

**SERIE DOCUMENTOS**

**BORRADORES  
DE  
INVESTIGACIÓN**

**No. 35 Agosto de 2003**

**Why peace processes fail or move forward?  
Negotiations in Colombia with FARC and AUC  
(1998-2003)**

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# WHY PEACE PROCESSES FAIL OR MOVE FORWARD? NEGOTIATIONS IN COLOMBIA WITH FARC AND AUC (1998-2003)\*

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the theory of civil war and conflict resolution to answer the question, why peace processes fail or move forward? I will look at peace processes in Colombia in the last five years when negotiation started and then broke with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia –FARC- and began with the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia –AUC-. The theory reveals the relevance of economic, political, external participation and military factor to explain why some peace processes fail while others succeed. For instance, the failure of the first peace dialogue with the left-wing guerrilla FARC can be explained by the military strategy, the role of violence during the talks and lack of international participation. By contrast, by avoiding all sensitive points of the first peace dialogue, AUC won a significant public support and the government confidence to begin talks. We have thus two recent peace processes in Colombia to analyse: one failed and one moving forward. Their analysis will help us to answer the opening question of this paper.*

## RESUMEN

*Este trabajo examina la teoría sobre guerras civiles y resolución de conflictos con el fin de contestar la pregunta: ¿por qué fracasan o progresan los procesos de paz? Se miraron los procesos de paz en Colombia en los últimos cinco años cuando comenzó y fracasó el proceso de paz con las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC y comenzaron con las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC. La teoría revela la relevancia de factores económicos, políticos, participación externa y militares para explicar por que fallan o prosperan los procesos de paz. Por su parte, el fracaso de las negociaciones con las FARC puede explicarse por razones de estrategia militar, el rol de la violencia durante la negociación y la falta de participación internacional. De otro lado, evitando todos los puntos sensibles de la negociación inicial, las AUC ganaron apoyo de la opinión pública y la confianza del gobierno para iniciar los diálogos. De esta forma, tenemos dos procesos recientes en Colombia para analizar: uno que fallo y el otro que esta progresando. El análisis de estos procesos puede ayudarnos a contestar la pregunta inicial de este trabajo.*

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\* Trabajo de grado para optar por el título de MSc in Comparative Politics de London School of Economics and Political Science. Se agradece el apoyo de la Universidad del Rosario y COLCIENCIAS.

Las opiniones expresadas solo comprometen al autor y de ninguna manera a la Universidad del Rosario.

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## INTRODUCTION

Why do some internal conflicts succeed in reaching a negotiated settlement while in others the combatants withdraw from the negotiating table and return to war? Why having achieved to seat opponent parties in a negotiation table some processes fail while other move forwards and may succeed? Those questions are posed in a growing body of literature on internal conflicts and peace processes pointing out several reasons for the failures and successes of conflict resolution efforts. Among those, we may find the type and terms of the settlement, the lack of third party support, the significance of ethnic and religious identities, and the economic and political incentives. In addition, a number of sensitive points have been suggested of the peace process that may difficult or threaten the progress of the process: strategies and objectives of each party, violence during the peace process and the design of the negotiation agenda.

During the past decade, interest in internal conflict and civil war has increased among scholars. The end of the Cold War moved the analysis from inter-state wars to intra-state wars and the conditions to bring them to an end through negotiated settlement. Civil wars and internal conflict are not new phenomena, not even post Cold War phenomena, as some suggest they have become the predominant form of armed combat in the last half-century.

The case of Colombia's internal conflict appears in a large number of analyses. The Colombian internal conflict is challenging as it has lasted for more than half a century, it involves left and right illegal groups, it has the oldest guerrilla group in Latin America and, as Bejarano suggests (1999, pp 201), "Colombia is the country where peace negotiations in Latin America began".<sup>1</sup>

The Colombian conflict is relevant for the analysis of negotiating civil war in three dimensions. From an international dimension, "there is consensus among analysts that for the first time [Colombia's] internal problem is being seen as a threat to the international order not only the United States and the European powers but also by our neighbours friends. In diplomatic circles Colombia has earned itself the soubriquets of the "Bosnia of South America" and "Latin America's open sore" (Guerrero; 2001, pp 22). In addition, the Colombia's conflict is in the context of international campaign against "new enemies": drug trade and terrorism.

From a regional perspective, Colombia's conflict is in a context of relatively peaceful post-Cold War Latin America; guerrilla war continues at full strength in Colombia. The effects of the conflict are increasingly felt in neighbouring countries in terms of refugees, ecological damage, and drug and arms trafficking routes. From an internal perspective, the development of the conflict underlines the interaction of three relevant actors: the left-wing guerrilla, the right-wing paramilitary and the government. The two cases chosen, the negotiation with the *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia* –FARC and the *Self-Defence Forces of Colombia* –AUC give lights to understand the obstacles and strengths in peace negotiation processes.

Colombia has experienced various peace processes at different times. During the eighties various initiatives of dialogues and negotiations took place. Three middle-range guerrillas signed

<sup>1</sup> Since 1982 all president in office initiated peace talks with insurgents groups. The following are the presidents of Colombia since 1982 (1982-86), Belisario Betancur, (1986-1990) Virgilio Barco, (1990-94) Cesar Gaviria, (1994-98) Ernesto Samper, (1998-2002) Andrés Pastrana and currently Alvaro Uribe.

peace accords during that decade. However, the two main guerrilla groups, the *National Liberation Army* –ELN– and FARC continued their violent actions without any real attempt at negotiating. The nineties were a bloody and dirty decade: escalation of violence; shocking violation of human rights; several increases of internal displacements; political violence that has left a great number of murders, kidnapping, drug-trafficking and so on, illustrated most of the development of the internal conflict. In 1998, president Andrés Pastrana announced a dialogue with FARC. Three years later the government broke-up negotiations.

Meanwhile, as a response to the guerrilla's regional power and strategic actions, Colombia experienced the emergence and strength of numerous right-wing self-defence groups. In the nineties, such disaggregate groups joined together forming AUC. In December 2002, in a climate of general scepticism toward negotiation processes, the leader of AUC announced his interest in dialogue with the government and proposed a potential negotiating agenda. The government of Álvaro Uribe initiated a set of meetings and declared the beginning of negotiation with the AUC.

The relevance of the period (1998-2003) is the coincidence of some circumstances: two processes with opposing armed actors, a change from an endogenous peace negotiation to a more open negotiation including international actors, the growth of the number of illegal troops and the failure of one peace process and another with high prospective to progress in the mid-term.

Even though AUC peace process is in progress and it might be difficult to anticipate its outcome, one can illustrate its development and the existing strength and obstacles to conclude that this peace process has chances of achieving something. By contrast, the broken peace process with FARC tells us about the problem of the negotiation, the lack of incentives to eventually reach an accord and the challenges of starting a new dialogue between the government and this rebel group.

To answer the question, *why peace processes fail or move forward?*, I examined secondary sources, and I collected information from newspapers, official documents and violence surveys. This essay aims to analyse the principal thesis about failure and success of peace processes and discuss the cases of FARC and AUC in the light of the theory.

To address the question, this essay is divided in four sections. The first section presents the relevant definitions used on the paper, an eclectic theoretical framework on internal (civil) war negotiation and termination and the relevant hypothesis on the Colombian case. The second section is a short description of the origins of Colombian violent conflict and some aspects of its evolution; a characterization of the armed groups and the peace processes undertaken in the past five years. The third section interprets the findings in the light of the theory and discusses the reasons for failure and progress of peace processes in the two cases. In conclusions I suggest that while the military, third-party's participation and violent actions can explain the failure of FARC negotiation they are not sufficient to explain why AUC negotiation is moving forward. In addition, I highlight the relevance of two elements, absent in the literature, to explain the progress of peace talks with AUC: "negotiation learning process" and judicial guarantees.

# 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 DEFINITIONS

The principal terms used are *peace process*, *civil or internal war* and *rebels*. According to Höglund (2001, pp 5), a peace process is considered to be in progress “when it is publicly known that the primary parties to the conflict have signalled a willingness to solve the conflict issues through dialogue”. That is to say, peace process relies on the type of resolution strategies between the parties and the changing patterns of the process rather than on the specific causes of the conflict and the parties conflict behaviour.

*Peace negotiation*, *talk* and *dialogue* will be used as synonyms. They refer to the process followed by the parties to bargain and to reach an accord of any kind, primarily based on a pre-established agenda of negotiation. Talks can include external parties to the conflict such as the church, international actors, civil society, businessmen, politician and so on.

