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Editor's Preface to the Fall Edition

Here at Elon University, we are extremely grateful to host *The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics*. We are proud to present the Fall 2021 issue and congratulate all authors published in this issue for their high achievement.

This publication seeks to highlight the intellectual curiosity that leads to innovative scholarship in all subfields of political science, scholarship that addresses timely questions, is carefully crafted, and utilizes diverse methodologies. We are committed to intellectual integrity, a fair and objective review process, and a high standard of scholarship as we showcase the work of undergraduate scholars, some of whom pursue questions that have been traditionally ignored in scholarship but that drive our discipline forward.

Following the lead of the American Political Science Review (APSR) Editorial Board, we are excited to publish research in the areas of “American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public law and policy, racial and ethnic politics, the politics of gender and sexuality and qualitative and quantitative research methods.” This publication also values the relationships formed through student-faculty collaboration and aims to build a culture of scholarship that expands beyond the college campus. We hope to encourage and empower students to seek out knowledge and pursue their potential, contributing to scholarship in a variety of disciplines.

This year, we thank our advisors Dr. Baris Kesgin and Dr. Aaron Sparks for their support, without which the issue would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the entirety of the Political Science and Policy Studies Department at Elon University, especially Dr. Laura Roselle; our Faculty Advisory Board; and all the students who shared their exceptional work with us this semester.

We are excited to present the Fall 2021 edition of the *Journal*. Thank you for your continued support and readership of our publication; we hope you enjoy the edition.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board at Elon University

Submission of Manuscripts

The *Journal* accepts manuscripts from undergraduates of any class and major. Members of Pi Sigma Alpha are especially encouraged to submit their work. We strive to publish papers of the highest quality in all areas of political science.

Generally, selected manuscripts have been well-written works with a fully developed thesis and strong argumentation stemming from original analysis. Authors may be asked to revise their work before being accepted for publication.

Submission deadlines are October 1st for the Fall edition and February 15th for the Spring edition. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis; therefore early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Students may submit their work through Elon University's submission portal, found here: <https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/arts-and-sciences/political-science/psa-journal/>

Alternatively, students may email psajournalelon@gmail.com with an attached Word document of the manuscript. In the body of the email, students are asked to include their name and university, the title of the manuscript, and the closest subfield of political science to which their manuscript pertains (American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, or policy studies). Due to the time committed to the manuscript review process, we ask students to submit only one manuscript at a time.

Submitted manuscripts must include a short abstract (approximately 150 words) and citations/references that follow the *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*. Please do not exceed the maximum page length of 35 double-spaced pages, which includes references, tables, figures, and appendices.

The *Journal* is a student-run enterprise with editors and an Editorial Board that are undergraduate students and Pi Sigma Alpha members at Elon University. The Editorial Board relies heavily on the help of our Faculty Advisory Board, which consists of political science faculty from across the nation, including members of the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council.

Please direct any questions about submissions or the Journal's upcoming editions to the editors at Elon University: psajournalelon@gmail.com.

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A Two-Colombia Model: How the “Hidden Colombia” Emerges with Qualitative Analysis

Hannah Kurowski, Point Loma Nazarene University

At first glance, state stability seems to be on the rise in Colombia; however, closer examination gives rise to a two-Colombia model. The “Visible Colombia” is represented by the currently available statistical data, while the “Hidden Colombia,” lost in the statistical aggregation, emerges through qualitative analysis. This paper analyzes rural poverty and cocaine profitability across three Colombian departments to better understand the “Hidden Colombia.” Evidence suggests a correlation between high levels of rural poverty and decreased state stability within these departments due to the intervention and activity of illegal armed groups. Although cocaine is the primary product trafficked by illegal armed groups, substitution of another product for cocaine would leave the model unchanged. Therefore, it is not the presence of cocaine trafficking that decreases state stability within a department, but the activities of illegal armed groups associated with trafficking that decrease state stability within a department.

In the United States, Colombia has become a household name associated with cocaine trafficking as public concern about drug abuse has become more prominent. Considering that most of the cocaine in the United States originates in Colombia, this association is warranted (Colombia Reports 2019b; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2019). However, the situation is far more complex than it appears, and reliance on an incomplete description of Colombia has led to US policy that fails to address underlying problems and does not lead to lasting solutions. For example, the US spent \$10 billion on cocaine eradication efforts via Plan Colombia between 2000 and 2015 (Alpert 2016). However, since the rate of cocaine production outstrips the rate of eradication, trade continues (White House 2018). Therefore, it is essential to understand the context in which cocaine trafficking occurs in order to develop effective policy that promotes stability. By studying the dynamics between rural poverty, cocaine profitability, and illegal armed groups (IAGs), effective policy proposals can be developed. However, the illicit nature of the cocaine trade and the deliberate concealment of information by IAGs engaged in trafficking makes it a particularly challenging topic to research accurately. Moreover, the available data lead to inaccurate conclusions because they do not adequately capture the disparity within the country that leads to two vastly different profiles.

This is a case of two Colombias: the “Visible Colombia” and the “Hidden Colombia.” The Visible Colombia is the part of Colombia represented by the data. When Colombia is referenced generally, it is usually about the Visible Colombia. Meanwhile, the Hidden Colombia is characterized by conditions of rural poverty and exploitation by IAGs. The *de facto* power of these groups is exercised in a variety of ways including forcible

displacement, strict regulation, and local relationship building through the provision of resources. Between the deliberate concealment of illegal activity and the minimal impact on aggregate data due to population size, this part of Colombia has been pushed into the shadows. Until this Hidden Colombia is revealed, the country as a whole cannot be fully understood.

BACKGROUND

Colombia’s Central Role in Cocaine Trade Destined for the United States

Cocaine is derived from the coca leaf, which is indigenous to several Latin American countries, including Colombia. For centuries, the coca leaf formed part of local culture and agricultural tradition. As drugs became a profitable commodity, cocaine came into prominence. This shifted coca production from its traditional role and local consumption to its production as the primary component of increasingly popular cocaine. After harvesting, the coca is dried and then transformed into coca paste by undergoing chemical treatments, finalizing it into cocaine (Mejía 2016; Office of the Inspector General and Department of Justice 1997; Russo 2014). This last step is the most complex and has historically been carried out by one country (Gootenberg 2007).

