

**Committee:** Special Political and Decolonization Committee

**Issue:** Achieving long-term political stability in Colombia

**Student Officer:** George Kantzis

**Position:** Main Chair

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## Introduction

*“My generation has not seen one single day of peace, and my dream is for my children and the children of all Colombians to have the chance to see it. I hope the guerrilla understand that the time has come to leave this 50-year confrontation behind; that the time has come to change from bullets to votes, from weapons to argumentations; that the time has come for them to continue their struggle, but within democracy.”*

*~ Juan Manuel Santos – President of Colombia (2010-present)*



**Figure 1: No more abductions. No more terrorism. No more murders. No more FARC.**

The conflict in Colombia has played a huge part in the formation of the country as it is today, as it has afflicted the country for more than 53 years. Throughout these five decades, the persistence of the conflict has been augmented by the ineffective government schemes and techniques, the absence of governmental institutions in rural areas, the emergence of paramilitary groups and guerrilla troops and the increase of the illegal drug trade and drug trafficking committed by rebel groups. As a direct result of this very conflict, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives and many have been displaced or abducted, while the country has been plagued by political instability and general turmoil.

In order to solve the issue, the Colombian Government has implemented multifarious projects, such as the “Plan Colombia”, the “Plan of Democratic Security” and the “National Consolidation Plan”, thereby improving the country’s security. However, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Spanish for

National Liberation Army, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Spanish for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, have continued their actions against the Colombian Government in order to gain control of the country and therefore, the situation remained critical until December 2016, when a



*Figure 2: Armed FARC forces*

revised peace deal between the Colombian Government formed by the President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC was ratified by the Congress.

Nevertheless, the problem of political stability still persists, as it is imperative to ensure that this peace deal is going to achieve long-term security and stability in the country. Lastly, apart from long-term security, Colombia has to gain

the trust of potential investors, since political stability is highly correlated with the boost of socioeconomic development in the countryside.

## Definition of Key-Terms

### Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

According to the BBC, the “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are Colombia's largest rebel group. They were founded in 1964 as the armed wing of the Communist Party and follow a Marxist-Leninist ideology. Their main founders had banded together to fight against the staggering levels of inequality in Colombia at the time.” Their principal objective is to overthrow the Colombian government and take control of the Colombian territory.

(Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36605769>)



*Figure 3: The FARC emblem*

## Guerrilla

The term guerrilla derives from the Spanish word “la Guerra” which means “war”. It is used to describe a state of war in which combatants and paramilitary forces act against the traditional military of the respective country through methods such as sabotages, raids and ambushes.

### Ejército de Liberación Nacional – National Liberation Army (ELN)

The ELN is an armed group supporting the ideologies of Marxism and Leninism. It has been operating in Colombia from 1964 and it is taking part in the Colombian conflict. The ELN has been characterized as a terrorist group by several governments and organizations including Colombia, the United States of America and the European Union. According to recent estimations, the group is comprised of around 3,000 guerrillas.



*Figure 4: ELN fighters*

### Right-wing paramilitary groups

The right-wing paramilitary groups in Colombia are paramilitary entities fighting against guerrilla forces, such as the ELN and the FARC. They are mainly financed by the illegal drug trafficking of cocaine and are held accountable for various human rights violations and for the majority of the political murders in Colombia.

### Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – United Self-Defenders of Colombia (AUC)



*Figure 5: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)*

One of the most important paramilitary groups in Colombia was the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – United Self-Defenders of Colombia (AUC), which was classified as a terrorist organization by countries including the United States of America, Canada and the European Union. The AUC is responsible for multiple assassinations and kidnappings of Colombian civilians and other massacres and human rights violations.

## Political Instability

According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, political instability in the case of Colombia can be defined as “the incidence of political upheaval or violence in a society, such as assassinations, demonstrations, and so forth and the lack of security and prosperity” (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/political-instability-indices>)

## **Background Information**

### The Colombian Conflict

The early beginnings of the Colombian civil war date back to the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Great Depression. Colombia’s economy was seriously damaged by the Great Depression and unemployment increased in the cities. Hence, many people migrated to the countryside in the coffee plantations of the Colombian territory, which were at that point flourishing. With the growing demand for coffee, the value of these plantations increased and the government started supporting wealthy landowners. The small farmers harshly criticized this situation, as they believed that the government’s actions were unjust because the government was helping wealthy entrepreneurs evict small farmers.

