

OCTOBER 2004

## The Social and Economic Dimensions of Conflict and Peace in Colombia

Edited by Cynthia J. Arnson, Deputy Director, Latin American Program

### INTRODUCTION

During 2003, both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published major studies of economic and social conditions in Colombia and their relationship to the internal armed conflict. The World Bank's 900-plus page study, *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*, and the United Nations Development Program's report, *Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano, Colombia, 2003, El conflicto: callejón con salida*,<sup>1</sup> offer comprehensive diagnoses of the relationship between violence and development. The reports detail, among other issues, the devastating human as well as economic costs of the war, the crisis of the rural sector, the intersection of narcotrafficking and armed conflict, and the need for macroeconomic and sectoral reform to spur sustainable and equitable growth. The UNDP and World Bank reports share the assessment that the armed conflict in Colombia constitutes the central and greatest obstacle to development.<sup>2</sup>

The two reports differ markedly, however, in their emphasis. The World Bank's report offers a development agenda for the administration of President Álvaro Uribe, viewing development as "a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for peace"<sup>3</sup> and offering comprehensive recommendations to achieve growth, share its benefits more widely, achieve fiscal sustainability, and build governmental capacity. The report devotes significant attention to strategies to reduce urban and rural poverty and inequality in the context of achieving sustainable growth. The UNDP, meanwhile, focuses greater attention on local and regional strategies to build peace by

mitigating or preventing Colombia's multiple conflicts. The UNDP describes the complex web of motivations that characterize each of the principal armed actors as well as the diverse manifestations of violence in different regions of the country. It challenges the view by which military strengthening and peace negotiations are seen as dichotomous—as opposed to complementary—strategies, calling instead for gradual efforts to contain the expansion of conflict, reverse the spiraling degradation of the war, and address the local triggers of and incentives for violence. The UNDP calls for international, national, and local initiatives on a broad range of military, political, economic and social fronts to ease the devastating effects of conflict and ultimately put an end to it.

Given the comprehensive scope of the World Bank and UNDP reports in both analytic and policy terms, as well as the relative inattention in Washington to the social and economic dimensions of Colombia's conflict, the Latin American Program convened a distinguished group of experts to discuss the two reports, their respective policy implications, and the growing humanitarian toll of the conflict. **Alberto Chueca Mora**, resident representative of the World Bank in Colombia, **Hernando Gómez Buendía**, coordinator of the United Nations Development Program's *Human Development Report for Colombia*, and **Jean Pierre Schaerer**, chief of delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Bogotá, discussed their findings, which are summarized below.



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## Alberto Chueca Mora

### The World Bank

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**A**lberto Chueca Mora<sup>4</sup> emphasized questions of growth and economic performance, indicating that the World Bank views Colombia positively and with optimism. He addressed the impact of the internal armed conflict on growth, as well as challenges in the effort to foster growth with equity.

The World Bank's optimism, he said, stemmed from Colombia's 3.64 percent growth rate in 2003. This represents the highest growth rate in Colombia in the last eight years, the second largest in Latin America, and a rate higher than the world average in 2003. In 2004, the World Bank predicts growth of about 4 percent, although some estimates have been higher. (See Table 1)

Chueca Mora noted other positive economic trends. Unemployment, although still high, declined in 2003 with the creation of 1,240,000 jobs. (See Table 2)

Private investment recovered, growing 100 percent in the last three years, from 6.6 percent of GDP to close to 12 percent of GDP in 2003.<sup>5</sup> In the first quarter of 2004, the rate of growth of investment was even higher. (See Table 3)

Chueca Mora said that President Álvaro Uribe's democratic security policy has helped restore investor confidence. For example, the average number of kidnappings in the country has steadily declined to 77 per month. (See Table 4)

The number of civilian casualties in terrorist attacks has also declined. (See Table 5)

The number of hectares devoted to coca cultivation has been reduced. (See Table 6)

And over the last two years, there has been a small, but progressive and steady reduction in the number of both guerrilla and paramilitary fighters; according to Colombian government figures, some 3,000 members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) have turned themselves in, and close to 900 members of a paramilitary group demobilized at the end of 2003. (See Table 7)

Chueca Mora attributed increased growth in Colombia to international and domestic factors, including the partial recovery of the U.S. economy (something that has had an impact throughout Latin America); Colombia's greater credibility in the domestic and international community due to the

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The Program's Project on Comparative Peace Processes has examined internal armed conflict in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru, to understand how and whether civil conflicts could be brought to an end through political negotiations, and if so, how to accomplish the key tasks of the post-conflict era.

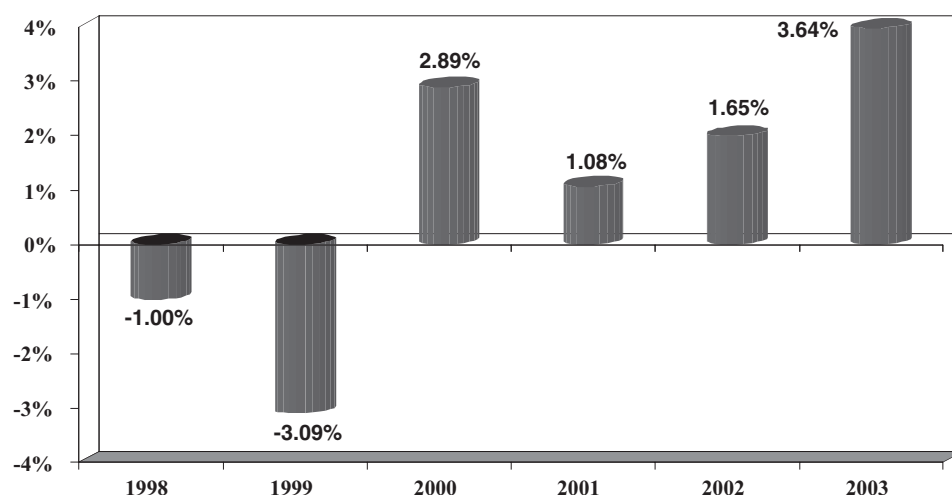
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**Table 1: Fastest rate of GDP growth since 1995: 3.64%**  
(Construction sector GDP: 14.5%)



