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Dorly Castaneda

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Introduction

The Colombian conflict is one of the oldest armed conflicts in the world with more than 50 years of violence. International attention for its resolution came only towards the end of the 1990s when the Colombian government was holding peace dialogues with the guerrillas (FARC - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and ELN-National Liberation Army). In this post cold war context, a pacific resolution seemed possible with the direct support of the United States (US), neighbouring countries, international organizations, European countries and the European Union (EU). All these different international actors came in with their own understandings of the conflict, its causes and parties, and of the role the international community could play in ending the violence. After three years of dialogues, the process failed and the international community found itself divided among those supporting an open confrontation and those supporting the research of a pacific resolution of the conflict. By then the global context had transformed dramatically with the 9/11 attacks.

The US was a determinant actor in the peace process and its failure. As the main international actor in Colombia, its mistrust towards the peace dialogues and the consequent support to the Plan Colombia as an antidrug strategy marked the process¹. The EU appeared as a counterbalance to this position with the defence of an ideal of peacebuilding. However, this original position was undermined as the EU common foreign policy was weakened by the Iraq war divisions among member states. The

¹ In fact, the US supported the peace process in 1998 and even Peter Romero, assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, send a representative for holding a “secret” meeting with the FARC international representative Raul Reyes, in December 1998 in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, their position changed after the assassination of three American indigenists in February 1999. Semana, « Jaque a la paz », in *Semana*, N 879, 8-15 March 1999, pp 22-26.

counterbalance became an ODA focused bet for peace. This paper focuses on this EU action for peace in Colombia. Indeed, it studies the EU as an international actor through its peacebuilding programs from the grassroots level called the “Peace Laboratories”. The Peace Laboratories are development programs financed by the EU in conflict zones in Colombia since 2002. Their total budget is 109€ millions coming from the EU Official Development Aid (ODA) for Colombia (see Annexe 1). There are 3 Peace Laboratories located in six regions where the population is highly affected by the violence and armed actors try to impose their control (see Annexe 2). Despite their small size and unobserved impact in the general conflict resolution, the Peace Laboratories have caused interesting institutional changes at the local, national and international levels.

The EU’s position in Colombia gives a hint on the civilian operation in conflict countries as well as on the kind of actor the EU can actually be. Indeed, the EU’s economic weight in the world and in Latin America in particular, has increased dramatically in the last two decades. However, the EU still is a political dwarf. It is in fact a challenge to study this non-identified actor, this “ensemble politique”², on the international stage because of its unfinished structure. Nevertheless, the EU can be analysed as an international actor under construction as Betherton and Vogler³ suggest. Moreover, the EU can be considered an international actor since it has developed a wide variety of policy instruments to pursue European common interests through collective action in the international system⁴. In fact, the EU has shown an overwhelming capacity to finance its own policy decisions, by allocating resources through a decision making process,

² Zaki Laidi, *La Norme sans la Force : l’énigme de la puissance européenne*, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2008. p 151

³ BRETHERTON, Charlotte, VOGLER, John, *The EU as a global actor*, Routledge, 2006,

⁴ MITH, Michael, « Implementation: making the EU’s International Relations Work », in HILL, Christopher, SMITH, Michael (eds), *International Relations and the EU*, 2005, p154-173, p154.

carrying out policies with its own tools⁵. For many authors⁶, there is a European Foreign policy understood as all the actions taken by the EU on the international stage pursuing “domestic values, interests and policies of the EU”⁷. It does not include member states foreign policies and it comprises issues from economics (trade and aid), politics (diplomacy), security and defence. In this way, European foreign policy has specific means for up taking its goals.

Under this perspective about the EU as an actor under construction able to carry out concrete foreign policies, the EU’s action in Colombia is the confirmation of the use of an instrument of foreign policy, ODA, for political goals. Indeed, ODA cannot be seen as a simple technical instrument that does not imply a political position. As Anderson states, this political aspect of cooperation is even more evident in conflict countries where development and humanitarian programs quickly become part of the conflict⁸. Thus, the Peace Laboratories as ODA programs are more than classical development programs focused on service delivery. They reveal a political position vis-à-vis the conflict resolution. Does this experience means that the EU counts on this mean for being not only an international actor but an international actor for peace?