During the “La Violencia”, a historical period from 1948 to 1958 characterized by the conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties, many self-defense groups were created supporting the liberal side and committing violent attacks that could have resulted in a socialist rebellion. In 1958, the two fronts agreed to end the “La Violencia” by accepting to preside over the country for an alternating four-year term each. However, many armed small landowners and peasants continued to express their resentment towards the government.

After the “La Violencia”, many paramilitary organizations were founded, such as the FARC and the ELN, which were however excluded from the agreement of the power alteration between the Liberal and the Conservative parties. Consequently, this exclusion led to guerrillas supporting communism and engaging in actions against the government. The FARC was a guerrilla group comprised of militants and peasants, while the ELN was composed of left-wing adherents, Catholic radicals and students aiming at the repetition of the communist revolution inspired by Fidel Castro. Both organizations agree on the protection of the rural citizens suffering from poverty because of Colombia’s wealthy landlords and are against the privatization of all natural resources. Their main sources of income include abductions of civilians and political personas, extortions and drug trafficking.



Figure 6: The actions of the FARC, the ELN and other paramilitary groups as of January 2006

Moreover, other paramilitary organizations, such as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) emerged in the 1980s, originally opposing guerrilla groups such as the FARC and the ELN. Albeit their primary objective was to protect conservative communities in the countryside from the socialist guerrillas, they soon turned out to be as vicious as the FARC or the ELN, committing multiple kidnappings and massacres, violating human rights and endorsing drug trafficking.

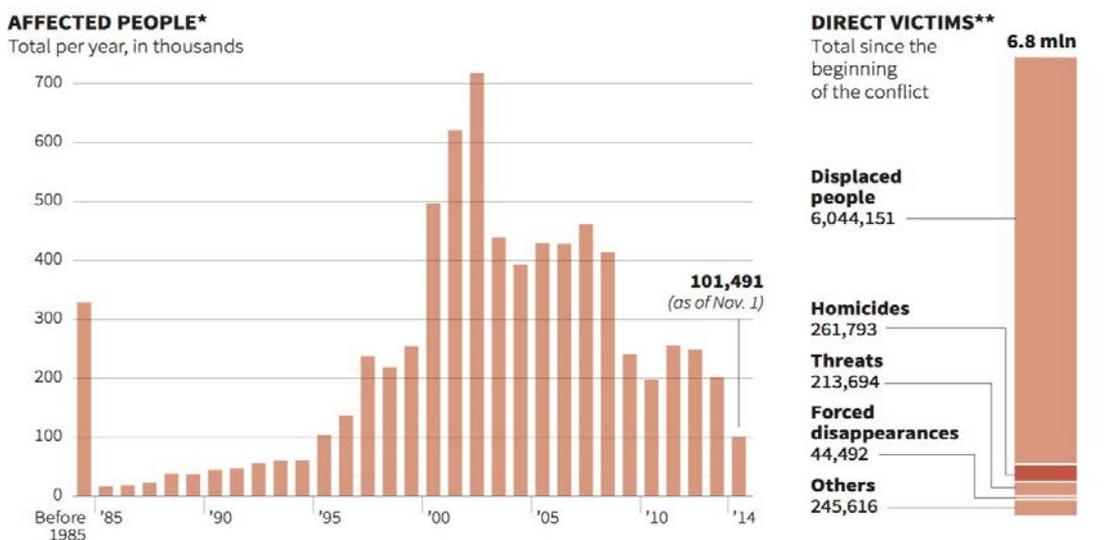
### Major Problems Caused by the Conflict

By and large, the 53-year-long rural conflict in Colombia has caused a great deal of damage as far as the integrity of the Colombian society and the political sector is concerned.

