Accord

Alternatives to war

Colombia’s peace processes

Issue Editor: Mauricio García-Durán

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Cover: As part of the "No Más" demonstrations against kidnapping and disappearances, Colombians protest on 6 June 1999 against the ELN's kidnapping of church-goers in Cali. Source: Reuters/REUTERS
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Colombia: challenges and dilemmas in the search for peace

Mauricio García-Durán

Colombians have suffered a long conflict that has taken a horrific toll on the civilian population and devastated an otherwise beautiful and vibrant country. The geographic coverage of the conflict and the number of lives affected have reached levels close to or even above those of countries experiencing full-blown civil war. Efforts to find a negotiated solution have been equally long-lived, spanning nearly 25 years and leading in some instances to partial peace agreements. The wealth, scale and diversity of social mobilization for peace and against violence is also of great significance. Nevertheless, all this accumulated experience has not enabled the country to find the way out of this labyrinth of violence and social fragmentation.

In searching for alternatives to the violence, there have been numerous efforts to analyse the conflict and develop strategies that might lead to peace. This Accord issue hopes to make a further contribution to this task. In a context where there are too few publications that collect and synthesize the lessons emerging from previous experiences, this 100-page publication attempts to present an overview of the last twenty-five years of peace initiatives. It brings together the voices of a diverse group of Colombians who have attempted to evaluate these efforts and initiatives. Their articles confirm that the non-violent transformation of the conflict is possible and that Colombian society possesses tremendous potential, dynamism and experience to bring to this task. Furthermore, the publication contains useful analysis regarding the obstacles faced in peace initiatives and negotiations, as well as suggestions as to how these can be overcome in the future. The conclusion that emerges is that there can be a peaceful resolution of the Colombian conflict and that this process must be negotiated, integral and participatory.
Understanding the conflict

The shocking reality of violence in Colombia provokes important questions regarding the nature of the conflict. By international standards, the magnitude of the confrontation could be described as a war. The diversity of the factors and actors involved in the conflict could indicate a situation of multi-polar violence. The degradation of the conflict could signify a war against society. The influence of the United States and the focus of its foreign policy after 11 September 2001 suggest an anti-terrorist war. The Colombian conflict would appear to have a little of all these elements.

There is an immense amount of literature about violence in Colombia. Some academics and critics even believe that the country has been over-diagnosed. However, it is questionable whether all the existing studies provide the clarity necessary to define the strategies needed for peace. Fernán González introduces us to the debate on political violence in Colombia, highlighting some of the points of consensus reached through these efforts to understand the reality of the conflict. His analysis invites us to adopt a complex approach to the conflict, taking into account the multiplicity of factors that underlie the political violence in Colombia and which must always be implicit in the alternatives and strategies for action.

Firstly, the dynamics of current violence combine structural factors rooted in the long history of the construction of present-day Colombia, and medium-term or contemporary factors that create significant variations in the magnitude and characteristics of the conflict. The process of settlement of the country and the conflictual dynamic of the construction of the state influenced the manner in which structures of political power have developed in institutions, political parties and local elites. In the medium term, the difficulties the political system faced in responding to social demands and conflicts created by this situation led to the appearance of the guerrilla groups in the 1960s and early 1970s. The penetration of drug trafficking led to a deepening of this political crisis, which reforms implemented through the new Constitution in 1991 were unable to resolve. Resources from the drug trade provided income for the guerrillas and the paramilitaries and led to further escalations of violence. In understanding the conflict, González points out that it is also necessary to examine its magnitude and coverage. He highlights the diverse geographical dynamics of the conflict as they are
connected to the different patterns of territorial expansion of the armed actors, stemming in turn from the two models of development of the rural economy that they defend.

Reviewing civic peace initiatives

Just as the violence has temporal and geographic roots, civic peace initiatives have developed across the country over recent years in reaction to the dynamics of the violent conflict. Fernández, García and Sarmiento present an historic overview of peace mobilization in the last 25 years, categorizing four different phases: the background to mobilization within the framework of the struggle for human rights (1978–85); the initiation of mobilization in the midst of the peace processes and the Constituent Assembly (1986–92); the organizational stage with mass mobilizations for peace (1993–99); and finally the stage of crisis within the national coordination structures coupled with the growth of local and regional initiatives (2000 onwards).

Within these phases, there have been successes, tensions and dilemmas, both within the movement and its organizations as well as in the relationship between the movement and society. On one hand, there are undeniable achievements, such as the ability to mobilize millions of people and create an organizational infrastructure for peace. This infrastructure has demonstrated significant capacity and results both on its own terms within Colombia and by comparison with other similar efforts elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, there are four crucial weaknesses in the relationship between the movement and society: a lack of consensus and poor discursive clarity on the use of violence; the median’s treatment of peace and the resulting invisibility of the movement; the ambiguous relationship with the political sphere and the state; and the challenges presented by relationships with international actors.

It should also be noted that peace initiatives have been concentrated primarily in areas with high levels of conflict and yet there has not necessarily been a significant reduction in levels of violence. Despite this, a careful review of the diversity of the experiences reveals that they are generating significant social processes for the construction of a sustainable peace. The majority are experiences of social significance, born out of the population’s capacity for collective and voluntary action, which leads to the withdrawal of support, explicitly or implicitly, for the warring parties.

In the local sphere, there are a number of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives which have grown significantly in recent years and which embody the civilian population’s efforts to resist violence and fight for life. In her article, Esperanza Hernández presents a typology that helps us to classify these initiatives. She distinguishes between three types of grassroots peace initiatives: those which emphasize the deepening of democracy at a local level; those that focus on civil resistance to the armed conflict, and those that resist the armed conflict, structural violence and the neo-liberal economic model.

At the regional level, the Peace and Development programmes clearly stand out. Amongst these fifteen initiatives throughout the country, the pioneer was the Peace and Development Programme of Magdalena Medio (PDPMM), which has received national acclaim (the National Peace Award 2001) as well as international recognition in the form of political and financial support. The PDPMM was established as a project for regional development and peaceful coexistence that seeks to construct an alternative in the midst of the conflict. It works to increase the capacity of local actors, in particular the poorest communities, to reverse the dynamics of exclusion and integrate themselves into processes that defend life, facilitate the transformation of conflicts and open up the communities to a civic construction of peace.

At a national level the massive peace demonstrations and initiatives of recent years are prominent, as illustrated in Jorge Rojas’ article. He argues that one of the obvious challenges for civil society peacebuilding is to undertake this not solely from an ethical perspective but above all to stimulate a genuinely political project. From the experiences of processes such as the Citizen’s Mandate for Peace, the Permanent Civil Society Assembly for Peace, the Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War (REDEPAZ), and Paz Colombia, amongst others, the need for the peace movement to gain power at the various levels of national politics is understood. This power must be used for the construction of a peace that genuinely transforms the roots of the protracted conflict.

The tapestry created by combining these three levels of initiatives encourages an optimistic perspective despite the critical nature of the Colombian conflict. These civil society efforts are not only the melting pot in which the country’s opportunities for peace are being moulded, but are also the means to guarantee a sustainable peace. Without a strong and organized civil society it will be difficult to advance the construction of a new country capable of living creatively and positively with the conflicts that define it. Therefore efforts are needed to connect the immense wealth of peace initiatives and mechanisms at local, regional and national levels, linking them effectively to the processes of consultation, agenda formation and decision-making that will be required in any future peace process with the armed actors.
Learning from 20 years of peace processes

At the formal level, there have been various approaches to the challenge of reaching a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the different armed groups. Daniel García-Peña offers an analytical perspective that helps to shed light on models used so far. The early governments of this 25-year period implemented two genuinely different and novel models: Betancur launched talks with the guerrillas based on a 'broad' agenda (political and social reforms) but within a process framework that was insufficiently institutionalized or supported by society; in contrast Barco pursued a model of dialogue with the guerrillas with a 'limited' agenda centred on demobilization in exchange for the creation a legal political party, a clearly institutionalized peace policy directed by the government and social and political reforms independent of the peace process. Subsequent governments have limited themselves to combining the principal components developed in these two 'models' to different degrees. Gaviria used the 'Barco model' to negotiate the demobilization of the smaller guerrilla groups, and expanded the model in the direction of the 'Betancur model' in his efforts with the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB); Samper, working unsuccessfully from the perspective of the 'Betancur model' granted civil society a greater role and pursued the ratification of the Second Protocol of the Geneva Conventions; Pastrana, in an attempt to implement the broad agenda of the Betancur model, created spaces for greater public and international participation; and most recently, Uribe, returning to a limited agenda even more restricted than the Barco model, has focused on the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, in particular paramilitaries.

The authors of the section on 'formal peace processes' present a cross-cutting perspective on these dynamics, considering the processes developed with each group.

As a protagonist of the process with the guerrilla group 19 April Movement (M-19), Vera Grabe allows us some vivid insights into the 1990–94 peace processes, which saw the application of the model developed during the Barco administration. We see the significance of a political option and the M-19's decision to disarm for the process (despite the government's failure to implement agreed measures), and how this and the peace processes with other smaller guerrilla groups found a privileged institutional channel in the form of the National Constituent Assembly in 1991. The M-19 was astute in taking advantage of the invaluable opportunity and found a clear echo in the positive attitude of the government's team, particularly the then Peace Commissioner Rafael Pardo. Although the model included a 'limited' agenda as well as very few opportunities for broader public participation in the process, it opened the doors to changes in the political system that can still be felt today. In this sense it was a process with a mixed legacy: it included constitutional reform, a milestone in the political history of the country, but at the same time it only achieved partial success in terms of genuinely opening and transforming the exclusionary political system.

Of all the guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have the longest history of engaging in talks and negotiations. Camilo González Posso presents the diversity of the last 20 years of negotiation efforts (1982–87, 1991–92 and 1998–2002, and the humanitarian accord of 1997) as well as the corresponding failures, with all that these have meant for the deepening of the violence, entrenchment of distrust between the parties and the difficulty of restarting a new process. González Posso also draws our attention to the various negotiation models used with the FARC and suggests the need for a new 'national constituent pact' model that overcomes the limitations of the previous ones. Despite the skill demonstrated by the FARC in the negotiations, it is not clear if the organization has genuinely appreciated the political opportunities it has been presented with, particularly during the Pastrana administration. For their part, the different governments made insufficient efforts to learn from previous experiences, repeating procedural mistakes on problematic issues from the first process, such as verification mechanisms. Furthermore, a future peace process will have to find a way to address the economic and political interests that obstruct the realization of a peace agreement. There will also need to be a substantial effort to define what the majority of the Colombian population feel is negotiable with the largest of the guerrilla groups.

Alejo Vargas presents a complete overview of negotiation efforts with the National Liberation Army (ELN), from its participation in the talks with the CGSB in Caracas and Tlaxcala to its efforts during the Pastrana administration. The proposal for a National Convention, first made in 1996, is the best indication of the ELN's interest in a peace process that is genuinely connected to civil society, and has given impetus to civilian bodies to promote the start of a process. The various governments, but in particular the Pastrana administration, have failed to fully appreciate the political opportunity represented by advancing a process with the ELN. This was illustrated by the limited political support for the creation of a demilitarized zone needed to convene the National Convention and advance negotiations during the Pastrana years. The process has been further complicated because neither the government nor the guerrilla group know what can viably be substantively negotiated given the parallel process with the FARC.
The present administration of President Uribe has brought about a significant shift in the government’s willingness to negotiate with the insurgency. Not only has its position on an eventual negotiation process hardened, but it has also placed a great deal of confidence in the possibility of a military solution to the armed conflict. While leaving the door to a negotiation process open, it has indicated that the only issues to be discussed would be the demobilization and reintegration into civilian life of the armed actors, be they guerrilla members or paramilitaries. Mauricio Romero describes the ongoing process with the paramilitaries, which raises many questions and concerns about its potential to deepen rather than counter the violence. Although there is a risk that it may lead to nationally and internationally unacceptable levels of impunity, the process, if appropriately managed, could also potentially lead to the removal of one of the principal obstacles to negotiations with the guerrillas.

Lessons for future peace processes
One of the most important challenges the country faces in the search for peace is to learn from its own long history of peacemaking experience. It is crucial to gather some of the lessons offered by the previous processes in order to formulate a viable model for a future process.

a) It is necessary to broaden participation in the negotiation process that will allow not just the parties but also those accompanying the process to contribute their experience. This implies including mechanisms that permit more third parties, both national and international, to provide technical support to the process. Their perspectives will be of great value in finding options to tackle the most controversial and unresolved issues (such as ceasefire, humanitarian accords, demilitarized zones, military participation at the negotiating table, confidentiality and/or the transparency of the process, procedures and decision-making). Furthermore, on these issues it is appropriate to learn from other countries’ peace processes.

b) It is necessary to formulate a more decentralized public peace policy that promotes real spaces for participation in the processes of political dialogue as well as in the wider peacebuilding process. Despite the wealth of autonomous initiatives in Colombia, civil society participation in the formal processes has been minimal. A new model could learn from and draw on current civic initiatives, as well as ongoing proposals such as the national convention and past mechanisms for participation (the constituent assembly, public audiences, thematic committees, and the national peace commission). It would need to identify and involve traditionally excluded groups such as the
indigenous communities and women. To facilitate broader participation in and ownership of all stages of a peacebuilding process, there would need to be sustained social preparation and clear communication strategies, involving the active and constructive participation of the media. Such an approach could also engender the 'democratization' of the peace process itself, a key contribution to the renewal of political life and institutions in the country.

Additionally, it is important not to lose sight of the central role that actors such as churches, particularly the Catholic Church, have played and will play in the future. The Catholic Church has not only provided good offices and undertaken mediation roles in a number of the processes, but has used its national presence to its advantage in playing a key role in responding to the needs of displaced persons, and could play a crucial role in helping achieve the changes and reconciliation the country will need after the signing of any peace accords.

c) The appropriate participation of the international community is another of the key ingredients of a successful future peace process. In the Colombian context both the government and the FARC have been fairly reluctant to accept greater social and international participation in the process, while the ELN has appeared more amenable. As Augusto Ramírez Ocampo illustrates in his article, it is necessary to recall the significant impact that international participation has had until now (the UN, the Friends of the Process, neighbouring countries, etc.). However, as Winifred Tate warns, it is equally important to recognize and mitigate the negative impact of the United States' foreign policy, particularly as it would be very difficult for Colombia to embark on any peace process without the approval of the US government.

d) There needs to be greater clarity regarding the fundamental question of what is and what is not negotiable in a future process, in other words, how far Colombians are willing to go to make peaceful coexistence possible. There is currently no consensus on this issue. Some actors believe that profound social and political reforms are needed for a sustainable peace agreement, as Carlos Lozano advocates in his article. Others believe that it is not appropriate to adopt a maximalist concept of peace, but necessary instead to emphasize the provision of electoral advantage for demobilized guerrillas and the subsequent enactment of reforms, as suggested by Rodrigo Gutiérrez. Although it is vital to build consensus on the type of agenda possible, it is equally important not to adopt an agenda as extensive as suggested in some public debates. A realistic agenda is needed that will allow the parties the necessary flexibility to engage in a process that will be inherently complex and conflictual.

e) The periods of stagnation and the breakdowns of the previous processes are suggestive not only of the need for genuine political will and the appropriate use of basic negotiation techniques, but above all of the importance of power relations within the process. In addition to the use of mechanisms that help create trust and fluid interaction between the parties, it is crucial to build broader support and commitment to the process amongst those groups who are most difficult and most likely to prevent progress. Such 'spoilers' might include those who are profiting from the conflict, the military hardliners in the insurgencies and also the right-wing elites. Political commitment also means bilateral (or multilateral) commitments by the parties themselves, as recommended in the report of the Comisión de Personalidades during the Pastrana process.

f) Given the degradation of the Colombian conflict, humanitarian accords between the parties must be urgently established in order to protect the population. In addition to humanizing the ongoing conflict, the model for a future peace process should enhance a culture of accountability rather than impunity. A balance will need to be struck between mechanisms for forgiveness and forgetting and the need to safeguard the victims' rights not only to the truth but also to justice and reparation.

The challenges ahead are daunting. But twenty-five years of conflict and peacemaking have also left a vital legacy of experience. They have brought significant advances and agreements, as well as tremendous innovations to inspire peacemakers elsewhere in the world. They have also brought bitter failures. Such experience represents a solid foundation for ongoing efforts to build peace in Colombia and provides a rich source of learning for all those involved. The articles in this Accord issue make a contribution to this process.
The Colombian conflict in historical perspective

Fernán E. González

The Colombian conflict is overwhelming in its complexity and devastating in its impact on the civilian population. Between 1990 and 2000 there were 26,985 civilian murders related to the armed conflict whilst there were only 12,887 fatalities in military operations. The total number of homicides is much higher: 9,087 homicides in 1983 increased to 28,284 in 1993, although this trend has decreased marginally in recent years. In 1995 there were 92 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest rate in the world.

This situation is reflected in the growing number of municipalities affected by military action, rising from 227 in 1990 to 498 in 2002 whilst the number of actions

Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America and has a population of over 40 million. The majority of the population (58%) is mestizo (mixed Spanish and indigenous heritage), and the remainder are whites (20%), mulatos (mixed white or mestizo and African heritage) (14%), Afro-Colombians (4%), zambos (mixed indigenous and African heritage) (3%) and indigenous peoples (1%). Approximately 90% of the population are baptized as Catholic, but membership of Protestant denominations has increased significantly in recent decades. Colombia has coasts on both the Pacific and the Caribbean. The Andean mountain range splits into three branches that extend from the south to the north of the country, with the plains and tropical jungle lying to the east. This landscape has made communication between regions extremely difficult and has created conditions suited to guerrilla struggle. Colombia is a large exporter of petrol, coffee, flowers, bananas, coal and emeralds. Textiles and food processing are amongst its principal industries. Colombia is the world’s largest exporter of cocaine.

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targeting the civilian population rose from 172 to 436. This increase produced between 1.5 – 2 million displaced persons between 1985 and 2003, composed mostly of female heads of households, children and the elderly. It also produced a change in the public’s perception of a conflict once considered distant from everyday reality but now seen as intervening more and more in people’s lives.

In the Colombian conflict the violence does not revolve around a single clearly defined polarity, with a specific core of economic or ethnic conflicts, but is instead related to various dynamics and different historical processes, which are reflected in more fluent identities and produce frequent changes in territorial control.

As a result of this complexity Colombian society has not established a consensus on the nature and origins of the armed conflict. This is one of the obstacles to a negotiated solution. The disagreements support differing explanations of the violence, ranging from those which privilege objective, structural factors such as political exclusion and socio-economic inequality, to those that centre on the motivations and voluntary choices of the individual actors. This disagreement reflects the heterogeneity of Colombian society itself.

In order to address these problems, this article attempts to explain the causes of the conflict by relating its recent development to the rationale of its actors in light of a medium and long-term perspective.

The historical context of the current conflict

Two historical phenomena are fundamental to understanding the conflict. The first is the campesino colonization of peripheral areas, which throughout Colombian history has served as an escape route from the tensions created by highly concentrated rural land ownership. In contrast to other Latin American countries, Colombia failed to implement agrarian reform to redistribute land ownership. Instead, a constant expulsion of poor campesinos towards areas of unclaimed frontier occurred, where the presence of the central state’s regulatory institutions and interaction with the rest of society and the national economy was minimal. Secondly, in political terms this dynamic was reflected in a gradual state-building process, in which the staggered incorporation of territories and populations resulted in an uneven state presence in the regions.
Both processes have their roots in the history of the settlement of the country from colonial times to the present day. Since the beginning of the sixteenth century the most isolated and inaccessible territories were settled by marginalized groups (such as poor whites, mestizos, Afro-Colombians and mulatos). In these areas of peripheral colonization the organization of social relations was left to individuals and social groups, and the state lacked the monopoly on justice and the legitimate use of force. Even in more integrated territories, the presence of state structures was uneven or part of a dual power structure whereby its control was exercised through local elites. The combination of the colonization process with this dependency on local powers made the integration of recently settled territories into the rest of the country highly conflictual.

From the end of Spanish rule until the consolidation of present-day Colombia, many of the rural and political structural problems inherited from the Spanish colony deepened. The often violent confrontation between the Liberal and Conservative Parties dominated political life during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. These partisan confrontations revolved around the extent and pace of economic and social modernization and the role of the Catholic Church. They also often served as channels for the expression of conflicts of a more social nature, such as struggles over land, rivalries between different regions and population centres, racial conflicts and confrontations between families or groups of families.

These conflicts prolonged the dual structure of power: alongside formally modern and democratic political institutions, the traditional parties functioned as two opposed but complementary federations of local and regional clientelist power networks, serving as bridges between the central authorities of the state and the local and regional realities. In areas of peripheral colonization state presence was only made possible with the concentration of land ownership. This created a degree of social hierarchy which in turn formed the basis of local and regional powers that could be integrated into the national network of the two traditional parties and the state’s institutions.

For these reasons the differing degree of consolidation of state institutions led to diverse expressions of violence in different local contexts. There was violence that confronted the direct rule of the state in the more integrated regions, which was very different from the violence in areas where the state’s power had to be negotiated through local power structures. There were still further expressions of violence in areas where the traditional mechanisms of social regulation had not yet been consolidated, or where these mechanisms were in crisis: here there was no clear dominant actor but instead a struggle for territorial control.

**La Violencia and the National Front**

In the 1930s the Liberal Party launched social, economic and political modernizing reforms. These created an atmosphere of polarization that prepared the way for the explosion of violence of the 1950s that became known as La Violencia. Violent regional clashes between Liberals and Conservatives spread across the entire country following the assassination in 1948 of the presidential aspirant and popular Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. The reaction in Bogotá on 9 April (the famous ‘Bogotazo’ riots) and in other regions of the country produced a Conservative counter-attack. In response, rural Liberal and Communist groups formed campesinos self-defence guerilla groups which the Conservatives fought with counter-guerilla units and hired assassins. It is estimated that some 200,000 were killed from 1946 to 1953.

In 1953 General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla took power, Colombia’s only period of military rule in the twentieth century. His government tried in vain to pacify the country through an amnesty for the Liberal fighters, but its anti-communist attitude drew it into confrontation with the guerillas, igniting a new wave of violence. Rojas’s attempt to consolidate his power by marginalizing the traditional parties prompted them to unite and overthrow him in 1957.

The localized nature of the violence reflected not only the predominance of local power structures but the fragmentation underlying the traditional parties’ networks of power. Clashes between Liberal and Communist guerillas also contributed to the atomization of the campesinos, and the violence strengthened the traditional parties as the collective identities derived from membership were all that gave the violence meaning.

The need to end the conflict and the military dictatorship led to the pact between the two traditional parties known as the National Front. For 16 years Liberals and Conservatives alternated the Presidency and divided the positions of state power between them. Although the regime contributed to the political stability of the country, the shared monopoly of power prevented both the political expression of new local powers and an effective response to the social problems that arose in the second half of the twentieth century.

**The medium-term political crisis**

The difficulties faced by the political system became evident during the 1970s and 1980s when rapid changes
in society made the existing institutional framework obsolete. From the 1970s onwards, Colombia experienced rapid urbanization, the secularization of the middle and upper classes, exposure to international thinking, and the significant growth of secondary and university education. At the same time, the traditional party mechanisms for the expression of social tensions in rural communities began to weaken and a divorce between the traditional parties and the trade unions took place. This situation was exacerbated by the limitations of agrarian reform and the criminalization of social protest, which illustrated the difficulties faced by the bipartisan regime in introducing appropriate reforms. The heterogeneity of the National Front made reform efforts appear too timid to secure middle and working class support and mobilization, but too excessive for some of the regional and local elites.

In this context revolutionary guerrilla movements appeared in the 1960s, due as much to the persistence of the campesinos' problems as to the increasing radicalization of university students and the urban middle classes. From this the Cuban-inspired National Liberation Army (ELN) was formed in 1964 by middle class students and intellectuals, trade unionists and former Liberal guerrilla members. In 1967 the Maoist-influenced Popular Liberation Army (EPL) was created as the armed wing of the Leninist Communist Party. The self-defence groups influenced by the Communist Party in peripheral areas of campesino colonization transformed into the guerrilla group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 1966, after they had been attacked by the Army. In 1972, the more urban 19 April Movement (M-19) was formed in reaction to perceived electoral fraud in 1970.

The short-term problems: political crisis and the penetration of drug trafficking

The above situation created a growing divorce between society and politics in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, attempts to rationalize the state’s bureaucracy and control of public spending unintentionally created further tensions between the technocratic and clientelist sectors, and further discredited the corrupt traditional political class. These events led to a serious crisis of political representation that profoundly affected the legitimacy of the state institutions and the means of political mediation in society. The result of this crisis was the constitutional reform of 1991, linked to peace processes with various guerrilla groups. The new Constitution recognized the ethnic, religious, cultural and regional pluralism of the country and tried to correct the most obvious vices of political life. But many of its reforms were frustrated or limited by subsequent legislation and the reality of political culture. The crisis was further complicated because the new Constitution’s decentralizing measures and popular election of mayors and governors dislocated the political mechanisms through which the traditional parties mediated between the localities, the regions and the central state, without creating new mechanisms of political cohesion.

Meanwhile, the contours of violence were being transformed as the guerrillas began to expand from the peripheral areas towards richer areas more integrated into national economic and political structures. The guerrillas’ increasing use of extortion and kidnapping as a means of finance started to alter society’s perception of the conflict. From this stemmed the development of the paramilitary forces and a certain degree of public sympathy for the use of authoritarian solutions.

Furthermore, drug trafficking activities increased from the end of the 1970s. By the 1990s a significant growth in coca production took place because of the decline of plantations in Bolivia and Peru. Illicit crops found ideal conditions in the peripheral areas of colonization where there was a low level of state presence and a social base in the form of the colonos (campesino settlers). Powerful drug cartels developed, particularly in Medellín and Cali, and launched a war against the state in the 1980s and 1990s. These were eventually defeated in the mid-1990s by the Colombian government with the military support of the United States. However the cartels divided into smaller groups. The US intensified its focus on Colombian drugs during the Clinton administration with the implementation of Plan Colombia from 1999.

The drug-traffickers, who slowly became landowners, contributed to the creation of paramilitary groups. In Puerto Boyacá in 1982 landowners, politicians, military personnel, ranchers, businessmen and a large oil company formed the group Death to Kidnappers (MAS), in response to guerrilla kidnappings. The phenomenon began to extend across the country, particularly after 1984: other groups appeared such as the Campesino Self-Defence groups of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCJ), founded by Carlos and Fidel Castaño, former members of MAS. In 1997, under the leadership of the Carlos Castaño, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) was formed as an umbrella group for paramilitaries from across the country. At present some of these groups are negotiating their demobilization with the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

The expansion of illicit crops has also led to the transformation of the relationship between the guerrillas and drug trafficking. Some argue that the violence after 1980 represents a fundamental rupture with previous violence. To begin with the FARC dedicated itself to regulating relations amongst the campesino coca
growers and with the drug traffickers, but gradually became more involved in levying tax on the crops, and later controlling the production and trafficking of coca. The income derived from illicit crops increased the FARC's autonomy, which no longer depended on its integration into the rural communities. This has given greater emphasis to the military dimension of the conflict and increased the FARC's offensive and recruiting capacity.

At the same time, the penetration of drug-trafficking in Colombian society has contributed to widespread corruption and the delegitimization of the political class. This reached its peak in 1994 when President Samper was accused of receiving money from the Cali cartel during his election campaign. The infiltration of the drug trade further deepened the fragmentation and privatization of state power and the crisis of legitimacy of the political regime, and led to the blurring of boundaries between political violence and criminal activities such as extortion or bribery. In this context, the conflict ceased to have an exclusively political rationale and instead combined political and military objectives with economic and social goals; individual initiatives with collective actions; and struggles at a national level with conflicts of a regional and local character. Through this the violence has permeated the fabric of Colombian society, becoming the mechanism for the resolution of private and collective conflicts in the absence of the state.

**Territorial dynamics and the implicit models of development of the armed actors**

The historical development of the conflict dynamics demonstrates a different logic to the territorial expansion of the armed actors. The differences in the expansion of the guerrillas and the paramilitaries relate to the agrarian problem, the gradual process of state construction and the *campesinos’* perception of their unstable integration into national life. The guerrillas develop in peripheral areas of *campesino* colonization, expanding towards:

1. **richer areas, more integrated economically into national and international markets, that coexist with marginalized pockets of colonos, and which are regulated by semi-autonomous local and regional powers;**

2. **areas undergoing rapid economic expansion, with little state presence, coexisting with groups of colonos who do not have access to the new wealth nor the mediation of social conflicts by a state supplanted by the local social hierarchies;**

3. **previously prosperous and integrated *campesino* areas with a degree of institutional presence and social regulation by local and regional powers, but where there**
is economic decline, a breakdown in social cohesion and regulation and the diminishing institutional presence of the state. An example is the coffee-producing region, seriously affected by the international coffee price crisis.

In contrast, the paramilitaries appear in areas that are relatively prosperous and integrated with the national and global economy, and where semi-autonomous and partially consolidated local and regional powers exist. Here the local elites find themselves threatened by guerrilla expansion and abandoned by the central state institutions; they perceive the state's modernizing and reformist policies undermining their traditional bases of power and interpret the peace negotiations as a betrayal. From these areas they have expanded towards more peripheral areas, with the support of the local powers.

These counter-posed logics of territorial expansion illustrate the confrontation between two contradictory models of rural economic development, as well as the different levels of integration of regions into national politics. In areas of open frontier in the south and east of the country the overlapping of regions controlled by the FARC and areas of illicit coca crop production by campesinos led to a functional alliance between these actors. Paramilitaries thus consider the south of the country the centre stage for the counter-insurgency struggle. In internal frontier areas, in the north and centre of the country, the model of development based on large-scale ranching and commercial agriculture competes with the peasant economy of the cofanos.

The geography of the violence

This opposing territorial expansion of the armed actors, demonstrates the need for a more refined analysis of the geographic dimension of the violence, which does not cover the entire Colombian territory homogeneously nor with the same intensity. Instead, the presence of the conflict varies according to the internal dynamics of the region, in terms of its settlement, forms of social cohesion and economic organization.

Firstly there is a national dynamic that reflects the conflict over geographic corridors that permit access to economic resources, weapons or movement from zones of refuge to zones of conflict. In this manner the conflicts can be distinguished according to areas:

In the north of the country, the AUC has achieved a degree of control although the FARC is attempting to recover influence in this former stronghold, and the ELN tries to defend its presence in the south of Bolívar. In contrast, in the southeast the FARC has traditionally possessed a large military capacity, which is why the area was chosen for the creation of the demilitarized zone for peace talks during the Pastrana government. However, this dominance has been challenged in recent times: since the 1980s the paramilitaries have been consolidating a military bastion there and since 1999 the Colombian Army has recovered a degree of offensive capacity in strategic areas. Perhaps because of these changes, in the southwest a new geographic corridor is being consolidated which corresponds to an axis that starts from the former demilitarized zone and heads towards the Pacific, taking advantage of the campesino colonization of the region. Furthermore, US pressure for the eradication of illicit crops introduces variations in the regional conflicts. For instance, on the southern frontier with Ecuador a conflict has developed between the FARC and the paramilitary groups over control of the coca-producing department of Putumayo, which has become the focus of the military strategy of Plan Colombia.

Secondly, there is a regional dynamic that corresponds to the confrontation between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries for control of strategic resources such as petrol, bananas or coca.

Thirdly, the local dynamic reflects the conflicts within the sub-regions, localities and sub-localities (i.e. small campesino villages), which in turn often reflect the conflict between the urban centre (more easily controlled by the paramilitaries or the army) and the rural periphery of the small campesino villages, where the guerrillas can act with greater freedom. There are also confrontations between villages of different ideology, different racial origins, economic dynamics and opposing economic interests.

The result of this triple dynamic of conflict and its diffusion within Colombian society is the degradation of the conflict and a profound humanitarian crisis, which is reflected in numerous human rights and International Humanitarian Law violations. Furthermore, the capacity of the different armed actors to operate in enemy territory and the instability of territorial control produce total uncertainty amongst the civilian population. In these areas the state functions as just another actor, interacting in a diffuse manner with the developing powers. The population is left without a fixed system of institutional references and is constantly exposed to reprisals by one armed group or another, none of whom can guarantee permanent control and protection. They therefore resort to the use of terror in order to ensure the loyalty of the civilian population and to deny the adversary support. This situation is exacerbated in a conflict described as a "war through third parties", where opponents do not confront each other directly but instead attack the real or supposed social base of the enemy. For this reason the Colombian conflict has been characterized as a war against the civilian population.
Armed conflict in Colombia
1997–2002

Summary map of military actions, IHL violations and socio-political violence

Level of conflict
- Municipalities with at least one incident of violence
- Municipalities with different types of violence (military actions, International Humanitarian Law violations and socio-political violence)
Civilian peace initiatives in Colombia
1979–2002

Map of peace initiatives
Civic initiatives

Peace mobilization in Colombia

1978–2002

Carlos Fernández,
Mauricio García-Durán
and Fernando Sarmiento

The current context of social crisis and the deepening of the protracted armed internal conflict raises questions about the capacity of Colombian society to generate the changes that might bring about peace. A review of the peace initiatives undertaken by different sectors of Colombian society is of fundamental importance in clarifying what these can contribute to the search for a solution to the conflict.

Civil society has used multiple methods to express its rejection of violence and to contribute to peacebuilding. In figure 1 we can see the constant increase in collective actions for peace since 1987/88. It can be argued that the principal motivation for social mobilization in Colombia in the 1990s was the rejection of violence and support for the search for peace. Peace mobilizations have involved the participation of at least 30 million people (counted cumulatively) since 1990. However, this immense participation does not mean that the mobilization as a whole has been organic and well-articulated, with a clearly progressive and consistent dynamic.

