

Relations between Colombia and Europe 1999-2002: Alliances and Conflict in International Cooperation

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Abstract

The dynamics of cooperation between the European Union and Colombia in the realm of international cooperation can be characterized by a change from that of the “anarchy” caused by the uncertainty of the preferences of the cooperation policy-makers, to the one which leads to the establishment of a regulatory framework in the cooperation policy. This process reflects the conflict between the Colombian State and NGOs in the issue of what must be the focus of security as a central element of the peace process in Colombia.

The key pillar of the European support of the peace process in Colombia is the equilibrium of the power relations between horizontal and vertical alliances that each of the involved actors manage to build. The tension between two groups – the State and NGOs- is like a zero sum game, since the benefits obtained by one actor are not enjoyed by the other, in particular with regards to the support of the human security proposal, which is the case examined in this paper.

Introduction

The Colombian foreign policy during the Andres Pastrana administration focused on the internationalization of peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to obtain political and financial support by the international community and establish a solid base for post conflict reconstruction based on Plan Colombia.

The strategy of the Colombian government consisted primarily in looking for support of its traditional ally, the United States. However, international presence in the peace process should not have been limited to North America, because the U.S. interpretation of the state of the conflict was closely related to drug trafficking. For that reason, Andres Pastrana decided to look for new allies that allowed him to impel a

policy of integral peace. Europe appears, then, as an entity that would allow reaching this goal. Keeping this situation in mind, it becomes necessary to approach the way in which the development assistance policy has been focused from the perspective of the pace in the relations between the European Union and Colombia.

The dynamics between the European Union (EU) and Colombia in the realm of international cooperation are characterized by the transformation of “anarchy”, which is determined by the actor’s uncertainty in the decision making preferences of cooperation policy. However, these dynamics are also determined by the regulatory frame of the cooperation policy established. This process starts to take shape with the conflict between the Colombian state and the NGOs’ perspectives in regards to the way in which security should be emphasized as a dynamic element in order to reach peace in Colombia – in which each proposal is the reflection of the objection to the enemy’s perspective.

The definition of European support to the peace process planned in Colombia is carried out through a balance constructed by each sector in the power relations between horizontal and vertical alliances. Horizontal alliances are understood as friendship bonds between entities of a similar nature to jointly influence the political decision centers; whereas vertical alliances are the bonds established between a political decision entity and an organization which pretends to use the resources of the decision entity in the future. The tension of these two groups resembles a zero sum conflict since the benefits obtained by an actor are not enjoyed by the opponent; in this case in regards to support for a proposal on human security.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the relations between Colombia and Europe had to face two obstacles: first, low strategic positioning of the Andean region within the agenda of the European states and its international organizations. Latin America was considered an area of North American influence (Sanahuja, 2003). Second, the multiplicity of interests within the European Community made it difficult to establish an agreement on the Colombian case among political decision making actors. For that reason, the Pastrana administration had to build consensus in the community of the Old Continent to support dialogues and the necessary financing to implement Plan Colombia.

During that period, the first official document framing the relations between Colombia and the European Union (EU) was *Orientaciones Plurianuales para la Ayuda*

Comunitaria (Multiannual Guidelines for Communities Aid Colombia IB/1035/98). In this writing, initial consensus between the European countries on development issues faced by Colombia¹ became explicit, among these issues were: political violence and drug trafficking; endemic weakness of the state's apparatus; incomplete economic liberalization; and, finally, the low competitiveness of Colombian products (European Commission, 1998).

The European Commission proposes then to fight against poverty by integrating the population into a market economy with support of the Colombian government, looking at the same time for the protection of human rights, promotion of democracy, stabilization of the state, and drug trafficking reduction. In this way, lines of intervention are established as a modernization of the productive sector, fortification of the Rule of Law, support for alternative development, environmental protection and, finally, the creation of conditions to continue with a peace process.

It is interesting to identify the clearly European perspective, mainly the European Union one. The Europeans call a *peace process* not only negotiations with illegal groups, but also the policies of humanitarian aid to the civilian population, victims of violence, and the development policy to deactivate the roots and causes of conflict. The European interpretation of peace is a policy of reconstruction of the entire Colombian society, in which enemies of the state are co-opted, collateral effects of confrontation are assisted, and economic and social bases for maintenance of long term peace are established. Nonetheless and in spite of arriving at an agreement, the European Community did not have a precise strategy defining the way it would act to support Colombia in the attainment of the development objectives.

Keeping in mind the aspects previously mentioned, the author attempts to provide a description of the relations between Colombia and Europe from 1999 to 2002, from a perspective of the political opportunity structure and interdependence theory. This way it will be possible to observe how relations in a conflicting international system are formed, based on the mobilization of the participant's resources at a suitable moment and on the construction of competition and cooperation bonds.

First Approaches

The European participation in searching for peace between 1999 and 2001 begins with a

declaration by the ambassadors of the Old Continent at the opening of negotiations between Andres Pastrana's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The diplomats demonstrate their interest in endorsing negotiations, since these, in the words of the French ambassador Guy Azias: "will allow Colombia to quickly leave a vicious cycle of violence and the damages of drug trafficking" (*El Tiempo*, January 8, 1999, 10A). This declaration acknowledges that political participation of the European States in searching for peace in Colombia is conditioned by the ambassadors' perception of the conflict and by a type of aid that their governments can offer according to the ambassadors' vision.

After having initiated negotiations with the FARC², President Andres Pastrana starts his first tour in Europe. He visits Germany, Switzerland and Italy³ to generate a consensus regarding the main governmental strategy -Plan Colombia- which was the best way to drive a long-term process for sustainable peace, according to Pastrana's government (*El Tiempo*, January 24, 1999). This way, the first meetings with the governments of Germany, Switzerland and Italy had the purpose of convincing them of the necessity of their participation. The argument used by the Colombian government was that all countries must contribute to conflict resolutions and to peace, which is a global common good. In this sense, the Donor Roundtables introduced by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) are presented to the European governments as the best route to secure the resources needed to solve Colombian problems.