First of all, according to a statistic carried out by the Internally Displaced Monitoring Center (IDMC) Colombia is one of the counties with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world, with approximately 6-7 million people having abandoned their properties in rural areas to flee to the cities away from the guerrilla forces and especially the FARC and other paramilitary organizations and drug cartels. Such armed groups have evicted small farmers and have acquired their land, forcing them to either join them in their coca plantations or to relinquish their homes. In consequence, such displacements have contributed to the rapid increase of poverty and the growth of social inequalities inside the country. (Source: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/globalreport2016/>)

## Colombia's conflict victims

Colombia's government has been in talks with leftist FARC rebels for more than two years in a bid to draw a line under a conflict which has killed more than 200,000 people.



\* Doesn't include 4,468 cases lacking enough information. \*\* Not including indirect victims, i.e. spouses, parents, children or grandparents.

Source: Victims Unified Records (RUV), Colombian government.

R. Carrera 16/12/2014

Figure 7: Chart illustrating Colombia's conflict victims as of November 2014

Secondly, during the armed conflict, human rights violations reached their peak, as drug cartels, paramilitary groups and guerrilla fighters, including the FARC and the ELN, have carried out several atrocities against the Colombian civilians. Based on reports from the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, these groups perpetrated a series of abductions, reaching almost 27,000 between the years 1970 and 2010. Most of the victims had to endure torture and to bear living in inhumane conditions. Aside from the kidnappings, the FARC and the ELN have also caused hundreds of deaths. All these violations and abuses were mainly performed in rural areas, where the presence of the government was minimal and the population was unprotected.

Thirdly, the rural conflict in Colombia has plagued the country's economy and political stability. The excessive power that drug cartels have acquired since their foundation and the extreme violence in the countryside, in combination with the lack of state presence has impeded economic development. Thus, the armed conflict has hindered the economic prosperity of the country despite the wide variety of resources the country has.

Last but not least, owing to the general turmoil that existed in Colombia, the government has put exceptional focus on security measures and defense policies, thereby basically neglecting economic and sustainable development. Moreover, the governmental entities have attempted to tackle the problem of drug trafficking and cease the existence of drug cartels and other illegal groups operating against the administration. Hence, the violence and the actions of the FARC and the ELN have prevented economic growth in Colombia and have created political and financial instability in the country.

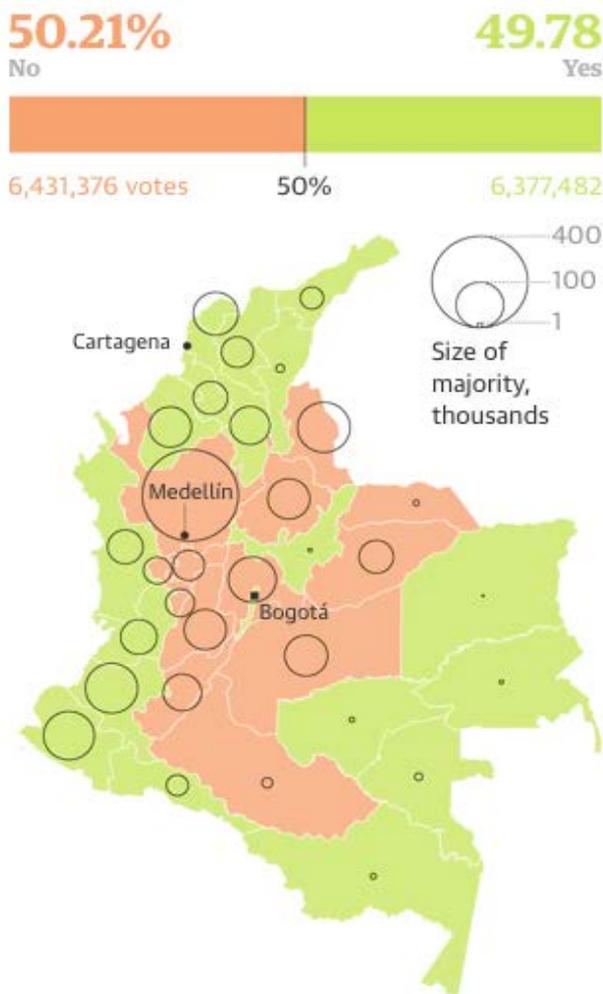
#### Final Peace Negotiations and the Referendum of 2016

In 2010, after the term of the former President Uribe had ended, Juan Manuel Santos was elected president and the peace negotiations between the government and the FARC started two years later, in 2012. Many peace talks were hosted in Venezuela, Norway, Cuba and Chile and the negotiations mainly focused on five principles:

1. "The future political participation of FARC members;
2. The rebels' reintegration into civilian life;
3. The illegal crop eradication, such as this of coca;
4. Transitional justice and reparations;
5. The rebel disarmament and implementation of the peace deal."

