CAUGHT BETWEEN THE WAR ON DRUGS AND GUERRILLA WARFARE:
COLOMBIA’S ROAD TO PEACE

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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By

Nicolas Cueter, B.A.

Georgetown University
Washington, DC
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Violence in Colombia has persisted for so many years that entire generations of its population have yet to experience peace. However, for the first time in its history, the ongoing Havana negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC give Colombians a real opportunity to leave behind the seemingly endless conflict. This thesis aims to analyze the factors that contributed to the Colombian dilemma to determine elements crucial to the nation's road towards sustainable peace. By combining Peter Coleman, Charles Call, Mathew Levinger, and Frances Stewart's theories with more than three hundred studies written by Colombian analysts over the last forty years, the new theoretical framework resulted in a shaking but very exciting experience across the country's history. At the end of the road, surprising conclusions counter common theories discussed and accepted worldwide about this dark period in Colombia. This extensive research reveals that misinformation and misinterpretation of historical events as well as factors never taken into account caused the misdiagnosis of the conflict. The war's timeline, debunking the myth that Colombia has an intractable conflict; the existence of two types of displacement, not all violent nor caused by the war; the effects of the narco-lifestyle, still deeply rooted in the Colombian society; and
the existence of unknown and unaccounted for victims show that this conflict will require more than a peace accord with the FARC to finally resolve it. Chief among the obstacles ahead are a leadership reluctant to change and a class system that continues to succumb to the demands of the wealthiest elite to the detriment of all other Colombians. However, given President Santos’ unquestionable commitment, the hope for peace in Colombia is no longer a dream but rather a tangible option. The skill, compromise, and openness of both Havana negotiating teams represent a significant leap forward towards a more egalitarian society. Hence, Colombia faces today the most important of choices, to begin the long walk towards sustainable peace or to go back to a senseless war that for far too long continues to take the lives of many Colombians.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is not always easy to express gratitude towards those who have been important influences in a person’s life. Things will likely be left unsaid since words are not enough to honor these five amazing people.

I must first acknowledge Professor Joe Smaldone, my mentor, always pushing me to dig deeper throughout this research. I am grateful for your patience and generosity with your time. Without your guidance and sound advice, my thesis would have never reached the depths and detail that it has. Learning from you is a gift that I will continue to cherish in the years to come.

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Few people in the world have a grandmother as driven and committed to her country as mine. Tata, I am so incredibly grateful to you for the endless hours spent sharing with me your love for Colombia. It was because of you I entered into Political Science and saw poverty reduction, and equality as goals worth fighting for. I hope I can live up to your amazing accomplishments.
Lastly, MC. There are not enough words to tell you nor actions to show you how grateful I am for the gift of having you as my mother. I was not always aware of the sacrifices you made for me, yet you made sure I felt the rewards. I owe my future to you.

Many thanks to you all,
Nicolas Cueter
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<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
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<td>AMR</td>
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<td>ANUC</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</td>
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<td>Bandas Criminales</td>
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<td>CEDE</td>
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<td>CIP</td>
<td>Center for International Policy</td>
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<td>CNAI</td>
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<td>CNMH</td>
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<td>COHA</td>
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<td>ECLAC</td>
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<td>ELN</td>
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<td>Ejército Popular de Liberación</td>
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<td>FARC</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</td>
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<td>FEDEPALMA</td>
<td>Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma de Aceite</td>
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<td>GAO</td>
<td>US Government Accountability Office</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HI</td>
<td>Horizontal inequality</td>
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<td>HPC</td>
<td>Health Policy Center</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally displaced persons</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Center</td>
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<td>IGAC</td>
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<td>IOC</td>
<td>Insight on Conflict</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LAWGEF</td>
<td>Latin America Working Group Education Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGTBI</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex</td>
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<td>NCR</td>
<td>National Public Radio</td>
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<td>NPR</td>
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<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
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<td>UNRIC</td>
<td>UN Regional Information Centre for Western Europe</td>
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<td>UP</td>
<td>Unión Patriotica</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>USIP</td>
<td>US Institute for Peace</td>
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<td>VI</td>
<td>Vertical Inequality</td>
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<td>WOLA</td>
<td>Washington Office on Latin America</td>
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<td>Washington Post</td>
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PREFACE

Colombia and its people have always been in my life. The nation's conflict, its violence and persistence, unconsciously entered my childhood through the experiences and anguish of my family living there. Too many questions left unanswered around our dinner table began shaping this thesis long before I even discovered my personal interests or career inclinations. With every visit to see them, I fell more in love with the country, with its food, but especially with the Colombians I met along the way. However, their warmth and gentleness clashed constantly with the news I read about the country. In the back of my mind, curiosity continued growing until the last requirement of my Master's degree finally unleashed the drive and the strength to pursue the underlying causes threatening the lives of the Colombians I know and love.

One of the many privileges of growing up in the United States is the opportunity to learn from brilliant academics. The importance placed on research, its rigorousness, techniques, and theories became an invaluable tool in my quest. The observations and opinions found in my thesis are the result of combining an American mind with a Colombian heart; a personal journey that drastically shifted and transformed along the way. At the end of this road filled by surprises and unexpected discoveries, many of my questions found an answer. Three generations of Colombians, three different views and struggles remained in my mind at all times. Today, I dedicate this thesis to my family and to all Colombians; they are a brave nation that deserves peace. I am grateful I will be alive to witness and enjoy Colombia's transformation.
In War: Resolution,
In Defeat: Defiance,
In Victory: Magnanimity,
In Peace: Good Will.

This is not the end, it's only the beginning.

— Winston S. Churchill
INTRODUCTION

COLOMBIA AND ITS WAR

Considered as one of humanity's highest values, peace is a notion that the entire world comprehends. Given the influence of different religions, cultures, political affiliations, or life experiences, while the interpretation of its meaning may not be the same for everyone, it is indisputable that we all want peace in our lives and we expect that our governments provide it. In fact, when individuals live and assimilate within a country an implicit social contract between citizen and government grants benefits and demands obligations to and from both parties. In the same manner in which everyone must contribute to the society in which they live, their government must guarantee the safety of each and every one of its citizens (Lee 2012, 211). As such, more than an ideal, peace is an important human right and intrinsic to the well-being and freedom of all individuals. Such is its importance that in 1984 the UN General Assembly (1984)¹ recognized that, "the peoples of our planet have a sacred right to peace," further declaring that, "the preservation [of this right]... and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligation of each State."

Today, although most countries in the world live in peace, not all of them do, and among the latter, people often find their land in temporary turmoil, regaining some

¹ The UN General Assembly (1984) adopted Resolution 39/11 on November 12, 1984. Ninety-two countries voted in favor and no country voted against it. However, thirty-four countries abstained from voting, twenty-nine nations stepped out of the meeting before the vote, and only two countries did not participate.
form of peace soon after. However, a few other nations are not as fortunate, for their citizens have lived without peace for so many years that entire generations of their people have never experienced it. For the rest of the world, that a country is incapable of finding peace —especially within its own population— is incomprehensible; more so, when all throughout history intricate and large-scale wars involving many nations in different continents have found long-lasting resolution. Unfortunately, history has also proven that the formulas used to solve those wars do not help when it comes to these eternal conflicts for they are unique in their nature and very complex. Yet, Louise Diamond and John McDonald found similarities in their disparities and coined the term intractable conflicts, following Edward Azar’s theory of protracted social conflict. Peter Coleman (2006b, 535) explains these conflicts as "... intense, deadlocked, and resistant to de-escalation or resolution. They tend to persist over time, with alternating periods of greater and lesser intensity. Intractable conflicts come to focus on needs or values that are of fundamental importance to the parties."

Colombia, a South American nation with forty-eight million inhabitants and the second oldest democracy in the Western Hemisphere, has experienced one of those intractable conflicts. This nation of astonishing contrasts, once perceived as nearly failed, is now South America’s third-largest economy and the only country to have never defaulted on a loan (FT 2012). Simultaneously and notwithstanding significant

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2. A Failed State refers to "a country in which the government is so weak that it has lost control of the structures of the state and other groups have more power" (Oxford English Dictionary 2015b).
economic achievement, Colombia, constantly categorized as highly dangerous, also carries the classification of the second most unequal country in the region.

However, Colombia's "... armed conflict is not only the oldest one in the Western Hemisphere —60 years since the beginning of La Violencia (The Violence)\(^3\)—, but also one that has produced the biggest humanitarian crises in the world" (Manrique Cortés 2008, 1). In addition, the extensive reach of this internal conflict has negatively affected countries in the region\(^4\) and has touched in one way or another many populations around the world. Not even Colombia's biggest ally, the United States of America, a superpower, highly motivated to win its declared wars on drugs and on terrorism, has been successful in winning either one of these two issues of vital importance for both nations. Unlike in any other country in the world, where one is a problem, but the other does not exist, in Colombia, these issues are deeply and completely intertwined, adding further complexity to a long-lived struggle that seemed to have no viable resolution, until now.

Today, Colombia is again at the forefront of the world's news, but not because more civilian casualties, kidnappings, human rights violations or terrorist attacks are registered; not even because —despite several failed attempts— the Colombian Government is still willing to give peace one more chance. Colombia is the news today

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3. La Violencia — Colombia 1948-1958, this period will be discussed in Chapter 1 of this document.
4. Russell Crandall (2014b) explains that cocaine trade has now moved to Mexico, continuing the trend of jumping from one nation to the next. Originally, coca grew in Bolivia, but once Colombia began producing and processing cocaine, Bolivian peasants that cultivated the plant impoverished.
because this time, the guerrilla group known as *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC)\(^5\) —the country’s main enemy— seems to have finally placed peace at the forefront of their objectives as well.

This thesis intends to show that even with the unrelenting problems and previous failures, the circumstances have changed in Colombia and that for the first time in their history, Colombians have a real opportunity to end the conflict. If achieved, the success of the negotiations under such difficult circumstances will undoubtedly be a great triumph for all the parties as long as they realize that in itself, the end of the war will not guarantee long-lasting peace for Colombians. Therefore, this paper also aims to shed a light on the key existing deficiencies that may hinder both the negotiations and sustainable peace, as well as which crucial policies, if implemented, will help the Colombian Government warrant long-term peace for Colombia and its citizens.

The Colombian peace process is unfolding, and as with any current issue, constant instability threatens its progress. Given the conflict's longevity, and its unique social characteristics, Peter Coleman’s theory on *intractable conflicts* provides a seemingly perfect framework to analyze why resolution has resisted previous efforts. By evaluating how the three key characteristics of such conflicts —*irreconcilable moral*

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5. The Library of Congress (2013, lvii) explains that, "the illegal armed groups in Colombia are criminal enterprises that are deeply involved in activities such as extortion and kidnapping for ransom, but primarily drug trafficking. Much of the violence in the Colombian countryside involves fighting among the FARC, paramilitaries, and narcotics cartels over coca-growing land, which is typically in remote and marginal areas." FARC remains the strongest of all illegal groups.
differences, high-stakes distributional issues, and domination (Coleman 2006b, 534-541)—
apply to the Colombian case, I will evaluate the peace agreement's attainability and the
changes that will be required for sustainable peace in Colombia. To accomplish this, I
will review the reasons for the start of the conflict, its different facets, and its current
stage to determine how each of the three characteristics mentioned above placed the
Colombian war in the intractable conflicts short-list.

After more than two years of intense meetings in Havana, Cuba, the current
negotiation process has allowed the world to see an outwardly strong Colombian
Government that, rather than withdrawing from the peace talks, manages the FARC's
ongoing violent incursions through the carrot and stick motivation theory. This brings
to the forefront a required examination of the role of the State throughout the duration
of this conflict, from its contribution in sparking the struggle to how it managed the
social, economic, and political issues surfacing because of its origin. In considering the
challenges of high-stakes distributional issues and domination conflicts, Frances
Stewart's human security principle and horizontal inequality theories supplement
Coleman's views.

According to Stewart's horizontal inequality (HI) theory,6 negative growth —
economic, social and political— impacting only certain sectors of society incentivizes
political instability (Stewart 2002, 3). Her premise will serve to examine the Colombian

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6. Frances Stewart (2002, 3) explains that, horizontal inequalities (HIs) differs from vertical inequality (VIs) in
that the latter is a measure of inequality among individuals or households, not groups. Furthermore, the
measurement of VIs is often confined to income or consumption.
Government's role to determine how its actions or lack thereof exacerbated the war. Similarly, Stewart's *human security* (HS) principle argues that when people are excluded from the benefits of development, *horizontal inequalities* increase resulting in an imbalance that prolongs the duration of a conflict (Stewart 2004, 19). These two complementary concepts offer a broader view of development, security, and inequality as catalysts of conflict. Since Colombia is today one of the most unequal countries in the world, adding her views to Coleman's will provide additional insight into the intractability of the Colombian conflict, and will determine if existing inequalities in Colombian society can quickly impede any chance for sustainable peace.

Although signing a peace agreement is the first step needed to end the Colombian conflict, I believe that if the social, political, and economic issues that fueled the war remain unresolved, the possibility of long-lasting peace in Colombia is nothing but a dream. Accordingly, Charles Call's theories on why peace fails—including the reasons why countries that successfully overcame long-term civil war reverted into conflict—will serve as guidelines to establish which crucial policies need immediate implementation by the Colombian Government for post-conflict peace in Colombia. This is imperative not only to include those who suffer grave inequalities but also not to exclude former guerrilla members re-entering society.

Consistent with the distinctive nature of the Liberal Studies Program, this case

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7. The World Bank (2012) reported that Colombia was the seventh most unequal country in the world, indicating that the only way to reduce their GINI, 58.7, was through a thorough Tax Reform.
study of conflict and its resolution will employ a human values perspective and an interdisciplinary approach. Human beings have been at the center of this sixty-year-old conflict making Colombians the most victimized population of any other in Latin America. Many have lost their freedom, lives, families, and have been displaced, further exacerbating the inequality gap. As a consequence, few and diminishing opportunities are available to the most vulnerable inhabitants. This negative change in opportunity correlates with an adverse change in values. Understanding that government action is limited, and at times even the enemy, the world has recently seen a substantial shift from traditional societal cohesion to a more individualistic approach. Therefore, ethics will guide a critical analytical perspective to recognize which moral principles were lost in the Colombian society as a result of the conflict, and which will provide instruments to rebuild the moral fiber of the nation. In particular, the final chapter will present a series of normative/prescriptive policy recommendations for the Colombian people and State to achieve and sustain good governance, peace, and socioeconomic justice.

Lastly, it must be said that because of its complexity, its many changing stages and facets, the conflict itself and the ongoing peace process cannot be analyzed from the perspective of a single discipline. As such, History will provide a clear understanding of the root and progression of the sixty-year-old Colombian war. Sociology and Anthropology, intrinsic to the social sciences, will allow the analysis and understanding of the behaviors of different actors intervening and influencing the conflict's historical shifts. Political Science will provide the framework to analyze the role of the State, the
country's conception of democracy, and its peacebuilding efforts, past, and current. Based on historical human values and principles, these sciences will help define the new roles that all Colombians must adopt for sustainable peace. However, without an Economics perspective, through the different aspects of development —inequality, poverty, demography, globalization, human security— it will be impossible to design and implement the new Economics of peace required by this nation. Only through an interdisciplinary approach to peacebuilding will Colombia's goal to end the war and to live in a more egalitarian society become possible; a goal that for the first time does not seem too far away to achieve, but rather, one that will finally turn peace from an ideal that Colombians dream about into the fulfillment of their "sacred right to live in peace" (UN General Assembly 1984).
CHAPTER ONE
A SIMPLE DIFFERENCE IN IDEOLOGY

Colombia is a unique, solitary, and very complex country. Its social and economic contrasts, the intricacies of a sixty-year-old internal conflict where drug trafficking and terrorism act as one, where a significant change in values of the population goes hand in hand with government corruption, with countless national and international actors involved, and with considerable economic and political interests at play are issues never seen all at once in the history of any other country. In fact, no other population in the world has ever confronted simultaneously dynamics such as the ones Colombians have endured for more than half a century. Given those characteristics, at first glance, the Colombian civil war conforms to Coleman's general description of \textit{intractable conflicts} for its struggle "... pervades all aspects of the parties' lives, and they see no way to end it short of utterly destroying the other side. Each party's dominant motive is to harm the other. Such conflicts resist common resolution techniques, such as negotiation, mediation, or diplomacy" (CRC 2009).

However, although it is in undeniable that there are clear similarities with other examples of \textit{intractable conflicts} around the globe, the ever-changing characteristics of the Colombian case do not allow for any straightforward comparisons. The historical evolution of guerrilla groups and the government's ineffectiveness to deal with the unexpected changes has not helped the country's search for a steady road to peace.
Instead, the fear that any movement may lead to a mistake clouded every step along the way and moved the Colombian conflict away from fitting into any formulas or previous experiences that could have helped resolve it. Be that as it may, the question about its intractability remains uncertain.

For instance, in his analysis about Colombia, Philip K. Abbott affirms that this conflict "has evolved into what can be coined as an intractable conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP). This conflict has remained unresolved for such a long period of time and at such a high level of intensity and destructiveness, that each side views the seemingly rigid position of the other side as a threat to its very existence" (Small Wars Journal 2014). Based on his description, one would be tempted to agree that Colombia's conflict qualifies as intractable. However, on second thought, Colombia's is not the longest war\(^1\) in the history of the world nor has it been the most destructive either. Yes, at least 450,000 Colombians have been killed, and close to six million rural workers —mainly women and children— remain displaced and completely vulnerable as a result of the fights. Yet the physical damage has been limited to rural and somewhat isolated areas of the country where the military and the guerrilla confrontations took place, rather than in the cities where there has been no combat at all. As such, Abbott's observations about its duration and perceived intensity are not enough to determine the intractability of Colombia's war.

\(^1\) The longest war in the world's most recent history is the war between the Netherlands and the Isles of Sicily lasting 355 years. In current days, the sixty-year-old Colombian conflict is the second longest war, since the Russo-Siberian War lasted forty-five years, and the Guatemalan Civil War thirty-six years (History and Headlines) Taken from http://bit.ly/1MvWbYD.
On the other hand, Coleman is much more precise when clarifying that an *intractable conflict* is identifiable by the presence of three distinct characteristics;

(1) *Irreconcilable moral differences* are conflicts about right and wrong, good and evil. They may be rooted in different religions, different cultures, or different worldviews.... What is important to them is that they are engaged in a noble crusade;

(2) *High-Stakes distributional issues* are conflicts over *who gets what* when the item in contention is very valuable -- often impossible to do without. People are unlikely to abandon continuing struggles over land, water, employment opportunities, and wealth, in general....These fights are likely to be especially bitter and destructive; and,

(3) *Domination or pecking order* are conflicts over power and status: who is on top of the social and political hierarchy, and who is not. While people with higher status tend to win the distributional conflicts, more often than not, status conflicts go beyond distributional conflicts -- they involve subjective assessments of an individual's or a group's goodness, value or social worth. ²

Refining and enhancing Coleman's definitions, Matthew Levinger (2013, 33) adds *denied human needs* for security, identity, and recognition as an important trait identifiable in deeply rooted and protracted conflicts.

Today, although the eyes of the international community are set on Colombia's peace process, there is much confusion and misinformation about the root of this protracted conflict. In order to support the country's efforts during this difficult quest, historians, academics, and experts around the world issue statements, recommendations, and opinions about how to best handle the negotiations. However, notwithstanding their good intentions and vast knowledge, defining whether

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² Peter T. Coleman (2006b, 534) adopted the distinct and comprehensive names and definitions that Heidi Burgess, and Guy Burgess (2003, 11-12) used to identify these three key principles. This thesis will maintain the titles and definitions throughout.
Colombia’s is an intractable conflict or not is a required first step. To do so, one must go back to its origins, to the how and why this old conflict began. As such, it is fundamental to analyze two defining moments in its historical path, La Violencia and Frente Nacional, for it is in these two periods where Coleman's irreconcilable moral differences theory began to take shape.

La Violencia, 1948-1958

Violence is described as "an unlawful behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something." In itself, the word instills fear for it represents torture, abuse, and death. However, in Colombia, Violence is much more as the word represents an entire period in the history of this nation; one filled with atrocities, cruelty, and unimaginable turmoil in the lives of the entire population of the country. In fact, Guzmán Campos, Fals Borda et al. (1962, 405), well-respected Colombian sociologists, described it as a time of bipartisan cruelty where violence became a social process; where political elites, a select group deciding the fate of the opposition quietly and secretly, eliminated all those who disagreed with their views. A period with leaders of high social immaturity who even denied the existence of violence, two characteristics now intrinsic to the Colombian culture. This timeframe needs careful analysis to understand not only the root of the current conflict but more importantly, to gauge if sustainable peace is even possible for Colombia.

Historians identify the events of April 9, 1948 as the genesis of the Colombian conflict. On that day, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán —valued candidate for the Liberal Party⁴ and front-runner in the upcoming presidential election— was murdered in Bogotá, Colombia’s capital city. A democrat more than a revolutionary, Gaitán united urban and rural workers around his platform advocating for necessary social reforms and became the voice of the Colombian masses. For those reasons, his assassination led to the Bogotazo,⁵ an unprecedented civilian riot that in ten short hours, left over four thousand dead, innumerable injured, and the city partially destroyed.

To Colombian Liberals, Gaitán's death symbolized the continuation of Mariano Ospina Perez's Conservative⁶ and repressive mandate. A government that since 1946, employed authoritarian measures to weaken the Liberal Party's majorities controlling Congress, to preclude the enactment of any socially Liberal policy, and that enforced Conservative rights⁷ in Colombia's rural areas. After the Bogotazo, still in power but fearful of losing it, the Ospina Government urged and encouraged Conservative campesinos known as Pájaros (birds) to take the lands and raid the crops of all Liberal rural workers, terrorizing the population and fueling La Violencia. Hanratty, and Meditz

⁴ The Colombian Liberal Party is ideologically close to the United States’ Democratic Party, the former remains more center, even center-right, on issues such as abortion, family, and religion.

⁵ James L. Zackrison (1989, 7) explains that, although the Bogotazo originated in the country's capital, Bogotá, a severe wave of violence quickly "...reached most of Colombia, [and] quickly settled into the central regions."

⁶ The Colombian Conservative Party's shares most of the United States' Republican Party ideology and principles. If a difference exists, it is likely very minor.

⁷ Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda et al. (1962) explains that, Conservative Rights included the right to expropriate the land owned by Liberals, providing financial support to military forces to defend Conservative Party members from potential Liberal attacks, and especially impunity for crimes against Liberals, among other prerogatives.
(1988) describe it as a large-scale civil war "... characterized by both partisan political rivalry and sheer rural banditry," that quickly spread throughout the nation.

Ideological differences are characteristic in societies. However, when these differences function as the excuse to not just exclude the opposition but also to assassinate them under disguised political principles, those actions must be seen as strong attacks against the moral fiber of the entire population for they become clear irreconcilable moral differences.

**Frente Nacional, 1958-1974**

After ten years of widespread killings where Liberal civilian-organized self-defense groups protected their lands and families from the government's repression and military attacks, another Conservative Government (1950-53) that further restrained Liberals' civil rights, and the only military coup (1953-1957) in the country's history, Liberal and Conservative elites agreed the Frente Nacional to stop the ongoing civil war. Signed in 1957, this accord specified that for the following sixteen years, the two parties would share governmental power with each other, exclusively, switching the country's Presidency every four years (Library of Congress 2013, 44). The news of the pact did not produce the intended effect since some of the Liberal groups protecting rural lands across the country did not receive its terms well.

Today, after decades of analysis and debates, historian Tomas Eloy Martinez

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8. The only successful Military Coup in Colombia was in response to excessively repressive measures established by President Laureano Gomez. However, Dictator "Rojas made no serious effort to win over the guerrillas, and eventually violence picked up again...." Library of Congress 2013, 44).
concluded that the National Front agreement was democracy's darkest moment in Colombia because it gave the population a false sense of peace after La Violencia (Paredes, and Díaz 2007, 12). However, under all that quietness and calm, the beginning of the current conflict was brewing since "the exclusion of all other parties and political movements, different from the traditional two, generated discontent ... and had a very negative impact" (Ibid., 187).

In fact, in 1964, unhappy with the Liberal governance, Pedro Antonio Marín—leader of a Liberal self-defense group—turned to socialism, changed his name to Manuel Marulanda, alias Tirofijo (sure-shot), and officially baptized his group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) (Manrique Cortés 2008, 1). However, the FARC was not the first nor the last revolutionary group formed after La Violencia; it was not even the only one vowing to protect the rights of poorer rural workers, nor to claim to fight for a more egalitarian society for all Colombians. That same year, another group of young Colombians—educated in Cuba, inspired by Ché Guevara, the Cuban revolution, and Marxist ideology—founded the Ejército Nacional de Liberación (ELN) (National Liberation Army), to date still the most politically driven of all illegal groups. In 1967, the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) (Popular Liberation Army), whose leadership initially followed soviet principles, is believed to be extinct since 1991. Finally, under an ideology that combined revolutionary socialism and populism, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) (April 19th Movement), was founded on April 19, 1970, to protest alleged election fraud that
denied former dictator General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's electoral victory (IOC 2014).

Since their inception, all these guerrilla groups claimed to follow some form of left-wing ideology and vowed to defend the rights of the poorest of Colombians. Notwithstanding those claims, and unlike in any other country in the world, when Colombia's drug production and trafficking moved away from the hands of common drug dealers or traffickers, it went directly to the hands of illegal groups successfully trying to destabilize the government (Thoumi 2002, 109).

When it comes to the Colombian guerrillas, it is now known that, in one way or another, all those revolutionary groups have not only performed terrorist acts against innocent civilians but have also partaken in drug trafficking, widely benefitting from its profits. Most importantly, history now shows that all guerrilla groups arose in response to the cruelty of Conservative policies imposed by those in power, using the quiet times of Frente Nacional to organize their ranks. While the rest of the country enjoyed a false sense of peace concocted by the Conservative and Liberal elites, the longest conflict in the Western Hemisphere was born.

Politics, an Enemy of Moral Values?

Just as politics was conceived to be the natural scenario in which expected contradictions that arise in a society are peacefully resolved, the role of political leaders is to represent voices from different ideologies in their society and to oversee the general well-being of all of them without incentivizing violence. That is not the case seen in those two periods of Colombian history —La Violencia and Frente Nacional—,
eras best described by sociologist Fals Borda as times "... culturally regressive and backward" (Guzmán Campos, Fals Borda et al. 1964, 67).

The actions of Conservative and Liberal elites, supported by the Catholic Church, turned violence into a social process that abandoned traditional moral values —such as the respect for human life, freedom of expression and ideology, and all those principles that are required in civilized societies— just to remain in power. During this time, politics became a weapon of war to justify mass murders as the military forces of the nation —traditionally charged with protecting the population— executed the orders coming from the highest ranks of the Colombian Government.

Furthermore, a split-second decision made by these two parties when creating the National Front did not foresee that the ideological war they began would forever change a population that, still today, cannot find its way back into each other. The polarization created during that time helps explain why it has been so difficult for this society to build any kind of consensus about the future of the nation. It all boils down to deeply seeded irreconcilable moral differences. Fals Borda believes that the foundation of the Colombian armed conflict stems from the decisions made by socially immature and selfish elites that not only refused to accept their actions, but that further continued to rule by secret gentlemen's agreements to hide their wrongdoings and to forget their own actions (Ibid., 67).

This tortured history helps explain why Colombia's search for peace continues to fail. Historical moral differences have separated the elites from the rest of the
population, creating structural barriers that unless recognized, acknowledged and changed, will continue to hinder any attempts for long-lasting peace. In fact, when looking at Colombia today, it is easy to see that many of the negative elements identified 50 years ago persist. This nation is still unequal, divided, with large numbers of the population living in poverty, with a weak leadership, debilitated institutions, and most of all, still at war.
CHAPTER TWO

BEHIND THE CONFLICT

Very few long-lasting internal conflicts have as much or as detailed available information as the Colombian war. Any interested party can find innumerable sources from respected historians, sociologists, economists, and lawyers who accurately describe and analyze different aspects, events, or periods of this conflict. However, as a nation, Colombia is still unable to achieve a consensus regarding its origin or the causes at the root of its longevity (see Chapter 5). Yet, despite the extensive and at times contradictory literature, three issues resurface in every analysis: Colombia's exclusive class system, its society's violent path, and the country's land.

Sociologist Alejandro Reyes Posada (2009, 368) links these three key matters when describing that, "Violence has been used in Colombia to pressure political reforms, to impede them, or to recuperate the State's rural sovereignty." This very clear statement tells about the permissiveness of a society that allowed, and even sanctioned, its government's use of violent methods to silence those perceived as an obstacle. It also speaks about the tremendous distance between the elites who control it all and the struggles imposed on those outside. However, more central to the conflict and to the ongoing peace negotiations, Reyes' ideas place land at the epicenter of it all, for in this country land ownership and power go hand in hand. Understanding this dependency brings about an entirely new dimension to this enduring conflict.
Both Coleman (2003, 19) and Levinger (2013, 33) coincide in the view that when *high-stake distributional issues* —understood as a conflict over an asset *impossible to go without*— are a factor clearly identifiable in a war, the unlikely possibility of arriving at a satisfactory resolution is one of the leading causes for its intractability. However, although Coleman defines land as one key asset that people will fight over, it is Frances Stewart's *horizontal inequalities* theory that offers a clear understanding of the importance of land ownership in an individual's life. According to her, the economic, social, and political opportunities available to specific sectors of the population are determinant factors in the welfare of each individual in that group. Based on that definition, Stewart (2002, 9) states that, "... land is of huge importance where agriculture accounts for most output and employment, but gets less important as development proceeds...." In other words, "... land ownership not only contributes to people's ability to be nourished, but it also contributes directly to their self-respect, status and well-being" (Stewart, Brown et al. 2005, 7).

With these notions in hand, the next logical step is to review economic data available to gauge if and how land ownership developed into a *high-stakes distributional issue* that contributed to the Colombian conflict's intractability. For years, economists around the world have used GINI coefficients\(^1\) to measure inequalities

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1. In Economics terms, “the GINI index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The GINI index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and the hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. A GINI index of zero represents perfect equality and 100, perfect inequality” (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms (2015)).
among individuals in a country or in a particular region. Given that land distribution and ownership are clear indicators of the existence of inequalities in a society, the sixty-year evolution of Colombia's GINI coefficients for these two elements will shed light on the extent of inequality gaps created by potential unfair distributions of land.

According to Ana María Ibáñez (2009), in 2012, Colombia's GINI coefficient was 0.86 for land, and 0.89 for property, two values unquestionably high that speak about the great inequality in the country's distribution of land. Upon further analysis, the data collected by respected national economists (Table 1) indicate that this disparity is not new in Colombia since records from 1901-1917 also show very high levels of land concentration during that time.

![Table 1. GINI Coefficient for Land in Colombia, 1901-2012.](image)

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<tr>
<td><strong>GINI LAND</strong></td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GINI PROPERTY</strong></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONCENTRATION INDEX %</strong></td>
<td>85.19</td>
<td>85.13</td>
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Source: Compilation by the author for this analysis, with data and research from Kalmanovitz, and López Enciso (2005), Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC) (2012); Ossa (2000); Centro de Estudios Ganaderos (CEGA), and Ministerio de Agricultura (MinAgricultura) (1985); Machado C. (1998); and The World Bank, and Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico (CEDE) (2004).

However, notwithstanding the historical concentration of land in Colombia, the noticeable increase in the 1997 GINI coefficient coincides with heightened guerrilla and paramilitary activity reported during the same year. An increase in drug trade or the war's escalation could help explain why this significant redistribution of vast extensions of land ended up in the hands of few, perhaps even in the hands of revolutionary groups fighting for territorial control. The alarming disparity of the Colombian GINI coefficient
allows experts to believe land is a potential issue at the root of the conflict. However, this theory can only be confirmed once the history of land in Colombia from 1960 to date is juxtaposed with the effects drug trafficking, paramilitary and guerrilla activity had on land ownership.

**Not Precisely a Government for the People**

Historically, Colombian elites have not only controlled vast extensions of land but also worked relentlessly to ensure that land ownership was unattainable for those outside their class. To that end, this select group used the highest-ranking positions in government — accessible only to them — to enact laws that facilitated the appropriation of campesinos’ plots. However, it was not until Mariano Ospina Perez’s regime (1946-1950) that the trickery used to extend the farms of the rich moved from enacting unfair laws to expropriation by extreme force, including torture and rape. Furthermore, the nature of the targets changed as well, adding to the list of rural workers all those landowners who opposed the government’s party.

Although the massive killings and illegal seizure of land slowed down under the following dictatorship of General Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957) and the first two

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2. The Spanish conquest established a social order were only those born in Spain from Spanish parents were at the top; a very small circle not even completely accessible to the children of Spaniards born in the new territories. These well-educated elite had power, money, and governmental support to acquire vast extensions of land. Mestizos (of mixed race), born from a Spaniard and a native Indian were called to work the elite’s land. Although they could buy small parcels to grow their own crops, the fees and conditions imposed were so steep that it became impossible for any of them to reap the fruit of their labor. Alejandro Reyes Posada (2009, 15) explains that most times than not, the debts acquired by these illiterate campesinos grew so quickly and so large that their tiny parcels were expropriated for lack of payment and their entire families forced to work for free to repay the lender.

3. The violent methods used by Ospina’s military forces included all kinds of unspeakable atrocities. They began with intimidations but very quickly escalated to torture (See Chapter 4).
governments of Frente Nacional, the lives and struggles of campesinos (rural workers) in Colombia were not even a concern in the minds of those leaders. However, the third term of that bipartisan agreement appointed as president a man still regarded as one of the greatest and most progressive leaders in the country. Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970) not only focused on modernizing the State, but most importantly, turned his eyes and policies to the needs of the nation's campesinos. Under his mandate and for the first time, Colombian rural workers became part of the government's new development model to acknowledge their importance in the sustainability and growth of the country's economy. President Lleras believed that, "... without campesinos' organization, land redistribution will not be possible" (Lleras Restrepo 1982, 8), and with that goal in mind, he organized the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC) (National Association of rural workers) to implement Law 165 of 1961 (Ibid., 69), a forward-thinking rural reform that intended to provide plots for Colombian campesinos. Although he was the author and promoter, Lleras had to become president to implement his rural reform law, an endeavor that he still was not able to achieve during his presidency.

Since the most significant component of this rural reform required an extensive redistribution of land, it should surprise no one that the strongest opposition came from the elites who refused to lose their valuable and large extensions of property. Under the last presidency of Frente Nacional with Conservative Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970-1974) in power, a new wave of violence escalated when wealthy
landowners hired private armies to delay handing parcels to the *campesinos*. Pastrana's signing of the *Pacto de Chicoral* ended the ongoing rural reform. In fact, this agreement—personally organized by the president and approved by those who in 1961 supported and enacted *Law 165*—became the perfect counter-reform that reversed President Lleras' achievement. As one of the many gentlemen's pacts signed behind doors in Colombia, the rural elite's agreed to pay taxes based on their lands' extension to immediately stop land redistribution guaranteeing support against any current or future land reforms. *Chicoral* also disguised another benefit for wealthy landowners, undervalued real estate prices for their lands (Albán 2011, 348).

Aside from how unethical and unfair that plan was, perhaps the biggest mistake of Pastrana's Government was to respond militarily to the pacific movement of *campesinos* organizations such as ANUC, who obviously protested the reversal. His ruthless decision not only facilitated the persecution and assassination of the *campesinos*' leadership—now seen and treated as rebels of the establishment—at the hands of rich landowners and the military, but also opened the door for the newly formed guerrillas to rise up in arms against the establishment, again.

