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FEATURED Q&A

Has Security in Colombia Improved Under Duque?



Colombian President Iván Duque on April 12 touted his government's security achievements in a speech to the U.N. Security Council. // Photo: United Nations.

Q In a speech to the U.N. Security Council this month, Colombian President Iván Duque highlighted what he called his government's achievements in strengthening the country's peace process, compensating conflict victims and reintegrating thousands of demobilized FARC rebels back into society. Duque also called drug trafficking "the greatest enemy of peacebuilding in Colombia." How should the outgoing president be remembered in terms of his security policy and implementation of the historic 2016 peace accord after a decades-long civil war? Is the country safer for more of its citizens now than it was before Duque took office, and has he done enough to advance the peace process? What will Colombia's next president need to do to address drug trafficking and improve the country's security situation, both in rural and urban areas?

A Elizabeth Dickinson, senior analyst for Colombia at International Crisis Group: "President Iván Duque took office in 2018 amid a windfall of security and trust from rural communities. The peace agreement created a rare opportunity, first for the state to recoup its physical presence in former FARC areas, and second, for Bogotá to consolidate the goodwill of areas of the country that had lived for decades without police, medical care or state institutions. While it is undeniable that there have been advances implementing the accord, particularly in the reincorporation of the former FARC, these two major opportunities were largely lost and will not be easy to recover. Indeed, today those same indicators—security and goodwill in the countryside—are both moving in the wrong direction. In more and more rural areas,

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Colombia Violated Nicaragua's Rights in Caribbean: World Court

The United Nations' International Court of Justice ruled that Colombia breached Nicaragua's water rights in the western Caribbean.

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BUSINESS

Peru to Declare Emergency Amid Protests at Mine

Peru's government said it will declare a state of emergency near Southern Copper's Cuajone mine amid protests that have halted 20 percent of the country's production of copper.

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ECONOMIC

Spain's Trade Secretary to Discuss E.U. Trade Deal With Boric

Spanish Secretary for Trade Xiana Méndez is to visit Santiago next week to discuss with President Gabriel Boric an updated trade deal between the European Union and Chile.

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Méndez // File Photo: Spanish Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Colombia Breached Nicaragua's Rights in Caribbean: Court

The United Nations' International Court of Justice ruled today that Colombia violated Nicaragua's rights in waters off its eastern coastline, including by granting fishing permits for boats from Colombia and other countries, as well as by impeding Nicaraguan fishing vessels, the Associated Press reported. The ruling stems from a case that Nicaragua filed in 2013, arguing that Colombia breached its sovereignty in waters of the western Caribbean Sea, an area that both countries have long claimed. In a 9-6 vote, the World Court's justices ordered Colombia to "immediately cease the conduct," the court's president, Jean E. Donoghue, announced, the AP reported. In a separate 10-5 vote, the court ruled that Colombia breached Nicaragua's rights "by interfering with fishing and marine scientific research activities" of vessels from Nicaragua or ones licensed by the Central American country "and by purporting to enforce conservation measures" in waters belonging to Nicaragua. "They limited some of its functions in the sense that they cannot undertake environmental control activities, which is a shame because we do have the ability to do that," the representative, Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla, told reporters, the AP reported. Even though the ruling imposed limits on Colombian naval activities in the area, Colombia's representative to the World Court said the ruling had positive aspects for the South American country. "But nevertheless, the court maintained the possibility of the Colombian navy being there and doing operations in the fight against organized crime in the area," he added. In 2012, the World Court ruling gave fishing rights in a wide swath of the western Caribbean to Nicaragua, but the Colombian navy has continued patrolling the area, which traffickers also use to transport illegal drugs into Central America, the wire service reported. The World Court on Thursday also ordered Colombia's government to amend a presiden-

tial decree from 2013 that established a zone around Colombian islands in the disputed waters, Reuters reported. The court ruled that the zone is too large and claims powers that are not in accordance with international law. Nicaraguan lawyers at the court declined to comment on the ruling, Reuters reported.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Spain's Trade Sec'y to Discuss E.U. Trade Deal With Boric

Spanish Secretary for Trade Xiana Méndez will visit Santiago next week to discuss with Chilean President Gabriel Boric an updated trade deal between the European Union and Chile, Bloomberg News reported. The deal was nearly finalized but blocked in 2021, due to other priorities, Méndez told the news service in an interview. "I'm going to Chile to talk about the trade negotiations and see how we can promote it," Méndez told Bloomberg News. "The prospects for moving forward with the deal are good," she added. The European Union is seeking to reduce its dependence on Russia for key commodities amid the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. The war has brought about renewed interest in a trade deal with Chile, given its large copper and lithium reserves. Boric, who was inaugurated in March, campaigned on the importance of multilateralism and strong international ties with Latin America and the rest of the world.

