



BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION





Borders in Globalization Research Project 28

Borders in Globalization Country Report on Colombia

Harlan Koff
University of Luxembourg

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By

Harlan Koff

University of Luxembourg and RISC Consortium

Visiting Professor, CIESAS Golfo and INECOL, Mexico

I. Introduction

Many of the states examined in the *Border in Globalization* (BIG) project are characterized as having “fluid borders.” This theme is prominent in the field of borderlands studies as prominent scholars in the field (John Agnew), many of whom are participating in BIG (for example, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, David Newman), have noted how borders no longer rigidly indicate the territorial limits between nation-states but instead borderlands are socially constructed territories defined by the interactions between dynamic actors and markets. The notion of “fluidity” however, usually indicates the de-territorialization of integration processes in border regions. Colombia’s border regions, like Andean regionalization processes in general, have historically engaged in processes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization. In many ways, border integration in Colombia has represented a process of back and forth opening and closing of national frontiers resulting from shared histories amongst cross-border communities, the expansion of cross-border markets, and regional integration on one hand, and security concerns and populist decision-making on the other. Colombia’s borders have genuinely been characterized by “fluid” processes because of complementary and contrasting integration conditions in the country’s border regions. On one hand, the Andean Community of Nations has established an institutional structure similar to the European Union’s which has permitted the creation of officially recognized “Border Integration Zones” (BIZ). Conversely, the weak legitimacy of region-building in the area has led to the market-based integration that has characterized regionalisms throughout the Americas. This contradiction is seen in civil society as much collaboration exists between non-governmental organizations active in the fields of human and environmental security while simultaneously, public opinion polls have indicated that negative stereotypes persist on both sides of Colombia’s national borders. Economically, the opening and closing of Colombia’s borders due to security concerns has led to trade flows that move from the formal to the informal sector (and back) quite rapidly. This constant mix of formal and informal cross-border activities has led to cross-border integration processes that can best be defined as “fluid.”

This descriptive country report on Colombia is divided into eight parts based on the template employed by the *Borders in Globalization* project. BIG is collecting information on border integration processes in different countries on six research themes: 1) History, 2) Culture, 3) Governance, 4) Flows, 5) Security, and 7) Sustainability. Following this introduction, each one of these themes represents a section of the present report, to be followed by a general conclusion. The research presented here is based on academic sources, policy documents, NGO reports, government websites including the Andean Community of Nations and newspaper articles.

II. History

Colombia shares 6004 km of land borders (see Figure 1) with five countries: Brazil (1,643 km), Ecuador (590 km), Panama (225 km), Peru (1,496 km), and Venezuela (2,050 km) (<http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blccolombia.htm>).

Figure 1: Colombia's State Borders



Source: <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blccolombia.htm>

While there is a strong cross-border tradition with each of these states, three of them, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama have an especially strong shared history with Colombia because they were all part of the Gran Colombia following independence from Spain in the early 19th Century.

The Gran Colombia was established at the Cucuta Congress in 1821 where the *Ley Fundamental de la República* was ratified. This Congress, held in the city of Cucuta which is presently a key border city between Colombia and Venezuela, established the Republic of the Gran Colombia with the present states of Colombia (then known as Nueva Granada),

Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama (which was part of the Nueva Granada). This country was founded by Simon Bolivar following the Latin American Wars of Independence. It was premised on two considerations. The first was ideological, as the Gran Colombia embodied the Bolivarian tradition of Latin American confederation. Second, Simon Bolivar strategically promoted this confederation in order to establish a strong military foundation for the conquest of Peru which remained a stronghold of Spanish Royalists until 1824 when the country was liberated by Bolivar.

While the Bolivarian vision of Latin American unity provided the discourse for cross-border integration, the strategic need for a territorial alliance outweighed the actual existence of a transnational identity. Historians who have studied the Gran Colombia, such as Inès Quintero, have documented both the civil strife that led to the dissolution of the republic in 1831 and the political end of Simon Bolivar's dream of Latin American unity. Quintero has documented how the Gran Colombia's political elites lost favor with public opinion that remained nationalist in both Venezuela and Nueva Grenada which led to public backlash when leaders pushed integration campaigns. The rivalry between Venezuela and Nueva Grenada led to different federalist rebellions which eventually doomed the Gran Colombia. Within this atmosphere, Panama broke away from Nueva Grenada and nationalist movements arose in Ecuador as well.

