

# NATIONAL AND HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA

## Democracies at Risk

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## Democratic Security in Colombia

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This chapter discusses current security policies in Colombia. Launched in 2002 as "Democratic Security" by the newly elected President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, the security policies have generated much controversy.\* Uribe had pledged to restore order and the rule of law and, after three years in office, his government claims to have brought about a major breakthrough in the country's long-standing struggle against crime and violence. His security policies have found high approval ratings in public opinion polls. Yet at the same time they have alarmed critics at home and abroad who accuse him of heavy-handed methods that risk a weakening of the country's democratic institutions while failing to address the root causes of the Colombian troubles.

This chapter will review official pronouncements on the objectives, contents and effectiveness of Uribe's *Democratic Security*. Such pronouncements, I argue, should not be dismissed out of hand. Yet as the subsequent discussion of the salient domestic and international dimensions of the Colombian security crisis will show, there is ample room for pessimism as to the appropriateness of current policies as a means to reach the stated objectives.

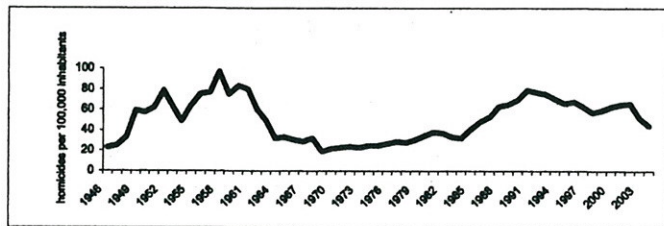
International news coverage about Latin America's third most-populous country tends to be dominated by reports on drug trafficking, extortion, kidnappings, and other crimes. Few readers, therefore, will need reminding that

Colombians face security problems of truly massive proportions. To fully appreciate the challenges they have to deal with, however, it is necessary to start with a brief review of a state of affairs that many analysts, dismayed by the diffuse nature of crime and violence in Colombia, refer to as "generalized violence."<sup>196</sup>

### A Brief Sketch of the Colombian Troubles

One of the indicators most widely used to illustrate the severity of crime and violence in Colombia is the country's shockingly high homicide rate. For reasons explained below, this indicator's analytical potential should not be overestimated; still, it provides a useful starting point.

Figure 5.1: The Homicide Rate, 1946-2004



Source: for 1946-1994: Juan Carlos Etcheverry, Natalia Salazar, and Verónica Navas, "¿Nos parecemos al resto del mundo? El conflicto colombiano en el contexto internacional," Power Point presentation, Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2000), available at: [http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/conflicto\\_armado/Cainv150401nosparecemosalmundo.html](http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/conflicto_armado/Cainv150401nosparecemosalmundo.html) (last accessed 6/1/2005); for 1995-2004: *Hechos del Callejón* 1:2 (April 2005), p. 2.

Colombia's history since independence has been marred by rather frequent outbursts of political strife and violence but statistical evidence does not reach back much beyond the 1940s. Between the late 1940s and early 1960s, as Figure 5.1 indicates, the country registered high levels of bloodshed. Brought about by a civil war that for its gruesome excesses came to be known as *La Violencia* ("The Violence"), these subsided after the leading contenders for power, the Liberal and the Conservative Parties, had come to a political settlement and power-sharing arrangement that was to last for two decades. The settlement was successful in

that it ushered in a period of relative calm. It was less successful, however, in its efforts to stamp out the remnants of armed resistance in the countryside. Uprooted by *La Violencia*, these rural guerrillas had taken a decidedly leftist stance and refused to be integrated into a political landscape dominated by the two traditional parties and their clientelistic networks. The aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, moreover, saw a host of new guerrilla organizations sprouting in the country's vast and fragmented territory.<sup>197</sup> Thus, armed opposition to the political settlement and armed conflict carried on but remained, in statistical terms, a phenomenon too marginal to produce a blip in the nation's mortality charts until fairly recently.

By the 1980s, as Figure 5.1 shows, homicide rates were on the rise again. Reaching a peak in the early 1990s, they subsided to lower levels thereafter. Yet, as Table 5.1 indicates, they remained staggeringly high by global standards. A glance at the country's demographic makeup serves to further illustrate the severity of the matter from a different statistical angle. Since murder victims tend to be young men, Colombia's elevated homicide rate has led to a significant widening of the difference in average life expectancy between men (68 years) and women (77 years).<sup>198</sup> This, of course, is not to suggest that women are being spared. Other types of severe and prevalent crimes such as sexual exploitation and assault tend to affect girls and women more often than men.<sup>199</sup>

Table 5.1: Colombia's Homicide Rates by International Comparison (intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2000)

Argentina	7.17	Jamaica	33.69	United States	4.55*
Chile	1.55	Japan	0.50	Uruguay	4.61
Colombia	62.74	Mexico	14.11	Venezuela	33.15
Germany	1.17	South Africa	51.39	Zambia	7.89

\* refers to the rate in 1998

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Seventh United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, covering the period 1998-2000* (available at <http://www.unodc.org>)

The deeper causes for the trends just described remain under dispute.<sup>200</sup> For our purposes here, it suffices to draw attention to two distinct, if interrelated, issues that are widely associated with rising levels of violence in the 1980s and 1990s: the expansion of illegal economies and the intensification and, as many argue, degradation of the country's long-standing armed conflict.<sup>201</sup>

The first refers to the trafficking and production of illicit drugs.<sup>202</sup> Though Colombia had started out as an exporter of marijuana much earlier, it was not until the 1980s that a major drug boom took hold. As marijuana exports lost ground to other suppliers in the hemisphere, cocaine became the leading drug for exports. Although dependent at first on imported coca paste from neighboring Peru and from Bolivia, Colombia soon emerged as the world's largest supplier of processed cocaine. In the second half of the 1990s, it also became the world's largest producer of coca leaf and an important source for heroin.<sup>203</sup> Of course, Colombia's extensive drug economy is not confined to the production and trafficking of cocaine or heroin but involves auxiliary activities that are necessary to turn the former into viable commercial enterprise. These include the manifold and often ingenious ventures used for the "laundering" of illegally acquired assets.

While undeniably providing a livelihood to a multitude of small producers and more than a livelihood to a smaller number of operators in and outside the country, "drugs" contributed in a number of ways to the Colombian troubles. From a theoretical perspective, there are good reasons to expect the trade with illicit drugs to be accompanied by violent crime. Entrepreneurs in the drug trade, as in other illegal enterprises, have no recourse to legal means to enforce compliance of contracts and property rights. As entrepreneurs in other highly lucrative industries, they aggressively compete for higher profits and larger market shares, yet the means open to them are limited and exclude traditional methods such as advertising. For various reasons, therefore, entrepreneurs engaged in the trade with illicit drugs are bound to rely, to some extent,<sup>204</sup> on violence to prosper in their trade.<sup>205</sup> Apart from such direct associations between

drug trade and violence, indirect and perhaps even more devastating mechanisms may also be at work. Thus, a rapidly expanding illegal economy may undermine the institutional capability of law enforcement agencies by straining their resources or simply by corruption and intimidation; "crime technologies" may diffuse into other spheres of human pursuits, and moral values may be transformed to encourage criminal activities and violence in general.<sup>206</sup>

In Colombia, these mechanisms found their arguably most extreme expression in Medellín where homicide rates rose to extraordinary levels towards the early 1990s after a thriving illegal economy and a particularly violent drug "cartel" had taken hold in the city.<sup>207</sup> The latter never gained the monopolistic control the term "cartel" would suggest. Nevertheless, Pablo Escobar's narco-venture grew into a formidable empire that penetrated deep into the city's life and beyond. At the same time, it was waging a violent war against competitors and former associates in the drug market, against local law enforcement agencies and, finally, in an effort to terrorize Colombian institutions into banning the extradition of narco-traffickers requested for prosecution in the United States.<sup>208</sup>

Apart from plentiful anecdotal evidence, systematic empirical investigations into the crime rates of the country's major cities point to the drug trade as a leading factor behind the rapidly increasing homicide rate of the 1980s and early 1990s. They also highlight the effects an increasingly overburdened and inefficient judiciary had on criminal activities in general.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, by the 1990s, the police and the judiciary seemed to have lost all pretence of being an effective bulwark against crime; even murderers had more than a good chance to get away (Table 5.2) as both institutions came under increasing scrutiny for inefficiency and corruption.<sup>210</sup>

Confronted with mounting evidence on the corrosive effects of the drug trade and under growing pressure from the United States, the Colombian authorities eventually mustered sufficient force to dismantle the large "cartels." By this and other means, they succeeded in bringing down the nation's homicide

rates from the exceptionally high levels of the early 1990s.<sup>211</sup> Yet the dismantling of the large "cartels" proved to be of little consequence as the narcotics industry continued to expand and a larger number of less conspicuous "baby cartels" filled the void. Indeed, as interdiction and eradication programs in Peru and Bolivia succeeded in reducing the area under coca cultivation during the second half of the 1990s, Colombian peasants greatly increased production (Figure 5.2a).