Early cocaine routes were dominated by Chile, which sourced coca paste from other countries and completed the chemical processing into cocaine prior to trafficking (Gootenberg 2007). However, after a shift in the 1970s, Colombia replaced Chile as the primary cocaine producer, sourcing much of the coca paste from Bolivia and Peru (Alpert 2016; Gootenberg 2007; Mejía 2016). In addition to its historical importance, Colombia gained additional attention

from the United States because the cocaine trafficked into the United States primarily originates from Colombia (Colombia Reports 2019b; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2019). Although other countries continue with their production, Colombia is the most dominant since it cultivates its own coca crop and produces its own cocaine.

Illegal Armed Groups (IAGs)

Aside from their infamous reputation, the actions, involvement, and impact of IAGs were relegated to the Hidden Colombia. Within Colombia, there are two dominant types of IAGs: guerrilla groups and paramilitary groups. Generally, guerrilla groups emerged in connection with Marxist or socialist movements that claimed to fight on the side of the people with the express goal of procuring more equitable land distribution. In order to achieve their objective, many of these groups employed violent tactics and eventually came to rely on the drug trade as a source of revenue for their movement (Colombia Reports 2018, 2019d, 2019e; FARC-EP n.d.; International Crisis Group 2017).

Paramilitaries emerged within this context, purportedly to defend the people from the violence of the guerrilla groups (Colombia Reports 2019c). However, the paramilitaries also relied on non-sanctioned violence in their effort to stop the guerrilla groups. Although many groups, especially the paramilitaries, denounced involvement in drug trafficking, the need for funding and interest in protecting their assets led many to become involved in trafficking (Colombia Reports 2019c; Holmes, Piñeres, and Curtin 2006; International Crisis Group 2017; Otis 2014). Their shared participation in the cocaine trade and use of violence to defend their interests have blurred the lines distinguishing these groups. Thus, in order to observe the larger dynamics of poverty and cocaine profitability that are impacted by behaviors common to both groups, they will be collectively referred to as illegal armed groups. Further research into the ideological motives behind various groups would be an insightful contribution to future research but would distract from the focus of this analysis.

The Visible Colombia

The Visible Colombia is the representation of the state in aggregate. Thus, it portrays more populated regions, typically in urban cities. This Colombia is also more routinely analyzed because there are quantitative data available. This information is frequently sourced from the World Bank because it offers a variety of aggregate data about Colombia that shows signs of improvement, such as an overall increasing trend in GDP and increasing primary school enrollment (World Bank n.d.). The World Governance Index, which offers data on state stability and relies on data collected and shared by the World Bank, indicates a rise in state stability in Colombia (Kaufmann and Kraay n.d.). Moreover, because the data provided by the World Bank have become the foundation for subsequent research, the presumption that they reflect the state as a whole is interwoven

with each analysis, and the presentation of Visible Colombia as Colombia prevails.

THEORY/STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PURPOSE

Exposing the Hidden Colombia is essential to developing a clear picture of Colombia. By establishing this accurate foundation, precise and directed policy is possible. IAGs exploit the conditions of rural poverty and rely on non-governmental sanctioned force to procure profits, which undermines state stability within the region. Thus, state stability within departments decreases as conditions of rural poverty and the profitability of cocaine trafficking increase.

Due to the qualitative differences between rural and urban poverty, the implementation of governmental programs can have divergent results. Since land is a vital component of cocaine production and trafficking, IAGs fight to control it. But they are more likely to openly exert their authority in regions with high levels of rural poverty away from dense metropolitan centers. Because public goods are not distributed in the same centralized way, unmet needs are different in areas with rural poverty. Therefore, access to clean water, basic sanitation, and maintenance of public structures like schools are often lacking. IAGs can exploit these gaps to win over loyalty from locals by providing resources. Or, IAGs can use physical distance to their advantage because isolated, local organization and mobilization against IAGs is far more difficult and unlikely to succeed, especially with insufficient resources.

Consequently, populations living in rural poverty are more susceptible to IAG authority and manipulation. As levels of poverty decrease, the leverage that IAGs use to control the area is also reduced, allowing for greater state stability in the region. If a correlation between high levels of rural poverty and IAG authority is shown across different departments, then IAGs are motivated by more than environmental location.

Hypothesis 1: *If rural poverty decreases in a department, then state stability within the department will increase.*

Since coca is the essential element of cocaine, its exclusivity to the region makes it an easier subject to study than other drugs that are more widely sourced or have synthetic variations. Additionally, Colombia's central role in the production and trafficking of cocaine is a key way that IAGs support themselves financially. Increased profits allow for greater expenditures to protect their interests through financial arrangements, by offering provisions to people in exchange for support, or by violent means. This expansion of force and designation as the *de facto* local power puts IAGs in direct opposition to the *de jure* authority of the state.

Hypothesis 2: *If profit from cocaine is reduced, then state stability will increase.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

The State

The state forms the basic unit of international organization, so it is a fundamental component of political analysis. Despite disagreement regarding its definition, there is consensus that sovereignty and territory characterize the state (Storey 2017).

One model considers the state from an international context, classifying a state as a state when other states do not intervene in that state’s domestic affairs (Croxtton 1999; Storey 2017). This classification based empirically on external relations does not place specific demands on the state to secure its recognition. Utilizing Thomson’s (1995) delineation of authority as the ability to make rules and control as the ability to enforce them, this conceptualization of the state prioritizes authority rather than control.

A second model shares in the idea of sovereignty and requires the state to exhibit a monopoly on violence within its territory (Eriksen 2011; Thomson 1995). This idea includes nonintervention by other states while introducing a domestic component that connects the state to power, increasing the connection between the notion of a state and its citizenry. This idea views the state as an authority with the capacity for control.