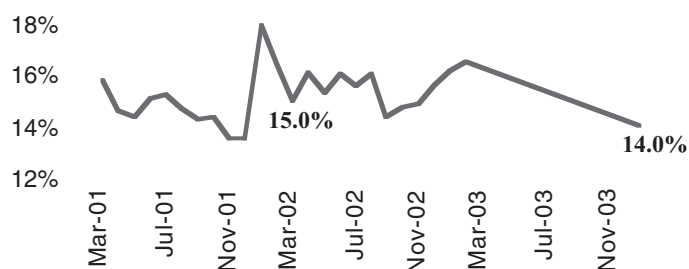
democratic security policy; increased Colombian exports; and the Colombian government's approval and implementation of necessary, but still insufficient, reforms. These reforms, proposed and approved by Congress during Uribe's first 100 days in office, included an asset tax to finance increased military spending, tax reform, modifications to the pension structure (although much remains to be done), and labor and public sector reform.

Despite the notable progress of the last two years, many challenges remain. One, according to Chueca Mora, concerns the fiscal sustainability of the country. The accumulation of public debt is very high, rising 100 percent in the last four years and now amounting to some 52 percent of GDP. Social conditions are staggering, he said, and, given the wealth of the country, unforgivable. Sixty percent of the population is still below the poverty line. Some 23 percent live in extreme poverty. The rate of inequality in Colombia, as measured by the gini coefficient, is one of the highest in the world and one of the highest in Latin America, after Brazil, Guatemala, and Chile.

The internal armed conflict continues to exact an enormous human toll and puts a damper on economic growth. Since 1980, some 100,000 people have died as a result of the conflict. According to official and unofficial sources, respectively, there are between two and three million internally displaced people. Approximately one million people, perhaps the most educated, have left the country.

**Table 2: New jobs created during 2003: 1,241,218**

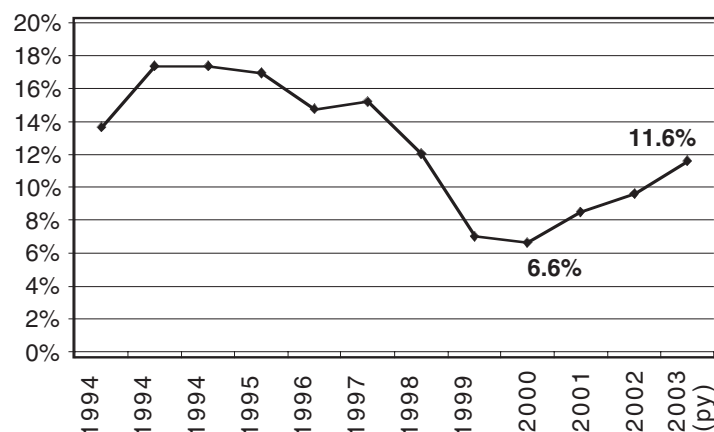
#### Unemployment rate



**Job creation:**  
13 Cities  
National

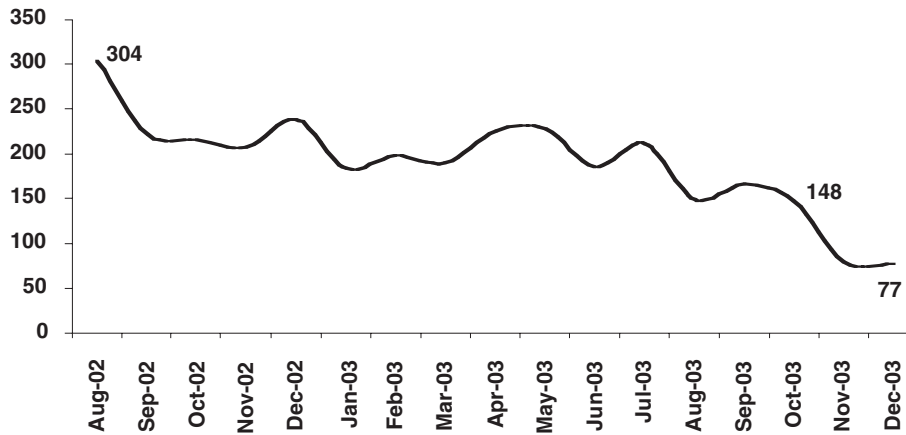
**Dec-02 - Dec-03**  
352.000  
1.241.218

**Table 3: Private Investment recovery: 11.6%**  
(% of GDP)



**Table 4: Significant decrease in kidnapping levels:**

Aug.-02: 304 Dec.-03: 77



Several studies have indicated that the conflict costs Colombia close to 2 percent of GDP per year. If the conflict had ended 20 years ago, Colombia's per capita income would be 50 percent higher than it is today. That is, it would have been close to that of Argentina after the default of 2001. The revenue lost in guerrilla sabotage of the country's oil pipelines—some \$500 million per year—would be enough to double the country's annual budget for social assistance.

