

**Cocaine Histories and Diverging Drug War Politics in Bolivia,  
Colombia, and Peru**

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Over the past decade, a number of Latin American states have moved from a largely compliant or dependent role in the U.S. “war on drugs” to actively dissenting reformist roles. This trend emerged in the 2008 Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy; the 2013 OAS report on alternative public health and anti-violence strategies over U.S.-style interdiction and eradication drug control; an array of local decriminalization initiatives in Uruguay, Bolivia, Jamaica, and Ecuador; and the lead of Mexico, Colombia, and Guatemala to revamp the UN drug treaty system at the April 2016 UNGASS meetings, with Latin America the most vocal regional bloc.<sup>2</sup> It is tempting to read this political shift—neither monolithic nor a even majority of nations—as the region’s realization of the “failures” or adverse policy costs of the long U.S.-led war on drugs, its collateral damage in violence or corruption

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<sup>2</sup> Coletta Youngers, “The Drug Policy Reform Agenda in the Americas,” IDPC Briefing Paper, WOLA, 2013; Bruce Bagley, “Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in the Americas: Major Trends in the 21st Century” LAP, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012.

to Latin American states, the political shock to governing elites of the Mexican drug war (2006-12), or even the waning of U.S. hemispheric power and the growing sovereignty capacities of Latin American states.

In this essay, I take a different lens, focusing specifically on the Andean countries and highlighting the striking *diversification* of drug politics in Andean states—despite shared illicit cocaine industries and long shared drug-war pressures of the United States. The case at hand is a crucial one: the protracted campaign against Andean cocaine across Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia was for numerous reasons (its mark-up profitability and violence surrounding the drug) the main driver of the U.S. hemispheric drug war since the 1980s. The “Andean ridge” is often taken as a bloc and certainly was in the grand optic of drug warriors. But as the global commodity chain of illicit cocaine and coca began a decipherable shift after 2005, it has revealed widening political fissures and possibilities in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. Here, I characterize Bolivia’s response as the nationalist-*indigenista* “coca sí, cocaína no” control strategy; Colombia’s response as a triumphalist state-building quest for sustainable “post-drug war” control; and Peru’s—again becoming the lead exporter of illicit coke—as a paradoxical case of political “cocaine denial.”

Thus, rather than a unified uniform turn to regional drug reform, a diversity of new drug politics is blooming in the Andes. But, as argued here in highly synthetic fashion, these different trajectories, rather than the usual generalities—the failures or local social costs of the U.S. war against cocaine—relate to deeply distinctive, longer *historical* relationships to both coca leaf and cocaine in each Andean nation, along with a complex of social, political, and racial geographies left by these histories.<sup>3</sup> One disclaimer: this is at heart an essay in comparative history and history’s impact on our present historical juncture. It makes no pretention to be a rigorous exercise in comparative politics, political science “modeling” of the drug war, the grassroots political “agency” of coca-growers, policy-making, or the minutia of national specialists. And while global forces matter here, it is mostly in how they open new national possibilities from these active historical forces in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. One of the global changes that matters most is the new and possibly game-changing shift in the hemispheric commodity chain of cocaine, a process I term

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<sup>3</sup> Rare comparative studies are Thomas Grisaffi, Kathryn Ledebur, “Citizenship or repression: Coca, Eradication, and Development in the Andes,” *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 5/1 (2016): 1-16; Thomas Fischer, “Culturas de coca?: El debate acerca de los grupos que produjeron y consumieron la coca en los países andinos, años 20 a 40,” *Revista de UNAM* (Dec. 2003): 16-26.

“Shifting South.”<sup>4</sup> Cocaine’s commodity chains out from the Andes have undergone a series of marked historical shifts since the 19th century, as the drug slowly transformed from legal to criminalized export circuits. From 1975-2005, as the drug’s commodity chains consolidated in Colombia from prior networks born in Peru and Bolivia, cocaine entered the infamous era that may well be periodized by historians now as the “Age of Colombian Cocaine.” By the 1990s, despite, or because of, mounting repression against the drug, Colombia’s phalanx of DTO “cartels” dominated an expansive cocaine export trade with a potential of some 1,000-1,400 tons worth some \$85 billion in final markets. Colombians vertically integrated coca growing at home to thousands of national *cocaleros* and out-sourced risky border smuggling north to Mexican traffickers.<sup>5</sup> On the consuming end, a majority of the world’s 14 million cocaine users lived in the United States. Given the drug’s supply-side price slide, these relationships led to the low-cost “crack cocaine” crisis of the mid-1980s. The racial politics of crack, and that cocaine counted for half of U.S. expenditures on illicit drugs, drove the escalating drug war in the Andes, militarized by Reagan-Bush in the 1980s and culminating in 2000-05 “Plan Colombia.”

Today’s restructuring of cocaine commodity chains, its shift south, has three key elements. First, the United States is no longer global cocaine’s dynamic market pole. Entrenched cocaine consumption began a “tipping point” down in 2007-08. In the half decade since 2006, total U.S. usage of cocaine fell by half to under 140 tons and to less than a quarter of all drug expenditures. The number of chronic users leading demand dipped below 2 million. Experts puzzle whether this change is a result of supply interdiction and prices, the Mexican drug war, demographics, global markets, or the reshuffled American drug mix to pot and opioids.<sup>6</sup> The home politics

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<sup>4</sup> P. Gootenberg, “Cocaine’s March North, 1900-2010,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 54/1 (2012): 159-80; “Shifting South: Cocaine’s Historical Present and the New Politics of Hemispheric Drug War,” for D. Arias and T. Grisaffi, *Governing the Drug War* (ms., 2017).

<sup>5</sup> P. Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), Ch. 3; Gootenberg, “Cocaine in Chains: The Rise and Demise of a Global Commodity, 1860-1980,” Ch. 12; S. Topik et.al., *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (henceforth UNODC), *World Drug Report 2014*, Pt E, Cocaine Overview; Jonathan Caukins et. al., “Cocaine’s Fall and Marijuana’s Rise: Questions and Estimates Based on New Estimates of Consumption and Expenditures in U.S. Drug Markets,” *Addiction*, 2015, May 2015: 728-36; J. C. Garzón, J. Bailey, “Displacement Effects of Supply-Reduction Policies in Latin America: A Tipping Point in Cocaine Trafficking, 2006-2008,” Ch. 23; *The Handbook of Drugs and Society*, H. Brownstein, ed. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015); “DEA Releases 2015 Drug Threat Assessment,” DEA (U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration), *Public Affairs* (4 Nov. 2014).

of drugs are in flux: the recent DEA “National Drug Threat Assessment” reveals a sharp drop in law enforcement perceptions of cocaine as a “drug threat” from nearly half to under 10%.” Cocaine’s fall may aid domestic drug reform and change drug politics beyond U.S. borders, such as the U.S.-Colombian axis of the late-20<sup>th</sup> century drug war.

Second, cocaine’s shift south spells globalizing consumption: the sum total of illicit drug remains stable at 800-1,000 tons (in the newest 2016 UN *World Drug Report*, a range of 746-943 tons, depending on coca conversion ratios), barely a 10% drop since its 1998 peak. The drug still has 18.7 million yearly users but dispersed far wider. Brazil has been steadily climbing as the second leading consuming nation (drugs first rerouted from Colombia), replete with alarming “crackolandias,” and will likely soon surpass the U.S. market, a phenomenon sketched elsewhere. Cocaine also finds dynamic demand in Argentina, West Africa (the transit hub to Europe), Europe and new frontiers across the southern Pacific to Australia.<sup>7</sup> High per capita indices of coke use (1.5% of adults) affect Spain, the UK, Brazil, and Italy. Cocaine is no longer just a U.S. problem, in part because past U.S. pressures scattered it across the globe.

Third, the production zones of coca-cocaine are also moving south within the Andes. Peru is becoming the new Colombia, in 2013 officially named top producer by the UN with over 340 tons of cocaine, mostly from the southeastern VRAEM valley system rather than the past northern Huallaga. Most Peruvian cocaine flows to Brazil, Argentina, and global south, and little north to the United States. Peru’s resurgence combines “balloon” and “cockroach” effects: the displacement of coca from Colombia guided by dispersed Colombian and Mexican traffickers. Whatever demerits of “Plan Colombia,” after a fitful start Colombia coca crops fell by 50% from 2007-12 (with a notable 2014-16 rebound, mostly in the south) and cocaine refining dropped from 700 tons in 2001 to 245 tons in 2013. The Colombian state got good at intelligence and lab seizures on the ground: most of Colombia’s cocaine is caught; almost none of Peru’s ballooning drugs; and Bolivia mostly avoids the balloon. The Colombian-U.S. chain is waning.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> UNODC, *World Drug Report 2016*, Fig 22, p. 39; seizures doubled 1990s to 2014 to the 50% range (37). UNODC, “The Transatlantic Cocaine Market,” *World Drug Report* (2010).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), “Coca in the Andes,” 2013; UNODC, *Colombia: Coca Cultivation Survey 2014* (July 2015); Daniel Mejía, “Plan Colombia: An Analysis of Effectiveness and Costs,” Brookings Institute, *Improving Global Drug Policy* (April 2015).

Cocaine's advances south suggests the possible detachment of the hemispheric U.S. drug war from its former political axis, but also affects highly divergent drug war political responses in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. These diverse developments, coca nationalism (Bolivia), post-drug war sovereignty (Colombia), and cocaine denial (Peru) may shape or displace the future U.S. drug war against cocaine. They, in turn, rest on the deeply distinctive historical and spatial relationships to coca and cocaine which this essay compares in depth.

