Chapter 21

d) Colombia: Extreme Negative Case Study

The Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion is that of the Nation; the public powers will protect it and make it respected as an essential element of the social order (Article 38, Political Constitution of Colombia of 1886, valid until 1991).

Public education shall be organised and directed under the Catholic Religion [...] (Article 41, Constitution of Colombia of 1886, valid until 1991).

The State is not atheist, agnostic, or indifferent to the religious feelings of Colombians (Article 2, Law 133 of 1994, currently valid).

For most of Colombia's history, most "Colombians have been in absolute poverty and plagued by violence and insecurity" (Robinson, 2016, pp. 10, 11). Indeed, serious security risks (violence and terrorism) mean that Colombia ranks bottom of the 136 countries rated for tourists and businesses. In the 2017 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, Colombia scored 2.6 on a scale of the most dangerous countries worldwide (min 2.59; max 6.65; median 5.60) (World Economic Forum, 2017). Colombian levels of corruption are also very high (Transparency International, 2016), and Colombia is one of the most inequitable countries in the world (World Bank, 2016).

Robinson (2016) convincingly argues that the causes lie in the country's historical extractive political institutions (low quality of democracy and weak state). However, he disregards the crucial and profound institutional influence of Roman Catholicism on moulding Colombian political institutions.

The vital role of Roman Catholicism in establishing the social, political, institutional, and religious *status quo* in Colombia is plainly evident and well-documented (Figueroa, 2016; Levine, 1981; Blanco, 2008; Munevar, 2008; Beltrán, 2008). The largely successful project pursued by the Roman Church-State in Colombia (so-called *Christilandia* according to the Jesuit Felix Restrepo) consists of three

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pillars: (1) political (a confessional state); (2) economic (a corporatist state); and (3) cultural (a Catholic and conservative “Hispanicism”) (Figueroa, 2016).

Roman Catholicism deployed Hispanicism (characterised by its triad of language, religion, and race) as its best cultural weapon. Hispanicism shielded the interests of the Roman Church-State against the threats of Bolshevik-Socialist atheism, French liberal anti-clericalism, and triumphant Anglo-Saxon Protestant modernity. Likewise, its feudal-medieval corporatism enabled the Roman Church-State to respond to both modern “right-wing” capitalism/neoliberalism and “left-wing”, socialist threats. The whole package needed to be tied politically and legally to a confessional state and constitution legitimised by a Concordat (Figueroa, 2016; Levine, 1981).

Despite the mild erosion of the hegemony of Roman Catholicism in recent decades, the coherence of the Roman Church-State project is still pervasive in Colombia (Figueroa, 2016); (Beltrán, 2008). The *Christilandia* project of Colombian society has been a product of the country’s most conservative and intolerant wing of Roman Catholicism. Such conservative views have been dominant in Colombia, regardless of the existence of less intransigent sectors, which have traditionally been weaker (Figueroa, 2016; Levine, 1981; Munevar, 2008; Beltrán, 2008). Consequently, Colombian Romanism (Catholicism) has forcefully advocated such a theocratic, hierarchical, organic, and corporate society (Figueroa, 2016).

21.1 Brief Historical Background

Contrary to popular belief in Colombia, the Roman Catholic Church-State is *not* a Colombian institution. It has, however, been very present since independence from Spain and even before. Colombia was a strategic ecclesiastical, political, and economic centre for Spain and the Roman Church-State in the colonial period.

After independence, Simon Bolivar petitioned the Roman Church-State (so-called “Holy” See or Roman See) to sign a Concordat with Colombia (New Granada). This move allowed legitimising the newly independent state and to continue the “*patronato*” without the Spanish Crown. Consequently, the Roman Church-State recognised Colombia as the first independent Latin American Nation in 1835 (Salinas, 2013).

Politically, several historical periods alternated between anti-clerical liberals and conservative Catholic “hegemonies” (as well as federalists and centralists), leading to traumatic civil wars. The liberal principles of the French Revolution had a decisive influence, especially in the first five Colombian constitutions until 1886 (Uribe, 1985). The extent of this liberal influence, which can be traced back to John Locke, led former president Lopez Michelsen to affirm that Colombian institutions descend from “Calvinism” (Lopez Michelsen, 1966). Far from that, Protestant and liberal ideals and influence were severely and systematically avoided in the following centuries in Colombia. Moreover, the Calvinist influence on liberalism occurred only indirectly via the French Revolution (Sect. 8.3.4.4).