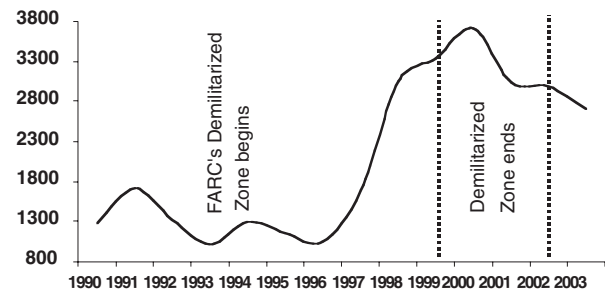
*Violence is one of, if not the, most important obstacle to development in Colombia. It destroys human, physical, social, and natural capital, making it difficult to create wealth and compromising the quality of life.*

Violence is one of, if not the, most important obstacle to development in Colombia. It destroys human, physical, social, and natural capital, making it difficult to create wealth and compromising the quality of life. Table 8 illustrates the relationship between violence (measured in homicides) and development.

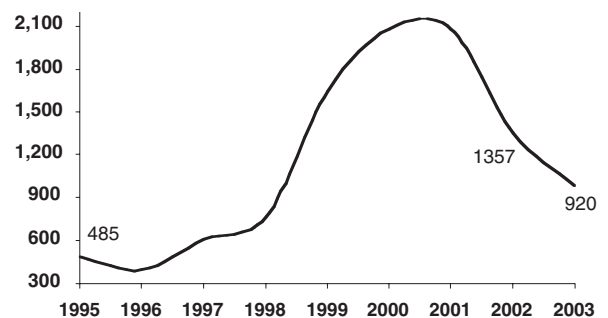
As the rate of homicides increased beginning in 1980, productivity also started to decline. In 1990, a reduction in the homicide rate—perhaps related to the capture of Medellín cartel kingpin Pablo

**Table 5: Kidnappings and casualties**

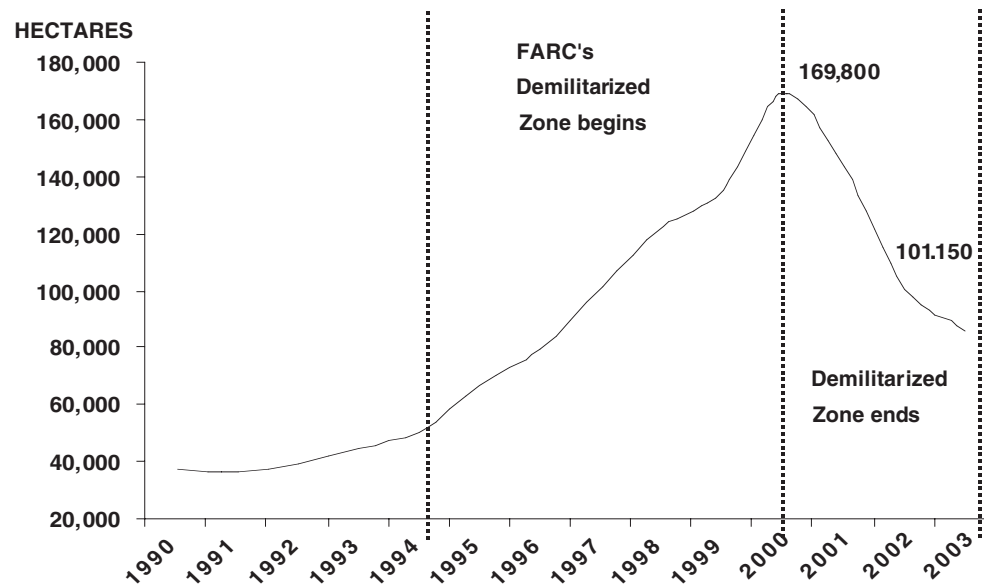
Kidnappings per year



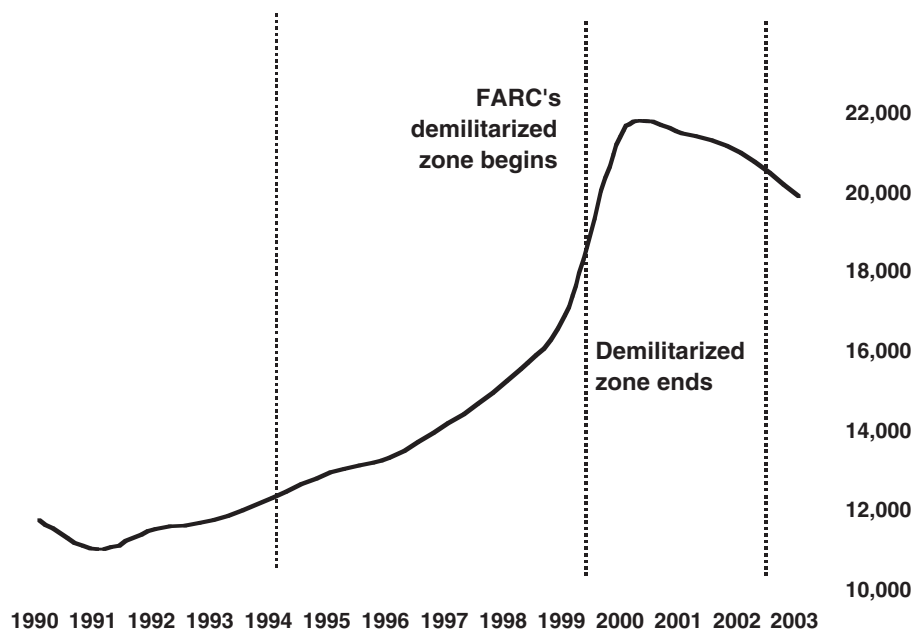
Civilians casualties by terrorist groups