*BOLIVIA: Coca sí, Cocaína no?*

The Plurinational Republic of Bolivia, now past its tenth year under President Evo Morales, has become, with its open rejection of U.S.-UN models of coca eradication, one of the most defiant nations in the global drug regime. Its pro-coca policies have grabbed minor headlines: President Morales's speeches before the UN heralding the cultural virtues of coca leaf; Bolivia's dramatic expulsion of the DEA in 2008 and most U.S. anti-drug programs; its direct legal challenge to the ban on coca leaf in the cornerstone treaty of global drug control, the UN 1961 Single Convention (a withdrawal from the treaty regime and returning in 2013 on coca exception terms); the "right" to coca enshrined in the 2009 Constitution; and the building of its community-based "social control" system of drug control. It helps that Evo Morales is identified as an Aymara Indian and that he honed his political skills and base as a leader of the embattled Chapare coca "sindicatos" of the 1990s. Bolivian state discourse ("coca no es una droga"; "coca sí, cocaína no") valorizes a benign indigenous coca leaf over a predatory capitalist drug cocaine. Bolivia's policy is historically rooted in its "coca nationalism."<sup>9</sup>

Bolivian coca nationalism is real enough but need not be confused with a romanticized vision of the eternal unchanging coca leaf. Bolivia stands out in the Andes not only for its indigenous majority but the fact that coca use is accepted across most sectors, regions, and ethnicities of Bolivian society. Today's coca nationalism, like most strands of national identity, is a protean, invented tradition, though this shifting history of Bolivian coca still needs research. In colonial times, for example, coca mostly symbolized the domination of Spanish colonialism, fostered and spread to stimulate Indian subjects and exploitation in high-altitude silver mines like Potosí that grew the world system of the 17th century. Coca was also likely extending

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<sup>9</sup> Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, 113-15, 214-17.

to popular classes throughout the Andes with the breakdown of Incan elite controls over *their* “Sacred leaf.” Like other colonial practices, over time coca was likely internalized with distinctive meanings and everyday practices at the community level, in some peoples as an herbal-spiritual tool of cultural survival and at times resistance. By the republican era, and the creation of Bolivia in 1825, coca commerce was dominated by core economic elites. The hacienda owners of the tropical Yungas ravines near La Paz organized themselves into one of the country’s core political lobbies (the SPY, Sociedad de Propietarios de las Yungas) and by 1900, aligned with the tin magnets, La Rosca, formed the basis of modern Bolivian Liberal politics. The SPY brand of coca nationalism was elitist, laborist, even racist. Bolivian diplomats, representing the SPY in 1920s Geneva League of Nation’s drug conventions, vociferously spoke out in against restrictions on coca in (an act unconsciously echoed by Morales at UN drug meetings). But they cast the leaf as a national “necessity” to make their lethargic “Indians” work, as well as not being a “drug.”<sup>10</sup>

The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 not only ended the tin oligarchy, but was also a turning point for coca. Rebellious peasants dissolved the Yungas hacienda class and coca quickly scattered along with new mostly Quechua migrants to Cochabamba’s Chapare region—where by the 1960s and 1970s, a more contentious popular brand of coca politics was brewing. During this transition, some Bolivian elites swung to the modernizing anti-coca rhetoric coming out of neighboring Peru and UN missions. Bolivia signed the 1961 UN Single Convention (under the Banzer dictatorship in 1976), which codified a coca-free world in a 25-year span—ironically, 1989, a high-point of illicit cultivation across the Andes. Yet, by the 1980s, in still unknown processes, the rise of neo-indigenista (Katarista) ethnic politics in Bolivia “revindicated” the leaf against its denigration by racial outsiders, mestizo domination of post-revolutionary politics, and as the foil of Bolivia’s booming cocaine capitalism. Indeed, before then, vanguard Bolivian *indigenistas* (small parties like Fausto Reinaga’s 1960s PIB) condemned coca as an “opium of the masses” numbing revolutionary indigenous spirit.<sup>11</sup> A local process, it was bolstered by an international class of anthropologists and ethnographers, who helped reverse pseudo-scientific prejudices against *erythroxylon* and attested to its “authentic” role in indigenous ritual and culture. In the 1990s, the mostly mestizo cocaleros of the Chapare, under Morales,

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<sup>10</sup> María Luisa Soux, *La coca liberal* (La Paz: CID, 1993); W. E. Carter, M. Mamami, *Coca en Bolivia* (La Paz, 1982); or René Bascopé A., *La Veta Blanca* (La Paz: Eds. E.G, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Fausto Reinaga, *La Revolución India* (orig. 1969, La Paz: Ed. FR, 2001), 100, 127.

consciously added the political hot label “indigenous” to coca to advance their cause. Coca became reconstructed as a fundamental indigenous “right.”

This history of coca can also be read in terms of Bolivia’s social geography. Coca has served, in various ways, as an integrating force in Bolivian nationality. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, if not before, it was one of the few domestic trade products monetizing the country’s populated altiplano epicenter. The Yungas lay adjacent to La Paz, just as the later Chapare arose near the city and valley of Cochabamba. Coca use was anything but remote and exotic to urban, cultural, or governing classes like the SPY political elites. Coca leaf was especially essential in the everyday lives of the country’s small but strategic working class of modern miners. The 1930s Chaco War and 1952 Revolution broadened coca among laboring classes, including mestizos. As Bolivia expanded eastward into Amazonia after the 1950s, colonizers (many migrant Quechua miners) carried coca leaf along, and for some it became the crucial lowland autonomy cash crop.<sup>12</sup> The fact that coca farms were in striking distance of Cochabamba or La Paz (plus the seasoned political skills of ex-miners) meant that as the cocalero movement climaxed in the early 2000s, its tactics, such as roadblocks, and links to urban groups, were intimately felt in the capital. Coca became a Bolivian national habit as well, traversing with mobile groups like mestizo truck-drivers to the borders with northern Argentina, where mixed culture use also prevails. Rather than pure exaltation of indigenous coca, it has become a normalized marker of Bolivian identity, like yerba mate to Argentines. Today, some 3 million people use ritual coca leaf regularly and coca finds routine uses (medicinal, social) in the lives of 15-30% of adult Bolivians. This contrasts to Peru, the world’s only other significant coca-using nation, where coca is almost exclusively the domain of spatially segregated, marginalized “indios.”

Bolivia’s rising identification with coca occurs historically in a longer relational arc of meaning to cocaine, the foreign “drug” and product of western capitalism and prohibition.<sup>13</sup> From the 1880s to the 1950s, modern Bolivian coca gestated in isolation from cocaine, for the country did not “industrialize” coca nor

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<sup>12</sup> Herbert S. Klein, “Coca Production in the Bolivian Yungas in the Colonial and Early National Periods,” D. Pancini, Franquemont, eds, *Coca and Cocaine* (Ithaca: Cornell, LASP, 1985), 53-64; Harry Sanabria, *The Coca Boom and Rural Social Change in Bolivia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Fischer, “Culturas de coca?; Ana María Lema, “The Coca Debate and Yungas Landowners in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” M. Léons and H. Sanabria, eds., *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 99-117; Silvia Rivera C., “Colonialism and Ethnic Resistance in Bolivia: A View from Coca Markets,” Ch. 6, Fred Rosen, ed., *Empire and Dissent* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

export leaf for industrial use. (In Peru, a contrasting history of legal cocaine-making gave the drug a modernizing national allure, and a later scientific debasement of coca leaf by medical elites as a degenerating Indian “addiction.”) Bolivia’s weaker modest set of Westernized medical authorities were familiar with everyday coca and likely aware of its medicinal role among folk-curing “curanderos.” However, the aftermath of the 1952 Revolution upended the traditional geography of Yungas coca, as did its mestizo politics, and modernizing Bolivian elites in and out of the MNR finally turned anti-coca. Moreover, during the 1950s cocaine finally entered Bolivia, as an essentially criminal activity. Indeed, during the 1950s and 60s, clandestine smalltime producers and smugglers (and a few notorious traffickers) pioneered in lowland Bolivia the rising hemispheric chain of illicit cocaine and coca capitalism. However, this outlaw culture (which later included unsavory characters like Nazi criminal Klaus Barbie) gained little lasting legitimacy, though given its easy cash flow, cocaine was able to corrupt bankrupt governments, including the revolutionary MNR by 1960.<sup>14</sup> Such scandals gave U.S. drug authorities their first leverage in the first Bolivian drug laws (1961), along with an aid role in economic stabilization, MNR politics, and a remilitarized Bolivian state. The United States continued to prop up weak Bolivian governments for the rest of the cold war.

Moreover, by the 1970s and 1980s, Bolivia won, after a long series of repressive post-revolution dictators, the infamy of enduring the hemisphere’s only real “narco-regimes” (like García Meza’s 1980 cocaine coup), where drug oligarchs like Roberto Suárez’s lowland clan basically captured the state and economy. Drug revenues supplied a quarter or more of Bolivia’s GDP in the mid-1980s, one of the highest shares ever recorded, anywhere, involving a tenth of the labor force, in part as the rest of Bolivia’s exports and formal economy simply crumbled under neo-liberal policies. Informality became a national survival mechanism. These years also saw compression and repression of the popular classes generally, from squeezed Bolivian miners and militant workers to dislocated peasants. The spectacle of cocaine capitalist corruption and consumption in cities like Cochabamba was plain to see and corrupt military officials sometimes conscripted peasants in cocaine-related labor. Illicit coca peaked during the 1990s at about 55,000 hectares in the Chapare, its migrant population swelling to about 350,000. Under sharp pressures from the United States, Bolivia fitfully reversed course. Law 1008 (1988), the first full coca criminalization,

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<sup>14</sup> Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, 275-86.



aimed right at Chapare coca, as were repressive new U.S.-trained anti-drug units like UMOPAR largely under the authority of the DEA. This unpopular campaign climaxed in 1998 with the Banzar-Quiroga regime's adoption of U.S.-funded Plan Dignidad. The plans forced "cero coca" (no coca) eradication goal deeply militarized and polarized the Chapare and thousands of coca farmers. More than 60 cocaleros and police died in these operations and mobilized cocaleros eventually bounced out eradication forces. Bolivia is a nation of protest but intense violence was rare, relative to the bloodbaths of late-20th century Peru or Colombia. Cocaine exports plummeted but at a steep political cost to Bolivia's traditional political class (those dominating *apellidos* of the post-revolutionary decades), along with other political shifts, with political blowback against a meddling United States.<sup>15</sup> This was the 1990s context that made Evo Morales the political face of Chapare cocaletero resistance, the growing legitimacy of coca growers as a structured largely peaceful social movement and lobby (in contrast to the guerrillas of Peru or Colombia), and the democratizing appeal of MAS, which won national power in 2005.

Cocaine in Bolivia has thus gained over time negative connotations, directly implicated with late 20th-century authoritarians, social disintegration, violence, and the rollercoaster of economic shock treatments that Bolivia endured during those same decades. No polls directly tell us this, but illicit cocaine displays the signs of the global savage "neo-liberalism" the MAS socialist movement deplors. Indigenous coca, its cultural foil in its long revindication, assumed an ever more positive, popular, and integrative Bolivian national meaning.

