

COVER PAGE

Title: Colombia and the FARC: Digging in for Peace

Subtitle: Colombia's Peace Process: End of The Road?

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COLOMBIA AND THE FARC: DIGGING IN FOR PEACE

COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS: END OF THE ROAD?

The Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas publicly announced in Oslo, Norway, that they would begin a new round of negotiations for peace in Colombia. However, none of the parties have ceased the armed fighting. The FARC made the first sign of commitment to the peace dialogue by announcing a unilateral ceasefire between November 20 and January 20, 2013. Although the guerrillas provoked several incidents during the truce and security forces continued their offensive against the FARC, the overall level of violence has decreased.

While the beginning of negotiations with the terrorist group has rekindled a sense of hope in society at large, well-founded polemics have given rise to opposing positions. Political analysts, public opinion, and President Santos' predecessor, former President Alvaro Uribe (who launched a strong opposition to the guerrilla), have all claimed emphatically that the FARC will be the main beneficiaries of the initiation of a peace process. Certainly, the FARC could obtain political legitimacy under the shelter of an agreement, just when their military power is at its weakest. Moreover, FARC leaders could receive unfair pardons or amnesties as a result. In addition, analysts fear that the peace negotiations may eat away at the morale of the armed forces, who risk their lives in the fight against terrorism in Colombia.

Over the past 30 years, there have been several failed attempts to advance along the path toward peace. For example, former President Andrés Pastrana established a demilitarized zone of nearly 43,000 square kilometers in the Caguan as a strong gesture to indicate real intentions of achieving peace. However, the leader of the guerilla group, Manuel "Tirofijo" ("Sureshot") Marulanda, an alias used by Pedro Antonio Marín (founder of the armed group who died in 2008), took control over the area that was meant to be neutral, imposing guerilla law and making it the nerve center for the drug-running activities used to finance the organization.

Peace is a necessary factor in Colombia's development. However, a state of uncertainty has inevitably emerged as to whether the FARC will accept a negotiation process that implies disarmament.



1999–2002 FARC–Government Peace Process

In 1981, Julio César Turbay's government created a peace commission, led by former president Carlos Lleras Restrepo to launch the first attempts at a peace process, but never established contacts with the FARC. On May 28, 1984, following a meeting of the leaders of the 27 fronts and the general staff, a ceasefire was established as part of the agreements signed with the government under Belisario Betancourt (Ceasefire Agreements, Truce and Peace). The FARC formed the Unión Patriótica to lead a political movement. The negotiation attempt failed due to two factors: i) violations of the cessation of hostilities by both parties; and, ii) the political violence of sectors on the extreme right.

In 1996, the FARC kidnapped 60 soldiers and proposed the possibility of negotiations in exchange for military clearance. In June 1997, negotiations began in Chairá Cartagena, Caquetá. The first condition imposed by the armed group was a demilitarization of four municipalities. In 1998, through agreements with the newly elected government of President Andrés Pastrana Arango, a 40,000 km² demilitarized zone was created in order to jumpstart a new peace process. However, the peace process was used as a leader's refuge, which led to an increase in illegal activities like drug production and trafficking, illegal arms purchases and threats on local authorities. The peace process lasted from 1998 to 2002. The tensions caused by the absence of FARC leaders at the negotiation sessions, such as the well-known "empty chair" incident, impeded the continuity of the process. On February 23, 2002, the presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt was kidnapped while trying to reach the town of San Vicente by land. Several officials at the time suggested that Betancourt was responsible for the kidnapping because she had ignored warnings about guerrilla presence in the area.

In 2002, Alvaro Uribe Velez, then president-elect of Colombia, implemented the *Plan Patriota*. Contrary to his predecessors' efforts, it intensified fighting against the FARC with the support of the U.S. military. Uribe supported the thesis that they weren't dealing with an armed conflict in Colombia, but a terrorist threat. According to government figures, the number of FARC terrorists was estimated to be 18,000 in 2002, decreasing to 6,500 in 2013. Uribe's counter-terrorism policy improved security in Colombia. Furthermore, the implementation of the *Plan de Seguridad Democrático* demobilized paramilitaries, debilitating the FARC and the ELN (National Liberation Army). According to figures from the U.S. Department of State, kidnappings in Colombia decreased by 83%, homicides by 40%, and terrorist attacks by 76% between 2002 and 2008. The police force recovered their presence in all municipalities in Colombia, including those areas with a strong guerilla presence. All things considered, Uribe's policy was a big success



compared to the efforts of his predecessors. However, while the FARC seemed to be drastically weakened, there were still thousands of fighters capable of carrying out terrorist attacks, kidnappings and other crimes.

In light of these facts, it is clear that the FARC have not been defeated. As has been seen in all irregular wars throughout history, these groups mutate; they try to move closer to cities, and they look to create conditions that will allow for maintaining their activities, in part by forcing their opponents to change their strategies.

However, Uribe's results in the fight against the guerrillas and drug trafficking, and the advances in national security led many of his supporters to ask for a third term. Colombia's Constitutional Court ruled seven to two against a referendum to allow President Uribe to run for reelection.

Tanja Nijmeijer, the only non-Colombian member of the FARC, was designated as one of the main delegates to participate in the dialogue with the government at the Havana Convention Center. She said: "The guerrilla organization is prepared to fight for peace, with or without rifles." The guerrilla leader traveled to attend the round of negotiations in Havana after the government lifted two arrests warrants against her (one for the crime of rebellion and another for extradition). She supported the pacification of Colombia, but demanded "peace with social justice and education for all."