History of peace mobilizations

Public mobilization for peace has been dependent on the political circumstances and opportunities that have presented themselves, regarding both the growth and degradation of the violence, as well as the peace processes with armed actors. Examples include the large number of massacres and political assassinations (particularly of the Patriotic Union) carried out by the paramilitaries since 1986/87 resulting in a growing reaction and mobilization against violence; the weariness of violence which preceded the Citizens Mandate for Peace; and the phenomenon of kidnapping, particularly ‘opportunistic kidnappings’, which triggered the mobilizations of 1999. What follows is a brief review of the principal moments in the development of what has been called the social movement for peace.

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1978–1985: Background to peace mobilization
The government of Julio César Turbay pursued a policy of repression, based on the National Security Statute, which involved serious human rights violations. In this context, the first peace initiatives that appeared were linked to the defence of human rights. And although during the administration of Belisario Betancur there was not yet what could properly be called a social mobilization in favour of peace, this period did see the establishment of the first channel for civil society participation through the broad and pluralist Peace Commission convened by the President. The various peace movements at this time, still relatively limited and dispersed across the country, were motivated mainly by social grievances (including the fundamental rights of workers and in particular the right to life), and demands for a negotiated solution to the armed conflict (including the respect for democratic freedoms, a broad amnesty and negotiations with the insurgencies).

Two events in the political sphere defined this period and have special importance for peace mobilization: the processes of negotiation and demobilization of the 19 April Movement (M-19), the Workers’ Revolutionary Party, the Popular Liberation Army and Quintín Lame, and the constitutional reform of 1991, which opened up and breathed life into democratic participation in Colombia.

During the government of President Virgilio Barco (1986–90) processes developed for a negotiated solution with the guerrillas grew, including the efforts of the first Comisión de Notables (Commission of Distinguished Citizens), the Uxaqué Summit (29 July 1988) of all the political sectors motivated by the M-19’s kidnapping of Álvaro Gómez and the creation of the Coexistence Commission at the summit in order to promote negotiations with the armed groups. These events drove the launch of the government ‘Peace Initiative’, which allowed negotiations with the M-19 to begin.

Social mobilization for peace took off in earnest between 1990 and 1994. Apart from the various efforts by sectors of civil society in support of negotiations, amongst which the work of the Comisión de Notables and the mediation of the Church in some of the processes stand out, the majority of peace initiatives were protests against violence or in favour of life and peace, as can be seen in the actions of women’s groups at the beginning of this period. While many initiatives took place in Bogotá, given
its importance as the political and geographic centre, there was support for regional dialogue by different sectors of society and a series of collective actions around the country. During 1991, these included initiatives such as the 'Social Pact for development and peace in Urabá', the campaign against terrorism and in favour of a negotiated solution to the armed conflict that took place in all the departments on the Atlantic coast, the 'Medellín in Peace' campaign, and the March for Life in Cali in September. Although mobilization was most obvious in regions ravaged by the violence, such as Urabá and Magdalena Medio, the magnitude of peace initiatives increased generally, spreading to new departments.

In the same year the 'Viva la Ciudadania' (Long Live Citizenship) campaign was launched at the national level, uniting more than thirty organizations, and a Peace Week was held (as it has been annually since September 1988), focusing that year on civic ethics. Demobilized guerrillas organized other similar activities during this period, but with the aim of demanding the fulfilment of the agreements reached with the government. In a way, the issue of peace, brought to the fore by the accords with the M-19, breathed new life into the demands of the human rights movement, without however establishing a complete convergence between the peace and human rights organizations.

1993–1999: The organizational phase and large mobilizations for peace

The political events that defined peace mobilization in this period were the declaration of the 'integral war' by the Gaviiria administration and the crisis stemming from Judicial Process 8000 regarding the donation of drug trafficking money to President Ernesto Samper's election campaign. This situation created a dynamic of mass demonstrations, which sought joint action across civil society in order to strengthen and create the conditions conducive to the search for a negotiated peace with the armed actors.

This third period was one of immense growth in peace mobilization and organization in Colombia. The multiplicity and diversity of activities, participating sectors and regions was huge. Firstly, the Comité de Búsqueda de la Paz (Committee for the Search for Peace) was created and brought together a series of social organizations and NGOs; secondly, as a result of the convergence of important regional dynamics, REDEPAZ (the Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War) was formed in November 1993. In 1995 the Episcopal Commission created the National Conciliation Commission to help bring the parties to the conflict together by providing 'good offices'.

By 1996 there was tremendous dynamism in the forums working for peace at a regional level, as seen in the
working groups for peace and in the large number of forums and marches in favour of a negotiated solution to the armed conflict. In March REDEPAZ presented the proposal for a Peace Statute, in order to promote the regulation of Article 22 of the new political Constitution (that states that peace is both a right and a duty). In July the Day of Active Neutrality in Medellín was held, which brought together the majority of NGOs in Antioquia and supported similar proposals to those being developed in indigenous and displaced communities. In October the ‘Children’s Mandate for Peace’ was held. In November, on the International Day Against Violence Against Women, the Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz (the Peaceful Route of Women for Peace) was born as an act of solidarity with the women of Urabá affected by the armed conflict. In addition, forums in favour of peace amongst different sectors emerged, such as Businessmen for Peace, Media for Peace and the University Network for Peace.

Toward the end of this period there was a great increase in the number of activities. The local and regional peace councils and committees were consolidated, and Open Peace Councils were held in various municipalities. During 1997 the Citizens Mandate for Peace process (‘Mandato’) took place, culminating with ten million votes for peace in the October elections. In 1998 the Permanent Civil Society Assembly for Peace (‘Asamblea’) was convened in which regions, social sectors, and peace and human rights organizations from across the country converge. In 1999, the famous ‘No Más’ (No More) mass demonstrations were held against kidnapping, although in some areas they were also related to other demands. More than 2.5 million people took part in 40 marches between April and September, and more than 8 million people mobilized on 24 October 1999, participating in marches and events in more than 180 municipalities the length and breadth of the country.

2000–2003: National level crisis and strengthening grassroots initiatives

The dynamics of the process with the guerrillas had a significant impact on the dynamics of the peace organizations at a national level, given that these organizations focused their attention on what was happening in the negotiations between the government and the FARC. With the end of the peace process, they entered into a period of crisis and flux. However, there was a continued dynamism at local and regional levels regarding the issues of peace, development, self-determination and civil resistance, as demonstrated by the peace communities in Urabá, the position of neutrality adopted by the indigenous communities, the constituent assembly processes at municipal and departmental level, the experiences of civil resistance, the fifteen peace and development programmes, and some experiences of return by displaced persons. Similarly other spaces continued to consolidate, such as the Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres, the Red de Justicia Comunitaria y tratamiento de conflictos (the community justice and conflict resolution network), and the conscientious objectors. All of these experiences were maintained in the regions with the objective of creating the social actors who would work to create the necessary conditions for peace in the country.

The geography of the peace movement

Looking at the territorial dynamic of the collective actions for peace, it is possible to distinguish between diverse experiences of mobilization in local, regional, national and global contexts, which show differentiated but complementary dynamics and rationales (see peace map on page 17 and chart of civic initiatives on page 28). Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that some of the experiences at the local and regional level have a genuinely national impact, which gives them a special character and greater significance.

We understand local initiatives to mean those developed by groups and social sectors active in hamlets, villages, and barrios, up to and including those that have a municipal dimension. Examples of this are those experiences of autonomy, civil resistance, and peace mobilization from the grassroots, such as the Association of Workers and Peasants of Carare (ATCC), the Peace Communities, the municipal constituent assemblies and 100 peace municipalities and the civil resistance initiatives.

Regional initiatives are those experiences that seek to develop and articulate processes that cover various municipalities and have a regional impact, either on an economic, political or social level. Examples include the peace and development programmes and the autonomy and resistance initiatives pursued by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, such as the NASA project (NASA meaning “living being”) and the indigenous resistance communities in Cauca, and the experiences of the Integral Peasants Association of Atrato, the Peace Communities, the Self-determination Communities and Life and Dignity in Chocó.

The national level initiatives have the specific characteristic of linking centralized power with national coverage – they attempt to link mobilization for peace with decision-making activities in Bogotá that affect all of the country. These national dynamics are represented by the forums for mobilization and articulation, such as Comité de Búsqueda de la Paz, REDEPAZ, Mandato, Asamblea, Planeta Paz, No Más, Colombia Va, Paz Colombia and Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres.
These national initiatives come into contact with more international and global dynamics, creating new dimensions for peace mobilization in Colombia and complicating the territorial idea mentioned above. The World Social Forum, the International Criminal Court and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations that elevate the solidarity between peoples and sectoral struggles to international levels cause the national situation to be viewed in a global context and not in the isolated manner of previous decades.

Achievements, tensions and dilemmas in the peace movement

The internal dynamic of the movement and its organizations

Peace mobilization has clearly generated and built on the existence and consolidation of an extensive range of organizations and working proposals for peace. An organizational infrastructure for peace exists today – with limitations and contradictions but at the same time with immense potential for the future. Lessons have been learned endowing organizations and social sectors with the infrastructure necessary to unite and articulate the diversity of peace initiatives. This convergence of perspectives has manifested itself in the efforts put into the construction of an agenda for peace and democracy.

However, it is important not to forget that there are tensions and differences amongst these perspectives, not only because of different concepts of peace (peace as the military defeat of the enemy, peace as demobilization, peace implying greater democracy, and peace as social justice), but also because some topics generate serious debate and controversy: the legitimacy of the armed struggle, the parameters of negotiations, and the issue of security. In the process of the configuration of the peace movement in Colombia there have been differences and contradictions, clearly illustrated by the differences between peace organizations and human rights organizations. Different traditions of thought on the nature of the country have found, in the issue of peace, a new historical arena in which to be debated.

In addition to these challenges, there are tensions arising from inter-organizational dynamics that can lead to the marginalization of some social and geographical sectors within the movement. A tension has existed between the ‘capital’ and the regions due to the concentration of activity and power in Bogotá. This geographic dynamic is also expressed in the manner in which certain sectors have in many instances been placed at the margins of the organizational processes for peace, as is the case, at least until recently, with women’s and indigenous groups.
External processes and relations with society

Some core problems exist regarding external processes and relations with other actors and wider society:

Poor definition and lack of clarity in its discourse with wider society on fundamental issues on the identity of the peace movement; the conceptualization of peace has been maximalist and ranged over many topics and insufficient care has been devoted to defining the ethical propositions that should guide it. Similarly, issues such as the use of violence as a means to achieve social change have not been clearly and openly debated, leaving the path open for the polarized discourses of some sectors. From here stems the challenge of how to channel social discontent and weariness with the war into a broader, non-violent and proactive vision capable of mobilizing large sectors of the population.

The media’s treatment of peace and the invisibility of the movement. The media has been subjected to almost continuous criticism by the many leaders of the movement concerning the sparse recognition and coverage of civil society peace activities, and even more so concerning the close relations between the mass media and the dominant sectors of the economic and political system, linked in some cases to the dynamics of the violence. At the same time journalists and the media criticize the methods and limited influence of the peace movement, and what they label their tired and superficial ideas given the present reality.

Relations to the political sphere and the state. Peace organizations have often demonstrated ambivalence towards formal politics, including a distant relationship from political parties, and a critical and confrontational stance with regard to state institutions, inherited from the social struggles of the previous decades. In order to make its proposals more effective, the peace movement finds itself facing the dilemma of rejecting the traditional practices of the political system but at the same time needing to enter the political sphere as the arena for the realization of the changes it seeks. How does this and how it manages the tensions that this implies will be something that determines the potential impact of the peace movement in the near future.

International relations. International variables will continue to be crucial in the immediate and medium-term future, as we have seen in the context of the ‘war against terrorism’. How alliances and support at this level are managed will be critical for the construction of a political context favourable to negotiations and in revitalizing the civil society peace initiatives and enhancing their capacity to exert real influence. The parallel diplomacy between non-governmental and inter-governmental sectors in Colombia, Europe and the US, conducted until now through international aid agencies, has in the last few years created a panorama of relationships that are more political than economic. Peace organizations need to strengthen their instruments of influence in the diplomatic field in order to make a genuine impact among the international actors involved in the peace dynamics in the country.

Perspectives and challenges

It is unlikely that a new peace process with the insurgency will commence during the Uribe administration, given the entrenchedness of the parties’ positions and the escalation of the conflict. At the same time, negotiations initiated with the paramilitaries not only exclude society, but also, due to the manner in which they are proceeding, run the risk of creating a grave situation of impunity that clearly does not favour progress towards an integral solution to the conflict. We can therefore foresee the continuation of the conflict, and given the effects of this type of conflict on society as a whole, an increased weariness with the violence among the population. In other words, as the strategy of ‘democratic security’ begins to show its limitations, a new demand for a negotiated solution will undoubtedly grow, as can be seen in the electoral results of the 25–26 October 2003, presenting a new political opportunity for mass mobilization for peace.

The peace movements – in all their manifestations – are evolving. Formal, lasting and effective unity is impossible without a broad process of social and political development. In this maturing process the peace movement faces the challenge of not subordinating its dynamic to the tendencies and logic of the armed powers and the dominant powers. In other words, it faces the challenge of constructing a political rationale and organizational dynamic, supported by large sectors of society, distinguished from the current polarization and violence.

In this context it is encouraging to see the innumerable initiatives and actions that have taken place in the last decade in terms of peace education and mobilization, acting as processes of civic empowerment and the rejuvenation of politics. These efforts, although sometimes not considered a social force capable of influence under the present circumstances, are in fact the foundations for any future negotiation attempts and genuinely sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

Peace mobilization in Colombia
Civic initiatives

Compelled to act

grassroots peace initiatives

Esperanza Hernández Delgado

“During all these years of violence, in the midst of this abandoned, forgotten land, just as a flower blooms in the desert, we have been tending the shoots of hope. Our birth and growth is an expression of the power of the people, power to rescue the beauty of life from such horror, and to recover our voice as the best tool for the resolution of conflicts.”

— Participants’ statement during the ‘First Meeting of the Experiences of Peace Communities and Territories in Colombia, Bogotá, November 1999

There are many reasons why grassroots peace initiatives have special relevance in Colombia. These experiences show us other realities in a country scarred by persistent violence. They indicate possible new dimensions of peacebuilding, with visions of peace that go beyond the absence of war or the silence of guns. Through organizational processes at the community level, they aim to build new social relations on the basis of solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity. They work to deepen participative democratic processes and to enable forms of development that meet basic community needs. Many of them attempt to recuperate and protect their cultures.

Typology of grassroots peace initiatives

Grassroots peace initiatives emerged in Colombia in the 1980s. Amid their diversity, many share common traits. They are processes with origins in social sectors that have traditionally been excluded from full participation in the political life and economic wealth of the country, such as the indigenous peoples, the Afro-Colombians, the campesinos and women. They are often groups directly affected by the impact of war, structural violence, or both. They often benefit from the active support of the Catholic Church and the international community.

It is possible to suggest three broad types of grassroots initiatives as indicative of some important dynamics within the spectrum of peacebuilding activity at this level: a) those with an emphasis on deepening democracy; b) those with an emphasis on civil resistance to the armed conflict; and c) those with an emphasis on civil resistance to structural violence, the armed conflict and the neo-liberal model of economic development. This article will offer a glimpse of one example of each type of initiative, offering descriptions of their emergence and approaches, and some assessment of their outcomes.

Initiatives with an emphasis on deepening democracy

In recent years, Colombia has witnessed a number of localized efforts to transform democratic politics at the local level. These initiatives include the ‘Municipal Constituent Assembly’ of Mogotes, originating in the Santander region in 1997; the Pensilvania Living Community initiated in Caldas (Manizárez region) in 2001 and the ‘Municipal Constituent Assembly of Tarso (Antioquia) in the same year.

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These experiences, perhaps the most developed examples of many similar efforts, aim to create participative processes for local problem-solving, planning of development projects and renewed democratic political culture that tackles clientelism and corruption. They also tend to appear in regions which are either corridors for the armed actors or have traditionally been dominated by a single armed actor, as well as in those localities where there is considerable structural violence, expressed in exclusion, inadequate mechanisms for civic participation and corruption.

Municipal Constituent Assembly of Tarso

"We, the representatives of the different political, social and administrative groupings, agreed to meet together here for the first time in local history, to evaluate the past, reconstruct the present and define the future."

Tarso is a municipality in southwest Antioquia, with approximately 7,000 inhabitants. Local income is primarily derived from coffee production. The region exhibits traditional patterns of land ownership, with most land concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy families. The municipality has not been the scene of high levels of violence, functioning primarily as a corridor for the armed actors, traditionally the National Liberation Army (ELN) and since 2000 the paramilitary group United Self-Defence Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU).

The region's social history includes the emergence of an important church-supported campesino movement during the 1970–80s. When economic crisis hit Tarso in 1999, Alijo Arroyave, one of the social leaders educated in this movement, took the lead. With the municipality threatened with bankruptcy, Arroyave proposed an Initiation Committee that would generate a broad process of education and consultation amongst residents. This process lasted for just over a year and led to a decision by the local population to form a Municipal Constituent Assembly in January 2001. The assembly comprised 150 delegates representing large landowners, trade associations, traditional political parties, campesinos, teachers, the church and the municipal government. With the overarching strategies of promoting sustainable development and peaceful coexistence, the primary function of the Assembly was to develop a Municipal Development Plan. This was facilitated by the formation of six thematic working groups, open to the participation of all interested parties. An elected seven-person Council supervises the working groups and convenes the Assembly for plenary sessions.
In its two years of existence, the process has enabled the municipality to overcome its immediate financial crisis and to generate a development plan through an inclusive process of consultation and direct participation. The local population has elected a mayoral candidate who is committed to respecting the process and enabling the Constituent Assembly, the Mayor’s office and the municipal council to interact. It has achieved regional, national and international recognition and support. However, much work still needs to be done to consolidate the process, strengthen commitment and improve communication mechanisms.

Experiences of civil resistance to the armed conflict

Civil resistance in the Colombian context is characterized as an active non-violent response to the impact of the escalating armed conflict on the civilian population. Initiatives typically emerge in contexts with high levels of violence, in areas where the insurgent movements have consolidated their presence and where paramilitaries have subsequently made incursions. Barbaric attacks on the civilian population have taken place and local residents and observers allege the active or passive collaboration of government security forces.

Civil resistance initiatives seek to protect the communities’ autonomy and their members’ rights to life. The exercise of non-violent resistance to all armed actors, including the security forces, is developed as a protection strategy for community members. Through active non-violence, residents also aim to rebuild the social fabric through solidarity, participation, collective work and life in community.

Colombia is home to a number of such peacebuilding experiences, including the Peasant Workers’ Association of Carare, the Active Neutrality of the Antioquia Organization, the Peace Community of San Francisco de Asís in the Lower Atrato region of Chocó and the Communities of Self-Determination, Life and Dignity based in Cacarica, Chocó.

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

“We declared ourselves a Peace Community… as the only alternative we had to survive in this war. Some of us have been able to return to our lands after three years… We still live in fear, but with all of us united together in work and resistance… We want the community to continue, united and resisting, and demanding the violent actors respect our norms and our rights.”

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is a ward of the Apartadó municipality in Urabá, Antioquia. It is a strategic target for armed actors, because of its proximity to the hill of Serranía de Abibe, a strategic corridor connecting three departments.

The armed conflict is intense, and the civilian population has suffered from the active presence of and clashes between all the armed actors.

Local residents report that in 1996, a group of paramilitaries entered the ward with the collaboration of the Security forces, to wrest control of the region away from the insurgencies. There were massacres, selective assassinations and for nine months a paramilitary regime prevented the entry of food and medicines. The armed actors presented local residents with stark choices: to join, leave the area, or die. With the support of the Catholic Church and some Colombian NGOs, the population decided to resist these options by creating a neutral zone and refusing to collaborate with any of the armed actors. The idea was developed through workshops where the concept and practice of active neutrality was defined. Each resident then had a free choice as to whether to assume this position.

In March 1997, the population held a ceremony to declare themselves a ‘Peace Community’ in the hope that the armed actors would respect them and allow them to continue living on their lands. The community subsequently benefited from the active accompaniment and assistance of a local NGO, the Inter-congregational Commission for Justice and Peace, as well as a number of foreign NGOs. It organizes itself through three different structures: work groups (currently 31 men’s work groups and 11 women’s work groups); committees on health, education, women’s issues, sport, etc.; and an elected council, which coordinates all activities and resolves conflicts through internal dialogue and regulation processes.

Residents describe a high social cost resulting from the establishment of the Peace Community, including the deaths of a number of community leaders, as well as victimization by all the armed actors, and particularly by the paramilitaries acting with support from the security forces. Yet the population remains committed to the practice of active non-violence. It continues to receive national and international support, primarily from NGOs, although international lobbying has led to the decree of protection measures in their favour by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Initiatives with an emphasis on civil resistance to structural violence, the armed conflict and the neo-liberal economic model

These experiences, such as the ‘Indigenous Community Resistance’ of Caquetá, the ‘Embera Wounan Organization’ and the Afro-Colombian ‘Integrated Campesino Association of Atrato’ in Middle Atrato, Chocó, have typically emerged in the context of structural violence, characterized by political, social and economic
exclusion. More recently, many of these contexts have also experienced the escalation of the armed conflict and have had to develop processes amid high levels of violence.

These initiatives have their origin in the need to defend and recuperate culture, autonomy and territory. With the escalation and impact of the armed conflict, they have incorporated civil resistance to the armed conflict into their traditional resistance. Recently a few of these initiatives have approved decisions in their assemblies to develop civil resistance to the neo-liberal model of economic development, which they consider a threat to their cultures and livelihood.

**Nasa project**

"The Nasa project came about not as a struggle but as a proposal for social, economic, political and cultural development with an eye on the future... the process has got stronger and improved and I would say that it is now a legal process. What our elders had to do secretly, we can now do in full public view... when we train ourselves, we raise our awareness and everyone works to work together from our different points of view."

Toribio is a municipality and an indigenous reserve, located in the north of the Cauca region. Its population of approximately 30,500 residents belong almost exclusively to the Nasa indigenous people. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has traditionally been present in this region, and recently conflict has escalated between the guerrillas and the paramilitary and state security forces.

Recent experiences of indigenous self-organization date back over twenty years. The Nasa project emerged in 1980, grounded in the teachings of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) that founded the indigenous movement. It had its origins in the initiative of a local indigenous priest, Alvaro Uclee and the decision of the indigenous communities of the Toribio, San Francisco and Tauceyó reserves to try to recover dispossessed territories, protect their culture and gain respect for their traditional lifestyles. The process was initiated through a Community Assembly of the People in Toribio in September 1980.

The original aims of the Nasa project were to unify the indigenous communities, enable participation and strengthen the cabildos (indigenous councils). The project sought to improve the indigenous population’s quality of life, enhance education and enable culturally appropriate development processes. As the armed conflict intensified, the population also began to develop active forms of civil resistance to defend the autonomy of their communities. These included the ‘Resistance Assembly’ in which they develop collective, non-violent responses to the armed conflict in their territory.

The Nasa project has had many achievements, and has existed for more than two decades. It has enabled the Nasa people to recover over 140,000 hectares of land. It has also developed important income-generating projects such as fishing and the production of dairy products and fruit juices. The civic movement has enabled the local population to elect a mayor who represents their interests. Locally developed participation processes have enabled mechanisms for broad-based decision-making on issues related to the indigenous movement, the municipality and the content of the Nasa project itself. Such processes do not come without a cost. The population has experienced violence, displacement and loss of life as a result of actions by the armed actors. However, through dialogue and active resistance, the community has managed to retain its autonomy from the armed groups. Its successes have influenced many other such initiatives in the north Cauca region.

**Conclusion**

These brief examples provide some moving illustrations of the diversity and importance of civic peacebuilding efforts in Colombia. They affirm that peace is not only built or provided by the State but also developed at the grassroots. In the context of tremendous difficulties, the significance of their achievements merits special attention and national and international protection.

Local peacebuilding efforts develop their own, locally appropriate understandings of peace. They also identify the need to address and transform structural violence, through processes of social inclusion, democratic participation, development and reconciliation.

Some of these initiatives show that local and regional processes of non-violence, dialogue and decision-making can protect the lives and integrity of communities and assist in reducing the intensity of the armed conflict. They can stimulate and consolidate economic development processes and social cohesion. Yet the difficulties and obstacles encountered within all experiences are also indicative of the risks involved and the very real dangers posed by armed actors demanding territorial control at any human cost.

The conflict in Colombia is experienced at the grassroots and waged within communities. Efforts to resolve the conflict must deal with this painful and complex reality. These initiatives show that peacebuilding in Colombia has to be seen as more than the signing of peace accords, but as social inclusion and citizen participation at the community level.
## CIVIC PEACE INITIATIVES

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Selection and design by Carlos Fernández, Mauricio García-Durán and Fernando Sarmiento. A full list of Spanish names is available in the Spanish version of this publication (see www.c-c.org)
Civic initiatives

A regional peace experience
the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme

Mauricio Katz García

Since 1995, a process has been developing in one region of Colombia, which hopes to transform the armed conflict into an opportunity for sustainable human development and peaceful coexistence. It attempts to face down the scepticism and disenchantment that many Colombians feel about peace and the discourse that surrounds it.

The Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme (PDPMM) is based on a consideration of peace as a product of two related efforts: a regional socio-economic development process, involving and positively impacting the life of the poorest people, and a process of rebuilding and recovering collective assets, starting with access to the state as an institution, education, health, the environment and cultural heritage.

Since the passing of UN Resolution 41/128/1986, it is recognized that the human person is the central axis of development and for that reason any development policy or project should ensure the participation of the person, not simply as a beneficiary but as a protagonist. In this way development is defined as an economic, social, political, and cultural process, geared to the well-being of the population. It is based on the voluntary participation of individuals in a community, respect for the environment and gender equity. The PDPMM takes those elements and tries to put them into practice creatively in an area which has for decades been wracked by war and abandoned by the state.

The Magdalena Medio region

The Magdalena Medio in the northwest of Colombia is 30,000 square km, crossed from north to south by 300 km of the Magdalena River. The area covered by the PDPMM is made up of 850,000 people, living in 29 predominantly rural municipalities, except for the two urban centres, Barrancabermeja and Aguachica. These municipalities, despite comprising a geographic region, are politically administered by four different departments (Santander, Bolívar, Cesar and Antioquia).

The region is geo-strategically important, owing to its privileged location and its natural and human resource wealth. It is the convergence point between the interior of the country (the most populated part where industry and commerce is concentrated) and the Atlantic coast, an essential node for exports, and between the Pacific region and Venezuela (Colombia’s second biggest trading partner). The city of Barrancabermeja also hosts the country’s principal petrochemical refinery.

An enclave economy was established in Magdalena Medio in the 19th Century, exploiting raw materials destined for export to the world market, such as quina,
tobacco, and wood. This tendency deepened throughout the 20th century with oil, palm oil, soy bean, and cotton. The consequence of this economic model is a resource-rich region which contributes significantly to GDP, but which has municipalities where 90 per cent of the population have unmet basic needs.

The concentration of land ownership is another dimension of poverty and the struggle for ownership, one of the causes of the social conflicts. This phenomenon has dramatically increased since 1980 due to the drugs trade and paramilitarism. As an area of internal colonization, its processes of population settlement were never accompanied by a solid state presence. Throughout its history the region has seen the arrival and growth of armed groups. Between 1960 and 1998, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) ran the area. After 1998, using violence and indiscriminate terror, the paramilitary group Central Bolívar Bloq provoked the withdrawal of the guerrilla groups to the mountainous and inaccessible zones, and now dominates the 29 town centres in the area covered by the PDPMM.

The consolidation of paramilitary domination of the region has been achieved at a high social cost. The homicide rates between 1998 and 2002 were higher than 250 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, at least 40,000 people were displaced and the social and organizational fabric of the region was affected by threats, selective assassinations of leaders, and the paramilitaries' association of any social demands with guerrilla sympathies. The context of poverty and violence has been fed over the last five years by the expansion of coca cultivation, a source of finances for the war.

The PDPMM: a proposal for regional development and coexistence

The PDPMM started in 1995 and arose through the converging interests of the State Oil Company ECOPETROL and the Oil Worker's Union USO around the defence of human rights and the proper use of state oil profits; the existence of a strong and active social movement; and the presence of a credible actor with operational capacity in the local Catholic church. It also had sustained government support.

The PDPMM defines itself through its efforts to build a model of development in the midst of conflict, with the active participation of men and women, through creating and accumulating social capacities and physical and communication infrastructure. It is a programme committed simultaneously to emergency responses and to rehabilitation, reconciliation and development processes.
The PDPMM works through setting up economic and social development projects that respond to inhabitants' needs and hopes, and the promotion of consensus-building between the inhabitants themselves and between them and the local, regional and national state authorities. The projects cover areas such as rural development (e.g. planting or extending crops, productivity improvement), development of urban production, commercialization of agricultural and manufactured products, housing, education, public service provision, fishing, and environmental and institutional development. Around 300 initiatives have been financed so far, including: 5,000 hectares of African Palm; renovation and production improvement of 8,000 hectares of cocoa; aqueduct construction; building or renovating over 30 rural schools; and the creation, training and consolidation of Municipal Planning Councils.

Life above all: principles and collective action in PDPMM

The first meeting of the Magdalena Medio inhabitants highlighted the need to tackle the polarized atmosphere and existing stigmatization between various social, political and economic sectors that were impeding the implementation of any accord. Efforts were made to collectively formulate working principles that would be simple, easily understood, and shared widely.

Building a region for life together: The different forms of conflict and exclusion have left deep wounds, making it difficult to start communal projects. The participation of all social and political actors is necessary to achieve the development and integration of the region. For the PDPMM development must include everyone or there is no development. Putting this principle into practice implies offering a broad invitation, to which only a few actors initially respond, until progressively more become interested and join in greater numbers. Care must be taken not to close the door on nor disqualify any actor.

Each municipality created a municipal nucleus for participation, comprising existing local social organizations. Their tasks include the design of a local development strategy (the Municipal Development and Peace Proposal), allocation of resources and execution of projects. In each municipality, development planning processes, project management training, participation and political consensus-building and involvement in local, regional and national markets are established.

Peacebuilding and conflict transformation: the PDPMM believes peace will be built as a result of a long and patient process. Alongside negotiations with the armed actors, the country needs reconstruction: not just the infrastructure to guarantee the economic context for sustainable development, but a collective project involving the whole country. Peace is understood as a process that transcends negotiations, ceasefires and demobilization, requiring the transformation of the violence in social, economic and political conflicts, by searching for a way to develop peaceful solutions, starting from recognition of the other and dialogue. Increasing local capacities for transforming conflicts is a priority for the PDPMM. A methodology has been established which works from where people are at the moment. The capacity of community organizations is built upwards from this base, so that they can become the subjects of their own development.

The local dimension: an environment for peacebuilding and development. In the political negotiation processes between the state and the armed actors, just as in the public policymaking for regional and national development, local actors are largely absent. For the national government, the political class, the guerrilla groups and the paramilitaries, the micro-dimensions of the conflicts do not count or are hidden. Yet in Colombia, an understanding of the configuration of the whole context in a place like Magdalena Medio is essential to generate opportunities for development and coexistence.

The PDPMM is not a protagonist in the negotiations between the state and combatant groups, but instead dedicates its energy to promoting dialogue and understanding between the social and political actors at local and regional levels, regardless of their political ideology, party affiliation or religious belief. The PDPMM recognizes that the development of the region and the exercise of political participation depends on pluralism, diversity and tolerance. This does not mean the PDPMM is a political-electoral movement that will supplant the state in its functions or convert into a political party to contest and win local authority.

The project is a means not an end: a means to break the phenomenon of exclusion of the poorest from development projects. The PDPMM promotes project formulation through participation, which allows for progressive growth, so that community organizations achieve concrete results, measurable in the short-term, and can then set more ambitious objectives. The starting point is the ideas the people have for resolving their own problems. These become an 'Initiative' and with technical, financial and administrative support from the PDPMM, in a specified time-frame and in accordance with the characteristics of the organization and its problems, becomes a 'Project' which can more easily attract resources. This methodology takes groups of participating inhabitants in their current state of
development, and seeks to increase the capacity of the involved group to be able to form projects.

Local authorities, political parties and armed actors tend to be suspicious and jealous of processes that the PDPMM generates because they break with the dominant clientelist political culture. The Programme is therefore constantly facing tensions and difficulties, converted into opportunities to spread its principles and seek consensus amongst diverse interests.

**Funding the PDPMM**

Between 1995 and 2002, 80 per cent of the funding for the PDPMM came through the Colombian state, US$3 million from the Colombian State Oil Company (ECOPETROL), and two Innovation and Learning Loans from the World Bank to the national government of US$10 million. The remaining 20 per cent has come from the UN system (UNDP, UNFPA) and grants from some European NGOs (Caritas France, etc) and governments (Sweden, Switzerland, etc). Since 2002, the PDPMM has received funds from the European Union through the Magdalena Medio Peace Laboratory project, an investment of 344m euros over 8 years, to which matching funds from the national government will be added.

**Most important features and results**

The most important characteristics of the PDPMM are that it is a process built from below, with broad participation by inhabitants, founded on simple, concrete and easily shared ideas. With approximately 15,000 people working with the same principles and objectives, it has an efficient communication process from and to the population, and from the PDPMM to national and international institutions. Crucially, it is administered by an organization that defines itself as a peace promoter, with a time-limited existence, with no pretensions to be a political party, and without creating assets nor a structure that is heavy to sustain. It is also built from the accumulated history of social organizations in the region, with the participation of credible actors (especially the Catholic Church and some of its institutions) able to form alliances and attract national and international public and private entities. The most important achievements include the fact that the poorest communities in the region have developed more than 300 projects. They argue with pride that this is the first time that they have been consulted and given responsibility. Further, a methodological model has been constructed, adjusted to the cultural, social and political conditions of the region, rapidly assimilated, simply and economically applied, and accepted without reserve by public and private financiers. Finally, the creation of the Programme has been a stimulus to regional civil society initiatives with similar objectives to the PDPMM and now 15 of them have formed a Network of Development and Peace Programmes (REDPRODEPAZ).

