

# International and internal perspectives of the armed conflict in Colombia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries

## Abstract

The present investigation is focused on studying the armed conflict in Colombia, from the 20th century up to the present 21st century, analyzing from this same three variables such as: the international aid, the thought of the academy, and the victims of the conflict. Taking as a tool for different sources and authors, helps in broaden the horizons and analysis that is sought in this work. In order to know how these three variables, have and have had influence, in all this process that currently exists and what conclusions and reflections can be obtained from them.

**Keywords:** armed conflict, international organizations, Colombia, peace

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## Introduction

Colombia has suffered for more than 50 years an internal conflict that does not seem to end. It has affected thousands of people within the country and has left an imprint on each of the Colombians for half a century. Despite all the advances that are currently being made as is the peace process carried out by President Juan Manuel Santos, there remain certain doubts and disagreements on the part of all the people of this country. As he points out<sup>1</sup> “Times, the world, the guerrillas, and Colombia have changed, but peace still has not reached this Andean country despite the partial successes achieved in the peace processes of the nineties, which culminated with the demobilization of some insurgent groups”, hence, without further ado, the intention is to analyze the influences from interventions, agendas, or different actions that indirectly or directly influenced this armed conflict in Colombia from the twentieth century to the present century. In order to meet the previously stated objective, this work is supported and developed under the model of Hayden White, who in his work develops explanations for both: plot, argumentation and ideology. Hence, in this work you want to implement these criteria well explained by this author. On the one hand, the plot to be implemented is comedy<sup>2</sup> “In comedy the hope of a provisional triumph of man over his world is maintained through the perspective of occasional reconciliation.” Regarding the argumentation to be developed is the organics explanatory mode. In this way we seek to break down a larger idea in order to identify the minor ideas that are contained in the first one, that is, to break down, based on the idea of armed conflict in Colombia, different factors that can help work. In the model, ideology is the third element. In this case a liberal form is presented, since one is optimistic in the face of a possible change, that is, in the face of a future peace for the benefit of all.

From these aspects and given the theme, three major variables are identified, and problems that are to be developed in this work; the first and one of the most important is to analyze and find out what international aid has been given by different actors during the years of conflict in Colombia, since more than 20 years ago different tables and negotiating agendas have been presented, and each time it is lost more the trust and with it the hope on a possible peace. The foregoing, because there is never an agreement and the victims of a country overwhelmed and marked by the blood and sadness that inhabits its territory continue to be more and more. On the other hand, from the

perspective of the delegate of the ICRC, in the Colombian field,<sup>3</sup> (...) “In recent years, the political conflict has spread widely, and with it the violations of international humanitarian law; the number of civilians killed or displaced has increased. Progress in the humanitarian field is made more difficult by the constant process of erosion to which the civil war is exposed. The boundaries between political debate and common crime are confusing. The war has long since acquired its own dynamic, which hinders political control. For many unemployed young people, it has become an alternative trade “(nd).

In short we want to get to see that aid of different kinds, have come to give these international organizations to the problem that has been highlighted, or on the other hand if there has been such help from the international community because it has been, but it has to be highlighted that this conflict has been in the light of the world and especially in the nineties when the world began to globalize this aspect does not say<sup>4</sup> “the lost decade for Colombia (the ninety) means that the visibility of your “internal” problems increases impressively. The Colombian crisis entered the agenda of the most important international forums “(nd). Hence, it can be shown that before countries of Europe and America has already made visible this conflict, for which they must already have an opinion on this and also some interests, or interventions before it. The second variable to work is to know some opinions of academics, since some of these begin to believe less in all these conciliation tables, as indicated above, because if you take the reference of a first approach to a negotiation process with these groups we have had this since 1982, that is, over 34 years, and this conflict still persists as it stands out.<sup>5</sup>

