

Colombia Between Neoliberal Peace and Democratic Peace¹

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As I write this (January 2017) the Colombian peace process enters its implementation period after the new version of the agreement between the government and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) has been ratified by the Colombian Congress. Peace negotiations between the government and the ELN (National Liberation Army) have also begun. This is a time of opportunities and blockades, of aspirations and frustrations, a time of hope though also of fear. In this paper I will offer some brief reflections on the relationship between democracy and peace as well as on the way how post-agreement developments can contribute towards the democratization of Colombian society

Democracy and Conditions for Democracy

Up to the 1980s theories of democracy were unanimous in considering that democracy was not possible in the absence of social, economic, and institutional conditions that would make it feasible. Such conditions included, among others, the country-city relationship, the agrarian reform, the presence of the middle-classes, and literacy. The absence thereof explained why so few countries in the world could boast a democratic regime. Around that time, a true revolution occurred in democratic theory, a revolution which nevertheless seems to have been barely noticed. From then on, the equation was inverted and the new belief

was that, rather than being dependent on a set of conditions, democracy was the condition for everything else. As a result, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund began to include the presence of democratic regimes as a precondition for development aid.

Forty years later, if one considers the situation of the democracies that really exist in the world today, both in more developed countries and in the others, which remain the great majority, it is easy to conclude that the aforementioned revolution was much less benevolent than it appeared at the time. It aimed to promote low-intensity democracies, based on minimal criteria of political pluralism and which tended to be devoid of social content, i.e., of the economic and social rights and the State institutions that used to provide public services in such areas as health, education, and social welfare. Democracy was therefore advanced because it was the most legitimate form of weak government, a government which would more meekly agree to accept the neoliberal orthodoxy of market liberalization, privatizations, the end of progressive taxing, the promiscuity between political and economic elites; in other words, a government put at the service of neoliberal globalization.

The crisis of neoliberalism has now become apparent. I am not sure whether neoliberalism is dead, as some like to announce, but it is at least producing the perversities that it supposedly undertook to combat: nationalisms, fascist movements, protectionism, the growth of the far-right, etc. Neoliberal capitalism has promoted such a low-intensity democracy that it is now too weak to defend itself against the antidemocratic powers that have been sieging it. The problem is knowing whether, in order to guarantee that the accumulation of capital, now completely dominated by financial capital, continues, global capitalism is soon going to have to show its true colors, i.e., its incompatibility with democracy, even low-intensity democracy.

The Colombian post-conflict process is emerging in a period of neoliberal crisis and can only become a genuine peace process if it is oriented, against the grain, towards consolidating and expanding democracy, that is, adding more intensity to the low-intensity democratic coexistence that now exists. After the farcical neoliberal narrative – and a very tragic farce for the majority of the world’s population it is – according to which democracy requires no pre-conditions, the post-conflict process will only become a peace process if the issue of the social, economic, and cultural conditions of democracy are discussed in a creative and

participatory manner. Our hope is that Colombia can be an inaugural affirmation of a new period, based on the idea that there can be no democracy without the conditions that make it feasible. Our fear is that it may show exactly that, albeit in the wrong way.

Democracy and Violence

Even within the liberal framework of democratic theory, democracy is incompatible with political violence because the only legitimate violence is State violence. State violence is legitimate in a double sense because the State has an exclusive constitutional mandate to exercise it and because it can only exercise it by complying with pre-existing procedures, rules, laws. Also in this respect, Colombia is a dramatic case of a democracy that has been disfigured by having fatally experienced for over a century the political violence exercised by powers parallel to the State as well as by the State itself, which includes a parallel State of which paramilitarism is the most visible, though not unique, expression. It suffices to read Alfredo Molano's (2015) piercing account of the armed conflict to be able to conclude that, if the post-conflict process fails to be boldly ambitious, it will run the risk of becoming yet another episode, among many, in a history of violence, a 'post-conflict' that will become known in the future as a 'pre-conflict', that is, a political event that has caused yet another wave of violent conflicts.²

Democracy and Peace

All democracy is peaceful, but not all peace is democratic. There are two types of peace: neoliberal peace and democratic peace. Neoliberal peace is false peace because it consists in the perpetuation of political violence through purportedly non-political violence. From political criminality to common criminality combined with the criminalization of politics (for instance, criminalization of political protest). Oriented towards neoliberal peace, the Colombian post-conflict process will be quick and relatively undemanding institutionally, but it will bring about a period of violence which, because it seems to be depoliticized, will prove even more chaotic and less controllable than the one it brought to an end. Given the frustrations it may generate, neoliberal peace will not only not contribute towards consolidating democracy at a more inclusive level, but it can further weaken the low-intensity democracy that made it possible in the first place.