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, known by the acronym FARC, is defined as a Marxist-Leninist army, created to represent the rural poor in the fight against Colombia's "rich and powerful." Their modus operandi involves seizing power through armed combat to bring about change in Colombia, to release the country from inequality and poverty. The most emblematic struggle is for land reform. During the early years, the FARC only operated in rural areas, with relatively sporadic actions in a small area of influence, in support of peasant self-defense. Like many leftist guerrillas, the FARC were influenced by the Cuban Revolution in response to the government abandoning the needy. Their main purpose is to achieve a just and socialist society through land redistribution and control over industrial sectors.

The FARC were initially an armed peasant self-defense movement that emerged during *La Violencia*, in the 1940s and 1950s. Based in a remote mountainous area between Bogotá and Cali, they became a regional guerrilla movement in the



1960s. In 1964, the guerrillas announced the creation of the FARC, a group dedicated to rural insurgency. The FARC is the oldest, largest, best-equipped and best-funded guerrilla organization in America.

Until the 1980s, the FARC had grown relatively slowly and had between 1,000 and 3,000 members. Since then, they have grown steadily in numbers (armed forces and intelligence) and have expanded dynamically to adapt to historical, military, political, financial and social pressures.

From the early days of the conflict, the FARC have kept their main settlement in rural areas. However, they have demonstrated the ability to execute attacks against Colombian political objectives in urban areas, including bombings, mortar attacks, kidnappings, extortion and murder.

The FARC's military power has been deteriorated after a decade of military retaliation, with the support of the U.S. war machine. However, the rebels have remained faithful to their revolutionary ideals which they defend by the use of violence.

Juan (guerrilla fighter name), said to a reporter for the *New York Times* that he was proud of the group and the cause: "A guerrilla doesn't use alcohol or drugs; he sleeps four hours per day, moving fast all day long. That's how we can fight against the enemy. We dream of creating a society for the majority in Colombia: the poor." When asked about deserters, he responded: "They are doing us a favor; we are getting rid of anyone who is not committed to the revolution."

Drug Trafficking, Extortion and Kidnapping

Analysts, the government and public opinion have reported that the guerrilla organization is funded mainly through kidnappings, drug trafficking, and the extortion of business leaders and landowners. Colombian law enforcement authorities have reported close links between guerrillas and emerging drug gangs in the drug trafficking business. These illegal funding activities distort the genuineness of the FARC's claim for recognition as a belligerent group.

In the assault that killed Edgar Tovar, head of the 48th Front of the FARC, a computer was seized. Files revealed route maps, businesses and partnerships that included their former enemies: *las autodefensas*. In short, sufficient evidence was obtained to prove that funding for the guerrillas came not only from drug trafficking, but from planting, production and distribution of drugs as well as trading them for weapons.

According to the Financial Information and Analysis Unit (UIAF) under Columbia's Ministry of Finance, in 2003 the FARC's main sources of income were ransoms for kidnappings and the theft of cattle. Reported profits amounted to



\$19 million. Drug trafficking represents 30% of their total income, most of which comes from the weight tax paid on every gram produced by coca farmers and drug gangs. A recent report prepared by the Colombian government for restricted circulation highlighted that 78 % of FARC income comes from drug trafficking (more than \$1 billion per year). Extortion also brings in over \$600 million per year for the FARC and cattle rustling ranks third among their financing methods.

Negotiations began in October 2012, when negotiators met to establish an agenda and set the ground rules for the agreement. In a brief statement, Santos delivered three principles intended to guide the peace process: i) the mistakes of past negotiation efforts should not be repeated; ii) all measures to be taken should be aimed at ending the conflict, not prolonging it, and; iii) the Colombian army would not yield any territory (which was widely interpreted as meaning that there would be a demilitarized zone inside the country, as in previous peace negotiation processes). The U.S. Department of State, the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations (UN), through its Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, praised the initiative.

Santos and FARC leader Rodrigo Londono, who uses the *nom de guerre* “Timoshenko,” reported that both sides would soon be entering a new phase of peace negotiations, with the aim of ending the long conflict. Santos stressed that this round of negotiations would be different from previous ones. However, Santos pointed out that there would not be a cease-fire and that the government would maintain military pressure on the guerrillas.

The FARC spokesman, Ivan Marquez, has emphasized that the steps toward peace must be based on deep transformations of Colombia’s political, social and economic organization. Changes needed be made to eradicate social inequality in Colombia, which ranks as the third most unequal society in the world. Marquez stressed the issue of land distribution as a pivotal point in the negotiations, since it has been the historical cause of class confrontations in Colombia and lay at the root of the FARC’s armed uprising. He also asserted that the negotiations were not meant to resolve the guerrilla issue, but to respond to the needs of the Colombian population. He rejected the idea that the guerrilla group would settle for a peace of the vanquished: “We want peace and we identify with the plight of the nation, but peace is not just silencing the guns. We seek peace with social justice.”

The Minister of the Interior, Fernando Carrillo, said: “The FARC will have to make peace and lay down their arms. Before aspiring to participate as a legal political force in Colombia, they must face pending trials for the crimes they have committed. It is very unlikely that the FARC will be a political option in the 2014 elections.”



Despite the three previous rounds of failed negotiations since the 1980s, analysts are confident that there are optimistic signs in this opportunity.

