any citizen, the deported person has laws and rights that should be respected by the country that is expelling them from its territory. This is precisely the most sensitive point made by the Colombian government during the most recent treatment of this topic with Venezuela. In 1991, an official number of 1,700 Colombians were deported from Venezuela.<sup>61</sup> In 1992, this figure increased to approximately 2,800.<sup>62</sup> The Colombian government has expressed its concern and has asked the government of Venezuela to carry out the process in a more rapid manner and in accordance with the agreements established in international conventions. Concurrently, Venezuela has also expressed an interest in concluding a treaty for the repatriation of Colombian prisoners detained in Venezuelan jails.

Since the 1970's, Venezuela has experienced an ever increasing amount in relatively violent crimes in border and urban areas. In the border areas the criminal offenses consist of trafficking in drugs, illegal immigration, and kidnappings. In the urban areas the crimes committed include: homicides, robberies of banks, and theft of

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<sup>59</sup> "Hacia un Estado Colombiano en Venezuela," El Globo, Caracas, Venezuela, November 1, 1993.

<sup>60</sup> "Los Indocumentados en Tiempos de Crisis," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, July 31, 1994.

<sup>61</sup> "Colombia Solicita a Venezuela un trato justo para los Deportados," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, March 4, 1993.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

vehicles (which generally are transported to the other side of the border). In a great number of these criminal offenses it is common to find that Colombian citizens are the perpetrators. This adds to the negative perception of Colombian immigrants in Venezuela. Generally, the Colombians in Venezuela suffer from a negative reputation that is associated with narcotrafficking, robbery, and other types of illegal activity.

Venezuela is the country with the second highest concentration of Colombian prisoners (after the United States). Recently, the Consulado of Colombia in Venezuela estimated that there are approximately 2,500 Colombian prisoners in Venezuelan jails.<sup>63</sup> The majority of these prisoners cause internal problems in Venezuelan jails when they try to exercise underworld control over the other prisoners through the use of terror and violence. Recently, jail disorders occurred in Venezuela at the beginning of 1994 when several Colombian prisoners were murdered.<sup>64</sup> The existence of criminal gangs of Colombian prisoners was confirmed as well as the fact that they maintained the internal control and traffic of drugs and their tendency to exercise diverse kinds of abuses on the other prisoners.

Finally, the governments of Colombia and Venezuela reached an agreement on the repatriation of prisoners and the exact number of prisoner exchanges was made known. Colombia would repatriate two Venezuelan prisoners that they held while Venezuela was going to repatriate more than 2,500 Colombian prisoners. However, the Colombian government could not fulfill its part of the agreement due to limitations of its jail space.<sup>65</sup>

One could conclude from the information provided that the problem of illegal Colombian immigration toward Venezuela constitutes an extremely delicate topic in the

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<sup>63</sup> "Se Firmará Acuerdo de Repatriación de Presos Colombianos," Diario 2001, Editorial de Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, January 7, 1994.

<sup>64</sup> "Ethnic Feud in Venezuelan Jail Kills 106," New York Times, V 143, January 5, 1994.

<sup>65</sup> "Se Firmará Acuerdo de Repatriación de Presos Colombianos," Diario 2001, Editorial de Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, January 7, 1994.

relationship of the two countries. In Venezuela, there is a feeling of urgency to renovate the Law of Immigration and Extranjería that has been in effect since 1937. Undoubtedly times have changed and currently this Law has little to contribute in an urban and democratic Venezuela. The new Law of Immigration in Venezuela must consider the reality of being a territorial neighbor of Colombia with the problem of illegal immigration. The complex and internal Colombian situation concerning the high index of violence, crime, narcotrafficking, and guerrilla activity obligate their citizens to seek a better horizon. On the other hand, Venezuela faces the meager reality of potential total anarchy concerning immigration when an effective policy toward immigration control does not exist to help put things in order. In Venezuela it is necessary to set in place an effective migratory policy that previously has not existed, currently does not exist, nor has it been planned for in the immediate future. Consideration for the creation of Zones of Border Security<sup>66</sup> is of immediate necessity in order to avoid the incremental growth of crimes of all types in the Venezuela and Colombia border region.

Diverse agreements surrounding border security have been signed between the governments of Venezuela and Colombia. In 1991, the Ministers of Defense from both countries agreed to meet every six months in order to improve the cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia pertaining to drug trafficking and insurgent activities in the border region.<sup>67</sup> The two nations recognize the strategic significance and national security relative to maintaining bilateral relationships in order to gain stability in the frontier region. The governments have agreed that the creation of bilateral commissions for confronting and resolving the problems of frontier security as well as the creation of commissions to obtain border frontier integration can facilitate understanding and cooperation between Colombia and Venezuela.

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<sup>66</sup> "Colombia-Venezuela: Crisis o Negociación?" Fundación Friedrich Ebert de Colombia, Centro de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

In Venezuela, the reception of illegal Colombians persists as a reason for governmental authorities to ratify their definitions concerning border security policies, for a chauvinist position, and to create distrust of the citizens in the democratic institutions. However, it is necessary to clarify that decisions and positions taken by the Venezuelan government relative to migratory policies (i.e., the nullification of Presidential Decree #1911) in no manner should be taken as acts of hostility toward Colombian citizens (even though the majority of incidents and subsequent actions are based on the activities of Colombian nationals). In reality, the decisions of the Venezuelan government were and are taken in order to face the serious (and numerous problems of and association with the) issue of illegal immigration.

Venezuela is a recipient of migration and it is interested in the productive human resource that come to help in its development. This attitude of interest does not exclude, in any form or sense, the Colombian population, which is respected and dear in Venezuela. The population that Venezuela does not desire is the inefficient and illegal migrant. In reality, it is necessary to clarify that the general denomination of illegal aliens not only applies to the Colombian citizens but to all of the surrounding countries. To clearly state it: the position against illegal aliens is not automatically an anti-Colombian position.

The matter of illegal Colombian immigration toward Venezuela should be resolved with seriousness and maturity on behalf of the two governments. Of course, these negotiations should continue to consider the respective national interests of both nations but at the same time should seek an all comprehensive form in order to search for solutions that better harmonize the interests of the two countries. It is necessary to overcome and to remove this painful obstacle in order to enlarge the base of understanding between Venezuela and Colombia.

Finally, relative to the problem of illegal Colombian immigration, the creation of a bilateral commission that will work exclusively on the migratory issue is of supreme urgency. This initiative should be taken as soon as possible in order to alleviate tensions and promote cooperation. However, it is necessary to emphasize that Venezuela's

fundamental point, as a sovereign country, is that it has the initiative and fundamental right of determining who is (and under what criteria constitutes) a national. No nation in the international environment delegates this decision to another.

## **C. CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY**

### **1. General Overview**

This section analyzes the impact of the cross-border insurgency on the Venezuelan-Colombian bilateral relationship. Although Colombia's long tradition of democracy remains strong, there are some chronic problems with violence generated by guerrilla movements which have not shown any progress in the negotiations with the government to achieve the pacification of the country. The Venezuelan government perceives the Colombian guerrilla movement to be a phenomenon that intensifies bilateral tensions between the two countries. This is especially due to the different levels of activity in the guerrilla movement of the two countries. Previously, in Venezuela, the guerrilla forces had completed their cycle and accepted civilian life as their legal status. However, the apparent revival (on the national scene) of insurgent groups similar to "Bandera Roja," are currently attributed to the influence of the Colombian guerrilla. On the other hand, Colombia is suffering the effervescent problem of guerrilla movements, almost analogous to a conflict without resolution.

The nature and constitution of the Venezuelan southwestern border with Colombia favors the vitality of guerrilla groups and guerrilla activities. In this area, the border is delineated by the Arauca River and most of the vegetation is jungle which offers an ideal environment for the development of insurgent activities. However, due to the great difficulty of the terrain in the area, internal supply and risk of detection and direct confrontation with the Colombian Army during their operations make the search for logistic support in the international environment vital to each guerrilla group in the pursuit of their goals. In view of the necessity to seek support outside the reach of the Colombian internal security system, the geographical area along the Colombian-

Venezuelan border is considered to be "outlying" of the same, and allows the guerrilla greater flexibility for subversive acts.

The inclusion of guerrilla groups as bodies (institutions) of interest with the capacity to pressure, as in the case of Colombia, is due to the fact that in the last few years the Colombian guerrilla movement has passed from being a secondary actor on the national scene to one of becoming a central actor on the political scene.<sup>68</sup> In reality the Colombian guerrilla was transformed into a recognized spokesman for the opposition to the government. In 1984 Colombia signed a truce that legitimized the guerrilla movement by providing it with the status of a legal belligerent.<sup>69</sup>

The levels of Colombian civic participation have increased the convergence<sup>70</sup> of two processes in the political stage: (1) the growing political role of the guerrilla; (2) the emergence of various social movements (the result of the decline of traditional political institutions) that consist of groups with high capacity for pressure. Previously, these groups had been ignored in the decision-making process.

## **2. Origin of Colombian Guerrillas**

The convergence of external and internal factors played an important role in the emergence of the guerrilla movement in Colombia.<sup>71</sup> The external factors included the influence of the Cuban revolution and the intentions of Colombian revolutionaries to apply the concept of "guerrilla focus" during the 1960's as a strategy to achieve political power.

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<sup>68</sup> Fondo Editorial CEREC. Crisis y Fronteras: Relaciones Fronterizas de Colombia con Venezuela y Ecuador, Universidad de Los Andes, Cristina Barrera, Bogota, Colombia, 1989, p. 146.

<sup>69</sup> Colombia a Country Study, p. xxvi.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>71</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1992, p. 39.

It also included the effects of the split within the Colombian Communist Party between the followers of the Pro-Soviet line and the followers of the Chinese Maoist revolutionary ideals.

Although these external factors promoted the guerrilla movement in Colombia, it was the internal factors that allowed the emergence and development of the insurgent movement. In Colombia, the intense passion of the political fight between Conservatives and Liberals and the struggle for land in the coffee sector degenerated into political violence.<sup>72</sup> The price of coffee after WWII increased, making large-scale production profitable and squeezing the small growers. In the coffee zones, the period known as "the violence" seems to be the ultimate political expression of the ongoing struggle for land and social mobility. The "violence" experienced during 1930 to 1948 was not only a result of actions taken by the elites. It also can be explained by the desire of the coffee workers to obtain control of the land. They sought freedom to plan and execute productive work and to enjoy the product of that work through the creation of "Peasant Republics." These "Republics" were formed as quasi-independent zones for self-defense and self-administration in agrarian matters.<sup>73</sup>

This intense period of interparty political violence accelerated with the assassination of the populist Liberal leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, on April 9, 1948. The assassination resulted in the intensification of the infamous period known as "La Violencia." This social phenomenon claimed (generally in the rural areas) the lives of more than 200,000 victims in the following twenty years.