Democratic peace aims at pacifying social relations in the broadest

sense of the word, and it is therefore oriented towards actively eliminating the conditions that have led to political violence. Democratic peace is premised on the notion that reconciliation processes will never result in reconciled societies if reconciliation does not include social and cultural justice. Without justice, you cannot have social cohesion, the basic feeling of belonging without which the sum of differences in ideas easily becomes a counting of dead bodies. The post-conflict process oriented toward democratic peace will certainly be a lengthy process and its success can be measured not so much by its inspiring outcomes as by the extent to which the resulting conflicts are managed and resolved peacefully and democratically.

Two additional challenges face democratic peace in Colombia. First, the current peace process carries the weight (as well as the ghost) of the many failed peace processes that came before, a failure which often involved the tragic elimination of the rebel fighters and the political forces associated with them. The physical elimination of Unión Patriótica leaders will go down in history as one of the most sinister and grotesque manifestations of democracy disfigured by violence. Secondly, the current peace process must give a clear sign that it signifies a break with the pre-post-conflict stage, which included the demobilization of paramilitarism during the Álvaro Uribe governments. At best, this demobilization aimed at securing neoliberal peace and was explicitly hostile to the idea of democratic peace. Offering paramilitarism as a thing of the past is one of the most dangerous cover-ups of the present situation.³

Democracy and Religion

One of the characteristics of the decades-long armed conflict in Colombia is the strong involvement of the Catholic Church. At first only the Catholic Church was involved, but now evangelical churches militate alongside it. The involvement of the Catholic Church has been contradictory and has two incompatible sides to it. On the one hand, in line with Camilo Torres and liberation theology, the grassroots church communities called base ecclesial communities that have emerged after the Second Vatican Council have played an important role within the community organizations that fight against land concentration, social injustice, and violence. Many members of the clergy and lay people who have stood beside the oppressed in their fight for land and dignity have paid the ultimate price, their own lives, for their generosity and commitment.⁴ On the other hand,

the Catholic Church hierarchy have almost invariably aligned themselves with the conservative forces, with the landed oligarchies condoning and blessing their arbitrary, and even their violent, behavior. At present, they often side with evangelical churches in a sinister and perverse ecumenic pact intended to block the hope of a democratic Colombia. Conservative catholic church has indeed been able to count on the increasing support of evangelic churches, most of which have had a crucial role in securing the victory of the No vote in the October 2nd, 2016 referendum.⁵ This proselytism will most probably be an active obstacle to the advancement of democratic peace. It will no doubt act in conjunction with other conservative forces, both at home and abroad, furthering their interests in the boycotting of the Colombian peace process. The question of knowing to what extent will conservative agendas converge is still open. The further they converge the greater the risk for democratic peace.

Democracy and Participation

The major uncertainty facing democratic peace is knowing which social and political forces will be willing to stand up for it and the level of activism that they are prepared to bring to it. Referendums are an important tool in participatory democracy provided they are called for by society, through a group of citizens, rather than launched by political parties or political leaders. In the latter case, as happened recently in Britain with the vote for withdrawing from the European Union (Brexit) and as may have to some extent happened in the Colombian referendum, the outcome may be contaminated by a judgement concerning the political leader who promoted the public consultation. The Colombian case is somewhat specific insofar as the only campaign being carried out was really the campaign for the No vote. This certainly provides food for thought and a profound reflection is needed because it seems to suggest that there is a dangerous disconnection between, on the one hand, progressive parties, human rights organizations, and social movements, and the real country, including its remotest parts, on the other.

This seems to indicate that democratic peace is going to need a great deal of participatory energy and resilience, far beyond mere election processes, which in Colombia are traditionally excluding. This may indeed have been one of the reasons that led to the establishment of the most recent guerilla. It seems self-evident that the democratic peace process

will require an articulation between representative democracy and participatory democracy. Such an articulation is currently necessary in all democratic countries in order to redeem representative democracy, which seems to be unable to defend itself from its enemies on its own. In the Colombian case, this articulation is a condition for the success of democratic peace. This must become a daily, practical agenda in families, communities, neighborhoods, trade unions, social movements and organizations. Rodrigo Uprimny was right when, on December 3rd 2016, he wrote the following in his *El Espectador* column: "Submitting peace to a referendum and implementing it is not something that can be done in a single moment; it is a complex and progressive process, which can incorporate different mechanisms at specific times."⁶ I therefore propose some mechanisms, with different levels of institutionalization and with a number of different strengths and weaknesses:

- i) open councils, which can be used to endorse the agreement at local and regional level, and to participatorily discuss local implementation measures;
- ii) popular legislative initiatives for some of the implementation measures ...
- iv) victims' panels in the regions and transitional justice committees, which would help support and refine the truth and reparation measures locally;
- v) territorial peace councils, which could be used to support and discuss other local peace measures;
- vi) social mobilization in the streets; followed by a long etc., etc., etc. since this list does not claim to be exhaustive.

