
INTRODUCTION

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Building Peace in a Time of War

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On two occasions when I was invited to talk about Colombia at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), I asked the audiences to list all the words and images they associate with Colombia.¹ Their responses included a range of general and specific terms related to the theme of armed conflict: war, violence, drugs, kidnapping, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—Colombia’s largest guerrilla group—arms, paramilitaries, child soldiers, corruption, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in women. Other terms mentioned—coffee, music—were less obviously related to the conflict. The audiences did not propose a single image linked to peace or to the pervasive efforts to pursue peace in Colombia. The contributors to this book seek to rectify some of the distortions created by the neglect of these nonviolent conflict actors, to consider how peace initiatives and their proponents might contribute further to a resolution of the Colombian conflict, and to assess the implications of this adjusted vision for the international community and policymakers.

The lack of attention to Colombia’s peace efforts and actors, particularly in the English-speaking world, is not surprising. Colombia receives relatively little attention from the American media, the public, or the broader global community; when it does appear in the news, drugs and violence frequently dominate the headlines. Although the country’s long-standing internal armed conflict involves multiple armed actors (including guerrillas, paramilitary forces, state armed forces, common criminals, and drug traffickers), agendas of violence, power, drugs, and greed have long overshadowed the political partisanship and ideologies that provided the backdrop for a guer-

¹USIP, Summer Institute for Secondary School Teachers on International Peace, Security, and Conflict Management, August 1, 2006; USIP site visit of students and faculty from Ocean County Community College, New Jersey, March 17, 2008.

rilla war kindled by socioeconomic inequities and political exclusion a half a century ago. In recent decades, drugs have provided a steady source of income that has fueled the conflict and contributed to its intractability.² Today more than 90 percent of the cocaine and about half the heroin consumed in the United States is produced in or transits through Colombia.³ Increasingly, Colombia's cocaine is finding markets in Brazil, Africa, and Europe as well.⁴ Scholars, journalists, and others have produced a steady stream of academic and popular materials in both Spanish and English on Colombian drug cartels and drug trafficking.⁵

Besides being infamous as a leader in the drug trade, Colombia is also a leader in statistics on violence. After Sudan, Colombia has the world's largest population of internally displaced persons, estimated at between two million and four million.⁶ In 2007, an additional three hundred thousand Colombians were internally displaced.⁷ Labor leaders, journalists, human rights workers, church leaders, elected officials, and judicial authorities in Colombia continue to be among the most threatened on earth, and U.S. legislation linking aid to improvements in Colombia's human rights record underscores U.S. policy concerns on this front. With more than 1,100 land mine victims in 2006, Colombia surpassed even Cambodia and Afghanistan for having the most land mine accidents.⁸ Colombia has long been known as the "kidnap

²Cynthia J. Arnsion and Teresa Whitfield, "Third Parties and Intractable Conflicts: The Case of Colombia," in *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005).

³U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report—2006*, www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol1/html/62106.htm (accessed October 21, 2007).

⁴Juan Forero, "Colombia's Coca Survives U.S. Plan to Uproot It," *New York Times*, August 19, 2006, www.nytimes.com/2006/08/19/world/americas/19coca.html?_r=1&n=Top%2fNews%2fWorld%2fCountries%20and%20Territories%2fColombia&oref=login (accessed August 15, 2008).

⁵See Grace Livingstone, *Inside Colombia: Drugs, Democracy, and War* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Russell Crandall, *Driven by Drugs: U.S. Policy Toward Colombia* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Robin Kirk, *More Terrible than Death: Massacres, Drugs, and America's War in Colombia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw* (Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001); Doug Stokes, *America's Other War: Terrorizing Colombia* (London: Zed Books, 2005); Ron Chepasiuk, *Drug Lords: The Rise and Fall of the Cali Cartel* (Preston, UK: Milo Books, 2005); Ted Galen Carpenter, *Bad Neighbor Policy: Washington's Futile War on Drugs in Latin America*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Films include *Clear and Present Danger* (based on Tom Clancy's 1989 novel), *María Full of Grace* (2004), and *Cocaine Cowboys* (2006).

⁶United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees 2006*, www.unhcr.org/static/publ/sowr2006/toceng.htm (accessed August 23, 2008).

⁷CODHES figure cited in Washington Office on Latin America press release, "Paramilitaries, Human Rights, and the Trade Agreement," September 19, 2008, www.wola.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=viewp&id=773&Itemid=8 (accessed September 22, 2008).