The more delicate definition is *civil war*. There is a large debate among Colombian scholars of the applicability of the term civil war in the case of Colombia.<sup>2</sup> Without ignoring the relevance of the discussion, we will say that Colombia experiences a civil war. Following the Licklider definition, civil war refers to any conflict that satisfies all of the following criteria: some influential leaders must be concerned about possibly having to live in the same political unit with their current enemies after the killing stops; there must be multiple sovereignties<sup>3</sup> and large scale violence as battle deaths (above 1,000 per year and at least 5% of casualties on its opponent). In addition, civil war is a conflict mainly concentrated within national boundaries where internal participants are involved and external powers might be part of the war and the peace process. In this essay there will be no distinction between *civil war* and *internal war*.

We define *rebels* as illegal armed groups aiming to overthrow the existing government (rebellion or secession) or attempting to substitute military forces. In addition, rebels or illegal movements have cohesion, organization, territorial control and a minimal support among the society.

Also, we prefer to use the term *move forward* instead of *succeed*. Even though in literature the term *success* is used in opposition to failure, in the cases chosen it is more accurate to talk of *move forward*. In that sense, I define *move forward* in a peace process, the development of the pre-negotiation phase where the parties involved establish an agenda of negotiation and advance in the dialogue reaching some kind of accepted and legitimate accord. In that sense, we will say that a peace negotiation is succeeding or moving forward when there are positive developments in the dialogue and consensus among parties. Even though literature defines success as the negotiated settlement, a ceasefire and re-incorporation into society, in this analysis we do not use such category. When a negotiation is *moving forward* there are no guarantees of a ceasefire,

<sup>2</sup> A review of the Debate appears in E. Posada Carbo (2001) “Guerra Civil?, Guerra contra los Civiles? Violencia Generalizada?. Sobre la naturaleza del conflicto interno en Colombia”. Fundacion Ideas para la Paz, (May), in [http://www.ideaspaz.org/publicaciones/download/guerra\\_civil.pdf](http://www.ideaspaz.org/publicaciones/download/guerra_civil.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Understood as defined by Charles Tilly, population of an area obeying more than one institution –taxes, armies, and symbols. See Charles Tilly (1978). *From Mobilization to Revolution*. (Reading: MA: Addison-Wesley).

even less of the end of the conflict and the violence in the country, those can be a further outcome. On the other hand, by *failure*, I mean the impossibility to reach any type of agreement, the dissolution of the negotiation table and the withdrawing from the dialogue of at least one of the parties.

## 1.2 THE THEORY

The literature on internal war (civil war) termination and conflict resolution can be categorized into two main groups: The first one, *rational choice* approach, considers negotiated settlement as a function of economic, institutional or military conditions that may encourage combatants to initiate dialogues. In this perspective, the success of negotiation will be closely related with the presence of specific conditions. The second set of theories, *conflict resolution techniques*,<sup>4</sup> underlines the ability of parties to solve their conflicts. In other words, once the dialogue is initiated, the success of the process will rely on the ability to put an end to the inner reasons of war. The final set of theories highlights the interaction of certain conditions that may foster or block the negotiation.

In the rational choice theory one can include the work of Shugart, Berdal and Malone, Zartman, Mason and Fett, Collier, and Fearon among others. In general, the literature is based on the idea that the decision to negotiate or not is determined by the relative costs and benefits of a unilateral victory or a negotiated settlement. In that sense, the relation of cost and benefit will depend on different type of elements such as economic viability, durability of the conflict, hurting stalemate, institutional reforms and so on.

Shugart, from an institutionalist perspective, considers the rational calculation of ending a conflict by democratic means, that is, political reform. According to Shugart (1992, pp 122), “institutional change may lower barriers to entry for new participants in the political market, therefore, negotiations over the institutional rules of the game are usually crucial components of any electoral settlement”. In that sense the greater the chances of electoral incorporation the lower the costs of continuing war. Here, the regime and rebels calculation costs interact in the outcome.<sup>5</sup> The step from war to settlement will occur if “for one side the cost of competition should become lower than the cost of conflict” creating a situation of stalemate that may lead to political and electoral reforms and ultimately the settlement. If government’s costs of suppression are greater than costs of toleration, then the reform will be one that guarantees electoral security and lower barriers to rebel participation. If the rebel’s cost of participation is lower than the cost of resistance, there will be an institutional reform that provides guarantees to the governing parties that their interest will be protected in the new electoral competition.

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<sup>4</sup> This category was developed by Markus Kornprobst (2002). ‘Explaining Success and Failure of War to Peace Transitions: Revisiting the Angolan and Mozambican Experience’. *The Journal of Conflict Studies*. 22 (2) (fall), pp 58-61.

<sup>5</sup> According to Shugart, an institutional reform decrease the cost of resistance of rebels in exchange of participation and decrease the cost of suppression of the regime in exchange of toleration. ( $T < S$  and  $P < R$  where T: Toleration; S: Suppression; P: Participation and R: Resistance)

Zartman analyses internal conflict by looking what can change the parties' behaviour due to preferable alternatives. Warring parties can present pain, fatigue and boredom from being at war and lower their benefits from the conflict. They may also have new incentives that increase their war-benefits. In that sense, the set of incentives will change according to the parties' behaviour. Zartman also suggests that timing can change the effects of incentives. As Zartman (2001, pp 298) says, "disincentives and incentives can come in two forms, as current or as contingent modifiers of present values ... Contingent disincentives and incentives must be credible, both as to their own feasibility and as to the willingness of the other party to implement them". Political reform and hurting stalemate are two main components that change behaviour and incentives of parties. The prospect of an inclusive political reform, accommodation and devolution can reduce the benefits of war that is increases the chances of negotiation. On the other side, mutually hurting stalemate can get the process started by pushing parties to listen to incentives and negotiate. In addition, both type of incentives require being credible. Mediation of a third party may provide credibility to the incentives.

Manson and Fett assume a simple model of rational calculation over the utility and cost of war and settlement. As they say (1995, pp 549), "the likelihood that both the government and the rebels will agree to a settlement rather than continue to fight will vary depending on each party's estimate of its probability of victory, its expected payoffs from victory versus those from a settlement, the rate at which it absorbs costs of conflict and its estimate of how long will take to achieve victory". They suggest that the probability of settlement will depend primarily on the duration of the conflict, on the size of government army; uncertain effects on the negotiation settlement are the casualty rates and the role of third parties, the points at the stake of the conflict have almost null effects on the decision of a negotiated settlement.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of economic factors to end a civil war, Collier states that civil wars occur where rebel organizations are financially viable, mostly in countries with low income, low growth and economies based principally on the export of commodities.<sup>7</sup> In that sense, the way to end a civil war depends on how public policies reduce the economic risk factors: change the pattern of economy, diversify the production and international cooperation to reduce the incidence of illegal trades: sanctions making the economic and military circumstances of rebellion more difficult. In addition, Berdal and Malone expose the political economy of civil war (rebels economic system and the opportunities generated by war) and they suggest that one of the ways to end war is to "deactivate the belligerents' financial spigot" (2000, pp 14). The greater the benefits of war economy the less chances to initiate a negotiated settlement.

Rational choice perspective seems to narrow in analysing an internal conflict. For instance, structure of cost will be constrained by lack of information; actors do not have all information and may mislead their calculation. In addition, by looking at the process with one feature, leaving aside other factors, the analysis is far from reality, where actors are interacting and more than one element affect parties decisions.

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<sup>6</sup> See David Mason and Patrick Fett (1996) 'How Civil Wars End: A Rational Choice Approach'. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 40 (4) (Dec), pp 561-564.

<sup>7</sup> He suggests that political agendas have been replaced by economic agendas.



The second set of theories of conflict resolution techniques highlights the way to resolve the issues driving the war. The main points to facilitate the negotiation are related with the identity of the combatants, the divisibility of the stakes and the presence of third party mediator. For the purpose of this essay I will not focus on identity issues.<sup>8</sup>

The divisibility of the stake depends on the nature of the conflict: secessionist or political driven. The first one may facilitate a division but the last one creates difficulties in the final accord. The more divisible the stakes over which the combatants are fighting, the more likely the war is to end in a negotiated settlement.

