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Chair of Political Sociology

COLOMBIA: FARC, the issue of land and the Peace Agreement

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Introduction

After nearly two hundred years of violence, Colombia seems to have begun to become a peaceful country. The Pope's visit, occurred from 6 to 11 September, sealed the peace agreement¹, signed on 24 November 2016 and approved by Parliament, reached between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army), the oldest, numerous and strong guerrilla of the South American continent. Even with ELN, the National Liberation Army, the second Colombian guerrilla force after the FARC-EP, are taking place negotiations with the executive, in the presence of representatives of the Colombian Church.

The Colombian government will then have the opportunity to work more effectively to combat drug-trafficking and to create the conditions for a sustainable development. It will have to focus particularly in rural areas where criminality and injustice are largely present and there is a lack of state's control, reducing the production of cocaine, used by rich countries as a forbidden pleasure and capable of generating illegal economic activities that cause violence and war.

Colombia is a rich country in terms of natural resources, but it has an index of inequality among the highest in the world, and thanks to the improvement of security conditions it can aspire to high rates of economic growth.

Violence is a constant in Colombian history and represents the greatest obstacle to the hope of a social and economic development. Eric Hobsbawm, in 1986, titled his book "Murderous Colombia"².

The historical period in which violence reaches its highest level is the one between the mid-forties to the mid-fifties and is known as "La Violencia".

Gabriel García Márquez in his autobiography "Living to Tell the Tale"³ devotes several pages to the description of the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in 1948, leader of the Liberal Party, and to the later dramatic events that Bogotá lived, that become known as Bogotazo, perhaps the most representative episode of the whole period.

Violencia marked the end of the spaces of political manoeuvres that the poor has and the impossibility of a dialectic in the constitutional field and in the political life of the country, between elites and oppositions for the transposition of instances of change from the civil society.

The American historian John Coatsworth reports that over 100,000 people have died during the Thousand Days' War (1899-1902), 200,000 in the Violence period, and 50,000 in the war against drug traffickers and

¹Acuerdo Final Para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera, 24 November 2016. <http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/procesos-y-conversaciones/Documentos%20compartidos/24-11-2016NuevoAcuerdoFinal.pdf>

² Hobsbawm E., *Viva la Revolución. Il secolo delle utopie in America Latina*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2016, p. 359.

³ García Márquez G., *Vivere per raccontarla*, Milano, Mondadori, 2002, pp. 307-336.

guerrilla in the 80s⁴. Capuzzi⁵ in 2012 wrote that Colombia had the highest figure in the world of internal refugees after Sudan and was ranked fourth in the ranking of nations with the highest number of forced-recruited soldiers. According to the UN data of 2016, the exorbitant number of approximately 7.7 million Colombians that are internally displaced persons is only exceeded by Siria⁶.

This work seeks to identify the historical origins of the deep contrasts that are still traversing the fragmented Colombian society. After dealing with the history of Colombia and reconstructing the secular struggle between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, I have analysed, the struggle for the land and the origin of the guerrilla warfare, the reasons why guerrilla has lasted so long and it is so rooted in the society.

Then I have examined the causes of the emergence of the paramilitary forces, the extension of the size of the phenomenon and its collusion with public security systems and the political system, and I have faced the plague of drug trafficking. Lastly, I arrived to our days and to the ongoing peace process.

The land is at the root of the armed conflict in Colombia. The armed struggle, from the 40s, takes place in rural areas and the main protagonists are peasants. Access to land is the prevalent cause, peasants want to cultivate food and breed animals independently and don't want to depends from large landowners, that force them to work under inhumane working conditions, similar to slavery. Currently it is of 8.3 million hectares the land that peasants were forced to abandon during the long conflict due to paramilitary groups and to a lesser extent to guerrilla⁷.

In Colombia, from his foundation until the end of the Violence period, there was a state of permanent civil war. The actors were the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party who fought for the conquest of power. The armed groups of the Conservative Party, police and "mercenary" fought against the liberal guerilla, communist groups and peasant organizations. This dramatic internal conflict has characterized Colombia and undermined its democratic evolution and peaceful development.

The elite of the two parties have systematically prevented a constructive discussion between the conflicting social parties. Even the three previous attempts, the one overwhelmed by the success of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to reach agreement with the FARC have been sabotaged, defamated or violated (1. In 1984 the FARC signed with the President of Belisario Betancur Cuartas the 2. in 1990, the newly elected President César Gaviria proclaimed new peace negotiations with the FARC; 3. in 1998, President Andrés Pastrana Arango launched in parallel both a dialogue with the drug trafficking groups and the *Dialogues of San Vicente del Caguán* with the founder and head of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda Velez.).

The courage to say yes to the process of peace and reconciliation especially not to continue to live in a stable and lasting uncertainty, let wrote to Hector Abad Faciolince an article⁸ entitled "*Ya no me siento víctima*": "La

⁴ Coatsworth J. H., "Roots of Violence in Colombia: Armed Actors and Beyond," in *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, II, 3, 2003, p. 3-7.

⁵ Capuzzi L., *Colombia. La guerra (in)finita*, Genova-Milano, Marietti 1820, 2012, p. 77 e 82.

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global trends. Forced displacement in 2016*, Geneva, 2017, p. 6.

⁷ Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*, Bogotá, Imprenta Nacional, 2013, p. 76.

⁸ Abad Faciolince H., *Ya no me siento víctima*, El País, 3 settembre 2016.

paz no se hace para que haya una justicia plena y completa. La paz se hace para olvidar el dolor pasado, para disminuir el dolor presente y para prevenir el dolor futuro.”. Abad Faciolince's father was assassinated by paramilitaries and his brother-in-law was kidnapped twice by the FARC. He managed to put his drama in a beautiful book “*El olvido que seremos*”⁹. The journalist explains the reasons why vote yes to the popular referendum that was held to ratify the Peace Accord the 2 October 2016 through the tragic stories of his family. The Peace agreements then signed in November 20016 after the defeat of the referendum, and their respect, ultimately the delivery of weapons by 27 June 2017, is an historic and fantastic news for Colombia and for the whole world: the FARC, after more than fifty years, have said goodbye to arms.

⁹ Abad Faciolince H., *L'oblio che saremo*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009.

Chap. 1 – The Colombian conflict

General background



Colombia is the fourth most populous nation of the American continent, with 49.291.609 million inhabitants at June 30 2017¹⁰. Of these, 37,816,051 live in urban areas, while the remaining 11,475,558 live in the

¹⁰ <http://www.dane.gov.co/>

countryside. Also, according to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), in 2005 more than 3 million Colombians lived as foreign migrants, especially in the US and Spain.

Colombia is often termed as a "country of regions" because of the considerable differences in the territories and cultures that constitute it. Its topographic conformation has made contacts between the various areas very scarce and has led to an independent development of the different regions. The country is not dominated by just one metropolis, but has four distinct regional centers: the capital Bogotá, Medellín in the northwest, Cali in the southwest and Barranquilla on the Caribbean coast.

Although urbanization has grown steadily throughout the 20th century, rural society has also grown considerably, and in several regions there has been a dynamic agricultural frontier, up to the 1990s, both towards the Amazon and the Pacific.

The frontier has meant a possibility of income and self-sufficiency for the poor and at the same time a way to expand the types of capitalist use of land, raw materials and the environment.

The salient feature of the population of Colombia is the low homogeneity. The ethnic composition is: Mestizo (mixed heritage, 58%); White (20%); Mulatto (mixed black and white ancestry, 14%); Black (4%); Mixed black and indigenous (3%); and Indigenous (1%)¹¹.

The population¹² is distributed for at least 3/4 on the cordilleras, in the tierras templadas and in the tierras frías, and on the Caribbean coast; for large extensions of the oriental lowlands, however, the density is approximately 1 ab./km².

One of the most significant economic data is the strong social inequality that decreases very slowly despite the fact that in the last few years there has been an urban middle class of several millions of people.

Colombia from an economic point of view is a country with a per capita income of 5,805.6 dollars¹³ in 2016. The 27,8% (in 2015) of the population lives below poverty line¹⁴. In this context, the 10% of the wealthiest population gains four times more than the 40% of the poorest¹⁵ population.

The most important data that represent the dramatic situation of inequality in the structure of land ownership, that is very highly concentrated are: 1.15% of the population owning 52,2% of the land, while the 78,31% owns the 10,59%¹⁶. About 80% of landowners live in absolute poverty, as microfunds do not allow them to have an income that exceeds the half of the legal minimum wage.

¹¹ <http://factbook.lincon.com/fields/2075.html>

¹² <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/colombia/>

¹³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CO>

¹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html>

¹⁵ Fraddosio M. C., *America Latina, non è la più povera ma tra le più diseguali*, Repubblica, 29 marzo 2016.

¹⁶ UNDP, *Colombia Rural: Razones para la Esperanza*, Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano 2011, Bogotá, 2011.

Estructura de la propiedad, según rangos UAF. 2009

Rango UAF	Área (%)	Predios (%)	Propietarios poseedores (%)
Microfundio	10,59	80,49	78,31
Pequeña propiedad	19,1	13,66	14,72
Mediana propiedad	18,2	4,99	5,83
Gran propiedad	52,2	0,86	1,15
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Fuentes: elaboración INDH 2011, con base en Acción Social, PPTP (2010).

“Concentrated land ownership and rural poverty remain problems, with rural poverty level running about 11% higher than the national level.”¹⁷

According to the Human Development Report 2016 of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), although the country is ranked ninety-fifth in the ranking of human development, before Dominica and after Jamaica, with an indicator of 0.727, the value of Gini's coefficient regarding Colombia's economic and social inequality level is 53.5, one of the highest in the world¹⁸.

The President of Colombia and 2016 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Juan Manuel Santos in a special contribution to that report wrote that Colombia has the objective to gain peace, equity, education and environmental sustainability in line with the Sustainable Development Goals by the 2030 Agenda¹⁹ and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The book *Violencia política en Colombia. De la nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado*²⁰, illustrates the concept of “geography of war” related to the Colombian internal conflict. The author argues that violence has not always been a feature of Colombian historical events, but violence has arisen continuously in specific historical periods and in certain places.

The author assumes to relate cases of violence to the unequal increase of wealth in specific areas where diversity between the rich and the poor appears to be evident and the state exercises a near-zero control over the territory. Instead of wondering why the war has focused on the poorer areas, one should ask why, for the

¹⁷ Beittel J. S., *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, 8 December 2014, p. 11. <https://fas.org/spp/crs/row/R43813.pdf>

¹⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016*, New York, United Nations, 2016.

¹⁹ United Nations, *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, A/RES/70/1, 2015.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

²⁰ González F. E., Bolívar I. J. y Vázquez T., *Violencia política en Colombia. De la nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado*, Bogotá, Cinep, 2003.

most part, rural areas rich in natural resources and commodities have remained firmly isolated and separated from the regions under government control.

The various illegal groups involved in the conflict have consequently been able to act in an almost indistinguishable way in rural areas, as the actions they have committed have been very rarely persecuted and condemned. Violence has been practiced in many ways: threats and violence to people who are unarmed, disappearances, homicides, massacres and forced abandonments of land by peasants.

The most elementary human rights were violated so much that it can't be said that the civilian population was a fortuitous victim of the Colombian internal conflict, but it was a constant target for selective assassinations, expropriations, kidnappings and persecutions that have caused a large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been forced to flee from their native territories and leave their home.

In conclusion, we can determine that the war was conducted with acts in which the protagonists of the armed conflict have transformed the innocent civilian population into military targets. That is why applying to this context the definition of "casualties of war" is too generic and does not sufficiently reflect reality, nor can it explain the reason why hundreds of thousands of civilians have been directly involved in this long internal conflict. The report *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*²¹ "analyzes the human rights abuses that took place during the past 50 years as a result of the internal conflict. As noted earlier, the report states that of about 220,000 people who died in the conflict 81% of the victims were civilians. It traces those responsible for violations, including the guerrillas (the FARC and ELN), the AUC paramilitaries and successor paramilitary groups, and the Colombian security forces"²².

The report indicates how violence is perpetrated:

- Between 1981 and 2012, have been counted 23,161 victims of selective murders, including 8,903 crimes committed by paramilitary groups, 3,906 by the guerrilla and 2,340 by the forces of order;
- from 1980 to 2012, occurred 1,982 massacres (58.9% paramilitaries, 17.3% guerrillas, 7.9% public forces, etc.), causing 11.751 victims;
- from 1981 to 2012, there were 588 events with serious episodes of ill-treatment and extreme cruelty that are for two-thirds attributable to paramilitary groups;
- 25,007 cases of desaparecidos; a very high number, if we consider that in Argentina, during military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, the official data set about 9,000 forced disappearances, increased to 30,000 from human rights organizations;
- from 1970 to 2010 there were 27,023 kidnappings related to armed conflict, in particular perpetrated by guerrillas, 9,568 by organized crime, 1,962 by other authors and for another 500 perpetrators are unknown;
- 1,754 victims of sexual violence in the armed conflict;

²¹ Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*, op. cit., pp. 30-109.

²² Beittel J. S., *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, op. cit., p. 17.

- from 1999 to 2013, 5,156 children and adolescents were forcibly recruited by armed groups, 60% by FARC;
- between 1982 and 2012 land mines killed 10,189 victims. The massive and indiscriminate use made 45% of the national territory a mine area. The biggest user of this practice was the ELN.

Another chapter to tackle is the scandal of the "false positives" involving some Colombian army members who were held responsible for the murder of innocent civilians which were made to look like fighting guerrillas. On January 7, 2009, a CIA document published by the National Security Archive revealed that the links between the army and the paramilitary groups were known by the US government since 1994 and that the "false positives" was an habitual practice of the Colombian army²³. In 2010, Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on arbitrary executions, in the report submitted after his visit to Colombia in June 2009, denounced the existence of "a series of extrajudicial executions" whose impunity was in 98.5% of the cases²⁴. A report by Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental international human rights organization in 2015, quantifies at least 3,000 "false positives" killings between 2002 and 2008²⁵.

The office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Defenders in Colombia observed in 2016: "389 aggressions of the following types: 59 killings; 44 attacks; 210 threats (69 collective); 72 infringements of the rights to privacy and property ...; three enforced disappearances; and one case of sexual violence. The 59 victims killed included four women, six indigenous leaders, three LGBTI leaders, three trade union leaders, one Afro-Colombian leader and two youth leaders. Although there were more attacks and assassinations of members of trade unions, and social and political movements, these statistics only include aggressions against leaders"²⁶. According to Human Rights Watch: "The Colombian government should redouble its efforts to protect rights defenders and community activists and to investigate killings of activists in the country"²⁷.

Freedom of press, according to the Word Press Freedom Index 2017²⁸, is still in a difficult situation as the country is ranked 129th out of 180 countries analyzed in the world. According to Beittel, journalists continue to operate in a dangerous environment in Colombia. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 45 journalists in Colombia have been killed in work-related circumstances since 1992²⁹.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (a World Organisation Against Torture OMCT-International Federation for Human Rights FIDH partnership) carried out an international fact-finding

²³ <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB266/index.htm> (accessed September 25, 2017)

²⁴ United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston, on his mission to Colombia* (8–18 June 2009).

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, *On Their Watch. Evidence of Senior Army Officers' Responsibility for False Positive Killings in Colombia*, United States of America, 2015, p. 1.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/24/their-watch/evidence-senior-army-officers-responsibility-false-positive-killings>

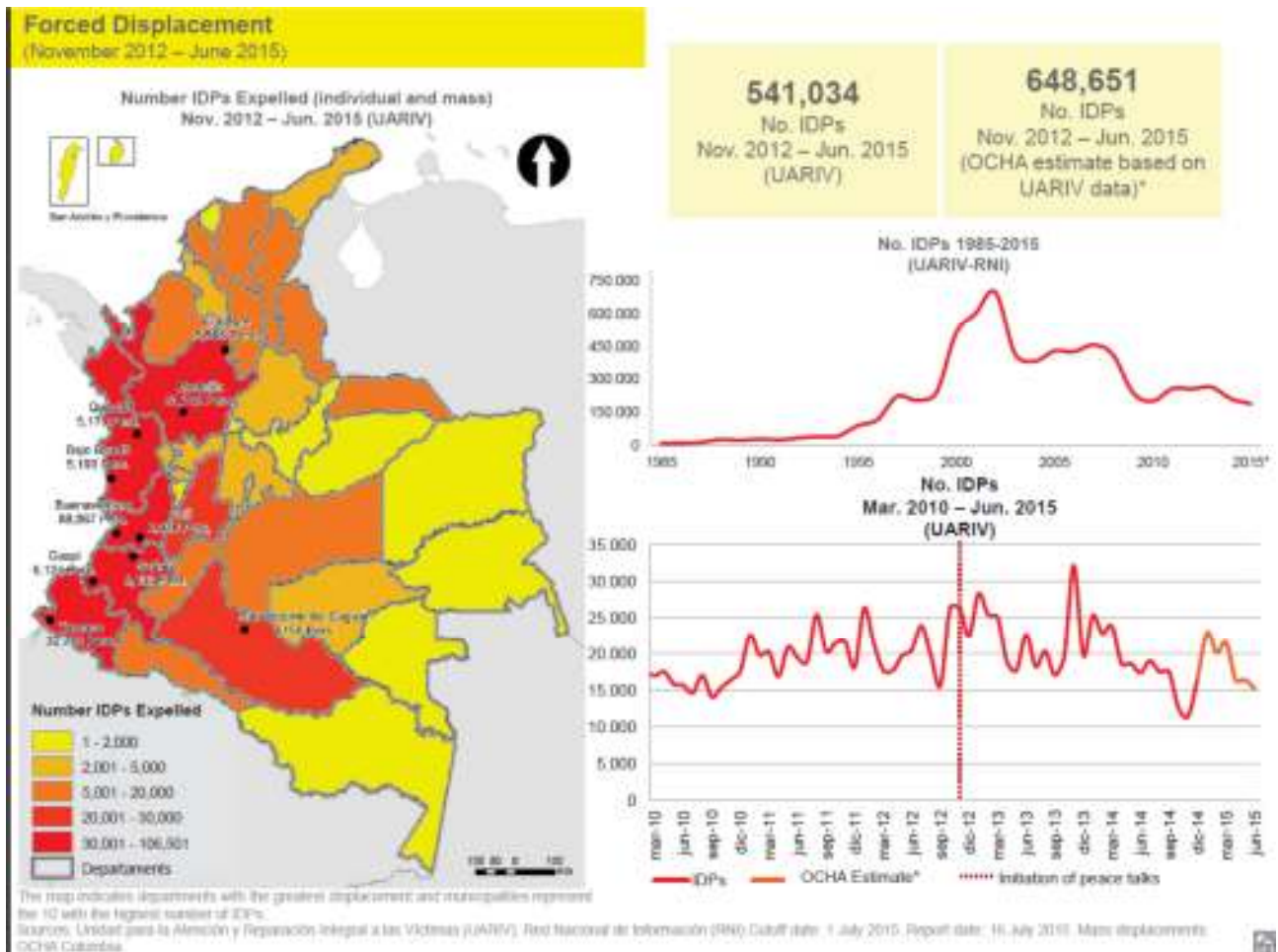
²⁶ UNHR, *Addendum – Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Colombia*, A/HRC/34/3/Add.3, United Nations, 2017, p. 9.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Colombia: Activists at Risk. Peace Promise Demands Guarantees for Rights Defenders*, 24 April 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/24/colombia-activists-risk>

²⁸ <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

²⁹ Beittel J. S., *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, op. cit., p. 19.

mission in different areas of Colombia from July 11 to 19, 2017³⁰. Preliminary results of the mission support the argument that there is still no peace in Colombia for human rights defenders.



