

## Introduction

For many people violence and Colombia are synonymous. Colombia (map 1), after all, produces the bulk of the coca processed into cocaine and shipped to the world's largest consumer of drugs, the United States, and suffers the crime and corruption that result from this illicit trade. Colombia is also home to the oldest guerrilla insurgency in the Western Hemisphere; the country that accounted for half of the world's kidnappings in 2000; the place where paramilitaries inscribe bloody messages on the bodies of their largely peasant victims; a land the U.S. media likes to refer to as "twice the size of France"; a land over which the central state exerts little authority; and a formal democracy where a handful of elite families are thought to monopolize control of the media, politics, and the nation's (licit) economy. Until recently, the Colombian city considered to represent the apex of lawlessness was Medellín, the capital of the northwestern province of Antioquia and, for the better part of two decades, the financial center of a global narcotics enterprise known as the "Medellín cartel."<sup>1</sup>

This book is not directly about narcotics or Colombia's contemporary crisis. Instead, it examines the experience of the department of Antioquia (see map 2) during the first seven years (1946–1953) of a civil war that was spurred by a struggle for power between members of the Conservative and Liberal parties and that has come to be known simply as *la Violencia* or "the Violence."<sup>2</sup> Initially, I did not intend to draw parallels between the period of *la Violencia* and contemporary Colombia, but I came to see that recent and past periods of violence are inextricably intertwined. I can pinpoint the day I ceased to regard *la Violencia* as something entirely distinct from current, daily, lived Colombian reality. I was sitting in my office preparing the last lecture of the spring semester for my survey course on modern Latin America. In a moment of procrastination I checked my email. There was a message from a friend in Bogotá—a fellow *violéntologo* at the National University<sup>3</sup>—telling me that a colleague from the University of Antioquia in Medellín had just been assassinated at point-blank range by three hooded individuals who carried guns with



Map 1. Colombia. (Source: Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* [Stanford University Press, 1986])

silencers. My friend had omitted the name of the murdered professor, but I knew the moment I read the message, with a certainty I cannot explain, that it was Hernán Henao, a man with whom I had collaborated for several months on an interdisciplinary seminar devoted to analyzing violence in Medellín and thinking about peaceful ways to end it.

This was not the first time someone I knew had been killed. During one particularly horrible period in the early 1990s, it seemed as if there was a funeral every week, sometimes more, of a professor, journalist, student, or human rights advocate. People called each other frequently to tell their loved ones that they were on their way home, had just arrived at the office, or were leaving to run an errand because otherwise ordinary delays were cause for mortal fear. Despite this familiarity with violence, Hernán's death plunged me into a deep depression from which it took months to recover. I wandered the halls of my building that day howling with pain. I replayed over and over again in my imagination the sight of Hernán agonizing in a pool of blood in the campus office of the Instituto de Estudios Regionales (INER), every inch of which was as familiar to me as my own house. I remember feeling anger, fear, numbness, disbelief. I couldn't think why anyone would kill Hernán, an academic whose life had been devoted to discussing and anguishing over a way to negotiate a space for tolerance, mutual respect, and plurality in an increasingly polarized society, but who had never himself advocated violence or taken part in violent activities. Neither Hernán nor any of the other professors affiliated with INER believed that the massacres, forcible displacements, or persistent violations of human rights that take place daily in Colombia were attributable to a single cause. Hernán and others had reached out to the victims of violence of the right and left, regardless of ideology, and offered them solace, education, and programs to help rebuild their lives. His murder seemed utterly senseless.

In the midst of feeling betrayed and vulnerable, I suddenly realized the point of terror and how it worked. I mean that I realized it in every fiber of my body, not as an intellectual abstraction. I had just finished a preliminary version of this manuscript and felt that I simply couldn't face thinking about violence any longer. I fantasized about setting it aside, as if by doing so I could set aside the reality of violence, too. And then the realization struck me. I knew that even if I could never absolutely establish the trajectory by which violence had occurred or the exact motivations behind it, even if I could not swear to the existence of an objective "truth"



Map 2. Department of Antioquia and its municipalities. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi)

about historical events, I nonetheless had to try to trace, with the greatest precision I could muster, the complicated, murky, sometimes contradictory, and seemingly unrelated events that led to violence. The only way to overcome my own terror was to refuse to be silenced.

This book is the result of that realization; it is the outcome of a conviction that what has happened in the past is crucial to understanding what is happening today and that refusing to accept that most violence is inchoate, random, or inexplicable is a moral obligation. It is also a small tribute to the people whose insistence on uncovering unwelcome truths in the face of extreme threat has been a cause of constant inspiration to me. My awareness of links between past and present conflict, however, should not be understood as a belief that violence in Colombia is somehow inherent,

unique, inevitable, or static. On the contrary, if the case of *la Violencia* in Antioquia is at all representative of Colombian violence as a whole, then what is significant about this study is the discovery of how selective and concentrated supposedly generalized violence has been, and to what degree factors such as ethnicity and race, cultural differences, class, and geography have shaped the evolution, trajectory, direction, and incidence of violence in Colombia over time. The historical act of glossing *la Violencia* as a generalized phenomenon gives short shrift to the memories of those who refused to take part in violence and to the memories of its true victims, the thousands of unnamed rural folk who died and whose voices have been silenced or forgotten. Hernán Henao dedicated himself to elucidating the causes of violence and the identity of its victims, and in its own way this book tries to carry that legacy forward.

### *La Violencia* in Antioquia

Two hundred thousand Colombians are estimated to have died as a result of violence between 1946 and 1966. Over two million others migrated or were forcibly displaced from their homes and towns, the majority were never to return. The impact of *la Violencia* was so great that it provoked Colombia's only twentieth-century military coup and led later to an unprecedented agreement between the leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties to alternate control of the presidency and share political power for nearly twenty years.

Of the Colombian regions hardest hit by violence, Antioquia ranked third in the total number of violent deaths registered nationally between 1946 and 1957, as approximately 26,000 of the province's inhabitants are estimated to have died as a result of the Violence. In 1951 nearly 14 percent or 1,570,000 of Colombia's total population of 11,500,000 lived in Antioquia. Thus, there was a regional, per capita casualty rate of nearly 1.7 percent over the time period.<sup>4</sup> In other words, many deaths occurred in Antioquia, but because the overall regional populations of other severely affected provinces were much smaller than Antioquia's, the impact of casualties in these other provinces was even more pronounced.<sup>5</sup> Antioquia also registered the eighth highest number of migrations as a result of violence in Colombia (117,000 or 6 percent of the national total of migrations caused by violence). But, again, in regional terms, the seven provinces that led the nation in total migrations as a result of violence



Map 3. Administrative subregions. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi)

had populations significantly smaller than Antioquia's and therefore experienced a much higher proportional displacement of their population.<sup>6</sup> What makes the case of Antioquia during *la Violencia* significant is not the number of casualties or migrations that occurred as a result of violence, but rather where violence took place in the province and why.

In this book I draw on previously untapped sources such as regional and municipal government archives, judicial testimony, parish death records, and interviews to tell a story that echoes the findings of researchers tracing the trajectory of violence in other Colombian regions between 1946 and 1953 and also challenges them. Despite ranking third as the department most severely affected by violence, Antioquia was not beset by widespread violence nor was the violence most pronounced or concen-



Map 4. Peripheral municipalities. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi)

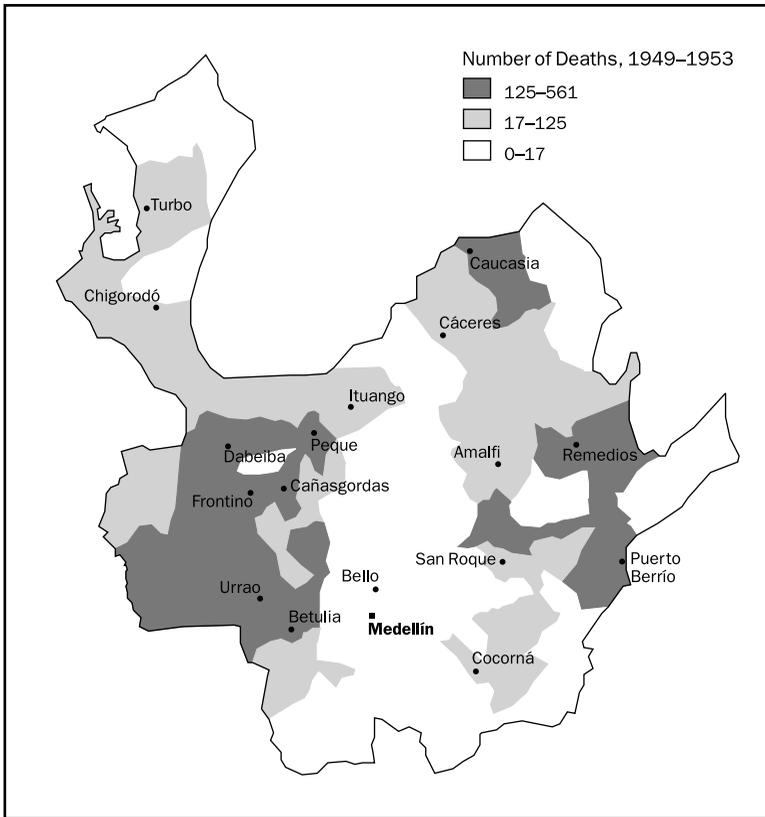
trated in the coffee-producing municipalities of the southwest as has historically been thought.<sup>7</sup> Instead, violence proved most severe in Antioquia's geographically peripheral zones where land tenure, production, labor, and the state's authority were markedly different from the dominant paradigm in Antioquia's centrally settled municipalities. In Antioquia, the earliest stage of *la Violencia* (1948–1953) affected in indelible ways those areas situated in the department's geographic periphery such as the tropical lowlands of Urabá, the Bajo Cauca (lower Cauca Valley), and Northeast and Magdalena Medio (middle Magdalena Valley), but not Antioquia's coffee sector or centrally located municipalities. (See maps 3 and 4.)