This scenario has significantly affected the history of border regions between Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama. On one hand, most of these borders are quite porous as migration is relatively easy and migrants are even formally afforded "local citizenship" in the form of social rights on the opposite side of their respective borders. For example, Colombian refugees who seek asylum in Venezuela are provided with identity cards and they are given access to certain social services (Naranjo Giraldo). These trends illustrate the existence of historical cross-border bonds amongst these countries. However, these bonds often erode when strategic issues dominate local cross-border agendas. Marcela Ceballos and Riaño and Villa, amongst others, have documented how the presence of Colombian citizens displaced by the civil war in border communities in Ecuador have been met with hostility due to fears that they are associated with crime and concerns that they will strain already limited welfare services. Thus, the history of these border areas has forged a shared notion of identity but is not strong enough to overcome socio-economic and political concerns. In fact, Adriana Hernández has contended that the weak political institutionalization that characterized the Gran Colombia can be seen as an "original sin" which has plagued integration efforts since the demise of the republic in the 1830s. Quintero's study, mentioned above, documents the various efforts to resuscitate the Grand Colombia on both the Colombian and Venezuelan sides of the border and in each instance, efforts to establish cross-border republics were undermined by populist discourse and strategies which were based on weak institutions and limited public consultation.

The Colombian border with Brazil instead, has been characterized less by open conflict but little shared identity exists as well. A detailed study of the region by the United States Department of State has noted that the Portuguese arrived in the border area before the Spanish and they quickly navigated the Amazon River and its tributaries in order to gain a rapid understanding of this territory. For this reason, initial forms of cross-border integration were hindered by a lack of accurate geographical information amongst the Spanish representatives which led to mistrust of their Portuguese counterparts. In fact, this border is

less populated and less urban than the Colombian borders with Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama. The initial forms of cross-border integration occurred through water treaties related to navigational rights in the Negro and Apaporis rivers.

The pattern of integration has also characterized border politics in the region since the borders were recognized by the 1750 Treaty of Madrid. As stated in the US Department of State report, the Colombian border with Brazil is an isolated, heavily forested, tropical zone. Brazil, as heir to the Portuguese in the region had better maps and more exact information on this territory. This hurt relations with the Gran Colombia. Moreover, because of the civil strife within the Gran Colombia mentioned above, the competing claims in the region were not directly in conflict with that country but Colombia, Venezuela and Peru quarreled over the exact location of the national divides and this indirectly affected relations with Brazil. Colombia's borders with Peru were actually drawn indirectly through Venezuelan and Peruvian agreements with Brazil which led to the establishment of various borders in the region, including Colombia's.

In fact, Colombia has shared a much more conflictive relationship with Peru due to historical border disputes. First, the negotiations over the definition of the border were tense and protracted and they did not lead to agreement until 1922 when the Salomón–Lozano Treaty was signed to definitively establish the border between the two countries. This treaty established the border at the Putamayo River except for the 100,000 square km “Amazonian Trapezoid” located between the Putamayo and Amazon Rivers which belongs to Colombia. This agreement was disputed by Peruvians in the area which led to the 1931 Leticia Dispute (rebellion of Peruvian settlers) and the 1932–33 Colombia-Peru Border War. This war was formally ended in 1934 with the signing of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol which formally gave authority in the region to the League of Nations and reconfirmed the borders established by the Salomón–Lozano Treaty.

III. Culture

The previous section has shown that Colombia has a long shared history with its neighbors and that the Grand Colombia was established on both strategic and ideological bases. In fact, scholars of cross-border culture in Latin America, such as Rhi-Sausi and Oddone and Robles Rivera have identified the importance of the Bolivarian tradition in cross-border politics in Latin America. Egas et. al. have contended that “borders in Latin America have less value than they do in other parts of the world” due to the presence of regional identities. (Egas et. al.) This ideal has often been romanticized in order to justify regional approaches to culture in Latin America that cross national divides.

This notion of “Latin” or “Mesoamerican” culture has been very important to populist presidents, such as Hugo Chavez (former President of Venezuela) and Alvaro Uribe (former President of Colombia) both of whom made reference to Bolivarian and Andean brotherhood during a 2007 summit. Politicians have often forwarded regional agendas by referring to the shared histories discussed above and the presumed existence of shared cross-border identities. How true are these claims? Does Colombia share a cross-border culture with its neighbors or is this a myth that does not reflect realities? This question is important to scholars of culture, such as Marcelino Bisbal, but it also pertains to regional politics where presumed cultural ties have not necessarily provided cross-border institutions with political legitimacy.