Uribe's Colombia: Making Tentative Peace Overtures

During Álvaro Uribe Vélez's presidency (2002-2010), the Armed Forces cut off the possibility that these criminal organizations might come to political power through the use of arms. However, they have continued to figure as the principle threat to the country. As Uribe pointed out, the weakening that has been observed in these organizations is the highest ever. Faced with the diagnosis of weakness among the guerrillas, some political sectors show reluctance toward peace negotiations. Furthermore, because the FARC makes use of urban gangs to carry out its criminal activities, questions arise as to how a peace agreement might be practically implemented, and whether it would be sustainable. These urban gangs have become an armed force that engages in urban violence and all kinds of criminal activities. What is the plan for dismantling these groups who obtain their livelihoods from criminal activities?

Uribe, largely responsible for the weakening of the guerrillas, was surprised by the negotiations undertaken by his former security minister, Juan Manuel Santos, during his own presidency: "These are terrorists and killers of mayors. Unlike other guerrillas, these are criminal drug traffickers who threaten the country's stability." Uribe emphasized that the FARC are not engaged in an armed conflict against a dictatorial government, or in an ethnic conflict. "They aren't insurgents; they are a terrorist group with political motivations. They don't deny their political purpose. Legitimizing the FARC and reaching a peace agreement would allow for kidnapers, extortionists and murderers to participate in open elections."

Uribe believed that peace negotiations would strengthen the guerrillas and weaken the national armed forces, demoralizing them: "If the government legalizes drugs, there won't be a single person willing to sacrifice his life to fight drug trafficking." Attacks on infrastructures had increased by 200% and attacks on security forces by 780%. Extortion, one of the main criminal activities used to finance the guerrilla, had also grown. The Metropolitan Police department of Bogotá confirmed that they were zeroing in on the extortion of private companies and business owners. During his second term, Uribe received substantial U.S. support to combat drug trafficking and terrorism in Colombia. George Bush's position on drug trafficking and terrorism was well known. Barack Obama continued with the same policy against drug trafficking. However, because of U.S. interests in the Middle East, the level of potential military



support in Colombia remained uncertain. Likewise, Obama had shown strong support for the beginning of peace negotiations with the guerrilla group.

The Colombian population, business and political sectors, as well as international organizations had all called for the end of the conflict with the guerrillas.

Santos's Revolution: Seeking Out New Friends

A distinctive feature of the Santos government has been the strong support of foreign policy, specifically the relations with its neighbors: Ecuador and Venezuela. These diplomatic relations were damaged during Uribe's presidency. Santos expects greater cooperation in trade, counter-narcotics measures, and commitment to security by improving diplomatic relations between the countries. The government has also extended this policy to other countries in the region.

Colombia showed its interest in regional integration during the Sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena in April 2012, with the participation of 30 of the 34 democratically elected leaders in the region. During the summit, U.S. President Obama and his counterpart Santos announced the North American Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United States and Colombia, which was approved by the U.S. Congress in October 2011. The agreement came into force on May 15, 2012, and will allow the countries to reduce almost all trade tariffs and barriers to bilateral trade over the next decade.

In addition to the FTA with the United States, Santos has sought to strengthen regional economic relations, pursuing strategies oriented toward the open market. In May 2011, Colombia, Peru and Chile signed an integrated market agreement, the Pacific Alliance. The three countries, along with Mexico, launched the trade bloc known as the Pacific Alliance to facilitate the free flow of investment, trade and people. Santos has actively looked to reach free trade agreements, such as the ones signed with Canada in 2011 and South Korea in 2012. Also, a number of agreements with China have strengthened bilateral relations and, recently, negotiations with the European Union have begun.

Havana: The First Round of Negotiations

Colombia's former vice president, Humberto de la Calle, leader of the government's negotiating team in the peace process, concluded that, in the eleven days of negotiations with the FARC in Havana, the results were as previously



expected. The negotiations in Havana focused on six points: 1) Agricultural development policy; 2) Reintegration of former guerrillas into society and political participation; 3) End of the conflict and handover of weapons; 4) Solution to the conflict with illicit drugs; 5) Disclaimer reconstruction of truth, and reparation for victims; 6) Implementation, verification and countersignature.

However, the FARC delegation in Havana argued that the government's proposals seemed to intensify the roots of the conflict, rather than diffusing them.

Media outlets that support the FARC's cause have questioned the peace process because there has been military action against the guerrillas: "While the government sits at the table to negotiate, the Minister of Defense is ordering an intensification of the war against the FARC, buying aircraft drones."

President Santos toughened his approach, attributing the "theft" and "plunder" of 500,000 hectares from the state and peasants to the guerrillas. These statements led FARC negotiators to adopt a defensive position, and the guerrilla leader, Tymoshenko, claimed that the government attitudes threatened to sink the peace process into a swamp.

However, after the first round of negotiations in Havana, the parties have shown interest in achieving the goal, though hostilities have not ceased altogether. The chief government negotiator said: "Progress has been made, especially, in the design of programs to reclaim land from illegal hands, in order to redistribute it among landless farmers." Also, the government insists that in the transition from armed conflict to abiding by the law, it is essential to recognize and compensate for the damage caused to the victims and their families. Marquez, chief negotiator for the FARC, admitted that his delegation was ready to talk about the victims of the guerrillas, "But let it be clear that we do not carry out actions against civilians. The victims are victims of this conflict and the government is responsible for its action or inaction."

While "nothing is agreed until everything has been agreed," the consensus over the structural reform of the land issues constitutes the first attempt in history to overcome the conflict since President Belisario Betancur pursued peace 28 years ago.