Violence-related death statistics provide a crude index of the spatial

and temporal dimensions of Antioqueño violence. The total number of officially registered deaths in Antioquia during the years of *la Violencia* varied only slightly between a low of 22,210 (1948) and a high of 25,125 (1951).<sup>8</sup> But deaths in three categories: “homicide,” “unspecified or ill defined,” and “other violent deaths” rose significantly between 1948 and 1951, and then declined until 1959. In 1951 the cumulative total of deaths encompassed by these three categories peaked at 10,212, accounting for nearly 41 percent of all the deaths registered in that year.<sup>9</sup>

Death statistics collected by Antioquia’s governor’s office (for internal purposes, not public dissemination) give a more precise picture of regional violence.<sup>10</sup> Before 1949, the regional government did not keep a separate statistical record of deaths specifically related to violence, but government records and interviews with survivors suggest that violence was largely sporadic between 1946 and 1949 and concentrated in centrally located towns where the total number of violence-related deaths was low.<sup>11</sup> Three quarters (twelve of sixteen) of the officially registered deaths specifically listed as the direct consequence of violence by the governor’s office in 1949, for instance, occurred in centrally located towns. By 1950, however, the pattern of sporadic, centrally concentrated deaths shifted. Deaths explicitly deemed the result of violence numbered in the hundreds by 1950 and were concentrated in Antioqueño towns located in the furthest southwest (Urrao),<sup>12</sup> western Antioquia, and in the far eastern portions of the department (the Northeast, Bajo Cauca, and Magdalena Medio). Core area towns such as Medellín, the industrial towns near Medellín (such as Bello or Envigado), the coffee-producing south and southwest, the near east (*oriente*) and the immediate north-central subregions, in contrast, reported very few violence-related casualties between 1950 and 1953.<sup>13</sup> In fact, half of the more than four thousand violence-related regional deaths officially registered between 1949 and May 1953 took place in just five municipalities (Dabeiba, Puerto Berrío, Urrao, Cañasgordas, and Remedios), all of them located on Antioquia’s periphery (map 5; also see appendix A.1, A.2.)

Of all the violence-related deaths tallied by the regional government, 43 percent occurred in western Antioquia and Urabá, 20 percent occurred in the southwest, 14 percent in the Magdalena Medio region, and 13 percent in the northeastern section of Antioquia. With the exception of the highly populated southwest, all of the areas with the highest percentage of casualties were also the least populated in Antioquia. Also, of all



Map 5. Deaths due to violence, 1949–1953. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi and Archivo Privado del Señor Gobernador de Antioquia, 1953, vol. 9, “Informe sobre la acción del bandolerismo de 1949 a mayo de 1953,” Medellín, May 1953)

the officially registered deaths from violence occurring between 1949 and 1953, half occurred in a single year, 1952. Just one town, Puerto Berrío, accounted for nearly a quarter of these. The selective and concentrated nature of violence is even more striking when deaths related to violence are measured as a percentage of local population. Based on the census of 1951, only one quarter of 1 percent of Antioquia’s population suffered violence-related deaths between 1949 and 1953, but Puerto Berrío in the Magdalena Medio lost 6 percent of its population to violence while Caucaasia in the Bajo Cauca lost nearly 4 percent of its inhabitants. Western towns such as Urrao, Dabeiba, and Cañasgordas, moreover, lost be-

tween 2 and 3 percent of their populations to violence during a three-year period.

The “official story” of violence represents it as a widespread, generically partisan phenomenon waged indiscriminately between Liberal and Conservative rural folk, but the official record uncovers a violence remarkably limited in scope and far more varied in impulse. How are we to account for the geographic and temporal specificity of violence-related deaths in Antioquia? Why were towns located on the margins of the department the sites of most severe and prolonged violence? Why were the majority of towns in the coffee heartland (the southwest), which were equally Liberal and where it has always been supposed that the violence in Antioquia was centered, so much less violent than towns on the periphery? Is it possible that factors in addition to partisan differences influenced the severity of violence and shaped a more pronounced concentration in specific geo-cultural areas? Did the objectives of violence shift over time and were they dependent upon factors peculiar to local rather than generalized national circumstances? If so, how would we have to re-think our conceptualization of the relationship between partisan politics and violence in Colombia?

Antioquia was Colombia’s most populated, Conservative, and economically influential department at mid-century. The province was also — and had been for some decades — one of Colombia’s largest regional producers of coffee for export, the nation’s main producer of gold, and the national leader in industry, commerce, and finance. Antioqueños were sometimes less likely to occupy national political office than the inhabitants of other Colombian provinces, but Antioquia’s voters were numerous and the province’s men of capital dominated powerful private producer associations such as the National Federation of Coffee Growers (FEDECAFE), the National Federation of Merchants (FENALCO), and the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI), entities instrumental in shaping Colombian economic and social policy.

In a country where Liberal and Conservative differences were thought to define individual identity and to have caused the majority of Colombia’s violent struggles since the nineteenth century, moreover, Antioquia was perceived as both a political maverick and as reluctant to take up arms in the name of politics. Indeed, there was little in Antioquia’s past to suggest that it should have become an area hard hit by partisan violence during *la Violencia*. Neither the province of which Medellín is the

capital nor Medellín itself was associated with violence in the Colombian imaginary. A stereotype existed of Antioquia and its inhabitants, but it was one that characterized *paisas*<sup>14</sup> as the nation's sharpest businessmen and pragmatic technocrats, a region of aggressive colonizers who were also fiercely Catholic. A prolific lot, Antioqueños figured in the national imagination as the people who opened and peopled Colombia's southwestern frontier, who came to embody coffee cultivation and culture in the early twentieth century, and who gave rise to a society characterized by a sense of strong regional identity, large families, and small property holders. Many a joke was made targeting regional inhabitants as too obsessed with making money to spare the time to take part in politics. When forced to choose between going to war over political differences and arriving at a negotiated solution that would preclude social unrest and allow business to continue unimpeded, the region's inhabitants were perceived as usually opting for the latter. What happened then by mid-century to make Antioquia an important locus of violence?

To those familiar only with the recent history of Colombia or Antioquia, the association of violence with both the country and the region might seem self-evident. As David Bushnell ruefully notes in the introduction to his recent synthesis of Colombian history, "Colombia is today the least studied of the major Latin American countries, and probably the least understood."<sup>15</sup> In contrast to many of its neighbors, Colombia has rarely suffered from dictatorships, boasted no powerful military, managed its finances conservatively, and displayed no conflict based on ethnic differences. Moreover, except for the brief appeal of Liberal populist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the 1940s and the military government of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the mid-1950s, Colombia rarely fell victim to the sway of populist or authoritarian politics. By the mid-twentieth century, the persistence of identification with the same parties that had oriented individual political affiliation since the nineteenth century at the expense of supposedly more modern forms of political expression reinforced the idea that Colombia was somehow unique and that there existed no common frame of reference with which to compare events in Colombia to those in the rest of Latin America. This has relegated the phenomenon of *la Violencia* to a kind of historical limbo much written and obsessed about by Colombian specialists but regarded by other Latin Americanists as an aberration peculiar only to Colombia.

At first glance *la Violencia* does appear as a throwback to an earlier

age of caudillo civil wars and peasant atavism that confirms the notion of Colombia as out of step with other “modernizing” nations in the region. The bulk of the killing during *la Violencia* took place in rural areas, and peasants constituted the majority of casualties. Victims were often tortured, dismembered, and sexually mutilated, and women were frequently raped in front of their families. These conditions alone, however, are insufficient to distinguish conflict in Colombia from that typical of the rest of Latin America. But, while national political struggles, personal feuds, agrarian unrest, and clientelist competition informed conflicts in other Latin American societies, these had either taken place in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, involved war with another nation, or occurred in the context of suppressing an indigenous population.<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, violence occurring in Latin America in the post-*Violencia* years was explained as leftist insurgency or anticommunist state terrorism waged in defense of national security and democracy.<sup>17</sup> There seemed to be no Latin American precedent for a conflict in which those killing each other were citizens of the same state who attacked one another because of partisan differences and who did so with a savagery rarely seen outside the context of racially or ideologically motivated wars.<sup>18</sup> In other words, what distinguished the Colombian *Violencia* from twentieth-century violence occurring elsewhere in Latin America was that it was fought in terms of mid-nineteenth-century political partisanship not modern political or social objectives. There were of course comparably brutal and complex cases of civil conflict in other parts of the world to which *la Violencia* might be compared, but this required attributing the same symbolic and innate power to Colombian partisan differences as that attributed to religious and ethnic and racial differences present elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

But cultural, religious, and ethnic and racial differences did exist in Antioquia and were fundamental features of how violence unfolded in the region. Indeed, it is the argument of this study that *la Violencia* in Antioquia can only be understood against the backdrop of profoundly perceived differences between geo-cultural areas internal to the province, and that these differences were often as critical as, or more so, than partisan factors in determining the intensity, incidence, and trajectory of violence in the region. To make clear how the Antioqueño experience of *la Violencia* differs from historical interpretations of the phenomenon, and the significance of these differences for the study of violence

in Colombia more generally, I have divided the remainder of this introduction into three parts. First, I provide a brief overview of Colombian politics and society in the decades preceding *la Violencia*. I then summarize the various interpretations and regional case studies that form the core of *Violencia* studies from the 1970s to the present in order to provide a comparative basis for a consideration of the issues raised by the Antioqueño experience of the Violence. Lastly, I lay out a theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between geography, politics, ethnicity and race, class, and violence and explore the reasons why these issues, rather than partisan identity alone, shaped the course of mid-century conflict in Antioquia.