The map indicates departments with the greatest displacement and municipalities represent the 10 with the highest number of IDPs.³¹

³⁰ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), *Colombia: No peace for human rights defenders - Preliminary findings of a fact-finding mission*, 24 July 2017. <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/colombia-no-peace-for-human-rights-defenders-preliminary-findings-of>

³¹ OCHA Colombia, *Humanitarian and Peace Trends November 2012 – June 2015*, Office of the United Nations for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2015, p. 3. The report was prepared and published by the OCHA in collaboration with partners in the Humanitarian Country Team and UN System in Colombia.

History of Colombia: from its foundation to the National Front

Columbian history³² has always been characterized by violence and armed conflicts which, according to most historians and scholars, are the result of structural factors that have emerged since the country's creation and have led to the formation of a social fabric with differences too marked inside.

After the invasion by Napoleon of the Spanish Empire in 1808, and the resulting weakening of the latter, independent movements began fights in Latin American colonies.

This clash between the colonies and the European nation ended when Simon Bolívar, the Libertador, helped by the desire of independence that was widespread in most of the population, and the bad economic trend, entered Bogotá and proclaimed the independence of Nueva Granada from Spain. Bolívar was proclaimed President and Francisco de Paula Santander Vice President. In 1821 a constitution was promulgated with the aim of creating the Republic of Colombia, which included the present territories of Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia.

But Bolívar's dream of a federal union of independent states collapsed because of the rivalry and divergent interests of the ruling classes of the various countries that led to the separation of Venezuela in 1829 and following that of Ecuador in 1830.

Colombian policy has been characterized since the early years of its foundation, from a struggle in the way should be conceived the role of the state. This internal clash between the elites and the opposition was in the way of conceiving the state and the function of government, the first conception was influenced by the liberal ideas coming from the UK and the US, while the second by the most conservative traditions inherited from the system of Spanish power.

The two oldest political parties were founded in 1849: the Liberal Party, linked to the town bourgeoisie, expressed the interests of the emerging industrial and credit capital, and the Conservative Party linked to the great land ownership, the land-based agricultural production system and the Catholic Church.

The Liberal Party was the mirror of the demands made by the merchant class, it favoured a decentralized state, international trade and export development, which in the case of Colombia were mainly raw materials and agricultural goods, especially to the US, England and France.

While the Conservative Party was composed and supported by the rich class of landowners and favoured a centralized and hierarchical state where different social classes played a specific role within society.

The former Vice President Santander, given his federalist inclinations, was identified by the Liberals as their forerunner, while the conservatives sought to politically use the figure of Bolívar, emphasizing his will to build a centralized state.

The use of the figure of the Libertador, however, posed an insoluble contradiction to the Conservative Party: while Bolívar insisted on the centralized state to strengthen the independence of Gran Colombia and united to

³² Bushnell D., *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself*, Berkeley and Los Angeles California, London England, University of California Press, 1993.

the independence the idea of social justice, the freedom of slaves and the struggle to the large estates, the Conservative party moved with almost opposing goals.

The great instability that took place in the country from 1839 to 1884 result in a series of civil wars, that are still marking the history of Colombia, some of which led to constitutional changes, of the system of government and of the name of the country.

The Liberal Party arrived to the government around 1850 and remained there until the 80s, a period that coincided with the boom of tobacco exports, thus giving the government the power to legitimize its liberal policies.

During these years, the liberal party, whose top representative was Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, succeeded in implementing many of its policies, such as the abolition of slavery and the creation of a more secular state, making education more and more independent from religion, first entrusted almost entirely to the Catholic Church.

A drastic reduction of the armed forces was done by the Liberals, this reduction was an important requirement for the creation of a federal state apparatus, which was established until 1859, the beginning of the fourth civil war, broke out with a rebellion in the State of Cauca, who overthrew the government between 1860 and 1863. From this period up to 1876, during the years of the Constitution of Rionegro there were about 40 regional civil wars and only one national.

Conservatives were able to return to power in the 1880s, and soon after they came to power, they decided to rewrite the liberal constitution that had been approved in 1863, and thus made a new one that remained in force for the next 100 years.

The constitution of 1886 represents a central aspect of what was called the period of regeneration. This period was characterized by a strong conservative drive and was summarized by the slogan "One nation, one race, one God".

The author of these constitutional reforms, which sponsored them so much to deserve the name of a regenerator, was Rafael Núñez, who laid the foundations for consolidating the power of conservatives. This period coincided with a series of reforms that institutionalized most of the ideas and values of the conservative party, thus creating the basis for subsequent conflicts that would have occurred.

The state was centralized, and the president was invested with great powers, including the most important and controversial that was to be able to take political rights away from those he considered capable of posing a danger to public order.

These reforms led to the exclusion of the liberal party from the political life of the country, which was cut off for the 44 subsequent years.

Conflicts and violence between liberals and conservatives culminated in the One Hundred Days War, from 1899 to 1902, the bloodiest from the country's independence, which caused about 100,000 deaths.

The disastrous situation created by the war had weakened the country, leaving it in a deep crisis. This allowed the United States, by means of a secessionist movement, to take advantage of the situation, and take Panama,

at that time only a province of Colombia, would they let become an independent state in 1903, thus beginning the construction of the inter oceanic channel.

An important role in these years was covered by the lawyer, later become general of the liberal party rebel army Rafael Uribe Uribe. He was a critic of the Regeneration. He was one of the main figures of the war of the Thousand days, and he was also involved in the independence of the state of Panama. He died in 1914, on an ax murder, operated by two workers, but there has always been the suspect that the principal was to be searched in the political sphere.

The Republic of Panama was not recognized by Colombia until 1921.

The modernization of Colombian society led in the same period, to the deepening of internal conflicts and the development of new contradictions.

At the clash between the part of the society linked to the process of industrialization and the one that expressed the interests of the great agricultural property, was added the one generated by the development of the agricultural movement and the strong tensions arising from the growth of the urban proletariat and the labour movement linked to the industrial centers .

In 1928 in Ciénaga, near Santa Marta, a strike of banana production and export workers, controlled by the United Fruit Company monopoly in 1891, was repressed in the blood.

This episode, which cost life depending on the sources from several hundred to a maximum of 3,000 people gathered in the city square, on which the army machine gun fire was opened after the soldiers had blocked all the escape routes, inaugurated the unconstitutional practice of using the armed forces as a tool for political repression. The massacre is remembered by the name of Masacre de las bananeras, and was made immortal by the famous writer Gabriel García Márquez in his masterpiece "One Hundred Years of Solitude"³³.

It is from this strike that emerged one of the main figures of the Colombian history, the liberal lawyer Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.

The Colombian Communist Party was founded in 1930, while protests sprang to other industrial and agricultural branches, joining student agitation. In the same year, the long conservative hegemony ended.

Between 1930 and 1946, the Liberal Party ruled the country. Within the party, however, two distinct trends were formed: the liberal right and the progressive liberal left, led by Gaitán, inspired by socialist ideas.

In 1933, Gaitán founded the Unión Nacional Izquierdista Revolucionaria (UNIR), which began to gain an ever greater consensus from the peasant population.

Gaitán, was a charismatic nationalistic leader, who promoted land reform and social inclusion policies, in disagreement with the line followed by the two main parties.

Thanks to his slogans capable of a great evocative power, such as "land to the workers" or "hunger is neither liberal or conservative," it began to become increasingly popular and in 1935 merged its movement into the liberal party.

³³ García Márquez G., *Cent'anni di solitudine*, Milano, Mondadori, 1982 (original edition, *Cien años de soledad*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1967).

Conservatives went back to the government with Mariano Ospina Pérez in 1946, who, while not enjoying the majority in the congress, succeeded in that because of the internal tensions in the liberal world, which was divided.

In fact, with the presidential election, the changed political framework became apparent. Gaitán, who counted on a strong and growing popular support, decided to run for president challenging his own party, who chose to support the Turbay, the right-wing candidate.

Gaitán organized an impressive "march of silence" in early 1948, with almost half of the inhabitants of Bogotá participating. The complaint against the constituted power had become increasingly radical and he accused liberal democracy of maintaining inequalities through fake oppositions.

The positions of the populist leader, who wanted to reform the power system to turn it into a participatory democracy, pushed the ruling class to mobilize all the power apparatus against him.

Between March and May 1948, the 9th International Conference of American States was held in Bogotá, led by US Secretary of State George Marshall. It marked the birth of the Organization of American States. It was chaired by Colombian Foreign Minister Laureano Gómez and the Colombian delegation of Gaitán was excluded.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated on April 9, 1948 in Bogotá, by the hands of the young conservative Juan Roa Sierra. This Murder has to be attributed to conservative forces, terrorized by what could have been the result of the presidential election of 1950.

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, an urban revolt broke out in Bogotá, which was repressed in the blood and called, *Bogotazo*³⁴.

With him died in Colombia the hope that people had to be able to change things through the democratic process.

It began a decade from 1948 to 1958, called "La Violencia"³⁵, which is universally recognized as the most violent period in the country's history with more than 200,000 deaths.

The Liberals formed peasant militias, who fought against the army, controlled by the conservative government. La Violencia hurled itself against the whole society, becoming the means to regulate other issues of various kinds, and it can be considered the response of the traditional elites to the danger of populism.

The 1950 presidential election saw only one participant, given the abstention of the liberal party, and the victory went to the far-right leader Laureano Gómez.

Gómez, implemented a counter-revolution, deleting all the slight advances that had been made by the liberals to ensure better social justice³⁶.

³⁴ Alape A., *El Bogotazo, memorias del olvido*, Bogotá, Planeta, 2000.

³⁵ Karl R. A., *Forgotten Peace. Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia*, Oakland, California, University of California Press, 2017.

³⁶ Abel C. and Palacios M., *Colombia 1930-1958*, in Bethell L., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. XI, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

In 1951, he declared the areas occupied by the communists "war zones" and he send the army to resume them, he then eliminated the unions, creating new ones that had strong connections with the owners of the means of production.

The application of the state of emergency to contain social struggles was almost permanent from 1951 until the new constitution of the 1991³⁷.

In 1953, was favoured a coup by the political class, both conservative and liberal, with the aim of pacifying the country, and was thus put in power General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.

Military operations ceased, and peasant guerrillas, attracted by institutional peace proposals, turn over their weapons, accepting the offer of amnesty. But many of the guerrillas who had delivered the weapons were actually murdered months or years later.

The armed struggle against the state was only followed by a few, who did not believe in government promises and continued to fight in favour of peasant claims.

When, in 1957, Rojas Pinilla came to challenge the whole power system, creating two new national banks that would have favoured the middle-low classes, was deposed.

In 1956, was reached a political agreement, implemented since 1958, which ended the violence. This agreement, made between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, put in power a provisional military junta that put an end to Pinilla's dictatorship and set up the "National Front", an agreement that would prescribe the presidency alternately to the two parties every four years, independently from the electoral outcome. This alternation would last for the next sixteen years, thus securing the two parties two presidential mandates each, and some historians have defined it a "constitutional dictatorship."

As journalist and author Bert Ruiz³⁸ has written, "it formally excluded any third party from participating in the decision making in the country or in the share of power...in the view of the lower classes, the ruling elite had ignored the lessons taught by Gaitán: they still owned the presidency and the pueblo still had exclusivity over appalling poverty."

During these sixteen years when there was this bipartisan division of powers, conservative and liberal elites consolidated their socio-economic control of the country, strengthened the powers of the army, and abolished social reforms initiated by Pinilla.

This led to the creation of groups formed by communist guerrillas, peasant groups and followers of Gaitán, who challenged the authority of the state, dominated by a small elite who wanted at all costs to maintain power. The four main Colombian guerrilla groups were born, the FARC and ELNs in 1964, the Ejercito Popular de Liberacion (EPL) in 1967, and the Diecinueve de Abril Movement (M-19) in 1970. These groups took up arms against the government authorities.

Of these groups, the two best-known organizations are ELN and FARC.

³⁷ Piccoli G., *Colombia il paese dell'eccesso. Droga e privatizzazione della guerra civile*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2003, p. 53; Profumi E., *Colombia. La pace è nostra*, Roma, Exòrma, 2016, pp. 34-35.

³⁸ Ruiz B., *The Colombian Civil War*, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2001.

L'ELN³⁹ was born in 1964. The Cuban Revolution and Che Guevara inspired students, radical Catholics, and left-wing intellectuals, led by brothers Fabio and Manuel Vásquez Castaño, to form ELN and fight in favour of a popular democracy. The ELN is based on the foquist conception advocated by the Cuban Revolution, starting from small guerrilla groups large-scale political and military uprisings should be born.

ELN founders, former members of a Cuba-funded training program named Brigada Pro Liberación Nacional, felt that the majority of the Colombian population was excluded from the political life of the country. The goal of the organization was to overthrow the government and replace it with one that they felt most representative. In June 1964, the group began training in the province of Santander. In 1965, was announced the foundation of the organization, with the first large-scale military act, the taking of Simacota Town Hall.

The group was influenced by the Liberation theology, a current of theological thinking that had developed following the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Council of Medellín in 1968. It represented an extension of the ideas and reform principles launched in Rome by the Council Vatican II and the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII *Mater et Magistra*⁴⁰ del 1961 e *Pacem in Terris*⁴¹ del 1963. A text that had a strong influence on the Theology of Liberation and which was signed during the concluding work of the Ecumenical Council at the Catacombs of Domitilla in Rome by several fathers of different nationalities, both European and Latin American, is the so-called Catacombs Pact. The document is a challenge to carry on a "life of poverty" and a "poor and humble" Church.

Finally, it is necessary to point out the forerunners of this theology and member of the guerrilla organization Father Camilo Torres Restrepo (1929-1966), cofounder of the first Faculty of Sociology of Latin America, a revolutionary priest who would then become a martyr of the guerrilla group and devoted his life to the struggle for defending the poorest. Camilo Torres was killed in his first guerrilla fight at the age of 37.

Influenced by the experience of Father Camilo Torres, three Spanish priests entered the ELN. One of these, Manuel Pérez, became their commander for more than fifteen years until his death in the late 1990s.

The next chapter deals with the FARC and in particular their relationship with land and its distribution.

³⁹ "National Liberation Army", Stanford University – Mapping Militant Organizations, updated 17 August 2015. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/87> (accessed September 25, 2017)

⁴⁰ *Pacem in Terris*. Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII. April 11, 1963. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

⁴¹ *Mater et Magistra*. Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII. May 15, 1961. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html

Chap. 2 - FARC and the issue of land

FARC



The FARC were founded on May 27, 1964⁴². FARC emerged as a response to a series of violent attacks, supported by the US, against peasants in the region of Marquetalia⁴³.

The uprising was officially recognized as a guerrilla movement during the X Congress of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC), held in 1966.

Prior to this official recognition by the congress, the movement was aimed solely to the defense of peasants by the attacks of the army.

In order to understand what the FARC were and are, we must start from the principle, that is, from the community movements of rural self-defense from which they would then take shape⁴⁴.

In Colombia, the social and economic movements of peasants, before the mid-twentieth century, had been a numerically reduced phenomenon.

FARC according to LeGrand⁴⁵ were made from “A real peasant movement, a response to official violence and military repression”.

As it is told by FARC itself “In their areas of influence they [the guerrilla/PCC leadership] encouraged the peasant communities to share the land among the residents and created mechanisms for collective work and assistance to the individual exploitation of parcels of land and applied the movement’s justice by collective decision of assemblies of the populace. These became areas with a new mentality and social and political

⁴² Brittain J. J., *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia. The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*, London and New York, Pluto Press, 2010; “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army”, Stanford University – Mapping Militant Organizations, updated 15 August 2015. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/89> (accessed September 25, 2017)

⁴³ Sanchez G. y Peñaranda R., *Pasado y presente de la Violencia en Colombia*, Bogotá, CEREC, 1987; Pizarro Leongómez E., “Marquetalia: el mito fundacional de las Farc”, *UNP N.57*, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2004.