(...) “If you start with the amnesties of 1982, during this time there have been many interruptions, deviations, new conflicts and some partial successes. Also, in recent years, the world has changed radically. For the first time we have seen peace processes, in other countries, that arrived at negotiated solutions in internal conflicts, despite having these very deep roots. In the year 82, when the first peace process in Colombia began, there were no international models to resolve a civil war through negotiations. There were losers or winners, but there were no cases of successful negotiations within the history of the terminations of civil conflicts. “(Nd) That is to say that it is not only Colombia that started negotiations, at the end of the Cold War, but it is one of the countries that distinguishes itself by the longest negotiation processes in the whole region, hence why we want

to analyze why? These processes have lasted so long, what difficulties have been presented so that Colombia has not yet been able to enter into an agreement? Can we still hope for a definitive end to the conflict on the part of all Colombians? There are many answers and more all the processes involved in covering all these issues, as it says<sup>5</sup> “the government it has to be bold to reach peace, much bolder than it has been; It has to draw up an agenda that commits the guerrillas and satisfies their historical demands. That is, we must look for an agenda that implies fundamental (and necessary) changes in the country “but that is why in this work we want to recognize, as has already been highlighted, and with this problem, some opinions and analyzes of some experts, and also what institutions or organizations within the country have helped in this internal conflict.

The last variable that we want to deal with based on the proposed topic, is to talk about the armed conflict in Colombia and the many victims that this has left and that, for its part, the government has the obligation to protect, but many times all of this it is carried out in a humane manner, and many Colombians are left, for example, those displaced by the violence in the streets, wandering and looking for a home they no longer have, as *Semana* magazine points out (Colombia retains the dishonorable title of the second country with the most displaced people, 2015) “The problems confronting Colombia since 1960 are on the rise. In total, 6,044,200 displaced persons have been registered. The figure is alarming, since it is 12% of the total population of the country. That is to say that these numbers are alarming for all since Colombia is the second most displaced country in the world, hence we want to look at how all these problems affect the country, and that in a certain way they overwhelm the State, that as it is said in the same report of the magazine *Semana*, (Colombia retains the dishonorable title of the second country with the most displaced, 2015) “The worrying thing is that more than 63% of displaced people in Colombia live below the poverty line and the 33% live in conditions of extreme poverty, which reflects the lack of support they receive to try to restore their lives “, all this affects the country, and brings as consequences more and more problems of all kinds, of which it is of a sum It is also important to include it in this work, since there will be a clearer vision of why Colombia still does not resolve its conflict and also problems such as the dead, the displaced, and everything here the one affected by this war, affects the same and the resolution of this confrontation. Finally, and based on the above, considering the three variables and the subject to work and investigate, in this work you get to the following question:

### **What has been the influence that international organizations, academics and victims have had on the resolution of the conflict and problems presented in Colombia, from the 20th century to the present 21st century?**

The fundamental objective is to know what the influence of international organizations, academics, and victims in the armed conflict in Colombia is, from the 20th century to the present 21st century.

## **State of Art**

### **International thinking**

Already entering the international aspect, the thinking and position of some organizations and countries regarding these groups in Colombia is considered by many as terrorists, since the news of

international channels that are currently seen in Colombia demonstrate this in terms of these groups; they point to cause: the damage to society, the illegal recruitment of minors, kidnapping and torture, the displacement of peasants and the illegal way in which they carry out their business in order to remain in force, such as cultivation and sale of drug. This is reflected because in the European Union these subversive groups in Colombia are classified as terrorist organizations that only seek to cause damage, in this case to Colombia. But other countries support them and do not consider them as terrorist groups, but as revolutionary groups opposed to the government, fighting for their rights; For example: the FARC has support from certain European NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations); The FARC presented several points and arguments in which it explains that in the government of Álvaro Uribe the paramilitary groups were created and that they are persecuted politically for example, indicates it.<sup>6</sup> (...) “The Europeans also experienced in their own flesh the arrival of an immense wave of political asylees: guerrillas, activists of the left, followers of communism, opponents of the establishment and opponents, all victims of political persecution. They arrived first in France, Spain and Italy, but then emigrated to Germany, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. Many political organizations received them with open arms “(nd).