A third definition of the state includes the responsibility for service delivery, which connects to the idea of social contract theory. Enlightenment thinkers and contemporary scholars alike name security as the principal service provided by the state. The state is responsible for providing other services, including access to political participation, education, and infrastructure (Rice 2003; Rotberg 2004). Thus, this understanding requires the state to exhibit both authority and control. Due to variation between populations about their expectation of the state, this theory is subject to criticism because it is difficult to generalize and, depending on the expectations of the citizens, potentially impossible to achieve (Eriksen 2011). However, it also offers the most insight about domestic factors that contribute to a state’s strength or weakness.

These interpretations of the state represent ideal notions, so state proximity to these standards rather than their achievement determines state designation (Eriksen 2011). Strong states approach these ideals. Conversely, as states grow more distant from the model, they are classified as weak states. Failed states occur when a state does not meet the standards.

Poverty

National-level poverty statistics distort the distinction between urban and rural poverty. Fortunately, as poverty studies become more common, there is increasing effort to represent the delineation, but the data deficiency remains. For example, the World Bank provides data for 2014 and 2015, but that is insufficient for a time-series analysis because there

is not enough information to indicate trends (World Bank 2020). Furthermore, no comparison between distinct periods of time can be substantiated due to the proximity of the years (World Bank 2020). Moreover, the rural designation is based on the unilateral headcount ratio set by the national poverty line, which neglects a nuanced consideration of qualitative differences between urban and rural conditions (World Bank 2020). While some models moved beyond a unilateral poverty approach, they are still confronted with the task of determining what criteria should designate poverty. Union models automatically classify a household as poor if at least one indicator is insufficient, independent of other indicators, and even if the recorded insufficiency is by choice (Angulo, Díaz, and Pardo 2016). This interpretation is too broad and leads to imprecise policy generation. As an alternative, intersection approach indexes try to compensate for imprecision by requiring demonstrated insufficiency in each indicator to be classified as poor (Angulo, Díaz, and Pardo 2016). This standard is too strict since unlivable conditions and a substandard quality of life persist despite meeting the standard set by one or a few indicators. In an effort to reconcile these differences, Alkire and Foster (2011) developed a model that allows for greater flexibility on the part of the user in hopes of combining qualitative and cardinal data. Their model led to the development of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which marks substantial progress for poverty studies as it better reflects the complexity of poverty. One of the valuable tenants of this model is the ability to disaggregate key features; however, the ability to do so with regard to rural poverty and urban poverty, independent of the total, is an underdeveloped but essential feature. In addition, the newness of this model limits its use for research, as there is currently only one data point available in the harmonized case data set for Colombia (Human Development Report Office 2019). While this is valuable information, more data are needed for comparison. Hopefully, as these data are collected and interpreted they can be used for future research. Building upon the Alkire and Foster framework, the Colombian Multidimensional Poverty Index (CMPI) shows a general decrease in multidimensional poverty across Colombia and notes the imbalance between rural and urban poverty (Angulo, Díaz, and Pardo 2016). But this determination comes from analysis after the collection of data and results in convoluted findings such as a simultaneous decrease in the rural/urban gap and an increase in the rural/urban multidimensional poverty headcount ratio (Angulo, Díaz, and Pardo 2016).

IAG Use of Violence

Since IAGs work independently, the extent of violence used and the form it takes vary; however, the willingness to use force is standard. Kidnappings constitute one common form of violence utilized by IAGs and have become a source of revenue (Colombia Reports 2018, 2019e). The National Center for Historical Memory estimates that kidnappings by guerrilla

groups between 1970 and 2010 total around 25,000 people (Felter and Renwick 2017). Some kidnappings are focused on a particular target. For example, ELN has routinely targeted the oil industry by bombing pipelines and taking officials hostage, conducting around 50 attacks of this nature in 2016 (Molinski 2017). In addition to targeted kidnappings, IAGs also carry out mass-scale civilian kidnappings, such as a kidnapping at a church in 1999 that resulted in the capture of 186 people (Colombia Reports 2019e). Other acts of violence include attacks against armed forces, extortion to secure payments related to mineral mining, and hijacking (Felter and Renwick 2017; International Crisis Group 2017). Assassination and the use of landmines have also resulted in extensive casualties; estimates suggest around 10,000 people died by January 2017 as a result (Felter and Renwick 2017).

Violence as it Relates to Cocaine

Given the persistence of conflict in Colombia, much of the literature has come to focus on violence in the state. Changes in drug prices, crop cultivation, eradication, and interdiction strategies are predictors of both domestic and international terrorism according to Piazza (2011). Therefore, decreasing the price of cocaine and increasing enforcement will lead to a reduction in terror (Piazza 2011). Contextualized to IAGs specifically, Millán-Quijano (2020) demonstrates that the number of homicides increases as cocaine prices increase due to the oligopolistic competition between IAGs. While these authors demonstrate the connection between profit and violence, they insufficiently explain which groups are responsible and what conditions enable them to use force. Focusing on the effects of crack cocaine in particular, De Mello (2015) confirms the relationship between cocaine and homicides, clarifying that the increase in homicides is associated with cocaine trafficking, not possession. Similarly, Holmes, Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Curtin (2006) reach the conclusion that violence is not dependent on cultivation, but they note a correlation between cultivation and displacement.

State Stability within the Department

Both violence and displacement suggest weak government authority and low levels of state stability within a department, as the government is unable to respond to the needs and demands of the people. This is stated more clearly by Shelley (1995), who finds that transnational organized crime decreases stability by increasing corruption. The acknowledgement of decreasing state stability is a valuable contribution, but the complexity of IAGs, which Shelley mentions as a unique and defining feature of Colombia, extends beyond corruption. Thus, it is a helpful but incomplete description. Another conceptually valuable claim is that increasing prices in Colombia, caused by reinvestment of drug revenue, do not necessarily result in improved quality of life for the people (Shelley 1995). This claim is made but not substantiated with evidence regarding quality of life. Thus,

there is an informational gap concerning living conditions amid complex and dynamic circumstances best met with qualitative evaluation. Finally, the idea of crimilegality, or authority in which the line between legal and illegal blurs, provides another model of stability (Schultze-Kraft 2018; Schultze-Kraft, Chinchilla, and Moriconi 2018). These crimilegal systems are often maintained by violence and coercion, especially in societies with a history of violence (Schultze-Kraft 2018; Schultze-Kraft, Chinchilla, and Moriconi 2018). The blurred lines indicate a loss of *de facto* power by the *de jure* government, especially as criminal groups take unsanctioned, violent action to achieve their goals that are uncontested despite local petitions for help by Colombian citizens.