### Politics and Society in the Decades before *la Violencia*

Initial attempts to make sense of *la Violencia* sought an explanation in the peculiarities of Colombian political history. Like Liberals and Conservatives elsewhere in nineteenth-century Latin America, Colombian political parties were divided into opposing camps of protectionists and free traders, centralists and federalists, and pro- and anti-clerical feeling. The significance of specific issues to the determination of individual political understanding and comportment differed to some degree from region to region, depending on the availability of resources, the structure of land tenure and production, kinship relations, accidents of history, and myriad other intangibles. An Antioqueño Conservative of moderate stripe, for instance, might simultaneously embrace both free trade and federalism (positions more typically associated with the Liberal party) and yet strongly support the Catholic Church (a position more typical of pro-clerical Conservatives). What set Colombia's parties apart from Liberal and Conservative parties in other Latin American countries, however, was the Colombian system's ability to foster a deep identification between the parties and the vast majority of its citizens.<sup>20</sup> The Colombian parties attracted individuals of all classes, regions, and racial and ethnic origin and, in the absence of a well-developed sense of national identity, scholars have argued, party affiliation shaped the average Colombian's sense of self and belief from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries.<sup>21</sup> Identification with one of the two parties also persisted in Colombia long after Liberal and Conservative parties elsewhere in Latin America disappeared or gave way to multiparty systems.

Policy and ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives fueled most of the repeated nineteenth-century civil wars for which Colombia became famous, although the majority of the so-called civil wars occurring in Colombia before the War of the Thousand Days (1899–1902) might more accurately be described as skirmishes. The ostensible catalysts of such “wars” were not insignificant—the suppression of convents, the abolition of slavery, the empowerment of artisans, struggles to seize control of the central government, and so on—but they rarely engaged more than a small percentage of Colombians in actual physical combat. Civil war casualties were for the most part also relatively few, although the destruction and confiscation of property affecting a particular individual, clan, or interest group could become the basis of long-standing resentment that cemented partisan identity. In the end, however, despite a reputation for chronic disorder, nineteenth-century Colombia does not appear to have been noticeably more violent than other Latin American countries of the time.<sup>22</sup>

In 1880 Liberal Rafael Nuñez won control of Colombia’s presidency and, with the support of the Conservative party revoked many of the political and social reforms passed during several decades of Liberal political domination. The revised Constitution of 1886 replaced state autonomy with strict centralism, converted previously elected offices into a hierarchically determined system of government appointments, established literacy requirements for male suffrage in national elections, and restored the preeminence of the Roman Catholic Church in matters such as public education.<sup>23</sup> A severe downturn in the export price of coffee during the second half of the 1890s as well as growing discontent among Liberals over their political exclusion eventually sparked the outbreak of the War of the Thousand Days, the last and greatest of Colombia’s nineteenth-century civil conflicts.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the limited engagements characteristic of earlier struggles, the war produced more than 100,000 casualties, a large number of maimed and displaced people, and the irrevocable loss of Panama.<sup>25</sup>

There were fears that, if the war were allowed to continue, further territorial dismemberment (beyond the already dramatic loss of Panama) would occur and Colombia’s economic future would be compromised at the very moment when coffee seemed to promise a way out of economic stagnation. Ultimately, these fears converged to bring fighting to an end. General Rafael Reyes, Colombia’s first twentieth-century military

ruler and the man behind the elimination of the most exclusionary policies associated with the *Regeneración* (as the Nuñez regime was known), came to power in 1904. Reyes enjoyed the overt support of the moderate faction of the Conservative party known as the Historical Conservatives—many of whom were Antioqueño capitalists—and the tacit support of many Liberals.<sup>26</sup> Reyes institutionalized minority representation in Colombia's various legislative bodies and promoted policy initiatives that proved crucial to the support of domestic industry and the export economy, especially the coffee sector. Although a combination of factors led to Reyes's quick fall from grace, he laid the basis for a period of economic expansion within a climate of relative bipartisan cooperation that characterized what has sometimes been called the *pax conservadora* of 1904 to 1930.<sup>27</sup>

Several aspects of coffee production helped it to emerge as a focus around which members of both parties and numerous regional interests could cooperate to set aside the partisan antagonisms that had undermined national political stability during Colombia's first century of independent existence. First, by the 1920s significant sectors of the population of both historically Liberal and Conservative regions were associated with coffee production or its commercialization. Second, coffee was grown by both large landowners in the eastern and central regions as well as by small and medium-sized property holders in the central cordillera (among them Antioquia and the regions its inhabitants colonized to the south). Charles Bergquist has argued persuasively that these circumstances ensured that "a large proportion of the Colombian body politic identified with the political economy of the export-import interests in control of the government after 1910" and that smallholders "fully endorsed the liberal political ideology, social conservatism, and pro-export economic policies of the new order."<sup>28</sup>

Despite continued differences between Liberals and Conservatives, consensus emerged between businessmen and coffee growers from 1910 to 1930 regarding the importance of and need for state investment in infrastructure and economic development. During these years many of the elite leaders of both parties intermarried, attended the same schools, and dominated regional and national politics.<sup>29</sup> The 1920s in particular witnessed unprecedented private and public expenditure on an ambitious program of public works and education. But investment and economic growth did not benefit all Colombians during the heady years

that came to be known as the Dance of the Millions. The Conservative coalition of coffee growers, export merchants, and industrialists that had dominated Colombian political fortunes for more than two decades toppled in 1930 amid rumors of fiscal mismanagement and accusations that they sacrificed the lives of Colombian workers to U.S. interests during the 1928 United Fruit strike in Santa Marta.<sup>30</sup>

During the presidential election of 1930, the Conservative party split and lost to the Liberal opposition. The change from one political administration to another in Colombia typically meant the substitution of one party's members for those of the other in patronage jobs and government positions. When Liberal Enrique Olaya Herrera was elected president (1930–1934), violence broke out in several regions of Colombia where Liberals unleashed their long-suppressed resentment on the Conservative opposition. Indeed, while many scholars consider the assassination of Liberal populist, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, on April 9, 1948, as the seminal event that catalyzed *la Violencia*, the factors that led up to the Liberal leader's death and the emergence of severe unrest in its aftermath can in part be traced to the changes occurring in Colombia during the 1930s and 1940s.

Industrial employment and unprecedented public works investment had begun to transform Colombia from a predominantly rural to an increasingly urban country in the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1925 a third of Colombia's population was classified as urban whereas by 1951 nearly half of the nation's inhabitants lived in urban areas. Rural migration to cities was only temporarily interrupted by the contraction of employment during the period of economic recession between 1928 and 1932.<sup>31</sup> The effects of urban growth—pressure on public services, the increased cost of living, and the emergence of an increasingly vocal underclass—were felt in cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.<sup>32</sup> Urbanization thus coincided with both the shift to a period of Liberal government after nearly fifty years of Conservative rule in 1930 and the emergence of popular demands for expanded political recognition and participation. These profound national changes were reflected in the administration of Liberal Alfonso López Pumarejo who allied with sectors of his party to shift Liberal policy in a more progressive and socially inclusive direction in 1934.

Alfonso López Pumarejo's Revolution on the March (1934–1938) was a more modest version of the Cárdenas administration that came to power

in the same year in Mexico and the progressive Popular Front governments that sprang up in other parts of Latin America during the 1930s. López initiated social legislation, abolished literacy requirements for suffrage, and extended legal recognition and rights to workers and peasants.<sup>33</sup> As he expanded the functions of the state, López also centralized its power, elevating the state into a mediator between conflicting social and economic interest groups.<sup>34</sup>

Agrarian unrest had become acute in several Colombian regions in the years immediately preceding López's rise to power.<sup>35</sup> In some areas, colonists hoping to escape the effects of economic downturns in the 1920s migrated in search of regions with supposedly abundant public lands only to find that these had been swallowed up by recently established large-scale commercial agriculture and cattle ranches. Conflicts in these areas emerged between landless folk competing with each other and with powerful capitalist landowners. In other areas, previously unorganized rural workers mobilized to protest changes in tenancy laws, dismissals, and poor wages on plantations.<sup>36</sup> To resolve the problem of growing agrarian unrest and to preclude economic disruption in regions where struggles over land were most severe, López initiated Law 200 of 1936. The law declared that property had a social function and sought to mediate competing claims to public lands while providing titles to those petitioners who could prove they had resided on and made improvements to the land. López did not intend to undermine the principle of private property in Colombia nor was it his intent to do away with large landowning.<sup>37</sup> Although agrarian unrest diminished after Law 200's passage, the land reform law confirmed only a limited number of squatter claims, making the validity of petitions not initiated before 1934 much more difficult to prove.<sup>38</sup> Reaction to the law, in any case, rested less upon its actual impact than upon the elite's perception of its threat.