⁵ See the approaches adopted by SMITH, Karen, *European Union Foreign Policy in a changing World*, Cambridge, Polity,2003, and SMITH, Hazel. *European Union Foreign Policy : What It Is and What It Does*. London ; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2002.

⁶ This paper takes in consideration Petiteville and Telo approaches to foreign policy. Petiteville proposes the concept of “politique internationale” understood as the set of actions, speeches and procedures attributable to the EU and meant to produce an effect on the international field . PETITEVILLE, Franck, *La politique internationale de l’Union Européenne*, Presses de Sciences Po, 2006, p18. Telo uses the concept of “structural foreign policy” in order to challenge the classical Westphalian model of inter-state relations. It includes the various dimensions of external relations and not only the CFSP, meaning “both the ends and the means, economics and politics, efficacy and democratic legitimization, direct accountability and multilateral commitment”. TELO, Mario, *Europe: a civilian power? European Union, global governance, World Order*, NY, Palgrave, 2006, p206

⁷ SMITH, Hazel, Op.Cit, p7.

⁸ ANDERSON, Mary, *Do no harm: how aid can support peace or war*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Colorado, US, 2009.

A careful look at the Peace Laboratories proposal allows to analyse the EU as an international actor in Latin America and to assess its capacity to propose a model of action for “conflict countries”. The paper argues that Colombia has been the stage for a process of creation of a common European foreign policy, which is based on the use of ODA for peacebuilding from the local level in the midst of a conflict. The EU pursues a “learning by doing” process with the Peace Laboratories which can contribute to the emergence of a European civilian policy of peacebuilding during conflict. However the general action omits an essential element which is the reach of minimum conditions of security in order to be able to carry out any project. The first part of this paper looks at why the EU decided to participate in the resolution of the Colombian conflict, and the process through which the EU’s particular approach was framed. For that, it explains the importance of ODA in the EU’s foreign policy and then explains the Peace Laboratories as a foreign policy response to the US involvement in the Andean Region through the war on drugs. In the second part the paper analyses the initial European approach to peace in Colombia and compares it with the US one. In the third part, it studies how the European action is perceived in Colombia by the two main political actors involved in the EU’s development programs: the Colombian State and civil society organizations. This part looks at the achievements and limits of the EU’s programs in Colombia with respect to their capacity to transform the Colombian State fragilities and its relations with civil society organizations. Then the last section summarizes the dilemmas the EU has faced in Colombia as an international action for peace. The paper concludes with an analysis of the emergence of a European civilian tool for peacebuilding in conflict-prone contexts.

This study is part of a PhD research in International Relations about the EU action in Colombia. It is based on official documents and interviews carried out in Brussels, Paris, Madrid, The Hague, Bogota and four conflict regions in Colombia where the EUs programs take place.

■ Why did the EU get involved in the resolution of the Colombian conflict ?

The EU is the biggest donor in the world, accounting for 60% of official development assistance (member states and European Commission aid taken together). The European Commission manages more than a fifth of EU development aid, with a European Community's aid budget amounting to € 8.5 billion in 2007⁹. The Commission is the first humanitarian donor in the world through the former ECHO office and third largest OECD donor¹⁰. Assistance is provided to more than 160 countries, territories or organisations worldwide. The EU is also the main trade partner of poorest countries: 40% of EU imports come from developing countries¹¹.

This information is proudly displayed by every site and publications about the EU external relations. It is always an argument supporting that the EU is a global actor very important for the South. Indeed, the use of ODA has played an important role in the image that the EU has in the international scene. In effect, aid helps the EU in multiple ways. First, it establishes contacts with the South; second, it creates the image of an actor engaged with the world's poor¹². Third, development cooperation proves it belongs to a group of donor states and therefore has the right of participating in a western dominated debate that conveys values and good practices. Four, it allows to pursue multiple policy objectives (commercial, security). The European development policy is therefore part of a more general action of

⁹ It does not include the EDF budget (European Development Fund) created in 1958 with member states contributions not considered common budget.

¹⁰ Compared with other multilateral institutions, the volume of Community ODA alone is larger than that of the World Bank's International Development Association and several times that of the United Nations Development Programme. For statistics see: <http://development.donoratlas.eu/>.

¹¹ http://www.oecd.org/document/35/0,3343,en_2649_34447_42458595_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/world/what/solidarity/index_en.htm

¹² ARTS and DICKSON, Op.Cit. p14

the EU: the definition of its international profile based on liberal traditions¹³.