It is then that it is pointed out that many organizations in the history of the FARC have been helping them, according to the magazine’s data 13 political parties from different countries in Europe, shelter these guerrillas, in addition to 28 activist associations. He points out<sup>6</sup> “the total of the organizations that before the prohibition were moving around the FARC over 200”, it should be noted that these years are from 2002. However, in countries such as Germany and France After a few years, the main NGOs in these countries began to withdraw their support to the FARC by freezing the funds and other financial assets that this group had, in addition to being considered as mere terrorist groups. Although the FARC did not stay with their arms crossed and looked for ways to show their ideology to the Europeans, they resorted to handing out cards where they said they will continue doing their activities to achieve their political objective. Currently, aid to the FARC by the European front, is far from what we did in the 80 or 90, according to<sup>5</sup> “Currently, these are the Internet, the organizations of refugees and clandestine networks in countries lax in enforcing the EU ban “referring to some of the few remaining mechanisms of the FARC in this part of the world.

It should be noted that there are organizations such as the AJPL (Association Jaime Pardo Leal), which remains in Sweden that the main objective of this association is to spread the ideology of the FARC, also maintain, the publication of complaints for this group and show and According to this, I want to show the true face of the Colombian government. It has the help of some political refugees, as well as grants from the Swedish government itself. Although, European Union has already catalogs them as terrorists and seeks to help the Colombian government to dismantle any organization which helps to these groups. This shows that there are some organizations like the aforementioned that seek to help these groups, according to them so that there is a “New Colombia”. Finally, regarding this aspect of prominence is that after the second round of donors that took place in Bogotá, it was agreed with the EU that their role in the conflict was to do the following that well exposes them.<sup>4</sup> (...) “-The EU separates from Plan Colombia and looks for its own scheme, both in the means it uses and in the priorities and conceptions it adopts.

- A. Support for the peace process and the negotiated solution.
- B. Requests greater coordination with civil society and emphasizes issues such as support for the rule of law, defense of human rights and IHL, protection of biodiversity and the environment, and promotes regional cooperation and cooperation.
- C. It refers to your willingness to cooperate in making a diagnosis about the demand for psychotropic substances. “(Nd)

## UN & PKO

PKO Peace Keeping Operations, are all the activities carried out by the UN, to resolve conflicts or crises that the countries have internally, among these there are four modalities of these activities that are carried out as indicated<sup>6</sup> (...) “Peacemaking will mean operations aimed at achieving peace through diplomatic means in the event that a conflict erupts (making peace). For peacekeeping, the operations that are in charge of safeguarding the peace agreements and ceasefire that the parties to the conflict obtain (keep the peace) will be enlisted. By peace building the operations that are responsible for building in the States in conflict the institutions that are necessary to avoid the outbreak of a conflict (build peace) will be understood. For peace enforcement the operations that come by force will be understood. “(P.14) As you can see here there are several types of activities and PKO that can be carried out, each one has its own process and although they differ in some aspects as regards the objectives of each of these, he says<sup>7</sup> “Each PKO has a set of specific and specific tasks in each case, but they all share common objectives: alleviate human suffering and create conditions to create institutions that defend peace. The presence of a PKO in a territory contributes to this objective by allowing the intervention of the United Nations “(p.28)

On the other hand, seen in this way it can be said and established that PKOs can serve as a very useful instrument for Colombia to achieve internal political security, since they could take this as a resource for the resolution of one way or another with the armed conflict. Although the aid of the PKOs in Colombia has not yet been finalized, the UN and the PKO do not consider the Colombian armed conflict as an international danger, it is because of this and also because the Colombian government has not requested the UN for PKOs, the PKOs have not they have been able to contribute to the Colombian armed conflict; but since the Colombian armed conflict is financed through drug and arms trafficking, this can affect international peace, not only of Colombia but also of neighboring countries and Europe, which has made agendas of multiple organizations such as the UN, to intervene and help in the resolution of this. It is then where it is seen as the PKO, are one of the many aids that can or could receive Colombia, but it has to glimpse all the political, social, economic aspects, that can bring all this “All in all, we cannot forget that the PKO could be used not to get involved in the conflict generated with the guerrilla groups, but to guarantee, for example, the agreements that are achieved with the paramilitary groups”<sup>7</sup>