Yet, the President's tour is stopped due to a series of difficulties in the negotiations with the FARC. These, however, are reestablished in the middle of March of the same year. President Pastrana travels to Spain and has two types of meetings: first, he meets King Juan Carlos de Borbon and the Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. They discussed topics such as extradition, Spanish investments in Colombia, environmental protection and, of course, the peace process (*El Tiempo*, March 13, 1999). The second meeting is carried out with European NGOs (Manos Unidas, Medicos del Mundo, Medicos sin Fronteras and America-Spain Solidarity and Cooperation, AESCO). Violations of human rights by different armed actors and by the Colombian state are discussed. The President promises these organizations to disburse eight million dollars for the protection of human rights defenders and to guarantee their defense in Colombia (*El Tiempo*, March 16, 1999).

While this was happening, two events take place which change the international focus of attention. First, the international community's confidence, especially that of the United States regarding the FARC, starts to dilute because of the death of three indigenous rights supporters of North American origin and that of a French citizen. Also as a result of these homicides, the Ambassadors of the European Union condemn kidnapping, the death of civilians, disrespect of international humanitarian law and human rights. Besides, they demand that the government conduct a thorough investigation of the case as well (*El Tiempo*, March 17, 1999).

Second, the beginning of the war in Kosovo⁴ diverts the European attention to the solving of their security problems and pauses the deepening of support to the peace process in Colombia. Although the European nations were engaged in solving the Kosovar crisis, the EU ambassadors were interested in continuing to seek peace in Colombia, and initiated to work towards the recognition task of the Colombian crisis. At the same time, they started to look at which programs could be implemented in the country in order to improve the situation. It is from this perspective that in a visit to Uraba, on the 28th of April of 1999, the ambassadors point out that the state agents were not applying a proper policy to lessen the consequences of forced displacement, mainly because of the ineffective bureaucracy in administering this task (*El Tiempo*, April 29, 1999). The role of diplomats in the entire process is important since they gave the leverage needed so that the Colombian conflict could become a part of the internal agenda of the States⁵.

Following a strong pressure imposed on the FARC by some political and academic sectors, this armed organization is once again committed to the negotiation process and allows the international community to be a part of it⁶. Consequently, two types of participation in this dialogue are established: first, the facilitation of a roundtable to be led by Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Norway⁷; and second, it was one of support in which facilitators from the same countries took part, in addition to Costa Rica, Venezuela and Mexico (*El Tiempo*, May 10, 1999).

Initially, the idea behind the Colombian efforts towards Europe was to build confidence among actors and to present them the way in which they could participate in solving the Colombian conflict. In order to fulfill such assignment in an effective way, the Colombian Government decides to resort to its main ally in the region, Spain. This

way a bond was established in order to help the consensus building in the European Community and to obtain the EU commitment to finance Plan Colombia, as well as to assure an active participation by the EU in the facilitation of the dialogues with the FARC.

Looking for Legitimacy

On June 26th of 1999, President Pastrana decides to take advantage of the Rio Group meeting to look for friends and the financing of Plan Colombia. For that reason, he meets with the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, French President Jaques Chirac, the President of Italy Massimo Palema, and the ministers of foreign relations of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Yet, at the end of the meeting the President only obtains political support for his efforts in searching peace in Colombia, and he does not find financial support for Plan Colombia (*El Tiempo*, June 26, 1999 and *El Tiempo*, June 30, 1999). This situation indicates two aspects: first, the limited European consensus regarding how to help Colombia impel its pacification; and second, the distance taking with respect to assistance, which was being discussed in the U.S. Congress at the moment. At the same time, Pastrana has an encounter with the IDB President Enrique Iglesias to approach the subject of Donors' Roundtable and a loan approval for 1,000 million pesos to finance the Plan.

On October, 1999, two European tours take place. The first one is headed by the Colombian Chancellor, Guillermo Fernandez de Soto, who travels to prepare the donors' roundtable and to look for financing of Plan Colombia. For this reason, he visits the United Kingdom, Norway, Belgium, France, Germany and Sweden⁸, since, according to the Minister, "these countries have shown much interest in collaborating with the peace process" (*El Tiempo*, October 5, p. 8A). The second tour, headed by President Pastrana, takes place in Spain, France and Belgium. In those meetings, he presents and explains Plan Colombia to the European Commission (Brussels) and to the European Parliament (Strasbourg), showing that it is not only a military strategy, but it is also an integral strategy to face the Colombian crisis. Nevertheless, the strong pressure of some NGOs⁹, due to their criticism of Plan Colombia and violations of human rights in Colombia, causes the European Union to start to take distance, but, at the same time, impels a strong development towards the commitment of this institution

to the peace process (*El Tiempo*, October 25, 1999; *El Tiempo*, October 26, 1999; and *El Tiempo*, October 27, 1999). The political scenario for decisions to be made on international aid to Colombia begins to take form as they are defined by the types of actors who are to participate. In it, there are different governments, delegates of the states abroad, intergovernmental organizations and international networks of NGOs.

Finally, on the 6th of November of 1999, some European countries show their interest¹⁰ in financially supporting the peace process in Colombia, but the United Kingdom appears not to take part of the tacit consensus that existed between the European countries to favor the peace process in Colombia in general and not specific terms. Indicatively, the Director for America of the British Chancellery, Peter Westmacott, affirms that his country would cooperate in fighting the drug trafficking, the defending human rights, environmental protection, and in deepening the democratization process¹¹. From the British perspective, Plan Colombia is a more appropriate route to face these challenges and for that reason they would try to reach consensus in favor of a strategy among the EU countries. This statement was made without any EU country having declared its position on President Pastrana's policy (*El Tiempo*, November 7, 1999 and *El Tiempo*, November 20, 1999).