⁴⁴ Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Guerrilla y población civil. Trayectoria de las FARC 1949-2013*, Tercera edición, Bogotá, CNMH, 2014; Leech G., *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*, London and New York, Zed Books, 2011; Pizarro Leongómez E., *Los orígenes del movimiento armado comunista en Colombia: 1949-1966*, Análisis político No. 7 may/ago 1989, Instituto de estudios políticos y relaciones internacionales (IEPRI), Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

⁴⁵ LeGrand C., “The Colombian crisis in historical perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 28(55–56), pp. 165–209, 2003, p. 176.

proposals different from those offered by the regime. The decisive factor was the presence in power of the people themselves.”⁴⁶

The development and purpose of these self-defense communities can be seen in many different ways. In 1984 Walton⁴⁷ said that the FARC were an autonomous form of collectivity and passive resistance against a repressive state. While Aviles⁴⁸ said that these communities “attempting to build sanctuaries independent from the national governments”.

Many peasants after the Violence period came to see the state as the main enemy of the people, and to escape from this danger, they created free regions⁴⁹.

Maria Ovidia Díaz, describing the involvement of PCC in the creation of these self-defense groups, said “the campesino self-defence groups were an organisation that sought to address the daily need of the farmers. In its origins these campesino self-defence groups were organised to protect the well-being of the community.”⁵⁰

To understand the development of peasant self-defense movements we need to know the division of Colombia from the historical and agricultural point of view. It is divided into three parts: the Caribbean coast, the central mountain range with the Cauca and Magdalena rivers and the eastern plain, with the forest stretching in the Orinoco valleys and the Amazonian Rivers. The coastal strip has always been the most important and the Magdalena River is the cardinal axis of Colombia. The black, mulatta and mixed black and indigenous population is entirely confined in the coastal areas and the desert hinterland of the northern departments.

Communist corpses were of three types:

The first type was the Republic of Tequendama. Its population was made up of former tenants who had forced landowners to sell them some farms. The area was divided into independent communities such as Viota and Sumapaz.

The second type of communist territory, which included deserted spaces ranging from the mountains to the Amazon basin, was adjacent to the first zone. In these places, independent pioneers and peasants were progressively allocated to them, who, as free men without a master, underwent the fascination of communist ideologies of social justice.

In these arduous areas of Metá and Caquetá there were guerrilla exercise centers. There were also other communist bases in the Tolima region and others in the Cauca india area.

The third communist enclave consisted of the semi-clandestine groups of the Llanos Orientales.

⁴⁶ FARC-EP, *FARC-EP Historical Outline*, Toronto, International Commission, 1999, p. 15; Ramírez Tobón W., “La guerrilla rural: Una vía hacia la colonización armada,” *Estudios Rurales Latinoamericanos*, 4(2), pp. 199–209, 1981.

⁴⁷ Walton J., *Reluctant Rebels: Comparative studies of revolution and underdevelopment*, New York, Colombia University Press, 1984, pp. 94-99.

⁴⁸ Avilés W., *Global Capitalism, Democracy, and Civil–Military Relations in Colombia*, New York, SUNY, 2006, p. 36.

⁴⁹ LeGrand C., “The Colombian crisis in historical perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 28(55–56), pp. 165–209, 2003, pp. 175-6.

⁵⁰ Obando L. and Velásquez J., *Tras Las Huellas de la Resistencia*, Documentary film (independent), 2004.

The communist areas were organized and armed, they used a regular legislative and administrative system, and within their territory la violencia had been eradicated, although in the rest of the country the blood continued to flow like a river.

Their main prerogative was to call the peasants of the surrounding provinces through justice and efficiency in their way of life. On the contrary, the weak point was spontaneous peasant character, as their political perspective ended at local level.

FARC were based on continuity with the peasant emancipation fights that had followed since the beginning of the century: “Compañeros, campesinos, obreros, estudiantes, artesanos, intelectuales, soldados, policías y oficiales patriotas, hombres y mujeres de Colombia: *Víctimas de cinco guerras*. Nosotros somos nervio de un movimiento revolucionario que viene de 1948. Contra nosotros, campesinos del Sur de Tolima, Huila y Cauca, desde 1948 se ha lanzado la fuerza del gran latifundio, de los grandes ganaderos, del gran comercio, de los gamonales de la política oficial y de los comerciantes de la violencia. Nosotros hemos sido víctimas de la política de “a sangre y fuego” preconizada y llevada a la práctica por la oligarquía que detenta el poder. Contra nosotros se han desencadenado en el curso de los últimos 45 años, cinco guerras: una, a partir de 1948; otra, a partir de 1954; otra, a partir de 1962; otra, a partir del 18 de Mayo de 1964 cuando los Altos Mandos declaran oficialmente que ese día empezaba la “Operación Marquetalia”.”⁵¹

The central government saw these communities as a danger to the stability of the country. They were considered in fact “a threat in the existence of the self-defense zones. It realized that they were not a sign of relative equilibrium in the class balance, but a manifestation of class struggle. Consequently, a plan of aggression against these zones began to be elaborated in 1957. It envisaged five stages: civilian action, economic blockade, military action, unification of the zone, and its “return to the orbit of national life”⁵².

From 1960 to '63 the Colombian government, assisted by the US, began the implementation, under the name of “Plan LASO” (Latin America Security Operation) or “Operacion Soberanía”, of a plan to destroy the most important peasant enclave, Marquetalia.

The offensive, called "Operation Marquetalia", reached its peak in 1964, when more than 20,000 soldiers were sent to the area in order to resume control.

The Colombian aviation, before the land offensive occurred, used the US-supplied Napalm for the first time in a war zone.

The military operation was a success. The self-defense groups had to evacuate the area that came under state control.

⁵¹ Programa Agrario de los Guerrilleros de las FARC-EP, Proclamado el 20 de Julio de 1964 en el fragor de la lucha armada de Marquetalia, corregido y ampliado por la Octava Conferencia Nacional de las FARC-EP, Abril 2 de 1993.

⁵² Gomez A., “Perspectives of the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia (FARC),” pp. 248–56 in Hodges D. H. and Abu Shanab R. E., *National Liberation Fronts 1960/1970: Essays, documents, interviews*, New York, William Morrow, 1972, p. 251; Sánchez G. G. and Meertens D., *Bandits, Peasants and Politics: The case of “La Violencia” in Colombia*, University of Texas, Austin, 2001, pp. 178-84.

However, the losses suffered by the latter were small, and after a few months they were able to reorganize and resume control of the area⁵³. (Gott, 1970)

This operation, as stated by Marulanda “marks the start of renewed armed resistance... The army symbolically took the Marquetalia region, but in spite of its new anti-guerrilla conceptions, it was military impossible to wipe out the seed of struggle, which had sprouted from these lands. The seed is the origin of the FARC-EP”⁵⁴. The founder of the FARC was Manuel Marulanda Vélez, known as "Tiro Fijo". A charismatic member of the communist guerrillas, he is considered one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders of South American peasant guerrillas.

In adolescence, he had shown himself in liberal positions, but as he lately said, just because he was born into one “a peasant family deeply influenced by the violent political struggles between Colombia’s Liberals and Conservatives”⁵⁵.

At 20, however, Marulanda aligned himself with Marxism-Leninism positions and abandoned any social-democratic ideology⁵⁶.

He became a PCC leader and later head of Marquetalia's self-defense community, which later transformed into the first FARC nucleus.

Marulanda⁵⁷ explained how the FARC were organized “Faced with the aggression against Marquetalia, for example, we created a single leadership. We were building a new type of general staff as the supreme political and military authority, taking care that militarism did not overwhelm everything. We set up the military structure that corresponds to an extraordinarily mobile struggle, and we adjusted the tactics to the necessities of that needed mobility. The guerrilla detachments and groupings are deployed in the field with the same versatility as a very small guerrilla unit. If we need to, we establish fixed commands for whatever time is required. Discipline is not imposed; rather, it springs forth in the conscious combatant as a necessity of the struggle. The barracks method modeled on that of the units of troops in the bourgeois army is now but a memory of the first days of the guerrilla force. However, our military structure is guided by conscious revolutionary military principles, adjusted to our form of guerrilla force. We maintain a critical and self-critical attitude in the face of our political and military errors, while we are guided by a profoundly respectful conduct in our dealings with the masses and in their interests. We raise and support the immediate and fundamental demands of the masses, which by virtue of our activity are in the fields like us. We were never, and we will never be, a bunch of self-important people trying to dictate the line to everyone else, nor defenders of the

⁵³ Gott R., *Guerrilla Movements in Latin American*, New York, Nelson, 1970, p. 254.

⁵⁴ FARC-EP, *FARC-EP Historical Outline*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

⁵⁵ Cala A., “The enigmatic guerrilla: FARC’s Manuel Marulanda,” *Current History*, 99(634), pp. 57; Wickham-Crowley T. P., *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A comparative study of insurgents and regimes since 1956*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 331.

⁵⁶ Cala A., “The enigmatic guerrilla: FARC’s Manuel Marulanda,” op. cit., pp. 57–8; Alejandro P. and Billon Y., *50 Years of Guerrilla Warfare*. Documentary film (Les Films de Village, Odyssee, Cityzen TV), 1999; Pearce J., *Colombia: Inside the labyrinth*, London, Latin American Bureau, 1990, p. 56; Maullin R., *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, Lexington, Mass., Lexington, 1973, p. 129n.2.

⁵⁷ Marulanda Vélez M., “The Origins of the FARC-EP: The birth of the armed resistance,” pp. 115–22 in Toledo R., Gutierrez T., Flounders S., and McInerney A., *War in Colombia: Made in the U.S.A.*, New York, International Action Centre, 2003, p. 120.

absurd thesis that ‘the guerrilla force creates the party.’ We go forward guided by the orientation of the only party that has always been with us: the Communist Party. And we will always continue to be so guided.”.

In the years following their foundation, FARC expanded their presence in the country year after year. In 1980, the insurgency increased to the point that about one-fifth of the country's regions saw the presence of the organization.

In the 90s the insurgency expanded so far that the FARC were present in 60% of the national territory. The 93% of Colombian areas of recent colonization saw the presence of the revolutionary group.

The organization had a very hierarchical structure, the secretariat was composed by seven members and it was the highest level of leadership. It took all tactical and political decisions in collaboration with the Central High Command, that was composed of twenty-five members, who in turn led seven blocks.

The blocks in which Colombia was divided were Caribbean, Center, East, Ivan Rios, Middle Magdalena, South and West. In each of these there were numerous fronts, each of which ranged between 300 and 600 guerrillas. In the mid-90s there were approximately 105 fronts, which is why it is estimated that at its maximum peak between the late 90s and early 2000s, the organization counted between 40,000 and 50,000 guerrillas. The two largest blocks were the east and the south, with the east being over 9,000 guerrillas.

These numbers make the FARC the longest and most powerful political-military revolutionary organization in South America.

In the 1980s the FARC said that “for the first time ... a revolutionary situation existed in the country”⁵⁸ and new strategies had to be developed.

In May 1982 at the VIIth conference of the guerrilla movement, it was decided that the words of peoples' army “Ejercito del Pueblo” would be added.

Through this change, the movement moved from a defensive strategy to a revolutionary guerrilla tactic positioned on more offensive military tactics.

This passage was defined as a metamorphosis: the guerrilla extended its operations, while reducing its relations with the communist party.

Meanwhile, the composition of the movement had evolved, moving from a peasant-based movement, made up of subsistence farmers in the underdeveloped southwestern regions, to a force composed just at the 65% by people from the countryside, 13% by various indigenous groups, while the remaining 35% by people from urban areas.

Despite the widespread idea that the FARC have had little popular support, there is evidence of alliances between insurgents and some sectors of the civilian population.

The mere continuation of the conflict for such a long period of time demonstrates the solidarity that existed between the two parties at local level.

⁵⁸ Pearce J., *Colombia: Inside the labyrinth*, op. cit., p. 173; Schulte-Bockholt A., *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics: a study in criminal power*, Lexington, Lanham Md, 2006, p. 110.

FARC were not seen by peasants as an external factor, but as part of the community. However, it would be impossible to say that the FARC have been universally supported or even accepted as a social movement. The FARC have been accused of being “the most dangerous international terrorist organization based in the Western hemisphere.”⁵⁹.

According to Beittel⁶⁰ “Observing the growing revenues of the illegal drug trade, the FARC initially began collecting taxes from marijuana and coca growers in areas that they controlled, but their role in the drug trade expanded rapidly. The FARC also conducted bombings, mortar attacks, murders, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and hijackings, mainly against Colombian targets. The FARC’s involvement in the drug trade deepened to include all stages of drug processing, including cultivation, taxation of drug crops, processing, and distribution. By the early 2000s, the FARC was thought to control about 60% of the cocaine departing Colombia. ... In the late 1990s, partly due to the drug profit-fueled FARC insurgency, the Colombian government was near collapse. According to a poll published in July 1999, a majority of Colombians thought the FARC might someday take power by force. In areas where the state was weak or absent, the void had been filled by armed actors. Some observers estimated as much as 40% of Colombian territory was controlled by the FARC forces and the state had no presence in 158 (16%) of Colombia’s 1,099 municipalities (counties). By the time the faltering negotiations between the FARC and the Pastrana government broke off in 2002, the Colombian public was totally disillusioned with the prospects for a peace deal with the leftist insurgents. It was during this period of the early 2000s that the FARC reached the peak of its size and power, with an estimated 16,000-20,000 fighters.”

This is because being a Marxist-Leninist organization, it has been a material danger for the Colombian government, for the maximization of the profits of foreign companies working in the country and for the elites that benefit from it.

The FARC grew very much in the 1990s. This was the result of the drastic decline in the material conditions of the Colombian people due to the neoliberal policies that were adopted in those years.

They consisted of greater privatizations, a decrease in social spending and services, and a reduction in customs duties with the consequent reduction in wages for workers, and led the population to increasingly support the movement.

As shown by Marulanda's figure, FARC have always had a strong connection with the PCC.

In Colombia, the leaders of the Communist Party have gone beyond the other South American countries, not only they have managed to get an hold on the masses of the city, but in some periods, they have also been able to push for a popular uprising against the ruling class of the country.

The Latin American communist parties usually have always failed to organize the rural population as a revolutionary force.

⁵⁹ Rochlin J. F., *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*, London, Lynne Rienner, 2003, p. 107.

⁶⁰ Beittel J. S., *Peace Talks in Colombia*, Congressional Research Service, 31 March 2015, pp. 3-6. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42982.pdf>

This, however, merely demonstrates the lack of knowledge of PCC history.

In the 1930s, the party declared its will to reach “social transformation, unionism and the education for the working class” and started a program “for the improvement of *both urban and rural workers’* rights and labour conditions”⁶¹.

The PCC, unlike other continent parties, immediately understood the differences between urban masses and peasant masses that were different from many points of view, from social to economic, from cultural to the purpose they wanted to reach. There was therefore a need to implement two different types of struggle in relation to the two types of companies that were present in the country.

For the people who lived in the countryside this meant creating defensive structures that would have been able to protect them from wealthy state-sponsored landowners.

Indeed, “the policy known as mass self-defence is not an invention of the Colombian Communists. This form of struggle was evolved by the peasants themselves. By supporting it and incorporating it in its own line – not as an aim in itself but as a means of advance towards higher forms of struggle – our Party showed that it had its finger on the pulse of Colombian life and took cognizance of all its aspects.”⁶²

Although this support was ratified in the 1930s, figures show that the party began to support rural militias since the 1920s.

In the 1930s, party members began organizing strikes, protests, and establishing enclaves and self-defense groups in south-areas of Colombia.

These areas not only remained regions controlled politically by the Communist Party but were also able to oppose and in some cases intimidate the government forces.

Beyond the fact that the Colombian party was rooted in the countryside, it must be remembered that even before its arrival the peasants had been organized since 1918 in the central mountainous area or Magdalena river.

Many believe that the FARC originated both from the more extreme areas of the liberal party and the PCC. “In southern Tolima the guerrillas were drawn from members of the Communist Party and Liberal Party. The Communists were led by Isauro Rosa (alias Major Lister) and Jacopo Pias Alape (alias Charro Negro), all of whom were peasants. Among the latter group, the current legendary leader of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda Velez (Tiro Fijo) started his revolutionary career.”⁶³

This is only partially correct, as this simplifies the PCC's history and efforts to try to counter the country's elites. Some regions have witnessed violence by members of the liberal party, when the Communist Party continued to organize self-defense groups after the National Front's agreement.

To contributed more to the foundation of the FARC were the militias led by the PCC, who fought against the elites of the country during the Violencia period.

⁶¹Osterling J. P., *Democracy in Colombia: Clientalist politics and guerilla warfare*, Oxford, Transaction, 1989, pp. 184-185.

⁶² Gomez A., “Perspectives of the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia (FARC),” pp. 248–56 in Hodges D. H. and Abu Shanab R. E., *National Liberation Fronts 1960/1970: Essays, documents, interviews*, op. cit., p. 248.

⁶³ Richani N., *Systems of Violence: The political economy of war and peace in Colombia*, New York, SUNY, 2002.

FARC have proven themselves unique in their political conception. Their Marxism-Leninism is different from each other, both in terms of leadership and in terms of their strategy of action.

Unlike other Latin American revolutionary organizations, leadership was held by people coming from the countryside, rather than lawyers, professors, doctors or students.

