



COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

COLOMBIA



*Colorful Colombian Bus
Flickr / Pedro Szekely*



COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE | COLOMBIA



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*Jardín, Colombia
Flickr / Pedro Szekely*

Chapter 1 | Colombia In Perspective

Geography

Introduction

From towering mountain peaks capped with glaciers to lowland rainforests awash in a diversity of plant and animal life, Colombia is a jumble of geographic extremes. Much of its highly urban population lives in cities on the highland plains of the Andes Mountains and along its Caribbean coastline. Given Colombia's complex topography and the extreme climatic conditions in some areas, transportation has been problematic until relatively recent times. Some rural areas remain nearly as remote as they were hundreds of years ago.^{1, 2}

Colombia occupies the northwestern region of South America and is the gateway nation to Central America. It is the only South American country to have ports on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. While much of eastern Colombia is relatively unpopulated, the Cordilleran mountain range is home to three of South America's largest cities: Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín.^{3, 4, 5} Colombia's total population of over 46.7 million people is packed into an area slightly less than twice the size of Texas. The only other Latin American nations to boast larger populations are Brazil and Mexico.^{6, 7}

Politically, Colombia has one of the region's longest democratic traditions. Unfortunately, internal violent conflicts have been a Colombian tradition as well. Local rural insurgencies staged by guerilla groups during recent decades have severely tested the government and military. Amid this background of ongoing conflict, paramilitary self-defense organizations have become increasingly active. Drug cartels emerged during the 1970s, using terrorism and bribery to shield themselves from interdiction efforts by local and national police and the military. Ultimately, the activities of all these groups began to overlap and work at cross-purposes, as revenues from drug trafficking became a favored means of both financing the insurgencies and fighting against them.^{8, 9}

The level of violence in Colombia has decreased, as several guerilla organizations have put down their guns or have weakened due to desertions. Counter-narcotics raids have been somewhat successful. While Colombia is no longer the largest cocaine supplier, the nation remains a major supplier of much of the heroin sold in eastern regions of the United States.^{10, 11, 12, 13}

Geographic Regions and Topographic Features

Mountains

Separating the western and eastern regions of the country are the northern ranges of the Andes Mountains. Within Colombia, the Andes divide into three roughly parallel branches. Moving from west to east, these are the Cordillera Occidental, the Cordillera Central, and the Cordillera Oriental. Steep river valleys divide the three Cordilleras; the Río Cauca lies between the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Central, and the Río Magdalena separates the Cordillera Central from the Cordillera Oriental.



*Snow-capped mountains of Colombia
Flickr / Russ Bowling*

Several volcanic peaks in the Cordillera Central are some of the highest points in Colombia and include Nevado del Huila (5,750 m or 18,865 ft) and Nevado del Ruiz (5,400 m or 17,717 ft). The latter erupted in 1985, generating lahars (volcanic mudflows) that killed tens of thousands of people in its river valleys.^{14, 15, 16}

Although the Cordillera Occidental and Cordillera Central descend long before reaching Colombia's Caribbean coast, the Cordillera Oriental continues northward after splitting into two narrower ranges near the Venezuela border. One range continues northeastward into Venezuela, while the other range—the north-trending Sierra de Parij—forms much of Colombia's northern border with Venezuela.¹⁷ To the west of the Sierra de Parij, near the Caribbean coast, stand the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an isolated range that is not part of the Andes chains. This range includes Pico Cristbal Coln and Pico Simn Bolvar, Colombia's two highest peaks at approximately 5,775 m (18,947 ft).^{18,}

^{19, 20}

Plains

West and north of the Andes ranges, the mountains descend into plains that lie along Colombia's Pacific and Caribbean coasts. The relatively narrow Pacific coastal lowlands receive ample precipitation and support rainforest conditions. The Caribbean coastal lowlands vary in climate and terrain, from rainforest in the southwestern parts to near-desert conditions on the Guajira Peninsula in the far northeast. Both coasts feature mangrove swamps along low-lying tidal areas.^{21, 22, 23}



The plains of Colombia
Flickr / toxrn

Two-thirds of Colombia is occupied by a vast plain, east of the Cordillera Oriental. This relatively unpopulated region is characterized by two types of natural vegetation. North of the Ro Guaviare, the plains mostly consist of grasslands interspersed by riverine forests, a savannah-type complex known as the Llanos. South of the Guaviare, the region is forested and forms the northeastern limit of the Amazon rainforest.^{24, 25, 26, 27}

Climate

Most of Colombia lies within 10° of the equator; thus, seasonal differences in temperature are minimal.^{28, 29, 30} Altitude defines the temperature of each region. At an elevation of 2,640 m (8,660 ft), Colombia's capital of Bogotá is located in a *tierra fría* (cold ground) zone [roughly 1,800 to 3,600 m (5,900 to 11,800 ft)], where the average monthly high temperatures vary only from 18 to 20°C (64 to 68°F) for the entire year. Average monthly low temperatures for Bogotá modestly fluctuate from 9 to 11°C (48 to 52°F).^{31, 32} Similarly, coastal Barranquilla, elevation 100 m (330 ft), has monthly average high temperatures that vary only from 31 to 33°C (88 to 91°F), and average monthly low temperatures between 24 and 25°C (75 and 77°F).^{33, 34} Barranquilla lies in the low-altitude *tierra caliente* (hot ground) zone [0-900 m (0-3000 ft)].³⁵ Between the *tierra fría* and *tierra caliente* zones, the mid-altitude *tierra templada* (temperate ground) zone [900-1,800 m (3,000- 5,900 ft)] provides moderate average temperatures at 18-24°C (64-75°F) that make it ideal for growing coffee beans, the crop that helped initiate the growth of the *tierra templada* city of Medellín.^{36, 37}



Brief rain shower in Cartagena
Flickr / Matthew Rutledge

Precipitation follows three different patterns in Colombia. In the tropical rainforest regions of the Amazon basin, the northern Pacific coast, and the Río Magdalena valley, rainfall persists throughout the year and averages more than 250 cm (100 in) annually.^{38, 39, 40} The northern Pacific coast is the wettest of these regions; it includes the small town of Lloró, estimated to have the world's highest annual precipitation at 1,330 cm (523.6 in).^{41, 42} In many parts of the Caribbean coastal lowlands and the Llanos region of the eastern plains, precipitation occurs mostly between April and early November—a tropical savannah rainfall pattern. Here annual rainfall averages 100 to 180 cm (40 to 70 in).^{43, 44, 45} A third rainfall pattern occurs east of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Here the Guajira Peninsula, Colombia's driest region, receives less than 40 cm (15.7 in) of rain a year, mostly in October and November.^{46, 47, 48}

Rivers and Lakes

Colombia has an extensive network of rivers, of which the economically most important has historically been the Río Magdalena. The Magdalena River originates in the Andes and flows 1,497 km (930 mi) northward between the Cordillera Central and Cordillera Oriental before entering the Caribbean coastal lowlands, where it flows into the sea near the city of Barranquilla. The extensive Magdalena River Basin covers nearly one-fourth of Colombia's land area.^{49, 50, 51, 52} The 1,349 km (838 mi) Río Cauca is the main tributary of the Magdalena, and for much of its length its narrow river valley separates the Cordillera Occidental from the Cordillera Central. The Cauca ultimately flows into the floodplains of the Magdalena roughly 200 km (124 mi) due south of Barranquilla.^{53, 54, 55}



Río Magdalena
Flickr / A*

Colombia's rivers on the eastern plains flow generally eastward off the slopes of the Cordillera Oriental. The rivers of the northern parts of the plains (i.e., the Llanos region) feed into the Río Orinoco, which serves as the Colombia-Venezuela border along the northward-flowing middle stretch. Prominent among Colombia's Orinoco tributaries are the Ríos Arauca and Meta (which also serve as border rivers with Venezuela), and the Río Guaviare further south.^{56, 57}

The Amazon River (Río Amazonas) receives the river waters that flow through Colombia's southeastern plains. Among these rivers are the Putumayo (which forms Colombia's southern boundary with Peru), Caquetá, and Vaupés. The Vaupés briefly marks the boundary between Colombia and Brazil before flowing into the Río Negro, the largest of the Amazon tributaries.^{58, 59}

Most of the rivers flowing off the western slopes of the Cordillera Occidental are short and rapid. Almost all, including the Paría, Mira, and San Juan, flow into the Pacific Ocean. The exception is Río Atrato which flows northward to the Caribbean Sea, because its path to the Pacific is blocked by coastal mountains.^{60, 61, 62}

Most of Colombia's lakes are relatively small by world standards. The nation's largest and highest natural lake is Laguna del Tota, which occupies 56 sq km (22 sq mi) of a Cordillera Oriental basin at an elevation of 3,015 m (9,980 ft).^{63, 64}

Major Cities

City	Population 2015 ⁶⁵
Bogotá	7,674,366
Cali	2,392,877
Medellín	1,999,979
Barranquilla	1,380,425
Cartagena	952,024
Cúcuta	721,398
Bucaramanga	571,820

Bogotá

Situated in a highland basin of the Cordillera Oriental, Bogotá is one of the highest capital cities in the world.⁶⁶ The city was founded as Santa Fé de Bacatá by the Spanish explorer / conquistador Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada in 1538. The new Spanish settlement was located on the site of Bacatá, the center of the indigenous Muisca culture. “Bacatá” was soon corrupted to “Bogotá.” By 1717, Santa Fé de Bogotá had become the capital of the new Spanish Viceroyalty of el Nuevo Reino de Granada (“the New Kingdom of Granada”), a vast colony encompassing modern-day Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela.^{67, 68, 69, 70}



*Colorful architecture in Bogotá
Flickr / Pedro Szekely*

Santa Fé de Bogotá remained a capital city after the Spanish were overthrown in a revolt that culminated in 1819. During the initial period of independence, the city’s name became shortened to its modern-day version.^{71, 72} Despite Bogotá’s central political role, however, the city initially grew slowly. Its development slowed by earthquakes, periodic epidemics, and geographic isolation.^{73, 74}

Bogotá began to emerge as a modern metropolis during the 1930s, when the city became a center of the nation’s growing manufacturing sector. Expanding governmental services led to employment growth in the city’s public agencies.

Continuing rural violence and decreasing demand for agricultural workers also led to a large peasant migration to the city during this time.⁷⁵ In 1948, parts of the city were destroyed by massive riots known as *El Bogotazo*, triggered by the assassination of Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.^{76, 77, 78}

Today, Bogotá is a commercial, financial, educational, and cultural center, in addition to its continuing role as the nation's political capital. Modern highways now connect the city with all major Colombian cities, and Bogotá's El Dorado International Airport is by far the nation's busiest. It is also the hub for Avianca, Colombia's national air carrier.⁷⁹

Cali

Cali is the southernmost large city in Colombia's mountain region. Founded in 1536 as Santiago de Cali by Spanish explorer/conquistador Sebastián de Belalcázar, Cali was a late bloomer.⁸⁰ Until the early 20th century, the city was secondary in regional importance to Popayán, which is located south of Cali at a higher, more hospitable altitude.^{81, 82} Cali's early economy centered on ranching, and then the nearby sugarcane plantations.^{83, 84} As railroad connections improved, Cali became the capital of the newly created Valle del Cauca Department and a local commercial center. By the 1940s, a manufacturing sector developed, utilizing local agricultural resources in industries such as food processing, paper production, and textiles.^{85, 86} The region's agricultural productivity and industrial growth were supported by the construction during the 1950s of a large-scale water project for the upper Cauca River region, which generated hydroelectric power and helped bring marginally cultivatable farmlands into production.⁸⁷



Cali, Colombia
Flickr / Maria Camacho

Like Medellín, Cali was associated with a drug-trafficking cartel during the 1980s and 1990s, albeit a much more low-profile organization that was more likely to use political bribery rather than violence as a means to avoid arrest or extradition.⁸⁸ The Cali cartel, the world's largest drug trafficking, was broken up only a few years after Pablo Escobar's Medellín-based drug empire was crushed.^{89, 90}

Today, the city is a major cultural center. It is also the Afro-Colombian capital and home too one of largest populations of the descendants of African slaves in Colombia.^{91, 92} For music lovers, Cali is known as one of the world's salsa music capitals, and the city's numerous *salsotecas* in the Juanchito district, located 12 km (7.5 mi) east of downtown, are among the best-known dance halls showcasing Cali's top salsa performers.^{93, 94, 95}