**From Ideology Driven to Drug Trafficking**

Originally, the guerrilla groups' sole purpose was to overthrow the Colombian Government to implement a Communist Regime that would protect the rights of *campesinos*. Notwithstanding their goal, the truth is that despite their attempts none of the insurgent groups played a very significant role in Colombian politics or even
society during those first years. The reason for their lack of success was their narrow scope of action, limited to very specific regions, simply too far away from the decision-making center of the nation to be even noticed. In fact, the secluded and remote locations where the guerrilla activity took place worked against them. The lack of communication and the difficulty of the terrain hindered their efforts to acquire supplies and to recruit new men to fight the better-trained and equipped national military forces.

![Figure 1. The FARC Expansion, 1977-2006.](image)

Source: Compilation made by the author for the purposes of this analysis with data from Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (DANE) (2014); Reyes Posada, Amaya et al. (2007).

During the 1970s, guerrilla groups struggled to finance their operations and focused their efforts in kidnapping rich Colombians, a business that did not produce enough resources to sponsor other illegal activities like blowing up oil pipelines. However, their unquestionable knowledge of the Colombian jungles and their experience avoiding the military facilitated the FARC's entrance into the drug trade as
protectors of the routes for well-known drug lords such as Pablo Escobar and his Medellin cartel (Isacson, and Poe 2009, 3). Yet, for a country with a population of forty-four million at the time, the FARC was still a relatively small group with only one-thousand to fifteen-hundred men, a number that would quickly multiply over the course of the following ten years.

The second stage of the FARC's approach to drug trafficking aimed to expand their drug business, a plan facilitated by the government's persecution and incarceration of the drug lords who originally hired them to safeguard coca routes. Ibáñez, and Velez (2008, 8) believe that "... their growth strategy focused on expropriating land to cultivate coca plants." To that end, the FARC, a group that professed following strict Communist principles and that fought against capitalism, quickly forgot its ideology and self-appointed role as protector of the rights of those less fortunate, and turned against the campesinos it once vowed to safeguard. As such, the FARC threatened the lives of defenseless rural workers to compel entire families —including children as young as five years old— to cultivate coca in seized fields; they forced boys and young males into their ranks, assassinating all those who did not collaborate; and they snatched young women to serve and please the guerrilleros. These radical actions exponentially increased the amount of land dedicated to coca production (Figure 1). According to Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (2013a, 11), they also contributed to the forced displacement of close to six million campesinos.

This relationship between the FARC and illegal drugs is very important to the
analysis of the conflict for it is believed to have changed the impact that guerrilla activities had in the country’s land distribution and in the overall national scenario. While there is still controversy about how this guerrilla-drugs association began, it is irrefutable that the link transformed the nature of all guerrilla groups, most of which followed suit despite never attaining the FARC’s level of success or power. Experts estimated that by the end of the 1980s, the revolutionary group’s income from drug trafficking was US$500 to US$600 million per year (UNRIC 2013).

Similarly, although the illegal expropriation of land is well identified, it is still unknown how much of this land was commandeered by the FARC, or for the personal benefit of its leadership. This is an important topic that the ongoing negotiations need to address, for those territories must return to their rightful owners, all of them campesinos, or to their families for many of the men were killed when refusing to give in to guerrilla demands. Without fulfilling this important requirement, there will be no guaranteed sustainable peace in Colombia.

From Private Armies to the Lords of War

As guerrilla incursions raiding productive lands of the country increased, wealthy Colombian landowners felt the threats of extortion and kidnapping upon them. To protect themselves, their families and lands, they organized and financed ruthless private armies (Manrique Cortés 2008, 2). Interestingly enough, history shows that these types of organizations are not new in Colombia. In fact, as of La Violencia, three different groups can be clearly identified by four elements shared by all; (1) small
armies with heavily armed retired members of the Colombian military in their ranks; (2) hired and financed by the elites, which included the government; (3) instructed to protect the elites' lands; and (4) the use of extreme violence to expropriate the plots of neighboring campesinos. The only difference between these groups was their name. During La Violencia, President Ospina Perez's Special Forces were called Chulavitas, during Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship they were known as Pájaros (birds), and since 1990 as Convivir under the Governor of Antioquia, Alvaro Uribe Velez. Later on in 2002, the group changed its name to Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), and continued acting under President Alvaro Uribe Velez (Fajardo 2002, 12). Today's paramilitaries are known as Bandas Criminales (BACRIM).4

The Colombian conflict entered a more violent face when these new right-wing private armies engaged in killing guerrilla members, including many innocent campesinos, unjustly blamed to be guerrilleros (AMR 2005, 3). In time, paramilitary groups also found drug trafficking more profitable than protecting the wealthy, and moved into the business as well. León Valencia A. (2007, 14)5 believes that the strong ties linking paramilitary groups to drug lords explained their urge for territorial control since, much like guerrillas, expanding their illegal business was imperative to their financial stability.

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4. Jaime Zuluaga Nieto (2013, 183) explains that BACRIM is short for Bandas Criminales (Criminal Bands). These groups were formed as a result of the 2005 paramilitary demobilization and its leadership stemmed from those paramilitaries who did not accept the benefits offered by Uribe's Laws.

5. León Valencia is a political scientist and research analyst in Colombia, who often writes for El Tiempo newspaper and Semana magazine, two of the most important written media in the country and owned by the Santos family. However, the most interesting part of Valencia's background is that he is a former ELN guerrillero who abandoned the fight in 1994 under President Cesar Gaviria. Although some would recommend reading his books with a grain of salt given his previous revolutionary life, Valencia is well-known and respected for his serious and thorough analyses.
Perhaps one of the most important analyses of paramilitary groups in Colombia is Gustavo Duncan’s who coined the term *Señores de la Guerra* (War Lords). The presence of these lords "... is seen when the coercion and protection of a society formed by armed groups that serve individual interest are superior to the reach and capacity of the democratic State..." (Duncan 2006, 30).

Duncan insists on the need to differentiate the *Señores de la Guerra* from other actors of violence —such as guerrillas, paramilitaries, or mafias— because their actions produce profound changes in the construction of the State, deeply impacting the nation's social order. Although these groups may seem to behave similarly given their violent actions, it is their intentions toward the State where the difference lies. For instance, guerrillas go after the National Government because they need national institutions to impose a Communist social order. To reach their goal, they had no problem sacrificing the *campesinos* they vowed to protect and lost credibility among them. On the other hand, *narcos* (drug dealers) do not aim to control the State, but rather, their business and what benefits it. The excessive profit forces them to create entities of control outside of the government that, by their nature, transform the social order. These actions force the State to negotiate with them creating a different *narco-government* relationship. Finally, paramilitaries want to be the State and capture local governments to impose the nature of political relationships according to the interests of one individual, the one who hired them and financed them (Ibid., 30-41). This boss could be a *narco*, a wealthy landowner, or even the government as it happened during Ospina
Perez and Rojas Pinilla's administrations.

According to Duncan, when big drug cartels disappeared from 1994 onward, it was their private armies who emerged to take-over the gaps left in the drug business and to protect valuable coca crops. At first, their operations were financed by revenues from drug trafficking, but "... as they gained territorial control, they took over the local governments' resources oriented to education and infrastructure..." (Ibid., 98). From there on, these War Lords built a peripheral regional authority that negotiated power with the social elites, administered justice in the communities, imposed new values based on patriarchal conducts, regulated property rights, and controlled demographic flows deciding —according to their interest— who could live in their territory. However, from economic data available for the regions they controlled, it became obvious that these lords were not interested in strengthening productive structures but rather in exploiting particular economies, limited to specific agricultural sectors —cattle, farming, timber, palm, and of course, coca crops— that benefitted them (Ibid., 99).

Interestingly, Frances Stewart's HS theory provides two contradictory perspectives when analyzing the effect of paramilitarism in occupied regions. On the one hand, these War Lords fit well her private interest motivation factor that describes greed at the root of a conflict. Paramilitary goals and structured expansion originated out of their want to control the drug trade. Also fitting is her description of the failure

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6. Frances Stewart (2004, 3) describes her narrowed-down definition for human security as, "... where insecurity consists in interpersonal violence or the risk of it... arising at the individual or community level... experienced at the level of the individual, community or group, rather than that of the nation."
of the social contract between the State and its citizens, which in this case, opened an entry for the Señores de la Guerra to take-over entire populations quickly as they advanced their agenda. What is contradictory is that after War Lords replaced the State in their newly acquired territories, they successfully provided human security in terms of protection against guerrilla threats, education, jobs, and even health services for the populations they controlled. For that reason, it is explicable how, in a very short time, the emergence of the Señores de la Guerra forever changed the Colombian social and political landscape.

A New Political Map for Colombia

The paramilitary strategy to attack the government from within required a solid and well-connected force. Taking advantage of the profits from the illegal drug trade and their high-level association with rich landowners, many of them political figures as well, these War Lords focused on capturing local administrations to influence the National Government. According to Valencia A. (2007, 14), "... it was not difficult to establish a relationship between the expansion of the paramilitary and the configuration of a new political map."

Upon visual examination of Colombian maps tracking the geographical expansion of paramilitary forces juxtaposed to electoral results from 1987 to 2002 (Figure 2), and Valencia's recounts, this new political geography becomes clear. All these
records show how unknown and unlikely new candidates began to win elections by a landslide in very specific areas of the country, some of them even receiving more votes than the total number of registered voters in their town. Even more interesting is that, in those same areas of control, the connection between paramilitary and newly elected local governments resulted in multiple small political parties with similar names —"... Colombia Democrática (Democratic Colombia), Convergencia Ciudadana (Citizens' Convergence), Convergencia Popular Cívica (Popular Civic Convergence)..." (Valencia A. 2007, 14), among many others—, quickly surfacing and pushing Liberal and Conservative candidates out of the race. In a country where only two parties —Liberal and Conservative— had exclusive political control for so many years, that their candidates withdrew last minute or lost elections traditionally won in at least twelve departments is a shift that had to be noticed by the central leaderships. This was a significant red flag foreshadowing a new social and political order in Colombia. However, it went unnoticed by either party; or did it?

In a handful of years, the Señores de la Guerra successfully infiltrated all spheres of the State by financing political campaigns in key strategic areas of the country — including those of traditional Liberal and Conservative candidates' areas of influence,

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7. According to León Valencia A. (2007, 15), "... in the small town of El Carmelo —population of 14,000— in Cordoba Department, Eleonora Pineda, a young hairdresser who had barely finished school, was elected in 2001 as council member for her township with 12,000 votes. Only a year later, in 2002, she was elected to the Colombian Congress with over 80,000 votes." Ms. Pineda never denied being financed by the paramilitaries to achieve her seat; she was found guilty of parapoltics and jailed from 2006 to 2009.

8. For Leon Valencia, those electoral losses became one of the reasons why Liberals and Conservatives either became paramilitary candidates or supported their parties in those regions they once controlled; simply to stay relevant politically and not let go of their perceived political power (Ibid.).
buying votes to guarantee the election of their own paramilitary nominees—. Furthermore, by securing allegiances with new and traditional parties, they protected themselves from an already weakened judicial system (Espinal, Giraldo et al. 2007, 9). Once elected, the new *parapolíticos* used their recently acquired power to shield paramilitary groups on all fronts; including enacting legislation against extradition and creating tax incentives that benefitted legal paramilitary businesses; the latter being the latest step in their well-crafted strategy to legalize their activities.

![Figure 2. The Paramilitary Expansion, 1987-2002.](image)

*Figure 2. The Paramilitary Expansion, 1987-2002.*

Source: Compilation made by the author for the purposes of this analysis with data from DANE (2014); Reyes Posada, Amaya et al. (2007); MinDefensa (2009).

Under that model, the paramilitaries created foundations and cooperatives to promote productive projects, engaged in community work especially in poor neighborhoods, and controlled local, regional and national elections and politics (McEvoy, and McGregor 2008, 199). Having control over the financial resources of the State, the *Señores de la Guerra* made sure that their senators and representatives in Congress
redirected governmental funds to programs that would not improve social policy, but that instead solidified the commitment of poor voters to guarantee future elections (Youngblood-Coleman 2014, 50). That is exactly what *Income Transfers* implemented during President Uribe's (2002-2010) administration did. They resolved some income issues affecting the poorer population without providing a real chance to move out of poverty (López M. 2011b, 12).

Without being able to influence the increase in military spending, *parapolíticos* diverted governmental funds to new destinations, accessible to local paramilitary control. Consequently, the most needed sectors of the population received the short end of both sticks; as the quality of social programs was severely affected, the military attacks on paramilitary, guerrilla, and *narcos*’ territory increased. By the end of the year 2002, the only area in the country without illegal group activity was the Indian Reservations (Figure 3).

When looking at the individual geographical localization of each group in 2002 (Figure 4), their simultaneous presence in some areas of the country becomes very noticeable and may be indicative of potential or existing combat zones. However, that
the northern and central territories —Colombia's most productive and fertile lands— are exclusively shared by narcos and paramilitaries not only confirms their close relationship, but also exposes the elites of the country, many of whom are still landowners in those same areas. Conversely, the southeast territory where narcos and guerrillas interacted is much smaller, isolated, and with little development; much like the rest of the guerrilla-controlled areas are localized in the inhospitable jungles of the Amazon. The presence of narcos in the most southern part of the country —where the Amazon River runs through the border with Brazil— is surprising for it is the only area on an Indian reservation occupied by an illegal group. It is explicable because the Amazon River flows to the Pacific Ocean providing an unencumbered route for cocaine.

Figure 4. Illegal Groups individual Expansion, 1987-2002.

Source: Compilation made by the author for the purposes of this analysis with data from DANE (2014); Reyes Posada, Amaya et al. (2007); MinDefensa (2009).

9. Alejandro Reyes Posada (2014) explains that Colombia’s northern and central lands are the most productive in the country. As such, coffee growing areas are localized in the central region while extensive agriculture and cattle farming are in the north given the flat surfaces and warmer weather.
Finally, this spread of illegal groups throughout Colombia requires an important clarification. Although the occupation revealed in these maps seems to indicate that paramilitaries, guerrillas, and even drug lords have ownership of the territories they occupy, it must be said that their presence in most of those regions does not imply misappropriation of the land (See Chapter 4). Although the illegal occupation varied very little until 2010, the State is still today, one of Colombia's largest owners of that land.

The difference between land ownership and territorial control explains what appears to be an enormous contradiction. Since the Colombian Government does not have complete control over the nation's territory, specifically over baldios (government owned land), illegal groups took unfettered control over those territories. However, because ownership continues to reside with the government, there is no change in terms of land distribution. The lack of State presence gives these groups unrestricted territorial access.

Is Land Really It?

Analyzing the historical background of the Colombian conflict is not a simple task. Aside from the many actors involved and the tremendous amount of reliable information available, its ongoing nature uncovers new facts that clarify or shift its analysis daily. Undoubtedly, in a war that has been fought in rural areas, with criminal groups killing campesinos and usurping agricultural plots to grow illegal drugs, the role of land as the key factor fueling the conflict seems obvious for land is the one constant throughout the entire sixty-year period. Nothing in recent developments point to any
other high-stakes distributional issues as the culprit for the potential intractability of this struggle, but a few historical details give rise to the question, is land really the reason behind it all?

The review of GINI coefficients for land and property from 1901 to 2012 (Table 1) indicate that land distribution in Colombia is highly inequitable, that large extensions of territory have always been owned by very few, including the State, and that the disparity increased as the years went by. The country's land Concentration Index rose from 85.19% in 1960 to 91.36% in 1997 (IGAC 2012, 68). By themselves, these figures not only place Colombia at the top of the most unequal societies' list but also support all reports stating that land inequality is at the root of the conflict.

However, when looking at the GINI coefficients side-by-side Colombian events, new observations emerge. For instance, the GINI index for 1918 through 1931 is 0.84 just as the land coefficient for 1988 is also 0.84. In fact, there is little to no variation of the GINI coefficient for land from 1918 through 1995.\(^\text{10}\) Since these figures do not lie, the unequal distribution of land in Colombia, well documented since the early 1900s, points to a central issue in Frances Stewart's theory. In her view, access to land is not only imperative to the welfare and sustainability of individuals and their social group, but most importantly, that such disparity can contribute to prolonging a conflict (Stewart 2002, 9). Although Colombia's GINI coefficient confirms that land distribution directly

\(^{10}\) Although not included in the compiled table made by the author, The World Bank (2015) records for Colombia a GINI coefficient for land of 0.85 in 1995.
relates to the country's high inequality, those figures still do not confirm that land ownership is the cause of the conflict. The reason is simple; the unfair distribution of land in Colombia began at least thirty years before the FARC —officially founded in 1964— entered the scene.

Although the guerrillas' originated out of the need to protect Liberal campesinos from the Conservative rule, the GINI Property and the Concentration Index from 1960 through 1984 show little to no variation in either ownership or concentration of the land during those twenty-four years. That active revolutionary groups exist in a country without effecting any change in land redistribution is incomprehensible. However, for Colombia, this can only mean that unequal distribution of land cannot be attributed to the FARC’s actions or to those of any other guerrilla group. More importantly, land is not the high-stakes distributional issue at the root of the protracted conflict.

Nevertheless, data shows that a change in land ownership began in the 1990s (Graph 1), at the time when well-known drug lords from the Cali and Medellin cartels were either captured or killed. It also coincides with heightened paramilitary activity, and with the involvement of the guerrilla groups in cocaine production. Most experts continue to emphasize that land is at the epicenter of the conflict because it is required to grow coca crops and to control coca routes. Land is also their reason to explain the six million displaced campesinos. The GINI Property and Concentration Index reinforce the importance to differentiate land ownership from territorial control for it is in misinterpreting this distinction where the confusion lies. In fact, not identifying one
from the other ill defines the role that land plays in the conflict in two ways.

Firstly, since coca plantations are located mostly in areas of low governmental control, far away from crucial productive lands and market centers, and land ownership has not changed as a result, stating that drug dealers or guerrilla groups expropriated privately owned farmlands to cultivate coca is inaccurate. Unquestionably, guerrillas hijacked *baldios* to grow coca crops; however, as Molano (2013, 11) confirms, those lands are still the nation's property. Similarly, there is no doubt that both guerrilla and paramilitary groups exert *territorial control* over vast areas of Colombia to protect coca routes. Yet, constant military pressure forces illegal groups to find new routes often, and both guerrillas and paramilitaries need the flexibility to move across the territory. As a result, the areas under their control changed constantly and turned land into nothing more than a temporary pass-through, one that does not require claiming its
ownership to control. Actually, land ownership can quickly become a hindrance that severely limits these groups' ability to escape military raids. For these reasons, their constant relocation fuels their need for increased territorial control, and that is what truly ignites the conflict.

Secondly, only by identifying the difference can one realize that the expression, "it is fundamental to acknowledge that there has always been a dispute over land in Colombia" (Fajardo 2002, 10) does not refer to the conflict, but rather to the meaning land has for Colombians. Its ownership is synonymous with power, and perhaps the best explanation for the historical concentration of land in the hands of a few. Most of all, realizing this correlation clarifies why those who own the most join forces with those who can help them keep it, wealthy landowners, and political elites. Without a doubt, their alliance contributed to increase Colombia's inequality gap for centuries; in fact, it still does. However, inequality is not at the root of the conflict either; it is not even what fuels the war. Although this is another bold statement, it is not baseless for both the GINI coefficient and the Concentration Index support this finding.

There is no easy way to say this other than bluntly. Even if Colombia never had civil wars, the nation would still be the most unequal country in the region. A terrible reality, certainly difficult to fathom, but one confirmed by both economic data and historical events. Even more shocking is that one constant clearly identifiable throughout those periods of time is the alliance wealthy-political elite and the role that different administrations played in the unequal distribution of land in Colombia.
This idea is not easy to explain firstly, because the widespread justification for the country's high inequality levels has always been—as with most negative issues in Colombia—the protracted conflict; whose epicenter happens to develop precisely in the rural areas. Secondly, because those who should discover and change high inequality are the same ones that create the policies that benefit the wealthy. That is the reason why land distribution is unequal in Colombia, and also why every single rural reform attempted quickly becomes a counter-reform. There are too many examples to enumerate, but one suffices; the Pacto de Chicoral, a gentlemen's agreement between President Misael Pastrana and his wealthy friends that halted the ongoing 1961 rural reform, and then, reversed it to guarantee that any land taken would go back to the original (wealthy) owners. As the icing on their cakes, Pastrana agreed to undervalue rural property unrealistically to lower his allies' property taxes to a bare minimum.

Although it seems logical to attribute the historical concentration of land in the hands of very few to the current conflict, the 1901-2012 GINI coefficient and Concentration Index demonstrate that there are in reality two different issues at play in Colombia's rurality, the conflict and high inequality. However, these two factors run in parallel to each other, they do not feed off each other, and one did not create the other. Yet, they do have one characteristic in common; both of them destroy the lives of Colombia's rural population. They also have a common enemy, the fusion of economic and political power in the hands of those who control the land. In other words, rural elites with too much power influenced both national and regional
governments for their selfish benefit, and political elites eager to please wealthy landowners forgot the little people they vowed to protect.

For many years, this alliance only focused on stopping rural reforms, and in doing so, lost track of what was going on in the periphery. The government abandoned control over extensive areas of national territory thereby opening space for drug dealers and guerrillas to enter the game. The solution was simple for the rural elite, to hire private armies to protect them. When those became a threat, most wealthy landowners supported their political ambitions to safeguard their lands maintaining a close hold on politics. Today, these governments of the elites for the elites have control over the weapons of war as well.

In the meantime, campesinos that never had anything to begin with, continue to lose it all, including the strength to fight back. To preserve their lives, it was easier for them to run away to cities completely unprepared to receive them. Their displacement proves that this conflict is not a struggle for land; how can it be when those who should be leading the fight for land are the most victimized by all?

What is indisputable from these facts is that the Havana peace negotiations must address not only territorial control, but especially, the unequal distribution of land in the country even if the land is not what ignited or drove this conflict. Given the government's interest and commitment in signing this accord, this may be the only chance campesinos will ever have at owning the parcels they once cultivated.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ECONOMICS OF THE WAR

Very few words are as powerful as the word war. Independent of language differences, its connotation always entails fear, chaos, cruelty, and death. Yet, as a concept, war explains the way in which State and non-State actors resolve those conflicts that diplomacy and politics failed to dissipate. Undoubtedly, this non-static notion evolves and changes over time, as do the tactics, weapons, and dynamics that surround it. The history of war is long and extends far back into early human history. Equally old are the attempts to define theories and patterns of acceptable conduct that nations in conflict must follow during times of war. Regrettably, in the same way in which globalization lavishes the world with innovations that facilitate most people's lives, it also brought with it a different type of war, one that is unpredictable and that follows no rules. Colombians live day-in and day-out that kind of war, one that most of them cannot truly comprehend nor can adequately describe.

Remarkably, prominent national and international experts\(^1\) also fail to grasp all the intricacies surrounding this conflict, yet most continue analyzing its different angles to understand why peace still escapes the "happiest people in the world."\(^2\) In contrast,

\(^1\) Experts such as Francisco E. Thoumi (2002), James Petras (2001), Aimo Baribbi, and Piet Spijkers (2011), Ethan Nadelmann (2009), and Adam Isacson (2014), to mention a few, have different theories explaining well researched analysis on the Colombian conflict. However, they agree that the war is not simply about illegal drugs and that there are many actors influencing its longevity; yet there is no consensus among them on the reason at its root nor on how to solve it.

\(^2\) WIN-Gallup International (2012) Annual Global Index of Hope and Happiness report conducts a yearly poll that measures who are the happiest people around in the world, and determined for the second
for the layperson, the Colombian conflict is not only easy to define, but especially, quite simple to resolve. In their assessment, this war is nothing more than the result of a bunch of guerrillas and corrupt government officials fighting over a very lucrative drug business. Equally simplistic is the conviction that all that is required to end the conflict is the country's willingness to stop cocaine production and trafficking. Although most Colombians would strongly disagree with such naïve views, a growing number will concur in that there seems to be a very profitable business behind all the turmoil; just not one related to the illegal drug trade.

This nation's economy represents one more of its many fascinating paradoxes, one that —in true Colombian form— now puzzles economists and financiers across the globe. Realistically, that a country manages to grow throughout sixty years of war seems impossible, but that such a nation is also recognized as one of three rising Latin American markets —next to Panamá and Bolivia while Chile, Brazil, and Mexico are no longer growing— is truly unbelievable. In order to evaluate a country's economic health and stability, economists calculate a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). 3 This measurement is of particular importance when assessing Colombia's economy since its formula does not account for any revenue coming from illegal activities.

With this clarification outlined, a review of The World Bank's data for Colombia year in a row, 2012 and 2013, that Colombians are the happiest people in the world. Even more surprising was that their happiness index, 75, almost doubles the index for the world, 40.

3. Gross Domestic Product represents “The total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country in a given year, equal to total consumer, investment and government spending, plus the value of exports, minus the value of imports.” (InvestorWords (2015).
reveals that from 1961 —one year after the FARC was officially formed— to 2013 (Graph 2), the country's economy not only grew, but also maintained a 4% average rate of growth across fifty-two years of war. Although Meléndez, and Harker (2008, 16) explain that the sharp economic decline in 1999 was the result of decreased public and private investment between 1997 and 2000,⁴ the country's economy quickly recovered the following year. Moreover, when comparing Colombia's data with the rest of the world's GDP, it is impossible not to be impressed by this nation's economic performance.

Graph 2. Colombia's economy, 1961-2013.
(GDP Growth annual %)


A few recent comments about Colombia’s economy are also notable. Christine Lagarde, director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in 2012 that, "Colombia’s economy is so strong that it is in a position to lend money to the

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4. According to Marcela Meléndez, and Arturo Harker (2008, 6), in Colombia, "Public investment decelerated (from positive average growth rates of 6 percent in the 1970s and 10 percent between 1985 and 1997, to negative average growth rates of -1 percent between 1997 and 2002); and private investment had a sizeable decline (from positive average growth rates of 7 percent in the 1970s and 3 percent between 1980 and 1997, to negative average growth rates of -7 percent between 1997 and 2002)."
International Monetary Fund rather than borrow..., [and] Colombia has enjoyed a macroeconomic policy that has given a lot of stability to the country" (Colombia Reports 2012b). In 2013, Bloomberg reported that in Colombia, "even as growth accelerates, inflation has slowed," and that, having "South America's lowest interest rate... [helped] Colombia’s economy gain momentum" (Bloomberg 2013). In 2010, Michael Geoghegan, HSBC Holdings' CEO, included Colombia among the new CIVETS\(^5\) that, "... will take-over as the new BRICs..." (Reuters 2010). Even more, the US Department of Commerce (US D.Com) (2013, 7) called Colombia "An Economic Miracle."

Undoubtedly, the economic indicators of Colombia are noteworthy, but let us not forget that this country is still immersed in a civil war that placed it in the short-list of intractable conflicts around the world. Hence, the inevitable question that arises from these findings is, if the GDP does not take into account a country's underground economy —in this case the drug trade—, the warfare directly impacting the country's economic structures —blowing up pipelines, filling fertile agricultural lands with coca crops and harming the population—, and miracles are not really around the corner, how can Colombia's economic growth be explained? Since the only business historically proven to be very profitable during times of war is war itself, perhaps then, the business behind the miraculous behavior of the Colombian economy is also the country's biggest

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5. Reuters (2010) reports that CIVETS is a term coined by Geoghegan to describe a new group of six nations —Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa— that he considers to be the new economic rising stars, for "each has large, young, growing population. Each has a diverse and dynamic economy. And each, in relative terms, is politically stable."
peril, its own conflict.

Colombia's economic growth during times of war brings forward an even more important issue addressed by Frances Stewart’s HS theory. When connecting development and security, she hypothesizes as follows:

*human security* forms an important part of people's well-being and is, therefore, an objective of development; that lack of *human security* has adverse consequences on economic growth and poverty and thereby on development; and that lack of development, or imbalanced development that involves sharp *horizontal inequalities*, is an important cause of conflict. (Stewart 2004, 1)

Based on her principles, the logical question is then, has the Colombian population benefitted from the country's overall economic growth? Given the ongoing nature of the conflict, it is fair to assume that the economic performance of Colombia is not linked to the well-being of its citizens. Understanding when and how the break occurred will provide formulas to reconnect these two important factors.

Additionally, although Stewart limits insecurity\(^6\) to the individual and to interpersonal violence among individuals or their groups, she includes criminal and political incentives as grounds for insecurity. Inherently, the financial costs of war must also play a significant role in the individual security of a population since their government's priority becomes its national security rather than its development. Based on this assumption, two distinct forces jump out as potential contributors to the

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6. Stewart (2004, 4) differentiates her definition of human security from the concept of national security claiming that the UNDP definition of Human Security is too extensive and encompasses "... not just the achievement of minimal levels of material needs, but also the absence of severe threats to them of an economic or political kind: ‘Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime – these are the emerging concerns of security all over the world’."
Colombian Government’s inability to provide for its citizens. Certainly, the actors directly involved in the struggle —drug lords, paramilitaries, and guerrillas— are the principal cause. Yet, in an internal conflict, that pressure from a generous international ally may develop into a deterrent is unanticipated. Since the United States and Colombia found a common enemy in the illegal drug trade, their relationship bears individual analysis. In the midst of the ongoing Colombian peace negotiation, this bond becomes of the utmost importance for both nations since lasting peace in Colombia will require unwavering American support to be genuinely sustainable.

**Mergers, Takeovers, and True Cost Economics**

For decades, the United States has been Colombia’s largest commercial partner and in return, Colombia has been by the United States’ side in several international conflicts.\(^7\) As with any relationship, these allies have not always seen eye to eye, yet they manage to continue strengthening trade and military links. Although only in 2012, a bilateral agreement opened the doors to free trade between the countries; their military cooperation is long-standing, and the United States involvement in the many stages of the Colombian conflict should surprise no one. In consequence, reviewing how the American policy shifts affected Colombia will clarify if the financial aid provided by the United States —in their joint effort against drug trafficking— mitigated the monetary burden placed upon Colombia by the war.

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\(^7\) The US Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs, and Historical Div., (1960, 24) report that Colombia was the only Latin American country to send troops to the Korean War, and the Batallón Colombia fought alongside the United States until the last day. Similarly, Colombia sent counter insurgent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.
A Long-Standing Military Partnership

The link between these nations extends as far back as 1947 when Colombia first received military aid from the United States "... to increase proficiency in the use of weapons and equipment; and to improve supply, maintenance, and administrative procedures by modeling them after U.S. Army systems" (US Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs, and Historical Div., 1960, 119). Even a team headed by CIA officer Hans Tofte arrived in Colombia during the 1958 Violencia since, "U.S. national interests required that Colombia, given its strategic Caribbean location, not be allowed to sink into turmoil and revolution that might lead to a government hostile to the United States" (Rempe 2002, 6). 8

Unlike most American foreign policy, President Kennedy's (1961-1963), the Alliance for Progress 9 (AFP) shifted the United States' relationship with Latin America. Drafted by the United Nations Office for Latin America (ECLAC), the AFP took into account the region's needs and proposed measures intending to "... speed economic and social development in Latin America, to improve the well-being of all, and to live in democratic societies that fulfilled their needs" (Machado C. 2011, 3). Unfortunately, a discrepancy existed between Kennedy's policy and Eisenhower's ongoing military

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8. Dennis M. Rempe (2002, 9) believes the United States Special Team recommended that Colombia "... initiate an anti-subversive program either partially or wholly clandestine, to discredit or eliminate by legal means those anti-democratic forces seeking for their own benefit, or for the benefit of a foreign power to impede or prevent the establishment of a stable, popular, democratic government..." since, a "... vital component to any successful political-military strategy designed to counter internal instability in Colombia [needs] U.S. support."

9. According to Absalón Machado C. (2011, 2), the AFP was a measure in response to the Cold War to pressure Latin American countries to undergo rural and tax reforms that would weaken revolutionary groups' attempts to cease democratic governments. As incentive to the governments, financial aid packages to repay their foreign debt were available for those countries once the reforms were enacted. To read the charter for the Alliance for Progress see http://bit.ly/1QdRfug.
strategies for Colombia. This became apparent with the 1961 implementation of Plan Lazo following General William Yarborough's advice to "... undertake counter-agent and counter-propaganda functions, as well as paramilitary, sabotage, and/or terrorist activities against known Communist proponents" (Rempe 2002, 14-15).

Although the Kennedy administration seemed to have a duplicitous speech, the AFP had a number of provisions that would have significantly contributed to bridging existing inequalities in Colombia. Regrettably, President Kennedy's assassination in 1963 halted a policy with the potential to improve many of the factors that Stewart defines central to her horizontal inequalities theory — access to ownership, fair income levels, employment opportunities, etc. —. Perhaps, if Colombia had implemented then the most significant ones — land and structural tax reform —, neither Coleman nor Stewart's theories would be applicable to this nation for this conflict may not be.

On the other hand, what outlived the Kennedy years was Plan Lazo, which remained active in Colombia for almost two decades. So did Yarborough's counsel to establish "... organized civilian self-defense units (autodefensas) and directed them to relieve army units of some patrolling and local garrisoning" (Ibid., 17). Thinking back to the Chulavitas during Ospina's Presidency, the Pájaros with Rojas and even Uribe's Convivir and AUC, there is no question that Colombia quickly implemented the military

10. Plan Lazo "... called for broad civic action programs within violence zones and an improved antiviolence apparatus coupled with military action that would target leading bandit elements and suppress and eliminate guerrilla forces. Ultimately, it would become the basis for additional counterinsurgency plans, including more sophisticated ones involving joint operations such as the Colombian Armed Forces (Joint) Counterinsurgency Plan of 1964-66" (Rempe 2002, 16).
advice received from its consistent ally.

**Colombia Meets America's Wars**

From the moment that the illegal drug business entered the conflict in the early 1980s, a struggle that originated from a *mere* difference in ideology shifted into a convoluted and very complex war. The rise of recognized drug lords —such as Pablo Escobar— not only strengthened the financial muscle of the guerrillas and empowered the emergence of paramilitary groups, but corrupted political and social structures throughout the nation. Additionally, governmental decisions like the 1990 *Apertura* (Opening)\(^{11}\) —a new development model to boost the economy—, and the 1991 Constitution defining Colombia as a *Social State of Rights*\(^{12}\) —to achieve a more egalitarian society— sanctioned two conflicting policies that contributed to weaken an already fragile State. By the end of the decade, a struggle that was no longer just between the Colombian Government and guerrilla groups had rapidly mustered new actors, not always easily identifiable, and with unyielding self-interests.

The conflict escalating in rural areas, Colombian cocaine flooding the world, and a rapidly changing population drowning under "...political violence, economic violence,

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11. Implemented under Cesar Gaviria's mandate (1990-1994), and defined by the US D.Justice (1994, vii) as, "The Colombian *Apertura* "opening" program, initiated in 1990, features a movement toward privatizing major state-owned companies and liberalizing Colombia's economy in an effort to attract and generate capital. Prior to 1990, Colombia and many other South American nations prohibited the importation of certain goods from other nations to protect domestic industries from foreign competition." The Colombian *Apertura* takes into account and adopts the Washington Consensus principles.