In short, in Bolivia, slogans like "coca sí, cocaína no" have a historical logic. Bolivia also enjoys unique social conditions, notably in an organized cocaletero class with ties to the Morales government (Bolivia's longest running elected regime) for instituting its new politics of coca. It is larger than coca in a series of shifting political and regional alliances in the new Bolivian state.<sup>16</sup> Morales insisted from the start that coca controls had to be voluntary, both for cocaleros and for the nation. The country has a unique internal ability, informed by an outspoken class of pro-coca intellectuals, cultural leaders, and enthusiasts, to counter outside pressures and support the policies

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<sup>15</sup> Mathew Brien, "Bolivian Drug Policy under the Morales Administration," B. Bagley, J. Rosen, eds., *Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Violence in the Americas Today* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), Ch. 10; James Painter, *Bolivia & Coca* (Boulder: Lynn Reinner, 1994); Jaime Malamud-Goti, *Smoke and Mirrors* (Westport CT: Westview, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Alberto Vergara, *La danza hostil: Poderes subnacionales y estado central en Bolivia y Perú* (Lima: IEP, 2015); Ursula Durand, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros of Bolivia and Peru* (London: Palgrave-McMillan, 2014).

now called “social control.” Post-2006 Bolivia has displayed a surprising new capacity for sovereignty, for a small weak state beset by regionalism, traditionally pliable to U.S. or DEA formulas. Morales was helped ironically by a buoyant economy from the long global commodity boom, diversified primary exports to China, and the fascination of global intellectuals with the cultural politics of coca leaf. Venezuela offered aid before its crash (to jumpstart “industrialization” of alternative still non-exportable coca products like teas and toothpaste). But most drug policy funding and advising has been replaced, if erratically, by Brazil, concerned with cocaine at its border, the European Union, and myriad NGOS. By 2014, Morales even offered an olive branch of cooperation with U.S. drug authorities.

The institutions, policies, and tensions of social control are under scrutiny by everyone from anthropologists to drug-policy think tanks.<sup>17</sup> Social control (also termed “cooperative coca reduction”) started in 2004, before Morales, as a grassroots alternative to the perceived failure of 1990s-style eradication and coerced alternative development. It centers on setting aside a registered “cato” plot (1600 square meters in the Chapare) for coca growing in the legal market (worth about \$200 cash monthly) and now encompasses about 45,000 *originario* families in the Chapare. The state has invested more than \$350 million in employment and infrastructure projects in the Chapare. The compact Yungas ravines (which barely faced the eradication pressures felt in Chapare) falls under “traditional” use, a term in debate. The varied Coca Growers Federations (COFECAY in the Yungas), using local elected officials and *campesino* input, effectively police land limits, with increasing systematic, high-tech, layered monitoring systems (SYSCOCA) involving the UN and EU. The government conducts anti-drug operations against illegal plots elsewhere in the country (remote jungle areas in national parks or near Brazil). But in established coca zones reduction is state programmed to reduce surpluses, carried out by cocaleros themselves, but who are themselves decidedly coercive, using an array of sanctions. The government fosters substitution crops like bananas, pineapples, or fish farming, gradually being adopted by some farmers. At first (2005-10), the country registered a planned spike in coca and an unwanted spurt of cocaine, but social control seems to work. Between 2010-12, the UN reports that Bolivia’s area in coca fell by 19%, and from 2013-15 more than 12% to under 20,200 hectares, the lowest ever monitored, with an aimed

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<sup>17</sup> I.e., Linda C. Farthing, Kathryn Ledebur, *Habeas Coca: Bolivia’s Community Coca Control* (Open Society Foundation, 2015); “Building on Progress: Bolivia...” (WOLA, Aug. 2015); UNODC, *Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia: Monitoreo de Cultivos de Bolivia* (Aug. 2015).

shrinkage to 20,000 hectares for traditional use. However, in early 2017, the government adjusted up legal coca limits to 22,000 hectares (to outside criticism) ostensibly linked to promoting sales of legal South American coca products. Yet, the coca economy is now below 1% of Bolivia's growing GDP, and despite its charged politics, cocaine barely counts in exports.

Bolivia's socially-pacted policies are a definite if unique form of "drug control." Bolivia seems as serious as a weak state can be about combating the scourge of illicit cocaine and coca growing in remote areas. Under Morales, Law 1008 remained on the books until 2017, and anti-drug operations shot to 12,000-15,000 yearly, sometimes with violent policing; confiscations of illegally-sold coca leaf alone rose 22% from 2013-14. They face severe threats by outsiders like Peruvian and Colombian traffickers who increasingly use Bolivia as transit space to cocaine markets to the south in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil. Half of seized cocaine originates in Peru. Bolivia is no "druggie" place: for example, cannabis smoking, a middle-class pleasure across the southern cone, is frowned upon and harshly punished. Good coca-bad cocaine is a tangible political divide in Bolivia. Studies also suggest the legitimacy of social control is among cocalers, but also due to growing unease with MAS.

The striking counterfactual here is that in exactly the post-2007 era when ballooning of cocaine south from Colombia began, almost all its criminal expansion has registered in Peru, and little in Bolivia, though more illicit coca may be hiding than Bolivian officials care to admit. Even U.S. statistics from 2007-13 show Bolivian cocaine's "potential production" oscillating in stable third from 130-190 tons. Moreover, in Bolivia, all levels of drug-related violence remain low or episodic, mainly along the Brazil border among rival criminal groups, compared to the spiraling violence seen in other transiting zones like Central America.

Bolivia, a country of barely 11 million, with a piecemeal state, has gained notable internal and external momentum in drug policies. Morales plays a unique role but it's not just one político's transformation of Bolivia, and social control will likely outlive his presidency. It's also ironic—if predictable—that the United States has failed to recognize the legitimacy of the Bolivian national experiment in drug control, despite evidence it works—probably since it is an open challenge to supply control ideology. Under Obama, the State Department and DEA vehemently opposed Bolivia's legal crusade to modify the UN Single Convention on coca and "decertifies" Bolivia on drug control at every opportunity, essentially on ideological grounds, as

strident as any anti-imperialist rhetoric of Evo's. Bolivia still lies strangely outside the new "Brownfield doctrine"—the official U.S. flexibility on hemispheric drug reforms—in a way that would not be tolerated in a state like Colorado.

*COLOMBIA: Drug-War State to Drug Sovereignty?*

Colombia has been the "battleground" state in the Andean drug war since the 1980s in a tight political alliance with the United States. That battle with cocaine (and even wider byzantine conflicts with guerrillas and paramilitaries) has taken a staggering human and financial toll: some \$10 billion in U.S. security aid since Plan Colombia, more in national budgets; as of 2013, 5.7 million people (15% of Colombians) displaced; some 57,000 Colombians killed in drug conflicts from 1994 to 2008 and 220,000 in other guerrilla strife. Human rights atrocities marred institutions. In the 1990s, Colombian cities were a hellish drug war-zone: Medellín, home of the infamous "cartel" of Pablo Escobar, registered 380 homicides per 100,000 in 1991, one of the highest rates ever recorded, and terror bombings rocked the capital Bogotá. Since the 1980s, 19% of Colombia's landscape has been altered by illicit coca and eradication, an environmental catastrophe for a biodiversity hotspot. Social inequality (among the world's highest) grew visibly with real estate grabs by drug lords and paramilitaries, worsening the inequalities that fuelled conflicts in the first place.

Such are the disturbing sound-bites of the Colombian "Age of Cocaine" (1975-2005), when the country was the crossroads of the global cocaine commodity chain. Now, the shifting chain portends surprising changes in Colombia. Illicit coca, from drug policies or not, receded from 160,000 hectares in 2000 to under 50,000 in 2013 (with a now serious rebound in 2014-16), and cocaine export capacity halved to under 250 metric tons. Colombian authorities intercept some 165 tons in-country and destroyed over the decade 40,000 coke "labs." The drug economy in Colombia, a steadily advancing diverse exporter even during its wars, returned \$4.5 billion in 2013, or 0.3-0.4% of GNP—a far cry from the late 1980s when the drug share was 10 times higher and politically volatile.<sup>18</sup> Citizen security improved, especially in cities: murder rates are down by 90% in places like Medellín, making Colombian cities attractive sites of global tourism and urban renewal. Nationally, still high homicides fell by 43% between 2000-13, kidnappings by 95%. Even national poverty rates halved in recent

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<sup>18</sup> Mejía, "Plan Colombia" (2015); UNODC, *World Drug Report* 2014, Pt E, "Cocaine Overview: A. Isaacson." Interactive Data Presentation: Explore Plan Colombia's Legacy" WOLA blog, 1 Feb. 2016.

years in part as destitute Colombians escape to safer towns. State capacities expanded beyond policing in taxation, education, and communications, but also in political statecraft: in the early 2000s demobilization of thousands of right-wing paramilitaries (however contestable), and in President Juan Manuel Santos' culminating crusade to resolve the half-century civil war with the FARC. The peace treaty pledges ex-FARC withdrawal from drug trades with an array of specific measures and restitutions to retire coca growers, including land rights. Such figures or moves get criticized as a deceptive cover of the vast human and rights cost to Colombian stability, or the "triumphal" discourse of a Colombian state and of U.S. officials selling the nation-building "success" of Plan Colombia.<sup>19</sup> It may also reflect—noted below—a transforming conservative state-building.

The intriguing sea-change in Colombia is discourse about the drug war. Over the past decade, Colombia moved from Latin America's most militant drug-warring state to a pro-active drug reform state on the international stage. Ex-president César Gaviria, who oversaw Escobar's elimination in 1993 and dismantling of cartels, by 2008 was a founder of the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, the first Latin American call against the global drug war. Under Santos (2010- ) Colombia hosted the 2012 OAS Cartagena Summit of the America's drug debate and follow-up OAS report on the dilemmas of transit and producing nations and proposed anti-violence, harm reduction, and public health alternatives to the drug war. Colombia then led the "Latin American" drive to reform the UN drug regime at the 2016 UNGLASS meetings and Santos continues active at the UN and other platforms.<sup>20</sup> Local judicial initiatives abound in Colombia for personal drug decriminalization. Colombia's Comisión Asesor para la Política de Drogas (under the Ministries of Justice and Health) advises government policies beyond security objectives. The longer "post-conflict" sustainability of drug suppression is in open public debate. The most dramatic move, in early 2015, was Colombia's unilateral (if now sometimes lamented) suspension, as environmentally unsound, of aerial glyphosate fumigation of coca fields, over objections of its U.S. policy promoters.

Such reform discourses also draw fire, as window-dressing to lackluster social policies and alternative development for coca growers or Colombia's drug

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<sup>19</sup> Winifred Tate, *Drugs, Thugs, and Diplomats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> OAS, *Report on Drug Problem in Americas* (2013); M.A. Arias, et. al., *Costos económicas y sociales del conflicto en Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de Los Andes, 2014); Juan Tokatlian, "El acuerdo sobre drogas en la Habana: un moderado paso radical," *Razón Pública*, 8 June 2014.

militarization role in places like Mexico. But they are changing the regional dynamics of drug politics. The big puzzle is why the Colombian state, reveling in its U.S. drug alliance, military prowess, and “success” in drug repression (not its policy failure) is now so outspoken against the drug war. Is it premature to analyze post-drug war strategies in Colombia and do changes reflect national or larger changes in cocaine’s chain? Here, I develop three possibilities for the shift (bearing in mind the daunting complexity of Colombia): the larger social-geography of drugs in Colombia after 1975 and the political intimacies of drug violence; as a refraction of post-1990s state-building processes; and as a product of Colombia’s unusual technocratic knowledge regime.