The literature on borders and culture in South America is complex. In general, scholars have noted that different levels of culture exist. Most superficially, culture has been defined in terms of cross-border exchanges. Scholars such as Gonzalez Gil, Montenegro-Coral, Zamora Cardozo, and Egas et. al. have documented how the weakness of state authorities in countries, such as Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador have promoted bonds between cross-border communities that have been based on necessity. In one example highlighted by Zamora Cardozo, a border resident in Colombia described “border integration” by stating that when local families need ingredients to finish cooking, they cross the border to buy what they need and then they return home in order finish cooking their lunch (Zamora Cardozo). In this respect, integration is constructed on a daily basis through basic exchanges.

These exchanges are very important in the area. It is estimated that 25,000 people “float” between Venezuela and Colombia as cross-border residents (Zamora Cardozo). Similarly, Egas et. al. state that the border region between Ecuador and Colombia contradicts the rigid reaffirmation of the border by central governments in Bogotá and Quito through the presence of informal markets, flows and exchanges that extend well-beyond the reach of immediate border communities. This informality is a defining characteristic of cross-border “culture” in which local residents promote exchanges and flows in contradiction to many official policies because these strategies offer perspectives for a better quality of life.

Having discussed “cross-border culture” on a superficial level based on exchanges, recent studies of identity in border regions have illustrated weaknesses in terms of “shared understandings” and the establishment of culture in the form of “common or unified social communities.” For example, scholars such as José Miguel Salazar and Marcelino Bisbal have conducted public opinion surveys in the Colombia-Venezuela cross-border region and both studies have documented the persistence of negative stereotypes of their neighbors on both sides of the Colombia-Venezuela border. According to these studies, more than half of the respondents in both Venezuela and Colombia hold negative views of their counterparts on the other side of the border.

In fact, truly “shared cross-border culture” is expressed most strongly by ethnic groups in Colombia’s border regions. Nohelí Pocaterra has discussed the role of Wayuu cross-border residents in communities on both the Colombian and Venezuelan sides of the national divide. Similarly, Montenegro-Coral has identified the Capulí and Piartal cultures as foundations for cross-border identities between Colombia and Ecuador. These communities have also been at the heart of Andean regional integration processes. The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) has established a Consultative Council for Indigenous Peoples of the Andean Community (CCPICAN for its Spanish name) in order to facilitate the input of ethnic groups in the formulation of Andean public policies. The goal of the “Andean Indigenous Plan” is to promote “diverse and participative” integration. While these projects are significant because they do highlight the presence of cross-border ethnic groups in the Andean Community (including Colombia’s border regions), it must be noted that the marginalization of ethnic communities (i.e. the mistreatment of the Wayuu by foreign mining companies (see Puerta)) has reduced the importance of these cultures in cross-border debates focusing on socio-economic development.

Finally, the notion of culture has arisen in Colombia’s border debates in terms of “the promotion of bi-national cultural activities.” In this regard, there has been a recognition

amongst actors in Colombia's border areas of the existence of pluralist cultures defined by informal exchanges of music, arts, theatre, etc. However, these same actors have called upon authorities to better promote and finance bi-national and cross-border cultural activities (see Ramirez and Cadenas, 2006). This trend is symbolic of the overall character of regional integration surrounding Colombia. Most of the cultural and social exchanges have occurred in the informal sector without government coordination or funding. This actually undermines the legitimacy of local political authorities more than it reinforces it. This point will be developed further in the sections on governance and flows below.

IV. Governance

The literature on "multilevel governance" usually pertains to European cross-border regions. However, this approach to the study of borders applies to South America as well. The literature on border governance in Europe (see McCall; Scott amongst others) examines the tensions and political conflicts that sometimes arise between actors at different levels of governance. The competition between these actors, however, is limited by organizational constraints given the institutionalized nature of regional integration processes in Europe. In South America, cross-border governance has proven to be complex because formal structures exist which reflect the European regional system of governance. However, these organizations do not share the same levels of legitimacy and authority as those found in Europe (despite their limits, especially since the 2008 recession). For this reason, Colombian cross-border governance can be characterized as a system with great potential that at the present time remains unfulfilled.