Medellín



Medellín, Colombia
Flickr / George Donnelly

Medellín sits at an elevation of 1,500 m (5,000 ft) along the Porce River in northwestern Colombia. Founded as a mining town in 1675, for much of its first two centuries the city was a sleepy provincial backwater, serving as the capital of Antioquia Department.^{96, 97} The city's first major growth spurt came during the late 19th century, when it became a marketing center for the nearby coffee plantations that were emerging as part of a colonization effort. The railroad soon arrived, and then,

in the early 20th century, a second boom occurred as Medellín became a major center of the textile industry.^{98, 99}

Modern Medellín is a largely industrial city and one of the nation's largest. Although it has a broad industrial base that includes food processing, metallurgical products, automobile manufacturing, chemicals, and rubber products, the city is heavily dependent on its steel industry.¹⁰⁰

Few cities have suffered through larger public relations problems than Medellín during the 1980s and 1990s. The city became notorious then as the headquarters of the nation's largest and most violent cocaine cartel, led by the ruthless Medellín native Pablo Escobar. For several years, the city had one of the world's highest homicide rates. Escobar's death in 1993 and the collapse of his cartel generated only a gradual decline in the city's crime rate, as the city continued to be wracked by violence between leftist guerrilla groups and right-wing paramilitary organizations. These groups often became the new employers of the former cartel hitmen who hailed from Medellín's poorest barrios.^{101, 102, 103}

For many, this portrait of Medellín remains as the city’s lasting image, but today’s Medellín no longer resembles the city of the Escobar era. In recent years, the murder rate has dropped between 80% and 90% from its peaks in the early 1990s. Medellín has become one of Colombia’s safer cities. Officials, however, admit such gains are difficult to maintain as gang violence plagues the city.^{104, 105, 106} Major investments have been made in the city’s infrastructure, particularly in some of the poorer neighborhoods, and social and educational training programs have been implemented to reintegrate former guerrilla fighters and paramilitary members into nonviolent pursuits.^{107, 108, 109, 110}

Barranquilla

Barranquilla is Colombia’s largest coastal city and the nation’s leading port on the Caribbean Sea. It lies 15 km upstream from the mouth of the Río Magdalena.^{111, 112} For much of the city’s early history, its importance as a port was overshadowed by Cartagena, which captured much of the river trade via the Canal del Dique (constructed by the Spanish, beginning in 1650). In the 1890s, a 15-km (9-mi) railway was completed, linking Barranquilla to the ocean pier at Puerto Colombia, the foremost Colombian seaport at that time.^{113, 114} In the 1930s, an ocean canal was completed through the Magdalena’s mouth, further solidifying Barranquilla’s importance as a sea and river port.^{115, 116} However, by the end of the 1940s, the Magdalena’s importance as a trade route declined as road improvements in the mountain regions and the development of the Pacific port of Buenaventura shifted much of Colombia’s trade to its western coast.¹¹⁷



*Barranquilla, Colombia
Flickr / Denis Jacquerye*

Nevertheless, the Barranquilla port continues to handle significant amounts of coffee and petroleum exports from Colombia’s interior, as well as cotton from nearby regions.

Natural-gas pipelines from the fields in northern Colombia terminate here as well. In addition, manufacturing has become a significant part of the local economy, in industries such as textiles, clothing, shoes, beverages, chemicals, and cardboard.^{118, 119}

Although Barranquilla is not a tourism magnet most of the year, the city’s 4-day Carnival celebration before the start of Lent is Colombia’s most festive celebration.

In 2008, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized the cultural importance of the Barranquilla Carnival by placing it on the organization’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.^{120, 121}

Cartagena

Cartagena was founded in 1533 and for much of Colombia’s early colonial history, Cartagena (technically, “Cartagena de Indias” to distinguish it from Cartagena, Spain) was one of the most important Spanish ports in the colony of New Granada. Spanish galleons transported gold and other valuables taken from the Colombian interior, a lucrative trade that soon attracted British, French, and Dutch pirates.^{122, 123}



Cartagena, Colombia
Flickr / ho visto nina volare

During the Spanish era, the port also became the main point of debarkation for African slaves being transported to sugar plantations and silver mines. Because of frequent pirate attacks, massive fortifications were built around the city’s port, much of which stands today. The huge defensive walls now enclose the cobbled streets of Cartagena’s “old city,” one of the most concentrated areas of colonial buildings from the era of the Spanish Main.¹²⁴

Cartagena became the first area of New Granada to declare independence from Spain in 1811, followed by several years of fighting and subsequent re-occupation by the Spanish. The city began to decline during the 1830s as Santa Marta, and later Barranquilla, began to usurp inland trade flowing on the Río Magdalena.^{125, 126} A cholera outbreak in 1849 is estimated to have killed one-third of the population and further diminished Cartagena’s economic standing.¹²⁷ Fortunately, the development of oil fields along the Río Magdalena valley in the early 20th century helped turn Cartagena’s fortunes around when a pipeline was built to Bahía de Cartagena.¹²⁸ One of the nation’s largest oil refineries was built near the terminus of the pipeline, making the city the nation’s main oil port.^{129, 130, 131}

Environmental Concerns

Deforestation and Soil Erosion

Colombia holds one of the world's great depositories of forest lands, containing a vast variety of animal and plant life. Deforestation is an ongoing concern, despite the fact that over half of Colombia's total land area.^{132,}

¹³³ The government's lack of authority in some of Colombia's most forested regions, where guerrilla and paramilitary groups have concentrated their activities, partially explains why the efforts to define vast protected areas have often failed.^{134, 135} Some of the threats to



Deforestation in Colombia
Wikimedia / Matt Zimmermam

Colombia's forests include illegal lumber and firewood harvesting in the Amazon and Chocó (Pacific coastal) forests, illicit cultivation of drug crops in isolated parts of national parks, overuse of pesticides, and use of herbicides to eliminate coca fields. The refinement of coca plants into cocaine, which usually is carried out in remote areas, has also introduced dangerous chemicals into local soil and water supplies.^{136,}
^{137, 138} Progress is being made, however; in 2014, the Colombian government reported that the rate of deforestation had dropped below recent averages.¹³⁹

Soil erosion, frequently resulting from deforestation, is one of Colombia's severest environmental issues. A study in the 1990s revealed that 48% of Colombia's land had experienced at least some level of soil degradation. While soil erosion negatively affects agricultural yields, it also inhibits the local retention of water for human uses. As a result of this problem, it is estimated that 65% of Colombia's cities and towns will face water shortages by 2015.^{140, 141}

Pollution

Air pollution in Colombia is becoming an increasingly serious problem causing more than 6,000 premature deaths in the nation each year. The problem is particularly acute in Bogotá where air pollution related respiratory diseases are the leading cause of death among children. The city's high elevation and more than 1.4 million automobiles are the main culprits.¹⁴²

The city has responded with public transportation initiatives, including the promotion of bicycling as an alternative, and was one of the world's first major cities to institute (and enforce) annual car-free days. Non-motorized transport in the city rose from 8% in 1998 to 19% in 2006.^{143, 144} Sulfur dioxide levels remain high, however, even on car-free days, because of the high-sulfur-content diesel fuel produced by the national refineries. Ecopetrol, Colombia's national oil company, announced plans to reduce the sulfur content of Bogotá's diesel fuel from 1,000 ppm to 50 ppm.^{145, 146, 147, 148}



*Smog in Bogotá
Flickr / Micah MacAllen*

Water pollution is also a concern. Virtually all household wastewater, 85% of industrial waste (including those from mining operations) and 95% of agricultural effluents are discharged into streams, lakes, and rivers. In 2011, the national health institute declared that about 13% of the departments (states) provided safe drinking water. Half of the departments had contaminated drinking water and 15% of departments had water rated as “high risk.”^{149, 150, 151} The waters of the nation's largest lake, Lake Tota, are heavily polluted by sewage, pesticide runoff, and industry.¹⁵²

Natural Hazards

Volcanoes and Earthquakes



*Volcano near Le Galeras, Colombia
Flickr / Josecamilom*

Colombia's volcanic peaks are part of the Andean Volcanic Belt, a section of the Ring of Fire that is made up of numerous volcanic mountain chains along the continental margins of the Pacific Ocean.¹⁵³ In the Andean Volcanic Belt, the eastward-moving oceanic Nazca plate is pushed beneath the westward-moving continental South American plate. This produces a chain of volcanoes that extend northward all the way to central Colombia.^{154, 155}

There are 15 active volcanoes scattered throughout Colombia.¹⁵⁶ From northeast to southwest, these peaks include Nevado del Ruiz, Nevado del Tolima, Nevado del Huila, Puracé, Doña Juana, Galeras, and Cumbal.^{157, 158}

In 1985, an eruption of Nevado del Ruiz buried the downslope town of Armero under a mud and debris flow (lahar) produced by meltwaters from summit glaciers. Approximately 25,000 people lost their lives, making this volcanic eruption one of the world's five most deadly volcanic eruptions since 1500 C.E.^{159, 160, 161} Galeras is now one of Colombia's most active volcanoes, having rained volcanic ashes on the nearby city of Pasto in February 2009.^{162, 163}

Colombia's proximity to major plate boundaries also creates earthquake risks. In January 1999, portions of the Central Cordillera cities of Armenia and, to a lesser extent, Pereira were destroyed by a magnitude 6.2 earthquake.¹⁶⁴ This earthquake was the largest in Colombia's history, leaving nearly 1,200 people dead, 8,000 people injured, and more than 100,000 structures damaged.¹⁶⁵ In 1983, another devastating earthquake occurred further south in the city of Popayán, killing over 300 people and leaving 70% of the city's buildings damaged.¹⁶⁶ In March 2015, a magnitude 6.2 quake centered about 280 km (175 mi) north of Bogotá. Although there were no reported injuries, infrastructure and some buildings were damaged.^{167, 168}

Drought, Floods, and Landslides

Drought is becoming an increasingly severe problem for the nation. Climate change has reportedly contributed to drought, reducing river flow and leaving some reservoirs at 40% capacity. The provinces of La Guajira and Casanare have been particularly hard hit. The most recent drought in Casanare led several reservoirs to dry up and killed over 20,000 animals.^{169, 170} In 2014, droughts in La Guajira province triggered riots demanding the government do more to help ease the water shortage.¹⁷¹



*Flooding in Cartagena
Flickr / Hembo Pagi*

Landslides and flooding also pose risks. In the months of May and June 2015, 215 natural disasters related to wind, floods, landslides, and hail affected hundreds of thousands across the country.¹⁷² A flash flood killed more than 80 people in the town of Salgar in the western region of the nation.^{173, 174, 175}

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Endnotes for Chapter 1: Geography

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Colombia in Perspective

Chapter 1 | Geography

Assessment

1. The northern ranges of the Andes Mountains separate western and eastern regions of Colombia.
2. Altitude plays the key role in defining the temperature range of Colombia's regions.
3. Bogotá is one of the highest capital cities in the world.
4. For much of Colombia's early colonial history, Cartagena was one of Spain's least important ports.
5. Although the Andean Volcanic Belt extends northward to Central Colombia, the country has no active volcanoes.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



Carib family
Wikipedia / Public Domain

Chapter 2 | Colombia in Perspective

History

Introduction

The history of Colombia, like many other countries in the region, is complex and violent. For thousands of years, indigenous tribes lived in the area that is now modern-day Colombia. Most relied on fishing, hunting, or farming for their survival. The first Spanish explorer reached the region in 1500 but it would take another 33 years before a permanent Spanish settlement was established. For the next 275 years, the Spanish ruled the country. Near the turn of the 19th century, France defeated the Spain in Europe setting off Colombian calls for independence.^{1, 2, 3}

Colombia's first period of independence was brief and lasted only five years.

