The Cartel Wars: Colombian Cabinet
Chair: Alan Hatfield
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Letter from the Chair:

¡Bienvenidos Compañeros!

I, president Belisario Betancur Cuartas, welcome you to the esteemed cabinet of the illustrious and unbowed Republic of Colombia. In thinking of my inauguration speech to the nation, I have realized that the road ahead will be long and difficult. We have many problems plaguing our great country and only through the hard work and integrity of you, the most capable and trustworthy that our nation has to offer, will we be able to restore peace to a society bearing the scars of decades of violence and oppression. I look forward to meeting every single one of you to compile and discuss what brilliant ideas and plans you have for making our country the preeminent power in Latin America. We have many potential allies and with the help of the global community and the powers we have at home, I am sure that we can make major strides in etching all of our names into the history of a prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.

In case we have not had the pleasure of meeting, and if you haven't managed to read up on my biography, let me tell you a little bit about my life and career. My name is Alan and I'm a second-semester senior from Columbia, Missouri. It's my pleasure to serve as the chair of the Colombian national cabinet as part of our Cartel Wars simulation this year and I intend to do my best to help our team save this beautiful country without keeping things too dry. I enjoy all things related to travel, intercultural exchange, cute dogs, and good storytelling. I have a dangerous affinity for spicy foods and am always open to suggestions for good music, movies, and (if I have the time and willpower) reading. I aim to maintain a professional, functional, and yet genuinely enjoyable atmosphere in my committee, so prepare to have a great weekend while getting some invaluable practice in saving society from imminent collapse. ¡Hasta entonces!

Sincerely,
Alan Hatfield aka Belisario Betancur Cuartas
President, República de Colombia
**Introduction:**

Welcome to the Colombia Cabinet!

It is currently 1982 and the notorious leader of the Medellin Cartel, responsible for making cocaine comprise 30% of all Colombian exports, just got elected to Congress. As the leaders of Colombia, you are tasked with managing a series of conflicting issues in Colombia. Firstly, the drug trade is quickly growing to unmanageable proportions and promoting more violence in our beloved country. How should we deal with these criminals? Should we allow them to be extradited to the United States? How do we protect ourselves from the cartels’ revenge for our actions?

Secondly, communist insurgent groups are gaining more and more ground in our nation. How do we stop the *guerillas* from pursuing their violent agendas? And how do we balance that with the social divisions in our country that are making it easier for them to recruit? Lastly, we must be concerned with the American agenda in Colombia. To what extent are we going to accept their help to take down the cartels and the FARC? In accepting their resources and manpower, what are we giving up?

Beyond that, we must also ensure the integrity of our own cabinet. There are many members present who have previously held communist ideals and would be willing to side with revolutionary group such as the FARC who threaten the stability of our government. Furthermore, the cartels are known for buying off high-ranking officials or threatening them (or their families) into compliance. How can we take any actions if we can’t trust those around us?

Our country is depending on us. Good luck to all.
Historical Background:

It is 1982 and Colombia has not yet recovered from more than 40 years of political conflict...

Since the 1940s the country has seen the continuous formation and disbanding of different paramilitary organizations throughout the impoverished countryside, housing the vast majority of the country’s inhabitants. The 1948 assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán sparked a decade of warfare between the paramilitary forces (consisting mostly of bands of armed peasants on both sides) of the two large political parties of the country, the Liberals and the Conservatives, known as La Violencia, which cost the lives of an estimated 200,000 victims.

To end the turmoil, the Sitges Decree was issued in 1957 as an agreement between Conservative leader Laureano Gómez and Liberal leader Alberto Lleras, establishing the Frente Nacional, a political alliance that would see the presidency and key parts of the bureaucracy rotate between the two parties every four years until 1974. Land titles were distributed to farmers and workers, hoping to end the systemic injustices that had given birth to the violence of the previous period. However, although a higher level of stability was achieved, the ideological differences between the two mainstream parties resulted in decidedly mixed results, as the FN administrations failed to prevent the continued harassment of rural communities by Colombian Army units. Government policies favoring the heavy subsidization of large-scale industrial farming for export crops resulted in the violent displacement of rural farmers, forced to relocate to developing urban centers and numbering 400,000 by 1969.¹ By 1971 70%...
of Colombian farmland was owned by approximately 5.7% of the population.\(^2\)