**Challenges and difficulties**

The key challenges confronting this experience today are:

(a) consolidating the move from micro-realization and pilot projects to macro-realization as a strategy of real development for urban communities and the rural poor;

(b) building a regional development strategy, as a public policy and a collective proposition, that goes beyond the existence of local projects financed by the PDPMM;

(c) developing an administrative, technical and operational structure that will maintain participation and opportunities, and continue to be credible in responding efficiently and effectively to commitments made to inhabitants and to funding bodies;

(d) making the process sustainable and showing its positive and durable impact in improving living conditions for its participants.

The chances of success for a regional development proposal that implies structural change, dialogue and reconciliation are limited in the current Colombian context, characterized as it is by the determination of the state to defeat the guerrillas militarily, by the polarization of society and by the deepening of the neo-liberal economic model. But the PDPMM is committed to the long-term, because it represents a contribution to the transformation of the political culture and toward a future constructed participatively, through promoting opportunities for public and democratic decision-making, freeing the discussion from the confines of party politics and groups, and forcing a change in the mentality of administrators and citizens about their role in the construction of a regional future. It is also an attempt to draw up a new social contract in which the Colombian state will be the guarantor of the general interest, a legitimate structure which regulates conflicts, a valid instrument of social cohesion capable of uniting Colombians, and promoting real economic and social development for all, with emphasis on the poorest.

It is vital that the PDPMM does not end up being co-opted and forming part of a process of legitimization of the authoritarian and exclusive model that the paramilitaries want to impose on the Magdalena Medio region. It is essential that the dynamic of collective participation and consensus-building begins to introduce change in local power relations, capable of defending a democratic and pluralist social order.
Political peacebuilding: a challenge for civil society

Jorge Rojas Rodríguez

Colombia has suffered from an irregular war for the last four decades. It is a war prolonged by unresolved structural causes that cannot be won militarily, but has not been resolved by political dialogue either. This stalemate continues in the midst of a serious humanitarian and human rights situation, a dangerous social crisis, a growing process of fragmentation and polarization in Colombian society and an international environment that favours the use of force.

We need to look beyond the demonstrated incapacity of the state and the insurgency to reach agreements, and beyond their decision to prolong hostilities, and highlight the role of Colombian society and civilian peace initiatives in the failed efforts at negotiation. Given the way the state and the insurgency use authoritarian methods to drag the whole of society into their war logic, we need to find political responses that advocate democracy, diversity and pluralism.

The dramatic changes in the national and international situation demand that social movements re-focus their strategies, methodologies, and forms of communication. We need to look at how to transform the hard reality of war into an opportunity for democratic peacebuilding. We therefore need to review the path taken thus far, assessing the attempts at coordination, consensus, lobbying and international dialogue as well as the breakdowns and internal contradictions.

This exercise is especially important in the current political context. The election of President Uribe followed the ineffective peace talks pursued by former President Pastrana’s administration with the left-wing guerrillas. The public lost trust in the peace processes as they did not offer answers to the profound social and economic crisis, reduce the intensity of the conflict, or allow democratic participation in their design, follow-up, or evaluation. In 2002, the electorate chose to back an experiment based on critical scepticism regarding the lack of results, instead...
of attempting to find other peaceful ways to resolve the Colombian crisis. In 2003 Uribe launched a national and international campaign against NGOs, peace initiatives and social movements under the generic accusation that they are ‘politically motivated, working in the service of terrorism, and human rights traffickers’. These accusations restrict the space of the civil peace movements, and put the lives of leaders and social activists in danger.

At the same time, this analysis of the role of social peace movements comes at a time when the political map of Colombia is changing after the elections of October 2003. These have ruptured the concept of unanimous support for war, and allowed candidates advocating a political solution to the armed conflict to win.

Experiences of civil participation in peacebuilding

In the 1970s and 1980s the union and agrarian movements led the mobilizations, and the principal emphasis was on social struggles for rights. In the 1980s human rights NGOs emerged in force. Yet maybe the most momentous phenomenon during this period was the elimination of the campesino leadership in the 1980s, continuing in the 1990s through the systematic persecution of union leaders and leaders of the left during the ‘dirty war’ waged by the paramilitaries. The result of this violent exclusion has been the dismantling of social and political organizations, the dispersion and disappearance of leadership and the imposition of hegemonic models of control over the population through anti-democratic practices and violence. Citizens’ peace initiatives emerged at the national level at the end of the 1990s, as a reaction to the dirty war, to demand a political solution to the conflict.

The Citizen’s Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty was the most formidable expression of this. It was preceded by the Children’s Mandate for Peace in 1996 in which 2.7 million children in 300 municipalities voted the ‘right to life’ and the ‘right to peace’ as the most popular rights in a ballot of 12 rights. The event was organized by the Network of Initiatives for Peace and against War (REDEPAZ), UNICEF and the National Civil Registry Office.

The following year, the Citizen’s Mandate was launched. It was a product of a broad agreement between sectors of society, involving peace initiatives, the business community, churches and the social movement, who were enthusiastic about the possibility of a new peace process with a new government. It was coordinated by REDEPAZ and the Fundacion Pals Libre, which had risen to prominence organizing marches against kidnappings.
by the guerrillas. Just under 10 million people voted in a ‘peace ballot’, conducted by local authorities on the same day as local and departmental elections on 26 October 1997. A country tired of war opted in desperation for peace, and a citizens’ proposal caught the political opportunity. The public voted in favour of a politically negotiated solution to the armed conflict and full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. So many people voted that there were insufficient ballot papers, and so people improvised by marking campaign leaflets, which were accepted as surrogate ballot papers. The number of votes was about three times that received by all presidential candidates the following year.

Additionally, a very varied group of social sectors have assembled since 1998 in the Permanent Civil Society Assembly for Peace, another form of coordination and action in favour of a politically negotiated solution to the conflict. The assembly’s first convention took place in July 1998, attracting 3,000-4,000 participants from a broad range of sectors. It declared that peace is a process in which a diverse civil society should be the principal protagonist, and it sought to both promote negotiations and develop a civil society agenda for peace agreements. Meetings have been held every year since.

The installation of the Dialogue and Negotiation Table between the government and the FARC, and the announcement of talks with the ELN at the beginning of the Pastrana administration magnified public enthusiasm for peace. For three years civilian peace initiatives promoted support for the peace processes, contributed to democratic participation (despite the exclusive model of negotiations), and, during the most difficult times, defended the process with marches and statements. But such almost unconditional support failed to take into account the need for a strategic proposal should the talks break down, and underestimated the population’s weariness with the lack of tangible results.

The process was a response to the clamour for peace from citizens, but it was also a political act, with electoral objectives, by the then presidential candidate Andrés Pastrana. It was never really clear if his commitment to peace was real, nor did he clearly represent the Establishment’s position on negotiating a peace accord. The FARC took advantage of the circumstances to talk but not negotiate a peace deal, and left the country and the world with the feeling that they had used the demilitarized zone to strengthen themselves militarily. This stalemate in the peace talks and the emergence of Plan Colombia created a new scenario that forced civil organizations to modify their agenda and adopt new methods. Human rights NGOs who questioned Plan Colombia from its inception as a dangerous obstacle to the negotiations, joined forces with peace initiatives and social movements in a civil coalition called Paz Colombia. This was an important step for the human rights NGOs, who went beyond their work on the consequences of the conflict, and developed a political position designed to transform its causes. Its main achievement was the organization of an International Conference for Peace, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL), in San José, Costa Rica in October 2000. Delegates from 32 governments attended, along with a sector of the insurgency, and broad representation from sectors of Colombian society.

With similar intent and in the midst of the breakdown of the talks between the government and the FARC (February 2002) and the presidential elections (May 2002), the National Congress for Peace and Country was organized. This was a last desperate attempt by civilians to get dialogue and negotiations restarted, and to create a joint platform for a social and political response to stop a candidate successfully campaigning for total war.

Two developing experiences are part of more recent peace efforts by civil society: women’s peace initiatives and the civil resistance to the conflict grounded in the spiritual worldview of the indigenous peoples. Diverse alliances and coalitions of women’s organizations are using a new language to try and mobilize a country tired by the war but sceptical about peace to persist in the search for a political solution. Significant expressions include the Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz (the Peaceful Route of Women for Peace) and the National Network of Women, who organized a large mobilization of women against the war on 25 July 2002 and organize annual marches to conflict-stricken areas to show solidarity with the population.

The indigenous people have succeeded in presenting to the country and the world their logic of resistance to the war, the defence of their territory and culture. Examples of this have been the declaration of neutrality of the indigenous people of Antioquia in 1997 and the multiple expressions of resistance to the guerrillas and the paramilitaries in Cauca in the last three years. All these expressions convert themselves into a display of autonomy by civil society as a means of initiating possible scenarios for peace.

Tensions and difficulties in building a peace movement

These examples of civilian action for peace in Colombia have a common agenda: a politically negotiated solution to the armed conflict, full respect for human rights and IHL, political and social changes in favour of equity and inclusion, international aid for peace and the democratic participation of society in voting on eventual accords.
However, there are tensions and difficulties that weaken capacities and affect credibility. The most fundamental difference may be between those who justify and those who reject the armed struggle of the insurgency. There are also many deficits in understanding, especially on issues such as: the representativity and the legitimacy of organizations involved in civil peace coalitions; the political changes occurring around the armed conflict; the role of the international community; the logic of their action and their contradictions and differences; and the role of specific social sectors and of the regions (with regard to centralism and exclusion). Finally, there are deficits in coordination, such as the absence of alliances with diverse sectors of Colombian society, and a lack of a national and international communication strategy in a country at war.

Lessons from a failure

It is evident that we need to look critically at the role of ‘civil society’ and its responsibility in the failed process of 1998–2002. Six of the most important lessons to be learned are:

1. A social movement for peace cannot run on voluntarism. It needs more political content to its actions, and it cannot leave the direction of the process solely in the hands of the warring parties. Political participation mechanisms are needed that go beyond protests and demands for labour rights and become events and opportunities for exercising local, regional and national power, with the capacity to effect real change;

2. A peace movement should alert the country to the potential risks of a process that is not irreversible, and needs to create the conditions for a structural rather than improvised response to an eventual breakdown;

3. A peace movement cannot simply be critical; it needs to create proposals for the negotiation table, have lobbying capacity and should define strategic alliances within the international community;

4. A civil peace movement must create a communications strategy to prevent the manipulation of information and build public opinion before and during an eventual process;

5. The most important lesson from the failure of the process is the need to develop the notion of democratic peacebuilding, as a space for capacity-building and inclusive, participatory action that can develop even during times of armed conflict;

6. A citizens’ mandate at the ballot box is not enough. The civilian leadership of the peace movement needs to gain power at the mayoral level, in local governments, the congress and other electoral spaces in order to make political participation real.

Peace building: ethical obligation, political responsibility

Colombian society will not support an endless war, and it will need to continue to develop its capacity to demand and prepare for a democratic peace. Support is needed for all forms of social expression, mobilization and political participation. There are many examples: the public demonstrations against the war by the women’s movement, with their immense ethical and political capital; the resistance of the indigenous peoples, who are neither impartial nor indifferent but who disagree with violence; the governors in the south of the country, who try to balance central authoritarian power with democracy; the community councils in the Afro-Colombian communities who resist the war; the civil peace initiatives and human rights organizations, who insist on a politically negotiated solution to this conflict; the huge consensus around active abstention on the referendum. The best antidote to the war is democracy and this is the exercise of a right that helps us even in the difficult times we are living through.

However, the prolonged armed conflict, which creates scepticism about social peace action, demands a substantial change in the peace, human rights and social equality movements. It is a change that has to be realized through politics and based on a social commitment to peace. It is urgent and necessary to move from having a chance to influence the resolution of the conflict, to having a chance to transform the causes of the conflict using the state. This does not necessarily mean the creation of a political party for peace, but it does mean creating a political strategy for peace, so that peace becomes the central axis in the coordination of political movements that assume responsibility for transforming a country rebelling against the war. The change in the peace movements should be understood as a way to offer the whole of Colombian society a political proposal for democratic peacebuilding.

A political agreement should establish the obligations of social sectors with different opinions, tendencies and interests, based on an ethical concept of the peaceful solution to conflicts. Political actions, with a strategic vision for peace, should commit interested sectors to participating not just in peace mobilization, but in democratic processes using the state. The movement will be transformed through the process of deciding on its political participation.
Peace processes 1990–1994

Vera Grabe

The peace policy adopted by President Barco in 1988 and continued by President Gaviria resulted in successful negotiation processes with the 19 April Movement (M-19), the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and Quintin Lame. These processes also influenced the creation of the 1991 National Constituent Assembly, which allowed for the participation of a wide spectrum of social and political groups in order to rethink the structures of the state and to develop a new constitution for the country.

In order to explain the peace processes of 1990–94, we must bear in mind their predecessors. No peace process can be understood in isolation, and in each process the previous ones appear as light or as shadow. Before looking more closely at these processes, it is worth noting that they had antecedents in developments earlier in the 1980s. The beginnings of the debate on a political solution to the conflict could be traced to the responses to the M-19’s seizure of the Dominican Embassy in 1980, and the debate it launched on the question of guerrilla amnesties. It also had roots in a ceasefire accord signed by the Betancur administration with the M-19, EPL and Workers Self-Defence Group (ADO) in 1984, which revolved around a proposed ‘National Dialogue’ and gave the guerrillas more public space and sympathy. Yet the agreement generated tension within the Colombian establishment, setting a course that eventually led to the Palace of Justice tragedy in November 1985, where an M-19 initiative to take several judges hostage resulted in the bombardment of the building by the army and the deaths of 95 people. New actors and circumstances arose in the years following the Palace of Justice tragedy, not least the growing impact of the drug trade on the violence. Peace acquired new complexities and concern about politics began to grow within the guerrilla movement.

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From the limits of war to an opening for peace

The M-19's response to the Palace of Justice disaster was to deepen its commitment to armed warfare. It strengthened its military units and militias, created new fronts and a battalion with recruits from the Andean region, and pushed for insurrection and unity amongst the guerrillas. Despite the military gains, however, it could not regain the political initiative in a country weary of war. It was evident that fighting for peace through war was not resulting in the swelling of the insulation.

In an attempt to regain its political direction, the M-19 undertook some deep-seated reflection and redefined the direction of the armed conflict: with whom? against whom? and for what? Until that point they had defined annihilating the armed forces as a primary military objective, but now concluded that this strategy was not weakening the ruling oligarchy. So it redefined its struggle as war but on the oligarchy, and as life for the country (in the framework of the movement to defend life that was emerging as a response to the 'dirty war' waged by the paramilitaries). This was an attempt to present a whole vision of its struggle to a divided country.

This decision was publicly launched in a military initiative that paradoxically opened the path for a new peace process; from an action aimed at polarization, reconciliation was born. In May 1988, the M-19 kidnapped Álvaro Gómez, a conservative leader and symbol of the Colombian oligarchy. The whole of the establishment reacted against this, and the M-19 understood that unnecessarily deepening the confrontation was counter-productive. The incident led to a reconnection with the political, with communication between the M-19 commander and the kidnapped leader, and a dialogue between multiple sectors. The result was a commitment from the political leaders of the country, representatives of the business associations, union leaders, religious leaders and members of M-19 diplomatic wing to think seriously about a reconciliatory solution to the national crisis, and from the M-19 a commitment to free Gómez.

Premises for a new peace process

The issue of peace was given new life. The government – M-19 negotiation model was built on two initiatives; an M-19 peace proposal launched during a political summit that emerged from the freeing of Gómez and President
Barco’s ‘Peace Initiative’ of September 1988, which established three phases of negotiation with the armed groups: demilitarization, transition, and incorporation into civilian life.

M-19 camps became political meeting places, providing impetus to a new peace process. It was not possible to gain the support of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB), of which the M-19 was a member, in the short time available. The opportunity had to be seized: for Carlos Pizarro, the M-19 commander, it was clear that peace needed a new model and new aims, including the possibility of demobilization.

On 10 January 1989, Pizarro and Rafael Pardo, Presidential Commissioner for Peace, signed a document committing them to peace. For the first time the guerrillas accepted the possibility of disarming, and the government the possibility of democratizing the state and society. At the time this was not an organizational decision by the M-19, but a commitment from its leadership to begin a pedagogical and dialogue process with leaders and militants. It became a democratic organizational decision to disarm in September 1989 at the 10th National Conference of the Movement, when in a secret ballot, 227 votes were cast in favour and 3 against.

**Peace needs clarity: itineraries**

The result of these first meetings was a negotiation model with several key features. Firstly, the main M-19 forces would be concentrated in an area in Santo Domingo, Cauca in order for negotiations between the presidential delegates and the M-19 commander to take place. The M-19 proposed this small village at the height of the central Andean mountain range, away from any urban centres, to symbolize a non-aggressive attitude, especially to the military. Secondly, participatory Working Groups on Analysis and Consensus were established for discussions with different national sectors about proposals and political, economic and social reforms. These were to be legitimized through Congress and the Presidency in a Political Pact, formalised in a ceremony. Thirdly, mechanisms were introduced to guarantee the full incorporation of combatants into civilian life, with security schemes, the application of pardons, and economic support for reintegration. Finally, a ‘political favourability’ scheme would be implemented, to compensate for the obvious inequalities of an organization recently incorporated into civilian political life, by enabling electoral advantage to guarantee representation in the country’s legislative bodies. Various legally constituted offices were also established during the negotiations, which the M-19 called ‘Peace Houses’, where the organization was able to contact those who wanted to join their cause.

**The people are in charge**

Santo Domingo, the site for the negotiations, became a ‘mini peace city’ as one journalist put it, a meeting place and reference point for those hoping to join the peace process, whether union members, campesinos, indigenous people, students, researchers, the religious, poets, musicians, or politicians; a place for political discussion, and a place to sing, dance, study, dream, and think up projects.

People took the process to heart, warming to the personality of Pizarro, which reaffirmed the decision to make peace and confirmed that building a political option was a real possibility. For this reason the M-19 never doubted the process, despite the many uncertainties and obstacles. In the middle of the negotiations, the army attacked an M-19 camp, leaving two dead. At another stage, the police assassinated one of the most loved and respected leaders of the M-19, Afriano Parra, in Bogotá. Faced with the crisis this provoked, the government investigated and detained those responsible within a few days. Transparency and sincerity were vital for keeping the process moving forward, as was the will to deal with obstacles instead of using them as an argument for mutual recriminations.

**Decision versus negotiation: a leap into the unknown**

The M-19’s democratic vote in favour of disarmament needed to be given substance in agreements to make it a reality. Thousands of proposals on socio-economic, political and judicial reforms resulted from the Working Groups, which were brought together in a Political Pact for Peace and Democracy, signed in November 1989. The Pact also included an agreement on political favourability and an Amnesty Law. However, the government, simultaneously fighting a war against drug-trafficking, merged the first part of the Pact, concerning substantive reforms, with a constitutional reform to combat drug-trafficking, including the institutionalization of extradition.

This mixture blew the reform. When the constitutional reform reached a vote in Congress in December, the political class who had kept their distance from the peace process turned the issue of extradition into the principal point of divergence between the Congress and the government and the reform was defeated. In effect, the Political Pact through which the M-19 agreed to disarm was rendered more a letter of intent than a firm agreement. There were plenty of arguments to justify a decision by the M-19 to return to war. However, the decision was taken to reaffirm their will for peace. Carlos Pizarro called it a “leap into the unknown”
Utilizing the State of Siege and the Amnesty Law, the government agreed to suspend the arrest warrants against the main M-19 leaders so they could travel to Bogotá to continue the demobilization process and their political development as the Democratic Alliance M-19 (AD M-19). Faced with the sinking of the reform, the M-19 sought a guaranteed commitment from all the Liberal presidential nominees (the only likely winners of the elections) to comply with the agreed accords, especially the convening of a Constituent Assembly. Similarly the National Registry agreed to include the names of demobilized M-19 members in the electoral lists in March 1990, in which all posts were contested except that of the President. An extra ballot called the Séptima Papeleta (seventh paper) was introduced in these elections by groups campaigning for the Constituent Assembly to give weight to the idea of an autonomous reforming body. Mass demonstrations in support of the M-19 in Bogotá removed all doubts: the decision for peace was the correct one, despite the fact that the political favourability option had not been firmly up, and despite continuing uncertainty about the reintegration process.

The country imagined lines of guerrillas surrendering their weapons, yet the M-19 always made it clear that it would never surrender its weapons, but would voluntarily disarm. This was a free and sovereign decision, one that did not mean they were abandoning the struggle, but were simply dropping weapons as an instrument that no longer served the purpose. For this reason the disarmament ceremony was not attended by government representatives, but by international observers as well as the national and international press. There was no doubt about the message when Carlos Pizarro wrapped his weapon in the Colombian flag and gave his last military order: “For Colombia, and for peace, put down your weapons.”

An involving environment

A National Constituent Assembly was convened in February 1991 to create a new constitution for Colombia. It was an idea that had been presented as far back as 1984 by the EPL, resurrected on various occasions, and now gathered new strength, with impetus from the peace process, student mobilizations and support from sectors of the Gaviria government. What was originally proposed as a constitutional reform through a Supreme Court of Justice decision, turned into a mandate to bring about the formation of a fully-fledged Constituent Assembly. Its 70 delegates were appointed through public elections held in December 1990. The result was a body that reflected a new country, a shift away from the domination of public bodies by the Liberal and Conservative parties, with a few representatives of the marginalized left. Members of the traditional parties, former guerrillas, indigenous people, sporting leaders, social leaders, and cultural and democratic figures were elected to the Constituent Assembly. The three fundamental forces were the National Salvation Movement, led by Álvaro Gómez, members of the Liberal party elected as individuals, and the AD M-19. It was an opportunity to design an institutional structure that reflected a country requiring transformation in its political culture, the recognition of fundamental rights and organs that could implement these.

The National Constituent Assembly sat in session for five months, voting on its mechanisms and decision-making processes. More than anything, it was an arena for consensus and collaboration, most specifically regarding relations with the Congress of the Republic, reluctant to accept any change. Perhaps what was most significant was the widespread enthusiasm generated by the process, seen by many as a unique opportunity for participation in the design of a new country.

The process also stimulated movement towards peace negotiations among the rest of the insurgency. The EPL, the Quintín Lame and the PRT entered into talks with the national government, which sped up during 1991 because demobilization became a condition of their obtaining seats and participating in the Assembly. During the discussions, the CGSB also re-established contacts with the national government, which were formalized in the Caracas and Tlaxcala talks. Although these talks eventually broke down, they continued to have an effect, with an important sector of the National Liberation Army (ELN), grouped under the name of the Socialist Renewal Current (CRS) deciding to venture into peace talks in 1994, as did the militia forces in Medellín.

Every process is a learning process

Although all the accords followed the same model and are seen as being part of one process, each group learned from earlier processes, perfecting agreements according to the moment and the variations in individual emphasis.

19 April Movement (M-19)

For the M-19, seven out of the ten points in the accord were political, and as a consequence, the pace of the process was set by politics, to the detriment of more careful work on the issue of reintegration, which was in itself a learning experience given that this was an unacceptable concept up to this point. The mechanisms for political favourability did not work, but were rendered unnecessary as the electoral results were better than expected. The AD M-19 gained one million votes for the Assembly, half a million for the new Congress post-Assembly and then went through a process of political dispersion. Although it was ultimately unable
to consolidate its early successes, the majority of AD M-19 activists are still alive and actively support peace and democracy-building, both visibly, and in other less obvious civilian efforts.

**Popular Liberation Army**
The final accord between the National Government and the EPL stated that two EPL spokesmen could participate in the National Constituent Assembly, and facilitated the conditions for the promotion of their political project. The political development of the EPL, which was achieved through a democratic process, and led to their demobilization, was perhaps one of the most important aspects of the process. It signified a break with their orthodox political origins, with one section forming Esperanza, Paz y Libertad (Hope, Peace and Liberty), and another section participating in the AD M-19. In Urabá, the EPL's historic home, antagonistic relations between the reintegrated guerrillas and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) developed. With the paramilitary expansion in the zone, the EPL became a target in the polarization between insurgents and counter-insurgents. Amid fear and accusations of being linked to the persistent war in Urabá, Hope Peace and Liberty maintained itself as an important local force, with a continuous link to social sectors.

**Workers' Revolutionary Party**
Enrique Flórez, ex vice-commander of the PRT, says that "the politicization of the PRT happened during the peace process with Barco." The accord provided for a spokesman at the Constituent Assembly, and administrative, judicial, and financial facilities and guarantees, security guarantees and guarantees to allow them to campaign, so that as a central part of their transition they could become a legal party. It also included a security plan, and support for human rights work and regional development. While the PRT did not become a political party, some of its members participated in the AD M-19, joined regional politics, and are still working with social sectors on human rights and peace promotion, especially in the departments of Sucre and Bolivar.

**Quintin Lame movement**
In the National Constituent Assembly, there was one Quintin Lame spokesman, alongside two other representatives from the indigenous movement. Since then the indigenous movement has been present in the various levels of political representation, and the most important and unprecedented achievement has been the recognition in the Constitution of their identity, and their rights derived from their own culture. The Quintin Lame movement always defined itself as the armed wing of an indigenous social movement, and with the peace
process that raison d'être remained, as there was a need for a political force as a mechanism for developing the indigenous movement. The Indigenous Social Alliance (ASI) emerged as a result, and remains an important political and social force.

Socialist Renewal Current (CRS)
The Socialist Renewal Current (CRS), a group who split from the ELN, agreed to the establishment of a mechanism of political favourability and they nominated two representatives to the House in 1994–8. They maintained their unity during their political transition, were active participants in building alternative political forces, and of all the demobilized movements, they have been the most dedicated to civilian peace initiatives.

A mixed legacy
Taken as a whole, the process was a piecemeal one in its achievements. It did not manage to end the war because important sectors of the guerrillas did not participate. The basic commitment was to bring about change in the political regime, deepening democracy and transforming political structures, in order to improve economic and social conditions. To this end, although rights, institutions, and foundations were established in the Constitution, the priority for the National Constituent Assembly was to promote the eradication of the political practices and institutions that sustained clientelism, exclusion and political authoritarianism.

The National Constituent Assembly completed its work in June and a new Colombian constitution was promulgated on 4 July 1991. It has since been criticized for its lack of democratic coherence on themes including the media, the control of monopolies, and the armed forces. However, it is meaningless to judge things out of context, from a perspective of what should have been, rather than looking at the conditions from which they arose: the 1991 Constitution was the result of a process where there were no winners or losers, a meeting of very diverse sectors and as such cannot be anything but a hybrid product. It reflected the crisis in the regime and was, from its inception, the expression of a new country: a country that until then had not been allowed access to decision-making spaces traditionally reserved for bi-partisanship. This in itself was a revolution. Recognition of fundamental rights was born here, something that might be taken for granted elsewhere, but in the Colombian case was a huge historic advance. A new institutionality was created: to deepen democracy; to create judicial mechanisms to make rights real, with a Court and People's Ombudsman to enforce them; to widen administrative decentralization; and to create mechanisms for fiscal and political control. Perhaps the development of the content and meaning of the new Charter has been more significant at the cultural level than in the building of a new state. While a series of new institutions were established, sectors of the old regime have since persevered in their efforts to dismantle the Constitution.

The dissolution of Congress sitting at the moment when the Assembly was approved, should have contributed to the renewal of political leadership, but was truncated when the Gaviria government, co-sponsor of political change, opted to ally itself with traditional sectors with a political majority in the Congress to push through its privatization and economic liberalization policy. This contributed to preventing the drafting of the laws required by the new Constitution. Since then the defence and development of the Constitution with regard to social and democratic guarantees has really been an exercise in resistance and perseverance by progressive sectors in Congress, and above all the people.

The obvious lesson is that redefining the foundations of the state has to be linked to a long-term political agreement in order to guarantee that a new house gets built on those foundations. The Constitution reflects a new country, but this does not mean that the traditional leadership and its political culture have been defeated.

Peace: revolution within revolution
The peace process during this period also had a number of less tangible results. It signified paradigm shifts in the ideas of revolution and peacemaking in Colombia, where before it had been considered a heresy to disarm as it was associated with surrender. This was not a product of military defeat – although it does not mean that some political and armed sectors did not see it in this way. With the decision to disarm, peace ceased to be a negotiation and became a free and sovereign decision.

This can be reaffirmed as a good and brave decision when one looks at the current panorama of the armed confrontation in Colombia in its degradation, barbarity, and established functionality. It is a question of ethics, of being able to read the historical moment, and of understanding that being a revolutionary also means being prepared to change, to adventure into unknown territory, abandon old schema, and begin to use the logic of non-violence and non-exclusion. Thus the simple fact of having taken peace as a paradigm of change is in itself an achievement and confirms that this process was worth it.
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<th>AGENDA</th>
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<td>'Political favourability'</td>
<td>Special peace district</td>
<td>Participation in the Constituent Assembly (delegates and spokesmen)</td>
<td>2 representatives in the House</td>
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<td>Support for electoral reform</td>
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<td>Forum in Uribá to explain the peace process with the CRS and present their proposal for the region</td>
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<td>Justice, human rights and public order</td>
<td>Commissions to reform the justice system, to study the drug-trade, and study the ratification of Protocol II</td>
<td>Commission on Overcoming the Problem of Violence</td>
<td>Forum to analyse the human rights situation in Colombia (leading to a book)</td>
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<td>Publish information on paramilitaries under the responsibility of the armed forces</td>
<td>Support to victims of violence</td>
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<td>Revision of the Statute for the Defence of Democracy</td>
<td>Governmental Commission on Human Rights and offices of the Department in some regions</td>
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<td>Social and judicial guarantees for ex-guerrillas</td>
<td>Amnesty</td>
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<td>Judicial benefits (including amnesty)</td>
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<td>Reintegration Programme (without detail)</td>
<td>Reintegration Programme, specifying types of guarantees and stages</td>
<td>Reintegration Programme (more specific and widened to include the nuclear family)</td>
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<td>Security Plan</td>
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<td>Regional and social development</td>
<td>National Peace Fund, to run programmes in zones of influence</td>
<td>Programmes in zones of influences</td>
<td>Social investment programmes in conflict zones, with community participation</td>
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<td>Inclusion of municipalities in PNR and negotiation of projects with other entities</td>
<td>Promotion of participation mechanisms for citizens</td>
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<td>Regional plans consulted with the community</td>
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<td>Socio-economic policies</td>
<td>Measures for participatory planning on, income, salaries, labour issues, housing, health, food security, campesino production and marketing</td>
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<td>Verification</td>
<td>No agreement</td>
<td>National: the Constituent Assembly, public figures, and the Confederation of Evangelical Churches</td>
<td>A commission comprising the National Government, the CRS and international organizations</td>
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<td>International: Socialist Workers Party of Spain, Socialist International, the World Council of Indian Peoples</td>
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Source: developed by Mauricio García-Durán based on the agreements
Personal reflections

Alice Maria Salazar

A former M-19 comrade, Alice is part of a Women's Collective of reintegrated guerrillas who work nation-wide to defend the rights of women who were members of insurgent groups.

Jazmin Agudelo

Jazmin works with the Horizon of Freedom Foundation, defending the rights of prisoners in various Colombian prisons.

The State peace processes have always had this content, a ceasefire, an end to military confrontation, but they don't create spaces for all those excluded sectors. There are many more people outside this society for whom the state never works: the street vendors in the informal sector, a large section of the population outside the education system, the health system, housing provision.

So we shouldn't be talking about reintegrating those with weapons, but we should start to reintegrate all those who don't feel the presence of the state, unless it is pursuing them, judging them, putting them in prison. There are many who don't feel the presence of the state because there is no social policy that covers them.

I don't see much peace building. I see a lot of talking and not much doing. I think that peace building implies working for better living conditions for all, a political environment that includes all Colombians, when I see the peace demonstrations I feel that it is more opinion that is being built, but no work that really defends rights, and includes sectors that have always been excluded, and makes democratic demands. No, all they do is recite the word peace.

Sometimes I want to believe in the formal peace processes, sometimes I can't let myself lose faith, sometimes I want to understand them but I am sadly confronted with the real situation, with what I live with all the time, day and night and I realize that they are not working, that they continue to be marred, that they have no aim, that the motive is more selfish than we thought. The motive is more immediate, it's more a kind of political publicity. They're not managing the root of the problem experienced by the general population, and I think we need that. Many members of civil society are going to continue to suffer just so that some of the actors and participants in these dialogues achieve their own objective, because each one will continue seeking his own objective. They are going to continue managing the negotiations and the dialogues for their own interests and the civilian population will get a raw deal for sure.
Formal peace processes

Negotiations with the FARC
1982–2002

Camilo González Posso

In a context of spiralling internal war in Colombia, there have been three attempts at negotiations between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) during the last twenty years. The failure of these negotiations has revealed the clash between the radical demands of the FARC and the inflexibility of the sectors controlling the country’s economic and political power. However, a review of these experiences suggests that possibilities for a political solution to the internal conflict continue to exist. For this to happen several minimum conditions must be met, namely: i) the emergence of a third socio-political actor who can sustain pressure for peace through dialogue; ii) the overcoming of the militaristic aspirations of both parties; iii) the critical revision and improvement of the two models of negotiations used until now; and iv) international accompaniment.

This article analyses each of the models of negotiation that have so far been tried with the FARC (the ‘dialogue without negotiation’ model and the ‘negotiation in the midst of war’ model). It highlights some of the lessons relevant for a future negotiation process and argues for the adoption of a ‘national constituent pact’ model.