One of the priority areas of the Cooperation Policy of the EU (since 2005 as indicated in the European Consensus of Development), and one objective of the EU's foreign policy in general, is Conflict prevention. Although the concept is not well defined¹⁴, it refers to actions directed at intrastate violent conflict and two kinds of instruments are available, short and long term.. The former are used when preventive measures have not worked and it becomes necessary to react rapidly in order to avoid imminent violence; they include political dialogue, observers, military interventions, peace enforcement, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, demining, humanitarian aid (Rapid Reaction Mechanism). The later are used to address the root causes of conflict, identified by the EU as political, social and economical such as inequality, poverty, corruption, lack of institutions, etc.

However, the balance of EU's action in conflict countries around the world is modest¹⁵. For instance, the increasing violence in the Balkans showed the limits of the EU's international action, first in Bosnia and Croatia in 1993, then in Kosovo in 1999. Also its absence in early warned conflicts such as Darfur showed its little proactive capacity. One of the reasons of this slow learning process is that conflict prevention demands coherence and coordination of instruments from what was called pillar 1 (trade, aid,

¹³ PETITEVILLE, Op.Cit. 457. Development cooperation and trade are considered the heart of the EU's external action. The author argues that the EU has adapted to the end of the Cold War by merging the values discourse of cooperation with its politisation. This constitutes a "Cooperating Diplomacy" reflecting a soft power.

¹⁴ For a detailed description of the EU's "catch-all" concept see: KRONENBERGER, Vincent, WOUTERS, Jan, "Introduction", in KRONENBERGER, Vincent, WOUTERS, Jan (eds), *Op.Cit.*, pXXVI

¹⁵ RUMMEL, Reinhardt, "The EU's involvement in Conflict Preventio. Strategy and Practice", in KRONENBERGER, Vincent, WOUTERS, Jan (eds), *The European Union and Conflict Prevention. Policy and Legal Aspects*, ASSER PRESS, The Hague, 2004, pp 67- 92, p 70

agriculture policies, immigration policies), 2 (CFSP¹⁶), and 3 (cooperation against illicit trade, money laundering)¹⁷. For Petiteville the definition of EU's external policies is systematically put to "l'épreuve des conflits". In fact there is a close relation between the European action (and no-action) in conflict and the formulation of foreign policies, including development policy. Today the Commission explains in its website: "The lessons of this experience were not lost. In the light of the Balkan wars, and of conflicts in Africa in the 1990s, the EU has created a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) within the overall framework of the CFSP"¹⁸.

But civico-military operations are not the only means employed for conflict prevention goals. Purely civilian actions based on ODA and trade have shown great success. Indeed, trade and regionalism are the basis of the construction of the EU itself. The "liberal peace" character of the EU has been visible in the enlargement process where the principle was: trade among nations can help to build peace. This means that the European integration process is first and foremost a peace project. Hill places this aspect at the heart of the EU values¹⁹ while Smith calls it part of the European identity. International action goals are agreed on the basis of this "identity"²⁰ (that comprises multilateralism, promotion of human rights and freedom, democracy and rule of law, economic and social progress, sustainable development, as established in the Treaty on European Union) which gradually brings a common way of acting in the

¹⁶ For example the "Petersberg tasks", defined in June 1992. They are the military tasks that look for humanitarian, peacekeeping and crisis management goals that the European Union (EU) and the Western European Union (WEU) are empowered to do. http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/petersberg_tasks_en.htm. The missions included by the end of 2006, a total of 16 missions in the Balkans (6), Africa (5), the Middle East (3), the South Caucasus (1) and South-East Asia (1). For an analysis of the evolution of this particular instrument see EMERSON, Michael, et al, *Evaluating the EU's Crisis Missions in the Balkans*, CEPS Paperback Series (CEPS Paperback Series), issue: 2 / 2007, pages: 1158, on www.ceeol.com

¹⁷ NINO PEREZ, Op Cit, p142.

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/world/what/working_for_a_safer_world/index_en.htm

¹⁹ HILL, Christopher, 2005, OpCit

²⁰ Op.Cit. SMITH, Michael, p156

world. Manners calls this the EU's civilian capacity²¹. Does this mean that the EU is an international actor able to use civilian means for pursuing civilian goals such as peace abroad²²?