When taken in conjunction with López's recognition and legalization of labor organizations such as the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC), and his introduction of organized labor into the once restricted arena of elite politics, his social policies fueled resentment among men of capital like those in Antioquia.<sup>39</sup> In addition, López's toleration of Communist leaders—many of whom headed important labor unions (affiliated with the newly created CTC) in strategic sectors such as oil, transportation, and mining—led the more reactionary members of both parties to repudiate the López administration as dangerously radical.<sup>40</sup>

The nearly hysterical alarm evinced by the nation's entrepreneurs and industrialists over López's championing of working-class interests and his extension of state authority between 1934 and 1938 formed a critical backdrop to the vituperative red-baiting that helped incite partisan violence in the forties and is only understandable when set against the background of growing capitalist investment and economic expansion taking place in the decade preceding the outbreak of *la Violencia*. Colombian industry, for instance, embarked upon a period of expansion that led it to grow in real terms at an unprecedented rate of 10 percent per year between 1932 and 1940. Nowhere was the impact of industrial growth more clearly felt than in Antioquia, especially in the industrial hub around Medellín where textile mills and other light industries formed the core of the local economy.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of López's term, the Liberal party sought out a candidate who might halt the momentum of López's revolution and reassure elite interests. They found their champion in Eduardo Santos, a prominent businessman and the patriarch of Colombia's family-owned, largest circulation daily newspaper, the Bogotá-based *El Tiempo*. During his presidency (1938–1942) Santos muzzled labor unrest, put down strikes, and deflected popular demands so as to curtail the movement of labor his predecessor had nurtured and encouraged.<sup>42</sup> Despite the distrust he generated among members of the elite, however, Alfonso López remained a charismatic political leader and he returned to power in 1942 with the support of the very groups whose interests he had defended during his first presidency. But López's second term in office proved a disappointment to his more progressive supporters. Disagreement within the Liberal party, increasingly fierce Conservative opposition, and the intensification of rural partisan conflict culminated in 1944 with a failed military coup led by disgruntled army officers.<sup>43</sup> When López was finally forced from office in 1945 and Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo assumed the presidency in May, the conservative social trend already apparent in the later years of Liberal government became more pronounced. One of Lleras Camargo's first acts as president was the dissolution of a long and bitter strike led by the Magdalena Transport Workers (FEDENAL), perhaps Colombia's strongest and most militant union, and the only one with a closed shop.<sup>44</sup> Lleras Camargo also implemented Law 6 of 1945 regulating collective bargaining agreements in Colombia. While the law confirmed the social services and benefits labor had won under Alfonso

López Pumarejo's Revolution on the March, it also marked a critical shift in the relationship that had been established between labor, the Liberal party, and the state in the mid-thirties. The law strictly defined the criteria for a legal strike, outlawing strikes in the *sector público*, that is, for workers employed in public works, transportation, communication, and municipal and state government (the source of most patronage hiring). These were precisely those sectors of the workforce that were most vocal and most dependent upon an alliance with the Liberal state for their well-being.<sup>45</sup> Failure to comply strictly with the labor code's criteria for a strike became the basis for dismissing workers' demands, however well intentioned or legitimate they might have been. Popular and working-class interests, already battered by declining real wages, unemployment, and harassment, were further weakened by the loss of state advocacy on their behalf.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the growth of the urban population, industrialization, and the incipient political empowerment of an organized working class, an emergent middle sector of professional politicians of non-elite origin had also gradually come to demand greater political participation in the national political arena during the 1930s and 1940s. Some of these professional politicians identified with the program embraced by the parties' traditional elite leadership, but others used populist appeals and criticism of bipartisan elite rule to expand their electoral support and confirm their political participation in party directorates and the national government. The divide between the political culture of *convivialismo* (as elite bipartisan political rule was called) and the new politics of mass inclusion was embodied in the figure of Liberal populist Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. A dark-skinned man of humble birth, Gaitán symbolized not only the rise of a growing nonwhite, urban popular core in Colombian society, but also the rise of non-elite politicians emboldened by the extension of education and suffrage that had taken place during the previous two decades.<sup>47</sup> The urban lower class and the aspirants to political power among the provincial middle-class or petit bourgeois sectors linked their fortunes together to press for an opening of the political sphere. The clash between the popular forces represented by young, up-and-coming politicians of both parties and an elite concerned with reasserting the exclusionary, paternalistic rule of pre-1930 Colombia came to a critical climax in the presidential campaign of 1946.

The Liberal party split over the candidacies of Gabriel Turbay Ayala

(the party's official candidate) and the dissident, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and lost the election to the moderate elite Conservative, Mariano Ospina Pérez. Partisan conflicts like those experienced in the early thirties, when power changed from Conservative to Liberal hands, once more emerged at the municipal level. Conservatives excluded from participation in government patronage and elected offices during the previous sixteen years of Liberal hegemony celebrated the defeat of the Liberal opposition with acts of intimidation and physical harassment in a number of Colombian departments. Although Ospina himself campaigned on a bipartisan political platform that promised the inclusion of Liberals in his cabinet, gubernatorial offices, and municipal government positions, his stance encountered considerable opposition from extremists within the Conservative party and the Liberal followers of Gaitán. When the Liberal party won the congressional elections of 1947, the basis of Ospina's National Union compromise dissolved.<sup>48</sup> Tensions between the Conservative government and the opposition escalated steadily from that point on, reaching a climax with the assassination of Gaitán by a mentally disturbed gunman in Bogotá on April 9, 1948.

The Bogotazo, as the popular uprising in response to Gaitán's assassination came to be known, left the nation's capital a smoldering mass of ruins; churches and public buildings were transformed into heaps of rubble; trolley cars were derailed and burned; stores looted; the city's sidewalks overflowed with the debris of broken glass and ruined merchandise. Meanwhile, decomposing corpses hurriedly thrown in piles in Bogotá's central cemetery seemed to give material testimony to the existence of an anonymous, dangerous crowd that had captured the elite imagination and provoked increasing anxiety of an impending attack upon elite privilege by a ragged, bloodthirsty army of the nation's excluded.<sup>49</sup> Surrounded by a burning and looted city and unsure of just how many troops or individuals might come to his defense, Ospina nonetheless resisted Liberal demands that he hand over power.<sup>50</sup> Instead, the president purged the police of Liberals (many of whom had turned against the government and collaborated with the rioters), reshuffled the cabinet and once more attempted to establish a bipartisan government. The administration also implemented modest reforms of the social security system, established price controls on basic food items, and sponsored a U.S. economic mission to examine the nation's development policies and make recommendations on how best to maximize the state's effi-

ciency.<sup>51</sup> But Ospina's attempt to shift attention away from partisan issues to less controversial technocratic matters proved unsuccessful. The Conservative party leader, Laureano Gómez, and his followers (known as *laureanistas*) led a violent bid for the presidency during 1949 that further ignited already combustible partisan animosities in Colombia's countryside. In the wake of growing incidents of partisan unrest, Ospina Pérez declared a State of Siege, and in November 1949 the president closed the congress indefinitely.<sup>52</sup> Congress would remain inactive for the next nine years.

A surreal quality enveloped Colombia between 1950 and 1953. As violence raged in rural areas and multiple groups under local and regional leadership terrorized the countryside, in Bogotá, Laureano Gómez ruled seemingly removed from the din and clamor of widespread strife.<sup>53</sup> In urban areas such as Medellín, moreover, business went on as usual; business, in fact, boomed. In 1950 the president of the National Association of Industrialists could coolly declare that Colombia's economy had never been better, repeating his assertion on the eve of the military coup in 1953.<sup>54</sup> Insisting that violence was in check, denying its severity, and blaming its existence upon isolated, depraved bandits, the national government seemed oblivious to its inability to assert its authority outside Bogotá and the nation's principal cities. By 1952 tentative attempts at bipartisan dialogue between the more moderate members of the parties, many of them representatives of prominent economic interests, were under way. Several months later a military coup—Colombia's first and last during the twentieth century—backed by significant civilian and elite support put an end to Laureano Gómez's presidency on June 13, 1953.

The military dictatorship that came to power under the leadership of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953 and which ruled Colombia until 1957 initially succeeded in reducing partisan tensions in Colombia.<sup>55</sup> The government pardoned Liberal guerrilla groups and removed some of the more hated Conservative local leaders who had been in charge of mobilizing paramilitary groups against the Liberal opposition in rural areas. After a brief respite, however, partisan-motivated violence gave way to common criminal delinquency, social banditry, and incipient, radical peasant leagues. Rojas Pinilla's growing ambition, moreover, frightened the very civilian elite forces that had initially supported the general's military coup. In 1958 power reverted once more to civilian rule and, in an unprecedented attempt to simultaneously put an end to violence and

preclude future military intervention, leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties agreed on a power-sharing arrangement known as the National Front. What had begun as partisan conflict in the countryside took on a distinctly social and economic cast by the later years of the 1950s, giving rise in some areas to the nucleus of what would constitute insurgent, leftist guerrilla groups in the 1960s. It appeared that *la Violencia* had not ended, but simply evolved.

### Interpreting *la Violencia*

In the 1960s social scientists took up the challenge of understanding *la Violencia* and devised numerous theories to explain it. These alternatively attributed violence in Colombia to conflicts provoked by the transition from a “premodern” to a “modern” society, to exaggerated aggression fueled by status deprivation, or to rivalries between patron-client systems in which peasants blindly followed the dictates of an elite leadership or party boss.<sup>56</sup> While the patron-client analysis offered clues to the seemingly national scope of violence, it failed to explain why, if disputes originating among an elite leadership in Bogotá could incite the most distant citizen to take up arms, significant areas within Colombia remained untouched by *la Violencia*. Other than through some vague “quasi-religious” appeal, how were ideology and party allegiance actually disseminated and understood?