These proposals are meant only for the early post-conflict period, i.e., for the short-term. Many others mechanisms must be creatively designed and put into practice when the time comes to discuss the structural issues that democratic peace must necessarily pose and which must be included in the political agenda. These include the reform of the political system, peasant reserve zones, the replacement of illicit crops without it meaning that numerous peasant farmers must again face extreme poverty, the place of neoextractivism (the unprecedented exploitation of natural resources) within the new development model, the media reform so as to ensure a more democratized public opinion, the criminalization of political protest, etc. Since the principle of non-repetition

of violence is so central to the peace accord, taking on the victims' perspective, I would perhaps recommend that part of the financial resources allocated to reparation be channeled to financing and fostering ample debates and national participatory instruments on the different issues that the peace process will be raising in the next few years. Such debates and participations would also serve to identify the issues that have been left out of the agreement and eventually include them in the political agenda. In this respect, the fact that the peace negotiations with the FARC adopted the Irish model, keeping the negotiations secret until some indications were obtained concerning the probability of success, was perhaps not the best solution. It is understandable that a secrecy policy was adopted given the fact that the Colombian big mainstream media was being dominated by conservative forces and powerful economic interests for whom either the continuation of the war or a feeble peace that could serve their own exclusive interests would be welcome. Anyway, the negotiations lasted for many years and Havana was far away. With time, negotiations became a provisional archive of past Colombia. While negotiators were busy discussing the future of the country, the public opinion insisted on throwing them back into the past.

As I write, negotiations with the ELN are beginning. This guerilla group is known to have a different view of the negotiations, insisting that these be permanently monitored by Colombian society. Let us hope that they may have enough political and argumentative power to be able to bring their indisputable reason to bear on the negotiations. On the other hand, the ELN has insisted on the importance and on the autonomy of popular social organizations. The communities and the peoples will be the ones to decide on the forms of popular participation. This is indeed one of the conditions for the autonomy of participatory democracy, and this autonomy will be the basis upon which possible articulations with representative democracy (political parties and leaders) will be established.

Democracy and Imperialism

When we analyze the history of the Colombian armed conflict it becomes clear that North American imperialism interfered constantly, with a view to defend the economic interests of its corporations (one such case is the sadly famous United Fruit Company), and, of course, the geostrategic interests of Colombian USA-allied oligarchies, some more amenable than others. With the Cuban Revolution, the geostrategic challenge increased

exponentially, and the need to isolate Cuba became the major imperialistic priority in the continent in the early 1960s. Given its specific location within the American continent, Colombia was a preferential target and a special ally. Had Colombia not been the only Latin-American country to send their troops to fight alongside the Americans in the Korean war?

As Molano writes in the text I have been mentioned, “the course taken by the Cuban revolution, which forced the USA to create the Alliance for Progress as an antidote against communist contagion, gave a new impulse to the agrarian reform. Kennedy’s visit to Colombia in the same week when the Agrarian Reform Law was signed was not in vain. The National Security Doctrine and the Alliance for Progress were therefore two sides of the same coin or, if you prefer, a combination of all the forms of struggle available to the USA to preserve the status quo while simultaneously isolating Cuba”.

The clearest evidence of this alignment was produced in 1961 when, at the Punta del Este Conference, Colombia promoted the expulsion of Cuba from the American States Organization. The “strongest regional ally” slogan gained a new justification. With Plan Colombia, signed by Bill Clinton in July 2000, Colombia became the third country in the world to receive more U.S. military assistance (after Israel and Egypt) as well as the largest recipient of U.S. aid for direct military training. The 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers provided an opportunity for the fight against the illegal drug trade and the guerilla to be converted into a dimension of the “global fight against terrorism”. This was soon to be followed by the adoption of the Colombian version of the new U.S. national security doctrine, President Álvaro Uribe’s inadequately called “democratic security”.