BUSINESS NEWS

Peru Declaring State of Emergency Amid Protests at Mine

Peru will declare a state of emergency near U.S.-based Southern Copper Corp.'s Cuajone mine in the midst of protests that have halted

NEWS BRIEFS

At Least Six Colombian Soldiers Killed By Bomb Blamed on Traffickers

At least six Colombian soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb exploded as their vehicle drove past in northwestern Antioquia province, the army said Wednesday, BBC News reported. Five other soldiers were injured in the attack and one is unaccounted for. Officials blamed the attack on the Gulf Clan criminal gang. Authorities are searching for the perpetrators of the attack.

Officers Kill Intruder at Peruvian Ambassador's Residence in Washington

U.S. Secret Service officers on Wednesday shot and killed an intruder at the residence of the Peruvian ambassador to the United States, the Associated Press reported. The man was using a metal stake to smash windows of the residence in Washington when the Secret Service was called. Officers shot and killed the intruder after unsuccessfully attempting to subdue him with a Taser, Metropolitan Police Department Chief Robert Contee told reporters. The Peruvian ambassador, his family and staff are safe and were unharmed, the AP reported.

Brazil, U.S. Discussing Oil Output Boost Amid War in Ukraine: Energy Minister

The United States and Brazil have been cooperating in the effort to cap global crude prices since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Brazilian Energy Minister Bento Albuquerque told Reuters Wednesday in an interview. Brazil has been increasing its crude oil production in the past few years and is seeking to reach 3.3 million barrels per day this year. Albuquerque said he and U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm have discussed "the importance to stabilize the offer and demand of oil and gas around the world," Reuters reported.

20 percent of the country's copper output, Prime Minister Aníbal Torres said Wednesday, Reuters reported. In the protests, members of impoverished communities in the Peruvian Andes are demonstrating against mining projects including Cuajone, Glencore's Antapaccay and MMG Ltd.'s Las Bambas. Protesters complain that mineral wealth in Peru, the second largest producer of copper in the world, has not trickled down to more impoverished areas in the country, even despite high international prices, the wire service reported. Demonstrators are also concerned about protecting water supplies that they use daily, Bloomberg News reported. In announcing the state of emergency, Torres said the protesting communities "are demanding something irrational, \$5 billion," Reuters reported. As of Wednesday, the Las Bambas and Cuajone mines have shut down in response to the protests, leaving approximately 20 percent of Peru's copper output offline, Bloomberg News reported. Las Bambas produced close to 300,000 metric tons of copper last year, while Cuajone produced 170,000 metric tons of the country's 2.3 million metric tons of copper output in 2021, Reuters reported.

Samsung Pay Expanding Offerings for Users in Brazil

Samsung Pay is expanding its offerings for customers in Brazil, where it has operated since 2016, Sammobile.com reported Wednesday. Samsung Pay users with accounts at Brazilian digital bank C6 will be able to link their bank cards to their Samsung Pay accounts in order to make payments using Galaxy smart phones and smart watches, the website reported. C6 Bank customers will be able to link their C6, C6 Platinum, C6 Carbon and C6 Business cards to Samsung Pay, though Samsung said C6 Yellow Cards and Global Account cards cannot be used with the service, Sammobile.com reported. JPMorgan Chase last year announced that it was acquiring a 40 percent stake in C6, Reuters reported. Former partners at investment bank BTG Pactual founded C6 in 2019.

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communities speak nostalgically about their freedom immediately after the peace accord, because now the presence of armed groups has once again subjected the population to displacement, forced confinement, extensive recruitment and selective killings. The government has pushed forward regionally focused development projects, but it has often prioritized projects that align with its political priorities rather than communities' self-identified needs. Duque blames these challenges on drug trafficking, but in doing so his government confuses a symptom with the disease. While focusing on hard-hitting policies such as forced eradication and captures, the government has downplayed rural reform and crop substitution that would help liberate the civilian population from perpetual armed coercion. The next government will have to return to the hard work of long-term reforms in the countryside, while shifting security forces' attention toward protecting the civilian population."