Table 5.2: Prosecution and Criminal Justice in Colombia and the United States

If murder occurs in . . .	Probability of an investigation	Probability of arrest and trial	Probability of conviction
Colombia	38	11	7
USA	100	65	58

Source: Steven Levitt and Mauricio Rubio, "Understanding Crime in Colombia and What Can Be Done About It," FEDESARROLLO Working Paper Series No. 20 (August 2000), p. 24.

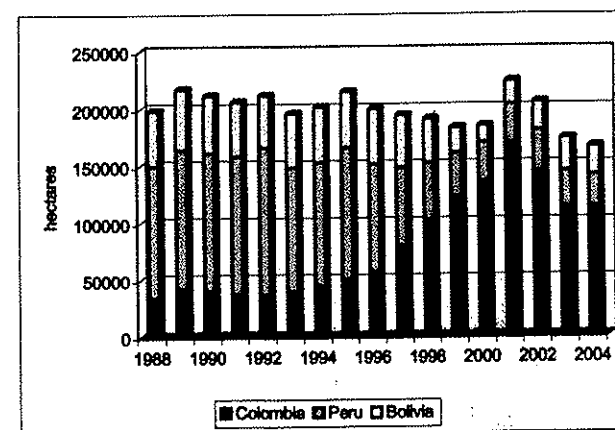
Coca and, to a lesser extent, opium poppy fields spread, above all, in remote areas and along the country's vast agricultural frontier where the state and the law-enforcement agencies have little or no presence. Although the lion's share of the profits to be made was certainly not going to small producers, there was no shortage of peasants willing or simply desperate enough to try their luck. Thus, coca fields penetrated deep into the Amazonian lowlands and other regions that, due to their fragile ecosystems, remoteness and lack of infrastructure, are poorly endowed for agriculture.<sup>212</sup>

The massive expansion of drug cultivation has been related to violence in Colombia. From a theoretical perspective, the reasons for this are not too obvious. In such forlorn parts, and in the absence of the state and its law-enforcement institutions, coca and opium poppy may acquire (what might be called) "quasi-legal" properties that render them not too different from other crops produced for the market.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, in much of Colombia's drug-producing frontier, coca came to be openly traded, tolerated or even sponsored by local authorities, and coca paste may even have replaced money as a means of payment in many business

transactions.<sup>214</sup> Yet, not only did the rapid expansion of coca fields fuel the country's violent-prone drug "cartels" and associated illegal economies; it has also been correlated with another source of violence: Colombia's long-standing armed conflict. The latter has increasingly been fed on "drugs" while, at the same time, it has greatly facilitated the expansion of drug cultivation.<sup>215</sup>

Figure 5.2a: Coca Production in the Andes/Areas under Cultivation

Data based on U.S. Department of State



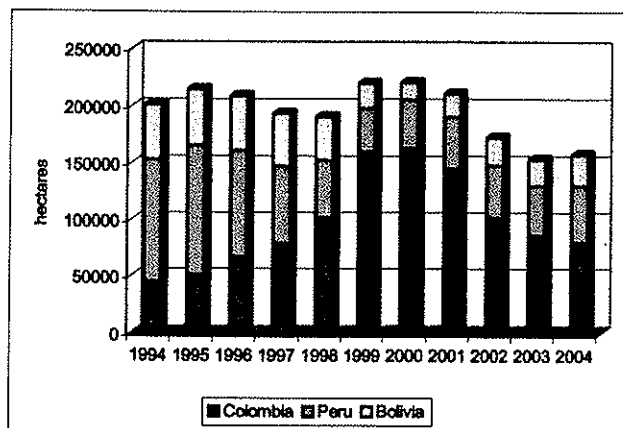
For many years a rather marginal phenomenon, Colombia's armed conflict has been gaining momentum since the 1980s and especially in the 1990s.<sup>216</sup> In recent years, it has loomed large among the many sources of violence, as the contending forces have been able to arm to their teeth due not exclusively, but to a large extent, to "drugs".

Profits from "drugs" have filled the coffers of leftwing guerrillas and rightwing paramilitaries, enabling them to greatly expand their fighting forces and their territorial reach. Thus, most estimates place revenue derived from "drugs" as the main source of income for the country's largest guerrilla group FARC (*Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia*). (Tables 5.3a and 5.3b present

estimates on the size and the predominant sources of income for the main groups as published by an authoritative account in 2003. By 2005, however, news reports suggest the size of the AUC's fighting force to be as high as 20,000 or double the size indicated in Table 5.3a.)<sup>217</sup>

Figure 5.2b: Coca Production in the Andes / Areas under Cultivation

Data based on UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)



Source: ciponline.org (last accessed 15/5/2005)

Founded in the 1960s but with roots that reach deep into the turmoil of *La Violencia*, the FARC grew out of peasant self-defense organizations and armed struggles for land. Initially confined to a few remote areas, the FARC has subsequently been able to greatly expand its fighting forces and territorial reach with the proceeds from a number of activities, including kidnapping, extortion and, more recently, drugs. It levies taxes on coca fields, laboratories and related activities in the areas it controls, and increasingly engages in the regional trade with coca paste and cocaine.<sup>218</sup> In contrast, the much smaller ELN (*National Liberation Army*), inspired by the Cuban Revolution and the principles of Liberation Theology, has been rather reluctant to tolerate or sponsor the

production and trafficking of drugs. The ELN, therefore, continues to rely primarily on kidnappings and extortion as a means of finance. It pretends to target the country's upper classes, foreign oil companies, and other agents of power, yet has descended ever more into less discriminatory practices that victimize social strata well beyond the rich. The small ELN has accounted for quite a significant proportion of kidnappings (Tables 5.4a and 5.4b).<sup>219</sup>

Table 5.3a: Estimates of the Size of the Guerrilla and Paramilitary Forces

FARC	16,580
ELN	4,500
AUC*	10,560

\* The size of the AUC may have grown to 20,000 by 2005.

Source: UNDP 2003, p. 40 (based on estimates published by the Colombian Ministry of Defense)

Table 5.3b: Estimates on the Sources of Finance of the Major Guerrilla and Paramilitary Groups (in Millions of US-\$ per year)\*

	FARC	ELN	AUC
Narcotics	204	***	200
Extortion	96	59	n/a
Kidnappings	32	74	n/a
Other**	10	11	n/a
Total	342	144	286

\* Since all groups also derive considerable income from investments in legal activities for which there is no data available, these estimates should be treated with a certain caution.

\*\* including cattle theft, robberies, and capture of public monies

\*\*\* other sources estimate the finances derived from narcotics to be as high as 8% of total income for the ELN

Sources: UNDP 2003, p. 285 (Data for AUC based on government reports)

The deepest involvement in the narcotics economy, reaching from the primary stages of production to the much more profitable regional and international trade, seems to fall to the rightwing AUC (*United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia*), an umbrella organization comprising of various regional

paramilitary groups.<sup>220</sup> From their beginnings as dispersed gangs in the payrolls of drug lords and large landowners, the *autodefensas* have evolved into a major force in the counterinsurgency. A growing engagement in the narcotics industry has provided paramilitary leaders with an autonomous source of finance allowing them to maintain large fighting forces, yet they continue to also receive more or less voluntary contributions from landowners and businessmen in their zones of influence. Tolerated and, to some degree, actively supported by Colombia's security forces,<sup>221</sup> they have waged a dirty war to undermine popular support for the guerrilla, successfully dislodging the ELN and, in some areas, even the FARC from their traditional strongholds, and killing many others suspected of leftist tendencies. In recent months, however, the *autodefensas* have increasingly turned against each other, as they fight over territorial control, stakes in the narcotics business, and leadership in their organizations.<sup>222</sup>

Table 5.4a: Kidnappings, 1992-2004

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1317	1014	1293	1158	1608	1986	2609	2991	3706	3041	2986	2200	1441