Apart from these five key areas, the two sides also accorded to remove landmines which have been buried in several places and have caused thousands of injuries and deaths. Additionally, Juan Manuel Santos promised to invest vast amounts of dollars in the Colombian countryside, as there was the perception that rural areas had been neglected throughout the five decades of the armed conflict.

## 2016 referendum result



Sources: Plebiscito.registraduria.gov.co, Colombia.com

**Figure 8: The result of the Peace Referendum of 2016**

In mid-2016, the Colombian government and the FARC established a cease-fire and the President alongside with the leader of FARC, Rodrigo Londoño, signed a Peace Agreement in September of 2016 in Cartagena in the Caribbean. This treaty was then voted upon in a referendum, held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October of 2016. The question stated in the referendum was as follows: “Do you Support the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace? Yes or No” However, the agreement was rejected by the Colombian citizens, as 50.2% voted against and 49.8% in favor with a turnout of less than 38%. Gustavo Arnavat, an advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies explained the outcome of this plebiscite by saying: “This vote shows you that while Colombians may want peace, they are very divided as to how that peace should be achieved”, thereby probably implying that the government should not treat the FARC with such leniency, as they have committed serious atrocities over the last 50 years.

After the results of the referendum, the two fronts maintained the cease-fire and recommenced negotiations regarding an improved peace accord. In December of 2016, the revised peace agreement was formed, which stated that the FARC would provide all its assets as reparations and thoroughly explained the punishments that FARC members who had committed atrocities in the past would have to face. The FARC would still become a political party, yet former members were prohibited from

becoming elected in key conflict areas. This improved agreement was approved by the Congress without a referendum this time and the government planned to achieve complete disarmament by the end of April 2017.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### The Republic of Chile

Chile, alongside Venezuela, Norway and Cuba supports the peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian Government. Chile acting as a mediator urged the two fronts to stop the escalation of the conflict.

### The Republic of Colombia

The Colombian government has attempted multiple times to start peace negotiations with the guerrilla groups. Former presidents, such as President Pastrana and President Uribe, have adopted different plans, such as Plan Colombia or Plan Patriota, which aimed at the disarmament of guerrilla fighters and the end of the conflict. Moreover, Colombian citizens have suffered immensely over the last 50 years, as many citizens have been abducted, killed or displaced. Apart from that, Colombia is suffering from instability and lack of economic development. In the peace deal of 2016, the government agreed to make substantial investments in the rural areas of the country and has proposed a new strategy in