12. For the first time in the history of Colombia, the new Constitution was drafted and agreed by a group of members of Congress, politicians and civil society, including sectors of the population traditionally excluded such as women, indians, blacks, churches with denominations other than Roman Catholic, and even former *guerrilleros*. However, that former *guerrilleros* participated and influenced the Constitution meant that in time, they could also force a rural reform. The fear of losing their extensive lands moved political and social elites towards a more decisive support for paramilitary forces (Valencia A. 2007, 27).
social cleansing violence, and disorganization violence" (Pécaut 2003, 93) were simply too many fronts to defend for a State that could no longer trust its own political elite. Under pressure, the Colombian Government finally grasped the vital need to fight back illegal groups to eradicate drugs from its land, and to counter the effects of a drug culture\textsuperscript{14} that was changing moral and ethical values across the board. Keenly aware that neither its economy nor institutions were strong enough, the government confronted another challenging reality. The country's military forces were inadequate to fight this battle alone. Isolated internationally, Colombia turned again to an old ally, the United States of America, a nation with great expertise in wars, and perhaps the only one with more financial resources and military power than those of illegal groups. Most importantly, this nation shared in the dilemma of illicit drugs affecting its population, albeit for different reasons.

In essence, Colombia saw in the United States' War on Drugs\textsuperscript{15} the only logical solution to its woes. Although the doctrine intended to end the flow of drugs to America by blocking distribution channels and eradicating crops at the source —or better yet, in Colombia—, in 2000, Presidents Clinton and Pastrana signed Plan Colombia, "a plan for peace, prosperity and the strengthening of the State... [that] involved an investment

\textsuperscript{13} Semana (1996) reports that after Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) was accused of receiving money from the Cali cartel to finance his campaign, his election was discredited, and his inability to govern isolated the country internationally. The official investigation named Proceso 8000, did not find Samper guilty, yet his campaign manager and his chief of staff, Fernando Botero were incarcerated.

\textsuperscript{14} The drug culture is a phenomenon that arrived to Colombia to stay. As of the 1980s, it began influencing and changing Colombians and their societal values (See Chapter 4).

\textsuperscript{15} The War on Drugs was President Nixon's initiative. According to the NPR (2007), in 1971 "Nixon officially declares a "war on drugs," identifying drug abuse as "public enemy No. 1."
of $7.5 billion over 3 years, with $4 billion provided by Colombia" (The Economist 2001, 2).

As per its terms, Colombia also granted American troops unrestricted access to its territory and authorized in-country aerial fumigation of coca crops. Once agreed, the American intervention in Colombia —ongoing since 1949— became official and very public.

Today, fifteen years later, the failure of the American War on Drugs is undeniable. Drug trafficking continues to affect the world's population and a solution still escapes the most dedicated and concentrated efforts from the two countries at the forefront of the issue. In the United States, drug consumption is widespread, and the supply of illegal drugs entering the country seems unstoppable. Plan Colombia also failed to eradicate drugs from Colombia, yet its execution deeply affected the rural population and the country's resources. Vargas M. (2000, 1) believes that rather than a plan for peace, for prosperity, or to help strengthen the Colombian State, Plan Colombia was "... a plan for war, of poverty, and weakened the State." In fact, this plan —designed and written entirely by U.S. policymakers— imposed upon Colombia the American vision to do away with drugs, which completely ignored social and economic issues fueling Colombia's internal conflict.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the plan originally proposed by Colombia and the final American version is that the former was an inclusive plan for peace, while the latter was essentially an anti-narcotics program —without any social
component—only geared to stop coca production. As a result, the mandatory American fumigations destroyed both legal and illegal plantations across the nation, leaving entire families empty handed and in despair. The signed *Plan Colombia* did not even consider what to do with *campesinos* once coca crops underwent fumigation, nor took into account that glyphosate would kill legal crops as well. The damage left by these fumigations severely increased *horizontal inequalities*—as defined by Stewart—when *campesinos* abandoned a land no longer usable, thereby hindering their ability to support themselves and further impoverishing them. Fumigating was a futile exercise since—faithful to the *balloon effect* (Nadelmann 2009, 26)—coca crops rose again on opposite sides of the country, under the care of different *campesinos*.

Despite this debacle, the United States' relationship with Colombia underwent one more evolution after two seemingly unrelated events overlapped. On one hand, the September 11, 2001 attacks on American soil, and on the other, the failure of the

16. The Presidencia de la República (1999) published President Pastrana's original 1998 *Plan Colombia*, which reveals a scheme more in line with the Marshall Plan, adapted to "... Colombia's countryside, with investments in rural zones to be negotiated with the guerrillas, a limited counter-narcotics component, and with much participation of European countries. Adam Isacson, and Abigail Poe (2009, 1) state that the failure of the Colombian government during the negotiations with guerrilla leaders in Cagüan designated the country as a failed state, hindering Colombia's ability to negotiate and limiting its political space to demand that its views be included in the accord. In turn, the United States' version of "Plan Colombia is about maintaining the mystique of the invincibility of empire and the irreversibility of neoliberal policies. The power elite in Washington know that the beliefs held by oppressed peoples and their leaders are as effective in retaining U.S. power as the actual exercise of force. As long as Latin American regimes and their opposition continue to believe that there is no alternative to U.S. hegemony they will conform to the demands emanating from Washington and its representatives in the international financial institutions" (Petras 2001, 4).

17. Glyphosate is the main chemical used during aerial fumigations; a substance not allowed in the United States, but still proposed as the perfect chemical to eradicate coca crops.

18. The DPA (2013, 27) explains that the way in which coca crops quickly reproduce "is often called the balloon effect because squeezing (by tighter controls) one place produces a swelling (namely, an increase) in another place, though it may well be accompanied by an overall reduction. This can be historically documented over the last half century, in so many theatres around the world."
peace negotiation with the FARC that same year. The American President, George W. Bush (2001-2009), and the newly elected President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010) aligned when demanding radical foreign policy changes that further strengthened the military ties between these nations. The first step encompassed a switch in plans, only possible after a 2002 law in the United States' "broadened the purpose of lethal assistance —for years limited to counter-narcotics— to include 'counterterrorism'" (Vaicius, and Isacson 2003, 2). The new American War on Terror brought to Colombia Plan Patriota —an improved version of Plan Colombia—, which included new strategies, shifts in tactics, new weaponry, and more American financial aid. It also officially authorized United States' Special Forces to engage terrorist groups to "... hunt insurgent leaders" (Ibid., 2).

With Plan Patriota, the internationalization of the Colombian conflict that began with Pastrana, solidified under Uribe's hardline Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security) finally placing the country's foreign policy at the service of the conflict. Today, Uribe is a controversial figure in Colombia for he split the country between Uribistas, those who followed him, and his enemies, everybody else. His mandate —tainted with the worse cases of political corruption and human rights violations— is also responsible for weakening the country's guerrillas aided by

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19. The American and Colombian presidents found a common goal that drove their nations' policies all throughout their mandates. These two presidents shared the unwavering goal to bring terrorists to their knees and to avenge those whom they lost —for Bush more than 3,000 Americans who died in New York's Twin Towers, and for Uribe, his father assassinated by the FARC—. As the Bush administration pursued terrorists, Uribe pursued guerrilleros; as Bush hired private contractors to support the American military, Uribe excused the abuses of the military; as the American military expenditures increased, so did the Colombian.
American military troops, new intelligence systems, and with significant support from
President Bush. Aside from the three United States' military bases that found a home
in Colombia as part of Plan Colombia, in 2009, Uribe granted American troops access
to seven Colombian military bases to "... carry out any "mutually agreed activity"
against any perceived threat, military or otherwise" (WOLA 2009, 5). In doing so, Colombia
was chastised by its Latin American neighbors who feared an enlargement of the United
States' intervention in the region (Semana 2009a).

During this last period, the evolution of these nations' relationship intertwined
so deeply that United States' national interests became Colombia's interests as well.
The American influence transformed the Colombian Government; yet the result was
not overall stronger and independent Colombian institutions, but rather limited to a
few sectors of the government that learned to adapt to the demands of the American
foreign aid; unfortunately, resources that came at a price higher than expected.

The Business of War

"While a weak State may benefit from external military assistance if it
strengthens the State's repressive capacity vis-a-vis non-State armed groups, the very
weakness of the State may also enable substantial capture and diversion of given
resources ..." (Dube, and Naidu 2010, 2). This quote accurately reflects both sides of the
Colombian experience with American foreign aid. In researching the conflict's
economic costs for Colombia, the vast majority of data informs the value of foreign aid
received from the United States. However, only a handful mention in passing estimated
costs of the total money spent by Colombia since *Plan Colombia* — merely fifteen years of the sixty-year-old war —. Notwithstanding the fluctuations on the calculations, the analysis shows that Colombia still bears three different types of costs, (1) the expense of revamping its military; (2) the cost traditionally associated with any war — loss of human lives, loss of infrastructure, loss of economic opportunities, etc.—; and (3) the cost of the American foreign aid, inherently entangled with the first two.

Initially conceived as a three-year strategy, *Plan Colombia* estimated that eradicating drugs at the source had a total cost of US$7.5 billion. Colombia agreed to contribute US$4 billion and the United States US$3.5 billion. The change of plans also demanded additional resources. According to the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2008, 2010, 2013), by way of *Plan Patriota*, the United States provided US$5 billion and another US$1.4 billion under *Espada de Honor* (Honor Sword), the policy that began with President Juan Manuel Santos' mandate (2010-to date). In total, from 2000 to 2014, the United States has provided US$9.8 billion in foreign aid to Colombia, a very large sum by any standards. However, when comparing the American aid contributions with the Colombian military expenditures over the same period of time (Graph 3), it becomes evident that while the United States' foreign aid rapidly reduces, Colombia's military costs sharply increase.
When isolating the expenses by plan (Graph 4), it becomes evident that the Colombian costs for the first two strategies were an average 4.8 times higher than the United States' financial support, and over the last three years, fifteen times greater. In addition, the side-by-side contrast shows that Colombia spent US$6.8 billion more than the original US$4 billion agreed under the terms of Plan Colombia. Although anyone can argue that it is fair that Colombia's costs are much higher since the conflict is theirs; from these figures, it is also reasonable to contend that the American Wars on Drugs and Terror —following guidelines designed only by American policymakers— benefitted from even larger amounts of financial aid received from Colombia.

Plainly, when Colombia agreed to increase its military spending —as stipulated
in *Plan Colombia*—, the enlargement of that nation's military was not the only American goal. Colombia's commitment to purchase U.S. military equipment and weapons, pay for U.S. counterinsurgence training, and procure added security for American projects and corporations already in-country represented an added benefit for the United States. It is widely known that, perhaps since World War II, America has been at the forefront of innovative and sophisticated armament, and that, through its many conflicts, the country developed an entire industry around fighting and winning wars. As such, for the United States, since 90% of the illegal drug market came out of Colombia ([UNODC 2014](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/Drugs-Synthesis/DrugThreat/2014/WorldDrugReport2014.html)), *Plan Colombia* represented not only collaborating with the greatest ally a nation can have on the War on Drugs, but also closing a new client for — what President Eisenhower once called— the booming American *military industrial complex* (Crandall 2008, 7).

Based on the data shown thus far, the logical question is how much of the US$140 billion spent by Colombia over those years went to the United States' military industry, one impossible to ascertain at this time. However, there is some information worth noting. The Security Assistant Monitor (SAM) (2015) reports that from 2005 to 2013 the United States trained more than forty-eight thousand military personnel in counterinsurgency tactics and intelligence methods; and that the United States sold over US$2.8 billion in arms to Colombia ([Graph 5](https://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/20190205_Report_56.pdf)). However, "... in 2008 alone, Colombia spent around US$5.5 billion on its military purchases, 13.5% more than in 2007" ([WOLA 2009, 8](https://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/20190205_Report_56.pdf)), indicating that the total amount of military equipment acquired by Colombia is
closer to US$25 billion. Also reported is that at least seventeen private American companies provided war-related services (Table 2), including supplying the glyphosate used during the aerial fumigations performed by American contractors as well. El Tiempo (2003) and the Associated Press (AP) (2007) reported that these corporations receive at least half of the United States' aid funds. Perhaps the reason why Leech (2004, 30) once wrote that, "... military aid can be understood as U.S. taxpayer subsidies to Corporate America."

![Graph 5. U.S. arms sales to Colombia, 2005-2012. (US Million)](image)

| Table 2. U.S. companies outsourced under Plans Colombia and Patriota. |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ACS Defense     |                |
| Air Park Sales and Service | |
| Alion, LLC      |                |
| ARINC Engineering Services, LLC | |
| Arinc, Inc.     |                |
| Cambridge Communications | |
| DynCorp Aerospace Operations | |
| DynCorp Aerospace Technologies | |
| Integrated AeroSystems | |
| Lockheed-Martin |                |
| ManTech         |                |
| Matcom          |                |
| Northrop Grumman |          |
| Rendon Group    |                |
| Science Applications International | |
| TRW             |                |
| Virginia Electronic Systems (VES) | |

Source: Security Assistant Monitor (SAM) (2015)

To make matters worse, after a number of reports linked human rights violations to the Colombian military — and by association to the American financial aid —, the United States Congress imposed a more balanced distribution of funds going to Colombia (Withers, Isacson et al. 2008, 6). Plan Patriota's financial aid was no longer exclusively destined for military aid (Graph 6), but "... split between interdiction and
alternative development..." (CRS 2005, 2). The Congress' decision-making process halted
the military aid to Colombia, forcing Colombia to accept all the American requests in
two central negotiations between the governments, Plan Patriota and the Tratado de
libre Comercio (TLC) (bilateral trade agreement). For Colombia, "losing the American
military aid in the middle of a heated war was suicide..." (López M. 2015), a statement that
helps explain why Colombia accepted, one more time, covering for a higher share while
also abiding by the United States' unilateral allocation of funds (Graph 7).

(US Million)

(US Million)

As such, with military aid going mostly to American private corporations and the
new development aid managed by the United States Agency for International

21. MinComercio (2012) informs that the TLC between Colombia and the United States was signed
on November 22, 2006. The Colombian Congress ratified it on June 28, 2007 and the United States Congress
on October 12, 2011. Today, three years after its implementation, Cecilia López M. (2015) believes that, "...the reduction in Colombian exports and the growth of imports returned a significant cost for the Colombia."
Development (USAID), the likelihood that any aid funds would ever reach impoverished Colombians—even if only to defray the damage caused by the aerial fumigations—is questionable. These funds were destined for research, consulting on social issues, or "... on quick demonstration projects that yield immediately visible results, and seek to make a high-profile display of the government’s presence when, in USAID's words, "the potential for political impact is the greatest" (Isacson, and Poe 2009, 9).

In all fairness, despite the distinctly asymmetrical relationship of this alliance on the Wars on Drugs and Terror, and notwithstanding that the outcome was far less than the goal, it must be said that the joint American-Colombian effort made some progress; small, but forward nonetheless. For instance, the universal belief is that the War on Drugs failed, that is true; yet it must be acknowledged that despite the disappointing mixed results, by 2008, cocaine production finally began to decrease in Colombia. Similarly, after the 2000-2002 aerial fumigations failed to reduce the number of coca fields, by combining manual and reduced aerial fumigations in 2003, the number of coca crops began a downward move that still continues, albeit slowly (Graph 8).

The result of the War on Terror also produced mixed results. Although the number of attacks perpetrated by the FARC slightly declined in 2002, only two years after Plan Colombia entered into effect, they skyrocketed in 2003, coinciding with the start of Plan Patriota. These assaults decreased again in 2004, and although the FARC sustained its most notable casualties during this period, their number of assaults maintained a steady rate until 2008, in similar levels seen before Plan Colombia.
However, from 2008 onward, the incursions increased again, with the highest number of FARC attacks in 2012, precisely as the peace negotiations began. A logical assumption is then that, (1) the FARC enlarged the number of assaults to pressure the government. Yet, when comparing the number of attacks versus the number of men, it is apparent that *Plan Colombia* forced an enlargement of *guerrillero* troops. In 2001, the FARC grew to have 20,766 men. By 2004, its forces slowly but steadily began a rate of descent that continues to date. Given these results, it can also be argued that, (2) the FARC's extensive decline in manpower is what brought them to the negotiation table (Graph 9). In 2014, estimations indicate that only 6,672 *guerrilleros* are left in the FARC's ranks, and the ELN troops have decreased to only 1,485 men (El Espectador 2014).

There is no question that any progress is good progress, especially if it contributes —even slightly— to give Colombians an opportunity to find peace.
However, if moving forward comes at a high price, financial or otherwise, then it is not progress at all. By itself, the analysis of the economic cost paid by Colombia to fight the internal conflict, thus far, outweighs the original benefit expected from joining forces with the United States. Colombia bore not only the largest share of the costs, but also —given the terms imposed by the United States— its population benefitted very little, if at all, from the American funds offered as part of the agreement. In contrast, the United States greatly profited from its alliance with Colombia since Colombia spent the majority of its war funds purchasing American-made military equipment and training. In addition, most of the United States' financial aid destined to Colombia returned to America when also paying United States' corporations. For that reason, and to answer a question previously posed, war is definitely not the business behind the remarkable behavior of the Colombian economy, but it is definitely a business that supports the United States' industry.

Then again, what explains the continued growth of the Colombian economy in the middle of sixty years of conflict? Some economists attribute it to the fact that, "...the government managed well a sequence of economic booms —coffee boom from high international coffee prices; oil boom from Cusiana and Copiagua; a commodities boom from oil, coal, gold and other minerals—" (López M. 2015). Others, to the existence of a number of self-contained financial conglomerates —with too much to lose in the international arena— that not only benefitted the economy, but that also limited the number of "...activities in which large sums of illicit funds can be laundered in
To deny that in some way, shape, or form, profits from the illegal drug trade have entered the Colombian economy is nonsensical. To what extent is impossible to quantify despite some attempts that now indicate that the amount is as much as 1% of the country’s GDP (Badkar 2011). However, it must also be said that the economic losses as a result of the conflict far outweigh the drug money entering the economy. In their most recent book, Arias, Camacho et al. (2014) introduce estimations made by Colombia’s most prominent economic researchers. Only to mention a few, "Pinilla (2013) finds that, every year, the armed conflict reduces rural GDP by 3.1% and national GDP by 0.198%" (Ibid., 62). "Ibáñez (2008) finds that forced displacement contributed to a loss in agricultural production equivalent to 3.4% of the yearly rural GDP" (Ibid., 27). "Rubio (1997) and Trujillo y Badel (1997) calculate that, in total, during the 1980s and 1990s the conflict caused yearly losses estimated between 2% and 4.5% of the national GDP. Londoño (1998) calculates that over those periods, the losses in human capital are 4% of the yearly GDP" (Ibid.). Perhaps these figures will balance the voices claiming that Colombia’s contribution towards resolving its war are rather small when compared to the American taxpayer money received.

Based on the realization that the American financial aid —decreasing or not—disproportionately increased the overall Colombian war costs, it is safe to assume that the government reduced its rate of spending in other areas to increase its military expenditures. Understanding if that reshuffling jeopardized in any way the
government's ability to provide for its people will shed light on the socioeconomic consequences of the American-Colombian alliance. Moreover, identifying if the reallocation of American funds—not envisioned as long-term solutions—tempered potential impacts in governmental shortcomings will also indicate if Colombians' well-being deteriorated as the war enlarged.

The Price of Foreign Aid

Colombia is a country with a complicated geography that isolated vast areas of the nation and inhibited the government's control over its territorial extension. Although this is an accurate depiction of the country, its intricate landscape cannot be the only reason for the lack of governmental control. In reality, the country's political past indicates that administrations did not invest much in its rural periphery, which explains why Colombia still has large extensions of jungle that serve as sanctuary for illegal groups. It also helps explain how in their quest to protect drug routes, guerrillas, narco, and paramilitaries groups substituted the State by "... imposing very authoritarian regimes, defining and applying their own laws and regulations, and providing education, police, and civil justice to solve conflicts among the population" (Thoumi 2002, 106).

From the moment that Plan Colombia entered into effect, the struggle of the Colombian military trying to take back the territory—and the guerrillas attempting to keep it—enlarged the war significantly across geographically distant regions. Furthermore, the guerrillas' control over regions bordering Venezuela, and Ecuador —
where coca crops also grow—strained diplomatic relations with those countries. Despite reports informing that aerial fumigations with glyphosate damaged legal crops and poisoned the foreign rural population, it was armed incursions that "... left Colombia in the position of defending U.S. interests and supporting its policies of intervention and cooperation in Latin America" (Manrique Cortés 2008, 2).

The actions of both guerrillas and paramilitaries had devastating economic costs for the country, and all Colombians suffered the consequences. The redirection of limited funds to supply the national military forces with the appropriate training and equipment—better arms and missiles, quieter planes and helicopters, to name a few—caused a large deficit in the government's social spending plan. In addition, large unplanned investments in infrastructure and human capital further deteriorated social expenditures that barely covered limited basic services—such as health, education, water, and electricity—used by the civilian population in occupied regions. These voids widened the already existing gap that guerrillas and paramilitaries used to enmesh themselves deeper into those lands and to debilitate the role of the State by providing social services for those working for them in the drug trade (Vargas M. 2000). Sadly, many campesinos accepted their help assuming that the government relinquished its social duty towards them to concentrate on protecting other parts of

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22. Given the rise of military presence in what guerrillas' considered their territory, they increased pipeline bombings. American-owned Occidental Petroleum had the concession for this pipeline. The Colombian government was contractually obligated to repair all infrastructural damages and to increase military protection throughout the length of the pipeline (Library of Congress 2013, 255).
the country, believed to be under even more distress.

Predictably, the areas became active war zones. Illegal groups controlling the land destroyed much infrastructure and placed the rural population right in the middle of the conflict. Hence, prior to making any investment, the government had to intensify military presence —and spending— in those areas to oust guerrillas and paramilitaries beforehand. Unquestionably, any criminal group assuming the role of the State —in any aspect— not only weakens that nation and endangers the entire population, but can also change its values and culture. In Colombia's case, the take-over allowed the government to grasp that drug trafficking and illegal groups' warfare merged into one.

The State's ability to fund social strategies for the rest of the population suffered across the board when the massive displacement of the rural population into the cities caused a social emergency. This combined with increased military spending to protect guerilla-infested areas forced another tremendous reduction in public expenditures to reallocate funds to support those newly displaced. The government's solution was worse than the cutbacks. The quality of all social services surrendered to broaden the coverage of basic services (López M. 2011a, 3). The decision failed to solve the humanitarian crisis and severely harmed the already existing poor and lower middle classes. The nation's social indicators show that in a very short time, an already unequal society saw inequality rise so much and so fast that in 2012 Colombia was the most unequal country in Latin America; today second only to Haiti (World Bank 2012).

That a country with a growing economy —where oil is the principal export, and
that receives billions of dollars in financial aid from the United States—has no choice but to redirect government funds intended to relieve the poor as the only way to help the displaced is difficult to comprehend. Not so much in Colombia where in 2002, the paramilitary infiltration strategy elected one-hundred and thirty-nine Congressmen, twenty-three legislators and five Governors;\(^2\) all of them working to redirect the limited governmental funds to programs that could not improve social conditions, but that rather solidified the commitment of poor voters to guarantee their future elections (AMR 2005). According to Cecilia López M. (2011a, 3), "that is exactly what former President Uribe's Income Transfers policy achieved. By giving small amounts of money to the poorer population, he temporarily solved some of their income issues; but instead of giving them a real chance to move away from poverty, he created dependency and loyalty to his government." Some believe this also guaranteed his reelection in 2006.

In fact, the American Wars on Drugs and Terror had a devastating impact on the quality of life of the entire Colombian population, and not just on those most directly in contact with drug trafficking. The consequences of the decreasing American aid policy requirements forced Colombia to assign a high proportion of public resources to an internal War on Drugs that once started could no longer stop. In turn, the government's cutbacks caused more war, more Colombian lives lost, a tremendous

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23. Adriaan Alsema (2012) reports that by May 2012, as a part of the Parapolitics scandal, 37 congressmen and 5 governors were convicted in Colombia "for their ties to paramilitary groups since the scandal broke in 2006". At least 139 congressional representatives were under investigation for the same reason since 2005. According to Semana (2006a), key information on who was in the list of parapolíticos and how they were elected in different areas of the country came from the computer of paramilitary leader Jorge 40, confiscated after his demobilization and subsequent extradition to the United States in 2006.
increase in corruption, and further devalued societal principles. The social spending cuts for the urban sector affected education, health, social security, housing, and infrastructure (Cardona López 2011, 11). As a consequence, "more children attended each school but received very poor quality of education, in very poor conditions; more people received health coverage, but fewer medicines were covered or available, and the doctor/patient ratios tripled affecting health quality; less decent work opportunities were available" (López M. 2011a, 122). Overall, the strategies and resources of the American aid did not help reduce the scope of action nor the income received from the drug trade by warfare groups.

Following the American path chosen to fight the War on Drugs —interdiction— was also inefficient for Colombia. Daniel Mejía (2012, 27) estimates that, "... one extra dollar of US assistance for eradication decreases the total cost to Colombia by about US$1.14, whereas one extra dollar of US assistance for interdiction decreases the total cost to Colombia by only US$0.12." Still, while paramilitaries focused on changing Colombian politics through policy changes and conditioned foreign aid, the United States influenced President Uribe to prioritize Plan Patriota —a counterinsurgency strategy— over the government's social commitments to the middle class.

International expert voices also came forward to show that the American War on Drugs was more detrimental than helpful to the Colombian conflict. The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) (2013) states that, "U.S.-backed drug policies have led to social unrest, violence, and human rights violations." Dennis Rempe (2002, 32) believes
that, "for the United States, policy remains mired in a supply-side approach to the War on Drugs, while Colombians must deal with a multifaceted violence problem where the drug issue is only one piece of a larger strategic puzzle." Today, Colombia owns the third-largest Blackhawk fleet in the world (Defense Industry Daily 2012). Its military uses modern weapons and advanced intelligence systems supplied by the United States. Yet, the economic costs associated with fighting its conflict the American way forced the government to neglect its duty to provide decent education, decent social services, and decent health for a rural population victimized for far too long.

Under such circumstances, old social problems remained unresolved while new ones arose. Just as Stewart explains in her human security theory, when horizontal inequalities in a country increase, the environment is not precisely conducive to peace, just like in Colombia's case, but can intensify an internal war. Although Colombia now sees a slight decrease in its extreme poverty, the vulnerable population rose to 37%. Instead of having a more egalitarian society, the rural-urban gap widens, the middle class is still small, and the 1% wealthy seems to become richer with every passing day. Today, the Santos administration (2010 to date) has made significant progress during the Havana peace talks. For Colombians, the internal war slowed down more as a result of the peace negotiations than the military efforts. Colombia is then an example to

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24. The Health Policy Center (2015) explains that, "Vulnerable populations are groups that are not well integrated into the health care system because of ethnic, cultural, economic, geographic, or health characteristics. This isolation puts members of these groups at risk for not obtaining necessary medical care, and thus constitutes a potential threat to their health. Commonly cited examples of vulnerable populations include racial and ethnic minorities, the rural and urban poor, undocumented immigrants, and people with disabilities or multiple chronic conditions."
show that military methods to resolve conflicts are nothing more than temporary results because social issues derived from horizontal inequalities require solutions that military tactics do not contemplate.

**A New, Better, Partnership**

Fortunately, today is a different day since the United States and Colombia agree that the old drug policy needs to change and share the view that recognizing addiction as an illness and treating addicts as sick people rather than as delinquents is what will finally defeat drug trafficking. However, while in the United States the Obama administration "has done away with the drug war rhetoric, has placed far more emphasis on dealing with American's appetite for mind-altering substances, and... begun to advocate reform of tough drug sentencing and incarceration policies" (WOLA 2013); in Colombia, the Santos administration focuses on an entirely different strategy, the pursuit of peace.

The advanced stage of the ongoing peace negotiations in Havana demands that Colombia reassesses its enduring relationship with the United States and its effect on the population. Signing the peace agreement with the FARC will soon end the War on Terror in Colombia for other illegal groups will likely follow suit, and with it, a shared goal will finally be attained. However, these nations' joint purpose evolved into an unhealthy economic dependency as well, and Colombia needs to prepare in two fronts to face the inevitability of the withdrawal of military and economic aid from the United States. On the financial side, Colombia must realize that its continued growth despite
the outrageous increase in military expenditures means that the country has the resources and the private sector required to sustain its economy. In peace, Colombia's military costs will shrink, and those savings will let the government finally focus on resolving existing horizontal inequalities affecting its population; that is, after solving its pervasive corruption first.

The second front is more difficult. Among the many factors fueling this protracted conflict, a weak State often ranks top-three in the list. Still, this nation's economic performance denotes a strong and solid State when it comes to managing the country's macroeconomics, but not so much when it comes to guaranteeing the welfare of its entire population. It is in this front where the relationship with the United States becomes most significant. Undoubtedly, Colombia can learn from the American leadership how to organize a modern society, to prioritize the well-being of its population, and although some Americans may disagree, to provide better standards of living through good public education, good health services, good public services, and decent work. Where Colombia will need the United States' support most is in sustaining peace; a difficult task that will not be achieved through more military involvement. The lessons learned over the last fifteen years of the alliance indicate that a common issue —drugs or terrorism— does not entail a shared strategy to deal with it.

Similarly, the United States must reassess its relationship not only with Colombia but also with Latin America in general. Unquestionably, any American citizen understands and supports the United States' priorities —its own national security,
population, and industry—. Yet most also realize that when this nation accepted the role of protector of the weak—a very noble cause—, the job came with great responsibility for the United States and towards whomever the nation chooses to protect. This commitment is an ethical principle more than simple words; it represents the moral duty to help resolve human insecurity around the world, no longer the responsibility of only those most directly involved. Today, the international community has the obligation to stop hiding behind the excuse of national sovereignty to ignore a conflict, or withhold peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts where there is a struggling population. Based on this code of ethics, the United States failed when getting involved in the Colombian internal conflict because its own interests in the region and financial gain took precedence over the welfare of the Colombian population; a responsibility that Colombia also failed.

In fact, much like Coleman's (2006b, 19) explanation on how domination influences a conflict's intractability, the United States exerted unjustifiable pressure over Colombia by imposing conditions and American views on the foreign aid offered. These restrictions unduly influenced the Colombian political, economic, and social agendas, placing them at the service of American national interests. The economic dependency created by the United States' foreign aid funds, combined with the uncertainty of receiving the funds while the conflict escalated, limited Colombia's individual scope of action. Not taking into account Colombia's social and economic factors—when formulating Plan Colombia, Plan Patriota, and Espada de Honor—impacted the already
weakened ability of the Colombian Government to provide for its citizens. For those reasons, the actions of the United States contributed to increasing human insecurity among Colombians as well as to the endurance of Colombia's internal conflict.

Obviously, the United States is not to blame for Colombia's drug production and trafficking initiatives, but it is undeniable that the decisions made and advice provided by American political and military elites over the course of sixty years influenced the longevity of the Colombian predicament. Today, many Colombians still argue that both Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota caused more damage than good given the high financial costs and the minor success achieved in stopping drug trafficking. For that reason, a number of benefits from the American aid are often overlooked only because its funds returned to the United States.

To truly value how instrumental and opportune this American aid was to Colombia, one must remember that since illegal groups work towards and strive for one goal, total control over the nation, they had a much stronger upper hand in the fight for two key reasons. Firstly, those groups have no obligations toward citizens, the country, or even each other; their enemy is one, the State, and no rules or laws apply in their aim to take it. Conversely, the Colombian Government must defend the entire population and national territory from at least three autonomous enemies—guerrillas, paramilitaries, drug lords—while simultaneously working on improving social disparities. Secondly, to defend and protect is a challenging task for any nation, but especially so if its military is not suitably prepared to keep enemy forces at bay. In truth,
without a large investment on its armed forces, Colombia was defenseless. Their old weaponry, tactics, and apparatus were noticeably insufficient against an enemy consistently increasing its financial capital and power —armament, training and armies—. In this regard, the United States proved to be an invaluable friend and ally.

By conditioning the terms of the financial aid and forcing the Colombian Government to invest on American military training and equipment, the United States guaranteed the efficient use of the funds provided. Most importantly, it did not fail its primary duty to Americans when succeeding in protecting large sums of taxpayer money from abuse and corruption leading to the aid's misappropriation. A very real danger due to the Colombian record, but especially significant given the ongoing redirection of governmental funds and the already brewing parapolitics scandal.

Even though the imposition forced the Colombian Government to reallocate funds previously bound for important social sectors of society, it is undeniable that the investment and support received from the United States changed the dynamics of the war for Colombia was no longer a weak State. The aid was indeed expensive but American trained and equipped Colombian armed forces greatly contributed not just to consolidate Colombia's military, but also to elevate the national and international confidence on the Colombian State. It even helped the government counter and diffuse the international concern caused by the parapolitics scandal. Yes, the American military aid failed to defeat the illegal groups, but those illegal groups also failed to defeat the Colombian Government. A priceless benefit that cannot be overlooked.
Today, with a peace agreement closer than ever, both countries, old friends and partners, have a new opportunity to help each other. Just as Colombia has the great chance to bring peace to its land, the United States has the opening to lend its hand, resources, and knowledge to Colombia during the still difficult years ahead. Both nations will experience the end of their fifteen-year war venture in different ways, but the benefits of a Colombia in peace, seriously working towards no longer exporting drugs to America, must overshadow any economic losses the United States may experience in the defense sector. Perhaps the political elites of these two nations will soon realize that this legendary alliance is stronger when —rather than the financial dependency of the weaker partner— common goals and an equal footing are the driving force that unites them.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE VICTIMS OF THE WAR

Of the many facets of war, perhaps the most difficult one to tackle is the subject of its victims. Hundreds, thousands, and sometimes, even millions of defenseless, innocent civilians that lose it all when caught in the middle of hostilities. Nameless men, women, and children without a voice, usually unarmed, yet forced to play a central role in a fight that most do not even comprehend. Their tragedies, their losses, their pain, and their heart-breaking stories —documented by vivid photos in history books— are part of school curriculums around the world, and provide a very real statement of the horrors of war. It is because of the images of the victims of different wars, seen at one point or another, that we all comprehend the depth of their tragedy.

In its most simplistic form, the Oxford English Dictionary (2015c) defines a victim as "a person who has been attacked, injured or killed as the result of a crime ...." Although the definition includes those fallen in war, the term Casualties of War is more appropriate to describe the innocent lives lost during those times. However, independent of the context, the term victim infers harm that is physical in nature, tangible, and temporary, simply because time heals all wounds, cities can be rebuilt, and those who died were mourned. Sadly those victims are eventually forgotten by most, becoming only statistics in those history books.

Similarly, the expression Casualties of War frames injuries to civilians within the
immediacy of a particular event, only gauging what is visible, and assessing what is evident after the devastation created by the weapons of war. This title also indicates temporality in the victim's condition for all wars end at some point, and peace follows. However, and perhaps more meaningful is that within the word casualties —derived from the Latin word casualis (casual)— a hidden message conveys that innocent citizens are victims "by chance, accidental[ly], without much thought or premeditation..." (Ibid. 2015a).

For most of the world, these descriptions suffice to realize the impact that a conflict has on its people. However, that is not the case nor all the characteristics of the Colombian victims. Despite some similarities, the undeniable death toll, devastation, and turmoil experienced in the country, the process of identifying the victims' nature brought to the surface a number of new elements that demanded a broader definition of the victims of this war.