The first results of diplomacy for Colombian peace only came to surface the following year. At the end of January, 2000, Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, offers his country to be the host of the first donors' table and he is committed to help summon the EU countries to attend the conference and to support the Colombian peace process (*El Tiempo*, January 30, 2000).

After this announcement, the Colombian government sends an entourage to Spain in order to initiate preparations for the meeting. Then, the Chancellor, Guillermo Fernandez de Soto, the National Planning Director, Mauricio Cardenas, the Special Presidential Advisor for Government Affairs, Jaime Ruiz, and Olga Echeverri, Director of Plan Colombia, traveled to meet civil servants of the Spanish government¹² and some other persons from the Inter-American Development Bank, presenting them a portfolio of social development projects for a number of Colombian regions affected by the conflict, in particular for the Magdalena Medio¹³, the Piedemonte Llanero, the Valle de Cauca, the Nororiente Antioqueno¹⁴ and the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta (*El Tiempo*, February 16, 2000).

Simultaneously, the so-called *Eurotour* is carried out. The trip of a group of representatives of the FARC headed by Raul Reyes and accompanied by the High Commissioner for Peace, Victor G. Ricardo, went to Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, France, and Spain and took place between the 2nd and the 25th of February, 2000 (*El Tiempo*, February 2, 2000). The delegation's visit had four objectives: first, to make public to Europeans the peace negotiations that were being carried out; second, to evaluate different development models in the visited countries in order to look for models that could be discussed in the dialogue's roundtable; third, to look for economic aid to finance the peace process in Colombia, showing that peace was possible. The final objective was to increase the commitment of the FARC to a negotiated way out from the war.

Following this round of Colombian lobbying in Europe, two announcements are generated: first, British Chancellor Robin Cook affirmed that the United Kingdom would organize a preparatory meeting of the Donors' Roundtable in Madrid to set a better atmosphere, which had been worsening after the U.S. chose a military approach over the aid that had been almost approved. The U.S. approach generated distrust among international NGOs, because according to NGOs, the situation in Colombia would become worse and would cause the U.S. presence to grow and an armed intervention to become possible (*El Tiempo*, February 15, 2000). In this way, the meeting looked to present an amiable face of Plan Colombia, explaining different development projects that the international community and, especially Europe, could finance. Ultimately, at the beginning of the year 2000, positions regarding the Colombian strategy to carry out a *peace process* were defined: whereas Spain and the United Kingdom supported it openly; other European countries did not openly express their opinions.

The second announcement is made by Spain and Norway. These countries accept to be facilitators in the International Hearing on Illicit Crops and the Environment, in which fifteen EU countries, Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, the United States, Canada, and Japan would participate. This was indicative that any European support for the *peace process* proposal would always strive to have two elements: first, it had to include a negotiation process carried out between armed groups and the national government; and second, the assistance provided would have to be focused on

alleviating poverty, eradicating illicit crops and improving the environmental protection. Besides, it was thought to boost participation by the civil society; something that Plan Colombia did not have.

Around mid May of 2000, Colombian diplomatic activity was reactivated. On one hand, the Colombian Minister of Foreign Relations, Guillermo Fernandez de Soto met the European Commissioner for External Relations, Chris Patten, who was in charge of the portfolio administering the EU development cooperation with Latin America. In this meeting, it became clear that the international aid of this organization would not be a contribution to Plan Colombia, but rather, it would be part of a European plan to support the peace process. On the other hand, the Special Presidential Advisor for Government Affairs, Jaime Ruiz met Javier Solana, the ministers of foreign affairs and the Prime Ministers of Italy, France, Spain and the United Kingdom to get their commitment in aiding Colombia and to count with their attendance at both the Donors' roundtable in Madrid and at the Preparatory Roundtable in London (*El Tiempo*, May 26, 2000).

The European interest to find a solution for the Colombian problem has increased since June of 2000. During two days the Swiss NGO *Center for the Humanitarian Dialogue*, and the University of Georgetown organized a seminary in Geneva called "How to help the Peace Process in Colombia". Various members of the Colombian government, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), organizations of the Colombian and European civil society, the UN and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) participated in this seminary, in which the best ways to help Colombia through international assistance were discussed.

After several days, some Colombian and sixty North American NGOs launched a series of declarations against Plan Colombia mentioning possible damages that the U.S. aid could cause on the environment, on crop substitutions, and on negotiations with the FARC, if the Plan were to be implemented at its present state. The first group of organizations presented a document to the European Union with opinions about the Plan and, at the same time, demanded that they press the U.S. congress not to approve the Aid Package (*El Tiempo*, June 12, 2000).

Finally, the Preparatory Meeting of the Donors' Roundtable took place, but for the Colombian government, unfortunately, it was not taken into account that some

French NGOs had previously met the Latin American Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom. They asked him not to support Plan Colombia, since they considered it could aggravate violence, by increasing the displacements in the southern part of the country, and harming peace dialogues with the FARC. On the contrary, the French NGOs asked support for the development projects (*El Tiempo*, June 19, 2000). In this way, the NGOs played the role of consensus builders not only within each European country, but also within the entire European community. The widely exerted pressure by the NGOs gave a greater chance for their demands to be heard when a window of opportunity arose, such as in the case of the Preparatory Meeting of London.

On June 19th, 2000, the Colombian government, the EU countries, the United States, Japan, Canada, the IDB, the UN and NGOs attended the London Roundtable. Colombia's entourage was composed by Jaime Ruiz, Mauricio Cardenas, Victor G. Ricardo (Ambassador to the United Kingdom), Roberto Arenas (Ambassador to the EU), Carlos Ardila (Ambassador to Spain) and Luis Alberto Moreno (Ambassador to the United States). At the end of the meeting, consensus among European countries about Plan Colombia was reached. On the one hand, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain show their affability for the strategy, whereas Belgium, Holland, France and Germany keep their reservations with regard to the plan, yet continue to support the peace process in an unrestricted way. The previous scenario would plot the development of the cooperation course for the European Commission, since France would be in charge of the Union's Presidency in the second semester of 2000, and Sweden in the first semester of 2001. It was the period in which the form of EU aid for Colombia was taken shape. Madeleine Church, representative of *Christian Action* and Francis McDonagh, representative of the Catholic Fund for International Development had made two declarations in this meeting: the first one was on behalf of fifty five European NGOs and the second, on behalf of sixty Colombian NGOs. Both criticized the Plan because "it deepens and intensifies the war" (*El Tiempo*, June 20, 2000).