A Adam Isacson, director for defense oversight at the Washington Office on Latin America: "President Iván Duque comes from the political party of ex-President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010), who had a troubled human rights record but left office with most of Colombia's security indicators in better shape than when he entered. The tragedy of Duque's four years is that Colombia has once again seen backward movement on human rights—but this time the security indicators have worsened, too. Homicides, massacres, social leader killings and other violent crime indicators are at or near their highest levels of the past 10 years, even as military and police units have been embroiled in scandals over brutal responses to protests, misuse of intelligence and civilian casualties during military operations. Meanwhile, as indicated by proliferating coca crops, the amount of Colombian territory without a functioning state presence—a problem the peace accord had so hopefully promised to address—is

at least where it was four years ago. This is not all Duque's fault: his government was battered by low commodity prices and Covid-19, which drained finances. But he chose not to devote enough resources to the accord's rural governance provisions, which remain far behind, or to work with ex-combatants, victims and ethnic communities. He and his defense ministers resisted adjusting to Colombia's post-accord security reality, preferring to 'fight the last war,' using tactics (including crowd control and forced eradication) developed to fight subversives bent on violent revolution, while the country's organized crime networks splintered and proliferated. Duque's successor will have to weaken these networks, starting with punishing the government corruption that enables them. The next president must build a state presence in neglected areas and protect social leaders. These challenges proved too much for Duque, who could have been Colombia's first true post-conflict president. That opportunity will go to his successor."

A Gwen Burnyeat, junior research fellow in anthropology at Merton College, University of Oxford: "President Iván Duque's implementation of the 2016 peace accord has been contradictory. He claims a commitment to peace, but his government's approach to security and drug-trafficking has resulted in significant increases in violence. In its latest report, the U.N. Verification Mission in Colombia highlights a significant deterioration in security this year, particularly in Arauca, Putumayo and Chocó provinces. Those hot spots saw nearly 14,000 forcibly displaced persons, 25 massacres and 43 social leaders killed, and the report says that nearly half of Colombia's municipalities face risks of violence. After Duque finished touting his peace and security achievements at the U.N. Security Council, Verification Mission head Carlos Ruiz Massieu called for a thorough investigation into the deaths of several civilians, including a pregnant wom-

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an and 16-year-old boy, in a military assault on alleged FARC dissidents in Putumayo in March. The peace accord offers a human security approach to tackling drug trafficking and helping vulnerable, socioeconomically marginalized families who grow coca to transition to legal activities, while target-

“**President Iván Duque’s implementation of the 2016 peace accord has been contradictory.**”

— Gwen Burnyeat

ing criminal structures with military and judicial measures. The highly questionable military operation in Putumayo evidences a security logic that equates communities in coca-growing regions with terrorism, legitimizing military action against them. A Colombian victims’ rights group called Defendamos La Paz (Let’s Defend Peace) has said that Duque has implemented some aspects of the accord but ignored others, undermining its interdependent nature. To secure the future of peace, Colombia’s next president must recuperate this interdependency, shift the security perspective toward the peace accord’s human security logic

and stop the never-ending cycle in which the Colombian state attacks its own people.”

A **Richard McColl, host of the Colombia Calling podcast:** “To his detractors and supporters of the 2016 peace accord, Iván Duque’s tenure as president has been an unmitigated failure. Even from an objective viewpoint, it is hard to take any positives from these four years. Violence is on the increase, but figures show them as lower than those of 2002, and by all accounts the uncertainty and instability in rural Colombia is cause for serious concern. More than 30 different armed groups vie for lucrative smuggling routes to move coca paste, and President Duque’s government does little more than militarize flashpoint areas—with little regard to enabling socioeconomic change on the ground as covered in the peace accord. Colombia’s next president needs to commit to rural development, productivity and communication since presently, there are two Colombias—one rural and the other urban—and the chasm between them is widening.”

[Editor’s note: The Advisor requested commentaries for this issue from Colombia’s ambassador to the United States and members of Duque’s party in Congress but received no responses from any of them.]

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