Source: Hechos del Callejón 1:5 (June 2005), p. 13 (based on Fondelibertad)

Table 5.4b: The Perpetrators of Kidnappings (2001)

FARC	840	AUC	262
ELN	917	common criminals	292
Other guerrilla groups	166	not established	564
Total			3041

Source: Fondelibertad

While guerrillas and paramilitaries stood to gain from the expansion of the drug economy in their respective zones of influence, Colombia's security forces increased their standing forces and equipment, as their country became one of the

major battlegrounds in the U.S.-led "war on drugs." Not only did the capital city of Bogotá come to host one of the largest American embassies in the world, Colombia also received an increasing amount of U.S. (mainly military) support (Table 5.5) and, during the Clinton administration, became the third largest recipient of U.S. aid following Israel and Egypt.<sup>223</sup>

Table 5.5: United States Aid to Colombia, 1997-2004 (in millions of US-\$)

Assistance Programs	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005*	2006**
Military and Police	88.6	112.5	308.8	765.3	242.6	401.9	621.0	546.8	629.5	590.5
Economic and Social		0.5	8.8	212.0	5.7	120.3	149.2	149.3	152.1	152.2
Total	88.6	113.0	317.6	977.3	248.3	522.2	770.2	696.1	781.6	742.7
* estimate									** requested	

Source: ciponline.org (last accessed 7/10/2005)

While the available estimates on the number of people killed due to the armed conflict vary, it is generally agreed that the situation worsened considerably during the 1990s. A new dataset prepared by the researchers Restrepo, Spagat and Vargas suggests that during the three and a half years preceding Uribe's assumption of office in August 2002, an average of 269 people died *every month* as a direct consequence of the armed conflict.<sup>224</sup> No doubt, Colombia's armed conflict had gruesome dimensions, although the number of deaths it produced may appear dwarfed when compared to the number of homicides committed (some 29,000 during the year 2002).<sup>225</sup>

Military confrontations between guerrillas, paramilitaries and state forces have taken their toll. Casualties, to be sure, are not confined to combatants as hamlets and villages are turned into war zones. Most of the violence generated by this conflict, however, is not the product of military engagements but results from activities directed against civilians. These include kidnappings and extortion, mentioned before as sources of finance, and the use of terror as a means to undermine the territorial hold of the enemy. Massacres and gross human rights

violations have been the trademark of paramilitary groups yet constitute, albeit on a lesser scale, a strategic recourse for the guerrilla as well (Table 5.6).<sup>226</sup>

Table 5.6a: Massacres,\* 1994-2004

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number	86	81	110	114	115	168	236	185	115	94	46
Victims	448	457	572	563	682	929	1403	1039	680	504	263

\* Colombian police statistics classify the murder of 4 or more persons at a given time and place as a "massacre."

Source: Hechos del Callejón 1:2 (April 2005), p. 2 (based on DIJIN)

Table 5.6b: The Perpetrators of Massacres and their Victims

	AUCs	FARC	ELN	others	not established	total
2000	701	161	41	—	500	1403
2004	13	115	—	13	118	259*

\* refers to "common criminals"

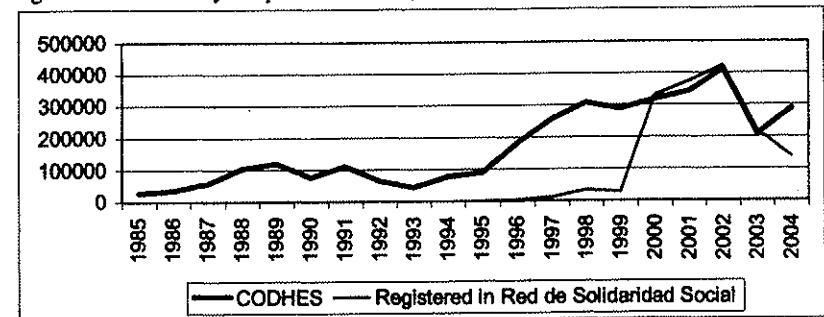
\*\* The reason for the slight variation to data for the same year given in 5.6a is unclear.

Source: Informe Anual de Derechos Humanos y DHI 2004, p. 196.

In disputed areas, it is not infrequent for entire villages to flee their homes and seek security in towns and cities where they join large numbers of displaced persons living in misery. Forced displacements have greatly added to the plight of the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities who make up a disproportionately large percentage of the population affected.<sup>227</sup> Although not the only source for such upheavals, territorial disputes related to the armed conflict greatly contributed to the fact that by the late 1990s Colombia had become one of the countries with the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Today, CODHES and other NGOs estimate the total number of IDPs to be as high as 3.6 million, while the government's *Red de Solidaridad Social* reports to have

registered about 1.6 million.<sup>228</sup> (For competing data on the subject see Figure 5.3).<sup>229</sup>

Figure 5.3: Internally Displaced Persons, 1985-2004



Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia: Accumulated  
 CODHES Estimates: 3.6 million (1985-June 2005)  
 Registered in *Red de Solidaridad Social*: 1.6 million (1995-2004)

Source: Hechos del Callejón 1:1 (March 2005), p. 2, and NGO Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES).

By the late 1990s, the Colombian state seemed to have lost control over increasingly large swaths of its territory, prompting concerned analysts to ask whether this South American country was going to join the list of "failed" or "collapsed states."<sup>230</sup> Colombia's economic performance, after decades of steady if modest growth, faltered and high unemployment pursued. While most observers agreed that the Colombian security crisis required prompt and decisive action, there was no consensus on the deeper causes that triggered it. Consequently, there was also no agreement as to the possible remedies. Those who give prominence to factors such as poverty, social inequality, political exclusion or ingrained cultures of violence as root causes for the Colombian troubles advocate comprehensive social, political, economic and educational reforms as a means to rebuild civil society along peaceful lines. Others claim that such factors contributed little, if at all, to the Colombian conundrum. What they see is a widespread breakdown of

public order. As for explanatory variables, they point to high levels of impunity and a weak state that lacks the ability to uphold the reign of law. Consequently, they advocate a strengthening of the forces directly responsible for the restoration and maintenance of public order, namely the military, the police, and the judiciary.<sup>231</sup> It is the latter perspective that informs President Uribe's discourse on security.

### Álvaro Uribe's *Democratic Security* Policy

Current security policies in Colombia rely, to a far greater extent than in previous years, on the use of force and, more precisely, on the military seeking to establish full territorial control. Thus, the year 2004 opened with a massive attack on the FARC's southern strongholds in what has been termed the largest military operation in the country's long history of counterinsurgency campaigns.<sup>232</sup> At pains to distinguish his policies from those applied in earlier times in the name of "national security" by authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone and elsewhere in Latin America, Uribe has taken to present his approach as "Democratic Security." "Unlike other regions of the hemisphere, where the rights of the citizen were eroded by excessive use of power on the part of the State," a government publication explaining his security approach insists, "the rights of Colombian citizens have been threatened mainly by the historical inability of Colombian institutions to assert their authority throughout the country, and to provide citizens with continuous and reliable protection against the threat and arbitrary action of illegal armed groups."<sup>233</sup> The basic objective, his government declares over and over again, is to "establish and reinstate the rule of law [...] and protect the population."<sup>234</sup>

While fancy labels and lofty pronouncements may easily be written off as "political spin," the strategy itself should not be dismissed out of hand. It deserves serious analysis as it was precisely Uribe's announcement to "get tough" on the guerrilla that seems to explain his electoral success. He won the May 2002

presidential elections in the first round, on a dissident position and in defiance of the leadership of his own party. Dismissing the peace negotiations his predecessor, Andrés Pastrana, had opened with the FARC as a grave mistake that would lead to nowhere but strengthen the guerrilla's intransigence, he seems to have expressed the feeling of a majority of Colombians at the time.<sup>235</sup>