⁸International Campaign to Ban Landmines, "Landmine Monitor: Colombia, 2007," www.icbl.org/lm/2007/colombia (accessed August 23, 2008).

capital of the world,” with more than seventeen thousand people—including prominent legislators, government ministers, presidential candidates, businesspeople, and U.S. contractors—kidnapped in the past seven years.⁹ While the number of kidnappings declined from 687 in 2006 to 521 in 2007, all of the armed actors still make use of kidnapping to sustain their war efforts. An unknown number of hostages continue to be held—750 by the FARC alone.¹⁰

A number of related factors contribute to the drugs-and-violence prism through which the world has tended to view Colombia. News stories are usually shaped by policy “hooks,” story angles that link events of the day to government policies or to an explicit relationship to the news consumer. In the United States, policymakers have promoted three sometimes overlapping paradigms that have shaped U.S. relations with Colombia: beginning in the 1950s (and increasing especially after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba), counterinsurgency concerns governed U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America; in the 1980s, the U.S. war on drugs dominated U.S. policy directives in the Andean producer countries; and in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., the war on terror has driven U.S. foreign-policy concerns around the globe. These policy approaches have sometimes warranted coverage because they carried a steep price tag or because they showcased U.S. interests abroad. With the launching in 2000 of Plan Colombia, a multibillion-dollar plan to strengthen the Colombian state, Colombia became one of the top U.S. aid recipients in the world, surpassed at the time only by Egypt and Israel. From 2000 to 2007, Colombia received unprecedented levels of U.S. aid totaling more than US\$5 billion, more than three-quarters of which went to the Colombian military and police for counterinsurgency and antinarcotics operations and oil pipeline protection.¹¹ Since most U.S. foreign aid thus far has been earmarked for the prosecution of the war, other agendas—regional stability; democracy, human rights, and the rule of law; socioeconomic development and humanitarian needs; and peace initiatives—make headlines

⁹Mexico surpassed Colombia for the title in 2005. See Larry Habegger, “Mexico: World’s Kidnap Capital,” *World Travel Watch*, August 9, 2005, www.worldtravelwatch.com/archives/2005/08/mexico-worlds-kidnap-capital.shtml (accessed August 15, 2008); Amnesty International Report 2006 (London: Amnesty International, 2006), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL10/001/2006> (accessed October 2, 2008).

¹⁰*Amnesty International Report 2008* (London: Amnesty International, 2008), <http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/americas/colombia> (accessed August 23, 2008).

¹¹Earlier levels of aid were significantly lower, reaching a high of US\$50 million dollars in FY2000. Levels of aid to Colombia in 2006 and 2007, at about US\$730 million per year, remained on a par with 2005 levels. Figures for 2008 and 2009 have declined slightly to about US\$650 million each year, with an increase in economic and social assistance and a slight decline in military aid. See Latin America Working Group Education Fund, Center for International Policy, and Washington Office on Latin America, *Just the Facts*, <http://justf.org/Country?country=Colombia> (accessed September 22, 2008).

only occasionally.¹² With rare exceptions, such as the Hollywood-style rescue of fifteen FARC hostages in mid-2008, neither peace efforts in Colombia nor the conflict itself has gotten much publicity.

The relative lack of attention to the conflict in Colombia is all the more surprising given that the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, with some two thousand employees representing thirty-two agencies, is second in size only to that in Iraq.¹³ Furthermore, the U.S. presence in Colombia on the ground has grown rapidly since 2000. U.S. troops and advisers are now legally capped at eight hundred, and U.S. civilian government contractors are capped at six hundred (plus foreign contractors).¹⁴ About a dozen U.S. citizens have lost their lives in this conflict, and three U.S. military contractors were held hostage by the FARC from February 2003 to June 2008.

If the war in Colombia has received little attention, Colombia's drive for peace has received even less. Only recently have political scientists, sociologists, and other scholars even begun to analyze the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in policymaking, while the study of the violence, or "violontology," has become a sophisticated and influential scholarly discipline in Colombian academic circles.¹⁵ To date, the literature on peace initiatives has largely been in Spanish and has tended to focus on the

¹²On U.S. policy interests, see Virginia M. Bouvier, "Evaluating U.S. Policy in Colombia" (policy report from the International Relations Center Americas Program, May 11, 2005), <http://americas.irc-online.org/reports/2005/0505colombia.html> (accessed August 15, 2008).

¹³Bouvier, "Evaluating U.S. Policy in Colombia"; Virginia M. Bouvier, "Civil Society under Siege in Colombia," Special Report 114, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, February 2004), www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr114.html (accessed August 15, 2008).