As Kronenbeger states, the European success in preventing violent conflict from occurring on its borders through the use of civil means, mainly trade and dialogue, "leads one to the idea that the EU can also contribute to the prevention of conflicts outside its territory"²³. Hill even finds that the reason why conflict prevention has acquired such importance in the EU foreign policy goals is this "civilian power" profile²⁴. For Telo the EU is in fact a civilian power because its policies have implications in global politics and security matters. During the 90s, the EU was called for, and willing to, move beyond the traditional commercial and cooperation dimensions, making clearer its "international identity"²⁵. In this perspective, civilian instruments such as trade and cooperation policies are essential aspects in the construction of the EU as an international actor for global peace. First of all, these are policies upon which all member states agree. Second, as Marjorie Lister argues, Europe could play an important role as "champion of the south"²⁶. This role would be beneficial to the integration process and for the world economic success of the EU. Moreover, pursuing conflict prevention purposes through civil instruments brings rewards such as ensuring security outside and inside Europe by avoiding conflict's spill over (instability, immigration, for instance), guaranteeing the safety of European economic assets and investments overseas, keeping trade links

²¹ LAIDI, OP Cit

²² This refers to the traditional debate over Europe as a civilian power. For a great summary of the debate from Francois Duchenes notion of civilian power Europe in the 70s, to Johan Galtung's European capitalist superpower, and the opposing view of Europe Puissance, until today's positions. See ORBIE, Jan, "Civilain Power Europe. Review of the Original and Current debates", in *Cooperation and Conflict*, No 41 (1), 2006, pp123-128.

²³ KRONENBERGER, and WOUTERS, op Cit p XVII

²⁴ HILL, Christopher, 2005, OpCit

²⁵ Op.Cit.TELO, Mario, p 206

²⁶ LISTER, 1997, in Arts and Dickson, OP.Cit. p4

in a region, and avoiding being called at a later stage to take on more costly and painful actions such as a military intervention.

Nevertheless, on this discussion over the civilian nature of the European power, two clarifications are important. First, as Laidi recalls, civilian power does not mean that the EU does not pursue selfish interests in the same manner as a State. It refers to the use of civilian instruments for reaching foreign policy goals, altruistic and selfish alike. Second, civilian power does not mean that the EU cannot use coercion in order to influence its partners. Indeed, the EU has such means at its disposal: access to its market, enlargement, and ODA, can all, from a third country standpoint, be considered instruments of coercion since they include sanctions and rigorous conditionalities²⁷. On top of this, the military element is not completely absent²⁸. The difference with the traditional perspective of power therefore resides on the (lower?) priority given to the military force, not in its absence²⁹. Thus the civilian power is neither the use of purely civilian means or the pursuit of uniquely civilian goals.

The use of cooperation instruments to reach peace implies that the EU tests a civilian profile where means and goals are civilians. The European action in Colombia is part of the small EU's set of actions in conflict countries. It is a case of ODA used without other policy tools for the explicit

²⁷ See: the conclusions of HILL, Christopher, SMITH, Michael , “Acting for Europe: Reassessing the European Union’s place in International Relations, in HILL, Christopher, SMITH, Michael (eds), *International Relations and the EU*, 2005, pp388-406; p 402. Also: Op. Cit. LAIDI, Zaki;

²⁸ SMITH, Karen, “The End of Civilian power EU: a welcome demise or cause of concern?”, in *The international spectator*, 35, p 11-28, p 28. Quoted in ORBIE, Jan, « Civilian Power Europe. Review of the Original and Current debates », in *Cooperation and Conflict, Vol41(1)*, 2006, p 123-128.

²⁹ There is the European Security and Defence Policy and the use of military action in support of humanitarian action but this is not considered military integration. The debate about the possibility of having a military power analysis also the implication it may have on the transatlantic relations. The UK and some of the new member states do not will to abandon the protection from the US and in any case, the military gap between the EU and the US would be extremely costly to reduce. See Op.Cit, SMITH, Michael, p162

purpose of transforming an armed conflict and preventing its recurrence and intensification (and not mainly for fighting poverty or easing the insertion in the global economy)³⁰. Military aid or presence is not part of the policy for peace in Colombia. Thus, EU's programs in Colombia are an example of a political bet for a pacific resolution of the conflict through civilian means. The Colombian case shows the real capacity of the EU as an international actor in a region penetrated by the US, in a country particularly keen on being an ally of the US in its war on terror. By choosing to increase EU's civilian know-how, the EU is challenging the very definition of power on the international scene. However, in hard conflict conditions, the civilian instruments may reach its limits, as a purely military approach does in a lull between in an armed conflict. Why did the EU decide to act in Colombia and what was its strategy?