In response, a series of autonomous Marxist-Leninist insurgent groups were formed throughout the latter period of the NF administrations, including the Marxist-Leninist *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), both founded in 1964, and the *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (*M-19*), founded in 1970. Since the 1930s, the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) had worked to form self-sufficient peasant defense leagues in the poorest rural areas of the country, prompting U.S. intervention to form a coherent anti-communist and anti-insurgent policy, known as Plan Lazo, beginning in 1959 and coming into full effect in 1962. Colombian government forces began to attack the rural self-defense leagues and following a violent assault on the community of Marquetalia, PCC members including Manuel Marulanda Vélez founded the immediate precursor to the FARC, intent on uniting rural peasant communities in and around the impoverished Huila region in open rebellion against the central government. At the same time, Colombian Communists trained in Cuba and including a number of influential Catholic priests, themselves fervent supporters of fundamentally anti-capitalist Liberation Theology, formed the ELN intent on achieving the establishment of a Catholic, Communist regime in the country. The group barely managed to escape destruction after numerous military setbacks during the administration of Alfonso López Michelsen, who in seeking to sign a peace accord with the group relaxed state security policies that had come under fire both domestically and internationally due to numerous accusations of human rights violations.

abuses against suspected guerrillas and prisoners.

By the early 1980s, the Colombian government's domestic issues multiplied with the beginning of the cocaine boom. Throughout the latter half of the 1970s, ambitious individuals began to take advantage of the ongoing conflict against insurgency to establish rapidly growing smuggling operations, among them the infamous Pablo Escobar Gaviria. Beginning in 1975, the middle-class resident of Medellin began to fly small shipments of cocaine through routes into Panama and eventually into the United States, earning enough to upgrade to a fleet of 15 large planes and six helicopters. With a rapid surge in demand for cocaine in the United State, Escobar and colleague Carlos Lehder bought a small island in the Bahamas, Norman's Cay, which would become the nerve center of what would become known as the Medellin Cartel. Cocaine paste was purchased in large quantities from Peru and Bolivia, processed in Medellin and rural areas of the department for $1500/kilo, and sold for a street value of $50,000/kilo in the United States, providing an astounding profit margin for the relatively small organization.³

By 1981, the Medellin Cartel had managed to develop extensive contacts among the ruling elite of Colombia. In that year, the cartel met with representatives from the Colombian military, the national legislature, small industrialists, wealthy cattle ranchers, and U.S.-based Texas Petroleum to form *Muerte a Secuestadores*

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(MAS), a right-wing paramilitary organization intended to defend economic interests and protect local elites from kidnappings and extortion at the hands of the Marxist insurgent groups. The group would provide the cartel with a militarized arm for the purpose of carrying out targeted political assassinations of rural community leaders, labor organizers, and elected officials who took harsh stances against the new class of drug dealers. This fell in line with Escobar's established practice of "plata or plomo" (silver or lead), which saw widespread bribery of supreme court justices, police officials, and even military leaders in addition to the murder of hundreds of those who refused to be paid. The violent activities of the group were not constrained to Colombia itself, as it feuded with emerging competitors via its mid-level distribution network centered in Miami, causing more than one-hundred drug-related murders in that city alone in 1981.\(^4\)

By 1982, Escobar had grown to an unprecedented level of public recognition and wealth, as cocaine surpassed coffee as Colombia’s largest export, accounting for 30% of total exports that year, and the country provided around 70% of the marijuana imported into the United States from abroad.\(^5\) Escobar ran a successful election that year for a seat in Colombia's House of Representatives looking to secure immunity from extradition to the United States, which had in the past three years significantly stepped up its anti-smuggling operations through special units of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). With Escobar currently in office and the longtime insurgency of the FARC at a low point, the Colombian government in 1982 had incredibly difficult decision to make concerning which allies would provide it

\(^4\) "Drugs and Society," http://countrystudies.us/columbia/59.htm
\(^5\) "Drugs and Society," http://countrystudies.us/columbia/59.htm
with the best means of restoring peace and stability to a nation fraught with violence.

6 “The Colombian Economy after 25 Years of Drug Trafficking”, Ricardo Rocha
Positions:

**Rodrigo Lara Bonilla**: Minister of Justice. He is strongly against the cartels, particularly the Medellin Cartel. He is the creator, alongside Luis Carlos Galán, of the New Liberalism Movement and will be trying to support its growth. He believes strongly in the extradition of cartel leaders to the USA and is particularly interested in removing Escobar from his seat in Congress.