¹⁴See Virginia M. Bouvier, "Colombia Quagmire: Time for U.S. Policy Overhaul," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Americas Program (Silver City, N.M.: Interhemispheric Resource Center, September 2003), www.americaspolicy.org/briefs/2003/0309colombia.html (accessed August 16, 2008); and Deborah Avant, "Privatizing Military Training," *Foreign Policy in Focus* 7, no. 6 (May 2002), www.fpi.org/papers/miltrain/box4.html (accessed August 16, 2008).

¹⁵See Daniel Pécaut, *Crónica de cuatro décadas de política colombiana* (Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2006); Rubén Ardila, "Violence in Colombia: Social and Psychological Aspects," in *International Perspectives on Violence*, eds. Florence Denmark and Leonore Loeb Adler, 59–67 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004); G. Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda, and E. Umana Luna, *La violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Ediciones, 1964); Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, and Gonzalo Sánchez G., *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1992); Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 2002); Cristina Rojas and Judy Meltzer, *Elusive Peace: International, National, and Local Dimensions of Conflict in Colombia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Steven Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Mario Murillo and Jesús Rey Avirama, *Colombia and the United States: War, Unrest, and Destabilization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, September 2003); Geoff L. Simons, *Colombia: A Brutal History* (London: Saqi, 2004); and numerous World Bank studies on conflict and economics, including Andrés Solimano, ed., *Colombia: Essays on Conflict, Peace, and Development* (2000); and World Bank Sector Study, *Violence in Colombia: Toward Peace, Partnerships, and Sustainable Development* (1998).

Colombian government's repeated and largely unsuccessful efforts to negotiate peace.¹⁶

Although human rights practitioners in Colombia and abroad have been aware of peace initiatives, and have sometimes even taken part in their construction, they have generally focused their work on discerning the patterns of violence and abuse in the daily manifestations of Colombia's conflict. Their most pressing task is to respond to human rights violations and to violations of international humanitarian law and norms governing the conduct of the armed conflict.¹⁷ Nonetheless, organizations such as the Jesuit Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), the National Network of Initiatives for Peace and against War (REDEPAZ), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have developed databases that provide not only human rights information but also much-needed documentation of peace initiatives.¹⁸

Ironically, within the conflict-resolution field there is an inherent bias against actors who have eschewed violence in the pursuit of peace. Conflict analysis generally is performed with "conflict actors" in mind, and they usually are limited to those engaged in the armed struggle itself. Peacemakers practicing their profession generally seek the resolution of conflicts by promoting negotiations and accords between the parties to the conflict—usually though not always between an armed group or groups and the state.¹⁹ Thus, mediation and facilitation most frequently involve dissuading, persuading,

¹⁶See Socorro Ramírez V. and Luis Alberto Restrepo M., *Actores en conflicto por la paz: El proceso de paz durante el gobierno de Belisario Betancur 1982–1986* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1989); Miguel Eduardo Cárdenas Rivera, ed., *La construcción del posconflicto en Colombia: enfoques desde la pluralidad* (Bogotá: CEREC, 2002); Edgar Téllez, Oscar Montes, and Jorge Lesmes, *Diario íntimo de un fracaso: Historia no contada del proceso de paz con las FARC* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2002); Mauricio García-Durán, S.J., especially *Movimiento por la paz en Colombia, 1998–2003* (Bogotá: CINEP/Colciencias, 2007); and "Alternatives to War: Colombia's Peace Processes," Special Issue, *Accord 14* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2004), www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/colombia/spanish/movilizacion.php (accessed August 16, 2008).

¹⁷Some of the major non-governmental groups documenting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law within Colombia include Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), Colombian Commission of Jurists, CINEP, and Justapaz. International groups include Amnesty International, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Crisis Group, Pan American Health Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Refugees International, and OAS, among others.

¹⁸See the database compiled by CINEP at www.cinep.org.co/datapaz_resumenes.htm (accessed August 16, 2008); UNDP's National Database of Best Practices for Overcoming the Conflict (Banco Nacional de Buenas Prácticas para Superar el Conflicto), www.saliendodelcallejon.pnud.org.co/banco_bp practicas.shtml (accessed August 16, 2008); and the ongoing REDEPAZ registry of peace initiatives, www.redepaz.org.co/ (accessed August 16, 2008).

¹⁹See I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004); Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of*

and engaging those with weapons—the would-be spoilers of a peace process. Victims and proponents of nonviolent conflict resolution are frequently left outside peace talks or, in some cases, given only token representation at the table. Amnesties or other arrangements have often let known murderers and “bad guys” off the hook, although increasingly, international human rights instruments and jurisprudence reject amnesty for crimes against humanity. Demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programs provide incentives to the perpetrators of violence to lay down their arms and are frequently held up as a necessary cost of pursuing peace. These programs sometimes create new tensions, because they privilege the perpetrators of abuses while ignoring the urgent needs of their victims, including the displaced.