In terms of third parties, the success or failure of conflict negotiation vary directly with the presence or absence of an outside mediator. According to Rothchild, third parties may regulate the use of coercive (diplomatic pressures and incentives, sanctions and military force) and noncoercive (purchase, insurance, legitimation and promise of economic support) incentives in the process of prevention and solution of a conflict. In addition, Walter suggests that third parties have an active role in terms of mediation, verification and coercion to create a credible commitment between the parties. Moreover, she suggests that the success of mediation go beyond the accord and need to involve third parties in the peace-building process. Besides, she exposes two critical barriers to civil war settlement: short-term demobilisation and rebuilding national armed force and long-term devolution of rebels controlled territory. As she says (2002, pp 21),

“This dual process creates two opportunities for exploitation, and this is the reason so many civil wars fail to end with successful settlements ... Settlements of civil wars, therefore, have the unintended and unfortunate effect of forcing factions through a highly risky implementation period that may leave them significantly worse off than they would have been had they kept their armies and continued to fight”.

Third-party participation is a growing necessity in a peace process. This can come from international actors or organized national groups. However, third-party participation is not a condition *sine qua non*. It may foster confidence but it also may reduce it. Third-parties also have incentives and interests on the conflict resolution, in that sense, it would not be a philanthropic intervention *per se* but may be reliant to specific interests.

The last set of theories emphasises the effects of a combination of factors to end an internal conflict. Among those are Darby and Mac Ginty and Höglund. According to Darby and Mac Ginty (2000, pp 12), “the success or failure of any emerging peace process depends on the interaction between a wide range of variable influences”. From this point of view there are six main themes that influence the peace process: violence and security issues; economic factors; role of external actor; popular responses; symbols and ritual,<sup>9</sup> progress towards political/constitutional agreement. Some of them described above but three features complement the analysis: violence and security; popular support and political/constitutional agreement

According to Höglund, a peace process is a changing and fluctuant process and one of the issues that alter its dynamic is the existence of violence during the peace process. As she sug-

<sup>8</sup> The reason is the absence of identity driven forces in the Colombian conflict.

<sup>9</sup> This feature points out the relevance of symbols and rituals especially in ethnic and religious conflict. However, as Colombian conflict lack of ethnic and religious categories, we will not focus on this theme without neglecting its relevance to understand other conflicts and negotiations.

gests, violence might be part of the strategy of the parties to achieve their goals or might be the outcome of dissidences and differences within the party. “Hence, one of the potential obstacles to successful conflict resolution is violence which takes place during a peace process” (2001, pp 2). In her view, incidents of violence have different effects on the negotiation depending on who use violence, timing and targets. She suggests that violence “by parties inside a peace process” is more likely to dislocate the negotiations, than violence by parties who are outside the peace process. This type of violence is seen as lack of commitment toward the peace process and may lead other parties to withdraw their support to the negotiations. In addition, Höglund follows Pillar’s<sup>10</sup> approach in respect of timing. Both suggested that the use of violence might be expected to increase in the final phase of the negotiation process, when the settlement is close to its establishment.

As stated by Darby and Mac Ginty, popular responses may also affect the outcome of the process in the ability of parties to mobilise popular opinion and strengthen its support. Public opinion can influence political initiatives on the peace process. It can generate both, a strong support to the peace process and the opposite, a negative view of dialogues and negotiated initiatives. Public opinion is changing and highly influenced by violent actions.

This final set of theories gives a wider view of the process. Success, progress and failures of peace process are explained by the interaction of different variables. By including institutions, external actors, means and economic conditions, they acknowledge the complexity of the war and, by extend, of peace process.

### 1.3 COLOMBIA’S ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

The academic discussion on Colombia’s internal conflict has primarily focused on the social and political meaning of Colombian violence, what has been called *violentología*<sup>11</sup> that has brought several hypothesis of the cause of the conflict.<sup>12</sup> However, in the past few years, the analysis has focused on the dynamic of the peace process and the possible ways to achieve a successful negotiated settlement or at least, an appropriate peace process methodology to address a negotiated political solution of the violence and conflict. Bejarano’s “*Agenda para la Paz*”<sup>13</sup> is the first, systematic analysis to evaluate the feasibility of a negotiation process in Colombia.

The debate around the failure of the peace process with FARC and the open possibilities with AUC dialogues points out four arguments: the scheme of the negotiation and the government position; the structure of the political system; stalemate, international intervention and the negotiation agenda of the peace process.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Pillar (1983). *Negotiating Peace. War Termination as a Bargaining Process*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp 103.

<sup>11</sup> *Violentología*: Colombian school specialist on national violence.

<sup>12</sup> A good review on the different hypothesis of the causes and origin of the violence of Colombia can be found in Fernán González et al (2002). *Violencia Política en Colombia. De la nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado*. Bogotá: Cinep, pp. 22-46.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus Antonio Bejarano was a professor at the *National University of Colombia*, and since 1990 he got involved in peace processes in Colombia. He was killed in 1999, while teaching at the University by an extremist right organization that were against anyone that promote and be part of dialogues with their enemies, the guerrilla.

González et al and Pécaut, suggest that the peace process was a dual strategy: politically and military. In short the strategy of FARC was war amidst peace. This was the format of the negotiation: no ceasefire, a demilitarised zone, and an extensive structural change agenda that instead of allow a proactive dialogue, promotes FARC unwillingness to achieve pacts. In addition, the format of the negotiation increased FARC's legitimacy on their territory, strengthened their military power and as a result, closed the possibility of peace and opened a new door to war (González: 2002, pp 75).

Hartlyn and Shugart suggest that the success of negotiated settlement in Colombia was a result of political transformation, some transfer of power and potential inclusion in an opened political system.

By contrast, Sanín suggests that FARC had not incentives to reach an accord and preferred to keep arms. Parties are in an "undesirable equilibrium" between symmetrical forces, where both parties' best alternative is to negotiate while engaging militarily. In order to shape the relation of forces and move forward, Sanín suggests it is necessary to weaken FARC's sources of financing so that the rebel movement will find itself closer to a defeat and will choose to negotiate. She considers that the *Plan Colombia* is a feasible way and a credible threat to undermine FARC's finance weakening their military apparatus and inducing FARC "toward moving to concede".

Rangel also points out the failure of FARC process due to their military strategy. The negotiation in the midst of war is FARC strategy to gain time to strength their military strategy and to extend the political support. In that sense, the first alternative of FARC is to win militarily and if this does not result, they will consider the signing of an accord.

Chernick suggests that the negotiation model with FARC lacks credibility. The role of international organization may lead to reinitiate the peace process. Colombia has not counted with strong international commitment with its peace processes. Most of the participation was oriented to the war against the drug, perception that misled the real need of creating confidence and fostering a proactive dialogue.

Bejarano and Leguizamo share their views. They suggest that the issues stated on the agenda are relevant in the outcome. That is to say, that some objectives can be easily negotiated while others take time and demand more work. Leguizamo suggests that structural reforms cannot be the starting point of discussion, and the case of FARC shows that the first point of negotiation was the social and economic reform, specifically the unemployment problem. To achieve something, negotiations may begin with issues that are relevant for both parties and that have chances to a positive outcome that shows the willingness and commitment to the peace talks.

Overall, the theory points out six components to determine why peace processes fail or move forward: economic perspective, military incentives, third-party participation, political system, public support and violence. To examine the negotiation in Colombia in the resent years, I focus on the six factors and two more: learning process and judicial incentives.

The next section is a short review of Colombian conflict and introduces the negotiation with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia –FARC– and with the United Self-Defence of Colombia –AUC–.

## 2. COLOMBIA'S CONFLICT

### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There is a consensus that current Colombia's violence and conflict is a heritage of the period known as *La Violencia* (1948-58). During that time, the confrontation between the two major political parties, liberals and conservatives, exacerbated the conflict especially in rural areas and took the lives of at least 180.000 Colombians.<sup>14</sup> A consociational accord put end to the conflict and fostered a period of political calm, the *Frente Nacional* (national front), 16 years of sharing-power between liberals and conservatives. Meanwhile, during the sixties, a former peasant self-defence movement that fought during the days of *La Violencia*, gave birth to FARC.<sup>15</sup> As Gutierrez (2003, pp 5) suggests, "the present days guerrillas have existed since 1964 and have their roots in an earlier protracted confrontation, 1948-1958 ... during more than a decade they [FARC] were marginal, and only very rarely came to the centre stage of the country's public life".