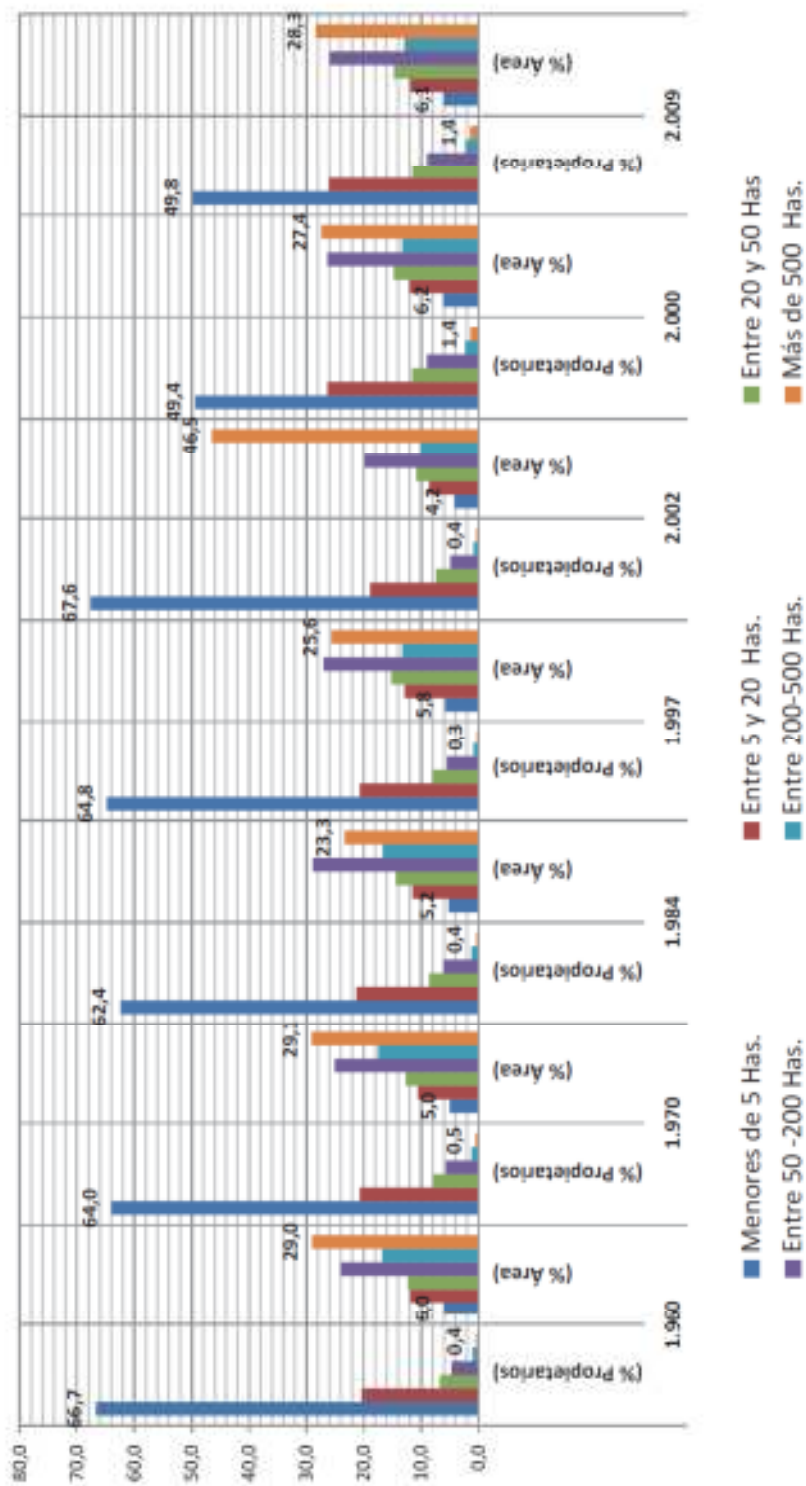
While, regarding their strategy, FARC were the only Latin American organization not to have implemented the Cuban strategy called theory of foco.

That consisted, according to Che, in the implementation of a strategy that was able to bring the masses to rise even when the conditions were not optimal. It was necessary to trigger a small revolutionary outbreak, which would expand exponentially in a short period of time and soon lead to the rise of the masses and the consequent lifting of the regime. This theory was considered valid especially regarding backward countries and had peasants as social class of reference.

The land

Gráfica 5.

Colombia. Distribución de la propiedad rural por rangos de tamaño y propietarios. 1960,1970,1984, 1997,2000, 2002,2009 (%)



Fuentes: años 60-70-84. Lorente, Distribución de la Propiedad Rural en Colombia. 1997: Claudia Lucía Rincón D., "Estructura de la propiedad rural y mercado de tierras", 2002: DNP-Banco Mundial. Colombia en Transición; 2000 y 2009 Gran Altas de la Distribución de la propiedad Rural 2010

Fuentes: años 60-70-84. Lorente, Distribución de la Propiedad Rural en Colombia. 1997: Claudia Lucía Rincón D., "Estructura de la propiedad rural y mercado de tierras", 2002: DNP-Banco Mundial. Colombia en Transición; 2000 y 2009 Altas de la Distribución de la propiedad Rural, 2010

On the previous page a chart showing for Colombia: the distribution of rural property by size and ownership in the 1960, 1970, 1984, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2009.⁶⁴

The distribution of land in Colombia was until the time of independence marked by a great inequality. During the twentieth century, any agricultural reform was completed which balanced consistently land ownership⁶⁵. The situation of land ownership is also very unequal depending on the regions, but most peasants can not rely on a legal title of ownership, and large extensions are attributed to ethnic-based collective organizations according to Law 70 of 1973.

The analysis of the FARC's political programs throughout their existence makes it possible to clarify the agrarian nature of their revolution⁶⁶.

FARC recruitment has almost always been in the rural world and the revolutionary program of the FARC has always had the main objective of radical transformation of the structure of land ownership.

The FARC agrarian program was articulated in eight points, among the most important we remember⁶⁷:

- free land that has to be distributed to peasants;
- landfill: confiscate large agricultural properties to redistribute land to poorer peasants; particular attention was paid to the policy of expropriation of multinational properties in Colombian territory;
- price of agricultural products: a minimum price is fixed to keep small farmers in a minimum standard of living;
- indigenous communities: protecting native communities by allocating sufficient areas to allow them to be preserved.

In order to contextualize the fight of the FARC, it is necessary to deepen the evolution of land distribution in Colombia.

The proportion of farm land used to livestock farming on ranches is still the most extensive today, in the 1950s it was calculated in about 90% of all land used.

A significant part of the land is currently, and was fifty years ago, property of a small number of owners, as better specified in the chart above. Properties with more than 500 hectares form the largest livestock units of Colombia, according to the ranch model and are also the units where the breeding is poorly intensive and very inefficient.

The emergence of the capitalist economy since the middle of the nineteenth century prompted the greater number of haciendas to devote themselves to farming, which was the simplest and most advantageous form of land exploitation.

The target of farming rather than agriculture on the majority of farmland exploited and therefore the

⁶⁴ Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC), *Atlas de la distribución de la propiedad rural en Colombia*, Bogotá, El Instituto, Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 2012, p. 74.

⁶⁵ Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *La política de reforma agraria y tierras en Colombia. Esbozo de una memoria institucional*, Bogotá, Imprenta Nacional, 2013; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Tierras y conflictos rurales. Historia, políticas agrarias y protagonistas*, Bogotá, CNMH, 2016.

⁶⁶ Bilotta N., *L'inesplorato legame tra le FARC e le terre*, IsAG, 2016, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, *Esbozo Histórico de Las FARC-EP*, Ed. FARC-EP, 2005, pp. 148-153.

numerically reduced use of farmers had significant economic and social consequences.

Growth of the population resulted in a shortage of land among peasants and forced them to emigrate, settle down in mountain slopes, unusable for ranches, or become *peones* in the *haciendas*. The peasants were therefore expelled from their land.

Peasant migration was a solution to land scarcity in a nation where deserted areas are in abundance. On one hand, the migration concerned the geographical shift of leases and property titles, on the other hand, it consisted on the employment of desert lands in the absence of legal titles or often in disputes over legal property, which gave rise to strong social conflicts.

Land occupation was not an instrument used solely by peasants. A large part of the demerical *tierras baldías* was taken by influential, important and wealthy men.

The ranch encouraged peasant farmers to reclaim those lands that, in the end, hoped to incorporate into the *hacienda*.

The contrast between *colonos* and *hacendados* on land rights had progressively grown during the great economic boom of the early 20th century.

The signs of discontent began to multiply from the 1920s, and in the 1930s a significant peasant movement developed.

The Colombian peasant movement during the time between the mid-20s and La Violencia was not centralized and unstructured, albeit very strong.

Around the mid-20s the struggles between peasants and landowners for claims on the property of the state lands, both of which had been seized without title, were very frequent.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1926 that the land should return to the state if the owner had not been able to present the original property documents. This pronouncement was a first victory for the peasants.

Such a pronouncement is clearly indicative of the pressure that was spreading in the countryside.

It was in that period that groups of young socialist revolutionaries and populist orientation politicians such as Gaitan appeared on the scene.

The economic crisis and the political victory of the Liberal Party in 1930 increased peasant demonstrations and revolts.

In 1934, the situation was so serious that the Supreme Court returned to its 1926 ruling.

The political situation on this occasion was different, and the liberal government of New Deal lead by Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-38) began a phase of social reforms articulated with popular support.

The most important result of this reformist era was Law 200 of 1936, which recognized the rights of *colonos*. It was arguing that the lands that were not economically exploited for ten years should automatically become part of state property.

There have been many debates on the importance of this measure: some have been assessed as a virtually useless law, as opposed to others as “one of the big accomplishments that is often ignored” (Albert O.

Hirschman)⁶⁸, as it favoured a partial distribution of land to part of the peasants, and was a major push for the landowners to make use of their holdings.

Almost certainly, both of these views are right: in the places where the peasant movement was present, it gave strength to both peasants and landowners, where there were no peasant movements it wasn't applied.

After 1938, the peasant movement had no longer the support of the government. López Pumarejo, re-elected in 1942, was put under pressure by the landowners and industrial bourgeoisie. Law 100 of 1944: 1. annulled Law 200 of 1936, referring the application of another five years and 2. prohibited the tenants from planting trees without the explicit permission of the owners, in order to favour the acceptance of peasants by the owners on their lands without the concern that peasants can claim colonial rights on their properties.

Politics in the years to come underwent a radical radicalization and Gaitán's assassination, instead of a social revolution or a populist regime, came to anarchy and civil war, and the expectations of peasant change were canceled by La Violencia.

The social tensions that led to the explosion of a spontaneous revolution are still very strong.

Colombia, according to OXFAM⁶⁹, still looks at indices of inequality and poverty today in the world's tallest campaigns. The Center for Research on Peace and Development (CRDP)⁷⁰ argues that a peace agreement can only succeed if it is based on a land reform that assures a different land distribution to mitigate extreme inequality and improve the living conditions of peasants.

The analysis of agricultural reforms implemented in Colombia between 1950 and 2000 mainly has two purposes: identifying the problems faced by the government in Colombian campaigns and examining the application of the same laws in order to evaluate their success or failure.

The link between the results of agricultural policies implemented by the government and the analysis of land ownership system constitute the framework in which examine the FARC.

The main causes of conflict in Colombian campaigns in the 60s were: concentration on land ownership, the number of farmers without land access and agrarian labour contracts⁷¹.

All the agricultural reforms that have been made over the years since the foundation of the FARC until the beginning of the 2000s (Ley 1 1968, Ley 4 1973, Ley 6 1975, Ley 35 1982, Ley 30 1988 and Ley 60 1994) have the primary purpose of redistributing the lands.

The cornerstone of all the reforms was the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the poorer classes of Colombian peoples⁷².

⁶⁸ Hobsbawm E., *Viva la Revolución. El siglo de las utopías en América Latina*, op. cit., p. 197.

⁶⁹ Oxfam, *Divide y compraras. Una nueva forma de concentrar tierra baldías en Colombia*, September 2012.

⁷⁰ Gutiérrez Sanín F., *Agrarian Debates in the Colombian Peace Process: Complex Issues, Unlikely Reformers, Unexpected Enablers*, Working Paper No. 40, Leuven, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Centre for Research on Peace and Development (CRPD), 2015.

⁷¹ Dale A., *Colombia's land tenure system: antecedents and problems*, Land Economics Vol. 42 (1966), pp. 43-52.

⁷² Cueto I. P. T., *Reformas agrarias en Colombia: experiencias desalentadoras y una nueva iniciativa en el marco de los Acuerdos de Paz en la Habana*, Ensayos de Economía Vol. 45 (Colombia, 2014).

The Examination of the mentioned six agricultural reforms highlights three inspirational ideas: the reduction of the process of concentration of land ownership, the protection of indigenous communities and the improvement of the living conditions of farmers and small landowners.

All these reforms followed the road begun by Ley 135 in 1961⁷³, which he had set himself to “Reformar la estructura social agraria por medio de procedimientos enderezados a eliminar y prevenir la inequitativa concentración de la propiedad rústica o su fraccionamiento antieconómico.”

There are four key points that can be identified:

- granting land access to farmers who are nullified by the confiscation of unpaid plots;
- improve the size and quality of minifunds;
- facilitating access to land for settlers and peasants;
- establish the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform and the National Agrarian Fund, whose task was to require unused private and public lands.

The 1961 law and other agricultural reforms, as we have said, were promoted to redistribute the land to the poorest peasants, but their application did not have significant redistributive effects.

In fact, most scholars say that the various agrarian reforms over time have played no role in producing significant changes in the configuration of land ownership in Colombia.

In 1954, 55% of landowners had less than ten hectares of land and their total land accounted for only 7% of the land worked. In the same period, 12.1% of cultivated land was owned by 0.06% of landowners.

A further explanation of the remarkable rural inequality is the percentage of cultivated land controlled by 0.64% of landowners with properties over 500 hectares⁷⁴: the 31,05%.

The small properties were used at 83%, while the minimum landfills of 2,500 hectares were only used in 10% of their surface⁷⁵.

Between 1960 and 1970, no significant change in the structure of agricultural property was found. The effects of reforms seem to be non-existent.

In the period prior to the creation of the FARC, a significant increase in the concentration levels of rural property can be observed. Small landowners (<50 hectares) and middle-sized landowners (50-500 hectares) declined their share of land they owned, from 73.5% in 1956 to 59.6% in 1960. In the same period, large landowners (> 1,000 hectares) almost duplicated their surface from 16.3% to 30.4%.

The portion of land areas controlled by landowners with more than 500 hectares between 1970 and 1984 declined from 29.10% to 23.34%, while the average properties increased their surface. This did not lead to an improvement in the living conditions of the poorest peasants.

Based on these data, it can be established that, between 1954 and 2000, the land ownership structure did not undergo any substantial changes.

⁷³ Ley 135 1961, p. 1. <http://www.suin.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=1792699>

⁷⁴ Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC), *Atlas de la distribución de la propiedad rural en Colombia*, op. cit., p. 56.

⁷⁵ Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC), *Atlas de la distribución de la propiedad rural en Colombia*, ibidem, p. 58.

Chap. 3 – Colombia in recent years

From the National Front to the '80

The end of the National Front in 1974 was not the end of the division of powers between conservatives and liberals, although after the 1968 constitutional reform, was allowed the participation of other parties in the country's political life.

At the end of the administration led by the Liberal President Julio César Turbay Ayala, who came to power in 1978 and who was about to leave the office in 1982, to seek consensus for the Liberal Party candidate, was removed the decree that declared the state of siege, that has guaranteed special powers to the president for over 30 years.

Citizens were tired of violence perpetrated by the state and guerrilla and voted at the presidential election of 1982 in favour of Belisario Betancur Cuartas, candidate for the conservative party, who proposed to dialogue with the main guerrilla forces.

The new president (1982-86) succeeded in negotiating in 1984 a ceasefire with the FARC in La Uribe, in the province of Meta. The agreement was accepted by the FARC after the release of many guerrillas arrested in previous years. These agreements included a ceasefire, the establishment of popular elections for mayors and governors, administrative decentralization and guarantees for the political activity of all political movements. An year after the ratification of the agreement, in 1985, the political movement Unión Patriótica (UP) was launched by the FARC.

A truce was also negotiated with the M-19, but it only lasted for a short period of time, while ELN refused to deal with.

The M-19, in fact, broke the truce by assaulting the Bogotá Palace of Justice in the same year, taking the people and judges of the Supreme Court who were inside it as hostages. Hundreds of people including all guerrillas and many judges, including Alfonso Reyes Echandía, president of the Supreme Court of Colombia, lost their lives during the attack to the palace by the army.

The fact that some judges had been killed by bullets of the army and not by the M-19, sparked many controversy and led think to a deliberate and conscious choice, dictated by political reasons, and not by chance. The member of parliament elected by UP in the 1986 elections were 14, but following this political affirmation began a real campaign of extermination against it, known as the "political genocide of the UP". More than 5,000 members and executives of this party were extradited in few years throughout Colombia, including two candidates to the presidency of the country, first Jaime Pardo Leal and then Bernard Jaramillo. These episodes led FARC to establish that there was no possibility of a legal political struggle in Colombia and to resume the guerrilla warfare.

We must also remember how it is between 1982 and 1996, that all guerrillas are growing militarily and politically, imposing themselves on the state thanks to a vast territorial expansion. Between 1981 and 1986,

the EPL ranges from two to twelve war fronts, the ELN from three to ten and the FARC's from ten to thirty-one⁷⁶.

In the same period, drug trafficking was increasingly taking importance on the Colombian economy, and its consequences were becoming increasingly relevant in the Colombian conflict.