First round of talks: 1984–89

The Belisario Betancur administration initiated the search for a negotiated solution to the internal armed conflict in 1982. It launched a peace pact addressing both “the objective and subjective factors” and declared a widespread amnesty. It created a 40-member Peace Commission representing a broad spectrum of social and political sectors, with the task of initiating contact and dialogue with diverse social sectors, including the insurgency, and presenting alternatives for examination by the executive and other public bodies. The municipality of Uribe was demilitarized and later became the meeting zone for encounters between the Central Command of the FARC, represented by Jacobo Arenas, and the Peace Commission.

In the first round of talks, the commissioners insisted that the FARC condemn the practices of kidnapping and extortion. The FARC insisted that any accord include the following commitments by the government: to modernize the political institutions, enable agrarian reform, facilitate the mobilization of campesinos and indigenous groups, strengthen education, health, housing and labour policy, establish a policy of public order under the sole control of the institutional forces of the state and initiate reconciliation processes. The talks resulted in the Uribe Accord, signed on 28 March 1984, which included initial agreements for addressing all the above issues and the establishment of a bilateral ceasefire. A National Peace and Verification Commission

A former Minister of Health in the Colombian government, Camilo González Posso has participated in various peace negotiations since 1984, including the coordination of the citizen’s forums for participation in the 1998–2002 negotiations with the FARC and the ELN. He is a university professor and President of the Institute of Peace and Development Studies (INDEPAZ).
was formed by presidential appointment, with nine regional commissions to support its work. Its task was to monitor the fulfilment of the commitments and to support the next steps of the peace process.

In this context and as part of a programme of democratization, the FARC concentrated its efforts on the launch of the Patriotic Union (UP) as its political wing. It aimed to boost its legislative influence and potential alliances with urban worker, middle class and 'nationalist business' sectors. At the same time the organization dedicated itself to its military consolidation within an eight-year plan. The Betancur government believed that the creation of the UP and the 'democratic opening' would serve as the most effective way to draw the FARC's interests into the legal sphere.

However, the modernizing drive of the Betancur government did not go further than the drafting and approval of legislation for the popular election of mayors and a statute on parties. The Congress, his own party, the country's important economic groups and the military failed to support the President's peace efforts. The Uribe Accord did not represent a national consensus on the political settlement of the conflict. Consequently, the Peace and Verification Commission gradually became a body without real power and at best an organization for 'good offices'. The government's weakness, already exacerbated by the M-19's violent attack on the Palace of Justice, was compounded by a fiscal crisis and the adoption of IMF structural adjustment programmes. In an attempt to overcome his political isolation, Betancur accepted a new agreement with the FARC in March 1986, confirming the continuity of the Uribe Accord and in particular the ceasefire.

The accords were received by the administration of Virgilio Barco as an inconvenient inheritance that it was unable to advance towards strong and lasting agreements. Although neither side announced a formal end to the ceasefire, communication between the parties seriously deteriorated after a FARC ambush at Puerto Rico (Caquetá) in June 1987, in which 26 military personnel and one civilian died. Furthermore, the ceasefire was violated not only by confrontations between the guerrillas and the military but more importantly with regard to the unarmed militants of the UP. Some 3,000 of its members (including its leaders, councillors, unionists, agrarian leaders, parliamentarians and two presidential candidates) became the victims of a systematic
campaign of elimination at the hands of paramilitaries and the death squads, the objective of which was the annihilation of UP as a political force. This was a consequence of the intransigence of the reactionary right, but also the result of the combination of means of struggle (legal and armed) pursued by sectors of the left. It would have a significant impact of the dynamics of the conflict, increasing the FARC’s scepticism of politics and negotiations as an alternative to the armed struggle, and resulting in a shift in the balance between the political and military wings of the organization.

The FARC responded to the Barco government’s proposal of ‘reintegration into legality’ with further military development and with demands based on the Uribe Accords. It also requested initiatives such as the formation of a Commission of Notables, a ‘patriotic national coalition’ government, and support for citizens’ initiatives for a Constituent Assembly. Ultimately, however, this dialogue of the deaf faded into the background, as the administration’s attention centred on talks with other guerrilla groups.

**Talks and negotiations in Caracas and Tlaxcala 1991–92**

In the early 1990s, the FARC, ELN and EPL revived the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) and worked on developing a common position for negotiations. At the same time, the Gaviria government focused its efforts on reaching agreements with some of the other guerrilla groups and on the installation of the Constituent Assembly. The international context (namely the end of the Cold War and the peace processes in Guatemala and El Salvador) fed the government’s belief that a strategy combining military pressure with partial democratization, including the Constituent Assembly, would force the CGSB onto the defensive and oblige it to either seek reintegration or face marginalization.

The army’s unexpected bombing of the headquarters of the talks in Uribe in December 1990 illustrated and deepened the mistrust between the parties. Following the taking of the Venezuelan Embassy in Bogotá by three members of the CGSB, exploratory talks were held in Cravo Norte (Arauca). These were succeeded by meetings held for the first time outside the country, without the precondition of a ceasefire – representing a shift in the government’s strategy.

Four rounds of talks were held in Caracas from June to November 1991. In the first round the parties identified the issues that would form the negotiating agenda: the relationship of the talks to the Constituent Assembly; state, democracy and conditions for political activity; the dismantling of paramilitary groups; justice and impunity; human rights; national sovereignty and natural resources; socio-economic democratization; a ceasefire formula; and the verification of the process.

With the parties unable to reach an agreement on the conditions for a ceasefire, the second round of talks focused on ceasefire verification mechanisms, international monitoring and possible confidence-building measures. The talks were suspended to let the parties consult on the conditions necessary for a ceasefire, during which time there was an intensification of military confrontations.

The third round of talks was held from 4–30 September and was characterized by the entrenchment of the government’s position. Still without consensus on the conditions for a ceasefire, the parties managed to reach an agreement on procedural issues. Both issued statements and the talks were suspended for a week of consultations. However, the government subsequently interrupted the talks in response to an assassination attempt on Aurelio Iragorri, the President of Congress before being dismissed by the Constituent Assembly.

The fourth round of Caracas talks (30 October – 10 November) focused on evaluating progress in the previous rounds and resulted in a memorandum of commitments containing the points of agreement and the remaining disagreements.

The talks recommenced in March 1992 in the holiday resort of ‘La Trinidad’ in Tlaxcala (Mexico) and continued until June. Initial agreements on changes to the order of the agenda were frozen following the kidnapping and murder of the former Liberal minister Argelino Durán Quintero by the EPL. In addition to this, the disappearance and death of Daniel García, diplomatic emissary for the FARC, set off a chain of mutual recriminations. These culminated in a joint declaration formally suspending the talks. There were a further two failed attempts to restart dialogue in April and May.

The breakdown of the talks was followed by the Gaviria administration’s declaration of an “integral war” against the guerrillas. Paradoxically this was announced by Rafael Pardo, the first civilian Defence Minister since the period of La Violencia and a former government peace negotiator. During the Samper administration, initial attempts to formulate a new model of negotiations floundered due to the political crisis created by accusations that drug money had financed the president’s campaign. The only negotiations that took place in 1997 were humanitarian negotiations on prisoner exchanges.

The Pastrana administration's peace policy developed amid the expansion and degradation of the war. These conditions resulted in popular mobilizations, culminating in 10 million votes for the Mandate for Peace in October 1997, forcing the prioritization of a policy of peace talks.

The talks during the Pastrana administration differed from previous negotiation models. The new model could be called an ‘agreement on reforms for a new state’, allowing for progress “towards a new Colombia, through political, economic and social change that would create a consensus for the construction of a new state founded on social justice, conserving national unity” (La Machaca, 6 May 1999). It was accepted that dialogue and negotiation should progress in the midst of military confrontation, with the exception of a demilitarized meeting zone comprising five municipalities (42,000 km²). The model also initiated the organization of ‘public hearings’, transmitted by television, in which more than 25,000 delegates participated and in which proposals from the different groups and social sectors were presented. It included the participation of civil society in a Thematic Committee, created by the parties to contribute ideas to the negotiating table. It also featured the signing of an agreement supporting the process by the political parties and representatives of economic associations. Finally, it included the participation of European and American government representatives as observers or facilitators, as well as representatives of the UN Secretary General and various UN agencies.

The negotiation agenda defined in May 1999 incorporated 12 issues and 48 sub-issues. These included human rights, agrarian policy (the distribution of lands bought with drug money and the substitution of illicit crops), natural resources, the revision of the economic and social development model, reform of the Justice system and the state, accords on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the redefinition of the peacetime role of the armed forces, and international agreements and the democratic mechanisms legitimizing these. There were dynamics that helped advance the process and build trust among the FARC and government representatives, such as the FARC ceasefire during Christmas and New Year in 1999/2000, and a visit to Europe to learn from other experiences and secure support for the peace process. One of the dynamics that weakened the process was the limitation on civil society participation, as seen in the delay in launching the ‘public hearings’ and the dense format used in these, as well as the belated revitalization of the National Peace Council by the government.

The protagonism of President Andrés Pastrana was central to the process, not only in his pre-election contacts that generated the dialogue and negotiation process, but also in the role he played in moments of crisis. This was the case in early May 1999 when he travelled to the demilitarized zone to meet with Manuel Marulanda and develop with him the start of formal negotiations on the basis of a common agenda. Similarly on 8–9 February 2001 he met again with Marulanda to attempt to unfreeze the talks. On this occasion the Los Pozos Accord was signed. It established agreements on how to advance the process, in particular through the creation of a commission of distinguished citizens (Comisión de Personalidades) to make recommendations to the negotiating table, agreement on a humanitarian accord, and the promotion of greater participation by the international community. On 2 June, a humanitarian accord was signed, formalizing the exchange of 42 military personnel with health problems for 15 imprisoned guerrillas also with health problems. Afterwards the FARC unilaterally released 242 soldiers and policemen.

But emerging tensions revealed the difficulty of maintaining the support of the large business groups and traditional power holders for a negotiation model that proposed commitments on changes to ‘a new Colombia’ and a ‘new state’ before dealing with the question of demobilization and disarmament, and even before agreeing on a definitive end to hostilities. This was compounded by the rejection by certain sectors of society of the existence of a large demilitarized zone, which while it might have been a neutral territory for dialogue, was also a strategic territory for the FARC. Moreover, the perception of a prolonged talks process in the middle of the cruelty of the war, without any obvious results, deepened frustrations. The disjunction between the rhythm of the talks and the expectations of a mobilized society translated into an increasing pressure for advances on humanitarian accords and an end to hostilities. The Pastrana government lost support and the process wasted credibility with the population as military actions and violence perpetrated against the civilian population continued.

In this context, a rapid change in military relations occurred. While the guerrillas continued a slow numerical growth, the paramilitaries multiplied and achieved supremacy in important agricultural, coca and oil areas and in strategic corridors for drugs and arms trafficking, including some urban centres. At the same time, government security forces increased the number of professional soldiers and re-equipped with modern technology with US help through Plan Colombia. Moreover, international attention to the ‘war against terrorism’ led to the anti-drug war being placed at the
service of counter-insurgency. Within the government and the armed forces, the influence of those sectors opposed to a negotiated solution increased, and they demanded military offensives and the political isolation of the guerrillas inside and outside the country. In the eyes of those in favour of a military solution, the global anti-terrorist alliance, elevated to an international strategy for the defence of the state, seemed to be the missing factor that would force an inflexible insurgency to retreat and prevent a risky negotiation including substantial changes and subject to guerrilla approval.

Against this background, the Comisión de Personalidades presented its recommendations on how to continue the negotiations on 19 September. The parties signed the San Francisco de la Sombra Accord on 5 October, based on these recommendations. This pre-agreement constituted the most advanced progress in twenty years of searching for a peace accord with the FARC, establishing the basis for redesigning the agenda for a political solution to the conflict. Yet paradoxically it was at this moment that the negotiations had reached the lowest point in terms of political backing.

From this moment on circumstances rapidly moved towards the definitive breakdown of the talks, with the demilitarized zone constituting the central focus of tension. The murder of the former minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera seriously increased the levels of tension between the parties, compounded by increasing pressure from the United States. The US government labelled the FARC the most dangerous terrorist group in the hemisphere and requested the extradition of some of its leaders on charges of drug trafficking.

Despite the international efforts, in particular the work of the special representative to Colombia of the United Nations Secretary General (Jan Egeland until 13 November 2001 and later James Lemoyne) the parties did not succeed in bringing their positions closer together. The decisive date emerged as 8 January 2002: the end of the extension of the demilitarized zone. Having failed to achieve an agreement, Pastrana prepared to give the order for the military to enter the zone. A dramatic intervention by James Lemoyne, representatives of the Church and the international community managed to keep the negotiations alive as the FARC declared that there existed guarantees to continue with the negotiations. Agreement was reached on a written timetable to establish a ceasefire before 7 April. However, the FARC’s hijacking of a plane with Senator Jorge Gachem Turbay onboard led the government to break off the negotiations and begin the military reoccupation of the demilitarized zone.
So the political class, with national and international support, regrouped around the formula proposed by Uribe Velez. This reintroduced the old schema of only offering to agree demobilization and reintegration based on military weakening of the insurgency, now declared to be terrorists and drug-traffickers. For their part, the FARC, faced with the crisis in the talks, were incapable of understanding the change in circumstances, and wasted opportunities to bring forward a ceasefire and end to hostilities, and with that an adjustment to the agenda and the functioning of the demilitarized zone.

The promise made by President Uribe to defeat the guerrillas and drug trafficking by 2005 on the one hand, and the demands by the FARC for two demilitarized departments as a condition for returning to the negotiation table on the other, illustrate how polarized the situation has become and highlight the difficulties involved in establishing a new round of dialogue.

Some lessons for a future round of talks

This long history of experiences suggest a number of recommendations directed at propitiating a politically negotiated solution with the FARC. Many are equally relevant to a future process with the ELN.

Firstly, it is necessary to revise and improve the models of negotiations to develop a 'national constitutional pact'. This new model would entail the adoption of an agenda of substantive reforms for the country, but overcome the bottlenecks of the previous models, in particular with regard to a ceasefire as a pre-condition for the negotiation of substantive issues, and the broad participation of those sectors set to benefit from the planned reforms. These reforms should then be institutionalized through a constituent congress. A constituent perspective is needed, enabling the inclusive participation of a mobilized society (which must involve amongst others the civil resistance movements, the multiple social movements and the independent political forces) and a media committed to the construction of peace.

It is also important to learn at a procedural level from the previous failed experiences. The new framework must recognize the invalidity of recreating the demilitarized zone, without clear controls and rules, and even less so in the broad terms that the FARC is now demanding. Perhaps it would be possible to try out one or more meeting zones, demilitarized for short periods of six months and including mechanisms for guaranteeing security and avoiding military advantages for either side. Similarly, the possibility of holding negotiations abroad should not be discounted, as attempted with the ELN. However, beyond the problem of a demilitarized zone it is fundamental to address the problem of a ceasefire as a condition for negotiations. As recommended by the Comisión de Personalidades it is necessary to explore alternatives at this level that do not generate military advantages for either side. Furthermore, there must be consideration of incentives capable of inspiring FARC confidence in possible demobilization following the massacre of the UP. Without the de-activation of the paramilitary groups and a clear security strategy for former combatants, it will be hard to generate motivation for a peace agreement that brings with it such risks.

A future peace process would also need a clear strategy to address economic factors 'oiling' the conflict, in particular the resources from drug trafficking and external support for the conflict. Whilst both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries continue feeding the dynamic of the conflict with these resources, it is unlikely that they will be interested in a negotiation process that implies an end to this business. And whilst Colombia is considered 'centre stage' in the global war on terrorism and drugs, this will stimulate militarist positions within the establishment.

Regional and local dialogues could generate progressive special humanitarian accords for the application of the norms on IHL, the protection of the civilian population and the reduction of the conflict's intensity, and could serve as bridges on the road to re-establishing the search for a political solution to the conflict, as well as having an inherent value.

A new process must clarify and articulate the international community's role. The United Nations must confirm that it can play a real role in facilitating the return to negotiations. This should complement the initiatives undertaken by both the international 'Friends of the Process' and the neighbouring countries affected by the conflict. This international role must not undermine the good offices of the diverse sectors of Colombian society, nor prevent contacts between authorities and guerrilla spokesmen for humanitarian purposes at regional and local levels.

Finally, all these efforts should start from the premise that alternatives for confronting violence can be found in expanding democracy and solidarity, in the exercise of justice and the battle against impunity, in strengthening the mobilization and organization of the pro-peace social and political alternatives, and in the definition of a model of sustainable and inclusive development.
Formal peace processes

The ‘entry-points’ to a negotiation

Negotiations between a government and an armed guerrilla group start from a supposition of mutual recognition between the actors. This implies that the guerrillas recognize the legitimacy, albeit partial, of the government and the government accepts its opponent as an actor involved in political crimes, and thus susceptible to a negotiation process to overcome the confrontation. Nonetheless, engagement generally takes place in the context of asymmetrical relations. The state is a much stronger actor militarily, with greater political support and national legitimacy, even if this is in question. However, once convinced of the impossibility of defeating its adversary through exclusively military means, it sees negotiations as a viable path towards the resolution of the conflict, as well as an opportunity for necessary political reforms.

Some analysts believe that negotiations are only viable when one adversary has been weakened, with the stronger party imposing the conditions for talks. Others argue that if you are trying to transform a dynamic of military confrontation into a political confrontation, the military balance of power is a secondary consideration and what is fundamental is to ‘politicize’ the process. Without doubt, the National Liberation Army (ELN) has historically situated itself in the second perspective. However, the dynamics of the organization’s engagement in negotiations have evolved considerably over its history.

Resistance to dialogue

The ELN’s struggle is rooted in a revolutionary ideology that proclaims ‘liberation or death’ as its motto. As such, the organization has tended to hold a fundamentalist discursive position against the state, leading it to reject any possibility of conciliation with its ‘class enemy’.

It was not until the beginning of the 1990s, after more than a quarter of a century of violent insurgency, that the ELN showed any interest in dialogue with the government. Prior to this, the only significant internal deviation from the path of exclusively armed struggle was that proposed by the ‘Rethinking Sector’, which emerged after the near-total military defeat inflicted on the organization by the army at Anorí, Antioquia, in 1973. The ‘Rethinking Sector’ was the first attempt by any part of any guerrilla organization in Colombia to examine political reintegration into civilian life and question the armed struggle as the only revolutionary path. However, this sector failed to manage internal tensions and ended up withdrawing from the ELN. It was similarly unsuccessful in embarking on a negotiation process with the government and only managed to achieve the reintegration of some individuals.

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The experience of the Caracas and Tlaxcala talks

Subsequently, the ELN demonstrated a persistent interest in uniting the guerrilla movement, ostensibly to achieve a more consolidated position from which to challenge the government. In the 1980s, it became involved in several coordination bodies, including the 'Trilateral' between the ELN, the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) and the MIR-Patria Libre in 1985, and in the subsequent creation of the National Guerrilla Coordination comprising the ELN, the PRT, 19 April Movement, the Popular Liberation Army and the Ricardo Franco Front. In June 1987, as other members of the National Guerrilla Coordination began to engage in bilateral negotiations with the government, this body disintegrated and the ELN merged with the small MIR-Patria Libre to form the Camilla Union - National Liberation Army. Finally, the ELN was instrumental in the formation of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination body (CGSB), initially comprising all guerrilla movements including the FARC. As the other smaller guerrilla bodies reached peace agreements with the government, the CGSB was reduced to those groups who had yet to conclude comprehensive agreements, namely the ELN, the FARC and a faction of the EPL.

As a member of the CGSB, the ELN participated in talks with the Gaviria administration, firstly in Caracas, Venezuela and subsequently in Tlaxcala, Mexico. This marked a fundamental change in the ELN's position. However, although this first experience of engagement no doubt influenced the subsequent evolution of the organization's political strategies, its participation at the time had more to do with the importance the ELN placed on the unity of the guerrilla movement than its belief in a politically negotiated solution. It was more a formal presence than a real interest in the development or success of the talks, and indeed at that time the predominant idea in the ELN was probably more to obstruct the talks, than a serious belief in the possibilities of a negotiated settlement, as spokesmen later acknowledged.

The talks in Caracas and Tlaxcala happened without the suspension of military operations, based on a previous agreement between the parties involved. [Editorial note: Additional information on the Caracas and Tlaxcala talks can be found in the article 'Negotiations with the FARC: 1982 – 2002']. Yet in the end it was an ELN military operation against the President of the Senate at the time that caused the suspension of the Caracas round.
Five months later, after one round of talks in Tlaxcala, the process broke down again, with the Gaviria administration claiming that the National Constituent Assembly process and resulting reforms left the guerrillas without justification for armed struggle. Gaviria declared an 'integral war', with the explicit aim of inflicting a strategic defeat on the guerrillas.

The renewal of contacts under Samper’s government
After this, the CGSB lost significance and eventually dissolved and the ELN underwent a period of significant military growth. As time passed, however, the organization began to incorporate dialogue and negotiation into its political thinking. It developed the central idea of a National Convention, a concept whose origin can be traced to the National Dialogues proposed in the mid-1980s by the M-19. The organization also emphasized the idea of ‘Immediately Enforceable Partial Accords’ especially in two fields: International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which was incorporated into the ELN discourse in the early 1980s, and mining and energy policy, especially oil policy.

The Samper government, therefore, started its term of office with an effort to re-politicize the conflict and the guerrilla actors and to rebuild trust. In the case of the ELN, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace made crucial, informal contacts with the imprisoned guerrilla leaders named as spokesmen by the ELN, Francisco Galán and then Felipe Torres. During these contacts, developed inside the prison but with a great deal of political respect for the spokesmen, the possibilities of a talks process with the ELN on the important issue of the ‘humanization of the war’ were discussed.

Temporary agreements were reached about the application of IHL (with the participation of the Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing - ICBF) and there was mutual acceptance of a Commission of Inquiry (a mechanism of Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions). There was also an informal meeting between two members of the High Commissioner for Peace’s Office and two members of the ELN Central Command.

The National Convention proposal
On 2 February 1996, in the middle of the Samper government’s crisis, the National Leadership of the ELN formally proposed the National Convention, in a document called ‘An urgent proposal for Colombia: an initiative for participation and decision-making on the national crisis’. It suggested that:

“All sectors of national opinion should participate: social organizations, political organizations, trade associations, the church, intellectuals, the left, democrats and patriots. It should be a meeting of all those Colombians interested in a different future for the country, and of course open to the healthy participation of the international community.”

The National Convention proposal progressively became a medium term negotiation strategy. In a subsequent document issued in November 1997 (‘The National Convention – Let’s retake the road to peace’), the ELN Central Command proposed:

“a dialogue process with the nation, without any kind of mediation, in order to remove the gag imposed by the press, radio and television on the opinions and ideas of the insurgency. We will develop this dialogue with the nation through public and secret meetings in our zone of influence. The international arena will be another space that will improve International Community efforts in this process. This great national meeting, which we are calling the National Convention, will acquire form through talking to the political movements and parties, social organizations, unions, churches, the National Conciliation Commission, the trade associations and personalities… this will provide guidelines to help overcome the crisis in the country, new approaches that will break open restricted political participation, imposed processes of disarmament and demobilization, and a system of government monopolized by the traditional machinery which excludes the majority.”

Even if this public proposal went relatively unnoticed by the government and the wider public during this moment of polarization, it remains crucial because it established the basis of the future ELN script on negotiation proposals, in relation to concepts, participants, arenas and hopes.

The Palace of Viana Pre-Agreement
At the end of the Samper government, with the support of the Spanish Government and through the independent efforts of the National Conciliation Commission (CCN) and the Office of the High Commissioner, government and ELN delegates met in Madrid. Milton Hernández (in charge of the International Front) and Juan Vásquez (member of the International Front) represented the ELN and the then Coordinator of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Daniel García-Peña and Presidential advisor José Noé Ríos represented the government. The CCN facilitated the talks, which resulted in the signing of the Palace of Viana Pre-Agreement in Madrid. This was later ratified at a meeting in the Itagüí prison between the ELN
spokesmen and the delegates of the High Commissioner’s office in the presence of the CCN.

This document, and later the Pueto del Cielo (‘Door to Heaven’) Agreement, focused on an elaboration of the National Convention proposal as a process with various spaces for dialogue, which allows for proposals from representatives of the state, society and those guerrillas which participate.’

It outlined that ‘The Convention will look to develop the basis of a political agreement on reforms and social changes, with a view to the democratization of the state and society. This will be developed through the required administrative and legislative mechanisms and through the organization of a National Constituent Assembly.’

The ‘Door to Heaven’ meeting with civil society

The Palace of Viana Pre-Agreement was leaked to the public by the Spanish newspaper ABC. With presidential campaigns in full swing, some sectors close to the future President Andrés Pastrana viewed the pre-agreement as a ploy to favour liberal candidate Horacio Serpa’s campaign. As a result the ELN cancelled the initiative.

Subsequent efforts to restart talks were led by the Colombian and German Conferences of Bishops. These were preceded by some behind-the-scenes contacts established by the German private agent Werner Maass and his Italian wife. The meetings in the German cities of Mainz and Wurzburg in June and July 1998 were held without any formal representation by the Colombian and German governments. With Father Hans Langendorfer, Secretary of the German Conference of Bishops and Bishop Emil Stehle acting as moderators, the ‘Door to Heaven’ meeting brought together the ELN, members of Colombian civil society and the National Peace Council. The importance of the National Convention was ratified, as a procedure for social participation within a process of talks that would lead to the end of the internal armed conflict.

In the Door to Heaven Accord the ELN reiterated its position that agreements around the ‘humanization of the war’ could be the starting point for talks. In addition to the accord, the Mainz talks also began to explore the possibility of the ELN ending kidnapping, if the problem of guerrilla finances could be resolved. It was agreed that this would only be viable within the framework of a talks process.

Attempts to formalize talks during Pastrana’s government

After the Mainz Meeting, the Preparatory Committee of the National Convention (formed in that meeting from a group of its members and including Francisco Galan and Felipe Torres) defined the methodological and thematic aspects of the National Convention. In agreement with a member of Central Command, they later defined the following agenda for the National Convention process: a) International Humanitarian Law; human rights, impunity, justice, insurgency and conflict; b) natural resources and energy policy; c) democracy, the state, armed forces and corruption; d) economy and social problems; e) culture and identity; nation-region; territorial reorganization; the agrarian problem and drug trafficking.

The National Convention process hit a dead-end when, during exploratory talks in Caracas in early 1999, the Pastrana government and ELN couldn’t agree on a venue, or the guarantees to take it forward. After this impasse the ELN initiated a series of kidnappings and mass retentions intended to demonstrate its military capacity and respond to the idea that they could be militarily defeated or weakened. In particular, the hijacking of an airliner on 12 April 1999 and kidnapping of all its passengers brought widespread national and international attention and condemnation.

In this political climate, the ELN criticized the government’s management of the peace process and condemned US interference in the conflict. It tried to justify its ‘war tax’ campaigns by categorically rejecting drug trafficking and proposed a National Accord document on the freeing of the first group of kidnapped aeroplane passengers. This proposal was subsequently overshadowed by the mass kidnapping of parishioners during mass at a church in Cali.

In the Pastrana period the ELN lost political support. There was a generalized public perception that it was being weakened militarily, even defeated. The Sur de Bolivar region was a symbolic case in which sectors of society, undoubtedly pressured by paramilitaries, mobilized against the establishment of a ‘meeting zone’ for ELN-government talks. This was symptomatic of negative public attitudes following the experience of the FARC demilitarized zone. Incidents such as the defection of an important ELN unit, the Yarigua Revolutionary Urban Front (FURY) to the paramilitaries in Barranquibrava, and the military defeat inflicted on the José María Becerra Front near Cali increased perceptions of military weakness. However, it is important to observe that the ELN’s growth is often compared to the growth of the FARC and from that conclusions are drawn about its real or supposed weakness.
The Civilian Facilitation Commission

It was in this context that the Civilian Facilitation Commission (CFC) was established on 30 July 1999, as an autonomous initiative by members of Colombian society, of diverse social origin, profession and political affiliation. This diversity has been its strength and has allowed it, with the acceptance of the parties, to play a national facilitating role both with the Pastrana government and with the Uribe administration. Importantly, the CFC has been able to build trust with the parties, especially through its thoughtful and discreet search for ideas to help them to overcome difficulties and obstacles.

In practice the CFC has become the national interlocutor as a result of its good work with the ELN and its coordination with the Group of Friends of the process. Despite their efforts, contacts between the Pastrana government and the ELN were riddled with mutual distrust and could never be formalized as talks. Everything indicates that there was a government tendency from the start to consider it possible to defeat the ELN militarily, and that there was no point wasting time in talks with a guerrilla group that could be demobilized and reintegrated. There was a view that this would be a process without real political cost, allowing them to conserve energy for the real fight with the FARC. This view remained despite advances in procedural aspects such as the meeting zone (strict regulations, national and international verification) and a timescale for the National Convention, with a defined methodology and content. In addition, agreement was secured on the ELN unilaterally freeing kidnapped members of the Security Forces.

The ‘Agreement for Colombia’ signed between the government and the ELN on 24 November 2001 acknowledged the non-viability of the ‘meeting zone’ at the time. This did not amount to a renunciation of the initiative by the ELN, just that formal talks would begin when it and the National Convention were politically viable. It set out the case for an evaluation exercise to review contacts between the ELN and the state, and following a Christmas ceasefire, ELN members travelled to Havana, Cuba, to attend a Peace Summit for this purpose. The initiative was also attended by the Colombian government, the CFC, the ambassadors of the Group of Friends, Cuban President Fidel Castro and some 100 participants representing economic associations, trade unions, the international community and humanitarian agencies. The summit concluded with humanitarian agreements, such as the suspension of crop spraying and guerrilla attacks on energy infrastructure. It also considered the possibility of linking regional peace initiatives with national policy, thus filling the void in the Pastrana government of forbidding regional talks.
The period following the Havana Declaration was overshadowed by the breakdown of negotiations with the FARC. Finally, despite several working group sessions and some discussions on a six-month bilateral truce, Pastrana announced the collapse of negotiations with the ELN on 31 May 2002. This sparked an angry response from the ELN, who believed that the Havana Declaration had committed both parties to a Transition Agenda that would remain in effect until August 2002 and the new presidential administration. At the beginning of the Uribe's presidency, there were formal contacts in Havana between the High Commissioner for Peace, Luis Carlos Restrepo and a representative of the Central Command but the ELN decided at the end of 2002 to consider the contacts an end, arguing that Uribe’s Democratic Security policy was belligerent and that neo-liberal economic and social policy was contrary to popular interests. It also objected to the talks process with the paramilitaries and the removal of political status from the insurgent groups.

Unity for peace or for war?
The Colombian guerrillas have typically been opposed to acting in a unified manner. When such unifying experiences have been attempted they have not managed to go beyond coordination and there has been more unity for war than for peace. Although they have different political and military strategies and unequal development, they share a strategic objective: military and political victory to allow them to seize power. This basic shared objective means that historically there have been more aspects connecting than dividing them. It is in this context that the joint communiqué from the high commands of the FARC and the ELN issued in July 2003 should be analysed. The most noticeable aspect of the joint communiqué is that it moves toward greater political unity, not as far as a merger, but suggesting a more solid alliance. It will strengthen joint military action, which is already happening in a regionally differentiated manner. Although it is questionable whether this will consolidate a policy on ending the armed conflict, it could be the beginning, in the medium term, of a single negotiation process with the guerrilla forces and could move beyond the model of ‘piecemeal peace’ that characterized previous negotiations.

Lessons and possibilities for the future
The ELN concept of a negotiated political solution appears to be one of a process of participation by diverse social and political actors. It considers itself one of those actors, although one with a self-assigned authority to become the armed watchdog of the process. The ELN has a concept of negotiation as a collective consensus-building process, while retaining the right to negotiate bilaterally with the state on strictly military issues.

The ELN sees its current National Convention proposal as a route to building consensus, and defining disagreements in the areas where consensus is not possible, in order to resolve them in the future. But there is also a wueness with regard to the nature and reach of the National Convention, its results and whether it links in parallel or in the future with a bilateral government-ELN talks table.

Everything suggests that in a negotiation process the ELN hopes to gain political, social, economic and security reforms and not just procedures through which these can be addressed in the future. And while the process is advancing, it wants to retain its military capacity as a means of ensuring compliance, a position that reflects its lack of trust in the process to deliver the necessary changes.

The ELN has always considered a ceasefire a possibility, but it has to be connected with a resolution of the problem of guerrilla finances and without accepting their concentration in a single location – a difficult position for the state to accommodate.

The ELN seems to be at a cross-roads: either they consolidate their war strategy and postpone any possibility of negotiation, or they go down the open road of the National Convention, assuming they can reach some internal consensus about it and that they are convinced that it will offer greater political results at less social cost.

However, the principal bottleneck to a sustained peace process between the government and the ELN lies in the differences in their discourse, perspectives and logic. Successive Colombian governments tend to see the problem from a logic of realism; looking at the balance of power and deducing what the guerrillas would be willing to concede in negotiations. For the ELN, the National Convention and negotiations are arenas in which a diverse range of actors from Colombian society, with an important emphasis on those who have traditionally been excluded, design the changes required to address national problems. The problem of the future of the ELN itself is therefore secondary, relatively speaking, and easy to resolve, if the National Convention process has brought about the consensual changes they hope to see. Thus the balance of military power has little importance for the ELN and only features as a mechanism to press for the start of formal talks. Until this difference in perspective can be overcome, it unlikely that a process with this guerrilla organization could have a future.
Formal peace processes

Negotiating with the paramilitaries

a minefield or a road to peace?

Mauricio Romero

Few issues have created such controversy during the past fifteen years as the paramilitary and self-defence groups, and their effect on the peace process with the guerrillas. Peacemakers have considered these groups the main spoilers of a negotiated settlement. Thus, negotiations between the government of President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2006) and the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), and the extent of the judicial benefits submitted for congress approval in 2003, have alarmed opposition parties, human rights organizations, sectors of the Catholic church, and even members of Uribe’s coalition.