■ **EU and the Colombian case**

The Colombian conflict is one of the oldest armed conflicts in the world with more than 50 years of violence. Since the independence from the Spanish domination in the XIX century, the construction of the Colombian state involved confrontations among traditional political parties, conservative and liberal. Their diverging interpretations of state, church and market's roles are at the origin of years of violence. In the 1950s, this violence was at its peak when civil war irrupted all over the country. Political elites attempted to impose their party ruple through violence over the whole decade, until 1958. Under the logic of the Cold War, Colombian elites found a political arrangement, the Frente Nacional which ended up in 1974. This deal guaranteed that both parties would alternate at taking

³⁰ Officially ODA conveys the European identity. In the Development Consensus is written that "Development based on Europe's democratic values - respect for human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, good governance, gender equality, solidarity, social justice and effective multilateral action, particularly through the UN". In http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/consensus_en.cfm

power every four years for 16 years. The result was the formal preservation of democratic institutions but total inaccessibility to the political stage for any other party, especially leftist movements. Thus, in 1964 the guerrillas ELN and FARC were formally created, and in 1974, the M19 urban guerrillas were constituted as a reaction to an electoral fraud that brought a traditional party to power despite the official end of the Frente Nacional.

Armed confrontations with rural guerrillas affected mostly isolated areas of the country at the beginning. However their military capabilities increased as Bogota did not have the political will to find a solution, either military or pacific, until the 80s. Since then, governments have either indiscriminately opted for open confrontation or political dialogues as preferred means to address the guerrilla's challenge. But the increase in drug trafficking in the 80s and the consolidation of organized paramilitary forces in the 90s radically transformed the political stage. Traditional approaches to peace negotiations and open violence became highly expensive in political terms because of the cartel's drugmoney and the multiplication of actors. Indeed, guerrillas' involvement in the production and traffic of cocaine did not only increased their military capacity, it also blurred their initial political grievances. Besides, paramilitaries extended war and narcotraffic activities throughout the country, penetrating all levels of the Colombian government from local organizations to highest national circles.

At the end of the 1990s, the EU was eager to jump in the unknown Colombian stage with an international pacifist agenda. The frame of mind in the EU was over the definition of common foreign policy objectives and the use of ODA. International debates discussed ODA's efficient use in the post cold war world and the importance of tackling internal conflicts. There was a rather optimistic mood in the donors' community concerning their capacity to address violent conflicts in the developing world. In this context, the EU's was developing its approach to cooperation and conflict

prevention. Indeed, the first general document for defining a common development policy was published in 2000³¹. It presented Conflict prevention as a main objective and ODA as an instrument of foreign policy adapted to this objective. By the time the peace processes started in Colombia, the EU was jointly: 1) initializing the Development policy reform after the Santer's crisis at the European Commission, and 2) integrating the lessons from its difficult experience in the Balkans where Europeans had to call the US for help in order to contain violence. The general principles of EU's cooperation policy were not yet agreed on³² and the practice was still under construction. Conflict prevention was (and still is) a "catch-all" concept that was defined case by case³³.

The Colombian peace process was then perceived as an opportunity for the EU to become an international actor. Indeed, the EU's decision-makers judged it possible to get involved considering the European experience in Central America as well as the expectations from international and local actors in Colombia as to the role the EU could play³⁴. Moreover, the transatlantic dimension was present in the EU's decisions in the Colombian case, a country influenced by the US³⁵. Colombian actors, from civil society

³¹ Council and Commission joint Statement on EC Development policy of November 2000. Quoted by WYATT, Dominic, « Que cooperacion para qué desarrollo ? El futuro de la politica europea de cooperaci3n al desarrollo », in *Cuadernos Europeos del Deusto*, No 34, 2006, pp 167- 186, p 171

³² In 2005, member states and EU's bodies agreed upon the European Consensus on Development. See: JOINT STATEMENT BY THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COMMISSION: THE EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT".