The guerrilla and drug lords have always had difficult relationships, especially because drug-traffickers were seen by guerrillas as members of the elite of the country.

The kidnapping of Martha Nieves Ochoa Vásquez by the M-19, coupled with the abduction of Severo Abelardo Ortega's son, both of whom were relatives of some of the leaders of the Medellín cartel, led to the creation in 1981 of "Muerte a Secuestradores" (MAS), considered the first Colombian paramilitary group funded entirely by drug traffickers.

In the years to come, many other paramilitary groups were formed and quickly took on an important role within the conflict.

They act as a force of opposition and support to the army against guerrillas, mainly carrying out operations against the civilian population that collaborates or is accused of collaborating with revolutionary groups.

After the dissolution of the two major Medellín and Cali cartels, these paramilitary groups took control of a big part of drug trafficking in the country and were responsible for most of the human rights violations committed during the conflict.

Paramilitaries

The Paramilitary groups enter in the conflict when during the state of siege imposed by the Colombian government after the start of the war, the Colombian president made the presidential decree 3398 of 1965, that authorized the formation of private security forces that were used to protect large landowners, cattle ranchers and officials.

This legislation, "opened the door for the emergence of private armies and consequently became an inherent part of the security of the social order."⁷⁷

In 1968, this temporary decree was substituted by the Law 48, that gave to the Government the possibility to establish this paramilitary group by decree and to the Ministry of National Defence the power to arm them.

In the following years, we do not assist to a large creation of these groups, and the phenomenon remains pretty limited, with the exception of the American Anti-communist Alliance also known as AAA, that was responsible of several attacks to the Guerrillas, and has been proved was directly linked with the Colombian National Army and to the United States embassy in Bogotá.

With the extension of the FARC presence through the country, there was an increase of kidnapping, used to collect money for the organization, and characterized by a clear class target and political motive. The guerrillas

⁷⁶ Profumi E., *Colombia. La pace è nostra*, op. cit.

⁷⁷ Richani N., *Systems of Violence: The political economy of war and peace in Colombia*, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

start to kidnap person that in their view represent the interest of the dominant class, for example right wing ideologues, members of the political elite, and military personnel.

In most of the cases, the individual kidnapped remained in custody as prisoner of war until a monetary fee was payed or an exchange of prisoner was done.

In 1981, FARC decided to kidnap the far-right Conservative and landowner, *Don* Jesús Castaño, father of 12 children. When their father was killed during his captivity, Fidel and Carlos Castaño, two of his son, that were in turn become rich thanks to the growing and profitable economy of narcotics, changed their ideology, and passed from being conservative, to a reactionary aggression against the FARC.⁷⁸

To protect their interests and to revenge their father's death, the two brothers organize a private army. This army will become one of the most powerful and well founded paramilitary forces up to that point in Colombia and it was named, the Peasant Self-Defense Units of Córdoba and Urabá (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*, ACCU). The organizations immediately start to work with sectors of the military forces and they developed an anti-guerrilla agenda.

At the same time, in the region of Antioquia, another paramilitary group was formed, and unlike the ACCU, this group was not formulated under an individual family, but through the coordinated effort of mercenaries, drug cartels, large landowners and state officials.

During the 70s, the illegal trade of cocaine became a more and more profitable business. At the start of the 80s cocaine became the most exported product of Colombia, surpassing coffee, and covering among the 30% of all Colombian export.

This wealthy drug traffickers, in order to lauder their money, started to purchase enormous quantity of land. And in the late 80s they had become the largest landowners of the Country.

In 1982, members of the Medellín drug cartel, the military, Texas Petroleum Company, and numerous political representatives came together and “created an armed organization to defend their interests and deter guerrilla attacks and extortions.”⁷⁹.

This organization was named Death to Kidnappers, MAS, at the same time, was created by the same partners, another organization, with the aim to facilitate the collection of founds giving so capital to the death squad and using far right populism to let peasants support their tasks.

This organization was named Association of Peasants and Ranchers of the Middle Magdalena (*Asociación Campesina de Agricultores y Ganaderos del Magdalena Medio*, ACDEGAM) and during the 80s worked hard to legitimize reaction to the threat of communism and the damages to the society that the guerrilla can create⁸⁰. It was mainly used to give legitimacy to MAS.

The organization was able in the first time, to present himself as an organization at the service of citizen,

⁷⁸ Livingstone G., *Inside Colombia: drugs, democracy and war*, London, Latin American Bureau, 2003.

⁷⁹ Richani N., *Systems of Violence: The political economy of war and peace in Colombia*, op. cit., p. 38.

⁸⁰ Kline H. F., *State Building and Conflict Resolution in Colombia, 1986–1994*, Tuscaloosa, Ala., University of Alabama Press, 1999, p. 68.

protecting them from the threat of FARC, while it was only protecting the interest of large landowners and the only citizen who were befitting from it where the supporters of it.

By the mid-80s, the two organizations had grown considerably, and as the number of their activities increases, they need financial support. This need was satisfy almost entirely by the boss of the Medellín Cartel: Pablo Escobar, Jorge Luis Ochoa and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, who also had become large rural landowners.

Under their control the MAS was strengthened and became “active in eight of the 32 regions of Colombia, enjoying the support of local political and military leaders.”⁸¹

At the end of the 80s, this network of elites, manifests his will to legitimize his position through politics. It was believed that an official far-right political organization would not only open the door to the legal conventional realms of Colombia’s municipal, regional, and national politics, but that a political party would enable the paramilitary to achieve complete authenticity as an army.

In 1989 the Movement of National Restoration (*Movimiento de Restauración Nacional*, MORENA) was formed. It was a political organization with a strong anti-communist view, that promoted policies of capital expansion and economic centralization.⁸²

After the proclamation of MORENA as a party, Ivan Roberto Duque García⁸³, general secretary of the ACDEGAM, openly declared “if fascism implies defending private property and the family with visor and energy, defending the state, defending democracy and shacking off the dangerous specter of communist totalitarianism, than let them call us fascist.”

The organization had “links with all the region’s political representatives, including Congress, and it was recognized that “the paramilitary groups had become as important as the guerrilla with regard to their affect on Colombian society”⁸⁴.

At that point was clear that there were few ways of restricting MORENA from legally conducting its “political” activities in preparations for the elections.

The Liberal Virgilio Barco Vargas, President of Colombia (1986–1990), knowing that MORENA would not agree to such conditions, ordered prospective parties to severe all ties to unsanctioned paramilitaries, agree to endorse all national laws, and follow the rules of the Colombian constitution.

Although the goal of delegitimizing MORENA was successful, this did not stop the elite's intentions, which began to support the paramilitaries.

During the years, the Castaño brothers and their ACCU, had started a working relationship with the MAS. They increasingly supported the MAS by profits derived from transactions derived to the narcotic industry and protection rents.

In the 90s the two organization were providing intelligence information to the state forces and at the same time

⁸¹ Simons G., *Colombia: A brutal history*, London, SAQI, 2004, p. 57.

⁸² Pearce J., *Colombia: Inside the labyrinth*, op. cit., p. 250.

⁸³ Pearce J., *Colombia: Inside the labyrinth*, ibidem, p. 250.

⁸⁴ Pearce J., *Colombia: Inside the labyrinth*, ibidem, p. 247; Kline H. F., *State Building and Conflict Resolution in Colombia, 1986–1994*, op. cit., p. 75.

they were conducting operations against suspected guerrilla supporters.

They soon became to coordinating “major counterinsurgency against the guerrillas”. This relationship was interrupted in 1994, when Fidel Castaño was killed, and his younger brother Carlos assumed the leadership of the paramilitary organization.⁸⁵

Carlos, different from his brother, doesn’t want to establish himself as a wealthy capitalist or a right-wing populist and he specifically concentrated his activities toward eliminating the FARC.

He started to work hard on unifying the two paramilitary organization, the MAS and the ACCU, in one distinct national organization. He arrived to reach this objective at the end of the 90s, when there was a successful consolidation of the two organization.⁸⁶

In April 1997, Carlos Castaño succeeded in creating a national paramilitary organization with the formation of Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)⁸⁷.

This organization it is the most recognized paramilitary organization in Colombian history.

It is know for his ruthlessness, it initiated itself by carrying out the greatest array of violent massacres in Colombian’s recent memory.

In fact, between 1997 and 2000, it allegedly conducted over 1,145 massacres.⁸⁸

The AUC was structured as a link of dozens of small groups to which it was provided, “a joint operational staff, and regional and local field units”⁸⁹.

The leader of the AUC has been Carlos Castaño between 1997 and 2001, when his second in command Salvatore Mancuso, became the paramilitary’s commander.

If we compare the AUC with the FARC, it is easy to affirm that “are far more loosely organized and much less disciplined than the FARC. Unlike the guerrillas, they have their own turf wars, often fighting between themselves for control of drug networks”⁹⁰.

While the AUC did “espouse a conservative ideology”, a closer examination of its coercive methodologies reveals far more than mere support for the continuity of the existing order.

The ideology and the practices used by the organization have been defined as very similar to the one of the Third Reich⁹¹.

⁸⁵ Richani N., “The paramilitary connection,” NACLA Report on the Americas, 2000, 34(2), pp. 38–9.

⁸⁶ Livingstone G., *Inside Colombia: drugs, democracy and war*, op. cit., p. 220; Leech G. M., *Killing Peace: Colombia’s conflict and the failure of U.S. intervention*, New York, Information Network of the Americas, 2002, p. 23; Richani N., “The paramilitary connection,” NACLA Report on the Americas, ibidem, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Pearce J., “Oil and armed conflict in Casanare, Colombia: Complex contexts and contingent moments,” pp. 225–73 in Kaldor M., Lynn T. K., and Said Y., *Oil Wars*, London, Pluto, 2007, p. 263n. 11; Leech G. M., *Killing Peace: Colombia’s conflict and the failure of U.S. intervention*, ibidem, p. 23.

⁸⁸ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Colombia: Negotiating with the paramilitaries*, Latin America Report No. 5., Bogotá/Brussels, ICG, 2003, p. 33.

⁸⁹ Kruijt D. and Koonings K., “The military and their shadowy brothers-inarms,” pp. 16–32 in Kruijt D. and Koonings K., *Armed Actors: Organized violence and state failure in Latin America*, London, Zed, 2004, p. 29; Livingstone G., *Inside Colombia: drugs, democracy and war*, op. cit., pp. 219–220.

⁹⁰ O’Shaughnessy H. and Branford S., *Chemical Warfare in Colombia: The costs of coca fumigation*, London, Latin American Bureau, 2005, p. 41.

⁹¹ Kirk R., *More Terrible Than Death: Massacres, drugs, and America’s war in Colombia*, New York, Public Affairs, 2003, p. 144; Taussig M., *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of limpieza in Colombia*, New York, New Press, 2004, p. 11.

The French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy, after have interviewed Carlos Castaño, concluded that the leader of the AUC was a fascist and “a psychopath confronting mafiosi”, a sadistic mastermind”⁹².

However, it would be limited attribute Colombian fascism to one charismatic authority. In the removing of any restrictions to political and economic growth, fascism has long needed the ability to facilitate violations against those that pose a potential deterrent to such interests. But the AUC, has not targeted the FARC specifically, but rather it has concentrated his effort against non-combatants.

The main strategy that the AUC used was to impose a model of morality through the practice of “cleansing” society.

As showed by Taussing⁹³, in his work, the AUC was repeatedly involved in eliminating those deemed detrimental to Colombia’s social fabric.

These ranged from persons who displayed an incorrect understanding and practice of a perceived conservative morality to people who did not support economic growth⁹⁴.

The ones that were regularly besieged were: suspected guerrilla sympathizers, unionists, community organizers, street-kids, homosexuals, independent prostitutes, drug addicts, beggars, small-scale street merchants, and homeless. Even: “Catholic Church workers and human rights activists, who used to be seen as unbiased mediators between the military and guerrillas, have become targets for the paramilitaries, who view them as apologists for the guerrillas. In February 1989, for example, in the Southern State of Putumayo, paramilitary groups entered in to a town and listed the names of priests and other activists to signal that they had been marked for death.”⁹⁵.

AUC has repeatedly violated international law and Geneva conventions by specifically coordinating attacks against the civilians and public infrastructure.

Even if the organizations was very well equipped, the military techniques used by the AUC were machetes, gas-propelled chainsaws, hammers, and even rocks as tools of war⁹⁶.

When Washington and Bogotá initiated a campaign to destroy the two cartels of Medellín and Cali, the Castaños helped them to reach this objective, because they have reasons for cutting ties, in particular with Escobar.

At the end of this operation, there was a void in the demand to fuel the global market of Cocaine.

The paramilitary, at the death of Fidel needed additional funds to maintain their army, and became one of the primary organizations involved in the Colombian narcotic industry.

⁹² Lévy B-H., *War, Evil, and the End of History*, Hoboken, N.J., Melville House, 2004, pp. 71, 89.

⁹³ Taussig M., *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of limpieza in Colombia*, op. cit.

⁹⁴ Lévy B-H., *War, Evil, and the End of History*, op. cit., p. 74; Livingstone G., *Inside Colombia: drugs, democracy and war*, op. cit., p. 107; Shah S., *Colombia: The pipeline war*, Documentary film (Frontline World), 2002.

⁹⁵ Crandall R., *The end of civil conflict in Colombia: Military, paramilitaries, and a new role for the United States*, *SAIS Review*, 1999, 19(1), p. 229.

⁹⁶ Webb J., *Warlords address Colombia Congress amid protests*, [online] 28 July 2004 <http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=5803111> (accessed July 28, 2004); Leech G. M., *Killing Peace: Colombia’s conflict and the failure of U.S. intervention*, op. cit. p. 23.

They became soon involved with the direct production of coca, and they financed the organisation primarily through trafficking, as admitted by Carlos Castaño⁹⁷.

In the 2000s, the AUC accounted for the 80% on revenue coming from drug trafficking, and it was involved in about the 40% of drug trafficking in Colombia⁹⁸.

It has been reported by Stokes that the AUC arrived in some cases to forces peasants to harvest coca on immense land tracts or coca plantations⁹⁹.

In the early 2000s, occurred a change in the ideology of AUC, which focused on acquiring greater control over drug trafficking.

In reply Carlos Castaño condemned the ideological disjuncture of certain leaders, and resigned, “saying he could no longer control the death-squad extremists”¹⁰⁰.

The paramilitary federation disintegrated in 2002 and was survived by the FARC¹⁰¹.

It would not be long until Castaño himself “disappeared”. Many believed Castaño’s death was directed by “rival paramilitary leaders who were unhappy with his repeated criticism of the AUC’s severe deeper involvement in drug trafficking”¹⁰².

After the declaration of a ceasefire the government of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe Vélez initiated talks with the group aimed at the dismantling of the organization and the reintegration of its members into society. The agreement took place in July 2003, and guaranteed in addition to an amnesia for AUC fighters, also the protection of their property.

A bill was promulgated that offered forgiveness to members of any illegal armed group, mainly in exchange for the verified demobilization, the concentration of such groups in a given geographical area and the symbolic repair of the offenses committed against the victims of their actions.

In mid-May 2004, the talks seemed to proceed when the government agreed to secure a safe harbor of 368 km² at Santa Fe de Ralito, Córdoba, where the AUC leaders and 400 of their body guards secured, where, under OAS control, Further talks would be held, for a renewable period of 6 months. As long as the AUC

⁹⁷ Molina M. A., *Mi Confesión: Carlos Castaño revela sus secretos*, Bogotá, Editorial La Oveja Negra, 2001, p. 205; Murillo M. A. and Avirama J. R., *Colombia and the United States: War, unrest and destabilization*, New York, Seven Stories, 2004, pp. 100-1; Crandall R., *Driven by Drugs: U.S. policy toward Colombia*, London, Lynne Rienner, 2002, p. 88.

⁹⁸ Richani N., “Caudillos and the crisis of the Colombian state: Fragmented sovereignty, the war system and the privatisation of the counterinsurgency in Colombia,” *Third World Quarterly*, 2007, 28(2), p. 409; Richani N., “Third parties, war system’s inertia and conflict termination: The doomed peace process in Colombia, 1998–2002,” *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 2005, 25(2), p. 102n. 77; Richani N., *Systems of Violence: The political economy of war and peace in Colombia*, op. cit., pp. 108-9; Scott P. D., *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 39.

⁹⁹ Stokes D., *Perception management and the US terror war in Colombia*, 7 June 2002 [online] <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=1448> (accessed June 10, 2002), pp. 65-7; Schulte-Bockholt A., *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics: a study in criminal power*, op. cit., ch. 5; Cassidy V., *U.S. Funds Indigenous Persecution in Colombia*, 1 December 2005 [online] http://www.americas.org/item_23357 (accessed December 1, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Simons G., *Colombia: A brutal history*, op. cit., p. 290.

¹⁰¹ Gutiérrez Sanín F., “Telling the difference: Guerrillas and paramilitaries in the Colombia war,” *Politics & Society*, 2008, 36(1), pp. 16-17, 28.

¹⁰² O’Shaughnessy H. and Branford S., *Chemical Warfare in Colombia: The costs of coca fumigation*, op. cit., p. 50; Crandall R., “From drugs to security: A new U.S. policy toward Colombia,” pp. 173–89 in Crandall R., Paz G. and Roett R., *The Andes in Focus: Security, democracy & economic reform*, Boulder, Colo., Lynne Rienner, 2005, p. 178.

leaders remained in that area, they would not have been sentenced to arrest. This condition and much of the surrounding legal framework had previously been implemented for the most extensive San Vicente del Caguán area, which former President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) had guaranteed FARC guerrillas as a safe harbor during the 1998-2002 peace process, but with differences.