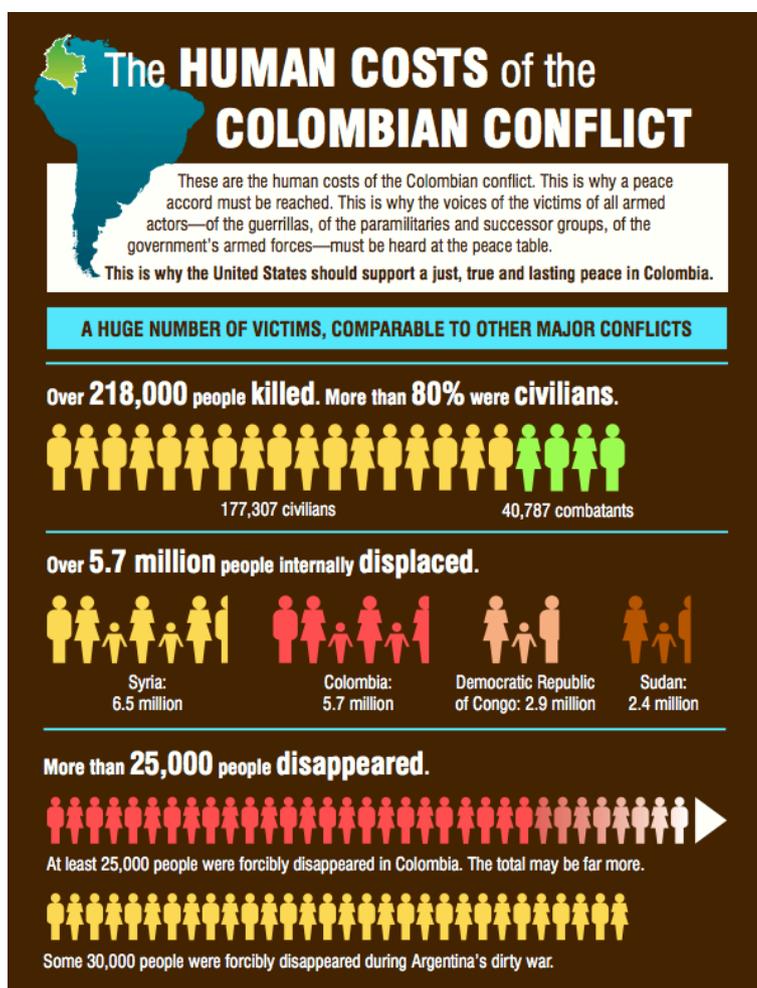
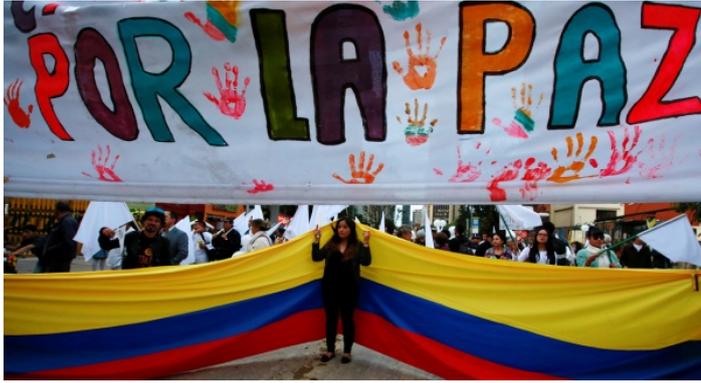


Figure 9: The Human Cost of the Colombian Conflict

order to eradicate the coca plantations. Furthermore, under the agreement, a new commission will be launched which will enforce different punishments on guerrillas who have committed war crimes and other atrocities. Nevertheless, the government has not engaged in peace negotiations with the ELN yet.



**Figure 10: For Peace in Colombia**

FARC members to engage in negotiations with the government, supporting that “You gain power by engaging in the political process”. According to the Colombian newspaper “El Tiempo”, “Castro directed a Colombian emissary who spent three days meeting with the FARC’s maximum leader, Timoleón Jiménez (also known as Rodrigo Londoño), to ensure that the rebels would participate in the negotiations.”

(Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/08/25/cuba-colombia-farc-peace-deal/87432410/>)

### French Republic

France’s former President François Hollande announced in January 2017 in a former war zone in Colombia, in La Venta, that Colombia’s peace deal should be an example to be followed all around the world and that France will continue to support Colombia during the post-conflict period.

### The Kingdom of Norway

In the peace process in Havana in 2016, Norway was acting as guarantor along with Cuba. Norway’s commitment to the peace agreement dates back to the first negotiations in 1984. During the peace talks in 2016, Norway played a significant role in keeping the FARC and the Colombian Government on track. Moreover, according to the State Secretary Barg Pedersen, Norway “has sought to create the conditions and the environment for the talks, to protect their confidentiality and to exercise balance and impartiality toward the two parties”.

### The United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom has supported all the successive Colombian governments in their attempt to establish peace and end the conflict. In the 1980s the British Special Air Services (SAS) organized Colombia’s air forces and provided

training to Colombian soldiers as regards ambushing techniques and patrolling. Moreover, the United Kingdom has also been involved in the counteracting of the drug cartels in Colombia.