Uribe has pledged to dismantle all illegal armed groups, i.e., the FARC, the ELN, and the AUC's "self-defense forces" and, soon after taking office, stepped up military pressure toward this end. Data on military engagements compiled by the independent think tank *Fundación Seguridad y Democracia* suggest that the AUC had to bear some of the new military vigor, yet the brunt of it was undoubtedly directed against the guerrilla.<sup>236</sup> Uribe's government loses few opportunities to lambaste the FARC and ELN as "well-organized and sophisticated terrorist networks with international connections" that "have abandoned any political or social agenda" and command "almost no support among the civilian population."<sup>237</sup> It refuses to refer to the Colombian troubles as an "armed conflict," for fear that this term might confer legitimacy to illegal armed groups or put them on a par with state forces.<sup>238</sup> Instead, and in close rapport with Washington, Uribe has declared his own "war on terror." Yet, quite like his predecessor Pastrana who had initiated high-profile peace negotiations with the FARC that collapsed in February 2002 after years of bickering and mutual recriminations,<sup>239</sup> Uribe ultimately hopes for negotiations to bring about a swift disarmament. Unlike Pastrana, however, he announced that he would refuse to negotiate on anything but the terms of the demobilization process and to only negotiate with those groups who submit to a ceasefire.<sup>240</sup>

In order to get there, Uribe suggested an approach consisting of essentially three sets of policies. While his insistence on making *security* the top priority of his government has come as somewhat of a departure from previous policies that proposed to restore *peace*, many of the elements of his strategy are indeed a continuation of what has been pursued by his predecessor.<sup>241</sup>

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The first set of policies is geared toward a considerable increase of the state's coercive capacity, including an accelerated expansion, modernization, and reorganization of the military and the police. Whereas the repossession of territory is largely in the hands of the military, the establishment and maintenance of order, sooner or later, will have to be trusted to the country's police and judicial authorities, a task which they seem hardly prepared to fulfill currently. At the same time, the government has been pressing for legal reforms that would greatly enhance the military's prerogatives in counterinsurgency operations, including the right to arrest civilians, tap telephones and carry out searches without previous warrants.<sup>242</sup> While this move has encountered resistance in the legislature and court of justice, the government has been able to implement a number of equally controversial measures that aim to induce more citizens to cooperate with state forces and thus to increase the quality of intelligence military and police forces rely on. Thus, it established a system of paid informants to report on illegal activities.<sup>243</sup>

The second set of policies is geared to weaken and, ultimately, destroy the economic support base of the various illegal armed groups. The government has, for instance, increased efforts to monitor the financial undertakings of municipalities in conflict areas to block the manifold schemes used by both guerrillas and paramilitaries to appropriate public monies.<sup>244</sup> Most important here, of course, are anti-narcotics policies. Uribe has pledged to continue and even to intensify the counter-narcotics programs initiated by Pastrana under the Plan Colombia. The controversial feature here is the continued reliance on large-scale aerial spraying with herbicides.<sup>245</sup>

The third set of policies aims to build and maintain adequate international support. Uribe depends on assistance from abroad in various ways. Once his government enters into negotiations with one or more of the armed groups in question, the international community is expected to provide missions to facilitate talks or to verify the compliance of ceasefire and demobilization arrangements.

Apart from these roles as observers or facilitators, foreign governments, particularly the United States, are important players in that they are able to increase or diminish the incentives to demobilize. Thus, by listing the AUC as a "terrorist organization" (in 2001) and by requesting the extradition of a number of its leaders on drug-related charges, the United States seems to have provided a strong incentive for the AUC to seek negotiations for an eventual demobilization.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, the success of Uribe's anti-narcotics policies greatly depends on international cooperation. The latter is needed, for example, to close existing loopholes that facilitate the illegal arms trade or the "laundering" of illegally acquired assets. The most crucial issue, however, is finances. Uribe's security strategy is, to a large extent, dependent on the continuation of massive financial and military aid from abroad, which, given the recalcitrance of the European Union, is mainly from the United States.<sup>247</sup> Not surprisingly therefore, his government has sought a close alliance with Washington. Thus, in stark contrast to Mexico, Chile, and other major countries in the region, it openly declared support for the war against Iraq.<sup>248</sup>

### The Government's Claims to Success

Given that the brunt of the military pressure is directed against the guerrilla, the turn of events might seem surprising. For example, in December 2002, only a few months after Uribe had taken office, paramilitary leaders of the AUC declared a unilateral ceasefire and willingness to enter into negotiations for an eventual demobilization. An accord signed in July 2003 declared the goal of the negotiations to be the complete disbanding of the AUC by December 2005.<sup>249</sup> The first round of demobilization (of some 870 mostly very young men) was initiated in Medellín in November 2003,<sup>250</sup> soon followed by further rounds in other parts of the country. While not all regional leaders of the *autodefensas* flocked to the negotiation table, most of them did. By September 2005, some 10,600 men and women had been demobilized.<sup>251</sup> Efforts to gain international support for this

demobilization process have, until now, resulted in limited success as governments abroad preferred to remain aloof. Yet, Uribe was able to persuade the Organization of American States (OAS) to send a special mission to Colombia,<sup>252</sup> a move that was undoubtedly motivated not only by concerns of a practical nature, i.e., by the need for a third party to facilitate talks and verify ceasefire and other arrangements, but also by a desire to confer legitimacy to the whole process.

Eager to show a balanced approach, the government simultaneously tried, with Mexican support, to advance preliminary talks with the ELN but has made little headway so far.<sup>253</sup> Negotiations with the FARC seem, at the time of writing, as far removed as when Uribe took office.<sup>254</sup> Yet, the government claims to have severely weakened both organizations. Data released by the Ministry of Defense suggest that the FARC and the ELN suffered considerable losses, in terms of increased casualties and desertions. While these claims have met with skepticism among independent observers,<sup>255</sup> it seems that military pressure did induce the guerrilla to retreat from a number of former strongholds in various parts of the country, including Cundinamarca where the armed forces launched a rather successful operation ("*Libertad I*") against FARC units operating in the vicinity of the capital. Together with specialized police and security forces, they also moved, and rather forcefully, against urban militias, most spectacularly in Medellín between October and December 2002 ("*Operación Orión*").<sup>256</sup>

Following its pledge to make *security* the top priority, the government has mobilized an increasing proportion of the nation's GDP for security-related expenditures. It has increased the country's armed forces, created six mobile brigades and added five high mountain battalions to its military units specialized in anti-guerrilla warfare. Even a large increase in the armed forces, however, is unlikely to achieve sufficient territorial coverage. The government therefore added a new feature to its security apparatus, the so-called "peasant soldiers," and deployed more than 27,000 of them in some 600, largely rural, municipalities. It

has continued to increase the nation's police forces and added three new units to their anti-kidnapping taskforce. No less important, it moved to deploy or re-deploy police forces in a large number of stations that had been vacated during previous decades, mostly because of guerrilla attacks.<sup>257</sup>

In defending their approach to security, government officials and their supporters are quick to point to the country's statistics on crimes and violence to illustrate their claim to success. Indeed, the available data do show some remarkable trends that deserve attention.

To begin with, Colombia's homicide rate has declined steeply after Uribe's assumption of the presidency. While it is still high by international standards, by 2004 it reached the lowest point (44 per 100,000 inhabitants) since the mid-1980s (Figure 5.1). A considerable part of this decline is due to developments in large urban areas. In Medellín, to name but the most spectacular case, the number of murders declined by 68% in two years, from 4,697 in 2002 to 1,517 in 2004. Massacres, which typically occur in contested rural areas, have equally been reduced, from a total of 185 cases involving 1,039 victims in 2001 to 46 involving 263 victims in 2004, a development largely related to the retrenchment of the AUC (Table 5.6a and 5.6b).<sup>258</sup> Although the latter has repeatedly violated the ceasefire it had announced in December 2002 and has continued to assassinate and intimidate on a gruesome scale, the total number of people killed due to paramilitary activities has been reduced considerably.<sup>259</sup> Meanwhile, the spatial retreat of the guerrilla is clearly reflected in marked improvements of the data measuring kidnappings, attacks on infrastructure, and related matters.<sup>260</sup> Last but not least, the government declares to have made, if less spectacular, headway in its fight against the narcotics industry. It points to the two most widely used coca surveys, published by the United States and the United Nations, to demonstrate that the area under cultivation with drugs today is markedly below the extension reached in the late 1990s (Figures 5.2a/b). At the same time, antinarcotics operations are still on the increase. During the first eight months of 2005,

antinarcotics units sprayed a record of 110,119 hectares of coca fields, which brought the total area sprayed since Uribe's taking office to nearly 450,000 hectares.<sup>261</sup>

While not all areas of government activity are rated as successful in public opinion polls, president Uribe and his security policies have consistently received very positive ratings.<sup>262</sup> In many areas of the country, a sense of security is returning. Thus, less than a year after the completion of *Operation Orión*, a broadly based victimization study reported that nearly half of the inhabitants polled for this purpose in Medellín felt more secure than before.<sup>263</sup> Counting on his solid popularity, Uribe is expected to run as a candidate for the upcoming presidential elections and, if current trends continue, will be confirmed for a second term in 2006. The speculation that Colombia was about to join the list of "failing" or "collapsed states" seems rather remote after his three years in office and yet there are good reasons to doubt that the country is heading in the right direction.