The local and state police authorities would not leave the area, since Colombian law would be fully applicable within its borders. The paramilitary leaders would need a special permit to leave the area or return, and government magistrates would be able to operate within the area to investigate criminal offenses.

In November 2004, the Colombian Supreme Court approved the extradition of the main political leader of the movement, Salvatore Mancuso Gómez.

The Colombian press suggested the government to endorse Salvatore Mancuso's extradition, but sought to delay it due to the peace negotiations that the latter and his comrades were engaging with the government. Mancuso himself declared his intention to continue negotiations in spite of the decree of the Supreme Court. In 2005, he passed the Law 975. It had been named "Peace and Justice," and it did that occurred "the demobilization of up to 20,000 members of the rightwing paramilitary group the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) while granting its leading broad concessions.

Under the legislation, AUC commanders will receive sentences as short as 22 months and at most eight years, with the possibility of serving the time on private farms instead of in state prisons. A "double jeopardy" provision also makes extradition to the United States unlikely. In addition, the legislation does not require AUC commanders to dismantle the group's organizational infrastructure, nor to give up any profits they have made from drug trafficking, kidnappings or other criminal activities"¹⁰³.

Jorge Daniel Castro, that in the summer of 2006 was general director of Colombia's national police, announced that the paramilitaries that had claimed amnesty through Law 975 were about 31,000. P. 145¹⁰⁴.

This process of demobilization has not been so effective, that because from the beginning, the government has failed to put in place policies and mechanisms that would allow it to uncover useful information about these groups, their crimes, and assets, to hold their members accountable for abuses, and to dismantle their structure and power.

So it has been reported from several NGOs that there has not been a real dismantle, and that the organizations still remain the regions were operates, but operates with other names. In fact in September 2006 was reported that "Media reports suggest that over 30,000 paramilitaries have demobilized. However, paramilitaries in supposedly demobilized areas continue to operate, often under new names, and to commit violations. There is also strong evidence of continued links between paramilitaries and the security forces. There were also fears

¹⁰³ Goffman S., "Colombia: Paramilitaries get sweetheart deal," *NACLA Report on the America*, 2005, 39(2), p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ Badawy M., *Colombia monitors ex-rebels, measures success*, 7 July 2006 [online] http://today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-07-08T004240Z_01_N07392270_RTRUKOC_0_US-COLOMBIA-REBELS.xml&archived=False (accessed July 8, 2006).

that government policies designed to reintegrate members of illegal armed groups into civilian life risked "recycling" them into the conflict¹⁰⁵.

And in December 2014 "... Demobilization remained partial, as some stayed outside the process or went on to rearm, strongly contributing to the emergence of successor groups known as New Illegal Armed Groups (NAIGs). Their number has fallen from 32 in 2006 to three, but they still muster some 3,000 members often concentrated in regions with a strong paramilitary legacy such as Uraba the Eastern Plains, the south-western departments or the Caribbean coast.¹⁰⁶".

From the '80 to the present Peace Agreement

Drug cartels began to fight not only against guerrillas, but also against the state, which had approved extradition to US drug traffickers.

The most famous victims of this war between drug traffickers and the Colombian state were the Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla assassinated in 1984, the General Prosecutor Carlos Mauro Hoyos Jiménez in 1988 and the candidate for the presidency of the republic for the liberal party Luis Carlos Galán in 1989 that forced the Betancur government to focus its efforts on the destruction of drug cartels.

After the abolition of many of the UP leaders, relations between FARC and the government became increasingly tense, and the peace agreement formally jumped in 1987 after the guerrilla attacked a military patrol in the jungle.

However, despite the breakup of the agreements, a dialogue continued between the organization and the government, interrupted in 1990, with the election of César Augusto Gaviria Trujillo (1990-94).

During its presidency, were implemented policies of "economic openness", which included the withdrawal of the state from strategic economic sectors and the free entry of foreign capital.

This context led to a dramatic deterioration of the living conditions in the countryside, reducing market access for small farmers to the benefit of landowners and gave an exceptional boost to coca cultivation, identified by peasant masses as the only possibility of subsistence and economic and social progress.

The biggest victory in the struggle against the guerrillas gained until that time was in 1990 the dismantling of the M-19, the EPL and other smaller groups such as Prt and the Quintín Lame who delivered the weapons.

Some elements of the M-19 founded a party called Democratic Alliance, that on the following year was among the signatories of the new constitution, while others were assassinated after the demobilization.

The new constitution sanctioned new social, civil and political rights such as, for example, the recognition of indigenous minorities.

¹⁰⁵Amnesty International, *Colombia Fear and Intimidation: The dangers of human rights work*, 2006. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR23/033/2006/en/>

¹⁰⁶International Crisis Group (ICG), *The Day after Tomorrow: Colombia's FARC and the End of the Conflict*, Latin America Report N°53, 11 December 2014. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/day-after-tomorrow-colombia-s-farc-and-end-conflict>

Since the middle of the 90s, also as a result of the aggravation of the living conditions of numerous sections of the population, the FARC and ELN guerrillas enrolled in their rows more and more men. The guerrilla activity of FARC peaked in the second half of the 1990s, and this massive growth convinced in 1998 the just elected conservative President Pastrana to open peace talks with guerrillas. For the first time a Colombian president and the commander of the FARC Marulanda met in the middle of the forest. The agreement that they made recognized the political status of the FARC and was also accompanied by the creation of an area called "Caguán", which was bigger than or equal to 40,000 kilometers, almost as much as Switzerland, demilitarized and used as a "laboratory of peace". Pastrana, during his presidency, also focused on strengthening the army in order to avoid that as in the previous decade it was so easy for the FARC to beat it in the field. Thus the government initiated a reform of the armed forces, where the heads of the various divisions were replaced, and the soldiers were equipped with new and modern armaments, almost entirely provided by the Pentagon. Since 1999, President Pastrana had begun to discuss with the US government and with the mediation of the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the US, Thomas R. Pickering, a new plan that would supplant the strategy of dialogue if it did not produce results. This plan, which would have come to light in 2000 and was called Plan Colombia, consisted in the adoption of alternative crops for farmers who would no longer be forced to cultivate coca plant, help for the internally displaced persons, and a military strategy aimed at eliminating drug traffickers and guerrilla members. The aid for the implementation of this plan was almost entirely provided from the federal budget of the US, and to a lesser extent by the EU countries. Colombian public opinion perceived Pastrana's peace process against the FARC as a series of concessions to a guerrilla war that did not make any conciliatory gesture through the state. It is in 2002 the famous kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt political exponent and presidential candidate, daughter of Gabriel Betancourt, former Colombian minister, who ended 6 years later, in 2008 with the release of the prisoner¹⁰⁷. So, in May 2002, the presidential election were won by the candidate of the political movement Colombia First, the conservative politician Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), who had promised to defeat militarily the guerrillas. He was the second president of a party other than the liberal or the conservative party in more than 150 years, having formed a coalition with conservatives, liberals, and smaller parties. Shortly after winning the election, he began giving broad powers to the army, who implemented a program involving the use of witnesses to arrest and strike guerrillas.

¹⁰⁷ Betancourt I., *Forse mi uccideranno domani*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2008; Betancourt I., *Non c'è silenzio che non abbia fine*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2010; Rojas C., *Prigioniera. Sei anni ostaggio delle FARC con Ingrid Betancourt. La donna che è diventata madre nell'inferno della giungla colombiana racconta finalmente la sua storia*, Milano, Cairo Publishing, 2009.

During his mandate grown enormously violations of human rights, such as massacres by paramilitaries and the army, forced disappearances, killings of unionists, indigenous, and left-wing activists.

In the autumn of 2002, the government adopted the Democratic Security and Defense Policy, a strategy focused mainly on security aspects of the country.

Many have been critics of Uribe's policies, who claim have always been too much geared towards a military solution to the conflict.

In many cases, Uribe's government has been called to made concrete efforts to enforce human rights in the country, protect the civilian population, and reduce any abuse committed by the armed forces.

By the end of 2008, emerged the scandal of false positives, that involved some members of the Colombian army, they were held responsible for passing civilians for guerrillas killed in battle. Investigations have found that they were killed in order to enhance the army's results and receive benefits and rewards. Many have been the officers who have resigned and have been investigated for these acts, and this has helped to cope the criticisms to the government¹⁰⁸.

On the other hand, Uribe's supporters have always argued that intense military actions were needed in order to prevent the guerrilla from taking ground.

President Uribe and his Democratic Security and Defense Policy had become increasingly popular for the Colombian public opinion, and the FARC were increasingly viewed negatively¹⁰⁹.

When the Constitutional Court ruled that Uribe was unable to apply for a third term, Santos, the defense minister of the Uribe government, launched his candidacy for the presidency of the republic, in continuity with the work of the previous government.

Santos proposed to pursue his predecessor's security and economic policies, even though he immediately confirmed his intention to implement an agenda called "democratic prosperity."

Juan Manuel Santos won the election in 2010, but just a few months after his election he began to deal with the FARC to reach peace.

FARC, when Santos take the power, were now composed of a small number of men compared to previous years. Many of the leaders of the organization had been killed and the guerrillas were relegated to remote areas of the country.

In addition, the confidence prompted from the lesser intensity of the conflict had allowed the Colombian economy to grow in a sustained manner. However, the price to pay for this growth, driven in part by the huge US aid, both in military and commercial terms, was an isolation from other Latin American nations, which in the meantime had turned to the left.

Santos, a few months after his election, broke up with former President Uribe when he began to relinquish

¹⁰⁸ Capuzzi L., *Colombia. La guerra (in)finita*, op. cit., pp. 143-153.

¹⁰⁹ Beittel J. S., *Peace Talks in Colombia*, op. cit.

relations with Venezuelan President Chavez¹¹⁰. The two presidents reached an agreement, and in return for Colombia stop in giving a solid base to US troops, Chavez ceased supporting FARC, and began collaborating to reach a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the marxist organization.

One of the first acts of the government was to propose a law called “Victims and Land Restitution Law” to compensate the estimated 4-5 million victims of the conflict with economic compensation and to secure land returns to the people who had taken refuge mainly in the cities. The implementation of this law began in early 2012, and the government estimates that over the next ten years will need at least \$32 billion to implement it. Although this law does not represent an agricultural reform, it has been a first step on the reform needed over the theme of land, which is one of the most important objective of the FARC as discussed earlier.

In June 2012, the Colombian congress passed a constitutional amendment that opened the way for peace talks with FARC. The Peace Framework Law, which provided the means to create a judicial structure that would govern a possible peace process. If implemented, the law would provide compensations to the victims and incentives to fighters that would have provided information on their crimes in exchange for reduced or alternative sentences.

In August 2012, President Santos announced that exploratory talks with the FARC were taking place in Cuba, to reach a peace agreement.

The initiative, held entirely in Havana, received the support of the large majority of the populations and Colombian popular movements, and was able to count on the participation of the Cuban government and the Norwegian government as guarantors, and to have the support of the government the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chile as the accompanying process¹¹¹.

In August 2012, a common agenda was agreed on the topics that have to be discussed and followed during the negotiations (1) rural development and land policy; (2) political participation of the FARC; (3) ending the armed conflict including reinsertion into civilian life of rebel forces; (4) illicit crops and illegal drug trafficking; (5) victims' reparations; and (6) the implementation of the final negotiated agreement, including its ratification and verification. Work began officially in October 2012.

Uribe soon became the main opponent of President Santos, opposing most of his reforms, and especially criticizing what he considered a soft and dangerous approach to FARC and Venezuela.

In the last months of 2013, the campaign for legislative elections and presidential elections began, which would take place respectively in March and May 2014.

Former President Uribe, who could not apply for a third term, run for the Senate, winning a seat.

He also founded a new party, the Democratic Center, who opposed peace talks and managed to elect a decent number of deputies and senators.

A few months later, however, was held the presidential campaign, President Santos played his re-election on

¹¹⁰ Di Ruzza M., *L'America latina sulla scena globale. Nuovi lineamenti geopolitici di un continente in crescita*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2011.

¹¹¹ Maldonado A. U., *Early lessons from the Colombian Peace Process*, Working Paper No. 1/2016, London, Global South Unit London School of Economics and Political Science, 2016.

the fact that he had to conclude the work, basing his electoral propaganda almost exclusively on peace agreements.

This led almost to the defeat of Santos, who in the first round came second after Uribe's candidate, Zuluaga. At the ballot, on June 15, 2014, Santos managed to reverse the result, taking 51% of the votes.

After the re-election of Santos, the contacts continued. Since December 2014, the guerrillas began to keep an unilateral ceasefire indefinitely even though it was not repaid by the government and continued the dialogues in the Cuban capital.

According to many analysts, one of the main differences between these peace dialogues and those that preceded them was the inclusion of the victims' perspective on the peace table¹¹².

From August to December 2014, the parties invited to the peace talks, five delegations of 12 people selected among the victims, to participate directly in the peace talks of the fourth point of the agreements, concerning repairs and justice for the victims.

The FARC chief, Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri said Timochenko, and President Santos met in September 2015 for the first time in Havana.

A few months later, in January 2016, a commission was set up to deal with a bilateral ceasefire.

On January 25, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2261, which set up a United Nations mission to monitor and verify a bilateral and definitive ceasefire.

The Colombian government and a FARC delegation on June 23, 2016, after 50 years of hostilities, in the presence of Raúl Castro and Ban Ki-moon, have ratified a definitive bilateral agreement that stipulates the end of hostilities and for the promotion of peace.

On August 25, 2016, the agreement was agreed publicly by the negotiators of the two parties, President Manuel Santos and Iván Márquez's guerrilla commander of the Bloque Caribe de las FARC, that met in Havana, concluding the negotiations.

Last September 26 2016, Santos and the FARC leaders, signed peace in the Colombian city of Cartagena.

The deal would then be submitted to a popular referendum.

The NO front, that was led by the former president Uribe, accused the government of granting too much to the FARC, which would have to be more punished for their crimes and their human rights violations, and above all challenged the candidacy of their leader, and the 10 seats that would be attributed to him in the 2018 elections.

On October 2, 2016, the deal was then submitted to a referendum and the world was surprised when it was surprisingly rejected by the Colombian people with 50.3% of the votes opposed to 49.7% of the vote.

After the agreement was rejected, the Santos government met with opposition leaders to discuss some changes that should have been made to the text.

Santos opened the negotiating table with the FARC again, and made changes so that it could also accept the

¹¹²De Roux F. S.I., *Colombia: la riflessione di un testimone. La crisi, la pace e la Chiesa*, La Civiltà Cattolica, Quaderno n. 3994, 2016, pp. 360-364.

agreement to the opposition¹¹³.

The most significant are: the downsizing of the mechanisms of political participation for the (former) guerrillas; the introduction of more stringent limitations on the ways in which alternative measures to the prison are enforced for crimes committed against human rights crimes; the limitation of the so-called block of constitutionality to only the parts of the treaty relating to international humanitarian law and the fundamental rights provided by the Constitution, whereby only these parties, and not the entire text of the agreement as previously envisaged, may be considered an integral part of the constitutional text.

The following November 24, a new peace agreement was signed between the parties, followed by the final ratification by the Colombian Parliament.

On December 28, 2016, the Colombian parliament passed a law that provides amnesty or grace to members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia accused of political offenses.

Peace Agreement and the agrarian reform

At the base of the agreements on the agrarian reform and rural development, which are the first point in the treatise agenda, according to the Provincial Father of Jesuits in Colombia¹¹⁴, there would be a draft prepared during the presidency of Ernesto Samper Pizano (1994-1998), by the Minister of Agriculture, José Antonio Ocampo, economist of the World Bank and United Nations.

The UN has also played an important role in voicing the need to address the root causes of the conflict, in particular through one human development report: *Colombia Rural: Razones para la Esperanza* (“Rural Colombia: Reasons for Hope”)¹¹⁵.

On the rural issue, the Peace Agreement says: “Chapter 1 contains the agreement on “Comprehensive Rural Reform” (*Reforma Rural Integral*) that will foment structural change in the countryside, closing up the differential that exists between rural and urban areas and creating conditions of well-being and quality of life for the rural population. The “Comprehensive Rural Reform” (CRR) must incorporate all of the country’s regions, contribute to the eradication of poverty, promote equality and ensure full enjoyment of the rights of citizenship.”¹¹⁶

This chapter seeks to lay the foundations for the improvement of rural Colombia, in order to reverse the negative effects of the armed conflict and the conditions that allow the persistence of violence in the country. The agreement aims to guarantee the health and well-being of the rural population, eradicate indigence and reduce poverty by the 50 percent within ten years to promote equality, eliminate differences between urban and rural areas, resume economic development of the Colombian countryside and the development of small-

¹¹³ Fanlo Cortès I., *Colombia: verso un vero accordo di pace?*, Confronti dicembre 2016.

¹¹⁴ De Roux F. S.I., *Colombia: la riflessione di un testimone. La crisi, la pace e la Chiesa*, op. cit., p. 360.

¹¹⁵ UNDP, *Colombia Rural: Razones para la Esperanza*, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace, 24 November 2016. <http://especiales.presidencia.gov.co/Documents/20170620-dejacion-armas/acuerdos/acuerdo-final-ingles.pdf>

scale agriculture.

The agreement provides the establishment of a land access program for the free distribution of land to people living in the country and are without land or are lacking of sufficient land. The objective is to ensure that access to land is accompanied by technical assistance, subsidies and better access to credit, roads and conditions that promote productivity and overall well-being and encourage the productive and sustainable use of land. A large-scale plan will be undertaken to register land in the estate cadastre, to regularize the ownership of landlords without the securities that will allow them to apply for loans or access to government programs. The land restitution program will be strengthened in order to ensure the repair of victims of displaced and forced expulsion and to support those who want to return to their lands. A new legal system for rural land will be established, able to resolve conflicts on land access and use and safeguarding the rights of peasant property. This should prevent forced displacement and facilitate conflict resolution.