In response to the violence and to the dictatorship of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957), Liberals and Conservatives agreed to a settlement known as the

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<sup>72</sup> Charles Berquis, Violence in Colombia, The labor Movement (1930-1946) and the Origins of the Violence, Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, Wilmington, Delaware, p. 51.

<sup>73</sup> Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, p. 17.

National Front.<sup>74</sup> The agreement established alternate control of the Presidency and shared offices of the ministries from 1958 to 1974. This monopoly by the Conservatives and the Liberal parties, through bi-party alternation of the Presidency, resulted in the following consequences: the emergence of a special style of authoritarianism and militarism because the Colombian Armed Forces became autonomous in the handling of public order; the submission of the civilian population in the country to a permanent regimen of exception for the institutionalization of a stable form of government; the concentration of power with the elites of the two parties; and in general, a new stage in the political struggle between the two parties (a bureaucratic confrontation began and displaced the traditional ideological scuffling).

It is necessary to consider the heterogeneity and dispersion of the guerrillas in Colombia. The most important Colombian guerrilla movements<sup>75</sup> are: the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL). The FARC emerged from the old "Peasants Republics" and previously were allies of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC). The FARC proposed the concept of grassroots support in the form of a local or regional mode of social and peasant warfare. In this case, the guerrilla, the PCC, and the rural organization are all mutually reinforced, eventually becoming a regional force. The Army of National Liberation (ELN) initially consisted of proto-guerrillas returning from Cuba in 1965. The ELN, with the support of university students, established "focos guerrilleros," a militaristic extreme without any political direction in the departments of Santander and Arauca (both located along the border with Venezuela). The Popular Army of Liberation (EPL) consisted predominately of Chinese/Maoist Communist ideologists. This movement assumed the thesis of a popular prolonged war from 1967 to 1980 when

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<sup>74</sup> John Higley and Richard Gunther, editors, Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis y Fronteras: Relaciones Fronterizas Binacionales de Colombia con Venezuela y Ecuador, p. 147.

they broke with the Maoist ideology and concentrated their action in constructing bases of support and enclosing (controlling) the cities in the countryside, primarily in the departments of Córdoba, Antioquía, and northern Santander (again along the Venezuelan border).

Another important guerilla movement was M-19.<sup>76</sup> This group was born in 1972 by the convergence of sectors expelled from the PCC, the FARC, and sectors coming from the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO-Socialista) during a period of internal crisis (when the ANAPO-S considered legitimizing itself to enter the democratic system). M-19 was one of the more active guerrilla groups during the last years of the movements. Their renovating character consisted of trying to make the armed movement a legitimate tool to deal with the government and a generator of state proposals (in its efforts, M-19 utilized its military capability as a factor during negotiations). In addition, M-19 demonstrated an effective leadership position in the groups of Colombian guerrilla movements upon organizing the council "Coordinadora Guerrillera Nacional" (CGN).<sup>77</sup> Counted among its militant membership were the EPL and the ELN, as well as other small insurgent groups (i.e., Patria Libre and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, PRT). The role of the CGN was limited to its declaration phase and to a few combined military actions, especially in the Colombia-Venezuelan border region. However, in early 1990, the CNG was permanently affected when M-19 accepted the government's offer of amnesty in exchange for abandoning the armed struggle and agreed to participate in the civilian political process.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Jorge Castañeda, Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War, Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., New York, 1993, p. 118.

<sup>77</sup> J. Hartlyn, L. Schoultz, and A. Varas, editors, The United States and Latin America in the 1990s: Beyond the Cold War, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1992, p. 122.

<sup>78</sup> Castaneda, Jorge, Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War, p. 118.

### **3. Tension in the Colombian-Venezuelan Border: Colombian Guerrilla Activities**

A product of the guerilla phenomenon is the increasing tensions between the two countries beyond that already produced by the continuing maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela, the ongoing problem of illegal immigration from Colombia to Venezuela (with its social issues), and the transnational crime in the border regions (i.e., contraband smuggling and drug trafficking). In addition to already poor disposition toward Colombia it is important to add the development of the guerrilla movement. After several years of hostile activity (during the 1960's) the guerrilla forces active in Venezuela accepted the government's offer of amnesty and began participating in the civilian political arena. This pacification policy was implemented during President Rafael Caldera's term (1968-1973) and it is considered one of the biggest achievements in the Venezuela's democratization process. Undoubtedly, for Venezuela, it is very undesirable to have to resist the continuous attacks of Colombian guerrillas in the frontier region despite having resolved the guerilla problem in its own national territory.

Some issues considered critical to the government of Venezuela (and vital to its national security) that have also transcended to the forefront of public opinion are: (1) the appearance of the guerilla group "Bandera Roja" (and their supposed link with the Colombian ELN) on the Venezuelan national stage; (2) the actions of the Colombian guerrilla groups, FARC, ELN, and EPL in the border areas (as the strategic value of the border areas is not only in respect to national sovereignty but also for the presence of petroleum resources); (3) the so-called "peaceful invasion" of Venezuela by Colombian illegal immigrants; (4) the Venezuelan public perception of the Colombian security organizations inability or lack of interest in resolving these frontier problems; and (5) the advance of the Colombian narcotraffickers into Venezuelan territory.

For the Colombian guerrilla movements, the Venezuela frontier areas are considered "outlying areas" belonging to Colombia and they have provided a favorable environment for the development of guerrilla activities. The armed groups ( FARC, ELN, and ELP) have not shown a desire or motivation towards accepting the terms of the offers

from the Colombian government for political pacification. In fact, they have tried to impose their own conditions.<sup>79</sup>

These guerrilla groups, upon separating themselves completely from the prospect of national reconciliation with the government of Colombia, have presented as their own answer a total confrontation to the system. Some of their more common actions in the border areas are: the sabotaging of pipelines that cause millions in losses to the Colombian oil companies and irreparable damages to the environment for both Venezuela and Colombia; terrorism (killings and kidnappings) against ranchers, peasants, political authorities of both countries who do not want to cooperate or pay the "vacuna" (security taxes) to the guerrilla movement; and constant aggression against Venezuelan military posts in the border areas.<sup>80</sup>

The southwest region of Venezuela, along the Colombian border, formed by the states of Apure and Táchira is known as the "hot area." This region, especially the riverine area surrounding the Rio Arauca, is where most of the guerrilla activity occurs (Fig. 9). The Colombian CNG forces have political control of the Aruaca region. This territory is located between El Nula and Guasdalito (Venezuelan border towns) and extends toward the frontier. This is a significant strategic problem that affects Colombia as much as it does Venezuela. This situation acquires greater relevance especially when one considers the current process and means of economic integration being attempted by the two nations with Mexico.<sup>81</sup> Venezuela and Colombia have expanded the construction of the Carretera Marginal de la Jungla (Marginal Jungle Road). Eventually it will unite the Andean countries, especially the Colombian/Venezuelan border region, with Bogota

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<sup>79</sup> "Colombia: Guerrilla fija condiciones para la paz," El Nuevo Diario, Caracas, Venezuela, September 22, 1994.

<sup>80</sup> "Problemas de Inseguridad o de Soberanía," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 25, 1994.

<sup>81</sup> "Desde ayer es un hecho el Grupo de Los Tres," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, May 13, 1994.

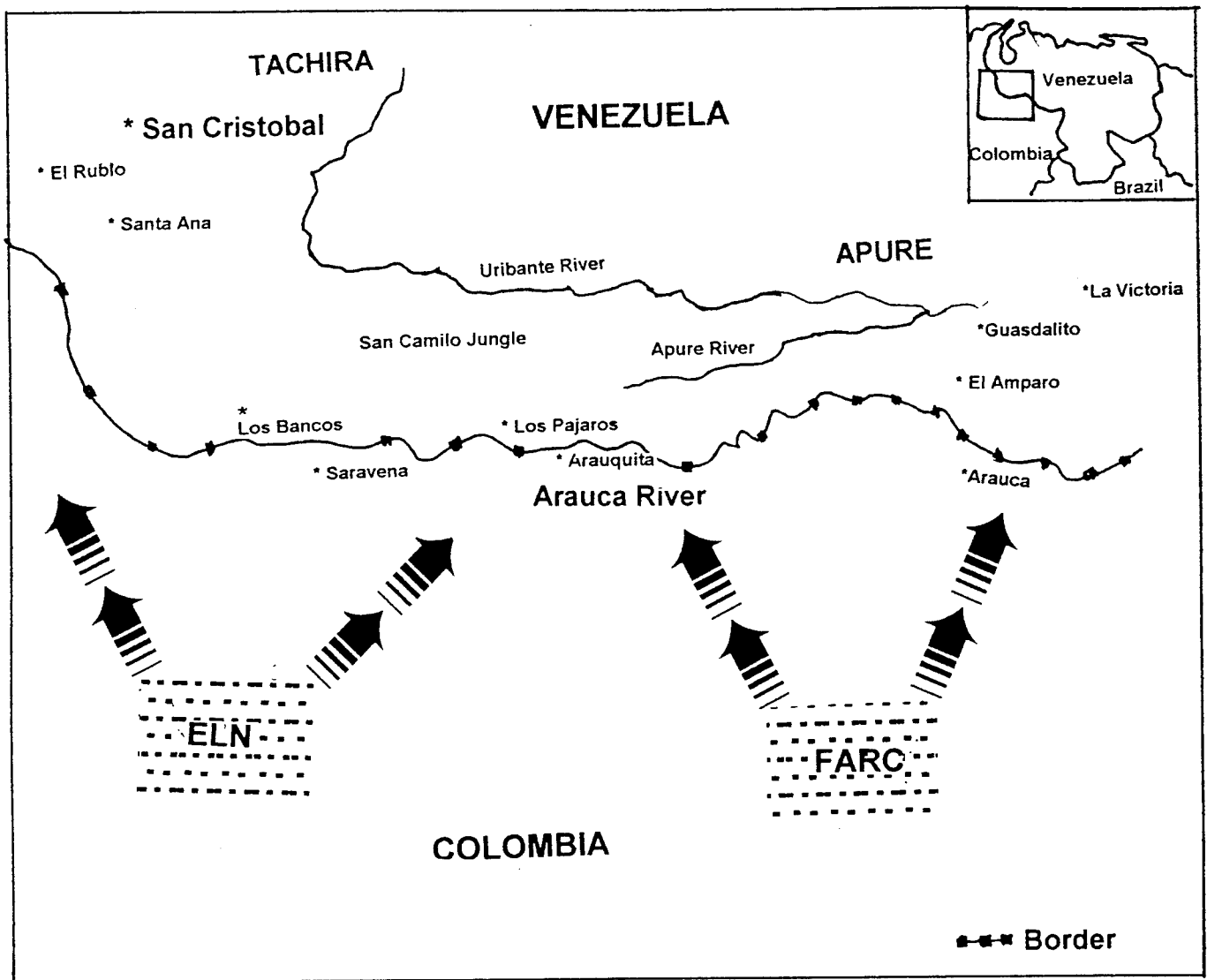


Figure 9. The Arauca region (southwest Venezuela).

and, eventually, with the Venezuelan plains highway. This will allow Colombia to have access, via this land bridge, to the Caribbean and the central littoral via the Venezuelan state of Zulia.

