

## Rebuilding From Conflict: Economic And Social Perspectives In The PDET Municipalities Of Tolima

Luis Fernando Narano Naranjo<sup>1</sup>, Oscar Andrés Benavides Parra<sup>2</sup>, Olga Patricia Pulido Villamil<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

*Widespread violence in territories has negative economic and social intertemporal effects, which increase significantly when in a context of armed conflict, as is the case in Colombia. In this sense, it is inferred that reducing conflict and supporting the recovery of the areas most burdened by conflict should be consistent with improving economic and social behavior. To understand the impact of the armed conflict on the economic behavior of the PDET municipalities located in southern Tolima, a model was proposed that aims to explain the effect of conflict victim cases on the added value gap of the PDET municipalities in Tolima. The correlation between the original variables is calculated and it is evident that the correlation between the variables suggests a moderately strong inverse relationship; which could be interpreted as an indication that an increase in local economic activity may be associated with greater social stability and possibly lower levels of violence.*

**Keywords** *Armed conflict, PDET municipalities, added value, victims, and social stability.*

### Introduction

The study of armed conflict is essential for various reasons encompassing humanitarian, political, economic, social, and security aspects. Firstly, armed conflicts negatively impact civilian populations. Millions of people are forced to leave their homes, facing extreme living conditions in refugee camps or as internally displaced persons. Analyzing these conflicts is essential to designing effective humanitarian measures that alleviate human suffering. Organizations like the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders require detailed studies to plan and carry out relief operations that save lives and provide medical care in conflict areas (Doctors Without Borders, 2022).

Additionally, armed conflicts are often accompanied by massive human rights violations, including murders, torture, rape, and kidnappings. Documenting these abuses is crucial for post-conflict justice and reconciliation. International courts and truth commissions rely on rigorous studies to bring perpetrators to justice and provide a sense of closure to victims (UN, 2021). Understanding the causes of armed conflicts is vital to prevent future wars. Conflicts often have deep roots in political problems such as power struggles, corruption, lack of representation, and oppression. Studying these factors allows governments and international organizations to design policies that address the underlying causes of conflicts, promoting inclusive governance and democratic participation (Kaldor, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Master in History, Technological University of Pereira.

<sup>2</sup> Master in Organizational Management, National Open, and Distance University.

<sup>3</sup> Master in Education, University of Tolima.

The study of armed conflicts is also essential for diplomacy and peace negotiation. Knowing the dynamics and actors involved in a conflict allows international mediators to facilitate more effective dialogues and design sustainable peace agreements. History has shown that successful peace processes, such as those in South Africa and Northern Ireland, are based on a deep understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflict (Darby & Mac Ginty, 2008). Armed conflicts have devastating economic consequences. They destroy infrastructure, disrupt trade and production, and divert resources that could be allocated to development. Studying these impacts is essential to design post-conflict recovery strategies that revitalize devastated economies and rebuild critical infrastructure (Collier et al., 2003).

Furthermore, economic studies can help understand how natural resources, such as oil, diamonds, and other minerals, can be both a cause and a source of funding for armed conflicts. The regulation and proper management of these resources can prevent conflicts and promote sustainable economic development (Le Billon, 2001). Armed conflicts fragment societies and leave deep social scars. Studying these impacts is crucial to understanding how to rebuild the social fabric after a conflict. Reconciliation and social cohesion are fundamental for lasting peace. Research in this area can guide reconciliation and education programs that promote understanding and tolerance between previously conflicting communities (Lederach, 1997).

The study of conflicts also addresses the generational impact. Children growing up in conflict zones often suffer psychological trauma and lose educational opportunities, affecting their development and future. Research-based interventions can be designed to support these children, providing them with access to education and psychological support (UNICEF, 2020). The study of armed conflicts is essential for international security. In a globalized world, local conflicts can have global repercussions, such as terrorism, organized crime, and migration crises. Understanding the dynamics of conflicts can help prevent the spread of violence and chaos beyond national borders (Williams, 2008).