Colombia: Challenges and Dilemmas in the Search for Peace

Peace negotiations with the FARC have a high impact on electoral races. Indeed, political analysts have suggested that the past negotiations involving Andrés Pastrana were a decisive factor in his 1998 election victory. Does President Santos share the same electoral speculation? Does Santos want to go down in history as the president who finally



achieved peace in Colombia after five decades of violent conflict? Could Santos obtain political gains ahead of an eventual re-election race, just when his public image has shown a decline in the surveys? A national survey measuring the approval of President Santos in mid-2012 revealed that the population's support had fallen from 70% to 47% due to the perception of increasing insecurity and the failure of the judicial reform initiative.

The Colombians' approval of the new peace process is high. However, they don't hide their skepticism about its success. A nationwide survey during October and November 2012, revealed that 72% of respondents in five capital cities were in favor of the negotiations, although they were pessimistic about the final outcome. The same survey showed discontent with the insurgency among Colombians. For example, 83% of respondents did not believe that FARC members would help to fight against drug trafficking if they were to be socially reinserted. Also, 80% of the sample believed that the FARC would not make any efforts to repair the damage caused to their victims.

The peace agreement can be interpreted differently with respect to its true intentions. On the one hand, it means that the FARC will leave behind their identity as a terrorist group in hopes of becoming a valid political force in Colombia. On the other hand, Santos could use the peace negotiations as an emblem for his new electoral campaign. Also, guerrilla leaders could pursue non-extradition deals; the United States has some claims for drug trafficking and terrorism. One of the critical issues in the future will be some FARC leaders' intentions to go into politics, as opposed to going to jail. This was made impossible under a law recently passed by the Congress. Most FARC commanders are facing local charges: investigations for murders, massacres, kidnappings, drug trafficking, torture, displacement and other offenses classified as war crimes and human rights violations by international law. This situation would prevent the guerrilla leaders from receiving pardons or amnesties, which would impede their possible election by popular vote.

The Colombian government is strongly committed to the development of their international relations in order to stimulate economic development. Thus, eradicating the FARC as a threat will positively influence the potential to attract foreign investment as well as increasing investor confidence.

The announcement of a new attempt at reaching peace in Colombia is a cause for renewed hope in a country that has grown accustomed to violence. Expectations are high, and so is uncertainty. Will President Santos, and the Colombian justice system, be willing to defend FARC leaders against international pressure regarding requests for their extradition? How might the failure to do so affect the negotiation process? Could the FARC be taking advantage in order to strengthen their positions, as former president Uribe claims?



Perhaps, one of the government's major concerns, also expressed by analysts and the general population in Colombia, is whether the FARC will move away from drug trafficking as a source of funding. In the hypothetical case of reaching a peace agreement and allowing the FARC to become a genuine political force, how would they finance an electoral campaign?

True, this is all part of what the government is negotiating with the guerrilla group. If both the government and the FARC fail to meet their expectations in terms of the demands made from each side, are there any guarantees that the chapter of armed conflict will really been closed in Colombia?

Meanwhile fighting continues, as do the criminal and terrorist activities. During the first 25 days of 2013, the FARC launched 10 attacks against pipelines in the departments of Putumayo, Norte de Santander and Arauca. The insurgent attacks have become an obstacle to the government's goal of surpassing a target production of one million barrels of oil. On January 1, the FARC detonated two bombs at a police station in Guapi leaving three injured and on February 15, seven soldiers of the armed forces were killed in a clash.



Appendix

A Chronology of Key Events

1525 - Spain begins the conquest of Colombia.

1536-38 - Spain establishes the settlement of Santa Fe de Bogota, which subsequently becomes known as Bogotá, the current capital; it becomes part of the Spanish vice-royalty of Peru.

Skyscrapers, colonial buildings rub shoulders in Bogota

Population: 6.4 million.

Elevation: 2,640 meters above sea level.

1718 - Bogotá becomes the capital of the Spanish vice-royalty of Nueva Granada, which also rules Ecuador and Venezuela.

1819 - Simon Bolívar defeats the Spanish at Boyaca. Republic of Gran Colombia formed with Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

1829-30 - Gran Colombia dissolved when Venezuela and Ecuador split off, leaving present-day Colombia and Panama to form a separate state known as Nueva Granada.

1849 - Conservative and Liberal parties founded.

1861-85 - Liberal Party rule sees country divided into nine largely autonomous entities and the church separated from the state.

Festival time in the northern city of Barranquilla

1885 - Start of 45 years of Conservative Party rule during which power is recentralized and church influence restored.

1899-1903 – “The War of the Thousand Days”: around 120,000 people die in a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives. Panama becomes an independent state.

1930 - Liberal President Olaya Herrera elected by coalition; social legislation introduced and trade unions encouraged.

1946 - Conservatives return to power.



1948 - Assassination of left-wing mayor of Bogotá ignites riots.

1948-57 - 250,000-300,000 killed in civil war.

1958 - Conservatives and Liberals agree to form National Front in a bid to end the civil war; other parties banned.

Appendix (Continued)

Guerrilla war

1965 - Leftist National Liberation Army (ELN) and Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL) founded.

Colombia's main rebel group, the FARC, appears to be losing ground

Colombia's most powerful rebels

Obituary: Manuel Marulanda

Rescue deals FARC a blow

1966 - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, the current largest guerrilla group) established.