By combining the insight on poverty, the relationships between IAGs, cocaine, and violence, and an analysis of state stability on a department level with qualitative case studies, the Hidden Colombia can emerge to provide a more comprehensive view of the country and its inner workings.

METHODS

To test these hypotheses, an in-depth case study on one Colombian department, Chocó, supplemented by two additional department-level case studies in Vichada and Vaupés are used. The relationships that emerge from the Hidden Colombia by studying Chocó in depth can be confirmed by the subsequent cases of Vichada and Vaupés (see Figure 1). The exclusivity between the demand in the US cocaine market and Colombian production and supply allows for the complexity of the world-wide cocaine trade to be simplified to a single chain, making Colombia an ideal state for observation. This simplification allows the study to better isolate the relationships between poverty and the profitability of cocaine trafficking on state stability within each department.

There is currently no international standard of classification for rural and urban poverty. So, using all of the public services statistics available for each department, I calculated the total and average amount of services provided for each department (Dane 2018b). Given these data, I ranked the departments according to their lack of services and compared them to the unsatisfied basic needs data (Dane 2018a). Chocó, Vichada, and Vaupés consistently ranked in the lowest five departments after using department-level population density to help verify that they are rural regions. All three departments, Chocó (10.4 inhabitants/ km²), Vichada (0.8 inhabitants/km²), and Vaupés (0.8 inhabitants/ km²), have population densities far lower than the national average of 42.4 inhabitants per square kilometer (AdminStat Colombia 2020). Thus, these three departments were selected out of the thirty-two Colombian departments. Conditions of rural and urban poverty differ qualitatively. For example, distance from government centers and unaddressed problems associated with rural poverty allow large-scale, decentralized networks of IAGs

Figure 1: Map of the Location of the Three Case Studies: Chocó, Vichada, and Vaupés.



to thrive as they engage in interdepartmental and international trade (Shelley 1995).

State stability is the ability for the government to execute governmental functions and is characterized by the public’s perception of their ability to participate within the political system. The government effectiveness and voice and accountability data collected by the World Governance Index operationalize these concepts using multiple indicators (Kaufmann and Kraay n.d.). Government effectiveness

indicates the government’s quality of service delivery and its commitment to such policies, while voice and accountability represent the ability of the public to freely participate within the political system (Kaufmann and Kraay n.d.). The data demonstrate increasing government stability in Colombia (see Figure 2); however, they represent an aggregation that only allows the Visible Colombia to be seen. Therefore, qualitative department-level findings are necessary to see past the Visible Colombia into the Hidden Colombia.

Another element of the Hidden Colombia is illegal cocaine trafficking. Because of the illegal nature of the cocaine trade, profitability must be approximated based on circumstantial evidence. One common way of estimating cocaine production is by considering the number of hectares of coca crop in cultivation (Holmes, Piñeres, and Curtin 2006). This allows for a reasonable projection of cocaine production, but it only represents the supply side of the equation. Since this research is particularly concerned with the profitability of cocaine trafficking, both the supply and demand must be taken into account to satisfy the quantitative formula for profit. Even with rough estimations of demand in destination markets, there are no data to represent the variable costs incurred in the trafficking process. This lack of information makes the projections of profitability inaccurate and results in misleading numerical conclusions. Another strategy is reliant on interdiction data (De Mello 2015; Piazza 2011). But, rates of interdiction rely upon state stability to enforce state policies regarding drug trafficking and conflates the independent and dependent variables. In other words, data obtained by interdiction cannot be used to study the impacts of cocaine trafficking on state stability when state stability is inherent to obtaining the data. Thus, qualitative data that describe how the drug trade occurs and highlight the role of profit allow for an analysis of trends and can provide an explanation.

FINDINGS

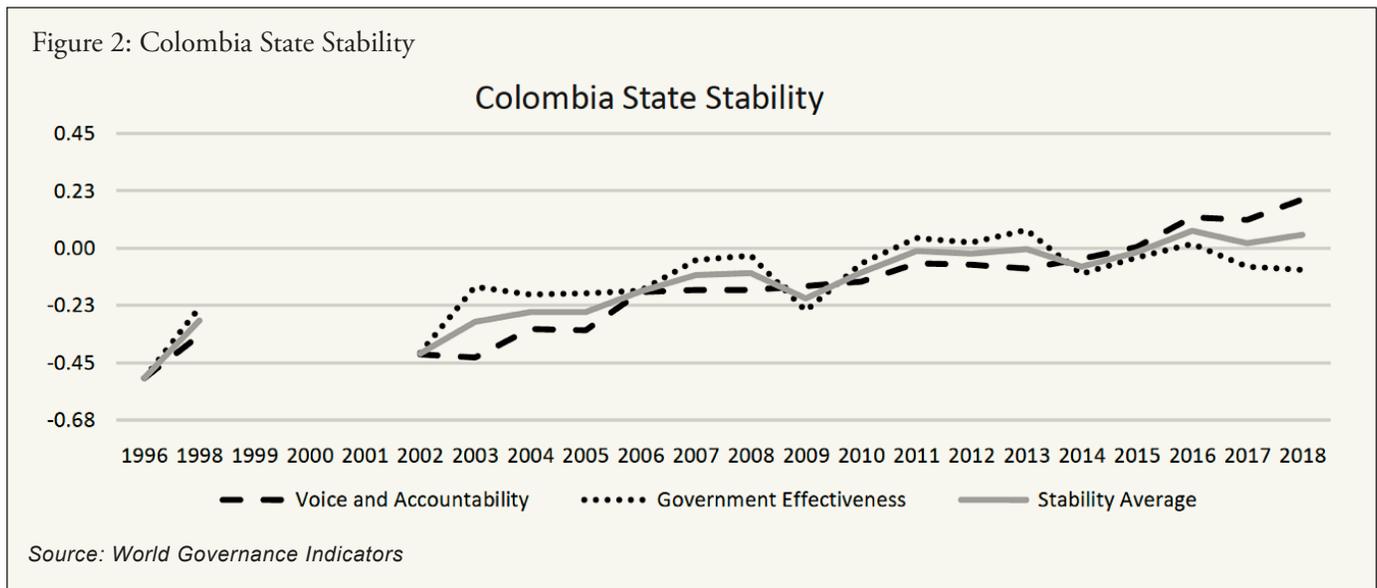
Chocó

As part of the Hidden Colombia, there is limited journalistic coverage of Chocó. This resulted in sparse historical coverage of the region, but contemporary accounts provide valuable insight. Chronic poverty in Chocó made it susceptible to exploitation by IAGs that in turn have undermined state