Approximately three years later, in 1819, Colombia became part of the Republic of Greater Colombia which also included Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela. The new nation dissolved within nine years, however, when Ecuador and Venezuela left the alliance. As tensions frayed the region, violence became a matter of course through the 19th century which saw eight civil wars. As the liberals and conservatives jockeyed for power in Colombia, the political instability finally erupted into a violent civil war in 1899. Finally, in 1903, Panama broke away from Colombia and the current borders were established.^{4, 5, 6}



*A map of Gran Colombia
Wikipedia / Public Domain*

In the early parts of the 20th century, peace settled across the region and the nation began to develop a thriving economy. That peace would end in 1948 when civil war once again broke out. A tentative peace emerged as the country's two main parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, agreed to a power-sharing arrangement in 1957. In the meantime, guerilla groups appeared on the scene in the 1960s. By the 1970s, drug cartels began operations in the region. Violence would continue until about 2002 with the demise of the cartels and a strengthening economy. Today, peace and prosperity are making a cautious return to the nation.^{7, 8, 9}

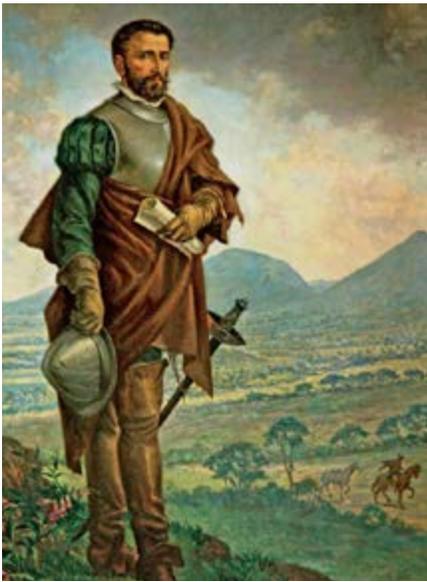
Pre-European Colombia

Early indigenous groups populated Colombia from around 11000 B.C.E. By 3000 B.C.E., more defined patterns of life developed along the Caribbean coast. Later, indigenous groups began to move inland, living in small settlements. Around 500 B.C.E, as agriculture developed, new groups moved into the region bringing a more developed culture and technology.¹⁰ By the time the Spanish arrived in 1530, approximately three to four million people lived in the region.^{11, 12} Of these, the Muisca and the Tairona, part of the Chibcha peoples, were the most advanced.¹³

The Muisca, who lived mainly in the plateaus regions, were the dominant Chibchan people. They had organized into two confederations ruled by higher chiefs (the Zipa and the Zaque), whose domains were centered on the modern-day cities of Bogotá and Tunja.^{14, 15} The Tairona were concentrated in the Andean highland areas such as the Cordillera Oriental, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the southern reaches

of the Cordillera Central as well as along the Caribbean coast.^{16, 17} Other groups also lived in the region including the Carib and Arawak peoples. Only a few thousand Carib-speaking descendants survive, most of whom are part of the Yukpa tribe living along the northern Colombia-Venezuela border.^{18, 19} The Arawak-speaking tribes also lived in lowland areas, mostly in the eastern plains (the Llanos region and the Amazon basin), and the Guajira Peninsula. The Wayúu of the Guajira Peninsula, whose language is known as Guajiro, are the only Colombian Arawakan group with a substantial population of an indigenous people.^{20, 21}

Spanish Conquests



Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada
Wikipedia / Public Domain

The earliest European reconnaissance of the modern-day Colombian Caribbean coast came in 1499, when the Spaniard Alonso de Ojeda, accompanied by his cartographer and pilot Juan de la Cosa, sailed along the Guajira Peninsula.^{22, 23} Over the next 10 years, several Spanish voyages by Ojeda, de la Cosa, and Rodrigo de Bastidas resulted in the first encounters with the indigenous peoples of the Colombian coastal regions, with sometimes unfortunate results for the Spaniards. A disastrous attempt by Ojeda and de la Cosa to establish a colony at Cartagena in 1509 left de la Cosa dead and Ojeda injured and forced into a hasty retreat.^{24, 25} Sixteen years later, the Spanish colonization of Colombia began in earnest when Bastidas founded the port of Santa Marta. A second Spanish port on Colombia's Caribbean coast was

established in 1533 at Cartagena by Pedro de Heredia, and within a relatively short time it became the center of Spanish trade along the coast.^{26, 27}

From Santa Marta, a Spanish expedition led by Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada set out in 1536 to venture up the Río Magdalena. In March 1537, Quesada and his men reached the high mountain tablelands inhabited by the Muisca. Not long thereafter, they were reaping emeralds and gold after having sacked the Muisca capitals near present-day Bogotá and Tunja.^{28, 29, 30, 31}

Two other groups of Europeans joined Quesada. From the region of Quito, Spaniard Sebastián de Belalcázar traveled northward to the Cordillera Central settlement of Popayán, and then traversed eastward and northward through the upper Río Magdalena

Valley. Meanwhile, the German Nicolás Federmann reached the plains of Cordillera Oriental after two years of travel through the eastern plains from the Venezuelan coast.^{32, 33, 34}

Early Spanish Colonialism

In 1549, Santa Fé de Bogotá became the seat of an *audiencia*, a Spanish legislative and judicial council for administering Spain's new colonial holdings in the Americas. However, the Cordillera Oriental's isolation from other mountain regions to the west and from the Caribbean coast limited Bogotá's effective administrative reach. By 1563, an *audiencia* established in Quito gave the modern-day Ecuadoran capital administrative control over western Colombian highland towns, such as Popayán, Pasto, and Cali.³⁵ In the Cordillera Oriental, agricultural products and textiles woven by the indigenous populations became the core of the region's economy. The labor of the indigenous peoples was secured through the *encomienda* tributary system that functioned as virtual slavery for the Indian peasants beholden to the Spanish deputies (*encomenderos*).^{36, 37}

To the west, in the Cordillera Occidental, Cordillera Central, and the Río Cauca valley, gold mining remained important for a longer period of time. Initially, the indigenous people were employed in mining operations, but as their numbers dwindled, African slaves were imported to work in the western gold mines.^{38, 39} In the eastern and western portions of the Colombian Cordilleras, the indigenous peoples increasingly became culturally assimilated with the Spanish, primarily through the Roman Catholic Church and intermarriage.^{40, 41}

Colombia's Caribbean coast was dominated during the early colonial period by the port of Cartagena, where gold was the principal export and slaves the most valuable import. After 1650, the Canal del Dique helped provide a cheap all-water route inland from Cartagena to the river ports of the Magdalena, but poor maintenance inhibited the canal's usefulness for long periods of time.^{42, 43, 44}



Map of Cartagena, 1585
Wikipedia / Public Domain

The Viceroyalty of New Granada



Pedro Messía de la Cerda, Viceroy of New Granada
Wikipedia / Public Domain

In the early 18th century, the Bourbons came to power in Spain which soon found itself embroiled in a series of wars with England. Spain's increasing need to finance its military campaigns meant that it required more revenues from its colonial outposts in the Americas. One consequence was the establishment of the Viceroyalty of New Granada which included most of Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Santa Fé de Bogotá became the new vice regal capital, furthering its importance as a colonial governmental center despite its remoteness.^{45, 46}

Later, the Bourbons expanded the number of Spanish and Spanish-American ports that could trade with Cartagena. This increased demand for New Granadan exports other than silver or gold. However, British blockades on Caribbean shipping during its numerous wars with Spain lessened the effectiveness of the new free trade reforms, and contraband shipping continued as the norm during these periods of conflict.^{47, 48, 49}

The Late Colonial Period

During the second half of the 18th century, colonists became increasingly dissatisfied with the economic and tax policies in New Granada. Protests erupted eventually culminating in the Comunero Revolt of 1781.^{50, 51} This spontaneous rebellion began in the small Cordillera Oriental town of Socorro as a reaction against rising tobacco and polling taxes. Ultimately, it spread all the way to Santa Fé de Bogotá, where the rebels presented a list of 35 demands, including greater participation of American-born Spaniards (criollos) in governmental administration and increased protections for the lands of the indigenous people.^{52, 53, 54}



Cordillera Oriental town of Socorro
Flickr / Diego Torquemada

The city's archbishop, the highest ranking official in the capital, quickly agreed but the Spanish viceroy later declared these concessions invalid after the rebel leaders left the capital.⁵⁵

Between 1790 and 1810, Spain and England were almost constantly at war. In New Granada, some of the criollo elites, who now formed an American-born merchant class, became increasingly frustrated by the frequent interruptions in regional trade due to Spanish-English hostilities. New political ideas began to surface and though active rebellion did not occur, criticism of and dissatisfaction with the relationship between New Granada and Spain grew.^{56, 57, 58}

Independence

In 1808, Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Spanish monarchy signaling an end to Spanish rule in the Americas. Within a few years, New Granada began to fragment, as movements began in several cities to form regional governments separate from Spain. The first modern-day Colombian city to do so was Cartagena in June 1810, followed weeks later by several other cities, including Santa Fé de Bogotá.^{59, 60, 61} July 20, the date in 1810 when Bogotá's removed their Spanish governors, is celebrated today as Colombia's Independence Day.^{62, 63}



Simon Bolívar
Wikipedia / Public Domain

Regional rivalries and infighting over the form of central government soon preoccupied the leaders of the newly autonomous regions. Some favored a loose, provincially oriented federalist system while others argued for a strong, centrally administered government. As they argued, Spanish royalists regrouped and retook some of the autonomous regions. Even the legendary Venezuelan revolutionary leader Simon Bolívar was unable to unite the badly divided rebel forces. Frustrated, Bolívar resigned his post in 1815 and went into exile in Jamaica.^{64, 65, 66} That same year, Spanish King Ferdinand VII sent a huge military force to Venezuela, launching a successful siege of Cartagena.⁶⁷ By 1816, most of the populated areas of New Granada had returned to Spanish control, and the remnants of the independence forces reestablished themselves in the inhospitable grassland plains of the Llanos.^{68,}

^{69, 70}

From 1816 to 1819, the Spanish exacted vengeance on rebels and their supporters. The harsh retribution led to bitter anti-Spanish reactions from many New Granadans, including some who had not been active in the initial independence movement. A turning point came in 1819 when rebels, led by Bolívar defeated the Spanish at the Battle of Boyacá, near Bogotá. Although pockets of royalist resistance, especially near the southern city of Pasto, continued for several years, the Spanish defeat at Boyacá marked the beginning of the end for the Spanish colony of New Granada.^{71, 72, 73}

Gran Colombia

Revolutionary congresses in several cities were held to plan the government and constitution of the new Republic of Gran Colombia. Once again, sharp disagreements over the form of the new government emerged. Bolívar, the new republic's first president, successfully lobbied to adopt a centralist system. Bogotá was named the republic's capital.^{74, 75, 76}

Gran Colombia, which originally encompassed virtually all the modern countries of Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador, did not last long. In 1826, Venezuelan General José Antonio Paéz led a rebellion against Gran Colombia. Bolívar's attempts legally to make himself president for life failed. Nevertheless, he declared himself the Liberator President and seized dictatorial power. Opponents tried to assassinate Bolívar in 1828 but failed.⁷⁷ In failing health, Bolívar resigned in 1830. He died later that year and shortly thereafter Gran Colombia' dissolved into the separate states of New Granada (modern-day Colombia and Panama), Venezuela, and Ecuador.^{78, 79}



Bolívar and Santander, Congress of Cúcuta
Wikipedia / Public Domain

Conservatives, Liberals, and Civil War

After Bolívar's death, political alliances developed in New Granada which continued into much of the 20th century. In 1832, following a military takeover that lasted only a few months around Bolívar's death, Santander was elected president of New Granada. Santander and his New Granada Liberal Party, favored a federalist system—granting increased powers to the provinces—rather than a government with strong central authority.