In order to make land use consistent with its purpose, the government will define the general guidelines for land use, taking into account development visions of the various territories, promoting citizens' participation in the creation of these territorial standards and design of conversion programs. An environmental zoning plan will be set up to delimit the agricultural frontier and protect areas of particular environmental interest, such as páramos, wetlands and water sources.

This plan also seeks to make compatible economic alternatives compatible with the conservation of these ecosystems for rural residents living in or near these areas. The government will support the development plans of agricultural areas (*zonas de reserva campesina*) that exist or will be created by local communities, ensuring a more active presence of the state in these territories.

The agreement also establishes national rural development plans to provide public services and infrastructure to the Colombian countryside with the aim of helping its inhabitants to overcome poverty and inequality, improve their opportunities and reduce the gap between urban and rural areas. They seek in particular to strengthen rural economies, starting from family-run businesses and cooperatives, integrating them with markets across the country.

In rural areas are planned plans to link regions with a road network and allow residents to access markets and public services, ensure access to water both for drinking and for irrigation, to extend electricity coverage and internet, improving public health care, improving education in order to eliminate illiteracy, ensuring access to waste management systems, improving housing conditions, boosting incentives for cooperative productions, bringing producers closer to consumers and create a national marketing plan for their products, facilitate access to technical assistance and technological innovation, ensure access to credit, start-up capital and crop insurance, improve working conditions for producers and workers, by granting them access to social protection mechanisms, eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

In the areas most affected by poverty, conflict, institutional weakness and illegal economies, program of territorial approach (PDET) will be implemented with the participation of communities in formulation, execution and follow-up to accelerate implementation and financing of national plans.

Conclusion

The reasons for the Colombian internal armed conflict relate in the concentration of wealth in few people, large inequalities, poverty, the exclusion of peasants and campaigns from the public sphere, and the lack of laws that guarantee social justice and fair distribution of resources.

The conflict has two fundamental characteristics: duration and complexity. Its remarkable complexity stems from structural motivations, the variety of actors involved and the various developments that the conflict has taken in the various Colombian regions and in different historical periods. The land issue and the inefficient agricultural reforms are the primary causes¹¹⁷.

The reconstruction of Colombian historical processes in the previous chapters highlighted the weakness of the Colombian state and showed the limits of a fragmented society¹¹⁸. Even today the government is unable to control the whole territory. Peripheral areas, rural areas and the rural population have paid and still pay the highest price of this endless war.

Daniel Pécaut¹¹⁹, expert of the Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas, argues that the conflict had the effect of preserving the social and political status quo, aggravating inequality and lack of citizenship.

The precariousness of the state, the logic of clientele power and the institutionalization of inequalities have caused that justice in Colombia is not pursued punctually and, consequently, regulatory and structural impropriety has expanded.

Javier Giraldo Moreno S. J.¹²⁰ thinks that there is a "gray zone" where legality and illegality are confused, civil life is not distinct from the military one, there is no separation between civilians and the army or illegal armed groups. There will be no peace in Colombia and violence will continue to be used to control territory, politics, civil society and the economy if this gray area is not replaced by law.

The first balance that can be tried after nine months of the peace agreement is positive: the agreement is a reality. In February 2017, the last guerrillas of the FARC, of the seven thousand planned, reached the 26 Zonas veredales transitoria de normalización provided by the agreement to lay down their weapons and prepare for returning to civilian life. On June 27, arms were delivered under the auspices of the United Nations, which sanctioned the final demobilization.

¹¹⁷ Fraudatario S., *La Colombia in bilico tra accordi di pace e continue violazioni dei diritti umani*, DEP, N. 30, Venezia, Università Ca' Foscari, 2016, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ Palacios M., *Between Legitimacy And Violence. A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2006.

¹¹⁹ Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (CHCV), "Un conflicto armado al servicio del status quo social y político," in *Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia.*, Febrero de 2015. http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/mesadeconversaciones/PDF/Informe%20Comisi_n%20Hist_rica%20del%20Conflicto%20y%20sus%20V_ctimas.%20La%20Habana%2C%20Febrero%20de%202015.pdf

¹²⁰ J. Giraldo Moreno, "Democracia formal e impunidad en Colombia: de la represión al ajuste del sistema jurídico," in Pigrau Solé A. y Fraudatario S., *Colombia entre violencia y derecho. Implicaciones de una Sentencia del Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos*, Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso Issoco, Bogotá, Colombia, 2012, p. 143.

On September 1st, at the end of the constituent congress in Bogotá with more than a thousand delegates from all over the country, the FARC became a political party. During the congress a reform program was presented and discussed. A collegiate leadership was elected, consisting of 111 people. The FARC will change name, they will always call FARC, but as acronym of Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común. The symbol that will accompany the change of denomination is that of a red rose recalling that of the Spanish Workers Socialist Party (PSOE).



In addition, on 4 September, the ELN and the Colombian government signed an agreement on the ceasefire of both parties, which will begin on October 1, and will remain in force until January 12 2018, so that it can finalize peace talks in progress.

In this path of peace begun, Pope Francis, from 6 to 11 September of the last year, went on an apostolic journey to Colombia. National reconciliation has been one of the central themes of this journey, starting with the significant slogan chosen by the local Bishops' Conference: "Demos el primer paso", "Let's take the first step." Peace is therefore an essential condition for social and inclusive development. Any path to a real democracy without progress and growth would not have a solid foundation and would be very unstable.

The Pope¹²¹ in a speech in Colombia cited Márquez: "May the aspiration of the great Colombian patriot, Gabriel García Márquez, resound in the heart of each citizen: "In spite of this, before oppression, plundering and abandonment, we respond with life. Neither floods nor plagues, famines nor cataclysms, nor even the unending wars down the centuries, have been able to subdue the tenacious advantage of life over death. An advantage which is both increasing and accelerating. What is thus made possible, continues the author, is "a new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness made possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will, at last and forever, have a second opportunity on earth" (Gabriel García Márquez, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1982).".

A quote that is an hymn to life, against fear and that want to break the sense of loneliness.

¹²¹ Apostolic journey of his holiness Pope Francis to Colombia (6-11 september 2017). Meeting with authorities, the diplomatic corps and representatives of civil society address of his holiness Pope Francis. "Casa de Nariño" Presidential Palace's Parade Square "Plaza de Armas" (Bogotá) Thursday, 7 September 2017.

After the "first step" two themes will be crucial to proceed with force on the path of reconciliation and peace: the fight against narcotraffic and that of terrorism.

Social justice must replace inequity and inequality in economic terms to address the causes of poverty and exclusion. In this context, the international community and Italy will have to adequately support the peace process and fairer development of the country through a strong commitment, especially in the economic sphere. The European Union's fund for Colombia is a first step in the direction¹²².

The giant revenue generated by drug trafficking focus at the center of the Colombian conflict the theme of land control and causes most of the crimes and violence. Agreements on land issues between the Colombian Government and the FARC establish a common commitment on replacing coca with other crops, in order to avoid leaving farmers "cocaleros" in poverty. They also say that the large-scale economy has to find a point of balance with the *campesina* economy. The scenario shows a sharp improvement in farmers' perspectives, but still shows signs of uncertainty: Colombia remains the only country in Latin America to have failed to implement real agricultural reform, but today the hegemony of the landowner's oligarchy is declining, as opposed to a strong social and political rise of the urban bourgeoisie¹²³.

Until now, 7 Decrees have been put into effect, which are under constitutional revision. Among the main advances the FARC underlines¹²⁴ the creation of legal instruments that will allow the implementation of the territorial approach. This has been achieved above all with the Decree Law on PDET, the plans for access to land, home, education and the Integrated National Plan for the Suppression of Illicit Farming (PNIS). This important program seeks to work together with the communities, giving them a prominent role at every stage, to transform the conditions of the territories affected by illicit crops and to solve the problems created by regional integration and social inclusion. The FARCs highlight the active participation of communities in formulating, implementing and monitoring the PNIS. Finally, they point out the persistence of the government's forced eradication of crops of illicit use, which causes discontent among the inhabitants of affected areas and is in violation of the agreement, and various difficulties and sluggishness in the legislative implementation process.

It should also be remembered that El País said on July 22 that Pueblo's Defensory speaks of 52 social leaders assassinated by June last year, the UN has registered 41 until May and the latest document of the Programa No Gubernamental de Protección a Defensores de Derechos Humanos - Somos Defensores, an organization that monitors the situation of human rights defenders, calculated that from 1 January to 30 June 2017, 51 were killed¹²⁵.

¹²² European Commission, International Cooperation and Development, *Accordo che istituisce il Fondo fiduciario dell'Unione europea per la Colombia e il suo regolamento interno*, 16 December 2016.

¹²³ Zupi M., *La Colombia e il processo di pace*, CeSPI, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale n. 72 - febbraio 2017, Senato della Repubblica, p. 5.

¹²⁴ FARC, *Rapporto sull'implementazione dell'Accordo Finale luglio-agosto*, 17 settembre 2017.

<http://farc-epeace.org/processo-di-pace/item/2575-rapporto-sull-implementazione-dell-accordo-finale-luglio-agosto.html>

¹²⁵ Palomino S, *Los asesinatos de líderes sociales no se detienen en Colombia*, Bogotá, El País, 22 jul 2017.

https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/22/colombia/1500705579_551845.html; Informe Enero - Junio 2017 Programa Somos Defensores agresiones contra defensores de DD.HH. en Colombia.

Such data cast a shadow over the difficult process of ongoing peace. The concern is that we can repeat the political genocide that took place at the UP.

Another topic of the Peace Agreements, in a symbiotic relationship with the land question, is that of illegal cultivation and drug trafficking. In this context, the announcement, on 6 September, by President Santos of the arrest of the leaders of the Gulf Signature, a large-scale organization in Mexico and the United States, can be a very significant step forward in the fight against narcotics and organized crime in central and southern America.

Narcos under the acronym *bacrim* (Bandas emergentes en Colombia) control tens of thousands of hectares, grown with coca, and systematically vanish the sovereignty of the state¹²⁶. Finding a definitive solution to the drug problem is indispensable to building a stable and lasting peace. Therefore, this chapter proposes a new strategy that addresses the causes and consequences of this phenomenon. It establishes the intensification of the fight against criminal organizations that control both production and drug trafficking¹²⁷.

A global strategy will be designed to intensify the fight against drug trafficking and resource recycling. To this end, a plan will be adopted to map, investigate and prosecute drug trafficking offenses, focusing on the most profitable links in its value chain. The government will strengthen the ability to detect, monitor and report illegal financial transactions and draft a new law on resource recycling to more effectively prosecute drug traffickers. There will also be stronger controls on drug production, new methods of confiscation of narcotraffic goods, and intensified anti-drug-related corruption.

The Peace Agreements and its deployment, despite the implementation problems, represent an historical and extraordinary news for the world and for the country, though it is precarious, incomplete or partial. The first step was made. The revision of the agreement, after the no at the referendum, however, denied him the rank of constitutional norm, making it became an ordinary law, and made it uncertain if the front of no will win the presidential elections of 2018.

¹²⁶ Schiavazzi P., *Vecchi guerriglieri e nuovi narcos: papa Francesco in Colombia*, Limes, 11 settembre 2017.

¹²⁷ Beittel J. S. and Rosen W. L., *Colombia's Changing Approach to Drug Policy*, Congressional Research Service, 10 March 2017. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44779.pdf>

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Summary of the Paper in Italian

La Colombia ha avviato finalmente un processo di pace. Quella che è stata una delle guerre civili più lunghe del mondo si è incamminata verso la pacificazione nazionale. Il 24 novembre 2016 è stato infatti sottoscritto e successivamente approvato dal Parlamento un accordo che sancisce la pace tra le FARC-EP ed il governo colombiano. Questo risultato dovrebbe garantire al governo colombiano la possibilità di combattere maggiormente il narcotraffico e riuscire a creare così le condizioni per un più intenso sviluppo del paese.

L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è quello di individuare le origini storiche dei profondi contrasti che ancora oggi percorrono la frammentata società colombiana.

La Colombia è infatti un paese ricco di risorse naturali, ma con uno degli indici di disuguaglianza più alti del mondo, nelle aree rurali è presente in maniera massiccia il crimine e l'ingiustizia e vi è una grave assenza del controllo da parte dello Stato.

La terra è alle radici del conflitto armato in Colombia. La lotta armata, a partire dagli anni '40, si è svolta in zone rurali ed i contadini sono stati i principali protagonisti. Attualmente ammonta a 8,3 milioni di ettari la superficie di terra che i contadini sono stati costretti ad abbandonare nel corso del lungo conflitto a causa dei gruppi paramilitari ed in misura minore delle guerriglie.

Uno dei dati più significativi è quello che indica la forte disuguaglianza sociale che diminuisce molto lentamente nonostante negli ultimi anni si sia strutturata una classe media urbana di diversi milioni di persone.

Un altro dato per rappresentare la drammatica situazione, la disuguaglianza nella struttura della proprietà della terra, con una concentrazione molto elevata: 1.15% della popolazione possiede il 52,2% della terra, mentre il 78,31% ne possiede il 10,59%. Quasi l'80% dei proprietari di terra vive in povertà assoluta, poiché i microfondi non consentono di avere un reddito che superi la metà del salario minimo legale.

In Colombia, dalla fondazione fino alla fine del periodo della Violencia, c'è stato uno stato di guerra civile permanente. Gli attori sono stati il partito Liberale e il partito Conservatore che hanno lottato per la conquista del potere. Questo drammatico conflitto armato interno ha caratterizzato la Colombia e ne ha pregiudicato l'evoluzione democratica e lo sviluppo pacifico. La guerra si è svolta mediante atti nei quali i protagonisti del conflitto armato hanno mutato in bersagli militari la popolazione civile innocente.

La storia colombiana è sempre stata caratterizzata da violenza e conflitti armati che, secondo la maggior parte degli storici e degli studiosi, sono frutto di fattori strutturali che si sono manifestati sin dalla creazione del paese e che hanno portato alla formazione di un tessuto sociale con differenze troppo marcate al suo interno.

La politica colombiana è stata caratterizzata sin dai primi anni della sua fondazione, da uno scontro nel modo in cui dovesse essere concepito il ruolo dello Stato. Questo scontro vide come attori principali i due partiti politici più antichi, il partito Liberale, legato alla borghesia cittadina, aveva una concezione dello Stato influenzata dalle idee liberali provenienti dagli Stati Uniti e dalla Gran Bretagna ed il partito Conservatore, collegato alla grande proprietà fondiaria, che proponeva uno Stato più simile al modello spagnolo.

Il partito Liberale arrivò al governo attorno al 1850 e vi rimase fino agli anni '80, riuscendo ad attuare molte delle sue politiche, come l'abolizione della schiavitù e la creazione di uno stato maggiormente laico.

I conservatori ritornarono al potere negli anni '80, e subito dopo averlo raggiunto decisero di riscrivere la costituzione liberale che era stata approvata nel 1863, e ne fecero così una nuova che rimase in vigore per i successivi 100 anni.

Lo stato fu centralizzato, ed il presidente fu investito di grandi poteri, tra cui il più importante e contestato era quello di poter togliere i diritti politici a coloro che riteneva rappresentassero un pericolo per l'ordine pubblico. I conflitti e le violenze tra liberali e conservatori culminarono nella Guerra dei Mille Giorni, dal 1899 al 1902, la più sanguinosa dall'indipendenza del paese, che causò circa 100.000 morti.

Allo scontro tra la parte della società legata al processo di industrializzazione e quella che esprimeva gli interessi della grande proprietà agricola, si aggiunse quello generato dallo sviluppo del movimento agrario.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader populista considerato rappresentante dell'ala più a sinistra del partito liberale, e che era divenuto il leader del movimento agrario, venne assassinato il 9 aprile 1948 a Bogotá, per mano del giovane conservatore Juan Roa Sierra. L'omicidio è da imputare alle forze conservatrici, terrorizzate da quello che sarebbe potuto risultare dalle elezioni presidenziali del 1950. Con lui morì così in Colombia la speranza che aveva il popolo di poter cambiare le cose attraverso il processo democratico.

Nelle ore immediatamente successive all'avvenimento scoppiò una rivolta urbana a Bogotá che venne repressa nel sangue e che viene chiamata, *Bogotazo*. I Liberali formarono delle milizie contadine, che combattevano contro l'esercito, controllato invece dal governo conservatore. Scoppiò così il periodo chiamato "La Violencia", durato un decennio, dal 1948 al 1958, che viene universalmente riconosciuto come il periodo più violento della storia del paese, con più di 200.000 morti. La Violencia si scagliò contro la società intera, divenendo l'espedito per regolare altri conti di varia natura, e si può considerare la risposta delle élites tradizionali al pericolo del populismo. I conservatori attuarono una controrivoluzione, annullando tutti i flebili progressi che erano stati fatti dai liberali per garantire una migliore giustizia sociale.

Nel 1953 fu favorito dalla classe politica, sia conservatrice che liberale, un colpo di Stato con l'intento di pacificare il paese, fu messo così al potere il generale Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.

La lotta armata contro lo Stato fu proseguita solamente da pochi, che non credettero alle promesse del governo e continuarono a battersi in favore delle rivendicazioni contadine.