As is known, during the first decade of the third millennium Big Brother was not conspicuously present in the continent, with the exception of Plan Colombia. He had drowned in the Iraqi and the Middle East swamp he himself had created. This might help partly explain the election of popular governments with their anti-imperialistic discourse, from Argentina to Venezuela, from Ecuador to Bolivia. The aggressiveness of the imperial presence was again felt in the Honduras coup against Manuel Zelaia, the democratically elected president (2007) and not many doubts remain as to its interference in the institutional coup that led to the *impeachment* of President Dilma Rousseff in Brazil. How will US imperialism react to the

Colombian peace process? It appears that the North-American political elites are somewhat divided at the moment. A proof of that is the diametrically opposed editorials of the two most influent newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. The former welcomed the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Juan Manuel Santos, while the latter claimed that it should have been given to former president Álvaro Uribe, who was the major protagonist of the No vote in the referendum. However, we should keep in mind that this division is relative. Whatever the position of President Santos, from the U.S.A standpoint he is a defender of neoliberal peace, the peace that is going to make a great portion of the Colombian territory available for the development of natural resource exploitation, where North- American companies will not fail to show the flag. Neoliberal peace is the highest possible level of conscience of North- American imperialism. Consequently, democratic peace will meet with resistance from North- American imperialism and the latter's success depends on its articulation with the Colombian economic and political forces that defend neoliberal peace. Since this peace is fake and it is certainly very far from contributing to strengthening democracy, Colombian democrats are not going to have as easy a job as the end of the conflict might suggest.

Democracy and Human Rights

For those who do not endorse the idea of a just war, armed conflicts are by nature a violation of human rights. At any rate, armed conflicts are a source of human rights violations whenever they entail the perpetration of violence and cruelty against innocent victims, crimes against humanity, war crimes, etc. The civil wars and the international wars waged in the last 150 years have been particularly violent - not to mention the two World Wars. As regards civil wars, the most violent of these was the American civil war, which, although it lasted only five years, caused 1.030.000 victims (3% of the population), among which 700.000 deaths. For this reason, bringing war to an end is considered a legal and political good more precious than the good of doing full justice and punishing all the authors of human rights violations as if there had been no war. It is not necessarily a case of not punishing (as was the case in the American civil war), but rather one of finding ways of guaranteeing a public, negative judgement of the acts committed without jeopardizing the higher legal and political good that is peace. One of the most notorious cases in recent decades has been the negotiations for the end of Apartheid in South Africa, which entailed the

agreement that the criminal nature of Apartheid as a regime should be ignored (although the United Nations did consider it to be criminal) and chose not to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of serious violations of human rights, provided they confessed to their crimes publicly. The Colombian peace agreement goes even further, but the supporters of the No vote still managed to find a reason for their position in the topic of punishment/impunity and were able to convey their message to public opinion thanks to the connivance of the big mainstream media and by resorting to lies, as they soon acknowledged.⁷ These conservative forces were able to find a precious ally in the *Human Rights Watch* organization, and notably in one of their directors, José Miguel Vivanco. With ridiculous resourcefulness, Vivanco played the role of useful idiot for the forces that perpetrated the highest number of human rights violations in the history of Colombia. The service rendered to those forces as well as to the most reactionary wing of North-American imperialism constitutes credibility ground zero in the fight for human rights on the part of this North-American organization. Vivanco's position amounts to a cruel insult to so many human rights activists who have paid with their lives for the courage to defend those rights on the different social struggles fronts, far from the comfort of New York offices.

Democracy and Ethno-Cultural Difference

Colombia is one of the Latin-American countries where, especially after the 1991 Constitution, significant progress has been made as far as the acknowledgment of ethno-cultural diversity and difference is concerned. The organizing power of Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples was a determining element in that development. The intercultural jurisprudence produced by the Colombian Constitutional Court in the 1990s did become a model for other countries. Unfortunately, however, just like in other countries, the high concentration of land ownership coupled with the neoextractivist model of development was responsible for the continuity, or even the recent increase in aggressions perpetrated against the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. Despite the increased political centrality of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian movement in recent decades, the participation of these movements in the peace negotiation was not as active as might be expected. Hence the importance of disseminating their claim to actively participate in the construction of democratic peace, a process that is now beginning.

To that end, the indigenous peoples' organizations gathered in Bose (the ancestral land of the Pueblo Mhuisqa) on October 14, 2016, have adopted a joint declaration, notable for its scope, from which I must quote some passages:

Resolutions of 9th National Congress of Indigenous Peoples:

WE REAFFIRM our vocation and commitment to peace building. In the exercise of the right to Autonomy and Self-determination, based on the Laws of Origin and the principles that govern us.

We ADOPT the Final Havana Peace Agreement in our territories, and declare them to be Territories of Peace.

WE REAFFIRM Indigenous and Social Mobilization as a resistance strategy to foster dialogue and the required social and political transformations, with the aim of returning the Country to hope and paving the way for building a society that is inclusive and where social justice exists.