There are two important points along the southwest Venezuelan border where most of the international commerce in South America will take place. Currently, analysts predict that in this region there will be investments of more than one billion bolivars before the year 2000.<sup>82</sup> One of these points is the route through Cúcuta, San Antonio, Ureña, and La Fría. This will be in addition to the second zone (also in the southwest region) which will extend from Saravena-Arauca in Colombia to Guasdalito-El Nula in Venezuela.

The Bolivarian Marginal Jungle Highway will connect all of the Bolivarian countries (from Venezuela to Bolivia) and will reach a length of 7,749 kilometers, according to calculations developed by the Council of Cartagena.<sup>83</sup> It will also provide a terrestrial link that will strengthen integration and increase international commerce between the South American countries.

The Arauca region will be an obligatory crossing point of this important transnational network. This will strengthen the economic situation of the Venezuelan people, located on the riverine area of the Arauca River, where the highway connects the plains with the center (southwest) and northern parts of Venezuela. The towns that will benefit the most are: Cutufi, El Nula, La Victoria, El Amparo, Guasdalito, and El Piñal. However, this economic project could be adversely affected with the presence of Colombian insurgent groups. In the last few years these insurgent groups have become stronger, with growing influence on the social life, political scene, and economic

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<sup>82</sup> "La Carretera Marginal," (El nuevo eje vial de la selva colocara a Bogota a 10 horas de Guasdalito, atravesando la zona guerrillera del Arauca), El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 25, 1994.

<sup>83</sup> FESCOL, Colombia-Venezuela: Crisis o Negociacion?, CEI, Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia, 1992, p. 60.

environment in the Colombian department of Arauca.<sup>84</sup> The insurgent groups assembled by the Colombian CNG have achieved a position of political and economic importance in the department of the Arauca. They have practically achieved complete control in some zones that not even the Colombian Army will dare to enter (although this situation is denied by the Colombian government).<sup>85</sup> Along the Venezuelan border, in the Colombian frontier cities of Saravena, Arauca, and Tibú the guerrilla movement has succeeded in notably influencing the behavior of the electorate and has even been able to implant some authorities (mayors and other similar positions of regional power).

This situation in Colombia has become a "natural state" (equilibrium of political forces where the guerrilla phenomenon has encroached upon the life of the region) and has begun to extend itself into the Venezuelan frontier zones. However, although the Colombian guerrillas do not presently have political objectives in Venezuela, the frontier zones, especially the southwest, have become since the 1970's, a relief zone for Colombian guerrilla forces. Later, the guerrilla forces began military actions against frontier posts, specifically armory caches and ammunition depots, resulting in the tragic deaths of Venezuelan military members and the loss of weapons and ammunition. At the same time, the guerrillas began to pressure the agricultural producers through kidnappings and extortion.<sup>86</sup>

Presently, the guerrillas have consolidated an important social base that allows them to control all types of information in the region, consolidate the collection of the "vacuna" (security tax) and has now begun to exercise political influence in some areas

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<sup>84</sup> "Guerrilla Colombiana tiene incomunicados a dos pueblos," AFP, Bogota, Colombia, January 6, 1994.

<sup>85</sup> "La Guerrilla Colombiana quiere la paz sin renunciar a sus armas," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, (Bogota, Colombia, AP-EFE-AFP), September 23, 1994.

<sup>86</sup> "En Colombia secuestran una persona cada 53 minutos," UPI, Bogota, Colombia, September 26, 1994.

of social life.<sup>87</sup> These guerrilla organizations are in reality a powerful political-military force with enough organization to exercise control in the southwestern zone of Venezuela which is an area of enormous economic potential.

Since 1990 the Venezuelan ranchers in the southwest, have been trying to reach an understanding with the guerrillas over the kidnappings and the collection of the "vacuna" (security tax).<sup>88</sup> However, one of the aspects that was of greater interest to the guerrilla bosses was more knowledge about the economic projections of the Venezuelan southwestern region. This interest has also been manifested during communications involving kidnappings and ransom. The guerrilla groups remark that in spite of their actions, they do not want to interfere with the economic development of the region.

The Venezuelan territory on the riverine area of the Arauca River consists of 25 percent of the better agricultural land in the country. However, Venezuela has not been able to efficiently develop the region due to poor communication facilities, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of official Venezuelan State authority.<sup>89</sup>

This region also consists of the Forest Reservation of San Camilo (approximately 110 thousand hectares), the San Camilo water reservoir (that includes the basins of the Sarare rivers and the Cutufi, Nula, and Burgua rivers) with a potential of 4.5 million cubic meters, and The Tamá National Park (with more than 139 thousand hectares of land).<sup>90</sup>

The areas already in production have 180 thousand hectares of fertile soil under agriculture, 774 thousand hectares used for raising livestock in the production of milk and meat, and proven energy resources of 4 thousand million barrels of crude (medium

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<sup>87</sup> Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, p. 109.

<sup>88</sup> "Dialogar contra el Secuestro?," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, December 14, 1993, pp. 1-14.

<sup>89</sup> "Un Polo de Desarrollo podría controlar la guerrilla Colombiana," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 18, 1994.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

and light grades) with a reserve estimated at 14 thousand million barrels (according to an exploratory base of resources at Corpoven conducted by the Venezuelan Petroleum Corporation).

Neither has the region's potential in human resources been properly tapped.<sup>91</sup> In the Venezuelan national census of 1990, the Páez Municipality (political division of the region) registered a population of 22,577 inhabitants with a growth appraisal of 10.5 percent (which represents an average that is three times that of the national average 3.1 percent).<sup>92</sup> Of this population, a third is located in El Nula and La Victoria and they constitute the centers for the local economy. In considering only the agricultural sector, this population consists of some 4,500 families that generate more than 740 million bolivars per year.

However, the level of urban equipment and infrastructure for providing public services to the local population is deficient. The availability of medical personnel is 0.27 per thousand inhabitants and adequate medical facilities do not exist to support the hospital needs of the area. Additionally, the potable water systems and refuse collection are also deficient or non-existent. Lastly, the illiteracy rate in the region is 20 percent, more than double that of the remainder of the Venezuelan population.<sup>93</sup>

This general overview of the region shows that a contrast exists in a land with economic potential, located in a national strategic point, but consisting of a population almost forgotten by the State. This situation becomes more complex because this part of the border is constantly attacked by the Colombian guerrilla movement. Although the Páez Municipality does not rely on its own inadequate resources (political, juridical, and administrative structure) in order to drive its own development and provide an adequate

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<sup>91</sup> Oficina Central de Informacion (OCI), Censo Nacional de Venezuela, Perfiles Demograficos, Caracas, Venezuela, 1990.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Oficina Central de Informacion (OCI), Censo Nacional de Venezuela, Indicadores Basicos, Caracas, Venezuela, 1990.

security policy, its population has made a great effort to transform this land into an important national-level center of production for milk and meat products.

The Venezuelan State is conscious of the frontier situation in the Arauca region and has reinforced its security and surveillance means by establishing military bases and conducting anti-guerrilla operations. In 1988, the military command, Comando Especifico José Antonio Páez (CEJAP) was created. This command operated like a policial-military organization and integrated all of the security forces in the zone. The Venezuelan authorities designed this unit for the sole objective of confronting and eliminating the Colombian guerrillas from Venezuela's frontier zones.<sup>94</sup>

The CEJAP infiltrated the social bases of the Colombian guerrilla and used the infiltrators to provoke armed encounters. This military organization also began the process of stripping the nets of Colombian guerrilla informants, drying up their finance resources (providing security against kidnapping and extortion), and eliminating the sources of supply (stopping the smuggling of contraband from Venezuela). However, on October 29, 1988, members of CEJAP shot to death fourteen Colombian fishermen who were apparently guiding a group of Colombian guerrillas in Cano Las Colorados, near the Arauca River in Venezuelan territory. The case was tried in military court and, in 1993, a prison sentence of seven-and-a-half years was imposed on the 15 defendants for the crime of intentional homicide.<sup>95</sup>

This meant the end of the CEJAP and its activities in the frontier region. Later, the Venezuelan government decided to substitute the CEJAP with a Military Task Force. The process of dismantling the guerrilla forces was stopped for a period of time and this allowed the Colombian guerrillas to succeed in re-establishing their social bases and entrenching their effectiveness against the Venezuelan ranchers.

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<sup>94</sup> "Problemas de Inseguridad o de Soberanía," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 25, 1994.

<sup>95</sup> "Human Rights in Venezuela," Americas Watch, Human Rights Watch, New York, 1993, p. 20.

A fundamental difference, from Colombia, is that the Colombian guerrilla does not control any portion of Venezuelan territory. Their presence is based on people who have won (politically) easy access to the frontier zone. Some are Venezuelan, others are Colombian, and others have the two nationalities (dual citizenship). Although the guerrillas occasionally execute informers, attack Venezuelan military posts, or carry out kidnappings, the fundamental reason for their presence in the frontier zone is to guarantee financial funds for their insurgent forces and to exercise political control over the frontier population.<sup>96</sup>

The situation on the Colombian side of the border is completely different. The people of Saravena, Arauquita, and Arauca are among the most violent in Colombia. The guerrillas maintains almost complete control over the region from Arauquita southward. This area is considered to be the "liberated zones." The "Mobile Brigades" of the Colombian Army specialized in guerrilla warfare occasionally intrude in these territories to emplace operatives and enforce their search for guerrillas. When that happens, the guerrillas fall back and only confront the military patrols when it is absolutely inevitable or advantageous, primarily by way of an ambush. The guerrillas rely on their great influence in the rural zones where they recruit the majority of their combatants, in some cases by force. After the military operation, the Colombian "Mobile Brigades" leave the zone. Meanwhile, social bases on which the rebels lean remain intact.

In the Arauca region, the Colombian CNG has succeeded in exercising a degree of control that includes the regional authorities. The CNG has succeeded in controlling whole frontier populations in the departments of Arauca, Arauquita, Tibú, and Sardinata. In these departments, the mayors have completely been submitted through intimidation.<sup>97</sup> The intimidation begins from the moment the candidates announce their candidacy and

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<sup>96</sup> "Guerrilla Colombiana Ataca Poblaciones Fronterizas con Venezuela," AP, Bogota, Colombia, February 8, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> "Problema de Inseguridad o Soberania," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 25, 1994.

intent to campaign for office. The candidates are required to submit their programs or policies for government to the guerrillas for their consideration. The guerrillas then either approve or reject them. Those candidates that do not submit to the terms of the guerrillas, are expected to abandon their aspirations for office. If they do not follow the rules imposed by the guerrilla and instead continue to follow the electoral process, they run the risk of being executed or at least being kidnapped. All of the decisions that should be taken by the mayors in the Colombian frontier regions must be endorsed by the guerrillas. The Colombian authorities have constantly denied that this situation exists for the southeastern regions. They have reiterated that the guerrilla does not control any portion of Colombian territory. However, facts indicate that it is not necessary to physically occupy territory in order to exercise complete dominance of a zone.