Additionally, research on armed conflicts informs national defense and security policies. Governments and international organizations need detailed and accurate information to design defense strategies, military interventions, and peacekeeping operations. These strategies must be based on a deep understanding of the dynamics of conflicts and the needs of the affected populations (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). The study of armed conflicts also contributes to the advancement of academic knowledge in fields such as political science, sociology, economics, and law. Interdisciplinary research allows for a more complete and nuanced understanding of conflicts, incorporating diverse perspectives and methodologies. This not only enriches the academic field but also provides tools and theoretical frameworks that can be applied in practice for conflict resolution (Wallensteen, 2015).

Analyzing armed conflicts from a historical perspective is essential to learn from past mistakes and successes. History provides valuable lessons about the causes of conflicts, effective resolution strategies, and reconstruction processes. Understanding the historical patterns of conflicts can help predict and prevent future confrontations (Galtung, 1969). In summary, the study of armed conflict is of vital importance due to its multidimensional impact on humanity. From alleviating human suffering to designing prevention and recovery policies to promoting peace and global security, research in this field is essential. Only through rigorous and multidisciplinary analysis can we fully understand the complex dynamics of armed conflicts and work towards a more peaceful and just world.

### **An Approach to the Armed Conflict in Colombia**

The armed conflict in Colombia has been one of the longest and most complex in Latin America, involving various actors such as guerrilla groups (FARC, ELN), paramilitary organizations (AUC), drug traffickers, and government forces. This conflict has had a profound impact on Colombian society, affecting political, economic, and social aspects. The origins of the conflict are rooted in social inequality, land concentration, and political exclusion. Guerrilla

groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), emerged in the 1960s, influenced by Marxist ideologies and aiming to fight against these inequalities (Pécaut, 2001). In the following decades, the conflict intensified with the emergence of paramilitary groups in the 1980s, initially conceived as self-defense forces against the guerrillas but later involved in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (Romero, 2003).

The main actors in the conflict are the guerrilla forces (FARC, ELN), the paramilitary groups (AUC), and the Colombian government. Each of these actors has pursued different objectives and employed various strategies. The FARC and the ELN sought social and political change through armed struggle and, in some cases, drug trafficking to finance their operations (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2004). Paramilitary groups pursued the elimination of guerrillas and territorial control through illicit activities (Semana, 2005). The armed conflict has had a devastating impact on the civilian population, with millions of internally displaced persons, thousands of disappeared, and a high number of victims of sexual violence and homicides. According to the National Center for Historical Memory (2013), between 1958 and 2013, the conflict caused a total of 220,000 deaths, 80% of them civilians. The presence of violence has fragmented communities and created an environment of fear and insecurity.

The most significant peace action in Colombia's recent history was carried out between the government and the FARC, culminating in the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016. This agreement included fundamental elements such as the demobilization and disarmament of the guerrillas, the creation of a transitional justice system, and the implementation of rural and political reforms to address the underlying causes of the conflict (Final Agreement, 2016). However, the implementation of the agreement has faced various challenges, such as resistance from some political sectors, the assassination of social leaders, and the persistence of illegal armed groups (Álvarez Vanegas, 2018).

Academic research on the conflict in Colombia is extensive and multidisciplinary. Historical and sociological studies have examined the structural causes of the conflict, such as inequality and political exclusion (LeGrand et al., 2000). Research in political science has examined the power dynamics and strategies of armed actors (Pizarro Leongómez, 2011). Studies in economics have examined the impact of the conflict on economic development and post-conflict policies (Sánchez & Palau, 2006). A fundamental aspect of the conflict in Colombia is transitional justice, designed to address acts committed during the conflict and ensure reparation for victims. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the Truth Commission have been essential in this process, although they are not exempt from controversy and operational challenges (Díaz, 2018). Additionally, the National Center for Historical Memory has worked on documenting and disseminating the history of the conflict to promote collective memory and national reconciliation (CNMH, 2013).

Despite significant progress in the peace process, Colombia faces numerous challenges on its path toward lasting peace. Violence persists in various regions through the reorganization of armed groups and the emergence of new threats such as drug trafficking and illegal mining (García, 2019). Furthermore, the full implementation of the peace agreement requires a continuous commitment from the government and civil society, as well as greater inclusion of the communities affected by the conflict. In summary, the armed conflict in Colombia is a complex phenomenon with deep roots in the country's history and social structure. Through an assessment of the main actors, the humanitarian impact, the peace processes, and academic research, a comprehensive understanding of this conflict and the challenges that persist in the pursuit of lasting peace can be achieved. The continuation of interdisciplinary studies and the strengthening of transitional justice institutions are fundamental to advancing toward reconciliation and sustainable development in Colombia.