The Andean Community of Nations has in fact included cross-border governance amongst its thematic priorities. It has established a system of officially denominated "Border Integration Zones" (BIZ) which include programs aimed at supporting local authorities' attempts to create effective cross-border governance mechanisms. The objectives of the BIZ initiative include the following:

These exchanges have broad objectives which include the following (<http://www.comunidadandina.org/Seccion.aspx?id=122&tipo=TE&title=zonas-de-integracion-fronteriza-zif>):

- To contribute to the diversification, strengthening and stabilization of economic, social, cultural, institutional, and political ties among the Member Countries;
- To help create and start up economic and institutional mechanisms that will give these territorial zones more free-flowing trade and interconnect them with the rest of the Andean economies and the world market;
- To streamline and boost economic transactions and trade, as well as the circulation of persons, goods, services, and vehicles;
- To set up effective mechanisms for jointly establishing and administering border labor markets and for managing binational and international immigration traffic in the BIZs;
- To give local associations preference by removing obstacles to the attainment of their capacities for production, trade, culture, and peaceful coexistence;

- To contribute to the intensification of national administrative and economic decentralization processes;
- To formalize and boost the longstanding social, economic, cultural, and ethnic processes and relations existing in those zones;
- To adequately meet the economic, social, and cultural demands of the people living in the BIZs;
- To increase and reinforce the supply of basic and or/social services for common use, such as aqueducts and electrification, communications, road infrastructure, health, education, and sports and tourist recreation services;
- To investigate and use the contiguous renewable natural resources in a sustainable manner and to promote mechanisms for their appropriate conservation;
- To contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources, with particular attention to the biological diversity;
- To carry out horizontal cooperation programs that promote the transfer of technical expertise among Member Countries or with border regions, with a view to the adoption of joint technological packages and the performance of production activities that combine or complement efforts.

Specifically, BIZ are sites for multilateral projects including numerous local officials and representatives of NGOs and labor unions that address trade concerns, labor issues, rights of ethnic groups, cultural exchanges and the implementation of sustainable development models that protect the future of natural resources.

Some studies of the impacts of these programs have indicated that they have been effective in many ways. Different scholars have found that these programs have promoted: local cross-border institutional cooperation (Linares, 2005); improved quality of life for local ethnic groups (Ramirez, 2003); increased effectiveness in the fight against the trafficking of contraband (Torres Velasco, 1999); significant local economic development (Otero Silva, 1997); cross-border civil society cooperation, especially amongst labor unions (Bustamante, 2002); and improved regulation of local informal economies (Alvarez de Flores and Pacheco, 1998).

While the BIZ have established interesting coalitions of local actors in specific cross-border development projects, the lack of public participation in these initiatives has been problematic. The study of human security in the Colombia-Ecuador cross-border region, especially in relation to clandestine migrants and displaced persons (see Ceballos, 2009) has indicated that public policies in this field have not been implemented effectively. Moreover, scholars of governance in Colombia's cross-border regions, such as Ceballos and Ardilla (2016) and Koff (2016) have identified three specific conditions that have hindered the effective establishment of cross-border integration zones: 1) administratively ineffective local governments that are often characterized by corruption, 2) the over-centralization of foreign policy by the Colombian, Ecuadoran and Venezuelan governments that essentially undermined regional governance approaches forwarded by the CAN and 3) the securitization of Colombia's borders by its neighbors (notably Ecuador and Venezuela) which has led to blocked exchanges at the local level. Furthermore, Carmen Maganda (2008) has contended

that the regionalization of cross-border governance in this area has established considerable “distance” between decision-makers and local citizens which has hindered the distribution of accurate policy information amongst local residents. These factors have led to informality that extends beyond economic markets as informal social and cultural ties have emerged across Colombia’s borders and this undermines the political legitimacy of a political system that is viewed as ineffective and corrupt by many local border residents.

V. Flows

In fact, the general weakness of authority in this political system has impacted cross-border flows in Colombia. However, more than discussing the quantity of flows in the region, most scholars focus on their quality. As mentioned above, cross-border exchanges occur on a daily basis and flows have historically existed in this area. Moreover, the establishment of the CAN was meant to promote cross-border trade that would strengthen Colombia’s commercial relationships with its neighbors and lessen its economic dependence on the United States. For example, Andean integration was intended to increase cross-border trade flows in manufacturing, leather goods, and agricultural products. Nonetheless, regional integration in South America has often been linked to an increase in informality. The MERCOSUR dossier in the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (2009) included articles showing: 1) how integration has affected trade and consumption in Brazil (Zago de Azevedo), 2) how transnational mining companies have utilized integration to increment their influence over workers (Hevilla and Zusman), 3) how integration processes have been linked to informal and illegal activities in cross-border areas (Osório Machado, Reyes Novaes, do Rego Monteiro) and 4) how MERCOSUR is ill equipped to address contention in its border regions (Di Martino). Analogous studies on Andean cases have demonstrated similar conclusions (see Bustamante; Caraballo, 2007).