Ten days later, the International Hearing on Illicit Crops and the Environment¹⁵ is finally carried out with twenty one delegations. During the meeting, various farmers and NGOs denounced the damages fumigations were bringing about, and asked for the international community to aid in the creation of crops substitution projects, as well as

to push for a deep agrarian reform to solve the agrarian crisis and in this way, to stop drug trafficking. Finalizing the hearing, 21 countries reiterated their support of the *peace process* and negotiations, and they reaffirmed, additionally, their disposition to collaborate in last aspect when the sides in question would wish to do it (*El Tiempo*, June 30, 2000 and July 1, 2000).

In the international arena, the issue of legitimacy is an area of conflict of interests when decision centers of public policy do not establish clearly the objectives and results that they want to reach. For that reason, they do not have a strategy to implement. Thus, the support of the Colombian government's proposal depended on the number of allies that the government has obtained in different roundtables. Nonetheless, every moment at which a discussion roundtable was carried out, this was an opportunity for the government's enemies as well. The decision on cooperative policies depended on the resources each side had and its bonds with pressure groups of states or international organizations. At that moment, Andres Pastrana's administration had managed to consolidate a support front composed of Spain, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. However, in the case with the European Commission, it was not possible to add to this coalition those who would preside over EU during the approval of aid for Colombia, i.e. France and Sweden.

Hence, the negotiation pace turned out to be a key in the construction of the European approach towards a better understanding of the reality in Colombia. In turn, this helped to the undecided countries to establish a clearer concept with regard to the effects of the U.S. aid in the development and peace process in Colombia. In a long term, the existence of their own vision towards the situation in Colombia has allowed the Europeans to ensure that the European plan of action would have to focus on other elements in order to secure different results.

Great Expectation

Prior to the Madrid meeting, the European Union has made two different statements. The EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana in various interviews affirms that Plan Colombia is a well-aimed strategy to create peace, and for that reason the European Community has a strong interest in supporting it (*El Tiempo*, June 28, 2000 and June 30, 2000). Yet, Gunnar Wiegand¹⁶

issues an official statement expressing his support of the government's efforts in searching peace by means of negotiations, and offering a **political** support to Plan Colombia¹⁷. Wiegand believed that this way it would be possible to tackle the structural causes of violence. The communication concluded indicating that the aid which European Commission was to offer would only be focused on the protection of human rights and humanitarian aid (The European Commission, July 5, 2000).

One could easily identify three important characteristics of these two declarations, namely:

1. Javier Solana's reference to the European Union does not mention various intergovernmental organizations that belong to EU. Rather, he speaks about the institution composed by the states and the organizations that will support Plan Colombia. However, the opinion of this civil servant does not represent the *national interest* of European governments because their foreign policy continues to be their own prerogative.
2. The European Commission shows its affability towards the strategy. Still, there is a lack of financial support because of two reasons: firstly, because the cooperation process of this organism has its own time frames, rules and objectives, which do not necessary correspond to the agenda set by a particular government. Secondly, a strong pressure exerted by different NGOs on the decision center, namely, the External Relations Commission, causes the latter to decide to construct its own strategy and to break away from Plan Colombia. As a result, the European cooperation is going to be evaluated by the European Parliament, which would later express its disapproval of the plan.
3. The European Commission has pointed out the interest areas to carry out the assistance. The fields in which EU wishes to work are relevant to the problems brought out by the conflict. Yet, these areas of assistance are not the ones that deal with the root causes of the conflict.

On July 7, 2000, the first Donors' Roundtable took place in Madrid. The

representatives of various countries and international organizations have attended this meeting. Besides of the fifteen countries that are a part of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Japan, the IDB¹⁸, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Andean Commission of Promotion (CAF), the UN and the European Commission were present. The contributions obtained were: 100 million dollars from Spain, 20 million dollars from Norway and 131 million dollars from the UN in non-reimbursable aid; whereas Japan offered a loan of 70 million dollars and the IDB, World Bank and the CAF offered a loan of 300 million dollars to Colombia. Additionally, a committee to support and follow-up the payments, composed by the participant countries, the UN and the IDB, is created in order to identify social projects that would be financed (*El Tiempo*, July 4, 2000; *El Tiempo*, July 5, 2000; *El Tiempo*, July 8, 2000).

At the same time, fifty Colombian and European NGOs decide to organize an Alternative Roundtable. At the end of the meeting, the organizations issue an official press-release expressing their support of any international initiative that looks to solve the problems generated by violence. However, the participants criticize Plan Colombia for being a strategy that promotes war and moves away from the possibility of a political solution to the conflict (*El Tiempo*, July 5, 2000)¹⁹.

The balance of the first roundtable is not particularly impressive. The Colombian government hoped to obtain approximately 900 million dollars in non-reimbursable aid, but it only managed to secure 150 million. Perhaps, this was consequences of a great pressure exerted by the NGOs within the different European political decision scenarios. The comment of Javier Solana, days before the roundtable in Madrid, would show the atmosphere that existed then: “to speak, to listen, to analyze and to interchange”. He never mentioned commitments on the contributions that different states were going to offer.