Three reasons make Colombians unlike the victims of other conflicts, even of those considered to have similar characteristics. Unrecognized facets of this society, the concurrence of atypical factors, and a multitude of actors find no coincidence whatsoever with other conflicts, not even with those whose uniqueness define them as intractable. These factors —globalization, their class system, and the drug culture— devastated the entire nation beyond the physical, the visual, and the temporary; their concurrence was not simply casual or accidental for they feed from each other further fueling the conflict. As a result, the already peculiar nature of this country's war
shattered the *fundamentals*\(^1\) of the entire society; its profound effect completely shifted the ethical and moral values of at least two generations of Colombians.

Although the research on the conflict is extensive and thorough, when trying to understand the victims of the Colombian war, it became evident that the limitations set by the standard definition of *Victim*, their stories, and the lack of a multidisciplinary approach to analyze their condition excluded or failed to associate, how these key elements impacted the Colombian population and contributed to fueling the conflict. In fact, not considering those factors misjudged the dimension of the tragedy faced by Colombians, and grossly underestimated the existing number of victims in the country. Therefore, rather than entering into the excruciating violence and cruelty still endured by this nation's population, this chapter will focus on corroborating that alongside the *Casualties of War*, beyond the expression's traditional definition, a large number of victims still remain unknown and unaccounted for in Colombia.

**When Culture Meets Violence**

The country is indeed inexplicable, with many ambiguities, beautiful and frightening all at the same time. Even so, nothing is more mystifying than Colombians are, not the country's economic growth nor the infamous title as world's largest cocaine dealer. Interestingly enough, often, the latter is how those who have not visited the country think not only about Colombia but also about its people. That perception could

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1. The *fundamentals of a society* define a set of parameters that establish basic norms of respect and conduct for its citizens.
not be further from the truth simply because there is so much more to Colombia than just war and drugs. In fact, this nation's culture is stimulating and splendid in its diversity. Colombia has a history that ranges from a Nobel Prize in literature to unbelievable cuisine, from folk art to world-renowned artists, and from five-hundred-year-old architectural gems to Grammy winners. Those achievements are only a few of many other remarkable characteristics of their culture. Colombians are not only "the happiest people in the world" (NEF 2013), but also have the ability to turn any situation, good or bad, into a positive. Always cheerful and friendly, they are perhaps some of the most polite people in the world as well, at all times ready to help the friend of their friend, effortlessly making any newcomer feel welcome.

Regrettably, there is also that other side; the aspect that the world hears about the most. One that those who experienced Colombia first hand cannot connect to the Colombians they meet, but still, a very real trait that is incontrovertible. Despite common belief, the violent side attributed to the Colombian culture is not a recent development, and, therefore, not a byproduct of the drug trade. Historical data show that Colombia was a violent country long before the current conflict began. In fact, the Chulavita police stopped at nothing, and for no one, to force into submission those who did not share their government's views. The accounts of the nefarious methods they

2. Russell Crandall (2014a) discovered as much when witnessing "... an impromptu and effortlessly (at least to this gringo eye) sensual dance clinic in a cinder amphitheater, with dozens of leisurely park-goers looking on. The scene revealed the centrality of dance to Colombian social life." That is true; Colombians love to dance, and they do it well. Who can forget the images of the Colombian soccer team dancing after every goal scored during the 2014 World Cup?
used to slaughter Liberals during *La Violencia* are chilling and unspeakable.  

When visually comparing the number of homicides carried out during *La Violencia* with those during the height of the drug trade (Graph 10), the number of lives taken during the latter wave doubled. Past reports indicate that *narcos* (drug dealers) and *paras* were also more vicious than *Chulavitas*. However, the analysis of the modus operandi of each group is what undeniably confirms that the methods currently used originated in the nation's violent past. Surprisingly, and despite the extreme cruelty and sadistic irreverence that characterized the 1950s violence, those dark times rarely come up as the reason behind the cultural violence attributed to Colombians. More often than not, that viciousness is only associated to the rapacity of the drug trade and to the infamous *drug culture* that sprouted from its profitability.

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Similarly, although a vast majority of people around the world acknowledge that illegal drugs—trade or consumption—can deeply harm a society, when it comes to Colombia, the generalized and misguided perception is that the economic gains stemming from the drug industry were not only received by all but also outweighed any possible negative ramifications to any. Unquestionably, those few involved in the illegal trade profited significantly from such activity. Equally true is that most Colombians suffered greatly because of it. In fact, the sad reality is that still today, "Colombia is subject to strong external pressures, and Colombians are discriminated against around the world" (Thoumi 2002, 114).

The excessive violence experienced by Colombians has contributed to the disintegration of the judicial system, the loss of political pluralism, their inability to exercise rights as basic as freedom of speech or to elect those who will represent them. Most of all Colombians have lost many of their own. However, few are recognized as the world continues to see only benefits in the profits from the drug trade. Although history speaks clearly about the tragedy and death brought forward by what many describe as a character flaw of Colombians, it is largely ignored that those piles of money are precisely what destroyed the moral fiber of the entire society.

**Globalization Touches the Heart of the Conflict**

The twenty-first century’s remarkable technological, social, and economic advances greatly contribute to improving the lives of most people around the globe. Many of those would not have been possible if not for globalization—the most
important economic and social global integration processes in today's world—, one demanding that developing nations find and correct deficiencies in their public and private sectors. Issues that if left unresolved, will harm the citizenry, the economy, and a country's chance to become part of a world where all nations have the opportunity to rise up to the same level of development. However, as new countries become important emerging economies—despite their efforts to breach existing gaps—, poverty and inequality, two historically unresolved issues, remain widespread and visible in almost every corner.

In consequence, the most significant international economic debates presently focus on the relationship between globalization and equality, simply because those who have less are precisely the ones who have not seen significant improvement in their lives. As the understanding evolves, renowned economists argue that globalization has an adverse impact on the distribution of income. To prove the failure of the *trickle-down theory,* in-depth analysis today shows that only those wealthy or skilled benefitted most from its effects, leaving behind a large sector of the world's population inevitably destined to become poorer. To Joseph Stiglitz (2002, 79), globalization is unfair towards the poor since "... clearly, growth alone does not always

4. According to Philipp Aghion, and Patrick Bolton (1997, 151), "It is widely believed that the accumulation of wealth by the rich is good for the poor since some of the increased wealth of the rich trickles down to the poor." Yet, its application has proven that only those who are rich or skilled benefitted from its effect, leaving behind a potentially large sector of society inevitably destined to become poorer.

5. Joseph E. Stiglitz (2002, 247), Nobel Prize in Economics 2001, is probably the most eminent critic of globalization. He also believes that the IMF and World Bank's harshly imposed the Washington Consensus' pillars, the economic policy behind globalization, which in the end did not bring to developing countries the promised economic benefits. He insists that globalization's failure is in the failed policies and poor management of the global economy that should have had a more human face.
improve the lives of all a country's people." In turn, OECD Secretary-General Angel 
Gurría argues that, "... growing inequality is divisive. It polarizes societies; it divides 
regions within countries, and it carves up the world between rich and poor" (Emmenegger 
2012, 3). Lastly, Dani Rodrik (1997, 8) explains that, inequalities "... exacerbate economic 
insecurity, call into question accepted social arrangements, and weaken social safety 
ets." Certainly, these experts' criticisms provide a logical rationale for the increasing 
gap between the 1% wealthy and the rest of us, yet none of their views consider the 
effects of globalization in the midst of conflict.

(Homicides per 100,000 inhabitants)

In that sense, Colombia is a leading example to show that when globalization 
and war join forces, not only inequality skyrockets, and the gap between rich and poor
widens faster, but most significantly, entire productive sectors can be obliterated from a country's economy, substantially increasing the number of Casualties of War. This is the case of the Colombian rural sector, the conflict's natural scenario, and the most deeply affected by the war. Indeed, the damage to the agricultural production and resources carved a gap in the country's economy. However, the real tragedy is the loss of significant segments of its population (Graph 11).

Countless men slain by paramilitaries, guerrillas, and even military forces; thousands of women and girls gang-raped in front of their families, later used as sexual objects to reward lower ranking members of the troop; hundreds of young boys kidnapped from their homes and placed in the front line of the confrontation between illegal groups and military forces; millions of campesinos, mostly women and children, forced to flee their lands, leaving it all behind, simply to survive. Those are a few examples of the atrocities that the rural victims of the Colombian conflict endured and that gave rise to one of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. In 2011, reported that, "as a result of the internal armed conflict ... [Colombia] followed Sudan with the second highest number of internally displaced persons (IDP) in the world" (NRC 2013b, 2). By 2013, displaced people in Colombia doubled Sudan's when six million Colombians became the largest internal displacement. Today, Colombia has fallen back to second place. Sadly, the reason is not that displacement stopped; not even that those who once left returned to their lands. The only reason for the drop is that the Syrian population outnumbered the still growing Colombian tragedy (NRC 2015, 2). Colombia's
displacement is especially dramatic because, unlike in the case of refugees, displaced people "have not crossed a border, they are not refugees and do not benefit from any international protection" (NRC 2013b). These formerly productive campesinos are now the poorest of the poor.

As perhaps one of the few economists who found a crucial relationship between horizontal inequalities, human security, and conflict, Frances Stewart's theories provide an additional contribution to the analysis of the Colombian war. By following her concepts, it is possible to determine whether a country's most affected population drove the hostilities or simply suffered as a result. Conceding that not all her views apply to Colombia —a case she has not focused on—, through her eyes, anyone can grasp how in unequal societies, a group's inequality threatens an entire nation. Furthermore, Langer, and Stewart (2013, 10) demonstrate that a group's perceived injustice will progress into a conflict; the one statement where the Colombian case breaks away from this important research. In Colombia, the victims of war and those most affected by outrageous horizontal inequalities are one and the same. Despite very real injustice, it is not them, the forsaken, who ignited this conflict but rather the ones still most victimized by it. Although the country's displaced population is undeniably the most severe tragedy, it is not the only human catastrophe in this long war. After looking at the Colombian rural victims through Stewart's theory, two questions are still in need of answers. Firstly, after so much injustice, what stopped the Colombian rural population from fighting back? Secondly, if they were not behind the escalation of the
conflict, why would they be a threat to the entire nation when it was their government—the one whose duty is to protect them—who failed them? Perhaps the answers are also in the analysis of globalization in the midst of conflict.

As briefly mentioned (See Chapter 3), the 1990 Apertura, the country's globalization initiative, was a process that forced Colombia out of its self-contained economy into the open market. As a confessed neoliberal, former President Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994) followed the recommendations of The World Bank and quickly implemented Washington Consensus' doctrines. At the time, he did not grasp that most Colombian sectors were not prepared nor equipped to scale manufacturing—never mind export—to compete in the international arena. Colombia's production was certainly more than enough to supply the national demand, yet when confronted with quality control issues, large orders, and rudimentary techniques, once successful industries collapsed soon after imports flooded the internal market. Gaviria's Apertura affected countless producers and bankrupted large numbers of small businesses across the country.

This dark facet of the Colombian economy is known across the board, yet the relationship between globalization and the conflict is not. In the eyes of the world, the only reason that explains why Colombia has more than six million displaced campesinos is the conflict; a reasonable justification that seems incontrovertible and conclusive given the long-lasting and cruel nature of this war. Interestingly enough, despite the detrimental economic effects of the Apertura, and even though the fallouts of its implementation clearly coincide with the height of displacement, not one of the four
hundred documents studied when researching this thesis mentions the Colombian globalization process as a potential contributor to the displacement dilemma. Also understandable since there is an ongoing conflict where illegal actors brutally mass-murdered the rural population that tried to resist them. In fact, given the horrific stories, it is difficult to comprehend why all campesinos did not flee their lands to save themselves. However, when trying to decipher the reason behind the submissive character of the rural victims, the sum of economic, social, political, anthropological, and religious expert research brought forward that there is another culprit for their suffering; the Apertura, as guilty for the six million displaced as the war itself.

When discussing the turmoil in the rural sector, alongside the misconception that warfare groups seized all rural lands (See Chapter 2), the assumption that the displaced population fled from areas seized to cultivate coca crops is also inaccurate. In reality, the vast majority of displaced campesinos ran away from highly productive lands, nearby market centers, and areas under governmental control. Where there is no mistake, is in that illegal groups forced campesinos out of their lands. The logical question arising from this realization is, if coca crops are far away, and displacement did not originate there, then why did illegal groups force the rural population out of the most productive lands in the country? The not so clear answer comes after analyzing four aspects of the Apertura that, once pieced together, show the devastating influence of globalization on the Colombian conflict.
New Markets, New Products, and Two Kinds of Displacement

The Apertura’s open market initiative forced national economies to withdraw from sectors quickly overtaken by lower priced imports, and to set their eyes on new areas that would allow them to compete internationally. In no time, Colombia moved from coffee grower and exporter to worldwide supplier of minerals and oil. This reorientation —seemingly good for the country— quickly became a double-edged sword. On the one side, Colombia had enough natural resources to respond to the international demand but lacked the technical knowledge and equipment to exploit them. As a result, important international companies stepped in to provide the missing side. The wave of new technology and large foreign investments that arrived with the Apertura fortified the new sectors —coal, gold, natural gas, oil, etc. — and turned them into dynamic, competitive, and very profitable businesses. The downside came when most foreign companies, if not all, met an unexpected but unavoidable bill, one that did not come from the government, but rather from illegal groups, mostly paramilitaries, imposing a counter-guerrilla-defense tax on their business. To protect their employees, productions, and investments these companies paid the tolls, and in doing so, financed the illegal groups and contributed to the enlargement of the conflict.

On the other side, a double-whammy hit the rural sector (Graph 12). Although the entrance into mineral exploitation drove some capital away from traditional agriculture —after several landowners abandoned the sector to explore mining—, it was the quick rise in imports of agricultural products already grown in Colombia that crushed the
country's rural production. Historically, Colombian campesinos cultivated annual crops—corn, coffee, wheat, potatoes, rice, soy, sorghum, etc.—and their produce supplied at least 60% of the internal market (DNP 2014b, 14). However, unlike American farmers—who own their land, receive fair market prices for their goods, and when necessary, their government subsidizes them—, Colombian campesinos lived with the bare minimum, did not always own the small parcels they planted,6 did not have much access to credit, yet still worked knowing that a pension was not waiting for them at the end of their productive life. Under these conditions, their failure to contest the international competition brought by the Apertura is quite logical. The lack of anticipation and preparation by their own government is not.

To make matters worse, a third flop completed the demise of the rural population, a new form of agriculture called agribusiness. These types of crops are not fast growing, require five to ten years of care, and simply harvesting them will not bring income to a landowner. To be profitable, growers must also purchase expensive equipment to turn crops into sophisticated products coveted by international markets. The secret to a successful agribusiness is in planting vast extensions of land with crop growth at different stages to guarantee that, once the first hectares are cut, new yields will be ready within a few months. From there on, production and manufacturing of the refined product are uninterrupted.

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6. According to the DNP (2014a, 8-13), campesino's land ownership figures are devastating. In 2011, only 0.9% of them own a parcel of no more than one or two hectares of land, and 75.6% of the rural homes owned less than 10 hectares each.
The *Apertura* brought to Colombia Palma Africana, a product in high international demand and that promised large returns on investment. Obviously, wealthy landowners whose farms complied with the palm's climate requirements moved quickly into the business. Equally fast, they realized that the *trick of the trade* was in defeating the palm's extensive nature by increasing the original size of their farms. Long before the *Apertura* arrived, these same owners hired private armies to protect their lands from guerrilla incursions (See Chapter 2). Once Palma Africana became their crop of choice, the existing relationship between landowners and paramilitaries evolved from protection to expansion. In that process, simply put, Palma Africana forced *campesinos* out of the lands they cultivated into cities unprepared to receive them. Just like that, globalization joined forces with the conflict and became an important contributor to the Colombian displacement, not to one but rather two kinds...
of forced rural migration.

The first one, *displacement by violence*, is associated only with the ongoing conflict (Graph 13). However, since the expansion of the Palma Africana business coincided with the height of displacement,\(^7\) occurred in the same rural areas that most *campesinos* fled from, and where some of the cruelest paramilitary massacres took place, perhaps it is time to reconsider the culprit. Conceding that the effect of globalization could not force this form of displacement by itself, it now becomes evident that the ongoing conflict is also not the only reason behind Colombia's displacement by violence.

The second type is *jobless displacement*,\(^8\) a term that describes how the lethal combination of extensive agribusiness with booming agricultural imports, both byproducts of globalization, resulted in a massive loss of work for the *campesino* population (Graph 14). In fact, the inability to compete with cheaper international products, the very limited ownership of the land they labored, and the time needed to harvest the first *Palma Africana* crops created a five-year *jobless* gap for once

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7. In one of her most outstanding debates in Congress, Senator Cecilia López M. (2008, 24) proved that the rapid growth of Palma Africana was clearly associated with paramilitary presence in the area.

8. The author defined *Jobless displacement* as a form of rural migration caused by lack of work opportunities resulting from the effects of the *Apertura*.
productive men and women. As a result, a floating population 9 abandoned their homes and migrated from one rural area to the next in search of new income opportunities; any job that would allow them to feed their family. Some became coca growers, a plant with similar care requirements as their previous crops, and a growing sector that was always looking for laborers. Others joined the military forces to escape the illegal groups' recruitment, and a few moved to small towns and cities where employment could be available. Sadly, many died when unknowingly entering hot conflict areas.

This floating population —families that the Apertura turned into nomads— becomes the first group of unknown and unaccounted for victims of the globalization-conflict merger. Unlike with the first kind of forced migration, the only culprit for Colombia's jobless displacement is the Apertura (Graph 15). Once more, the one to blame is their government for opening the country's economy without realizing the potential damage to the rural population. Its biggest sin was not preparing, training —at a minimum—, or subsidizing campesinos completely unaware that globalization would

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9. The World Heritage Encyclopedia (2012) defines floating population as “a group of people who reside in a given population for a certain amount of time and for various reasons, but are not generally considered part of the official census count.” What differentiates this group from nomads is choice; for the former moves constantly because they have no other option than to do so.
soon destroy their lives.


Source: Author’s compilation with data from COHDES (2012) and FEDEPALMA (2014).

(by Quinquennial age group)
The explosive combination of conflict, drug trafficking, and globalization's \textit{jobless displacement} changed the age composition of the rural population as well. As a result, the majority of \textit{campesinos} are more than 50 years old (Graph 16). The number of children and those of working age significantly decreased during the height of displacement, and now represent a small proportion of the total population. What this really means is that, since there is not a proper pension system in Colombia, the oldest \textit{campesinos} are in a difficult situation for they must either continue working to survive or take care of the children while the few men and women left work longer hours. This age gap also negatively affected the rural production.

José Antonio Ocampo, one of Colombia's most respected economists and professor at Columbia University, describes these two governmental failures — quick shift in rural production and \textit{jobless displacement} — when explaining that because of the \textit{Apertura}, "the peasant production lost one million hectares in annual crops. After 25 years, 2015, peasants have not recovered the production of the land they lost when their annual crops competed with the world markets, while agribusiness grew in that same number of hectares" (DNP 2014b, 14).

\textbf{Smaller Central Government, Huge Regional Mischief}

Perhaps as contentious as the topic of inequality, globalization's premise on the
size and role of today's governments has as many critics as it has supporters. Paraphrasing the idea, a globalized government must facilitate the integration of internal and foreign markets. To do so, central governments need to be more agile and responsive. By partially transferring authority to local governments, the size of the State will shrink and as a result, the country's economy will integrate into the global markets faster. Decentralization was the term used to describe this transfer.

The concept was not new to Colombia since throughout the 1970s, twenty years before, the country partially decentralized its central government. The new element stressed upon by the Apertura was the need for a more equal society; a task only achieved when "... improving the population's access to social services, reducing poverty, and equalizing the well-being of all Colombians" (Ramírez, Díaz et al. 2013, 25). With that goal in mind, and aided by Colombia's recently signed 1991 Constitution, President Gaviria took decentralization one step further when transferring the "... competencies to different levels of government and the allocation of resources that enabled local governments to exert those competencies" (Ibid, 5). In other words, aside from complete autonomy to manage public, health, and education services in the areas under their care, the Gaviria Government also transferred to local governments the totality of the national budget allocated to those sectors. A move as bold as the Apertura —perhaps geared to soften the blow that shifting production caused the rural population— could have succeeded in changing the lives of many Colombians; that is, of course, if not because of this nation's never-ending conflict.
Silvia Mantilla V. (2012, 55) believes that "decentralization plays a very important role when it comes to the escalation of the Colombian conflict." As previously discussed (See Chapter 2), paramilitaries expanded their areas of control by manipulating local elections to appoint their own people. As a result of the Apertura's expanded decentralization, once their corrupt political leaders became the local authority, these illegal groups had full access, and "... total control over public funds transferred from the central government" (Ibid, 36). Obviously, without thinking about it twice, paramilitaries used these large quantities of money to scale up their expansion and to reinforce their troops. Simultaneously, local and national parapolíticos designed new and accommodated social policies to conceal large numbers of citizens —the rural population as well as the poor and the vulnerable— covered under the public finances shortfalls. The most affected sectors were health and education, precisely the two most important for the already unprotected rural population. This lack of funds delayed and severely hindered the well-being of those Colombians whose only choice was to accept lower quality in health and higher coverage in education of less quality.

Although this next coincidence where globalization rejoined forces with the conflict has yet to be acknowledged, it is undeniable that decentralization opened the door for paramilitary groups to swiftly increase their financial resources. In doing so, globalization contributed to escalating the war. However, the most important issue here is that connecting the dots between decentralization and paramilitarism shined a light on a new group of unknown and unaccounted for victims of the Colombian
conflict; a large number of people that suffers greatly today because a byproduct of globalization aided illegal groups in depriving them of fundamental rights as citizens.

Globalization, an Equal Opportunity Provider

Globalization's main purpose was to open international markets; its job was to tear down trade barriers to facilitate capital markets' growth, new sectors, and new economies. Without debating globalization's principles or goals, it is unquestionable that this integration process succeeded in blurring traditional boundaries between nations. Similarly, its technological triumphs improved transportation; new air and maritime routes opened up, more direct cargo and passenger flights crossed the globe daily. During this time, the internet also became a window for half of the citizens of the world to see how the other half lived, what they worked on or bought, and vice versa. Hence, it would be a travesty to deny that globalization is the reason behind all of today's international trade. One might then ask; does all include cocaine exports and imports too? Unfortunately, yes, it does.

As can be expected, more routes and frequency drove down the cost of airfares, and loosened up visa requirements to facilitate tourism, an important source of revenue for many nations. Drug traffickers took advantage of these new services to increase their revenues, but not because they intended to visit their clients and their markets, or to take advantage of cheaper tickets. What globalization facilitated for their business was that an increase in passenger flow meant busier airports and lower security controls. By sending many mulas (mules or swallowers) in one or several flights
a day, *narcos* quickly multiplied their cocaine exports while exponentially decreasing the risk of having one of them captured (Semana 2014b). Nonetheless, thousands of them died during those flights when the coca balloons in their stomachs ruptured or are now paying life-long sentences for drug trafficking far away from their families and homes.

Although many people around the world heard about the existence of Colombian *mulas*, they do not know that most of them, very young or very old men and women, are also part of the unknown and unaccounted for victims of this nation's war. Acknowledging that ignorance is not an acceptable excuse in a court of law or anywhere else for that matter, the truth is that these so-called *mulas* were never part of the drug business. Vast majorities of them were from very poor sectors, had little education, and were only looking for an opportunity to improve their lives. Most of them fell prey to unscrupulous *narcos* who promised a brighter future abroad and succumbed to the temptation of a one-time easy job in exchange for an airfare out of misery. Very difficult to believe that such degree of ignorance or naiveté exists, yet that is the reality of all those who have no access to education, limited by poverty and inequality's narrow surroundings blinding them to the realities of the world.

**The Dawn of a Drug Culture, a Hostile Takeover of the Elites**

From time to time, international newspapers, and television broadcasts report on Colombian events, but the information is usually discouraging. For the most part, the news about the country mentions in passing political corruption cases, announces the latest guerrilla disturbances, or mostly, denounces issues related to the drug trade
—new trafficking schemes, most recent seizures and captures of known narcos—.

Interestingly, in one way or another—perhaps because space in newspapers is limited and time in television short—, these reports consistently present each story as an isolated event, extricated from any other, and somehow, completely unrelated to the sixty-year-old Colombian conflict. However, they are not. From the moment narcos entered the Colombian scene, a conflict that originated from political exclusion took a turn, and began one of its worst facets when the illegal drug industry moved to hijack this society.

Jorge Orlando Melo (1995, 1) explains that, "... all over the world, narco-trafficking is a phenomenon little understood but massively denounced." Like him, a number of respected Colombian historians, psychologists, and sociologists agree that the illegal drug trade is the reason behind most of the adverse changes experienced by the Colombian society over the last twenty-five years. Francisco Thoumi (2002, 102) believes that, "... in no other country has the illegal drug industry had such dramatic social, political, and economic effects."

In that regard, the industry's genesis provides a fascinating correlation between the country's worse maladies and drug dealers' standard practices. As some may know, Colombians have strong ties and big families; aside from parents and children, their relatives include fifth cousins, very close friends, and sometimes even the in-laws of their in-law. For that reason, it is not surprising that those first charged with moving drugs and establishing international distribution networks were a drug dealer's family
members living abroad. The illegal nature of the activity formed a bond of secrecy among each group; as the family grew, sharing in cumulative profits strengthened already indissoluble loyalties. A tradition that continues today, for some of the country’s most scandalous corruption cases involves family members as well.\textsuperscript{10}

The nation’s ongoing political corruption is well known and documented; as such, the inevitable question that arises is where did these high levels of corruption in Colombia come from? Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the drug industry’s influence on Colombians materialized with the realization that neither the politics-business relationship nor political corruption are new to the country, yet their strong foundation only traces back to the origins of drug trafficking. From very early on, narcos’ strategy focused on developing social, economic, and political networks to protect their venture. To that end, they invited "... wealthy Colombians to buy shares in a cocaine shipment," and used their wealth "... to make large political contributions ..." (Thoumi 2002, 111) to stop the enactment of laws against them, extradition being feasibly the most relevant. Through those deliberate actions, drug dealers entangled themselves with only powerful elites in the country — the wealthy and the politicians, often one and the same — simply by dangling money in front of their eyes. These new

\textsuperscript{10} During a 2009 Congress debate, Senator Cecilia López shined a light on the new booming relationship between politics and business after several high-ranking government officials influenced bidding processes to award multi-billion contracts to their relatives. She baptized them Empresarios de la Política (Politics’ Businessmen). Semana (2009b) reports that Senator López questioned the children of then President Álvaro Uribe’s, who fresh out of college and no older than twenty-four years old received multibillion-dollar government contracts, and free-trade-zone licenses when competing against seasoned and well-established companies. She requested that the President and his sons disclosed their income tax returns to prove that their earnings were in keeping with young men of that age. The President denied any impropriety but never presented either income tax returns. Today, newspapers still use the term to denounce similar cases.
mergers triggered a sequence that rapidly tore down traditional moral and ethical values across the nation; and just like that, a *drug culture* was born in Colombia.

A point often overlooked when discussing this nation's turmoil is its class system, possibly one of the most stratified in the Western Hemisphere, but of great importance when discussing its society. In Colombia's *social order*, invisible boundaries, and a *number*, clearly define how far up a person can rise—though there is no set limit for how low an individual can sink—. Long before *narco* entered the scene, the government divided cities and towns into six different *Estratos* (sectors). The intention was that those with higher earnings paid public services at a premium to subsidize the services received by those who had less. Hence, the number assigned to a household indicated the residents' income level, with 1 representing the poorest and 6 the wealthiest Colombians. Inadvertently, these *Estratos* "... fortified the class system and segregated Colombians" (Uribe-Mallarino 2008, 144). The subsidies succeeded in providing public services to a larger number of poor, but "the income classification stopped social mobility among the poor" (Ibid., 145). Obviously, given the structure, earning more money also meant paying more for the same services previously received at much lower rates. However, the quality of service was not equal for all *Estratos*. While 5 and 6 always had water and electricity, the services received by groups 1, 2, and 3 were cut-off more than eight hours every day. The differences did not stop there either; the children in 5 and 6 arrived to quality schools driven by the fathers of 1, 2, and 3. The women in the lower two cleaned the homes and cooked for the top two. In no time, a
good intention developed into more inequality among classes (Wallace 2014). The territorial categorization soon turned into social discrimination when 5 and 6 excluded and belittled those beneath them, and of course, 1, 2, and 3 resented it. Since there is no mention of Estrato 4 in this tug and pull, one might wonder if the number even exists in the classification of the Colombian population. The answer is barely; those nationals who live in Estrato 4 are the middle class, a quickly shrinking group who receives no subsidies nor subsidizes others; perhaps it is because those pigeonholed under Estrato 4 pay the highest tax rate in the country.

Once the Colombian class system is thrown into the conflict’s mix, it reveals why, "narco-trafficking generated a tension between savage accumulation of capital and a repertoire of cultural values from social sectors that refused to accept the new social movement" (Camacho Guizado 1992, 90). In other words, the gigantic profits coming from drug trafficking placed the country’s elites in a duplicitous situation of their own doing. On one hand, that lower-class-narcos —the first narcos came from Estratos 1 and 2— moved into their neighborhoods, became members of their country clubs, and sent narco-children to the schools attended by their children horrified these elites. On the other hand, those narcos contributed to increasing their wealth by doing business with them or when financing their political campaigns. Fortunately, the elite were not all compromised, and many rejected the offers made by drug dealers; at least at first. Unfortunately, rejection did not sit well with narcos, and those who refused them saw their days numbered. In fact, in a very short period, many honorable political figures
and judges died, and with their murders, a new wave of violence engulfed Colombia. More importantly, as a result, many politicians secretly acquiesced to narcotics' advances to save their lives or their loved ones.

From thereon, a drug culture spread-out throughout the nation, across all sectors, and both men and women lost focus of what was once important in their lives. With traditional values crumbling under the financial demands of our globalized culture and the constant fear of death imposed by the new narco-rule, Colombians moved further away from moral and ethical canons once believed to be ideals; values that epitomized the lives of previous Colombian generations. A country that suddenly moved from a known fight against guerrilla forces into an unspoken and undeclared war where drugs, culture, and social-mobility-by-fear clashed with morals and ethics. A very convoluted and confusing mixture where many Colombians capitulated.

**Drug Trafficking Traded on Human Values**

Often people think that the drug trade is all about money, only imagining how boxes filled with cash pay for narcotics' luxurious lives in ostentatious homes with gold faucets—which Pablo Escobar apparently had—, driving cars that most men can only dream about, and with their many women—covered in diamonds and gold—ready to serve and please them. Perhaps some of this may be true, but if it is, those who experience that side are a very limited number of high-ranking drug lords and their families. For the rest of those who fall prey to the temptation of its profits, drug trafficking is a dark world by all means, one of ruthless actions, where there are no
limits or boundaries, and where the only way to move up the ladder is by killing one another. To enter the business, at any level, the first step required must be to leave moral standards and ethics at the door. How else can a person explain partaking in a business that profit from destroying so many? A world marked by incomprehensible acts of violence that continue to take the lives of the innocent, unexpectedly and unnecessarily. Sadly, that is the true depiction of the cocaine business; a reality that Colombians navigated for three decades.

While searching for the road leading to the unknown victims of the Colombian conflict, one of the most significant findings was that merging drug trafficking and war conceals another ignored reality. Much like globalization and conflict did, these two forces also feed off each other but act as two independent monsters. Drug trafficking had a devastating impact in the rural areas for coca crops still grow amidst illegal groups; and it was drug money that financed those same groups when narcos first hired them to open and protect coca routes. However, rarely discussed or even acknowledged is that the manner in which drug dealers conducted their lives contaminated large segments of the urban population, Colombians who watched the war in rural areas on television, as if it was happening in a foreign land. Aside from the previously mentioned strategies used by narcos to infiltrate the elite, five distinct traits of the narco-behavior permeated urban Colombia, once described as a very Conservative and Catholic society.

Undoubtedly, the most toxic and nefarious influence of the narco-lifestyle came
from drug dealers’ ability to replace common income generation methods with _quick-easy-lucrative_ activities. In traditional societies, wealth only came from hard work, inheritance, or luck; that was it. In Colombia, the _narco-world_ provided a much faster road to wealth, effortlessly, and handsomely paid in cash, never mind that it was and still is illegal. In a country where "the lack of money is the root of all evil," (Mark Twain 1976) to have finally an opportunity for social mobility was too tempting to let pass. The ease with which those involved in the drug business climbed the class ladder enticed others who were not part of the trade to try the scheme. Slowly but steadily, with every step climbed, the _narco-quick-lucrative_ formula deeply ingrained itself in the moral fiber of urban Colombians, at every income level, in both public and private sectors.

Camacho Guizado (1992, 1) defines it as, "... _Vertical Mobility_; a decomposition process of the new emerging classes, and that began the current ethics ambiguity experienced by the Colombian society." Three generations later, this _narco-formula_ is more alive than ever, yet few remember where —or from whom— the scheme originated.

Given the success achieved by _narcos_ when practicing this new form of social mobility, corruption was inevitable. Although it all began with a few isolated cases, dishonesty is now a common practice for many Colombians; it happens in large business deals as well as in the simplest financial transactions, and across all _Estratos_. Much can be said about the different types of corruption that coexist in Colombia, yet none has more devastating effects than political corruption, a crime all on its own, and regarded as "the mother of all corruption" (Castellano 1996, 195). Undeniably, it is in politics
where corruption leaves the largest number of victims after dirty politicians embezzle public funds, just as paramilitaries continue to steal monies allocated to health and education in rural areas. Because of them, the poorest Colombians do not reap the benefit of policies geared to change their lives. Corruption is the second bequest of the *narco-way*.

The third and cruelest legacy received from the *narco-lifestyle* buried next to each *narco-victim* the ability to resolve differences between Colombians peacefully. History confirms that *narcos* expeditiously killed not only those who confronted, disagreed, or dared to say no to them, but even anyone who looked at them wrong (Melo 1995, 1). In turn, Alejandro Gaviria (2010, 24) explains that, "as *narco-violence* grew so did the rate of homicides, the leading cause of death in the country then." Yet the rising number of murders was not the only alarming problem derived from this specific *narco-behavior*. Perhaps even more destructive was that the *narco-resolution* tactic completely ruptured the harmonious coexistence of an entire society. From there on, Colombians—men and women alike—became more aggressive with each other, far more intolerant, and completely reckless. Little by little, the idea of growing old dissipated; as did any hope for the future when dying young became the norm. This short-term view drove many men to abandon cherished moral canons as basic as respect for the life of others, a principle considered by most of us as the essence of a civilized society. Although today Colombians no longer kill each other for simplicities such as honking, the level of aggressiveness and hostility between them—especially
those seen as beneath them—contradicts their gentle and kind ways with foreigners and those whom they consider their own.

After a legacy of such magnitude, it is not surprising that important social dynamics in the country transformed. Noticeably, the structure of the traditional family was the one that changed most. With so many dying young, men's life expectancy decreased significantly, and as should be expected, "the number of families with women heads of household multiplied rapidly" (Gaviria 2010, 33). However, the death of their partners was not the only reason behind the increasing number of women taking on the role as the sole provider. Two additional factors intervened; on the one hand, the short-term view drove men to abandon their wives and children to revert to their single-man days. On the other hand, "... anticipating the impossibility of long-lasting relationships, some women opted for becoming single parents anyway" (Ibid.). This fourth narco-souvenir, the breakdown of the family structure, turned Colombia into a country of absent fathers for millions of children who grew up alone as their mothers worked too many jobs to rear them. As the children became adults, and social structures deteriorated further, a very strange kind of individualism evolved, one that strived to protect and maintain close family ties intact while fending for the self. Inevitably, Colombia became a country of smiling and polite people who did not care about each other. Members of a society who turned a blind eye to the suffering of those outside of their family, who lost the ability to empathize or feel compassion, who saw no cruelty or deceit in any action that benefitted them or their inner circle. In other
words, a society who took to the extreme the meaning of "He who is not with me, is against me" (Mathew, 12.30), and turned into enemies all those who did not share their views or became an obstacle to their goals.

