

BRIEFING ON THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT

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GENERAL FRAMEWORK

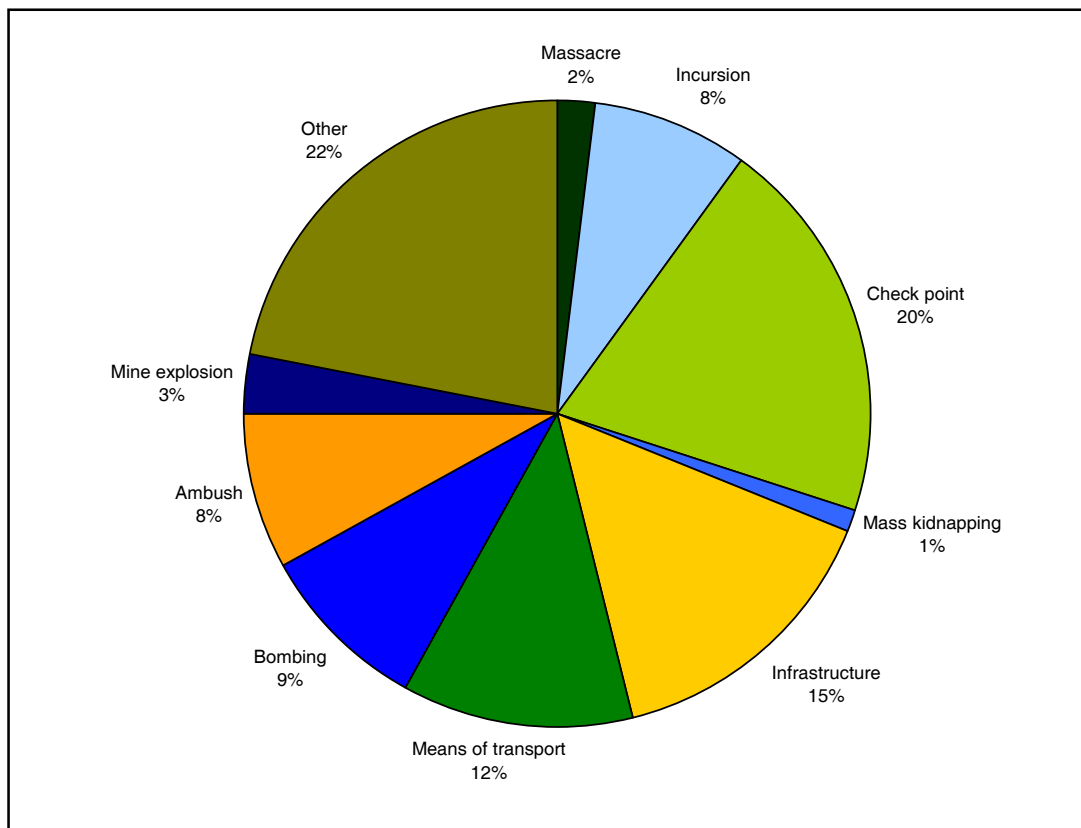
- The Colombian conflict can be roughly characterized as a three-sided one involving left-wing guerrillas, government forces and illegal right-wing paramilitaries.
- There has been a rough equilibrium over the years; paramilitary activity has been high during periods when the government has done a poor job of containing the guerrillas and vice versa.
- Existence of the paramilitaries reflects a failure of the state to contain the guerrillas, although the paramilitaries now have a life of their own and will continue to exist with or without the guerrillas.

MAIN ILLEGAL GROUPS

GUERRILLAS – FARC AND ELN

- Check point/road block actions (without robbery), infrastructure attacks and attacks on means of transport account for roughly half of all guerrilla events in our dataset.
- Then come bombings, incursions, ambushes, mine explosions and massacres (kidnappings are not included in our data at present but are a big activity)

Portfolio of attacks by guerrilla groups

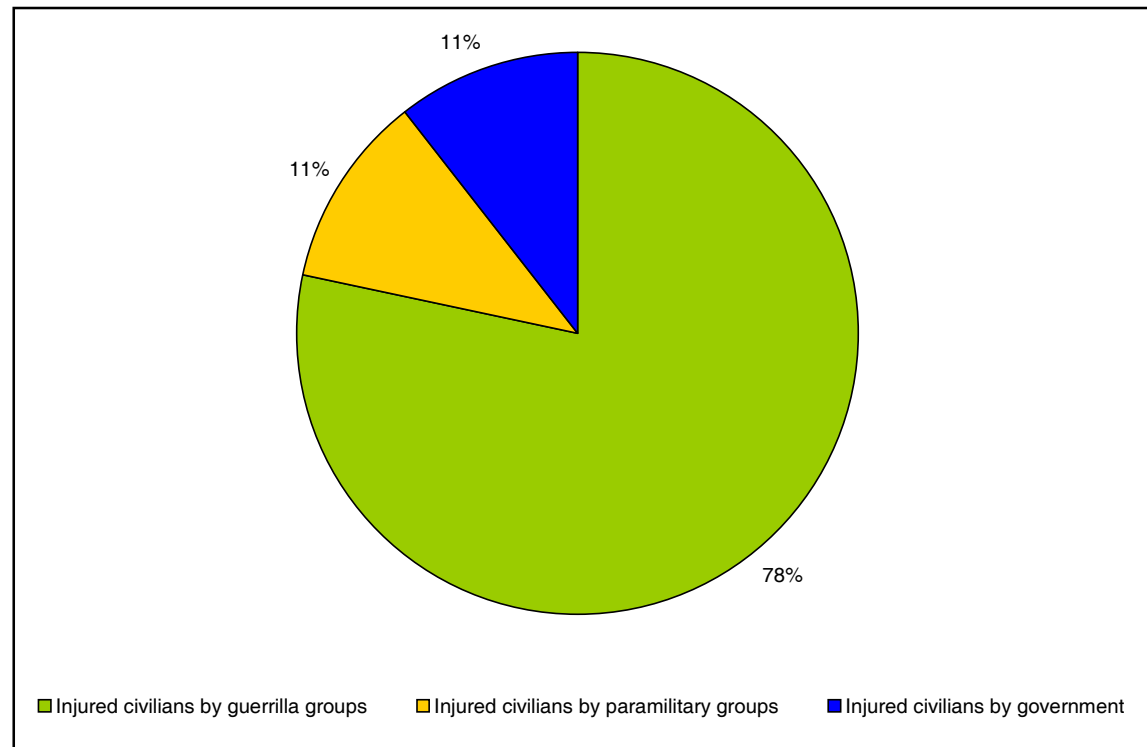


Source: CERAC

- The ELN stresses infrastructure attacks more and bombings less than the FARC.
- Are the Guerrillas narco-terrorists? Yes, but the term is too narrow. The guerrillas do lots of things (e.g., infrastructure attacks) not normally associated with terrorism and lots of things inconsistent with a desire for a quiet life dealing drugs.