Consequently, the Colombian government intents to alter the context for the second Donors’ Roundtable to be held in Bogota. A month after July 7, 2000, Pastrana travels to Spain, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal seeking the support of Plan Colombia (*El Tiempo*, September 6, 2000). Yet, three of four above mentioned countries had already shown their support for the strategy, and two of them had pledged their financial aid in Madrid.

October would be a decisive month for international cooperation. On October 9, 2000, the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council reaffirms its political support of peace process, which would be achievable through consultations with the civil society and the approval of the parties involved, so as to look for peace based on the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Indicatively, the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council's Official Note emphasized that

[f]ollowing its current efforts, the European Union will start up a substantial European program of socioeconomic and institutional support of the peace process in Colombia, directed to promote and to safeguard the respect of human rights, humanitarian right and fundamental freedoms, to improve on the life conditions of the local population, to foment illicit crops substitution and protection of biodiversity, and to accompany execution of structural reforms in all aspects that feed the armed conflict (General Affairs and External Relations Council, October 9, 2000).

In this way, whereas the European Union is taking a distance from Plan Colombia without criticizing it, EU is obviously looking for a new way in which to participate in the solving the Colombian conflict, according to the European procedures and vision.

A week later, on June 23, 2000, the international conference in Costa Rica is held, summoned by NGOs, in order to discuss a reframing of the foreign aid and, thus, to redesign the international participation in the *peace process*²⁰ (*El Tiempo*, June 24, 2000). Delegates of the Colombian government, the National Liberation Army guerrilla (ELN), civil society organizations, as well as representatives of Latin American and European countries, the IDB and the UN had attended this meeting (*El Tiempo*, September 30, 2000; *El Tiempo*, October 9, 2000; *El Tiempo*, October 15, 2000). The encounter was divided into five commissions²¹. The discussion in one of the commissions was focused on the issue of international aid. Here, the criticism to Plan Colombia is manifested again: the respect for human rights and humanitarian international law is requested, and NGOs push for an *International Cooperation for Peace*²².

On October 18, 2000, Chris Patten²³ and Poul Nielson²⁴ made public a proposal for the European Parliament called the *Multiannual Support Programme for Colombia*

²⁵. The commissioners describe the Colombian strategy to solve the conflict through Plan Colombia, and warn particularly against the military components of the US aid. In addition, they do not wish the European Commission to be involved in a military campaign. Nevertheless, they want the EU to play a more active role based on some other initiatives. Namely, the document proposes an aid package of 105 million Euros and points out the specific allocations of the aid²⁶ In addition, Nielson and Patten suggest that a mission of identification of the specific projects be sent to Colombia in the beginning of 2001.

The above proposal of European Commissioners shows that the Commission had already been executing its regular procedure in order to plan the assistance to Colombia for the four year period, from 2002 to 2006. This happens at the same moment in which the Donors' Roundtables are held. In other words, it is the case of two parallel developments that do impact each other but neither one is the cause of the other²⁷.

On the other hand, it is evident that the foreign aid provided by the Commission cannot be considered as a contribution to Plan Colombia. Not only because it is a different process, but also because Europeans clearly expressed their wish to help the *peace process* by means of other initiatives.

On October 24th, 2000, the Second Donors' Roundtable is carried out in Bogota. Different countries from America, Asia and Europe, International Organizations and some NGOs attended this meeting. Renaud Vignal, the General Director of the Americas and the Caribbean for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*El Tiempo*, October 25, 2000), affirms that the only solution that Colombia has is the *peace process*, and for this reason he establishes the following parameters in which the European Union cooperation would focus on:

1. Support of the Rule of Law.
2. The defense of human rights and international humanitarian law.
3. The fight against the causes of violence and aid to the victims of violence.
4. Protection of biodiversity and the environment.
5. Reinforcement of regional agreements and cooperation.

The day after the meeting, Renaud Vignal calls a press conference at the French Embassy. He states that the international assistance offered by Europe is not to finance Plan Colombia and it would be announced in March of 2001 (*El Tiempo*, October 26, 2000). This way the European Commission's final position regarding the Colombian government's strategy is established.

After the second donors' roundtable ends, the Colombian government decides to create an inter institutional group to generate a better atmosphere and to promote international aid; as well as to coordinate and follow-up the negotiation process of the projects to be financed for the next roundtable in Brussels. This group was integrated by the Chancellery, the National Department of Planning, the Colombian Agency of International Cooperation (ACCI) and the recently created Investment Fund for Peace (FIP). The group organized a series of bilateral meetings with different cooperation agencies presenting a portfolio of projects which could be the focus of their assistance (Paris, 2002).

From June to October of 2000, the aid which would be provided by the European Commission to support the Colombian peace process is defined. Different meetings not only became scenarios where competitors could be heard by European decision centers, but they were also transformed into spaces of horizontal (pairs) and vertical alliance (decision makers) construction. Colombian NGOs met similar friends that provided them their internal resources to put pressure on the administration in charge of official aid to development, and to obtain the support of states that would direct it.

This way, alliances showing results of the Colombian State diplomacies and the NGOs were consolidated. The former managed to have friends such as Spain, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Andean Commission of Promotion; while the latter obtained support from France, Sweden and the European Commission. The uncertainty in the intentions by the states and intergovernmental organizations fostered competition amongst actors in the international cooperation realm. Hence, the relation between competitors is transformed into a zero sum game as the benefits provided to an actor will not be shared by its enemy.

Europe Signs the Check

The year 2001 begins with great optimism by the Europeans. Daniel Parfait, French Ambassador, notes that Europe changed a skeptical opinion²⁸ into a clear vision of Colombia and the type of aid it needed to solve its problems. For that reason, he would push for his own plan, which would focus on strengthening the Rule of Law, the protection of biodiversity and the drive to the integration of Latin America's economy (*El Tiempo*, January 19, 2001).