The last of the narco-lifestyle influences focused on changing women. Mimi Yagoub (2014, 1) explains that the perfect female form adopted by narcotics replicated the looks of the 1970s American prostitutes —blond, very voluptuous and highly sexualized women—. The immense profits from the drug business paid for the plastic surgeries of narcotics' women —their wives, their many lovers, and any other woman who they considered worthy of their attention—, turning them into replicas of the prototype they envisioned. As narco-aesthetics expanded, the perception of beauty shifted when Colombian women —young and old, poor and wealthy, highly educated or not— began to associate physical enhancement with a better life. From there on, just as quick-easy-money gave poor men access to the higher class, narco-aesthetics became the social mobility tool for women. However, even more damaging was that as beauty changed in Colombia, so did the way in which men viewed and treated women. Chauvinism reverted to the old times when women were either sexual objects, trophies or servants. The darkest side of narco-beauty gave rise to an inexplicable form of human-trafficking-by-consent as noted below:

... girls and young women from rural villages, or even lower-class neighborhoods of cities, [are] taken by force or in agreement with prospectless parents to be "pimped" to perfection; or when they themselves take the initiative to go to the big city in an attempt to "make it big", ... to eventually have their economic issues resolved by a rich man. (Ibid.)
Today, although narco-aesthetics turned plastic surgery into a lucrative Colombian export service, its legacy lost the woman by making all women invisible, it contaminated men when rather than partners or spouses they saw objects with curves, it replaced education with beauty, and in doing so, the narco-lifestyle swiftly squashed and reversed gender equity advances previously achieved.

By its very nature, drug trafficking is a destructive force with the innate ability to break down traditions and change customs. Drug addiction has the power to cripple entire families in poor inner-city neighborhoods, a fact that is well documented and understood across the globe. What is completely unknown is that the narco-lifestyle is even more debilitating to families and can quickly tear down an entire culture. Obviously, drug traffickers' ethical beliefs shift when entering the business; however, less obvious to most is that their moral turpitude is so far-reaching that it deeply impacts their society as a whole.

Drug trafficking, always analyzed through the jaded lens of the internal war, marginalized the depth of the crisis in values experienced by this country, and grossly underestimated the impact of the narco-lifestyle on urban Colombia. Only when including ethics —defined as the commitment an individual has to follow the rules imposed by society— and morals —defined as the ability of a person to recognize and

11. The beauty of Colombian women impresses anyone who visits the country. Sadly, today even middle class women use their beauty to finance their undergraduate and graduate education or to help support their families, understood as parents, young siblings, and even grandparents.
differentiate right from wrong—into the calculus of this equation is the *narco-lifestyle* legacy truly revealed. By understanding its overall impact, a large number of new unknown and unaccounted for victims come to light. Crandall (2014a, 5) states, "... coca and cocaine are horrible for Colombia in ways that are not entirely understood from a distance." Three generations of Colombians —once honest men and women— have not experienced a single day of peace in the thirty-five years since *narcos* began trading on human values. Today, their children grow learning this new set of ideals based on the unprincipled legacy, one where *the end justifies the means*.

The Colombian characteristics described by the five *narco-legacies* seem to be in direct contradiction with the qualities attributed to the Colombian population in the introduction of this Chapter. They are not; as are not the incongruences perceived within those *narco-bequests*. The incredible dichotomy of the culture is precisely why Colombians are mystifying and terrifying at the same time; why those who visit Colombia cannot associate the people they meet and love with the stories they once read. Most importantly, this complex juxtaposition is the reason that makes the Colombian conflict unlike any other conflict in the world, intractable or otherwise.

**Ethics and Morals Escape the War**

A country at war terrifies its society, but a society living in an ethical and moral vacuum frightens the world. Perhaps that is why the international community only sees the profits from the drug trade entering the country and cannot grasp the destruction left behind. But how can Colombians change an evil so deeply ingrained inside of them?
True to its form, "Colombia will always be a country of extreme individual behaviors and exceptional individuals, some of whom [will] go to any extreme to comply with the law and others [will] break it" (Thouni 2002, 112). A nation that will continue to surprise us all, one that after sixty years of war is taking for the first time the important step to acknowledge its victims, its pain, and its shame. It was in that spirit that this quest to find the unknown victims of the war began.

For many decades now, the internal war is the only reason used to explain the country's victims; six million campesinos displaced, thirty thousand citizens kidnapped, and at least a half million Colombians killed by guerrillas, drug dealers, paramilitaries, and even the military. Similarly, it is the conflict that cast drug trafficking, corruption, and violence upon this nation's society, with drug trafficking being the main force fueling the war. However, it is now evident that the conflict did not act alone. Three additional elements joined in targeting different sectors of the population, and each force yielded additional victims that are either unknown, ignored, or only attributed to the conflict. In the middle of the vicissitudes of the peace negotiations between the Government and the FARC, recognizing that other factors contributed to the ongoing predicament will not only ease up the country's tensions but will also focus the negotiation efforts on solutions for very specific problems affecting the Colombian victims, both the known and the unknown.

For instance, acknowledging that as a result of the Apertura —globalization's Colombian name— displacement in Colombia is not of one type but two will clearly
inform the government that simply ending the conflict will not bring back *campesinos* to the rural areas. Understanding *jobless displacement* is what will result in social and economic policies guaranteeing work stability and new strategies needed for *campesinos* to return to agricultural lands. As soon as most of the displaced resume their traditional activities, these rural workers will re-enter the economy's productive sector, easing up the weight that their displacement brought upon cities still today unprepared to help them. Realizing what caused *jobless displacement* will also help to prevent it in the future. Essentially, since the *Apertura* not only took away their crops but also their option to fight their unjust condition as jobless rural workers, the government has the ethical and moral duty to provide the space for *campesinos* to exercise without harm their constitutionally given rights as Colombian citizens. With land ownership and work security, this once nomadic population will also find the time to form solid and lasting communities to organize and protect each other.

Given that the rigid and overpowering Colombian class system stopped social mobility for far too long, the country’s elite refuse to see that those who face exclusion, abandonment, and lack of opportunity inevitably suffer the devastating effects of inequality in a society. These elite's reprehensible lack of generosity used political power to halt rural reform and any other reform that could benefit those beneath them, simply to not share their wealth. It is thanks to them that Colombia continues to be the most unequal society in Latin America. Their greed opened the door to drug dealers and in doing so, their moral double standards and lack of ethics contributed to
the decay of society. Their blindness to the suffering of the rest of Colombia did not allow them to see that they are victims as well.

However, the group where the number of unknown victims is the highest and is not counted by individuals but in terms of generations —past, present and future—is due to the impact of the *narco-lifestyle*. A transformation that began in the urban societies but quickly permeated rural Colombia as well. Traditional moral and ethical canons, easily understood and followed around the world are nowhere to be found amidst the conflict. This does not mean that all Colombians are completely immoral or completely unethical by their own standards; it simply means that the boundaries understood by the majority of Colombians are not the same as those practiced around the world or by Colombians who preceded this period of moral and ethical decay. Those few who still uphold traditional values are easily isolated when not sharing in corruption, illegality, lack of solidarity, and all other negative behaviors. Both these two groups are part of the unknown and unrecognized victims. The fundamental harm is that those few Colombians who could lead the country back to the moral and ethical standards practiced around the globe find too many roadblocks to succeed when not marginalized. Colombia becomes then, the greatest victim of them all.

Undeniably, at the end of this road, the most shocking discovery is that under one name, three different Colombias fight their own battles alone, while in desperate need of each other’s help. The conflict is the biggest obstacle separating them, because attributing all maladies only to the internal war ignored three key issues that require
acknowledgment to find a resolution. Grasping that when globalization, the class system, and the *narco-lifestyle-legacy* joined the conflict, these four elements merged into the unstoppable force that destroyed the moral fiber of their entire society; only then, the structure and the roadmap needed to rebuild Colombia will become clear. At that point, the world will see for the first time, all those unknown and unaccounted for victims left behind by each phenomena, millions and millions of Colombians mischaracterized, misunderstood, and unfairly treated across the globe. Most importantly, only then will Colombia reunite again as one nation, as a country no longer at war; one capable of sustainable peace. The nation where the *happiest people in the world* can truly be happy, and one that stands together to honor its victims, the known, the unknown and the unaccounted for.
CHAPTER FIVE

IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

One thought that emerges consistently after analyzing the Colombian victims is why experts such as Peter Coleman and Frances Stewart — whose theories touch on bits and pieces of the reasons behind the potential intractability of this country's internal war — do not consider the one reason that truly makes this conflict intractable; the existence of a moral and ethical vacuum in an entire society. Possibly it is not that either of them overlooked that reason, but rather that this war is so unique and so complex that there are no coincidences with other experiences. Maybe, it is because its many edges fit so many possibilities that one stops looking before truly arriving to the root. Perhaps the reason is that the delicate intricacies of Colombians, their way of life, their own contradictions, require a multidisciplinary approach, fresh eyes, and an untainted heart\(^1\) to understand fully what is hurting these wonderful people. With this in mind, the reasonable next step begins with determining if the Colombian conflict is in fact intractable, and if so, what can be done to move past it.

From a historical perspective, it is impossible to deny that peace is more the exception than the rule in Colombia (Deutsche Welle 2013). Even when only looking at the country from the outside, not only its duration but also its divergent facets through the years clearly indicate that this nation's war is not just a war. The simple enumeration

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\(^1\) An untainted heart refers to the existing international bias towards the Colombian society as a result of the drug trade, but especially to Colombians' inability to judge themselves.
of a few actors involved suffices to assume why. With the oldest guerrilla in the world protecting coca crops and kidnapping wealthy individuals, private armies with former military personnel roaming around chasing guerrilla members and their supporters — whether they really are supporters or not seems irrelevant —, and the nation's military forces hunting both of them — including the followers of either — while announcing the illegal groups' defeat by showing an increased falsos-positivos' (false-positives) body count, any country fighting either one would be at war. To exacerbate the chaos further, Colombia also endures high levels of political corruption, drug trafficking with its international stigma, and even a fifteen-year-old American intervention.

Under this thinly veiled panorama, it is understandable why people around the world characterize Colombia's war as an intractable conflict. At first glance, it definitely seems to be. Regrettably, most Colombians also agree with the assessment without realizing that adopting the concept becomes a deterrent to finding solutions for the nation and its people. Much like blaming the conflict for any and all the country's problems, simply assuming its intractability not only reinforces the notion but also misplaces responsibility and hope. Most of all, it does not contribute to finding peace.

Even more interesting is that seasoned experts who focus their research on the

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2. Mauricio García Durán (2011, 5) describes falsos positivos as Military forces' abuses against the innocent population later introduced as guerrilleros killed or detained in combat. "From 2001 to 2010, the number of falsos positivos included 1449 extrajudicial executions of innocent civilians and 1119 victims of military abuse, including 87 cases of torture, 36 wounded, 41 individual threats, 63 forced and involuntary disappearances and 214 arbitrary arrests."

3. In his article for Small Wars Journal (2014), Philip K. Abbott states, "Colombia has evolved into what can be coined as an intractable conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). This conflict has remained unresolved for such a long period of time and at such a high level of
country—analyzing the internal war using structured frameworks and combining different socioeconomic aspects—also tend to conclude that Colombia lives amidst an intractable conflict. Usually, their findings are reasonable, their explanations very logical and more often than not, their research provides a deeper understanding of the complex dilemma. As such, a methodical approach that arrives at that conclusion gives much credence to the diagnosis. Thus, when not one but many analyzes—from diverse disciplines and using unrelated approaches—conclude that Colombia has an intractable conflict, then, it truly must be one; otherwise, how else can one explain that all roads lead to the same place?

However, despite much agreement on what the war is, it is puzzling that the solution remains a mystery. Why? The reason is simple. The Colombian conflict is a chameleon, a conflict for all seasons and a master of disguise. In other words, this conflict seems to adapt to any discipline, any framework, and any combination after that. Purposely, it even leads analysts to believe that they found the root of the problem when in reality, all they touched was the tip of the iceberg. Proof of this is the story behind the February 10 headline of El Tiempo (2015c) announcing, "after five months of intense work, twelve of Colombia's top academics were unable to agree on the reasons behind the conflict."

Five months before, in the middle of the ongoing Havana peace negotiations, intensity and destructiveness, that each side views the seemingly rigid position of the other side as a threat to its very existence."
the Colombian Government and the FARC realized that clearly defining the causes at the root of the conflict was vital to finding lasting solutions. With that in mind, they jointly enlisted the country's top academics—all of them internationally known, from different careers and ideologies—to find the answer. The article ends stating that, "Although the twelve academics disagreed on the causes, they unanimously agreed on which solutions will lead to peace" (Ibid.). The absurdity in this sentence serves as the perfect example to show why this hyper-studied, overanalyzed, and vastly misdiagnosed war continues to elude peace. It also clarifies why if not even Colombian experts can establish the cause, nor the date when this conflict began, the easy choice is to see this war as an intractable conflict.

Precisely because of this much incongruence across the board, Peter Coleman's theory becomes an important tool to decipher whether a conflict is truly intractable or not. Needless to say, a task not easy to achieve with most wars, but one that is especially difficult given the complexity of the Colombian case. However, the most interesting aspect of his framework establishes a structure that—instead of simply focusing on the actors—forces the analyst to see beyond the obvious acts of war; a methodology that reels the research back on track when losing the course.

Not All Academic Research Leads to the Truth

Following Coleman's going beyond the obvious attitude, this thesis moved away from the traditional scrutiny of the victims of war—setting aside the human tragedy and the horrors Colombians endured—to find those victims who are still unknown and
unaccounted for. As a result, not only new victims came to light, but also previously unidentified forces —globalization, the class system, and the *narco-lifestyle-legacy* (see Chapter 4)— were exposed. Notwithstanding the above breakthrough, of greater significance was the realization that even when using Coleman's framework, one can mistakenly assume that the country lives an *intractable conflict*. Undeniably, all the characteristics that he references as determinant factors are easily found in the nation's predicament. What challenges his theory in Colombia is precisely a key element that Coleman himself considers of great importance, time; a decisive element that turns tractable into intractable. Indeed, the one aspect with enough power to derail many analyzes if experts fail to recognize that each characteristic in the framework is limited to a very specific moment in time —some shorter than others—, yet none is ever permanent or sustained throughout the entire conflict (Figure 5).

Another remarkable aspect is that Coleman's characteristics seem to be misjudged or misunderstood when associated with historical milestones in this war. For instance, Coleman's *irreconcilable moral differences*, 4 interpreted in Colombia as a difference in ideology, applies to *La Violencia* (1948–1958). At the time, the struggle between Liberals and Conservatives —recognized by some experts as the beginning of the conflict— was a violent difference of political views, one that gave birth to most guerrilla and paramilitary groups.

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4. *Irreconcilable moral differences* are "conflicts about right and wrong, good and evil. They may be rooted in different religions, different cultures, or different worldviews. What is important to the parties is that they are engaged in a noble crusade" (Coleman 2006b, 19).
Interestingly, two more elements materialized during this time; *domination*\(^5\) as the expression of the Conservatives' newly found power and *high-stakes distributional issues*\(^6\) since they assassinated Liberals to take-over their land. In the history of the Colombian conflict, this is the only period where Coleman's three key elements are present simultaneously and match his descriptions. If it were not for its short duration, *La Violencia* fits the *intractable conflict* definition perfectly.

![Figure 5. Peter Coleman's frameworks applied to the Colombian conflict, 1948-2015.](image)

Source: Compilation by the author for the purposes of this analysis using Peter Coleman (2006b) framework for *Intractable Conflicts*

However, with *Frente Nacional* (1958-1974), when Liberals and Conservatives agreed to share political power, their ideological differences ended, as did the

\(^5\) *Domination or pecking order* are "conflicts over power and status: who is on top of the social and political hierarchy, and who is not…. more often than not, status conflicts go beyond distributional conflicts -- they involve subjective assessments of an individual’s or a group’s goodness, value or social worth " (Ibid.).

\(^6\) *High-Stakes distributional issues* are "conflicts over who gets what when the item in contention is very valuable -- often impossible to do without. People are unlikely to abandon continuing struggles over land, water, employment opportunities, and wealth, in general " (Ibid.).
assassinations and land seizures. The agreement undoubtedly brought to the country a sense of peace, although brief and non-inclusive. *Irreconcilable moral differences* resurfaced almost immediately when these two parties jointly opposed the recently formed guerrilla groups claiming to adhere to Communism, following the American Cold War’s response to that political system. Despite strong conflicting views on the role of government, this new period of ideological differences was short-lived. Partially because guerrilla groups established themselves in distant areas—far from governmental control—the previous struggle for land ended, as did any *domination* possibilities given the geographical distance between them. Although the FARC still mentions today their Communist roots, their actions indicate that more than following the ideology, the term is intrinsic to their speech. For those reasons, to affirm today that Colombia lives an *intractable conflict* due to *irreconcilable moral differences* with guerrilla groups is inaccurate.

From 1979 onward, Coleman’s *high-stakes distributional issues* element is even more interesting for the misinterpretation of his definition leads to the most confusion. In Colombia, land is the invaluable asset with which this characteristic is associated. Notwithstanding that land concentration has not significantly changed in the country for well over a century, most experts continue to see *land ownership* and *territorial control* as synonymous when they are not (see Chapter 2). In doing so, they fail to realize

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7. Throughout the FARC’s job as protectors of coca routes first and as cocaine producers later, they always maintained the communist speech about wanting equality for peasant while mistreating and exploiting those same campesinos to force them to cultivate coca fields.
that land is not what fuels the conflict. The government's lack of total control over the
nation's territory opened the door for land to become the unfortunate stage where the
war plays out. Unfairly, campesinos end up caught in the middle because their work
and homes are in those same rural areas. Similarly, not taking into account that most
coca plantations are in baldíos, lands still owned by the nation, grossly mischaracterizes
the impetus of land in the war and offers an erroneous perception about the causes of
displacement. Therefore, for these reasons, during the Drug Trafficking Boom
Coleman's definition of high-stakes distributional issues is not applicable (Figure 5).

Additionally, when the Apertura opened the country's economy to new
agribusinesses and agricultural imports it devastated campesino's production. These
two factors caused the jobless displacement of broad sectors of the rural population
(see Chapter 4). Similarly, it is undeniable that campesinos also experienced violent
displacement, but it was mostly as a result of paramilitary groups and some wealthy
landowners looking to increase production to adapt to the demands of globalization.
Describing displacement in Colombia without clearly differentiating violent from jobless
displacement conceals a crucial issue that requires immediate attention, the high levels
of rural unemployment that endanger campesinos' lives when forcing them to move
around to find jobs. However, neither of these two forms of displacement should be
categorized as high-stakes distributional issues. Why not? Simply because paramilitary
groups found no resistance when taking over campesino lands, and there were no
attempts by campesinos to take their land back. The rural population abandoned the
land because work was no longer available or because they chose to stay alive rather than to fight. This establishes that land is an asset that campesinos can do without.

The third and last characteristic, domination or pecking order, refers to who controls whom. Obviously, this relates to political power in Colombia. At first glance, anyone could say that this element refers to the power struggle between paramilitary forces, drug dealers, and even guerrilla groups looking to control the government and the country's elite. This is also an inaccurate statement because from the moment narcos entered the scene, their self-protection strategy included financing political campaigns, bribing politicians, terrorizing, and even assassinating those who initially rejected any kind of association with them. Similarly, paramilitary groups focused on electing their own politicians, first at the local level, but soon after, nationally. What those actions demonstrate today is that what might have started as a struggle for power, very quickly evolved into strong partnerships. The parapolítica, one of Colombia's most shameful episodes, serves as living proof of how when criminals and political elites merge, there is little hope for the country's population. Hence, when opposing political groups join forces and work together, there are neither domination issues nor power struggles.

Lastly, some may interpret the American intervention in Colombia as a form of

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8. As of 2005, one hundred and thirty-nine congressional representatives were under investigation for the same reason. Key information on who was in the list of parapolíticos and how they were elected in different areas of the country came from the computer of paramilitary leader Jorge 40 confiscated after his demobilization and subsequent extradition to the United States in 2006 (Semana 2006a).
domination. A simple reminder that the United States and Colombia are not at war with each other is enough to dispel such belief. In fact, these nations' long-standing relationship encompasses much more than an alliance in the most recent War on Drugs and War on Terrorism (see Chapter 3). In the end, despite their patchy relationship, receiving pressure from the United States must never be confused with domination by the United States. Undoubtedly, like most other nations, Colombia is well aware that a global pecking order exists, one where the United States sits at the top as the most powerful nation in the world. Not appreciating that support in the middle of such a convoluted civil war would be a tremendous mistake for Colombia.

Once the events universally recognized as central to the conflict are side-by-side each element in Coleman's theory, the initial perception that the characteristics defining intractability were misjudged or misunderstood in the Colombian war is correct. Although all elements seem present throughout the conflict's timeline, only the events at the beginning of the war (1948-1958) fit the identifiable components. However, time, crucial to Coleman's framework, is too short to turn that period intractable. When time seems to meet the terms, the other elements are misinterpreted and do not correspond to the definitions outlined by his theory. With this in mind, the indisputable conclusion is that the Colombian conflict is not, nor ever was, an intractable conflict.

Coleman's framework makes one more contribution to this analysis when a previously unnoticed fact emerges. From 1974 to 1980, there is a clear and seemingly
uneventful gap in the conflict’s timeline. Historical data describes this period as one of fast growth and economic development⁹ in the country, not a common characteristic of nations at war. However, the gap's most significant gift to the analysis is that its presence noticeably divides the timeline in two (Figure 5). There are only two plausible interpretations of this six-year period. Either Colombia has an ongoing sixty-seven-year-old war with two facets, or the country has gone through two different conflicts with one lasting twenty-six years and the other, still in progress, thirty-five years. To determine which interpretation is closest to the truth, the timeframes before and after the gap require an in-depth definition and analysis.

The first period, from 1948 to 1974, includes two noteworthy events. The first was La Violencia, a declared civil war between Conservatives and Liberals. The second was the agreement signed between those two parties to share governmental control to end the confrontation. That single action reveals that Frente Nacional was in fact a peace treaty. "A peace agreement is defined as an agreement concerned with the resolution of the incompatibility signed and/or publicly accepted by all, or the main, actors in a conflict" (Kreutz 2010, 245). In addition, since "... most modern wars have ended not in the surrender of one side but through a bargaining process establishing the terms of armistice or peace" (Pillar 1985), there is only one unavoidable conclusion. Colombia deals with two civil conflicts as if it was only one prolonged war.

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⁹ Between 1974 and 1980, Colombia’s GDP average rate of growth was 5.1. In contrast, the country’s GDP average rate of growth in the 1960s was 4.5 and in the 1980-84 was 2.2% (World Bank 2015).
The second period (1980–to date) coincides with the boom of drug trafficking in the country, a new actor that completely changed the dynamics of the entire nation. Although guerrilla and paramilitary groups remained constant players across both periods, they were not the same. The associations formed by each illegal group with drug cartels provided large sums of drug money that empowered them and changed their nature (see Chapter 2). For instance, guerrillas set aside their ideological component and used their knowledge of the jungles as a valuable asset for cartels looking to protect coca routes and to escape military checkpoints. Conversely, paramilitary groups were no longer part of the military secret police but independent contractors who maintained close relationships with the national military to fight guerrillas. However, they also developed tight associations with wealthy landowners—including narcos—and local political leaders. A well-crafted strategy to have unlimited power and funds, not to mention impunity for crimes against campesinos. The influence of drug trafficking not only explains the difference between periods but also divides them. Narcos—the new key player—changed other actors, their motifs, and the nature of the confrontations. This shift clearly indicates that the second period is an entirely new conflict rather than the continuation of the original war.

This conclusion is in direct contravention with those that see the Colombian conflict as a prolonged war. Perhaps the constant presence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups throughout sixty-seven years of turmoil in Colombia misled some experts. Maybe, some others do not realize that although seemingly the same groups, the
original principles and ideals held by each group changed significantly from one conflict to the other. Independent of the reasons, describing the Colombian hostilities only as a sixty-year war disguises crucial moments that—although presumably irrelevant—not only ignore the changing nature of each conflict, but most importantly, the significant and determinant shifts in the relationships between actors throughout the stages. Not recognizing Frente Nacional as a historical peace agreement negates the end of the first war and the reason guerrillas moved across periods. The clue is in understanding what separates those who signed the accord from the actions of those excluded from it.

Charles Call’s theory brings much clarity to the forefront of the debate when stating that, "...political exclusion of opposition groups, rather than economic or social factors, plays the decisive role in most cases of civil war recurrence" (Call 2012, 4). This concept points to the biggest flaw in the pact signed by Conservatives and Liberals to end La Violencia. Unquestionably, Frente Nacional brought peace to the country, yet foretold the recurrence of the Colombian war simply because two parties purposely outlawed any other ideology or party from access to political participation. Ayala Diago (1999) believes that, "Frente Nacional activated the country's political life, but out of exclusion." 10 This kind of segregation easily explains the continued presence of armed groups in Colombia from 1964 to 1979. Guerrillas were then the armed voice of political

10. César Augusto Ayala Diago (1999) also explains that the agreement ratified between liberals and conservatives not only confirmed the parties’ intent to govern Colombia without input from any other ideology, but also to rule with absolute independence from one another. To achieve it, the narrow-minded Frente Nacional governments’ out rooted all possibilities that those who opposed their measure be heard by forcing political leaders out of Bogotá. Despite much effort, those who subscribed to Communism, or considered independent failed in the attempt to resist political exclusion.
exclusion in the country. A force quickly weakening when the diminishing financial resources and support from the Communist world signaled the unquestionable and impending "... collapse of the iron curtain" (Thoumi 2002, 106).

In the end, all required to demonstrate how political exclusion endangered sustainable peace in Colombia is to look at the guerrilla's timeline (Figure 6). For an objective outlook of their actions, it is imperative to go back in time, not just to the day
in which the group officially declared its existence (1964), but rather to the time and circumstances of its true origin (1949). Historical data confirms that in the midst of the Conservative repression, some Liberal campesinos organized and took it upon themselves to protect their own. True Liberals who answered and reported to their party's elite based in Bogotá. From there on, the timeline shows that despite granting them two amnesties, the continued persecution and betrayal from different Frente Nacional governments pushed those campesinos into uniting the other excluded group, the Colombian Communist Party. Perhaps the most shocking event is precisely the one that turned them from Liberals to Communists, from campesinos to guerrilleros.

In 1959, President Alberto Lleras Camargo (L. 1958-1962) negotiated an amnesty with the Liberal self-defense group and enlisted them as rural police. Three years later, President Guillermo León Valencia (R. 1962-1966) inexplicably dismissed the ongoing amnesty and began their endless persecution. In May 1964, León Valencia ordered a savage attack on Marquetalia —the rebels' town of residence—. With the support of American forces acting under Plan Lazo, sixteen thousand soldiers squashed the entire guerrilla group, a total of fifty men and two women (Verdad Abierta 2013). Among the few survivors was Manuel Marulanda Velez —known today as Tirofijo, the oldest guerrillero in the world— who took it upon himself to organize the other five survivors.

11. Even after signing a peace agreement to end the hostilities between Conservatives and Liberals, party affiliation continued to play a very important role in Colombia. More so since alternating power did not guarantee the continuation of policies from one administration to the next. To facilitate the understanding of how party lines influenced key governmental decisions, the author includes the president’s party designation inside the mandate timeframe by using the American political party identification. As such, Republicans (R.) represent the Conservative Party, and Democrats (L.) represent the Liberal Party.
Only a month later, Marulanda and a group of seventy-five men officially declared that moving forward Colombia was dealing with a revolutionary guerrilla.

The timeline not only serves to show the injustices against former Liberal combatants but most significantly, to confirm that from 1964 to 1982, the FARC focused on organizing the group and gathering support instead of on guerilla warfare. Therefore, to affirm that Colombia fights a sixty-year-old war against the FARC is also inaccurate; especially since a government’s actions to suppress an ideology is definitely not a war. The FARC’s terrorist actions began in 1982, coinciding with the entrance of drug lords into the scene and initiating the country’s second conflict. Verdad Abierta (2013) confirms that in 1982, "FARC leaped from a clandestine group, without any national impact, to headline major newspapers," a costly mistake by previous governments who never measured the consequences of political exclusion.

Fortunately, history’s most significant contribution to mankind is the opportunity to calmly go back in time to review actions and decisions made in the heat of a moment, to learn from old mistakes, and to understand why a good idea at the time failed. Most of all, the past always provides an opportunity to reevaluate and change the course leading to the future.

When going back in time through the history of the Colombian conflict, it is undeniable that many mistakes and betrayals led to today’s seemingly irreversible dilemma. However, the country’s account also indicates that peace for Colombia may be closer than expected if the Havana negotiating teams take the time to walk together
through memory lane. They will find that the solution to the Colombian peace quandary seems rather simple after establishing that, (1) the country’s conflict is not intractable by international standards; (2) since the parties that originated the conflict signed a peace treaty and agreed to share power, Colombia does not have a sixty-year-old war but two shorter conflicts—; and (3) the second, and very different, war arose out of the political exclusion agreed upon in that peace treaty. Therefore, to find peace, all Colombia needs is to agree to the political inclusion of all ideologies, a very obvious solution for most nations around the world.

Unfortunately, the failure of six earlier peace negotiations proves that it may not be so easy, and can only mean two things; either Colombia never placed political inclusion on the negotiation table, which does not make sense since guerrilla groups always expressed their political aim to govern the nation; or other factors are equally important and as necessary to the successful negotiation of a peace treaty. One more time, appealing to history to understand the undertones behind each failure will also help clarify why peace continues to elude Colombians. At this point, not considering those experiences could severely hinder the ongoing talks for earlier mistakes might reoccur, and opportunities to resolve historical differences may pass by unnoticed.

Good Intentions Are Not Always Enough

After six failed attempts, neither the Colombian Government nor the FARC can claim that peace talks are a new concept to either of them. In fact, both groups must acknowledge that regardless of the government’s commitment, or the FARC’s
availability, previous efforts were unsuccessful for the most part. Although filled with seemingly good intentions, they were not always ethical, honest, or enough. The unquestionable failures point out to both parties' culpability and speak about their responsibility in the suffering that Colombians endured. More importantly, in the midst of more than two years negotiating, their faults impose upon them the moral duty to be active participants in resolving the still ongoing conflict. This will also speed up moving forward towards sustainable peace for all.

In speaking about Colombia's failed peace negotiations, Marc Chernick (1996, 4) states that, "... no good analysis about the past experiences exists, no explanation about the reasons for partial successes, nor about the failures, ..., yet if Colombia is known for having the oldest insurgency in the continent, it must also be acknowledged for having the longest negotiation processes in the region." Since 1982, Colombia attempted seven peace agreements. In those thirty-three years, the nation failed six times. The last one, entering the third year, has weekly highs that bring much hope to the entire country and devastating lows that point toward rupture. However, a few days after a critical disagreement, both negotiating teams still show up to the table hoping that their counterpart will also turn up, and they do. Undoubtedly, these teams' commitment in spite of grave moments is the most telling indicator that, perhaps this time, this attempt may end differently. It is with that in mind that the trials and errors of previous efforts should be the map to avoid bumps still ahead on the road.

President Belisario Betancur (R. 1982-1986) began his mandate with peace at
the forefront of his ideas for Colombia, one that included guerrillas and all other illegal
groups. Unfortunately, "Betancur's plan for peace was exceedingly openhanded... He
had advocated for a blanket amnesty for those in arms against the State, with no
preconditions other than that the guerrillas lay down their weapons and return to civil
life" (Henderson 2015, 102). Jaime Bateman, commander of M-19, refused the proposal for
he believed it lacked necessary social and political reforms. The negotiations quickly fell
apart after M-19 seized the Palacio de Justicia (Justice Palace) in Bogotá and the
government authorized military actions to regain control of the building. 12 In the
meantime, the FARC and the Communist Party co-founded a new political party under
the name Unión Patriótica (UP) (Patriotic Union) (IOC 2014).

Most people consider Betancur's peace a catastrophe, yet Chernick found two
positive elements that contributed to future peace processes; firstly, "... that the armed
opposition is a political actor and that it was necessary to open a dialogue with them"
(Chernick 1996, 5); secondly, that the exercise opened Colombia's democracy. However, the
main lesson learned from Betancur's failure is that negotiating peace without political
support, but especially when going against party-line ideals, shuts the door to any
reform independent of how necessary it may be. 13

12. According to Ana Carrigan (1993), during the Justice Palace Siege, among the ninety-eight
casualties and assassinated at close range were eleven magistrates, including the President of the Supreme
Court of Justice. At least fifteen people seen on TV leaving the Palace alive disappeared, and of those, two
public servants were later found shot in common graves. Well-known M-19 leaders later killed or captured by
the military, succeeded in burning the criminal records of known drug dealers like Pablo Escobar. Confessions
from captured Guerrilla leaders accused Pablo Escobar of masterminding and financing the siege.

13. Ricardo Acuña (2012) explains that Betancur was a Conservative and his idea of negotiating with
communist groups counters completely the principles and ideologies of his party, which followed the lead of
the American Republican Party in the midst the Cold War.
President Virgilio Barco (L. 1986-1990) shared his predecessor's commitment to peace. However —perhaps because of the Justice Palace debacle—, he chose a different approach to negotiating with guerrilla groups. By limiting the scope only to disarmament and political inclusion, his government focused on reaffirming "... the authority of the State as a State" (Ibid., 5). Unfortunately, Barco's Government coincided with the drug cartels' war —headed by Pablo Escobar— against the administration, as well as the Cali cartel. The additional pressure caused by inhumane actions of newly formed paramilitary groups protecting landowners derailed his plan for peace for three years. Chernick (1996, 6) states that Barco’s strategy was not designed to end the conflict but rather to show the government's power and to delegitimize guerrilla forces. Although he is likely right on the government’s intention, history shows that despite many difficulties, Barco’s Government signed peace agreements with the M-19—a group already weakened by their losses during the Justice Palace Siege—, the Quintin Lame force, and a faction of the EPL. Three revolutionary groups that laid down their weapons and returned to civil life. That same year, 1989, the M-19 became a political party that is still active today14 (Sequera 2014). No other president has signed a single peace agreement with any guerrilla groups since then.

14. To date, M-19 has democratically appointed to Congress eight to fifteen Senators and a similar number of Representatives on each election since becoming a political party in Colombia. Democratically elected, its many political figures strongly defend the country’s Constitution and the rights of Colombians. One of its key senators, Gustavo Petro, was instrumental to uncovering the parapolitics scandal. In 2012, he was elected Mayor of Bogotá, but in March 2014, Vivian Sequera (2014) explains that the country’s Inspector General removed him from office under accusations of "overstepping his constitutional authority with heavy-handed tactics in a failed attempt to replace private trash collectors." Large masses of Colombians protested the decision, yet President Santos accepted the Inspector General’s ruling and Petro was forced to leave the office. El Tiempo (2014a) reports that Petro was reinstated as Mayor only a month later.
Barco's legacy to future peace processes was his first time implementation of an institutional framework to negotiate peace (Chernick 1996, 6). *La Consejería para la Reconciliación, Normalización y Rehabilitación* (CRNR) (Counsel for reconciliation, normalization and rehabilitation) conceived as an entity to support the reintegration of former guerrilleros, paved the way for the next government's reinsertion program.