One of the military objectives of the guerrillas established in Arauca has been the Colombian oil companies. These companies initially consented to pay the "vacuna" (security tax) to the guerrillas in order to avoid having their installations attacked by the insurgent groups.<sup>98</sup>

However, in 1986 the Colombian petroleum corporations stopped paying the security tax. In response, the ELN began a series of continuous attacks against the pipeline that carries petroleum from Arauca to Puerto de Coveñas. The pipeline covers a distance of more than 762 kilometers that must cross two guerrilla-infested zones inside of Colombia: Arauca and Northern Santander. During the period, 1986 to 1992, there have been 130 attacks on the pipeline. A result of these acts of sabotage has been spillages totalling more than 270,400 barrels of petroleum with annual losses of more than 6 million dollars.<sup>99</sup>

These acts of sabotage on Colombian soil have affected the Venezuelan river basin on the Catatumbo River. Petroleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anonima (PDVSA) has had

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<sup>98</sup> Colombia: A Country Study, p. 307.

<sup>99</sup> "Actualidad de Colombia," El Mundo, Caracas, Venezuela, January 15, 1994.

to implement the Binational Plan for Contingencies,<sup>100</sup> signed in 1989 with Colombia, on eleven occasions in order to gather 19,286 barrels of petroleum that entered Venezuela through the Catatumbo River. The last attack, during May, 1994, was the region's most recent environmental disaster.

The ELN is the primary guerrilla movement that has taken the initiative in conducting acts of sabotage in the Venezuelan southwestern region. It has succeeded in consolidating as much economic, political, and social power in the department of Arauca as it has in the north of Santander. Every time the Colombian government announces increases in the cost of fuel or announces punitive measures against worker strikes, the ELN carries out an act of sabotage against the oil pipeline. The ELN has declared, in their manifestos, that they carry out acts of sabotage in order to generate employment for the peasants who will be employed in the recovery of the spilled petroleum.<sup>101</sup>

The coordination of frontier security (between Venezuela and Colombia) has only been partially effective although several agreements of cooperation between the Armed Forces of the two nations have been signed. In November, 1993, President Velasquez' administration notified the Colombian authorities of its uneasiness concerning repeated guerrilla attacks on Venezuelan territory, which had claimed the lives of five armed forces members on November 18. Additionally, on November 11, four members of Venezuela's National Guard were wounded, presumably by guerrillas, in an earlier attack near the border.<sup>102</sup> News released from Colombia indicated that the guerrilla attacks were specifically directed at the National Guard based on the fact that an Army patrol had passed through the area shortly before the incident occurred. The group identified as being the most likely responsible for the attack was the ELN. This group has in the past

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<sup>100</sup> Colombia-Venezuela: Crisis o Negociacion, p. 64.

<sup>101</sup> "Guerrilla impone condiciones para la paz," El Diario de Caracas, Editorial by Javier Baena, Caracas, Venezuela, September 29, 1994.

<sup>102</sup> "Government Sends Communique to Colombia on Border Attacks," FBIS-LAT-93-223, p. 54.

claimed responsibility for similar attacks on National Guardsmen as reprisals against presumed abuses suffered by Colombian illegal immigrants.<sup>103</sup> In response to the incident, Colombian military authorities stated that "Our problem is to fight guerrillas in our own country. We do not conduct joint operations with the Venezuelan Armed Forces, rather we confine ourselves to coordinated operations. Each individual army and police force is responsible for their own respective country. Crossing the border is considered a violation."<sup>104</sup>

The presence of guerrillas along the border has also sparked allegations by Colombian officials concerning the involvement of members of the Venezuelan military in the sale of illegal arms and other contraband to Colombian guerrillas. In January, 1994, weapons from the Venezuelan Armed Forces were seized from FARC guerrillas by Colombian troops stationed in the border town of Villavicencio. The weapons consisted of FAL assault rifles, the standard regulation weapon of the Venezuelan military. The FAL assault rifles had been painted to hide their origin. Along with the eighty assault rifles seized in the region, the Colombian forces have seized mortars, ammunition, and submachine guns.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, two former guerrillas (who had turned themselves in to Colombian authorities) made statements implicating that members of the Venezuelan military are involved in the sale of contraband and weapons to the ELN and FARC movements. One of the individuals cited a specific instance when a member of the Venezuelan military

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<sup>103</sup> "Navarro Wolff Demandara al Jefe de la Guardia Nacional Venezolana," Diario El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, November 24, 1993, p. A/2.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> "Army Continues to Seize Venezuelan Weapons from Guerrillas," FBIS-LAT-94-011, p. 67.

provided ten machine guns (UZI) in exchange for 120 kilos of cocaine and 40 kilos of "bazuco," a cocaine derivative.<sup>106</sup>

To date, Venezuela's official stance has been that any weapons seized have been stolen from border garrisons and other secondary posts during the two Venezuelan coup attempts in 1992. Due to the implications, the flow of Venezuelan weapons into Colombia poses a serious threat to the internal security of both countries, regardless of the circumstances.

In January 1994, a significantly more serious incident occurred when Colombian airspace was violated by a Venezuelan helicopter. This incident was exacerbated by the fact that it followed on the heels of recent Venezuelan prison riots during which several Colombian prisoners were killed; and, there was talk of pardons for the military personnel involved in the Amparo massacre (14 Colombians were killed by government forces in 1988). According to Venezuelan authorities, the National Guard helicopter (initially involved) was on a routine border patrol tracking Colombian guerrillas, and in the process, violated Colombian airspace. The helicopter received ground fire, became disabled, and was forced to crash land on Colombian soil. Subsequently, the crew was rescued by a second Venezuelan helicopter.<sup>107</sup> The Colombian version, alleged that the National Guardsmen in the Venezuelan helicopter had mistaken a group of local fishermen for guerrillas, landed, and apprehended seven men from the group. The helicopter attempted to take off with the prisoners but crash landed due to the excessive weight. Both countries continued to stand by their respective versions of the incident. Venezuelan reaction to the incident has been to downplay its importance and blame Colombia for its inability to exercise authority and control over its border regions.

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<sup>106</sup> "Militares Venezolanos Cambian Armas por Cocaina," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, February 4, 1994, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> "Venezuela no ha causado daño alguno en territorio Colombiano," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, January 13, 1994, p. 7.

Colombian reaction was complicated by three additional factors: (1) the ongoing electoral campaign (each candidate was calling upon President Gaviria to adopt a forceful stance); (2) Gaviria's own campaign to solicit support among members (of the OAS) for the upcoming position of Secretary General for the Organization of American States; and (3) both countries were scheduled to sign a major free trade agreement on the twentieth of the month. Perhaps, in response to the last two, President Gaviria chose a moderate approach. He sent a strongly worded communiqué requesting that Venezuelan authorities conduct an investigation followed by legal action against those found responsible. Simultaneously, President Gaviria attempted to diffuse the incident by emphasizing the importance and success of the ongoing bilateral negotiations. Subsequently, an agreement was reached by both Presidents to hold a meeting of senior members (from both governments) from the Departments of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs in order to discuss and seek some mechanism for the preservation of border security. Additionally, Colombia indicated that it would militarize its frontier region in order to exercise better control over the border districts.<sup>108</sup>

Colombian guerrillas were responsible for ten intrusions into Venezuelan territory between May 19, 1993, and May 4, 1994.<sup>109</sup> The intrusions resulted in attacks on six Venezuelan military outposts, two marines dead, one marine wounded, and twenty-two National Guardsmen wounded. Venezuela estimates that Colombian guerrillas have killed about 50 Venezuelan military personnel during the past 15 years.

Venezuelan security agencies and governmental authorities that specialize in national security and defense issues have analyzed the methodology used by the Colombian guerrillas to exercise political, economic, and social control in the Arauca region. Two of these agencies, the National Council for State Security and Defense

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<sup>108</sup> "Colombia asegura que Venezuela violó su espacio aéreo y causó daños materiales," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, January 13, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> "Ataques de la guerrilla colombiana en territorio Venezolano 1993-1994," Diario El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 11, 1994.

(SECONASEDE) and the Ministry of State for Border Issues, both support and advise the Organization for Law, Security, and Defense concerning the establishment of policy on the issue of frontier security.

In Venezuela, several bills, concerning the development of the frontier regions, have been presented to the Congress of the Republic. These bills contain regulations that are intended to motivate Venezuelans to relocate to the frontier regions, thus, driving and ensuring its development. However, these bills have not been approved and the current environment of insecurity that is in the border region (primarily from Colombian guerrilla activity) has created a problem of a lack of motivation and mobilization by the masses to work in these regions.

Although Venezuela is actually submerged in an economic crisis that affects all national sectors, it is necessary that plans for security, defense, and the development of the frontier are executed in a concerted, concrete, and efficient manner. This must be done with the support of Venezuela's National Congress and in accordance with internal laws. The construction and provision of basic services, availability of doctors in the frontier the local population, and mutual cooperation between the governments of Venezuela and Colombia must be accomplished in order to strip the guerrilla movements of their influence and stop their subversive activity in the border region.

## **D. DRUG TRAFFICKING**

### **1. Historical Background**

The production and consumption of drugs in Colombia as well as Bolivia and Peru has a longstanding history in the region. Although the indigenous populations have cultivated and consumed coca for hundreds of years on a minor scale, cultivation of marijuana is a recent phenomenon. During the 1930's, for the first time, cultivation of marijuana on the Colombian Caribbean coast began to be observed. The North American market demand, during the 1960's, provoked the peak of marijuana production in Colombia. Colombia, a peripheral supply source, gained control as the primary supplier to the United States. This occurred during the mid 1970's when Mexico implemented

strict anti-narcotics campaigns in response to strained political relations with the U.S. administrations. Drug trafficking and illegal immigration problems prompted the United States to increase pressure on the Mexican government. Mexican drug suppliers were forced to suspend trafficking and attempt to develop new strategies. Colombia's drug traffickers used the weakened state of the Mexican drug lords and seized control of the drug market. By the end of the 1970's, Colombia accounted for approximately 70 percent of the marijuana that was reaching the United States.<sup>110</sup> The main centers of production were located in the Guajira Peninsula and in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range.