- The ultimate goal of the guerrillas is to take power, not to get rich off drug-dealing. A more medium-term and realistic goal is to maintain and extend local power.
- Guerrilla revenue comes not just from drugs but also from kidnapping, extortion and theft, notably of land and cattle.
- The guerrillas cause most injuries to civilians, these coming mostly in bombings.

Distribution of injured civilians in attacks by identified group attacking

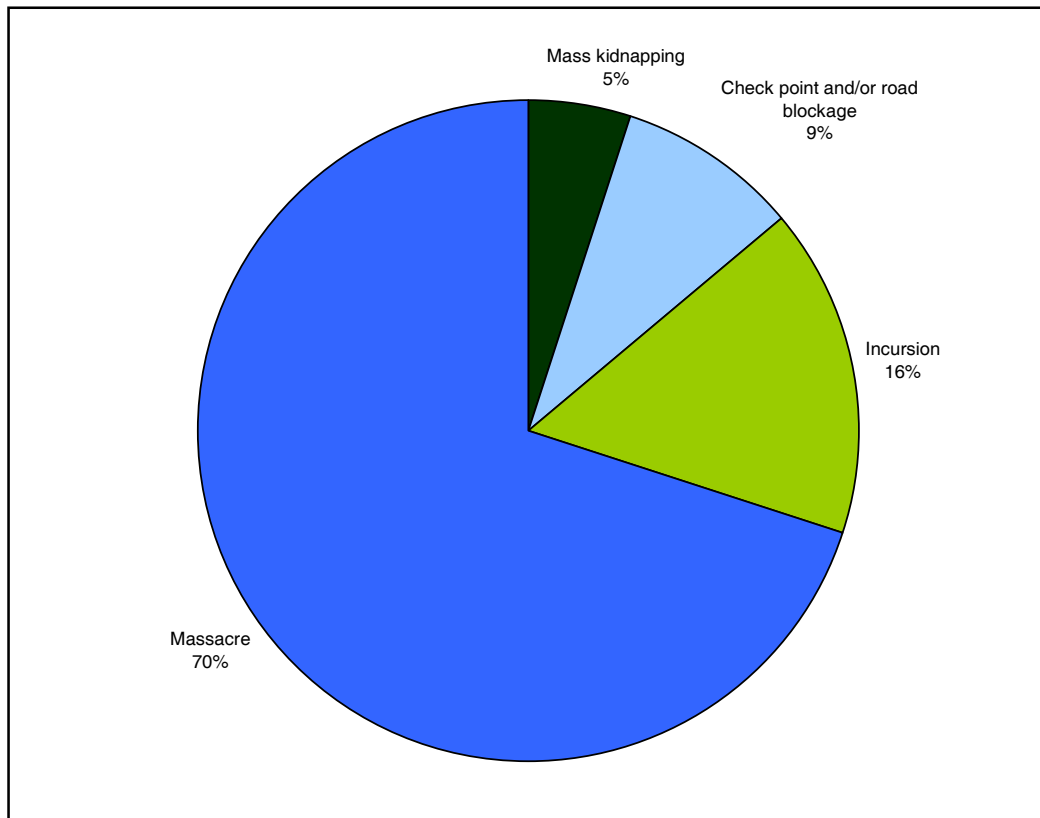


Source: CERAC

PARAMILITARIES

- Basic strategy has been to massacre civilians they suspect of helping the guerrillas.

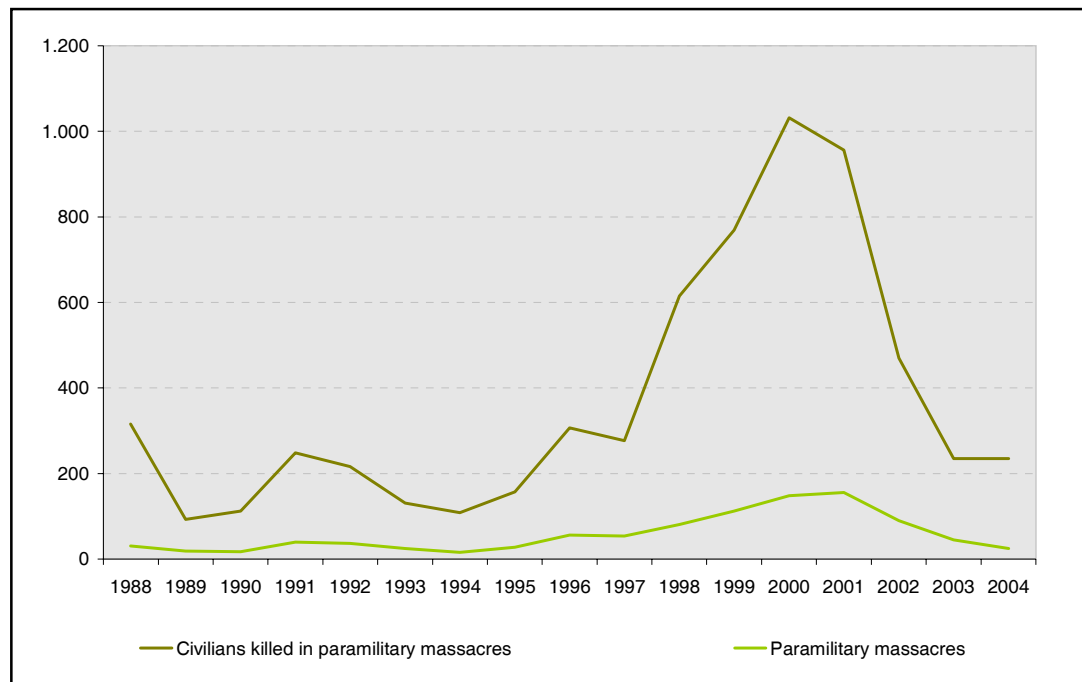
Portfolio of attacks by paramilitaries



Source: CERAC

- Cause most killings of civilians, mostly through massacres.