Source: Ministry of Defense, National Police

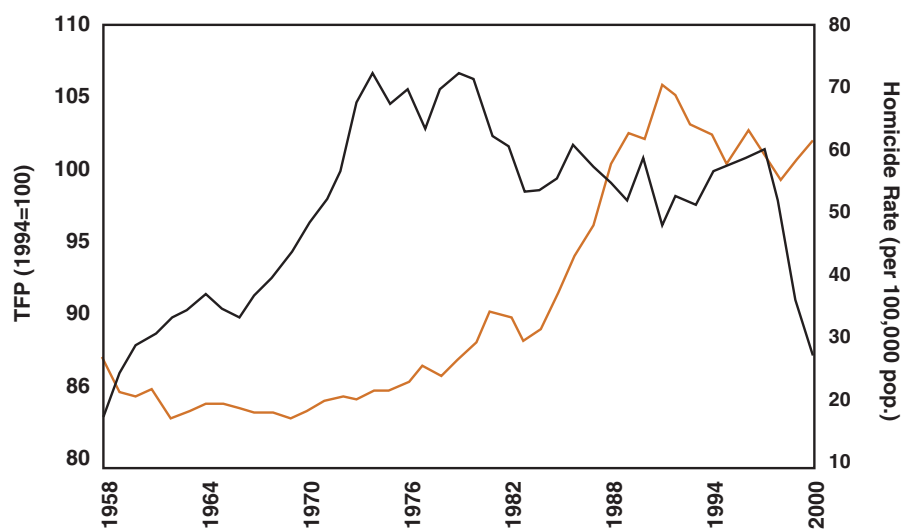
**Table 6: Coca hectares in Colombia 1991-2003**

Source: US State Department, March 2003

**Table 7: Guerrillas' manpower**

Source: Ministry of Defense - Joint Intelligence Center



**Table 8: Total Factor Productivity and Homicide Rate**

Escobar and to the destruction of some of the drug cartels—paralleled a gradual improvement in productivity. But by the end of the 1990s, homicides again went up and productivity suffered a significant reduction.

Chueca Mora identified three factors that have been cited to explain the causes of violence and the existence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups: the lack of state presence in large areas of the country, high levels of inequality, and the rise of drug traf-

icking, which, in addition to extortion and kidnapping, serves to finance the armed groups. He noted two schools of thought in explaining violence, arguing that both contained valid elements.

Other countries have greater poverty and higher rates of inequality than Colombia does, and have not experienced the same levels of violence or suffered an armed conflict.

A second school of thought, identified primarily with former World Bank economist Paul Collier, focuses on resources, income, and greed as the engine fueling violence and conflict in Colombia.<sup>6</sup> Those who subscribe to Collier's thesis point to the rent-seeking behavior of the armed groups, who take advantage of any boom or bonanza—from emeralds, marijuana, coffee, petroleum, cocaine and heroin—to finance their activities. Violent actors are drawn to the geographic areas of commodity boom, particularly when there is no state presence. Violence and conflict themselves create inequality, reversing the direction of causality posited above.

According to Chueca Mora, the income from drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping is the variable that best explains Colombia's violence. From the beginning of the 1980s, as cocaine production increased, so did the number of guerrillas

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*For Colombia to meet its challenges and realize its potential, it must grow. But it must also implement economic and social reforms that fight corruption and impunity and help improve the lives of those most vulnerable.*