WE DEMAND the participation of the Indigenous Movement in the National Pact proposed by the Government, in order to defend, with the great majorities that have been victims of the armed conflict, the historical struggles for social and political changes and for the pacification of our territories that, as Peoples, we have undertaken. The pacts of the elites, in the past, have generated more violence, perpetuating the dominant power structures.

WE RESTORE the Consejo Nacional Indígena de Paz – CONIP (National Indigenous Peace Council), as a specific Indigenous Peoples body to exercise their influence on issues relating to Peace, notably as regards the specific issues that concern indigenous nations.)

WE CONSIDER the Comisión Étnica para la Paz y la Defensa de los Derechos Territoriales (Ethnic Commission for Peace and the Defense of Territorial Rights) as an autonomous and self-representative body of the Ethnic Peoples, to manage the issues related to Peace and DEMAND the establishment of the special High-Level body with Ethnic Peoples, to monitor the implementation of the Final Agreement, as enshrined in the Ethnic Chapter.

WE CELEBRATE the announcement of the public phase of the talks

between the National Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN, trusting that they will consolidate the full, stable, and lasting peace that our country calls for. WE simultaneously DEMAND the direct participation of the Ethnic Committee in this process.

In this respect, I must add the following caveat: in the subcontinent, and most particularly in Colombia, acknowledging ethno-cultural difference is a dimension of territorial justice and this, in turn, is a dimension of historical justice. This is not a purely cultural issue; it is a problem of political economy. In this regard, after the 1991 Constitution, legislation was passed to assign territories (resguardos) to the indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples. In a country with such a high concentration of land and where the exploitation of natural resources has become so central to the development model (or should we rather speak of growth), it is to be expected that territorial justice issues become highly conflictive. Two topics are likely to become particularly acute. The first has to do with the existing land conflicts. Contrary to what one might think, such conflicts do not occur only between large multinational owners or companies and peasants, they also occur among poor mestizo peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-Colombian peoples. In the latter case, such “contradictions within the people” will require robust forms of participatory democracy so as to prevent them from generating violent conflicts or from being taken advantage of by the big landowners or the government in order to block legitimate claims for territorial justice.

The second topic concerns the fact that peace negotiations also address issues with an impact on territorial justice, such as the agrarian reform and peasant reserve zones. These issues will eventually be combined with those raised by the first topic, and here too participatory democracy will play an important role, especially by reason of its decentralized nature and the resulting flexibility, which will allow it to adapt to the immense territorial, agricultural, and cultural diversity of Colombia.

Democracy and Sexual Difference

Women’s movements have also been able to secure important victories in recent decades, but sexual violence continues to exist and women have also been victims of violence for a long time, both within and without conflict zones. Their interest in the process of building democratic

peace must be adequately safeguarded.

I will now quote from the extensive *Manifiesto Político Mujeres por la Paz* (Women for Peace Political Manifesto), from September 22, 2016, which includes the following statement:

“We, diverse women, participants in the II Cumbre de Mujeres y Paz (Second Summit of Women and Peace), declare:)

Our commitment to building a country where all people without distinction can enjoy their rights, their autonomy, express their opinions in full freedom, without fear of being violated or living under the anxiety and turbulence of a country under conflict.

Our willingness to contribute to a present and a future that can be lived in peace, leaving violence behind, joining forces so that children, adolescent women and men, and young people in general may grow up in peace rather than under the distress caused by war.

Our acknowledgement of the creative knowledges of young women and their contributions towards the implementation of the agreements and the transformation of the peace dynamics, acknowledging their voice and their actions in the building of the country.

That this is the time to heal the wounds, to transform hate and vengeance into truth, justice, reparation and the guarantee that things will not be repeated, to substitute commitment to justice and peace for indifference, to overcome the differences between us, not in order to deny them but to enhance democratic coexistence. It is time to close the war page, not in order to forget but to give way to life and freedom.

Our conscientious objection to the use of force as a means to deny the other, including women, and our support of universal disarmament, banning violence and militarization as a way of handling public and private disputes, with special emphasis on sexual violence, and the eradication of all forms of violence against women.

Our repudiation of any denial of, discrimination against, or signaling of women for exercising their rights, their economic,

affective, reproductive, sexual, cultural, ethnic and political autonomy.

Our determined will and political commitment to be active parties instead of objects of agreements, to participate and to enjoy decision making power in the implementation and fulfillment of the Final Agreement.

Ensure the rights of women in the different regions and safeguard the environmental and cultural integrity of their territories, promoting a sustainable economic model that respects the rights of nature and the “buen vivir” (good life) of the communities.