The economic boom created by the illegal export of drugs to the United States brought an atmosphere of prosperity and comfort to the Colombian Caribbean cities of Barranquilla, Riohacha, and Santa Marta. However, at the same time, the region of the Peninsula of Guajira began to experience acts of violence and corruption began to appear in the agencies responsible for state security.<sup>111</sup> The drug traffickers convinced the farmers to substitute marijuana plantations for traditional crops, i.e., bananas. Additionally, many legitimate businesses were bought (hotels, banks, airlines, and restaurants) by the drug traffickers and used for money laundering.

The production and traffic of cocaine in Colombia also developed because of the North American market demand for the drugs. At the beginning of the 1970's the pasta of the coca was brought from Bolivia and Peru to Colombia for processing into marketable cocaine. Although the Colombian agricultural sector did not start producing coca until 1978, by 1983 Colombia had established itself not only as the leading producer and distributor of cocaine, but as the leader in coca cultivation as well. Colombia's coca plantations reached an excess of 25,000 hectares under cultivation.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Colombia: A Country Study, p. 127.

<sup>111</sup> Corrupcion y Expoliacion en America Latina, p. 178.

<sup>112</sup> David Bender, War on Drugs, Greenhaven Press, San Jose, California, "Colombia by 1986 produced 30,000 hectares of coca," 1990.

At the start of the 1980's, the traffic of cocaine generated criminal organizations that represent, even today, a serious internal security problem.<sup>113</sup> The decade of the 1980's became known as the "Era of the Narco-Terrorism." Various government officials were assassinated for their efforts to carry out anti-narcotic laws. Among the murdered officials were: a Minister of Justice, the former head of the Anti-narcotics Police, several Supreme Court Judges, as well as numerous police personnel and lower-court judges.

The Colombian government has made a strong effort to fight against the narcotraffickers. President Julio Turbay Ayala (1978-1982) carried out several campaigns against the drug dealers. He used military personnel to destroy marijuana fields and signed an extradition treaty with the United States. President Belisario Betancourt (1982-1986) declared the "war without mercy" in 1984 after his Minister of Justice was assassinated by the Medellin Cartel. In 1988, President Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) recommitted the military forces to the interdiction effort (a measure that President Betancourt had suspended). President Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994) announced the policy of reduced punishments for those who turned themselves in. This procedure was used with the Medellin Cartel's former leader, Pablo Escobar Gaviria, who selected his own place of reclusion, with all of the attendant comforts. He then escaped from there and was ultimately shot to death by Colombian security agencies in December 1993.

In the June 1994 presidential election, Liberal Party candidate Dr. Ernesto Samper was elected even though he was allegedly involved in a drug scandal. The scandal revolves around the appearance of certain tapes now known as "los narco-tapes" where a reference is made to economic contributions to his political campaign made by the narcotraffickers.<sup>114</sup> The candidate of the Conservative Party, Andres Pastrana narrowly lost the election, and was also allegedly involved in the scandal. His name was mentioned

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<sup>113</sup> The United States and Latin America in the 1990s: Beyond the Cold War, p. 217.

<sup>114</sup> "Cartel de la Droga reitera que colaboró con campaña de Samper," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, July 11, 1994, p. 2.

in one of "los narco-tapes." An article entitled "The Narcocandidato?" published in Time on July 4, 1994, included a taped conversation (recorded during the second round of the Colombian presidential elections) between the journalist Albert Giraldo Lopez and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela, one of the leaders of the Cali Cartel, which controls the 80 percent of the worldwide cocaine traffic. The day after the elections, three tapes containing the conversations between Giraldo and Rodriguez were published in Bogota, placing the legitimacy of Samper's election in doubt and sinking Colombia into political turbulence. Before the vote, copies of the tapes had also arrived in the hands of U.S. officials; and their decision not to initiate some or any legal action created a great controversy in Washington.<sup>115</sup> On the side, while the Colombian Department of State agreed with President Gaviria's decision to not make the tapes public, some of the officials of the agency, Direccion de Control de Drogas (a counter-drug agency), did not hide their displeasure. Both Dr. Samper and Mr. Pastrana have denied receiving any campaign money from drug-trafficking organizations.

## **2. Colombia's Drug Trafficking and Implications for Venezuela's National Security**

Venezuela does not produce drugs, but is an important transit area for drugs headed from Colombia to Europe and the United States. Between 1990 and the first four months of 1994, Venezuelan security agencies seized more than 33 thousand kilos of drugs and detained more than 60 thousand people for possession and trafficking of drugs.<sup>116</sup>

In the Arauca frontier region, the situation gets more complicated due to the action of Colombian rebel groups. The largest, best-trained, and best-equipped insurgent group in Colombia, the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), collected taxes from drug traffickers and coca growers in exchange for protection or surveillance. In 1984,

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<sup>115</sup> "Presidente Electo de Colombia esta manchado," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, June 29, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> "La Droga en Venezuela: Un paraíso para los Carteles del Narcotráfico?," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, September 23, 1994, pp. 1-18.

FARC determined that the drug trade was a prosperous enterprise and entered the drug industry itself.<sup>117</sup>

In the Venezuelan and Colombian frontier region that borders the Amazon the situation continues to become more complicated due to the operations carried out by the Colombian narcotraffickers. The secret laboratories for the processing of the drug have been relocated to the sectors of Vichada and Guainia where the work is easier, given the minute presence of the Colombian security forces. In Puerto Ayacucho (Venezuela) there has been a notable increase in the movement of money and amounts of armament (Fig 10). South of the city, roads built by the narcotraffickers to transport their merchandise across the Orinoco river have been discovered.<sup>118</sup> Other routes have also been encountered toward the north, near the towns of Puerto Paez and Puerto Carreño (Colombia) and several other towns in the department of Vichada. Previously, the people of the region failed to denounce these acts for fear of reprisals. However, the greater fear of a "Colombianization" of the serene and calm life that surrounds the Amazon provoked a stronger desire for cooperation with local authorities in combating the illicit drug related activities in the region.<sup>119</sup> One of the problems that affects the interdiction of drugs in the area is the utilization of the Orinoco river by the drug traffickers for exporting drugs to the United States and Europe (Fig 11). The Orinoco River is an international waterway according to an agreement signed by both Venezuela and Colombia. The agreement allows the free, uninterrupted flow of traffic and ships between the two countries and towards the Atlantic Ocean.

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<sup>117</sup> Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, Daily Report: Latin America, FBIS-LAT-93-190, Washington, D.C., October 4, 1993. FARC staff formally established its relations with drug traffickers in 1982. They began to sell drugs and provide surveillance for coca plantations and its processing. In 1984, they commenced production themselves. In the past two years, FARC members began to plant poppies in Colombia.

<sup>118</sup> "Amazonas: Una Autopista Fluvial para la Droga," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, May 17, 1994, pp. 1-12.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

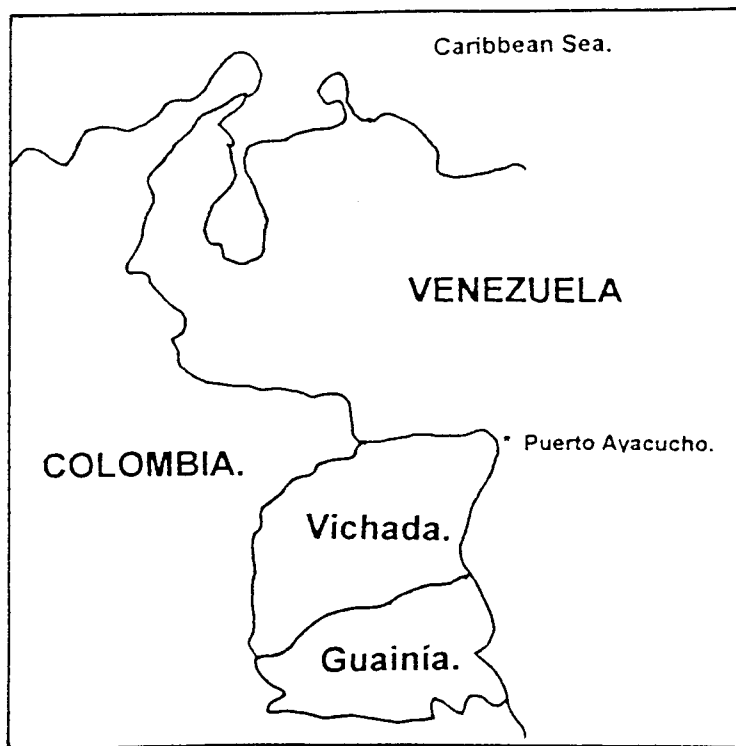


Figure 10. Location of Puerto Ayacucho (Amazonas state) Venezuela.

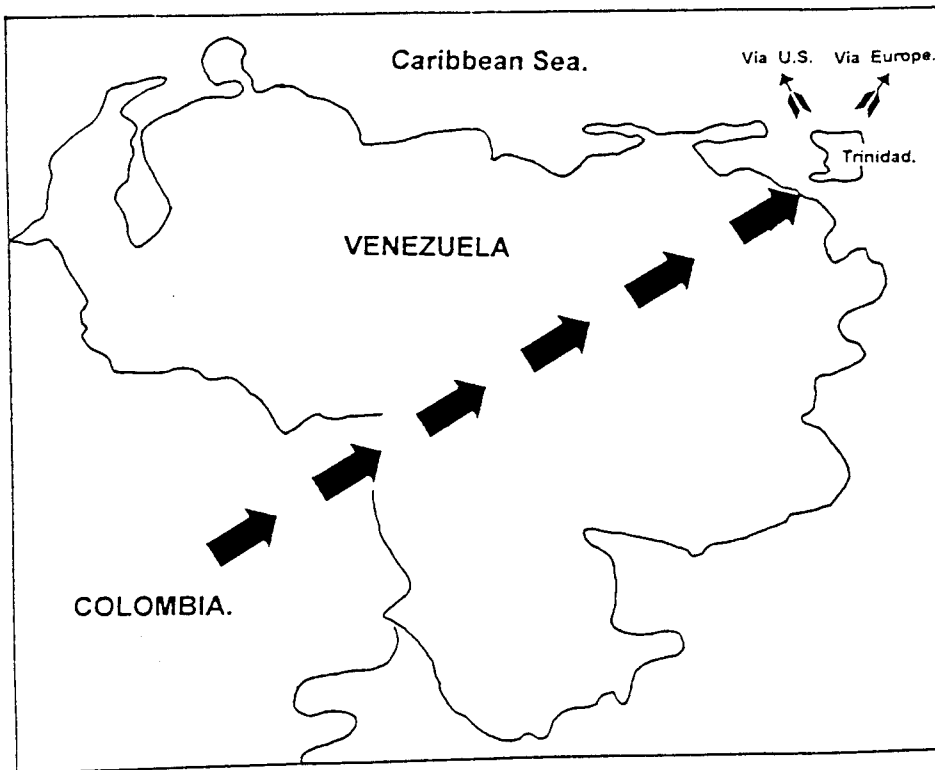


Figure 11. Utilization of the Orinoco River by the drug traffickers for exporting drugs from Colombia to the United States and Europe.

