



Colombia War Geography

OE Watch Commentary: The first accompanying reference criticizes a set of Colombian government development plans that were inspired by the accords reached between the FARC and the previous administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos. The programs, and in particular their latest iteration, the “Development Plans with Territory Focus (PDET),” enjoy considerable support from international organizations. However, the author points out a fundamental flaw in the PDET, a flaw that is made obvious by its strategic geography. His argument is compelling. Of Colombia’s 1,100 or so counties, the 170 counties on which the government will focus correlate closely with organized violence. They are more or less also the 170 counties that FARC insisted in negotiations that the government help economically and developmentally. They are not, however, violent places because of underlying socio-economic or demographic factors. They are violence prone because they are hosts to the illicit commodity sources and smuggling routes that the FARC and their associates maintain. There are easily another 170 counties in Colombia with similar socio-economic profiles, but within which there has been no organized violence. What differentiates those peaceful counties from the violent counties is that the peaceful counties don’t contain smuggling routes.

As the second accompanying reference demonstrates, the government ministry in charge of the program blames socio-economic underdevelopment in the 170 violent counties on ‘abandonment by the State’ or the ‘presence of illicit crops’ (as though the crops cultivate themselves), and not on the guerrillas. Mr. Lafaurie suggests that the monies from the burgeoning structure of assistance programs will flow ever more precisely to outlaw front organizations, to the Bolivarian narco-guerrillas. The government appears to be broadly, systematically building and securing the rear support areas and lines of communication of what Colombians with Lafaurie’s perspective would call its enemies. The prospects are not encouraging. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...[The] map of 170 counties... overlap... with that of the war and illegal groups, as well as that of illicit crops and illegal mining, and with a third map with the decision of the [FARC-government] Accord as to the Peasant Reservation Zones and the Township Zones...”

Source: José Félix Lafaurie Rivera, “Geografía del poder y de la guerra (Geography of power and of the war),” *La Linterna Azul*, 29 September 2019. <https://lalinternaazul2.wordpress.com/2019/09/29/geografia-del-poder-y-la-guerra/>

...[The] map of 170 counties ... overlap completely with that of the war and illegal groups, as well as that of illicit crops and illegal mining, and with a third map with the decision of the [FARC-government] Accord as to the Peasant Reservation Zones and the Township Zones... My geography exercise ends with the map of the 16 Special Electoral Districts, and everything coincides... With that there have been seven candidates [for mayor or commissioner], five suffering attempts, two more kidnapped, 40 receiving threats, and 54 victims of violence...

Source: E”Planes de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (Development Plans with Territory Focus),” *Agencia de Renovación del Territorio (Territory Renovation Agency)*, Undated. http://www.renovacionterritorio.gov.co/especiales/especial_PDET/mapa.html

The objective of the PDETs is to achieve structural transformation in the countryside and rural ambit, and an equitable [relationship] between the countryside and the city...

The transformation of the 170 Colombian counties most affected by violence, the presence of illicit crops, poverty and abandonment by the State, has already begun...