authority. Chocó consistently ranks as one of the more impoverished departments and demonstrates more unstable rates of economic development than the national average (Colombia Reports 2019a; Dane 2018a; Eustance 2016; Friedmann 2018; Restrepo 2019). According to data from 2011, 80% of the population living in Chocó experienced unmet basic needs, and approximately 30% lived in extreme poverty (Human Rights Watch 2017). In 2013, according to a World Bank document, Chocó was recorded as the department with the highest poverty rates. Citizens of Chocó have limited access to basic infrastructure; about 29% of the department has access to an aqueduct, while approximately 20% of the department has access to sewage systems (Dane 2018a). The lack of infrastructure and services is also apparent in the education system. Because schools are limited, students are forced to rise early in the morning and commute long distances to reach the nearest school (Human Rights Watch 2017). The lack of access to essential resources and services demonstrates the high levels of poverty the department endures.

The extreme scarcity is illustrated by the return of displaced Colombians to their homes after seeking refuge in other municipalities where they expected to receive resources, as stipulated by the constitution (Human Rights Watch 2017). In one example, displaced people were collectively placed in a room and forced to sleep on a concrete floor for eight months with inadequate food and sanitation, resulting in the spread of preventable diseases (Human Rights Watch 2017). The unmet needs were so severe that many Colombians risked returning to the violence they fled, indicating widespread poverty throughout the department.

Conditions of poverty made Chocó particularly susceptible to exploitation by IAGs by two primary forms. The first capitalizes on the poverty of the people by providing services to build relationships, while the second implements



strict regulations and relies on threats for control (Council on Hemisphere Affairs 2010). For several decades, the dominant IAG in the department was Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) (N. Ávila and Clavel 2017; Restrepo 2019). Its hegemony in the region allowed for a certain level of predictability, and local leaders were able to work with FARC, which preserved some aspects of civil society (Restrepo 2019). Beyond some relationship formation between local leaders and FARC members, FARC also assumed the role of the *de facto* government in a few cases (Council on Hemisphere Affairs 2010), such as when FARC provided access to education and medical services (Stanford 2015). There are also reported cases of FARC charging a tax in order to create school programs and infrastructure and thus filling a central role of government (Leech 2013). The relationships between local communities and FARC were not consistent across the entire department, nor were they uniformly peaceful. However, providing necessary resources fostered greater reliance and trust in the authority of the IAG than in the government (Restrepo 2019). The 2016 Peace Accord signed between FARC and the Colombian government transitioned FARC into a political party and created a power vacuum that other IAGs rose to fill (ABC Group 2019; Clavel 2017; International Committee of the Red Cross 2019; International Crisis Group 2017). Prior to the agreement, FARC occupied a quasi-governmental role, thereby limiting state stability in Chocó by undermining government effectiveness.

The voice and accountability component of state stability was also undermined in Chocó. For example, the 2016 Peace Accord called for governmental reforms to address the unviable conditions, but its slow and limited implementation did not restore authority to the government (Palau 2019). In fact, the Ombudsman for the region, Carlos Negret, claimed that the emergence of 17 IAGs was due in part to the unanswered requests for government assistance (Alsema 2019c). The emergence of these new groups often led to violent clashes between them that spilled over into the population. Some residents of Chocó commented that under FARC's authority they were still able to engage in civil society, but as other IAGs fight to control the department, their ability to do so has declined (Restrepo 2019). In many cases the IAGs that emerged to contend for power subverted local traditional leaders, either by assassination or through threats, as a way to assert control over the area (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017). This is especially true among indigenous leadership. At least three indigenous leaders were assassinated in Chocó in 2017 and 2018, with a fourth assassination taking place in 2019 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017; Veitch 2019). In Jurado, Chocó, more than 1,600 members of indigenous communities were displaced within two weeks (Veitch 2019).

The variation of IAGs' strategies creates confusion for citizens as they determine how to act. There are two primary strategies: the first relies on winning over local support,

while the other involves the use of threats and fear. The 2002 pipe bombing highlights both simultaneously. The bombing occurred in the Bojayá municipality, which was contested by several IAGs (Navarrete 2020). When the locals heard rumors of an attack, they took precaution by gathering together in a church, assuming that it would be a safe location (Cárdenas 2019; Navarrete 2020). However, FARC initiated an attack on the church as a display of power that would allow them to take control of the region; it resulted in 80 casualties and wounded hundreds of others (Cárdenas 2019; Navarrete 2020). This example of fear and violence to assert control was juxtaposed with the strategy of another IAG that showed up on the scene a few hours later, providing care for the wounded and assisting in transporting the injured to receive medical care (Cárdenas 2019; Navarrete 2020).

Another display of authority comes from the establishment of rules by IAGs (Southwick 2013). These rules infringe upon the daily activities of the people and limit their ability to work in the fields, hunt, or fish, oftentimes limiting their access to basic necessities like food and water (Human Rights Watch 2017). One example is the implementation of curfew from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM by an IAG called Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) across several municipalities within Chocó under the pretext of protecting the community (Human Rights Watch 2017). These limitations disrupt the traditional work and social interactions within the community, but the fear of punishment, which is made clear in mandatory meetings detailing the IAG's response, acts as a deterrent to non-compliance (Human Rights Watch 2017; Southwick 2013). In addition to the meetings, instances of killings and torture add credibility to the threat of enforcement, which is used for a wide array of actions. For example, in some municipalities, IAGs implement restrictions on social behavior (Southwick 2013). Brawling, for instance, is punishable by community service (Human Rights Watch 2017). The nuanced protocols, like establishing a permissible length for boys' hair and banning ear piercing, help to socialize the community into the *de facto* legal system led by the dominant IAG in the area (Human Rights Watch 2017). Furthermore, the fear of retribution stops many Chocó citizens from requesting governmental assistance or even speaking out about violations that have occurred (Human Rights Watch 2017). Therefore, the reported cases of violence represent only a partial number of all the incidents.