New scholarship in the 1970s shifted the focus of work on *la Violencia* in other directions. The power of the state, the expansion of the political arena, the rise of new political actors and leaders such as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the decades preceding *la Violencia*, and the quest for alternative forms of economic and political mobility were issues increasingly singled out as playing important roles in the development of the violence.<sup>57</sup> As scholars grounded their research in region-specific studies, moreover, it became apparent that while partisan conflict provided the initial catalyst to violence, and perhaps even a seemingly logical framework in which to understand the intensity of the conflict, reliance on the notion of inherited party hatreds was insufficient to account for the divergence and specificity of violence. *La Violencia* resembled the Mexican Revolution in the way that historians might agree that the latter phenomenon was set off by Porfirio Díaz’s decision not to seek reelection, but they might not agree on the composition of those fighting, their exact objectives once

violence got under way, or the long-term implications of the revolution. *La Violencia* has similarly proven to be an extraordinarily heterogeneous and complex phenomenon.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, recent studies of *la Violencia* raise as many questions as they answer. They reveal, for instance, how little is actually known about the workings of Colombian politics at the local, regional, or national levels or about the internal organization of the parties themselves. Were the parties monolithic?<sup>59</sup> How did understandings of partisan affiliation differ among individuals belonging to different classes, regions, or ethnic and racial groups?<sup>60</sup> Was it really true that partisan affiliation took precedence over any other kind of identity in Colombia?<sup>61</sup> If not, what shaped people's beliefs, actions, and sense of identity? Even less was known about the nature of the Colombian state, how strong or weak it was or whether a central state existed at all. Was power centralized in the state to such a degree, as some researchers argue, that competition between the parties for its control could set off national unrest of the scope of *la Violencia*?<sup>62</sup> Or was the problem just the opposite? Perhaps no central state existed or it had so tenuous a presence in most areas of the national territory that it proved helpless to control conflict between omnipresent political parties when it broke out?<sup>63</sup>

Then there were the social and economic implications of *la Violencia*. Was violence the response of a frightened elite to the mid-twentieth-century expansion of the Colombian electorate and the rise of middle-sector politicians?<sup>64</sup> Had the rise of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his political movement introduced class struggle in Colombia? Did *gaitanismo* represent a threat to the exercise and workings of traditional politics in Colombia?<sup>65</sup> Did the spread of popular uprisings in the aftermath of Gaitán's assassination and their subsequent repression constitute the seeds of a failed social revolution?<sup>66</sup> Was violence waged under traditional party banners to deflect attention away from or to justify crushing other latent sources of conflict such as struggles over land, declining opportunities for social mobility, and growing worker unrest?<sup>67</sup>

Two very influential analyses of the violence posited that *la Violencia* was the result of excessive partisan clientelism and the growing competition between two monolithic parties to control access to the central state. Paul Oquist argued that as the central state grew in the 1930s competition between Conservative and Liberal leaders to monopolize access to the state's largesse and influence became increasingly urgent. Ac-

According to Oquist, the struggle to achieve “hegemonic” control of the Colombian state unleashed violence that led to its partial “breakdown.”<sup>68</sup> French sociologist Daniel Pécaut, on the other hand, argued that the state’s power to build a sense of national identity or act as a suprapartisan arbiter of conflict between different sectors of Colombian society had been eclipsed by the persistence of two “subcultures.”<sup>69</sup> These subcultures were defined by individual identification with either the Liberal or Conservative party. Since only partisan affiliation could guarantee individual material needs and physical survival, any conflict between the parties inevitably resulted in widespread conflict. The use of force, over which the Colombian state had never achieved complete monopoly, in turn, Pécaut suggested, became more dispersed among competing corporate interests as partisan competition to control the state intensified.

Various scholars gave greater empirical precision to the hypotheses of violence put forth by Oquist and Pécaut. Herbert Braun, for instance, focused on the urban rather than the rural manifestations of violence, more specifically, on the prelude to and aftermath of Gaitán’s assassination in Bogotá on April 9, 1948. In much greater detail than Pécaut, Braun laid bare the insular, aristocratic, aloof character of political exchange in pre-Gaitán Colombia. Braun argued that elite members of both parties coincided in their social views and interests, and political decision-making took place not in congress, but over shots of whiskey at Bogotá’s exclusive gun or jockey clubs.<sup>70</sup> The critical question always present in the minds of Colombia’s elite, and roused to hysterical urgency by Gaitán’s persona, Braun argued, revolved not around ideological differences but rather around the issue of how to deal with the lower classes.<sup>71</sup> Gaitán challenged the insularity of gentlemen’s politics precisely by reveling in his plebeian and mixed-race origins and by manipulating his identification with and appeal to the popular classes into a major political movement.<sup>72</sup> Braun did not believe, however, that the basis of violence was the insurrectionary or revolutionary content of Gaitán’s message to the poor. On the contrary, in Braun’s estimation, Gaitán had a fundamentally petit bourgeois attitude toward the masses, admonishing them to bathe and act responsibly and to overcome their socioeconomic condition through hard work and education, not class struggle.<sup>73</sup> Braun suggested that the overreaction of a dominant class terrified by its own prejudices against a lower class it had long demonized and its misconception of Gaitán’s political message led it to dangerously raise the stakes of political ex-

change. The divisive and vituperative rhetoric employed by the elite had the unintended effect of promoting and legitimizing violence among the parties' nonelite membership rather than reasserting the political system as it had existed before Gaitán's mobilization of the popular classes. While Braun noted that Liberal and Conservative elites were equally opposed to Gaitán, he blamed Conservatives more than the Liberals for the inception of violence. Braun argued that Conservative efforts to shore up an eroding electoral position led the party to unleash violence in order to recuperate the loyalty of the popular classes, and he implied that Conservatives embraced Christian Socialist rhetoric when addressing workers only as a political ploy to undermine Gaitán's movement. While the effort to substitute Liberals in office was certainly a critical factor in fomenting violence, Braun may have been too cynical in assuming that the adoption by some Conservatives of a kind of Christian Socialist position vis-à-vis workers was nothing more than posturing.<sup>74</sup>

Braun's theses were quite compelling, but he limited his study to Bogotá, leaving unanswered the question of whether or not and in what manner Gaitán and the reaction he elicited among Bogotá's politicians affected the emergence and nature of violence outside the capital. Meanwhile, Gonzalo Sánchez, Carlos Ortíz, and scholars such as Jaime Arocha, James Henderson, and Darío Fajardo gave specificity and concrete meaning to the abstraction of battles waged in the capital by examining the day-to-day patterns of violence in several Colombian regions.<sup>75</sup> In looking at political culture from the "bottom" up, these scholars also reintroduced the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and violence that had faded from the discussion of *la Violencia* since the early allusions to such a link in the days of patron-client analysis.

Gonzalo Sánchez argued that an analysis of Gaitán and his movement was the necessary starting point for understanding *la Violencia*. Like Braun, Sánchez also believed that the issue of lower-class mobilization or political incorporation was at the very heart of *la Violencia*. In sharp contradiction to Braun, however, Sánchez insisted that Gaitán had introduced the question of class into the Colombian arena, and that Gaitán's movement constituted a first attempt at a revolutionary challenge to the established Colombian economic and political system. For Sánchez, April 9 marked a critical turning point in Colombian history. Answering the question left in suspense by Braun, Sánchez insisted that Gaitán's movement had profoundly affected Colombian society at all levels, con-

stituting “a national insurrection, which, particularly outside Bogotá, laid bare the enormous creative capacity of the masses for revolutionary action.”<sup>76</sup> Although the “revolution” failed because it lacked coordination and because Colombia’s elite cohered against it, everyone now had a glimpse of what class war might be like. Sánchez argued that the aftermath of Gaitán’s assassination triggered a violent reaction and retrenchment by Colombia’s elite, first against Gaitán’s followers and then, as Conservatives gained power, by Conservatives against Liberals, unions, agrarian leagues, and any other group that might represent a threat to the status quo.

According to Sánchez, once the threat of social revolution from below was suppressed by elite coercion, what followed, at least during the first phase of *la Violencia* from 1948 to 1953, was a period of violence characteristic of that experienced during Colombia’s nineteenth-century civil wars. The ultimate impact of this period of *la Violencia* was to reinforce old party identities and the strength of *gamonales*—the local bosses or power brokers—within the parties.<sup>77</sup> The tenor of violence changed, however, when in 1952 armed popular groups in the cattle frontier of the Llanos split into those led by Liberals and those under Communist direction. By the end of the first phase of *la Violencia*, Sánchez argued, partisan violence had given way to violence that had little to do with disputes between Colombia’s Liberal and Conservative parties.<sup>78</sup> Some former Liberal guerrillas, in turn, became the nucleus for Colombia’s contemporary leftist guerrillas.

Gonzalo Sánchez recognized (along with other scholars) that the objectives and nature of violence could vary from region to region depending on the economic conditions and social arrangements in each. Fajardo, Arrocha, and Sánchez theorized that violence in cattle frontiers such as the Llanos, for instance, was most likely to shift away from traditional to more radical objectives. Coffee-producing towns, in contrast, evinced partisan but not revolutionary violence because, unlike cattle frontiers, coffee towns were nationally integrated through commercial, political, and social networks. Both Sánchez and Fajardo drew a further conclusion that violence coincided with the emergence of large agribusiness haciendas.<sup>79</sup>

Regional examinations of the course of violence suggested important differences in the day-to-day workings of politics outside the capital and the factors that influenced variations in the experience and trajectory of

*la Violencia*. By the 1980s, the notion of a single, blanket interpretation of violence gave way to the acknowledgment that violence had many manifestations and meanings. Local conditions appeared to be the most significant factor in determining the nature of violence and its objectives. In the most thorough regional study to date, Carlos Ortíz Sarmiento focused precisely on local issues in his examination of the development of violence in Quindío.<sup>80</sup> Like Sánchez, Pécaut, and Oquist, Ortíz acknowledged the importance of party identity in shaping the course of violence, but he also noted the influence of an individual's place of birth, kinship relations, municipal loyalty, and cross-party relationships.<sup>81</sup> While Ortíz acknowledged the weak presence of the state, he disagreed with Oquist who assumed that the absence of the state necessarily provoked a vacuum of authority. Instead, Ortíz showed how local political arrangements and beliefs were not automatically affected by national developments.<sup>82</sup> Ortíz laid bare the nexus of local political understandings and behavior that operated at the regional level, arguing that faraway disputes between vaguely recognized national leaders were unimportant unless they coincided with local struggles over revenues, boundaries, and patronage. Ortíz also focused his attention on determining exactly who held power and how they used it at the *vereda* and *municipio* levels.<sup>83</sup> Rather than assuming that patron-client relations worked from the top down, he demonstrated convincingly how these were also constantly renegotiated from the bottom up. Bogotá and the *municipio* were connected through intricate, dynamic links between *gamonales* and national politicians. The currency of political adhesion was patronage and votes.