## The red cross as a mediator and intervener in the conflict

As is already known, Colombia is a country that has been plagued by conflict, of all kinds, which is often thought to be an internal conflict and that the international media do not intervene in this, in this part we seek to analyze how it has In the case of the ICRC, which is the International Committee of the Red Cross, this has been one of

the agencies that has most intervened in the conflict in this country. It should be noted that the objectives and the most important activities that this organization has are: (...) “The main activities of the ICRC in Colombia are: protection of the civilian population, assistance to the displaced persons and the communities affected by the conflict, assistance to people affected by the contamination of arms, support for relatives of the disappeared, visits to detainees, promotion of international humanitarian law (IHL) and cooperation with the Colombian Red Cross and other active members of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Colombia.”<sup>7</sup> Emphasizing a little on the help it provides in the release of hostages, one of the cases was on June 15, 1997, where 70 soldiers of the government armed forces, captured by the guerrillas after having lost a combat, landed in Cartagena de Chaira. Nine and a half months before. There the ICRC was a great mediator between the two parties since it was he who received the soldiers, and also provided the first medical assistance, took care of the accommodation of the relatives of the soldiers and also coordinated many aspects so that none of it was left random. The most important aspects that can be highlighted from this fact as mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

(...) “is that the collaboration of the ICRC to solve the drama can be classified into three phases. During the first weeks after the capture of the soldiers, the delegation acted as a communication bridge between the Government and the guerrillas. In the next longest phase, the delegates tried, in favor of humanitarian activity, to gain access to the soldiers. Once the political obstacles were eliminated, the ICRC was able to fully concentrate, during the third phase, on the delivery operation, contributing, through its good offices and with its technical-logistical knowledge, to the smooth development of the same “(nd). Regarding this aspect, it is very important to highlight it since it shows how the ICRC can and has been helpful as a mediator between the two parties, for communication and intervention in many aspects as it was in the previous case. With respect also, that “The ICRC has been present in Colombia for more than 40 years and has a dozen offices that address the consequences of the armed conflict (one of the longest in the world) and other situations of violence. Operational priority has been given to 25 remote rural areas where the situation of the civilian population remains very difficult”.<sup>7</sup> Finally, regarding this issue of the ICRC, although the conflict is still going on, and for some it is superficially thought that this aid has not been very useful for this organization, as you can see more profoundly, yes, since With constant work and presence in many areas of the conflict in the country has helped in many of the cases already mentioned, and not only that, but has encouraged the country, has sought peace and in one way or another, encourage the end of the most soon this possible conflict that has affected Colombia so much for so many years. As he says<sup>3</sup> (...) “In addition to managing humanitarian crises, ICRC delegates can give longer-term impetus, including to civil leaders, through their information work, coordinating their activities with private and public institutions, openly raising question of the social roots of violence. In this way, the ICRC, far from renouncing its independence and its neutrality, places these fundamental principles at the service of constructive elements for the development of Colombian society “(nd)

## Internal perspectives on the conflict in Colombia

As for the thinking and perspectives that not only academics and public opinion have, but also the people of the country, there are some opinions and a side of the face that says that a conciliation between

parties is never going to be reached in order to reach the peace in Colombia in an interview with Jairo Estrada expresses that “the war is in the capitalist social order that promotes the accumulation of property and is based on the domination of the less favored classes. This model prevails since the 1920s and led to the emergence of armed subversion as a reaction that seeks to oppose the impositions of such social order.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Estrada argues the above-mentioned in a way that highlights a type of violence and dispossession that precedes the 20’s in Colombia and that this focuses on capitalism as a key axis in which a new model of society is not accepted, which I unleash the historical mobilizations, social and worker struggles to which they were being excluded from any opinion, this led to many people withdrawing from their lands, colonizing new ones and being displaced in different municipalities and places, this according to Estrada, there is an order social and economic capitalist from 1960 at the hands of a liberal regime that excused in the struggle and resistance generated credits, safeguards that today are little seen and spoken between the government.