Truth commissions, sometimes established to air the claims of victims, often fall prey to political considerations that favor reconciliation over truth or justice, because they seek to appease the illegal armed actors. Such models of transitional justice often overlook the tremendous resources that civil society stakeholders bring to the table, and the urgent need for victims’ interests to be represented if the peace that is negotiated is to be sustainable.

In the development field, we see a similar bias against “peace” actors. Communities that are experiencing the most violence are often the targets of international intervention and assistance—to the neglect of communities that may have been successful in preventing or curtailing violence. Ironically, attention and increased resources to these conflicted communities appear to reward or create incentives for violent behavior. The relative invisibility of Colombian peace initiatives stems in part from the general invisibility of the sectors of the population that have been most victimized by violence, economic policies, and discrimination. Women, the rural sectors in general and the rural poor in particular, youth, Afro-Colombians, and the indigenous have a history of political, social, and economic exclusion in Colombia, and they are bearing the brunt of the armed conflict.²⁰ About one-third of Colombia’s displaced population is of African descent, more than half are women, and half are under age fifteen. Despite a general economic upturn in recent years, at least 13 percent of Colombia’s rural population is now displaced, and rural poverty in Colombia appears to be growing; the World Bank estimates that 80 percent of rural Colombians live in poverty, with 42 percent living in extreme poverty.²¹ Afro-Colombians (the largest minority

Managing International Conflict (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001); and Crocker, Osler Hampson, and Aall, *Grasping the Nettle*.

²⁰ Angela Vera Márquez, Francisco Parra Sandoval, and Rodrigo Parra Sandoval, *Los estudiantes invisibles* (Ibagué, Colombia: Universidad del Rosario and Universidad de Ibagué, 2007).

²¹ United States Agency for International Development, “Budget,” www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/co.html (accessed August 16, 2008); *NotiSur*, Latin American Data Base 16, no. 9 (March 3, 2006), <http://ladb.unm.edu> (accessed August 16, 2008); see also Edward E. Telles, *Incorporating Race and Ethnicity into the UN Millennium Development Goals*, Race Report (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Dialogue, January 2007).

group in the country) and indigenous communities (about 2 percent of the population) suffer disproportionate poverty, displacement, environmental degradation, ill health, illiteracy, food insecurity, and an absence of state infrastructures to promote and protect their basic human rights.

Although research is beginning to tell us how the conflict affects these groups, little scholarly research has emerged yet that focuses on the role of these groups—or of displaced groups in general—in seeking nonviolent change.²² These marginalized groups have high stakes in the conflict's resolution and, as this book documents, are active in many of the peace initiatives being carried out in Colombia's most contested zones. They are attempting to end the violence by forming peace communities, marginalizing actors advocating violence as a vehicle for change, learning about their rights and demanding the state protections to which they are entitled, and negotiating with armed actors to prevent or resolve violent conflicts on the ground.

Of course these civil society actors are not the only key to resolving Colombia's long-standing armed conflict, nor do they act in a vacuum. The government and the armed actors provide the broader context for their actions. Government efforts to deal with Colombia's armed actors have persisted nearly as long as the conflict itself—with intermittent success in varying degrees. National efforts, including the Rojas Pinilla amnesty in 1953 and the pact that established the National Front in 1957, led to a pause in "La Violencia," an era of violence between Liberal and Conservative partisans that took the lives of some 180,000 Colombians from about 1946 to 1965 and is considered the beginning of the current conflict.²³

In the past twenty-five years, Colombian governments have alternated between strategies of war and strategies of peace in their efforts to deal with the many illegal armed actors that have defied the state's monopoly on force. Several governments have engaged in negotiations with guerrilla groups, leading to the disarmament of at least five guerrilla groups or factions thereof.²⁴

²²One important exception (available only in Spanish) is Esperanza Hernández Delgado, *Resistencia civil artesana de paz: Experiencias indígenas, afrodescendientes y campesinas* (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2004). Faith-based groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee, have focused their programming on these sectors and have produced educational resources for popular audiences. See Gretchen Alther, John Lindsay-Poland, and Sarah Weintraub, *Building from the Inside Out: Peace Initiatives in War-Torn Colombia* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee and Fellowship of Reconciliation, November 2004), www.afsc.org/colombia/learn-about/Building-from-the-inside.pdf (accessed August 16, 2008).