However, the dialogue with FARC was not in the best shape. Because of this, the Union ambassadors decide to look for reconciliation with the national government and travel to the Demilitarized Zone, managing to convince the FARC to untie the process and to organize the Second International Hearing²⁹ at the beginning of March (*El Tiempo*, February 1, 2001). At said meeting, Sweden, Norway, France, Spain, Cuba, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela would act as facilitators to report back on the state of the process (*El Tiempo*, February 28, 2001). The conference took place on the 8th of March and there it was agreed that the international community would participate in negotiations with a group of countries³⁰ summoned every two months to support the National Dialogue Roundtable, as well as with another group³¹ which would meet every six months to receive information on the state of the negotiation (*El Tiempo*, March 9, 2001). This was a new attempt to commit the guerrilla organization to the construction of a negotiated peace.

Pastrana initiates another European tour in search for support of Plan Colombia's social programs; in this instance he visits France and Sweden (*El Tiempo*, January 20, 2001). At the same time, the identification mission³² of the European Commission arrives at Colombia and visits the region of Magdalena Medio; interviewing people from the government and the Development and Peace Corporation of Magdalena Medio. This group of experts approves the launching of the first Peace Laboratory in the country to start in March.

The Colombian government receives bad news on February 1st of 2001. The European Parliament approves a resolution showing their disagreement with Plan Colombia by four hundred seventy four votes in favor and one against it³³ This disapproval is manifested because of two reasons:

1. The lack of debate on this strategy with the Colombian civil society.
2. The focus on the fight against drug trafficking by coercive means, i.e., the fumigation of illicit crops.

Nevertheless, this European entity reaffirms its commitment to support the peace process through an aid concentrating in social problems affecting Colombia (*El Tiempo*, February 1, 2001).

At the end of March Chris Patten, Commissioner for External Relations of the European Commission, comes to Colombia to show its commitment to the peace process and to define the way in which 95 million dollars would be invested in the financing of projects such as crop substitutions, sanitation programs and the construction of water supply infrastructures. This way, a list of financed projects³⁴ would be already prepared on April 30, 2001. Also, the commissioner affirms the Commission aid requires a commitment by Colombians to protect and to defend human rights, pluralism and the law (*El Tiempo*, April 1, 2001).

The context of the third Donors' Roundtable starts with the declarations of the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, who avows his political support of negotiations and highlights that the intention of European assistance is to surpass socio-economic causes of violence. For that to happen, he announces that a series of projects looking for sustainable development and regional balance will be financed (*El Tiempo*, April 22, 2001). Days before the Table, the European Commission confirms its support of the peace negotiations and its substantial financial commitment in the assistance to the *peace process*; preparing the right atmosphere in which to present its aid package for Colombia³⁵. Also, protests of the NGOs against Plan Colombia are reinitiated because of its military nature, the lack of consultation with the civil society and the possible repercussions on human rights. In other words, the conditions were favorable to drive a European peace process support program.

The Meeting of the Consultative Group in Brussels took place on April 31st, 2001, at which several countries of America, Asia and Europe, some international organizations like the IDB, the CAF, the IMF, the World Bank, the European Commission and the European Parliament, accompanied by some NGO's, as well, participated. This roundtable provokes a series of protests in the EU facilities headed by

social organizations against Plan Colombia. Mrs. Gun-Britt Andersson, State Secretary for Development Cooperation, Migration and Asylum Policy, issues an official note on behalf of the Union in which she informs that 335 million Euros in next six years will be destined to support the *peace process in Colombia*, in which 105 are from the Commission³⁶.

But in the end, it would be Chris Patten, the Commissioner for External Relations of the European Commission, who summarized the objective of the *Country Strategy Paper* for Colombia:

“Direct financial support must accompany economic and diplomatic aid, if our efforts want to have the opportunity of producing a lasting impact. Support must be directed basically towards the causes and not simply the symptoms of Colombian conflict existing for years” (Patten, 2001, p. 2).

The Commission aid will be 140 million Euros, 105 of which will be for programmable aid (financial, technical and economic) and 35, a nonprogrammable aid (ECHO and horizontal aid programs). Thus, financial aid has the Peace Laboratories as a main strategy; the first laboratory is launched in the Magdalena Medio.

The most important aspect at this moment is that the Union is not supporting European initiatives to find peace in Colombia, but rather they are initiatives originated from the Colombian society and endorsed by the Commission. This happens because on one hand, the initiatives are in agreement with its own aims, and, on the other, sustainability of development programs is assured since there is an appropriation of initiatives by citizens of countries in which the investment occurs. In the end the supported projects are the result of use of internal resources in NGOs and the construction of horizontal and vertical alliances.

Terrorism Knocks the Door

The guerrilla's relations with Europe enter a period of crisis. On July 30th of 2001, FARC kidnap three Germans in Cauca, one of them who works at the German Technical Agency of Cooperation GTZ (*El Tiempo*, July 31, 2001). This event originates a series of declarations of the European ambassadors in Colombia in which they insist on the liberation of these citizens and affirm that promising aid to Colombia would be paused unless this insurgent group carried out the liberation of these people (*El Tiempo*, September 26, 2001). The international hearing with amicable countries³⁷

that was going to take place in San Vicente of Caguan on September 26 is suspended (*El Tiempo*, September 20, 2001). The Germans are finally liberated on October 11th, in the presence of representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, civil servants of the German Embassy in Colombia and a group of European journalists.

However, a feeling of discontent could still be felt amongst Europeans. Later, it would be accompanied by a new crisis in the peace dialogues provoked, on this occasion, by different kidnappings of congressmen, deputies and the death of Consuelo Araujo³⁸. There is another aggravating moment: the attacks which occurred on September 11th, 2001 in the United States permit the government to exert a great pressure on different European governments so that they do not allow guerrilla members entrance to their countries. This shows a change of vision in Andres Pastrana's government regarding armed organizations and the future of peace negotiations. Thus, the government of the United Kingdom, applying its policies against terrorism, cancels the guerrilla member's visas, justifying this measure as a repercussion of the terrorist tactics used by these organizations such as kidnapping and their enlisting of minors in combat (*El Tiempo*, November 17, 2001).