1970 - National People's Alliance formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.

1971 - Left-wing M-19 guerrilla group emerges.

1978 - President Julio Turbay (Liberal) begins intensive fight against drug traffickers.

1982 - President Belisario Betancur (Conservative) grants guerrillas amnesty and frees political prisoners.

War against drug cartels stepped up

1984 - Campaign against drug traffickers stepped up following assassination of justice minister.

1985 - Eleven judges and 90 other people killed after M-19 guerrillas force their way into the Palace of Justice; Patriotic Union Party (UP) founded.

Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupts. An estimated 23,000 people are killed in four Andean towns.

1986 - Virgilio Barco Vargas (Liberal) wins presidential elections by record margin. Right-wing paramilitary groups begin murder campaign against UP politicians, amid continuing violence by left-wing groups and death squads run by drug cartels.

1989 - M-19 becomes a legal party after reaching a peace agreement with the government.





Appendix (Continued)

Andrés Pastrana secures U.S. aid but fails to stem violence

2005: Ex-leader of Colombia named U.S. envoy

2002: Pastrana's legacy of failure

Liberal and UP presidential candidates murdered during presidential election campaign, reputedly at the behest of drug cartels; Cesar Gaviria elected on anti-drug platform.

1991 - New constitution legalizes divorce, prohibits extradition of Colombians wanted for trial in other countries and guarantees indigenous peoples' democratic rights, but without addressing their territorial claims.

1993 - Pablo Escobar, Medellin drug-cartel leader, shot dead while trying to evade arrest.

1995 - Ernesto Samper Pizano (Liberal) elected president and is subsequently charged and cleared of receiving drug-cartel money for his election campaign.

Peace talks

1998 - Andrés Pastrana Arango (Conservative) elected president, begins peace talks with guerrillas.

1998 November - Pastrana grants FARC a safe haven the size of Switzerland in the south-east to help move peace talks along. The zone is off-limits to the army.

1999 January - Peace talks formally launched but proceed in stop-start fashion. Pastrana and FARC leader Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda meet.

1999 January - Powerful earthquake kills some 1,000 people. Cities of Armenia and Pereira badly hit.

Plan Colombia

2000 July – Pastrana's "Plan Colombia" wins almost US\$1 billion in mainly military aid from the United States to fight drug trafficking and rebels who profit from and protect the trade.



Appendix (Continued)

Plan Colombia: The United States pumps billions into anti-drug campaign

2006: Colombia's "lost war" on cocaine

2005: United States weighs costs of Plan Colombia

2000 September - Government freezes talks; alleges that FARC harbored a plane hijacker who was forced to land in safe haven. Later, FARC refuses to resume talks, accuses Pastrana of not stopping paramilitary groups.

2001 February - The FARC returns to peace talks after a meeting between "Sureshot" and Pastrana. Pastrana extends the validity of the demilitarized area for eight months.

2001 June - FARC rebels free 359 police officers and members of the military in exchange for 14 captured rebels. The FARC are accused of using the safe haven to rearm, prepare attacks and conduct drug trade.

2001 October - Government, FARC sign San Francisco agreement, committing themselves to negotiating a ceasefire. Pastrana extends the safe haven until January 2002.

2002 January - Pastrana accepts FARC ceasefire timetable and extends safe haven until April.

Talks fail

2002 February 20 - Pastrana breaks off three years of tortuous peace talks with FARC rebels, says hijacking of aircraft hours earlier is last straw. He orders rebels out of the demilitarized zone. Government declares war zone in south after rebels step up attacks.

2002 May - Independent candidate Alvaro Uribe wins a first-round presidential election victory, promises to crack down hard on rebel groups.

Demobilization: AUC fighters hand over weapons

AUC called for a ceasefire in 2002; peace talks began in 2004.

Group listed as terrorist organization in Europe and the United States



Most rank-and-file members will get full pardon and job training.

2004: Colombia's "drug barons" in peace talks.

2002 August - Moments before Alvaro Uribe is sworn in as president, suspected FARC explosions rock Bogotá. Twenty people are killed. Days later, Uribe declares a state of emergency.

2003 October - 14 out of 15 of President Uribe's planned austerity measures and political reforms are rejected by voters in a referendum. Three ministers and the national police chief resign.

Appendix (Continued)

2003 November - Fighters from right-wing United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) begin to disarm.

2004 May – FARC's Ricardo Palmera, the highest-ranking Colombian guerrilla ever captured, is sentenced to 35 years in prison.

2004 July - Right-wing AUC and government begin peace talks. AUC leaders address Congress.

2005 January - Bitter 15-day dispute with Venezuela over the capture of a FARC leader on Venezuelan soil. The affair is resolved at talks in Caracas in February.

2005 June - New law offers reduced jail terms and protection from extradition for paramilitaries who turn in their weapons. Rights groups say the legislation is too lenient.

2005 December - Exploratory peace talks with the second biggest left-wing rebel group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), begin in Cuba.

2006 February - Colombia and the United States agree on a free trade deal. The agreement awaits ratification in both countries.

Uribe's second term

2006 March - Parties loyal to President Uribe win an overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections.

2006 May - President Uribe wins a second term in office.

2006 November - Court investigates possible ties between high-ranking politicians from Sucre department and right-wing paramilitaries.



2006 December - Detained paramilitary leaders say they are pulling out of a peace process. Government says demobilization of right-wing groups will continue.

2007 January - Ecuador turns to the Organization of American States (OAS) for help with its challenge to Colombia's coca crop-spraying program along their common border.