## **On the Economics of Peace**

One of the earliest works on the importance of peace for economic growth and development was written by John Maynard Keynes. His book, "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," is a critical analysis of the Treaty of Versailles and its economic implications for Europe after World War I. Keynes, who participated in the Paris Peace Conference as a representative of the British Treasury, resigned from his position due to his disagreement with the conditions imposed on Germany and published this book to express his concerns. The work is fundamental to understanding how economic decisions can influence political and social stability.

Keynes argues that the Treaty of Versailles imposed overly harsh conditions on Germany, especially in terms of economic reparations. According to him, the reparations were unsustainable and would lead Germany into a deep economic crisis, which would have negative repercussions for all of Europe (Keynes, 1919). He maintains that the reparations were not only excessive but also unrealistic, as they did not consider Germany's actual capacity to pay them. This approach, according to Keynes, was doomed to fail and would undermine any possibility of economic recovery in Europe.

Keynes' text offers valuable insights and lessons for designing economic and peace policies in post-conflict contexts. Keynes teaches that economic policies must be realistic and sustainable, considering the capabilities and needs of all actors involved. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of economic reconstruction and mutual support to achieve lasting peace (Keynes, 1919).

Peace is fundamental for economic growth for various reasons, including political stability, security, investment, human development, and efficient use of resources. The following are the main reasons why peace is crucial for economic growth:

### **Political Stability and Investor Confidence**

Peace provides an environment of political stability, which is essential to attract both domestic and foreign investment. Investors seek predictable and stable environments where they can be sure that their investments will be protected and can generate long-term returns. In peaceful contexts, the risks associated with investment decrease considerably, increasing confidence and capital flow towards productive projects (Alesina & Perotti, 1996).

### **Security and Cost Reduction**

Peace significantly reduces costs related to security and protection. In times of conflict, governments and businesses spend enormous amounts of resources on defense and security, which diverts funds that could be used in productive sectors such as infrastructure, education, and health. Additionally, peace allows businesses to operate without interruptions, reducing economic losses due to looting, destruction of property, and other acts of violence (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

### **Social Stability and Human Capital**

Peace contributes to social stability, which is fundamental for human capital development. In times of peace, governments can invest more in education and health, thus facilitating the development of a skilled and healthy workforce. An educated and healthy population is more productive, driving long-term economic growth. Furthermore, peace promotes social cohesion and inclusion, creating an environment where all citizens can contribute to economic development (Barro, 1991).

### **Infrastructure and Development**

In peaceful conditions, governments can allocate more resources to the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. A solid infrastructure is essential for economic growth, as it facilitates trade, improves mobility, and connects communities to markets. Additionally, good

infrastructure attracts investments and enhances a country's competitiveness in the global market (Easterly & Rebelo, 1993).

### **Innovation and Technology**

Peace creates an environment conducive to innovation and technological development. Without the constant challenges and distractions presented by conflicts, societies can focus on research and development, promoting technological advancements that increase efficiency and productivity. Businesses and individuals have more incentives to invest in innovation when there is a prospect of stability and continuous growth (Romer, 1990).

### **Trade and International Relations**

Peace facilitates trade and international relations. In a peaceful environment, countries can establish and maintain trade agreements that benefit their economies. Trade barriers and sanctions are usually less frequent in times of peace, allowing a freer flow of goods, services, and capital. International trade is a key driver of economic growth, as it allows countries to leverage their comparative advantages and access larger markets (Gartzke, 2007).

### **Poverty Reduction**

Peace is a crucial factor in poverty reduction. In peaceful contexts, development programs and redistribution policies are more effective. Government resources can be directed towards economic and social development instead of being spent on armed conflicts. This contributes to an improvement in the quality of life of citizens, reducing poverty and fostering more inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Sen, 1999).

### **Justice and Good Governance**

Peace is also associated with greater justice and better governance. In times of peace, institutions can function more efficiently and fairly, promoting the rule of law and equal opportunities. Corruption and impunity are usually less prevalent in peaceful societies, which improves trust in institutions and fosters a more favorable economic environment for growth (Rodrik, 2000).