The measure is accompanied by a discussion on kidnapping and peace in Colombia in the Cabinet (ministers of Foreign Relations) of the European Union, and a proposal of EU representatives for Latin America to cancel visas the guerrillas (*El Tiempo*, November 18, 2001). On December 7th, through the Union Presidency, the decision of fifteen countries of this organism to stop granting visas to organizations which practice extortion and kidnapping becomes public, and it asks armed groups to commit to *the peace process*, the respect of human rights and diplomatic immunity (*El Tiempo*, December 8, 2001).

However, at the same time in which spaces of political discussion were being closed for armed groups in the international arena, two very important events occurred which would have a great national impact. First, the European Commission's approval of international aid and, with it, the most important project this supranational organization has in Colombia, **the Peace Laboratories**. This project would start to function in 2002 in the Magdalena Medio zone, directed by the Development and Peace Corporation of Magdalena Medio, and new zones would be studied in which this program could be boosted in the country as well (*El Tiempo*, October 26, 2001).

The second event is an increase of participation of the ambassadors who are members of countries friendly with FARC, in order to save the dialogue process which was in a deadlock after all the events occurred. This was accompanied by a distrust of the guerrilla commanded by Manuel Marulanda as well, due to continuous over flights of the Colombian Air Force after the conversations had paused. After several meetings with the facilitator countries and the representative of the UN for the peace process in Colombia, James Lemoyne, the dialogue reopens where a discussion on the cease fire and the FARC demands to stop over flights starts (*El Tiempo*, November 21, 2001; *El Tiempo*, January 11, 2002; *El Tiempo*, January 15, 2002). The negotiations were finally broken on February 20th, 2002, after FARC kidnapped the Senator Jorge Gechem Turbay. In spite of this, five days later the Peace Laboratory of Magdalena Medio was launched.

The Europeans face two situations: on one hand, the approval of its official aid to development, which would provide resources to support process of peace in Colombia. On the other, the collapse of the peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Andres Pastrana's government had lost confidence in the guerrilla organization and, from September 11th, 2001, he used the allies obtained in the previous years to close opportunities for the FARC dialogue with the states and international organizations. This was done by presenting them as a non political actor, based now on the perspective of the war against the terrorism. The work accomplished by Colombian diplomats during the previous Donors' roundtable established a framework allowing for the labeling of FARC as a terrorist organization. In spite of the conditions at the time, the ambassadors continued believing in the peace process until February, 20th, 2002, which was when negotiations reached the end.

Conclusions

Relations amongst states, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations are carried out in anarchical scenario in which absence of a superior organization as a regulator of relations among different groups predominates. In spite of that, continuous communications in the international system make actors create and consolidate a frame under which the formation and base of their bonds is established. As soon as relations among different actors are intensified and expanded a process of

greater differentiation amongst them is generated; as a consequence, an increase in the interdependence among sectors is produced.

The permanent construction of that frame becomes a conflict scenario, where different sectors look for special spaces to renegotiate the way in which they are related. Those spaces are used by entities to display their interests and the manner in which they wish to obtain them; this way competition is transformed into an element of identity, while at the same time it is the repertoire employed by competitors to make their worries be taken into account by decision centers.

Even though each contender possesses a series of internal resources allowing to transform the standardization of relations, they decide to look for a series of external resources that allow them to evolve in a better way in the fight with their enemy, for that reason, they need to get horizontal and vertical alliances to use the internal resources of their friends and to win over the alliance of his enemy.

The alliances are characterized by their multiple functionality, that is to say, they can be used in the future with aims different from the ones originally created. They are also characterized by their instability, since they can transform the perspective of security of the actors which compose it. Well, the result of the conflict is a policy of cooperation among different actors that is constructed from existing tension between different poles; and it is in the final agreement that the winner can be seen, and thus, his agenda of relevant subjects in the regulatory frame.

The winning strategy of a competitor will be based mainly on the number of horizontal and vertical allies obtained and on the degree of influence these allies have on conductors of public policy. Horizontal alliances are understood as bonds of friendship between entities of a similar nature to influence jointly on political decision centers; while vertical alliances are the bonds established between a political decision entity and an organism that is going to use resources of the decision entity in the future.

The bonds of final cooperation tend to imbalance when an asymmetric relation between a triumphant group and a loser appears; because tension is resembled to a zero sum conflict, characterized basically in that the benefits reached in the final agreement can only be enjoyed by the winner of the dispute.

In the case of relations between Colombia and the EU, uncertainty in the anarchy of the international system created an interdependent scene in which

competition and cooperation were the moving bodies allowing actors to construct horizontal and vertical alliances to impel public policy regarding the peace process from 1999 to 2000. The benefits for the winner of this fight, in this case, were the political and financial support of the peace proposal which resembled closely the European Community perspective on human security. This support demonstrated that the government did not monopolize different actions directed to the pacification of the country, although it was a domestic issue, it was transformed into a responsibility of the international civil society and the international system.

The Old Continent was convinced it was necessary to protect the individual from the effects of war dynamics; thus, the reconstruction of Colombian society would not have to start off from the fortification of the state, but from the construction of a community that would allow to reach a total benefit of human rights. For that reason, the European proposal involved dialogues with armed actors and regional development programs as well as humanitarian aid; all of this in search of thorough attention to citizens.

During the first years, the Colombian Government, through the attendance to different conferences and trips abroad, managed to construct a series of coalitions with states and international organizations that supported Plan Colombia and negotiations with FARC. However, the nature of this alliance did not remain static and it transformed itself as consensus on national and international security changed. This way different Colombian armed groups were isolated due to their affinity in the use of terrorist actions and their lack of commitment to a negotiated solution of to the war.