A Colombian truism is that the country has “more Geography than State”: the political fact that since the colonial era governing elites were largely confined (by fragmenting mountains, poor land and river transport) to a few upland inland cities with limited impact on the rest of its territory. Colombia’s political topography—the world’s third most splintered in a recent survey—lends it a complexity beyond the bipolar or tri-polar regionalisms of Bolivia and Peru.<sup>21</sup> Surrounding Colombia’s towns and formal institutions of church, business, and state were vast imagined “frontiers” and peripheries—in the eastern *llanos*, Pacific coast, Guajira peninsula, Darien, middle Magdalena valley, and vast ungoverned stretches of Amazonia. Colombia’s national era development turned on highland coffee colonization, in Santander, Gran Tolima, Antioquía (with Medellín at its core), replicating social patterns rather than integrating a nation. Political scientists thus often see Colombia as the hemisphere’s “weakest” in state capacities (a contested term), given its population and economy, and indeed, in the 1960s state spending to GNP at 11.2% was the lowest ratio in Latin America. Moreover, the central theory for Colombia’s rapid 1970s descent into the “illegal psychoactive drugs industry” (by economist Francisco Thoumi) pins it precisely on the country’s political conditions. A weak fragmented state, illegitimate to regional elites and absent to rural folk after the 1950s “Violencia,” was Colombia’s real comparative advantage for violent drug smuggling.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> F. Safford, M. Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James D. Henderson, *Víctima de la globalización* (Bogotá: Siglo de Hombre, 2012), 39.

<sup>22</sup> F.E. Thoumi, “Why the Illegal Psychoactive Drugs Industry Grew in Colombia,” *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, 29/2 (1992), 35-53—a still contested idea. Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion: An Economic History of Latin America in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington DC: IDB, 1998), Table 6.2.

First, to begin analysis, in Colombia the historical geography of coca leaf sharply contrasts to Bolivia's or parts of Peru. Colombia is only 4% indigenous, like the United States, highly marginalized on frontier land "reservas." Coca use was only known among a few isolated peoples, the Nasa of Cauca or the Kogi and Arhuacos of Santa Marta, while Amazonia tribes had distinct forms of the plant.<sup>23</sup> Colombian coca is in fact botanically in a class of its own (*E. coca var. novogranatense*), which 1980s traffickers found poor for making cocaine. Coca was thus always folkloric to urbanites, perhaps why Colombia had a militant anti-cocaism when it joined the global drug regime after World War II. Today, Nasa youth are giving up coca rituals and Nasa lands are over-run by traffickers exploiting forests and legal autonomies. Colombia has a tiny new legal indigenous-only trade in herbal coca products, unlike Bolivia's national good.

Thus, coca came into Colombian national consciousness as an illicit and recent good in the 1980s, grown by unknown "foreign" types. Commercial coca cultivation (i.e., for cocaine) began in so-called "zonas de colonización," as destitute peasants, fleeing poverty, landlessness, and violence in the coffee highlands, fled into "developmental" tropical frontiers of Valpés, Guaviare, Sur de Meta, and by the 1990s swaths of southeastern Putumayo and Caquetá departments, areas with scant state presence. Imports of Peruvian PBC coca paste had been the key ingredient for the swift 1970s expansion of Colombian trafficking groups. Traffickers may have fostered this unprecedented turn to national coca with imported shrubs, from ruralized cocaine labs (agro-industrial complexes like Caquetá's early 1980s "Tranquilandia"), or the rise of southern Pacific Cali networks. The final spur to Colombia coca was the early 1990s attack—part of the U.S. military Andean Initiative—on the PBC "air bridge" from eastern Peru and Bolivia. Coca was part balloon effect, import substitution, and vertical integration of the national drug industry. Adding to cocalero perceptions as "alien" to Colombia was association in many areas (if highly varied) with the FARC and other guerrillas, who promised vulnerable peasants protection from police incursions and traffickers. Cocalers became painted as a problem of state "subversion," though many new communities sought ties to national parties and state services.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Antony Henman (Antonil), *Mama Coca* (London: Hassle Free Press, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Alfredo Molano B., "Frontier cultura takes to coca" in M. L. Smith et. al., *Why People Grow Drugs* (London: Panos Institute, 1992), 65-77; María C. Ramírez, *Between the Guerrillas and the State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); M. C. Bustamante, *Estado y coca en la frontera colombiana: El caso de Putumayo* (Bogotá: Cinep, 2011).

Colombian coca's subsequent saga has two turning points. The breakdown of the urban trafficking organizations of Medellín and Cali in the early 1990s accelerated coca's dispersion across Colombia, as leaner crime groups and paramilitaries jumped into cajoling or enlisting peasants. Money laundering into estates, some for coca, helped make what is now known as Colombia's "*Counter-Agrarian Reform*," against a non-existent equitable one. By year 2000 and Plan Colombia, the country dominated Andean coca: 120,000 hectares or three-quarters of all coca. As coca became a "conflict good," thousands of cocalero families got caught in a spiraling rural civil war linked to drug war chests. Another marker was early Plan Colombia with its intensive aerial spraying and armed manual eradication against cocaleros. The main effect was to make processing more efficient and radically disperse coca plantings as micro-plots in new coca frontiers: the Pacific hotlands of Cauca and Nariño, along the Magdalena, the northern Guajira and the Darien peninsulas, near Venezuelan smuggling, and national parks and minority preserves.<sup>25</sup> Coca, if pushed, could thrive almost anywhere in Colombia. Today, after more than a decade of drug warfare against peasants, by 2013 Colombia had 48-69,000 hectares in coca, before its 2014-16 spike. More than 60,000 families remain in coca but only 2-3% of agrarian product, mostly in southern departments Nariño, Cauca, Putumayo, and Caquetá. Experts barely agree which anti-drug policies really "worked," though the critique is growing that Colombia wasted too much time and effort eradicating the bottom human rung of the commodity chain.

This brief coca history unveils how in the politics of the Colombian state, elite, and U.S. drug warriors, cocaleros got painted as an expendable criminal social group, worthy of chemical warfare, cleansing off lands, and the rights atrocities of paramilitaries, traffickers, and guerrillas. They were beyond the imagined national polity, despite pleas and marches for recognition, and after decades in coca, a mestizo crop culture much like coffee's. This may explain Colombia's enthusiasm to go after the peasant per se in drug policy (no other Andean country systematically doused its own people with toxic chemicals). However, the rapid spread of a cocalero class after the 1990s also made them, as officials now grasp, a wider national problem worthy of the carrots of integration. In search of livelihoods, cocaleros enlarged Colombia's agrarian frontiers, though many clearings devolve into ex-paramilitary cattle grazing or

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<sup>25</sup> Mejia, "Plan Colombia"; ONDCP "Coca in Andes," 2013; UNODC, *Colombia: Coca Cultivation Survey* 2014 (July 2015); it's not obvious, claims aside, that tough eradication policies "worked."



corporate industries like palm oil. Coca culture's novelty and weak roots in Colombia made its rollback seem a possibility, and may favor a sustainable resolution of Colombia's Age of Cocaine.

Second, Colombian historical geographies of cocaine and cocaine conflicts play into today's political shift. Colombia is distinguished by the urban source of its initial drug trafficking organizations, which date only to the mid-1970s, and which like coca proved resilient as they expanded to national scale. Their challenge to the state are often exaggerated for political effect: neither "cartels" nor the FARC ever threatened a "failed" state in Colombia. However, the lived national drama of trafficking and escalating drug violence on urban scenes, and against Bogotá's core political institutions, meant that eventually Colombian elites deemed drug trafficking the country's political ill and sought ways to cure it.

Cocaine, like coca, arrived late to Colombia, after decades of incubation as a modern illicit drug in the southern Andes—Peru and Bolivia—transiting via Chile. It was a modest commodity chain shaken north, first via the Amazonian hub of Leticia, by the events of September 11, 1973.<sup>26</sup> Cocaine might have turned north through Colombia anyway given the country's smuggling skills, political vulnerabilities, and proximity to 1970s coke growth markets in south Florida. Elaborating on Thoumi, the perfect storm for cocaine in Colombia was its mix of dynamic entrepreneurial classes (and other aspirants to wealth) with a precarious state. Regional cultures focused this drug dynamism. Medellín, for example, was the modern business and industrial capital, with a floating population of workers, migrants, and slum-dwellers, its real locational advantage. The rise of Escobar's organization, which with others rapidly expanded refining and wholesale distribution overseas, relied on this social matrix, consolidating a regional base with the largesse of social services and risky jobs. The Ochoas also come across as typical mobile modern *paisas*. Cocaine via Colombia rose from nil in 1970 to some 10 tons by the mid-1970s to about 100 tons by 1980 to nearly 1,000 tons by the 1990s. Such hyper-entrepreneurial groups, and their layered business structures, belie (as experts know) the misleading structural label "cartel." Escobar defied the mostly cooperative local business and political class, and by 1983-84 began his campaign to integrate himself into the state's political party and

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<sup>26</sup> P. Gootenberg, "The Pre-Colombian' Era of Drug Trafficking in the Americas: Cocaine, 1945-65," *The Americas*, 54/2 (2007): 133-76; Jorge Orlando M., "The Drug Trade, Politics, and the Economy: The Colombian Experience" Ch. 3, E. Joyce, C. Malamud, eds, *Latin America and the Multinational Drug Trade* (London: ILAS-MacMillan, 1998); Cf., E. Sáenz-Rovner, "La pre-historia del narco-traficante en Colombia," *Innovar* 8 (1996): 65-82

institutional apparatus, first as Medellín's New Liberal senator-elect.<sup>27</sup> The Cali organization was more closely within the business class of its burgeoning Pacific metropolis via the port of Buenaventura, well placed for the 1990s cocaine rerouting, and less confrontational to capitalists and institutions of a faraway Bogotá state. Gilberto Rodríguez-Orejuela ran a chain of booming discount pharmacies before reinvesting profits to front for smuggled cocaine. These stories are well-known along with the multiplication of trafficking to other locales.