**Rodrigo Hernán Lloreda Caicedo**: Minister of Foreign Affairs. Hernán comes from a very privileged background and was highly educated, having studied in Switzerland, the United States, and Colombia. He will be pushing for the interests of the Conservative party and handling relations with the United States. He is in favor of American intervention and of extradition.

**Fernando Landazábal Reyes**: Minister of National Defense. Has a radical stance when it comes to the *guerillas*: that the only way to stop the radicals is through brute force, not weak peace treaties that can easily be taken apart. Wants to focus more on the fight against the FARC than against the cartels, especially since he might be susceptible to the influence of the Medellín Cartel.

**Carlos Holguín Sardi**: President of the Senate. A strong member of the Conservative Party. He is used to his comfortable life and his reputation as a good administrator. However, he is highly interested in pursuing his family’s interests and is willing to do what it takes to achieve his own goals.

**Luis Carlos Galán**: Journalist and liberal politician. He just recently ran for President, but lost against Betancur. Founded, together with Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, the New Liberalism movement. Believed the cartels were responsible for corrupting the Colombian society and is facing threats from the Medellin Cartel for his public stance against them when Pablo Escobar tried to infiltrate his party.

**Roberto Junguito Bonnet**: Minister of Finance and Public Credit. Intellectual with great understanding of the economy. Studied abroad in the United States (Princeton!), the
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United Kingdom, and Belgium. Primarily concerned with restoring peace, because the conflict with the cartels and the revolutionary groups have damaged the economy.

Jairo Ortega: Open supporter of Escobar. Helped him get to office and is ready to help defend him against any accusations thrown at him in Congress. Maintains that Escobar is a “man of the people” since, as of yet, there is no concrete evidence linking Escobar to the drug trade.

Jesús Armando Arias Cabrales: Chief of Staff of the Army and Commander of the 13th Brigade. Doesn’t really believe in following all the rules: if things get done, it doesn’t matter how they got done. Suspected of leading enhanced interrogations and is prone to violent outbursts.

Jaime Pardo Leal: Representative of the Communist Party. Used to be a youth activist member of the Juventud Comunista Colombiana (Colombian Communist Youth) group. Known for his good sense of humor and extroversion, he is a strong believer in his ideals, which might not get him many friends in the cabinet. However, he is strongly against the alliance of politicians with the drug cartels and paramilitary groups.

Álvaro Gómez Hurtado: Ambassador to the United States. Conservative with a strong family history in politics, especially since he is the son of a former President of Colombia Laureano Gómez. He also has a history as a journalist before launching his political career and still has contacts with the media. He is particularly concerned with the conflict between the anti-imperialistic sentiment in the Cabinet and Colombia’s need of American aid to solve the cartel wars.

Guillermo Cano Isaza: Journalist of the popular newspaper El Espectador. Very outspoken against the influence of drug cartels in Colombian politics. Although not a politician like the other representatives in the Cabinet, he holds a lot of sway over the people, which can get him a lot of power with the masses.

Hernando Baquero Borda: Supreme Court Justice. Worked with Rodrigo Lara Bonilla to support extradition and take down the cartels. He is on the panel that decides which Colombian traffickers would be extradited to the United States. This means
he faces constant death threats from the cartels and must take extra security measures, but he won’t back down from what he believes in.

Carlos Albán Holguín: Minister of National Education. Conservative. Later appointed at Representative of Colombia to the United Nations. Working on improving literacy in the poorer regions of the country.

Rosso José Serrano: General of the Colombian National Police. Leads the struggle on the ground against the guerillas and the drug cartels. Serrano has to deal not only with the corruption within his ranks, which makes it hard to capture his targets since they are consistently tipped off, but also with maintaining its public image before accusations of human rights violations.
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Questions:

1. How should we decrease corruption within our political, judiciary, and military sectors?
2. How should we deal with the threat of American imperialism?
3. How to ensure the safety of public official amid the threat of kidnappings and assassinations?
4. Should we extradite cartel leaders to the United States for trials?
5. How to stop the guerillas from recruiting the youth?
6. How far is too far in war? In other words: what should we do about accusations od human rights violations and enhanced interrogations from our police forces?
7. How to encourage economic growth in times of conflict?