Carlos Castaño, the most outspoken leader of the AUC until 2002, defined his organization as “para-statals”, alluding to the paramilitaries’ support of the Colombian state in its fight against the insurgencies. However, the main targets of these groups have been unarmed civilians accused of being “guerrilla collaborators”, “parasubversives”, or “plainclothes guerrillas”. Paramilitary groups have killed, silenced, or forced the displacement of thousands of trade unionists, social, political, or human rights activists and leaders, as well as inhabitants of the regions with social conflicts and guerrilla influence. According to the Colombian Commission of Jurists, they are responsible for two thirds of the selective killings and assassinations with known perpetrators of the past decade. The UN and international human rights organizations have also expressed their concern at the process. In late August 2003, Michel Frühling, Director of the Colombia office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned about the extent of the planned judicial benefits and called for adherence to the norms of international law.

Motivations for the negotiations

What are Uribe’s motivations for engaging in such risky and criticized negotiations with the AUC? His electoral campaign emphasized the need to strengthen the state and the rule of law; having an irregular armed group accumulating political and military power and resources under the pretext of defending and assisting the state was therefore untenable. He was also elected with strong support from regional constituencies with ties to the AUC, such as cattle ranchers and agribusiness elites. Uribe is responding to their requests to provide a suitable exit for AUC leaders, powerful regional landlords, businessmen and military entrepreneurs. Finally, he is committed to defeating the insurgencies through a combination of military force and politics, and aims to isolate them from any political support. The AUC’s demobilization would portray the guerrillas as recalcitrant groups insisting on armed struggle and terrorism.

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The AUC leadership saw Uribe’s term of office as a favourable opportunity to demobilize. His political stance gave them confidence; he has criticized any negotiation other than terms of surrender with the guerrillas, his government has continued a military build-up that seems to be containing the insurgents, and his tax-raising campaign to fund the armed forces has diminished the flow of resources to the paramilitary treasuries. As the AUC and its allies are not fighting the government or advocacing social or political reforms, this combination of factors persuaded the main AUC leaders to seek an advantageous negotiation. However, not all groups under the AUC umbrella have easily accepted demobilization. Forces of up to 4,000 armed men in the middle Magdalena Valley, the department of Antioquia, the eastern planes, and Urabá have demanded separate negotiations or remained out of the talks. Disagreements between units have even led to instances of armed confrontation.

**Progress in the negotiations**

Soon after taking office in August 2002, Uribe outlined the conditions for negotiations: a ceasefire, an end to the killing and abduction of civilians, and the severing of links with the illegal drug business. In response, the AUC announced a “unilateral ceasefire” on 1 December 2002. However, the government failed to establish a mechanism to verify the fulfilment of the conditions for negotiations, despite public knowledge that different AUC groups have continued drug-related activities or operations against civilians. Media outlets, the military and the police – previously extremely critical of the guerrillas’ misbehaviour during peace negotiations – have been particularly cautious in reporting or commenting on these activities.

The administration subsequently obtained congressional approval for a new law allowing the government to begin negotiations with an armed group without granting them political status. On 23 December, Uribe appointed a six-person exploratory commission to begin contacts with the AUC and define the conditions for negotiations. The commission includes only one government representative (Carlos Franco, a former guerrilla demobilized in the early 1990s and in charge of the Human Rights Programme of the Vice-President’s office). The other five members are private citizens, whom critics claim were appointed because they hold the same political views as Uribe. Representatives of the Catholic Church agreed to facilitate the talks. After seven months of confidential negotiations at the paramilitary compounds in northwest Colombia, the commission released a public statement on 25 June 2003. It recommended that the government continue the negotiations, and enable “verifiable implementation of a total ceasefire”, suggesting the concentration of forces as a means to fulfil this condition. The commission also demanded an end to illicit activities such as “drug trafficking, stealing of fuel, extortion and abduction”. It asked the Catholic Church to continue its role as facilitator and witness of the negotiations, the international community to support the process, and the government to define judicial mechanisms to “pave the road to peace”. Then on 15 July, High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo and nine of the AUC leaders signed the Santa Fé de Ralito Accord, outlining the parties’ acceptance of the commission’s statement and the phases of a demobilization process to begin before the end of 2003 and be completed by the end of 2005. Towards the end of 2003, the Bloque Central Bolívar and the Bloque Aliado Vencedores de Arauca signed a similar agreement. By the end of the year, 870 paramilitaries had demobilized in Medellín, and 155 in Ortega, Cauca.

**Concerns about the process**

Critics of the process have two main concerns: the timing of the judicial benefits and the lack of a comprehensive peace plan that includes negotiations with the guerrillas. Human rights organizations accept that a degree of impunity is justified when a peace process includes all parties, and the likelihood of ending the confrontation is high. They claim that any concession to the AUC should be the outcome of a process in which the victims’ rights have been addressed. They are also concerned that negotiations could help drug traffickers within the AUC to whitewash their police records and legalize their properties without punishment. Carlos Castaño announced that “if the alternative at the end of the road is jail, none of the AUC commanders and his troops would walk in that direction,” warning about the effects of failure in the negotiations.

In May 2003, former Interior Minister Fernando Londónio submitted the government’s ‘alternate penal plan’, which aims to facilitate national reconciliation and reparation for the victims. Initial reactions suggest it will not be approved easily. The President’s initiatives are likely to face difficulties in light of the failure of the government-sponsored referendum on 25 October and the recent success in the regional and local elections of the Polo Democrático, which has led opposition to the process.

By tackling one of the most difficult issues of the armed conflict President Uribe has demonstrated that he likes tough games. However, the negotiation could become a minefield, creating the conditions for new cycles of revenge and deepening Colombians’ frustration. It could also be a first step on the road to peace. For this to happen, President Uribe needs to behave like a peace and nation builder, rather than a warmonger.
Reforms are the key to peace

Carlos A. Lozano Guillén

In November 2001, when the peace process between the government of Andrés Pastrana Arango and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was in crisis, the legendary FARC commander Manuel Marulanda Vélez spoke to the Colombian newspaper VOZ. He said that in order to provide continuity and stability in the peace talks, the Establishment needed to determine what was negotiable on the path to a political settlement of the conflict. It seems to me that this is the key to the negotiations, as was clearly stated in the report from the Comisión de Personalidades, presented to the Government and the FARC in September 2001.

The Comisión de Personalidades (Commission of Distinguished Citizens) – renamed the Comisión de Notables by the press – was appointed by agreement between the parties at the first summit held between Pastrana and Marulanda, and stipulated in the Los Pozos Accord of 9 February 2001. The Commission comprised four people, two proposed by the Government (the constitutional lawyer, Vladimir Naranjo and the director of the national newspaper El Colombiano Ana Mercedes Gómez Martínez) and two by the FARC (the doctor Alberto Pinzón Sánchez and the director of the newspaper VOZ, Carlos A Lozano Guillén). Its mission was to produce a report with recommendations on how to reduce the intensity of the armed conflict and proposals on how to combat paramilitarism. The report was delivered in September 2001, although not signed by Ana Mercedes Gómez, who alleged differences with the rest of the commissioners.

The principal stumbling block for peace in Colombia, without ignoring the negative effect of the terrible acts
of war, is that the Colombian establishment has not determined how far it wants to go with negotiations with the insurgency. Its position during the talks, as a rule, is limited to descriptive issues (i.e. procedures, methodology, timetables, etc.), while the in-depth issues concerning political, economic and social reforms, which in the end will be those that resolve the conflict, are relegated to second place.

The history of peace processes between the government and the FARC or the ELN confirm that whenever the time comes to address problems at the root of the Colombian conflict (political, economic, social and historical causes) in the negotiations, pressure from the ‘dominant class’ is exerted to break them - in the majority of cases using the military actions of the guerrilla as a pretext. This was the case with Betancur’s government in 1984, in the Caracas and Tlaxcala talks during the government of César Gaviria in 1993 and in the Caguán peace process.

While the Colombian Establishment maybe has the ‘will for peace’ it does not have the ‘will for change’. It wants peace but without eliminating the causes of the conflict, such as the lack of democracy (or at least the restriction of democratic freedoms inherent in an exclusive bipartisan political system) and the profound disintegration of the social and economic fabric.

Throughout the Colombian conflict the dominant class has tried to defeat the guerrillas militarily in order to impose surrender, an approach some call a kind of paz de los sepulcros (peace of tombs). The result of similar efforts in the past has been greater escalation in the armed conflict and the strengthening of the guerrillas.

The government of Pastrana acted in this way when it broke off the peace talks. The pretext was the hijacking of the plane and the kidnapping of Senator Gechem Turbay on 20 February 2002, but there is a perception that Pastrana had taken the decision to end the peace process with the FARC as far back as October 2001, under intense pressure from the right wing sectors of the traditional parties, the majority of the business sector (in particular cattle-ranchers and large landowners), the military high-command and the Embassy of the USA. With the process in crisis and lacking concrete results, the parties would have had to begin in-depth discussion of political and social issues. Instead, there was a period of inertia from October 2001 until the incident in February 2002.

Throughout three and a half years the talks were focused on issues related to the acute ongoing conflict, and with aspects of form, and never reached the Common Agenda adopted by both parties in May 1999. Yet without doubt this Common Agenda was the most important and transcendental advance in the peace process.

This was exactly what the Report of the Comisión de Personalidades concluded. It clearly recognized the political and social character of the conflict and recommended that the Common Agenda form the basis of the negotiations in order to arrive at concrete accords or even a ‘Peace Accord’. Such an accord would need to be agreed through a National Constituent Assembly, before which the guerrillas should disarm. For the Commission this was the purpose of the negotiation process.

In this context, the report proposed that there should be a bilateral truce for six months, renewable on joint agreement by the parties, and a bilateral commitment to respect human rights and accept IHL, in order to reduce the intensity of the conflict. This would create a better environment for the parties to advance the negotiation of the in-depth issues in the presence of different sectors of Colombian society. With regard to the paramilitaries, it recommended rooting out any relations to and protection from state agents and bringing them to justice, with the understanding that there could be no level of political recognition.

The Report of the ‘Personalidades’ was directed at the peace process with the FARC, although the ELN was interested in it. It was very well received by both parties and by various sectors in the country, amongst them the Congress, the Liberal Party, the parties of the left, the trade unions, the business community and the main industrial trade associations, the Catholic Church and the diplomatic corps. Although both parties agreed to adopt it as a ‘route-map’ in the San Francisco de la Sombra Accord, the report arrived at the worst moment of crisis and the largest offensive against the process by enemies of peace in Colombia. The processes with both insurgencies failed through a unilateral rupture, in both cases by President Pastrana.

In the short term it is difficult to see how the peace processes could be reconstituted under the government of Uribe Vélez. In official policy, oriented by Washington, war has the upper hand and the attitude towards even a humanitarian accord on the issue of kidnappings and retentions is negative.

Despite this, the Report of the ‘Personalidades’ could be useful in future efforts towards peace. It is fully valid as a kind of route map for the political resolution of the conflict, as is the Common Agenda, which includes the in-depth issues that could clear the way for a democratic opening in Colombia. The report underlines the political origin of the conflict, the bilateral nature of agreements, the need for a reduction in intensity of the armed conflict and for advanced political and social reforms.
Personal perspectives

Alternatives for peace
The business community's perspective

Business organizations are responsible for the production and distribution of almost all the goods and services that satisfy human needs, and are therefore the wealth-creators and key protagonists of economic, social and cultural development of nations. The men and women who run businesses, as many experiences demonstrate, therefore become essential actors in the prevention of violence and the resolution of social, economic and political conflicts.

Because of the prominent role that society assigns to it, the private business sector has an inescapable social responsibility to protect the security of the communities it serves, not only because of ethical imperatives but because it needs propitious and stable conditions to do its job effectively.

The business sector and peace

Colombian business leaders are increasingly aware of the role they should play in the search for a resolution to our armed conflict and the consolidation of a durable peace. This can be seen in their personal, active and direct participation in negotiation, demobilization and reconciliation processes from 1982 to the present.

The Ideas for Peace Foundation (FIP) is an expression of this commitment to the country, created and backed by a group of well-known and progressive leaders of important companies. Since the end of 1999 this centre of ideas and action has been contributing to the solution of the prolonged internal conflict and its deleterious impact on Colombia's political, social and economic institutions.
The FIP's input into President Pastrana's peace initiative, and now into that of President Uribe, is derived from work undertaken in three areas of activity. Firstly, the FIP informs national and international public opinion about the causes and impact of the conflict and alternatives for its resolution. Secondly, it offers critical evaluation of the talks and negotiation processes to the government, Colombian civil society and other friendly countries. Finally, the Foundation proposes post-agreement projects which include the rehabilitation of victims, reintegration of fighters, institutional development, the reintegration of ex-combatants and income generation.

The views of the business sector
The FIP expresses and embodies the prevalent position of the most progressive and responsible section of the business community on how to achieve peace. It believes that the speediest, most desirable and least onerous option in terms of human and material cost is a politically negotiated solution. It rejects the use of violence as a political weapon and condemns human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The business sector believes that the democratic principles which inspire our institutionality are valid and effective for building a just society together, and recognizes that additional institutional reforms are necessary in order to achieve it, some of which are already included in draft legislation and others are being studied and prepared. Only through strengthening our democratic institutions can we ensure viable governance, and ensure the full and essential application of basic liberties, human rights, and respect for the principles of equality and tolerance which make peaceful coexistence possible. The FIP disseminates and promotes these ideas widely through different media. In particular, it aims to engage with the rest of the national business community, who have as yet only limited awareness about social responsibility and their role in achieving peace.

Future perspectives
It will take time for peace talks with the guerrillas to be reactivated, given the precedents of the last attempt. For this to happen, some conditions need to be in place. The first is a change in the correlation of forces and military resources of the parties in conflict in favour of the state. The state is constitutionally obliged to impose law and order in the whole country, and has to commit itself wholeheartedly to stopping the violence of all illegal actors using all the legitimate methods at its disposal. We know that the probability of a conflict being solved increases substantially when one of the parties perceives that it is militarily weaker and that it could be advisable to negotiate. Another condition is that the insurgency understands they do not have the support of the population that they claim to represent, nor the support of external allies. An entire population united around a state policy which rejects the use of violence and terror as a political weapon should induce the insurgency to negotiate. A third condition is the intervention of a neutral third party in the form of a person or entity with sufficient influence and moral stature, initially to bring the parties together and develop contacts through discreet channels, and later to mediate in a negotiation process.

To achieve progress in future talks the actual definition of peace needs to be a starting point. The maximalist version adopted during the last failed talks was unhelpful because it defined an unrealistic design for a new country. The aim should be an end to hostilities and the reintegration of the demobilized fighters into the democratic system and a normal life. This should follow accords that include 'political favourability', finally allowing the reintegrated members to gain access to the various arenas of political representation.

Other factors and circumstances can influence the achievement of a politically negotiated solution. The state has the constitutional duty to improve the capacity of the military forces to protect civilians and fight violence from illegal armed groups across the whole country. International pressure, in the current context of zero tolerance of violence and terror as political instruments, needs to continue. The sources of financial support for violence must be blocked.

On the guerrillas' side, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) lack of capacity to convert its military power into political advances is evident, as is its failure to shift from a guerrilla war to the more advanced stage of a war of movements. Desertions are increasing, and every day there are more obvious signs of fatigue, demoralization and logistical difficulties within the guerrilla groups. This should also lead them to negotiate.

Talks on the demobilization of the self-defence groups have begun, without first offering them political recognition, which would have been impossible. The process will be slow and full of hurdles, originating from their long history of serious human rights violations and crimes. Achieving real disarmament and reintegration, while complying with principles of truth, justice, and reparations, will be a positive step towards peace.

The business community will contribute effectively to the achievement of peace in multiple ways. It will support the necessary institutional reforms to attack exclusion, poverty and inequality, and to guarantee human rights and coexistence. It will offer solutions to post-conflict problems and inspire society to make peace the great national project.
Formal peace processes

As the oldest civil war in Latin America takes on aspects of the ‘new wars’ of the Post-Cold War era, the Colombian peace process and the specific form it might take in the future are a fascinating laboratory to study the ‘new peaces’ required for the new millennium.

The peace process has had its distinct stages and mixed results. However, the evolution, combination and interplay between government policy and insurgents’ response have produced two distinct ‘historical models’ for conflict resolution: the first moulded during the Betancur years and co-authored by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), while the second was the result of the Barco administration’s dealings with the 19 April Movement (M-19). Even though since then there have been variations on the two and attempts at designing alternatives, the two often conflicting models have continued to predominate.

Over the years and despite the many setbacks, there have also been important elements of progress and evolution that in the future could come to constitute a ‘third model’ for conflict resolution, including new factors, such as a more active role for civil society, greater concern from the international community and the effects of the growing intensity of the war itself.

Historical models of conflict resolution in Colombia

The Betancur/FARC model of conflict resolution was characterized by a ‘broad agenda’ of social and political structural reforms and took its most concrete form in the La Uribe Accord in 1984. It was based on an acceptance by the Betancur administration of the ‘objective causes’ of the conflict such as social inequity and political exclusion, and recognition of the insurgencies as legitimate interlocutors in negotiations. The pioneering nature of Betancur’s approach omitted sufficient institutionalization of his peace policy and he failed to engage important political and social actors such as the armed forces, the Catholic Church and local business elites in the process. He did however succeed in laying down three basic pillars that would somehow guide future administrations: talks with the guerrillas, political reforms and social and economic relief.

President Barco was elected largely as a reaction against the generalized perception of the failure of Betancur’s approach. Barco reversed the order of priorities outlined by his predecessor, demonstrating that social and political reforms should happen independently of negotiations with the insurgents, and moving to institutionalize peace policy. Just as the FARC helped to mould Betancur’s approach, the co-authors of the new Barco policy were the M-19. They quickly agreed on the
negotiation's objective: to focus on political guarantees allowing the insurgencies to disarm and transform themselves into legal democratic movements, as well as the terms for reincorporation of ex-combatants into civilian life, which took place in 1990. This was arguably a 'limited' agenda in comparison with the array of issues on the 'broad' agenda discussed between Betancur and the FARC.

The Betancur/FARC and Barco/M-19 models of negotiation remained important reference points during the subsequent administrations of Gaviria, Samper and Pastrana. While Gaviria's presidency is remembered primarily for his policy of "integral war" against the insurgency, it is noteworthy that during the first part of his term, while on one track the Barco/M-19 model was being negotiated and implemented with the EPL, the PRT and the Quintin Lame, it simultaneously agreed in Caracas with the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body to an agenda closer to the Betancur/FARC model. Although the political crisis that dogged the Samper administration prevented any progress in peace talks, government peace policy conceptually returned to the broad agenda of the Betancur/FARC model, while continuing the process of institutionalization central to the Barco/M-19 model. New elements included the ratification of the Second Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and the recognition of a new role for civil society and the international community.

The Pastrana administration blended elements of both historical models and added new ones. Pastrana's pre-inauguration meeting with Manuel Marulanda signalled a return to direct presidential diplomacy without abandoning the formal institution of the Office of the High Commissioner. The 1999 Agenda for Change for Peace signed by the government and the FARC is clearly inspired in the broad agenda of the Betancur/FARC model, yet much of the administration's policies and handling of specific issues reflected otherwise. The agreements on procedures reflect an evolution with regards to past experiences with the FARC, with the Public Hearings and the Thematic Committee creating limited opportunities for broader public participation. The armed forces were also generally supportive of the process, despite the FARC's relentless pursuit of the war. And finally, although Pastrana was not fully successful in enabling other branches of his government to play a useful role, he skillfully used international concern about the effects of the war to garner support and create
awareness of the peace process around the world. If progress of the peace process could in fact be measured in its more ample dimension, including citizen awareness, ripeness of political conditions, social support and possibilities for international cooperation, there is no doubt that the Pastrana years saw unprecedented advance. However, there was never a coherent strategy for the negotiation process itself, nor did the talks produce any real progress on the substantive issues.

The Uribe interlude
There is no doubt that the collapse of talks in 2002 was directly proportionate to the success of Alvaro Uribe and his hard-line policy of democratic security in the presidential elections of that year. Nevertheless, at least on paper, the Uribe administration has not closed the door completely on future talks. However both they and the insurgents trade unlikely conditions as prerequisites for talks: the FARC demand the demilitarization of two departments and the President insists on a unilateral ceasefire, the immediate release of all those kidnapped by the guerrillas and a limitation of the agenda to the terms of disarmament and reintegration, echoing a more restricted version of the limited agenda of the Barco/M19 model. In relation to the National Liberation Army (ELN), Uribe has also ratified the intermediary role being played by Cuba.

The biggest policy shift by the Uribe administration is the treatment of the paramilitary groups. Uribe secured congressional approval for a controversial legal reform removing the recognition of political status as a prerequisite for peace talks. In this new context, and under the auspices of the Catholic Church, contacts with the AUC were established and an initial deal, the Santa Fé de Ralito Accord was signed on 15 June 2003.

However, there are still more questions than answers, relating to the extent of paramilitary disarmament, their role in drug-trafficking, and their potential conversion into ‘peasant soldiers’ upon demobilization. There are also deeper questions about truth, justice and reparation for atrocities, as well as the degree of state responsibility in their creation and development.

In the meantime, the war continues, with some changes in its dynamics. There are growing signs that the conflict can shift to the cities through acts of terrorism. While some indicators of the violence, like kidnapping, have decreased, others, like forced internal displacement, are at a record high. For the first time in over a decade the FARC and the ELN issued a joint communiqué pledging to fight closer together. Although it is still early, these factors suggest that chances for restarting peace talks in the short term are slim at best, making the current administration an interlude in Colombia’s search for peaceful resolution to its internal war.

Towards a new Colombian model of conflict resolution?
The corollary of two decades of peace processes is a wealth of valuable experience. Each of the two historical models, Betancur/FARC and Barco/M19, made significant contributions, and recent years have also led to the appearance and consolidation of key, new elements. Added to a synthesis of specific aspects of the two historical models, these could be the ingredients for a future, third model for conflict resolution, building upon the lessons of the past, but adjusting to the realities of the present and the future. For this new model to evolve, unfortunately, the ongoing dynamic of escalation must reach maturity. Likewise, several additional conditions should emerge or be induced.

Civil society participation
In the Colombian conflict, the armed political actors on the left and the right, and the state itself, have precarious legitimacy. Even collectively, they do not represent the nation as a whole. For this reason a central component of the new model will have to be the active role of civil society, at different levels and at different moments of the peace process. Yet it is not simply a matter of having civil society sit at the table alongside the government and the guerrillas as a third party. For example, the most significant arena for citizen participation in the processes of the early nineties was not the peace talks with the insurgent groups that decided to demobilize, but the wider dynamics that evolved around the National Constituent Assembly. These other forums, however, must be closely connected to the negotiations around the armed conflict.

In the processes with both the FARC and the ELN during the Pastrana years, there were subtle attempts to involve civil society in the negotiation process, much more pronounced and decisive in the second case. Although neither was able to adequately constitute itself in an effective and socially accepted means of citizen participation, it is significant that both processes at some point expressed the need to establish better links with society and its diverse expressions.

However, the Los Pozos Accord serves as an example of how often civil society participation was more rhetorical than real. There can be no more graphic expression of the archetype of bilateralism than the picture of the President and the legendary guerrilla chieftain meeting alone
under a tent, like two chivalric generals deciding the fate of an entire nation. The overwhelming political effect of the meeting, symbolized in the hugs and the handshakes, indicates that even though neither the government nor the FARC can claim to represent the Colombian people, when they come together to work jointly for peace, their legitimacy, popular backing and degree of social representation takes a quantum leap. This should at least prevent us overemphasizing the magnitude and scope of civil society representation.

But what the final breakdown of the talks during the Pastrana years suggests is that the essentially bilateral nature of the negotiation model was inadequate given the levels of complexity of the national crisis. It is therefore imperative that the new model has specific objectives for social participation to be effective. It must also be remembered that civil society reflects the contradictions and conflicts that characterize a nation fractured by years of war and political violence. While it has shown enormous resilience, great ability to mobilize people power and capacity to generate new leaderships, it still reflects the many tears in the nation’s social fibre. Civil society, in its diverse forms of expression, must also be able to further its organizational capacities and reach the necessary levels of commitment, decision and empowerment needed to express its will and have it respected.

The National Peace Council, although it has not been implemented nor fully developed since it was created, can be revived and reformed if necessary, as an institutional setting to articulate the diversity of representations and expressions of Colombian society. Although the ELN's National Convention has yet to be more than a vague proposal, many of its components coincide with the basic premise that civil society must play a formal and decisive role in a peace settlement. Likewise, the proposal made by the Comisión de Personalidades focused on linking the ceasefire with the specific objective of convening a new National Constituent Assembly as the final stage of talks with the FARC, reminiscent of the Barco/M19 model.

Broad participation must also be consolidated within the political arena. After the genocide of the Patriotic Union (UP) in the late 1980s and the frustration of the Democratic Alliance M-19 in the early 1990s, the absence of a democratic left within the legal spectrum of party politics gave credence to the insurgents’ claim that it is only possible to exercise opposition through armed struggle. For this reason, the recent appearance and early success of the leftist Polo Democrático in the 2002 national elections and 2003 regional elections should be seen as a significant step towards reversing this historical deficit in Colombian democracy.

Unlike previous experiences, the Polo Democrático reflects the growing autonomy, independence and distance of social organizations, intellectuals and progressive political movements with regard to the insurgency. If it is able to continue consolidating itself as a modern and viable political alternative, the Polo Democrático could persuade the guerrillas that playing within legal bounds is possible in Colombia.

**Institutionalizing peace policy**

Another fundamental transformation required to consolidate the new model is the institutionalization of peace as a state policy rather than a presidential policy. Amongst the branches and components of the state, the armed forces are especially important. Traditionally excluded from policy-making and from the talks themselves, the military should be directly and actively involved in all phases, including and very significantly at the negotiation table. Furthermore, strategic continuity is required to bridge the gap from one administration to the next, requiring it to move beyond the category of state policy, extending the degree of consensus to the whole of society, to reach the level of public policy.

Creating and sustaining political support for the peace process is essential for its feasibility. The highly volatile nature of public opinion and the fragility of civil society were evident during the Betancur/FARC experience, as social and political support for his peace policies at the beginning fizzled into nothing. Something very similar occurred with Pastrana. In the case of the Barco/M19 process, even though civil society only played a marginal role, public support grew ostensibly as the peace agreements began to transform into tangible and visible realities, carrying over into the National Constituent Assembly.

Amidst the escalation of the war and its increasing degradation, much can be done to prepare a climate favorable to a negotiated settlement. The democratic development of the organizations of civil society on the social front, the consolidation and growth of the movements like the Polo Democrático on the political front, strategic thinking and planning on realistic post-conflict scenarios on the public-policy front, the building of international support networks for peace, are all vital tasks which require a long-term perspective.

**Humanitarian Accords**

Another key component of a new model and its political and social support base is the gradual application of the ethical values and norms of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. The implementation of International Humanitarian Law by the way of special, ad hoc agreements, as a first step
towards a fuller respect for human rights, becomes a moral and political imperative. For these to be possible, they must produce benefits for all parties; for example, political recognition for the insurgency and the freeing of kidnapped victims for the government.

**Shifts in guerrilla strategy**

The still unknown outcome of internal processes within the insurgent groups is another key component in determining the feasibility of any future dialogue. Just as the breakdown of talks in the early nineties gave the hard-liners in the FARC the upper-hand, we will have to wait to see if this time a similar shift takes place, possibly allowing for a re-positioning of the more political wing. Within the ELN, recent experience confirms that its traditional complex decision-making by consensus within the five-man Central Command, coupled with the fact that no one has yet been able to replace Manuel Pérez at the helm, continues to often produce erratic political leadership and ever-shifting positions.

One further condition for the new model is the coordination of the processes with the FARC and the ELN. The issues to be discussed in each are the same, although with different order and emphasis. Understanding their distinct natures, sizes and conditions, their historical differences and present rivalries, and the particular rhythms of their internal processes and of their dealings with the government, it is necessary for all the concerned parties to work towards the eventual convergence of the two into a common trajectory – or at least a coordinated one.

**Social and political reforms**

We should assume the basic premise that peace will entail deep structural changes in social and political terms, requiring legal and constitutional reforms that can affect society and culture as a whole. Issues at the root of the conflict, such as land ownership, macroeconomic policy, the use of natural resources and energy policy, must be seriously debated and redefined. This does not imply, as someone once put it, a "socialist revolution by decree." But it does mean that the Colombian political system and society must do some serious upgrading to meet the standards set even by bourgeois liberal democracy. Far from the achieving the Bolshevik Revolution, Colombia needs to first think about the French Revolution.

This leads one to envision an acute redistribution of political power that will probably include formal recognition of local guerrilla control of significant portions of territory and greater regional autonomy, without ever considering the notion of a Yugoslavia-style
disintegration of national unity. On the contrary, power-sharing is much more likely than break-up.

Sensitive issues of defence and security, involving the armed forces, will also require reform. Not only will their doctrine, make-up and functions be matters of negotiation and of major redesign, but it is likely that integration of today’s rebels into some form of national security force will be required. Whether that be the army, as has been suggested by ELN leaders, or separate units, or a whole new body, remains to be seen.

It will also be necessary to foresee a five to ten year process, with a probable period of adjustment of what could be called ‘armed peace’. It is clear that from the rebels’ point of view and given the long history of broken promises and political genocide, their guns are seen as their only leverage to monitor and press for the implementation of agreements, and guarantee personal safety for their members and sympathizers.

For this reason, particularly given the experience of the Barco/M19 process, it is necessary to think about and plan for the colossal task of reincorporating thousands of ex-combatants from all the armed groups into civilian life. This must take into account the human, social, regional and economic components. Rather than try to turn peasants into business people, which failed a decade ago, it will be necessary to apply different models of alternative development, and more democratic organization of production within the parameters of a free-market economy, such as cooperatives and social development zones, where tax credits and public funding create investment incentives in historically deprived areas. Opening up real equal opportunity is today far more important for furthering the democratization of Colombian society than nationalizing industry.

Addressing paramilitarism
Without a doubt, one of the major questions for the future is that of the paramilitaries. It seems obvious that for peace to be complete and lasting, it must include all those who are involved in the war. However, the way in which a process with the paramilitaries is advanced can provide important incentives or obstacles to future negotiations with the insurgencies.

This, of course, leads to further immense issues for the future: impunity, punishment, due justice. It is clear that given the unthinkable level of atrocities perpetrated by these groups, the mere discussion of possible pardons or amnesties raises some very delicate questions and matters that go far beyond the boundaries of Colombia, especially in the new context of the International Criminal Court. We too must face the dilemma that all post-conflict societies have had to confront and design our particular way of resolving the tension between the need to forget required for reconciliation and the equally important need to punish the guilty without which peace can only become a cover-up for impunity and wounds that never heal.

But, more important than punishing paramilitary atrocities, the consolidation of a new model of conflict resolution that can lead to real and sustainable peace will require the dismantling of the logic and system of paramilitarism itself.

There is no doubt that the one key ingredient of the new model is the participation of the international community. Despite the many shortcomings faced, the Pastrana years showed, both in the cases of FARC and ELN, that the role of the international community can be multifaceted, and can include accompaniment, facilitation, mediation, cooperation and technical support.

Final thoughts
Our history shows that every time peace efforts break down, it is harder to start again and much costlier to human life and the nation as a whole. While many Colombians feel that we have touched bottom, the potential for violence to escalate further is great. However, if neither side is able to win the war, Colombia will find itself once again restarting the peace process. But in order for this current phase of increasing conflict to blossom into the final act of this seemingly endless war, a new model for conflict resolution must arise. It must be able to adjust to the burdensome and seemingly outdated need to redress historic injustices that most societies resolved decades, if not centuries ago. But it must also have the high-tech sophistication required to incorporate a diverse network of inter-related pieces, increasingly interconnected with a large variety of global concerns. Such a mammoth task can only be accomplished with the teamwork of an awful lot people over a long period against apparently insurmountable odds. This is a challenge that only the Colombian people as a whole, with the help of their friends in the world, can meet.
No room for peace?

United States’ policy in Colombia

Winifred Tate

The United States’ support for peace efforts in Colombia has been ambivalent at best, and always subject to the pressures of official policy priorities: first counternarcotics programmes and now the ‘war on terror’. Diplomatic efforts in favour of negotiations have been thwarted by internal governmental divisions among governmental branches and deeply held suspicion of the guerrillas’ political will. Throughout the negotiations during the administration of Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002), the US government remained focused on counter-narcotics objectives to the detriment of the peace process. Initial, limited support for the negotiations quickly eroded following the murder of three US citizens by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in March 1999, and internal political pressure against the process. Civil society lobbying efforts shaped the debate over US policy and its aid package without substantially altering the content. Following the political shifts instituted by the administration of George Bush (2001–) and the attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, the US is even less willing to support peace talks with the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN), although officials have offered some support for negotiation efforts with the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). Current US assistance and programmes in Colombia have been incorporated into the global ‘war on terror’, with increased military funding linked directly to counter-insurgency efforts. In this context, significant US support for any future negotiations with the guerrillas is unlikely.

Counternarcotics policies and peace talks

US international counter-narcotics policies are based on zero tolerance at home and abroad, criminalizing all stages in the chain of illegal narcotic production, transport and consumption. By declaring drug trafficking a threat to national security, and making the Pentagon the lead agency for international counter-narcotics policy, President Reagan set the stage for the expansion of the “war on drugs” in the 1990s. These efforts in Colombia have been two-pronged: extensive herbicide spraying in
illicit crop growing areas, primarily coca fields in southern Colombia, and hundreds of millions of dollars in military hardware and training for Colombian security forces involved in counter-narcotics operations. Since 1989, when President George Bush Sr. announced the “Andean Strategy,” counter-narcotics funding has escalated from US$18 million to almost US$750 million in 2003.