The Colombia-Venezuela border is periodically in evolution, depending on whether it is open for commercial cooperation or whether security concerns linked to Colombia’s civil war lead Venezuelan officials to close it. Toll disputes also periodically close the Simon Bolivar Highway (part of the Pan-American Highway system) which links major cities in the border region. These border closings significantly affect formal commerce in the area. In 2008, producers in Cúcuta sold 2.2 million pairs of shoes to Venezuela. In 2010 this number was reduced to only 147 000 “on the legal market” due to border closings. Moreover, the Venezuelan government (La Comisión de Administración de Divisas) suspended a payment of 1.5 billion dollars to Colombian shoe producers in Norte de Santander. This led to the establishment of an informal shoe market. Similarly, the political tensions between Colombia and Venezuela led to a Venezuelan ban on agricultural imports from Colombia. Producers of sugar cane (and their employees) in Norte de Santander were significantly affected as only 25 000 tons of the 65 000 grown for export to Venezuela were actually sold in formal markets, which similarly established black market exchanges. This crisis has significantly affected the whole Department of Norte de Santander. From 2008 to 2010, departmental exports plummeted from a value of US\$1.2 million to US\$ 68 878. According to the Cúcuta Chamber of Commerce, only 12% of the lost Venezuelan market has been substituted for in formal sales.

These economic trends, in association with close cross-border ties between Cúcuta and San Cristóbal, have led to collective survival strategies amongst this general population. On both

sides of the border, more than 60% of the population works in informal activities. In Cucuta (Norte de Santander), an estimated 100,000 inhabitants are economically dependent on smuggling, while 80% of La Paz's 24,000 inhabitants are directly or indirectly dependent on smuggling petrol. (<http://www.janes.com/article/45175/venezuela-colombia-border-controls-likely-to-increase-bilateral-trade-disruption-and-risks-of-protests>) Many citizens in the area do not consider the informal trade of gasoline and food, which dominate informal cross-border commerce, as “illegal.” More than 65 000 cars and 250 000 people cross this border on a weekly basis (Bustamante de Pernia and Bustamante Urbina), filled with participants in this cross-border informal economy. Gasoline passing informally from Venezuela to Colombia increased in 2009 from 10 million gallons per month to 13 million gallons per monthⁱ. This represents 15% of gas sales in Colombia and 40% of fuel subsidies in Venezuela (http://www.ozy.com/rising-stars-and-provocateurs/the-downfall-of-colombias-billion-dollar-gasoline-smuggler/36914?utm_source=Outbrain&utm_medium=CPC&utm_campaign=INTL%20-%20All%20Clicks%20ALL%20Devices). Social movements have even formed to defend the rights of people working in this sector. For example, the “Association for the Rights of Informal Exporters” exists in Táchira, Venezuela. In October 2014, protests at this border turned violent as protesters burned cars, motorcycles and a Colombian tax office in response to Venezuelan anti-contraband measures (<http://colombiareports.co/violent-protests-colombia-venezuela-border-anti-contraband-strategies/>).

Population flows, often informal, also link Norte de Santander with Táchira. In the 1970s and 1980s, more than 100 000 Venezuelans came to Norte de Santander as political refugees. Similarly, Táchira has welcomed more than 200 000 Colombians escaping that country's political violence since 2000. Civil society has woven a common fabric in response to social, political and economic challenges in this difficult region. For example, NGOs on both sides of the border work together in service provision for families displaced by violence in Colombia.

These phenomena have also been documented along the Colombia-Ecuador border. According Ceballos and Ardilla, more than 50% of the Colombian population living along this border and more than 40% of their Ecuadoran counterparts work in the informal sector. Unlike the more urbanized Venezuela-Colombia border, this informal trade is dominated by agriculture. In the Andean region of Nariño-Carchi, informal economic trade also involves potatoes and milk, not necessarily because of an existing economic market, but rather due to seasonal changes in the prices of those products that create comparative advantages for the two countries' populations. Moreover, because Ecuador subsidizes natural gas and gasoline (like Venezuela), informal trade of these commodities to Colombia exists as well.

These trends have also been seen in terms of population movements. Like the Colombia-Venezuela border, the divide with Ecuador has seen an increase in displaced persons. While some of these migrants have fled the civil war, others have been affected by the rise in the drug trade in this area (Gonzalez Gil). These displaced persons have not been received through regular channels by Ecuadoran authorities (see Ceballos, 2009) and civil society has responded to their needs on both sides of the border. Thus, a dynamic has been established that mirrors the one found in Norte de Santander, Colombia and Táchira, Venezuela.