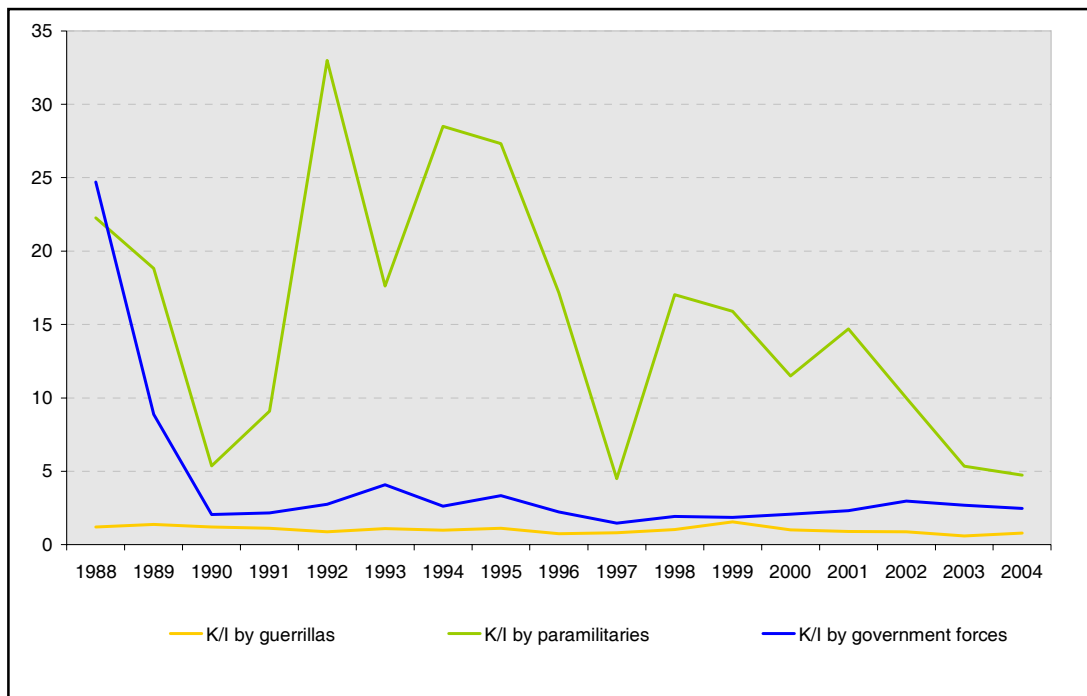
Civilians killed in paramilitary massacres 1988-2004



Source: CERAC

- The paramilitary Killing/Injury ratio is on the order of 10, compared to roughly 2 for the guerrillas and 1 for the government. This is because they mostly kill people by shooting them at short range in massacres.

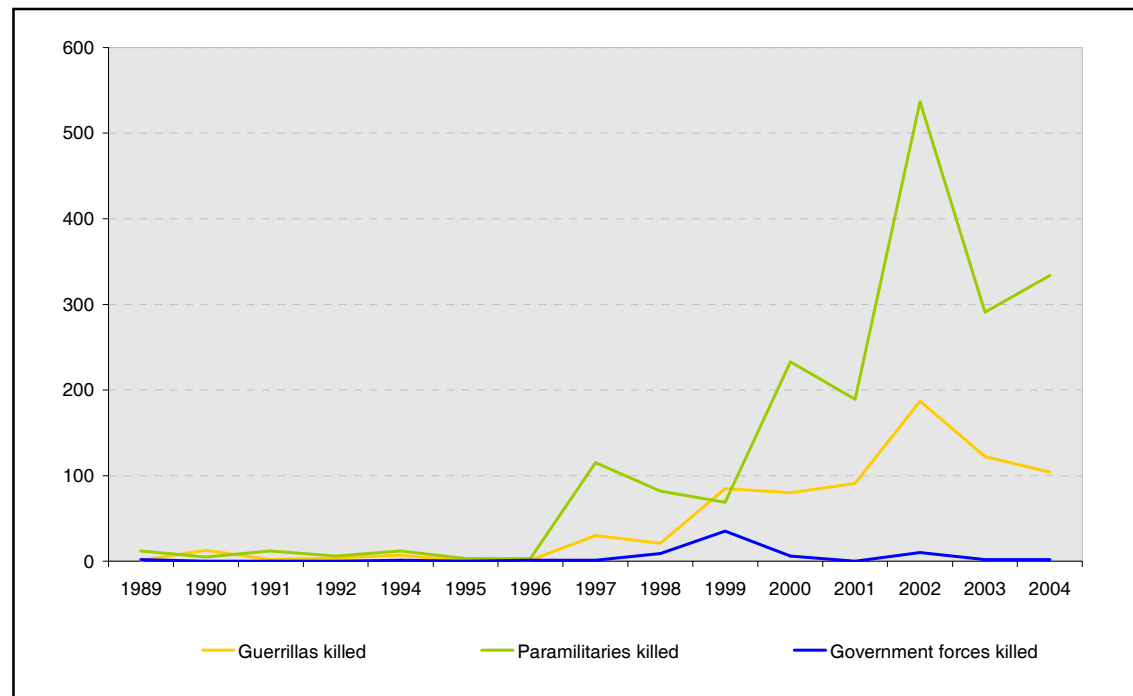
Ratio of killings to injuries in attacks by group attacking 1988-2004



Source: CERAC

- Generally perform very badly in clashes with other armed groups, getting killed much more than the opposing guerrillas and government forces.