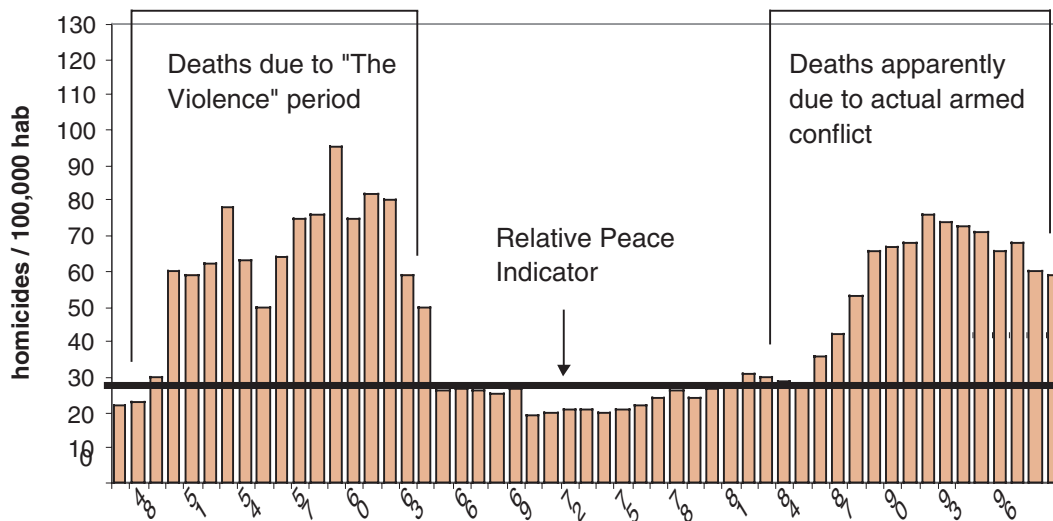
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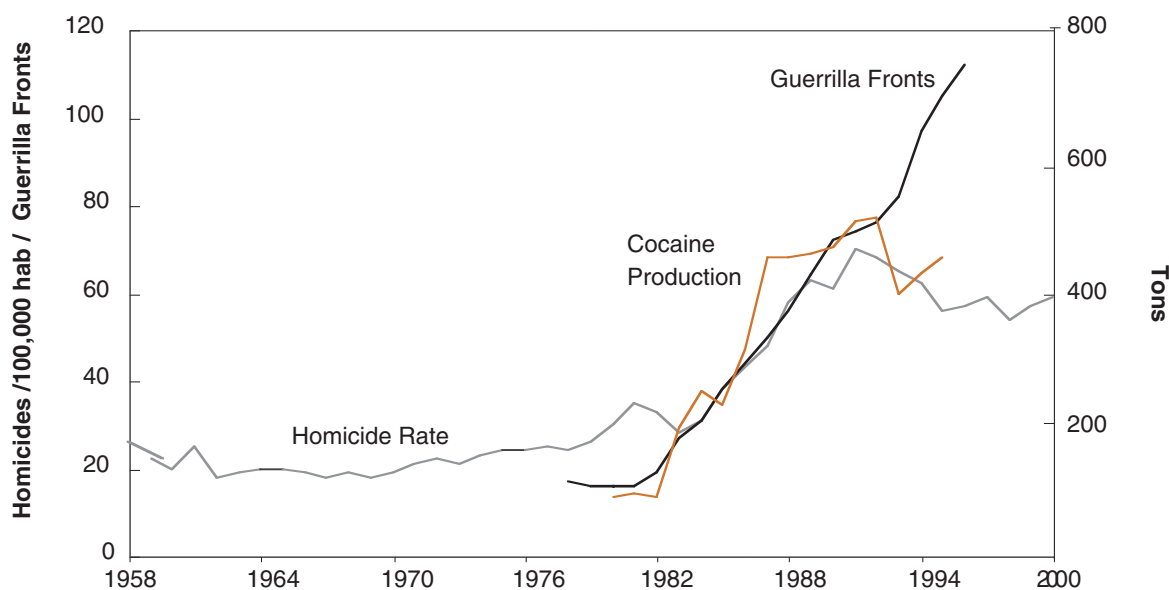
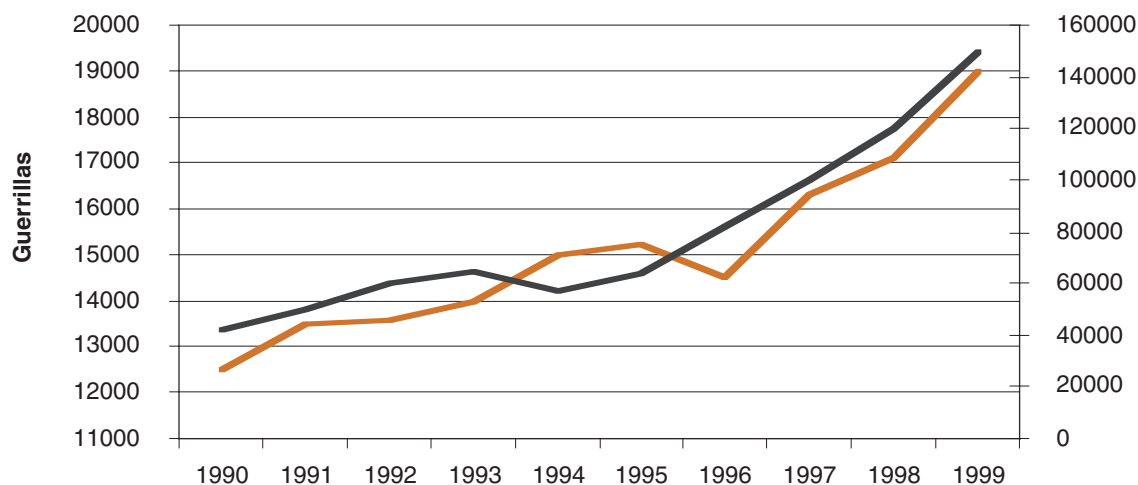
ficking, which, in addition to extortion and kidnapping, serves to finance the armed groups. He noted two schools of thought in explaining violence, arguing that both contained valid elements.

One school of thought focuses on the sociopolitical roots of conflict, and particularly on questions of socio-economic and political exclusion, in

**Table 9:****Colombia's Gini Coefficient**

Source: 1935, 1951, 1964, and 1971. "Distribución del Ingreso Y Desarrollo Económico." Juan Luis Londoño  
1976-2000, Dane, Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Cálculos DNP-Umacro.

**Homicide Rates in Colombia (1946-1998)**

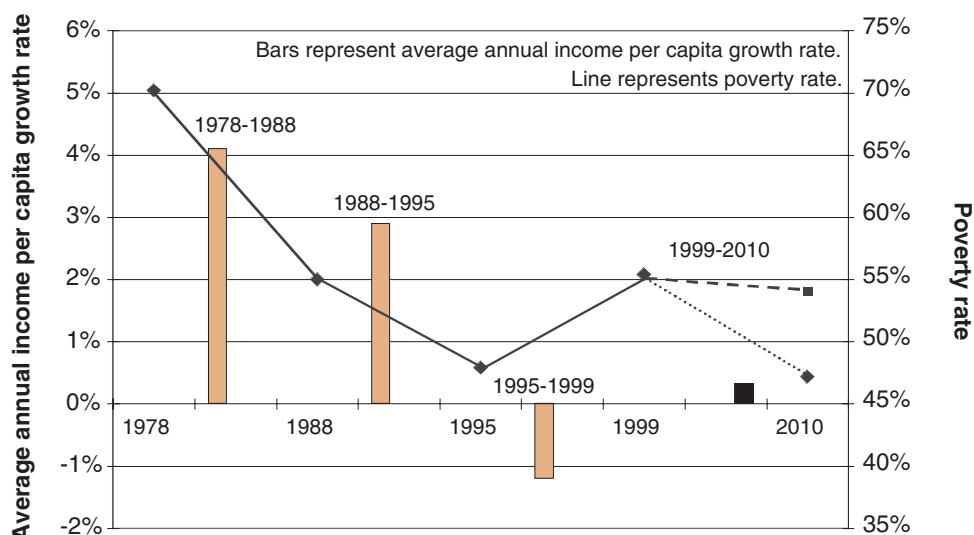
**Table 10a: Cocaine Production, Homicide Rates and Guerrilla Fronts****Table 10b: Coca Cultivation and Guerrilla Growth**

and paramilitaries and the rate of casualties and homicides. The close correlation suggests that, if it were not for this source of income, the existence of armed groups from the left and right would be harder to explain. The correlation between the rise in crime and the rapid expansion of drug trafficking from 1980 onward is also evident. (See Tables 10a and 10b)

The principal future challenge for Colombia is to achieve higher and better growth. That is, the quality of growth is important. As Table 11 demonstrates, the number of those in poverty declined as growth increased.