The Santanderistas generally supported moves to rein in the military and the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁰

On the other side were supporters of Bolívar, as well as moderate liberals who favored a more moderate stance toward the military and the church. These two groups formed the New Granadan Conservative Party. In the 1836 presidential election, a moderate candidate, José Ignacio Márquez, narrowly defeated Santander's hand-picked successor candidate, General José María Obando. In 1840, an angry Obando staged a rebellion in southern Colombia that spread to most of the populated areas of New Granada and continued until May 1842.⁸¹ This so-called "War of the Supremos" helped cement the strong political divisions emerging between the "liberals" and "conservatives."⁸²



Francisco de Paula Santander
Wikipedia / Public Domain

Liberal Ascendancy



Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera
Wikipedia / Public Domain

During most of the 1840s, the New Granadan presidency was held by two former Bolívar generals, Pedro Alcántara Herrán and Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera.⁸³ In the presidential election of 1848, the Liberal candidate José Hilario López won a narrow victory. Several reformist measures were passed during the López regime, including the abolition of slavery and a shift of taxing authority to the provinces.⁸⁴ Issues related to the interests of the church continued to galvanize partisan passions, and on several occasions from 1851 onward, helped spark anti-government insurrections in pockets of the country.^{85, 86}

In 1852, General Obando, back from exile in Peru, won an overwhelming victory in the presidential election. The following year, conservatives and radical liberals passed a new constitution weakening Obando's presidential powers.^{87, 88} In 1854, Obando supporters mounted a coup to reinstate Obando into a presidency with dictatorial powers.⁸⁹

The Conservatives returned to power in 1855 after a counter coup. A civil war in 1859 brought about another three years of bloody conflict. Order was finally restored in 1863 and a new federalist constitution was enacted that renamed New Granada the United States of Colombia. During this time, several anti-clerical measures were carried out by the government of General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, a former conservative president in the 1840s who by the early 1860s was firmly liberal in his beliefs. All real estate held in perpetuity by the church was seized by the government and sold on the open market.⁹⁰

Colombia 1880-1946

The Liberals remained in power until 1880, a period that was marked by instability as empowered provinces fought among themselves over territorial and economic issues.⁹¹ The period from 1880 to 1895 is now known as the Regeneration, in which Conservative governments, mostly under President Rafael Núñez, restored relations between the church and state and instituted numerous economic reforms. The government established the first national bank, invested in new industries, and increased tariffs on imports. A new, more centrist constitution also led to yet another name change for the country—the Republic of Colombia—which remains the official name.^{92, 93}



Rafael_Núñez_Moledo
Wikipedia / Public Domain

During these years, coffee became Colombia's leading export. A dramatic decline in coffee prices in the 1890s precipitated serious economic instability followed soon after by political instability after Núñez's death in 1894. Five years later, Colombia a civil war known as the War of One Thousand Days broke out. Estimates of the deaths in this conflict range from 60,000 to 130,000.⁹⁴ Shortly after the war's end, Colombia lost its province of Panama whose residents, with the support of the U.S. Navy, declared their independence.^{95, 96, 97}

The 1920s were a boom period in Colombia. Coffee exports continued to grow, and the government coffers expanded.⁹⁸ Outside investment by companies from the U.S. also established oil and bananas as new, valuable export commodities. Labor union rose in this period, providing the Liberal Party a new electoral base.^{99, 100}

In 1928, the Colombian military fired upon workers striking against the U.S. based United Fruit Company. One of the political repercussions was the defeat of the Conservative government by Liberal candidate, Enrique Olaya Herrera, in 1930. He was followed in 1934 by the more radical Liberal candidate Alfonso López Pumarejo, who promoted a series of reforms known as the “Revolution on the March.”¹⁰¹ Among these measures was a land law act in which peasant squatters could obtain title to the land they were working if the absentee landowner was not using it productively.^{102, 103}

La Violencia



Jorge Eliézer Gaitán
Wikipedia / Glasperlenspiel

Liberal control of Colombia’s government continued until 1946, when a split within the Liberal ranks allowed the moderate Conservative candidate Mariano Ospina Pérez to narrowly win the presidential election. One of the Liberal candidates was Jorge Eliézer Gaitán, who had first come to national attention in 1928 when, as a junior congressman, he delivered fiery speeches denouncing the relationship between the Colombian government and United Fruit.¹⁰⁴ After the 1946 election, politically motivated violence began to ominously increase in the countryside after several decades of relative calm. Gaitán’s assassination in 1948—occurring only two hours before he was scheduled to meet with a young Cuban law student named Fidel Castro detonated an explosion of violence around Colombia that lasted for most of the next decade.¹⁰⁵

Ultimately, La Violencia, as this period came to be known, transformed into a guerrilla war that spread throughout the countryside. The violence proved particularly brutal for those in rural areas and smaller towns, and triggered an exodus of the Colombian peasantry to the urban areas. In 1950, the doctrinaire Conservative Laureano Gómez won an uncontested presidential election (it was boycotted by the Liberals). Within a few years, he was pushing for a new constitution that Liberals and even many Conservatives felt would give him dictatorial powers.^{106, 107} Gómez was eventually removed from office by the military in 1953—Colombia’s only coup in the 20th century.¹⁰⁸

Colombia 1953-1974

Coup leader General Gustav Rojas Pinilla remained in power until 1957, when an economic crisis precipitated his resignation. A military junta ruled for the next year as Liberal and Conservative politicians negotiated a power-sharing arrangement: The two main parties would alternate the presidency for the next 16 years and would have equal representation in the nation's Congress and in cabinet positions.^{109, 110} The fruits of these negotiations were first displayed in the presidential election of 1958, when Liberal leader Alberto Lleras Camargo assumed the presidency by winning the uncontested election. The National Front, as this arrangement was known, ushered in a long-awaited period of relative political peace for Colombia. Unfortunately, however, other forces outside the political mainstream would soon initiate further violence in Colombia.¹¹¹



Gustavo Rojas Pinilla
Wikipedia / SajoR

In the 1960s, many areas of rural Colombia, and even some urban areas, came under the direct or indirect control of various leftist guerrilla movements. Best known of these groups is Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), a Marxist-inspired group founded in 1964 by Manuel Marulanda, a veteran of the guerrilla wars of the la Violencia era.¹¹² Other leftist guerrilla groups that emerged during the 1960s included the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) became a high-profile guerrilla movement responsible for the 1985 seizure of Bogotá's Palace of Justice, which resulted in the deaths of 11 of Colombia's 21 Supreme Court justices.¹¹³

Colombia's fight against the nascent guerrilla groups was complicated by the rise of right-wing paramilitary organizations, which were employed by local land holders, and later drug lords, to protect against guerrilla attacks. Some of these organizations—most notably, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)—became more feared than the guerrilla groups in parts of the country.¹¹⁴

The Post–National Front Era (1974-2010)

Free elections returned to Colombia in 1974 with the end of the National Front.¹¹⁵ The end of the National Front also ushered in an era of organized crime centered largely on narcotics.^{116, 117} In the 1970s, nearly three-quarters of the world's marijuana was being imported from Colombia. Drug leaders soon diversified to cocaine. This gave rise to two major drug cartels, one centered in Medellín and the second in Cali.¹¹⁸ The government's response was weak and largely ineffective. Drug dollars soon filled the nation and by the 1980s, nearly half of the dollars entering Colombia were linked to drugs.¹¹⁹

Colombia during the 1980s and 1990s was inundated by a wave of violence and political intimidation that sprang from the activities of increasingly powerful drug cartels. In the mid-1990s, the cocaine cartels operating out of Medellín and Cali were successfully broken up.^{120, 121, 122} The drug trade did not, however, completely cease. It continued in a more decentralized fashion frequently embedded into the operations of the remaining guerrilla groups in the country, such as FARC.^{123, 124} Colombia's military, strengthened by large amounts of U.S. assistance under Plan Colombia, had success against FARC, and the guerrilla group is believed to have only half as many foot soldiers as in 2002.^{125, 126, 127} A lenient government-sponsored desertion policy for low-level FARC fighters also contributed to the weakening of the organization.¹²⁸



*Flag of the FARC-EP, a Colombian guerrilla group
Wikimedia Commons/ MrPenguin20*

In 2002, Álvaro Uribe became president, partly on the promise to end the violence that continued to plague the nation. Uribe planned a two pronged attack: strengthen the military and negotiate with the rebels. Uribe's plans met with some success. In 2002, the government signed a ceasefire with the AUC and by 2006, an estimated 30,000 paramilitary troops had demobilized.^{129, 130, 131} Based partially on his successes in improving national security, Uribe was reelected in 2006.¹³²

Current Events



Juan Manuel Santos
Wikipedia / Agência Brasil

After Uribe's bid for a constitutional change to allow him to run for a third term was rejected, Juan Manuel Santos, a Western-educated economist, was elected president in 2010.^{133, 134} Among his first challenges was to deal with an increasingly hostile neighbor, Venezuela. Venezuela's then-president, Hugo Chavez, severed diplomatic relations with Colombia amid allegations that Venezuela was harboring FARC rebels. Santos was able to smooth the waters and within a few months, diplomatic relations had been restored. In February 2011, FARC announced it would stop kidnapping civilians. In August 2011, peace talks between the rebel group and the Colombian government began in Norway but moved to Havana, Cuba the following month.¹³⁵

At the same time Santos was making political progress, the economy of Colombia also strengthened. The country opened up trade and foreign investment increased along with improved security. Domestic conditions and the standard of living improved for most Colombians.^{136, 137, 138} On the heels of these successes, Santos won reelection in 2014.¹³⁹ In September 2015, Santos announced that the government was close to reaching an agreement with the FARC that would end the nearly half-century civil war in Colombia.^{140, 141} The economy experienced a slowdown in growth, due mainly to the global decline in oil prices. Nevertheless, sound fiscal policy and infrastructure have helped keep the economy on track.¹⁴²

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Colombia in Perspective

Chapter 2 | History

Assessment

1. The first Spanish settlement in the region of Colombia was established in 1500.
2. Santa Fé de Bogotá became the seat of an audiencia, a Spanish legislative and judicial council.
3. After Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Spanish monarchy, New Granada consolidated into a cohesive autonomous unit.
4. Rivalries over the form of the central government should take in New Granada left a legacy that would continue into the 20th century.
5. After the 1946 election, politically motivated violence increased in the Colombian countryside.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True



*Coffee carrying pack mules
David Shankbone / Wikipedia*

Chapter 3 | Colombia in Perspective

Economy

Introduction

Colombia's economy can trace its roots to the nation's dramatic surge in coffee exports during the first half of the 20th century. The mountainous coffee-growing regions were generally far from coastal ports, so the nation's rail and road systems were developed largely to improve the transport of coffee beans to market.^{1, 2} Coffee export revenues financed the machinery and raw materials that helped spur Colombia's industrial development.³

In the 1990s, Colombia's economy began to diversify, insulating the nation from external shocks.^{4, 5} Oil and coal now lead export revenues, and a substantial manufacturing sector helps to buffer the effects of price drops in these energy commodities.⁶ Colombia has experienced above-average economic growth since 2005 and in 2015 was the third-largest economy in Latin America, behind Brazil and Mexico.^{7, 8} The country was projected to have the 12th fastest growing economy in the world in 2015.⁹

The country's poverty rate has declined from 50% to 34% and the growing middle class now constitutes about 27% of the Colombian population.¹⁰ The country's economy faces some challenges including a poor infrastructure, narco-trafficking, security issues, and high rates of unemployment.¹¹ Nevertheless, the nation has implemented a series of sound economic policies, entered into trade agreements, and begun its ascension into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which should help maintain growth.^{12, 13, 14}

Agriculture

Agriculture's importance to Colombia's economy has lessened in recent years and by 2014 this had dipped to an estimated 6.3%.^{15, 16} Despite its shrinking role in the economy, agriculture continues to be the main livelihood for many rural Colombians; nationwide, it still employs approximately 17% of the labor force.^{17, 18}



Banana plantation
Wikipedia / Luc ViatourvVv

Colombia's wide variety of soils and temperature ranges (which vary with altitude) allow for much crop diversity. Coffee remains the most important legal cash crop.¹⁹ Cut flowers are second in agricultural export value. Only Holland exports more flowers than Colombia which sends most floral shipments to the U.S.^{20, 21} Other important Colombian cash crops include bananas, sugarcane, cocoa beans, tobacco, and palm oil.^{22, 23} The primary grain products grown in Colombia are rice and maize (corn).^{24, 25} Colombia's many cattle ranches supply beef for domestic consumption and export.²⁶

Coca plants, used to make cocaine, are also grown in Colombia. Although years of spraying led to the decline of such crops, Colombia no longer conducts such operations. This has led to a 39% increase in the land dedicated to coca plants.²⁷

Although many farmers are reluctant to give up growing the more lucrative coca plants, others are switching to alternative crops such as cocoa. This has led to a decrease in coca production in recent years.^{28, 29, 30}

Rural poverty remains a serious problem for Colombia. The government is introducing measures designed to make the agricultural sector more competitive and productive. One major obstacle is encroaching desertification. Approximately one-third of all agricultural lands experience serious erosion leading to reduced crop yields and productivity.^{31, 32}

Industry and Manufacturing



Textile worker in Medellin
Wikipedia / Cromemco

In the 1990s, Colombia's economy became more reliant on its manufacturing and industrial sector. Trade barriers were lowered, in part, to expand exports beyond agricultural products—mainly coffee. Today, Colombia's main industries include textiles, food processing, oil, clothing, beverages, chemicals, and cement.^{33, 34} Industrial output presently makes up 36% of Colombia's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 21% of the population.³⁵

The main manufacturing centers are located in the four largest cities: Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.³⁶ All these cities have a broad industrial mix, although some have become associated with certain industrial sectors. Medellín has long been a hub for clothing and textile factories.^{37, 38, 39} Cali has traditionally been the center of Colombia's sugar mills and, more recently, the ethanol production plants that also use the sugar grown in the surrounding region.^{40, 41, 42} Bogotá has the most diversified manufacturing economy and dominates production in several sectors, including pharmaceuticals and the automotive industry.^{43, 44}