US counter-narcotics programmes have been an obstacle to peace efforts on several levels. Fumigation has an impact on large-scale coca growers and peasant farmers alike, destroying food crops and alternative development projects as well as coca fields. Fumigation campaigns have exacerbated existing social tensions, eroded public confidence in the government, and generated widespread protests, including the largest peasant mobilization of the decade in massive protest marches in 1996. US military assistance for counter-narcotics operations changes the correlation of forces on the battlefield, by offering training and supplies for the Colombian military. Since 1999, growing US support for the Colombian army has been viewed as endorsement of a military ‘solution’ to the conflict. Finally, the imposition of ‘non-negotiable’ counter-narcotics policies by the US means that the Colombian government has been unable to set their own policy agenda. Despite the fact that counter-narcotics policy was the tenth point on the FARC’s platform, the US made it clear to their Colombian governmental allies that changes in US policy imperatives were unacceptable. Failure to comply with US objectives could result in decertification in the annual assessment of all countries’ compliance with counter-narcotics objectives, meaning the loss of US aid.

US suspicion of the Colombian guerrillas and hostility within many official sectors to negotiating reforms has also impeded the development of successful negotiations. Lewis Tambs, US Ambassador to Colombia 1983–1985 is credited with inventing the term “narcoguerrillas” to describe the FARC and the ELN. For much of the 1990s, many US officials portrayed the guerrillas in public comments and private meetings simply as drug trafficking bandits. The FARC and the ELN are also both listed on the US State Department List of Terrorist Organizations, as is the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitary group.

**US policy and Pastrana’s efforts for peace**

Many hoped that the 1998 election of President Andrés Pastrana would offer an opportunity to broaden the US–Colombia agenda. President Bill Clinton pledged his support for the peace process and expressed his intent to broaden US–Colombian relations to address a range of issues, including human rights, judicial reform and trade. State Department officials, at the request of the Colombian government, began meetings to support the negotiations. In December 1998, Deputy Assistant
Secretary of State for Andean Affairs Philip Chicola spent two days in Costa Rica with representatives of the FARC. Two months later, US Ambassador Curtis Kamman was among the foreign diplomats to attend the inauguration of peace talks in the demilitarized zone. These efforts came under sharp attack from critical Congressional Republicans who used their power in the appointment process to prevent the confirmation of Assistant Secretary of State Peter Romero, in response to his approval of the meeting with the FARC.

In March 1999, FARC actions further eroded US support for the process. The FARC killed three US indigenous rights activists who were visiting Arauca in support of the Uwa indigenous people in their struggle against Occidental Petroleum oil exploration. Despite the published pleas of one of the victims' mother in favour of peace efforts, US officials prohibited future meetings with the FARC until those responsible were handed over to the Colombian justice system. As the FARC refused, the US declined to participate in any public events for the process or any Group of Friends meetings.

Even in the first hopeful months of the peace process, the US was expanding military assistance programmes to Colombia. As early as December 1998, the US instigated a major policy shift by beginning to support the Colombian military. At a meeting of Latin American defence ministers, Defence Secretary William Cohen and Colombian Defence Minister Rodrigo Lloreda agreed to the first new Colombian Army counter-narcotics battalion. By 1999, Colombia had become the third largest recipient of US military assistance in the world.

The 'emergency' aid package of 'US Support for Plan Colombia' presented by President Clinton totalled US$1.3 billion for 2000 and 2001 (US$860 million of which was assistance to Colombia), and barely reflected prevailing efforts for peace. What was described as US support for President Pastrana's national development plan in reality changed it substantially. Pastrana had first presented Plan Colombia in 1998 as a "Marshall Plan" for economic and social development in southern Colombia. But the final Plan Colombia was a vague proposal for reform, rumoured to have been written in English and never debated in the Colombian Congress.

The bulk of US$642 million assistance to the security forces included within the package was designated for the "Push into Southern Colombia" and used to train and equip three new army counter-narcotics battalions and provide helicopters and intelligence assistance. For the FARC, this was one more example of how the Pastrana administration was not genuinely interested in peace.

Domestic debates on US–Colombia policy

Corporate lobbyists have also played a visible role in shaping US assistance to Colombia. Newsweek magazine reported that Lockheed Martin, one of the largest defence contractors in the US, commissioned a poll revealing that the drug war was a weak issue for the Democrats in the 2000 election. Helicopter manufacturers have been pushing the aid package as well. Occidental Petroleum Vice President Lawrence Merialo was one of a very few non-governmental witnesses to testify before Congress in favour of the package, as a leader in the US–Colombia Business Partnership, founded in 1996 to represent US companies with business interests in Colombia.

Non-governmental, religious and activist groups also lobbied to change the aid package, advocating the removal or reduction of military assistance, the addition of human rights language and more development aid. Beginning in 1997, a loose coalition called the Colombia Steering Committee coordinated these efforts, posting legislative updates and organizing lobbying efforts. While each organization focused their efforts according to individual institutional mandates, all shared the general objectives of building public support for the peace process and improving the human rights situation. Given the difficulties in the process, NGOs were more successful in raising human rights issues than promoting the peace agenda. NGO lobbyists were successful in working with Congressional staff to add human rights conditions into the legislation. According to these conditions, the State Department must certify that the Colombian government is making progress on a series of specific human rights issues, including prosecuting paramilitary leaders and removing from active duty military officers accused of collusion with such groups. These conditions were either waived or certified following pro forma review. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Washington Office on Latin America responded with a series of joint documents offering evidence that the Colombian government had not met the certification requirements. Despite frustration at the lack of genuine implementation of the conditions, each certification process was an opportunity for debate, and raised the profile of human rights in US policy.

The 'Leahy Law', named for sponsor Senator Patrick Leahy, and one of the most active senators on human rights issues, was also central in debates over human rights issues in Colombia. Attached to appropriations bills from 1997, this law prohibits military assistance to foreign military units implicated in human rights violations, and stipulates that corrective measures must be taken (the language has varied slightly in different bills over time). Interpretation has been subject to debate, particularly
over what constitutes a 'unit' and what appropriate corrective measures are. In Colombia, the US has instituted a vetting programme to view the record of soldiers receiving US training. To date, the US has applied the law to temporarily suspend funding in three cases.

President George Bush Jr. expanded the strategy of supporting local police and security forces in the war on drugs with the Andean Regional Initiative. Despite the on-going efforts to salvage the negotiations, peace in Colombia was not part of the Bush agenda. With the attacks on the US of 11 September 2001, any residual support for the Colombian peace process almost immediately evaporated as US attention became focused on the Middle East. By the time the process collapsed in February 2002, US officials were openly pleased.

‘War on terror’
Following the ‘9/11’ attacks, US foreign policy, including policy towards Colombia, underwent a major shift as the US focused on terrorism. Paradoxically, military aid to Colombia has continued increasing even as Colombia has become less of a policy priority, given expanding US military engagement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. Since the ‘9/11’ attacks, US officials including Secretary of State Colin Powell and former US Ambassador to Colombia Anne Patterson have linked the FARC and al-Qaeda in public statements and incorporated Colombia into the broader ‘war on terror’.

Starting in 2002, the US further expanded their military operations in Colombia with the Pipeline protection programme, entailing US$99 million to protect the Canon-Limon from attack by the ELN and the FARC in 2002–03. Another US$147 million will go to Colombia through the same funding programme in 2004, but only part of this will go to the pipeline effort. More than 70 US Special Forces officers will train two elite battalions of Colombian soldiers to protect the pipeline, 50 per cent of which is owned by US-based Occidental Petroleum.

The next major change occurred in August 2002. A change in US law allowed lethal assistance provided to Colombia — previously restricted to counter-narcotics operations — to be used in "counterterrorism" operations. Now, US aid and training can be used by Colombian army units to attack FARC, ELN and AUC fronts in a move that directly incorporates Colombia into the US ‘war on terror’.

On 10 September 2003, General James Hill, head of US Southern Command, linked Middle Eastern and Latin American terrorists, concluding, "Not surprisingly, Islamic radical groups and narco-terrorists in Colombia all practice the same business methods;" President Bush included an additional US$104 million for Colombia in the ‘emergency supplemental’ foreign aid package passed in March 2003 to pay for the war in Iraq. The requested 2004 foreign aid package includes US$731 million in aid for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative destined for Colombia and six other countries.

Paramilitary talks
The Uribe administration has begun a radically different kind of negotiation with the right-wing paramilitary groups. On 10 September 2001, the AUC was added to the State Department list of terrorist organizations, and the US has indicted AUC spokesman Carlos Castaño (as well as FARC leaders) for drug trafficking. Although the internal dynamics of the process remains unclear, US officials have been very supportive in public statements. In an interview published in the major Bogotá daily El Tiempo, former US Ambassador to Colombia Anne Patterson said that the US would help fund the demobilization of paramilitary forces.

Impact of US involvement
Since the late 1990s, the US has appeared to be adopting a ‘Salvadoran’ style strategic approach. Civilian and military policy-makers alike invoke US policy towards El Salvador in the 1980s as the model, in which direct military intervention is eschewed in favor of escalating assistance in the form of equipment, training and intelligence technology. As in El Salvador, US officials also emphasize the need to strengthen the military to force the guerrillas to the table. One senior intelligence official reported that President Bush was even more hostile to the idea of negotiating with the guerrillas than Uribe. The US is offering support for the experimental demobilization process with the paramilitaries. Given the history of the US role in Colombia, and the current directions of US policy, however, active US support for talks with the guerrillas remains extremely unlikely.

In both the ‘war on drugs’ and the ‘war on terror’, US policy towards Colombia remains driven by domestic policy considerations rather than a reasoned response to the Colombian conflict. Both these frameworks have generated widespread support among the general population, and grant wide latitude for a militarized response by positioning US authorities as tackling an extensive and amorphous evil. In polarizing debates, extremist rhetoric limits the degree to which reformists can push for a peace-centred agenda. Given the relatively low profile of Colombia in the press and among the public, few progressive politicians are willing to risk the political costs of working for peace in Colombia. This dynamic has particularly dire consequences for Colombian government leaders, dependent on the US for trade and economic assistance and unwilling to challenge US policy dictates once in office.
The role of the international community in Colombia

Augusto Ramírez Ocampo

Following the end of the Cold War, the international community has focused its efforts on searching for security and peace through the respect, protection and promotion of human rights, the defence of human dignity, the cultivation of economic and social equality and by adopting 'Sustainable Human Development' as a new paradigm. Colombia lags behind on this agenda, ranking 64th in the world according to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2003. This situation, which partly explains the conflict, is compounded by the consequences of 40 years of first political, then social, and now degenerated and narcotized violence, which impedes the full development of democracy and the complete guarantee and implementation of human rights and responsibilities.

While the Colombian conflict may not be the cause of all the country's ills, it does contribute in a decisive manner to the fact that Colombia is perceived as a problem country regionally and globally. The need to address the critical human rights situation, environmental ravages, the impossibility of adequately integrating into the globalization process, violent human displacement, and the global drugs problem, are only a few of the issues where the Colombian agenda coincides, fundamentally, with the international agenda.

However Colombia has been reluctant to accept the 'international community' as an actor in the solution to the armed conflict. When the National Conciliation Commission (CCN) first proposed this in 1995, many voices spoke about the primacy of absolute autonomy when dealing with an issue considered to be tightly linked to national sovereignty. Only recently has there been greater recognition of the growing interdependence of nations and an acceptance that, in addition to serious internal efforts, active collaboration with international organizations, friendly governments and NGOs is required in order to achieve peace.

Augusto Ramírez Ocampo is a former Foreign Minister. He led the United Nations Mission in El Salvador following the peace agreement, and is a member of the National Conciliation Commission.
Background to international support for peacemaking efforts

There was limited international involvement in the pre-1998 peace processes. The guerrilla group M-19 had strong international links and managed to establish 'action centres' in Mexico and Europe. Socialist International witnessed the signing of the Political Pact between the M-19 and the government in 1989, as well as verifying the Peace Accords signed with the Popular Liberation Army (EPL).

Violence increased dramatically during the government of President Ernesto Samper. The state lost control of broad swaths of national territory that were dedicated to the cultivation, processing and production of illegal substances, affording an increased income for the rebels and the paramilitaries. The International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) played an important role in promoting international humanitarian standards at this time. With the government's blessing, the CCN and the ICRC initiatives led to the first application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Colombia, resulting in the release of 72 soldiers and Navy personnel held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The internationalization of the conflict and peace process

Andrés Pastrana came to power under the banner of a politically negotiated solution to the armed conflict and a proposal for Peace Diplomacy. Faced with the 'internationalization of the Conflict', that is to say a situation that began to be understood as a threat to the peace and security of the region and hemisphere, the Colombian government opted for an 'internationalization of the peace'. It invited the international community to understand and cooperate in finding solutions to problems resulting from both the causes and consequences of the armed conflict.

During the negotiations (7 January 1999 - 28 February 2002) an active international presence served to safeguard the continuity and development of this difficult process, supporting a political solution to the conflict. The international community attempted to influence the armed actors, informing them that their war tactics and financing by drugs, extortion and kidnapping defied agreed multilateral principles. They severely denounced the FARC's violations in
the demilitarized zone. Finally, they also provided technical and financial assistance to the negotiations and to conflict reduction projects.

During this period a more hopeful situation emerged: Colombian society, the government, and the international community declared that the peace process had to include the defence of human rights and international humanitarian law. At the same time they reinforced the urgency of short-term accords upholding civilians’ immunity. A Group of Friends for Peace in Colombia was formed and a Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General appointed. The government also maintained in-depth talks with the US and there was even a meeting between the guerrillas and the Andean Group representative in the US State Department.

The Groups of Friends
The Group of Friends was created following an agreement between the government and the FARC. It comprised 26 friendly nations and the Special Delegates of UN Secretary General and the European Commission.

The group designated a smaller ‘Facilitating Commission’ of ten nations, with one representative each from Canada, Cuba, Spain, France, Italy, México, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Venezuela. The Commission’s role was to coordinate six-monthly meetings with the wider group and stimulate their cooperation across different activities. They agreed that the Commission would act by consensus, have a coordinating country which rotated every two months, and act with the discretion and confidentiality proper to the work of ‘good offices’. The Commission worked with diligence, supporting the process as a neutral observer, but in key moments taking up the functions of facilitator and even mediator, such as in discussions leading to the two last extensions of the demilitarized zone.

In the same manner and with the agreement of the government and the ELN, another Group of Friends was created, comprising Cuba, Spain, France, Norway and Switzerland. Their representatives were always present in the talks as facilitators and actively participated in numerous meetings in Colombia and Cuba. Alongside the UN, they offered technical assistance on crucial issues such as the regulation of the meeting zone in the Sur de Bolívar. The Group continues to exist despite the breakdown of the process and both the government and the autonomous Civilian Facilitation Commission have requested that the Group promote the resumption of talks aimed at establishing humanitarian agreements, and eventually the resumption of peace negotiations.

The United Nations
Since the UN Secretary General named his Special Advisor for Colombia, Jan Egeland, in 1999, the UN has played an important but diffuse role in the peace negotiations with both the FARC and the ELN. During the Pastrana administration, the parties accepted UN intervention, offering a semi-formal role that was neither facilitation nor mediation. This lack of definition meant that the Special Advisor’s many efforts were at times ignored during the various breakdowns in the negotiations. Nonetheless, without this participation the negotiations would probably have been more short lived and current recognition of the need for international presence in the processes would not have been possible.

During his work, Jan Egeland was accompanied by James LeMoyne, who succeeded him in the position. He established in-depth contact with President Pastrana but had difficulties with the High Commissioner for Peace who offered very little information to the Secretary General’s staff. The UN Special Advisor also coordinated the participation of other UN organs with regard to the peace process.

Neighbouring countries
Neighbouring countries have increasingly voiced concerns about the cross-border effects of the conflict. In particular Ecuador has received about 6,000 refugees and Venezuela and Panama have at moments suffered from the same effect to a lesser degree. Venezuela has also become the main corridor for illegal trafficking, as well as a destination for injured guerrillas and paramilitaries requiring hospital treatment. The Venezuelan government has however refused to contribute to interdiction efforts. Brazil, and to a lesser degree Peru have experienced problems relating to the drug trade and local guerrilla activity, and Ecuador has also recently been accused of allowing the supply of arms, munitions and explosives to the guerrillas and paramilitaries.

The regional insecurity generated by the conflict has galvanized various initiatives. The Colombian government has initiated bilateral and multilateral meetings to address the problems. The Andean Community (CAN) has initiated a systematic approach to an Andean security policy, formalized in the ‘Lima Declaration’ of November 2001. This approach is developed within the framework of efforts such as ending arms trafficking, some countries’ attempts to reduce their defence budgets, intelligence sharing, multilateral actions, coordination and border development. In addition, some US$458.8m of US aid has been directed to supporting the affected
countries and the US Congress has recently approved US$697m for 2004 for the Regional Andean Initiative.

Other regional organisms and mechanisms have also made statements about the armed conflict. In May 2003, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, composed of all Latin American countries, the President of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Haiti called on the UN Secretary General to use his good offices to ‘promote with vigour a peace process in Colombia,’ exhorting the guerrilla movements to engage in dialogue. This call was supported in June by the OAS member states’ meeting in the XXXIII session of the General Assembly.

Financing peace

By 1998 there was growing support for efforts to obtain financial resources for peacemaking, in a similar form to the hugely successful fund-raising for the Central American peace processes. Then, in response to a request by the Presidents of Central America in 1998, the UN Secretary General proposed a Special Coordination Plan (PEC) to support peace efforts in Central America, approved by consensus by an extraordinary Assembly of the United Nations. This plan committed $2 billion to debt relief, $2.2 billion for special projects for the internally displaced, the reconstruction of sub-regional integration, institutional strengthening and democratisation. The UNDP implemented the Plan over a five-year period and it is considered an excellent model of international cooperation.

Following this example, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Colombian government developed a project estimated at US$3 billion. It was to be administrated by the Peace Investment Fund and implemented over a three-year period serving as the ‘Bank of the Process’, providing alternative development to facilitate the eradication of drug-crops and assisting the 1.5 million internally displaced people. The Colombian contribution of US$1.2 billion was raised through a special tax.

However, the Colombian government, with the support of the US, subsequently included the need to strengthen the Security Forces in this initiative. Their modernization was a necessity in order to recover the monopoly of force for the rule of law, the legitimization of the armed forces and the success of negotiations through a new balance of military power.

This led to the birth of Plan Colombia, which generated a strong reaction from the rest of the International Community, because of the weight of US military aid to Colombia, the Andean Region and the Caribbean. The US converted Colombia into an issue of national and regional security, epicentre of the war on drugs at the global level. It approved an aid package of US$1.3bn for 2000 and 2001, dedicated to supporting the government’s offensive in the southern regions of Colombia, improving its capacity to decisively intercept the cocaine and cocaine-trafficlers, and increasing the eradication of coca crops. Only US$323 million was dedicated to other objectives. Following this, a three-year extension of the Andean Trade Preferences was also achieved, and the Andean Trade Promotion Drug Eradication Act (ATFDEA) was passed in recognition of the antinarcotics effort.

With regard to the treatment of the drugs trade and its influence on the internal armed conflict, the European Union (EU) and US applied clearly different criteria, with obvious consequences in the economic, social and political domains. The EU refused to contribute to the military budget and instead directed its support to the defence of human rights and International Humanitarian Law, and initiatives aimed at supporting the internally displaced and alternative development.

Despite these differences, the continuation of multilateral initiatives to fight the drugs trade is essential. The eradication of illicit crops is vital in cutting off sources of finance from the guerrillas and paramilitaries. This can be achieved through initiatives that combine crop eradication with alternative development. Efforts should also be made outside Colombia to reduce levels of consumption, end the trade of chemicals and halt the money-laundering activities taking place in rich countries (the majority of whom are members of the EU).

During this period there were also meetings of a group of potential donors (the EU, Norway, USA, Canada and Japan) under the banner of the Support Group to the Peace Process, in Madrid (July 2000), Bogota (October 2000) and Brussels (April 2001). In the last meeting the Colombian government and the FARC were applauded for the advances made in the Los Pozos Accord and the preliminary Accord signed by the ELN in January 2001. The meeting also expressed support for the work of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor and acknowledged the increased support for the process from regional governments.

At the same meeting, the EU presented an aid package equivalent to Euro 330m over a five-year period, to be used according to four principal strategies: economic and social regeneration, institution strengthening and social development, (through humanitarian aid and integrated alternative development), the peace process and the fight against drugs. They also announced that Euros 45m
of EC funding would support projects like the ‘peace laboratory’ in Magdalena Medio. The EU has also insisted that the war against drugs must be tackled by both the producers and the consumers. It favours the manual eradication of illicit crops, and supports plans for alternative income-generation methods and to addressing social needs.

The Support Group had limited success in its principal objective of securing the support of other important donors for Plan Colombia, with the exception of some bilateral promises from the EU, Japan and Spain. Due to the paralysis of the peace negotiations, the Group as a whole has not met again but the EU and Canada have followed the United States’ example in declaring the FARC and the United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia (AUC) terrorist organizations, deepening their international isolation. They have also exerted constant pressure for the release of kidnap victims, giving particular attention to the case of former senator and presidential candidate Ingrid Betancur.

**Current trends in international policy**

Since 11 September 2001, the approach to terrorism in the Colombian context has changed in emphasis, particularly with regard to US assistance. The US has accepted that its military aid be used not only in the war against drugs but also in combating the FARC and the AUC, and only the EU continues to stand by its decision to not give any military aid.

President Uribe has maintained the momentum of Plan Colombia. The exchange of visits between US and Colombian figures such as the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defence and the Commanders of the Military alongside the fairly untraditional position of the Uribe Government in supporting the US intervention in Iraq, suggests that the resources requested by President Bush for national and regional security reasons will be maintained by the US Congress.

**The role of the UN and Colombian responses**

Despite his unwillingness to engage in dialogue with the FARC without a unilateral ceasefire, President Uribe asked the UN to intervene in the Colombian armed conflict on the day he took office, and asked for the presence of Blue Helmets to protect the displaced population from the inclemency of war. This was subsequently modified to a request for a Civil Accompaniment Commission to assist in the return of internally displaced persons to their place of origin. He also wanted to use such a mechanism to verify the negotiation process initiated with the AUC.

None of his recommendations has received a positive response from the UN.

Special Advisor James Lemoyne has maintained contact with the FARC for the purpose of organizing a formal meeting. This has not materialized because of UN demands that it take place outside Colombia (perhaps in Brazil), without the presence of other actors and without excessive publicity. Despite refusing the UN’s offer to mediate, the FARC sent an open letter to the UN asking for an opportunity to make its case. It is not inconceivable that the UN could begin again to facilitate the resolution of the armed conflict in Colombia if requested and accepted by the parties as the UN Charter allows. It could take advantage of the experiences accumulated since 1999 and offer an effective service to peace in Colombia.

The need to support the UN’s work in Colombia and its office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was one of the conclusions reached at a meeting in London on 9–10 July 2003 attended by ten governments and six organizations, including the UN, EU, and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Participants also expressed full support for the Colombian government’s fight against violence and drugs, the search for a negotiated solution to the internal conflict, and the important role played by Colombian civil society. At the same time, donor countries expressed their concern regarding the humanitarian crisis, forced displacements and the serious human rights and IHL situation. They offered to reorientate their cooperation programmes and continue discussions in the next conference on donor coordination.

**Challenges for the international community**

In a conflict like the Colombian one, in a moment like the present, a solution is unlikely to be possible without the presence of the international community, understood as states, international organisms and civil society. Their participation is necessary in each of the distinct phases of a peace process, from the early contacts between the parties to create the necessary conditions for dialogue, to helping the parties during the negotiations, witnessing the signing of accords, verifying their implementation and accompanying the national reconstruction and consolidation phase. As was the case in Central America, the participation of the international community will be essential in the future administration of the peace to guarantee compliance with and the sustainability of the agreements.
Personal reflections

Jorge Otalora

Jorge was kidnapped by the ELN in north Tolima in 2001. He was freed after two months thanks to the intervention of the National Coffee Growers Federation, whom he has worked with for 19 years.

Kidnapping is one of the most horrible crimes that can happen to someone. The privation of liberty either from minute to minute, hours, a day, a month, years, it's always in my mind and it's in the background any time something happens. It's like drowning.

These are people that have other objectives. Now the ideological objectives they had are no longer relevant nor is it what motivates them. I think that at this moment, undoubtedly, what motivates them is a common drug-trafficking cartel, pure and simple.

The government is obliged to be constantly looking for ways to make contact and to see how to reach them, to obtain the freedom of all those people retained for so many years. They are obliged to do that and to continue to insist and look, using all means whether at a national or international level. We need to wait and see if their counterparts will accept an intervention like that and at least give some kind of sign.

Santiago Chaparro

Santiago is 54. He has lived for 30 years on the streets in a poor area of Bogotá. He now works singing his own songs on buses.

In the sense that people are beginning to realize what a disaster this war is, and what a disaster intolerance is, I think that they are going to start to realize that peace is something we should find as quickly as possible, if not then when we do find it, there'll be no one to enjoy it.

There's a big problem, we know that there's a segment, quite a large segment of the population that maybe because they are sensitive to it do as much as they can to propose dialogue, to try to reach agreements, but I think there is a serious problem. We can do the part that corresponds to the state, either through voting or through marches because we know that the state in one way or another has to listen to us, but the other side in the conflict, I don’t know if any of what Colombia says to them about being tired of the war has ever gone further than their ears.

In this sense the problem is that everything that is done is sterile, it's like serenading a guest of honour who hasn’t arrived.
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<th>President</th>
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Typology of peace agreements by presidency, 1982–2003

Unofficial translations of the texts in bold are reproduced below.
Additional texts available on Conciliation Resources website: www.c-r.org/accord
THE URIBE ACCORDS
28 March 1984

With the objective of shaping our national peace, that is an indispensable prerequisite for the general prosperity of the Colombian people, and to develop social and economic activity on the foundations of freedom and justice, the Peace Commission and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) commit to the following points:

1. The FARC-EP will order a ceasefire and an end to other military operations across all of its fronts in the country as of 00:00 hours on 28 May, 1984, a date which can be postponed, if necessary, for at most two months. The above order will be maintained indefinitely for as long as the President of the Republic, Dr. Belisario Betancur, corresponds to this genuine gesture for peace with a similar order of his own when the opportunity presents itself to all the civil and military authorities under his jurisdiction.

2. The FARC-EP will again condemn and de-authorize kidnapping, extortion and terrorism in all its forms and will contribute to ending the practice of these actions which are attacks against freedom and human dignity.

3. The order from the President of the Republic will be followed exclusively in respect of the groups and persons that comply with and respect these principles and do not break the law.

4. A National Commission to be designated by the President of the Republic and representative of the parties involved in the confrontations, will be responsible for the verification of all the items contained in this agreement, with the objective of consolidating the process of pacification. The Commission will create sub-commissions in Florencia (Caquetá), Vista Hermosa (Meta), Barrancabermeja (Santander), Saravena (Arauca), Santa Marta (Magdalena), Medellín (Antioquia), Neiva (Huila), Orito (Putumayo) and Cali (Valle). It will also be able to consult persons external to it in order to examine, in the regions or places in which their services are appropriate, the complaints and grievances regarding events that might interfere with the wish for national peace and security. The Commission will function for as long as is necessary and can draw up its own regulations.

5. The national Verification Commission will convene in Bogotá and will periodically move in order to hold sessions, with full guarantees of access and freedom of movement, to one of the following locations, to be chosen by the President of the Republic:
   a. San Juan de Arama, Granada y Vista Hermosa, en el Meta
   b. San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá
   c. Colombia, Huila

The government will provide the Commission with all the necessary means of communication to be able to best fulfill its functions and will provide its members the necessary credentials to guarantee their freedom of movement and security.

6. When, to the satisfaction of the Verification Commission, all armed confrontations have ceased a trial period or one lasting one (1) year will commence in order to allow the members of the group currently known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) to organize themselves politically, economically and socially of their own accord. The government will grant them the pertinent guarantees and benefits according to the law and the Constitution. During this same period the government will undertake the necessary measures in order to re-establish civic normality in the areas affected by the violence.

7. Members of the FARC-EP can apply for and receive the benefits of Law 35 of 1982 and its complementary degrees, when they fulfill the conditions these establish. The government’s National Rehabilitation Plan will give preference to Colombians who have suffered, directly or indirectly, the ravages of the violence, in order to reestablish the rights unjustly violated as a consequence of the disruption of public order and social insecurity.

8. The Peace Commission has faith that the government has an ample will to:
   a) Pursue the modernization of political institutions, aimed at enriching the democratic life of the nation, and to demand of the Chambers the speedy approval of projects regarding political reform, guarantees to the opposition, democratic elections for mayors, electoral reform, adequate access by political groups to the media, civilian control of the activities of the state, more effective administration of justice, impetus for the improvement of public services and new initiatives aimed at strengthening the constitutional functions of the State and to promote a consistently high moral standard in public life.

b) To vigorously pursue the implementation of a policy of agrarian reform in recognition that land-related problems are present in the current social conflicts, and to pursue initiatives by the rest of the State’s agencies aimed at permanently increasing the services provided to the campesinos in order to improve their quality of life and the normal production of foodstuffs and primary materials needed for industry, for all of which the government has at its disposal the legal instrument allowing for the control of the economy by the State, as stipulated in article 32 of the Constitution.

c) To strengthen and facilitate community and political organizations of peasant farmers and indigenous peoples, and of both urban and rural workers.

d) To make continuous efforts towards the improvement of education at all levels, as well as health, housing and employment.

e) To maintain the indisputable principle that to carry out the protection of the rights of the citizens enshrined in the Constitution and the law, and for the protection and re-establishment of public order there exists only the institutional forces of the State, on whose professionalism and continuous improvement the safety of the people depends.

f) To pursue, once peace has been re-established, as happened on other occasions, initiatives to strengthen the ideal conditions for democratic brotherhood, that requires forgiving and forgetting, and the conditions for the best possible economic, political and social conditions for all the Colombian people.

9. The Peace Commission believes that the above declarations constitute a notable improvement in the necessary conditions for political and electoral...
action and it reiterates its invitation to the sectors dedicated to the disruption of public order to join normal life and to apply their talents and prestige to winning public opinion through democratic and peaceful means.

10. This agreement will be valid with respect to any other armed group that expresses its decision to subscribe to it, following the communication of this decision to the government through the Peace Commission. To facilitate the incorporation to this agreement by groups that so desire it, a meeting will be held with them at a location and date agreed upon by the parties.

11. This agreement, in order to be valid, requires ratification by the President of the Republic.

As proof this document is signed in La Uribe, Municipality of Mesetas, Department of Meta, on 28 March 1984

SIGNATORIES:
The Peace Commission
JHON AGUDELO RIOS (PRESIDENT), RAFAEL RIVAS POSADA, SAMUEL HOYOS ARANGO, CÉSAR GOMEZ ESTRADA, ALBERTO ROJAS PUYO, MARGARITA VIDAL DE PUYO.
The Leadership of the FARC-EP
MANUEL MARULANDA VÉLEZ, JACOBO ARENAS, JAIME GUARACAS, ALFONSO CANO, RAUL REYES


The political pact for peace and democracy, agreed upon on the 2 of November 1989, contains fundamental aspects for the realization of national reconciliation.

The issues of greatest concern to the country today were addressed in the discussions that resulted in the agreed upon conclusions presented in this Pact: the administration of justice, narco-trafficking, electoral reform, public investment in areas of conflict and, of course, peace, public order and the normalization of civic life.

With the objective of successfully completing the peace and reconciliation process with the M-19 it is necessary to legalize those agreements and incorporate additional elements to replace those which formed part of the Constitutional Reform not completed in 1989.

Therefore, the signatories of this document assume the following commitments, all of which are derived from agreements already achieved and from the will to successfully finalize this effort at pacification:

1. We agree on the necessity of – through the normal mechanisms of Constitutional Reform or through the convocation of the Constitutional mandate of the people through a Constituent Plebiscite, Referendum or Assembly – approving issues of primary importance to the realization of peace and strengthening the state’s institutional legitimacy.

We commit ourselves to pursuing the political agreements necessary in order to realize this task of the expansion of democratic spaces.

However, the decision that is taken in this respect must be preceded by a broad consensus that must include the consent of those who occupy the Presidency of the Republic.

2. In order to allow for the incorporation into civilian life of the guerrillas and their transition from armed struggle into political life the parties commit themselves to supporting the establishment of a one-off Peace Constituency for political parties emerging from armed movements who have been demobilized and reincorporated into civilian life. Said Constituency for the Senate of the Republic and the House of Representatives will be later applied to the 1992 elections, and its characteristics will be defined by the signatories in a future agreement.

3. In regard to the National Peace Fund as envisioned in the Political Pact, designated to promote initiatives and programmes for the benefit of communities in the areas in which the demobilized guerrillas have held influence, can have its funding added to by the government, private enterprises and by those international foundations that are prepared to offer their support to this initiative.

A high level commission will be created for the Administration and Promotion of this fund that will undertake these objectives.

4. The signatories of this accord support an Electoral Reform that will have the following basis:

~ With the objective of extending electoral opportunities and modernizing the voting procedures it would establish a Electoral Card and a secret ballot for mayoral elections as of 1992 and it would examine the technical possibilities of incorporating these into the Public Corporations elections as of 1994.

~ Similarly, with the objective of expanding the space for political participation measures increasing the extension of parliamentary representation for minorities would be adopted through mechanisms such as the National Constituency and National Territories.