Location, in the regional cultures of Colombia's primary business cities, and visible new wealth and ambitions made traffickers hard to ignore. But they often were: for example, save for one arrest, Escobar stayed under the radar nationally (and the DEA) until his 1980s political debut. President López-Michelsen overlooked the 1970s rise of cocaine, taking on the expendable smalltime Guajira marijuana "marimba boom" to placate U.S. concerns. The Colombian military of the 1990s knew the side business of paramilitary allies, and mid-1990s narco-funding of President Samper's campaign shook the strategic alliance with the United States, and left Colombia briefly "decertified." As late as 2003-5, in Alvaro Uribe's concerted drug-war regime, a third of congress, as later the DAS chief, were implicated in para drug networks. Political class autonomy from traffickers was tricky.<sup>28</sup>

The decade of early 1980s to the 1990s brought on civil war between traffickers and the central state. Set off by the shocking 1984 assassination of Justice Minister Lara Bonilla and later presidential hopeful Galán in 1989, it only began to calm, with occasional lulls, in the December 1993 killing of fugitive Escobar, only to morph into decentered killing waves in the 1990s and beyond. It was spectacular demonstrative violence: killings of major candidates and key judges, powerful terror bombings of newspapers and the DAS headquarters; downing civilian planes; the massacre during the M-19-narco attack on the Supreme Court Palacio. Much of the initial turmoil hinged on the politics of "Extraditables"—whether the terrorized Colombian justice or political system would send traffickers abroad for prosecution. Violence became a quotidian fact in Medellín and beyond as Escobar's force of *sicarios*

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Roldán, "Colombia: Cocaine and the 'miracle' of modernity in Medellín," Ch. 8, P. Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine: Global Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999); Alfonso Salazar J., *La parábola de Pablo* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Journalistic accounts include Fabio Castillo, *Los Jinetes de cocaína* (Bogotá: Ed. Documento Periodísticos, 1987); Camilo Chaparro, *Historia del Cartel de Cali* (Bogotá: Intermedio Eds., 2005).

took out rivals and police at will.<sup>29</sup> So, by 1985, Medellín became the world murder capital with 1,698 killings, doubling in 1986. It was the proximity of this carnage and the brazen challenge to power centers (unlike the invisible 1950s rural killing spree) that brought cocaine to the forefront of Colombian politics.

The trajectory of drug-war trafficker conflicts is beyond our scope. Suffice to say that the “kingpin” strategy preferred by U.S. and Colombian authorities rarely worked, dispersing drugs and death across Colombia instead. As Kenney shows, the 1990s dismantling of the flat, loose, wheel structured “cartels” only spun off more invisible, innovative criminal forms, and a labyrinth of power struggles among lower echelon traffickers (much like Mexico in 2006-12).<sup>30</sup> Breaking the Medellín (1992-93) and later Cali (1994-95) organizations proliferated into exporter nodes of some 600 boutique *cartelitos*. Colombia’s cocaine exports thus intensified during the 1990s, peaking about year 2000 with 700 ton capacities based on national coca, feeding into the cheap U.S. “crack” era of the 1990s. In Colombia, this post-“cartel” era saw paramilitaries, especially the AUC confederation, mobilized to fight peasants, the left, and traffickers, gain autonomy and absorb lucrative parts of drug trades. The resilience of motley criminal gangs, diversifying into other legal, forced, or illicit activities (mining, logging) challenged a state itself implicated in criminality. In this chaos, as peace talks failed, the FARC surged after a long stalemate, using drug taxes to take a countryside offensive. A late 1990s panic, amplified by the CIA, sounded the prospect of a collapsing “failed state” in Colombia, reinforced by a 1999-2001 kidnapping wave against rich families. Thus, Colombian elites embraced a militarized drug war and built-up Praetorian state to seize back national territory.

This narration of trafficker power leads back to bigger state-building and sovereignty questions. If Thoumi’s model of Colombia’s “weak” state is the primal structure for drugs trafficking in Colombia, how has the more cohesive offensive of the state after 2000 undercut cocaine’s conditions? Did drug trades themselves paradoxically produce over time a more national state? Is this behind Colombian drug reform initiatives after 2010?

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<sup>29</sup> Gerard Martin, *Medellin: Tragedía y resurrección--Mafia, Ciudad y Estado 1974-2012* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2012); James Mollison, *The Memory of Pablo Escobar* (London: Chris Boot, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007), Chs. 1-4; J. C. Garzón, *Mafia & Co.* (Washington: Wilson Center, LAPS, 2010); C. Krauthausen, L.F. Sarmiento, *Cocaína y Co.: Un mercado ilegal por dentro* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1991).

It's a contested topic, filled with conceptual and political land-minds. First, the Uribe regime itself (and U.S. supporters) painted its 2002-10 security project as a conscious policy of state-building, making it difficult to detangle from official discourse or triumphant policy claims. Scholars look instead at the palpable impact on local and "peripheral" regions, how communities and municipalities assumed "agency" in relation to the state, the victims and silences of securitization, or brown sites of un-governance and illicit flows.<sup>31</sup> A larger debate in social sciences (and in Colombia) questions the very meaning of "weak" or strong states. Researchers disagree with motley data whether the Colombian state achieved much else beyond militarization in the decade after 2000. Under Santos, nation-building discourse noticeably swung towards social and decentralist mandates, but present state development is hardest to assess.

One unmistakable trend is that Uribe focused on military expansion, not as a dictatorship but in the Weberian spirit of attaining a "monopoly of violence" as the precondition of state bureaucracy and legitimacy. High military and policing expenditures doubled to 4.2% of GDP, military budgets rose 120%, and professionalized troops reached 446,000 by 2012. This consumed much of Colombia's overall 9.4% annual rise in public spending.<sup>32</sup> Intelligence improved, one reason for Colombia's mounting ability to intercept drug shipments. A political Seguridad Democrática program imperfectly demobilized the AUC and other irregulars, evolving into the 2007-10 Plan Nacional de Consolidación. The PNC fostered "pacification" followed by sequenced steps to municipal incorporation, elections, and land titling in peripheries. By 2007, the first time in history, the state had some presence in all 1,099 municipalities. Santos replaced these campaigns with a full-funded Consolidation program for municipal empowerment, transfers, and infrastructure to conflict-risk villages.

New scholarship moves beyond binary "success or failure" views of the Uribe regime to state-building interpretations. For example, political scientist Gustavo Duncan's new book (2014) probes the broadest geo-dynamics of the drug war and Colombian state expansion. The "empty spaces" occupied by cocalers,

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<sup>31</sup> J. Revelo-Rebellado, M. García-Villegas, *Los Estados del País* (Bogotá: DeJusticia, 2011); A. Feldmann, "Measuring the Colombian Success Story," *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 32/3 (2012): 739-52; F. González, A. Rettberg, "Pensando la fragilidad estatal en Colombia," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 37 (2010).

<sup>32</sup> Tate, *Drugs and Diplomats*; Diana Rodríguez-Franco, "Internal Wars, Taxation, and State-Building," *American Sociological Review* (Dec. 2015); Ministerio de Defensa de Colombia, "Logros de la Política Integral de Seguridad y Defensa para la Prosperidad" (Bogotá: 2013).

paramilitaries, and guerrillas from the 1990s forced the Colombian state to react, at last after 2000 finishing territorialization and institutionalization of its rule. Narcotics had filled out Colombia's frontiers as armed actors exploited the municipal power vacuum of the 1991 charter in local fiefdoms. Today Colombia, in line with its constitution, is more "national" than before drugs and civil war.<sup>33</sup> Millions of refugees from the war-torn countryside into Colombian cities add to this social impact, bringing the real Colombia (including invisible groups like Afro-Colombians) to formal institutions. Another new optic is sociologist Diana Rodríguez's Tillyian fiscal analysis (2015). In Colombia's case, an internal war-state was able to build itself up: taxation, only 6.6% of GDP in 1990 (the lowest in the region) rose to a mid-range 14.3% in 2012. Eleven tax reforms ensued, including a wealth tax, as the DIAN tax agency opened hundreds of offices. Elites strikingly consented to new levies, due to direct threats to their interests, forging a compact for an expanded state. Others suggest a paradoxical longer expansion for a neo-liberal state: in 1970, the state accounted for only 11.3% of GNP; by 1990 13.6%; by 1997 20%, above the Latin American average.<sup>34</sup>

The Colombian state is thus bigger, more territorial, autonomous, financed, or "stronger" than ever. The preconditions of 1980s Thoumi's "statelessness" eroded. Its political legitimacy and democratization, in lieu of social reform, remain shakier. How sovereignty shifts inform specific capacities for drug initiatives—alternative development, human services, health policies, land and social equity—is harder to say. Many Colombian officials believe they've "won" their war on drugs, and such confidence has since 2012 sparked a search for post-conflict, longer, stable solutions. Colombia cannot be militarized forever.

One puzzle to sovereignty is external drug policy, i.e., Colombia's new regional activism. Santos clearly looks to project a strong "new" Colombia—now the third largest nation in people, economy, and territory of South America—onto the international stage. Its leadership is crucial to drug politics as other dissenter states, Bolivia, Uruguay, Guatemala, Ecuador, Jamaica, are mainly a mixed bag of small states. Beyond reformism is also the model of Plan Colombia and Colombian experts

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<sup>33</sup> Gustavo Duncan, *Más que plata o plomo: El poder político del Narcotráfico en Colombia y México* (Bogotá: Random House-Debate, 2014), Ch. 6; Rodríguez-Franco, "Internal Wars and State"; Bustamante, *Estado y coca*.

<sup>34</sup> J.J. Echeverri, "Colombia en la década de la noventa: neoliberalismo y reformas estructurales en el trópico," *Coyuntura Económica*, 30/3, 2000.

and advisers to Mexico, Peru, and Central America.<sup>35</sup> Whether or not U.S. power wanes in the region, Colombian officials surely grasp U.S. congress and public skepticism of drug wars and its resource shifts to Mexico and Central America. The older Cold War style U.S. military alliance is fading, especially if Colombia ends the FARC conflict. Ahead, Colombia is more on its own or related to European and UN drug institutions. Sovereignty requires “sustainable” drug policies to preclude cocaine and other resurgent threats. Yet, this realm, socio-political alternatives to drug warring, is where the United States has least to offer, so the Colombian state is falling back on its own resources, including ideas.

Unlike other states with DEA policy sway, Colombia has a vibrant intellectual and technocratic class, which has now developed a pronounced interest in drugs, violence, and the state. This is nothing new: Colombia’s urban culture hosts a cosmopolitan *letrado* elite, its “conversations among gentlemen” dating to 19th century. Eduardo Dargent posits Colombia’s technocrat policy autonomy as unique in Andean politics.<sup>36</sup> Colombia’s university systems are among the most professionalized and funded in Latin America, not just in Bogotá. By the late 1980s, intellectuals presented “violontology” as the national social predicament. Since then, in direct response to urban crisis, scores of scholars crafted sophisticated fields of violence and drug policy studies, in politics, sociology, anthropology, and economics. Respected think-tanks at the Universidad de los Andes formed to inform the state on drug violence issues. It’s a far cry from cocaine’s start when only a few intrepid journalists or politicians spoke openly of drugs. One such pioneer *violentólogo* intellectual is Alfonso Salazar, who became a leftist mayor of Medellín (and whose social biography inspired the 2012 nationally mesmerizing telenovela *Escobar: El Patrón del Mal*). An army of NGOs drawn to Colombia, state-like in contested regions like the Putumayo, and strong national human rights institutes CINEP or DeJusticia, promote rights and grassroots inclusion discourse in intellectual circles, Colombia’s drug intellectual apparatus far surpasses Mexico’s much less its Andean neighbors.