²³See UNDP, *Colombia's Conflict: Pointers on the Road to Peace, National Report on Human Development for Colombia—2003* (Bogotá: PNUD, 2003), 25, www.pnud.org.co/indh2003 (accessed August 23, 2008).

²⁴These included the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), or Popular Liberation Army; Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), or Workers' Revolutionary Party; Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (MAQL); Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19); and, later, the Corriente de Renovación Socialista (CRS), or Socialist Renewal Group, a splinter group of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), or National Liberation Army.

And successive presidents, beginning with Belisario Betancur, have, to no avail, sought peace agreements with each of the two major guerrilla groups: the FARC and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, or ELN).

After the 2002 breakdown of peace talks that President Andrés Pastrana had initiated in 1998 with the FARC, the oldest and largest of the guerrilla groups, Álvaro Uribe was elected president based on his commitment to all-out military victory over the guerrillas. Although security conditions under Uribe's program of "democratic security" improved in many of the larger cities and towns, the violence and displacement has continued, particularly but not exclusively in the countryside. Uribe's tenure has been marked by a crackdown on left-wing guerrillas and the demobilization of the right-wing paramilitary forces known as the Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or AUC). In April 2006, High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo announced that, with the demobilization of more than thirty thousand paramilitary combatants, the largest demobilization in the history of Colombia had been achieved. While the demobilization has dramatically cut paramilitary violence in many places, the demobilized AUC, like the Hydra of myth, has generated dozens of new criminal and drug-trafficking organizations and networks that include thousands of ex-combatants and that continue to terrorize the civilian population.²⁵ Its limitations notwithstanding, the regulation of the DDR process through Law 975 (otherwise known as the Justice and Peace Law) has also opened limited opportunities to victims of paramilitary violence. It has created the political space for investigations and activism on the part of courageous victims; journalists; judges and prosecutors; human rights defenders; and a few politicians seeking truth, justice, and reparations.²⁶ These investigations have confirmed the insidious links between paramilitary violence and Colombia's political elites that, as of August 2008, had put thirty-three members of Congress behind bars and led to the indictment of dozens more.²⁷

In Uribe's second term, which began in 2006, there was nonetheless hope that with the AUC officially demobilized, the president might turn his attention to negotiating peace with the FARC and ELN guerrillas. In 2005, the Colombian government had accepted a proposal by European governments to create a small demilitarized zone in the Valle del Cauca that would host

²⁵ For the quarterly reports to the OAS Permanent Council on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP), see "OEA Acompaña Proceso de paz en Colombia," www.oas.org/documents/spa/colombia.asp. See also "Se calcula que hay entre 30 y 60 'bandas emergentes' surgidas de los grupos 'paras' desmovilizados," *El Tiempo*, December 10, 2006.

²⁶ See Lisa Haugaard, *The Other Half of the Truth: Searching for Truth, Justice, and Reparations for Colombia's Victims of Paramilitary Violence* (Washington, D.C.: Latin America Working Group Education Fund, June 2008), www.lawg.org/docs/the_other_half_of_the_truth.pdf.

²⁷ Juan Forero, "U.S. Extraditions Raise Concerns in Colombia," *Washington Post*, August 19, 2008.

discussions about a humanitarian accord to secure the exchange of hostages being held by the FARC for FARC prisoners serving time in Colombian jails. Sen. Álvaro Leyva, a negotiator during previous peace talks, initiated overtures to the FARC on the viability of such discussions.²⁸ In October 2006, when a car bomb exploded at the war college in Bogotá, injuring twenty-three people, Uribe immediately blamed the FARC, and the talks halted.²⁹

Pressures for a humanitarian accord nonetheless mounted throughout 2007 and 2008. Following the tragic killing of eleven of the FARC hostages and public mobilizations against kidnapping (including the heroic march across southwestern Colombia by Gustavo Moncayo, the father of one of the hostages), President Uribe appointed Sen. Piedad Córdoba as facilitator for such an accord. Senator Córdoba in turn secured the appointment of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez as an official mediator for a humanitarian accord.

After a flurry of activity and far-reaching international diplomacy, in late November 2007, President Uribe suspended the process and dismissed Chávez for initiating unauthorized contact with the Colombian army chief.³⁰ Córdoba and Chávez's efforts, as well as ongoing shuttle diplomacy by the French and Swiss governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other members of the diplomatic community, nonetheless resulted in the unilateral release of six of the hostages in early 2008 and the announcement of the imminent release of additional hostages.³¹ Chávez, perhaps prematurely, called for recognition of the FARC and the ELN as belligerent forces and their removal from various international terrorist lists, provoking a rapid outcry from the Colombian government and the international community alike and raising questions about Chávez's capacity to serve as a neutral mediator in the conflict.