### **Sustainable Development**

Finally, peace is crucial for sustainable development. In the absence of conflict, countries can implement more effective and sustainable environmental policies, ensuring that natural resources are used responsibly. Peace allows for better long-term planning and the implementation of development strategies that balance economic, social, and environmental needs (Brauch, 2003).

### **Current Status of PDET Municipalities in the Tolima Department**

The Colombian Government's Peace Process created the PDETs (Territorially Focused Development Programs). A PDET municipality is an administrative entity in Colombia that has been identified and prioritized by the government within the framework of the peace agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP. PDETs focus on the regions most affected by armed conflict, poverty, and institutional weakness, to promote comprehensive and sustainable development. This program seeks to close social and economic gaps through the implementation of projects and policies that improve infrastructure, education, health, the economy, and community participation, thus strengthening peace and equity in historically vulnerable territories.

In the Tolima Department, these municipalities are located in the south of the territory and are Planadas, Ataco, Rioblanco, and Chaparral. These localities have been historically the

most affected in the region by armed conflict issues, causing forced displacement and negatively impacting the well-being of the community.

The following presents the evolution of the PDET Municipalities in Tolima: Table 1 Historical Events by Violence 2011-2022

ACTS OF VIOLENCE BY TYPE	Ataco	Chaparral	Planadas	Rioblanco
Warlike actions	41%	46%	23%	34%
Forced disappearance	14%	2%	4%	12%
Selective assassination	9%	6%	17%	9%
Recruitment of minor	9%	4%	13%	1%
Kidnapping	9%	2%	6%	2%
Sexual violence	9%	8%	6%	3%
Damage to civilian property	5%	10%	4%	3%
Mines	5%	23%	28%	35%

Source: Own elaboration based on the Single Registry of Victims

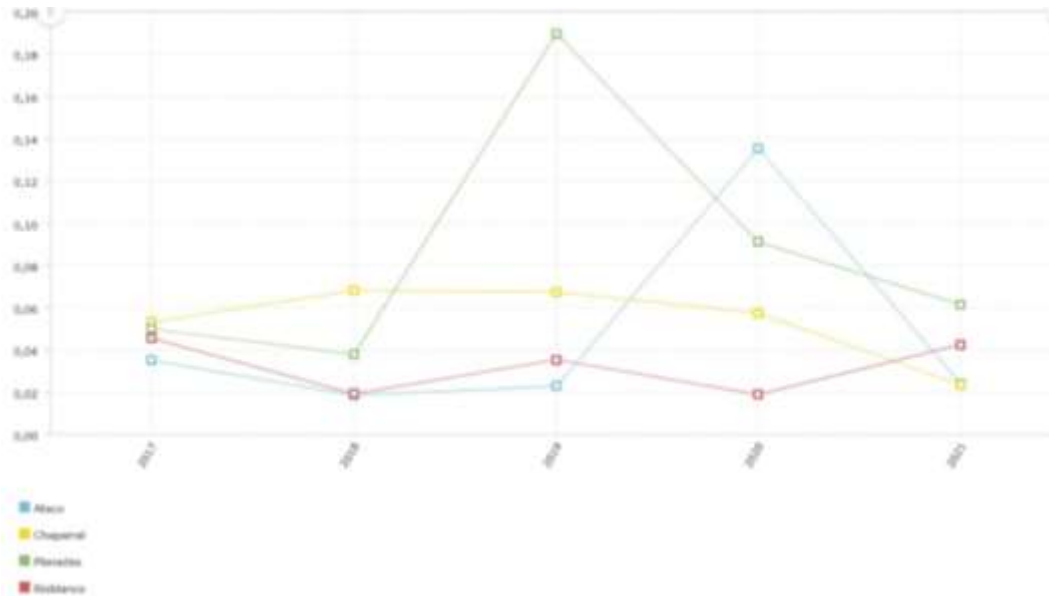
Table 1 shows the percentage prevalence of various types of violence in the Colombian municipalities of Ataco, Chaparral, Planadas, and Rioblanco. In Ataco, 41% of violent events are war-related actions, followed by forced disappearance (14%), with selective assassinations, recruitment of minors, kidnapping, and sexual violence each accounting for 9%. In contrast, Chaparral has the highest proportion of war-related actions at 46%, but very low rates of forced disappearance (2%) and kidnapping (2%), also highlighting a significant 23% of incidents related to mines.