Maria Emma Wills, suggests in her article that from the debate on the armed conflict in Colombia since 1960 that the factors that initially affected and even today have been little taken into account are first the little political participation of the peasants, second the lack of professionalism to deal with the issues to those affected and finally the remaining armed groups in the regions this is developed in his article and explains these factors one by one. (...) “On the first knot is located in the second half of the nineteenth century, the formation of a sector of small independent peasants who were outside the regional client alliances, outside the bureaucratic partisan power, and constituted the first migrations of settlers that constituted the agricultural frontier, on the second and the third knot is located that the Nation-State in Colombia was born fractured by the disputes between the parties for the control of the institutions. The relations of the center with the regions, the collection and distribution of the treasury, and the place of the Catholic Church in the social order were the cause of constant confrontations that led to 8 national and 14 regional wars during the 19th century, and that with the Constitution of 1886, unleashed in the war of a thousand days”

However, according to the previous quote from the article by Emma Wills, the government only unleashed a political disorder and when in the 20th century an attempt was made to create a group of peasants who had support from the Left for an agrarian reform that would reestablish some of their land they stripped of the legal personality withdrawing all the support and undoing the reform, this led to many of the rules of support and protection were evaded and reserved aside so that now more than 50 years later it is still negotiated to happen with those displaced peasants who They are still without direction and without a decent home that was violently taken from them.

### Victims: an important point in the conflict

Then, according to the two previous variables, you can talk about a third and last one in which the victims are protagonists and as recently seen in President Santos’ Peace Negotiation, one of the items on the agenda is how to give back to the victims of physical, psychological and moral damage, it should be noted that when referring to victims we do not only speak about those affected by the armed groups but also the members of these groups and their reintegration into society; as it is spoken in (Transnational Justice in Colombia, s.f) (...) “The Justice and Peace Law had as its object” to facilitate peace processes and individual or collective reintegration into civil life of members of illegal armed groups, guaranteeing the rights of victims to the truth,

justice and reparation. “This law was proposed to guarantee all the rights of the victims through a special criminal process, different from the ordinary one, in which the postulated ex-combatants are potential beneficiaries of alternative sentences (between 5 and 8 years of imprisonment), change to tell the truth about their belonging to the armed group, contribute to the reparation of the victims and national reconciliation “(nd)

The recent ruling of the Constitutional Court, which declares the Legal Framework for Peace to be enforceable and establishes that Congress must respect certain “parameters of interpretation” to prevent subsequent laws from fostering impunity, reaffirms that these obligations do not represent an obstacle to a negotiated end to the conflict, but an integral component to ensure that the peace agreement is sustainable in the long term. In an opinion of a victim of the conflict, Jineth Bedoya, who was a sub-editor of the weekly magazine, who was also seen to suffer kidnapping, torture and rape, by members of the FARC, she believes in an interview with the *El Tiempo* newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

(...) “The simple fact that they have reached an agreement on the issue of justice is already a significant step forward. We, the people who were somehow victims, are not going to give back to our children, nor our life, nor our tranquility, nor what we have lost psychologically, physically and materially. That is irreparable. So, if the perpetrators were 100 years in prison, it would not be a solution either. What the victims ask is the truth. The basis of the change in this country is that. Whether it is five or eight years is a symbolic penalty. Those who do not believe in the peace process fall into something that is very bad: sowing anxiety and the feeling that the peace process is on its way to impunity. What is it for people who have not been victims of impunity?”(Nd). According to this, it can be said that there are many perspectives on the conflict, some in favor and others against, in the way of seeing all the factors and variables must be taken into account for the same and realize that many Sometimes the most affected are those who should have an opinion on the word because they are the ones who suffer all these consequences, hence the talk of a plurality of opinions in Colombia internally about the conflict, some positively and others more negative.