In 2008, a number of developments altered the political scenario and the prospects for a negotiated solution to Colombia's conflict. In March, the Colombian army raided a rebel camp in Ecuador and killed Raúl Reyes, the

²⁸Cynthia J. Arnson et al., eds., *Colombia's Peace Processes: Multiple Negotiations, Multiple Actors*, Latin American Program Special Report (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, December 2006).

²⁹Proof of FARC involvement was not forthcoming, however, and there was some speculation that was later confirmed that the incident was a hoax created by the military itself. See Sam Logan, "Colombia's Latest Problems with Corruption," *Power and Interest News Report*, November 9, 2006, www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=580&language_id=1 (accessed August 16, 2008).

³⁰See Virginia M. Bouvier, "New Hopes for Negotiated Solutions in Colombia" (working paper, September 2007, United States Institute of Peace), www.usip.org/pubs/working_papers/wp4_colombia.pdf; Adam Isacson, "Negotiations for Colombian Hostage Release Deserved More Time," *Americas Program Commentary*, December 4, 2007, <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4791>.

³¹See Virginia M. Bouvier, "Colombia's Crossroads: The FARC and the Future of the Hostages," *USIPeace Briefing*, June 2008, at www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/06_17_colomb.

FARC's number-two leader, along with dozens of others, nearly touching off an international conflagration as Ecuador and Venezuela sent troops to the border and protested Colombia's violation of Ecuador's national territorial integrity. Intervention by the Organization of American States (OAS) tamped down the escalating tensions. Diplomatic efforts for a humanitarian accord were set back at least temporarily by the incident, since Reyes had been the FARC's primary interlocutor with the international community. Accusations by the Colombian government based on information found on Reyes's laptops charged individuals who had been seeking a humanitarian accord (including Venezuelan and Ecuadorian officials, and individuals such as Piedad Córdoba, Álvaro Leyva, and Jim Jones) with complicity in supporting the FARC. Although the charges were denied by all and no proofs were forthcoming, the atmosphere of distrust and ill will dramatically limited diplomatic options (at least in the short term).

The FARC suffered other setbacks in 2008. Early in the year, FARC secretariat member Iván Ríos was killed by his bodyguard. In March, the FARC's longtime patriarch, Manuel Marulanda, died of natural causes and was replaced by Alonso Cano. Together with the death of Reyes, this meant the unprecedented loss of three of the seven members of the FARC secretariat in a short time. Venezuelan president Chávez appealed publicly to the FARC to end its forty-year struggle, noting that "an armed guerrilla movement is out of place" in Latin America. He urged the new FARC leader Cano to release all hostages, including those from the United States, suggesting that releasing the hostages in a "great humanitarian gesture" could provide the necessary condition to initiate peace talks supported by a group of friendly nations.³² Colombian government officials, including former hostage and current foreign minister Fernando Araújo, echoed the call for the hostages' release. Additionally, hundreds of FARC militants deserted in the first part of the year, including longtime front commanders, and close to two thousand FARC combatants were killed in action. In July, a military rescue operation successfully secured the release of former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, three U.S. defense contractors, and eleven others held hostage for many years by the FARC. The rescue operation involved an elaborate ruse that included the impersonation of a humanitarian rescue team and journalist, unauthorized use of the ICRC emblem (in violation of international humanitarian law), infiltration of FARC ranks, and disruption of FARC communications.³³ The operation at least temporarily destroyed the confidence that diplomats had

³² Simon Romero, "Chávez Urges Colombian Rebels to End Their Struggle," *New York Times*, June 9, 2008; "Chávez pide a las FARC liberación incondicional de todos los rehenes," Reuters, June 9, 2008, www.betancourt.info/indexFr.htm (accessed August 23, 2008); and "FARC Should Free Hostages: Chávez," *Agence France-Presse*, June 9, 2008.

³³ See "Colombian Military Used Red Cross Emblem in Rescue," www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/americas/07/15/colombia.red.cross/ (accessed September 22, 2008).

been building so painstakingly with each of the parties, and severely hampered future ICRC efforts to engage in prisoner-exchange dialogues.

The military rescue operation and the perceived weakening of the FARC fueled popular sentiment that military victory over the FARC just might be possible after all, deepening divisions within civil society over the best course forward. Discussions about the humanitarian accord have faltered in this new context, although efforts to secure the release of the remaining hostages may continue to provide a lightning rod for mobilization efforts.