The following administration was perhaps one of the most difficult in Colombia's recent history. Cesar Gaviria (L. 1990–1994) took office under much social instability and a grave political crisis caused by the assassinations of three presidential candidates before the 1990 election.\(^{15}\) Perhaps driven by his youth\(^{16}\) and inexperience, and clearly influenced by his campaign slogan *welcome to the future*, Gaviria quickly undertook the *Apertura*, a war against Pablo Escobar, a constitutional reform, and the continuation of Barco's peace policies. Undoubtedly, too many important topics to handle at the same time, or to accomplish in only four years.

Although Gaviria never saw illegal groups as political actors, he invited guerrilla leaders to be part of the National Assembly convened to discuss necessary changes to the Colombian Constitution. Two crucial differences broke down the collaboration. On one hand, Gaviria's attempt to separate the conflict from other national issues demanded that guerrilla groups demobilize. On the other, the FARC's willingness to

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15. The *NYT* (1989) reported the first two assassinations beginning with that of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán (L) on August 18. Later, the *NYT* (1990) confirmed the assassinations of presidential candidates Carlos Pizarro (M-19) on April 27. and Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa (FARC-UP) on March 22.

16. *La Silla Vacia* (2014) reports that when taking office, Cesar Gaviria became the youngest president in Colombian history. At the time, he was only forty-three years old.
discuss key national matters did not involve their intention to end the conflict (Chernick 1996, 5). This unsurmountable gap hurt negotiations despite the new Constitution's message for peace and equality in Colombia. Sadly, the nation's hope ended after Gaviria ordered a military attack on Casa Verde (Green House), a small town where FARC leaders gathered (Semana 1991). Although shocking, Gaviria's actions are not surprising. A quick review of his presidency shows that inconsistent and conflicting decisions were an everyday occurrence throughout his mandate. For instance, history records that in the same manner in which he escalated the war against drug dealers one day, he offered lesser sentences and no extradition in exchange for their truthful confessions on the next.

When analyzing Gaviria's peace, Chernick (1996, 6) poses a brilliant question; "Why can't a government discuss big national issues with illegal groups and use those conversations to find national solutions?" His answer is equally realistic; "Jointly finding solutions to problems do not mean that guerrilla groups represent civil society. The guerrilla likely does not represent anyone, yet a government has the duty to propel the changes that a country needs by any means, and peace processes have that function" (Ibid.). It is precisely in that statement where there is a lesson that needs to be at the forefront of the current Havana negotiations. Although guerrillas' methods are not the example to follow to achieve any goal, they consistently highlight very real issues affecting most Colombians. The tremendous inequality in the country and the need for rural reform —already delayed for far too long— are only two of many examples. Since
the FARC is part of the problem and greatly contributes to rural insecurity and inequality, listening to their proposed solutions side-by-side the government's ideas may allow them both to find a middle ground that benefits all Colombians. In fact, the psychology behind mediation techniques encourages opposing parties to work together in solving a problem not just to find consensus, but especially to guarantee their commitment to each other and to the solution (Schneider, Gruman et al. 2005, 352).

Colombia's pursuit of peace faced four years of inaction following Gaviria's presidency. President Ernesto Samper's (L. 1994-1998) Government was deeply weekend by proof — presented by defeated candidate Andrés Pastrana— that his campaign received financing from the Cali cartel. For the most part, Samper's mandate focused on defending himself —nationally and internationally— from the accusations and in advancing his Salto Social (Social Leap) (DNP 1994), a set of social programs that did not include negotiating with illegal groups. However, during his first hundred days in office he "... restored the conflict's political status" (Chernick 1996, 7), lost once his predecessor identified guerrillas as mere criminals. Recognizing illegal groups as political actors reopened the door for future negotiations. This important distinction is defined in Colombia's Law 418 of 1997, which limits the government's ability to negotiate peace with only armed groups recognized as political actors (MinInterior 1997, T.I, Art 1.). Any other criminal group must face the justice system and pay for their crimes without any special consideration.

Taking advantage of the political void created during the previous
administration, Andrés Pastrana (R. 1998-2006) used peace to defeat other candidates and launched his initiative even before taking office when "he met FARC’s principal commander before his inauguration, and made several bold gestures upon taking office aimed at creating a propitious climate for peace" (Arnson, Chicola et al. 2000, 6). His was a long and dedicated peace process that included more than a dozen meetings where the FARC’s infinite agenda obstructed any agreement. Unfortunately, the lack of political support from the country’s elites — fearful that a treaty would result in a Communist Colombia — disrupted the negotiations (Chernick 1996, 7). However, the FARC's continued actions eventually lead to the dissolution of peace talks.

Perhaps one of Pastrana’s biggest mistakes was the establishment of Cagüan — a demilitarized zone where guerrilleros moved freely —, for the FARC used its safety to strengthen its forces. In no time, the illegal group escalated its incursions to other Colombian regions and increased its troops (Bouvier M., Chernick et al. 2012). The number of kidnappings and assassinations of political figures, wealthy landowners, and journalists rose to unexpected levels, yet the government remained consistent in its efforts to compromise and to provide a safe forum for discussion. Still, the FARC agreed to nothing. When simultaneously kidnapping twelve members of the Valle Department’s Assembly, the guerrilla leadership went too far and sent a loud message about their unwillingness to reach a peace agreement. A week later, President Pastrana ended the negotiations by signing Plan Colombia, a strategy without any social content or space for peace that allowed American troops into the nation (see Chapter 3). A costly initiative
for the entire country, partially due to this president's rush to involve the United States. The peace talks fiasco severely hindered Pastrana's ability to negotiate Plan Colombia (Petras 2001), and placed Colombia in the failed state\textsuperscript{17} category.

When comparing Pastrana's peace with previous experiences, it becomes obvious that the negotiation was doomed from the start. Two key factors behind Betancur's failure are easily identifiable in Pastrana's peace; excessive generosity and lack of political support. Undoubtedly, the most significant contributors to the demise of both attempts thus far.

An important shift happened in Colombia during the eighth-year mandate of President Alvaro Uribe (L. 2002-2006; R. 2006-2010).\textsuperscript{18} During his first term, Uribe announced his Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security) policy, a hardline against the guerrilla when signing Plan Patriota with the United States (Library of Congress 2013, 190); an agreement that also produced little to no result in stopping drug trafficking. His aggressive and deliberate speech against the FARC contributed to Colombians moving from fearing FARC to hating FARC, and anyone else who openly disagreed with the

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\textsuperscript{17} Corruption is one of the political, economic, military, and social indicators of instability that contributed to Colombia's borderline ranking of 41 out of 60 countries surveyed in Foreign Policy magazine's pejoratively named Failed States Index 2009. The authors of the Colombia Country Study agree that Colombia "... is far from being a failed state; only a weak one" (Library of Congress 2013, bxiii).

\textsuperscript{18} Uribe's government changed much more than Colombians attitude towards guerrillas. He also altered traditional political structures when amending one article in the country's 1991 Constitution. "As in most Latin American countries, strong presidential government characterizes the Colombian political system. The president of the republic is the chief of state, head of government, supreme administrative authority, and commander in chief of the armed forces. For about a century, until 2005, the president was elected for a nonrenewable four-year term. Congress then passed legislation authorizing reelection for a single consecutive term, and the Constitutional Court approved it in October 2005. This new legislation made possible the reelection of Uribe for a second term in May 2006 " (Ibid., 217). During his second mandate, the parapolitics scandal erupted weakening all three branches — executive, legislative and judiciary— of government.
Those who dared speak against his policies received the label of guerrillero and were discredited without proof. Under Uribe, Colombians became hostile towards each other, and paramilitary forces grew stronger under the justification of protecting the nation from guerrillas. The opposition accused him of running a softer line against the paras, later validated when the parapolitics' scandal uncovered that a majority of his political allies, close friends, and even family had strong ties with paramilitary leaders or were elected with paramilitary funds (Rivera Velásquez 2007, 10-11).

During his second term, two independent and distinct peace negotiations took place. The first with guerrilla groups stemmed from the international pressure to negotiate freedom for three American military contractors and seven national political figures in captivity for over five years (Pemberthy López 2009, 21). The second, with the AUC, confirmed that, "... paramilitarism in Colombia is a phenomenon far deeper than its military apparatus, penetrating Colombia's political, economic, and institutional life" (Arnson 2006, 4). The diametrically different talks with each group indicate that Uribe was exceedingly tolerant with paramilitaries and that he never intended to reach agreements with guerrilla groups.

Immediately after taking office, Uribe proposed amendments to important laws to facilitate a paramilitary demobilization. For instance, an amendment to Law 418 of 1997 removed the government's limitation to negotiate peace only with illegal groups recognized as political actors in the conflict; the enactment of Law 782 of 2002
established clemency for paramilitares who received a demobilization certification from the Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración (CODA) (Colombian Reintegration Agency). To qualify, all required from paras was a statement with their intention to demobilize and not return to the illegal group. The law compelled CODA to issue the certificate if after a twenty-day investigation there was no proof of the para’s illegal actions (Alvear Restrepo 2006). That was it; no weapon’s surrender, no judge nor jury, no victims’ statements nor witnesses, nothing other than the para’s words and an impossible verification process. As if those two measures were not enough, Uribe’s Party majorities in Congress quickly sanctioned Law 975 of 2005 —named the Justice and Peace Law—, the president chosen framework for the AUC’s complete demobilization.

Colombian jurist Gustavo Gallón G. (2007, 7) believes that, "... implementing the law guaranteed that paramilitaries not covered under Law 782, with already open court cases, or whose crimes fell under the human rights violations category, also received leniency." Riddled with violations to the Rights of Victims, Humanitarian Law, and the Colombian Penal Code, the Constitutional Court rejected Law 975. The excessive clemency granted to paramilitaries incentivized their confessing crimes without the burden of proof, disallowed victim’s right to confront their perpetrator and to learn the

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19. José Alvear Restrepo (2006) explains that 17,023 paramilitaries demobilized and benefitted from either legal pardons, conditional suspension of sentences, cessation of proceedings, or the preclusion of any investigation against them in accordance with Law 782 of 2002.
20. The six members of CODA represented the Ministry of Justice and Law, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior’s reincorporation office, the Colombian Institute for Family Well-being and the People’s defense Office (Ibid.).
truth, and reduced sentences to ridiculous timeframes. Needless to say, Uribe succeeded in his peace treaty with paramilitaries, but as expected, it is now known that many lies and false demobilizations surrounded the negotiation and surrender. Most importantly, neither of those laws included guerrilleros' reinsertion. By restricting the confession of illegal acts to those executed prior to July 25, 2005 —date in which Law 975 was enacted— and by establishing that only those illegal actors included in the government's list created under Law 782, Uribe guaranteed the exclusion of all guerrillas from any rewards offered by his laws then, or in future peace processes.

An unbiased analysis of Uribe's peace will agree that his endeavors set very negative precedents for future peace talks with illegal armed forces. On the one hand, it is undeniable that the agreement with the paramilitary was a sham for new groups resurfaced soon after, stronger and out of control. Today, only eight years later, the AUC leadership is being released from jail.21 On the other hand, no guerilla group should be keen to discuss surrender terms other than the same Uribe granted paramilitaries. Perhaps this is the reason why currently the most precarious topic in the Havana talks is precisely justice. In all honesty, how can the Santo's Government and Colombians demand stronger sentences for guerrilla members when paramilitaries got off the hook easily after perpetrating the worst massacres in the country? Uribe's peace strategy also increased hatred towards all guerrilla groups, a hindrance for the Havana

21. The Justice and Peace Law established reduced sentence of five to maximum eight years for paramilitaries that confessed from one crime to multiple ones without increasing the maximum number of years. (Ibid., 5).
negotiations because most Colombians are incapable of giving credence to the FARC's proposals, commitments, or intentions. Since peace requires a significant dose of forgiveness to be sustainable, the Colombian society will need to overcome this feeling sooner rather than later; that is, of course, if they want lasting peace.

The Enemies of Peace

Chernick, Vargas V. et al. (2003, 14) believe that, "The most significant factor that will affect political violence today is not the economy, the drug trade or the amount of resources available to the armed actors. It is the political will by all sides to negotiate a far-reaching peace based on major structural reforms and the distribution of political power." In theory, Colombia's failed peace attempts ratify this view. However, those same failures indicate that the minutia, the practical details, and the execution of a peace process are equally important.

It would be a travesty to ignore two crucial truths found in all but one of the Colombian failed peace initiatives. Firstly, most Colombian Presidents began their peace strategies with the political will to end the conflict. Secondly, guerrilla groups' active participation signaled their initial resolve to reach an agreement. The other important reference to keep in mind is that of those six attempts, only one — President Barco— signed peace treaties with guerrilla groups. The one element in his strategy that was not present in the others was a structured and limited framework to negotiate with illegal armed forces. Although the other administrations had agendas to discuss topics, their lack of structure resulted in the inability to focus the debate and achieved
no agreement on any of them. It is also important to recognize the similarities among mandates for two distinct patterns highlight how attitudes and ideologies affected the negotiations. Presidents Betancur and Pastrana shared the same mistake, an extreme open hand that allowed guerrillas to strengthen their troops and financial resources. In contrast, Presidents Gaviria and Uribe shared their view that guerrillas were criminals and treated them as such, which increased warfare. One more coincidence is rather shocking; the Conservative Presidents were soft with illegal groups while the Liberal ones were tough. Very uncharacteristic of each party, and a fact impossible to explain at this time.

The final lesson received from failed peace attempts is the incontrovertible evidence that in Colombia, peace is an independent presidential goal rather than a State policy. With each new executive, fresh ideas to solve the war appeared, completely dismissing any foregoing advances as if there were no lessons worth learning from their predecessors. Perhaps behind the nation's endless pursuit of peace is the governments' inability to see that peace matures as a result of trial and error.

After this analysis, anyone can correctly point out that President Uribe reached a peace agreement as well, and may wonder why this thesis only recognizes President Barco's treaty as successful. The answer is simple. Uribe's agreement with paramilitaries was not a peace process as defined by Kreutz. Given that the majority of elected officials and public servants involved in the parapolitics scandal were active
members of the political party Uribe founded —Partido de la U (Party of U)\textsuperscript{22}— validates that rather than dealing with enemies of the State, he negotiated an agreement benefitting his political allies. When changing Law 418, the former president opened a very dangerous door for Colombia when disguising criminals as political actors, and legitimized mass murders and crimes against humanity\textsuperscript{23} as acts of war. The "11,179 Colombian politicians, officials, businessmen involved in parapolitics" (Colombia Reports 2012a) in 2012, represent the sheer definition of unethical and amoral standards in the country. Under Uribe's rule, Colombians further lost the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, between legal and illegal. His government epitomizes the moral degradation that began with the narco-lifestyle. During his eight-year mandate, his policies systematically widened the moral vacuum already growing inside Colombians.

However, even more detrimental is that Uribe's presidency abdicated the Colombian Government's moral high ground to deal with illegal groups for the

\textsuperscript{22} Alvaro Uribe was elected President in 2002 as member of the Liberal Party, and with the support of former President Cesar Gaviria. Prior to his reelection in 2006, Uribe formed a new political group called Partido de Unidad Nacional (Nacional Union Party), better known as La U. For his reelection in 2006, Uribe ran under this party —formed by a coalition of smaller regional parties, all formed and supported by paramilitary groups in different regions in Colombia— (Valencia A. 2007, 43). Later, on June 24, 2008, Yidis Medina, a former legislator, was convicted of accepting bribes in 2004 in exchange for supporting the legislation that approved the constitutional changes allowing Uribe to seek a second consecutive term. The conviction opened a debate within the judiciary over the legality of President Uribe's historic landslide victory in May 2006 (Library of Congress 2013, lxii).

\textsuperscript{23} The Internacional Criminal Court (2014) defines that, "Crimes against humanity include any of the following acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, persecution against an identifiable group on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious or gender grounds, enforced disappearance of persons, the crime of apartheid, other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious bodily or mental injury."
foreseeable future. Thanks to him, any criminal band in the country —BACRIM, or narcotics— can demand today not only the same treatment paramilitaries received, but also, all reinsertion benefits stipulated in Uribe's still enacted laws. Unquestionably, a miserable outlook for this nation.

In spite of all, in true Colombian form, an unexpected turn brought hope to many hearts and demonstrated one more time that Colombians are unreadable people. Since sharing a malady does not mean agreeing on the solution, Colombians reelected President Juan Manuel Santos' peace initiative when, independent of party affiliation, joined forces to vote against Uribe's policy of war. A very strong sign that this time things have changed, the circumstances are different, and the country is shifting. Perhaps, Colombia's endless pursuit of peace is truly about to end.
CHAPTER SIX

A REAL SHOT AT PEACE

Colombia—the word, the country, the meaning—unequivocally raises some emotion in people all over the world. Some feel anger, disdain, and even repulsion; others smirk thinking about cocaine, beautiful women, or endless parties; a few either deeply love or intensely fear the country. Interestingly—aside from that first emotion—there is one impression that most seem to share when Colombia comes up, skepticism. Incredulity that Colombians will ever stand up against corruption, drugs, or any other evil that lingers over their society. Misgivings about the government's ability to shake off the dishonesty within; and even disbelief in the nation's will to fight back. Most of all, doubt that the war will ever end. After five failed attempts and one fiasco, why would it be different this time? Perhaps those who have not immersed themselves in understanding Colombia beyond the drug trade cannot see it yet, but there are meaningful transformations—the first one being an unlikely shift at the very top that commenced quietly but steadily, with one man, conceivably the most unexpected and improbable to gamble on peace, but a man who calmly hedged his bets and surprised the entire country.

President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018) is a son of Colombia's oldest upper crust, heir to El Tiempo and Semana,¹ and Uribe's Minister of Defense. In spite of

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¹ Semana (2011) reports that Grupo Planeta, renowned European media group, bought forty percent of El Tiempo in 2007, but the Santos family kept the rest of the shares. In 2012, Luis Carlos Sarmiento
excluding many aspects of his professional life, this short description of Santos' background sets the stage to appreciate why his decisions and actions are not only the most important sign of a shifting country but also evidence that today, more than ever, Colombia has a real shot at peace. How is this significant? Santos was born into the Bogotá elite — the most powerful in Colombia — , a group that tends to listen only to its own and that can be blamed for many things but never for being Communist. This influential group — highly targeted by guerrillas — has lost many to kidnappings, assassinations, bombings to their private clubs (NYT 2003), and even to military rescue efforts. They opposed previous peace attempts fearing a Communist Colombia and always favored war to defeat guerrillas. Given his sphere of influence in the group, by investing himself in peace, Santos gives much credibility to the process.

Correspondingly, his family's control over two of the most circulated written media in the nation grants the president an enviable position to convey his message truthfully and widely. Throughout the process, he has utilized those spaces wisely to inform, to gather support, to calm down the FARC, to instill hope in the population, and to counter the misinformation coming from enemies of the process. It even helped him earn the FARC's trust when keeping secret what needed to stay quiet for some time.

Nevertheless, Santos' most radical transformation took place somewhere along the way in his path from Minister of Defense to President. As Uribe's minister, he

\footnote{Angulo, owner of most banks in the country bought eighty-eight percent of the newspaper, President Santos sold most of his personal stake in 2010 when he began his presidential campaign}
faithfully implemented and executed the Seguridad Democrática strategy, a relentless and successful war against guerrillas. Under his command, the Colombian military — aided by United States' forces— scored many victories and the FARC lost among their guerrilleros, two of its most important leaders. Santos' achievements and commitment positioned him as the only conceivable presidential successor, the perfect backup if Uribe’s attempt to rule for a third term by changing again the Constitution failed. The court rejected the change and Santos became Uribe's candidate. A former Liberal running under the Partido de la U umbrella, endorsing a platform promising the continuation of Uribe's Democratic Security battle. Santos won by a landslide, but the newly elected president was a different warrior, one who swiftly, almost unnoticeably, moved from war commander to peace trailblazer.

Unquestionably, Santos' shift is still perplexing for most Colombians, a change that turned many of his original supporters against him, including Uribe himself, perhaps the most vociferous enemy of Santos' peace. Not long ago, President Santos said that history will judge him "... as a traitor to his class for using his position and privileges to favor those most needed" (BBC 2014b). Many will add that he betrayed Uribe

2. Alejandro Reyes Posada (2015) explains that, "Uribe used the American global war on terrorism finance, train, and arm the Colombian Military but also to implement his personal war against guerrillas. In doing so, Uribe redefined the nation's armed conflict as a terrorist attack against Colombia's democracy. However, negating the structural causes behind the internal war and minimizing guerrillas to drug traffickers allowed him to close the door to peace negotiations with guerrillas."

3. Bloomberg (2008) reports that on March 1, 2008, the Colombian Military killed Luis Edgar Devia, alias Raul Reyes, in a camp located in the Colombia-Ecuador border. In their 44-year history, Reyes was the first member of the FARC’s ruling secretariat killed in combat. In May of that same year, IOC (2014) records the death of Manuel Marulanda, Tirofijo, founder, commander and most notorious leader of the Secretariat, a hard hit that changed its leadership. The FARC reported that Marulanda died from a heart attack, but the date and location coincides with a Military air strike.
as well. What is undeniable is that Juan Manuel Santos is no longer the same man. Even more interesting is that, as Uribe’s support and party turned against Santos, he received the unexpected endorsement of society’s progressive sectors, which rallied around his peace initiative. As a result, the 2014 presidential election moved from deciding on the next President of Colombia to Colombians choosing between peace and war. President Santos’ reelection speaks about the country’s shift as well. Today the country is split, but many Colombians still believe that Santos—his commitment, background, and sphere of influence—offers peace a chance that eluded previous attempts.

One question remains unanswered here. What prompted the abrupt shift between Santos the Defense Minister and Santos the President? Enrique Santos C. (2014, 21) suggests that his brother's work as Minister of Defense is what convinced him that a military victory was not possible. That awareness became President Santos’ reason to move quickly towards a negotiated peace agreement. In the land of skepticism, not many trust that explanation, especially since it comes from the president’s brother who wrote an entire book about it. Perhaps there are other reasons behind the president’s choice, but one fact is incontrovertible. Juan Manuel Santos' commitment to peace has not waivered despite his significant loss in political capital, approval ratings, and popularity. All strong indicators that Santos regards peace as his role in Colombia's

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4. President Santos’ oldest brother, Enrique Santos Calderon is a well-known journalist, close friend of Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia’s Nobel prize in Literature), Director of El Tiempo for more than ten years, and member of former President Betancur’s peace commission. He is likely the only leftist member of the Santos family. As a seasoned journalist, he spent many days talking to the FARC Leadership and kept some contact with them through the years.
history, his legacy to the motherland.

The Making of a Peace Process

Every four years, Colombians gather on August 7 to listen to the first speech of their new president. The 2010 inauguration of Juan Manuel Santos seemed no different from all others, but it really was. In a country filled with rage against the guerrilla, surrounded by supporters of the Democratic Security, and with Alvaro Uribe unusually seated just a couple of steps away from him, President Santos spoke to the nation about his dream for Colombia. Brilliantly written, every paragraph had a profound meaning that only a handful of Colombians understood; amidst statements reinforcing the continuation of the war, hidden messages in Santos' words announced his secret plans for peace:

My calling for National Unity assumes leaving all sterile confrontations behind, brawls lacking content, and overcoming the senseless hatred between citizens of the same nation. It entails the sums of better intelligence and will to build a better country together. It means reaching a significant agreement on what is fundamental…. I want to be heard out in the fields, in the mountains, on the plains, the jungles, and the coasts of our territory…. We will not rest until the Rule of Law prevails in each and every township…. The door to dialogue is not locked…. We have to learn from the lessons of the past and from the mistakes made during this struggle to overcome a confrontation that has been tearing us apart for too long…. those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it…. It is possible to have a peaceful Colombia, a Colombia without guerrilla, we are going to prove that, either by reason or by force…. The world will see what we Colombians are capable of doing upon our consolidation of peace…. The word war is not in my dictionary…. I encourage you all to partake in the construction of a new dawn…. Many countries […] have overcome difficult times of violence, underdevelopment, conflict, and today set an example of progress and social justice. Colombians: Now it is our turn! It is now in our hands. (Juan Manuel Santos 2010)
Only a week before, the president-elect turned to his brother Enrique for advice on the best way to send a message to the FARC’s leadership about his intention to bring peace to Colombia. Soon after, President Santos secretly began assembling his peace team. From there on, he managed a double agenda geared to appease Uribe and his electors while simultaneously working towards ending the protracted conflict.

A review of the military actions undertaken during the first two years of President Santos' administration confirms that his stance against guerilla leaders was much stronger than Uribe's. In a very short time, Santos weakened the FARC's core structure by bombing their secret camps. News articles reveal that after each successful military attack, President Santos addressed the nation to send this message; "... to each and every member of that organization: demobilize... or otherwise you will end up in a prison or a tomb. We will achieve peace" (BBC 2011). Interestingly, while Colombians watched how Santos' relentless and successful military attacks on FARC camps decimated guerrilla forces, their president forged ahead with an even more audacious and dangerous plan. Virtually out of a Tom Clancy novel, as the country's soldiers exchanged bombs and bullets with guerrilleros, Colombia's Commander in Chief exchanged letters about peace with FARC's leadership. Establishing the...

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5. Enrique Santos C. (2014, 21) recalls the President's first peace team had five public officials; Sergio Jaramillo - Security Counselor, Frank Pearl - Minister of Environment and former Uribe, Alejandro Eder - Counselor for Reinsertion, Jaime Avendaño and Lucia Jaramillo, negotiations' experts.

6. Only a month after Santos' inauguration, Victor Julio Suarez Rojas, alias Mono Jojoy, killed in a military raid on September 23, 2010, left the FARC without its key military strategist. That same year, Fabian Ramirez, presumed new leader for only a few days, died after an air strike. Finally, with the death of Alfonso Cano, the Secretariat's Commander, on November 4, 2011, killed by the army, the FARC lost the last member who knew the location of all its cells and how to communicate with them (Brodzinsky 2010).
underground communication that began soon after the presidential inauguration, now seems like the easiest part of the strategy, even with the risks involved when using Uribe’s 2009 back channels and emissary (Semana 2012c).

In fact, the intricacies of the events leading to the official announcement about the Colombian Government-FARC peace negotiations are as shocking as the agreement itself. Although every single piece was difficult to resolve, they discussed it and worked towards a mutually convenient solution. The first impasse came when picking where the conversations should take place. The FARC wanted to meet in Colombia, Venezuela or a nearby country like Brazil or Ecuador. Since the government did not accept those countries the parties finally settled in Cuba (Santos C. 2014, 22). The next difficulty was the very complex logistics required to get FARC negotiators to Havana safely and quietly. On January 11, 2011, the Venezuelan border became the first host of face-to-face meetings between these two groups. For months, the delegates met and defined the size of the negotiating teams, legal pitfalls, headquarters, coordinates, and travel arrangements for FARC’s delegates. They also agreed on three key backers, Cuba and Norway as guarantors of the discussions, and the International Red Cross as guarantor for the safe mobilization of Mauricio Jaramillo, FARC’s delegation chief and Mono Jojoy’s leadership successor (Ibid., 24). Santos’ book has baffling anecdotes, yet one

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7. It surprised many that the Government agreed on Cuba as the host nation; a communist nation, then sanctioned by the United States, a safe-haven for the FARC, also of a communist nature, given military forces hunt for its leadership. The government’s acceptance is as a generous gesture, a pledge to safe keep the lives of FARC’s negotiators and leaders, and proof of the its commitment to the peace process. El Espectador (2008) reports that for more than 50 years, past administrations called upon Fidel Castro to help resolve issues with the FARC; therefore Cuba also provided safety for Colombia’s team.
revelation is truly astonishing. Traditional military terms created for kidnapping rescues—*Operación Extracción de Mauricio* (The extraction of Mauricio) (Ibid., 25)—disguised Jaramillo’s safe travels.

The president's double agenda is also evident when his public statements are side-by-side the milestones achieved in Cuba. In Havana, over a six-month period that began on February 24, 2012, teams Colombia and the FARC sat at the negotiating table sixty-nine times in ten formal sessions. In the meantime, President Santos focused on shifting the attention to his government's priorities—security, modernization, and justice—, often indicating that to manage the internal conflict, he "... built upon his predecessor’s policy of *democratic security* that guaranteed safety to all citizens, regardless of status or geography" (The Harvard Crimson 2013). He succeeded despite a few decisions, perceived as Santos' meek attempt to distance himself from Uribe. Colombians did not sense a radical change from the previous administration in terms of the conflict. How could they when the national media covered daily how successful military raids and bombings gunned down the FARC’s Secretariat.

Back in Havana, insulated and with all the time in the world to find common ground, the teams arrived at the most vital agreement of all. (1) The main objective of the negotiation was to end the armed conflict. They also settled on what would not be discussed nor agreed; (2) the government's economic model was not up for discussion.

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8. Semana (2014e) recalls that the first time Uribe called Santos a traitor was because he appointed two of Uribe's political enemies, German Vargas and J. Camilo Restrepo minister in his cabinet.
(3) nor was the status of the Armed Forces. (4) There would be no bilateral truce until the essential issues were agreed; and a personal favorite, (5) "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2012, 1-2).

Finally, on August 26, 2012, after two years of secret rendezvous, the Colombian Government and the FARC signed The Acuerdo General para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera (General Agreement to end the conflict and for the construction of sustainable and lasting peace). Indeed a historical agreement for Colombia. Inexplicably, after two years of successfully maintaining absolute secrecy, the "Ink had not dried" (Santos C. 2014, 18) before two news outlets—Colombian RCN and Venezuelan—broadcasted on August 27 the existence of the meetings, even disclosing parts of the agreement. On September 4, 2012, President Santos spoke to Colombians confirming that, "after more than six months of exploratory talks in Havana, Cuba, the Government and the FARC agreed on a framework to begin formal negotiations" (Juan Manuel Santos 2012). Great news for Colombia; still, amidst congratulatory notes, doubts regarding the FARC's participation clouded national and international opinion alike. The entire world was surprised when only a few hours later, Timochenko, FARC's supreme leader, broadcasted that the FARC "... would not get up from the negotiation table until a peace agreement was reached" (Isacson 2012, 1). A month later, before formal talks began in Oslo, Norway, the parties announced the members of their negotiating teams, which included five lead
negotiators and up to thirty members each (CRS 2014, 16)9 Two particular appointments speak highly about the parties' seriousness and commitment to the agreement. The government's lead negotiator is Humberto de La Calle, former vice President of Colombia. In turn, FARC's lead negotiator is Luciano Marín Márquez, Alias Iván Márquez, "... member of the FARC's ruling seven-person Secretariat and a veteran of prior negotiations" (Ibid.)10 They are equally respected, influential, and have the same status in their societies.

Five years after the initial contacts, and with peace talks progressing despite difficult challenges to overcome, it is still astonishing that for two long years, President Santos' war and peace strategies advanced simultaneously, clandestinely and without torpedoing each other. His plan was a well-played game that, much like chess, had too many moving parts, required meticulous planning, and unwavering commitment from all involved. Most of all, it was a dangerous bet demanding a vow of silence that could not be guaranteed. Today, those who know Colombia well concede that this negotiation is different from any other because the bond of secrecy gave the teams space to discuss it all, and the time to find a middle ground without undue influence. Most of all, it allowed them to "learn to trust each other; two historical enemies that

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9. The Pan-American Post (2012) reports that the rest of the government's team was a "cross-section of influential members of Colombia's society, General Jorge Enrique Mora, former commander of the Army and prominent spokesperson for retired military personnel; Luis Carlos Villegas, former president of the National Association of Business Leaders; and retired General Oscar Naranjo who once received the title of best police officer in the world."

10. The CRS (2014, 16) states that FARC's team included Seuxis Paucias Hernández alias Jesús Santrich, Ricardo Tellez alias Rodrigo Granda, Jesús Carvajalino alias Andrés Paris, and Luis Alberto Albán alias Marco León Calarcá, all high-ranking members of the illegal group.
had only met through the scope of their weapons” (Santos C. 2014, 18).

Be that as it may, that the Colombian Government makes every possible effort to end the conflict is expected; that is the role and duty of governments, to provide safety and peace for all its citizens. However, the reasons behind the FARC's leadership choosing to commit to this process with the Santos Government are still a big mystery. After more than fifty years up in arms, having refused and mocked previous openings, why now? Some people deeply believe that their readiness does not come from willingness but rather by force since heightened military pressure left the group no other choice but to acquiesce.

It would be outlandish to deny that the combination of American trained Colombian soldiers and sophisticated American weaponry played a role in weakening the FARC. Santos' military strategy hit the core of the guerrilla group accomplishing two key things. Firstly, the loss of the original Secretariat closely followed by the demise of those who replaced them, confronted the new and inexperienced leadership with significant challenges to hold the group fighting together. Additionally, the military air strikes hindered the group's communication structure and the new leader's ability to locate each Frente (cell). Without clear connection, it is likely that some Frentes contested the new authority or disregarded their orders, especially since not all FARC groups communicate with each other. Controlling a multitude of cells widely spread across the country required great skill, time, and well-established alliances within the group. Three issues only achieved over time and almost impossible to do with the
military on their trail. Secondly, after each attack, Colombian ground troops raided the camp and recovered valuable records kept by the original leadership. The tactic provided the government with vital intelligence on the guerrilla, which included cells and crops' locations, plans of attack, and lists with their supporters' names (INTERPOL 2008). Most importantly, while Colombia gained knowledge on the FARC's modus operandi, the new leadership lost all access to its information —likely never seen before by them—, essential to governing their structure. Colombia finally had a crucial advantage over the FARC.

It truly makes sense that the combination of FARC leadership changing too often, large guerrilla casualties, massive desertion rates, insufficient information, broken communication channels, and loss of local support created a perfect stage for the government to force the illegal group into negotiating peace. FARC publicly acknowledging that "politics is a better conduit for pursuing a revolutionary agenda as part of the continent-wide Bolivarian movement for change" (Cala 2014), further explains why many Colombians interpreted the statement as proof of their defeat.

On second thought, although lack of leadership may be one of the factors that changed the FARC's views regarding a negotiated peace, something does not add up in that explanation; it seems rather simplistic after such a powerful statement.

11. After each attack, the military seized computers, USB drives, hard drives and handwritten notebooks with information on FARC activities as far back as 1990. Just to see the dimension of the information they managed, after Raul Reyes' death, INTERPOL (2008) reports show that three computers recovered contained "over 30,000 written documents and more than 7,000 e-mail addresses."
Furthermore, the data available does not support that theory either (Graph 17). Since 2007, during Uribe's second mandate, FARC significantly escalated the number of bombings and assaults. Interestingly, 2011 is the year with the highest number of attacks in FARC's fifty-one years as a revolutionary group; precisely the same year in which the military forces achieved most success in killing the old leadership. In all honesty, there is no doubt that the Colombian military truly hurt FARC's structure. However, the illegal group's response is not exactly what one would expect from a weakened or defeated enemy.