On the other side, in the mountain range of Sierra de Perija (which defines the Northwestern border between Venezuelan with Colombia in the state of Zulia) a resurgence in the cultivation of marijuana has been observed, while the cultivation of coca remains unchanged.<sup>120</sup> The resurgence of marijuana cultivation in Colombia has worried the Colombian authorities and is presumed to coincide with increment in marijuana exports to the United States. During 1993, the Colombian National Police seized 93 tons of marijuana and destroyed more than 100 hectares cultivated with the illicit grass.<sup>121</sup>

The narcotraffickers, feeling the increased pressure exercised by the Colombian security agencies, began to move their bases of operation from Colombian territory toward the neighboring countries Ecuador, Brazil, and Venezuela.<sup>122</sup> The relative success of the Colombian pacification policy and the progressive dismantling of the drug cartels has also contributed to the new relocation of these secret laboratories and the farmlands under drug cultivation. The statements of Colombia's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Noemi Sanin de Rubio concerning the "difficult environment" that would be in Colombia towards the production of illegal substances and the actions that would be taken by the narcotraffickers in their search for spaces of greater permissiveness corroborate the intentions of the criminal organizations that operate in those regions.<sup>123</sup> The Cali Cartel is considered to be the major world organization dedicated to the smuggling of cocaine. According to reports from the Colombian National Police, the cartel has extended its trafficking network to Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Panama. The cartel has developed large cultivated tracts of coca in the vicinities of: Puerto Ayacucho, in the Venezuelan

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<sup>120</sup> "Aumentó cultivo de marihuana en la frontera con Colombia," El Diario de Caracas, Caracas, Venezuela, March 24, 1994. p. 25.

<sup>121</sup> "Precisan sembradíos de marihuana y coca en el Alto Guasare," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, February 17, 1994, pp. 2-28.

<sup>122</sup> "Cartel de Cali amplió red de narcotráfico en Venezuela," El Diario de Caracas, Caracas, Venezuela, January 24, 1994, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> "Existe un Plan para trasladar Centros de Droga a Venezuela," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, June 16, 1994, pp. 2-17.

Orinoco region, and in several areas of the Brazilian Amazon. In Ecuador, the Cartel has succeeded in establishing their illegal transportation network to send shipments to the United States via the Pacific Ocean. In Panama, especially in the Colon zone, the Cartel carries out large transactions of drug money. The Cartel also launders money in Argentina and Chile.<sup>124</sup> The danger is that Venezuela, like other countries that share a border with Colombia, runs the risk of being converted into a producer of drugs. This is in addition to the problems that already exists with the illegal transit of drugs through Venezuelan territory enroute to international markets.

The Director of Operations, General Staff of the Armed Forces of Venezuela, estimates that more than 50 tons of drugs transit annually through Venezuela.<sup>125</sup> Of this figure, the Venezuelan National Guard only succeeded in capturing an estimated 10 percent. This provides an indication of the size and seriousness of the problem. The problem becomes more complicated when one realizes that controls do not exist in Colombia on importing chemical products that are necessary to process the drug. This situation induces the smuggling of chemicals from Venezuela, where, in spite of supposedly strict controls, the authorities have not been successful in controlling smuggling across the border.

International organizations have called attention to the high level of heroin traffic from Colombia through Venezuela. According to conclusions in a United Nations report, completed by the Program of International Monitoring of Drugs (PNUFID), the growing traffic in heroin has its base of operations already established in Colombia and Mexico.<sup>126</sup> From 1992 to 1994, one can observe that the appearance of heroin in Latin America is due to the growing demand in the United States and Europe. In North American cities

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<sup>124</sup> "Decomisaron 2,500 kilos de cocaína en Panamá," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, June 26, 1994, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> "Mas de 50 toneladas de drogas pasan anualmente por Venezuela," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, February 22, 1994. pp. 2-1.

<sup>126</sup> "Venezuela: Mercado de blanqueo y tránsito de drogas hacia Europa," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, May 14, 1994, pp. 1-19.

such as San Francisco and New York, where cocaine was the drug of first choice, the use of heroin has replaced it as the principal drug of consumption. The narcotraffic organizations have reacted to this demand by boosting the prices of heroin, and also promoting the substitution of coca products for poppy derivatives. This is due to the existence of a gigantic stock of cocaine, coca paste, and coca leaf. It is estimated that the land under coca cultivation, in the countries located along the Andean region, consist of an area of approximately 400 thousand hectares.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, the income potential in the production of heroin is overwhelming. While a kilo of cocaine could reach 30 thousand dollars on the North American market, a kilo of heroin costs 300 thousand dollars. A change in the Cartel's priorities is seen in Venezuela, where a large increase in the seizure of heroin during the first quarter of 1994 (2,975 kilos) was observed, while in previous years the amount seized was insignificant.

A report from the United Nations, published in January 1993, concludes that the drug cartels consider Venezuela a "monetary paradise" for trafficking and laundering of drug money.<sup>128</sup> Before the Venezuelan government established the economic measures to combat the fiscal crisis of July 1994, which included the control of international exchange, among other things, there wasn't any type of control for suspicious deposits that would help any timely financial investigation. The Venezuelan financial system is open, liberal, and relatively free of regulation which facilitates the laundering of drug-related dollars.

Since 1987, millions of dollars have been invested in Venezuela in the construction of resorts and other tourist developments on Margarita Island and Puerto La Cruz, without any requirement for reporting the source of that capital. Equally, despite Venezuela's

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> "El país es un paraíso fiscal para lavar y depositar dólares," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, February 21, 1993, pp. 4-1.

current economic crisis, the Ministry de Hacienda has discovered that just in the years between 1987 to 1993, automobile imports with a value of 3 thousand million dollars have entered the country.

The extent of money laundering in Venezuela is difficult to determine. Banking laws have been generally lax, although efforts are currently under way to implement more stringent regulations. In 1991, U.S. agencies estimated that at least \$3 billion per year were being laundered in the country.<sup>129</sup> The most common methods include: construction, investment in hotels and nightclubs, purchases of gold and other precious metals, and real estate speculation. During the first trimester in 1993 an estimated \$700 million was laundered by a single group known as the CONAR group. This group consisted of three aluminum exporting companies, a small airline of 11 planes, various trucking companies, and six estates.<sup>130</sup> Laundering is generally accomplished through electronic transfers. Funds from Venezuela are subsequently transferred and deposited in European and U.S. bank accounts.

The effects of these money laundering operations have been devastating on the Venezuelan economy. The U.S Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) warned, in April 1994, that Venezuela faces the closure of a great quantity of legitimate companies in the sectors of construction, tourism, and agriculture due to the impact of the companies dedicated to laundering money.<sup>131</sup> Legally, these companies can use their revenue to break their competitors and force them into foreclosure.

In Colombia, the flow of dollars coming from the drug trade has driven the reevaluation of local currency, to the point that local products stop being competitive in

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<sup>129</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, "The Drug War: Extent of Problems in Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela," National Security and International Affairs Division, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1992, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> "La Droga Colombiana encuentra tropiezos en Venezuela," El Universal, Caracas, Venezuela, February 4, 1994, pp. 1-2.

<sup>131</sup> "CIA: Narcotráfico quiebra empresas en Venezuela," El Diario de Caracas, Caracas, Venezuela, April 27, 1994, p. 38.

the international market. Also, the control of legitimate private corporations went increasingly into the hands of drug cartels. Using legitimate businesses as fronts for laundering money and to cover illicit activities was beneficial for all involved, and helped make the traffickers untouchable. As a result, the vast sums of illicit money created from narcotics trafficking actually established a "parallel" economy with which the national government could not compete.

In Venezuela, it has been quite difficult to establish controls that detect the laundry of drug money due to the customary movement of dollars. The legal movement of large sums of money is observed in the country due to its role as a petroleum producer and also that of a traditional exporter of other minerals (i.e., iron, aluminum, and steel) to the United States. During May 1994, the Venezuelan judge Mildred Camero suggested that Pablo Escobar Gaviria, the deceased leader of the Medellin Cartel, had invested in the Caracas stock exchange.<sup>132</sup>

A dilemma that affects each of these countries as much as drug production and drug trafficking is the fight against corruption. In Colombia, although there are many factors that contribute to the development of corruption, there are two important analytical factors: (1) financial benefit, and (2) survival.<sup>133</sup> In 1989, the Colombian military released 2,100 personnel including 130 officers. The Colombian National Police released over two thousand police officers including the former commander of the National Police.<sup>134</sup> Offenses ranged from corruption related, to drug trafficking, to participation in terrorist attacks. In 1993, the Colombian Attorney General's Office reported that the officers assigned to prison duty while Pablo Escobar Gaviria was incarcerated received

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<sup>132</sup> "Dinero de las drogas se hace legítimo en Bolsa de Valores de Caracas," Diario 2001, Editorial De Armas, Caracas, Venezuela, May 4, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Colombia: A Country Study, p. 308.

<sup>134</sup> A. Oppenheimer, Drug Traffickers Corrupt, Infiltrate Colombian Forces, Miami Herald, Miami, Florida, U.S., September 30, 1989, p. 8.

500,000 pesos each in exchange for the entry of vehicles, portable phones, and other items.<sup>135</sup>

In Colombia, between 1981 and 1989, 45 percent of all attacks and violent crimes were drug-related. During 1987, there were 16,200 homicides with an average of 52.8 murders per 100,000 people (the fourth highest average ever recorded in the world).<sup>136</sup>

In Venezuela, the number of drug-related arrests and scandals involving government officials is symptomatic of the corruption that is penetrating its institutions. In 1991, a former governor of Caracas, Adolfo Ramirez Torres, was arrested on charges of participating in an international cocaine-smuggling ring. In 1992, Brigadier General Ramon Alexis Sanchez, an assistant military attaché assigned to Venezuela's Embassy in Washington, was arrested in Miami, Florida, by U.S. authorities for accepting 55 pounds of cocaine from DEA agents. In the course of a yearlong investigation, the Brig. General had negotiated the shipment of half a ton of cocaine from Venezuela to the United States.<sup>137</sup> However, perhaps the most disturbing incident to date involves the "accidental" presidential pardon of the drugtrafficker, Larry Tovar, in the fall of 1993. Tovar was among a group of 17 people, detained in 1989 for possession of cocaine by Venezuelan authorities. A member of the "Euro-American Conexion," he was extensively involved in the shipment of drugs to Europe, Canada, and the United States. While awaiting sentencing of up to 20 years in prison, and following various unsuccessful bribe attempts and death threats against the judge and prosecution, Tovar was inexplicably released on a presidential pardon which was later determined to have been illegally processed and obtained. The personal secretary of President Velasquez who obtained the President's signature without his full knowledge, was implicated. By the time a new arrest warrant

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<sup>135</sup> Daily Report: Latin America, FBIS-LAT-93-176, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Washington, D.C., September 14, 1993.