### Room for Pessimism

Although very popular among the country's electorate at large, Uribe's *Democratic Security* has sparked acrimonious debates in the political arena. To some extent, these mirror the current state of affairs in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere. As other governments engaged in the "war on terror," Uribe was not shy to resort to heavy-handed methods. Mass detentions of suspected guerrilla supporters, failures to enforce proper procedures for arrests, detentions based on flimsy evidence by paid informants, maltreatment of prisoners... these and other issues could not but call the attention of Human Rights groups who continue to monitor the Colombian situation with grave concern.<sup>264</sup> Rather outspoken critiquing has not been limited to human rights organizations and the political left; it has also been aired repeatedly—and to the great damage of the government's

international standing, particularly in Europe—by the Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>265</sup>

Of course, Uribe's security strategy is not simply a reflection of the "war on terror" waged elsewhere. Although it may steadfastly refuse to refer to it as such, his government is facing the manifold problems that accompany the winding down of a long-standing *armed conflict*. Thus, Colombia's law and policymakers have to make painful decisions as to the legal and wider policy framework governing the demobilization process. On what terms should society be prepared to integrate demobilized combatants? How severely should those, who have taken part in atrocities, be dealt with? To what point will it be convenient or necessary to offer leniency in order to bring about demobilization talks or to avoid their breakdown? These and other questions continue to vex the current demobilization process with the AUC, which started well before the wider policy framework had been established, and, therefore, has been clouded by a high degree of uncertainty.<sup>266</sup>

The government, favoring a rather swift and lenient approach, has come under severe criticism by those who demand a thorough investigation into the criminal activities, organizational structures, support networks, and financial underpinnings of the demobilizing groups to ensure their complete dismantling. The issue of the victims' rights to truth, justice and compensation has to be dealt with. In short, while its counter-insurgency strategies are being lambasted as heavy-handed, the government's approach toward the *autodefensas* is being criticized as too soft.<sup>267</sup> Recent press reports suggest that such critics are not the only ones to perceive the current demobilization process as an easy way out of illegality: "narcos" suddenly posing as demobilizing "paras" or lesser criminals swelling the ranks of the AUC foot soldiers registering for the reinsertion programs seem to share this view.<sup>268</sup>

More serious still is the allegation that Uribe's *Democratic Security* has been accompanied by a consolidation and expansion of paramilitary control in

many parts of the country, notably in those areas where major security operations have been waged against the guerrillas.<sup>269</sup> Thus, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has repeatedly “expressed its concern over the manner in which paramilitary groups operate in vast areas of Colombian territory despite the presence of the military forces and the National Police.” While acknowledging the overall decline in paramilitary violence and, particularly, of massacres, the IACHR attributed this to a “change of strategy geared to committing more selective homicides.”<sup>270</sup> With respect to the demobilization process in Medellín, which many consider a “pilot scheme” for the collective demobilization of the *autodefensas*, it reported that the latter were seeking to “maintain their control over everyday activities in the *comunas* by the use of violence, extortion, and intimidation.”<sup>271</sup> A more recent report by *Amnesty International* on Medellín suggests that the state and municipal security forces continue to cooperate with paramilitaries on the ground and that *Operation Orión*, while dismantling the leftist militias, has indeed served to expand and strengthen paramilitary control over the city’s poorer *comunas*.<sup>272</sup>

Such a diagnosis is not altogether inconsistent with the evidence on steeply falling crime rates presented earlier. Although they continue to commit (selective) assassinations or forced disappearances of suspected leftists, human rights activists, trade unionists, and other “undesirables,” paramilitary armed squads and associated vigilantes were also able to establish a measure of control over the city’s entrenched and bewildering criminal scene, thus delivering security in *barrios* that had been swamped by violence. Steeply falling crime and homicide rates in these quarters, then, seem to be not so much the result of a successful strategy to establish the rule of the law, but product of the *autodefensas*’ iron grip.<sup>273</sup> In this and other parts of the country, they are reported to maintain a large stake in the drug trade and racketeering business, yet at the same time are told to have political ambitions to seek to extend their control over local mayors and other elected officials, including members of Congress.<sup>274</sup> In more recent

allegations, they are portrayed to have infiltrated the most important state agencies for intelligence.<sup>275</sup>

Is Uribe’s *Democratic Security*, then, for all its rhetoric on the strengthening of the state and the rule of law, giving rise to a “paramilitarization” of the country?<sup>276</sup> Or, are such cases isolated occurrences that will, sooner or later, give way to the rule of law? A concluding response will have to wait another day and will require a more comprehensive discussion of the phenomenon and current metamorphoses of paramilitarism in Colombia,<sup>277</sup> which is well beyond the scope of this essay. Yet, there are good reasons to suspect that the dismantling of the paramilitary and related phenomena will be a rather difficult endeavor even for a government more firmly committed toward this end than the current administration.

The paramilitary in Colombia are not simply an illegal annex to the state security apparatus created to carry out the dirty war against the guerrillas. They are, for this reason, not easily “switched off” by administrative or political reforms and they may morph into other forms of criminal organizations. Even a complete demobilization or eradication of the guerrilla forces (which does not seem likely in the near future despite upbeat press releases by the Ministry of Defense on the weakening of the FARC and ELN) may not bring about a major change in this respect. True, Uribe’s forceful turn against the guerrillas may have induced many veteran leaders of the AUC to divest themselves of their standing armies, and more so since they hope to get away avoiding extradition to the United States, avoid severe punishments for the crimes they have committed, and a close scrutiny into their accumulated assets. Yet, there are underlying contingencies that, if left unresolved, may well lead to new crops of armed organizations sprouting throughout the nation: a continuing failure to dislodge the country’s extensive illegal economies and provide acceptable levels of order and security for the country’s citizens. The former will not only continue to provide the profit incentive and resources for illegal armed groups but will also continue

to be a source of violence and institutional corrosion. The latter will continue to provide a demand for extra-legal organizations and vigilantism to take up the slack.

Despite the massive resources invested into the counter-narcotics programs, their success continues to be limited. The reports on the displacement of coca fields into new regions, on thinly spread and better-disguised plantings, on higher-yield crops and other forms of adaptation suggest that estimates on the cultivated area (as given in Figure 5.2a/b) may give too optimistic an impression. And even if we accept these at face value, the vast discrepancy between the number of hectares sprayed and the actual reduction in cultivated area<sup>278</sup> indicates that there will be no victory in this “war” any time soon. Whatever the strategy chosen in Colombia—the government’s harsh approach that bears heavily on the country’s marginalized peasantry in the coca zones or softer approaches advocated by critics to invest more resources into interdiction, manual eradication, crop substitution programs or land reforms—there is no quick way out as long as international demand for illegal substances keeps propelling the drug economy and the major consuming nations refuse to deal with this demand in a more realistic and innovative manner.<sup>279</sup> If the current state in the “war on drugs” does not invite cheers, the long-term perspectives are fraught with uncertainties because it is difficult to foresee for how long the United States will be committed to foot the bill.

As to the provision of public safety and security, the manning of police stations and strengthening of the security apparatus throughout the country may be an indispensable, yet insufficient approach as many analysts have suggested.<sup>280</sup> Yet, in any case, the prevalent mistrust against the police and judiciary, which results in many crimes and severe transgressions to remain unreported or settled outside the state’s institutional boundaries,<sup>281</sup> suggests that much remains to be done. The strengthening and rebuilding of the Colombian state, even if conceptualized in rather narrow law-and-order terms, will continue to require

massive resources that may stretch the country’s finances to the point of crisis.<sup>282</sup> Optimists may argue that such times of exceptional strains and war have often furthered a transformation toward effective governance and a more coherent state. No doubt, Colombians in 2002 have elected a president whose personal demeanor and motto (“work, work and work”) seemed to impersonate a new, invigorated manner to run the affairs of state. Yet the “wars” Colombians are “fighting” today are not the ones that forged the prototypical European nation-state,<sup>283</sup> and thus may prove to be less conducive to state-building and democratic citizenship.