The years of the National Front brought peace to the country. However, the consociational pact ended in 1978 and the stability of the political system at the local level proved insufficient to keep peace. During the eighties the intensity of the armed conflict changes from a particularly rural conflict to a generalized violence. In the past decade, in addition to the generalization of the conflict, new actors appeared in the scenario changing the traditional guerrilla dynamic of the conflict. Currently, there are four relevant (in number and action) actors: FARC, ELN, AUC and the legal Armed Forces.

During the past decades, there have been several rapprochements between the government and the insurgents groups. FARC has participated in some talks without reaching any accord. In 1982, the president Betancur initiated a rapprochement with the guerrillas groups but without any success. At this time, FARC established a political front, the Patriotic Union –UP–, that gained some legitimacy in the legislative elections of 1986; it was a sort of truce with FARC, yet the UP disappeared from the political scene.<sup>16</sup>

By 1990s the coincidence of national and international circumstances (collapse of Eastern European communism, the advances of Salvadoran peace process and the inclusive constitutional convention at the national level), lead to a debilitation of some Colombia's guerrillas

<sup>14</sup> See: Washington Office on Latin America (1989) *Colombian Besieged: Political Violence and State Responsibility*. Washington: Washington Office on Latin America. Chapter 1 and J. Henderson (1985) *Cuando Colombia se desangró*. (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores).

<sup>15</sup> In particular, the core of FARC's leading cadres was already active in the 1950s civil war, as the left wing of the liberal guerrillas. In the early 1960s it became a peasant self-defence organization active in rural areas. After a process of radicalisation (1970s) FARC became close to the pro-Soviet Communist Party, and so it remained until the fall of the Berlin Wall.

<sup>16</sup> Unión Patriótica (UP), the political movement of the guerrilla, created in the 1980s. The UP campaigned in FARC dominated territory and got some posts in regional elections. The UP was methodologically murdered person-by-person by violent right organizations [among others self-defence groups] and many claims with the help of state security forces. More than 3,500 members and partisans were murdered (among those two presidential candidates). See: Fernando Giraldo (2001). *Democracia y Discurso Político de la Unión Patriótica*. Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano.

movements. After several failed attempts, the peace process led to an accord with middle-range insurgent movements<sup>17</sup> but none with FARC. In 1991, the government entered in negotiations with a joint organization of guerrillas, the *Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinator* –CGSB– that included FARC. This negotiation also failed after a major violent incident perpetrated by the guerrilla.<sup>18</sup> FARC went back to the mountain and sharpened their armed confrontation.<sup>19</sup>

During the nineties, the growth of illicit drug trade, Colombia being the largest grower of illicit coca and manufacturer of processed cocaine reshaped the dynamics of the conflict. Violence today is three times greater: social inequality, military stronger guerrillas, internally displaced people,<sup>20</sup> rise of kidnapping as armed movements financial scheme<sup>21</sup> of political violence that had been claiming on average more than 700 lives a month since 1988.<sup>22</sup> In addition, self-defence groups emerged in reaction to the guerrilla in areas where the state was unable to provide security to the population,<sup>23</sup> that is, their *raison d'être*. Self-defence groups are the result of an alliance between local elite, landowners and narco-dealers and some spheres of the Colombian state, primarily the armed force.

As Chernick (1999, pp 161) suggests, “the contradictory realities of the late 1990s made a negotiated settlement between the government and the guerrillas more difficult –and more necessary”.

Domination of territory appears to be the core military strategy of illegal armed groups. Many areas of the country are either dominated by some group or under active dispute. As Garfield and Arboleda (2003, pp 41) suggest, “the inability of the State, through the military and police, to exercise a monopoly of force and protect people and property has permitted the illegal armed actors [guerrilla and paramilitaries] to move into these areas and exercise authority”. Moreover, Chernick (2003, pp 244) states that the “rapid expansion of the paramilitary groups transformed a classic guerrilla insurgency that targeted social elites and state actors into a multipolar war among leftists insurgents, right-wing paramilitaries and the state”

<sup>17</sup> In 1989 the M-19 demobilized. In 1990 three smaller guerrillas laid down: The People Liberation Army (EPL), the Quintín Lame and the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT).

<sup>18</sup> The kidnap and assassination of a former government minister.

<sup>19</sup> It is significant the way FARC has growth since 1980 when they had 1,000 battle men to around 18,000 fighters in 2002 and presence in about 1,000 municipalities out of 1,024.

<sup>20</sup> According to CODHES, there are more than 2,5 million internally displaced people in Colombia since 1985, with an intensification in the late nineties. CODHES (2003). *Boletín para la consultoría de los Derechos humanos y Desplazamiento*, no 4, (Bogotá), in <http://www.codhes.org.co/>

<sup>21</sup> According to the Departamento Nacional de Planeación, the number of kidnappings had rose in 85.7%, from 1,608 in 1996 to 2,986 in 2002 with a peak in 2000 of 3,706. See. *Cifras de la Violencia 1996-2002*. Dirección de Justicia y Seguridad.

<sup>22</sup> Cited by Chernick (1999), Data Bank of the Comisión Inter-Congregacional de Justicia y Paz, Bogota. Figures include political assassinations, collective massacres, assassinations presumed to be political, “social cleansing”, death combats, disappearances and death under obscure circumstances.

<sup>23</sup> About 140 municipalities out of 1042 lack of state presence, and occupied by any armed actor. Pécaut (2003). *Midiendo Fuerzas. Balance del Primer año del gobierno de Alvaro Uribe Vélez*. (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta), pp 97.

## FARC AND AUC'S ZONES OF INFLUENCE



### 2.2 FARC NEGOTIATING WITH PASTRANA'S GOVERNMENT

The rapprochement between FARC and the government took place in 1998 during the presidential campaign. The candidate Andrés Pastrana had several secret meetings with the guerrilla leader, Manuel Marulanda. Pastrana's strategy was to win the elections and he showed his willingness to negotiate with FARC after several secret meetings with the leader of the movement. Once in office, the parties established the conditions to initiate negotiations. There is a consensus that the government conceded too much without demanding anything. FARC demanded the demilitarisation of a region of Colombia [42,000 square kilometre area],<sup>24</sup> known as *Zona de Distensión* (demilitarised zone), to remove some officers from the military, to crack down on the paramilitary, non-ceasefire or negotiating in the midst of war.

<sup>24</sup> 3.67% of the Colombian territory, an area almost the size of Switzerland and the largest area in hands of FARC ever since.

On 9 January 1999 the peace dialogues were officially inaugurated. However, since the beginning Marulanda made clear that his movement had more to demand than to offer. The inauguration day he was absent, leaving the president next to an empty seat.

The negotiation's agenda<sup>25</sup> shows the parties interest on the talks. Talks started after defining this agenda and the bargain began with the fifth point (economic and social structure), specifically economic reforms concerning unemployment. During the following three years, the negotiation stuck on the same point without getting an accord, or moving to another point.

It can be said that FARC's interests on negotiating with the government was:

1. As Marulanda suggested, the new peace process opened a new political opportunity to find solutions to the social crisis<sup>26</sup> that is to transform the social, political and economic structure.
2. To achieve a government commitment to rein in paramilitary groups.

The tacit and tactic strategy of the negotiation scheme (no ceasefire and a wide demilitarised zone) was:

1. To build and strengthen a FARC controlled strategic corridors between the centre of the country (demilitarised zone) and the north and southwest of Colombia that permitted a rapid movement of troops, weapons and illegal trade.
2. FARC was using the negotiation time to train and increase its forces for the continuation of offensive strategy in order to force the government to agree to negotiation terms. As Marulanda said, FARC will continue the struggle "until victory".<sup>27</sup>
3. FARC was seeking its control of the grass-roots levels of government: municipalities and rural areas. "Small towns and rural areas are, for the most part, highly vulnerable to guerrilla infiltration [...] there is no police presence in one fourth of the country's *municipios* and *corregimientos*". Rabasa et al (2001, pp 50).
4. To consolidate their control of coca regions (south and east).
5. To expand their operations to the whole territory of Colombia in order to disperse the military force and reduce its ability to regain the military initiative.

What was wrong? The talks initiated ill. From the beginning, FARC showed their unwillingness to bargain and presented them in a too strong way so that the government had to fulfil their demands if seeking to negotiate. They suspended the talks three times and pushed the government to maintain and extend the deadline of the demilitarised zone without counterpart com-

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<sup>25</sup> The agenda "A Common Agenda for Change Toward a New Colombia" contained the following points: 1. Negotiated Political Solutions; 2. Protection of Human Rights Is a Responsibility of the State; 3. Integral Agrarian Policies; 4. Exploitation and Conservation of Natural Resources; 5. Economic and Social Structure; 6. Justice Reforms the Fight Against Corruption and Drug-Trafficking; 7. Political Reform and the Expansion of Democracy; 8. Reform of the State Agreements on International Humanitarian Law; Armed Forces International Relations Formalizing Agreements Signed 6 May 1999 in La Machaca, (Demilitarised Zone).