The United States of America (USA)

The United States has been the most crucial external factor in the Colombian Conflict in the last 50 years. To begin with, under a US military initiative by President Bill Clinton in 2000, Colombia adopted the much-criticised Plan Colombia strengthening its army against the FARC and the ELN. In addition, in 2002, the US Congress decided that US assistance should be expanded not only fighting drug cartels but also providing security to Colombian people. Additionally, it must be emphasized that after the 9/11 attacks, the USA provided additional military and financial help to Colombia to fight the FARC, which had been designated as a terrorist group. In his speech, the former President Barack Obama, in December of 2016 stated that, "This shift (in 2002) in U.S. aid was one of the least well-known impacts of 9/11. It helped Colombians gain the upper hand against the FARC." According to the newspaper "El Tiempo", "the U.S. assistance was key not only in terms of money and equipment, given to us at a time when the country was going through a deep economic crisis. Their assistance in intelligence matters was crucial, and it also gave us Colombians a message of solidarity. It showed we were not alone in this fight." (Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/us-colombia-peace-deal\\_us\\_57ebd0dce4b082aad9b80ff5](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/us-colombia-peace-deal_us_57ebd0dce4b082aad9b80ff5)). Lastly, in 2013, Colombia announced that it wants to join the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as the Colombian President stated that "In June (2013), NATO will sign an agreement with the Colombian government, with the Defence Ministry, to start a process of rapprochement and cooperation, with an eye toward also joining that organization." The USA responded to this announcement by saying: "Our goal is certainly to support Colombia as

being a capable and strong member of lots of different international organizations, and that might well include NATO." (Source:

<http://www.rawstory.com/2013/06/u-s-might-support-colombia-nato-bid-state-department-official/>)

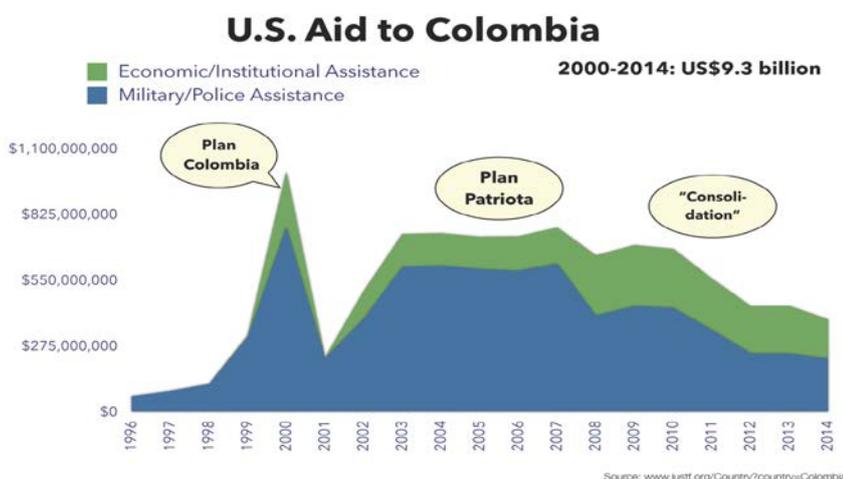


Figure 11: US Aid to Colombia

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
27 May 1964	The rural conflict in Colombia officially begins.
1966	The FARC become the Communist Party's armed wing.
1984	The government achieves the first cease-fire with the FARC and formal peace talks begin.
1987	The ceasefire ends and the negotiations finish unsuccessfully after the murder of a presidential candidate.
May 1991	Once again, the government and the FARC engage in peace negotiations, which end a year later with no consensus met.
1997	The AUC is formed and is considered to be a right-wing paramilitary group.
May 1999	For the third time, the President of Colombia Pastrana and FARC's leader Marulanda start negotiations for peace.
2000	Plan Colombia is launched by President Pastrana, to stop the illegal drug trade of heroine and cocaine
2001	The AUC is listed as a terrorist group by the United States of America.
November 2001	FARC is designated as a terrorist group by the United States.
February 2002	Peace talks end abruptly after the FARC commits a hijack of a plane carrying 24 passengers.
22 February 2002	Senator Ingrid Betancourt is abducted by the FARC and is held hostage alongside other victims for 6 years.
2004	President Uribe launched Plan Patriota, which aims at achieving military presence in the Colombian countryside and end the actions of the guerrillas.
2006	The AUC is demobilized.
28 August 2012	The new Colombian President announces that peace talks will

	be held anew between the government and the FARC.
16 May 2014	The FARC stops its collaboration with drug cartels as part of the potential peace agreement.
15 December 2015	The government and the FARC sign an agreement ensuring the provision of reparations and of justice to all the victims of the conflict.
23 June 2016	An official ceasefire is signed.
26 September 2016	The final agreement has been formed and the two sides sign the Agreement in Cartagena.
2 October 2016	The results of the referendum regarding the peace agreement narrowly reject the accord made by the two sides.
December 2016	The revised Peace Agreement is approved by the Congress and is ready to be implemented.

## Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

### Security Council Resolution S/RES/2261 of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2016

The Resolution S/RES/2261 was adopted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 by the United Nations Security Council. Its objective is to “establish a political mission to monitor and verify the laying down of arms and the bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between the Government of Colombia and the FARC.”

For more Security Council resolutions and reports, visit this site:

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/colombia/>

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Since the beginning of the conflict in 1964, the Colombian government, the United Nations and other entities have applied various programs and strategies to solve the conflict and ensure that Colombia will have long-term political stability. Some of these are the following:

- Plan Colombia

The Plan Colombia was a framework conceived by the US President Bill Clinton in collaboration with the Colombian President Andrés Pastrana in 1999. The program was enforced in 2000 and its objective was to end the Colombian Conflict by eliminating drug cartels and cocaine production and by strengthening security

and fighting guerrilla groups. This Plan was replaced in 2015 by the new program “Peace Colombia”, which aims at providing Colombia with the necessary assistance in the post-conflict period after the Peace Agreement with the FARC in 2016.

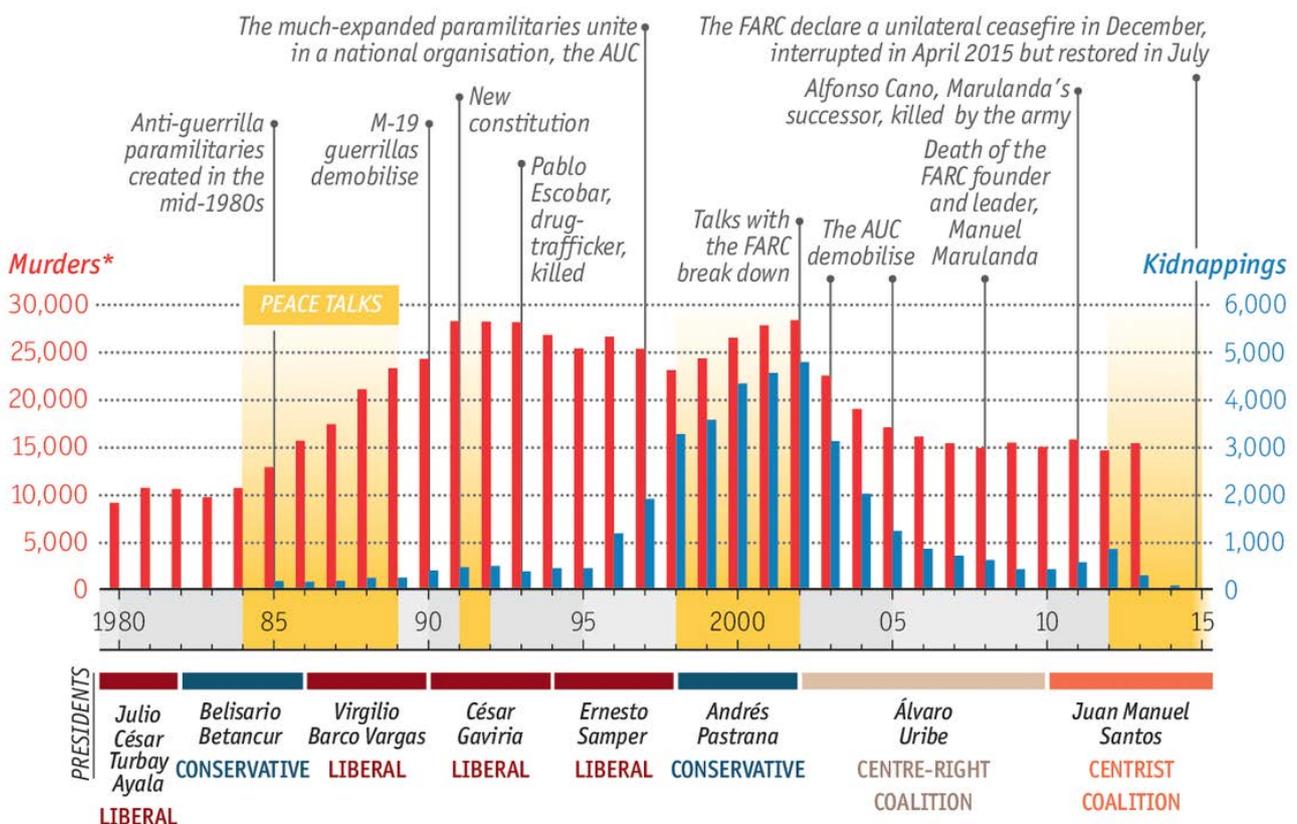
- Plan Patriota

Plan Patriota is another military strategy proposed by Colombian President Álvaro Uribe in 2004 and supported and financed by the United States of America. This Plan seeks to condemn all guerrilla groups and particularly the FARC and the ELN, and to strengthen the military presence of the Colombian government in rural areas. Generally, this plan is thought to be quite similar to the Plan Colombia of President Pastrana.

- National Territorial Consolidation Plan

The National Territorial Consolidation Plan was adopted in 2011 and is a five-year-long program. As Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota, the National Territorial Consolidation Plan aims at increasing the presence of the government in remote areas, at fighting guerrillas and at eradicating drug cartels.

## The flow and ebb of violence



Sources: UNODC; Registro Único de Víctimas; The Economist Economist.com

\*Excludes civilian deaths related to the armed conflict

Figure 12: Previous Attempts for Peace in Colombia

As it has already been stated, the main problem of the conflict was the negligence of the countryside of Colombia from the side of the authorities and the emergence of drug cartels and insurgent groups. Most of these guerrilla groups have been demobilized today and only a few remain, such as the ELN. Yet, neither Plan Colombia nor Plan Patriota and all the other US-backed programs have been able to foster the economy and promote stability.