Planadas, on the other hand, records 23% of war-related actions, the lowest among the municipalities, but a notable 17% of selective assassinations and 13% of recruitment of minors. Rioblanco shows a distinctive profile with 34% of war-related actions and a worrying prevalence of mines (35%), the highest in the table, and a forced disappearance rate of 12%. These data indicate that although war-related actions are common in all municipalities, the nature of violence varies significantly between them, suggesting different dynamics and focuses of conflict.

The variability in the types of violence among the municipalities of Ataco, Chaparral, Planadas, and Rioblanco highlights the need for specific and localized intervention strategies. While Chaparral and Rioblanco face high levels of mine-related problems, Planadas and Ataco deal with higher incidences of selective assassinations and forced disappearances, respectively. This diversity in violence profiles underlines that there is no single, uniform solution for all municipalities affected by the conflict in Colombia. Therefore, security policies and territorially focused development programs (PDET) must be adapted to the specific realities of each region, addressing their particular problems to promote lasting peace and sustainable development.

On the other hand, when studying the incidence rate of armed conflict in the PDET municipalities, the following stand out:

Graph 1 Incidence Index of Armed Conflict (IICA)



Source: National Planning Department.

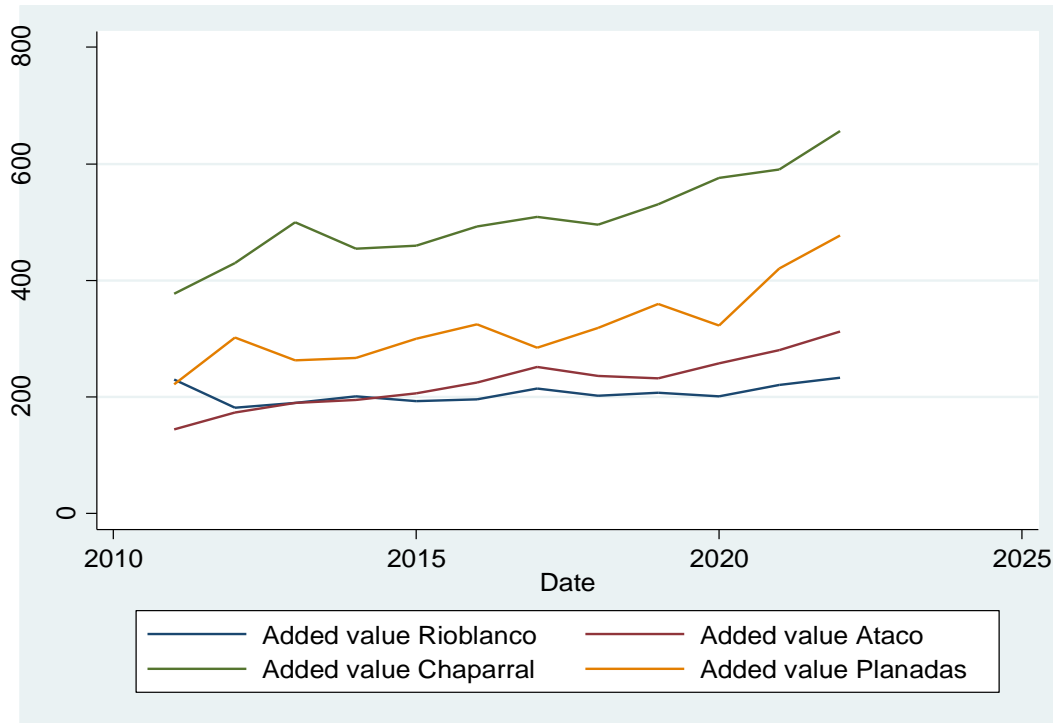
Graph 1 of the Incidence Index of Armed Conflict (IIICA) in the municipalities of Ataco, Chaparral, Planadas, and Rioblanco during 2017-2021 reveals distinct trends in the dynamics of conflict in each area. Ataco and Planadas show high volatility with significant increases and decreases in their indices, reaching notable peaks in 2020 and 2019, respectively. In contrast, Chaparral presents a more stable trend with a slight increase, while Rioblanco exhibits relative stability with slight upward trends towards the end of the period. These fluctuations could be linked to changes in the activities of armed groups, the implementation of security policies, or the effectiveness of peace agreements in each region.