Nel 1956 venne fatto un accordo politico, poi messo in atto a partire dal 1958, che mise fine alle violenze. Questo accordo fu fatto tra il Partito Liberale ed il Partito Conservatore, istituì una giunta militare provvisoria mise fine alla dittatura di Pinilla e istituì il "Fronte Nazionale", un accordo che prevedeva di assegnare ogni quattro anni la presidenza in modo alternato ai due partiti, indipendentemente dall'esito elettorale. Questa alternanza sarebbe durata per i successivi sedici anni garantendo così ai due partiti due mandati presidenziali ciascuno, ed è stata definita da alcuni storici una "dittatura costituzionale".

Questa condizione portò alla creazione di gruppi, formati da guerriglieri comunisti, gruppi contadini e seguaci di Gaitán, che sfidavano l'autorità dello stato, dominata da una ristretta élite che voleva a tutti i costi mantenere il potere. Nacquero così l'ELN e le FARC.

L'ELN nacque nel 1964. La rivoluzione cubana e Che Guevara ispirarono studenti, cattolici radicali e intellettuali di sinistra a formare l'ELN per combattere in favore di una democrazia popolare. Il gruppo, era influenzato dalla teologia della liberazione, una corrente di pensiero teologico che si era sviluppata a seguito dal Concilio Vaticano II.

Le FARC vennero fondate il 27 maggio del 1964. Nacquero come risposta ad una serie di violenti attacchi supportati dagli US contro i contadini nella regione di Marquetalia. Molti contadini dopo il periodo della Violencia arrivarono a vedere lo Stato come il principale nemico del popolo, e per scampare a questo pericolo, crearono delle regioni libere. Le aree comuniste erano organizzate e armate, si avvalevano di un regolare sistema legislativo e amministrativo, e all'interno del loro territorio la violenza era stata debellata, nonostante nel resto del paese il sangue continuasse a scorrere a fiumi. La loro prerogativa principale era quella di richiamare i contadini delle province limitrofe grazie alla giustizia e all'efficienza connaturate al loro modo di vivere. Il fondatore delle FARC fu Manuel Marulanda Vélez, conosciuto come "Tiro Fijo". Carismatico membro delle guerriglie comuniste, egli è considerato uno dei più importanti leader rivoluzionari delle guerriglie contadine sudamericane. Negli anni successivi alla sua fondazione le FARC estesero anno dopo anno la loro presenza nel paese. Nella metà degli anni '90 esistevano all'incirca 105 fronti, per questo si stima che al suo picco massimo tra la fine degli anni '90 e i primi anni 2000, l'organizzazione contasse tra i 40.000 e i 50.000 guerriglieri. Questi numeri fanno sì che le FARC sono state la più lunga e potente organizzazione rivoluzionaria politico militare del Sud America. Le FARC sono cresciute moltissimo negli anni '90, come risultato della drastica diminuzione delle condizioni materiali del popolo colombiano dovuto alle politiche neoliberiste che furono adottate in quegli anni.

L'analisi dei programmi politici delle FARC durante tutta la loro esistenza permette di chiarire la natura agraria della loro rivoluzione. Una parte rilevante delle terre è attualmente, ed era cinquant'anni fa, proprietà di un numero ridotto di proprietari, nonostante nel corso degli anni sono stati fatti da parte del governo numerosi tentativi per risolvere la questione della terra. La prima fu la Legge 200 del 1936 che riconosceva i diritti dei *colonos*, anche se poi fu annullata di fatto dalla Legge 100 del 1944 che ne rinviò l'applicazione di altri cinque anni e vietò agli affittuari di piantare alberi senza l'esplicito permesso dei proprietari.

Il Center for Research on Peace and Development in un paper del 2015 sostiene che un accordo di pace può avere successo solamente se fondato su una riforma agraria che assicuri una differente distribuzione della terra per mitigare l'estrema disuguaglianza e migliorare le condizioni di vita dei contadini. Le principali cause di contrasto nelle campagne colombiane negli anni '60 erano: la concentrazione nella proprietà della terra, la numerosità dei contadini senza accesso alla terra e i contratti di lavoro agrari. Tutte le riforme agrarie che sono state fatte negli anni dalla fondazione delle FARC fino all'inizio degli anni 2000 hanno avuto come scopo primario la redistribuzione delle terre, ma la loro applicazione però non ha avuto effetti redistributivi rilevanti.

Il primo presidente che giunse ad un accordo con le FARC fu il conservatore Belisario Betancur Cuartas (1982-1986). Riuscì a negoziare nel 1984 un cessate il fuoco con le FARC a La Uribe, nella provincia di Meta. Questi accordi prevedevano un cessate il fuoco, l'istituzione di elezioni popolari per sindaci e governatori, la decentralizzazione amministrativa e garanzie per l'attività politica di tutti i movimenti politici.

Nel 1985, venne lanciato dalle FARC il movimento politico Unión Patriótica (UP). I parlamentari eletti dall'UP alle elezioni del 1986 furono 14, ma in seguito a questa affermazione politica iniziò una vera e propria campagna di sterminio nei confronti della stessa, conosciuta come il "genocidio politico dell'UP".

Nello stesso periodo, il traffico di droga stava assumendo sempre più importanza nell'economia colombiana, e le sue conseguenze stavano divenendo sempre più rilevanti nel conflitto colombiano. Nel 1981 fu creato "Muerte a Secuestradores" (MAS), considerato il primo gruppo paramilitare colombiano finanziato interamente dai narcotrafficienti. Negli anni a seguire si formarono molti gruppi di paramilitari che rapidamente assunsero un ruolo importante all'interno del conflitto, questi gruppi di paramilitari subentrarono nel controllo della quasi totalità del traffico di stupefacenti nel paese e furono responsabili della maggior parte delle violazioni dei diritti umani perpetrate durante il conflitto. I cartelli della droga, iniziarono a combattere non solo contro le guerriglie, ma anche contro lo Stato, che aveva approvato l'estradizione negli US per i narcotrafficienti.

Dopo l'eliminazione di molti dei dirigenti dell'UP, le relazioni tra FARC e governo si fecero sempre più tese, e l'accordo di pace saltò formalmente nel 1987, dopo che la guerriglia attaccò una pattuglia di militari nella giungla.

Dalla metà degli anni novanta, anche in conseguenza dell'aggravamento delle condizioni di vita di numerose fasce della popolazione, le guerriglie videro arruolarsi nelle proprie file sempre più uomini. L'attività di guerriglia delle FARC raggiunse l'apice nella seconda metà degli anni '90, questa crescita così massiccia convinse il presidente conservatore Pastrana (1998-2002) ad aprire dei colloqui di pace con i guerriglieri.

L'accordo che fecero riconosceva alle FARC lo status politico, e veniva inoltre accompagnato dalla creazione di una zona, chiamata il "Caguán", grande più o meno 40,000 chilometri, all'incirca quanto la Svizzera, che veniva smilitarizzata e usata come "laboratorio di pace".

Pastrana, durante la sua presidenza, si focalizzò anche nel rinforzare l'esercito, per evitare che come nel decennio precedente fosse così facile per le FARC batterlo sul campo.

Nel maggio del 2002, vinse le elezioni il candidato del movimento Colombia First, il politico conservatore Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), che aveva promesso di sconfiggere militarmente i guerriglieri.

Durante il suo mandato crebbero enormemente le violazioni dei diritti umani, quali massacri da parte dei paramilitari e dell'esercito, sparizioni forzate, omicidi di sindacalisti e di attivisti contadini, indigeni e dei partiti di sinistra. Nell'autunno del 2002, il governo adottò la Democratic Security and Defense Policy, una strategia che si focalizzava soprattutto su aspetti di sicurezza del paese. Inoltre uno dei risultati principali del governo Uribe fu la legge 975 del 2005, chiamata anche "Justicia y paz", per raggiungere la smobilitazione dei paramilitari, che ora erano tutti riuniti sotto un'unica sigla, l'AUC. Questa legge fece ai membri dell'AUC

concessioni molto vaste, come permettere ai paramilitari di tenersi i profitti realizzati attraverso le attività illecite durante la loro permanenza nell'organizzazione. Limitò inoltre gli anni a cui sarebbero potuti essere condannati ad un limite massimo di otto, prevede che avrebbero potuto trascorrere il periodo di detenzione in fattorie private anziché in prigione e non li obbligò a smantellare le loro reti di potere.

Juan Manuel Santos vinse le elezioni nel 2010, ma a soli pochi mesi dalle sue elezioni iniziò a trattare con le FARC per raggiungere la pace. Le FARC, quando Santos assunse il potere erano ormai composte da un numero esiguo di uomini se comparate agli anni precedenti. Molti dei leader dell'organizzazione erano stati uccisi ed i guerriglieri erano relegati nelle aree più remote del paese. Nel giugno 2012, il congresso colombiano fece passare un emendamento costituzionale che preparava ai dialoghi di pace con le FARC. Nell'agosto del 2012, il presidente Santos annunciò che erano in corso dei colloqui esplorativi a Cuba con le FARC, per giungere ad un accordo di pace. Dopo la rielezione di Santos i contatti continuarono. Dal dicembre del 2014 la guerriglia iniziò a mantenere un cessate il fuoco unilaterale a tempo indeterminato nonostante non fosse corrisposto da parte governativa e proseguì i dialoghi nella capitale cubana.

Il governo colombiano e una delegazione delle FARC, il 23 giugno 2016, dopo 50 anni di ostilità, in presenza di Raúl Castro e Ban Ki-moon, hanno stipulato un accordo bilaterale definitivo per la cessazione delle ostilità e per la promozione della pace. Il 25 agosto 2016 venne confermato pubblicamente l'accordo dai negoziatori delle due parti, il presidente Manuel Santos e il comandante dei guerriglieri del Bloque Caribe de las FARC Iván Márquez, si incontrarono a L'Avana concludendo così il negoziato. L'accordo sarebbe poi stato sottoposto ad un referendum popolare. Il 2 ottobre 2016 l'accordo fu poi sottoposto a referendum ed il mondo restò sorpreso quando venne sorprendentemente bocciato dal popolo colombiano con il 50,3% dei voti contrari in opposizione al 49,7% dei voti favorevoli.

Il successivo 24 novembre fu firmato un nuovo accordo di pace tra le parti, a cui ha seguito la ratifica definitiva da parte del parlamento colombiano.

Il capitolo dell'Accordo di Pace sulla riforma agraria e sullo sviluppo rurale tenta di fissare le basi per il miglioramento della Colombia rurale, al fine di invertire gli effetti negativi del conflitto armato e le condizioni che permettono la persistenza della violenza nel paese. L'accordo punta a garantire la salute e il benessere della popolazione rurale, a sradicare l'indigenza e a ridurre la povertà del 50 per cento entro dieci anni per promuovere l'uguaglianza, l'eliminazione delle differenze tra aree urbane e rurali, la ripresa economica della campagna colombiana e lo sviluppo dell'agricoltura di piccole dimensioni.

L'accordo prevede la creazione di un programma di accesso alla terra per la distribuzione gratuita di terreni alle persone che vivono in campagna e sono senza terra o non possiedono terreno sufficiente. L'accordo stabilisce, inoltre, piani nazionali di sviluppo rurale miranti a fornire alla campagna colombiana servizi pubblici e infrastrutture, con l'obiettivo di aiutare i suoi abitanti a superare la povertà e le disuguaglianze, migliorare le loro opportunità e ridurre il divario tra le aree urbane e quelle rurali. Nelle zone più colpite dalla povertà, dal conflitto, dalla debolezza istituzionale e dalle economie illegali saranno attuati Programmi di Sviluppo con un Approccio Territoriale (PDET), con la partecipazione delle comunità.

In conclusione, le ragioni del conflitto armato interno colombiano poggiano sulla concentrazione della ricchezza in poche persone, sulle grandi disuguaglianze, sulla povertà, sull'esclusione dei contadini e delle campagne dalla sfera pubblica e sulla mancanza di leggi che garantiscano la giustizia sociale e un'equa distribuzione delle risorse.

Il conflitto presenta due caratteristiche fondamentali la durata e la complessità. La sua notevole complessità deriva da motivazioni strutturali, dalla varietà degli attori interessati e dai diversi svolgimenti che il conflitto stesso ha assunto nelle varie regioni colombiane e nei differenti periodi storici. La questione della terra e le inefficaci riforme agrarie ne costituiscono le cause primarie.

La ricostruzione dei processi storici colombiani nel lavoro, ha evidenziato la debolezza dello Stato colombiano e mostrato i limiti di una società frammentata. Ancora oggi il governo non è in grado di controllare tutto il territorio. Le zone periferiche, le campagne e la popolazione rurale hanno pagato e tutt'ora pagano il prezzo più alto di questa interminabile guerra.

Il conflitto ha avuto l'effetto di preservare lo status quo sociale e politico aggravando la disuguaglianza e la mancanza di cittadinanza. La precarietà dello Stato, le logiche del potere clientelare e l'istituzionalizzazione delle disuguaglianze hanno fatto sì che la giustizia in Colombia non sia stata perseguita puntualmente e che, di conseguenza, l'impunità normativa e strutturale abbia dilagato.

Esiste una "zona grigia", in cui legalità e illegalità si confondono, la vita civile non si distingue da quella militare, non c'è separazione tra civili e esercito o gruppi armati illegali. Non ci sarà la pace in Colombia e la violenza continuerà ad essere utilizzata per controllare il territorio, la politica, la società civile e l'economia, se questa zona grigia non verrà sostituita dal diritto.

Il primo bilancio che può essere tentato dopo nove mesi dall'accordo di pace è positivo: l'accordo è una realtà. A febbraio 2017 gli ultimi guerriglieri delle FARC, dei settemila previsti, hanno raggiunto le 26 Zonas veredales transitoria de normalización previste nell'accordo per deporre le armi e prepararsi al ritorno alla vita civile. Il 27 giugno si è conclusa la consegna delle armi, sotto la supervisione delle Nazioni Unite, che ha sancito la definitiva smobilitazione.

Il primo settembre scorso, alla conclusione del congresso costituente a Bogotá con più di mille delegati di tutto il paese, le FARC sono divenute un partito politico

In questo percorso di pace avviato, Papa Francesco, dal 6 all'11 settembre scorso, si è recato in viaggio apostolico in Colombia. La riconciliazione nazionale è stata una delle tematiche centrali di questo viaggio, a partire dal significativo slogan scelto dalla Conferenza episcopale locale: "Demos el primer paso", «Facciamo il primo passo».

La pace quindi è una condizione essenziale per uno sviluppo sociale e inclusivo. Qualsiasi cammino verso una reale democrazia in assenza di progresso e crescita non avrebbe basi solide e sarebbe molto instabile.

Il Papa durante un incontro in Colombia ha citato il Discorso di Márquez in occasione del Premio Nobel 1982, la gente comune deve avere "una seconda opportunità sulla terra". Una citazione che rappresenta un inno alla vita, contro la paura e per rompere il senso di solitudine.

Dopo il “primo passo” due temi saranno cruciali per procedere con forza sulla via della riconciliazione e della pace: la lotta al narcotraffico e quella al terrorismo. La giustizia sociale dovrà sostituire l’inequità e la disuguaglianza economica per risolvere i motivi che provocano la povertà e l’esclusione.

I giganteschi ricavi generati dal traffico di droga pongono al centro delle dinamiche del conflitto colombiano il tema del controllo della terra e causano la maggior parte dei crimini e delle violenze. Gli accordi sulla questione della terra tra governo colombiano e FARC stabiliscono un comune impegno per la sostituzione della coca con altre coltivazioni, per evitare di lasciare i contadini “cocaleros” in povertà. Inoltre, stabiliscono che l’economia su larga scala debba trovare un punto di equilibrio con l’economia *campesina*. Lo scenario presenta un deciso miglioramento delle prospettive dei contadini ma mostra ancora segni di incertezza: la Colombia è rimasto l’unico paese dell’America Latina a non avere attuato una vera riforma agraria, ma oggi l’egemonia dell’oligarchia latifondista è in declino, al contrario di una forte ascesa sociale e politica della borghesia urbana.

Tra i principali progressi le FARC sottolineano la creazione di strumenti giuridici che permetteranno l’implementazione dell’approccio territoriale. Infine, rilevano la persistenza della politica governativa di sradicamento forzato delle coltivazioni di uso illecito, cosa che provoca malcontento tra gli abitanti delle aree colpite e sia in violazione di quanto previsto nell’accordo, e svariate difficoltà e lentezze nel processo di implementazione normativa.

Occorre anche ricordare che anche quest’anno dal 1 gennaio al 30 giugno 2017 sono stati uccisi 51 difensori dei diritti umani. Tale dato getta un’ombra sul difficile processo di pace in corso. La preoccupazione è che si possa ripetere il genocidio politico che accadde all’UP.

Altro argomento dell’Accordo di Pace, in relazione simbiotica con la questione della terra, è quello relativo alle coltivazioni illegali e alla piaga del narcotraffico. I narcos sotto la sigla *bacrim* (bande criminali emergenti) controllano decine di migliaia di ettari, coltivati a coca, e vanificano sistematicamente la sovranità dello Stato. Trovare una soluzione definitiva al problema della droga è indispensabile per costruire una pace stabile e duratura. Pertanto, questo capitolo dell’accordo propone una nuova strategia che affronta le cause e le conseguenze di questo fenomeno. Stabilisce l’intensificazione della lotta contro le organizzazioni criminali che controllano sia la produzione che il traffico di droga.

L’Accordo di Pace e le sue implementazioni rappresentano nonostante i problemi attuativi una notizia storica, straordinaria per il mondo e per il paese, per quanto precaria, incompleta o parziale. Il primo passo è stato fatto. La revisione dell’Accordo, dopo il no al referendum, gli ha negato però il rango di norma costituzionale facendolo divenire legge ordinaria e lo ha reso incerto, qualora il fronte del no dovesse vincere le presidenziali del 2018.