Hence, albeit the conflict ended in December 2016 with the two fronts signing the Peace Agreement, political stability has yet to be achieved. The country already has strong democratic institutions, since the people of Colombia had the option to accept or reject the peace accord in the referendum and since they can choose their president every four years; however, the country lacks security and in many cases, violence is flourishing. Lastly, many people in Colombia disapprove of the Peace Agreement as they think that the government should have been more uncompromising and austere towards the FARC and the guerrillas and should not have accepted their political representation in the parliament.

### **Possible Solutions**

In order to promote political stability in Colombia, delegates have to understand the situation and the reason of the conflict in the first place and then propose effective measures. The measures included in the resolutions should predominantly revolve around three key aspects of the problem; firstly, around security and support of the Peace Agreement, secondly, around economic and social development and thirdly, around the reduction of violence.

First of all, it is imperative that support for the peace agreement is strengthened. Without this support, the peace agreement will not be able to be enforced in reality, as there will be many opponents and the measures that have been agreed upon will be deemed ineffective. Meanwhile, Colombia's allies have to continue providing their assistance and continue investing in Colombia's countryside in order to enhance the situation.

Moreover, the country has to improve in terms of security, since violent attacks are often in the limelight of the country's affairs. The training of specialized personnel and police forces would possibly lessen the threat of violence and promote security among the citizens. Drug cartels and drug trafficking, however, also contribute to the increase of violence. The government could, therefore, eliminate drug trafficking by imposing stricter border controls and running regular checks on previous drug traffickers and their links, who have been arrested and imprisoned.

Furthermore, both economic and social development is vital for the promotion of prosperity. Delegates have to recommend efficient legislation, providing access to public and health care services to all the people in Colombia and especially in remote rural areas and reducing high poverty and combating hunger. Additionally, the country has to pass constructive legal frameworks, improving infrastructure and thereby urging big investments in the private and the public sector. Of course, all obstacles to innovation have to be eliminated and the country has to strengthen its industries and increase the exports, thus opening more markets to Colombian services and local goods. Lastly, a consensus for political reform is also necessary, in order to fight political corruption at a local and national level.

To conclude, political stability in Colombia will be guaranteed, only if the aforementioned measures are implemented and only if all the main problems causing instability are tackled efficiently.

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