During the second half of the 1990s, as the economy fell into recession, poverty increased significantly, by some 3 million people. To reduce poverty,



**Table 11: High Economic Growth is Instrumental**

the country not only has to grow more, but also create better mechanisms of equity.

World Bank experience from around the world suggests that steady and progressive growth depends on macroeconomic stability, predictable and clear rules for all economic actors, appropriate levels of social and human capital investment (in health, education, and social protection), the existence of a framework that supports the development of entrepreneurship and management innovation, political and social stability, and, above all, peace.

Growth is essential to create jobs and lift people from poverty. But the quality of growth also matters.

There must also be a process of economic and social reform: to incorporate popular sectors, particularly those more vulnerable, in the benefits of economic growth; to generate a process of social capital formation (particularly in education and health) to support long-range economic growth; and to provide for anti-cyclical social protection mechanisms in times of external shock, economic crisis, or natural disaster. For Colombia to meet its challenges and realize its potential, it must grow. But it must also implement economic and social reforms that fight corruption and impunity and help improve the lives of those most vulnerable.



# Hernando Gómez Buendía

## United Nations Development Program

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**H**ernando Gómez Buendía noted that many explanations for the Colombian armed conflict are highly simplistic or vague. They reduce the conflict to a peasant war, a war caused by narco-trafficking or by social injustice, or a war that is cultural in origin. At the same time, some of the prescriptions for ending the war—if only the army had a free hand, if only the guerrillas would spell out what they really want—are overly optimistic. Other analyses are fatalistic, concluding that the conflict is too deeply-rooted and complicated to be resolved and, therefore, that Colombia has no hope.

The report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *El conflicto, callejón con salida: Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano para Colombia—2003* (*The Conflict: A Cul-de-Sac with Ways Out: Human Development Report for Colombia—2003*), attempts to navigate these extremes and arrive at an explanation that takes into account all of—and only—those factors that have a precise and clearly-established relationship to the armed conflict. The report then explores aspects of a solution that are both feasible and realistic, even if they are not simple. The report views the armed conflict as the main obstacle to human development in Colombia. For the first time in Colombian history, Colombian elites are squarely facing the issue of the armed conflict, largely for reasons of personal security. But there is still a lack of willingness to make the conflict the central political problem of the country.

The UNDP report is the product of an extended, participatory process involving numerous national and regional experts, consultants, local correspondents, and private citizens. The Colombian team that produced the report travelled to 220 different townships and 14 departments, fostering dialogue among a range of actors, from government officials and members of the military to representatives of social organizations, grassroots movements, and armed groups. The report reflects many diverse voices, attempting to identify what is being done to

resolve the conflict and what can be done better in order to reach a solution.

The report reflects the conviction that history does matter in explaining violence in Colombia, and stresses that the war has been a failure:

- it has been a failure for the guerrillas, who for forty years have been unable to seize power;
- it has been a failure for the paramilitaries, who, despite all their brutality, have been unable to defeat the guerrillas;
- and it has been a failure for the State and Colombia's upper class, who have been incapable of putting an end to the bloodshed.

To the extent that the Colombian conflict was not solved at the national level (through revolution, military victory, or political negotiation), it shifted into two spheres, one regional and the other international.

At a regional level, guerrilla groups and paramilitaries spread throughout the countryside to seek social support and revenues. All the armed actors—the FARC, ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, National Liberation Army), and paramilitaries—became regional powers because they had some degree of a social base, and, in some regions of the country, functioned as a kind of para-state. Questions of class, economic structure, and the existence or absence of social conflict explain why different groups entered different regions.

To understand the complexity of the Colombian conflict, one has to view the illegal armed groups as simultaneously, and to varying degrees:

- a political project organized around the objective of power, but without necessarily possessing a coherent ideology;
- a military apparatus or armed bureaucracy;
- an actor in social conflicts, representing (or claiming to represent) social actors, or inter-

fering in social conflicts through their armed actions;

- a rent seeker, using force to obtain economic revenues;
- a way of life reflecting private or non-political motives, including the search for employment and opportunity;
- a territorial power defined by the exercise of control over populations;
- a criminal organization and a perpetrator of violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes of an atrocious nature; and
- an obstacle to human development.

Understanding the Colombian conflict, and more importantly, devising solutions, depends on understanding this complexity. In addition, according to Gómez Buendía, one needs to understand the rationales of each of the armed groups, even if one does not share or accept them. As the report argues, violence is rational insofar as the armed combatants and victims respond to cues from their environment. In other words, they choose among the viable options. Until these choices are better understood and the range of options enlarged, a lasting solution to the conflict will not be possible.

As Colombia's conflict dragged on, it also became internationalized. For some thirty years, Gómez Buendía observed, Colombian peasants killed each other in rural areas with few, if any, national or international repercussions. This changed in the 1990s with the intersection of the conflict with drug trafficking, an issue touching on the vital interests of the United States. Over the last two U.S. and Colombian administrations (Presidents Clinton and Bush, and Presidents Pastrana and Uribe, respectively) the conflict became internationalized, through the design and implementation of Plan Colombia.

Under Plan Colombia, military expenditure has increased and military performance has improved considerably. There is much popular support for President Uribe's security policy, and citizen security, reflected in a decrease in the crime rate, has also improved. The Colombian government has launched a second stage of its military strategy. *Plan Patriota* is centered on taking the war to the FARC, attacking the guerrillas in their own strongholds. Questions have arisen, however, about the fiscal sustainability of the military strategy, as well as about its implications for human rights.