³³ For a detailed description of the EU's "catch-all" concept see: KRONENBERGER, Vincent, WOUTERS, Jan, "Introduction", in KRONENBERGER, Vincent, WOUTERS, Jan (eds), *Op.Cit.*, pXXVI.

³⁴ See CASTANEDA, Dorly, "Qu3 signifi can los Laboratorios de paz para la Union Europea?", in *Revista Colombia Internacional*, "ONG, Estados y Derechos Humanos", No 69, Enero-Junio 2009.

³⁵ According to Rosenau, "penetration" is a kind of interaction in which external actors participate directly in the definition of the values of the society or in the mobilization of the society for supporting the external actor's goal (ROSENAU, James, "Pre-theories and theories of Foreign Policy", in VASQUEZ, John, (ed) *Classics of International Relations*,

organizations to government bodies, saw the EU as a counterweight to the US. In fact, the EU was particularly attentive to the Human rights network and understood that the Colombian government, or part of it, was looking for the EU's political support in order to have more than one international partner, the US.

This section described the call made by Colombian actors to the European Union in the late 90s to participate to the Peace Process with the guerrillas. It shows the development of the EU's relations with the Colombian government and civil society and that the transatlantic dimension was central in these relations since the USA's support to the war polarized Colombian actors and pushed the EU to adopt a clear position for a peaceful negotiation.

■ Colombian actors' call for international participation in the conflict resolution

Until the 1999 Peace process, the participation of the International community in the Colombian conflict had been almost inexistent. The resolution of the Colombian conflict had been (and still is) considered a domestic issue³⁶. For instance, the presence of the United Nations (UN)

Upper Saddle, 1996, pp 179-190. Arlene Tickner uses this approach for her analyses of the US-Colombia relations. She argues that since the US declared drugs as a national security threat, in 1986, Washington increased its influence in Colombia determining the way internal issues such as the armed conflict are addressed. She argues that US influence also transforms the external political identity of the country passing from passive subordination to an active one. TICKNER, Arlene, "Colombia" es lo que los actores estatales hacen de ella: una (re)lectura de la política exterior colombiana hacia Estados Unidos", in *Prioridades y Desafíos de la Política exterior Colombiana*, Bogotá, 2002, pp 352- 396.

³⁶ The peace negotiations in Colombia started before the consolidation of communist guerrillas. In the 50s the two main political parties, conservative and Liberal, were disputing power through violence generating a civil war, a period called "La Violencia". The peace agreement ending with such violence was the "Frente Nacional", a sharing of

had not been considered necessary by both the government or any guerrilla group. In fact, the Colombian conflict is not an “international conflict” since: 1) it is not a direct threat to international peace and security, 2) it is not a “national liberation war” based on the principle of self-determination of people, 3) it is not a war against a recognised “belligerent” force. Therefore the UN’s presence would only depend on the Colombian actors will and not on a Security Council decision under chapter VII.

During the 80s and early 90s, international actors were involved as enablers, in contrast to mediators. Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, Spain, Germany have played the role of enablers in different dialogues with the FARC and the ELN³⁷. The conflict was subject of international attention in the late 90s because of official government campaigns and the transnationalization of Human Rights (HR) activists’ networks. The multiple peace operations and negotiations taking place around the world provided incentives for a Colombian peace process to be taken seriously. The Colombian government and the HR activists’ network called for international attention in the conflict resolution. At the beginning they were pushing in the same direction (calling for participation) but gradually, as negotiations deteriorated, they pushed international actors in different directions. The EU and US’ roles reflect this division.

the power between traditional political elites. This agreement did end violence but closed the door to any other kind of political party.

³⁷ President Turbay (1978-1982) had negotiations with the guerrilla M-19 with the support of Cuba and Tom Farer and professor Tomas Brueghental closed to the Inter American Human Rights Court President Gaviria (1990-1994) had the support of Venezuela and Mexico for holding there dialogues with the FARC. President Samper (1994-1998) negotiated with the ELN in Spain and Germany (See CEPEDA ULLOA, Fernando, “Le role de la communauté internationale dans le processus de paix”, in *Problèmes de l’Amérique Latine*, No 44, Spring 2002, pp 81-100, p82).