By adding FARC's reaction to their history (see Chapter 5), it becomes obvious that the assumption of their commitment to negotiate peace is wrong. We are speaking here about a group that rose out of the ashes with only five men that survived the Marquetalia military incursion; a group that chose to go underground for decades simply to fortify themselves, to plan their comeback, and to take-over the government. No, weakness is definitely not the reason the FARC shows up every day in Havana to find a middle ground on very difficult issues with the Colombian Government. Everything indicates that much like President Santos realized that the war would not be won by shooting each other, FARC also realized that they will never achieve political
power through those same weapons. Perhaps the most compelling reason to explain their commitment to the process and why FARC stuck to the two-year vow of silence. That is why this process is different from any other; their clear purpose is what keeps them glued to those chairs in Havana despite the difficult pull and tug. Most importantly, it is FARC's political decision what truly gives Colombia for the first time, a real chance at peace with the oldest guerrilla group in the world.

**A Structure to Negotiate Peace**

There are many reasons to be hopeful about these negotiations, but none of them provides as much reassurance as the agreement itself. Perhaps following in the footsteps of Virgilio Barco —whose first time implementation of a concise framework was instrumental to his fruitful peace negotiation—, President Santos' team worked diligently with FARC to define a structured and limited agenda. FARC understood the imperative need to have a framework to advance the talks and to avoid any derailment.

As of October 8, 2012, in Oslo, six points represented the road map for peace in Colombia, (1) "Rural Development Policy, which also includes land tenure; (2) Political Participation, which delineates FARC's possible political future; (3) Ending the Conflict, which also discusses a cease-fire, demobilization, and paramilitarism; (4) Solving the Illicit Drug Problem, which deals with alternative development; (5) The Rights of Victims; and (6) Peace Implementation and verification" *(Colombian Gov. & FARC 2012, 4-5).* This framework reflects paramount issues not properly addressed previously by the government nor the political, economic, or social elites of Colombia. Perhaps,
anticipating strong opposition, the parties agreed not to disclose details on how the talks advanced until everything was decided. Nonetheless, rumors about what transpired flooded both Colombian and international media. Amidst tidbits here and there, the teams reached consensus on three key points, but the terms and conditions of each agreement became public only six months ago. One more time, by comparing actions undertaken by the Santo’s Government with the Havana pacts’ dates, it becomes evident that the government is quickly implementing a few strategies that appear to be requirements of at least one of the signed agreements.

First Point Agreed. Towards a New Rural Colombia: Integral Rural Reform.

For some Colombians that have ignored the increasing gap between rural and urban development during recent decades, the importance given to this issue in the Government-FARC agenda came as a surprise. However, those who identified the FARC’s rural origin expected that the topic would become a priority; indeed, it was. The inclusion of rural development as the first point for discussion generated in Colombia, and specifically in the government, an unusual commitment to this sector. Finally, Colombia now sees the rural areas' extreme levels of poverty, the weakness of their institutional framework, the precarious situation of public goods, and the erroneous priority placed—especially during Uribe’s Government—on subsidizing big producers rather than campesinos.

12. According to Semana (2014d), the reason behind the Government's decision to publish all the agreements of negotiations was to silence Uribe and his followers who were misinformation Colombians when affirming that Santos was “selling the entire country to FARC.”
It is for that reason that the deals made in Havana—if implemented as planned—will change the lives of the Colombian rural population. Two of them are of particular importance for they directly address Frances Stewarts’ horizontal inequalities theory. Firstly, Colombia and FARC agreed to establish a Fund of Land to guarantee the democratic distribution of land among campesinos living in misery, those without or insufficient land, and those displaced. This fund—made out of lands expropriated from drug dealers, FARC, paramilitaries, and baldios (government unused lands)—will be an important step toward finally fulfilling some of the forgotten mandates of the 1991 Constitution. In this case, that the nation's unused territory be given to rural peasants, a right that for years guerrillas, paramilitaries, landowners, and the government stripped away from them, will begin level out horizontal inequalities. Secondly, they agreed a strategy to improve public goods such as education, health, and infrastructure (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2014a, 4-7).

Finally, they settled two surprising and unexpected issues. One that will likely annoy wealthy landowners, but of great importance as well for it requires updating the values of rural property—for years undervalued—, and to implement a land tax directly associated with the land's productivity. Next, a very heated issue in the country, highly opposed by rich landowners and multinationals, yet agreed by teams Colombia and FARC; the need to close-off the agricultural frontier and protect natural resources in national parks as well as reserved lands (Ibid., 8, 15).

Two years ago, coinciding with the date of the Rural Development agreement in
Havana, President Santos organized the *Misión para la Transformación del Campo Colombiano* (Mission for the Transformation of Rural Colombia). The task force's team includes the participation of international organizations —ECLAC, United Nations, FIDA, etc.—, members of the academic world, international experts in rural development matters, the governments of France and Brazil, three former Colombian Ministers of Agriculture, and headed by José Antonio Ocampo, one of Colombia's most respected economists. The diversity of sectors and political views included in the group implies a message from the Santos' administration; a guarantee that the government will not strongly influence any observations and that the results of the mission will strive to be unbiased. However, what really gives it away is that, after decades of not being part of any agenda, the rural sector —both small and big agriculture, its institutions, its resources—, now is a priority on the national agenda. No longer a secret, the group must include in their rural development design all the terms of the Havana agreement, a twenty-year plan designed not just for Santos but for future governments as well ([DNP 2014b, 3-7](#)). Unfortunately, rural reform will not be easy to implement in Colombia given the disparity in land ownership. Further complicating the issue, the scattered rural population still lives in the nineteenth century while urban Colombia lives in the twenty-first ([DANE 2015](#)); closing that gap will be a tremendous challenge for future administrations.

**Second Point Agreed. Political Participation: Democracy for Peace**

It surprised many that Colombia and FARC moved through the issues on this end
quickly and without much trouble. The groups' historical experiences with each other and the 1991 Colombian Constitution presented significant challenges. Article 122 of the country's Constitution specifies that those members of society who executed crimes against humanity or who partook in drug trafficking shall not have the right to run for office, nor occupy any public position (Colombian Gov. 1991, T.I, C.2, Art. 122). Therefore, given those limitations, the parties agreed, (1) to develop a New Democratic Opening for Peace, which entailed establishing rules for those in the opposition; (2) to grant recognition to new social movements, giving them space to grow and to one day, become political parties; (3) to dignify the exercise of politics and to offer security to its participants, a way to generate reconciliation in the country (El Tiempo 2012).

The most important issue settled is the imperative need to acknowledge the crucial role of political opposition in a democracy, and to recognize the rights of those Colombians who choose to exercise it. A right particularly lost during Uribe's eight-year mandate as a result of his practice to accuse as guerrilleros all those who disagreed with him. Therefore, it is understandable why FARC was more concerned with getting protection as the opposition rather than immediately becoming a political party. To safeguard all political groups, especially those that may emerge from the peace accord, the teams delineated the Estatuto de la Oposición (the Opposition's Statute) defining rules for the free and safe exercise of political opposition (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2013, 2-8).

The prospect of the FARC becoming a political party in the future raised all sorts of negative emotions in Colombia, anger being the most common. In fact, that this
illegal group could one day run for office generated so much rejection that only a few weeks after the announcement, President Santos' favorability dropped at least another thirty points. From there on, the enemies of the negotiation became more vocal; especially former President Uribe, now Senator, who even traveled to the United States seeking support to derail the agreement. During his interviews,\textsuperscript{13} he called Santos an ally of terrorists who promoted impunity for FARC's crimes (\textit{WOLA} 2015). However, after reading if not all, the majority of Santos' public statements, not one of them announce gifting Senate seats to the FARC. In fact, when discussing FARC's political future, Santos always caveats his opinion with, "... once they pay for their crimes" (\textit{Semana} 2015b). Uribe's statements are therefore contradictory and baseless; particularly outrageous coming from a man with at least two investigations for human rights violations in Spain (\textit{Semana} 2015a), and another 267 indictments in Colombia (\textit{Vanguardia} 2013).

When looking at the country from abroad, the reaction against FARC's potential political future coming from Uribe's Party and followers raised more questions than endorsements. How can anyone forget that the former president changed the law to allow the government to negotiate with illegal groups not recognized by the State? Even more, his \textit{Justice and Peace} Law allowed paramilitaries to pay minimum sentences for confessing horrendous crimes while upholding their right to run for public office.

\textsuperscript{13} WOLA (2015, 2) recalls that Uribe accused President Santos of disrespecting and betraying the Colombian armed forces when treating them "... like the illegitimate forces of a dictatorship ... to put them on the same level as terrorism." In fact, Adriaan Alsema (2015) reports that few can forget that Uribe's closest political allies are serving time for their links to paramilitaries uncovered during the parapolitics' scandal.
Two more unanswered questions baffled this author. Why should the members of the FARC—a revolutionary group recognized by the State as a political actor in the conflict—be stripped away from that same right? Lastly, instead of taking away FARC's leadership right to be elected, if the Colombian society does not want to have the FARC in public office, is it not easier and less damaging to peace to simply defeat them by not voting for them? As stated before, Colombians are truly full of contradictions.

Third Point Agreed. Solving the Problem of Illicit Drugs

When a joint Colombian Government-FARC communique announced the signing of the Agreement on Illicit Drugs, the reactions around the globe went from astonishment to happiness and then, disbelief. The generalized comments were more a question; the FARC agreed to do what? Well, it is true. Not only did the FARC agree to stop trafficking drugs, but also to participate actively in a crop substitution strategy to provide an alternative for cocaleros (campesinos who grow coca). In turn, the National Government committed to developing policies to stop and efficiently punish all bouts of corruption inside public institutions, still an undefeated legacy of the narco-lifestyle practices. Equally important as ending Colombia's drug problem, the parties also committed to ending the vicious ties between drug money and campaign financing, which includes money laundering. Because drugs are so ingrained into the rural sector, the Havana drug strategy will be an essential component of the integral rural reform plan (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2014b, 1-4, 20-23). Undoubtedly, providing legal means of production, ending the cruelty and devastation that drug trafficking brought to rural
areas, and stopping corrupt local officials from deviating funds destined to them will benefit Colombian campesinos the most.

Lastly, they recognized drug addiction as an illness, and for that reason, they agreed that drug addicts must be treated as sick rather than as criminals. To that end, the government will design and implement drug consumption programs available to all Colombians (Ibid., 8-10). This new strategy to end the Colombian drug problem has significant meaning for the entire country. So much so that it already received praise from most nations including the United States. Speaking of America, it needs to be said that some of the decisions of the negotiating table are in keeping with President Obama’s views, at least when it comes to addiction. The coincidence is strategic for it will unite the two nations in a new cause, one that rather than war entails life, that can succeed quickly, and that will truly benefit the entire world.

**Reasons for Hope**

None of the topics enumerated in the general framework are easy to discuss, even less so to negotiate. Three agreements signed, sealed, and delivered is historic in itself. Those are three reasons to feel hopeful about the outcome of the negotiations. Yet, there are more, and few are as justified as the teams’ evident efforts to find common ground on the most difficult ones to deal with, points four on justice and five on the Rights of Victims.

Although not yet signed, the Rights of Victims already yielded meaningful changes for Colombians. Since this nation traditionally focused on punishing the
perpetrators of crimes without even considering their victims, the Victim's Law — enacted to protect them— was never truly implemented, until now. This law is of particular significance because when no one in Colombia knew about the president's covert peace operation, Santos reopened its debate by reintroducing the bill. After much opposition from Uribe, the law was finally sanctioned on June 10, 2011 (MinInterior 2011, 1). Four of its five statutes define punishments for perpetrators of crimes against Colombian victims; actions that the FARC cannot deny. These are, (1) A victim's right to receive monetary compensation from the perpetrators; (2) Land Restitution, returning the land once taken away from the victims; (3) Historical Memory to guarantee a victim's right to know the truth; and (4) Pledge of no-repetition, which among other things, entails the government's protection and its warranty to stop any human rights violations (Ibid., C.2, Art.3-4, 8, 23-25, 28). The fifth point recognizes the existence of victims of the armed conflict and provides them with psychological support to overcome what each of them endured, clearly a point not precisely for the FARC's benefit. Today, Colombians see how central this law is to the Havana negotiations.

The news continually reported the talks' steady progress; however, skeptics and enemies predicted its demise for most believed this issue had the highest potential to wreak havoc on the peace accord. Most of them must still be shocked after seeing the first twelve of sixty victims of the conflict —especially flown to Havana in five groups—

14. In 2008, the Liberal Party presented this bill to acknowledge for the first time in history, the victims of the armed conflict. Uribe's government defeated it because he did not accept the armed conflict. Today, many see the Victims Law as the issue that ended Uribe's relationship with Santos (Semana 2014e)
sitting at the negotiation table, calmly discussing their suffering with the FARC (BBC 2014a). From there on, the negotiators focused on dealing with Colombia's victims carefully, including those victimized by paramilitaries and even military forces. Lastly, on June 7, 2014, teams Colombia and FARC surprised the entire nation again when prioritizing ten essential matters to do right by these victims; very unusual in a peace process, and definitely unprecedented in Colombia.15

Thus far, perhaps the most significant result of this process: an honest invitation extended to the conflict's victims to take part in the dialogues that rather than empty words, turned out to be a miraculous healing process. It really needs to be said here that the Colombian victims — simple people who suffered and lost so much — are remarkable, truly an example to learn from and to follow. Each and every one of them, representing different social groups — women, children, the LGBTI community, campesinos, kidnappees, displaced, widows, orphans and even soldiers — spoke about forgiveness and peace. Most even declared that rather than financial compensation, what mattered most to them was the truth, to know why they were hurt or where their loved ones rest. Undoubtedly, this part of the process was emotional for Colombians. It likely touched the FARC deeply as well since the round of victims' participation ended with Colombians hearing for the first time in the nation's history, a very unexpected act

15. These points will guide the Colombian Gov. & FARC (2014c, 1-2) negotiations about the Rights of Victims; (1) Recognition as victims, as citizens with rights; (2) Admission of perpetrators' guilt; (3) Satisfaction of victims' rights, the dilemma is how to do so; (4) Participation of victims in the Havana talks, (5) Ascertaining the truth, its causes, origins, and impacts; (6) Reparation for the victims; (7) Protection and security guarantees; (8) No repetition, to prevent new generations of victims; (9) Principle of reconciliation for the Colombian society; (10) Rights approach, whereby every agreement must protect the rights of all Colombians.
of contrition. The FARC's leadership apologized to the entire nation for the pain and suffering they caused (El Tiempo 2014b).

**The Obstacles Ahead**

There is still one matter that may turn out to be the breaking point of these talks; one where the teams may not find a middle ground despite their willingness to do so. Justice, incredibly complex not just because it entails punishment for the FARC's crimes of war, but also because there are too many national and international laws to look at, regulations that in some cases contradict each other. There are also too many domestic and foreign interests that will make it even harder for these two teams. Then, there is the Colombian Congress' innate ability to have the last word as the only authority that can rescind or amend the nation's laws. An entity that continues to be under tremendous scrutiny given the parapolitics scandal; still filled with members of both houses with open legal cases, and with Uribe seating among them. As such, the government cannot guarantee the Congress' actions and cannot agree to any FARC demand related to changes in the law. For that reason, point four of the negotiation's framework presents the biggest challenge to the Colombian peace talks.

When it comes to justice, the largest issue at stake is that the FARC is not the only player at fault in this conflict. The actors are of two kinds. Those recognized worldwide like paramilitaries, drug lords, and guerrillas, and then, those who managed to stay underground. The *untouchables*, a very powerful group that includes members of different Colombian elites and who benefitted from the war in one way or another.
Some bankrolled paramilitaries, others financed their political campaigns with drug money, a few hired paramilitaries to protect and grow their businesses. Most of them are respected and very wealthy public or private figures never before linked to illegal groups' activities until now. 16

The Havana negotiations finally touched on an issue considered taboo in Colombia but that the entire nation knows. From the get-go, these elites perceived justice to be a topic about how long the FARC leadership's sentences should last. There was never a doubt in their minds that jail-time was the only option to punish FARC's crimes. Today, those elites moved from tremendous shock, anger, and disbelief to sheer terror; and it is not because the FARC refuses incarceration, but rather because of one man, Enrique Santiago, FARC's lead attorney. His statement was quite simple and in fact, rather short, "Since Colombian authorities believe that jail-time is required, I presume that they intend to imprison everybody involved and not just the FARC. As such, they will need to capture all those that justice has not pursued as well" (Semana 2015a). Obviously, Colombia is now in the middle of a heated debate. The most vociferous are precisely the untouchables, who are no longer an invisible group.

This topic is far from reaching an agreement, but there are positive steps and plenty of ideas trying to breach the gap. Other international experiences see

16. Term coined by the author to describe a group of Colombians so powerful that laws do not seem to reach them, or so they believe.
Transitional Justice\textsuperscript{17} as a good compromise for it separates punishment for crimes of war from criminal acts. Aside from the fact that the Colombian elites demand to see the entire FARC in jail, this type of justice is not always accepted by the International Courts, the main concern for the Santos' Government (Voelkel 2013a). However, De la Calle, Colombia's lead negotiator, uncovered the ruling issued by the Interamerican Human Rights Court (IHRC) as a result of Transitional Justice verdicts during El Salvador's peace negotiation. It says, "When it comes to a nation's transition out of an armed conflict to peace, a State may not be able to comply fully nor simultaneously, with the rights and obligations demanded by international agreements" (El Tiempo 2015a). De la Calle interpreted this decision not only as a ray of hope, but as the clear message that when peace is at stake, "multilateral organizations cannot become an obstacle to peace" (Ibid.). More importantly, the ruling fortifies Transitional Justice as the acceptable middle ground that will not end the talks. Now, all he has to do is deal with the fears of the untouchables. Perhaps they may not be so reluctant to pay for their crimes on their farms or at home.

As the negotiations advance, the teams continue to find agreements and nothing seem to let them walk away from each other. Thus far, those who favor the process are still more than those against it. Nonetheless, the Santos administration

\textsuperscript{17} In the UN (2010, 3) simplest definition, "Transitional Justice is the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation." However, the ICTJ (2015, 9) explains that it must not be not be mistaken as "... a 'special' kind of justice, but an approach to achieving justice in times of transition from conflict and/or state repression. By trying to achieve accountability and redressing victims, transitional justice provides recognition of the rights of victims, promotes civic trust and strengthens the democratic rule of law."
refuses to agree to a bilateral cease-fire, perhaps to keep in FARC's mind the undeniable Colombian victories that weakened their old structures. Its leadership knows that the government's focus on strengthening the nation's security forces is thriving, and will continue to improve if the conflict does not end; a wise plan, for now. Although both forces continue to battle each other, the FARC's willingness to compromise on issues such as kidnapping displays its leadership's commitment to peace. The fact that FARC negotiators continue to back down after the government announces leaving the talks indicates that its new leadership is more flexible as well.

The difference in approach taken by Santos is propelling significant changes in the country's most difficult issues. The president's clear understanding of the need to end the conflict allows him to keep the talks' door open, regardless of the vocal opposition (Isacson 2014, 10). His speech, a well-managed combination of tough statements and opportune gentler interventions, eased tensions in the negotiations and help Colombians shift their resistance. Santos' peace team has contributed greatly to convince Colombians that a bit of sacrifice in the name of peace is easier than continuing the war. Finally, the newly found global stage —with the world turned to the Havana talks— places healthy pressure on the Colombian Government and FARC's leadership. The United States statements supporting these negotiations (Colombia Reports 2015a)—despite the American policy to never negotiate with terrorists and with the FARC still in their terrorists list— is one more indication that this time, Colombia is very close to finding peace.
It May Actually Work, but… Tread Lightly

Five years after President Santos’ first message to the FARC, the prospect for peace in Colombia is quite different. The international community is less skeptical and continues to support the efforts as best they can. However, depending on the news coming from Havana on any given day, Colombians will express hope, fury, or disbelief. Their views continue to be split in the middle; very understandable given their previous experiences and decades of living in fear. Nonetheless, those who look at the process closely and without emotion cannot help but applaud both negotiating teams and their leaders. They continue to think outside the box to find consensus and to compromise, far exceeding most expectations.

Colombia and FARC also joined forces to silence the enemies of the process through the simplest, yet amazingly meaningful actions. For instance, once the secrecy of the topics agreed upon cast a cloud of doubt on the legitimacy of their meetings, the delegations invited victims, academics, high-ranking military and international leaders to participate in the discussions. These visitors were not mere spectators; their ideas and points of views were heard and taken into account; their reports on the experience silenced antagonists. However, the most compelling evidence came after President Santos proposed forming a rural police squadron with soldiers and guerrilleros cooperatively aiding and protecting campesinos. Outraged Colombians called the idea an insult to the military and predicted that neither the armed forces nor the FARC would ever accept. The response from Havana arrived just in time to shut those voices
down by announcing on March 7, 2015 that the Colombian military forces and the
FARC’s guerrilla members will work together, side-by-side, without uniforms or
weapons, to begin demining Colombia (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2015b, 1). This transcendental
agreement is a critical step toward the peace accord, but most of all, it signifies that
de-escalation of the war finally begun.

Sadly, despite countless leaps forward, enemies of the process still lurk around
the proceedings (Semana 2014c). Some will always find reasons to speak against the
agreements made, but those will vanish with time, probably, once the peace accord is
final. However, a few are real threats to the sustainability of peace in Colombia; more
preventable than not, but only if dealt with promptly and decisively. In either case, now
that the end of the conflict seems closer than ever, it is crucial to identify and squash
the nemeses of Colombia’s peace. One particular issue is of great concern here. Notably
in current Colombian debates, no-repetition seems to be a term related more to
reassuring the victims of war that their horrors will not reoccur, than to the very real
and potential reoccurrence of the conflict. In itself, vowing to the former without first
guaranteeing the latter is the worse contradiction of them all; beyond doubt, it is an
impossible promise to keep. How can the government, the FARC, or anyone else pledge
to protect others once the accord is in place if fundamental factors for sustainable
peace are not thought-out before finalizing it?

Unfortunately, despite extensive research, to date, this thesis found no
information on the Colombian Government’s post-conflict plans for the nation.
Perhaps, in the same manner in which Santos quietly began this peace process, his undercover post-conflict team already focuses on recognizing, analyzing, and preparing to correct crucial deficiencies that can hinder this peace's sustainability. But if there is no team yet, the commitments made and the important road map agreed upon in Havana are in grave danger of becoming empty words in historical pieces of paper. Measuring a peace accord's chance for success only by the number of topics agreed upon is short sided and very dangerous. Not using the negotiations to plan, settle, and launch required post-conflict changes is senseless and irresponsible. To avoid this debacle, sustainability strategies need to begin implementation now, when there is still time. Preempting the groundwork is what will safeguard the efforts and concessions achieved in Havana from joining the list of unsuccessful peace attempts in Colombia.

In moments like this is when research and academia are invaluable resources, and when the experiences of others shine a light on warnings that those too close to an issue cannot anticipate. In that sense, Jones, Elgin-Cossart et al. (2012, 8) consider that, "... weak institutions are unable to provide peaceful and durable resolution," simply because people's "lack of confidence in the ability of institutions to resolve claims increases the incentives for violence." Colombia no longer has the strong institutions of the past. Nowadays, there is generalized mistrust in the country's political institutions, and rightly so. Aside from the well-known corruption at every level, the largest issue is the government's inability to protect all its citizens simply because it has no control, nor presence, across the national territory. From there on, all other
institutions deteriorate as well; the overall crisis of the judiciary system breeds 
impunity, the health and education systems provide poor services for the poor, the tax 
system penalizes middle-income earners more than the wealthy, to mention a few 
examples. Sustainable peace requires fortifying all governmental institutions as a first 
step to begin closing the existing inequity gap. Not doing so will contribute to heighten 
human insecurity and HIs, as defined by Frances Stewart, and will allow illegal groups, 
perhaps even the FARC, to resurface igniting a third conflict.

The weakness of national and regional institutions affects directly operational 
matters of a signed peace accord as well. Thornton, and Gude (2011, 16) emphasize the 
successful reinsertion of combatants into civil society as critical to lasting peace. In their 
view, three principles will conquer the task. "Firstly, the conditions must be outlined in 
the peace agreement to ensure 'buy-in'; secondly there must be significant investment 
by the government in both stipends and education and training programs; and finally 
active involvement from the private sector is needed to provide employment 
opportunities for demobilized combatants" (Ibid., 16-17). Colombia is not foreign to 
reinsertion processes; however, while few have been successful like in the case of M-
19, the BACRIM’s current structure confirms the government's overall failure to assist 
former rebels.¹⁸ More bothersome is that none of the published Havana talks'
documents mentions the FARC's buy-in, perhaps because none of them outlines a reinsertion plan either. With any luck, since justice is still under discussion, not all the information is available to the public. Nonetheless, the Santos Government needs to act on this because not planning appropriately for FARC's reinsertion will provide those guerrilleros, who were not ready to depose their weapons, with the perfect excuse to find a new home among the BACRIM's ranks.

The next issue to tackle when planning for Colombia's post-conflict is very difficult, especially because it is mostly out of the government's control. The Colombian elites dangerously hinder sustainable peace. Although this is a rather harsh statement, the nation's history bears witness to their actions and inactions. Their power and selfishness stopped more than once rural reform and derailed three prior peace attempts; they also fostered paramilitarism and welcomed drug dealers' funds. Today, the dominant classes continue to force governmental decisions mostly for their benefit. At least now, after Santos committed so deeply to this process, one sector of the elite supports him. However, the big question here is whether they switched sides because they finally saw how much Colombians need peace or simply out of class loyalty. If the reason is the latter, then long-lasting peace is unrealistic, at least until they grasp that peace "... requires a change in the thinking of the Colombian elite. That elite can no longer define the society that matters as just 37 percent of the population; it must include everyone" (Crandall 2013, 6). Only when the majority of the elite realize how detrimental their actions are will Colombia’s long-standing social division stop being an
open invitation to war repetition.

Lastly, Charles Call's extensive research brings to the Colombian case the most important reason for peace failure in countries susceptible to war reoccurrence. When using his framework to isolate temporary intimidations from genuine threats in Colombia, one demoralizing quote jumped out. Call (2012, 47) believes that, "No single factor or variable accounts for success in consolidating peace and averting war recurrence," this view can only mean that anything and everything could hinder a country's transition from war to sustainable peace. Although he enhances and delimits the combination of characteristics that reignited other conflicts in the world, he isolates political exclusion as the ultimate "trigger for renewed armed conflict" (Ibid., 4); one that rather than a factor is a process that quickly develops after signing a peace accord. His book confirms that in most of the cases he studied, the unquestionable link between peace and war recurrence was not opening the political space equally for all actors of the ending conflict to participate in rebuilding their nation.

Of the many reasons mentioned by Call and by other experts on the matter, political exclusion is the most dangerous for Colombia's peace. Why this one? Simply because this practice is a recurring theme in the nation's history; central to the 1948 civil war, definitive in the 1958 peace accord, and what gave birth to the country's illegal groups, guerrillas and paramilitaries (See Chapter 5). Frankly, the conflict that Colombia is trying to end today began because over sixty years ago, the nation's governing elites refused to include those who opposed their views.
Soon after point two —Political Participation: Opening democracy for peace— reached consensus, harsh reactions, and vocal opposition indicated that political exclusion is still a very tangible exercise in Colombia. On this issue, the country is divided as well, moving between those who value fundamental democratic principles that give all citizens the right to elect and to be elected; and those who assume the right to selectively choose who can exercise their democratic rights and who cannot. As such, the big and unanswered question here is whether Colombia's political and economic elites are ready to share power with the FARC, their legendary enemy.

For peace to be long-lasting in Colombia, President Santos has to find some equilibrium between two evils. In one corner, wealthy Colombian elites that will need to learn selflessness, and on the other, right-wing politicians led by Uribe adamantly and irrationally opposing peace, driven solely by his hatred for the FARC. Three factors may help Santos sway those who cannot fathom the idea of FARC’s guerrilleros sitting in Congress next to them. Firstly, at least two former members of M-19 —past Senator and currently Mayor of Bogotá Gustavo Petro, and prior Senator and Presidential candidate Antonio Navarro Wolf— are now well-accepted and democratically elected political figures in the country. Secondly, according to Verdad Abierta (2014), twenty-six senators still investigated for paramilitarism and Uribe with his 267 inquiries were elected to the Colombian Senate; certainly, at least two or three of those are already sitting next to those objectors. Thirdly, the cold war ended a long time ago, and Communism barely survived; therefore, the FARC's hope for a Communist Colombia is
not a threat worth risking peace for.

For foreigners who watch the development of these peace talks from afar, it is very difficult to understand why President Santos receives so much criticism from his own people. Any analysis devoid of emotion sees that he is all in. Sure, not everything is perfect, but how can it be when the issues at hand carry so much history, and there is still much unchartered territory? Although some mistakes were avoidable, three out of five points were agreed, and most importantly, their differences on the other two have not broken down the negotiations. In fact, not even the ongoing war has derailed the commitment of the two groups. The FARC has mostly kept its word and even proposed six unilateral cease-fires. Although the government stumbled a few times as well, so much bias and unfounded criticism is detrimental to the process.

The times ahead for Colombia will not be easy since managing sustainable peace is perhaps harder than war itself. The entire process will be taxing for the government, for the new legal actors, for those who remain illegal players in the conflict, and for the civil society. However, those of us who carry the country in our hearts saw how bravely three generations of Colombians endured these conflicts; because of their character and strength, we know that these wonderful people have the stamina to outlast sustainable peace. All they need now is to find the will to do so.
CONCLUSION

THE LONG ROAD TRAVELED

Hope for peace in Colombia drove the origin of this thesis; it also structured its analysis. Faith in the power of academic thoroughness and a multidisciplinary approach guided each effort undertaken to identify the obstacles that would prevent this wish from becoming a reality. The road has been an adventure, a bit of a war as well since this conflict is tricky and truly chameleonic. Its many facets, plenty of outrageous actors, but most of all, heart-wrenching stories of violence endured by campesinos became digressions difficult to escape. The never-ending paths and possibilities often disguised the way to this thesis' core question; is peace really in sight for Colombia?

To answer it, undertaking an extensive review of the country's data combining history, economics, political science, sociology, and ethics was imperative. Two more elements were instrumental to focus the complex analysis. Firstly, the structured framework joining the theories of Peter Coleman, Matthew Levinger, Frances Stewart, and Charles Call did not allow for dispersion; their common views and their divergences enriched the study. Secondly, the massive amounts of information produced by Colombian academics brought to the forefront the pain of the nation and its profound history. In other words, the former provided great rigor and the latter gave it a soul. Their merger allowed previously unnoticed realities and gaps to come forth, offering unexpected conclusions. Without a doubt, this was an incredible learning experience.
where new discoveries emerged at every turn. The biggest reward at the end of this road is the prospect that the thesis' findings may contribute to a better understanding of Colombia, its conflicts, and its people.

Despite extensive and thorough study, the Colombian nation is still unable to reach consensus on the origin of its conflict or on the causes for its longevity. Not even twelve of the country's most experienced academics could agree on how, when, or why this war began. However, they do have twelve different reasons for its persistence. The paradox lies in these scholars' unanimous agreement on the requirements to end it. How can that be possible? A cardinal rule to find sustainable peace is that the reasons that ignited a conflict become paramount to its solution. Without fully uncovering how and why this war began, any strategies to terminate it will leave the original differences unresolved, and those will become the lingering for its reoccurrence.

Slowly but firmly, through a process of elimination of key factors in the chosen framework, each chapter guided the path towards the surprising but indisputable conclusion that the Colombian conflict has been misdiagnosed. The lives of forty-eight million Colombians are in turmoil today not because the nation's war seems intractable, not because there is no solution, but basically, as a result of incomplete analyses, misidentified causes, and much misinformation. To put it bluntly, this war has not found a resolution because of an inability of the Colombian society either to see, accept, or amend choices made in the past. This is a strong and somewhat harsh judgement, yet it is not baseless. The country's data support this claim despite popular
belief and past narratives that continue to ignore the evidence. Now, when it is most 
crucial to the Havana negotiations, it is very difficult to comprehend why significant 
events in the conflict's history have not come to light. They are vital to the nation's 
peace plan. Perhaps pointing those out clearly will help others see them as well.

**First, the Colombian conflict is not one, but rather two conflicts mistakenly 
melted into one.** Today, the entire world speaks about Colombia’s sixty-year-old war 
as the second longest in recent history. Every single document, book, and research 
studying the country's predicament begins and ends describing one conflict as the 
culprit for the nation's turmoil. However, this thesis found that Colombia does not have 
an ongoing sixty-seven-year-old war; not even one with two facets. Instead, this nation 
has endured two very different conflicts. The first one, *La Violencia* is a ten-year civil 
war that ended when Liberals and Conservatives signed *Frente Nacional* in 1956, a 
peace accord that stopped their confrontation in exchange for sharing political power 
exclusively for sixteen years.\(^1\) The second conflict is a *guerra de guerrillas* (guerillas' 
warfare) that began twenty-two years later when drug trafficking entered the rural 
sector during the late 1970s; it is still ongoing after thirty-five years.

Nonetheless, Colombians fail to see *Frente Nacional* as a peace process. 
Unquestionably, two enemies suddenly settling a war by sharing political power is

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1. Paul R. Pillar (1985) explains that "... most modern wars have ended not in the surrender of one 
side but through a bargaining process establishing the terms of armistice or peace." Therefore, *Frente Nacional* 
fits Joakim Kreutz (2010, 245) peace agreement definition for it was "... an agreement concerned with the 
resolution of the incompatibility signed and/or publicly accepted by all, or the main, actors in a conflict."
rather unusual and unconventional. It turns the accord into *politics as usual* for it portrays it more as a *gentlemen’s agreement* between the nation's political elites than as a pact to end the civil war devastating rural areas. Perhaps because it was not a war fought in the cities, urban residents only experienced the political change but not the benefits of peace for they never felt the chaos of war.

**Second, the ongoing conflict did not stem from issues left unresolved from the previous war.** The changes in the goals of actors and in the nature of the confrontations make it a new conflict. It began when a new player entered the scene, drug trafficking, the damaging and powerful influence that resurrected Colombian illegal groups. The need to secure routes to transport coca out of the country safely identified the FARC as a master in the art of military avoidance through untraceable routes in the jungles. To safeguard their shipments, *narcos* handsomely rewarded a penniless FARC that could no longer support its political aims and growing forces. However, coca crops and routes confronted military forces and guerrillas again. The military fought the FARC to stop the coca trade, and the FARC fought the military to protect coca shipments and routes to finance its armies. Theirs was no longer a war about ideological differences, but one caused by an illegal business. One more known actor changed its nature as well. The military secret police, who once pursued Liberal guerrillas, also entered drug trafficking to play a double role not easily understood. Soon after the implementation of the peace treaty, the group should have disappeared but it did not. It simply changed its name to one of many aliases, thus disguising that
the history of paramilitarism in Colombia is even longer than guerrilla groups.

The presence of guerrillas and paramilitaries throughout the entire sixty-seven years is misleading for it inaccurately links the two independent wars. Without an in-depth analysis to discern these actors' actions from the names and aims, it is quite easy to be steered into concluding that there is only one conflict and only one illegal actor afflicting Colombia. Perhaps it is also a reason behind Colombians' inability to discern that the nation no longer fights the same old war or that the enemies multiplied.