### Conclusion

Throughout the work you can see how this conflict has been spreading in Colombia, observing it and as some authors have had different stages and key moments, it is a very long process that has been well known for more than 50 years, that is to say more than half a century, which is already considered one of the longest of all in terms of internal conflicts, that is why this work initially was well pointed out to analyze three variables regarding the armed conflict in Colombia. To clarify a bit these were: the first as it affects or helps international organizations, and countries in it, the second was to publicize the perspectives of academics and common people on how they saw in conflict and a possible reconciliation and finally, the third was to analyze the armed conflict and its victims. Already analyzing these three variables and having obtained information and data, we can reach a conclusion of each, the first can be said that there have been different stages in the international intervention, at first was not taken into account in the agendas and the important organisms of the world, but little by little that the world became globalized was gaining importance and many countries were aware of the problem of which Colombia lives, that is where there have already been several interventions from some organisms such as the UN, CIRC, NGOs, the United Nations, among others, for not extending, and also European countries, and North America, especially the USA, have offered these

aids of all kinds, both logistics, as mediators, or help with victims, intervene in negotiation tables, etc. In other words, if there has been help that can be said to have influenced the conflict enough, although this is not over yet, with these aids is a point in favor of the end of the existing conflict, although there are still no results concrete in the tables, it is necessary to clarify and emphasize.

The second variable leaves many things to discuss and that is an issue of importance in every opinion in Colombia, since this conflict has affected both directly and indirectly many things of the country, both political, economic, social, throughout its history, by There are all kinds of opinions and thoughts on this subject both by some academics who are experts in the subject, as well as the common people, and even more so by the victims who have suffered because of this conflict and left their mark on them. his memories, that is to say, it can be said that in this variable there are many opinions and very divergent, but the way you see it should have a more positive attitude because sometimes it is very pessimistic and negative which does not help peace, as well as the fact that the Colombians themselves must already undertake actions that are consistent not only with the conflict that is experienced, but on the other hand a peace in all social and labor fields. Regarding the third variable it is easy to show that there are many victims that this conflict has left, and they are alarming figures which can be observed not only the number of casualties, and deaths that have left, but on the other side the thousands and millions of displaced people who leave day by day and who on the one hand are imprisoned in the streets of large cities trying to live and sustain a daily bread, and even more alarming that the government of the country is not strong and effective enough to be able to do something with all these victims as they are every day added to this list of people who are unprotected in every sense of the word without anyone or very few offer him a hand.

Finally and as a way of reflection is that we also answer the question that was raised at the beginning, according to what was already talked about the variables, hence it can be inferred that although there are all kinds of opinions and issues of debate both by international organizations and the internal perspectives of the country itself, we must reach a consolidation of a more positive vision of what is achieved and what can be achieved, since it is not only talking about the issue but putting each One your grain of sand as they say commonly. As Camilo Azcárate expresses it in an interview made by time:<sup>11</sup> (...) “We Colombians must accustom ourselves to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes. There you have to start. Everyone in Colombia has to look at who has victimized and say: we made a mistake, and this is what we are going to do so that it does not happen again in the future, and to compensate them. The

reconciliation is that after looking back, we must look forward “(nd) As he expresses it, it is a very important factor, since this will give one more step to the peace so longed for by so many Colombians and their victims, so even though there are all kinds of variables that can be analyzed in this conflict, in this work we wanted to go into this because sometimes you have to refresh and realize the multiple perspectives and analyzes that occur in all parts of the conflict, and that there are multiple currencies of the face that are worth observing not only in texts and books, but in the daily life of each Colombian.<sup>12,13</sup>

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## Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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