**Killings by group in (clashes with paramilitary participation)
paramilitary clashes 1988-2004**

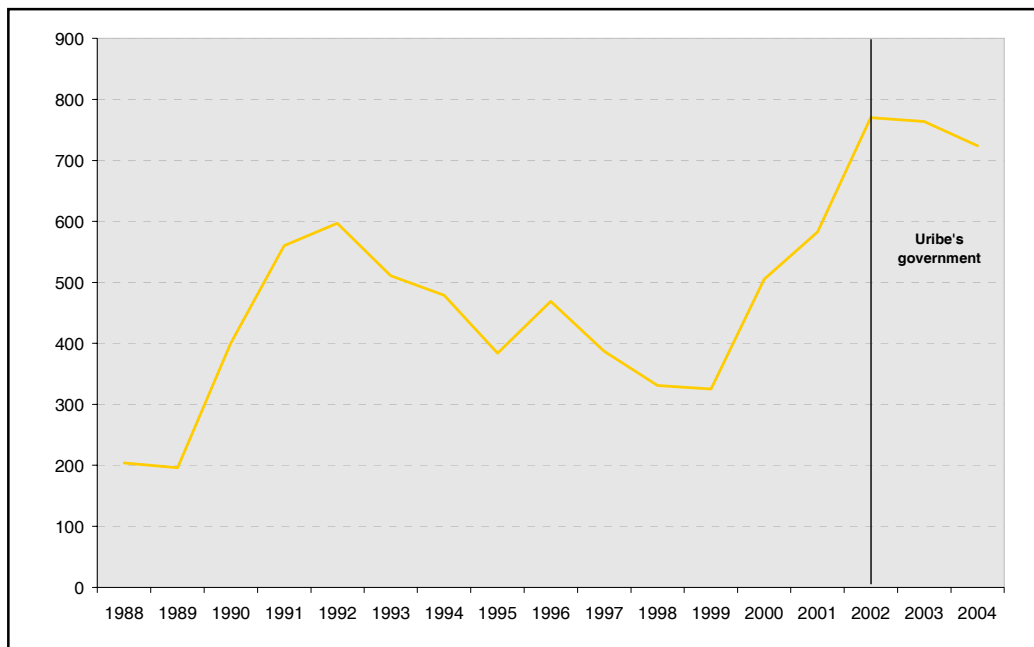


Source: CERAC

MAIN TRENDS UNDER URIBE

- Very high levels of Government-Guerrilla clashes

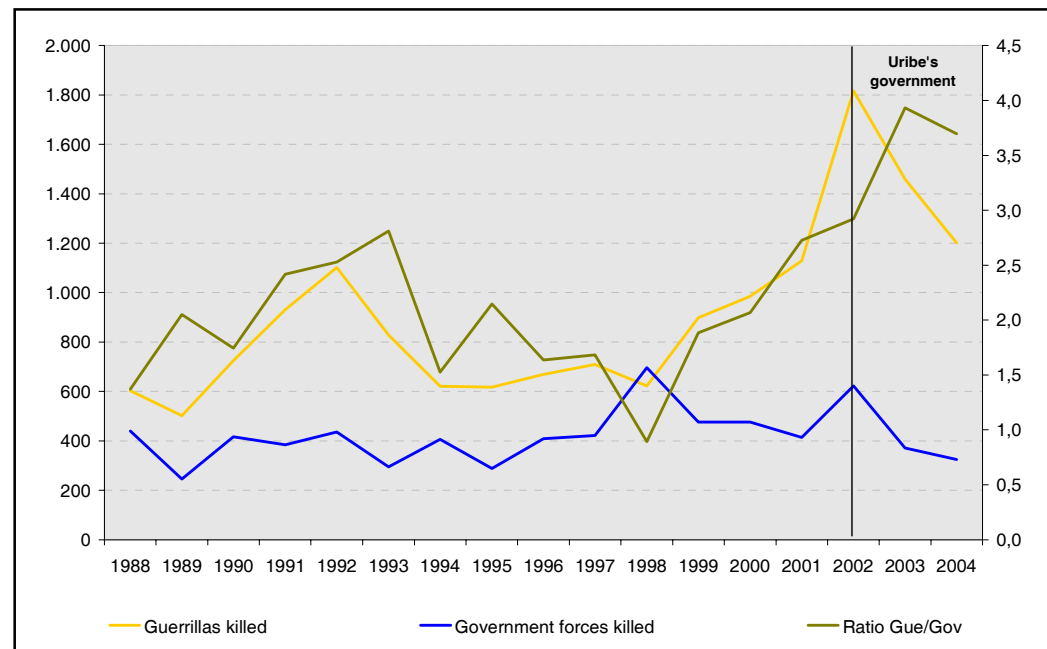
Government guerrilla clashes 1988-2004



Source: CERAC

- Higher ratios of guerrillas killed to members of government forces killed

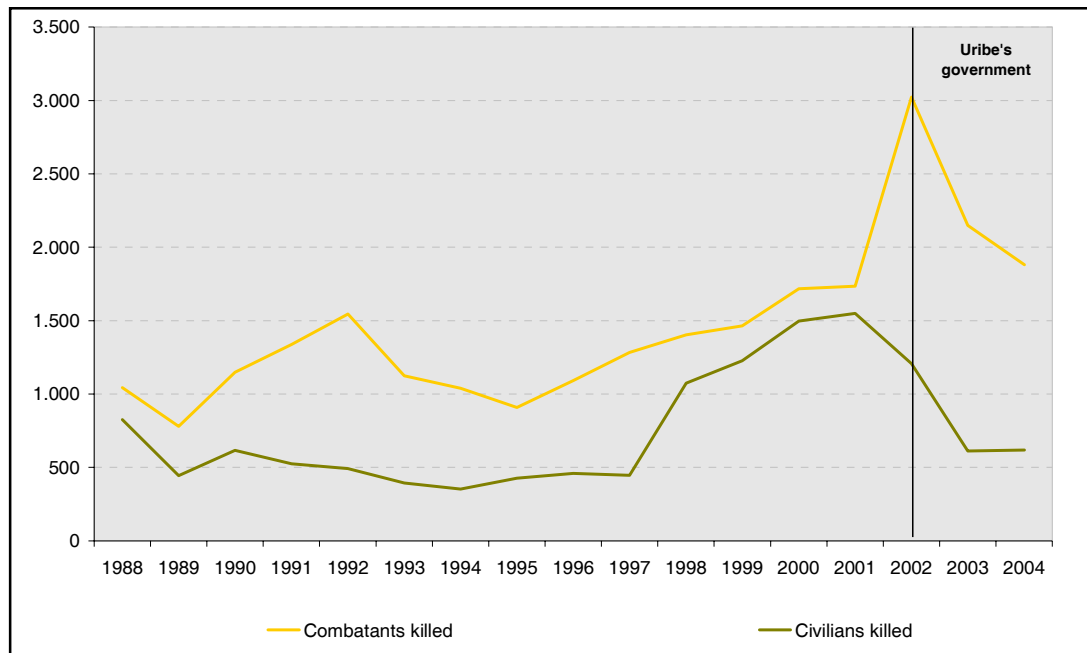
Number of government forces and guerrilla s killed 1988-2004



Source: CERAC

- Many combatants killed, fewer civilians killed.