■ *Colombian government's "internationalisation" of the Peace process*

At the end of the 90s Colombia was getting in a new cycle of peace negotiations. After a rather chaotic and violent period from 94-98, Andres Pastrana was elected president, mostly because of his proposal of peace negotiations with the two main guerrilla groups FARC and ELN. Since his political campaign for president, Pastrana expressed his intention to invite international actors to support the peace process both politically and economically. The "Diplomacia para la Paz" was the strategy to "internationalise" the Colombian peace process and take advantage of the already internationalised conflict³⁸. Indeed, since the 90s Colombia has been known as a threat to regional stability with its drug production, internal migration, refugees, and environmental damages. During the Cold War the situation was not so visible compared with other Latin-American countries where authoritarian regimes and/or guerrillas were present. But when the democratization wave overtook the continent, Colombia persisted as a point of insecurity. Considering this particularity, the Pastrana government called for a "shared responsibility"³⁹ in the drugs problem and pointed out the consequences of globalization on the conflict dynamics, most notably by expanding the drug market, therefore making guerrillas and paramilitaries' access to weapons and financial resources easier and directly fuelling the war. He then called for a better understanding of the Colombian conflict and increased participation in the

³⁸ The Internationalisation of the Colombian conflict has been extensively discussed by Colombian scholars; see CARVAJAL, Leonardo, PARDO, Rafael, "Internacionalización del Conflicto y Procesos de Paz", in ARDILA, Martha, CARDONA, Diego, THICKNER, Arlene, (eds), *Prioridades y Desafíos de la Política Exterior Colombiana*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Bogota, October 2002, p 182- 236.

³⁹ "Shared responsibility" refers to the responsibility that consumers of drugs have on the existence of the market. The argument is that the drugs' supply follows the drugs' demand. In that sense, consumers are as responsible as producers. According to Puyo, Colombia mentioned the principle of Shared responsibility since the 80s for negotiating the SGP between the CAN and the European Community (PUYO TAMAYO, Gustavo Adolfo, "La política exterior colombiana frente a la Unión Europea en la década de 1990", in *Prioridades y desafíos de la política exterior colombiana*", 2002.

search for peace through dialogue⁴⁰. He wanted to embed his foreign policy in the global post cold war activism for peace.

Dialogues with the FARC started in November 1998 with the creation of a demilitarized area called “Zona de Despeje”, 42000 km² in the department of Caqueta. A broad agenda of negotiations was established in May 1999. But the dialogues came to a halt in November 2000 and violence kept rising. Both actors, guerrillas and government, were trying to show their military strength all over the country as a way of imposing their own conditions on negotiations. The increases in violence also came from the principal “spoilers”, the paramilitary groups, which had grown in number and strength since the Samper period (1994-1998). Other spoilers were present within the government (part of the military forces) and the guerrillas (some militarist factions of the FARC)⁴¹.

Negotiations with the ELN started under Samper. A preliminary agreement was reached in Maguncia, Germany, where a “National Convention” was planned with the government, the civil society and the ELN. However, Pastrana concentrated all his efforts on the dialogues with the FARC and ignored the not so modest achievements with the ELN⁴².

Pastrana’s “Diplomacia para la paz” widened the international participation in the peace negotiations but did not change the nature of its role in mediation. The government’s goal was to engage the US, the European countries, the EU and international organisations in the peace negotiations with the FARC and the ELN. His priority was the recovery of

⁴⁰ Analysis made by the Foreign Affairs minister in 2004, RAMIREZ OCAMPO, Augusto, “El Papel dela Comunidad Internacaional en Colombia”, in Conciliation resources.

⁴¹ This point about « spoilers » is treated in detailed in the second part of this dissertation. For the analysis of spoilers of peace processes see STEDMAN, Stephen, “Introduction”, in STEDMAN, Stephen John, ROTHCHILD, Donald, and COUSENS, Elizabeth (eds.), *Ending civil wars: the implementation of Peace Agreements*, Lynne Reiner and International Peace Academy, Boulder and NY, 2003. For a general application of the concept to the Colombian case see: CHERNICK, Op.Cit, p47

⁴² CHERNICK, Op. Cit; p 139.

the relations with the US, highly damaged under the government of Ernesto Samper⁴³. But the diversification of international actors capable to counterweight US approach was also important. With the technical support of the Inter-American Development Bank, donors' roundtables ? took place in London (19 June 2000), Madrid (7 July 2000), Bogota (October 24 2000), Brussels (30 April 2001).