<sup>136</sup> James M. Malloy, Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1990, p. 89.

<sup>137</sup> James Brooke, "Venezuela's Open Border Speeds drug Traffic," New York times, V142, November 5, 1992, p. A/13.

was issued for his recapture, Tovar had fled the country, presumably to Colombia.<sup>138</sup> The incident caused great embarrassment to the Velasquez administration; discredited the Minister of Justice; and raised unsettling questions concerning the extent of drug related corruption within the Venezuelan government.

In September 1994, Larry Tovar was detained in Colombia and even though he tried to hide his true identity, a check on his fingerprints confirmed that he was the narcotrafficker that was previously and erroneously pardoned by the Venezuelan government. He is actually awaiting the disposition of the Colombia's General Attorney Office on the requests for extradition from the governments of Venezuela and the United States.

In view of the threat that the drug problem represents for Venezuela, the government has begun to consider the militarization of the anti-drug campaign as a priority of the State.<sup>139</sup> It is impossible to establish the quantity of drugs that pass through Venezuela, enroute to international markets, but the following examples reflect the magnitude of the problem provided: (1) in December 1991, 15,000 kilos of cocaine, worth 79 million dollars were discovered in Miami. The cocaine was hidden in concrete parts sent from Venezuela; (2) in December of the same year, 2,700 kilos of cocaine, worth 14 million dollars were confiscated in New Jersey. The drug shipment was hidden in aluminum ingots sent from Venezuela; (3) in February 1994, more than 3,000 kilos of cocaine, worth 15 million dollars were discovered in Holland. The drug was hidden in aluminum structures sent from Venezuela; and finally, (4) in April 1994, another drug shipment valued in more than 375 million dollars was discovered in England, the drug was hidden in barrels of petroleum sent from Venezuela.

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<sup>138</sup> "La Mano Peluda del Narcoindulto," Zeta, N969, Caracas, Venezuela, November 15, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>139</sup> "Militarizar lucha antidrogas como una prioridad de Estado," El Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela, May 11, 1994, p. 4-1.

The fight against drugs cannot be unilateral in nature. For example, in the case of Latin America, drug trafficking is a multinational business. The situation in Bolivia and Peru is also alarming as far as production is concerned. Venezuela does not have enough of a police infrastructure to confront the narcotraffickers and that is why the government is studying the possibility of militarizing the fight against drugs. In the past, the policies of the Venezuelan government in the fight against the narcotraffickers have suffered from poor planning and execution. Narcotrafficking is considered a threat to Venezuela's national sovereignty. There are many threats to national security such as deteriorating public health, ruining the environment, laundering money, corruption, and finally, culminating in violence that will represent a danger to the stability of the democratic institutions.

An attack on a Colombian police helicopter carrying a number of senior U.S and Colombian officials, which came under fire from gunmen guarding cocaine laboratories in the jungles of Caqueta, south-west Colombia, on September 22, has been used by Colombia's President Ernesto Samper to draw international attention to Colombia's huge drug-trafficking problem and the commitment of the new government to combat it.

The cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia should undertake all levels of the judicial and executive systems in order to facilitate the extradition of narcotraffickers and should include the integration of the information and intelligence services of each nation in order to confront and overwhelm the powerful criminal organizations that manage the drug trafficking. The agreements signed by both governments upon drug trafficking have not been effective at all. A greater effort in bilateral actions against drug traffickers must be done in order to strength the capacity of Colombia and Venezuela to enforce laws and authority in all levels over the war against drugs.



### III. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SECURITY

Latin America, especially the Caribbean and Central America, has a unique ability to directly affect U.S. security and well-being, primarily because of its proximity (and economic ties) to the United States. The security of Latin America and the United States is linked in many ways. In recent decades, the Caribbean has triggered many U.S. military responses. The difficulty with keeping the region in consistent policy focus perhaps has been worse in the last ten years because of the United States' deepened involvement in Central America. The interaction of security issues (drug trafficking, illegal immigration, environmental degradation, and political stability) is a complex and controversial one. Yet, as the history of U.S. military intervention suggests, the tendency is to overlook the region's problems until the moment of crisis (i.e., Cuba and Haiti with their refugee crises in 1993-1994).

Although the world is less dangerous now than during the Cold War, security in the Caribbean is in many respects more complex and uncertain. At the end of the Cold War, the dangers of conflict erupting more freely among local actors could increase. The potential rises of regional aggressors and the potential for crises stemming from instability in the Caribbean region could present the United States with many difficult security issues. The proximity of the Caribbean to the United States is an important factor in analyzing both its vulnerability and its instability. The true problem for the United States is presented in the serious inability of many regional governments in appropriately addressing and resolving more complex social, economic, and political problems. These problems have been characterized by the ease in which they are politicized and turned against the legitimate governments, which in turn creates a crisis in the security and stability of the region. In confronting this situation, the behavior of the United States is generally classified as "interventionist," involving itself in the internal matters of many regional nations. However, in reality these crises generate difficult and non-traditional threats framed within U.S. security concerns. Therefore, some of the nations in the region

see the United States as a key solution to their problems but, at the same time, its "intervention" can be perceived as a greater problem for their national interests.

In the past, South America has had several conflicts because of territorial disputes, for example: between Ecuador and Peru; and the Falklands conflict in the South Atlantic. These rivalries and disputes, including Bolivia's claims for access to the sea, are often used by the military to justify arms purchases, and, in more serious cases, become a factor for democratic destabilization (i.e., the maritime dispute between Colombia and Venezuela over the rights in the Gulf of Venezuela). In 1992, the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela was one of the factors precipitating the attempted coup by a nationalistic faction of the Venezuelan Army against President Carlos Andres Perez.

Venezuela and Colombia are considered to be a part of South America. However, at the same time, they are considered to be countries within the Caribbean Basin that share (along with the neighboring smaller nations) a high degree of dependence on the North American market.

The maritime dispute between Colombia and Venezuela (over rights in the Gulf of Venezuela) is an example of a territorial dispute that becomes more complex when a valuable resource, oil, becomes involved. This territorial dispute is a product of ambiguity with the actual trace of the border after the breakup of Greater Colombia, in 1830, and equally to the inability of the two governments to agree on the application of the Law of the Sea. The expansion of economic projects in the Caribbean, the petroleum resources that the zone possesses, and the control of a strategic area for maritime passages (control the passage of crafts through the Gulf Venezuela) defines the conflict as geopolitical.

Venezuela and Colombia possess a moderate military force that is respectable in the Caribbean region. Although the Colombian Armed Forces are larger in number than the Venezuelan forces, the Venezuelan military forces are considered to be among the better trained and equipped forces in South America. Colombia's defense problems are complicated by the actions of the guerilla movements and the fact that their activities facilitated the development of the narcotraffic criminal organizations.

On the other hand, the relationship between the two countries and the United States are also different. In the 1950's, Colombia distinguished itself in being the only Latin American country that sent troops and naval units to Korea to support the United States in that conflict. However, since the 1970's, Colombia has experienced a high increase in drug related activities (cultivation and export of illegal drugs), in meeting the growing demand in the United States. Subsequently, towards the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 1980's, the cycle began in the trafficking of cocaine and has had devastating effects at every level in the United States. This phenomenon has resulted in medium tensions between the two countries. Tensions occasionally escalate, especially when the United States demands that Colombia exert a stronger effort in the fight against drugs. At the same time, Colombia discloses the sacrifices that it has already experienced and demands that the United States, as the consumer country, acknowledge its responsibilities and controls its own actions. Additionally, it is necessary to recognize the geographical importance that Colombia represents for the United States. Colombia occupies a strategic position in that it has an east coast on the Caribbean Sea, a larger west coast on the Pacific Ocean, and is located just south of Panama, near the Panama Canal. The Colombian eastern littoral, the coast that meets the Caribbean Sea, is where the cultivation and traffic of drugs towards the United States began to develop and persists. In the urban centers of Santa Marta, Barranquilla, and Cartagena the narcotrafficking has succeeded in controlling important economic and political levels. This situation, without any doubt, constitutes a factor of insecurity for the Panama Canal, as it is the means by which the transfer or shipment of drugs (from one part to another) occurs.

In respect to Venezuela, it is important to remember that it is one of the most important providers of petroleum to the United States. In the Gulf of Venezuela, specifically in Lake Maracaibo, one finds the majority of oil fields that generate 75 percent of Venezuela's national income. This large deposit of oil makes the country the number one oil producer in South America and one of the most important producers and exporters in the world. The Gulf of Venezuela covers an area of over 17,000 square

kilometers and is the primary and most important of the Venezuelan gulfs. This is due not only to its extension but also because of its use for internal communications and resources it provides for the economy of the country.

In the event of a potential military conflict arising in the Gulf of Venezuela, between Venezuela and Colombia, oil shipments to the United States would stop at the start of hostile action. This does not mean that the United States would necessarily support the Venezuelan position. Nevertheless, a conflict situation could seriously affect oil shipments to the United States. A conflict would also affect the sea lanes in the area, delaying or preventing many ships from transiting to the ports of Cartagena (Colombia) or Maracaibo (Venezuela). Such a conflict could even complicate the transit of shipping in the direction of the Panama Canal, thus creating an immediate and serious threat to U.S. security concerns.

The problem of migratory flow from Colombia toward Venezuela does not represent a direct threat to the security of the United States. However, although the number of Colombian illegal immigrants in the United States is insignificant in comparison to the numbers of illegals coming from Mexico and Central America, it is important to point out that in the international arena, the United States is the country with the highest number of Colombian prisoners, followed closely by Venezuela. This situation, in general, has been produced by the activities of the narcotraffickers in North American territory and, also, although in a very minor manner, by the number of extraditions executed in accordance with the common agreement between Colombia and the United States. Once more, the geographical position of Venezuela and Colombia and their proximity to the United States are factors that should draw the attention of North American authorities. Colombia's current internal situation has not helped to deter the migratory flow of its indigenous population in search of socioeconomic improvement. The violence experienced through "narco-terrorism" in Colombia has also had a notable influence on the migratory flow.

With respect to the impacts that the guerilla movements and the narcotraffickers could have on the security of the United States, it is necessary to note the important

relationship that exists between these two factors. This is the case of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), who is the better trained insurgent group and is involved in drug trafficking. One can observe the problems posed by narcotrafficking and guerilla movements problem on democracy in Colombia. Despite a relatively long democratic tradition, the Colombian efforts to integrate the guerilla movements into the political system have had limited success.