Colombia thus enjoys an intellectual class shaping the state’s search for alternative drug policies. Mostly trained in top U.S. universities, they pass in and out

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<sup>35</sup> Arlene B. Tickner, “Colombia, The United States, and Security by Proxy,” WOLA report, March 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Eduardo Dargent, *Technocracy and Democracy in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Chs. 4, 6; Winfred Tate, *Counting the Dead* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Salazar, *Parábola*; Gabriela Polit, *Narrating Narvos* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

of government and carry a social science “evidentiary” pro-U.S. bias. Their political moment arrived with the Santos regime after 2010, as it consciously sought to diversify security policy away from Uribe’s model. The State benefits from their input: for example, the World Bank World Development Index ranks Colombia’s statistical and planning capacities among the highest in Latin America, a kind of cognitive national integration or surveillance capacity. One example, Daniel Mejía, a Brown-trained economist at Los Andes, runs its NGO Research Center on Drugs and Security, which fosters “sustainable” “post-conflict” policy.<sup>37</sup> Santos tapped Mejía to head the Comisión Asesor para Política de Drogas. Mejía’s academic criticism of coca eradication as an “inefficient” resource misallocation informed the 2015 decision (along with FARC talks) to end fumigation. In 2016, Santos also tapped the LSE think-tank IDEAS to “move beyond” the “war on drugs.” In Colombia, intellectual classes play the role that social movements do in Bolivia.

In postscript, Colombia, the center of cocaine’s hemispheric commodity chain for three decades, 1975-2005, is realigning to national drug policies that reflect its distinctive history of coca and cocaine. At the present Colombia faces three uncertainties. First, 2014-16 saw an embarrassing setback and now crisis in coca reduction trends, as plantings wildly jumped 44%, in 2014 and by 2016 to a reported 159-188,000 hectares—back to Colombia’s 2001 peak. The explosion is mainly confined around older plots in three southeastern departments, near Ecuadorian borders for smuggling in chemicals and slipping out drugs. The UN and others attribute this to the perverse effect of cocalero land grabs in anticipation of the FARC peace treaty. This turnaround deflates the triumphalism of Colombian authorities but possibly underscores a negotiated path on coca reduction. Second, are the sinuous decade-long FARC negotiations and its climax in a formal 2017 peace treaty, despite its referendum setback. Santos took a huge political gamble as many provisions anger the Colombian right and wider public which has little love for the FARC. Even before the recent twists, drug policy analysts questioned Colombia’s “peace dividend” and how demobilization will wind down all ex-guerrilla and cocalero drug activities, or sustain longer working visions of alternative development. Article 4 of the treaty, now debated news, commits all parties to a sustained intensive program of crop substitution and development; at last count, 55,000 coca families had signed onto the

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<sup>37</sup> A. Gaviria, D. Mejía, eds. *Políticas antidroga en Colombia* (Bogotá: Eds UniAndes, 2011); Mejía “Plan Colombia”; Arias et.al., *Costos económicos del conflicto*; “LSE academics to advise Colombian President Santos on new policies after the ‘War on Drugs’ ([www.lse.uk/news](http://www.lse.uk/news), 29 Jan. 2016).

plan (a majority of 82,000 coccaleros), with pledges to voluntarily eradicate 100,000 hectares in exchange for land titles, new crops, and subsidies.<sup>38</sup> If this plan fails to work quickly, and skepticism abounds, pressures will mount to resume coercive fumigation. Third, is the U.S. role. Under Obama, the United States tacitly helped the peace process and expressed few public qualms over Colombia's drug policy tilt. Officials at the 2012 Cartagena summit, including President Obama, conceded the "legitimacy" of drug debates. Former hardline Ambassador to Colombia, William Brownfield, is now known for the "Brownfield Doctrine," a State Department concession that Latin American states have a right to experiment with drug policies.<sup>39</sup> Colombia, unlike leftist Bolivia, is a vital and big ally. However, the 2016 Trump upset, with a possibly sharp regress in U.S. drug policies, clouds that trend. Santos has (in early 2017) already met with Trump: one scenario is that with slashed "foreign aid," Colombia is left more to its own devices, including its already evolving autonomous "post"-drug war path.

*PERU: Cocaine in Denial*

Peru stands in sharp contrast to the momentum of Bolivia's coca nationalism and Colombia's nascent national post-drug war strategy. Poised to be the world's top cocaine nation, Peru is mired in what I term "cocaine denial." Few Peruvians knew they achieved in 2013 the dubious official UN distinction as the leading cocaine producer at 340 tons. Peru is the biggest importer of "precursor "chemicals for cocaine and its producers are getting more efficient. U.S. monitors suggest a strong trend of Peru's "production potential,' surpassing Colombia in all but two of the last 6 years since 2010. These data are naturally discrepant, but Peru's own drug agency DEVIDA estimates in its latest report (2017) that Peru's illicit export capacities surpassed 400 metric tons from 2009-13 and in the 300-350 ton range today, with 53-55,000 hectares in coca.<sup>40</sup> Yet, in Peru unlike Colombia or Bolivia, little public

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<sup>38</sup> UNODC, *Colombia: Coca Cultivation Survey* 2014 (July 2015); V. Felbab-Brown, A. Newby, "How to break free of the drugs-conflict nexus in Colombia," Brookings Institute, Dec. 2015; Nazih Richani, "Colombia Peace: The War System Yields to Peace," AULA Blog (American University), 11 Jan. 2016; "Colombia's coca production soars to highest level in two decades, US says," *The Guardian*, 14 March 2017.

<sup>39</sup> *StoptheDrugWar.org*, 15 April 2012 (Obama); D. Restrepo, et.al. "The United States and Colombia: From Security Partners to Global Partners in Peace," *Center for American Progress* (Working paper, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> ONDCP, "Coca in Andes" (2001-15); UNODC, *World Drug Report* 2014, Pt E; Patrick Balbierz, "Peru: The New King of Cocaine" *World Policy Blog*, 3 Feb. 2015. Perú-



discussion sounds about a cocaine crisis. Few intellectuals speak to the issue; there is barely any research establishment, academic or social scientific research work, popular exposes, novels, or perceptible popular or commercial “narco-culture” (a few coca huaylas aside). Peru’s small and ineffectual drug control institutions (like DEVIDA) are headed by non-specialist political appointees. Lima sees scant media coverage of drugs, save for scandals over money laundering or far-away killings.<sup>41</sup> Peru’s cocaleros remain politically negated or persecuted. And the country has a long passivity to looming U.S. drug war designs on Amazonian cocaine labs.

History, politics, and social geography underlie Peruvian “cocaine denial,” for this is in fact Peru’s third stretch as cocaine’s epicenter. Peruvians have no historical memory of the country’s deep links to the drug: Peru invented the initial legal cocaine trade (1885-1915) prior to world criminalization, and in the 1970s-80s began the illicit flow from the Huallaga that shot Colombians to prominence. In short, Peru lacks the consciousness, direction, or sovereignty on drugs achieved by Bolivia and Colombia.

Peru’s cocaine resurgence is largely concentrated—two-thirds of more—in the rugged remote south-east region known as the VRAEM (Valley of the Apurímac, Ene, Mantaro rivers), in the lowland tropics of Ayacucho, Cusco, and Junín departments. The eruption of the VRAEM since 2005 remains an unstudied black box, a symptom itself of cocaine denial. But new coca colonization is now also rapidly spilling deeper into lowlands nearer Brazil and into the remote jungles adjacent to Colombia’s Putumayo, making official statistics highly unreliable.<sup>42</sup>

The VRAEM’s centrality in the current boom reflects three factors. First, VRAEM coca is balloon displacement of coca south again from Colombia towards Brazilian and Argentinean drug networks and use. Even in Peru, the geography of coca has shifted perceptibly south, from the Ucayali basin and northern stretches of the Upper Huallaga Valley (UHV), notably San Martín’s Tocache, the capital of cocaine of the 1970s-90s. Long cocaine’s historic homeland, the Huallaga PBC fueled the 1970s rise of Colombian processors and cartels to the north. At its peak, the Huallaga had some 120,000 hectares in illicit coca, twice all of Bolivia’s crop. By the

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DEVIDA, *Estrategía Nacional de Lucha Contra las Drogas, 2017-21* (Lima, April 2017). Table 6.

<sup>41</sup> In contrast to Colombia, Peru has few consistent known coca suspects: Gorritti, Soberón, H. Cabiesas, two Durands (inheriting the mantel of earlier figures B. Cáceres, E. Mayer, Cabieses); a low-key drug research site (CEDRO) and a new Laboratorio de Criminología Social y Estudios sobre la Violencia (PUCP).

<sup>42</sup> Mirella Van Dun, “Cocaine Flows and the State in Peru’s Amazonian Borderlands,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* (48/3 (2016): 509-35.

early 1990s, Colombian intermediaries retreated from San Martín—with the 1989 Galan crisis, Sendero, and a “Fuji” shock to chemical prices—to pursue coca at home. Hard-line Alberto Fujimori, with CIA aid, finished the rupture with Peru’s brief intense mid-90s air war on the remnant PBC “air bridge” to Colombia. By 1997, Colombia’s coca bypassed Peru—for a decade.

Shortly after, new Amazonian water routes began draining Peru’s cocaine towards Brazil. The VRAEM long had some coca but became dominant in 2005-08. By 2013, the VRAEM was home to some 60,000 active cocalers, 45-75,000 hectares of coca, and supplied a fifth of the world’s cocaine, much to Brazil.<sup>43</sup> Hundreds of clandestine pits and labs dot its valleys, absorbing rivers of clandestine pollutants; countless makeshift, small-craft jungle airstrips ply the goods south and east. Export echelons of the current trade are engineered in part by displaced Colombians and even by deals of distant Sinaloans. Vitality, unlike Colombia, or even Bolivia, the scant intelligence on Peruvian drug networks and high levels of policing corruption means that a negligible share of cocaine is caught on the ground before alighting to outside markets, as low as 1.5-2% in the VRAEM or 8% nationally. A tense stalemate reigns between the region’s traffickers, drug police, and Peruvian armed forces, in 45 bases charged with regional security.

Responding to U.S. pressures and aid promises, in 2014 DEVIDA announced ambitious 50% eradication goals for the VRAEM; they just released 2017 plan pledges to pursue a new and conflict-risking “Integral Anti-Drug Program” in the region. It also reveals virtually no change in the VRAEM’s overall coca crop since 2014—enough for 256 tons of cocaine. Peru’s congress voted in mid-2015 to renew aerial interception tactics (which ended last time with a CIA-implicated downing of an American missionary family). Peruvian officials also like to showcase the so-called “Miracle of San Martín,” a steep post-2005 drop in northern coca bush attributed to integral programs of eradication and crop substitution (cacao, coffee, palm), a wealthier zone with long links to coca.<sup>44</sup> My hunch is that specific local security or

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<sup>43</sup> Ricardo Soberón, “VRAEM: Convergencia de un modelo de desarrollo neo-liberal y uno legal” (Beckley Foundation Report, UK, *Cocaine: Roadmap to Regulation*, 2015); “El VRAEM es Bomba de Tiempo” (Rubén Carelas), *Caretas* (2442), 23 June 2016; E. Bedoya G., “Las estrategias productivas y del riesgo entre los cocalers del valle de los ríos Apurímac y Ene,” *Amazônia* (Lima: CIPA, 1986); A. L. Pérez, *Mares de Cocaína* (Mexico: Grijalbo, 2014), 161.