Although introduced by Pécaut, Sánchez, and Braun, the concept of the professional politician who gained power and challenged the elite in the mid-twentieth century was brought down to local terms by Ortíz. Gaitán, for instance, after an initially lukewarm reception, gradually attracted Liberal support in Quindío, but in the aftermath of his assassination had faded from the region's politics.<sup>84</sup> *La Violencia* emerged around the intrusion of "outsiders" with ambitions to become local power brokers—policemen and mayors appointed to *municipios* by the central and regional government in 1949 whose presence disturbed webs of local power—rather than as a result of Gaitán's death.

In exploring the alliances and confrontations that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, Ortíz also traced the complexities of individual allegiances, while rooting these within a framework of economic and politi-

cal changes in the region and the nation. Such changes spawned tensions not only between classes or individuals but also between villages, towns, regions, and the national government.<sup>85</sup> Ortíz concluded that violence was due less to an umbilical relationship between dominant national politicians and their obedient followers in the localities, and more to the presence of specific social actors operating within a particular context who might or might not choose to capitalize upon national ideologies and movements to achieve local objectives and satisfy local aspirations.<sup>86</sup>

Where then does the case of Antioquia fit within the broader framework of regional studies of violence? In what ways does the experience of Antioquia during *la Violencia* confirm or challenge the findings of studies of violence for Colombia as a whole?

One of the central premises of this book is that violence in Antioquia was intimately linked to struggles waged between the regional and the central states and between the regional state and its peripheral inhabitants over the right to determine political, social, economic, and cultural practices. Mid-century violence, moreover, was built on latent, unresolved conflicts in the areas where it was most intense and cannot be understood outside the context of broader structural issues and transformations affecting Colombia as a whole. While no single analytical framework can adequately capture the multiplicity of reasons why violence did or did not occur in specific localities, a close reading of individual incidents of violence in Antioquia can bring to the surface multiple, lived realities that are crucial to a reconstruction of violence and its motivations and that continue to shape the geo-specific incidence of violence in contemporary Colombia. A regional study of the heterogeneous experience of local violence thus enables us to explore how the meanings of concepts such as the state, partisan affiliation, clientelism, regional identity, and citizenship were contested and redefined in historically contingent ways by different sectors of society at different times and in different places.

*La Violencia* was — and violence in Colombia continues to be — about state formation and reformation. The process of state formation occurred and was fought out at multiple sites among diverse, dynamic sectors and produced varying outcomes. How local and regional participants experienced the effects of state formation and how they responded to these varied in relation to specific and subjective individual and collective positionings within the region and the nation. The emergence of violence in

Antioquia was therefore not the result of a monolithic, coherent, top-down dissemination of inherited party hatreds or the result of central strategy or mandate. Rather, the escalation of partisan conflict between Colombia's two parties provided the catalyst for latent regional and local conflicts to come to the fore in the 1940s and created unprecedented opportunities for previously marginalized sectors to pursue divergent struggles in their pursuit of power. Not all Antioqueños experienced their relationship to the state or the parties in the same way. Indeed, multiple realities coexisted in Antioquia. How individual Antioqueños negotiated the complexities and challenges of mid-century change and why these negotiations were expressed most violently in peripheral areas form an essential aspect of the individual stories that make up the larger narrative of regional violence in this book. In short, for the areas most severely affected, *la Violencia* did not represent the culmination or apex of a history of partisan hatreds so much as it marked a critical stage in an evolving history of regional state and identity formation. In the peripheral areas that formed the central locus of conflict, *la Violencia* represented a fundamental struggle—and ultimate failure—to impose a hegemonic regional project of rule predicated on notions of cultural, ethnic, and racial difference.

#### A Theoretical Framework for Thinking about the State and Clientelism

In a recent anthology examining the impact of the Mexican Revolution and the formation of the Mexican state, Derek Sayer and Phillip Corrigan suggest that the state may either be conceptualized as a “thing,” a tangible, fixed entity where power is believed to reside or, more dynamically, as a “*claim*.” In the latter instance, the state represents an attempt to “give unity, coherence, structure, and intentionality to what are in practice frequently disunited, fragmented attempts at domination.”<sup>87</sup> For Sayer and Corrigan that which we call “the state” is subject to constant change and renegotiation. To study it requires abandoning the notion that there exists an already defined, fully operational apparatus in which power is centered. Instead, Sayer and Corrigan suggest, the study of the state is the study of how ruling practices are developed and exercised over time. The central issue of inquiry thus becomes how political power is constructed and naturalized, the effects of this naturalization, and the ways in which

those that the state supposedly dominates also shape the practice of politics. “Performances,” Sayer and Corrigan argue, constitute a crucial dimension of the power that represents itself as “the state” and us as members of the “body politic”: “it is the exercise of power pure and simple that itself authorizes and legitimates; and it does this less by the manipulation of beliefs than by defining the boundaries of the possible.”<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the mundane rituals of obtaining a driver’s license, observing the speed limit, and paying taxes are what construct power and, over time, legitimize it. Sayer identifies the institutionalization of such rituals as the coercive aspect of the organized exercise of power. But coercive practices may also enable power. People may seize upon the obligations or forms imposed by the state to do things that were not envisioned by the framers of those forms. The state, moreover, also “incorporate[s] elements of counter-hegemonic cultures” in the interests of advancing some other agenda or as a mechanism of achieving “legitimacy.” Indeed, “the hegemony of the state is also exactly what is most fragile about the state, precisely because it does depend on people living what they much of the time know to be a lie.”<sup>89</sup>

How does a theoretical formulation of the state as a dynamic and contested process help us to understand the relationship between the state and violence in Colombia? First, by treating the state as a claim that is constantly being constructed and negotiated rather than as an immutable, ahistorical thing, it is possible to consider the existence of competing claims or states and the role such competition may have played in the development of violence. A struggle between two competing state claims, or two hegemonic projects, if you will, is precisely what I argue occurred in Antioquia in mid-century. There existed, on the one hand, a regional claim whose ruling practices—constructed over the course of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—were characterized by a suprapartisan, pragmatic, technocratic rule, and an emphasis on material development at the expense of rigid partisan ideology.<sup>90</sup> It was an elite-led, paternalistic form of rule in which popular participation was limited, but it promised some social protection, education, employment, mobility, public investment, and development at a time when the central state was not yet in a position to guarantee these. In return, the regional state demanded of its citizens conformity (or the illusion of it, the “performance” to which Sayer alludes) to a specific set of values such as Catholic ritual observance, marriage, work discipline, capitalism, and

political moderation. A bargain emerged in Antioquia that guaranteed a modicum of order and regularity of rule, but it operated only where the values the regional state claimed to embody found material form, that is, where access to property ownership or mobility was possible, an extensive nuclear family structure existed, and a strong sense of Catholicism operated. The linchpin of “order” was the prioritization of regional and economic interests over partisan differences and the containment of the expression of partisan differences within boundaries that would not challenge the regional status quo.

The strength of the regional state claim precluded the emergence or viability of a central state claim in Antioquia until the 1930s. One could even argue that the politics of *convivialismo*, based on the alliance of coffee producers and merchants that characterized the period from 1910 to 1930, represented a moment in which conflict between the central and regional state projects was minimized because these were one and the same. The period between 1910 and 1930—one of the few periods in Colombian history when Antioqueño politicians occupied the presidency and played a visible role in national politics—may be read as a moment in which Antioqueño elites attempted (but failed) to remake Colombia in their own idealized image. Changes in Colombia’s suffrage law, the rise of the Liberal party to national power, and the expansion of what until then had been a weak and largely ineffective central state, however, brought into competition and conflict the regional and national projects of rule. Indeed, one of the most important effects of this competition between distinct state claims was that partisan clientelism threatened to eclipse a suprapartisan or bipartisan regional model of the state. The regional state model of rule mediated inclusion in the state through patron-client relations embedded in economic associations (the Federation of Coffee Growers, for instance), kinship relations, shared local origin, and the appearance of satisfaction of an idealized regional regime of cultural conformity, but not necessarily, or only secondarily, through either the Liberal or Conservative parties.<sup>91</sup>

The limited significance of partisan clientelism in Antioquia before the 1930s was due mainly to the availability of economic avenues of mobility whose access was not primarily or exclusively dependent upon partisan affiliation (such as coffee production, mining, and commerce). It was due as well to the persistence of a regional vision of government as technical management rather than what elite Antioqueños disdainfully referred

to as *politiquería*, or politicking. This was not altruism on the elite's part per se, but rather the result of fearing class conflict more than privileging partisan loyalty. The dominance of private over public investment or, rather, the complexly intertwined nature of public and private spheres in Antioquia limited the mobilization and integration of regional clientelist networks through the central state.<sup>92</sup> Antioqueños who relied on state employment were obviously part of partisan patron-client machines (teachers, municipal employees, and public works personnel), but these were often regulated by regional rather than national dictates, and patronage positions constituted a small percentage of overall employment in the region before 1930.