The defeat suffered by the Communist movement in the Cold War did not mean the disappearance of guerilla movements in Latin America. On the contrary, upon losing the ideology on which they drew their political power, many of these groups opted to ally themselves with the criminal organizations that control the narcotrafficking in order to obtain gigantic, but illegal, income. In Peru, it is evident that an alliance was made between the narcotraffickers and the Shining Path, in the Upper Huallaga Valley.

In Colombia, the FARC, the best-equipped insurgent group operating in the border region, initially collected taxes from drug traffickers and coca growers. Later, FARC realized that drug trafficking was very profitable and, in 1984, entered the business of drug cultivation and smuggling. The FARC (as well as the other guerrilla movements in Colombia, the ELN and the ELP) is a rebel movement that is disposed to negotiate with the Colombian government from a position of strength. Although they have lost their original Communist ideology, these rebellious groups have been convinced of the necessity to maintain their strength and capacity for negotiation. This was a result of several decades of armed conflict and finally coming to the conclusion that it was impossible to dominate all national territory from a political or military point of view. In reality the guerilla movements, like FARC, represent some of the most serious anti-democratic forces in Latin America. The perseverance of these groups resides, in particular, in the fact that they try to defend their power base, even with violent military means.

The problem of the narcotrafficking is of deep concern to the Colombian government because, together with the guerrilla movement, it is a serious threat against democratic stability. In Colombia, the internal consequences of instability produced by

these two factors are: problems in public health, irreparable damage to the environment, social disruption, corruption, political violence, and a dangerous environment of general unrest in the democratic system.

Additionally, the discovery in Colombia of extensive plots of land under opium cultivation has also caused a high level of concern due to the evidence of a growing demand for consumption in the United States. Because of the extraordinary quantity of money involved and because of the power that it has to corrupt individuals and institutions (or at least the power of being able to threaten them in order to guarantee cooperation) the narcotrafficking has been recognized by the United States as one of the most dangerous threat to its security.

In the United States, the trafficking of drugs is a self-inflicted crisis that generates more money than the inhabitants spend annually in gasoline. This situation has created a real dilemma for the United States government in that it has demonstrated the inability to modify (or to at least change) the behavior of its people in order to stop or diminish the growing demand that sustains the illicit drug trade.

The narcotrafficking problem and its threat is international. The United States uses the policies of economic and military aid in order to demand the eradication of acreage cultivated in coca, marijuana, and poppy in Colombia as well as in other Andean countries such as Peru and Bolivia. Additionally, the United States provides Colombia and Venezuela radar systems to aid in the identification of flights and drug shipments towards North American territory.

The sacrifice in human lives brought about by narcoterrorism and the ongoing fight against drugs in Colombia reveal a heavy toll in what is supposed to be a civilized nation in the western hemisphere. In response, the regions' producers, especially in Colombia, have demanded a greater demonstration and action, on the part of the U.S. government, to resolve its own problem of growing demand within its own borders.

In the United States, the explosion in the consumption of crack and other drugs that generally are involved in crimes and homicides has affected society negatively. The social and economical costs for the United States are large. Looking only at 1989,

substance abuse in the U.S workforce cost the economy an estimated \$200 billion in lost production, transportation accidents, and health care. The enormous economic earnings derived by the narcotrafficking also helped to develop larger criminal organizations in the Caribbean region and to extend its business nets by means of intimidation, corruption, and political influence.

The U.S war against drugs, has failed in great part due to a lack of understanding of the complexity of the problem. The use of military force would not change the panorama because the narcotraffickers do not operate as identifiable armies, but on the contrary, all of their activities are hidden by corruption, generally in the form of payments in large quantities of money. Policies of interdicting drug shipments and military aid to drug producing countries have not been sufficient to resolve the problem. The policies and threats of extradition of narcotraffickers to North American territory have only served to generate more violence and to stir nationalistic passions. Lastly, crop substitution in producer countries could have long term results provided they are accompanied by social improvements in the standard of life of the peasant. However, the most difficult part of this problem resides in trying to control the demand for illegal drugs; one alternative which has been offered is the legalization of drugs in Colombia, as well as in the United States.

The guerrilla movements' activities in alliance with narcotraffickers in Colombia, the migratory flow of the masses in search of socioeconomic improvements, and any other factor that can be characterized by a connection to the narcotrafficking (and its illegal activities) have a negative and direct affect on the security of Venezuela and on the United States.

As discussed earlier, the effects of a possible armed conflict between Venezuela and Colombia, over a failure to reach a peaceful and equal agreement concerning the maritime dispute over the rights of the Gulf of Venezuela, would also have serious consequences for the security of the United States. However, one of the greatest strengths of both Venezuela and Colombia lies in the fact that they are democratically ruled. If well cultivated, this represents a strategic asset for the United States and a

potential source of long-term stability. What is important to point out here is the relationship between democracy and stability. There is ample evidence to show that democracies are the least violence-prone form of government. Democracies are systems that maximize and guarantee individual freedoms, promote pluralism and diversity, emphasize tolerance, and subscribe to the rule of law. Moreover, wars generally do not occur between democracies.<sup>140</sup> Where wars do not occur as a matter of course, because there are widespread institutionalized mechanisms for mediating and resolving disputes, there would seem to be little need for maintaining large, resource-consuming military establishments or for concentrating on defense to the virtual exclusion of development. However, where authoritarianism is the rule, there is a greater propensity for violence, as well as more fertile grounds for the emergence of the sorts of conditions or threats mentioned before.

The cooperation of the United States, in promoting common security interests and democratic values, could have a very positive impact on regional stability and would deal better with U.S. security concerns in the Caribbean.

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<sup>140</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, South America into the 1990s: Evolving International Relationships in a New Era, Westview, San Francisco, 1990, p. 130.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The prospects for conflict and cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia are affected by the nature of their relationship. Based on the theory of complex interdependency described by Keohane and Nye, this thesis has argued that Venezuela and Colombia are involved in an interdependent relationship. It is complex because of the many linkages between the two countries: economic (commercial, financial), diplomatic, human (illegal immigration), and security (cross-border insurgency, border disputes, drug trafficking, etc.).

The theory of Keohane and Nye suggests that the greater the complexity in an interdependent relationship, the less likely either country will resort to force or self help to further its goals. In the case of Venezuela and Colombia, the interdependence has become more complex, as the two countries have drawn closer together through economic integration. That level of interdependence has placed new strains on the relationship. In other words, increased cooperation has heightened conflict, but in new areas, where dialogue and diplomacy have been used as instruments to manage that conflict.

Although growing integration has made the utilization of force between the two countries less likely, both countries remain vulnerable and sensitive on numerous issues. The two countries are especially sensitive to the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela, and growing interdependence has not removed that issue from the bilateral agenda.

The dynamics of interdependence between the two countries becomes extremely complicated and confusing when the governments of Venezuela and Colombia fail to establish an agenda that clearly identifies and prioritizes the hierarchy of the border security issues involving the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela, illegal immigration, cross-border insurgency, and drug-trafficking. Interdependence not only makes it possible but also makes it necessary to identify common objectives, prioritize them, and establish a common means to achieve them. Achieving these objectives

through mutual integration and through active participation in bilateral security operations will also increase the effectiveness of all policies requiring security cooperation.

In order to achieve security cooperation it is also necessary to identify the elements that generate tension and distrust. Eliminating friction between the two countries and establishing a foundation of common security interests will permit bilateral implementation of mutually beneficial and effective border policies. Mutual trust and the results of effective border policies will lead to new levels of security, and defense cooperation between both Venezuela and Colombia. All of the stated factors are interrelated and cannot be addressed in isolation nor should they be weighed disproportionately.

The economic integration programs initiated by Venezuela and Colombia are important steps in the search for harmony and cooperation in their bilateral relationship. The process of economic integration is virtually irreversible. In reality, the economies of the two countries are quite complementary and there are very few sectors of production in which unfair competitive advantages exist that could favor one of the two countries. The efforts of private entrepreneurs, from both Colombia and Venezuela, have made economic integration successful in a way that could be extended to third countries (i.e., Ecuador). However, the tension generated by conflict in the frontier region has greatly affected the level of Colombian-Venezuelan economic integration. The inability to resolve the security issues will diminish the potential for successful economic integration and reduce or impede the level of growth.

There are some indicators that point to a desire by both nations to reach better prospects for future cooperation. Colombia's current president, Dr. Ernesto Samper, in spite of having been one of the more radical proponents of Colombian rights in the maritime dispute over the Gulf of Venezuela, on several occasions after being elected has stated that the solution to this territorial conflict should be reached through friendly dialogue with Venezuela. Additionally, he has said that this dispute should not have any lingering negative effect on the process of economic integration.

From the domestic politics perspective, the stability of democratic systems in Venezuela and Colombia is also very important for the achievement of greater levels of cooperation and the continued development of mutual trust. The existence of democratic systems in both countries provides an environment that may resolve even territorial conflict through good will and bilateral negotiations.

Furthermore the degree of trust between the armed forces of the two nations is not founded in the two military organizations themselves, but is based on the broad level of democracy in each country and the political relationship between Venezuela and Colombia. The use of military force is rendered ineffective in a complex interdependence such as the one defining the relationship between Venezuela and Colombia. In addition, it is important to point out that the armed forces of both countries are only tools to exercise the security policies of their respective governments. In sum, the degree of mutual trust, cooperation and effectiveness to implement border security policies in both nations will depend on political decisions.

It is imperative for Venezuela and Colombia to establish an effective agenda in order to identify their mutual border security interests and to make effective bilateral decisions that will diminish the vulnerabilities of the two nations against the problems of illegal immigration, cross-border insurgency, and drug trafficking. These decisions should also help to diminish the sensitivities perceived to exist between the two countries and to initiate further confidence building measures. Consequently, these confidence-building measures will help diminish the tensions produced by incidents in the frontier region that continuously damage the harmony being built in the bilateral relationship. Resolving these issues and building mutual trust will accelerate the process of economic integration that undoubtedly is very important to the economies of both nations.

The pursuit of a bilateral approach to resolve all the conflicts of border security issues existing in the complex interdependency between Venezuela and Colombia in no way compromises the sovereignty of both countries and can potentially work in favor of regional stability. Venezuela and Colombia have already established joint commissions

to ease the tensions caused by conflicts on the border and both nations have started to set up an agenda to resolve their differences.

In summary, it seems likely that Venezuela and Colombia will continue to build the bases of their bilateral ties through economic integration. As the interdependent relationship becomes more complex, and as the two countries continue to strengthen their democracies, the prospects for ongoing cooperation are good. Nevertheless, conflicts will exist, but they can be managed through rational diplomatic channels and with tolerance and mutual respect.

The ongoing complex interdependence in the relationship between Venezuela and Colombia and their implications for the U.S security in the Caribbean and the western hemisphere are clear. As integration becomes the rule throughout the Americas, and the spread of free trade and democracies are further consolidated, the prospects for peace and cooperation are enhanced in inter-American relations.

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