Over the last ten years, paramilitarism in Colombia has expanded, a phenomenon that has received insufficient national and international attention. Paramilitaries belonging to different organizations—some more or less linked to narcotrafficking—are taking over many parts of the country, in military and political terms. The disappearance and/or murder of AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) leader Carlos Castaño has demonstrated that paramilitarism is a very complex phenomenon, involving a small group that is politically minded and a larger group consisting of narco-traffickers. This greatly complicates the ongoing peace negotiations with paramilitary groups.

In the short term, Gómez Buendía said, one could not rule out the possibility that the Colombian state could be forced into a war on two fronts, against both guerrillas and paramilitaries. If this were to happen, the possibility of defeating the FARC would be seriously compromised. Over the long run, however, one needs to confront the possibility that the Colombian government would, indeed, manage to beat the FARC, but end up with a country in the hands of paramilitaries.

Conventional wisdom holds that there are only two ways to end the conflict, either through military victory or through peace negotiations. The UNDP report, however, argues that there are ways to achieve a better victory and a better peace, and to reduce the conflict's negative impact on development. Rather than view military strengthening and

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negotiations as successive or alternative strategies, the report's authors view them as simultaneous and complementary. In addition, there is a moral as well as ethical imperative to promote public policy reforms that expand people's choices and reduce the local incentives for and triggers of conflict.

Conventional wisdom also holds that Colombia faces one enemy. For the Colombian establishment,



the Colombian government, and much of the Colombian public, that enemy is the FARC. For the United States, the enemy is drug trafficking. For the extreme left and the guerrillas, the enemy is the paramilitary. The UNDP, however, views the enemy as the war. What is needed is a gradual, not final solution, and an effort to relieve and prevent conflict as a way to ultimately end it. While the conventional wisdom holds that solutions should be managed at the national level, the UNDP sees a need for solutions at the local, national, and international levels.

Some 200 specific proposals flow from the eight characteristics of the armed actors noted earlier. In attempting to confront the conflict in its complexity, the UNDP report contains recommendations for measures to improve citizen security and criminal justice; to widen the humanitarian field by humanizing the actions of the armed groups; to offer better assistance to victims, including the displaced; to increase the number and address the needs of demobilized

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combatants; to prevent recruitment into the armed groups by designing social programs, particularly for youth, targeting especially the 60 or so municipalities that supply the greatest number of guerrilla and paramilitary recruits; and to address drug trafficking.

On this latter question, the UNDP report discusses policies both to decrease the amount of drugs produced and exported and to diminish the impact of drugs on the Colombian conflict. In making this latter connection, Gómez Buendía said, it is important to bear in mind that the Colombian conflict cannot be reduced to drugs. Similarly, it is not true that to end the conflict, one has to end drug traf-

ficking. Moreover, not all methods to end or reduce drug trafficking have an equally salutary effect on ending or mitigating conflict. One must also remember that the main goal of Colombians is to end the armed conflict, not combat drug trafficking.

Other proposals in the report deal with strengthening local and municipal governance as well as the capacity of civil society to alleviate the effects of conflict and build peace. The report also examines in detail and discusses recommendations for three kinds of social conflict that have a precise and clear relationship with the armed conflict. These social conflicts involve land, labor disputes, and questions of economic investment in boom areas of the economy or where the state is heavily involved. Ending the conflict means rediscovering politics, and the UNDP's report includes a number of suggestions for political reform.

In the UNDP's view, it is in the best interest of the government, the guerrillas, and Colombian society to negotiate a peaceful settlement. For the guerrillas, quite simply, the time for a noble peace is running out. For Colombian society, the cost of pursuing 20,000 or so well-armed, well-trained men and women is simply staggering, if measured only in terms of terrorist and criminal acts.

Additional chapters in the report are devoted to the educational system, the media, civil society and the international community, pointing to the conclusion that much is needed to reframe the debate over the Colombian conflict. What is done should be done well. The report does not criticize most of what the Colombian and U.S. governments are doing. Rather, it criticizes what they fail to do or see. The question is one of emphasis, and of exploring the full range of policy tools or instruments that could lead to the conflict's resolution. The UNDP continues a process of identifying "best practices" in the effort to build peace. More has been done on a small scale than people realize, by local governments, national authorities, NGOs, mayors, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombian communities, and others. The message of the UNDP report, therefore, is highly optimistic.

## Jean Pierre Schaerer

### International Committee of the Red Cross

**J**ean Pierre Schaerer reiterated the position of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other international human rights organizations vis-à-vis Colombia: the country confronts a situation of non-international armed conflict to which international humanitarian law (IHL) applies, in particular Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions as well as the II Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions.

Schaerer noted an increased radicalization of the methods used by the armed groups and increased polarization of the opposing sides since the collapse of the peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC in February 2002. The deterioration, he said, has had a marked effect on the civilian population. Certain armed actors have displayed a total disregard for any notion of the distinction between participant and non-participant in the armed conflict. Of greatest concern has been the willful distortion of that principle by illegal armed groups, which pressure the population to participate actively in the conflict, thereby exposing civilians to ever-higher degrees of violence and retaliation.

Efforts by the ICRC to ensure the protection of the civilian population have been hindered by the apparent unwillingness of the illegal armed actors to accept the applicability of international humanitarian law to the conflict. Both war-fighting methods and strategies are affected by this disregard. In addition, the fact that the conflict has an overlay with common delinquency—manifest in the different actors' links with the narcotics industry—has progressively eroded the capacity of international humanitarian law to restrain or affect the behavior of participants in the hostilities.

As a result, the conflict continues to take an unacceptable toll upon the civilian population, as the different armed groups attempt to obtain dominion over large segments of the national territory by terrorizing the local population. These tactics include selective executions, indiscriminate attacks, disappearances, and forced displacement.