<sup>26</sup> Cited in *Semana*, No. 871, January 11, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in A. Rabasa and Chalk Peter (2001). *Colombian Labyrinth The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*. (Santa Monica: Rand), pp 39.

mitment. Pastrana's government tried to keep the talks going at any price, even of fulfilling almost all guerrilla demands without achieving some accord.

In addition, the approval of the *Plan Colombia*<sup>28</sup> opened the gap between parties and diminished the weak confidence-build among them. According to FARC, the *Plan Colombia* contradicted the government position. They suggested that on the one hand, government has peace willingness and, on the other hand, government followed a peace diplomacy aiming to strengthen public force and to fight against narcotrafficking, that is a violent initiative.

Any result? An explicit result, and perhaps the only accord achieved: the exchange of 14 guerrilla members' prisoners by 350 policies and military kidnapped, some of them since more than 3 years.

In terms of the agenda, no more was achieved. By contrast, an implicit outcome of fruitless peace negotiation was the shared belief of the unfeasibility of negotiating in the midst of war. Public opinion saw guerrilla attacks and violence as a cynical behaviour of FARC toward the negotiation talks. AUC took advantage of the failed peace process and learned from it.

In addition, the government of Andrés Pastrana faced too many constraints to get along with the talks. The Armed Forces was divided between supporters and opponents of the government policy. While the president was engaged in talks, the military were suspicious of such negotiation and continued their military strategy. In that sense, the Armed Forces, the guerrilla and the paramilitaries limited the government purpose of achieving military presence in the whole territory. Instead of achieving legitimacy, president Pastrana expended three years losing his credibility and reducing the legitimacy of the state.

### 2.3 AUC

The origin of paramilitary groups is particular in the Colombian case. The term "paramilitaries" refers to elements of security forces with some military capabilities and/or groups that are tolerated, supported or acted under state agents complicity. However, the Colombian paramilitaries do not fit totally in this definition. They are illegal groups independent from the state and organized and financed by civilian sectors. They are, in general, counterinsurgent civilian groups.<sup>29</sup> They are known as paramilitaries and/or self-defence groups (synonymous in the case of Colombia).

Moreover illegal forces, self-defence groups have counted with some periods of legality. The more recent event of legalization was the creation of the cooperatives *CONVIVIR*. Those

<sup>28</sup> The president Pastrana reinitiated relations with the United States after four years of de-certification policy toward Colombia. In 2000, after several meeting the U.S Congress approved \$1.3 billion to support of Plan Colombia. Of that, \$911 million was to reinforce the war against the drug (aerial fumigation, destruction of coca labs and military training and strengthening), \$106 million to support alternative programs and the remaining \$302 million to human rights and justice. Behind the logic of the Plan Colombia, there is an idea that guerrilla are major drug trafficking dealers, so by eliminating the drug trafficking Colombia will achieve two goals, end of illicit traffic and a victory over the guerrilla.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Rangel (2001). *Guerra Insurgente. Conflictos en Malasia, Peru, Filipinas, El Salvador y Colombia*. (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores), pp 412.



were the legal creation of civil armed groups that cooperated with the public force to defend and protect some regions out of army presence.<sup>30</sup> The paradox is that the governor of Antioquia (a state of Colombia) who legalized those civilian armed groups is the current president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

Self-defence organizations are far less cohesive than the guerrillas. Recently, groups have clustered under an umbrella organization, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* –AUC-. AUC brought some central coordination, funding and coherent doctrine. According to Richani (2002, pp 108):

“The leadership of AUC is a loose coalition of different private armies with common class and political interests in defending the socio-economic order in their fight against not only the armed insurgency but the leftist political groups and by and large the democratic forces and human right groups”.

During the negotiation between FARC and the government, paramilitaries militarily target both, government and guerrilla. Even in the battlefield, they managed enlarged their troops, military power and territorial control.<sup>31</sup> The scheme of the negotiation with guerrilla's movements exaggerates their *raison d'être*. When peace negotiation broke up, paramilitaries continued their violent actions along the country. However, the election and beginning of Uribe's administration in 2002 reshape their strategy. They reduce violence, from massacres to selective assassinations. The first of December, about 4 month after Uribe took office, the leader of AUC declared the ceasefire and the government announced the initiation of rapprochement to negotiate demobilization. What is behind the change of strategy?

1. To obtain a blanket pardon for major drug traffickers inside AUC and amnesty of massacres and violence associated with the paramilitary group.
2. To legalize their growing economic activity (agricultural sector).
3. To join the army and together fight against their mutual enemy, the left-guerrilla, and preserve the *status quo*.

Beyond the political success of negotiate with an armed actor and initiate a peace process, Uribe's government benefits from the talks because military duty will be targeting one front instead of two and, in the context of negotiations, talks with FARC will be easier. However, the main obstacle to reach a future accord is to negotiate with a group nationally and internationally perceived as the “symbol of barbarous in Colombian war”.<sup>32</sup>

This short description opens the question: why FARC peace process fail and what is happening with negotiation with AUC?

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<sup>30</sup> Created by the Decree 356 of 11 Mars 1994.

<sup>31</sup> There is no consensus on the exact number of fighters. According to Chernick, they are 8,150 and according to the Leader of AUC they are about 13,000. However, what matters is the extraordinary growth since 1997. They almost doublet in size during this time. See M Chernick (2001). ‘The dynamics of Colombia's three-dimensional war’ *Conflict, Security and Development*, 1 (1), pp 95. and, Semana (2003), ‘Habla Mancuso’ *Semana*, August 11-18 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Semana (2003) ‘Negociacion Secreta’. In *Semana* 25 Nov – 2 Dic 2002, pp 46.

### 3. WHY FAILURE? WHY MOVE FORWARDS? : *FINDINGS*

Learning from the theory presented above, I will analyse the two cases by considering eight factors: First, the economic incentives to negotiate. As drug trade increases and involves the dynamic of both armed groups, it might be an association between financial resources and negotiation. Second, military strategy. Third, third-party intervention in different roles. Fourth, political perspective; that is, the expectation of political participation. Fifth, public support to the negotiation. And Sixth, the presence of violence during the peace process.

In addition, there are two issues not mentioned in the literature that give light to the question of failure or progress of peace negotiation: the role of judiciary system and a learning 'negotiation' process. Both complement the analysis specifically in the case of AUC.

#### 3.1 ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The economic perspective is related to opportunities to get funding from illegal activities. In the case of Colombia, narcotic activities, where most of the rebels' income comes from:

"The coca and heroin export booms have altered the resources, alliances, and social relations of both the guerrillas and the armed forces. They have transformed a polarised armed conflict between two sides [guerrillas and military] into one in which multiple groups and sectors are armed and, depending on the nexus of social relations in a given region, are allied or in conflict with each other". Chernick, (1999, pp 173).

Drug trade has reshaped the logic of the conflict, increased the capability of armed groups and led to expansion, consolidation and strength. FARC and AUC incomes from illegal narcotic activities are approximately 40% for each of them.<sup>33</sup>

Can we conclude that the existence of illegal financial activities creates incentives to stay in war and disincentives to negotiate as Berdal and Malone suggest? No. Illicit activities are a fact in Colombian civil war but not a tradition. Both groups are extracting a high profit from such businesses but may find other sources of financing (kidnapping, extortion, oil theft and war taxes).

The theory suggests that rebels behave with economic rationality and will continue at war moved by the possibility of high profits. That is, they are moved by greed, grievances being just a strategy to gain support. However, the theory is narrow and deterministic to explain what may happen inside the group. In the case of FARC, there are other rationales beyond economic motivations affecting their position toward peace negotiation. Gutierrez (2003, pp16) suggests, FARC "emerged before big scale rent seeking was possible", they have survived by other means before getting involved in drug trade.