Energy and Mineral Resources

Energy

Colombia enjoys a wealth of natural resources, especially in areas related to energy production. Of these, oil is the most mature industry, with the first oil field having been discovered in 1918.⁴⁵ Colombia is currently the third-largest producer of oil in South America.⁴⁶ Much of the nation's production capacity is concentrated in the foothills of the Andes as well as the eastern jungles of the Amazon. Another main refining center is located in the Los Llanos region.⁴⁷ The nation's refining capacity (concentrated in two refineries in Barrancabermeja and Cartagena) is being expanded to handle heavier crude oils. The project is slated for completion in 2018.⁴⁸



*Oil rig
Pixabay / MarioAdrade*

Seven major pipelines carry oil from the producing fields to refineries and shipment points. These pipelines have been the frequent target of terrorist bombs, although in recent years the number of pipeline attacks has declined.⁴⁹

Most of Colombia's natural gas is produced by three companies, including Ecopetrol, the nation's state-owned company. The nation's natural gas reserves are concentrated in the Los Llanos basin but much of the production is carried out in the Guajira peninsula in northern Colombia.⁵⁰ Another 70% of Colombia's energy is provided by numerous hydroelectric plants on its Cordilleran rivers. Colombia exports much of its energy to Venezuela although in 2014, virtually all went to Ecuador.⁵¹

Coal production has expanded rapidly over the last two decades and has become an important energy export. Much of this coal is the highly desirable low-sulfur, low-ash variety that commonly fuels power plants.⁵² Colombia is the world's fifth-largest coal exporter.⁵³ A large part of Colombia's coal is extracted from the El Cerrejón mine on the Guajira Peninsula, the world's largest open-pit coal mine.⁵⁴

Minerals

Colombia is also richly endowed with numerous reserves of metallic and nonmetallic minerals. In 2014, mining accounted for about 2% of GDP and 7% of Colombian exports.⁵⁵ The nation is the largest producer of nickel in Latin America and the 10th largest in the world.^{56, 57} Much of the nickel is subsequently blended with iron and refined as ferro-nickel granules, an important export product.⁵⁸ Gold and emeralds continue to be mined and contribute significantly to the economy.

Gran Colombia, a Canadian based exploration company, is the largest gold mining operation in Colombia.⁵⁹ Many of Colombia's gold mines, however, are illegal operations. Nearly 80% of the gold mined in the country comes from illegal mining operations.^{60, 61, 62} Colombia remains the world's top emerald supplier despite recent drops in production rates.^{63, 64} Copper, iron ore, and silver are also mined in various areas of Colombia.⁶⁵



Gold
Flickr / Guillermo Vasquez

Trade and Investment



Bank of Bogota
Wikimedia / Remux

Colombia is the world's 53rd-largest export economy. Total exports amounted to approximately USD 61 billion in 2013 and imports totaled USD 57 billion.⁶⁶ In the first three quarters of 2015, Colombian exports declined nearly 35% from the same period a year ago.⁶⁷ In the last two years, Colombia's imports increased leading to a negative balance of trade between 2013 and 2015.^{68, 69,} ⁷⁰ Colombia's exports are dominated by petrochemicals and coal which account for 59% of total exports.⁷¹ Other important exports include emeralds, coffee, nickel, cut flowers, bananas, and apparel.⁷² Colombia's leading imports include industrial equipment, transportation equipment, consumer goods, chemicals, paper products, fuels, and electricity.⁷³

The United States (26%) is Colombia's most important export partner (26%) followed by China (11%), Panama (7%), Spain (6%), and India (5%). Colombia's major import partners are the United States (29%), China (18%), and Mexico (8%).⁷⁴

The Colombian government passed laws in the early 1990s to ease foreign direct investment (FDI) in the economy, and the country quickly experienced a rapid increase in FDI.^{75, 76} Between 2001 and 2012, total FDI jumped 500%.⁷⁷ The oil, coal, gas, electricity distribution, and telecommunications sectors have been the largest recipients of such aid.^{78, 79} The bulk of FDI dollars between 2010 and 2014 were provided by the United States, Switzerland, Panama, Spain, and the United Kingdom.⁸⁰ FDI dipped somewhat between 2013 and 2015.^{81, 82}

Transportation

Most overland passenger and cargo traffic is carried on the road system. Colombia's geography has dictated that most main roads generally run north-south, although some east-west connecting highways link the major cities of the Cordilleras. The eastern plains and most of the western coastal region have no paved roads and only a few unpaved roads.⁸³



*Avianca Airbus A330
Flickr / jmiguel.rodriguez*

Colombia has over 874 km (543 mi) of rail lines but much of the railway system is underdeveloped or in need of repair.⁸⁴ Several major rehabilitation and construction projects are currently underway including the updating of two sections of track that have been out of service for decades. The focus of these rehabilitation efforts are on the section that runs from La Dorada to Chiriguana and includes the port of Santa Marta. The second runs from Belencito to Bogotá.^{85, 86}

Colombia's seaports transport roughly 80% of the nation's international cargo. Buenaventura is the primary port on Colombia's Pacific coast, and it handles about 65% of the nation's imports.⁸⁷ The main ports on the Caribbean coast are Cartagena (which handles much of Colombia's oil exports), Barranquilla, and Santa Marta. On the Guajira Peninsula, Puerto Bolívar is the port for the nearby El Cerrejón coal fields.⁸⁸

Most international air travel arrives via Bogotá's El Dorado International Airport.⁸⁹ This airport is also a hub for the nation's domestic passenger service, much of which is provided by Avianca, the national air carrier.⁹⁰ Virtually every significant city in Colombia has its own airport, and several of these have regularly scheduled international flights. The largest of these regional airports are located in Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.^{91, 92}

Tourism



Cruise ship
Pixabay / neufal54

The widely publicized violence springing from Colombia's guerrilla groups, their paramilitary adversaries, and ruthless drug rings dampened its tourism potential until recently. Colombia has successfully battled its negative international impressions and improved security in the nation resulting in significant growth in tourism. Since 2006, Colombian tourism has increased 87% and averaged about 5.5% growth in the last three years.^{93, 94, 95, 96} Tourism receipts directly accounted for 1.7% of Colombia's

GDP in 2013 but its total contribution to the economy was higher reaching 5.4%.⁹⁷ Approximately 2% of Colombians are directly employed by the tourism industry. Nearly 5% are employed if one considers indirect contributions. That number is expected to rise to nearly 6% within the next decade.⁹⁸ Although nearly 75% of tourism revenues come from domestic tourism, the number of international visitors is increasing.^{99, 100} In 2014, more than 2.5 million international tourists arrived in Colombia.¹⁰¹ Most international visitors were from the United States and South America, especially Venezuela, Argentina, and Ecuador.¹⁰²

Since 2006, many visitors have arrived via cruise ships, which now call on the ports of Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Colombia's Caribbean island of San Andrés.^{103, 104} Cartagena is the most popular port of call and saw nearly 200 cruise ships dock there in 2014.¹⁰⁵ Other locations that have been promoted by the nation's tourism officials are Santa Marta (the jumping-off point for Colombia's first luxury eco-tourism development, in Tayrona National Park at the coastal base of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta), and Leticia (Colombia's gateway to the Amazon River basin).^{106, 107} "Coffee tourism," based out of Bogotá, has also been successfully marketed as a specialized tourist activity.^{108,}

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Banking and Currency



Colombian Pesos
Pixabay / daracanela

Colombia's unit of currency is the Colombian peso; the official abbreviation is COP. As of late November 2015, USD 1 was equal to roughly COP 3,023.¹¹⁰ Prior to September 1999, the Colombian peso followed a slowly moving exchange rate band that was pegged to the dollar. The national bank has since allowed the exchange rate to float, to help achieve national economic goals.^{111, 112}

The Bank of the Republic (BanRep, or *Banco de la República*) is Colombia's central bank and issues all currency. It also sets reserve rates and independently carries out monetary policy as determined by the BanRep Board of Directors, also known as the Monetary Board (*Junta Monetaria*).¹¹³ Unlike central banks in some countries, the Bank of the Republic does not have a supervisory role over the larger banking system. These duties are carried out by the government's Superintendency of Banks.¹¹⁴ The nation's two largest commercial banks are Bancolombia and Banco de Bogotá.^{115, 116} A Colombian bank crisis in 1998-2001 brought oversight reforms and tighter lending practices to the Colombian banking industry. As a result, fewer problem loans and other troubled assets were on their books when the U.S. credit crisis hit a decade later.^{117, 118} The global financial crisis in 2008 forced Colombia to obtain a loan from the World Bank. As part of the terms of the loan, the government implemented another series of reforms which significantly strengthened the industry.¹¹⁹ Most analysts rate the current banking system as healthy and there is little risk the banks will fail in the near future.^{120, 121, 122}

Standard of Living

The standard of living for most Colombians has improved dramatically in recent years. The country's poverty rate has declined from 50% to 34% and the growing middle class now constitutes about 27% of the Colombian population.¹²³ Life expectancy is now roughly 75.5 years although women typically live approximately seven years longer than men (79 years vs. 72 years).¹²⁴ Colombia has made significant strides in education and achieved a national literacy rate of 95%.¹²⁵



*School children in town
Flickr / Tijs Zwinkels*

Educational levels have risen sharply in a relatively short time (although, as with all such measures, there is a large gap between urban and rural figures). In 1999, for example, 54% of children of secondary school age were actually attending secondary schools, and by 2014 that had increased to roughly 90%.¹²⁶

Colombia's GDP per capita of USD 13,500, is near the middle of the scale for South American countries, behind Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Brazil.¹²⁷ In 2012, the average monthly salary of USD 692 was less than half the global average. The country's legal minimum wage that year was USD 328.¹²⁸ Colombia has one of the largest levels of income disparity in the world.^{129, 130} Colombia's large income divide also displays a significant rural vs. urban pattern. In 2012, about half of rural Colombians fell below the national poverty line.¹³¹

Since 1993, Colombia has had a universal healthcare system.¹³² Although 98% of the population has access to health services, the quality of those services are highly variable. Care in the remote areas of the country is inferior to those in urban centers.¹³³

Employment and Jobs

Between 2001 and 2015, Colombia averaged nearly 12% unemployment. The situation is improving but unemployment remains relatively high. In September 2015, Colombia's unemployment rate stood at 9%.^{134, 135} Some experts argue that Colombia has the second-highest natural rate of unemployment in South America behind only Argentina. But unemployment varies by group. For example, the unemployment rate for women is generally six points higher than that for men indicating a significant gender gap. Unemployment among workers between the ages of 18 and 25 is twice that of other groups.¹³⁶



*Coffee farm worker
Flickr / CGIAR*

More than half of all Colombians work in the nation's large informal sector which often pays lower wages and offers few protections or benefits.^{137, 138} Older workers, women, and those who have not completed primary school are the most likely to work in this sector.¹³⁹ Building higher wage jobs in the formal sector could be problematic in the short term. Only 16% of the Colombian labor force can be considered skilled. Educational levels, while improving are still too low to fill demands for higher technical jobs which pay better wages.^{140, 141}

Economic Outlook



*El Dorado airport Bogota, Colombia
Wikimedia / Mr tobi*

A fall in global oil prices caused a slowdown in Colombia's economy. The fall is likely to be temporary, however, and the economy is expected to rebound in 2016 and 2017.¹⁴² GDP growth estimates range from 1 to 3.6%.^{143, 144} Unemployment is likely to remain near its current 8% levels.¹⁴⁵ The peso's fall against the dollar (50% in 2015) presents another threat to the overall economic health and put pressure on consumer prices. With pesos buying less, Colombian consumer spending has dropped and is likely to continue to do so in the near term.¹⁴⁶

In spite of some bumps in the road, however, Colombia's economy is expected to continue growing, albeit at a slower pace than in recent years.^{147, 148}

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Chapter 3 | Economy

Assessment

1. Colombia has one of the weakest economies in Latin America.
2. Colombia's most important cash crop is coffee.
3. Colombia has carried a positive balance of trade for the last several years.
4. Colombia has one of the highest per capita GDPs in South America.
5. Tourism has more than doubled since 2006.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True



*Paisas
Flickr / Mario Carvajal*

Chapter 4 | Colombia in Perspective

Society

Introduction

Colombia's long colonial history may be partially responsible for a general attitude among Colombian's that inequality is a fact of life.¹ At the same time, Colombia is one of the most collectivist nations in the world. Only three nations score higher on this dimension: Ecuador, Panama, and Guatemala. As a practical measure, this means that Colombians often align themselves with specific groups to which they are very loyal. These groups, often tied to social class or ethnic distinctions, provide individuals with a sense of belonging, support, and identity. As a result, relationships take precedence over most other aspects of daily life.