21.2 The Progressive and Short-Lasting Liberal Constitution of 1863 (Rionegro)

Ironically, Colombia became the first Latin American country to decree the separation of church and state in 1863. The Rionegro Constitution of Colombia (1863) was an anti-clerical effort promulgated under the auspices of the Liberals in power. It was a very progressive and pioneering Constitution that provided full freedom of religion and other individual liberties. However, it only lasted 23 years. No other religion rivalled the primacy of Roman Catholicism in Colombia, where the state was weak and poor. After a Conservative revolt that resulted in a civil war of marked religious character, Colombia discarded the liberal Constitution of Rionegro and undid much of the Liberal effort to lessen the power of the Roman Catholic Church. It then promulgated its most conservative, intransigent, and long-lasting Constitution in 1886. The 1886 Constitution declared Roman Catholicism to be the religion of the nation, and public authorities were empowered to enforce respect for it. The constitutional provisions of 1886 led Colombia to sign a concordat that reiterated the establishment of Catholicism as the state religion (Delpar, 1980). Thus, Colombia did not formally separate church and state until its current Constitution (1991).

21.3 The Constitution of 1886 (Valid Until 1991) and the Concordat

The Conservative victory in the nineteenth-century civil wars ensured the substantial removal of liberal principles from the Constitution of 1886. The Roman See imposed the conditions on the state to grant constitutional privileges to the rights of the Roman Catholic Church. These rights were ratified in the Concordat of 1887. Thus, Colombia retained its well-rooted colonial institutions, a powerful Roman Church-State, a unified social and economic elite, and a strong central state (Levine, 1981; Figueroa, 2016).

The Concordat of 1887 was progressively modified, favouring the Roman See, until 1973. Since the Middle Ages, no other country has enforced such a complete integration of church and state (ideal medieval Christendom), as reflected in Colombia's Concordat (Salinas, 2013; Levine, 1981; Figueroa, 2016). Several articles of the 1886 Constitution were identical to those of the Concordat. Among others, under the Colombian Concordat, the following legal instruments were enforced. For instance, Article 3 accepts the force of canon law: "Canon Law is independent of civil law and is not part of it, but the authorities of the Republic will respect it" (Concordat 73, Art. 3). Consequently, civil courts cannot judge the Church hierarchy, only the Roman See can.

In the Colombian Concordat, the Roman Church-State is defined as an "essential element of the social order" (Art. 1). Consequently, the Roman Church-State has played a major role in various areas of society:

1. Public and private education at all levels, which had to be maintained “in conformity with the dogmas of the Catholic religion” (Art. 12) (religious instruction was mandatory);
2. More than 63% of Colombia’s territory are “mission territories”, in which the Church exercised broad civil powers (Art. 31) (Levine, 1981; de Roux, 2001);
3. The armies of the republic enjoy exemptions known as “military privileges”, which are determined by the pope in a separate decree (Art. 20);
4. Registering births and marriages (Art. 17–19), and the management of death, including cemeteries (Art. 30). Parish records had preference over civil records.

Moreover, the Colombian government is obliged to pay the Roman Church-State an annual fee (Art. 22, 25), in addition to granting tax exemptions for Roman Church-State properties (Art. 6). Regarding education, the Concordat enforces further contentious measures: The government is obliged to prevent “the propagation of ideas contrary to the respect and veneration of the Church and Catholic dogma” in *literary and scientific subjects and, in general, in all branches of instruction*. Diocesan ordinaries, personally or by delegates, should inspect and revise the texts of religion and morals. In the universities, the archbishop of Bogotá identified those books that would serve as texts for religion and morality. Also, to ensure the uniform teaching of these subjects, the archbishop, together with the other prelates, would choose the texts at public schools (Art. 13).