This is made more apparent with recruitment of child soldiers into IAGs. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported recruitment of more than 3,900 minors in 2019 (Alsema 2019b). If a family reports the loss of a child, the family risks becoming the target of more recruitment, facing retaliatory violence from the IAG, or having their child labeled as an enemy sympathizer by other IAGs, making the child a target (Restrepo 2019). The susceptibility to child recruitment has led many families to stop sending their children to school, fearing that the long journey exposes them to too much risk.

The concern is well-warranted given the conversion of many schools into IAG base camps (Human Rights Watch 2017). The forcible re-designation of schools into IAG encampments symbolizes the power of these groups as the local authority and indicates weak state stability within Chocó.

The decision to keep children home is one manifestation of the desire to avoid the violent circumstances. This is also witnessed in the form of displacement when locals decide that it is better to leave than stay in the situation. OCHA estimated that 6,900 people were displaced from Chocó in 2016 (N. Ávila and Clavel 2017). Within the first ten months of 2019, from January to October, it is estimated that over 36% of the population were victims of armed conflict in which OCHA registered more than 15,000 humanitarian emergencies, 1,800 displaced people, and 13,000 people confined to violence (Alsema 2019b). Often this displacement comes in waves, like the displacement of 52 residents after an ELN attack that killed 5 farmers or the event in February 2019 where an estimated 2,800 people were held hostage in Bojayá (Villalba 2019). The violence and displacement show the ineffectiveness of the state to carry out its functions to protect its citizens.

Furthermore, the reluctance of many Chocó citizens to request government support indicates either a low public perception of voice and accountability in the government or a belief that the government is ineffective. In the first case, the people lack a sense of efficacy and believe that their needs and desires cannot be effectively communicated to the government, which is either unwilling or unable to listen. The second case describes a perception of state weakness where the people are unwilling to risk retaliation by the IAGs for appealing to a government that is unable to intervene and protect them. In Chocó, both aspects of state stability are called into question.

First, in the case of government effectiveness, unfinished projects and inadequate provisions reflect an inability to carry out the tasks charged to the government. One recurrent example in Chocó is flooding. Chocó is geographically predisposed to flooding but is often met with insufficient aid from the government. The citizens are often reliant on foreign aid for recovery purposes. The most recent flood occurred in February of 2019. While the government announced nationally that it had provided aid to 1,500 people, over 15,000 people were impacted by the flooding, and much of the support was provided by the Red Cross (Floodlist News 2019; Zambrano 2019). Thus, the government claimed success while delivering aid to less than 10 percent of the victims, demonstrating a relatively low level of government effectiveness. Compared to emergency response, infrastructure offers a clearer understanding of government effectiveness because the completion of the project as set out by the state can be used as the criteria for its success. Consider an infrastructure project in Chocó that planned to create the first fully paved road connecting Quibdó, the capital of Chocó, to Medellín, the closest large city to Quibdó (Eustance 2016). After more than three decades of construction the project

is still underway (Eustance 2016). Similarly, in Quibdó, which has a population of approximately 400,000 people, there is only one hospital, which is purportedly on the brink of bankruptcy (Eustance 2016). The inability to complete the project or maintain facilities points to low levels of state stability in the department.

Aside from poverty, the geography of Chocó makes it a uniquely profitable region. It is the ninth largest producer of coca and has two rivers, the Bojayá River and the Atrato River, that run across the region forming the foundation of two major drug trafficking routes (Friedmann 2018). These are particularly valuable for efficiently moving large quantities of cocaine to the coast (N. Ávila and Clavel 2017; Villalba 2019). Chocó's access to the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea make it especially lucrative because transportation via sea routes remains a prominent mode of trafficking. Go-fast boats, which were popular for trafficking in the 1980s, are being replaced by low-profile vessels that encompass a variety of models (Woody 2018). One variation of these low-profile vessels includes "narco-submarines," which are becoming more common since the first one was reported in 2006 (Sutton 2020; Woody 2018). It is approximated that the vessels cost about one to two million dollars to build and equip, but they allow for massive quantities of product, valuing hundreds of millions of dollars, to be transported with little detection, according to the former chief of international operations for the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Mike Vigil (Woody 2018). The uptick in usage was noticed in 2018 when 35 narco-submarine incidents were reported, and slightly increased in 2019 with 36 recorded incidents (Sutton 2020). It is estimated by the DEA that at least 30-40% of drugs that enter into the United States arrived by narco-submarine, but this estimate is uncertain (Woody 2018). This reliance on submarines suggests that even as strategies of drug trafficking continue to develop, Chocó will remain strategically significant.

The growth, production, and trafficking of cocaine is essential to understand what is happening in Chocó because of cocaine's current profitability. Should another illegal product become more profitable, it is likely that IAGs will continue to operate and dominate the region. IAGs actions contribute to the decrease in state stability more than the presence of cocaine. The simultaneous involvement in illegal mineral production makes this point more evident (Insight Crime 2019; Otis 2014). Chocó is the largest producer of platinum and silver and the second largest producer of gold (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017). Much of this production involves IAGs; for example, FARC established a tax on illegal gold mines (Insight Crime 2019; Otis 2014). Currently, cocaine and mineral production are interrelated, as many believe that over-reporting of mineral production is used as a way to launder cocaine profits (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017). Therefore, the IAGs have been able to diversify the products that they traffic. If

cocaine suddenly lost its value, IAGs would likely concentrate their efforts on other illegal products.