Notes

- 1 It is necessary to consider at the moment in which it was written, the Colombian government faced a legitimacy crisis at national and international level due to money infiltration of drug trafficking in the presidential campaign of the President Ernesto Samper.
- 2 The negotiations between the Government of Andres Pastrana and the FARC have started on 7 of January of 1999, in San Vicente of Caguan.
- 3 Andres Pastrana starts his tour in these countries because in Germany, he is going to participate in a forum on Economic Relations of Europe and Latin America, in Switzerland, he meets the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the UN High Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHCR), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

- 4 On 23 of March of 1999.
- 5 The EU diplomats were: Candido Rodriguez, from the Delegation of European Commission, Peter Von Jagous from the Embassy of Germany, Marianne da Costa from the Embassy of Austria, Francis Ronse from the Embassy of Belgium, Yago Pico from the Embassy of Spain, Guy Azias and Daniel Parfait from the French Embassy, Jeremy Torp and Thomas Duggin from the Embassy of the United Kingdom, Felice Scausso from the Embassy of Italy, Teunis Kamper from the Embassy of the Netherlands, August Antonio Jorge from the Embassy of Portugal, Olof Skoog from the Sweden Embassy.
- 6 Initially, the FARC were not interested in an international participation in the process.
- 7 Italy, Spain and Sweden belong to the European Union.
- 8 All countries belong to the EU except Norway.
- 9 Action de Chrétiens pour l'abolition de la Torture (ACAT), Comité Colombien Association France Amérique Latine-Lyon (AFAL), Amnesty International-france, Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD), Collectif pour la Colombie, Ecole de la Paix, France-Amérique Latine (FAL), Fédération Internationale de Ligues de Droits de l'homme (FIDH), Fondation France Libertés, Terre des Hommes, Asamblea Permanente por la Paz, Codhes, Transnational Institute, Redepaz, Convergencia Paz Colombia, Pax Christi, Misereor e.V, Departamento de Derechos Humanos de la Obra Diaconica de las Iglesias Protestantes de Alemania, Coordinación Alemana por los Derechos Humanos en Colombia, Central Misionera de los Franciscanos – Alemania, Centro de Información América Latina -ILA, Asociación para los Pueblos Amenazados, Action pro Colombia – Aachen, Grupo Colombia –Nuertingen, Eine Welt-Laden – EMDEN, Concejo Diocesano de los Laicos de Aguasgran, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save de Children Fund Uk, among others.
- 10 The United Kingdom, Spain and Italy.
- 11 Although all the countries support thematically these sectors, the difference showing by the United Kingdom will be its direct support to the Plan Colombia.
- 12 Abel Matutes, Minister of Foreign Relations of Spain, Ramón Gil, Presidential Counselor of International Relations, Eduardo Gutierrez, Director of the Iberoamerican Foreign Policy, Jesus García, Director of Spanish Agency of International Cooperation.
- 13 The first Peace Laboratory zone.
- 14 One of the zones in which it is compelled the Second Peace Laboratory.
- 15 The meeting took place on June 29-30, 2000 in San Vicente del Caguan (Colombia).
- 16 Chris Patten's spokesman
- 17 It is considered it would be the host of the third Donors' Roundtable.
- 18 The IDB organized the event, and showed its support to development programs presented by Colombian government.
- 19 The meeting was attended by the Father Francisco de Roux, Director of the Program for the Development and Peace at Magdalena Medio, as well as by Norma Henríquez, who represented the Permanent Assembly for Peace and Jorge Rojas, Director of the Consulting Group for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES).
- 20 This meeting, although summoned by non-governmental organizations, actually is organized with the support of the Colombian government, as a result of a series of working roundtables among civil society's organizations, National Planning Department and the Colombian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

- 21 This conference consisted in five panels, namely: 1. Peace, Human Rights, International Humanitarian Right, 2. Social, Economic, Political and International Implications of the Fight Against Drug Trafficking and International Co-Responsibility, 3. Economic and Social Crisis in Colombia, 4. Agrarian Issue and Alternatives for Rural Development, 5. International Cooperation and Alternative Development.
- 22 *International Cooperation for Peace* is a concept, proposed by NGOs, which could finance regional projects, so as to deactivate the structural causes of violence and to promote processes of dialogue with the guerrilla, involving a greater participation of civil society. See *International Meeting on Peace and Human Rights in Colombia, Final Document, Commission V*, International Cooperation and Alternative Development, October 15-19, 2000.
- 23 Commissioner for External Relations
- 24 Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid
- 25 *Multiannual Support Programme for Colombia*, SEC (2000) 1647/5, Brussels, October 17, 2000.
- 26 40 million Euros are destined to economic and social development, 30 million Euros to alternative development, 25 million Euros to the support of the law system and 10 million Euros for the protection of human rights.
- 27 At the beginning of 2000, the European Commission starts to design the foreign aid provided to Colombia.
- 28 During the Donors' Roundtable in Madrid.
- 29 27 countries, the Delegation of the European Commission and the UN are invited at this event.
- 30 Sweden, Norway, France, Spain, Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico and Canada.
- 31 Germany, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Holland, Panama, Peru, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela, the Vatican, the UN and the Delegation of the European Commission.
- 32 Contractors of COWI Company. From January 29 to February 20, 2001.
- 33 Resolution of The European Parliament on Plan Colombia and Support to Process of Peace in Colombia, issued on February 1, 2001.
- 34 Press Conference on March 27, 2001,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/visit/pc.htm
- 35 Peace Process in Colombia: Brussels meeting to galvanize international support, IP/01/615 - Brussels, 26 April 2001, in
http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/colombia/3msg/ip_01_615.htm
- 36 Gun-Britt Andersson, State Secretary for Development Cooperation, Migration and Assylum Policy, Brussels, April 30, 2001.
- 37 Agreement reached at the beginning of the year to untie the dialogue with FARC.
- 38 Former Culture Minister in Colombia and wife of the Attorney General, Edgardo Maya Villazon.

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