2007 June - Government releases dozens of jailed FARC guerrilla fighters, in the hope that rebels will reciprocate by releasing hostages. The FARC rejects the move, saying it will only free hostages if government pulls back troops and sets up a demilitarized zone.

2007 July - Hundreds of thousands protest in Bogotá against kidnappings and conflict in the country.



Appendix (Continued)

Hostage release talks

2007 September - In his role as mediator, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez agrees to invite rebels for talks on hostage release deal.

2007 November - Colombia sets deadline of December 31 for President Chavez to reach deal with rebels on prisoner swap.

2007 November - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez withdraws his country's ambassador to Bogotá in a row over his role in negotiations between the Colombian government and rebel forces.

Ingrid Betancourt

Born on December 25, 1961.

Grows up in Paris.

1989: Returns to Colombia.

1994: Elected to lower house.

1998: Becomes a senator.

2002: Kidnapped by FARC rebels.

How the hostages were freed

In pictures: Hostages freed

Joy as U.S. hostages return home

Profile: Ingrid Betancourt



2008 January - The FARC releases two high-profile hostages, Clara Rojas and Consuelo Gonzalez, as a result of Chavez's mediation.

Chavez calls on U.S. and European governments to stop treating Colombian left-wing rebel groups as terrorists, but Uribe rejects the idea.

2008 March - A Colombian cross-border strike into Ecuador kills senior FARC rebel Raul Reyes and sparks a diplomatic crisis with both Ecuador and Venezuela.

2008 May - Colombia extradites 14 paramilitary warlords to the United States to stand trial on drug trafficking charges. The United States hails the move as evidence Colombia deserves a trade deal. Colombian opposition complains the extraditions mean that the militia leaders will not reveal their alleged links to Uribe's political allies.

The FARC announces the death of its leader and founder, Manuel Marulanda.

2008 June - Colombia renews low-level diplomatic relations with Ecuador.

Appendix (Continued)

Betancourt freed

2008 July - Colombian army rescues the country's highest-profile hostage, Ingrid Betancourt, held in captivity for six years by the FARC. She was among 15 hostages freed in an operation in the southern-central region of Guaviare.

2008 November - The sudden collapse of pyramid investment schemes - used by some of the poorest savers - triggers violent protests. Several towns are put under curfew.

2009 February - FARC rebels free six high-profile hostages, including a former provincial governor held since 2001.

Regional Friction

Relations with the wider region became more hostile in 2009

Colombia's rocky regional relations

2009 March - FARC releases a Swedish man thought to be the group's last foreign hostage, Erik Roland Larsson.

President Alvaro Uribe offers FARC rebels peace talks if they halt "criminal activities" and declare a cease-fire.



2009 July-August - Relations with Venezuela deteriorate again after plans are unveiled to allow U.S. troops to use Colombian military bases as part of a drive to curb drug-trafficking.

Venezuela withdraws its ambassador from Bogotá and freezes relations after the Colombian government accuses Caracas of supplying arms to FARC rebels; Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez accuses Colombia of carrying out a military incursion into his country.

2009 October - Colombia and the United States sign a deal giving the U.S. military access to seven Colombian bases.

2009 November - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez urges his armed forces to be prepared for war with Colombia and orders 15,000 troops to the border, amid growing tensions.

Former army General Jaime Humberto Uscategui is condemned to a 40-year jail sentence for his role in the killing of unarmed civilians by right-wing paramilitaries.

Common cause

2009 December - The Marxist rebel groups, the FARC and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN), announce that they intend to stop fighting each other and concentrate on attacking the armed forces.

Appendix (Continued)

Tough on Rebels

President Alvaro Uribe had some success in his fight against rebels

Profile: Alvaro Uribe Velez

2010 July - Venezuela cuts diplomatic ties with Colombia after being accused of harboring FARC rebels.

2010 August - Juan Manuel Santos takes over as president, having won an easy victory in the run-off election in June.

He responds to a FARC offer of talks by insisting that the rebel group must first release all the hostages it still holds.

Colombia and Venezuela restore diplomatic ties.

2010 September – The FARC steps up its campaign of violence. Colombian army kills senior FARC

2011 February - FARC releases several hostages in what it describes as unilateral “gesture of peace” toward the government.

2011 May - Senate approves law to compensate victims of civil conflict and return land to millions of displaced people.

President Santos describes the new law as “historic.”



2011 August - President Santos outlines new tactics against rebels, who have increasingly been resorting to hit-and-run raids.

2011 September - Former intelligence chief Jorge Noguera - a close ally of former president Alvaro Uribe - is sentenced to 25 years in prison for collaborating with paramilitary death squads.

2011 October – U.S. Congress passes long-delayed free trade agreement with Colombia, despite concerns over country's poor record of labor relations.

2011 December - Country-wide protests against the FARC guerrilla group.

2012 April – The final ten police and military hostages held by FARC rebels are freed after more than a decade, encouraging hopes of peace talks.

2012 June - Congress approves a law setting up guidelines for peace talks with left-wing rebels. Previous governments have refused to negotiate with the FARC.

2012 July - FARC rebels continue taking hostages after promising to stop political abductions earlier in the year.

Members of Nasa tribe seize a hilltop police fort, saying they are tired of being caught in the cross-fire of the FARC-government conflict.