## Endnotes

\* For comments on previous versions of this paper I am grateful to Peter Baumann, Luis Eduardo Hoyos, Imtiaz Hussain, Sabine Kurtenbach, Medófilo Medina, Ulrich Oslender, and Peter Waldmann.

<sup>196</sup> On the notion of “generalized violence” see, for instance, Daniel Pécaut, “Violencia y política. Cuatro elementos de reflexión teórica alrededor del conflicto colombiano,” *Al margen* No. 3 (September 2002), pp. 47-65; Peter Waldmann introduced “Veralltäglichen von Gewalt” (violence becoming part of everyday life or routinization of violence), in “Veralltäglichen von Gewalt: das Beispiel Kolumbien,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (Soziologie der Gewalt / Sonderheft 37 1997), pp. 141-161.

<sup>197</sup> Such a brief introduction cannot, of course, do justice to the complexities of *La Violencia*, the political settlement brought about by the *National Front* (1958-78) or the achievements and shortcomings of Colombia’s “consociational democracy”. Among the outstanding general introductions into the history of Colombia are Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>198</sup> Average life expectancy at birth for men and women (2003), according to the World Health Organization.

<sup>199</sup> On sexual violence related to the armed conflict see, for instance: Amnesty International, *Scarred Bodies, Hidden Crimes – Sexual Violence against Women in the Armed Conflict* (AI Index: AMR 23/040/2004); see also: The World Bank, *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace* (Washington: The World Bank, 2003), pp. 767-785.

<sup>200</sup> The following pages do not intend to contribute to the vast volume of analysis on the root causes and dynamics of violence in Colombia, a subject that has intrigued generations of *violentiólogos* from different academic disciplines; for an overview over the issues at stake see Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, and Gonzalo Sánchez G. (eds.), *Violence in Colombia 1990-2001* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2001); Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, and

Gonzalo Sanchez, (eds.), *Violence in Colombia: the Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1992).

<sup>201</sup> I am following Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez and others who have argued that "armed conflict" is a more appropriate term than "civil war"; for a discussion on the terminology see Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez, *Una democracia asediada. Balance y perspectivas del conflicto armado en Colombia* (Bogotá: Norma 2004), pp. 35-80.

<sup>202</sup> Illicit drugs, however, are not the only illegal sector thriving in Colombia; for a short overview over illegal economies with further references see United Nations. UNDP, *El conflicto, callejón con salida. Informe nacional de desarrollo humano en Colombia 2003* (Bogotá: UNDP, 2003), p. 66, p. 72, pp. 293-297. The Spanish and English versions of this report are available under <http://www.pnud.org.co>.

<sup>203</sup> For a short introduction into the history of "drugs" in Colombia see Francisco E. Thoumi, "Illegal Drugs in Colombia: From Illegal Economic Boom to Social Crisis," *Annals of the American Academy* 582 (July 2002), pp. 102-116; a fuller account is given in Thoumi's *Political Economy and Illegal Drugs in Colombia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

<sup>204</sup> While the relationships between "drugs" and "crime" is rather well established in the international literature, it is less clear why the intensity of violence generated by the illegal drug trade varies significantly between countries. For a recent attempt to explain these variations see Jeffrey A. Miron, "Violence, Arms, and Drugs: A Cross-Country Analysis," *Journal of Law and Economics* XLIV (October 2002). Miron suggests that differences in the enforcement of drug prohibition are an important factor in explaining these variations.

<sup>205</sup> For more comprehensive discussions of the relationship between "violence" and "drugs" see R. T. Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); LaMond Tullis, *Unintended Consequences: Illegal Drugs and Drug Policies in Nine Countries* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

<sup>206</sup> As Alejandro Gaviria and others have pointed out, the vast majority of homicides in Colombia remain unrelated to "drugs," yet the rapid expansion of the drug trade may be seen as a "detonator" that led to a rapid increase of crime and violence; see Alejandro Gaviria, "Increasing Returns and the Evolution of Violent Crime: The Case of Colombia," *Journal of Development Economics* 61 (2000): pp. 1-25.

<sup>207</sup> Toward the early 1990s, the homicide rate in Medellín rose to well over 300 (per 100,000 inhabitants).

<sup>208</sup> Bushnell (1993), pp. 262-265, 265; Thoumi (1994).

<sup>209</sup> For a brief overview with further references see World Bank 2003, p. 43-44; Levitt and Rubio 2000; Malcolm Deas and Fernando Gaitán Daza, *Dos ensayos especulativos sobre la violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá: FONADE/DNP, 1995), pp. 382-387.

<sup>210</sup> On the crisis of the law enforcement institutions and ensuing reform efforts see Arnold Riedmann, "La reforma policial en Colombia," in *Justicia en la calle. Ensayos sobre la policía en América Latina*, ed. Peter Waldmann (Medellín: CIEDLA/ISLA/KAS; 1996), pp. 215-239; World Bank 2003, pp. 897-929, 946-947; for a highly critical account see also Javier Giraldo S. J., "Corrupted Justice and the Schizophrenic State in Colombia," *Social Justice* 26 (1999).

<sup>211</sup> A large percentage of the fall in overall homicide rates following the peak in the early 1990s was due to developments in Medellín, Bogotá, and Cali; for a short overview with further references see Levitt and Rubio (2000), pp. 5-8.

<sup>212</sup> Thoumi 2002; the expansion of the drug economy and the wider implications are discussed in UNDP (2003).

<sup>213</sup> High levels of violence in such frontier communities are rather the result of the absence of the state and to the failure to establish viable alternative institutions for the provision of public order at the local level.

<sup>214</sup> For a vivid English-language account of life on the coca frontier see: Carlos Villalón, "Cocaine Country," *National Geographic* (July 2004), pp. 34-55. The case described here exemplifies the argument suggested in the preceding annotation: A frontier locality, specialized in the production of coca, evinces high levels of crime and violence because it lacks local institutions providing public safety and order. As it falls under the control of the FARC guerrillas and it succumbs to the rigid order imposed by FARC, the level of violence decreases. The FARC regulates all important aspects of daily life, including the production and trade of coca and participates in the profits.

<sup>215</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the links between the drug trade and the armed conflict see UNDP (2003), chapters 12 and 13; and more recently: Ana María Díaz and Fabio Sánchez, "A Geography of Illicit Crops (Coca Leaf) and Armed Conflict in Colombia," *LSE Crisis States Programme Working Paper Series* No. 1 (July 2004). For a more comprehensive investigation into the political economy of Colombia's protracted armed conflict see, for instance, Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002).

<sup>216</sup> On the intensification and territorial expansion of the armed conflict see UNDP (2003), Ch. 2.

<sup>217</sup> This would suggest that the size of paramilitarism has generally been underestimated, but the discrepancy between the two estimates may partly be due to a very rapid expansion between 2002 and 2005 and to some "free riding" (to be explained below).

<sup>218</sup> The increasing participation of both guerrilla and paramilitary organizations in the drug economy and other highly lucrative activities has given rise to a lively debate on the nature of the Colombian conflict and the forces that drive it. While there is general agreement on the importance of "drug money" and other illegal sources to explain the rapid expansion of the illegal armed groups, there is less agreement as to the nature and ulterior motives of guerrillas and paramilitaries, i.e., whether they are driven simply by "greed" or continue to be driven by "grievance"; Pizarro (2004), 112-116, 125-129, 169-201; Alejandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict. Beyond Greed and Grievance*, edited by Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 73-106. The guerrillas' involvement in the trade with drugs is discussed in: UNDP 2003, chapters 12 and 13; see also: Martín Kalulambi (ed.), *Perspectivas comparadas de mercados de violencia* (Bogotá: IEPRI/Alfaomega, 2003); Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence. The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002).

<sup>219</sup> While criminal statistics distinguish between crimes committed by "common criminals" and those committed by illegal armed groups, it should be noted that this distinction has become increasingly blurred, particularly in the case of kidnappings, as it is not uncommon for "common criminals" to "sell" their victims to the armed groups.

<sup>220</sup> As most observers on the current state of affairs in Colombia, I use the terms "autodefensas" and "paramilitary" as referring to those illegally armed groups that are affiliated with, or similar to, the AUC. A more comprehensive discussion on the origins and diverse manifestations of "self-defense forces" and "paramilitarism" in Colombia would have to resort to more subtle distinctions. For a brief synopsis of the history and characteristics of these phenomena see Pizarro (2004), 112-130; for a more comprehensive discussion see Mauricio Romero, *Paramilitares y autodefensas 1982-2003* (Bogotá: IEPR/Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2003).