What are their motivations? FARC are not homogeneous. Ideological leaders: Marulanda, Reyes and Cano claim to represent peasant and popular interests; they aspire to a reform bringing equity by political and economics means including agrarian reform and democratic pluralism. FARC maintain their ideology since 1964, when the movement was born. However, the proliferation of illicit activities and the benefit derived from them have reshaped internal struc-

<sup>33</sup> Richani (2002), pp 64 and Pécaut (2003), pp 138. Neither FARC nor AUC are nowadays drugs processors. They both tax the coca and the poppy past the "gram tax" charged on the growers and processors of illicit drugs.

ture of FARC. Historical leaders and ideology remain strong and were defended during the negotiation, yet internal fractures are natural in a movement with approximately 20,000 combatants and 60 fronts. *Mono Jojoy*, leader of the East Block has shown differences with Marulanda and Reyes. Specifically, *Jojoy* has shown interest in pursuing military and economic power in its zone of control separating himself from central orders. The fronts he commands are regularly accused of being particularly barbarous and drug-dealers.

That may suggest that there is not a unique rationale inside FARC. The economic hypothesis suggests such uniqueness and explains war and peace outcomes by the prevailing rationale. Thus, in the case of FARC one can say that they respond to two rationales: grievance and greed. Historical leaders and factions are closer to grievances and saw illegal activities as means to achieve their goals: rebellion, military victory and political transformation. By contrast, fragmentation has led other parts of FARC to follow economic motivation: thus, they have more incentives to at war than to negotiate, and took advantage of the negotiation period to strengthen themselves militarily in order to defend coca controlled territory and processors labs. In spite of some internal division, one can say that Marulanda's ideology is dominant in the core of FARC.

In that sense, one cannot conclude that the existence of economic financial sources were a sufficient reason for failure in negotiation and preferring war. The development of the peace process showed that FARC was aiming at military victory and structural reforms and not only at keeping a lucrative economic activity as an immense source of income. Their main points have been constant in their three attempts at negotiation.

As a matter of fact, the peace dialogues with Pastrana's government stuck in the economic reforms issue attempting to solve unemployment in Colombia. Moreover, FARC accepted the need to eradicate coca crops but were reluctant to use aerial fumigation. They defended manual eradication and alternative programs. Why would they negotiate and strengthen their military apparatus if just motivated by greed? The answer is in their division and the existence of powerful fractions looking for economic profits, besides the main ideology, for which economic activities are a mean, not the reason of war.

From AUC's perspective, it is not clear how economic incentives work. They have been involved in drug business and are partly financed by narcotrafficking. However, they are also involved with legal activities such as cattle ranches, sugar and palm crops. They may be interested in cleaning their gains and continue their legal activities. A negotiated settlement will allow paramilitary members to return to their businesses and invest from the surplus of past drug activities. In that way, their decision to negotiate is not related to their financial weakness but to the future possibilities to develop permitted activities already managed by them.

Thus, economic weakening is not a sufficient disincentive for war and an incentive to negotiate. The economic hypothesis may work in situations of criminal groups such as mafias but does not explain sufficiently the cases of FARC and AUC in Colombia.

### 3.2 MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

"The mutually hurting stalemate that is almost a prerequisite for negotiation or even for mediation is characteristically absent, yet neither side has the power—with rare exceptions—to dislodge the other fully. Fluctuating stalemate becomes a way of life". Zartman (1993, pp26)

Neither FARC nor AUC has presented a hurting stalemate with the Armed Force. During the negotiation with FARC, there was a fluctuating stalemate or negotiation deadlock where the state could not defeat the guerrilla and the guerrilla could not achieve a revolutionary victory.

According to Zartman, the failure of negotiation highlights his hypothesis that incentives can only be “effective when parties are sufficiently dissatisfied with their present costs” (2001: 301). Talks with FARC showed that they were not hurting enough and were not sufficiently pessimistic about the future to attend to incentives from the dialogue process. In the same direction, Rangel (2003) suggests that FARC has greater incentives for staying at war than for signing an accord; they did not feel militarily powerless. This view, matches Zartman’s idea: FARC were not hurting enough and they see their negotiation position as a way to strengthen their military power instead of hearing incentives.

The case of FARC is interesting. Many suggest that there is no military solution to the conflict. Why? On the one hand, FARC know much better the territory of Colombia. Four decades in the mountains make them masters of Colombia’s geography. The Armed Forces are just beginning to penetrate in FARC controlled zones (most of them in the jungle). That gives a strategic advantage to FARC. In addition, FARC has fought for 40 years and are patient in achieving their goals. Their idea of time is lax while the government’s temporality responds to presidential periods: four-year goals. FARC is waiting to win a military victory and have few incentives to negotiate a settlement in the short term. As Rangel suggests, their strategy was not to meet an accord but to dilate the demilitarised zone to strengthen their army, and hurt the state.

The stalemate and deadlock was a result of the format of negotiation: “negotiating amidst war”. Who benefits from this format? FARC suggests that the government used such strategy in order to achieve a military victory and neglected the real socio-economic solutions to the nation. The government suggests that such strategy was viable to negotiate and reach accords step-by-step, ending with a ceasefire. Both lost and won from this strategy. FARC lost their political opportunity to achieve structural reforms and participate in their design and won time to strengthen their military forces and continue their strategy of a military victory. The government lost its credibility and an opportunity to negotiate a settlement and won international support and confidence in a further military strategy.

With broken negotiations with FARC, AUC took 10 months to decide to negotiate. In December 2002 they were already more than 12,000 combatants. However, there was not a hurting stalemate. During the three years of peace process they were targeted by Armed Forces, as demanded by FARC, yet the state’s ability to rein them in was minimal and they kept their force with almost null damages.

The reason to negotiate is not linked to the relation of forces between the state and the self-defence group but to the potential hurting stalemate they can create. What I mean is that the military incentive to negotiate is part of AUC’s fundamentals: to eliminate guerrillas and preserve the *status quo*. The presidential program of Uribe is the legitimacy of the state based on security and active role of Armed Forces. From the beginning he has focused on military actions against insurgents. As part of it, he increases military income (from about 1.8% of GDP in 2000 to

4,5% in 2003).<sup>34</sup> In addition, he searches to increase troops by about 20% that is, 35,000 soldiers in the following years.<sup>35</sup> This policy can be accelerated by AUC demobilisation, incorporating demobilised AUC's combatants in the Armed Forces. AUC believes in Armed Forces and in government strategy to defeat guerrillas. Their *raison d'être* has not changed, what has changed is their strategy. Government engaged in a security policy, together with paramilitaries' expertise might jointly fight against guerrilla. This is the goal of the government and has been the objective of paramilitaries since the beginning. In addition, as suggested by Pécaut, the ceasefire declared by AUC insinuates that Armed Forces are targeting guerrillas leaving paramilitaries out of their military objectives.<sup>36</sup>

The military idea of a hurting stalemate to initiate negotiations is far from explaining why AUC decided to dialogue. The military incentive of AUC is the opportunity to join president Uribe's strategy and legalize their fight after their demobilisation. By contrast, the absence of a real hurting stalemate between FARC and the government generates a disincentive to reach accords among them and fosters the military campaign of both parties.

### 3.3 THIRD-PARTY PARTICIPATION

"With parties mobilized for warfare, polarization becomes extremely high, making negotiations more difficult. When leaders are in strong position to deliver on their bargains, a space remains for meaningful negotiations, but efforts already sunk in violent action limit the room for manoeuvre. Under these circumstances, third-party actors play a critical potential role in increasing communications and using various pressures and incentives to promote opportunities for bargaining" Rothchild (2003, pp 61):

What has been third-party participation in Colombian peace negotiation?

FARC negotiation did not involve, in the beginning, third parties. Specifically, international intervention was minimal: U.S through Plan Colombia and in the late phase of the peace talks, European Countries. Furthermore, FARC disliked international community and viewed it as explicit supporters of the Colombian state, all being capitalist states. They were sceptical of international community neutrality and that was why they preferred to keep them out of the negotiation".<sup>37</sup> FARC only accepted an eventual participation of the international community as verifiers of signed commitments between the parties.

The principal international participation during FARC's peace process was the U.S assistance package called *Plan Colombia*. As mentioned above, FARC reaction to *Plan Colombia* was negative and fostered their unwillingness to bargain. This type of international intervention was not a program to support peace efforts or create confidence between parties but was disproportionately skewed toward antinarcotic efforts.

<sup>34</sup> Figures from: El País (2003) "Colombia invierte poco en Seguridad", (Jul, 19 2003) in, <http://elpais-cali.terra.com.co/paisonline/notas/Julio192003/B119N1.html> and D. Pécaut (2003). *Midiendo Fuerzas. Balance del primer año de gobierno de Alvaro Uribe Velez*. (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta), pp 49.