The differences in incidence patterns suggest the need for differentiated approaches to intervention in each municipality. Ataco and Planadas require strategies that can manage high instability and mitigate conflict peaks, possibly through increased state presence and community development programs focused on resilience. On the other hand, the relative stability in Chaparral and Rioblanco indicates that existing policies may be working moderately well, but still need adjustments to reduce conflict rates more effectively.

In short, the graph shows that although there are ongoing efforts to reduce the incidence of armed conflict, the realities on the ground are diverse and complex. This underscores the importance of designing and implementing security and development policies that are specific and adapted to the needs and contexts of each municipality. Addressing the roots of the conflict and strengthening social and economic cohesion in these areas is essential to achieving sustainable peace and equitable development in the regions affected by the armed conflict in Colombia.

When studying the economic behavior of the added value in each municipality, the following graph is obtained:

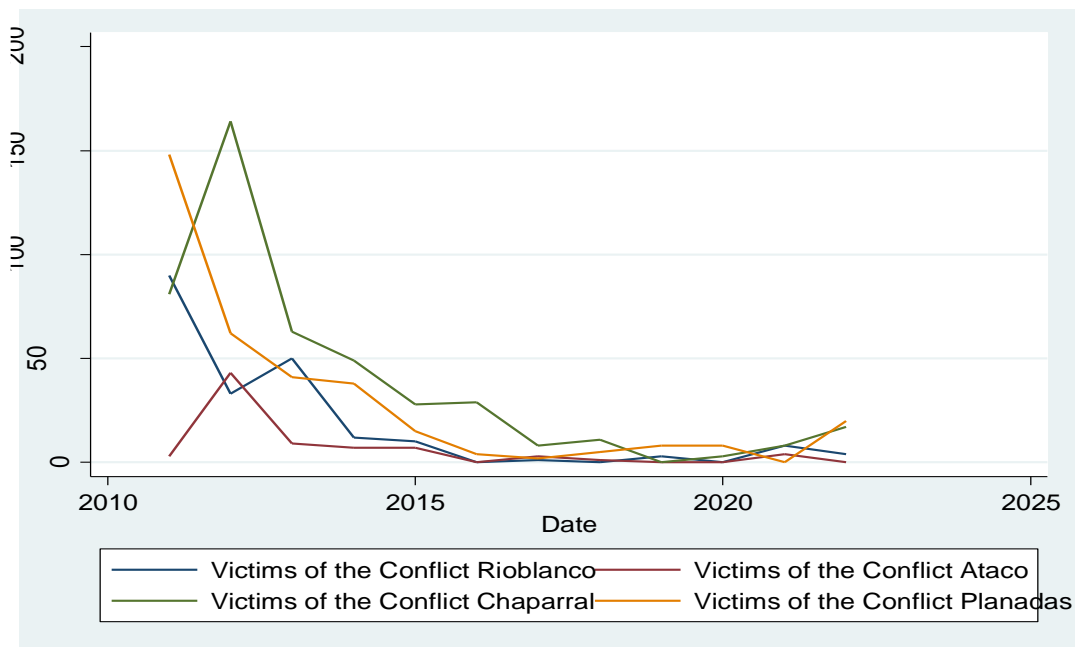
Graph 2 Added Value PDET Municipalities (2018 prices)



Source: Own elaboration, DANE data

Graph 2 reveals a disparity in economic development among the analyzed municipalities. Chaparral and Planadas show sustained and significant economic growth. In this sense, to achieve balanced and equitable development in the region, it is necessary for development policies to be based on a detailed analysis of the particular conditions and needs of each municipality, thus promoting inclusive growth that benefits all communities.

Graph 3 Victims of the Conflict





Source: Own elaboration, with data from the Victims Unit.

Graph 3 shows a sharp decline in conflict victims across all PDET municipalities during the study period, particularly in the municipality of Chaparral.

### **Methodology**

To understand the impact of the armed conflict on the added value of PDET municipalities, we propose a model that explains the effect of conflict victim cases on the added value gap of PDET municipalities. To do this, the database under study was adjusted and aggregated, that is, the sum of each of the municipalities in each variable. In other words, the total value of the PDET municipalities in Tolima in each of the years will be taken as added value.