<sup>221</sup> For obvious reasons, the nature and degree of this support is hotly disputed. The government, under considerable pressure from the international community, insists that it has made great progress in severing the ties between the state's security forces and the "illegal self-defense forces" and, in general, refuses to use the term "paramilitary". Human rights observers and other critics remain largely unconvinced as current reports by *Human Rights Watch*, *Amnesty International* and others suggest. For a highly critical account see Human Rights Watch, "The Ties That Bind: Colombia and Military-Paramilitary Links," *Human Rights Watch Report 12*, 1B (February 2000).

<sup>222</sup> Armed clashes, assassinations, and disputes among paramilitary groups were widely reported upon during 2004 in *EL Tiempo*, *Semana* and other news media.

<sup>223</sup> For a recent account of Russell Crandall, *Driven by Drugs. U.S. Policy Towards Colombia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

<sup>224</sup> The data set has been compiled using raw data published by CINEP; on the data set see Jorge A. Restrepo, Michael Spagat and Juan Fernando Vargas, "The Dynamics of the Colombian Civil Conflict," *Homo Oeconomicus* 21:2 (2004), pp. 296-428; the monthly average refers to the time period January 1999 to July 2002; the monthly average for the total time period investigated (January 1988 to July 2002) is 175, see Jorge A. Restrepo and Michael Spagat, "Colombia's Tipping Point?," *Survival* 27, 2 (Summer 2005): 131-152.

<sup>225</sup> Using a different data set, a recent study sponsored by the United Nations estimated a somewhat larger proportion, i.e., about one quarter of all violent deaths to be directly attributable to the armed conflict. For further details see PNUD (2003), p. 105. The PNUD study included politically motivated homicides and disappearances. On the differences in the available data sets see also *Hechos del Callejón* 1, 8 (October 2005): 12-14.

<sup>226</sup> For an analysis of terror as a strategic recourse from a game-theoretical perspective see Boris Salazar y María del Pilar Castillo, *La hora de los dinosaurios* (Bogotá: UNAL / CIDSE/ CEREC, 2001).

<sup>227</sup> For a brief overview on forced displacement see UNDP (2003), pp. 121-123, 127, 131-132; other causes for internal displacement as defined by the *Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento* (CODHES) and other NGO's include the government's fumigation programs.

<sup>228</sup> For a comparative perspective see Global IDP Database <http://www.idpproject.org> (last accessed 10/1/2005); or World Bank (2003), p. 83.

<sup>229</sup> The data on displacement published by the government's *Red de Solidaridad Social* reflect the number of persons registered as "displaced" and does not include persons who left their homesteads as a consequence of anti-narcotics programs (fumigations). The latter are included in the CODHES figure, as are persons who are reported to be "displaced" although they may not have been officially registered as such. For a fuller explanation of the differences in methodology cf. *Hechos del Callejón* 1, 1 (March 2005): 2-4.

<sup>230</sup> For a critical discussion of the notion see Eduardo Posada-Carbó, "Colombia's Resilient Democracy," *Current History* 103: 670 (February 2004): 68-73; others, referring to Oquist's influential interpretation of *La Violencia*, have preferred the notion of a "partial collapse of the state", see Fermán González, "¿Hacia un 'Nuevo Colapso Parcial del Estado?'" *Andlisis. Documento Ocasional* No. 50 (September 1988): 5-12; Paul Oquist, *Violencia, conflicto y política en Colombia* (Bogotá, Instituto de Estudios Colombianos, 1978); Pizarro (2004), pp. 203-253.

<sup>231</sup> For a discussion on the "root causes" see: Comisión de estudios sobre la violencia, *Colombia, violencia y democracia* (Bogotá: IEPR/Universidad Nacional/Colciencias, 1987); Deas and Daza (1995); UNDP (2003).

<sup>232</sup> Cf. "El Plan Patriota, una campaña militar sin comparación en la historia del conflicto colombiano," *El Tiempo*, 12/18/2005.

<sup>233</sup> Colombia, Presidency of the Republic and Ministry of Defense, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, (Bogotá: Republic of Colombia, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>234</sup> Colombian Embassy in Washington DC at <http://www.colombiaemb.org/opencms/opencms/Colombia> (last accessed 4/8/2005).

<sup>235</sup> For a more profound analysis of Uribe's electoral victory see Pizarro 2003, pp. 297-298; Fernando Cepeda Ulloa, "Álvaro Uribe: Dissident", *Inter-American Dialogue Working Paper* (August 2003); Ann Mason, "Colombia's Democratic Security Agenda: Public Order in the Security Tripod," *Security Dialogue* 34, 4 (December 2003): 391-409; John C. Dugas, "The Emergence of Neopopulism in Colombia? The Case of Álvaro Uribe," *Third World Quarterly* 24, 6 (2003): 1117-1136.

<sup>236</sup> Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, "Informe Especial. Evaluación Semestral de Seguridad 2001-2004," at: <http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org>; on combats and casualties see also Restrepo and Spagat (2005).

<sup>237</sup> Colombian Embassy in Washington <http://www.colombiaemb.org/opencms/opencms/colombia> (last accessed 4/8/2005)

<sup>238</sup> Cf., for instance, "Si hay guerra, señor presidente", *Semana.com* <http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articuloImpresion.html?id=84650>.

<sup>239</sup> For an assessment of the country's history of peace negotiations and the conditions leading to Pastrana's peace initiative see Marc W. Chernik, "Negotiating Peace and Multiple Forms of Violence: The Protracted Search for a Settlement to the Armed Conflicts in Colombia," in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, edited by Cynthia Arnson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); pp. 159-199; on the fundamental difficulties the peace negotiations were fraught with see also UNDP (2003), Ch. 17; Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth. The Synergy of Drugs and Its Implications for Regional Stability* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 2001), Ch. 7; Francisco Leal Outrage (ed.), *Los laberintos de la guerra. Utopías e incertidumbres sobre la paz* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1999); Adam Isacson, "Was Failure Avoidable? Learning From Colombia's 1998-2002 Peace Process," *The Dante B. Fascell North-South Center Paper* No. 14 (March 2003).

<sup>240</sup> Cepeda Ulloa (2003); Pizarro (2004), pp. 307-308.

<sup>241</sup> The continuities have been stressed in: Luis Alberto Restrepo, "La difícil recomposición de Colombia," *Nueva Sociedad* 192 (2005): 46-58.

<sup>242</sup> For a critical account of the government's legislative efforts see, for instance, International Crisis Group (ICG), "Will Uribe's Honeymoon Last?" *ICG Latin America Briefing* (December 19, 2002); ICG, "Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy," *ICG Latin America Report* No. 6 (November 13, 2003); Amnesty Internacional, Comunicado de Prensa, "Colombia: La política de seguridad democrática no es una política de derechos humanos," AMR/23/142/2002 (16 de diciembre de 2002); Mason (2003), pp. 396-402.

<sup>243</sup> For a brief summary see Mason (2003), p. 401.

<sup>244</sup> The government's publication on *Democratic Security* refers particularly to oil royalties channeled into underdeveloped municipalities and appropriated by illegal armed groups; other cases involve the appropriation of public monies through infiltration into public works projects and public services.

<sup>245</sup> For a critical review of Colombia's anti-narcotics programs and alternative recommendations see UNDP (2003); Daniel W. Christman, John G. Heiman, and Julia Sweig, *Andes 2020: A New Strategy for the Challenges of Colombia and the Region. Report of an Independent Commission Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

<sup>246</sup> Judging by the scant information on the current negotiations, it seems that the AUC leaders seek, above all, a guarantee that they will not be extradited to the United States and that they will not receive harsh prison sentences in Colombia. It is worth noting here that the case for the FARC and the ELN is not entirely symmetrical to the AUC's. The guerrillas have been on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations for quite some time and have also been subject to extradition requests. Yet this has added relatively little additional pressure on the FARC and the ELN. By contrast, U.S. extradition requests have made a difference for the AUC leadership as they threatened to end the state of virtual impunity the AUC was operating under.