Combatants and civilians killed 1988-2004

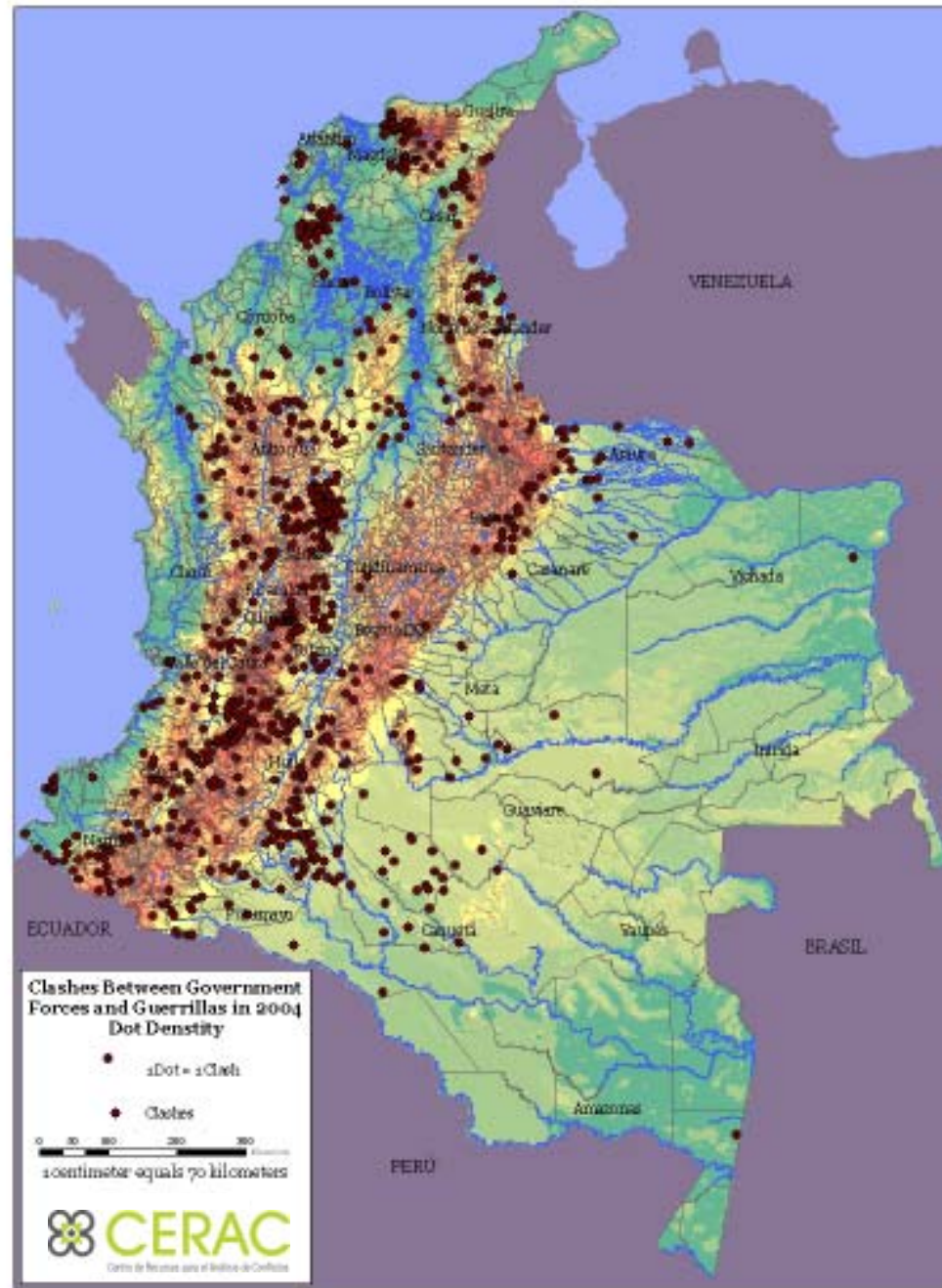


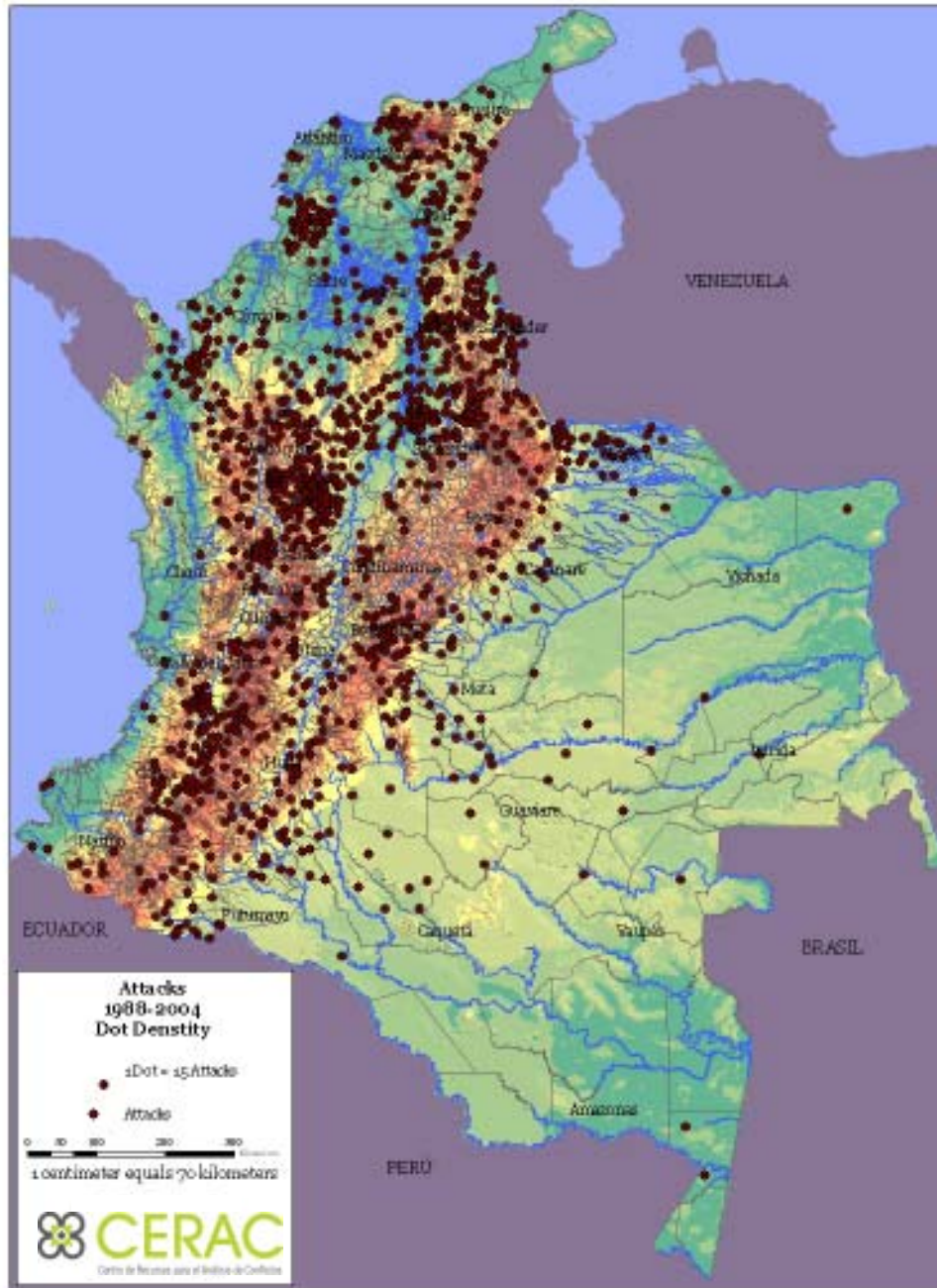
Source: CERAC

- Government forces have increased both their initiative and responsiveness against the guerrillas.
- Heavy activity in the so called "Operación JM" zone in the deep south of the country; but not just there, activity remains all over the place.

Map 1: Clashes between government forces and guerrillas in 2004

- Notable problem areas are Southeastern Antioquia and near the Venezuelan border with the Ecuadorian border emerging as an issue.