Levine (1981) notes that it is hard to envisage a more powerful tool of ostracisation, or a more revealing indication of the convergence of religious and civil forces, than these structures (p.71). Neothomism inspired such conservative arrangements by opposing social change based on the belief of an indisputable “Roman Catholic truth” (Figueroa, 2016, p. 298). Thus, Colombia’s large Roman Catholic population is a natural result of such an intransigent institutional regime rather than of the free choice of believers. Colombia has the highest proportion of adults raised as Roman Catholics in the world (92%), after Paraguay (94%) (Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 12) (Colombia and Paraguay share the same clusters for low competitiveness and high corruption in QCA; Sect. 16.3.3.4).

During the conservative regime, the presence of liberals, and even more of Protestants, was strictly limited. Liberals and Protestants, as opponents of the regime, were stigmatised as heretical and dangerous groups (Beltrán, 2008). The president was empowered to take away their civil rights, imprison them, and condemn them to exile (Figueroa, 2016, p. 58). Such a tyrannical social order led to radicalisation and bloody conflicts, for instance, between liberals and conservatives (e.g. *La Violencia*) (Levine, 1981; Figueroa, 2016).

21.4 The Corporatist State

In the Middle Ages, the corporations enjoyed enormous privileges. Political power and social organisation depended entirely on them. The authority of the Roman Church-State was beyond question. All social expressions formed part of a unique organism described by Thomas Aquinas as “harmonious”. The Protestant Reformation, and thus the rise of nation-states, as well as the French Revolution, led to a crisis of the corporatist model. This also explains the attacks of the Roman Church-State on modernity and democracy in Colombia (especially before Vatican II, but also afterwards) (Figuerola, 2016; Levine, 1981).

In Colombia, corporatism has maintained a medieval oligarchic society by the corporations relentlessly defending their interests to the detriment of public welfare. The state continues to approve laws and policies for the benefit of corporate associates. As a result, this hierarchical inequality has produced endemic violence across the country, which increased significantly during the same years in which corporatist proposals were implemented (Figuerola, 2016, pp. 15, 19; Levine, 1981). Moreover, corporatism, violence, and deadly conflicts have exacerbated in the country’s most conservative departments (e.g. Antioquia, Norte de Santander, Nariño) (Figuerola, 2016).

21.5 Partial End of a Totalitarian Roman Catholic Hegemony

The 1990s began with a new constitution. This was the result of a student movement and of a peace agreement that the liberal government signed with a liberal-intellectual guerrilla (M-19) (Buenahora, 1992). The new Constitution of 1991 included (although only to a modest extent) the views of ethnic minorities, Protestant Christians, and other social groups. Accordingly, the new Constitution questioned the pervasive presence of Roman Catholicism and removed its privileged status as a “state religion”, at least formally. Moreover, the new constitution opened up the path for religious pluralism (Munevar, 2008; Beltrán & Quiroga, 2017).

The participation of Protestants in drafting the Constitution of 1991, in the Religious Freedom Law (Law 133 of 1994), and in the Convention of Internal Public Law (Decree 354 of 1998), has helped dismantle the denominationally Catholic character of the Colombian State (Beltrán & Quiroga, 2017, p. 205). Thus, one of the fruits of the 1991 Constitution is the decline in poverty over the last decade, and an unusual series of clashes and crises for the elites (Robinson, 2016, p. 75). However, Protestant intervention in politics failed to abolish the Concordat altogether (Beltrán & Quiroga, 2017, p. 206). The Concordat of 1973 had to be renegotiated with the Roman See and was reduced to six articles (7, 8, 12, 14, 19, and 20) out of the 33 articles in the original text (Garzón, 2011). As the Attorney General formally put matters in 1993:

... the Concordat does not recognise several *jus cogens* rules of international human rights law, namely: religious freedom; equal rights in marriage, during it and in case of dissolution of the bond; the freedom of teaching; respect for the autonomy, rights, and freedoms of indigenous people; and the right to education (Procuraduría General de la Nación, 1993).

In spite of these reforms, the Colombian government is still required to pay a perpetual fee to the Roman See. Religious instruction in public schools according to the Roman Church Magisterium for Catholics also remains firmly in place.