On the downside, such high levels of group identification can mean that Colombians often exclude people or tend to think of the world in terms of “us” vs. “them.”²

Colombians tend to be status-conscious and competitive. Given their strong collectivist traditions, however, this competition is often directed at other groups rather than individuals.³ Colombians are also keen to avoid uncertainty where possible. This means that society is generally conservative and that there are rules prescribing behavior in many situations. However, groups can choose to ignore rules if they feel them to be inapplicable to their members. Taken together, the propensity to avoid uncertainty along with their collectivist and status-consciousness, suggest that it is difficult to effect meaningful changes to the status-quo.⁴

Ethnic Groups



*Women of African ancestry
Flickr / Luz A. Villa*

Most Colombians are descended from three broad groups. There are the indigenous tribal peoples (“Amerindians”) whose ancestors inhabited Colombia prior to the Spanish conquest. Another group is the white Europeans, most of whom are of Spanish origin. Then there are the black Africans who were brought to Colombia as slaves during the colonial era. As a result of several centuries of intermarriage, roughly three quarters of Colombians have a mixed heritage. It is estimated that 58%

of the population are mestizos (European and Amerindian ancestry). Another 14% are mulattos (European and African ancestry). Whites of European ancestry represent 20% of the population. The remaining 10% are Afro-Colombians and indigenous groups.⁵

Regional variations in these percentages are common. The Caribbean and Pacific coastal regions of Colombia have traditionally had larger percentages of Afro-Colombians (blacks, mulattos, and black-Amerindians). In particular, the Department of Chocó, running south along the Pacific coast from the Panamanian border, has an Afro-Colombian majority. Most Amerindians are found in rural, often remote areas, where they have avoided assimilation. Unfortunately, Chocó and many of the southern and eastern rural areas became strongholds of guerrilla, paramilitary, or narcotics groups. As a result, Afro-Colombians and Amerindians have disproportionately been displaced by the violent actions of these organizations.^{6, 7, 8}

The Colombian constitution of 1991 and two laws passed in 1993 granted indigenous groups and Afro-Colombians numerous rights that had not been acknowledged by the state. Among these were territorial, cultural, and language rights. In 1999, Colombia's Roma population (sometimes referred to as "gypsy") was also recognized as a national ethnic group.^{9, 10}

Language

Spanish is the official national language of Colombia.¹¹ Colombian Spanish is considered one of the "purest" versions in Latin America of the Castilian Spanish of Spain, in terms of accent and grammar. Nevertheless, many different expressions ("Colombianisms") have filtered into common speech.¹²

As many as 180 indigenous languages continue to be spoken in Colombia. Some of these languages are only active among several dozen speakers.^{13, 14, 15} The most robust of Colombia's indigenous languages is Wayuu (also known as Wayuunaiki or Guajiro), which is still spoken by over 100,000 people on the Guajira Peninsula.¹⁶ It is one of the few indigenous languages that is increasing in use.¹⁷ Other active native languages with more than 50,000 speakers are Emberá, which has several dialects among the indigenous tribal people of Chocó Department, and Páez, a southern highland language believed to be unrelated to any other.¹⁸



*Indigenous Páez people
Flickr / Jorge Panchoaga*

Religion

Colombia is a secular state with no official national religion. According to the national constitution, Colombians are guaranteed the right to practice the religion of their choice. Nevertheless, the long history of the Catholic Church in Latin American generally, and Colombia specifically, means that the Church enjoys a privileged position within the nation.¹⁹

Because the government does not keep official statistics on religious affiliation, it is difficult to specify with precision the religious demography of the nation. Based on various reports, estimates suggest that 70-90% of Colombians are, at least nominally, Roman Catholics.^{20, 21}

Many Colombian Catholics are leaving the Church and converting to Protestantism. According to a recent study, as many as 74% of Protestants in Colombia report they were raised as Catholics.²² Nevertheless, Christian Protestant groups represent only 10%-17% of the population. Among the estimated five million Protestants, the largest groups include the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Anglican Church, and Presbyterian Church.^{23, 24}



Catholic church
Flickr / Cristian Santiago Gomez Zapata

Other religions in Colombia have significantly fewer adherents. Colombia's Jewish population is estimated between 2,500 and 5,000 people, mostly in Bogotá.^{25, 26} Animist religions are still practiced in some of the more remote areas by indigenous groups, while blends of Christian and animist traditions are practiced by some Afro-Colombians within Chocó Department.²⁷ An estimated 10,000-15,000 Muslims live in Colombia.^{28, 29} Although Colombia's earliest Muslims were refugees from Ottoman oppression at the end of the 19th century, the most recent are from Lebanon.³⁰ Colombian Muslims are concentrated along the Caribbean coast although many now live in the capital.^{31, 32} The Omar Ibn Al-Khattab mosque in the small city of Maicao on the Guajira Peninsula is the largest mosque in Colombia, and the second largest in Latin America.³³

Cuisine

Soups and Main Dishes



Colombian Cuisine
Flickr / mauricio giraldo

Colombian food has been heavily influenced by Spanish cuisine but it also bears the hallmarks of its neighbors such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Peru.³⁴ Present at nearly every meal are starchy vegetables such as potatoes, arracacha (a root vegetable resembling a parsnip), yam, and cassava.³⁵ Popular meats include beef, chicken, and pork, although fish is often eaten on the coastal areas.³⁶ Frying is the most common cooking technique.³⁷

Although Colombia has no single national dish, there are many traditional dishes served around the nation as well as regional variations. Bandeja paisa, is a traditional fish dish from the Paisa region. The dish is made with white rice, red beans, ground beef, plantains, chorizo, blood sausage, fried pork rinds, flatbread, avocado, and a fried egg.^{38, 39} On the Caribbean coast, fish and seafood dishes are common, including cazuela de mariscos al coco, a stew of shellfish and whitefish cooked in a coconut milk broth.⁴⁰

Soups are a popular dish in Colombia.⁴¹ The soup course is often the stew-like sancocho, which mixes meat or fish with large pieces of potatoes, plantains, and/or cassava root, sliced pieces of corn on the cob, and other vegetables.^{42, 43} In Bogotá, ajiaco is the traditional soup. It consists of chicken, three types of potatoes (one is the small, yellow Andean potato known as papa criolla), and sliced corn on the cob discs. The soup is distinctively flavored with the herb guascas, which in much of the world is considered an invasive weed (known in the U.S. as “gallant soldier”).^{44, 45, 46}



*Barranquilla - Sancocho de mondongo
Wikimedia Commons / Jdvillalobos*

Accompanying many Colombian meals or sometimes eaten as a snack, arepa is a cornmeal patty that is cooked in various ways, including grilling, frying, or baking the dough. As a snack, arepa is often served with a cheese or egg filling.^{47, 48}

Drinks and Desserts

Coffee is the national drink and is served either black (tinto) or with milk (pintado or perico). Another option is café con leche, which is mostly milk with some coffee added.⁴⁹ A favorite sweet drink is agua de penela, which is made by melting chunks of unrefined sugar in hot water. Lime or lemon juice, milk, and/or chunks of cheese are sometimes added to the drink.^{50, 51} Colombians also have their own hot chocolate drinks, always whisked with the special (molinillo) utensil. Often the chocolate has spices added such as cloves and cinnamon. Or there is the special “chocolate santafereño,” a cup of hot chocolate with a mild white cheese melted into it.^{52, 53}

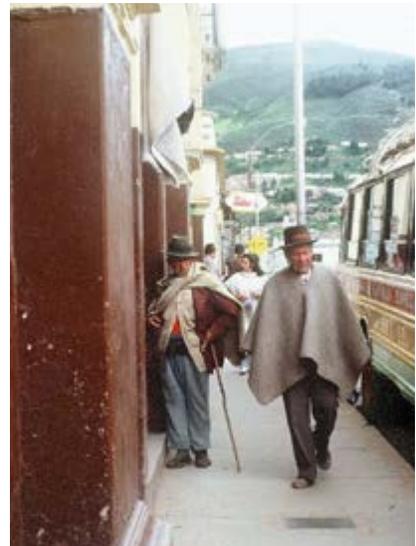


Colombian Coffee
Flickr / Yassef Briceño García

Desserts are quite popular in Colombia. Some of the most popular include brevas con arequipe (figs stuffed with toffee), cocadas (made with shredded coconut and sugar), and torta de tres leches (a three milk cake).⁵⁴ Some desserts are associated with particular holidays or special occasions. One such dessert is natilla, a sweet custard-like concoction thickened with cornstarch that is frequently served during Christmas time.⁵⁵

Traditional Dress

Modern Colombians, especially urban dwellers, dress much the same as anywhere else in the Western world. In rural areas, clothing is more likely to be homemade and is often worn in the fields and at home. In these agricultural regions, men's shirts and women's skirts are usually loose-fitting for greater comfort.⁵⁶ More elegant versions of peasant clothing are sometimes seen, but usually only during holiday festivals or folklorico events. In cooler areas of the interior highlands, men and women may wear the traditional ruana, a woolen poncho that runs from basic monochromatic peasant style to more colorful versions for middle- and upper-class women.^{57, 58}



Gentlemen wearing ruanas
Flickr / The Real Estreya

Hats are still commonly worn in many areas of the country. Along the Caribbean coast and adjacent savannah regions, the sombrero vueltiao commonly adorns vallenato performers and traditional dancers.^{59, 60} In the interior highlands, the tapia basada of the Boyacá plains has permutated into numerous variants, with names such as the Palmeado, Rancher, High Crown, Common, and Cowboy.⁶¹

Some indigenous peoples continue to dress in their traditional styles. Among these are the Guambianos, who live in a highland area near the city of Popayán. Guambiano men wear a blue anaco (knee-length wraparound cloth), a blue or gray poncho, a red scarf (usually hanging open), and a bowler-like felt hat. Guambiano women dress in a skirt, with a blue cape instead of a poncho. Their necks are adorned with multiple strands of tiny white beads.^{62, 63}

Gender Issues

In recent years, women's social status and gender equality have improved considerably in Colombia. By law, for example, 30% of all political candidates must be women and 30% of all high level government positions must be filled by women.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, patriarchal attitudes that have long characterized Colombian culture die hard. These attitudes fuel a serious gender problem that continues to victimize women.^{65, 66} Many Colombian women continue to be victims of harassment, abuse, and violence.^{67, 68, 69, 70} Nearly four out of every five women who are physically abused never report the crime. Even seeking medical support can carry risks as women are often victimized again by police or medical workers.⁷¹



*Woman with goat
Flickr / CAIT*

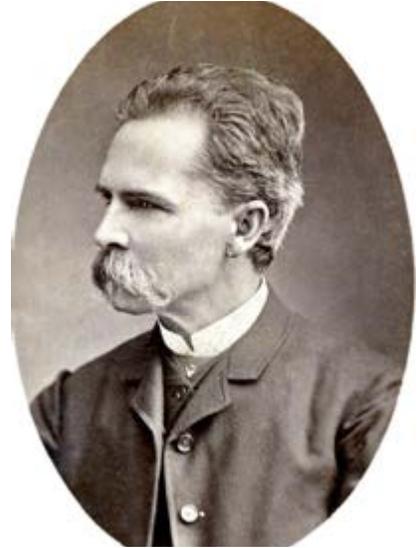
Women are also underrepresented in politics. Despite laws designed to create greater gender equality, women in Colombia hold only 20% of all seats in parliament, 16% of the national senate seats and govern only 9% of the states.^{72, 73} Many women do work outside the home. According to the World Bank, about 43% of the labor force is female.⁷⁴ Many more women may, in fact, be employed outside the home. Because the government keeps no data on the nation's informal labor market, it is hard to know exactly how many women are actually employed. What is certain, however, is that women in the labor force make less money than their male counterparts and this is especially likely to be true in the informal market.^{75, 76, 77}

Arts

Literature

Colombia enjoys a well-regarded tradition in the language arts, even though few of its novelists and poets have achieved enough financial success to work full-time on their literary pursuits.⁷⁸ One of the earliest Colombian writers to achieve renown was Jorge Isaacs (1837-1895). Isaacs was principally a poet but is remembered today for his only novel, *María*, a romantic tale set in the Valle del Cauca region of Isaac's childhood.