<sup>44</sup> Hernán Manrique L., “Las bases históricas del milagro de San Martín,” *Politiái* (Lima) 6/11 (2015), 33-51; Roger Rumrill, “The Highs and Lows of a Cocaine Economy,” Smith et.al., *Why People Grow Drugs* (1992), 79-91.

development policies had less impact than coca's bigger swing south along the South American commodity chain.

Second, social roots underlie VRAEM coca and its resilience in southern branches of the Huallaga system. Peru has ample room for coca, with at least a dozen ecologically apt basins to the eastern Amazon. But the poverty, inequality, and marginality of agrarian migrants in the VRAEM made it today's prime site for illicit coca. The VRAEM is one of Peru's deepest poverty pockets, geographically and socially a world apart from Lima since the country's dramatic post-2000 consumption boom. In 2007, cocaine's new takeoff, three-quarters of Ayacucho's depressed agricultural revenues issued from coca crops as did half of Huánuco's. This pinpoints the focused local impact of drug economies, despite recognition that global drug economies leave little (about 1%) "returned value" to peasant producers. In recent national economic studies, Peru's three top coca departments (Apuímac, Huánuco, and Ayacucho) rank among the country's worst in monetary and broader metric "multidimensional" poverty. Half—45 to 60%—of these rural people are officially impoverished, three times the national average with 70% in "informal" pursuits. Social inequality reigns: these are three of Peru's four most unequal departments by 2012 income deciles. Poverty and inequality, in decline nationally over the past decade, fuel Peru's coca boom, among the peasants who dared stay in a depleted countryside.<sup>45</sup> Eastern coca hotspots represent a closer informal livelihood other than pulling up stakes to Lima.

Third, VRAEM suffers wider political and sociological marginalization. Poverty alone is rarely sufficient to explain illicit drugs (nor for social mobilization or revolts) as the vast majority of poor folk never get involved in risky business, and some most dynamic hemispheric trafficking centers (Medellín, Juárez) began as business poles. Peru's coca growers lack political voice, unlike Bolivia's thriving coca leagues after the 1990s, and Colombia, whose coca organizations persevere. Peru's nascent cocalero unions have been mostly attacked, beheaded, or disenfranchised. A flurry of leagues arose in the early 2000s, but unlike Bolivia's, they proved too politically isolated to link to any national movement, and suffer from historical

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<sup>45</sup> Analysed data from J. J. Ruda, A. Zavaleta, *El mapa del narcotráfico en el Perú* (Lima: IDEI, 2009): 47, 233-6, Table 1, "Variables Económicas 2001-07, 396; and Enrique Vásquez, "Los límites de la política económica y social en el Perú: Mercado, estado, y capital (2000-2012)" (Symposium on the Contributions of Rosemary Thorp, Oxford, 2015), graphs 17, 19; Soberón, "VRAEM."

discontinuity.<sup>46</sup> During the prior 1980s-90s cocaine boom, Maoist Sendero Luminoso guerrillas infiltrated the Huallaga, the final redoubt of “narco-terrorism,” and Peru cracked down hard on coca politics in a regional repression. In 2010, Humala’s first progressive drug czar, Ricardo Soberón, one of Peru’s few drug experts, promised to engage beleaguered peasant organizations with alternative drug policies, before U.S. embassy objections got him sacked. Now, the remote VRAEM is where splintered Sendero diehards regroup again, harassing drug police and still tainting cocacero politics as “terrorist.” Moreover, if a larger idea on the origins of illicit economies, it seems no accident that coca thrives today in the same department, Ayacucho, which originally birthed the Sendero movement in the 1970s. Across the Andes and beyond (parts of Mexico and Central America) illicit activities emerge as refugee aftermaths of collapsed “modernization” and state-building projects (Peru’s 1968 Velasco regime) and failed revolutions (Sendero). They do not arise from Thoumi’s proposed state of socio-political isolation.

Peru’s “cocaine denial” has its blind-spot in the VRAEM, but it also has deeper historical and geographic origins. Collective amnesia about cocaine fits a longer historical arc between coca and cocaine in Peru. Like Bolivia but not Colombia, Peru has a significant (if now marginalized) past of indigenous coca use, with a few million regular users today in high altitudes zones. But Peru also boasted a unique legitimate cocaine and coca-exporting business, from the 1880s-1940s, before its mid-century criminalization (which began the illicit coke that turned into 1980s Huallaga coca-paste). Cocaine’s long legal past, when Peru led the world in medicinal cocaine sales, gave the drug a heroic modernizing hue to governing elites: a “cocaine nationalism.” It took time to fade as the drug’s international prestige fell from advancing global anti-drug movements after 1915. Complexly, the scientific modernity of cocaine, touted by Lima researchers like Alfredo Bignon (the 1880s inventor of local PBC processing) led at first to novel respect for Andean coca leaf rather than colonial myth or Indian vice. But by the 1920s and 30s, a circle of Lima *indigenista* social medicine leaders, led by Dr. Carlos Paz Soldán, imbued with Western addiction science, began to condemn coca as the backward foil to cocaine.<sup>47</sup> Coca became an oppressive degenerative pariah “drug,” the view universalized in 1948-50 by the UN Commission of Enquiry on the Coca Leaf to Peru and Bolivia, over

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<sup>46</sup> Ursula Durand, *Coca o muerte* (Lima; DESCO, 2008); Durand, *Empowerment of Coccaleros* (2014).

<sup>47</sup> Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, chs. 1-4; Joseph Gagliano, *Coca Prohibition in Peru* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); Fischer, “Culturas de coca?”

objections of “Andean man” scientists like Peru’s Carlos Monge. At this same 1950s conjuncture, cocaine was finally outlawed by Odría, the cold-warrior who shut Huánuco’s factories under U.S. pressures. What better to erase its former national cache than to forget cocaine altogether? Peru’s last public discourse on the drugs date to the 1940s (the binary “coca debate” of Gutiérrez-Noriega vs. Monge) or back to the scientific excitement of cocaine in the 1880s. Since 1950, neither coca nor cocaine plays a perceptible role in the national imaginary.

Still, how can cocaine denial thrive today as Peru reemerges as cocaine’s world capital? First, is the weight of racial geography: the people who mattered in Lima from Independence on had little contact nor concern with the highland peoples who still used coca leaf, their so-called “Indian stain”—a very different stance from Bolivian elites or its invisible racial politics in Colombia. About 2-3 million take coca daily, some 7% of Peruvians, the poorest of “Indians,” mostly Quechua speakers, many illiterate. Coca chewing in Peru is still distained as a backward “vice,” without the national aura the leaf emits in Bolivia, if no longer the “drug addiction” crudely thought by mid-century authorities. Racism, however, enjoys a long deniability in Peru, complexly woven into the hierarchies and politics of region and cultural *mestizaje*.<sup>48</sup> Peru’s national negation of race and discrimination parallels its denial of cocaine.

Second, Peru is increasingly polarized in Lima, where more than a third of its thirty million citizens now congregate. The political ascendancy of Lima has been the key political transformation of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Peru, over regional elite political configurations such as the traditional autonomy pole of the southern Andes around Cuzco, where coca is mostly known.<sup>49</sup> Regional inequality is the national blinder. The sierra and its people remain segregated from the coast with scant visibility of coca use in Lima. And leaf agriculture and cocaine lie still further off mental maps, originating in the third most marginalized part of the country, the “eye of the jungle” tropics. As the illicit cocaine business picked up in the 1970s, it was safely ignored, and indeed much of it (unlike Colombia’s drug geography) bypassed the coastal Peruvian urban establishment institutions altogether, distantly managed by traffickers. Peru, with its tepid entrepreneurial spirit, developed nothing like “cartels,” regional or urban drug

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<sup>48</sup> Fernando Rospigliosi, ed., *El consume tradicional de coca en el Perú* (Lima: IEP, 2004), essays by Rospigliosi, C. Blondet, J. Lloréns; Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> Vergara, *Danza hostil* (2015).

business cultures, much less notorious drug barons like Escobar, though a few enriched families or fronts like AeroContinente were quietly known. Passive benefits accrued, such as the famed “back window” of the Central Bank that may have helped float exchange rates in the dire 1980s, or even a few presidents who personally indulged. But no trafficker bombings rocked the streets of Lima or unsightly Colombian-style drug massacres. However, recent violent spectacles in Lima, hitting owners of high-end cars, or active *sicarios* in Callao, who have killed more than a hundred port workers in recent years, are a worrisome sign of change.<sup>50</sup>

Put another way, Peru unlike Bolivia or Colombia has never been threatened by capture as a “narco-state,” in part due to its flimsy actual state apparatus and weak political parties.<sup>51</sup> This stasis was endangered during June 2016 presidential elections and candidacy of Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the 1990s autocrat, and her populist Fuerza Popular party. Serious opposition allegations portrayed Keiko’s surge as a vote for a “narco-estado.” The DEA publically accused Joaquín Ramírez, the FB general secretary and Keiko’s campaign manager, of extensive drug-related activities.<sup>52</sup> Fujimori lost, but the response to pressures was pure cocaine “denial”: Keiko’s polls rose with the U.S. allegations that dismissed Fujimori-style as prejudice against “cholos con plata.” In past decades, Peru’s weak party structure deflected narco-political infiltration, scandals around decaying APRA factions aside.

Cocaine was most visibly a “problem” to Peru in the mid-1990s interval when halfway in the Fujimoriato the military realized that Sendero guerrillas (and not just his intelligence chief Vladimiro Montesinos) were profiting from protection rackets with Huallaga peasants and ties to Colombians. The dramatic 1992 capture of “Presidente Gonzalo” left the Huallaga as Sendero’s last stand. The state briefly swung from traditional apathy about faraway cocaine to a U.S.-abetted crackdown, gaining a decade (1995-2005) of control over coca crops by breaking the transit bridge to Colombia and pushing out Sendero. Nothing alleviated, on the ground, cocalero alienation from the Peruvian state, who mostly knew the state firsthand from military incursions, roundups, or crude propaganda acts in the region.<sup>53</sup> Instead of drugs,

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<sup>50</sup> Gustavo Gorriti, *La calavera en negro* (Lima: Planeta, 2006); M. Méndez, “El impacto del narcotráfico en el ámbito política,” in Ruda, *Mapa del narcotráfico* (2009), 43-58.