The importance of the statements issued by social movements, be them indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian populations, poor peasants, women, or marginalized urban populations, lies in the fact that they take a clear stance in favor of democratic peace and against neoliberal peace. The social groups that are most excluded and discriminated against know that they will be the ones to bear the hard blows of the aggressions that are bound to result from neoliberal peace.⁸

Democracy and Development Model

In the last two decades, a capitalist model of development based on the exploitation of natural resources once again dominated the continent. I say “once again” because this was the model that was applied during the whole of the colonial period. However, this is not a return to the past. The current model is a new model because of the unprecedented intensity and diversity of the exploitation of resources, which includes mining, oil and wood exploitation, industrial agriculture, hydroelectric mega-projects, and others. Given its relative novelty, it has been called neoextractivism. Its emergence resulted from the huge impulse generated by the growth of China and by financial speculation on commodities. This model gathered so much consensus among the political elites of the sub-continent in the first decade of the new millennium that it was adopted by virtually all governments, including those that were emerging from popular struggles and taking a nationalist, more or less markedly anti-imperialist stance. At best, this model provided significant relief from poverty, but it had huge social and environmental costs. Some of the most negative effects of

neextractivism include forcible land seizure, the eviction of peasants, indigenous and Afro- descendant populations from their ancestral lands, the physical elimination of resistance leaders, the contamination of water and land, and an alarming increase in cancer rates among rural populations. In addition, this model proved unsustainable and, since the 2008 financial crisis and the slowdown in China's growth, began to show signs of exhaustion, and the crisis was installed in all the governments of the region that had adopted this model. But the social and environmental consequences will hardly be reversible. Intermediate development countries, like Brazil, have failed to keep the momentum of their industrial sector, have become deindustrialized, and will hardly be able to resume the path of an ecologically sustainable industrialization. So far, the alternatives that have been proposed by important sectors and social movements have not been implemented. On the contrary, governments are trying to take advantage of the internal differentiation of the model, for example, by prioritizing industrial agriculture should the price of oil remain low. On the other hand, they are abandoning the nationalist and redistributive element of the previous period, yielding the exploitation of resources to multinational companies, and transferring the management of the economy to the former executives of large corporations, notably financial capital firms (especially Goldman Sachs).

This is the framework for neoliberal peace, which seeks to enhance it and provide it with added impetus, for example, by releasing more lands for multinational exploitation. On the contrary, the assumption behind democratic peace is that the high concentration of land has always been one of the central reasons for violence in Colombia. Therefore in the post-conflict period it will be impossible to reconcile society under this development model and if a process of greater territorial justice is not initiated, as a prerequisite for greater social, historical, ethno-cultural, sexual, and ecological justice.

This is probably the most dilemmatic juncture facing the Colombian peace process and the signs do not seem very encouraging. Colombia is now one of the countries with the highest concentration of land in the world. According to the available data, currently "77% of the land is in the hands of 13% of owners, but 3.6% of these own 30% of the land. Eighty percent of the small peasant farmers have less than one Unidad Agrícola Familiar (UAF) (Family Agricultural Unit), which means that they are "microfundistas" (micro-landholding owners). Despite the lack of access to land, 70% of the food produced in the country comes from small farmers.

According to the 2011 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program, “For the year 2009 the Gini index for land inequality was 0.86. This indicates that, when compared with that of other countries, Colombia has one of the highest inequality rates as concerns rural property both in Latin America and in the world”.

According to Danilo Urrea and Lyda Forero, the peace that President Santos’ government points to is neoliberal peace, not democratic peace. In their words, “The legislative initiatives of the Santos government, and their respective figures and mechanisms of land dispossession provide a clear evidence of this reality. For example, the Zonas de Interés de Desarrollo Rural, Económico y Social -ZIDRES (Zones of Interest for Rural, Economic, and Social Development) allow the handing over of wasteland, with no limits of extension, to Colombian or foreign legal persons, who are granted control over the use of the territory - principally in the plateau or in the Magdalena Medio... An alternative based on big capital, in line with the hacienda model, which exists since colonial times, but incorporating transnational capital into the game, for which the pacification of territories is deemed necessary as a guarantee to attract the foreign investment of the corporate apparatus. A model is implemented whereby the land can be granted to the peasants, although its use, management, and control depend on the chain of production as defined by transnational companies, which ultimately determines the accumulation of capital and implies the loss of rights over the territory with new forms and instruments for intensifying land dispossession. The countryside financialization model plays a leading role in this form of capital territorialization through the so-called bolsas agrícolas (agricultural pockets) and rural re-colonization via credit (Urrea and Forero, 2016).