Endnotes

<http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/si-no-se-logra-la-paz-seria-un-salto-al-vacio-exguerrillero-yesid-arteta/20121015/nota/1779187.aspx>.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2013/02/colombias-peace-talks?zid=305&ah=417bd5664dc76da5d98af4f7a640fd8a>.

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/r/revolutionary_armed_forces_of_colombia/index.html.

<http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/farc-forever/>

Colombia timeline (BBC NEWS <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1212827.stm>).



1. Purpose of the Case

The case is suitable for students of two different types: graduate students in Public Administration taking political science courses, and MBA or Executive Education students in Business Schools. For the former, the case is intended to analyze negotiation processes in unconventional armed conflicts, such as with terrorist guerrillas. For the latter, it can serve as a basis for the analysis of complex negotiation processes.

The objectives of the case “Peace With the FARC: Is It Negotiable?” are pedagogical. Indeed, students are not motivated to take a position for or against either of the parties, but to discuss why these situations occur and the chances of a successful negotiation. The professor should make this topic clear at the beginning of class, with the aim of steering clear of political debate. Given this premise, the case may have several objectives:

- a) First, the case allows for examining the difficulties created by long-term social inequalities and how the dynamics of the reaction processes can lead to complicated situations. Violence never solves problems, it makes them worse. Indeed, history shows that this lesson is often diluted given the impossibility of turning back. In fact, once a process of violence has begun, theories are developed to support it.
- b) Second, the case provides the opportunity for analyzing the possibility of reaching a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC. To do this, we suggest applying a simple analytical model that incorporates the positions of each of the parties and their vital needs, both primary and secondary. The framework is known as the VIA (an acronym for Vital, Important, Accessory) of negotiations. The
- c) Analysis must be done before beginning a negotiation. This analysis not only helps calculate the probabilities of reaching agreements, but also indicates the paths to follow in order to reach said agreements.
- d) Finally, the case can be used to discuss alternative ways of advancing toward agreements by adopting one of the positions, the Colombian government or the FARC.

2. Synopsis of the Case

The case briefly details the origins of the FARC and its evolution throughout history. It also describes the nature of other armed groups in Colombia. It can be interesting to discuss whether the guerrilla is genuinely involved with ideals of social justice or whether, as some say, it is a terrorist group with links to drug traffickers.

The case also describes the successive attempts at reaching an agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC over the past 30 years, as well as the causes of the failure of those negotiations.

Finally, the status of the negotiation process in La Havana in the early months of 2013 is explored, providing a view of its evolution. In particular, it voices criticism of the process led by the former President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe, whose policy of “democratic security” left most of the territory under the control of the army and the police.

In terms of the negotiations carried out in La Havana, the case highlights the following discussion points: 1) agricultural development policy, 2) both the reintegration of former guerrillas into Colombian society and their political participation, 3) the end of conflict and disarmament, 4) a solution to the conflict over illicit drug trafficking (narcotics), 5) legal terms for the reconstruction of truth and reparation for victims, 6) implementation, verification and endorsement.

3. Matters to be discussed in Class

3.1. Violence Always Begets Violence

If the history of the FARC conflict has taught us anything, it is that the solution to violence is never more violence. Terrorist violence, even less. The “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” mentality leads to an endless vicious circle. Originally, peasant self-defense, brought on by the outrages suffered by farmers, resulted in the creation of isolated, small groups of guerrillas. Over time, the FARC became the most outfitted and powerful guerrilla force on the American continent. The initial violence suffered in rural areas in the 1940s and 1950s ended up generating violence with components in terrorism and drug trafficking. In consequence, Colombian society suffered terrorist attacks affecting, surprisingly, the people that the guerrilla was initially defending. Small farmers have experienced the most pain.

The lesson is that social inequality is a cause of great evils down the line, although in the short-term some social groups are enriched by it. It also teaches us that fighting this inequality with more violence only ends up generating greater inequality.

At the very beginning of the class, this idea should be made clear. The need to employ peaceful mechanisms to fight against inequality must also be explored. Eventually, justice wins out. However, the use of violence, of whatever kind, to achieve that only creates another kind of injustice, which is sometimes even greater. FARC's story corroborates this hypothesis.

Some students may indicate that, in the beginning, the FARC emerged as a form of self-defense. True, but they should have used different channels for protest. The peasant leaders could have used peaceful resistance mechanisms, which have often proven to be effective. See the example of Gandhi in India. During the class, part of the film "Gandhi" is screened, in which he advocates nonviolence.

3.2. Analysis of the VIA of Negotiation

After analyzing the previous point, the question is: What are the chances of reaching a deal? To answer this question, the professor can apply the VIA analysis of the negotiation, detailed in Section 1.

During the discussion, the teacher can list the vital conditions for each of the two parties on the blackboard. According to the hypothesis that has been formulated, the odds of reaching an agreement will be higher or lower.

First, when examining the FARC's vital conditions, if their main condition involves pardoning and reintegrating their leaders, success of the negotiations will be uncertain. Second, as far as the government is concerned, it is easier for them to concede to Agrarian Reform, rather than pardoning the guerrilla leaders. In particular, those who face criminal charges and have been involved in drug trafficking. Thus, the probability that the negotiations will conclude successfully in terms of the FARC side depends on where they place the emphasis. While formally the FARC places priority on land reform issues, speculation suggests that they are also looking for a quick and easy social reinsertion for their members.

A vital issue for the FARC is that the end result should not be seen as an unconditional surrender. In fact, they have triumphed. Their international image has improved, whereas a few months prior to beginning the negotiations they were on the lists of terrorist organizations compiled by many national and international organizations. They have cemented this victory, and the government has allowed it for the sake of beginning the negotiations.