Frustration with the government is evidenced by a department-wide strike held in Chocó in 2016 where the people demanded a government response to address poverty, lack of adequate healthcare, and limited access to clean water (Eustance 2016). In 2017, another strike was held, and participation was estimated to include 70,000 people (Johnson 2017). Symbolic displays also demonstrate the marginalized sentiment of individuals living in Chocó. On Colombian Independence Day in 2016, the inhabitants of Chocó refused to raise the Colombian flag and flew their department flag instead (Eustance 2016).

Vichada

Vichada is another Colombian department characterized by high levels of rural poverty. The lack of infrastructure illustrates the extent to which poverty pervades the department. The department does not have roads connecting cities, and what roads are available cannot be used during rain; there are no health posts, and where electricity is available, it can only be used from 7:00 to 10:00 at night (Romero 2017). In the context of this poverty, FARC came to dominate the region in the 1980s (Romero 2017). FARC and other local IAGs, like Liberators of Vichada, inserted themselves in land disputes and worked against new agricultural companies (Oxfam 2013). The IAGs purchased land below market value or took it by force, which often resulted in forced displacement, a number that grew from 321 people in 2003 to over 8,600 in 2008 (Oxfam 2013). Given its location on the border of Venezuela and its lush jungle cover, Vichada was prime land for growing coca, concealing cocaine production, and trafficking drugs across the border by plane (Oxfam 2013). Despite some areal eradication efforts, the protection provided by the jungle and the importation of arms, food, and supplies from across the border made the cocaine relatively profitable (Oxfam 2013).

There was minimal evidence of *de facto* governmental power until 2012 when the government responded by launching a campaign aimed at reducing cocaine trafficking (Romero 2017). Concurrently, Vichada was selected as one of fourteen departments to take part in an agricultural substitution program run by the government that committed the Colombian Air Force to help transport the cocoa harvest if farmers would switch from coca to cocoa crops (Loaiza and Dalby 2019; Romero 2017). After the 2016 Peace Agreement, a new plan called the Integral Development for Alto Vichada was set to offer a monthly wage to farmers transiting their crops to help cover costs and to provide expert advice on new crop cultivation (Romero 2017). After these measures, there was a purported decrease of coca production from estimates of over 4,900 hectares to less than an estimated 700 hectares in 2017 (Romero 2017). So, the areal anti-trafficking campaign in combination with the promise of policies to help reduce rural poverty decreased the relative profitability of cocaine

trafficking. This suggests that by increasing the costs of trafficking cocaine in the department, therefore decreasing its profitability in the department, the prominence of IAGs was reduced, resulting in increased state stability in Vichada. However, these outcomes occurred in conjunction with policies that aimed to reduce rural poverty, which also strengthened state stability in the department by reducing the public's deference to IAGs.

Unfortunately, by 2019 replacement rates of coca production were estimated to be around 50 percent, as many of the programs were not adequately implemented (Jaramillo 2019). Across the participating departments, including Vichada, it is estimated that less than 10% of eligible citizens received the promised benefits like technical assistance (Palau 2019). In addition to the failure to receive promised payments, people who signed up for crop substitution faced retribution by IAGs for their willingness to participate in the government programs (Loaiza and Dalby 2019; Palau 2019). Despite government agreement to these programs, laws were never passed to implement them, and thus action was left to the will of the government at the time (Palau 2019). Out of the 578 stipulations in the 2016 Peace Accord, about 61% have some level of implementation activity, but they concentrate almost exclusively on the ceasefire and transition of FARC into a political party, leaving the conditions of poverty unaddressed (kroc.nd.edu 2018).

Thus, while intervention to make cocaine trafficking costlier and the promise of poverty relief demonstrated temporary improvements in state stability within Vichada, the failure to carry out the policies aimed at poverty reduction led to the resurgence of IAGs. Once the areal anti-trafficking campaign and the promise of subsidies to the farmers were removed, coca replanting rates increased (Jaramillo 2019). Even without significant material changes, the perception of changing circumstances resulted in changed behavior. However, when the promises were unsubstantiated, the behavioral changes could not endure. In other words, the recognition of the Hidden Colombia's existence prompted a positive change in policy approach, but the incompleteness of these policies let the Hidden Colombia slide back into the shadows.

Vaupés

Vaupés is a department in the southeastern part of Colombia that is primarily jungle and only accessible by plane (Zambrano 2019). It is an ideal location for IAGs because the Vaupés River that runs through the region to Brazil is used to transport coca base (L. Ávila 2017). Excluding the head municipality, unsatisfied basic needs for the department is 88.18% (Zambrano 2019). Inadequate resources are especially apparent in the schools. For example, the boarding school in Bocas de Yi has no water, electricity, or toilets, and children must sleep in hammocks or on the floor (Valdivieso 2010). These conditions of poverty led IAGs to control and transform the region into a profitable cocaine production and trafficking center.

Amid desperate circumstances, and with no legal alternative, much of the population is forced to support themselves by coca cultivation and coca paste production (L. Ávila 2017). Despite their compliance and involvement, people and municipalities are still subject to both extortion and protection fees imposed by IAGs (L. Ávila 2017). The normalization of this type of exchange has spread throughout the region, and coca base is commonly used as currency to purchase items like food and clothing (L. Ávila 2017). Poverty has radically linked Vaupés to coca, and the connection will continue as long as IAGs maintain *de facto* power and coca remains valuable to them.

As in the other departments, the threat of minor recruitment by IAGs is common. Many children sleep at inadequate schools rather than risk abduction by IAGs during the commute to and from school (Valdivieso 2010). The number of children recruited is unknown, and teachers, often the first to notice a child's absence, fear retaliation for reporting (L. Ávila 2017). The inability to report for fear of retribution demonstrates the lack of government effectiveness, an indicator of low state stability in the department, as the government cannot enforce its own policies requiring school attendance. Elections reveal a similar lack of state stability in Vaupés. As a constitutional democracy, the government of Colombia has a responsibility to carry out free and fair elections, but in 2002 the threats and violence by FARC were sufficiently severe that two municipalities in the department were unable to participate in elections (United States Department of State 2004).