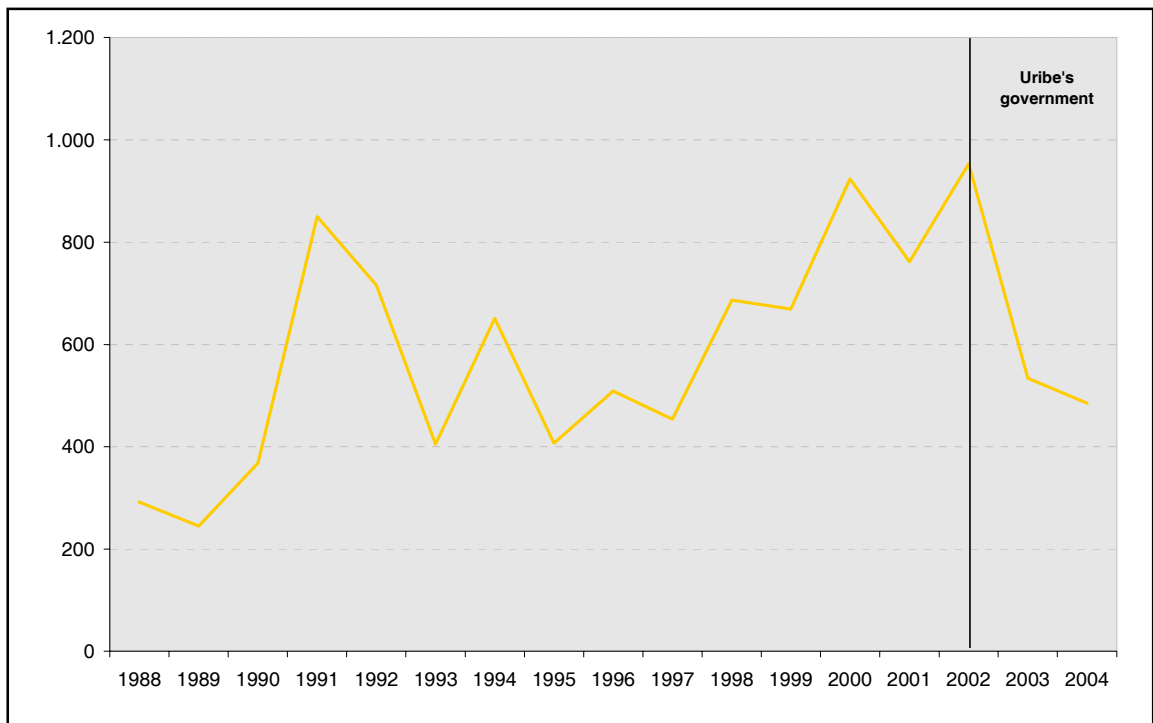




Map 2: Attacks

- Government-Paramilitary clashes rose from almost nothing to something, but then disappeared.
- Fewer guerrilla attacks (one-sided events) although these have started to come back.

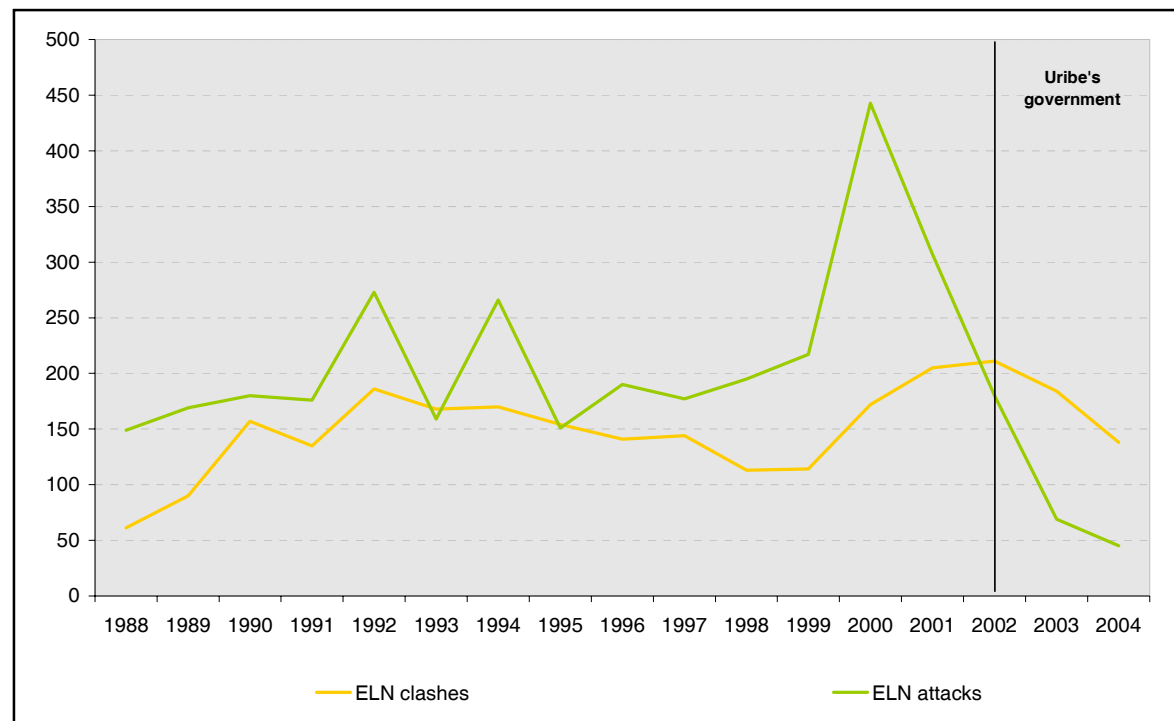
Number of guerrilla attacks



Source: CERAC

- ELN is disappearing as an attacking force.