5. Regarding the administration of justice, the national government will issue a decree corresponding to the creation of an Exploratory Commission on the Integral Reform of the Administration of Justice according to the terms stipulated in the Political Pact. Said Commission according to the above mentioned criteria would function during a period of three years and would be authorized at the highest level. Its aim would be primarily to propose strategies for the reform of the justice system in substantive, administrative, budgetary, personnel and procedural areas.

6. Regarding the issue of the production, trafficking and consumption of narcotics the Minister for the Interior, acting in the name of the national government will create a non-governmental Commission of Academic Nature, with full autonomy and independence, which will investigate the national and...
international dimensions of the phenomenon. The Commission will be composed of academics from public and private universities and from research centres of recognized prestige.

7. Regarding the remaining political and socio-economic issues and issues regarding peaceful coexistence, justice and public order agreed upon in the Political Pact, the government will begin application and implementation as of the date when the group lays down its arms.

8. The M-19 as of this date declares that all of its armed fronts have been demobilized and its members incorporated into the institutional life of the country. Similarly it announces that it has decommitted all of its weapons, munitions and war materials before the International Socialist Commission, designed for this purpose.

The national government created a National Council for Normalization through Decree 314 of the current year in order to coordinate all of the Demobilization Plan.

The national government as of this date will grant amnesty to the members of M-19 and will begin the agreed upon programmes of social reinsertion and income generation.

The M-19 similarly reiterates that all of its members accept this agreement and that as an armed group it ceases to exist.

9. The Signatories of this agreement commit themselves to the formation of Follow-up Commission (with one member from each signatory) with the objective of detailing and making viable the commitments subscribed to here.

10. The Security Plan will be implemented according to the terms agreed upon by the national government and the M-19 in December 1989. The said Plan will be in force until 7 August 1990, with the necessary revisions that will be agreed upon by the representatives of the national government and the M-19.

The need to maintain an appropriate level of security and protection for the principal leaders of the M-19 after 7 August 1990 is stressed.

The signing of this accord concludes a decisive stage for the preparation for peace and the re-establishment of harmony that has been the wish of several generations of Colombians. Today we can hold genuine hope that common sense and generosity will impose themselves over intransigence and radicalism and that in the near future political ideals will not be the cause of killing between Colombians.

The National Government, the political parties and the M-19 are in agreement on the significance that the undertaking of this accord has for the country. It opens the road to reconciliation. It shapes the conditions in order to continue advancing in the search for pacification. It offers procedures and instruments in order to implement political solutions. In other words it demonstrates how, through the transformation of the parties' genuine will for peace into concrete actions, the pursuit of peaceful coexistence can be achieved.

SIGNATORIES:

**VIRGILIO BARCO**
President of the Republic

**RAFAEL PARDO RUEDA**
Presidential Adviser

**JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA**
Former President of the Republic and National Director of the Colombian Liberal Party

**CARLOS PIZARRO LEONGOMEZ**
Absolute Commander of the M-19

**ANTONIO NAVARRO WOLF**
Commander of the M-19

**Monseñor ALVARO FANDINÓ**
Representative of the Catholic Church, Moral and Spiritual guide of the Process

**Dr. LUIS AYALA**
Witness, representative of the Socialist International

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THE CARACAS AGENDA
6 June 1991

The national government and the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB), as the result of the discussions held in Caracas on 4 and 5 of June, declare that:

1. Both the meeting at Cravo Norte and the mechanisms adopted by the government and the guerrillas in order to achieve the presence of the delegates of the CGSB in Caracas constitute significant steps in the re-establishment of mutual trust, the essential ingredient for the continuity of the peace process.

2. The credibility of the peace process in the country must be built on the specific actions and conduct of the government and the Coordinator which must contribute to the reduction of violence, in particular those aspects of the confrontation that affect the civilian population. The specific identification of these aspects should be worked on in the following days.

3. The government and the Coordinator must confirm that the objectives of the peace process must address as much the definitive solution of the political armed conflict as the generation of policies which aim at definitive eradication the causes that have generated the conflict, keeping in mind the needs of all Colombians, so as to assure their democratic cohabitation and the search for a society which incorporates social justice.

4. After the government and the guerrillas have presented their conceptualization of the peace process and the fundamental elements it constitutes, it has been agreed upon to announce a package of issues constituting a preliminary agenda that will both allow for the continuation the discussions of Caracas and place the peace process in a general perspective in order to be developed in the future. It is understood that the issues annunciated below are to be defined in the talks taking place in the following days focusing on their treatment and the details of their content and parameters.

5. The following are the issues selected for discussion, some of which imply bilateral commitments, and are arranged in order of priority for examination:

1. Examine the possibility of agreeing between the government and the Coordinator a formula for a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

2. The relationship between this process and the National Constituent Assembly, public corporations, political organizations and social sectors.
3. Initiatives against 'paramilitary' and private justice groups. Effective initiatives against impunity. Concepts on the doctrine of national security.


5. The State, democracy and the conditions for political participation of armed groups.

6. Factors that contribute to the development of national sovereignty, such as the management of natural resources and elements from international agreements that relate to this process, and international economic policy.

7. Ingredients for the democratization of economic and social policy.

8. The design of a process that will permit the development of a phase for the reaching of agreements and practical measures in order to bring about the definite resolution of the armed conflict in Colombia and guarantee the exercise of political activity without the use of arms within the framework of the civic and democratic life of the country, once the requisites for this have been satisfied.

9. Verification of the peace process.

10. Methodology, procedures and regulations of the negotiations and the accords.

VI. The government and the Coordinator convene the media and shapers of public opinion to evaluate, with their usual consideration, the content of this declaration, as well as the issues that have been included with only the purpose of later discussion, the focuses, the achievements and the possibility of these.

On behalf of the government:

JESUS ANTONIO BEJARANO A.
Presidential Adviser
ANDRÉS GONZALEZ D.
Vice-Minister for the Interior
CARLOS EDUARDO JARAMILLO C.
Adviser to the Peace Council
HUMBERTO VERGARA P.
Adviser to the Peace Council
TOMAS CONCHA S.
Adviser to the Peace Council
REYNALDO GARY P.
Adviser to the Commission

On behalf of the Simón Bolivar Guerrilla Coordination Body

ALFONSO CANO (FARC), IVAN MARQUEZ (FARC), PABLO CATATUMBO (FARC), HUMBERTO ZULANGA (FARC), DANIEL ALDANA (FARC), MIGUEL SUAREZ (FARC), ANDRÉS PARIS (FARC)
FRANCISCO GALAN (ELN), LUCIA GONZALEZ (ELN)
DIEGO RUIZ (EPL), ASDRUBAL JIMÉNEZ (EPL)

Observers present

MIGUEL MOTTA C., RAFAEL SERRANO P., MARIA CRISTINA OCAMPO, HENRY MILLAN, WILLIAM RAMIREZ, OSCAR REYES, JESUS CARVAJAL, ALVARO VASQUEZ, HERNAN MOTTA, NELSON BERRIO

Caracas, 6 June 1991

1. A Negotiated Political Solution
A political solution to the serious social and armed conflict is being sought, one which will bring a new Colombia through political, economic, and social change, creating consensus to build a new state, founded on social justice and conserving national unity.

Acts of peace will occur as the negotiations advance. This means that all Colombians must commit to the construction of peace without regard to economic, social or religious interests, or political parties.

2. Protection of Human Rights as a responsibility of the State
2.1 Fundamental rights
2.2 Economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights
2.3 International human rights treaties

3. An Integrated Agrarian Policy
3.1 The democratization of credit, technical assistance, and market access
3.2 Redistribution of unproductive land
3.3 Recuperation and distribution of land acquired through drug-trafficking and illegal enrichment

3.4 Stimulating production
3.5 Integral ordering of territory
3.6 Illicit crop substitution and alternative development

4. Exploitation and Conservation of Natural Resources
4.1 Natural resources and their distribution
4.2 International treaties
4.3 Protection of the environment based on sustainable development

5. Economic and Social Structure
5.1 Revision of the economic development model
5.2 Income redistribution policies
5.3 Expansion of internal and external markets
5.4 Stimulating production through small, medium and large-scale private enterprise
5.5 Cooperative support for the economy
5.6 Stimulation of foreign investment that benefits the nation
5.7 Social participation in economic planning
5.8 Investment in social welfare, education and scientific research

6. Justice reform, fighting corruption and drug trafficking
6.1 The judicial system
6.2 Control institutions
6.3 Mechanisms to fight corruption
6.4 Drug trafficking

7. Political reform to broaden democracy
7.1 Reform of political parties and movements
7.2 Electoral reforms
7.3 Equal opportunity for the opposition
7.4 Equal opportunity for minorities
7.5 Mechanisms for citizen participation
8. State reform
8.1 Congressional reform
8.2 Administrative reform to improve the efficiency of public administration
8.3 Decentralization and strengthening of local power
8.4 Public services
8.5 Strategic sectors
9. Agreements about International Humanitarian Law

COMMON AGENDA FOR THE PATH TO A NEW COLOMBIA
6 May 1999
9.1 No child involvement in the conflict
9.2 Land mines
9.3 Respect for the civil population
9.4 Respect for international agreements
10. Armed forces
10.1 Defence of sovereignty
10.2 Protection of human rights
10.3 Combating self-defence groups
10.4 International treaties
11. International relations
11.1 Respect for non-intervention and free self-determination
11.2 Latin American regional integration
11.3 Foreign debt
11.4 Treaties and international state agreements
12. Formalizing the agreements
12.1 Democratic instruments to legitimize the agreements

SIGNED:
For the government:
VICTOR G. RICARDO
FABIO VALENCIA COSSIO
MARIA EMMY MEJIA VÉLEZ
NICANOR RESTREPO SANTAMARIA
RODOLFO ESPINOSA MEOLA
For the FARC-EP:
RAUL REYES
JOAQUIN GOMEZ
FABIAN RAMIREZ

GOVERNMENT-FARC HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE ACCORD
2 June 2001

The parties to this Accord, represented as follows: for the Government, Camilo Gómez Alzate, and for FARC-EP Jorge Briceño; and Joaquín Gómez as a representative member of FARC-EP, CONSIDERING
That Article 22 of the Colombian Constitution conceives peace as a mandatory duty and right;
That under Law 434/98, the peace policy is a State policy, and it is permanent and participatory. All organs of the State and all forms of organization, action and expression of civil society must cooperate in structuring it in a coordinated and harmonious manner, transcending the period of office of one or another government, and expressing the complexities of the situation of this country;
That the Colombian State has legal instruments to seek coexistence as a means of promoting reconciliation among Colombians, securing peaceful coexistence and peace;
That through these instruments the Government of Colombia may undertake any act designed to establish conversations or dialogue with the armed organization FARC-EP, acting outside the law, which the Government has recognized to have a political character;
That Article 8 of Law 418/97, renewed by Law 548/99, expressly gives the Government the permanent power, to be exercised by the Government alone, to sign agreements with the representatives of armed organizations which act outside the law which have been recognized to have a political character, designed to obtain solutions to armed conflict, the effective application of international humanitarian law, respect for human rights, the cessation or reduction of the intensity of hostilities, the reincorporation of the members of such organizations into civil life and the creation of conditions which favour a just political, social and economic order;
That Law 418/97, renewed by Law 548/99 provides that the State will encourage the establishment of a just social order which will secure peaceful coexistence, the protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual; and will adopt measures in favour of groups affected by marginalization or discrimination in order to achieve conditions of real equality and to provide all with the same opportunities for appropriate development of the individual, the family and the social group;
That the Government has decided to proceed with dialogue and negotiation with FARC-EP and to sign agreements with its representatives in accordance with the progress made at the negotiating tables, in order to create conditions for the reincorporation into civil life of the members of that organization, in order to favour a just political, social and economic order;
That FARC-EP have on many occasions stated that the signature of this Agreement would represent a substantial step forward in the peace process;
That as part of the peace process in train between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, the Government and FARC-EP have stated their interest in seeking, at this point, a solution of the situation of the soldiers and policemen held by the FARC-EP;
That the sick and wounded are persons protected by international humanitarian law;
Have agreed to make this ACCORD, on the terms given below:
GENERAL
This Agreement is signed for humanitarian reasons and therefore its scope is restricted to its specific content; and
None of the terms of this Agreement reduce the minimum obligations of common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their supplementary Protocol II, and the terms of this Agreement have no effect on the juridical status of the signatories in the light of the content of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.
INSTRUMENTS
The Government of Colombia has verified the place of confinement and the judicial status of members of the FARC-EP, legally deprived of their freedom, who are sick, according to a list supplied by the FARC-EP;
The FARC-EP have delivered to the Government the list of sick soldiers and policemen in their power, and undertake to place them in places which will permit their easy and immediate verification by the International Red Cross Committee; and these places will be determined by the Government and FARC-EP;
In order to give effect to the measures referred to in this Agreement, the express permission of each of the persons deprived of their freedom who may be subject to such measures must be obtained;
The Government has performed the
appropriate medical examination through a group of doctors recommended by the International Red Cross Committee or an entity named by the Government, for the members of the FARC-EP referred to in this Agreement;

Having completed this process, the Government has delivered a list of 15 individuals who are members of that organization who, in its opinion, are subject to this Agreement; and it undertakes to follow all procedures required to secure a suspension of the detention order or sentence;
The FARC-EP ratify that the list of 42 sick soldiers and policemen delivered to the Government corresponds to the individuals to be released under this Agreement; and this number may be increased;

Once this Agreement is signed FARC-EP undertake to release Col. Alvaro Leon-Acosta immediately, given his state of health;

With regard to the sick soldiers and policemen in the power of the FARC-EP, once their state of health has been established the International Red Cross Committee will receive them at the place agreed by the parties, on the same day that the members of the FARC-EP are released.

The sick members of the FARC-EP to whom the Government has determined that this Agreement may apply, will be released to the International Red Cross Committee at their place of confinement, once the detention order or sentence has been effectively suspended;

The International Red Cross Committee will deliver them at the place and time agreed by the Parties;

FARC-EP undertake to release unilaterally at least 100 soldiers and policemen who are in their power and who are not sick, within 15 days of delivery of the sick soldiers and policemen;

Given that they are sick, the members of the FARC-EP covered by this Agreement will not take part in future hostilities;

The Government and FARC-EP agree that the United Nations Organization and the Office of the People’s Defender will be invited to attend on the day of the release of the sick;

Also, for the purposes of performance of this Agreement, there will be an international presence, and the ten Friends of the Peace Process countries and the United Kingdom are designated for this.

Given in San Vicente del Caguán,
2 June 2001

For the Government
CAMILO GOMEZ ALZATE
High Commissioner for Peace
FOR FARC-EP
JOAQUIN GOMEZ
JORGE BRICEÑO

ACCORD FOR COLOMBIA BETWEEN THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE ELN
24 November 2001

The national government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) meeting in Havana, Cuba, in the presence of the International Group of Friends, in light of the will to find a political solution to the conflict that ravages the country have agreed to:

1. Formally restart the dialogue process by means of a transitional agenda lasting until the end of the present government.

2. Initiate the convening of meetings between the parties and the different sectors of society.

3. Organize meetings between the parties and the presidential candidates with the objective of strengthening peace as a policy of the State and to guarantee the continuity of the implementation of the transitional agenda.

4. Organize thematic forums abroad in order to generate initiatives and proposals on specific issues of national interest, such as International Humanitarian Law, energy resources, and other issues that will be decided upon between the parties. The conclusions derived from these forums will provide ideas and proposals for the organization of the National Convention by the next government. We will establish a timetable for work in the next meeting.

5. Pursue the convention of a Summit for Peace with the participation of diverse sectors of society and the international community in order to evaluate the achievements, successes, and obstacles faced by the previous dialogue process between the government and the ELN.

6. Organize working groups between spokespersons of the parties in which the following issues will be addressed:
   i. Ceasefire and an end to hostilities
   ii. Conflict reduction measures
   iii. Problems of the energy sector
   iv. Analysis of the conclusions arrived at in the forums

The first working group will take place on 12 December in Havana.

7. Establish a mechanism so that the regional initiatives for peace can be examined by the spokespersons of the parties, who will be responsible for managing and articulating them within the peace policy of the national government and the Central Command of the ELN.

We thank the brotherly State and Government of the Republic of Cuba for having offered us the guarantees, hospitality and facilities for our meeting. Similarly we thank the International Group of Friends and the Civil Facilitation Commission for their efforts in furthering this process.

Havana, 24 November 2001

On behalf of the government:
CAMILO GOMEZ ALZATE
JULIO LONDOÑO PAREDES

On behalf of the ELN:
RAMIRO VARGAS
OSCAR SANTOS
MILTON HERNÁNDEZ
SANTA FÉ DE RALITO ACCORD TO CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE IN COLOMBIA
15 July 2003

The national government and the United Self-Defence groups of Colombia (AUC), as the result of the preceding Exploratory Phase conducted between the parties since December 2002,
AGREE TO:

1. Define as the objective of this process the establishment of national peace through the strengthening of democratic governance and the re-establishment of the monopoly of force in the hands of the State. The AUC reiterate that its greatest service to the country in this historic moment is to advance its reincorporation into civilian life and to contribute to the strengthening to the rule of law. The parties commit themselves to this process conscious that their actions are an effective step towards the construction of a genuine peace that the Colombian people deserve and desire.

2. To achieve this proposition the AUC commits itself to the total demobilization of its members through a gradual process that will begin with the first demobilizations before the end of the year and that should be completed no later than the 31 December 2005. The government commits itself to pursue the necessary actions to reincorporate the AUC’s members into civilian life.

3. The AUC values very positively the final recommendations made by the Exploratory Commission and recognizes that these constitute the basis for a peace process between the national government and the AUC.

4. The parties agree that with the recommendations made in the final report of the Exploratory Commission the exploratory phase of the peace process has been concluded, giving way to the start of the negotiation stage.

5. Create the conditions so that within a reasonable time period – with the necessary security guarantees – members of the AUC will congregate in previously agreed upon locations. The congregation of the AUC’s members will include all levels of command, with the necessary security guarantees as agreed between the parties. These zones will have a permanent public security force presence.

6. The AUC ratifies its commitment to the end of hostilities, as a good will gesture, and will continue with its efforts to ensure that this is completely effective.

7. The AUC shares the government’s goal of a Colombia without narco-trafficking and supports the actions of the Colombian State against this phenomenon that destroys democracy, peaceful coexistence, the economy and the environment.

8. Thank the Catholic Church for its permanent presence throughout this peace process and invite it to continue this as a guarantee of the processes’ transparency and parties’ commitment to peace in Colombia.

9. Call for national solidarity and commitment in order to strengthen the State and to create the conditions that will make possible the demobilization and reincorporation of the members of the AUC into civilian life. The parties ask that the different national sectors and local communities support the efforts of the State institutions in consolidating security, peaceful coexistence and development.

10. Call on the international community to support the efforts to defend and strengthen the Colombian democracy and to give their support to deactivating the causes of violence that affects Colombia.

With this accord the government and the AUC are responding to the national wish for a peaceful Colombia with opportunities and guarantees for everyone.

On behalf of the National Government:
LUIS CARLOS RESTREPO
High Commissioner for Peace

On behalf of the AUC:
HERNAN HERNÁNDEZ
RAMIRO VANROY

LUIS CIFUENTES
FRANCISCO TABARES
ADOLFO PAZ
JORGE PIRATA
VICENTE CASTAÑO
CARLOS CASTAÑO
SALVATORE MANCUSO
Witnesses:
Members of the Exploratory Commission for Peace
CARLOS FRANCO
JORGE IGNACIO CASTAÑO
EDUARDO ESPINOSA
GILBERTO ALZATE RONGA
RICARDO AVELLANEDA
JUAN B. PÉREZ RUBIANO
Facilitators of the process from the Catholic Church
MONSEÑOR GERMAN GARCIA
MONSEÑOR JULIO CESAR VIDAL
PADRE LEONIDAS MORENO
Santa Fé de Ralito, 15 July 2003
**Government**

<table>
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<th>President</th>
<th>Term in office</th>
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<td>Belisario Betancur</td>
<td>1982 - 1986</td>
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<td>Virgilio Barco</td>
<td>1986 - 1990</td>
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<td>César Gaviria</td>
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<td>Ernesto Samper</td>
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<td>Andrés Pastrana</td>
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<td>Álvaro Uribe</td>
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**Official peace bodies**

**Peace Commission (August 1982 – August 1986)**
As well as launching an amnesty and national dialogue process, President Betancur reorganized and expanded the Peace Commission created by the Turbay government, appointing 40 members from different social and political sectors. The Commission's principal mission was to initiate dialogues with different social groupings on social and political reforms, as well as with the guerrillas. The Peace Commission signed ceasefire agreements with different groups: the FARC in March 1984, the M-19, EPL and ADO in August 1984, and some sectors of ELN in December 1985.

**National Rehabilitation Plan**
As part of his peace strategy, President Betancur established a National Rehabilitation Plan (PNR) to address the objective causes of the violence and establish harmonious relations between the state and society. It aimed to increase the state's social investment, as well as its presence in rural regions, and thus diminish support for the guerrillas. Fiscal problems limited the strategy's implementation. President Barco reactivated and extended the PNR in August 1987, with the same intentions as the Betancur administration. The programmes were to cost 4 per cent of GDP annually, but the state had neither the resources nor the administrative capacity to implement them. Moreover, the social interventionism was out of step with the orthodox macro-economic policies of the Barco administration. Although some components of the PNR continued to function during the Pastrana administration, it lost its importance as a component of peace policy.

**Council for Reconciliation, Normalization and Rehabilitation (August 1986 – August 1994)**
In a strategy opposed to that of President Betancur, President Barco established a Council for Reconciliation,
Normalization and Rehabilitation, better known as the Peace Council. This Council, headed by a presidential adviser, centralized government peace policy. In the first stage (1986-88) it focused its attention on managing social protests and implementing the PNR in order to prepare for the second phase comprising the Initiative for Peace and peace talks with the guerrillas from 1988. It was responsible for conducting negotiations with the M-19, and during the Gaviria administration, with the other smaller guerrilla groups. It also participated in talks with the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) in Caracas and Tlaxcala.


The office is part of the Presidency and the High Commissioner is appointed directly by the president. When President Samper took office, he elevated the status of the Peace Council, giving the High Commissioner for Peace the status of minister and appointing Carlos Holmes Trujillo to the post in August 1994. Holmes held the post for a year until political crisis engulfed the Samper administration. Daniel García-Peña was subsequently named as coordinator of the Office of the High Commissioner until the end of Samper’s term of office. Government peace policy promoted civil society participation and minor initiatives with the guerrillas.

During the Pastrana administration, the Office of the High Commissioner retained responsibility for the peace process with the guerrilla groups. Víctor G. Ricardo was appointed as High Commissioner, concentrating on the peace process with the FARC. Camilo Gómez briefly replaced Ricardo in May 2002 before President Uribe appointed Luis Carlos Restrepo, the former coordinator of the Mandate for Peace, in August. The efforts of the newly renamed Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and Coexistence have focused on the peace process with the paramilitary groups.

**National Peace Council**

The National Peace Council is a mechanism for developing a ‘permanent peace policy’, or ‘state peace policy’, and coordinating different government bodies. The Law creating it was passed in February 1998 under the Samper Administration and the Council was installed in April. Convened and chaired by the president, it is a legal organism that represents the diversity of Colombian society and was conceived as a consensus-building arena between the state and civil society. Armed actors were also to be allowed to participate as long as they had shown a commitment to engaging in a peace process.

The Council was to appoint a National Peace Committee to carry out necessary functions, with three of the seven members of the Committee to be from civil society. Municipal and departmental level peace councils were also to be formed at the initiative of mayors and governors. Subsequent governments have opted not to use this body. President Pastrana only convened the Council in the most critical moments of the peace process, without turning it into a real instrument of government peace policy. President Uribe has not convened it to date.

**Comisión de Notables**

The most recent Comisión de Personalidades (Commission of Distinguished Citizens), which became known as the Comisión de Notables in the media, was formed in May 2001. Its predecessor, the Comisión de Notables (a civil initiative), had been convened during the Barco administration and continued to function during Gaviria’s presidency. The creation of a new Comisión de Personalidades was agreed between President Pastrana and FARC leader Manuel Marulanda at their first meeting after the Lago Pozos Accord in February 2001, with the government and the FARC each nominating two members.

Its mission was to produce a report on how to reduce the intensity of the armed conflict and ways of advancing the peace process. Among other things, the report recommended a bilateral truce for six months and a commitment to respect human rights and accept international humanitarian law. However, its release in September 2001 coincided with the deterioration of the Pastrana peace process and it faded from view.

**Government Security Forces**

The state security forces total approximately 268,000 members including the army (146,000); air force (10,000); navy (5,000); and police (110,000). All come under the authority of the Ministry of Defence, which is currently headed by a civilian.

The Colombian armed forces have only been involved in one military coup (1953–1957). However, they are powerful and have gained a large degree of autonomy in the absence of a civilian-defined policy to direct public order. This autonomy decreased slightly after the ratification of the 1991 constitution, especially during the Gaviria administration but revived during the political crisis of the Samper administration. Under Uribe, this is changing again and there has been greater civilian control of the armed forces.

According to some critics, the autonomy of the military in the control of security and defence policies has had negative consequences. Firstly, it resulted in a process of bureaucratization, consolidating an inefficient
organizational structure for confronting the guerrillas. This was accompanied by the consolidation of a series of privileges (military jurisdiction that favours impunity) and rents, limiting the military capacity of the security forces to address the armed conflict and resulting in significant levels of corruption.

This inefficiency reached its peak between 1996-1998 when the security forces suffered significant blows from the guerrillas who captured more than 300 personnel in addition to those killed. Police stations were destroyed in at least 150 population centres and the police had to be withdrawn. This trend began to be reversed after 1998 following a process of modernization and significant military assistance from the United States.

The armed forces, in particular the army, were accused of being largely responsible for human rights violations at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s but their share direct involvement in killings and disappearances has fallen sharply in recent years, although they continue to face serious allegations of indirect human rights abuse through collaboration with paramilitary groups.

The armed forces have maintained close relations with the US since the early cold war. Numerous Colombian officers have been trained in military schools in the US and Panama. US military assistance to Colombia was continuous but limited until the advent of Plan Colombia, which resulted in assistance of US$1.319 million, of which US$860m was for Colombia, making the country the third largest recipient of US aid worldwide.

US counter-narcotic aid shifted from the national police to the army, with the 2000-2001 US aid package funding three new counter-narcotics battalions, adding another 2,400 troops. However, the police and its counter-narcotics unit (DIRAN) remain the lead agency for counter-drug activities, carrying out aerial fumigation of drug crops and most other operations.

In President Uribe and his policy of "Democratic Security" the military has found its greatest ever political and institutional support. This has been reflected in increased military spending but also an increased demand for results.

As part of this effort, the Ministry of Defence is managing Uribe's controversial "Peasant Soldier" programme that allows men to do military service in their home towns. A Network of Collaborators (previously Informers) has also been established to collect intelligence information on the armed groups in return for payment. Critics argue that this strengthens links between soldiers and paramilitaries.

**Political parties**

Colombia has been dominated by the two 'traditional' parties formed in the mid-nineteenth century. Their rivalry resulted in violent conflict between their followers throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and in La Violencia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. From 1958 to the mid-1970s these parties shared power within the National Front, alternating the presidency and dividing other positions of power equally between them. Until 1970, candidates of other parties were not allowed to contest elections or could only do so indirectly as dissidents of the two traditional parties.

The **Liberal Party** was formed in 1849, with an ideological orientation toward a federal arrangement and the separation of Church and state. It split into two factions in the early twentieth century – the economically orthodox Moderate Liberals, and the Radical Liberals who supported social intervention and welfare. The murder of Radical Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 was one of the sparks of La Violencia, and elements of the radicalized Liberals contributed to the rise of guerrillas in the 1960s. The Moderate Liberal majority became ever more pro-establishment, especially following the formation of the National Front (1958-1974). In 1979 a reformist breakaway group, New Liberalism, was created. Leader Luis Carlos Galán won 10 per cent of the vote in the 1982 presidential elections before returning to the Liberal fold in 1988. He was assassinated in 1989, but the New Liberalism mantle was carried on by César Gaviria who became the successful Liberal presidential candidate in the 1990 elections. The Liberals held the Presidency again 1994–1998 with President Samper. A "dissident" Liberal, Álvaro Uribe, standing for 'Primero Colombia' won the 2002 Presidential elections.

The **Conservative Party** was formed in 1848. It was inspired by the Bolivarian model of a strong central state with close ties to the Catholic Church. It dominated Colombia from the 1886 Constitution to 1930, but split into two factions: the Moderate Conservatives who favoured a minimal state and free trade, and the ultra-right Historic Conservatives. It has not been very popular since the end of the National Front, holding the presidency for only two terms (1982-1986 and 1998-2002).

The **Communist Party of Colombia** (PCC), formed in 1930 as a pro-Soviet party, has been an important locus of anti-establishment political activity. Its relationship with the FARC has dominated its existence since the 1960s, although a formal separation between the two organizations is maintained. It cannot operate freely because of violent harassment by paramilitaries.
The smaller, initially Maoist, Communist Party of Colombia – Marxist Leninist (PCC-ML) broke away in 1965 and was closely related to the EPL.

The FARC itself attempted to participate in party politics with the foundation of the Patriotic Union (UP) in May 1985. However, at least 3,000 of the party’s congress members, mayors, candidates and activists were killed by paramilitaries, security forces, and drug cartels in the following years. In 2000 the FARC launched the Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia, a clandestine front that aims to fill the void left by the UP.

Non-communist leftist parties have grouped together in a succession of umbrella groups and alliances. The latest is the Polo Democrático (Democratic Pole), named in 2002 after existing as the Social and Political Front since 2000. The Polo Democrático has also absorbed the Via Alterna (Alternative Way) (created 1998) which includes, among others, former M-19 guerrillas and the Indigenous Social Alliance. Leader Luis Eduardo Garzón was elected Mayor of Bogotá in October 2003, the first leftist candidate to win the post.

Guerrilla Groups

FARC
The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has the oldest roots of all the Colombian guerrilla groups. Although it has antecedents in the Liberal and Communist self-defence leagues during La Violencia, it arose after military attacks on Communist Party-inspired peasant cooperatives in Marquetalia, El Pato, Guayabero and Riochiquito. The campesinos who were displaced by these attacks created mobile guerrilla units, founding what was to become the FARC shortly afterward, adopting the name at their second conference in 1966. They continue to be led by Pedro Antonio Marín, alias Manuel Marulanda Véliz, also known as ‘Tirofijo’ (sure-shot), a peasant guerrilla who had fought since 1948 in La Violencia.

From the beginning, the FARC was associated with the Communist Party, as the armed component of the strategy of combining forms of struggle. Its expansion took places in zones colonized by campesinos where state presence was weak. It became a peasant army whose discourse is a mixture of revolutionary agrarianism and anti-imperialism. Since the fall of the Soviet Union it has emphasized its radical nationalist credentials and describes itself as Bolivarian after independence leader Simón Bolívar.

The FARC remains a peasant-based organization. In 1998, one FARC member estimated that the social composition of FARC was 70 per cent ‘peasants’, 20 per cent ‘working class, students and school teachers’, and 10 per cent ‘middle class intellectuals’. However some believe that its campesino base is not as strong as they suggest.

Estimates of the exact number of FARC members vary, but analysts say that there are around 18,000 divided into 70 fronts, mobile columns and urban militias. The FARC leadership has declared that it hopes to expand to 30,000 members in the coming years. It is estimated that they are present in 60 per cent of the country’s municipalities. The FARC is particularly strong in the southern departments of Huila, Caquetá, Meta and Putumayo, as well as the southeastern department of Guaviare.

The FARC finances itself through kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and involvement in Colombia’s drug trade. FARC-controlled areas produce much of Colombia’s coca, although the guerrillas’ link to the drug trade is the source of much controversy. The FARC “taxes” coca-growers, but some units in southern Colombia are thought to be involved in drug trafficking activities, and the Colombian armed forces estimate that the FARC gets about half its income from involvement in narcotics trafficking.

The FARC has been accused of violations of International Humanitarian Law. It also regularly recruits minors, at times by force, and carries out massacres, including killing large numbers of civilians through the indiscriminate use of inaccurate gas-cylinder bombs.

The FARC dealt the Colombian military several humiliating defeats in 1996-1998. As a result of the increasing use of military aviation by the army, these large-scale attacks have decreased. It has also come under more pressure from the paramilitaries.

The FARC have been involved in unsuccessful attempts to negotiate peace in 1984-87, 1991-1992 and 1999-2002. During the Pastrana administration, a 42,000 square kilometre zone was cleared of armed military presence to allow talks in five municipalities in Meta and Caquetá departments. The FARC is now demanding that President Uribe clear two departments, covering more than 110,000 square kilometres, to initiate new peace talks.

ELN
The National Liberation Army (ELN) was founded in 1964. Inspired partly by the impact of the Cuban revolution, it attracted radical students, priests, unionists and some of the remnants of the Liberal guerrillas. It made its first public move on 7 January 1965 with the seizure of the town of Simacota in Santander, where it distributed the ‘Simacota Manifesto’ making a wide-reaching call to overthrow the government.
Among the priests who joined was Camilo Torres, a radical firebrand who died during his first combat in 1966. The link between Torres and the ELN gave it a certain legitimacy with the nascent revolutionary guerrillas and would differentiate it from the gangs of bandits that were a residual element of the bipartisan violence.

Another priest who joined in the 1960s was Manuel Pérez, who served as the group’s ‘maximum leader’ from the 1980s until his death from natural causes in 1998. The ELN is now led by Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista ‘Gabino’.

The early years of the ELN were characterized by caudillismo (authoritarian rule by a charismatic leader) and a clear hierarchical and personalized structure. In this first cycle the strategy was to prosecute a national liberation war starting from rural rebellion in the style of the Cuban M-26. This implied the need to ally itself with social movements, which it partially achieved in the late 1960s with Camilo Torres’ influence on the university student movement and the United Front.