<sup>51</sup> Sofía Vizcarra, “¿Estamos en camino a un narco-estado?” (*PUPC EDU*, website, 28 April 2015).

<sup>52</sup> “Bad Week for Keiko,” *Peru Support Group* (UK) Blog, 22 May 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Kernaghan, *Coca’s Gone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); M. Gallo, L. Tello, L. Rivero, “El impacto económico del cultivo de la coca” (Lima: CEDRO, monograph #11, 1994).

Peruvian fears fixed on Sendero, in its urban terror campaign in the late 1980s, or the mangled bodies of car wrecks of Lima's yellow press. Still, the country's overall levels of violence in remote pockets of coca-cocaine remain comparatively (to Colombia) low.

A third speculation concerns Peru's dominant economic model, oft captured in the worn term "neo-liberalism." Unlike Bolivia, and more like Colombia, economic liberalism resonates with the average Peruvian. It blossomed later than Colombia's and hinges less on technocratic classes. Cocaine has been a step-child of neo-liberalism in multiple senses: Peru's downsized state, weak social policies, rickety public sector (despite a trend of social spending since 2010), and streamlined economic policies.<sup>54</sup> Cynicism aside, what could be more free-market, entrepreneurial, or trade-promoting than narcotics in ignoring oppressive laws, the state, or borders? The *limeño* celebration that "the market" has finally after centuries triumphed as a working development model—after so many cycles of open economies and "statism" (such as the demonized 1960s Velasco reforms)—cannot be disturbed. "Market triumphalism" is Peru's answer to drug-state triumphalism in Colombia. From 2000-15, Peru suddenly jolted into one of the world's fastest rising economies, with two-digit growth comparable to closely linked China's, more than a dozen unbroken years of commodity-led expansion. Bad news gets ignored in boom times, drugs not being the only problem swept under the rug in the so-called "New Peru."<sup>55</sup>

Despite this complacency, the informal sector and black markets uneasily fill in many social gaps left by resource-led growth, a buffer for millions of urban poor and to Amazonia in cocaine's VRAEM. Peru's peasant migrants are the country's most marginal, informalized people, internal refugees to regions unlike Lima fully removed from government services and ties. Hernán de Soto, Peru's global guru of neo-liberal freedom and informal development, has notably been, since the 1990s, one of Peru's few consistent liberals, even in his early-1990s stint advising "auto"-dictator Fujimori on coca policy. His Lima ILD (Institute for Liberty and Democracy) calls for coca's legality and resolving the struggles of cocalero families and organizations through its panacea of land-titling proposals. Cocaine was surely not his

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<sup>54</sup> Deborah Poole and Gerardo Renique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1992); Soberón, "VRAEM."

<sup>55</sup> *ReView: Harvard Review of Latin America* (Fall 2014) esp. S. Levitsky, "Paradoxes of Peruvian Democracy"; Paulo Drinot, ed., *Peru in Theory* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014). Per denial, neither fine text notes cocaine.

imaginary “Other path,” his famous titular referent equating statism itself with the terror road of Sendero.<sup>56</sup>

Peru’s commodity path at the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with 15 years of dramatic GNP to show, surprised many observers, and is now leveling off with Chinese demand. Peru may no longer be officially “underdeveloped” but the boom did little to lift Peruvians left in the countryside, half mired in extreme poverty. Peru is chastised by critics for its classic growth without development, another Peruvian “fictitious prosperity”—the epithet applied by Jorge Basadre to the 19th-century guano export boom and bust. Along with an orgy of trendy consumption—that exemplary new *limeño* cultural achievement, Larco Mar Mall—the boom conceals shifting inequalities and illicit commodity chains, not just around drugs but in “illegal” mining, logging, wildlife, real estate, and money laundering, forms of resource pillage with sharp environmental social externalities. Wildcat artisanal gold mining like the southern Sierra’s La Rinconada complex may now surpass drugs in illicit revenues, and be as deadly to its precarious workers. Corporate resource extractive projects in the sierra evoke local strife and resistance, blurring lines between “conflict” goods like coca and other exports over the last decade.<sup>57</sup>

The economics of neo-liberalism and drugs remains mystified: questions surround Peru’s growth at the margin or the social cushion of off-the-book activities. Most benefits are likely recycled and cleansed via an unequal consumption stimulus into Lima high-rises, shopping arcades, sports cars, and requires the political cover of denial, as do hidden “corrupt” political contributions that peak in national election cycles. In places like the VRAEM, in contrast, the returned value of drug trades is very low with scant linkages or resources left in the hands of primary producer coccaleros. It is thus hard to imagine risky drugs as a force for equitable or sustainable grassroots development.<sup>58</sup> Yet in Ayacucho, for instance, coca is still a statistical income: in Ayacucho (and Huánuco) Departments 12% of regional PBI. Still, Peru’s coccaleros remain disarticulated with few horizontal ties, barely a social force demanding “recognition” rights. They are unable to leverage themselves, as Bolivians

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<sup>56</sup> Hernán De Soto, *El otro Sendero* (Lima: IDL: 1986) subtitled “La Revolución Informal.”

<sup>57</sup> Ruda, *Mapa del narcotráfico*, Table 1, “Variables Económicas 2001-07, 396; William Finnegan, “Tears of the Sun” *The New Yorker*, 20 April 2015; J. C. Orejuela, M. Paredes, “Few Linkages, Plenty of Conflict: Resource Booms and Horizontal Inequalities in Peru” (Symposium on the Contributions of Rosemary Thorp, Oxford, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> OAS, *The Drug Problem in the Americas* (2013), Chs. 5-6; Peter Reuter, “The Political Economy of Drug Smuggling,” in M. Vellinga, *The Political Economy of the Drug Industry* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004). Ruda, *Mapa del narcotráfico*, Table 1.



did, into a legitimate lobby to improve their own development prospects. In a mobilizing political spring after Fujimori's fall, cocalero leaders organized eight federations and 50,000 members to oppose eradication style development strategies. Quickly shut out of drug policy in Lima, their failure is attributed to valley divides, sheer distance from Lima, public association with "terrorism" (which doomed their initial 1980s movement) and a weak identification with indigenous causes.<sup>59</sup> This outcome contrasts in the same years with Bolivia's cocalero political breakthrough.

Macro-economically, neoliberal Peru is not a "drug addicted" national economy, the triple *entendre* left over from dependency theory. Estimates of cocaine's economic contributions from the 1990s mostly suggest exaggerated public perceptions of drug economies. Across the Andes, only Bolivia ever derived a substantial share from drugs, some 15-20% of national product in the 1980s, during its starkest decade of export collapse. Peru's comparable highpoint lay in the range of 1.5-3.7% of GNP; Colombia, defying representations, was less than 3% during its war with the Medellín and Cali cartels.<sup>60</sup> Two decades later, all three nations are diverse export economies with sharply lower drug shares, Bolivia's under 1%, Colombia 0.4%. It is the political combustibility of conflict goods that ignites their visibility. Fogged over in Peru by cocaine denial, it may no longer suffice as Peru's commodity bonanza fizzles.

More vital than economics are the political and policy cultures of drugs. Given historic, racial, geographic, and social barriers to thinking about cocaine in Peru, Peruvian policymakers (Peru has few state-makers) appear mostly passive or pliable in drugs. This passivity is now glaring in light of Colombia's military strategizing and Bolivia's social strategy on drugs. The country lacks a palpable social movement, state interest, or cultural-intellectual drug project. Since the 1980s, Peruvian politicians, pundits, and generals (seeking new mission toys), backed by few informed home experts, academic, technocratic, or ministerial research or agendas on drugs, much less regional political constituencies on drug issues, remained vulnerable to outside pressures—when they come.<sup>61</sup> For the last three decades, the United States was overwhelming engaged with Colombia, and since 2005 agitated with Bolivia,

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<sup>59</sup> Durand, *Coca o muerte*, Chs. 4-5.

<sup>60</sup> Painter, *Bolivia and Coca*, Chs. 1-3, Table 3-10, "The Coca-Cocaine Economies..." (1990/91 estimates).

<sup>61</sup> Julio Cotler, *Drogas y políticas en el Perú* (Lima: IEP, 1999); latest UN figures have a 14% reduction in Peru's coca crops, to 49, 900 Hts. in 2014 (Youngers, "Building on Progress" 2015), 6.

overlooking its Peru problem. Peru, stuck in a geo-political middle, turns from fits of compliance or feigned loyalty to U.S. military eradication models (in the mid-1990s, or as seemed in 2014), to muddled bouts of social intervention or development, the uncertain path today.

As cocaine's global chains shift south, the United States itself has the strategic choice—probably unwise—of turning to Peru as its last best drug “ally” in the region, or even distancing itself from the Andean war on drugs. The DEA knows well that little Peruvian cocaine reaches the United States, making disengagement from a vacillating Peruvian state ally a possibility, or an outsource job to Colombian advisors. However, the option of simply ending the Andean drug war, as relationships change to Andean cocaine, is constrained by institutional instincts and interests, the DEA and Pentagon's “military-drugs complex.” Trump's recent upset in the United States generates tremendous uncertainties: Will it mean a revival of unrealizable militaristic “law and order” drug policies, even abroad, or disengagement from remote places like the Andes as its isolationist rhetoric and aid cuts portend? If the Andean nations like Peru intensify their superpower tilt to China instead, how will that color future drug policies?

*Conclusion: Cocaine Divergence*

It is odd, writing in a “transnational” age on an eminently global topic (cocaine's changing chains), to fall back on such a national and comparative analysis. But the distinctive spatial histories and of Andean states, and their onion-like relationships to coca leaf and illicit cocaine, seem at work beneath the distinctive politics of cocaine shaping up in the 2000s. History really “matters” is a constantly unheeded refrain to those who think about or make drug policies. And if national histories matter in a weak mix of Andean states, diversifying sovereignties may play into any larger Latin American moves to regional drug reform.

This deeper past raises big questions about cocaine's present and future histories. One puzzle remains: the specific links between the current flux in cocaine's global commodity chain—its global pivot south away from the United States and Colombia—and these varied national responses. How does Colombia's path from frontline drug war state to reformer sovereignty, Bolivia's national social pact out of drug warring, or Peru's neoliberal stasis of denial relate to this changing commodity chain? And vice-versa: how do Andean states possibly shape on the ground cocaine's commodity flows or enveloping drug conflicts? Will convergence or alliances arise

among Andean states? Will interested regional powers like Brazil (now in crisis) bring new cocaine policies to a possible era of U.S. isolation or policy incoherence? Will U.S. drug authorities ever engage Andean divergence and end a futile four-decade war against cocaine? Could cocaine ultimately decline as a conflict good in the Andean ridge or take off to new global hotspots?