<sup>35</sup> D. Pécaut (2003). *Midiendo Fuerzas. Balance del primer año de gobierno de Alvaro Uribe Velez*. (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta), pp 95.

<sup>36</sup> D. Pécaut (2003), pp 147.

<sup>37</sup> A. Rangel (2003) *Guerreros y Políticos. Diálogo y Conflicto en Colombia 1998-2002*. (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores), pp 99.

In addition, as Mason (1996, pp 553) suggests, “if other nations intervene militarily on one side or the other in a civil war, the likelihood of a negotiated settlement should decrease”. In FARC negotiation, the participation of the US through *Plan Colombia* created a climate of dissatisfaction among FARC leaders. U.S intervention has not been a neutral intervention. As most scholars suggest, military intervention may reduce the probability of a negotiated settlement, even more, it may promote the withdrawal from the talk table. In Colombia, the resources of *Plan Colombia* have served to strengthen the military probability to achieve a victory and to diminish the likelihood of peace negotiation.

In January 2001, FARC accepted international participation in the figure of “Facilitating Group”.<sup>38</sup> The main achievement of this “Facilitating Group” was to conciliate both sides when the government decided to end negotiations in January 2002 and re-enter in the demilitarised zone. The main confidence built by this group was to guarantee no military “invasion” to the zone and security within it. Their following task was to be part of ceasefire negotiation, however the decision of FARC to hijack a commercial airline and kidnap the head of Colombian senate’s Peace Commission blurred the active participation of international community.

The third party participation attempt to generate confidence among parties was timid in the case of FARC’s peace process. At the beginning of talks, there was no room to intervene in the process due to the negative of FARC’s leaders to involve international community. Later, third party participation had no sufficient leverage and legitimacy in the light of FARC to have strong peace negotiation manoeuvre.

The *Plan Colombia*, understood as international participation, was not aiming to end the conflict in a negotiated way but by military means. *Plan Colombia* is not committed to peace initiatives, and instead of creating confidence among parties it exacerbates the distrust within them.

On the other hand, AUC announced from the beginning their willingness to involve international community in the peace process. However, as stated above, AUC members, among them Castaño, are being sought for extradition, accused of shipping cocaine to the United States since 1997.

However, what seemed hard to solve, has been smoothened in the past weeks. The U.S reaction to the starting peace process was, if not enthusiastic at least positive: according to Caballero (2003, pp 29) the U.S “supposedly stated that peace talks between AUC and the Uribe government should take priority over ongoing efforts to put Castaño and Mancuso on trial in a U.S courtroom on drug-trafficking charges”. The U.S ambassador, Anne Patterson, says that the U.S government will donate \$3 to \$4 million to support the disarming of AUC troops, indicating the Washington approval to the peace talks with AUC.

Castaño now claims he wants to join the war on drugs, and to prove his commitment, he says he wants U.S officials to attend the next round of peace talks with the Uribe government: “we want to let them know that they can count on our legitimised movement to cooperate in the struggle against drug trafficking”.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Conformed by Mexico, Venezuela, Canada, Cuba, Germany, Switzerland, France, Norway, Sweden and Spain.

<sup>39</sup> Leader Castaño told to Newsweek. In María Cristina Caballero (2003). “Peace at any Price” *Newsweek* Vol. CXLII, No. 6. August 11, pp. 29.

### 3.4 POLITICAL SYSTEM

Shugart and Hartlyn state that the opening of political system in Colombia was favourable for the decision of laying down arms and negotiating with the government during the nineties. However, what was an incentive for the M-19 was not one for FARC. After the unexpected electoral support to the new political movement M-19, this party almost disappeared from the political game. Their initial success was blurred by several circumstances including the assassination of its presidential candidate, Carlos Pizarro. One decade after M-19 laid down arms, their political movement is absent in national elections and has a minimal success in local elections.

In addition, the political party created in the eighties by Colombian left and FARC members, *Unión Patriótica*, died on the hands of extremists. Both events, the M-19 collapse as a party and the political persecution to the UP blurred political participation as a viable incentive to negotiate. Marulanda says “we will never commit the same mistakes from the past”<sup>40</sup> referring to the fate of the M-19 and the UP. That is, while negotiating they will strengthen their ‘clandestine’ movement: *Movimiento Bolivariano por la Nueva Colombia*, a political movement that attempts to unify peasant and rural supporters. In addition, FARC leader affirms that they will not participate in elections unless a political reform includes a constituency to draw a new constitution and inclusion to institutional power.

However, the discourse of FARC does not reveal their real possibilities of competing in elections. On the one hand, FARC knows their shortcoming. They have lived in the logic of war during the past 40 years and they do not expect opportunities in the political game. Elections are not sufficient for them to decide to negotiate. FARC is aware that they have great chances to be defeated in elections. Their support is among peasants; most of them absent from the political game, and the two-party system dominated the electoral game making it hard for new parties to succeed in elections.

Political incentives to negotiate, in the case of FARC was not their inclusion in the electoral game but a political reform including a new Congress structure, power-sharing and social inclusion. In spite of their political discourse FARC never demonstrated a real interest to progress in political reform topics. The *Comisión de Notables* presented their recommended points to negotiate. They were clear in the advantage of a constitutional assembly to foster negotiation with FARC. However, FARC disapproved those recommendations and insisted in their military ability to reach power and then, implement political reforms. As they said, only a structural reform will guarantee their possibility to participate in a new political and institutional system, but not as players and competitors but as winners since the beginning. They seek to change their current power to a legitimate and immovable power inside the system.

On the side of AUC, the political incentives are not clear. AUC has declared its unwillingness to become a political party. It might be early to establish their real willingness, however they have shown interest to support some politicians from different parties rather than express their ideas as a new political force.

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<sup>40</sup> Marulanda says: “en lo político, por supuesto, jamás cometeremos los errores del pasado” Cited in L.E. González (1999) ‘Pastrana Desconoce como Marchar hacia Adelante’, in Corporación Observatorio para la Paz. *Las Verdaderas Intenciones de las FARC*. (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores), pp 217.

### 3.5 PUBLIC SUPPORT

In Colombia, the previous talks with FARC and the initiation of the negotiation were greatly supported by citizens. However, as the process developed and showed the lack of commitment and credibility of FARC, people started to withdraw their support and to demand a non-negotiated resolution (military strategy) to end the conflict. In that sense, president Pastrana initiated his mandate with above average popular support toward his principal aim, the peace process, and ended with a decreasing support. By contrast, president Uribe, committed with a security and military strategy to rein in armed groups, has maintained a rating above 70% showing the popular satisfaction with his policy.

In addition, violent actions committed by FARC have created dissatisfaction among the population and lost them support among intellectuals, students, grass-roots activists, and urban middle classes. However they continue to have support in many rural areas.

As Rangel suggests, four years ago people thought that it was impossible to defeat guerrillas and supported peace dialogues and opposed war. Nowadays, public opinion makes a 180° turn. People are opposed to dialogues and in favour of war (57% of Colombians feel satisfied with Armed Forces).<sup>41</sup> However public opinion is not totally against dialogues. The great majority of Colombians is still against a dialogue with FARC, yet the opinion is favourable toward the dialogue with AUC. Two factors have helped in this support. First, some sectors of public opinion (such as businessmen, landowners, and the upper class), believe that paramilitaries were necessary to fight against the guerrilla. Second, the government policy of security increased the confidence in the military forces and the viability of a military victory.

Even though public opinion is not crucial for the decision to negotiate it has effects over the process and the credibility of a president's policy, and even more, on forthcoming campaigns. As stated before, Pastrana campaign was to bring peace and end violent conflict by a negotiated solution. But public opinion got exhausted after three years of fruitless negotiation during his government. In the following campaign the peace negotiation issue was partially out of candidates' discourses. Instead, the discourse of "strong hand" succeeded and convinced a great number of Colombians that peace is only achievable by military means and by supporting all instruments strengthening Armed Forces.

### 3.6 VIOLENCE

The format of the negotiation: no ceasefire affected its prospect. The presence of violence is not in and of itself a source of failure. In fact, as Pillar suggests, cease-fires are more a part of the conclusion of negotiation than of its opening, as parties may leave open the possibility to adjust their relation of power during the peace process. Negotiating in the midst of war with FARC was costly, and reshaped the negotiation prospects. FARC violence went beyond government and public tolerance.