The die is cast. The political and social forces oriented towards the goal of democratic peace know the roadmap. It remains to be seen whether or not they will have the political strength to follow it.

Democracy and Ethical Difference

One of the most complex aspects of an armed conflict is the ethical nature of the crimes committed. By this I do not mean the intensity or the quantity of those crimes. All the data published on violence in Colombia are unanimous in recognizing that most of the violence (murders and

massacres) was perpetrated by the paramilitaries and by the army, and that the most cruel and atrocious crimes were committed by the paramilitary. What I wish to discuss is the ethical quality of the motivation behind violence. In the negotiations that led to the end of Apartheid in South Africa there was a recognition of the ethical superiority of Nelson Mandela's ANC (which at one point chose to pursue the path of violence) vis-à-vis the Apartheid government. In the Colombian case, the question may reside principally in the confrontation between the actions of the guerrillas and the actions of the paramilitaries, criminal entrepreneurs, or mercenaries. The path of armed struggle to build a socialist society by means of violence has now been discredited, and there are certainly good reasons for that. As a result, it is now easy to condemn the young men and women who, from the 1960s on, headed to the mountains to join the guerrillas, motivated by the ideal of fighting for a more just society. This facile reaction can be misleading because, in times of individualism and ideological desertification, it may lead to the conclusion that all violence must be equally condemned or acquitted and that there is no ethical difference between different agents of violence. If there is no ethical difference, then there is also no political difference and therefore what we ultimately have is common violence. There has been a strong case in Colombia for this idea of the depoliticization of violence, i.e., the general concept voiced by public opinion that, over time, the guerrilla fighters have relinquished their ideology to become common drug traffickers. In an interview with the periodical *La Silla Vacía*, on January 4th 2017, Alfredo Molano says: "Public opinion is wrong in thinking that the FARC manage the illicit crop business from start to finish, from the land plot to a street in the Bronx. The role of the FARC as a political movement is focused on taxing local farmers and intermediaries. They do not export, they do not go into the international market. They do not do it much in Colombia either. The same Havana Agreement recognizes this."⁹

This is the key issue: is there an ethical difference between the rebel who commits an act of violence with an altruistic motivation in the name of a collective ideal of justice, even if based on a wrong premise, and the mercenary who commits violence for money? The importance of answering this question has less to do with the nature of a settling of accounts with the past than with building a more inclusive society in the future. Let me explain.

Democracy and Political Renovation

One of the most promising aspects the Peace Accord is the fact that it paves the way for the conversion of the guerrilla combatants into political actors. In my opinion, this can provide an opportunity to renew the political system, making it more diverse and more inclusive. In order to achieve this, three conditions must be met. The first is a profound reform of the political and electoral system that may give substance and a voice to the achievement of diversity and inclusion. The second condition is that the guerrilla soldiers gain awareness of the fact that the world has changed immensely since the time they left for the mountains. Many of the reasons that led them to make this decision are unfortunately still valid, but the strategies, the discourses, the mechanisms, the means, the alliances to fight for their eradication are now very different though equally complex. It will take a lot of unlearning to create room for new learning. The third reason is that the new political actors must be recognized by Colombian society as fully-fledged political actors. For this to happen, it is critical that they are not viewed as repentant common criminals. That is why their misperception must be acknowledged as acutely as the fact that they did act for the sake of what they believed was the ideal of the common good of Colombians.

I have said that Colombia may be the only Latin American country to become the bearer of good news to the world in the second decade of the new millennium: the news that social and political conflicts can be resolved peacefully, even conflicts that have lasted for a much longer period of time; and that from such a resolution a more just and democratic society can emerge. This is a bet whose outcome is in the hands of Colombian men and women.

Endnotes

¹ This text is part of the book *Democracia e Transformação Social* (Democracy and Social Change) to be published in Bogotá in April 2017 by Siglo del Hombre.

² See also Moreno (2015)

³ A cover-up that is all the more dangerous as it may entail the splitting of paramilitarism into two types: legal paramilitarism, linked to private security

companies and other armed forces support companies, and illegal paramilitarism, in line with its traditional profile.

⁴ I will just mention the brilliant analysis by Colombian theologian Javier Giraldo Moreno S.J., in his dissertation *La teología frente a otra concepción del conocer* (Theology versus another conception of knowing), submitted to the School of Theology of the Universidad Javeriana in 1977.

⁵ César Castellanos, the star-pastor of the Misión Carismática Internacional, the fastest-growing mega-church in Colombia, recently addressed an enthusiastic crowd in Pasadena, California, declaring: We, nosotros, we saved Colombia from being handed over to communists! We saved Colombia from the destructive power of the spirits of homosexuality. We saved the traditional family. We saved Colombia from the ideology of Homo-Castro-Chavismo.” (Bartel, 2016).