Isaacs' contemporary, Rafael Pombo (1833-1912), was a poet and diplomat and is frequently referred to as the father of Colombian romanticism, a style popular during the 19th century.⁷⁹ Pombo also was a children's writer, and his whimsical stories and fables are as popular and widely read today as they were during his time.⁸⁰



Jorge Isaacs
Wikipedia / Cultura Banco de la



Gabriel García Márquez
Wikimedia / Festival Internacional de Cine en Guadalajara

Colombian literature of the 20th century is dominated by the towering figure of Gabriel García Márquez (born 1928). He was born in the near-coastal town of Aracataca, widely considered to be the inspiration for the fictional town of "Macondo," a setting in several of his stories and novels. García Márquez began his career as a journalist while writing short stories on the side.⁸¹ His first novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, published in 1967, brought both fame and fortune, becoming the second-most selling Spanish novel of all time (behind Cervantes' *Don Quixote*).^{82, 83} In the novel, realism is freely enmeshed with fantastical elements, a technique that has become known as "magical realism." García Márquez's later novels, such as *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *Autumn of the Patriarch*, have also achieved great literary and popular success. In 1982, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.^{84, 85}

García Márquez was far from the only Colombian writer of his generation to gain notoriety. Álvaro Mutis (born 1923), who has lived most of his later life in Mexico, is both a poet and novelist, best known for his novellas that follow the travels and adventures of Maqroll el Gaviero (“Maqroll the Lookout”). These books, all written between 1986 and 1993, have garnered Mutis literary awards in Latin America, Europe, and the United States.^{86, 87, 88}

Music

Colombia’s musical traditions are as varied as its people and geography. Colombia’s Pacific coast, with a history of strong African influences, is associated with the complex drum- and marimba-driven rhythms of currulao.^{89, 90} Along the Caribbean coast, where African, Spanish, and indigenous cultures mixed and the port cities provided influences from the entire Caribbean basin, two major musical forms have emerged: cumbia and vallenato. In traditional cumbia, African drums provide the driving rhythms to European- style melodies and harmonies played on gaitas and the flauta de millo, wind instruments of indigenous origin.^{91, 92, 93} Modern cumbia songs may also be accompanied by guitar, accordion, bass, and sometimes brass instruments.^{94, 95} Vallenato music is a roughly 100-year-old descendant of cumbia, characterized by its use of the European-introduced accordion.⁹⁶ Modern vallenatos by artists such as Carlos Vives and Jorge Celedón feature electronic instrumentation as well and are among the most popular songs in Colombia.^{97, 98}



Shakira
Flickr / Roberto Fernández

Joropo is a traditional music of the Llanos region, which stretches across northeastern Colombia into western Venezuela. Featuring the cuatro (a small, four-stringed guitar), harp, and maracas, this music traditionally follows a waltz-like 3/4 rhythm.^{99, 100} As with the other forms of traditional Colombian music, modern joropo forms may often include nontraditional instrumentation.¹⁰¹ In the mountainous interior of Colombia, bambuco is probably the best known of several traditional musical styles. In its purest form, a bambuco ensemble consists of a tiple (12-string guitar), mandolin, and guitar, with the mandolin carrying the melody line. The bambuco rhythms mirror those of the coastal currulao, without the marimba and drums.^{102, 103}

Folk Crafts and Folklore

Traditional handcrafts thrive in Colombia where approximately one million people make their livelihood in the sector. About 60% of Colombian artisans live in rural areas and 65% are women.¹⁰⁴ Popular crafts include ceramics, wood carving, metal works, baskets, jewelry, and textiles that reflect their cultural traditions.¹⁰⁵ Many of these items continue to be made using techniques that have changed little over the centuries.¹⁰⁶



Sombrero vueltiao
Flickr / Daniele Pieroni

One prominent example of a traditional Colombian craft that continues to be produced is the sombrero vueltiao. This hat even serves as a national symbol of Colombia.^{107, 108} (The Colombian Olympic team wore such hats during the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympics.)¹⁰⁹ The Zenú people of northern Colombia first made the sombrero vueltiao centuries ago, braiding fibers collected from the caña flecha, a type of tall cane found near the rivers and swamps of the savannah region where the Zenú lived. The fibers, which are

leaf stems dyed black in clay or bleached white by the sun, are intertwined using different types of braids that reflect elements of Zenú beliefs about the origin of the world and universe. Over time, representations of animals, hacienda life, and religious iconography have been woven into many of the hats, creating headwear that represents a slice of both Colombian and Zenú cultural history.¹¹⁰

Sports and Leisure

Colombia is no different than the rest of Latin America in its passion for the game of fútbol (soccer).¹¹¹ As a spectator and participant sport, it is unrivaled in Colombia. The national team has had sporadic success on the international scene, having appeared in four World Cup tournaments (including three in a row during the 1990s). But only once (1990) did they advance into the second round of the tournament.¹¹² All of the 1990s teams were led by midfielder Carlos Valderrama, the only Colombian soccer player ever named South American Footballer of the Year (1987, 1993).¹¹³ Women's soccer has emerged onto the sports scene.

In 2015, the team ranked 28th in the world and have enjoyed more international success in recent years.^{114, 115}

Other popular spectator sports in some areas in Colombia include bullfighting, bicycle racing, basketball, boxing, tennis, and automobile racing.^{116, 117}

An increasing number of golf courses in Colombia, as well as the worldwide professional success of Medellín native Camilo Villegas, has increased interest in that sport.^{118, 119} Baseball is popular along the Caribbean coast, which is home to a professional winter league.¹²⁰ Seventeen Colombians, most of whom hail from Cartagena, have played major league baseball.¹²¹



*Competition on the soccer field
Flickr / Santiago La Rotta*

A unique recreational activity, and arguably the national sport, in Colombia is the game of tejo, loosely based on an ancient game of the Muisca tribes who inhabited the highlands near present-day Bogotá. In the modern game, a weighted disk is thrown at a target, which is embedded in a box of clay and loaded with tiny packets of gunpowder in the center. Tejo is often played outside beer halls, and drinking, betting, loud music, and generally good-natured taunting frequently punctuate the proceedings. Tournament versions of the game are played more formally, without alcohol or music, and sportsmanship is encouraged.^{122, 123, 124}

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Colombia in Perspective

Chapter 4 | Society

Assessment

1. Most Colombians today are descended from three broad groups.
2. Colombian Spanish has evolved and no longer resembles the language brought from Spain.
3. Colombian society is marked by high levels of individualism.
4. Women enjoy nearly equal status with men in Colombia.
5. Spanish is the official religion of Colombia.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. False; 5. False



*Colombian Special Forces
Flickr / Blatant World*

Chapter 5 | Colombia in Perspective

Security

Introduction

Few nations have suffered through a national nightmare like that which has engulfed Colombia since the 1980s. Two conflicts, one a guerilla war and the other a battle for control of Colombia's lucrative drug trade, helped unleash a spiral of violence that was further fed by paramilitary militias who terrorized civilian populations thought to be sympathetic to either of the guerilla forces or even to left-of-center causes (such as trade unions).^{1, 2} Millions of Colombians, mostly in rural areas, were forced to flee their homes and villages due to the threatening presence of one or more of these groups in their region.^{3, 4}

Massive human rights abuses by all sides in these conflicts, including in some cases the Colombian military, contributed to an image of Colombia as a lawless land teetering on the edge of becoming a failed state.^{5, 6, 7}

This image, however, reflects more the Colombia of the 1990s than the country as it is today. While guerilla groups, paramilitary organizations, and drug-trafficking activities are still significant problems, particularly in rural regions, Colombia has nonetheless made significant improvements in its overall security environment over the last decade.^{8, 9}

Yet, these events have shaped and continue to shape much of Colombia's foreign policy. As Colombia continues to emerge from its civil wars and guerilla insurgencies, foreign policy is likely to become more focused on building alliances based on trade, as well as security.^{10, 11, 12}

In September 2015, the government of Colombia reached a peace deal with the leftist FARC rebels which could help bring stability to the nation after nearly 50 years of war.¹³ By October, however, hopes began to fade as the peace deal fell apart.¹⁴ Negotiations continue and President Santos hopes to have the final treaty signed and in place by March 2016.^{15, 16}

U.S.-Colombian Relations

Colombia is a key U.S. ally and relations with the United States are strong and friendly. The two nations share strong economic, political, and military relations with each other.^{17, 18} The two nations have signed agreements on trade, environmental protection, energy, and other issues which have spurred cooperation.¹⁹ The United States is Colombia's major trading partner with the most recent balance of trade favoring the United States.^{20, 21} Through September 2015, total trade between the two countries was roughly USD 23.7 billion.²² In addition to trade, the United States provides significant amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Colombia. In 2012, Colombia received approximately USD 8.4 billion from the United States. Most U.S. FDI dollars are destined for the manufacturing and finance sectors.²³ Roughly 250 U.S. companies currently do business in Colombia.²⁴



*US and Colombian military meet
Wikimedia / Cpl. Laura Gauna*

Relations with Neighboring Countries

Brazil



*Stream separating Brazil and Colombia
Flickr / mtrpuitt*

Overall, political relations between the two nations have improved in recent years.^{25, 26} New relations are based primarily on trade and investment rather than on rebel groups and counter-insurgencies.²⁷ In October 2015, the two presidents signed several economic agreements. Trade between Colombia and Brazil has been growing in recent years. In 2014, bilateral trade reached USD 4 billion.²⁸ The balance of trade strongly favors Brazil. The value of Brazil's exports into Colombia was roughly 68% higher than Brazil-bound Colombian exports.²⁹

Security issues, however, still remain a concern. Both countries agreed to create a border commission, which in addition to improving trade, is aimed at improving border security and reducing illegal smuggling. Colombia has also agreed to purchase military equipment and supplies from Brazil.^{30, 31} In 2015, in a sign of stronger cooperation, the Brazilian and Colombian Air Forces held joint training exercises to fight drug trafficking along their mutual borders.³²

Ecuador

Relations between Ecuador and Colombia wax and wane. In 2008, they were at a low point following a Colombian raid on a FARC camp inside Ecuador's borders.^{33, 34} Both sides withdrew their ambassadors, and cut diplomatic relations setting off fears of a broader regional conflict. Diplomatic relations were not restored until 2010.^{35, 36} By 2013, relations had warmed considerably following the visit of Ecuador's president to Colombia.³⁷



*Border with Ecuador
Flickr / Micah MacAllen*

In the first three quarters of 2014, bilateral trade between Colombia and Ecuador equaled USD 715 million with the balance of trade strongly in Colombia's favor.^{38, 39} In a bid to protect itself from an influx of cheap consumer goods from Colombia (and Peru), Ecuador imposed tariffs on Colombian imports early in 2015.⁴⁰

Several other issues continue to strain relations between the two countries. One of these is Colombia's use of aerial herbicides on coca fields along the two countries' joint border. In 2013, Colombia agreed to pay USD 15 million to Ecuador for economic damage caused by the spraying.^{41, 42} Ecuador continues to face challenges related to an influx of Colombian refugees who fled southward to escape the violence in their home regions.^{43, 44}

Panama

Historical relations between Panama and Colombia have been good. Relations were strained briefly in October 2014 when Colombia accused Panama of being a "tax-haven" but soon warmed.^{45, 46, 47} This tiff underscored the importance of Panama as a business and trading partner. Panama is Colombia's third- largest export destination.⁴⁸ In 2013, the two countries signed a free-trade agreement designed to bolster trade.⁴⁹



*Border with Panama
Flickr / argylejargon*

Panama, once a part of the Republic of Colombia, shares a land border with Colombia that has no road or rail linkages. The border sits astride a sparsely populated region known as the Darién Gap, the missing link in the Pan-American Highway. Nonetheless, despite its remoteness (or perhaps because of it) the guerilla-war violence and drug activities taking place in Colombia have periodically spilled over into Panama. Colombian paramilitary groups have crossed the border in search of FARC encampments, while Panamanian officials have intercepted cocaine shipments in the Darién jungles.⁵⁰

Peru

Among the four Andean Community countries, Peru is Colombia's closest ally.⁵¹ Both sides share common economic visions.⁵² Recently, Peru and Colombia signed a free-trade agreement with the European Union.^{54, 55} The two nations have strong trade ties.⁵⁶ The balance of trade favors Colombia.⁵⁷

Both Peru and Colombia have long faced similar problems with guerilla movements and cocaine trade. In southern Peru, the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) guerilla movement has been able to revive itself using a technique borrowed from Colombia's FARC guerillas: retooling itself as a drug-smuggling operation with a Maoist bent.⁵⁸ Despite the lack of border crossings between the two countries, the border is nonetheless heavily policed by the Peruvian military to keep Colombian guerilla units from entering their country.⁵⁹