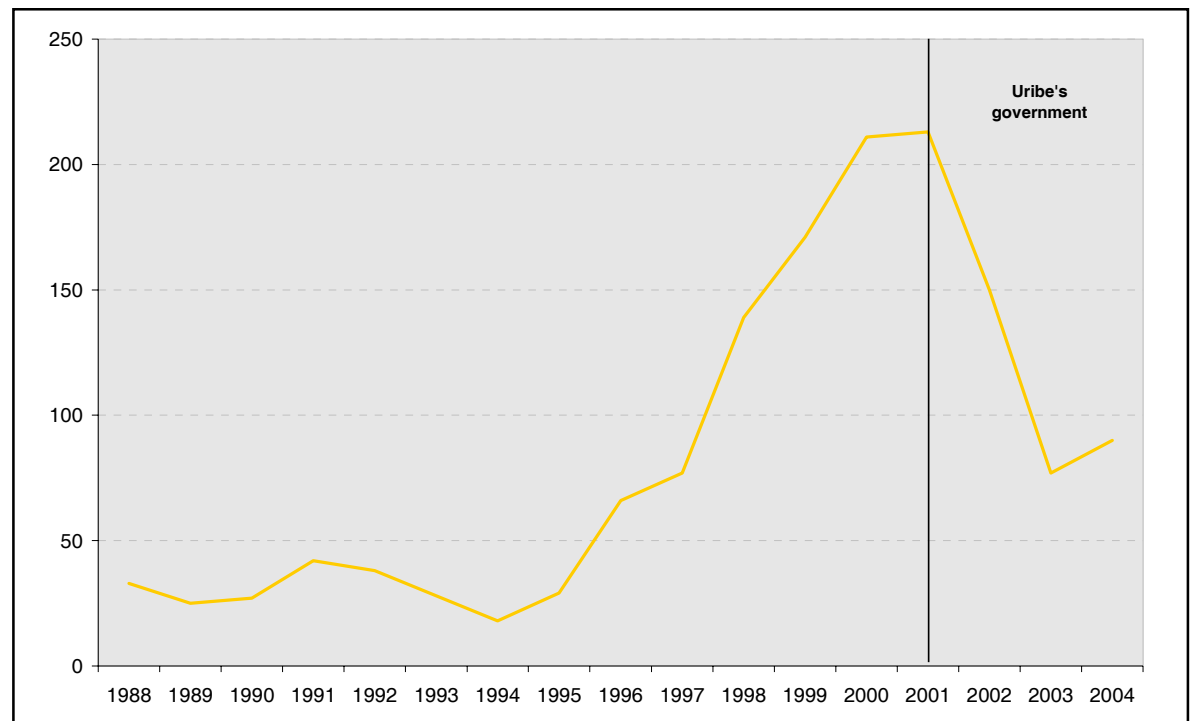
Number of ELN clashes and attacks



Source: CERAC

- Fewer paramilitary attacks (one-sided events)

Number of paramilitary attacks

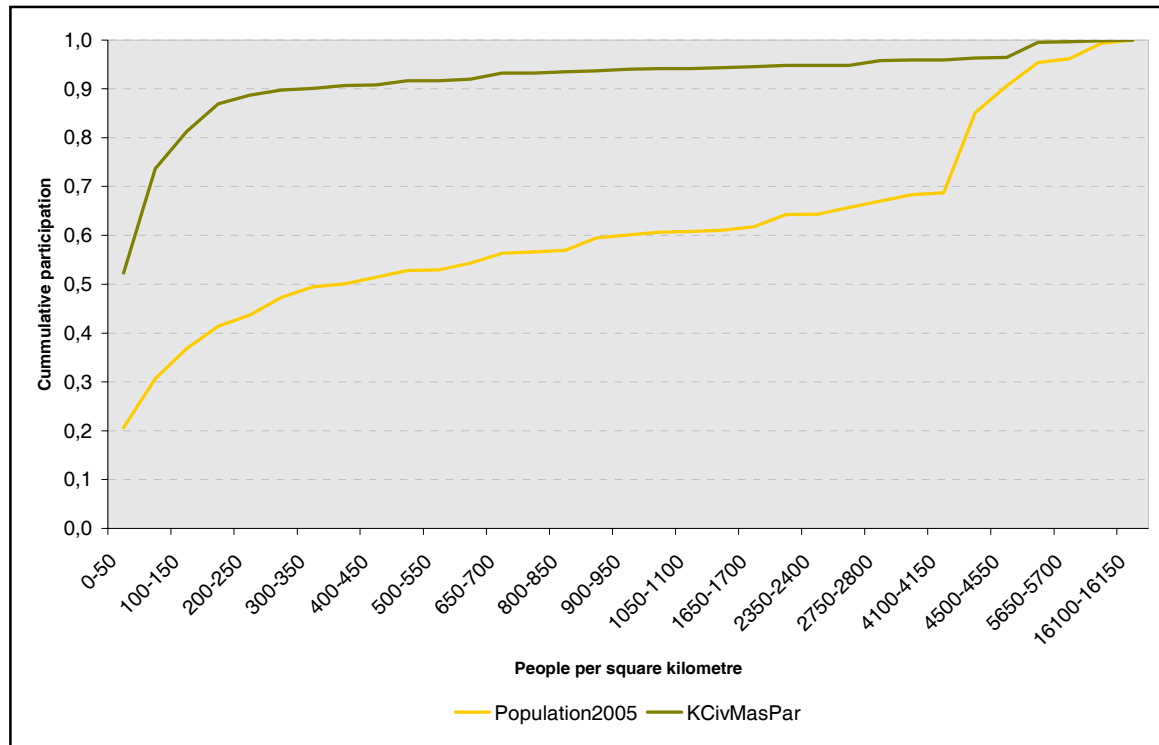


Source: CERAC

- Since 2002 the paramilitaries have been on an official ceasefire. They have violated it frequently but have, nevertheless reduced their activity, focusing less on the guerrillas and more on land-grabbing, drug dealing and political infiltration

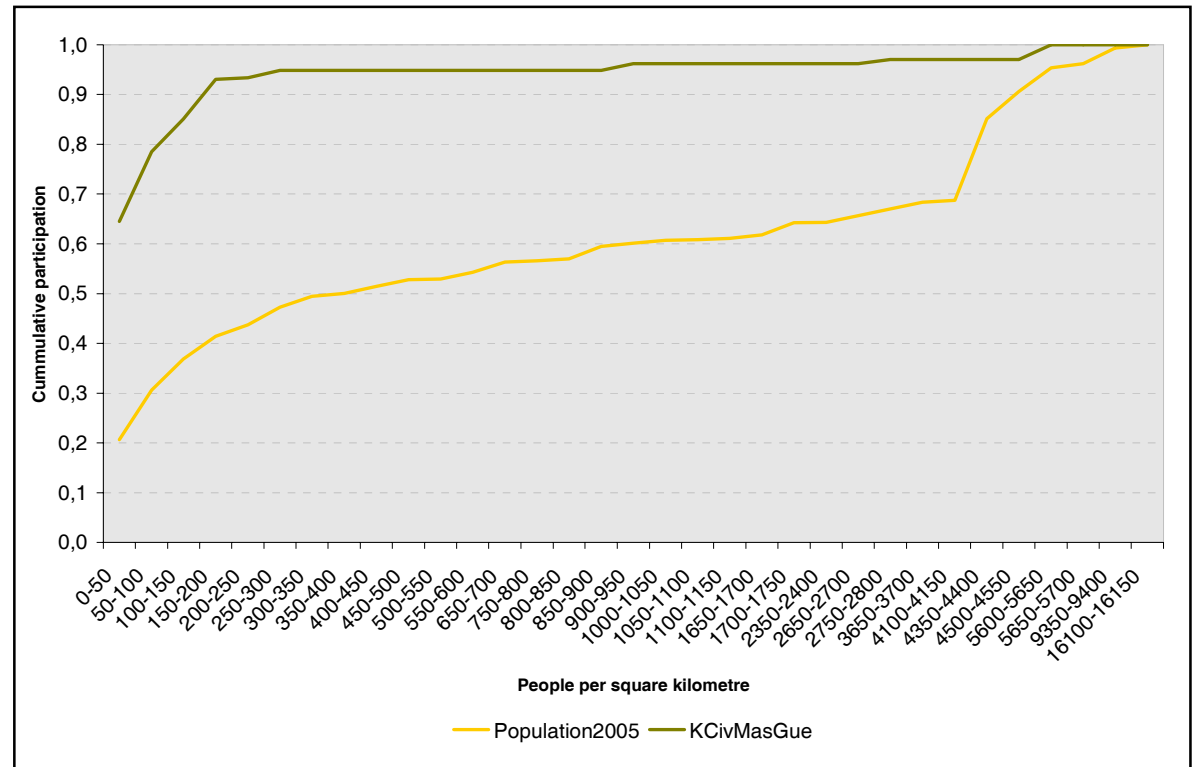
- The paramilitaries are killing fewer civilians than before but the numbers are growing.
- Civilian killings are overwhelmingly in isolated rural areas, mainly from paramilitary massacres.