The government's vital approach is to conclude the negotiations in order to ensure the reelection of President Santos. In that sense, the process should be concluded a few months before the elections (fall 2015). In addition, negotiations must be followed through to avoid alienating the center-right electorate, who supported him during the first election. That may involve issuing pardons for blood crimes or drug trafficking. The government may be as interested in agrarian reform as the FARC is, so it will not constitute any obstacle during the negotiations.

The other four issues to be discussed (disarmament, drug trafficking, reparation for victims and monitoring) could fall into the category of "major" or "accessory" for both parties. Once the initial hurdles have been overcome, agreeing on them will not be difficult.

3.3. Negotiation Calendar

In light of the previous analysis, class discussion may turn to where negotiations should begin, whether with agrarian reform or rehabilitation methods. It seems like the former is the best place to start since it is in the interest of both parties. It could even be understood that, with the help of a group of experts, both parties could come to rapid agreement in this area. This first step could help to solve the greatest challenge: rehabilitation and sentencing for violent crimes and drug charges.

Related to this issue, discussion could establish which courts should be responsible for prosecuting offenders. The government could offer non-extradition agreements for those sought by international courts or the United States in return for the FARC's acceptance of court rulings. It is not easy an agreement in this regard. Negotiations should also be carried out very discreetly to prevent leaks to the public through the media, in order to avoid unnecessary tension and additional pressure on the government. The Colombian government might even negotiate an agreement with the U.S. government.

Could a law regulating reconciliation, with generous pardons and reduced sentences facilitate the guerrilla's reintegration into society? This aspect is, in fact, the key to the negotiation. Once it has been resolved, the rest of the requirements are easy to achieve.

In terms of the last four topics, once the reintegration process has been clarified, agreements should be reached quickly. In many cases, the participation of neutral intermediaries, i.e., third parties or international institutions for arbitration, mediation and process control, is advisable. It is a very common practice in this kind of process.

4. Conclusions

At the end of the class, the professor should summarize the lessons learned from the discussion. The first lesson has to do with the long-term costs of social injustice and the hazards of attempting to resolve it through violence. The second lesson centers on the usefulness of VIA-based analysis when facing a complex negotiation process. Strategic analysis should be used to decide whether or not to consider a negotiation. It can also be used to define the most effective way to carry out negotiations once a party has decided to begin them and to develop awareness about the key difficulties in reaching an agreement.

At some point the need to be generous, but with caution, should be emphasized. If there is excessive generosity, the negotiations may break down due to the pressure of public opinion faced with the complaints of innocent victims. Note that this conflict has involved kidnappings and the deaths of people who are external to both negotiation parties. They have public opinion in their favor. That can create a dilemma for the government, which also has an interest in political triumph, after all. The difficulty lies in striking a balance between generosity and rigor. Government negotiators should bring up this difficulty with the FARC and ask them to make an effort of imagination and realism in the interest of finding solutions to the dilemma. Without the goodwill and the responsibility of both parties, an agreement will not be possible. Finally, the professor may talk to students about the progress in the negotiations after the final date discussed in the case. However, this should only be done for information purposes, indicating that the class exercise will be the most important should students ever find themselves in a similar situation.

5. Teaching Suggestions

For a 75-minute class, the session time could be distributed as follows:

- a) 20 minutes - devoted to the discussion of the problems that breed violence, and the vicious circle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." At the end of this discussion, the professor should indicate that this is a general principle. The class is not intended to condemn the FARC or the Colombian government, but to highlight the error of attempting to solve problems with violence.
- b) 20 minutes - Discussion about the VIA for the negotiation corresponding to each of the parties in the conflict. The professor should focus on the discussion about whether agrarian reform or social reintegration is more

vital to the FARC. Finally, the professor should also point out that the government has to operate within a set time-frame because of the elections.

- c) 20 minutes - Analyze what would be the best timetable for negotiating and where to begin. Should land reform be the first issue on the table, or should it be the reintegration of the FARC? Once the students' positions have been clarified, the professor should lead the discussion toward debating alternative solutions for reconciling the needs for i) prosecuting violent crime; and, ii) maintaining flexibility in these processes. The government's dilemma should also be addressed.

- d) 15 minutes - the professor can close the session with conclusions from Section 4, relying on historical examples. Using Wikipedia, the professor can discuss successful vs. failed negotiation processes. For example, the withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba during the Kennedy presidency, the creation of the Palestinian Authority, the end of the Vietnam War and, most recently, UN negotiations on the disarmament of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict, between the United States. and Russia. Finally, the professor may wish to report on the state of negotiations in La Havana as of the date of the class, indicating that it is only for the sake of curiosity; the most important aspect concerns the mental exercise performed by students during the discussion.

Exhibit 1

What can we learn?

- Violence always begets violence.
- Social inequality is violence
- Fightingh social inequality with violence only leads to more violence

Topics to be discussed

- Agrarian reform
- Reinsertion former guerrillas
- End conflict and disarmament
- Legal terms and reparation for victims
- Verification and endorsement

VIA of Negotiation

Discussion about the possibilities for agreement arguments

AGREE DISAGREE

Schedule of negotitation

- Where to begin?
- Agrariam reform or social reinsertion?
- Criteria for deciding

Historical examples

- Missiles in Cuba
- Vietnam
- Disarmament in Syria