Third, political exclusion and governmental persecution of an ideology does not mean the country is at war. Peace did not reign in Colombia during the entire twenty-two-year period between conflicts, but there was peace.² By itself, the Frente Nacional treaty was the sheer definition of political exclusion. However, President G. León Valencia's decision to adopt the American approach to the Cold War turned political exclusion into persecution when militarily attacking those who professed a Communist ideology. This included Liberal self-defense campesinos authorized to work as rural police. As a result, the FARC went underground to regroup. Any other confrontations thereafter were at best short-lived skirmishes rather than acts of war. Therefore, the absence of peace does not necessarily mean there is a war either. By 1971, the military stopped pursuing the group believing it disappeared, and Colombia lived at least six years of peace without confrontations.

² Charles T. Call (2012, 236) indicates that in most cases of war reoccurrence peace consolidation fails "... within the first few years of a cease-fire." This means that peace is not immediate or instantaneous after signing a treaty.
Fourth, land is not the cause nor at the root of the Colombian predicament.

**Land is only the stage where the confrontations take place.** Much like the belief that Colombia lives one conflict is the idea that land fueled it. The reason why experts see land as the catalyst is not surprising. The simplest explanation is that since coca crops require land to grow, guerrilla groups fight the nation to protect and increase their cocaine business. Yes, this makes sense, but only as a possible explanation for the second conflict. The argument fails when justifying sixty-seven years of war since Colombian coca entered the markets as of the late 1970s. Perhaps then, the assumption comes from the worldwide view that land is an asset worth fighting for since its ownership is synonymous with status and wellbeing. There is some truth in this for in Colombia, land and power go hand in hand. Yet, the country's economic and social indicators refute that land is the force behind the war's past and endurance.

A conflict for land where there is no change in its distribution index makes no sense. Long before the wars, land concentration in Colombia was already one of the highest in Latin America, a fact that has not varied significantly since 1918 (See Table 1). Both conflicts share the same rural scenario, yet land is not the cause or at the root of either. During *La Violencia*, seizing their land was the excuse to kill poor Liberal *campesinos*, but their parcels were too small to alter the country's land distribution index. The large extensions of land owned by the elites, whether Liberal or Conservative, remained untouched. During the second, the theory that the coca business displaced six million *campesinos* ignores that coca crops grew in the nation's
widespread baldios away from governmental control, whereas most displaced campesinos fled their plots in highly productive areas with a noticeable presence of local authorities.

Nevertheless, land did play a central role in this thesis by flagging the dichotomy of active guerrillas growing coca and fighting the military without effecting a drastic change in the nation’s land distribution index. How is this possible? The answer is in differentiating land ownership from territorial control. The lack of State presence gave guerrillas unrestricted access over its baldios, but those lands still belong to the State. In the same way, guerrilla and paramilitary groups exerted territorial control over vast extensions of land; their reason to do so was not land appropriation but safe passage for cocaine shipments. Constant military pressure forced both groups to shift coca routes often to evade raids. Land ownership was detrimental to their goal of moving swiftly and safely from one area to the next. Their need for territorial control, however, is what truly ignited the ongoing conflict.

Fifth, the conflict is not the only reason that explains displacement. It is, however, what disguises one of the devastating effects of globalization in Colombia. To deny the existence of violent displacement in this war is simply impossible. Unquestionably, many campesinos abandoned their plots after enduring unspeakable horrors. Their tragedy is overwhelming, but their choice to flee contradicts Coleman and Stewart’s view that land is an asset worth fighting for. In fact, their leaving reinforces that land is not at the core of the conflicts.
Displacement was perhaps one of the most complex issues to analyze until it uncovered a surprising factor, globalization, well known and discussed around the world, yet never before associated with the ongoing conflict. The 1990 Apertura opened Colombia's economy causing a dramatic impact on the rural sector. While a flood of agricultural imports took over national markets, wealthier landowners quickly moved into agribusinesses. This lethal combination crushed campesinos who were not prepared to compete with cheaper international products. As a result, one of five million hectares dedicated to food crops were lost (DNP 2014a, 14). These rural workers were also no longer qualified nor required labor to harvest the new Palma Africana extensive crops. Their inability to farm the land or find work close-by caused a massive jobless displacement forcing campesinos to leave it all behind to find work wherever possible. Therefore, not all displacement in Colombia is violent or caused by war.

The demands of the Apertura also required that agribusinesses develop alternating-harvest schemes to be profitable. The need to expand the land caused the violent displacement of campesinos when many wealthy landowners turned to paramilitaries for help. Perhaps the reason why displacement is only associated with the conflict comes from the fact that the methods used by paramilitaries to massacre campesinos were very similar to those used during La Violencia. Still, the expansion of agribusinesses does not place land at the root of the second war either for the Apertura arrived roughly ten years after the war began. What it does clearly show is that globalization joined forces with actors in the conflict to reignite it. The Apertura is as
Sixth, coca trade is not the only source financing illegal groups. The Apertura also opened the door to new means. Following globalization's aim to make the role of the State more efficient and agile, a decentralization of the national budget sent large quantities of funds to local governments. The goal was to speed up and facilitate coverage for citizens' basic services in each region. Unfortunately, by that point, the governments already captured by paramilitaries transferred the funds to those leaders. This strengthened their finances, increased inequalities in those areas, and allowed the illegal group stronger control over the population. Although inequality did not fuel the war, decentralization contributed to its escalation when paramilitaries enhanced their reach into local governments by increasing the number of politicians in their pocket.

The Apertura also invited international companies into the country. Each new company brought with it new technologies to contribute to the globalization of the Colombian economy. Unfortunately, when paramilitaries imposed a counter-guerrilla-defense tax on their businesses, they paid it. When guerrillas taxed the safety of their production, they also paid it. These corporations' cost-benefit analysis did not take into account that protecting their company by financing illegal groups had a high price for Colombia; whether they realized it or even cared is irrelevant.

Seventh, already selfish by nature, the Colombian elites greatly contributed to the country's wars by either action or omission. Their greed halted social mobility and opened the door to drug lords and paramilitaries. Sitting at the top of a stratified
class system empowered financial and political elites, often one and the same. Their wealth is the driver behind their decisions; their immense power guaranteed its protection. Through undisclosed agreements, they succeeded in either stopping or reversing reforms needed to breach Colombia's massive inequality gap for those were inconvenient or detrimental to their riches. To increase it, their greed welcomed drug lords when accepting illegal money to finance their political campaigns, when joining in the profits of the business, or when succumbing to their bribes and demands. Their fear to lose it established and strengthened paramilitarism when hiring and financing private armies to protect their farms; their own armed forces that soon after also fed their avarice by helping them increase their land extension to make their businesses even more profitable.

Thus far, the elites have not acknowledged their part in either Colombian conflict; instead, they continue to turn their backs on their people ignoring their pain. Rather than supporting the government, they squeeze it for more. More often than not, they seem oblivious to the country's problems and issues, perhaps because their own guilt blinds them. Nevertheless, now, they not only control wealth and power but the nation's weapons as well. Today, those Colombian elites have a big debt to society, one that must be repaid promptly.

**Eighth, ethics and moral values walked out the door as soon as a Drug Culture settled in. Its force devastated the nation beyond the physical, the visual, and the temporary. Its victims remain unknown and unaccounted for in Colombia. Most**
people around the world see only the damaging effects cocaine addiction brings to families and societies, but fail to realize that drug trafficking equally devastates the families and societies of those who profit from the business. Although many see it as the world's largest producer of cocaine, Colombia is not a nation of drug traffickers for most Colombians do not partake or condone its trade. It is, however, a nation of wonderful people deeply shaken by the piles of money, cruelty, and influence of ruthless drug lords. Their business devastated rural areas, their lifestyle hijacked urban Colombia; the toxic combination gave rise to a drug culture that by quickly tearing down fundamental principles destroyed the moral fiber of the entire society.

Three generations of Colombians live today inside a moral vacuum unnoticed by most after five narco-lifestyle legacies crept in. The narco-quick-money formula replaced traditional income generation methods with dangerous but very lucrative activities that opened the vertical mobility door into previously forbidden classes. Discovering that wealth —rather than last name— enabled narco to climb the class ladder enticed others to follow suit. Since quick-easy money expedited a process that hard work and education could not always achieve or guarantee, this narco-formula is still very alive in Colombia.

Although corruption is not new to the country, after narco-funds succeeded in bribing even those believed most ethical, dishonesty became accepted and widely practiced. By quickly moving across social classes, businesses, and politics, the narco-corruption legacy distorted fundamental societal checks and balances. Chief among
them, the separation between business and politics. Once these joined forces, politics set aside its duty towards the welfare of Colombians to focus on schemes for business to execute and bring profits to both. Political corruption squashed the middle class, exacerbated poverty, increased inequality, and opened the door to parapolitics.

The narco-resolution-tactic changed how Colombians argued and solved their differences. The nature of drug trafficking is violent in itself, but few realize that its viciousness was not limited to enemies, rivals, or traitors in Colombia. Too many young lives lost as a result of narcotics changed the value placed on life when dying young became the norm. Their aggressive demeanor and threats gave narcotics the upper hand in all arguments because the prospect of their violence sunk the entire nation in fear. Their narco-tactic tore down Colombia’s harmonious coexistence. Today, Colombians are more aggressive, far more reckless, and completely intolerant with each other.

A new narco-family-structure emerged when men either abandoned their families to enjoy a potentially short life or died as expected. Although taking on the role of heads of the household propelled women into the workforce to support their family, it created an entire generation of children who grew up with absent fathers and busy mothers. Today, those children are adults who cannot build consensus easily because they do not know how. Growing up alone shaped a strange individualism driven by excessive concern for their own and total disregard for the wellbeing of others.

The narco-aesthetics legacy diminished women when altering the definition of beauty, the value of education, and their role in society. Drug money paid for the plastic
surgeons that transformed *narco*'s women into their ideal female form. Beauty changed in Colombia when physical enhancement became an effective tool to escape poverty, advance careers, keep a husband, find a new one, or simply to have a *better life*. Unfortunately, it also changed men who no longer saw women as partners but rather as objects with curves. A form of *human-trafficking-by-consent* lost the woman and reversed gender equity advances across the board. Today, young Colombian women continue to focus on what their beauty can get them. In the eyes of most men, these gorgeous women continue to be disposable.

*Ninth, the Colombian conflict is not, nor has ever been, intractable. Its characteristics do not comply with the international definition of intractable conflict.*

Three issues continually resurface in every analysis of the conflict, Colombia's exclusive class system, its society's violent path, and the country's land, all features indicating the war's potential for intractability. Based on Peter Coleman's theory, this thesis concludes that despite the elements' presence across the sixty-seven year timeline attributed to the conflict, their incidence is short lived, and their analysis is misinterpreted, distorted, or simply misunderstood.

The ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives that gave rise to *La Violencia* fall into Coleman's definition of *irreconcilable moral issues*. Signing *Frente Nacional* ended their ideological divide. The government's pursuit of the FARC and Communism that followed the peace accord does not constitute a war for ideological differences; it was political exclusion. These differences in ideology did not
ignite nor fuel the second war either; it was drug trafficking that confronted the
government and the FARC again.

Coleman's *high-stakes distributional issues* points to land as a potential reason.
However, the lack of change in the GINI concentration index discharges land as the
asset *worth fighting for* in both wars. Using land as the excuse to kill *campesinos* during
*La Violencia* does not turn land into the reason for the war. Not discerning *Land
Ownership* from *Territorial Control* misrepresents the role of land during the second
conflict for the areas hijacked to grow coca still belong to its rightful owner, and owning
the land was not required to control the territory. Attributing the land dispossession
caused by the Palma Africana expansion to the conflict shields that the real culprit is
the *Apertura*. However, since *campesinos* never fought to take their land back,
unequivocally, land is not, nor ever was a *high-stakes distributional issue* in the wars.

*Domination* or *pecking order* is perhaps the easiest principle to dispel in
Colombia. Power has always been in the hands of Colombian elites and the masses have
not disputed it. Not even guerrillas whose rhetoric never amounted to more than loud
words and two or three, at most, scandalous demonstrations on the power of
armament without any real force. The only *domination* attempt worth mentioning
stemmed from drug trafficking, but drug lords were not after governmental control,
just the protection of their business and themselves. When *narcos* infiltrated the upper
class, the potential *domination of the elites* turned into a long lasting *partnership with
the elites*. This behavior repeats itself when it comes to the paramilitaries indicating
that perhaps in Colombia, the elites truly understand and practice an old proverb advising that, if you cannot beat them, join them.

Those three characteristics are central to Coleman's principles to identify if a conflict is tractable or intractable. Their absence should be strong indicators that intractability does not play a role in the Colombian case. Nevertheless, so there is no doubt about it, the existence of two independent and very different wars discards time, the factor considered most significant to his theory. Therefore, the categorical and undeniable conclusion is that Colombia does not have an intractable conflict.

Tenth, yes, the Colombian military struck the FARC heavily. However, the FARC is not defeated nor even weak. Leveling the battlefield between enemy forces opened the space for peace. To believe that a few successful attacks on the FARC and killing a handful of their leaders is enough to defeat them is a very dangerous assumption that grossly underestimates and neglects the enemy's history. Its strength is not in the number of guerrilleros, but rather in their ability to strike unexpectedly, to hide, and with the training and weapons drug money can buy. The war changed because of the support and financial aid from the United States. Although very costly, help from the world's best army rejuvenated and modernized the Colombian military. The strict American control over the funds avoided misuse, redirection, and misappropriation. The Wars on Drugs and Terror failed to stop drug trafficking and illegal groups, but the training received from the United States weaponized Colombia and professionalized its soldiers. The battlefield between Colombia and the FARC is
finally on an equal footing.

Equal force between enemies drove President Santos and the FARC's leadership to realize that their goal —peace for the former and political participation for the latter— would never be achieved by means of war. Understanding and realizing each other's military strength gave the Havana negotiations a real chance and a different dynamic. Perhaps even forced these legendary enemies into learning to trust and listen to each other. They both must now see that going back to war in a leveled battlefield guarantees their mutual destruction with millions of innocent Colombians dead along the way. A very powerful reason that justifies showing up every day to find consensus on very difficult topics and despite disagreements; it is even a good reason to lose some points to win others. Most of all, it uncovers why President Santos has not agreed to a bilateral cease-fire despite the FARC's unilateral six. Now, it all makes perfect sense.

March 23, 2016!

Today, the Colombian Government and the FARC astonished the world one more time. The hope for peace in Colombia stopped being a simple wish and became a tangible reality. Although a regular day for many, September 23, 2015, turned out to be one of Colombia's most important days. Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia, and Timochenko, leader of the FARC, stood side by side to announce to the world that having reached an agreement on justice —point four of the General Agreement—, the final peace accord will be signed on March 23, 2016 (El Tiempo 2015e). Yes, today became Colombia's day, definitely one for its history books. The announcement requires a
pause and a place in this thesis; the two decisions are too important to conclude the analysis without mentioning their significance.

Reaching an agreement on justice solidifies Colombia's road to peace. Knowing how controversial the FARC's position was (see Chapter 6), seventy out of seventy-five points settled is mind blowing. The terms agreed upon are novel, fair and balanced; a major triumph for the Colombian society. Yes, the FARC will face the law and will pay for their crimes. The victims stand tall in the middle for they hold the future of every single guerrillero in their hands. Restorative justice with amnesty, a reduced sentence, and atypical incarceration awaits only those who confess all their transgressions truthfully, fully, and immediately. The difference between restorative and punitive justice is the truth, yet the right of the victims to know the truth for their grief separates much more than easy from hard sentences. Truthful confessions also grant an invitation to assist rebuilding the nation, and to one day, after paying the sentence, to partake in shaping the future of Colombia as citizens with the right to elect or be elected. Those who disavow any requirement or fail to come forward will face punitive justice as common criminals and sentenced to decades behind traditional bars (Colombian Gov. & FARC 2015a, 1-2). Indeed, the FARC agreed to these terms.

Certainly, softer sentences and future political participation for the FARC will be a hard pill to swallow for some Colombians. Two groups in particular will not receive well the creation of a new Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (Special Jurisdiction for Peace); the Colombian untouchable group and the nation's military forces. The
agreement on justice is not exclusive to the FARC's wrongdoings but extends to the military and to all those who "... directly or indirectly took part in the conflict" (Ibid.). Definitely, a very inclusive plan and fair from every angle. It punishes not only all those who victimized Colombians but also all those who financed, supported, and aided illegal groups or benefited from displacement. The terms, conditions, and sentences will be the same for all. Those who choose the truth will be rewarded; those who do not will become criminals harshly punished. Yes, the government agreed to these terms as well.

Fulfilling this accord will not be easy in Colombia, but doing so will propel the nation towards a more balanced and egalitarian society. The reactions of one particular group will be very interesting to watch. Past behavior predicts that once confronted with the prospect of jail, and given the truth leniency, the untouchable group will likely panic first but will quickly recover from the initial shock. Next, they will come out shouting against the peace accord to stop its signing on March 23. Failing to derail it will shift their power and wealth towards swaying Colombians to vote against it during the referendum promised by President Santos to give the nation the last word. The reason behind their behavior comes from the fear that their truth will come out. Their involvement in the war, the benefits they received as a result. Financing paramilitarism makes them directly responsible for six million campesinos displaced, thousands massacred, land expropriation and concentration. They also fear the reforms proposed and already agreed upon for they will take away the land illegitimately acquired, will force them to pay taxes, and will stop secret gentlemen's agreements behind closed
doors. For those reasons, the elite is the most interested in completely excluding the FARC from having any influence in rebuilding the country. The weapon they used to terrorize the uninformed or fearful is politics. The FARC as political party, future senators, or one day campaigning to become President. They instigate fear by affirming that in their hands Colombia will become the next Venezuela, a twenty-first century socialist nation with Timochenko as the Colombian Chavez. Their fears and the one they instill in others weigh heavily in the opposition to the peace agreement with the FARC. Perhaps, it is time to remind all of them that the 1958 exclusion and persecution of Communism kept guerrillas alive, much as the funds they paid to rescue kidnapped family members financed them.

The military will not join nor support the untouchables’ actions; they may be upset, but they are an institution that vowed to protect civilians. More than anyone, they all know that any soldier who purposely fails to shield or who intentionally harms the innocent defies the most sacred military code and must pay for all crimes. Too many honorable military men and women felt the war to allow that a few bad apples taint their force. The military will not be a problem for they stand for democracy first, but President Santos should be well prepared to counter the wrath of the untouchables. Luckily, the stars continue to align for peace in Colombia since those who sell their vote are usually also the ones who felt the war the most; likely, their votes are cast already.

March 23, 2016 is the day when the war between Colombia and the FARC ends. Six months to a new beginning for Colombians. Wait. The news on the justice accord
did not mention any plans for reinsertion, five issues are still pending and *The Right of Victims*—point five of the General Agreement—is not agreed yet. As the days go by quickly, less than six months seems rather short to finalize it all, especially considering that it took the negotiations three years to get here. Maybe setting a date was a bit premature although it could also expedite the process. Only time will tell.

A central question in this thesis finally finds its answer. Is peace really in sight for Colombia? Yes it is, just not sustainable peace, at least not yet. The peace accord between the government and the FARC will be signed, and the ELN will follow suit soon enough.³ The battle with the FARC will end, but sadly, that will not end the Colombian war. This thorny conflict pulled another rabbit out of the hat to show everyone that the FARC is not the main cause of the Colombian turmoil. Only one question can follow such a bold conclusion. If not the FARC, whom will Colombia be at war with then? A few answers come to mind, the BACRIM who took over drug trafficking and the paramilitary deserters, maybe the common criminals harassing cities, or the former leaders of the AUC now released after paying eight-year sentences that went by too fast. Perhaps, the best answer to leave no one out is that the enemy of Colombia has many faces. However, one thing is equally clear. Colombia is at a stage in which going back to war is unthinkable, and that is the new reason to keep hope alive.

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³ Although sporadically mentioned, the author decided to leave the ELN out because they refused to join the initial negotiation. When the government invited them in again, their demands were irrational and uncompromising. They are seriously negotiating now but lost the opportunity to add their view to the agenda. Today, they have no other choice than to accept and subject to the agreements with the FARC.
The Demands of Sustainable Peace

A vast majority of Colombians are unaware that the end of the confrontations with the FARC will not be the end of the war. Most expect that as soon as the accord is signed, peace will swiftly take over every corner of the nation. The truth is that some campesinos will feel and see less tension, but urban Colombians will not experience any change at all. Only a handful of people realize that the difficult and long process in Havana is just a first step towards a nation in peace; a very strong move forward if managed as Colombia's only chance to transform its society. The greatest gift of the Havana peace accord is that shifting attention away from the FARC as the only culprit will force Colombians to see their truth.

Peace will visit Colombia, but its sustainability will be intrinsically dependent on the ability of the government to see and move immediately towards new social and economic structural reforms to change evils from the past no longer acceptable. Most pressing are weak institutions, income and land concentration, corruption, and awful inequality. Aside from other violent actors, a few more issues work against this nation's goal. The current economic context is not the best, not just for Colombia but also across the world. The nation's mediocre economic growth, 2.5% to 3.5% of GDP, is well below Colombia's potential and limits fiscal resources. Despite some poverty reduction, 37% of citizens are vulnerable and can fall back into poverty. Amidst this scenario, the unavoidable commitments of the new peace accord also need funding. Its price tag is pure speculation thus far, but rough estimates indicate a cost as high as 2.0 to 2.5 points
of GDP per year for at least twenty years (DANE 2014). Finding the initial funds will demand to reshuffle the national budget to discard pointless expenses and prioritize elements of the accord. The country's exceedingly high military spending that took valuable funds away from social policies weakened vulnerable sectors and Colombia can no longer afford another thirty-five years of war, especially not with new rivals growing. The end of the war with the FARC will not translate into savings in military costs either; there are still illegal groups to fight, but most of all, Colombia needs to control the national territory in its entirety, a goal only achieved with more soldiers and institutions. The military cost of war will need to move towards protecting their new baby peace.

Certainly having a president committed to peace is a great advantage, but Santos is half way through his final term and sustainable peace will require at least three or four successive administrations equally steadfast. The country's academics are also an asset, but only if heard rather than sidelined. Lastly, although the United States' support is a tremendous gain, the international pressure following the peace talks raised already high stakes, even higher. They expect a Colombia ready to sustain peace, but most fail to grasp that even paying for the newborn peace will be impossible without their financial aid. The message here is only one; Colombia better get started on working towards sustainable peace because the world will not tolerate a new war and Colombians will not survive it. Yes, the country is between a rock and a hard place, not following through with the terms of the accord will bring the FARC back, and help financing the changes agreed will keep the eyes and pressure of the world on Colombia.
Peace is probably smirking from afar; that is not a bad place to be for peace to begin its magic. The biggest question is where to start? Not a simple answer at all.

Great change is never effortless or quickly implemented. It requires hard work, unwavering commitment, perseverance, and much endurance. However, since peace is not the exception but the only alternative left, the challenges delaying sustainable peace must be defeated today. The peace accord with the FARC is indisputably of the utmost importance to the nation's welfare. Executing the policy changes agreed upon will transform the life of Colombians; it will also expose the negotiations' best-kept secrets. From day one, two issues were not open for discussion, the country's economic model and the military structure; yet not discussing them does not mean not changing them. The terms agreed under point one force a rural reform that will explicitly transform the old economic model into a new, more inclusive one. Similarly, inviting the military to the peace talks was a brilliant move that forced change as well. Today, soldiers already working with guerrilleros teach tolerance and acceptance to all Colombians, militaries and elites judged and sentenced for the same crimes by the same rules equalizes the society. The need to be the example propelled the Minister of Defense to announce a radical change in the Military Doctrine (MinDefensa 2015). These shifts are a wonderful reward, but they are not enough to move from war to sustainable peace. Only one element is powerful enough to vanish the risk of a third conflict; it also can fast track Colombia's goal for a more egalitarian society. The nation's high inequality needs a shock; addressing the following issues simultaneously will achieve it.
**Drug Trade.** A few matters will be easier to resolve than others; among them is drug trafficking, the key to the second war. With trade moving out, resolution is already on its way. Very good news for Colombia, not so much for Mexico. The terms agreed on *illegal drugs* promise coca crops' extinction. It will take time and funds, but can be a reality once alternative crops support *campesino* production. Protecting them and the new yields from drug traffickers will require a strong rural police force; perhaps a job for reinserted *guerrilleros*. Without coca crops, those benefiting from drug production will have nothing to trade. The success of this strategy will sever the link between Colombia and cocaine. The nation's contribution to the world would be immense, but if countries do not control drug consumption, the Colombian efforts will be moot.

**Rural Reform.** The terms agreed in Havana intend a profound rural reform with a strong emphasis on *campesinos*. They touch all the right issues to solve misery, disperse rural population, to aid the 90% poor or vulnerable, and even the need of State presence across the territory. They missed one, *Jobless displacement*. However, three different strategies will help all *campesinos*; the *Victims' Law* for the displaced, *Crop Substitution* for *cocaleros*, and the *Rural Transformation Mission* will cover the rest. Increasing *campesinos'* rural production is a good start, but unless combined with education, health, infrastructure, technical assistance, subsidies, and affordable loans, it will not guarantee job creation or economic inclusion. The problems for the rural reform are weak regional institutions, many years before seeing results, and wealthy landowners that may attempt one more time to stop or reverse it. To stand a chance,
these changes need to start while President Santos is still in office.

**Weak Institutions.** Given the difficult geography, Colombia needs to transform and strengthen its institutions to control the territory. Decentralization is necessary to guarantee the welfare of the population but needs restructuring as well. A challenge for public policies because today, corrupt political elites, illegal groups, and politicians associated with regional entrepreneurs captured territories and institutions undermining local public resources. As a natural consequence, local institutions are weak and have no capacity to respond to public demands.

**Regional Disparity.** Colombia needs to design a logical territorial integration process based on a new alliance between the State and *campesinos*. Building together agile institutions across the territory and jointly establishing practices and norms to regulate public life and generate welfare will guarantee buy-in from the population and defense by the beneficiaries. If achieved, the government will reduce the voids that allowed illegal groups to usurp the role of the State endangering their lives. Citizens well served by their government will keep it safe. Integrating the society will reduce military costs for they will become the eyes and ears throughout the territory as well.

**Tax Reform.** As currently structured, the tax system will not support any peace strategies. The deficit comes from not taxing wealthy individuals and undervalued rural land prices paying very low property tax. The solutions seem obvious and easy. Not so much in Colombia when the pockets targeted belong to the same group, the *untouchables*. In any other country, a law would soon solve the problem.
**Political Exclusion.** Although the ideological differences that ignited the first conflict no longer exist, the legacy of the 1958 peace accord is still around, political exclusion, which entails much more than barring an ideology's participation or a citizen from election. Politicians deprive citizens from being part of the nation's design daily. The State still fails to guarantee their rights, including the right to vote. Colombia must invest in educating citizens on the value of their vote; doing so will also help fight political corruption. Yet, that is not enough if necessity outweighs a vote's worth. The best example of how damaging weak institutions can be is the Colombian Electoral Council. The minuscule fines that punish electoral fraud will never stop the crimes; the laws are weak and need revision to strictly pursue and punish individuals and political parties infringing electoral laws. If not changed, political exclusion in all its forms will continue threatening the nation's stability and democracy. Now, when the peace accord is at stake, the irrational opposition of those who fear the FARC's political participation may sway the referendum if not stopped.

**Political Reform.** Colombia has many political parties today, and they are all in crisis. Politicians shamelessly move from one to the next since there are no clear ideologies in any. Leadership is non-existent but corruption, nepotism, and arrogance are alive and well in all of them. The number of votes they can buy replaced the wellbeing of people. Most Colombians now reject politician's antics; as a result, politics lost good Colombians as well. The practice of politics needs a revolution. The handover from parents to children needs to stop for it excludes new leaders, fresh ideas, and
transparency to rule again. Perhaps strict campaign financing rules, firm justice, and hard sentences to get corrupt politicians out of the parties may be good starting points.

**Reinsertion Policy.** Mechanisms to incorporate former guerrilla members into society are vital. Previous Colombian experiences show that reinsertion processes cannot be limited to only offering former members of illegal groups the opportunity to move freely around cities. Despair, inactivity, and lack of clear goals will drive them back to illegality where they feel needed and productive. Opportunities to be an integral part of the reconstruction of the territories and to contribute to the entire society must be part of the incorporation strategy.

**The Drug Culture.** Profound changes in the Colombian society, its code of ethics, and the unethical behavior of its leadership are imperative. The historical class system separating the elites from the rest of Colombians created structural barriers that unless recognized and changed will also hinder any attempts for peace. Sadly, many negative elements identified 50 years ago persist in today's society. Without a complete societal overhaul, the benefits of development will never reach all Colombians equally and will continue to fall into very few hands. Unfortunately, this is Colombia's most difficult issue because three generations live inside the moral vacuum created by the *narco-lifestyle* legacies. It will not be resolved easily or quickly. The policy that could help is refocusing education, emphasizing ethics and moral values, and good public schools across the nation. It is starting again, building a society with their future, the children. There is one hope, that as fast as the *drug culture* changed most Colombians, peace will
quickly restore the ethical and moral values that abandoned them.

Consensus for peace. President Santos was very generous when entrusting Colombians with the nation's future peace. A bold and very dangerous move that may backfire if the government fails to educate the entire population on the details of the peace accord and the consequences of its rejection. His administration must prepare Colombians to accept the General Agreement reached with the FARC, even if they do not condone a few of its terms. All Colombians will have the last word in the peace process, but it must be an informed last word. However, a consensus for peace entails much more than approving the accord. It also requires preparing Colombians to accept reinserted guerrilleros back into society, and the damages that will follow if excluded. It would be a good opportunity to shake Colombia's individualism by reinforcing that the entire society must actively participate in the reconstruction of the nation.

A Final Thought for Peace

Colombia is about to start writing an entirely new book in its history; one that leaves behind decades of horror, cruelty, and too many lives lost in a war that no one seems to understand how, when, or why it began. The first chapter of this new future will be in the hands of three generations of Colombians; men, women and children who never lived or experienced peace before. Although most of them often speak about their shared dream for a peaceful nation for the children of their children, it is impossible not to wonder how Colombians interpret peace. Do they even realize that "Peace is not something you wish for; it is something you make, something you are,
something you do, and something you give away?" (Fulghum 2004). Peace is a long-term pledge that needs commitment, but most of all, it requires not one but many shifts. Unfortunately, change is not always easy to deal with; it is grueling and frightening when it attacks issues that one considers a safety net. However, when change demands that an entire nation tears down structures held dearly by some or that became second nature to most, every shift becomes a revolution destined to meet great resistance. This is exactly where Colombians are today, in the middle of the last battle before peace finally settles in.

A number of challenges remain in their path. Among these, one is particularly difficult to believe for it defies logic. Unknowingly, urban Colombians inverted peace and war. The impact of a conflict lived only in the rural areas failed to impress upon urban society the price paid by those in the countryside. In the middle of an ongoing war, peace was their norm. The few attacks conducted in the cities became isolated events rather than indications that the conflict might be moving from rural to metropolitan areas. After claiming back the nation's most productive lands, Uribe's war consolidated the reversal of the concepts. Urban Colombians were able to go on road trips and visit their farms earlier abandoned fearing guerrillas. Once again, the country's war became their peace. Millions of men and women incapable of imagining that the war experienced by the other 30% of Colombians was the exact opposite of theirs.

Today, the urban society opposes the peace accord the most. Buying into the rhetoric that the military weakened the FARC, they are unable to accept that after sixty-
seven years and two conflicts, the only road to peace is through negotiation. Instead, their jaded view prevents them to discern surrender from negotiation. Unwilling to make concessions, their excessive demands indicate that to them, the Havana talks is the surrender of the FARC and want to claim guerrilleros as prisoners of war captured after a major defeat. Perhaps that is the reason behind their outrage after learning that Colombia conceded an issue or agreed with one of the FARC's ideas. A negotiated peace is far from capitulation, but most importantly, it is not a negotiation among friends but with enemies. Peace requires finding a middle ground and conceding some issues to gain others more meaningful; it is a game of tug of war with a vital reward at the end.

Today, the urban are the voices most heard on the news and public debates, precisely those who felt the war the least. Unfortunately, campesinos who really lived the impact of war do not have columns in newspapers nor receive invites to public debates. They are the only ones who truly know what peace means, they are ready to commit to what it entails and requires, but they are the minority, and the most powerless of Colombians. A nation split between those who never felt the war and those who never lived in peace means only one thing, not all Colombians are ready for this. Since most still do not see the benefits of peace, they do not value what it may do for their country, themselves, and each other. For others, peace is simply not convenient. Today, so close to signing a very important accord that will kick start a new future for all, the rhetoric for war seems to be winning the battle against building consensus for peace.
One more time, the strongest enemy to Colombia's sustainable peace stands up, a rival still very difficult to overthrow. It will not negotiate a peace accord, and no public policy can control it. The power of its wealth, its excessive influence on political elites and State decisions continue to prevent Colombians from moving ahead towards a more egalitarian and modern society. Colombia's upper class, the *untouchable group* behind too many unethical and reprehensible decisions is pushing back, again. Can a country live in peace in spite of historically powerful but very selfish elites? The Colombian upper class will not change, at least not of their own volition. However, the government can change its behavior towards those elites. All it has to do is place all other Colombians ahead of them. A long time ago, there was a need for the separation of Church and State, perhaps the time has come for Colombia to also have a separation of Elites and State. Without it, sustainable peace will always be vulnerable.

Yes, the picture is complicated and remaining unbiased is difficult. The options are limited but not exhausted. Hence, continuing to hope that peace will arrive in Colombia by itself, loving the country and its people so much that it will decide to stay is not even a remote possibility. The country’s realities are complex but the solutions are now doable. Yes, the wars changed Colombians drastically and distorted politics as well; although the value once placed on the welfare of all shifted to the gain of the individual in Colombia, the duty to protect civilians has not changed nor shifted around the world. It was then and continues to be today a priority of both peace and war. Going back to that standard will require time, and unquestionably, the years ahead for
Colombia will be hard for many reasons, but much easier than their violent past. The peace negotiations brought forward movement all around, so much so that once a lonely nation, today Colombia is surrounded by international friends, with the United States first in line, all ready to gently help steer its future towards finding what was lost along the way. First and foremost, ethics and morals; two principles that will rebuild the moral fiber of the Colombian society; two values never obsolete and that the nation needs for morals and ethics are the universal languages that will hold peace in place. The rest will come easier soon after.

President John F. Kennedy defined peace once as "the necessary rational end of rational men... [since] peace does not require that each man love his neighbor -- it requires only that they live together with mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement" (Kennedy 1963). Very fitting advice for Colombians at this time. In simple words, all it means is that the time has come to change the old weapons for a new one, lighter, faster, and that requires no ammunition, wisdom...

Wisdom slowly acquired as sixty-seven years went by, learned step-by-step through the many difficult moments and times. Wisdom that grew from simple and ordinary moments that seemed extraordinary. The kind of wisdom that knows that forgiving is not forgetting, but that recognizes that after so much violence and sorrow, it is time to forgive, to not look back, to not let anything or anyone discourage the steps gained.

Colombia, a nation of amazing people is about to receive a wonderful gift that will reinvigorate its strength to continue moving forward towards long lasting peace.
All that is required now is a bit of patience for peace really is much closer than most think, and there is nothing to fear. After what every Colombian has been through, the last milestone will feel painless since "the great cause of peace between the people needs all the energies of peace present in a man's heart" (Jean Paul II 1978), and heart is what Colombians have the most. Therefore, "... do not be afraid to take a chance on peace, to teach peace, to live peace... [for] peace will be the last word of history" (Ibid).
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