While these phenomena are less pronounced in Colombia's Amazonian border with Brazil and Peru due to the rural nature of the region, similar cross-border dynamics exist. Gomez

Suarez has documented how the cities of Leticia and Tabatinga have developed as twin cities with constant economic and commercial exchanges. He also notes that the triple border (Colombia-Brazil-Peru) region is characterized geographically by jungle, politically by the distance between local authorities and respective central government and economically high levels of (formal) unemployment and the presence of important informal markets. Also, like the Colombian borders with Venezuela and Ecuador, armed local groups and the presence of drug trafficking have promoted informality in the area. Consequently, in all of Colombia’s border regions, security is an issue that has significantly affected the character of cross-border flows.

VI. Security

In many ways, security is the defining characteristic of border integration processes in Colombia’s border regions. Security concerns permeate border debates at the local, national, bi-national, regional and international levels. Colombia’s civil war has spilled over its borders as FARC rebels and paramilitary groups utilize the border regions to their advantage where they can cross national divides in areas with weak local authorities and act with impunity. For example, recent studies of the Colombia-Ecuador border region, conducted by scholars such as Adriana Gonzalez Gil have documented the rise of armed groups which apply “taxes” to local businesses called “vaccinations.” These groups act as de facto authorities in this region through coercive means. Similar phenomena are occurring along the Colombia-Venezuela and Colombia-Brazil border as well.

Most importantly, security concerns have led to repressive border policies in the area. In general, border controls have been enacted by foreign actors in these regions. The United States has paid particular attention to security issues in the Putumayo border region between Colombia and Ecuador where much of the cocaine that is exported from Colombia is grown. The US has invested 882 million US dollars (<http://colombiajournal.org/colombia65.htm>) in its Andean Regional Initiative, which builds on the previously established Plan Colombia, begun in the 1990s under President Clinton. These initiatives formulate aid packages that combine development and military assistance in multilateral efforts to combat drug trafficking in the Andean Region. Table one shows the distribution of this aid to Colombia.

U.S. Aid to Colombia, 1996-2006 (including non-Plan Colombia aid)											
Last updated	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
11/11/05										(est)	(req)
In millions											
Military/Police	54.15	88.56	112.44	309.18	765.49	242.97	401.93	620.98	555.07	641.60	641.15
Economic/Social	0.62	0.00	0.52	8.75	214.31	5.65	120.30	136.70	134.98	131.29	138.52
% Military	99.88	100	99.53	97.42	78.12	97.72	76.96	81.95	80.43	83.01	82.23

Source: Pastrana, Andrés; Camilo Gómez (2005). *La palabra bajo fuego*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana S.A. pp. 48–51.

United States anti-drug efforts have actually increased the prominence of border areas in the drug trade based in Colombia. According to the United States embassy in Bogotá, US-funded

anti-drug efforts in traditional coca growing locations, such as central Colombia, led to increased production in Norte de Santander along the Venezuela border and Putumayo, along the border with Ecuador and Peru. Moreover, drug production increased along Colombia's jungle-laden southern borders (Amazonia) because of the sharp decrease in coca production in traditional source countries such as Bolivia and Peru. Drug traffickers have in fact moved their operations to these border regions for two reasons. First, the political weakness of local authorities make drug production and distribution easier to carry out without threat of detection. Second, as stated above, these border areas are often controlled by FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) rebels or paramilitaries who protect the interests of local populations, including drug traffickers, in exchange for the payment of the aforementioned taxes.

The United States presence in these border regions has had a spillover effect amongst different political actors in the area. Most notably, Brazil has enacted a Brazil-Colombia border intelligence collection unit. The United States has also invested in a Plan Ecuador in order to promote anti-drug efforts in that country as well.

The combined presence of drug traffickers, FARC rebels and paramilitaries has made these border regions dangerous places. The independent NGO Fundacion Progresar warned of a "serious" increase in human rights violations along Colombia's border with Venezuela, where some 16,000 people have been murdered and 1,800 have disappeared over the past decade (<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=356763&CategoryId=12393>). Similarly, the Colombia-Ecuador border remains unstable. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, violent groups in this area are displacing 1200-1500 persons from Colombia to Ecuador every month (<http://www.unhcr.org/4f86ecfc9.html>).