*Three-way border: Brazil, Colombia and Peru
Wikimedia / Valter Campanato*

Venezuela



*Colombian CoffeeBorder with Venezuela
Flickr / mtpuitt*

During the last decade Venezuela and Colombia have had stormy, off-and-on political relations.⁶⁰ The long-running guerilla war in Colombia has been a significant contributor to these tensions, as both FARC and ELN, the primary combatants against the Colombian government, have had a strong operational presence in the border region between the two countries. Colombia has long accused Venezuela of supporting these insurgent groups.^{61, 62} Drug traffickers, often one and the same as the guerilla groups, have also operated on both sides of the border.⁶³

In 2008, relations began to thaw. Chávez even urged FARC to cease their resistance, a striking comment by a leader who had previously been supportive in his comments about the group.⁶⁴ However, in July 2009, relations between Colombia and Venezuela were frozen following new Colombian accusations of Venezuelan arms support to the FARC guerillas.⁶⁵ Venezuela led the charge against U.S. use of Colombian military bases and suspended diplomatic relations with Colombia.^{66, 67} In February 2015, relations plummeted to their lowest levels in nearly five years following the arrest of Antonio Ledezma, the mayor of Caracas.⁶⁸ In 2015, Venezuela sent 3,000 soldiers to the border area after two of its soldiers were killed by Colombian paramilitary groups. Venezuela also closed many of its borders crossings, infuriating Colombia.^{69, 70} Relations improved somewhat when Venezuela agreed to reopen its border.⁷¹

Despite the political friction between the two countries, there exists strong economic linkage between Colombia and Venezuela. Trade relations, have, however, suffered from the current diplomatic tensions. In 2014, trade dropped between the two nations and continued to plummet an additional 35% in the first five months of 2015.^{72, 73}

Police

Colombia's National Police force (Policia Nacional/PNC) numbered approximately 168,000 officers in 2012. They are heavily militarized and maintain a presence in all of the nation's administrative districts. The PNC exhibits a paramilitary-like organizational structure. The force is armed with light infantry weapons, armored vehicles, helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, and Special Forces. The role of the military and the police is often confused leading to significant rivalries between the two forces.^{74, 75}



*Colombian National Police
Flickr / Policia Nacional de los colombianos*

The National Police fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense.^{76, 77} The force underwent significant restructuring in 2000. Colombia's National Police are charged with normal duties associated with a police force except that they are not involved in investigative functions. The force is also active in counter-insurgency efforts.⁷⁸ In addition to the regular units, the National Police has several specialized units.^{79, 80}

Among these are the Carabineros, which essentially function as riot police whose role is to provide and maintain public order and provide security along the major roadways. They also provide security in guerilla zones.⁸¹ In addition, there is an anti-narcotics unit and the Unified Action Groups for Personal Freedom (GAULA), which functions as anti-kidnapping and anti-extortion police. The GAULA are highly trained in hostage rescue.^{82, 83}

Allegations persistently surface regarding rampant corruption and incompetence within the National Police who are alleged to be involved with the drug dealers or armed militia groups.^{84, 85, 86} Police often fail to investigate criminal complaints and shirk their responsibility to protect citizens.^{87, 88} The police have also been accused of abusive practices including the excessive use of force, illegal detentions, illegal surveillance, execution, and even dismemberment of individuals.^{89, 90}

Military

Colombia's armed forces number 298,000 personnel divided among the Army (Ejército Nacional), Navy (Armada Nacional), and Air Force (Fuerza Aérea Colombiana).⁹¹ Years of battling rebel groups has helped make Colombia's armed forces one of the most mobile and effective counter-insurgency forces in the world. The armed forces is now working on increasing its effectiveness in conventional warfare, cyber warfare, and organized criminal activities.^{92, 93} The armed forces' top military commanders have been accused of serious human rights violations including the execution of civilians.^{94, 95} In response, President Santos replaced the entire armed forces leadership in July 2015.⁹⁶



Colombian Marines
Flickr / CWO Keith A. Stevenson

Army (Ejército Nacional de Colombia/ ENC)

Colombia's army is the largest of the military branches with 232,600 active personnel and an additional 25,000 reserves.⁹⁷ The army is largely involved in counter-insurgency campaigns against rebel groups. As the prospects for peace increase, the army is working on preparing for more conventional warfare to protect its territorial integrity from external threats.^{98, 99}

The army, in 2012, began to reorganize into a joint command structure. Currently, there are three joint commands, a joint Special Operations Command, and a Joint Cyber Command. The move is aimed at facilitating cooperation between the different arms in the military.^{100, 101}



Colombian Army
Wikipedia / SSGT DANNY PEREZ, U.S. Air Force

All Colombians, regardless of sex, between the ages of 18 and 24 are obliged to register and undergo medical examinations to determine their fitness for military service. Except in times of national emergency, however, women are not mandated to serve.^{102, 103} Among those deemed fit, a lottery is held to determine which men will be inducted into active service. Terms of service are variable; 12 months for those having at least a secondary education; 12-18 months for “peasant soldiers” who serve in their place of residence; and 18-24 months for regular soldiers. Males then remain technically in a reserve corps until the age of 50.^{104, 105, 106}

Morale within the army is generally good although most recruits feel salaries are too low. Scandals involving army officers and prosecutions of some service members have lowered morale and confidence that soldiers can conduct their operations without civilian court interference.¹⁰⁷ Significant numbers of human rights abuses have been leveled against the army adding to negative perceptions among the general public.^{108, 109}

Navy (Armada Nacional de la República Colombiana/ARC)



Colombian Navy
TKMoreno / Wikipedia

Colombia has a small navy numbering 33,800 sailors including 26,600 marines, 200 coastguards, and 100 naval aviators.¹¹⁰ The navy is under command of the armed forces and, like the army, divided into several commands serving five naval zones.¹¹¹ Both the Colombian Marine Corp and the ARC headquarters are in the capital.^{112, 113} The ARC is charged with protecting and defending parts of the Caribbean Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and 35 navigable rivers in the country.¹¹⁴

Like the army, the navy is now focused on improving its conventional warfare readiness and to increase its deterrence capabilities. Current efforts in that direction include the procurement of various patrol vessels, submarines, and frigates.^{115, 116}

Naval officials are usually well educated. Submariners spend large amounts of time at sea on intelligence gathering missions. In recent years, however, they have been increasingly called on to interdict drug smugglers.^{117, 118} The marines have a reputation as being highly capable counter-insurgency and anti-narcotics units.¹¹⁹ As a result of the high regard in which the navy is held, morale amongst sailors is high.¹²⁰

Air Force (Fuerza Aerea Colombiana)

Colombia's air force has a current troop strength of 14,500 and is among the most experienced air force in the region.¹²¹ The air force has two fighter squadrons, three counterinsurgency squadrons, a reconnaissance squadron, and a transport squadron. The main air base is Germán Olano Military Air Base at Palanquero. The other major bases are in Bogotá, Barranquilla, and Cali.¹²² The force's primary roles are the defense of national airspace, natural resources, and the provision of air support to other military branches. The air force has also been involved in drug interdiction efforts.^{123, 124} Nearly 19% of the force personnel are officers, 27% NCOs, and 30% enlisted troops. New recruits must be at least 18, unmarried with no children, and no criminal records. Recruits may not be an only child.¹²⁵ Morale within the organization is high, due in part to the high regard in which it is held by the Colombian public.¹²⁶



*Colombian Air Force
Wikipedia / Facmilitar*

Issues Affecting Stability

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

(Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC)



*Aftermath of a FARC attack
Flickr / George Donnelly*

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC as the group is commonly known (its Spanish acronym), was formed in 1964 from the remnants of armed peasant self-defense groups that emerged during the years of La Violencia (1948-1958) and later did not demobilize. From its inception until March 2008, FARC was led by Antonio Marin, better known by his nom de guerre Manuel Marulanda Velez. The group originally embraced a Marxist ideology, but its ideological emphasis has lessened in

recent years as criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and kidnap-for-ransom, have become a larger part of the group's activities.^{127, 128, 129} Peace talks with the government are ongoing and the two sides appear to be near an agreement.¹³⁰

National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or ELN)

Like FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN) emerged in the early 1960s. In its early manifestation, it was a group composed of students, leftist intellectuals, and radical Catholic clergy inspired by the Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution and the revolutionary doctrines of Che Guevara.¹³¹ ELN has since managed to survive several setbacks at the hands of government forces, but it has never been able to achieve anywhere near the military strength of FARC.¹³² Most of ELN's most highly publicized activities have been kidnappings and attacks against infrastructure, such as oil pipelines and electrical distribution networks. The ELN has begun peace talks with the government but its aims are highly ambitious, a situation that could make it difficult to reach agreement any time soon.^{133, 134, 135}



*ELN propaganda poster
Flickr / Julián Ortega Martínez*

Other Security Issues

Colombia's organized criminal activity poses a security threat. In addition to narco-trafficking, the criminal gangs are actively involved in human trafficking, kidnapping, and abuses against the population. Inter-gang rivalries and fights often displace locals who flee their homes in order to escape the violence.¹³⁶



Cocaine fields in Colombia
Flickr / Eric Molina

Colombia's most trying security issues with its neighbors are now with Venezuela and Nicaragua. The decreasing security situation in Venezuela is problematic and popular dissent could spread into Colombia. Problems with Nicaragua revolve around disputed waters in the Caribbean. Although the International Court of Justice awarded Nicaragua some of the Caribbean waters claimed by Colombia along with several small islands, Colombia has said it refuses to recognize the ruling. Navies from both countries now patrol the disputed waters, raising the risk of a diplomatic incident.^{137, 138}

Political Outlook

Colombia is politically stable. The internal security of the nation has vastly improved in the last five years.^{139, 140} The government is involved in active negotiations with the FARC and a peace deal between the two appears imminent. Sporadic attacks against infrastructure, though radically reduced in number, occasionally occur.¹⁴¹ Although insurgents continue to operate, illegal armed groups no longer directly threaten the government or block government functions. The ELN has begun preliminary peace talks with the government but talks have not yet seen much progress. The ELN remains the most active in Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Chocó, and Norte de Santander. The main risk posed by the ELN is the security of Colombia's pipelines in the northeast and southwestern sections of the country.¹⁴²

At the same time that insurgent risks have been reduced, the risk of civil unrest is on the rise. Protests over various social and economic issues are increasing although they are not likely to present any immediate political risk to the government. Colombia's indigenous groups are becoming more active and have been active in protests.^{143, 144}

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Colombia in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security

Assessment

1. Colombia's foreign policy is largely shaped by its concerns with its internal security.
2. Relations between Colombia and the United States have tensed in recent years over Colombia's drug policies.
3. Colombia's relations with Brazil are based mainly on security concerns related to rebel groups and counter-insurgencies.
4. Colombia's national police force is a paramilitary unit.
5. All Colombian men and women are required to serve in the military.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False

Colombia in Perspective

Further Readings and Resources

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Colombia in Perspective

Final Assessment

1. Most Mexicans are rural peasants.
2. Mexico is home to active volcanoes.
3. Mexico City is home to the country's largest community of expatriates from the United States.
4. Government policies from the 20th century discouraged economic cooperation across the Mexican-U.S border.
5. People are using up Mexico's water supplies faster than nature can replenish them.
6. The Olmecs, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Mayans, and people of Teotihuacan had disappeared by the time of the Spanish conquest.
7. Success in Spanish colonial society required the sponsorship of a personal patron.
8. The Spanish subjugated all the local peoples and achieved firm control throughout New Spain.
9. The Mexican Revolution was a communist revolution that made Mexico a socialist state.

10. Mexico has been a multi-party democracy since the end of the revolution.
11. The United States is Mexico's most important trade partner.
12. Most Mexicans are farmers.
13. Approximately six in ten Mexicans work in the informal economy.
14. Mexico is one of the world's largest recipients of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) dollars.
15. Due to economic nationalism, Mexican banks must be domestically owned.
16. Rates of violence against women in Mexico are among the highest in the world.
17. In creations such as corridos and lucha libre, Mexicans poke fun at political and social problems.
18. Traditional Mexican clothing is usually reserved for folk festivals.
19. Most of the Mexican population are indigenous peoples.
20. Mexican national cuisine is a mix of regional native dishes and colonial imports.

21. Roughly one million people a day cross the international border between the United States and Mexico.
22. The United States financial aid to Mexico has contributed to a decrease in violence throughout Mexico.
23. Belize is Mexico's largest trading partner in Latin America.
24. Water is a long-standing source of contention between Mexico and the United States.
25. The shorter border between Guatemala and Mexico is relatively easy to police.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True; 6. False; 7. True; 8. False; 9. False; 10. False; 11. True; 12. False; 13. True; 14. True; 15. False; 16. True; 17. True; 18. False; 19. False; 20. True; 21. True; 22. False; 23. False; 24. True; 25. False.