A regional tradition of not overly privileging partisan affiliation in the distribution of even state-determined employment was so strong, moreover, that it could still be found operating even in the midst of *la Violencia* when partisan competition over patronage distribution became most acute. Antioqueño Conservatives reminded their Conservative governor in 1953 of an implicit agreement not to “take political reprisals against workers and lower-ranking employees since the individuals [Liberals] who are detrimental to the government’s party are those that hold high ranking positions.”<sup>93</sup> Even those most sympathetic to Conservative exclusionary rule insisted to the governor that he “use all the means at [his] disposal to ensure that men who fulfill their social obligations not be deprived of work or thrown into the street just because they oppose our political creed, since most of these men are fathers.”<sup>94</sup> At the apex of *la Violencia*, the maintenance of a gendered social system of family-based capitalist integration took precedence over partisan concerns in Antioquia. In areas of the economy (agriculture, ranching, and mining) where capitalists belonged to different parties but shared economic interests, moreover, hiring was neither contingent upon partisan affiliation nor upon voting for a particular party.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the apparent indifference with which the average Antioqueño approached the question of partisan politics was significant enough to prompt acute concern among politicians anxious to replace the regional model of suprapartisan rule with that of partisan clientelism during *la Violencia*. They despaired publicly of “the excessive insistence of our working people on simply economic affairs” and lamented that “Antioquia’s human groups play so small a role in the struggle between the parties.”<sup>96</sup> This tendency in Antioquia contrasted with that of other Colombian departments where employment

and survival had been dependent upon public or state patronage hiring and was indexed to patron-client networks mediated through the parties since the nineteenth century, long before the emergence of an identifiably important central state.

The claim of the central state contrasted sharply with that of the regional state. The central state project was not predicated upon conformity to a specific set of cultural, economic, or social values in the way that the regional state model of rule was. Participation in the central state was technically open to any adult male simply by virtue of having been born on Colombian territory. Despite the more inclusive nature of the central state ruling project, however, the state's inability to consistently enforce its presence at either the regional or municipal level diminished its appeal among Antioqueños. While the central state's promise of labor and social legislation, land reform, and expanded political participation was certainly embraced by regional inhabitants, the central state's inability to make good on its promises undermined its potential base of support. Reluctance to identify with the project of the central state was particularly pronounced among Antioqueños residing in centrally located areas where the regional state exerted a strong presence and responded with reasonable agility to local demands and needs. For, while the regional state ruling project was predicated on conservative notions of "respectability" and "social conformity," Antioquia's political leaders were in some respects economically and socially progressive. They could be tiresomely paternalistic, but they were aggressive builders of schools, factories, health facilities, and roads. Access to the benefits of paternalistic rule, moreover, was not predicated primarily on shared partisan affiliation. Discipline and a willingness to work were held in far higher esteem than partisanship, while access to individual mobility (though not inclusion in the elite) was based on the appearance of cultural conformity and merit. Antioquia's elite was not egalitarian nor did the hegemonic bargain implied by an exchange of education, employment, and limited political access in return for apparent compliance represent an equal exchange between regional inhabitants and their leaders. But, the "bargain" struck between central core inhabitants and Medellín's elite did represent an exchange, one that typically had a better chance of being partially fulfilled than did comparable exchanges between the central state and local citizens. Such an attitude contrasted sharply with the governing style of other Colombian regions or even the central state. In centrally settled

areas, moreover, conformity to regional state ruling practices and values guaranteed the enabling power that Sayer notes is the flip side of coercion. Inhabitants in core municipalities could parlay their conformity to regional ruling practices into demands that the regional state take their calls for political recognition and inclusion seriously. Further, they could demand—and expect—that the regional state prevent violence from jeopardizing local economic prosperity or the status quo regardless (in most cases) of their partisan affiliation.

The national state model of rule, in contrast, was most appealing to those sectors of Antioqueño society who in the 1930s benefited from the central state's expanded control of patronage and recently achieved regulatory functions. The growth of the central state coincided with the Liberal party's rise to power. Thus, members of the Liberal lower-class and emergent middle-class politicians in Antioquia were initially integrated into the central state's ruling project through the expansion of state employment and the recognition and co-optation of organized labor.<sup>97</sup> The central state project also appealed to Antioqueños left out of the regional state model of political rule, that is, the majority of the inhabitants residing in the region's periphery, including important sectors of unionized labor employed in foreign-owned industries such as mining and oil production. These sectors, in addition to identifying with the Liberal Party or parties friendly to the left wing of the Liberal party (such as the Communist or Socialist parties) defied or failed to conform to the cultural values which underpinned the regional state ruling project. The failure to reproduce the values associated with Antioqueñidad barred peripheral inhabitants from participation in the hegemonic bargain that governed relations between central core inhabitants and the regional authorities. Peripheral areas, moreover, were ones where the regional state was either absent, weak, or present only as a repressive force.

In sum, clientelism and the competition over the state did indeed play central roles in the definition of violence in Antioquia as they did elsewhere in Colombia during *la Violencia*, but the reasons why they did are specific to Antioquia and must be understood at the regional level. In the areas where the regional state was strong and enjoyed legitimacy, partisan violence never threatened the status quo and was largely avoided or was mediated in nonviolent ways. In the areas where the regional state's relationship with the local citizenry was hostile and intermittent, partisan-based clientelist networks and a central state project clashed with supra-

partisan clientelism and a regional ruling project, provoking a violent conflagration that precluded the possibility of mediation. It was in geographically peripheral areas where the regional and central state claims and their respective clientelist networks came into severe competition and formed a significant catalyst to violence.

### Ethnicity, Culture, and Core and Periphery Violence

In her work on frontiers and peasant protest, Catherine LeGrand suggested a close connection between the areas where *la Violencia* was most severe in the 1950s and those experiencing land conflicts in the 1920s and 1930s. Regional studies of *la Violencia* confirmed that a relationship existed between land issues and violence, but the coincidence between conflicts over land and partisan violence was considered to have occurred primarily in coffee-producing areas.<sup>98</sup> A very clear correlation exists between the areas experiencing the most severe violence and those where land struggles had occurred in the 1920s and 1930s in Antioquia.<sup>99</sup> However, the incidence of land and labor restructuring did not typically occur in Antioquia's coffee towns.

One explanation for the apparent discrepancy in experience between Antioquia and other regions in Colombia may have to do with the location of frontiers and regional migration patterns. While coffee frontiers were still open and recent migration from a variety of departments characterized provinces where violence was also severe such as Valle del Cauca, Tolima, and Viejo Caldas (the contemporary departments of Caldas, Quindío, and Risaralda), in the thirties and forties, the coffee frontier in Antioquia had effectively closed by the early part of the twentieth century. The market for land in Antioquia's traditional coffee belt was relatively static, while coffee lands in places like northern Valle, Tolima, Quindío, and Caldas were still volatile. Another factor that shaped the different geographic focus of otherwise similar conflicts in Antioquia and other departments identified as coffee producers had to do with ethnic and cultural differences between the different groups colonizing areas where violence was most pronounced.<sup>100</sup>

The peripheral areas experiencing the most acute violence in Antioquia shared several features which distinguished them in important ways from the settlement and dominant production and land-tenure patterns evident in the central or core zones of Antioquia. All peripheral areas

bordered on departments perceived to be ethnically and culturally quite different from Antioquia or at least from an “imagined” Antioqueño ideal. Urrao bordered on the Chocó, the Pacific-lowland province with the greatest Colombian population of African descent. Bajo Cauca bordered on what was then the province of Bolívar (today Bolívar, Sucre, and Córdoba), an area connected to the Afro-Caribbean coast. Urabá bordered on both the Chocó and Panama and opened out to the Caribbean Sea, while the northeast and Magdalena Medio towns bordered on the Magdalena River and the provinces of Santander, Cundinamarca, and Boyacá. (The latter two departments being important areas of indigenous settlement.) Ironically, since Antioquia was known for its colonizing vigor, all of these areas (with the exception of Urrao) were colonized in large part by non-Antioqueño migrants from the Afro-Caribbean coast, Chocó, Bolívar, and Santander.

Before the 1930s, Antioquia’s peripheral zones (all but Urrao’s tropical, lowland areas) had held little attraction for Antioqueño settlers from the mountain valleys and highlands of centrally settled municipios. Regional myth attributed the reluctance of Antioqueños to venture into the northwestern and northeastern areas of their department to fears of the insalubrious climate and the presence of “wild” inhabitants in outlying areas.<sup>101</sup> The myth that such places were empty but for a few scattered barbarians and intrepid miners had long dominated the regional imagination. Or, as former president Carlos E. Restrepo bluntly put it when explaining why the Bajo Cauca and Urabá were unappealing sites for colonists from the central region, “Antioqueños, like the Swedes and the British, can only work where they establish their homes [*hogar*] [and] home cannot flourish where malaria exists.”<sup>102</sup> Even before Carlos E. Restrepo penned these lines in 1927, however, Antioqueños shifted their colonization route away from the traditional southern coffee belt and toward distant western and eastern sections of their homeland and the lower Cauca Valley.<sup>103</sup> Colonists from centrally settled municipios arrived in peripheral areas as squatters hoping to work what they assumed were nearly unlimited public lands, or as cowboys, miners, and public works personnel on the railroad and newly begun, state-financed road projects. When it became apparent that many so-called *tierras baldías* were actually claimed by large capitalist concerns, conflicts between squatters, colonists, mining companies, and large landowners ensued.<sup>104</sup>

Unlike the inhabitants of centrally settled towns, the majority of non-Antioqueño residents in peripheral zones were unwilling to behave in

ways that made reciprocity between the regional state and the people of the core municipalities possible. The regional state's historic absence or intermittent presence only as a punitive force in such areas also meant that none of the infrastructure, public investment, and institutional presence that integrated peoples in the central zone to the regional state was present. The construction of a relationship of hostility and distrust between the regional authorities and the periphery was intimately related to the historically colonial relationship forged between core and periphery. Local inhabitants of peripheral areas viewed Medellín and migrants from core municipios as arrogant interlopers who considered themselves both "whiter" and more civilized than non-Antioqueño migrants, while the authorities and inhabitants of Antioquia's traditionally settled areas dismissed the inhabitants of the periphery as everything they perceived themselves not to be: lazy, unruly, promiscuous, irreligious, and shifty. The periphery was linked to disorder in the minds of the regional authorities and centrally settled inhabitants and was thought to be in need of morality and control (by force if necessary). In contrast, the center was perceived as absolutist and exclusionary by peripheral inhabitants, and responsive only to demonstrations of local defiance and violent threat. But mutual distrust and antipathy between the core and periphery in Antioquia existed long before the advent of *la Violencia* and alone would have been insufficient to catalyze intense violence in peripheral areas. However, the construction of stereotypes of cultural difference gained new importance when peripheral areas emerged as Antioquia's most economically dynamic and valuable in the decades of *la Violencia*. On the one hand, the stereotype of the periphery as a site of chronic misrule became a justification for the regional state's refusal to engage in the politics of negotiation and compromise characteristic of the state's interactions with residents of central areas. On the other hand, local perceptions of the regional state as a colonial and repressive force legitimized the use of defiance by inhabitants of the periphery to counter regional attempts to impose partisan hegemonic control.