Population density and civilians killed in paramilitary massacres



Source: CERAC

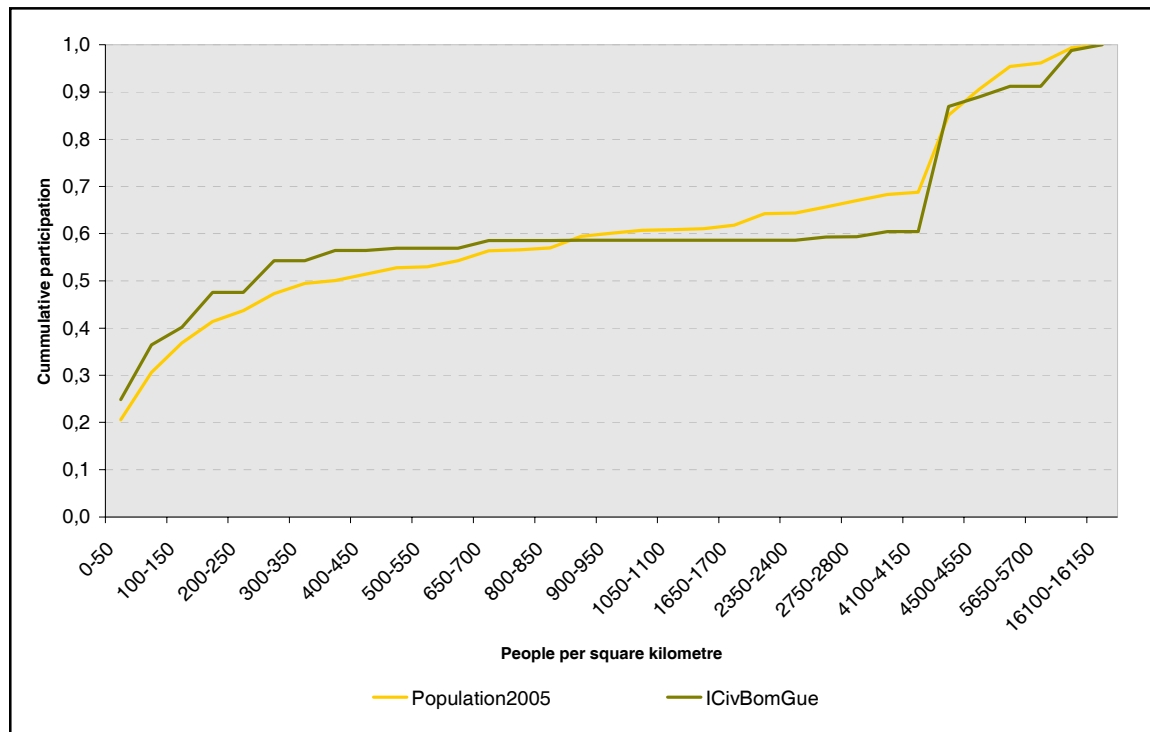
Population density and civilians killed in guerrilla massacres



Source: CERAC

- Civilian injury rates remain very high due to a sustained guerrilla bombing campaign.
- Civilian injuries tend to concentrate in biggest cities and the most isolated rural areas but these effects are not as pronounced as for massacres.

Population density and civilians injured in guerrilla bombings



Source: CERAC

- 2004 was not as good as 2003 and indications are that 2005 will show further backsliding.

BIGGER PICTURE

- The government has made serious mistakes in the political side of counterinsurgency.
- It has not made a good case internationally, e.g., its bewildering campaign to deny that Colombia has a conflict.
- There is weak international support for paramilitary demobilization, in part due to failure of the government to build a wide coalition for its Peace and Justice Bill.
- Resources, including time but also money, are lacking for investigation of paramilitary crimes. The government is doing a poor job of doing forensic tests on guns and pairing them with demobilizing combatants.
- More importantly, resources are scarce for reparations. Building a good victims registry is the key to this process but it will be expensive to get this right. The international community should focus more on reparations for victims and less on punishments for perpetrators.
- The UN needs to be brought into the demobilization process. Right now the OAS is carrying this load almost by itself with little support and lots of criticism just for monitoring the process.
- Potential security vacuum as paramilitaries demobilize. The government is addressing this problem with a new division and 5,000 additional police but this is unlikely to be enough.

- No sign that the guerrillas are really on a trajectory of defeat at this stage.
- Uribe remains remarkably popular but this has translated into only modest additional financing for the conflict.
- Neighboring states, primarily Venezuela and Equator, must be pressured to cooperate. These countries clearly have understandings, implicit or explicit, that illegal groups can go there as long as they threaten only Colombian interests. Venezuela is just now setting up a production line that will be able to produce ammunition usable by the FARC for weapons they have been struggling to feed.
- There needs to be a broader, more integrated program of taking away territory, holding it and building institutions, including police, judges and prosecutors. There does seem to be some desire to do this but the resources are lacking.
- In this context training for special forces, military, police, judges, prosecutors and emergency medicine is very valuable.
- Controlling land is the most promising approach to cutting the supply of drugs in the long run. It is vital for Colombia to do a comprehensive land survey. There is too much ungoverned space for spraying to really work as the primary tactic in the drug war.

- Continued US funding seems assured but with an unfortunate single-minded focus on spraying.

Some Ratios for the Colombian Conflict 1988-2004

	1988-2004	1998-2004
Ratio of killings in events with paramilitary participation to total number of killings	0,26	0,36
Ratio of injuries in events with guerrilla participation to total number of injuries	0,82	0,79
Ratio of killings to injuries in paramilitary attacks	11,23	11,21
Ratio of killings to injuries in guerrilla attacks	0,96	0,92
Ratio of killings to injuries in government attacks	2,64	2,43
Civilian killngs	12771	7766

Source: CERAC

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He is a professor of Economics at Royal Holloway-University of London and has an extensive record of research in political economy of conflicts, dictatorships and repressive regimes. He has also done research in comparative and monetary economics.

Professor Spagat holds a PhD in economics from Harvard University and is a member of the CEPR and the William Davidson Institute.

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