With regard to the ELN, progress in the first decade of the twenty-first century appeared more feasible, partly because the ELN was considered militarily weakened and less beholden to drug-trafficking interests than other armed groups.³⁴ Civil society, including religious leaders, has spearheaded repeated attempts to bring the ELN to the negotiating table. After facilitation efforts led by Mexican government officials stalled, a civil society commission created the Casa de Paz, or House of Peace, in late 2005 to facilitate consultation between Colombian civil society and the ELN.³⁵ This led to eight rounds of formal exploratory meetings in Cuba between the ELN and the Colombian government, mediated by international facilitators (Norway, Switzerland, and Spain).³⁶ In 2006 and 2007, these talks began to address substantive issues such as forced displacement, a cease-fire, and amnesty for imprisoned ELN combatants, and the parties reached agreement on a demining initiative in Samaniego, Nariño. By the end of 2007, however, following Chávez's call to grant the ELN belligerent status, and given last-minute changes inserted by government peace commissioner Restrepo into the basic agreement that was just about to be signed, talks were put on indefinite hold. As of this writing, discussions between the ELN and the government of Colombia have halted, and there are indications that some ELN fronts, particularly in the Nariño region, have entered the drug-trafficking arena full force. As with the stymied efforts for a humanitarian accord, the impasse has left civil society grappling to find a way to move forward.

Although there is little movement toward formal negotiations between the guerrillas and the government at the national level, a variety of track II initiatives are under way as churches, other non-governmental groups, and local and regional authorities throughout Colombia seek peace—often in alliance with disempowered groups. These groups are designing and implementing programs that offer alternatives to violence and promote attitudes

³⁴The ELN emerged in the 1960s in northeastern Colombia with the support of urban middle-class students, oil workers, and priests inspired by Catholic liberation theology and the Cuban Revolution. Its vision and revolutionary project reflect these origins.

³⁵See Andrés Valencia Benavides, *The Peace Process in Colombia with the ELN: The Role of Mexico*, Latin American Program Special Report (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, March 2006), www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/Mexico's%20Role%20in%20the%20ELN%20Peace%20Process1.pdf (accessed September 22, 2008).

³⁶See Arnson et al., *Colombia's Peace Processes*, 5.

and structures that may help create a more inclusive political system capable of managing conflict nonviolently. At the local level, Colombians have carried out delicate negotiations with armed actors to release kidnap victims, prevent the displacement of communities, and allow safe passage of foods and medicines past armed blockades. Citizen initiatives have promoted electoral debates, addressed corruption, and created institutional vehicles for local populations to contribute to the formation of municipal and national economic-development plans and to hold local authorities accountable to their campaign promises. Peace communities, peace laboratories, zones of peace, no-conflict zones, humanitarian zones, sanctuary churches, and territories of nonviolence (or peace or peaceful coexistence) are flourishing in some of the most vulnerable conflict zones in Colombia. Governors of the southern states have developed proposals for a negotiated settlement to the conflict, as well as a development plan that proposes regional alternatives—including crop substitution and the development of small microenterprises based on traditional indigenous and Afro-Colombian agricultural practices—to the current fumigation policies of the central government. Mayors are seeking paths to more participatory governance and greater community input into development decisions. Youths have emerged as a source of tremendous dynamism in the quest for peace, spearheading drives for popular education and increased citizen engagement. Dozens of “municipalities of peace” have been established that have in turn led to a proliferation of constituent assemblies at the municipal and regional levels. These new structures are increasing citizen engagement, deepening the nature of democratic governance, and enhancing accountability in Colombia.

Project Overview

This volume brings together the experiences and insights of more than thirty seasoned and emerging authors. More than half the authors of this volume hail from Latin America (especially Colombia), with the remainder from the United States and Europe. Contributors include journalists, policy analysts, church leaders, human rights and development practitioners, and scholars who have engaged in or studied peace initiatives from a variety of historical, regional, and disciplinary perspectives, including political science, anthropology, history, psychology, education, and peace and conflict studies. Documenting and drawing lessons from Colombia’s persistent struggles for peace, the authors provide a veritable encyclopedia of experiences in peacemaking and peacebuilding for those seeking to transform violent conflicts in other parts of the world.

The chapters have been separated into five major sections (framed by an introduction and conclusion) that focus on the different levels of peacemaking and peacebuilding. These sections address peace initiatives involving national actors and activities, institutional and sectoral initiatives, the role of

gender and ethnicity in peacebuilding, local and regional initiatives, and the multiple roles of the international community in Colombia's search for peace. These areas sometimes overlap, and the divisions between them are often porous, but this arrangement lends itself to a variety of new analytical approaches to peace initiatives.