Politicians have often utilized the presence of violent groups in the area to close the borders as military cooperation along Colombia's borders remains limited. In fact, the approaches to border controls enacted by Colombia's neighbors is quite conventional. When border conflicts erupt, these countries send military units to the borders which are periodically closed. Most recently, in February 2015, President Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela temporarily closed the border following his claim that Colombian paramilitaries had crossed it in order to destabilize the regions of Zulia and Táchira (<http://www.eluniversal.com/nacional-y-politica/150225/maduro-blames-colombian-paramilitaries-for-violence-in-venezuela>). The most famous incident of this kind was the 2008 Andean diplomatic crisis that occurred when Colombian troops entered into Ecuador in an attack that killed 17 FARC rebels, including Commander Raul Reyes and recovered computers that supposedly held documents indicating Venezuelan and Ecuadoran support for the FARC. Similarly, Venezuela closed the border to Colombia in 2004 when Colombian authorities entered Venezuelan territory in order to arrest FARC member Rodrigo Granda. Each of these disputes was settled peacefully but in both cases, and others that received less international attention, Colombia's neighbors closed the borders, disrupting travel and commerce.

It must also be mentioned that poverty rates are elevated in almost all of Colombia's, Ecuador's and Venezuela's border departments which raises numerous human security issues, such as access to health facilities and education. This social situation has been recognized politically and academically as a contributing factor to security difficulties in these regions. Foreign development actors, such as the German Development Agency and the Carter

Foundation, have enacted programs in these regions that aim to support equitable and sustainable development as a basis for peace. This approach has recently been enacted by the Colombian government itself. In a break with the border security approaches established by his predecessor Alvaro Uribe, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos has established a new security program entitled “Borders for Prosperity.” This security strategy addresses socio-economic development issues in Colombia’s border regions in order to eradicate the social bases for violence in these areas. This approach is innovative but it will be difficult to achieve progress in terms of human security unless authorities in Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru enact similar security programs given that these cross-border communities are linked economically so prosperity on one side of the border can only be sustained when it is promoted on other sides of the borders as well.

VII. Sustainability

The previous sections of this report have indicated that development in Colombia’s border regions has not been equitable. Poverty rates are elevated, many cross-border residents work in informal sectors and ethnic groups are often marginalized in these communities. For this reason, it is difficult to discuss sustainable development in Colombia’s cross-border regions given the social imbalances that presently exist.

In terms of environmental issues, the situation described above has most significantly affected natural resources, especially the extraction of precious minerals. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in the Triple Border area (Colombia-Brazil-Peru) where rubber and lumber have traditionally been exported without significant benefits to the inhabitants of the region. The rise in plantation areas means that Colombia’s rubber production is steadily increasing, hitting 3,200 tons in 2010. This figure is expected to grow further to 35,000 tons by 2020 (<http://colombiareports.co/colombian-rubber-plantations-beginning-to-boom/>).

More recently, this region has witnessed the emergence of a black market for different precious metals, above all coltan. The mining of this metal, which is utilized to construct an array of electronic devices, is illegal in Venezuela and most parts of Colombia. However, informal mining has emerged and it has even fed illegal sales of coltan in smuggling networks organized by drug traffickers and armed groups in the region. Similarly, Colombia and Venezuela have witnessed the mining of tungsten by these groups in their shared border region.

In fact, the FARC and different paramilitary groups are profiting handsomely from these illegal mines. First, these organizations “tax” mining operations up to 10% of their daily earnings. They also organize labor, including the recruitment of children (<http://www.ijc.org/projects/coltan/venezuela-emerges-new-source-conflict-minerals>). Finally, armed groups often extort fees for the rent of heavy machinery in small mining operations. These fees can reach up to 1600 US dollars for the rent of a backhoe.

While these precious metals are emerging as profitable resources, the main earner amongst these informal mines remains gold. Some 3,000 grams of gold are reportedly extracted in the Colombia border region with Peru each month, with each gram worth around \$30, making a total worth of \$90,000. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/colombia-farc-profit-from-peru-illegal-gold>). These mines have proliferated to such an extent and created such significant human and environmental damage to cross-border communities, that Colombia has

signed Memoranda of Understanding with Ecuador and Peru in 2014 in order to establish joint efforts to eliminate informal mining in shared cross-border regions. Moreover, in addition to joint action by security forces against illegal miners, the treaty also seeks to promote sustainable economic activities, such as fish farming and the production of cacao in the border region.

Ethnic communities have been amongst the most significantly affected by mining operations in Colombia's border regions. In addition to illegal mining these groups have often been marginalized in areas with legal mines. The most studied case is the Cerrejon mine which is the largest open pit coal mine in Latin America, located in the Guajira border region. It has generated 500 million tons of coal since 1976. Nonetheless, the Guajira region remains one of the poorest in Colombia with a poverty rate of over 60%. Many of the residents of this region belong to the Wayuu ethnic group. This group, with large populations on both sides of the Colombia-Venezuela border, largely lives from agriculture. The expansion of the Cerrejon mine has significantly affected the wildlife and biodiversity of the Guajira region. Also, the Wayuu have been forced to settle in new places as they have been displaced from ancestral lands due to the expansion of mining. Until now, this issue has not been satisfactorily addressed by either the Colombian or Venezuelan governments. In fact, the issue of mining further illustrates the weakness of local authorities in Colombia's border regions because they have not been able to properly defend local populations from different forms of exploitation.