⁶ See: <http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/refrendacion-progresiva-ii> I have eliminated some of the proposals because they had lost their topicality.

⁷ See: <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/plebiscito-por-la-paz-juan-carlos-velez-revela-estrategia-y-financiadores-del-no/497938>

⁸ See the unsettling experience compared in Moreno (2004). As I write, I receive the disquieting statement issued by the Asociación Nacional de Afro-Colombianos Desplazados (AFRODES) (National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians), which is quite instructive as regards the pitfalls of neoliberal peace:

NIT: 830074556-1

AFRO-COLOMBIANS WE
CONTINUE TO BE KILLED! PUBLIC
DENUNCIATION:

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DISPLACED AFRO-COLOMBIANS – AFRODES – REPORTS THE MURDER OF A FATHER AND HIS SON BY THE “GAITANISTAS” PARAMILITARY GROUP AT RIOSUCIO-CHOCO

Although the implementation of the peace agreement is being carried forward, which gives us back the hope of being able to live in a country without war, where there is justice and respect for all, the paramilitaries continue to perpetrate criminal acts against human rights defenders with the authorities failing to take any concrete measures to protect the civilian population. 54 year-old Juan De la Cruz Mosquera and his 30 year-old son Moisés Mosquera Moreno were murdered by the

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“gaitanistas”paramilitary at Riosucio-Choco, Caño Seco Community, Salaquí River. A crime which we condemn and which we demand is not left unpunished.

Juan De la Cruz Mosquera was living as a displaced person in Riosucio, where some people he knew came and invited him to visit the Caño Seco Community, by the Salaquí river where the paramilitary have a command base, located some few kilometers from the army’s military base. When they arrived there, he was asked to call his son Moisés who was in the Tamboral community and with whom they had some issues to discuss; when he arrived, on January 7th, a Saturday, he was immediately murdered. His father, who had been made a prisoner by the group learned about his death on Monday, the 9th, he confronted them on the spot and they murdered him there and then. Juan De la Cruz was born in the Tamboral River area and there he lived with his family. In 1997, under Operación Génesis, he had fled to Panama with his family to save his life. He lived several years in Panama but they were eventually repatriated against their will and had to return to their original community.

Juan De la Cruz and his son were relatives of Marino Córdoba’s, the president of Afrodes, whose son was also murdered in the same municipality towards the end of last year, facts that we condemn and on which no investigation is known to have been started. De la Cruz was a father of 10, a man of faith, a member and a pastor of the Pentecostal church, a member of the Community Council of the Tamboral Community, a community leader, a hard-working peasant farmer. A man taken from his family by the armed conflict while cherishing his faith in Christ and good examples in his community.

Armed violence has marked the life of the Riosucio community since 1996, when, under Operación Génesis, over twenty thousand people were displaced, numerous murdered and disappeared, part of the population was despoiled of their land to facilitate the planting of African palm-trees, and many continue to live abroad. The Riosucio Municipality is one of the poorest in the country, it is situated north of the del Choco department, and its chief economic activities are agriculture, forestry and cattle-raising. Before the war, people lived communally, sharing without fear and travelling with no restrictions. Now the people are prisoners of their fear and must live as hostages in their own territory, a violation of international humanitarian law that we reject.

Since the year 2015 the populations and human rights

organizations have observed the increasing presence in the region of armed men who are members of the “gaitanistas” paramilitary group, who have arrived in the area after crossing all the military checkpoints, and who control the civilian population without any military authority preventing them from doing this. Today Juan De la Cruz and his son add their numbers to the dozens of families murdered and disappeared in the region, and the community is unable to denounce these crimes for fear of reprisals, and these acts are not being investigated into, the perpetrators are not identified, and there is no hope of getting a response from the authorities.

AFRODES demands of the competent authorities that these acts are not left unpunished.

We demand that the National Prosecutor’s Office investigate, identify, and prosecute those responsible for the murder of Juan De la Cruz and his son Moisés Mosquera

We demand that President Juan Manuel Santos order the Armed Forces based in the area to sever any criminal links with paramilitary groups and to guarantee peace and security in the region.

We demand that the competent authorities guarantee the security of the relatives of the murdered father as well as that of the other residents in the area.

We request that the United Nations, the diplomatic corps in Colombia, and human rights organizations follow up the communities and condemn these systematic violations.

Bogota, January 10, 2017

⁹ See: <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/si-las-farc-insisten-en-los-viejos-esquemas-los-habran-emboscado-59215>

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