<sup>41</sup> According to Latinobarómetro: Armed Forces satisfaction in Colombia is the second highest in Latin America. Countries such as Argentina and Mexico are below 50% and Chile roughly 50%. Colombia's figure is only topped by Brazil with 61%. In Latinobarómetro (2002). *Informe de Prensa*, in <http://www.latinobarometro.org/ano2001/grpre2002.pdf>



For instance, violence during peace negotiation involved external actors: the kidnapping and assassination of three U.S human rights activists on February 1999, led the U.S to change their position over the negotiation process and to demand that FARC respond to Colombian authorities before any dialogue could resume.

In addition, violence toward expected targets may be viewed as legitimate and acceptable (military targets, for instance). That is, it does not change parties' expectation on the negotiation. However, the panorama changes when unexpected targets are attacked. In this situation, the dynamic of peace talks can totally change and may impose new obstacles: "...violence directed towards unexpected targets is more likely to disrupt the negotiations, than violence directed towards expected targets" (Höglund; 2001: 16). In the case of Colombia, incidents of violence toward civil society changed government perspective on the talks. The kidnapping of Senator Gechem Turbay in February 2002 was decisive to break off formal contact with FARC. This incident was taken as proof of the unwillingness of FARC to find peace throughout negotiations. As a result, the president declared the peace process was over and gave FARC four hours to withdraw from the demilitarised zone before the Armed Forces reoccupied the zone.

Violence is seen otherwise in the case of AUC. They declared the ceasefire since December 6 2002, before initiating formal peace dialogues. Nowadays, AUC crimes and massacres are 'selective' primarily toward guerrilla's supporters and in the battlefield against guerrilla combatants in their mutual territorial fight. The effects of targeting guerrilla are seen or not as unacceptable violence depending on government position, which is explicitly anti-guerrilla, at any price. Uribe said referring to guerrillas: *caterva de bandidos que no podemos aceptar que sigan abusando de la patria*<sup>42</sup> suggesting that his government might accept violence toward guerrilla as expected targets.

### 3.7 JURIDICAL GUARANTEES. PARDON OR PUNISHMENT?

As leader of AUC, Castaño has operated with virtual impunity for more than a decade: massacres, political assassinations, narcotrafficking are just a few of his publicly recognized crimes.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Colombian military officers have been accused of providing tacit and sometimes active support to the group.

An intense debate has followed the announcement of the negotiation with AUC and the government, pointing out the dissatisfaction of giving amnesty to a recognized murderer and violator of human rights: "there should be no deals that allow murders to escape punishment" says U.S Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont.<sup>44</sup> The current leader of AUC, Salvatore Mancuso, says that the negotiation will succeed if there are legal guarantees to their members. According to Mancuso, if the amnesty law is established, about 70% will be ready to enter the peace process.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> "Mob of brigands that we cannot accept that they continue abusing of our Motherland" Cited in D. Pécaut. *Midiendo Fuerzas. Balance del primer año de gobierno de Alvaro Uribe Velez*. (Bogota: Editorial Planeta), p 177.

<sup>43</sup> Carlos Castaño accepts many murders and massacres happened in the last decades: among others, the assassination of the M-19 candidate Carlos Pizarro in 1990. In M. Aranguren (2001). *Mi Confesion. Castaño revela sus secretos*, (Bogota: Editorial Oveja Negra).

<sup>44</sup> Cited by María Cristina Caballero. "Peace at any Price" in Newsweek Vol. CXLII, No. 6. August 11, 2003, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Semana (2002) 'Negociación Secreta', in Semana (Nov, 25 – Dec, 2), p 40.

Uribe's government shows a strong commitment to negotiate peace with AUC. He presented and initiative to the Congress aiming to suspend crimes' sentences (drug trafficking and human right crimes), proposing alternative sanctions. If approved, the law will beneficiate all members of armed groups that have declared a ceasefire and participate in a peace process.<sup>46</sup> However, the High Commisionate of United Nations for Human Rights in Colombia declared this proposal unacceptable to the international community.<sup>47</sup>

No doubt this is the principal incentive of AUC to negotiate with the government. A blanket pardon for their crimes is more than enough to seat on the table.

### 3.8 LEARNING FROM PAST EXPERIENCES

In a recent edition of *The Economist*, it is suggested that, "Mr Castaño is politically more agile than FARC's leaders. He seems to have concluded that greater international intolerance of terrorism, and AUC's drug-trafficking were harming his cause. And AUC likes to think that Mr Uribe's military build up might make vigilantism unnecessary".<sup>48</sup>

AUC position passed from being against the government because of its politics of negotiation with guerrillas to be supporters of the government initiatives and be willing to begin a peace process. Since their first announcement in December 2002, the tone of their proposal sounds humble to the public opinion. They proposed to change everything that was unachievable and highly criticized from the previous negotiation process: in that sense, the way paramilitaries announced their willingness to negotiate was strategic to gain support. In December 2002, the leader of AUC stated the interest to meet with the government and a potential negotiating agenda that included: unilateral ceasefire supposedly starting on December 6; no demilitarised zone but concentration zone under public force control; no exchange of prisoners; handover of part of their controlled land to displaced people; international intervention and U.S participation in the process and special programs with UNICEF to reintegrate young and children troop members.

This learning from the former process may foster the advancements of this new negotiation process.

## CONCLUSION

Peace negotiations are not static and homogeneous processes. There are driving forces and complementing factors that may lead illegal armed groups to negotiate. In the case of the Colombian negotiations, there is not a unique factor having led to failures or progresses of negotiations. The case of FARC began deadlocked because of the format of negotiating in the midst of war. FARC found incentives to stay at war instead of reaching a negotiated accord. They considered viable a military victory and the government forces were not strong enough to create a 'hurting stalemate' and bring FARC to a proactive dialogue. In addition, external participation was weak and could not generate confidence and real channels of communication

<sup>46</sup> El Tiempo (2003). "Proyecto sobre delitos atroces entra al Congreso", *El Tiempo*, August, 22.

<sup>47</sup> El Tiempo (2003). "Alerta roja de la ONU a Uribe", *El Tiempo*, August, 29.

<sup>48</sup> The Economist (2003). 'Sniffing for Peace', in [http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1560092](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1560092)

among parties. Even more, the participation of the United States was not supportive of peace dialogues but explicitly of a military defeat. This circumstance aided to reduce incentives to negotiate and instead, routed the peace process to its dead-end.

By contrast, economics does not appear to be determinant of the failure of the peace process. One may say that inside FARC there is one principal ideology aiming to achieve victory and power and a fraction that may respond to economic rationality. FARC has existed for several years not getting involved in illegal narcotic activities and may find alternative financial sources to survive and continue their fight. By contrast, AUC has claimed their willingness to end drug dealing and had proposed alternative programs to substitute coca crops. AUC has incentives to negotiate if they can clean their past illegal gains. Economic incentives are not homogeneous inside armed groups and are not limited to a cost-benefit related to illegal activities *versus* negotiation.

In terms of military incentives, neither FARC nor AUC have presented a situation of 'hurting stalemate', a condition to decide to negotiate. FARC took advantage of negotiations to strengthen their military forces to achieve a victory. The more convinced they are of their military ability, the less the chances to achieve accords and move forwards in negotiation. Moreover, AUC military incentive to negotiate is not the result of feeling hurt by the state but the opportunity to be a legal force joint with the Armed Forces to hurt or defeat FARC.

Political incentives were not significant in the case of any of the two peace processes. FARC were not expecting electoral incentives. Moreover, they blocked external initiatives to put political reform in the table. They were not expecting to demobilise in exchange of political inclusion. They were expecting to be in power to reform the political system. In that sense, to offer real incentives, Colombian political system should dramatically change in order to achieve a negotiated settlement. It cannot be said that the government refused to give political incentives, they tried, but nothing was enough to FARC. AUC, has not showed a real interest to participate in politics, this is not a significant incentive for them to negotiate.

Two important issues appear as incentives to negotiate in the case of AUC: judicial guarantees to AUC members and the learning experience from past processes. The first is to guarantee a blanket pardon to their crimes. Amnesty or pardon is enough to ensure the peace process will move forward. In addition, they learnt from past experience. They announced a format of dialogue avoiding all mistakes of FARC negotiation, specially the non-ceasefire. AUC announced a unilateral ceasefire that changed the public opinion toward peace negotiation, trusting an armed group that decided to ceasefire.

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