To understand the nature of violence in peripheral regions within Antioquia during *la Violencia*, then, one must acknowledge the inequalities of power embedded in colonialism.<sup>105</sup> Like colonies and imperial metropolises everywhere, this relationship was steeped in fantasies of extractive wealth, political domination, and cultural subordination. The latter were expressed and rooted in a regional discourse historically based upon hierarchies of cultural difference that segregated Antioquia into

centrally located areas perceived to conform to a regional value system and peripheral areas perceived to deviate from it. In this study I define “centrally based municipios” as those located in the southwestern coffee region — the embodiment of Antioqueño values and comportment — the north as far as Yarumal, the south to Abejorral, and the east as far as Santo Domingo. A town such as Urrao on the border between the southwestern coffee district and the western towns of Dabeiba, Frontino, and the region of Urabá, would occupy an intermediate position, a buffer zone between the values of Antioqueñidad and external threats to the integrity of regional identity and order. The Magdalena River Valley, the lower Cauca Valley, the mining regions of the northwest and the southeastern areas of Antioquia (San Luis, Cocorná), in contrast, formed part of the unstable zone I refer to as the “periphery.”

Labels such as non-Antioqueño, “*costeño*,” “*negro*,” and “*cosmopolita*,” that is, nonwhite, were used to legitimize marginalization or exclusion and were coded to a series of attributes or patterns of behavior that might or might not characterize peripheral inhabitants but which had come to constitute a frame of reference that Antioquia’s core inhabitants, authorities, and elite used to describe the “other.”<sup>106</sup> These behaviors typically included sexual partnerships that took the form of free union (rather than Catholic marriage), physical impermanence (seasonal migration, transience, vagabondage), collective cultivation (rather than privately owned plots), a tendency to embrace dissident political movements, and the practice of folk rather than institutionalized religion.<sup>107</sup> These were attributes believed to contradict and endanger the ideals associated with regional identity or Antioqueñidad.

In most instances, difference was conflated with deviance, criminality, and corruption: the “other” threatened the stability of Antioqueño identity, authority, and prosperity. “Cultural competence,” or the satisfaction of norms of “respectability,” was in turn linked to “cultural milieu,” the idea that “racial and national essences could be secured or altered by the physical, psychological, climatic, and moral surroundings in which one lived.”<sup>108</sup> In spatial and ideological terms, Medellín and the centrally located towns over which it governed met the criteria of Antioqueñidad. These were areas defined in official discourse as being peopled by “individuals of noble race, strong, healthy, valiant and hardworking, the birthplace of liberators and heroes.”<sup>109</sup> Peripheral or frontier towns located in the northwest (Urabá), Bajo Cauca (Caucasia), and Magdalena Medio (Puerto Berrío, Maceo) were, in contrast, tropical lowland

areas of African, Indian, or non-Antioqueño migration and settlement (see appendix A.3). The inhabitants of these areas were imagined by centrally based Antioqueños as “sickly,” “full of indolence,” and full of “a passionate nature and inconstancy, superstitious in spirit, [and] predisposed to fetishism and anarchy.”<sup>110</sup> More importantly, peripheral areas were not characterized by the presence of a smallholder landowning tradition, a strong local church that could broker local interests, a resident elite linked to powerful producer associations, or political representatives integrated into the bipartisan networks of Antioqueño rule.

The regional state project of hegemony, constructed and deployed by Antioquia’s men of capital and political leaders, was based on the maintenance of hierarchies of difference.<sup>111</sup> The appeal of such norms extended beyond the elite. Tropes of supposed cultural difference could be deployed, as they were during *la Violencia*, by the central zone peoples of lower-class origin to justify homicide, usurpation of property, and rape against the “coastal peoples” (*costeños*) and “revolutionaries” (*revolucionarios*) of a similar social level. The existence of an “other” was also used to construct and reinforce the central zone inhabitant’s sense of positive identity (“I am *this* because I am not *that*”) and deployed as a mechanism of negotiation when bargaining for recognition or political inclusion with the regional elite. The ruling forms embedded in the regional hegemonic project thus enabled non-elites to legitimize violence in the name of protecting regional values or Antioqueñidad.

In suggesting the existence of a regional hegemonic project, and the use of stereotypes of cultural difference to further it, I am not arguing that there really existed any distinction between peripheral and central areas and their values, or that even where observable differences of production, organization, and belief were present, that these were static or inherent. Rather, I am marking the construction and manipulation of dynamic, profound, and widespread preconceptions of difference and identity and signaling their political and social repercussions. The geographer James Parsons once noted that “contemporary Antioquia was shaped out of an initial mixing of Spaniards, Indians and Black slaves,” and yet Antioqueños embraced “an ethnological heresy by which the inhabitants refer to themselves as the Antioqueño race [*la raza Antioqueña*].”<sup>112</sup> Belief in themselves as members of a separate race (defined by the norms of respectability I have already mentioned) was “firmly rooted in popular consciousness,” Parsons argued, even though by the 1940s, when he conducted his study of Antioqueño colonization, regional censuses showed

that “the preponderance of mixed blood . . . stood in flagrant contradiction of the assertion that Antioquia is a province of whites.”<sup>113</sup>

Among the core municipalities of Antioquia there emerged over time a sense of region and regional identity comparable to what Benedict Anderson has dubbed the “imagined community” that he argues enabled the emergence of nations and national identity.<sup>114</sup> In Antioquia, however, cultural distinctions were constructed and deployed to characterize particular areas within the region and imbue them with symbolic meaning as part of a larger process of constructing regional identity and power against both peripheral populations and the larger Colombian nation. Communities create boundaries and oppositions against which their identity may form and be marked. For Antioquia’s elite and political authorities, the limits of a regional community were drawn around spaces that were long-held objects of desire. These were areas of strategic importance, characterized by natural resources and economic potential to enrich and extend Antioqueño power, but which, for various reasons, had historically proven difficult to control or resistant to Antioqueño cultural, political, and economic domination.<sup>115</sup> Peripheral areas were the sites in which the parameters of regional identity and authority were fought over and shaped and where violence became endemic and widespread.<sup>116</sup>

An adequate understanding of *la Violencia* in Antioquia thus requires the exploration of characteristics and conditions that transcend partisan considerations. What was the ethnicity of the people in conflict? What cultural patterns and expectations ruled their behavior? For how long had the zone been occupied, and where did the settlers come from? Where was the village located in relation to the older core of the department? What were relations between Liberals and Conservatives in the area before the emergence of *la Violencia*? What state institutions operated in the area, through what agents, and to what effect? What were the predominant economic activities in the area, and how were local inhabitants connected to them? What relative degree of Antioqueñidad can be ascribed to the groups in conflict? An examination of these and other elements, their interaction, and their evolution through time, occupies the body of this work.

### The Book’s Organization

In the first chapter I trace the attempts, from 1946 to 1949, by emergent Conservative middle-sector politicians to conservatize Liberal mu-

municipalities and to replace Liberal workers in state employment positions with Conservative followers.<sup>117</sup> I also examine why public works employment and competition to control patronage positions in Antioquia became so critical to the consolidation of electoral fortunes in the 1940s. When conservatization efforts met with limited success, sectors of the regional state who were followers of Conservative leader Laureano Gómez created paramilitary forces (*contrachusmas*) and deployed them into peripheral areas where the state had little support but where state-determined patronage posts were most concentrated. The official use of systematic violence provoked a rupture within the regional Conservative party that surfaced in the conflict between a regional suprapartisan political tradition and the new politics of national, state-sponsored, partisan hegemony. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are, respectively, detailed analyses of the evolution and impact of violence in three peripheral zones: Urabá and western Antioquia; Urrao and the Southwest; and eastern Antioquia (the Bajo Cauca, Magdalena River Valley, and the Northeast). These were areas where armed Liberal guerrillas emerged to resist the Conservative national government between late 1949 and 1953. I examine how the regional and national states responded to violence in each of these areas, where the state's monopoly over force was transferred to paramilitary organizations, the reasons why this happened, and the long-term implications of such a course of action. I also explore the differences between different guerrilla groups from region to region, how partisan conflict intersected with latent tensions over land, labor, and resources in some areas, and explore the factors that impeded the possible mediation of violence. I argue that violence in peripheral areas was largely the product of concerted and systematic harassment waged by selected regional authorities rather than the "natural" outgrowth of partisan conflicts among local residents. In other words, the regional state and its forces were the primary instigators of violence on the periphery, and their object was not just the establishment of partisan hegemony but the forcible imposition of Antioqueñidad. Local resistance to the regional state was thus waged not only along partisan lines but also involved struggles over the right to cultural self-determination and the articulation of alternative conceptions of citizenship and identity. The epilogue concludes with a reflection on the relationship between current states of "disorder" in Antioquia and *la Violencia*, in particular the consolidation of private and paramilitary forms of terror in contemporary Colombia.



**Pavarando, municipality of Murindo,  
Urabá. April 1998. Government officers  
visit this displaced persons' camp.**