One of the most dramatic stories within the department is that of the municipal head, Mitú. In 1998, it was a highly-impooverished municipality with access points to the Vaupés River (L. Ávila 2017). The locals anticipated an IAG attack, but they were unable to leave or prepare, so the threat went unaddressed until around 2,000 FARC members attacked on November 1, 1998, resulting in over 70 police and civilian casualties (Borrero 2018; CNN Español 2018; Pachico 2011). In response to the attack, the government used the military to drive back FARC forces (Pachico 2011). After the initial government response, Mitú underwent significant socioeconomic changes and did not face additional IAG attacks. Due to its historically isolated and impoverished state, little data are available regarding poverty statistics or accounts of infrastructure in Mitú, but reflections by locals on the twentieth anniversary of the 1998 FARC attack indicate stark change. In their comments to the Colombian newspaper, *El Tiempo*, citizens of the municipality noted that now 80% of the streets are paved, 25 indigenous zones have access to education and health services, and the number of inhabitants has more than doubled (Borrero 2018; CNN Español 2018). It appears that poverty has improved, or at least that locals perceive they are less poor now than they were previously. Mitú still reports an unmet need of 40.26%, which is better than the departmental average of 54.7% but still worse than the national average of 29% (Zambrano 2019). While there is room for

improvement, substantial shifts toward poverty reduction were made in the municipality. Mitú has become a relatively peaceful and quiet municipality with no current formal reports of IAGs (Borrero 2018). The decrease in relative rural poverty led to a decrease in the IAGs' authority and resulted in an increase in state stability in the region.

DISCUSSION

Across Chocó, Vichada, and Vaupés, it is evident that high levels of poverty leave the population susceptible to rule by IAGs. This *de facto* rule directly contests state stability within the departments, as the sense of voice and accountability is cut off and the government is made ineffective. Once this process has started, it often escalates to high levels of violence and displacement. Chocó exemplifies this and has experienced more violence since the 2016 Peace Agreement because unaddressed poverty reduced government effectiveness. When FARC, the *de facto* power, left, it resulted in a power vacuum that led to violent competition for control. However, the cycle can be broken. Reductions in poverty, like the case of Mitú in the department of Vaupés, can restore state stability in the region and keep out IAGs. Vichada showed similar progress toward the restoration of state stability in the department when promises to alleviate poverty were made, but the prioritization of disarmament and neglect of poverty policies opened the department up to renewed conflict between IAGs fighting to assert control, thereby compromising state stability.

While pursuing profit, IAGs translate poverty into a decrease in state stability in the region. As long as cocaine remains a profitable product it will play a contributing role in IAG trafficking. If it loses value, it will likely be replaced by something else. The emergence of illegal metal mining in Chocó supports these predictions. Thus, the system of IAG trafficking will continue undisturbed, regardless of what is trafficked unless sustained efforts targeting the process of trafficking are implemented.

Moreover, the Visible Colombia conceals downward stability trends in the Hidden Colombia because of the improvements in high-density, urban areas. The sheer number of people in urban locations overwhelms the aggregate data and therefore cannot represent the nuance within the numbers or account for the challenges unique to rural populations. Closer examination shows that in the Hidden Colombia, decreases in state stability within departments have gone unnoticed.

Study Limitations

Bringing to light the Hidden Colombia is an important first step, but there is more to be done. Other factors such as ethnic, racial, and religious affiliation warrant greater study. Understanding the intersection of these other variables with factors like rural poverty will help bring to focus the image of the Hidden Colombia in its complexity. Access to personal interviews to provide primary source accounts of these

departments and insight into how they have changed would allow patterns to be analyzed across time and to confirm what happens in the Hidden Colombia.

Since corruption is motivated by coercion or incentivization that occurs when the state does not hold a monopoly on violence, it appears that corruption is a symptom of state instability. However, detailed research examining the role of corruption could help to verify this reasoning. Similarly, it would be beneficial to consider the ways in which policies at the national level could proscribe some government actions within departments, as this would alter the scope of responsibility for the state. Regardless of state-level policy variation, evidence suggests that there is still an expectation of the government to provide services to fulfill needs that are currently unmet. While additional insight would clarify the strength or weakness of the government’s ability to force compliance, the perception of unmet needs for which the government is responsible suggests a reduction in state stability.

Policy Considerations

Because of the adaptability of trafficking by IAGs, policies targeting cocaine cultivation and production are unlikely to improve durable state stability within departments. At best, it will create a temporary improvement while the groups transition to other trafficking forms. Therefore, policy directed toward decreasing rural poverty should be prioritized. The provision of necessities like access to water and sanitation are critical to breaking local dependence on IAGs. Similarly, making public services, like education and the infrastructure to support it, accessible will help decrease the vulnerability of the local populations. The proposed government policies supporting the reduction of rural poverty and assistance with crop substitution after the 2016 Peace Agreement generated a positive response. Thus, the full and sustained implementation of these policies have a high chance of success toward creating a more stable Colombian state. To be effective, however, the policies need to be substantiated by laws that secure their implementation.

In addition to these legislative tasks, the government must inform the rural populations of the legal changes that will uphold the policies. In an effort to minimize retaliation from IAGs to the local populations, government information campaigns about the changes should coincide with the distribution of benefits. If the people are required to commit before receiving benefits, it is likely to spark localized violent conflict. By acknowledging and communicating with populations that have lived most of their lives in the Hidden Colombia, the government can help meet local expectations and garner support. This is especially important to help restore credibility after the terms of the 2016 Peace Agreement were not carried to completion. A sense of broken trust and the need to recover from IAG backlash makes the challenge of implementation more difficult now, but, with deliberate government action to meet the terms of the agreement and to inform the citizens, the policies can still take hold.

CONCLUSION

In departments that fall within the Hidden Colombia, state stability decreases due to high levels of rural poverty and profitable trafficking by IAGs. IAGs are concerned only with the profitability of the product they traffic. Since cocaine remains profitable, they continue to rely on it as a source of revenue. However, IAGs simultaneously continue to diversify the products they traffic, notably expanding into precious metals. Ultimately, it appears that rural poverty is the precondition that enables IAGs to become the *de facto* power in a region and rural poverty is a significant factor for determining the level of state stability within a department. ■

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