Following this introduction, Part I provides the historical context within which the conflict and initiatives for peace have evolved at the national level. It establishes a series of frameworks for interpreting the practices of governments, civil society, and armed actors over time and evaluates national peace efforts and processes. This section includes an assessment of the evolution of a national civil society movement for peace in Colombia as well as an analysis of official government peace initiatives in the past quarter century. Finally, it provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution of the two largest guerrilla groups active in Colombia today and of the paramilitary umbrella group AUC, which has recently demobilized. It reviews how Colombian norms and laws relating to truth, justice, and reparations have evolved with changing international norms of transitional justice and human rights and discusses the implications of these trends for future negotiations with illegal armed actors.

Part II includes case studies of specific peace initiatives occurring within the context of particular institutions and sectors of Colombian society. These include studies of efforts to promote peace through education, including government and non-governmental initiatives. They analyze the role of the Colombian Catholic Church in preparing the ground for peace and promoting reconciliation, and the institutional goals and structures that have emerged from within the church in response to the ongoing violence. Finally, the section includes case studies of the private sector's current and potential role in peacebuilding.

Part III is dedicated to the ways that gender and ethnicity are mobilized on behalf of peacebuilding. These chapters analyze the development of women's organizations for peace in Colombia, the indigenous traditions of resistance and mediation in the resource-rich and highly conflictive Cauca Department, and the evolution of community-based municipal development proposals known as *Planes de Vida* among the Cofán people in the Putumayo region.

Part IV provides further sampling of regional and local initiatives for peace that have persisted and blossomed in the midst of conflict like desert flowers on sandy rocks. This section discusses how the tremendous variations in natural and human resources have imbued peace initiatives with regional dimensions. It analyzes the peace communities that have emerged throughout Colombia and places these local zones of peace within a broader context of current definitions and assumptions in the conflict-resolution field. This section then turns to the particular inflections of peace initiatives in four of the most conflicted regions of Colombia: the Middle Magdalena Valley, Eastern Antioquia (*Oriente Antioqueño*), the Montes de María region of

the northern coast, and Putumayo. In the first three regions, innovative programs known as “peace laboratories” are being piloted with the support of the European Union, the World Bank, and the Colombian government. Each of Colombia’s three peace laboratories builds on existing development and peace programs linked through the national Network of Regional Development and Peace Programs (REDPRODEPAZ). In the marginalized southwestern state of Putumayo, an area on the Ecuadoran border dominated by the FARC and marked by the vagaries of coca cultivation and the war against drugs, local authorities have joined forces with sectors of civil society to forge a precarious coalition in opposition to all the armed actors.

In Part V, policy analysts from both sides of the Atlantic analyze the role of internationals in the search for peace in Colombia. The first case study of this section analyzes the implementation of the UNDP’s Reconciliation and Development (REDES) program in Montes de María and analyzes the complex dynamics of international and local collaboration in promoting sustainable development and peace on the northern coast of Colombia. Subsequent chapters look respectively at U.S. government and U.S. NGO policies toward and practices in Colombia, the involvement of European governments and institutions—particularly the European Union—in Colombian peace initiatives, and an ongoing project of the Norwegian government to “skill” Colombia’s security forces in international humanitarian law, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

The Conclusion analyzes the scope and texture of peace initiatives presented in the volume. It provides a framework for evaluating these initiatives, analyzes the factors that appear to contribute to their success or failure, teases out lessons for Colombia and elsewhere, and calls on internationals to find ways to support and strengthen these fragile and innovative endeavors. Finally, it points to new avenues where further research is needed.

The contributors to this volume offer a vision and an assessment of Colombia’s historical and current experiences in peacemaking, peacebuilding, and negotiating with armed actors. They explore the ways in which civil society is engaged in conflict prevention, management, and transformation; human rights protection and promotion; peacemaking (prenegotiating); negotiating; and other peacebuilding activities. They provide insights into the negotiating practices of Colombia’s armed actors, and what incentives might bring them to the peace table, and they suggest the need to understand more clearly the relationship between track I and track II peace efforts, as well as the need to build on synergies between the various sectors and levels of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Attempts to transform the Colombian conflict are as complex as the conflict itself. Nonetheless, peace initiatives such as those discussed in this volume merit greater consideration than they have heretofore received, for they may well contain the seeds for the conflict’s transformation.