Schaerer expressed cautious optimism regarding the peace process between the Colombian government and the AUC, saying that it has led and could lead to further reductions in the number of violations of international humanitarian law regularly perpetrated by the AUC. He said that achieving more lasting reductions would depend on the government's ability to exert pressure on the AUC within the framework of the negotiations, and on tight control of demobilized fighters. Following the disappearance and presumed death of AUC leader Carlos Castaño, Schaerer noted that the peace talks had been in crisis. If the government did not manage the process well, he said, Colombia could end up worse than before with respect to paramilitarism.

While the security situation improved in 2003 for millions of Colombians, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict remain a source of deep concern. In 2003:

- Hundreds of civilians were summarily executed;
- The ICRC documented 686 cases of civilians who are “missing” and still unaccounted for;
- Hundreds of civilian hostages were still in the hands of the guerrillas;
- Hundreds of civilians were wounded or killed by antipersonnel mines;
- Over 150,000 people were newly displaced by the violence. Of those, more than 100,000 were displaced on an individual basis;
- Twenty percent of the families displaced were headed by women whose husbands had been killed or who had abandoned them;

Whole areas of the country were or continue to be under blockade by one or another of the armed actors, who restrict the movement of goods and persons in and out of a particular zone.

Possibly due to a reduction in the level of direct confrontation between paramilitary groups and the guerrillas, the number of new cases of massive displacement decreased in 2003. The trend may not continue in 2004, due to a potential increase in dis-



placement in conflictive regions such as Caquetá and Putumayo.

Especially worrisome, said Schaerer, is the increase in the number of individual violations of international humanitarian law, which resulted in an increase in displacement on an individual basis. Such cases involve people who have been threatened or whose family members have been recruited or killed by one of the armed groups. Of those displaced on an individual basis, only 10 percent return spontaneously to their places of origin. Single mothers as well as large families fare the worst. In general, the situation for those relocating within more densely populated cities is more alarming. Those who relocate in rural zones or in smaller cities tend to fare better, particularly if the receiving community is supportive and accepting. Too often, however, the influx of the displaced affects the resident population eco-

principal concern for civilians in these zones is security, as those maintaining a blockade frequently assume that civilians in the zone support the opposing side. That is, civilians in rural areas are often stigmatized merely because they live in an area controlled by one or another group. Civilians are afraid to leave these areas of blockade; if and when they do, they often become victims of violence or harassment, eventually killed or forced to flee. Blockades also have a negative impact on the health status of entire communities, forcing the suspension of immunization campaigns and preventing those with medical emergencies from receiving attention. Threats, harassment, and attacks on medical personnel have left entire areas without any medical infrastructure. The education system also suffers, as does the economy, when few goods can enter or exit a blockaded area.

A final area of major concern has to do with the number of Colombians deprived of their freedom. Aside from those held hostage by the FARC, the number of persons arrested in Colombia rose significantly in 2003. The radicalization of the conflict and the government's determination to defeat the armed opposition suggests that the trend will continue and possibly worsen if and when the government's *Estatuto Antiterrorista* (Anti-Terrorist Law) goes into effect.<sup>7</sup>

The policies of the Uribe government have resulted in an extraordinary increase in the number of arrests. The detainee population in January 2003 was approximately 52,000, and had risen to 62,000 by January 2004.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the total capacity for all places of detention combined is 45,000.

Schaerer noted that in January 2003, the ICRC was following the cases of 4,400 persons arrested in connection with the conflict, in 70 different places of detention. By mid-2004, the number had risen to almost 8,000 persons registered in more than 120 detention centers.

Within the places of detention, the number of arrests has worsened already precarious conditions linked to overpopulation. If left unaddressed, Schaerer warned, overcrowding could lead to the further deterioration of health conditions as well as to internal violence in the prisons. The number of additional arrests also generates a heavy burden on the judiciary, he said, further delaying the administration of justice.

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*The conflict continues to take an unacceptable toll upon the civilian population, as the different armed groups attempt to obtain dominion over large segments of the national territory by terrorizing the local population.*

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nomically and socially, resulting in resentment and lack of support. The government's policy of return is feasible only in some parts of the country, but not in the many regions where violence continues.

The economic situation of displaced persons is likely to worsen in the near- to medium-term. According to the Colombian government's *Red de Solidaridad Social* (Social Solidarity Network), 373,020 people were displaced in 2002 and not reabsorbed, adding to the spillover of cases from previous years. The total number of displaced is approximately 1.5 to 2 million. Through the combined actions of humanitarian organizations and the State, the most acute needs of the displaced are met in the first three months. But the State has provided insufficient coverage for the medium and long term, Schaerer said, and should establish clearer policies that integrate development assistance with programs of a purely humanitarian nature.

Additional concerns arise from blockades or similar restrictions imposed by the armed groups. The



## Notes

1. Marcelo M. Giugale, Olivier Lafourcade, and Connie Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2003); United Nations Development Program, *El conflicto, callejón con salida: Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano para Colombia—2003* (Bogotá: UNDP, 2003).
2. The UNDP uses the term human development, which it defines as “include[ing] other values such as equity, democracy, ecological sustainability, and gender equality—which are also essential if people are to live better.” See United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report for Colombia 2003, Summary*, p. 19.
3. Guigale et. al, p. 2.
4. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the World Bank.
5. By comparison, private investment rarely surpassed more than one-tenth of GDP in the last 30 years.
6. See, for example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” The World Bank, Development Research Group, Policy Research Working Paper 2355, May 2000; Paul Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 6, December 2000; and Paul Collier et. al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003) [ed.].
7. Colombia’s Congress approved the law, but in August 2004, the country’s Constitutional Court declared it unconstitutional, citing irregularities in the legislative process. [ed.]
8. This figure did not include over 11,000 individuals under house arrest.

## Biographies of Contributors

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