The 1970s, especially after the heavy military defeat at Anorí in Antioquia in 1973, was a period of profound crisis in which the ELN reached the brink of dissolution. It re-emerged in the 1980s with a reformed organizational structure. Casting aside caudillismo, it adopted a confederated structure, which resulted in weaker mechanisms for effective rule and very slow decision-making. The political and military strategy centred around control of local and regional powers, where it showed an aptitude for adapting to institutional changes such as decentralization.

At the end of the 1980s they developed a wider national presence than their Santanderist roots. The ELN has not made numerical strength a priority, rather expanding its political base via ‘armed clientelism’, and concentrating its activities in a more limited number of localities than the FARC. Its strongest areas of influence are in the centre and north-east and it is also active in the south-west around Cali. In the late 1990s the FARC began to operate more in the oil-rich areas of Arauca and Norte de Santander, causing ELN-FARC clashes for control of the zone (which peaked in mid-2000). Also during Pastrana’s administration, they suffered a significant defeat at the hands of the paramilitaries in the Sur de Bolívar.

Bombings of pipelines and energy infrastructure have been used as “war tactics” and the group has also carried out several high-profile mass kidnappings since 1999. Their primary sources of finance have been kidnapping and extortion, which they call “war taxes”. They have not profited significantly from the drug trade. Membership is estimated at about 3,500 members, down from a late-1990s high of about 5,000.

In 1987, the ELN formed part of the new umbrella organization for guerrilla groups, the now defunct Simón Bolivar Guerilla Coordination Body (CGSB). Through this they were briefly engaged in peace talks with the Gaviria government. For years, the ELN has declared its intention to negotiate its peace agenda through a ‘national convention’ with Colombia’s civil-society groups. In 1999, ELN negotiators insisted that this event must take place in a zone similar to the FARC’s demilitarized zone. Under President Pastrana this was agreed in principle in two municipalities in southern Bolívar department, but never realized.

Smaller Guerrilla Groups
Colombia has been home to many small guerrilla groups since the 1960s. Some signed peace agreements and demobilized at the beginning of the 1990s, some have been annihilated, and others continue operations.

The Popular Liberation Army (EPL) today consists of those remnants of the original EPL that resisted a peace accord with the government in 1991. The Maoist-inspired EPL was formed in 1967 as the armed wing of the PCC-ML. It faced obliteration in the 1970s but re-emerged in the 1980s and its membership peaked in 1990 at around 1,500. It rejected Maoism in 1984 and joined the CGSB the next year. Since demobilization, about 300 members have fought on, but their leader, Francisco Caraballo, has been in prison since 1994.

The 19 April Movement (M-19) formed in 1972 were predominantly urban guerrillas. They were named after the date of the perceived electoral fraud of 1970 (when the Popular National Alliance (ANAP), may have polled the most votes in the presidential elections but was prevented from taking power by the National Front elites). ANAPO members were joined by other elements including FARC dissidents to form the M-19. It announced its arrival by stealing the sword of Simón Bolívar from a museum in Bogotá, and its spectacular activities won particular popularity among the urban poor. Many of its leaders were killed during the 1980s. The occupation of the Palace of Justice after the breakdown of the ceasefire was a serious political error that influenced its subsequent demobilization. It started peaceful talks with the Barco administration in 1989 and gave up the military struggle in March 1990 when it signed its Political Pact with the government. The M-19 entered politics as the Democratic Alliance M-19 (AD M-19), but presidential candidate Carlos Pizarro was assassinated in April 1990, causing mass protests and a strong vote for Antonio Navarro Wolff in the elections (12.5%). The AD M-19 gradually lost support and dissolved as it failed to transform sympathy for its cause into an activist party base.
Several other groups demobilized around the same time as the M-19. The Quintin Lame group, named after the leader of indigenous struggle in the early twentieth century, was formed to protect indigenous communities from both the army and from FARC. It received training from the M-19, but did not engage in any major military action and demobilized in 1991. The Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) was a small group formed in 1982 of uncertain origins (breakaways from the PCC-ML or the ELN) who demobilized in 1990. The Socialist Renovation Current (CRS) was an offshoot of the ELN, and signed a peace agreement in 1994.

A number of groups continue fighting. The Guevarist Revolutionary Army (ERG) and Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) are both breakaways from the ELN with perhaps a dozen members, carrying out occasional kidnappings and violent attacks.

Paramilitary Groups

Although private armed groups have long existed in Colombia because of the weakness of the state, today's paramilitary groups emerged in the 1980s alongside the booming drugs trade. New landholders arising from drug trafficking put together private armies to deal with the guerrillas who kidnapped and extorted wealthy ranchers in the area.

One of the first groups was Death to Kidnappers (MAS), active in the Magdalena Medio region of north-central Colombia. Similar groups appeared across Colombia, especially in the north of Antioquia, Puerto Boyacá and Meta. Paramilitary fighters were often a mix of ex-soldiers, ex-guerrillas, and small-time criminals.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the paramilitaries acted mainly at local level and largely in response to regional and localized needs of large landowners to protect their investments.

Paramilitary tactics - selective assassinations, forced disappearances, massacres, forced displacement of entire populations - quickly made them one of the country's main human rights abusers, causing them to be outlawed in 1989. They played a significant role in the decimation of the UP in the late 1980s.

In the 1990s the paramilitaries continued to grow, as did reports of local-level collaboration between paramilitaries and the armed forces. These have been well documented by human rights groups, the United Nations, the US State Department, and Colombian government investigators.

The paramilitaries support themselves with donations from landowners and drug lords, and are increasingly involved in the drug trade itself. The main sources of funding are taxes on small businesses, contractors, and the multinationals they are hired to protect, contributions from large landowners and cattle ranchers, and drug trafficking.

In the early 1990s the United Self-Defence Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), headed by brothers Carlos and Fidel Castaño, emerged in northwestern Colombia. The ACCU depended on logistical support from the army, and its role was to carry out the 'dirty war' on leftist leaders and peasant organizations. Their credentials as a counter-revolutionary force were enhanced considerably by their success in subduing workers unions in Urabá and by uprooting the leftist peasant organizations from the Latifundios on the Caribbean coast.

Advances such as these, combined with the demise of the Medellín and Cali drug cartels, ushered in a new phase when numbers grew and paramilitaries became better armed and trained. Military operations extended south (Putumayo, Meta, Guaviare), north (Santander, North Santander) and east (Casanare, Arauca). The successes of the Castaño brothers made them a focal point in any national strategy, and their control over Urabá and other areas close to the Panamanian border, a main contraband route, gave them further power.

Fuelled in large part by drug money, the paramilitaries' growth has far outpaced the guerrillas. They have expanded nine fold since 1992 and have more than doubled in size since 1998 to an estimated 8,000 members. They currently commit about 80 per cent of killings associated with Colombia's conflict.

The ACCU formed the nucleus of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), an umbrella group formed in 1997 and headed by Carlos Castaño (Fidel had reportedly been killed in the mid 1990s). The AUC began making inroads into FARC-controlled coca-growing areas in southern Colombia in the late 1990s. It is estimated that drug trafficking provides the AUC with US$75 million per year, some 80 per cent of the group's income.

Colombian governments have not granted the paramilitaries the 'political status' given to guerrillas, meaning that they will only negotiate their terms of disarmament. Talks in 2003 led to an agreement in which the AUC committed to demobilizing all its forces by the end of 2005.
The birth of the Colombian state

The colonization of present-day Colombia begins in 1525, following earlier contacts with the Spanish colonizers from 1508. Declarations of independence from Spain made in 1810 are followed by re-conquests, before Simón Bolívar leads the final defeat of Spain in 1819. The new nation of Gran Colombia is formed (present day Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama and Colombia), but in 1830 the country divides, with Colombia and Panama constituting Nueva Granada in 1832. Following various changes of name and organization, it changes its name to Colombia following the reforms of 1886. Panama becomes an independent country in 1903.

Political evolution

The Conservative and Liberal Parties publish their first political programmes in 1848 and 1849 respectively. Following several bi-partisan wars between their supporters during the nineteenth Century, the bloody War of a Thousand Days (1899-1901) leaves an estimated 100,000 people dead. The Conservatives dominate Colombian politics from 1885 until 1930.

La Violencia (1948-1957)

The assassination of radical Liberal presidential aspirant Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 triggers el Bogotazo, a popular uprising in the capital and other regions. The Conservative party responds with a policy of general repression, resulting in the spreading of violent incidents throughout the country. The period later becomes known as La Violencia, during which an estimated 200,000 people die.

General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla leads a coup in 1953 against the ultra-right Conservative government. Colombia’s only period of military rule lasts until 1957 when a civil resistance movement encourages the armed forces to ask Rojas to step down. In a referendum in December, voters endorse the traditional parties’ power-sharing scheme, the National Front.

The National Front and the emergence of the guerrilla groups (1958-1978)

1958

Alberto Lleras Camargo takes office as the first National Front President.
1964
The ELN establishes its first guerrilla centre in southern Santander. The army attacks campesino self-defence groups close to the communist party in Marquetalia, Pato, Riochiquito and Guayabero. The attacks lead the groups to form mobile guerrilla forces, creating the group Bloque Sur, the origin of the FARC.

1966
The FARC is officially formed in the second conference of the Bloque Sur.

1967
The EPL is formally founded.

1970
The National Front system begins to break down after farcical elections where many believe ANAPO leader General Rojas Pinilla won but was officially declared to have come second.

1972
The 19 April Movement (M-19) is founded.

1973
The ELN is all but destroyed after 33,000 government troops move into the region of Anorí, Antioquia.

**Turbay and the failure of the repressive model (1978-1982)**

1978
Julio César Turbay Ayala is elected President. The Security Statute is passed, allowing the armed forces to arrest and prosecute people in military courts. Many accusations of torture are made against the army.

1979
The M-19 steals more than 5,000 weapons from the Canton North army battalion in Bogotá. A subsequent wave of repression results in the imprisonment of members of the M-19, other guerrilla groups and political and social activists.

1980
An M-19 commando storms and takes over the Embassy of the Dominican Republic, leading to negotiations between the government and guerrillas on the release of the diplomatic corps. It is the first negotiation between the government and the guerrillas since La Violencia.

1981
President Turbay appoints a Peace Commission, chaired by former president Carlos Lleras Restrepo.

1982
In Puerto Boyacá, local politicians, military, businessmen, ranchers and drug-traffickers form Death to Kidnappers (MAS) to wipe out local guerrillas and tackle kidnapping.

**Betancur opens the door to negotiations (1982-1986)**

1982
President Belisario Betancur establishes an all-party peace commission to begin talks with political forces and guerrilla groups. In December, the government passes an amnesty law that does not require disarmament.

1983
The Peace Commission starts its contacts with the FARC in La Uribe in January. In October, President Betancur meets with M-19 guerrilla leaders in Spain. The FARC Central Command decides to proceed with its military expansion and create a popular army with the aim of taking power within eight years.

1984
Comando Quintín Lame begins operations, rooted in indigenous resistance dynamics. A bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed at La Uribe on 28 March between the government Peace Commission and the FARC. The M-19, EPL, the Workers Self-Defence Group (ADO) and the ELN splinter fronts 'Simón Bolívar' and 'Antonio Nariño' sign a ceasefire agreement with the Commission for Peace, Dialogue and Verification. Two other ELN factions do the same the following year. The army attacks the M-19 at Yarumales and fighting lasts 26 days.

1985
The national dialogue concludes in February, without much success. The FARC creates a political party, the Patriotic Union (UP), in March to participate in elections without abandoning guerrilla warfare. In June, the M-19 creates 'camps of peace and democracy' in various cities, particularly attracting young people from working class districts. This alarms business and political leaders and the camps are banned. The following months, after the assassination of an EPL commander, the M-19 and the EPL declare the ceasefire over. In November the M-19 takes hostage several magistrates in a bloody siege of the Palace of Justice. The army responds by bombarding it and 95 people are killed.
Finding a partial model for negotiating (1986-1991)

1986
The FARC signs a new agreement with the Peace Commission, extending the 1984 ceasefire agreement. President Virgilio Barco takes office and creates the Council for Reconciliation, Normalization and Rehabilitation.

1987
The M-19 proposes the renewal of talks and the joint demilitarization of reserves and indigenous zones in Cauca. The Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) is formed with the participation of all the guerrilla groups.

1988
The M-19 announces a six-month ceasefire in January, but kidnaps Conservative leader Álvaro Gómez Hurtado in May. A political summit is held in Usaquén in July to resolve the situation, where the Commission for Democratic Coexistence is created to present a peace proposal to the government. President Barco presents his 'Peace Initiative' in September, and in December announces that the government will begin negotiations with the M-19.

1989
January
M-19 leader Carlos Pizarro and Commissioner for Peace Rafael Pardo begin negotiations in Tolima.

April
As part of the peace process with the M-19, Analysis and Consensus Working Groups are set up to develop political accords on social and economic issues.

October
The M-19 decides to disarm and create a political party.

November
The government and M-19 sign a Political Pact, recognizing the results of the Analysis and Consensus Working Groups. A bomb planted by members of the Medellín drug cartel explodes on an Avianca flight, killing 110 passengers.

1990
March
Despite the failure of constitutional reforms, the M-19 signs an agreement on its demobilization and incorporation into the political process. Bernardo Jaramillo, presidential candidate of the Patriotic Union is assassinated.

April
Carlos Pizarro, leader of the M-19 and a presidential candidate, is assassinated.

May/June
The government has preliminary meetings with the EPL, PRT and Quintín Lame and a dialogue process is initiated separately with each group.

August
President César Gaviria Trujillo comes to power. He continues the peace processes with EPL, PRT and Quintín Lame.

September
The first summit of the commanders of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) takes place.

December
The M-19 wins the second largest number of delegates to the Constituent Assembly.
The army attack 'Casa Verde', the stronghold of the FARC high command in La Uribe on the same day as the elections.

1991
January
The PRT signs a peace accord with the government. Similar agreements are later signed with the EPL and Quintín Lame.

February
The National Constituent Assembly is convened. In January and February the FARC conducts the largest escalation in military activities in its history.

April
Three CGSB guerrillas, along with some politicians, storm the Venezuelan Embassy to demand negotiations with the government.

May
The government reveals its new 'Strategy against violence' incorporating the possibility of initiating negotiations without a ceasefire. An exploratory meeting is held between the government and CGSB in Cravo Norte (Arauca). They agree to begin talks in Caracas.
June
Two rounds of talks take place between the government and the CGSB.

July
The new Constitution is promulgated. The Caracas talks with the CGSB continue, but there is a violent interlude during July and August.

September/November
The third and fourth round of talks are held in Caracas.

1992
March
Talks between the government and the CGSB resume in Tlaxcala, Mexico.

June
Talks between the government and the CGSB break down.

The integral war and marginal negotiations (1992-1994)

July
Defence Minister Rafael Pardo publicly announces the government’s ‘Integral War’ policy.

September
Medellín drug cartel boss Pablo Escobar escapes from his luxurious high security prison in Envigado, Antioquia.

1993
January
Pablo Escobar declares war on the government, leading to a major spate of car bombings and the assassination of judges, police and others.

February
President Gaviria announces a major increase in military personnel.

December
Pablo Escobar is shot dead by antinarcotics police.

1994
April
The CRS signs a peace accord with the government.

May
The Urban Militias of Medellín sign an agreement for their demobilization following the same model used with the guerrilla groups.

June
The Francisco Garnica Front signs an agreement for its demobilization and reintegration.

Drug trafficking and obstacles to peace (1994-1998)

August
Liberal Party candidate Ernesto Samper is elected President. He calls for negotiations with all guerrilla forces and an “integral peace” to tackle the socio-economic causes of conflict. Carlos Holmes Trujillo is named High Commissioner for Peace.

November
The High Commissioner for Peace presents his first report and preparations for a negotiation process begin.

1995
June/July
The Samper administration faces a severe crisis due to accusations that drug money was used to finance his presidential campaign. The Commander of the army opposes the plan to demilitarize the municipality of La Uribe to start talks with the FARC. Holmes Trujillo resigns as High Commissioner for Peace.

August
The National Conciliation Commission is convened by the Catholic Church to explore alternatives for peace.

1996
February
The ELN proposes a broad-based National Convention to discuss political, social and economic problems.

March
Colombia is decertified by the US State Department for providing insufficient support for the war against drugs.

April
The UN Commission on Human Rights asks to establish an office in Colombia. This is formally agreed with the Colombian government and opens one year later.

August
The FARC launches an attack on a military base at Las Delicias, Putumayo. The base is destroyed, 54 soldiers die and 60 are captured.
October
Two and a half million children participate in the Children’s Mandate for Peace.

1997
April
Carlos Castaño, leader of the Peasant Self-Defence Groups of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), forms a national coalition of paramilitary groups, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC).

June
The government signs a humanitarian agreement with the FARC to allow for the freeing of 70 soldiers.

July
The AUC kills 49 peasants in the village of Mapiripán in southeastern Colombia.

October
Nearly 10 million Colombians vote for the Citizen’s Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty.

1998
February
The government and the ELN High Command sign the Palace of Viana Pre-Agreement in Madrid.

March
FARC guerrillas attack a Colombian army battalion in southern Caquetá, killing 107 soldiers.

April
The ELN announces the death of its leader, Manuel Pérez Martinez.


July
President-elect Pastrana meets FARC commander Manuel Marulanda to discuss the withdrawal of the military from five municipalities and exchange views on future peace talks. La Puerta del Cielo (Door to Heaven) agreement on humanizing the war is signed by the ELN and civil society representatives in Germany. The Permanent Civil Society Peace Assembly meets for the first time.

August
President Pastrana takes office. Victor G. Ricardo is named High Commissioner for Peace.

October
The Colombian government initiates talks with the ELN and recognizes their political status. Civil society representatives and the ELN hold a preparatory meeting in Río Verde (Antioquia). The ELN destroys a section of the central oil pipeline in Machuca, Antioquia, killing 70 civilians. The government suspends talks. Pastrana orders the creation of a demilitarized zone (DMZ) to facilitate talks with the FARC.

November
The DMZ is established on 7 November for an initial period of 90 days.

December
Government-ELN peace talks resume.

1999
January
Paramilitaries carry out a series of civilian massacres. Pastrana attends the inauguration of the peace talks with the FARC in the DMZ. Marulanda does not attend. Talks are suspended with the FARC citing Pastrana’s failure to take decisive action against the paramilitaries.

February
Following Preparatory Committee meetings, High Commissioner Victor G. Ricardo and ELN military chief Antonio García meet in Caracas but fail to agree dates and a location for the National Convention. Three US indigenous rights activists working in Arauca are abducted and later assassinated by the FARC.

April
The ELN hijacks an Avianca domestic flight with 46 passengers and crew on board.

May
The government and FARC agree a broad 12-point agenda for peace talks. The government extends the DMZ by 30 days. Defence Minister Rodrigo Lloreda resigns in protest at government handling of the peace process. The ELN attempts to kidnap an entire congregation at La María church in Cali and escapes with 63 people.

June
The government suspends peace talks with the ELN and revokes its political status.

July
Negotiations with the FARC are postponed indefinitely after failure to agree on the international verification commission for the DMZ. Pastrana declares that he wants
peace but is preparing for war. The Civilian Facilitation Commission (CFC) is formed.

August
The government accepts CFC good offices and allows it to contact the ELN to facilitate the release of the Avianca and ‘La Maria’ hostages.

September
Pastrana unveil Plan Colombia. The government commits US$4 billion and seeks US$3.5 billion from abroad.

October
Government and ELN representatives meet in Havana, Cuba. Peace agenda talks between the government and the FARC begin after the government drops its demand for a verification mission in the DMZ. On the same day, an estimated 10 million people march in the No Mds (‘No More’) campaign.

November
Agenda talks with the FARC continue despite guerrilla offensives in 13 municipalities. The parties agree that ‘public hearings’ should begin in December, and the FARC offers a conditional Christmas-New Year truce. The government and the ELN hold a further round of talks.

December
The Norwegian Jan Egeland is appointed Special Adviser to UN Secretary General on International Assistance to Colombia. The government extends the DMZ for six months. The first public hearing is postponed. The ELN releases the remaining Cali church hostages.

2000
January
The US government announces a US$1.6 billion package for Plan Colombia.

February
Inhabitants of southern Bolivar stage roadblocks, protesting against the possible establishment of the ELN meeting zone. Government-ELN talks resume in Caracas and continue in Havana.

March
The government and the ELN meet once in Havana and twice in Caracas. The FARC establishes a clandestine political party called ‘Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia’.

April
The FARC imposes a ‘peace tax’ on wealthy Colombians, threatening to kidnap those who do not pay. The Government and ELN announce agreement on a meeting zone.

May
Camilo Gómez replaces Víctor G. Ricardo as High Commissioner for Peace.

June
The government extends the DMZ for six months and restores political status to the ELN. The ELN, government and regional authorities meet in southern Bolivar to discuss local concerns about the meeting zone. Both sides agree to encourage the establishment of a ‘Group of Friendly and Facilitator Countries’.

July
The government and FARC exchange ceasefire proposals in sealed envelopes and agree on a period of one month to consider and respond to them. At an international conference in Madrid, the international community expresses support for the peace process and some countries offer financial assistance. Separately, President Clinton approves US$1.3 billion for Plan Colombia. Government representatives of civil society and ELN leaders meet in Geneva for a ‘Conference on a National Consensus for Peace in Colombia’. The creation of the Group of Friends is confirmed.

August
The government reactivates the National Peace Council.

September
FARC member Arnubio Ramos hijacks an internal flight on 8 September and forces the aircraft to fly to the DMZ. The government freezes peace talks. The ELN kidnaps 70 civilians outside Cali.

October
Representatives from Colombian civil society, the government, the ELN and the diplomatic community attend an ‘International meeting on Peace, Human Rights, and International Humanitarian Law’ in Costa Rica. Government-FARC negotiators agree to establish a special commission to resolve the problem of FARC hijacks. They also agree to begin a second round of public hearings and examine each other’s ceasefire proposals.

November
Following a meeting with the government, the AUC releases seven Congressmen. The FARC announces a
suspension of peace talks until the government clarifies its position with regard to the paramilitaries.

December

2001

January
The Government and ELN agree detailed ground rules for the proposed meeting zone in southern Bolivar.

February
The army carries out operation Bolivar to clear the proposed ELN meeting zone. After a roadblock by 2000 inhabitants, the government agrees not to establish the zone before talking with the communities. Pastrana and Marulanda sign the Los Pozos Accord. The DMZ is extended for eight months and formal peace negotiations resume.

March
The ELN unilaterally suspends peace talks, charging that further meetings in Southern Bolivar lacked security and credibility.

April
The ELN announces the indefinite suspension of talks, criticizing the government’s “lack of will”.

May
The Group of Friends and the Group of verification countries meet with the Colombian government to discuss conditions for the meeting zone.

June
The government and the FARC agree on the release of 42 soldiers and policemen and the release of 15 imprisoned guerrilla members. The FARC unilaterally releases 242 soldiers and policemen. The CFC meets with ELN representatives in Caracas. An ELN-government meeting then takes place on Margarita Island, Venezuela.

August
Government-ELN talks stall after a meeting in Caracas. President Pastrana announces that he is cutting off all talks with the ELN guerrillas.

September
The AUC is added to the US State Department’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations joining the FARC and the ELN. The Comisión de Personalidades, created in May as a result of the Los Pozos Accord, presents its recommendations. Ex-minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera is kidnapped and assassinated by the FARC.

October
The FARC and the government sign the San Francisco de la Sombra accord. The DMZ is renewed until 20 January 2002. Marulanda orders the FARC to withdraw from negotiations until flights over and control of entry to the DMZ are stopped. In Antioquia, 23 mayors secretly negotiate a ceasefire with the ELN. The government opposes the move.

November
The UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for the Peace Process in Colombia, Jan Egeland, resigns and is replaced by James LeMoyne. Marulanda challenges the governing classes to hold a meeting to discuss what is really negotiable.

The Accord for Colombia is signed in Havana between the government and the ELN.

December
The ELN and the government issue the ‘Havana Declaration’, agreeing to begin ceasefire discussions in January, and to hold a series of thematic meetings in Cuba.

2002

January
Pastrana suspends the peace talks and announces that the armed forces will re-enter the demilitarized zone in 48 hours. The government gives UN, the Group of Friends and the Church time to investigate alternative options. Following intense efforts, the FARC announces that there are sufficient guarantees for the process to continue. The parties then agree a timetable to negotiate a ceasefire. The DMZ is extended until 10 April. The Summit for Peace between the ELN and the government takes place in Havana.

February
The US Government announces US$98 million to fund a new Colombian army unit to defend oil infrastructure from guerrilla attacks. The FARC hijacks a plane kidnapping a congressman. Pastrana announces the end of the peace process with the FARC. The FARC kidnaps the senator and presidential candidate Ingrid Betancur.

March
The second and third Havana working sessions between the ELN and government take place.
April
The Group of Friends participate on one day of the fourth ELN-government working session in Havana.

May
Pastrana suspends peace talks with the ELN, claiming they are not committed to peace. During a clash with paramilitaries, the FARC attacks the church of Bojaya (Chocó) with a cylinder bomb, killing 119 civilians sheltering inside.

Security policy as a path to peace (2002—)

August
Álvaro Uribe becomes president on a platform of ‘Democratic Security’, adopting a hard line towards the guerrillas.

September
The US asks for the extradition of paramilitary leaders Carlos Castaño, Salvatore Mancuso and Juan Carlos Sierra.

December
The AUC declares a unilateral ceasefire.

2003
February
The FARC bombs a club in Bogotá, killing around 30 people.

May
Perú’s President Alejandro Toledo says that leaders of the Rio Group have agreed to ask UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to press Colombia’s guerrillas and paramilitaries to negotiate a peace deal.

July
An inter-governmental donor coordination meeting is held in London resulting in the London Declaration. During a visit to Brazil, Uribe says that there is no possibility of peace dialogue with the FARC. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo announces that nine paramilitary groups have agreed to demobilize and begin formal peace negotiations with the government.

August
The government signs a framework agreement with the AUC. The FARC and the ELN issue a rare joint statement ruling out peace talks with the Uribe administration.

October
Luis Eduardo Garzón of the Polo Democrático is elected Mayor of Bogotá. Uribe loses a referendum on his proposed political and economic reforms.

November
The government signs an accord for negotiations with paramilitary groups Bloque Central Bolívar and Vencedores de Arauca. The demobilization of 800 paramilitaries of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (the main Medellín paramilitary group) begins.

December
A further 155 paramilitaries hand in their weapons in Ortega (Cauca). The ELN releases five foreign tourists kidnapped in September, following negotiations mediated by the Catholic Church.
Further reading

(A more extensive selection of texts in Spanish can be found at www.c-r.org/acord/)

Violence and conflict in Colombia

- Galvis, Constanza Ardila. The heart of the war in Colombia (London: Latin American Bureau, 2000)
- García Márquez, Gabriel. One hundred years of solitude (Many publishers, Spanish language original 1967)
- Pearce, Jenny. Colombia: Inside the Labyrinth (London: Latin American Bureau, 1990)

Peace processes with the armed actors

- International Crisis Group. 'Colombia: prospects for peace with the ELN. Bogotá/Brussels, Latin America Report No. 2, 4 October 2002

Peace movements and mobilization

- Cameron, Sara. Out of war: true stories from the front lines of the children's movement for peace in Colombia (New York: UNICEF, 2001)

International involvement


Web resources

- Colombian Presidency: http://www.presidencia.gov.co/ (Spanish only)
- FARC website: http://www.farcep.org/pagina_ingles/
- ELN website: http://www.eln-voces.com/ (Spanish only)
- AUC website: http://www.colombialibre.org/ (Spanish only)
- Embassy of Colombia in Washington, DC: http://www.colombiaemb.org/
- Center for International Policy, Colombia project: http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/
- US Office on Colombia http://www.usofficeoncolombia.org/
- Colombia Week: http://www.colombiaweek.org/
- Colombia Journal: http://www.colombiajournal.org/
Glossary

**Barrio**: an urban neighbourhood.

**Campesino**: 'peasant', or 'rural worker'.

**Clientelism**: a political practice based on the dispensation of favours by leaders in exchange for support.

**Colono**: 'colonizer'; usually refers to campesinos who have settled in frontier territory in search of land and a livelihood.

**La Violencia**: a period of profound violence, uprisings and counter-revolutionary repression, occurring principally from 1948 to 1953 (although continuing at least until 1957) in which an estimated 200,000 people died.

**National Front**: an exclusive power-sharing arrangement between the Liberal and Conservative parties that lasted from 1958 to 1978, which meant they alternated the Presidency (until 1974) and divided other legislative and executive positions equally between them.

**Political favourability**: one-off benefits negotiated with armed groups (originally the M-19) to assist their transition to legal political activity, by enabling electoral advantage or otherwise guaranteeing their participation in legislative bodies.

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Acronyms

| ACCU | United Self-Defence Forces of Córdoba and Urabá |
| AD M-19 | Democratic Alliance M-19 |
| ADO | Workers' Self-Defence Group |
| ANAPO | Popular National Alliance |
| ASI | Indigenous Social Alliance |
| AUC | United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia |
| CCN | National Conciliation Commission |
| CGSB | Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body |
| CINEP | Centre for Research and Popular Education |
| CRS | Socialist Renewal Current |
| DMZ | Demilitarized Zone |
| ECOPETROL | Colombian Petrol Company |
| ELN | National Liberation Army |
| EPL | People's Liberation Army |
| EU | European Union |
| FARC | Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (also FARC-EP) |
| FIP | Ideas for Peace Foundation |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IHL | International Humanitarian Law |
| M-19 | 19th April Movement |
| MAS | Death to Kidnappers |
| PDPMM | Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme |
| PNR | National Rehabilitation Plan |
| PRT | Workers' Revolutionary Party |
| REDEPAZ | Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFP | United Nations Population Fund |
| UP | Patriotic Union |
The Accord series

Accord: an international review of peace initiatives is published by Conciliation Resources (CR). It provides detailed narrative and analysis on specific war and peace processes in an accessible format. The series is intended to provide a practical resource for reflection for all those engaged in peacemaking activities.

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The Liberia issue documents the lengthy and fractious Liberian peace process and provides insight into why thirteen individual peace accords collapsed in half as many years.

Safeguarding Peace: Cambodia's Constitutional Challenge
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This publication documents issues around the signing of the 1991 Paris agreements which officially "brought to an end" Cambodia's long war and the violent collapse of the country's governing coalition in July 1997.

Negotiating Rights: The Guatemalan Peace Process
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The signing of the peace agreement in 1996 brought an end to 36 years of civil war in Guatemala. The publication analyses issues of impurity, indigenous rights, political participation and land reform.

Compromising on Autonomy: Mindanao in Transition
Issue 6 | 1999
The GRP-MNLF 1996 Peace Agreement was a milestone in many ways. The publication analyses features of peacemaking in Mindanao and examines the challenges of implementation. 2003: Supplement Issue

The Mozambican Peace Process in Perspective
Issue 3 | 1998
The Mozambique issue documents the diverse initiatives which drove the parties to a negotiated settlement of the conflict as well as illustrating the impact of changing regional and international dynamics on Mozambique.

A question of sovereignty: the Georgia-Abkhazia peace process
Issue 7 | 1999
The publication explores the background and issues at the heart of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict, provides a unique insight into a political stalemate and points towards possible avenues out of deadlock.

Demanding Sacrifice: War and Negotiation in Sri Lanka
Issue 4 | 1998
The Sri Lanka issue documents the cycles of ethnic/national conflict which have blighted the country since 1983. It analyses negotiations and other peace initiatives that have taken place since 1993 and outlines fundamental issues that need to be confronted in future peacemaking efforts.

Striking a balance: the Northern Ireland peace process
Issue 8 | 1999
Accord 8 explores the factors that led to the negotiations resulting in the Belfast Agreement, describing the complex underlying forces and the development of an environment for peace. 2003: Supplement Issue
Paying the price: the Sierra Leone peace process
Issue 9 | 2000
The Lomé Peace Agreement of July 1999 sought to bring an end to one of the most brutal civil wars of recent times. Accord 9 explores earlier attempts to bring the conflict to an end and in doing so seeks to draw valuable lessons for Sierra Leone’s transition.

Politics of compromise: the Tajikistan peace process
Issue 10 | 2001
Accord 10 describes the aspirations of the parties to the conflict in Tajikistan and documents the negotiation process leading to the General Agreement of June 1997. It looks at the role of the international community, led by the UN, as well as local civil society, in reaching a negotiated settlement.

Protracted conflict, elusive peace: initiatives to end the violence in northern Uganda
Issue 11 | 2002
While a meaningful peace process in Northern Uganda remains elusive, this issue documents significant peacemaking initiatives undertaken by internal and external actors and analyses their impact on the dynamics of the conflict and attempts to find peace.

Weaving consensus: The Papua New Guinea – Bougainville peace process
Issue 12 | 2002
Accord 12 documents efforts leading to the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. The issue describes an indigenous process that drew on the strengths of Melanesian traditions, as well as innovative roles played by international third-parties.

Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking
Issue 13 | 2002
The first thematic publication documents mechanisms for public participation in peacemaking. It features extended studies looking at how people were enabled to participate in political processes in Guatemala, Mali and South Africa. It also contains shorter pieces from Colombia, Northern Ireland and the Philippines.

Future issues

The Angolan conflict and peace process
The death of Jonas Savimbi, leader of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in February 2002 and the signing of the Luena Memorandum on 4 April 2002 brought an abrupt end to the 27-year civil war in Angola. Since then, the country has embarked on a process of transition, addressing challenges such as demobilization, development and reconciliation. The Accord publication will provide an overview of peacemaking efforts during the conflict and attempt to understand why they failed to halt the violence. It will also document current progress in addressing key ‘post-conflict’ issues, highlighting the roles played by the government, civil society, the business sector and the international community.

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