In practice, the Roman Church-State still has considerable privileges, despite being compelled to participate in a meanwhile competitive religious market. Roman Catholicism enjoys the prerogatives arising from more than four centuries of monopoly: First, a privileged relationship with the Colombian State, as guaranteed by the Concordat, which remains in force with modifications despite the 1991 Constitution. Second, clear educational privileges based on the Concordat and its past institutionalisation. Third, an enormous amount of property and cultural wealth, as evident in a solid corporate organisation and extensive infrastructure. And lastly, access to domains otherwise reserved for powerful institutions, such as the mass media (Beltrán, 2008, p. 189).

Thus, the centuries-long Catholic monopoly and hegemony have lastingly impacted Colombian culture, as is visible today. The traditions, styles of action, practices, procedures, and axes of conflict are well established everywhere in Colombia and are often characteristic of feudal-medieval times (Levine, 1981, p. 58; Blanco, 2008; Munevar, 2008). Moreover, the influence of the Roman Church-State is still closely bound up with politics in Colombia. The ideological function of the Roman Church (with a less direct link to religious beliefs) still plays a vital role as a cultural point of reference underpinning the Colombian ethos (Figueroa, 2016; Munevar, 2008; Beltrán, 2008). Moreover, even after religious freedom was guaranteed in the 1991 Constitution, 79% of the population remains Roman Catholic (Pew Research Center, 2014).

21.6 Protestantism in Colombia

As Roman Catholicism was closely linked with conservatism, Protestantism was naturally allied to liberalism and anti-clericalism. Accordingly, Protestantism gained ground mainly during liberal periods. Protestants were, however, discriminated and excluded from wider society as “second-class citizens” (Beltrán, 2008). The situation has improved since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and especially the Pentecostal movement has flourished since the 1960s (Beltrán, 2008). However, Pentecostal and Neopentecostal movements have played only a marginal role in Colombian public life (Munevar, 2008, p. 389). Moreover, whenever Protestants participate in politics, they often fall into the same corrupt behaviour as traditional politicians; the longstanding practices are too well established (Helmsdorff, 1996).

21.7 Empirical Analysis and CDA for Colombia (Prosperity)

21.7.1 Textual Analysis (Theological)

The Christian (i.e. biblical) principle of prosperity is closely linked to obedience to the Commandments (Moral Law). A quite harmonious discourse exists among the different Protestant stakeholders regarding this principle. Thus, for instance, the Protestant Free Pastor 1 (f) refers to San Andres and Providence Island as a prosperous place before the arrival of “Catholics from mainland Colombia” destroyed the local system of values. Similarly, the Protestant Free Pastor 2 (g) refers to the importance of biblical values: They create trust in society. The Independent Protestant believer (n) cites examples from the Old Testament, for instance, Israel prospered whenever it obeyed God, but struggled and suffered whenever disobedience prevailed (Table 21.1).

In contrast, Roman Catholic stakeholders prefer a somewhat more secular (non-theological) approach to the prosperity issue in Colombia. None refers to a biblical principle. Roman Catholic Priest 1 (a) mentions the change of discourse, towards progress, after the Second Vatican Council (1965). Roman Catholic Priest 3 (c) mentions that “development” resulted from liberalisation after the introduction of the 1991 Constitution (as corroborated in previous sections). This discourse is expected and in line with the previous sections. It also coincides with the views of similar stakeholders (i.e. Catholics) in the case study of Switzerland.

21.7.2 Analysis of Discourse Practice (Theoretical Triangulation)

The Free Church Pastor (f) and the Government Official (p) link trustworthiness, values, and prosperity, similarly to Fukuyama (1995). Stakeholder (n) cites the example of Israel as a society that was (cyclically) obedient to God whenever in crisis. Yet no sooner did Israel prosper, disobedience soared—until the next crisis. This principle refers implicitly to the theory of existential security (Norris & Inglehart, 2004), which explains why societies become more secularised whenever freedom and security exist in sufficient measure, but become religious in times of crisis (Sect. 7.2.1).