The added value gap developed in this document refers to the difference between the actual added value and the potential added value of an economy at a given time. The added value represents the economic value added to a product at each stage of its production, that is, the value of production minus the value of intermediate goods and services used in its manufacture.

The actual added value reflects the total value of goods and services produced within an economy during a specific period, adjusted for factors such as inflation. On the other hand, potential added value is a theoretical estimate of how much an economy could produce if all its resources (labor, capital, technology) were used efficiently in the long term.

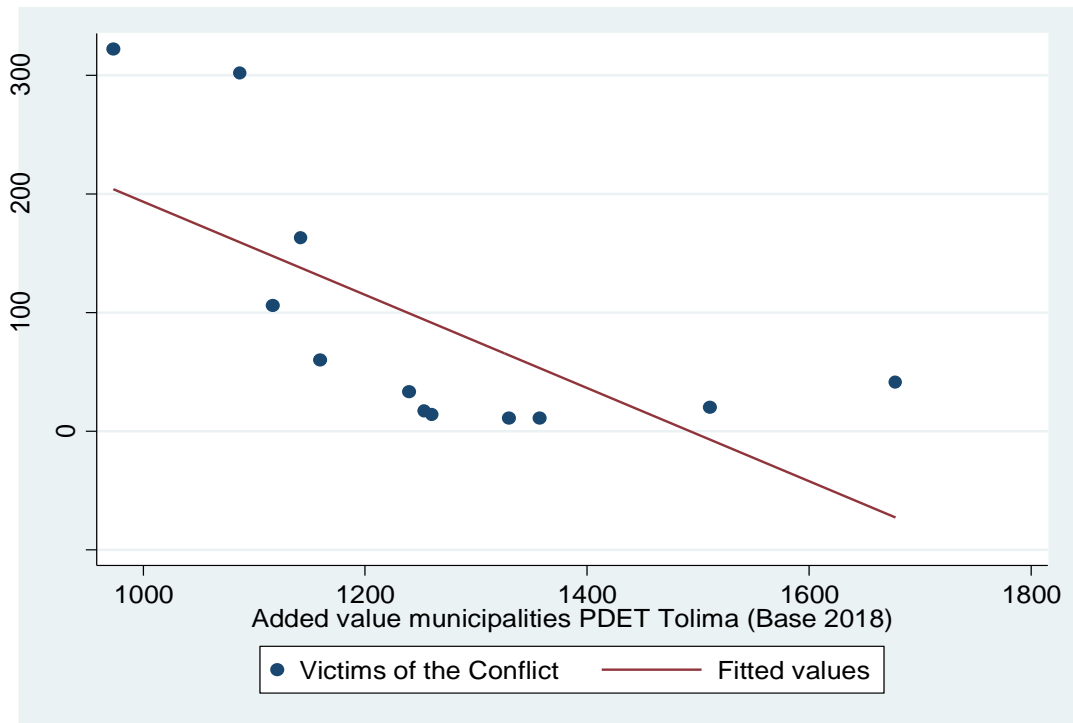
When the actual added value is below the potential added value, there is said to be a negative added value gap. This indicates that the economy is not operating at its maximum potential and may be experiencing underutilization of resources. Conversely, if the actual added value exceeds the potential added value, there is a positive added value gap, which can generate inflationary pressures due to the overutilization of resources.

### **Development**

Initially, the correlation between the original variables is calculated, where it is evident that, first, the correlation between the variables was  $-0.6726$  between the added value of the PDET municipalities in Tolima and the cases of victims of armed conflict indicating a moderately strong inverse relationship between these two variables. A negative correlation close to  $-1$  suggests that when the added value of the municipalities increases, there tends to be a decrease in the number of cases of victims of armed conflict, and vice versa. In the context of the Territorially Focused Development Programs (PDET) in Colombia, this finding could be interpreted as an indication that an increase in local economic activity may be associated with greater social stability and possibly lower levels of violence.

It is important to consider that correlation does not imply direct causation, that is, it does not establish that the increase in added value directly causes the reduction in cases of conflict victims. Other contextual factors and local dynamics can also influence this relationship. However, this result underscores the relevance of policies and programs that promote economic development in regions affected by conflict as a possible means to promote peace and social stability in the long term.