The other main environmental issue that is prominent in the political agendas of Colombia's border regions is the management of water. The first border treaties between Colombia and its neighbors focused on navigation rights in different border rivers. However, despite these antecedents, little progress has been made in the establishment of an effective system of cross-border governance of shared water basins. Miguel Sanchez has documented the need to improve water management in the Colombian-Venezuelan Guajira, an area where climatic conditions often alternate flooding with drought. Medina de Perez analyzes the international treaties that Colombia and Venezuela have signed regarding the management of water resources from the Catatumbo River, noting that these treaties, negotiated in association with international organizations, such as the Organization of American States, have not been implemented. Carmen Maganda's study of the Cucuta-San Antonio basin, located in Colombia and Venezuela has indicated that each country administers their side of the basin as it sees fit with little bilateral cooperation. Moreover, Maganda notes that Andean Community efforts to effectively regionalize water governance have not succeeded because the regionalization of decision-making has created a democratic deficit due to a lack of public information regarding water and decision-making procedures in the Andean region. Maganda, amongst others, also notes that water governance in the Colombia-Venezuela border region has been challenged by the weakness of local cross-border governance systems discussed above.

VIII. Conclusion

This descriptive report has documented the fluidity of Colombia's border regions. In general, these cross-border areas are characterized by socio-environmental vulnerability. While cross-border exchanges are abundant and cooperation exists in the economic sphere, the defining characteristic of these regions remains insecurity which results from the combination of Colombia's civil war and the internationalization of Colombia's drug trade.

This vulnerability should be viewed within the framework of governance systems. On one hand, Colombia and its neighbors, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil and Peru, have enacted national economic development strategies that favor urban centers located far from these border areas. This has significantly limited the economic opportunities for sustainable and equitable growth along the borders. Specifically, many of these areas are characterized by limited infrastructure.

Politically, these border areas are also isolated from their national capitals in many ways. The literature on these border regions repeatedly returns to the same theme: local authorities in these border areas are weak, leading to often conflictive relationships with central governments and a vacuum of power which has been filled by armed groups, such as the FARC and paramilitaries. In the highest profile case related to this subject, the then-mayor of Cucuta, Colombia, Ramiro Suárez Corzo was arrested in 2007 (and later acquitted) for the murder of two political rivals. He has also been investigated for links with paramilitary movements.

For these reasons, the fluidity that characterizes Colombia's border regions does not only refer to horizontal cross-border exchanges, which are significant in these areas. It also refers to the dynamic tension between local communities interested in maintaining open borders and central governments that periodically close them for security purposes. Most importantly, it refers to the fluidity between formal and informal economic and political life in these areas where the line between formal and informal markets and institutions is highly permeable.

The Andean Community of Nation's experiment with "Border Integration Zones" is very interesting and it offers great potential for the establishment of effective cross-border governance systems. The reason that these zones have not yet been able to achieve broader governance successes related to sustainable development can be explained by the general weakness of the Andean governance system. Regional organizations, like the CAN are built on local and national governance foundations. If these foundations are weak, it is difficult to propose strong regional initiatives. The sections above have shown that central governments in the Andean Community have often undermined regional strategies in cross-border areas (Venezuela actually left the CAN in 2006, just as the BIZ were gaining traction along this border) through national border security policies. Local authorities cannot be viewed as reliable partners either in terms of service delivery or the promotion of legitimacy for regional development strategies.

Border security is presently the cross-cutting theme that infiltrates debates in each of the research areas proposed by *Borders in Globalization*. However, while human and environmental security need to be considered short-term priorities in Colombia's border areas, the long-term objective in these regions should be "formalization" of cross-border communities through the establishment of transparent governance systems. The defining characteristic of these communities which leaves their populations in vulnerable conditions is informality. Informal exchanges significantly affect cross-border political cooperation, economic markets and even social/cultural life. Residents of these regions often engage in "survival strategies" and their relationship with authorities is often adversarial. This informality may bring short-term gains to local communities but it facilitates long-term insecurity and vulnerability which hinders the establishment of reliable cross-border sustainable development strategies.

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