21.7.3 Analysis of Social Practice: Law and Institutions

The Roman Catholic Priest 3 (c) argues that the liberalisation of education (i.e. emancipation from Roman Catholicism) after the introduction of the 1991 Constitution has caused corruption and crime. He advocates a conservative approach, one in line with *old-regime* Roman Church discourse (pre-Vatican II).

Table 21.1 Principles of prosperity according to stakeholders interviewed in Colombia (Source: Author's figure)

Prosperity	
Stakeholder	Fundamental principles identified (interviews)
The Holy Bible	"Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do" (<i>King James Bible</i> , 1769, Deuteronomy 29:9).
a) Roman Catholic Priest 1.	"The enemies of the Catholic Church were Communism, liberalism, and the Secret Societies (Freemasonry). In 1965, the Second Vatican Council ruled that the Church could not oppose progress, liberalism, and modern civilisation".
c) Roman Catholic Priest 3.	"After 1991, Colombia opened up to free markets, imports and exports, which generated development, but also sparked much corruption. Corruption and crime are linked to the issue of relaxation and liberality in education".
f) Protestant Free Church Pastor 1.	"... Protestantism remained here, and over the years the values of our society were marked by that essence. San Andres was a prosperous territory. They could also sleep with their doors and windows open at night and hang their clothes outside [...] to dry. You did not have to worry about [...] people] stealing anything from you. They would have farms far away from their homes and no one would steal. People would end up in trouble just for stealing a coconut. When someone was killed on this island, it was an island-wide crisis. It shocked everybody that blood was shed. It was a major episode. All the church bells would ring because there was a murder. That was a society that Colombia came to found here. It was a society that was built by Protestantism and its values, but was eventually [...] destroyed by a new value system led by Catholicism [and] implanted by continental Colombia".
g) Protestant Free Church Pastor 1.	"You could say that while society is based on biblical principles and values, the lives of others will be more respected and more valuable. But as society moves away from God, there is more crime and less development".
i) Ecumenical academic theologian.	"García Márquez tries to explain why we [Colombians] are the way we are. He says that we are a cultural blend of the types of Spaniards who arrived, the indigenous people we were ancestrally, and mixed with Africans. This makes us a paradoxical country, a country full of cultural contradictions. Colombia is a society of narcos. [...] Congress and the presidential campaigns have been ruled by drug money. We want to excuse and cover things up, but the structure of Colombian society [...] is] the result of a culture of drug trafficking".
n) Independent, free Protestant believer (Academic)	"Whenever the law of God and moral standard as found in the Bible declines, the economy goes down, morality goes down, the crime rate goes up, and the result is a degenerated society. The closer you live in harmony with biblical principles, the more harmoniously you will live. [...] This principle comes down to us historically and repetitively, for example, from the book of Judges [...] the more Israel obeyed God's law in the Bible, the better [they] got, whereas whenever they strayed far from God's commandments, they faced the worst crises. [...] this pattern is repeated cyclically over and over again in history, leading to social failure and oppression whenever

(continued)

Table 21.1 (continued)

Prosperity	
Stakeholder	Fundamental principles identified (interviews)
	people disobeyed God. In the same sense, you can explain society today. For example, how do you explain that humans suffer famines and animals have enough to eat and are fit in Africa? Voodoo and spiritist practices [that humans do and animals do not do] can give you the answer”.
p) Government official	“Some of the factors that may affect our productivity are that we have a low level of trust in our public institutions since their accountability and transparency are dubious. Likewise, many government employees are not doing their duties. Instead, they are checking personal e-mails, Facebook, etc. [...] The sense of public property here is not that they belong to everyone but that they belong to no one and that we have to take advantage of them”.
s) Colombian Embassy Official	“[...] there is no legal framework for cooperation between Colombia and the Holy See. Caritas Internationalis develops its work through the National Secretariat of Social Pastoral (Cáritas Colombiana). This includes rural development, helping the population (the victims of the conflict), prevention and attention to emergencies, promotion of human rights, gender equality, peacebuilding and social inclusion. The payment of the Concordat fee (per the Concordat of 1887) by the Government of Colombia to the Catholic Church is still in force. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs processes this payment, but the resources to make it effective are consolidated by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit within the annual national budget.

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