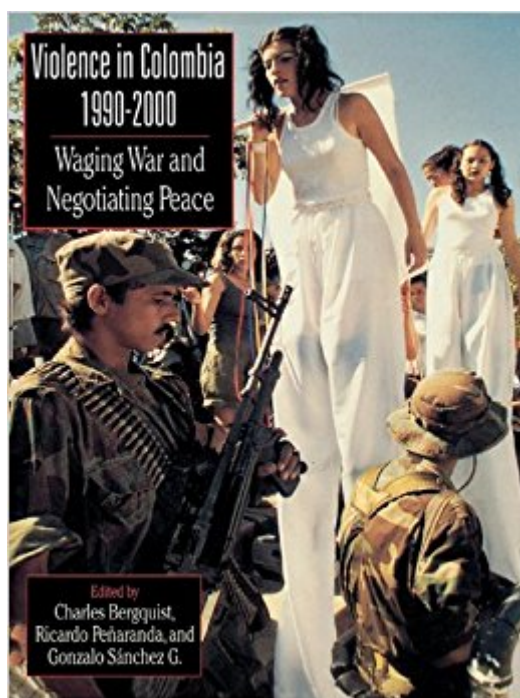


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Violence In Colombia, 1990-2000: Waging War And Negotiating Peace (Latin American Silhouettes)



Synopsis

Violence In Colombia provides students with a deeper understanding of the crisis facing Colombia today. The book focuses on the 1990s, a decade that witnessed a strengthening of the oldest and largest guerrilla insurgency in the Americas and the emergence of a powerful paramilitary right. The decade also saw a dramatic rise in homicide, kidnapping, and human rights violations that made Colombia by far the most violent nation in the hemisphere. But the 1990s was also about negotiating peace. The decade began with negotiations between the government and some of the guerrilla groups that led to their demobilization and to the important reforms codified in the Constitution of 1991. It ended with another serious attempt at negotiating peace, a historic agreement between the government and the largest and most powerful of the guerrilla groups to put a range of social and economic reforms on the negotiating table. For many, the crisis in Colombia is understood in terms of the drug trade. To be sure, the drug trade is implicated in every aspect of the crisis. And despite (or because of?) escalating efforts by the Colombian and U.S. governments to curb the trade, Colombia's role as the leading supplier of cocaine, and increasingly of heroin, to the U.S. market continues to expand. But the drug trade, by itself, cannot explain the crisis. If it could, why have other Latin American drug-producing and trafficking nations not experienced a fate like Colombia's? To answer this question, the book presents some of the best recent work by Colombian scholars on the crisis facing the nation. Violence in Colombia also includes a large section devoted to primary documents, which enables students to get a feel for the views of the protagonists in the conflict and judge for themselves the meaning of what they say. Examples include the negotiating positions of the government, the guerrillas, and the paramilitary right; testimony by kidnap victims and human rights lawyers; and assessments by U.S. officials and Colo

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Customer Reviews

This book brings together the world's most respected academic analysts of the Colombian conflict, and is in my opinion the most important single contribution to contemporary analyses of Colombia's protracted conflict. It effectively demonstrates that the conflict can not merely be reduced to the role of nascent American imperialism, the drug trade, or poverty, but is far more complex and subtle than explanations given by ideologues on either the right or left. In order to better understand the conflict, one must comprehend its origins, the historical processes of political exclusion and repression, the relationship between the drug economy and both the insurgency and counter-insurgency movements, conflict over land rights, business-labour relations, and the role of institutional reform. It serves as a reminder that in the Colombian conflict, nobody is entirely innocent and nobody entirely culpable. The chapters that I found to be most informative were those of Sanchez, Bejarno, Restrepo, and Bergquist, though all chapters were excellent. The chapters by Sanchez and Restrepo pose a serious challenge to unflinching guerrilla sympathisers (and counter-insurgency supporters), and Bergquist's chapter shows how the domestic economy, social classes, and political actors have evolved throughout history in a near-constant struggle for land and economic profits, bifurcating "el pueblo" and creating the present quagmire. Bejarno's is the best single analysis of the constitutional reform process and flags potential dangers on the road to future reform. Any serious student of Colombian politics and society must read this book.

In anticipation of moving to Colombia, I have spent a great deal of time researching the country's current sociopolitical situation and trying to sort through the abundance of books that exist on the subject. The in-depth and critical analyses presented in this collection of articles, authored primarily by known Colombian scholars living and working in Colombia, offer truly invaluable insider perspectives on a variety of subjects. It's a necessary and refreshing read for those who have been

exposed mainly to North American interpretations of the situation. I have not found a better book on the subject. Period. If you are seriously interested in and care about what's going on in Colombia today, this book is a must-read. Its predecessor, "Violence in Colombia - The Contemporary Crisis in a Historical Perspective," is nearly as good and well worth looking into also.

A good foundation of Colombian history would help the reader, for what is told within is extremely insightful, and necessary for gaining a profound understanding of Colombia's unfortunate situation. The compilation of authors in this anthology brings together the economic, political, historical and sociological factors that have, and continue to, contribute to Colombia's demise. They show how it finds itself in regards to the rest of the world, as well as within its own borders.

This book offers a collection of viewpoints. Each gives detailed explanations of the violence in Colombia. Moreover, it goes into great lengths to explain the dynamics of the civil war in Colombia. The scholars that contribute to this book are outstanding. However, I found Gonzalo Sánchez to be the most engaging.

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