<sup>247</sup> For a brief overview over the European position and limited engagement see Sophie Rodríguez-Daviaud, "La declaración de Cartagena: ¿Nueva etapa en las relaciones Colombia-UE," *Hechos del Callejón* 1, 1 (March 2005): 12-14; Joaquín Roy, "Europe: Neither Plan Colombia, nor Peace Process – From Good Intentions to High Frustration," *The Dante B. Fascell North-South Center Paper*, no. 11 (January 2003).

<sup>248</sup> For a short introduction into recent U.S.-Colombian relations see Arlene B. Tickner, "Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism," *Current History* 102, 661 (February 2003): 77-85; Pizarro, pp. 299-303.

<sup>249</sup> The deadline for the AUC's demobilization has subsequently been extended to Spring 2003. For a chronology of the events see: *Informe anual de derechos humanos y DIH 2004*, pp. 157-194, or "Cronología de la negociación" in *Semana.com* at: <http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=80565>;

<sup>250</sup> For a rather critical account see "Reinserción en pañales," *Semana.com* 01/27/2004.

<sup>251</sup> This figure reflects only those demobilized through collective agreements with the AUC. According to the government, another 2,638 paramilitaries and nearly 5,000 guerrillas demobilized (or deserted) individually, cf. *Hechos del Callejón* 1:8 (October 2005), p. 2.

<sup>252</sup> The OAS *Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia* (MAPP/OEA) is publishing quarterly reports on the demobilization process. These and other documents can be obtained from the OAS' web page.

<sup>253</sup> For the government's view on the failure see Colombia, Vicepresidencia de la República, *Informe anual de derechos humanos y DIH 2004* (Bogotá: Vicepresidencia de la República, 2005), pp. 164-166 (available at: <http://www.derechoshumanos.gov.co/observatorio>). The ELN's declarations are to be found on the organization's web page at [www.eln-voces.com](http://www.eln-voces.com).

<sup>254</sup> On the FARC's reaction to the Uribe government see Pizarro (2004), pp. 315-317.

<sup>255</sup> Cf., for instance, the skepticism expressed by Alfredo Rangel. Previously an advisor to the Ministry of Defense at the beginning of Uribe's government, Rangel argues that the FARC's response to current counterinsurgency initiatives is not so much a sign of weakness, but rather a "strategic withdrawal" that might be maintained for an extended time period. Many of Rangel's commentaries are accessible through <http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org>.

<sup>256</sup> Both operations were heavily commented upon in the Colombian press, see, for instance, the web pages maintained by *El Tiempo* and *Semana*.

<sup>257</sup> Data taken from Embassy of Colombia Washington, "The Uribe Administration: 3 Years of Progress in Colombia," available at <http://www.coltrade.org/Progress.pdf> (last accessed 11/11/2005).

<sup>258</sup> The source of the data mentioned is: *Hechos del Callejón* 1, 2 (April 2005): 2, 3.

<sup>259</sup> For further details on the reduction of paramilitary violence see Restrepo and Spagat (2005), pp. 141-143.

<sup>260</sup> Recent data on kidnapping are included in Table 5.4a; further details on kidnappings, homicide rates, attacks on infrastructure and related issues are to be found in: *Informe anual de derechos humanos y DIH 2004*.

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.coltrade.org/Progress.pdf> (last accessed 11/11/2005).

<sup>262</sup> The magazine *Semana.com* compiled a number of these polls under <http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=84914> (last accessed 6/1/2005)

<sup>263</sup> Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta de victimización 2003. Bogotá-Cali-Medellín* (Bogotá: DANE, September 2004), p. 44 of the Power Point Presentation; not all the findings of this poll, however, seem to have been to the liking of the government although these were probably more indicative of the shortcomings of previous administrations than that of Uribe's; see further details in: "El que es caballero renuncia," *Semana.com*, 9/19/2004.

<sup>264</sup> These include: *Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP); *Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento* (CODHES); *Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch; Center for International Policy; International Crisis Group*.

<sup>265</sup> The annual reports and press releases of the High Commissioner are to be found at <http://www.hchr.org.co>.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. the intense debates surrounding the "conditional liberty" or "alternative sentencing bill" and, more recently, the "Law of Justice and Peace".

<sup>267</sup> See, for instance, ICG, "Negotiating with the Paramilitaries," *ICG Latin America Report* No. 5 (September 16, 2003); ICG, "Demobilizing the Paramilitary in Colombia: An Achievable Goal?" *ICG Latin America Report* No. 8 (August 5, 2004).



<sup>268</sup> The former, like many of the paramilitary leaders currently negotiating with the government, seek to avoid extradition to the United States and harsh (if any) prison sentences, the latter are attracted by the (limited) benefits provided by rehabilitation programs; see "Negociación con los paras" and further links provided by *Semana.com* at [semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=80564](http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=80564).

<sup>269</sup> *Semana.com* and other media commented amply on these phenomena: see, for example "Meras coincidencias?" (<http://semana2.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=71591>)

<sup>270</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), *Report on the Demobilization Process in Colombia*, Chapter 3, point 51 and 49 at <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/Colombia04eng/chapter3.htm> (Last accessed 4/8/2005). The IACHR is not to be confused with the MAPP/OAS Mission to Colombia to which it is providing advisory services. The latter has to date refrained from critique.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, point 81.

<sup>272</sup> Amnesty International, "Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization or Legalization?" (AI Index AMR 23/019/2005), p. 23; see also: ICG, "Demobilizing the Paramilitary in Colombia: An Achievable Goal?" *ICG Latin America Report* No. 8 (August 5, 2004).

<sup>273</sup> According to reports published by *Human Rights Watch*, paramilitary leaders of the demobilized *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* boasted that "they had brought peace to the city by taking it over;" see HRW, "Smoke and Mirrors: Colombia's Demobilization of Paramilitary Groups," *Human Rights Watch Report* Volume 17 No. 3 (B) (August 2005), p. 40; for a journalistic account on the "pacification" of Medellín's criminal scene see "El pacificador" in *Semana.com* at <http://semana2.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=86216>; for a rather chilling depiction of paramilitary strategies to gain control over a small town and impose order see Michael Taussig, *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza in Colombia* (New York: The New Press, 2003).

<sup>274</sup> "Se enciende el debate sobre la creciente presencia paramilitar en Colombia" and "La paramilitarización de Colombia" in: *El Tiempo* 9/27/2004 and 10/04/2004; "Los tentáculos de las AUC" *Semana.com* 04/24/2005 (<http://semana2.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articulo.html?id=86215>). On the expansion of paramilitary influence into urban spheres see also Gustavo Duncan, "Del campo a la ciudad en Colombia. La infiltración urbana de los señores de la guerra," *Documento CEDE* 2005-2 (Enero, 2005).

<sup>275</sup> On the allegations that even the DAS (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad) was collaborating with the AUC see "El DAS y los paras", in *Semana.com* at <http://semana.terra.com.co/opencms/opencms/Semana/articuloImpresion.html?id=90864>; *The New York Times* 10/28/2005.

<sup>276</sup> On the danger of "paramilitarization" see Adam Isacson, "Peace or 'Paramilitarization'," *CIP International Policy Report* (July 2005), available online at <http://ciponline.org/colombia/0507ipr.htm>.

<sup>277</sup> The rise and nature of Colombia's paramilitary groups will certainly remain one the major research topics for some time to come; for the current debate see Pizarro 2004, pp. 112-130; Romero 2003.

<sup>278</sup> More than 400,000 hectares have been sprayed in 2001-2004, and the ratio between sprayed acreage and actual reduction seems to be worsening.

<sup>279</sup> This is not the place to discuss alternatives to the current "war on drugs"; for recent contributions that reopen the debate on possible alternatives see: Juan Carlos Echeverry, "Colombia and the War on Drugs, How Short is the Short Run," *Documento CEDE* 2004-13 (February 2004); Gary S. Becker, Michael Grossman, and Kevin M. Murphy, "The Economic Theory of Illegal Goods: The Case of Drugs," *NBER Working Paper No. 10976* (December 2004); Robert J. <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=107178248>.

<sup>280</sup> For a rather measured critique see, for example, Mason (2003).

<sup>281</sup> One of the less complimentary results of the 2003 victimization study mentioned above was the degree to which crime remained unreported, see DANE (2004).

<sup>282</sup> Colombia's governments have traditionally followed a rather conservative approach to fiscal policies, yet in recent years public debt has accumulated rapidly.

<sup>283</sup> For a further-reaching discussion on the relationship between "war" and "nation-building" in Latin America see, for instance, Miguel Ángel Centeno, *Blood and Debt. War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).