Graph 4 Dispersion between Added Value and Victims of Conflict



Source: Own elaboration

The following is Table 2, which reflects the main data from the estimation of the proposed econometric model.

Table 2 Model Estimation

brecha	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t
vc	-.0009682	.0002633	-3.68	0.004
_cons	7.216474	.0372511	193.72	0.000

Source: Own elaboration in Stata

Based on the results obtained from the regression between the added value gap (variable Y) and the victims of conflict (variable X) in Stata, it was identified that both estimated coefficients are statistically significant. The estimated coefficient for X (b1) is positive and has a value of 7.216474, while the estimated coefficient for the constant term (b0) is negative and has a value of -0.0009682. This suggests that, on average, an increase in conflict victims is associated with an increase in the added value gap in the studied municipalities, although this effect is small compared to the effect of other variables included in the model.

Furthermore, it is highlighted that the model complies with the assumptions of ordinary least squares (OLS), which is crucial for the validity of statistical inferences. The assumptions include linearity, normality of errors, homoscedasticity (constant variance of errors), and absence of multicollinearity among the explanatory variables. The confirmation of these assumptions strengthens the reliability of the coefficient estimates and the significance tests performed.

In short, the results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the added value gap and conflict victims in the PDET municipalities of Tolima. Although the direct

impact of the number of victims on the added value gap is relatively small in absolute terms, this finding suggests that socioeconomic dynamics and the consequences of armed conflict can influence local economic activity. These results could support the need for integrated public policies that promote economic development and social reconciliation in conflict-affected areas to improve economic and social conditions in the long term.

Now, John Maynard Keynes, in his work "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," argued that the devastation caused by World War I had profound economic and social implications for Europe. Keynes highlighted how physical destruction, the loss of human capital, and economic disruption negatively impacted the recovery capacity of the affected countries. This analysis can resonate in the context of the PDET municipalities of Tolima, where the aftermath of the armed conflict has also left deep marks on the economic and social structure.

Keynes emphasized the importance of rebuilding devastated economies through significant investments in infrastructure, employment, and human development. Similarly, the regression results suggest that promoting economic and social development in conflict-affected areas is crucial to fostering stability and long-term growth. This implies not only investment in productive sectors and the promotion of peace but also attention to the basic needs of the population, such as education and health, to strengthen the resilience and recovery capacity of communities.

In conclusion, by integrating Keynes' principles on post-conflict reconstruction with the empirical results of the regression, the importance of comprehensive public policies that address both economic and social dimensions to promote sustainable and equitable development in the municipalities affected by the conflict in Tolima and beyond is reinforced.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the regression results between the added value gap and conflict victims in the PDET municipalities of Tolima, several fundamental recommendations emerge to improve the economic and social conditions in these areas affected by the armed conflict.

First, it is crucial to strengthen inclusive economic development programs that can stimulate local growth. These programs should focus on improving basic infrastructure, promoting investment in key sectors such as agriculture and sustainable tourism, and supporting local entrepreneurship initiatives. By diversifying the economy and creating new employment opportunities, economic vulnerability can be reduced and resilience to future crises can be improved.

In addition to economic development, it is essential to promote reconciliation and peace initiatives that strengthen the social fabric and foster community cohesion. These initiatives can include educational, cultural, and sports programs that facilitate inter-community dialogue, promote historical memory, and rebuild trust among the inhabitants of the region. The active participation of civil society, local leaders, and non-governmental organizations is fundamental for the success and sustainability of these efforts.

To sustain the progress made, it is also necessary to guarantee a safe and stable environment in these areas. This implies strengthening local security and justice institutions, as well as promoting equitable access to justice for victims of the conflict. Close collaboration between the government, security forces, and the community is essential to maintain an environment conducive to development and protect the achievements made in terms of peace and development.

Finally, it is recommended to establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the impact of implemented policies and adjust them as needed. Transparency and accountability are relevant pillars to ensure that resources are used effectively and for the benefit of all affected communities. With an integral and collaborative

approach, it is possible to move towards a more prosperous and peaceful future for the PDET municipalities of Tolima and other regions that have suffered the ravages of armed conflict.

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