Human Rights network "transnationalization"⁴⁴

In the end of the 90s not only did the Colombian conflict and peace process became international, but so did the local NGOs advocating Human Rights and peace. In fact, the HR network had a strictly national and local profile until the early 90s. Then, structural changes in the country transformed the activism of the civil society. The first transformation was the economic and political liberalisation; the second, a change in the constitution involving former guerrillas, and the third, the decision to wage "an integral war" against the two main guerrillas, FARC and ELN. According to Mauricio Garcia-Duran⁴⁵, a new kind of civil society emerged in this context. Small local organizations as well as national associations advocated not only HR but also peace at multiple levels from the sub

⁴³ During Ernesto Samper administration, bilateral relations US-Colombia were highly damaged. Samper was suspected of financing his political campaign with narcotrafic money of the Cartel de Cali. The US "descertificate" Colombia (did not certificate Colombia as a country doing enough against drugs) and denied the visa for the President According to the Colombian former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guillermo Fernandez de Soto, the "normalisation" of the relations with the US is a main achievement of the Pastrana administration, see FERNANDEZ DE SOTO, Guillermo, « Logros de la politica exterior de Colombia : 1998-2002 », in *Colombia Internacional*, No 53, september – december 2001, pp76 – 93, p 78.

⁴⁴ Using the concept of Transnational networks: KECK Margaret, SIKKINK Kathryn, *Activists beyond Borders, Advocacy networks in international politics*, Cornell University Press, London, 1998.

⁴⁵ GARCIA-DURAN, Mauricio, *Movimeinto por la paz en Colombia 1978-2003*, CINEP, Bogota, September 2006

national to international⁴⁶. The connection with other non-state organizations in Europe and North America made the militancy possible..

The network for HR in Colombia was well established in Europe by the time of the Peace Process. Indeed, in 1994 the “London Agreement” was reached among European organizations in solidarity with the defence of HR in Colombia. Later on, in 1995 they had organized at the European Parliament in Brussels, the first Conference on HR in Colombia where more than 350 people assisted including European Member of Parliaments (MPs), politicians, European and Colombian NGOs, and a delegation from the Colombian government. This meeting was followed by an intense mobilization for HR defence in Colombia. A platform of organizations was consolidated: ODHACO (Organization International pour les Droits de l’homme en Colombie) in Brussels, Coordinadora Europa- Colombia in Bogota, and later on Coordinadora USA- Colombia in the US.

The transnational network pushed the HR subject on the Samper agenda. In fact, the Conference in Brussels insisted that the UN send a special envoy? for HR to Colombia. The presence of such UN representative is usually an international sign of an important deterioration of the situation with regards to human rights. The Samper administration was opposed the idea but was not strong enough to ignore the requests for a UN presence. Then, the government made a compromise with the civil society organizations and accepted the office of the UNHCHR in 1996.

In 1999, the peace process raised expectations among the platform members. There were mobilizations to include the civil society in the

⁴⁶ There were national initiatives for peace since 1987, Programa por la Paz, led by the Jesuites. However, the Integral War launched by Gaviria in November 1992 provoked a national meeting of organization against the war and for peace in November 1993. As a result of this meeting is born the Red Nacional de Iniciativas por la Paz y contra la Guerra (REDEPAZ). REDEPAZ has succeeded until today to be present in national and international discussions about peace and HR. See RODRIGUEZ-DAVIAUD, Ibid

negotiations and the post-conflict plan that was under discussion with international actors.

Then government and civil society called for international participation but it was not clear what for. In fact, foreign actors only acquired a clear role when the peace process was in danger of failure. In March 2001, during a particularly severe crisis in negotiations with the FARC, the International Community was allowed to participate in the peace process in the context of a meeting of International officials in the Despeje Zone. 31 Ambassadors and representatives of International organizations assisted and created the “Grupo de Facilitadores” (Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Spain, France, Italy)⁴⁷. Similarly, foreign actors played an important role for maintaining negotiations with the ELN⁴⁸. The guerrilla reacted to Pastrana’s initial disengagement with the ongoing peace process with violence. Negotiations were blocked until the “Paises Amigos” got involved (Cuba, Spain, France, Norway and Switzerland). In June 2000 a meeting took place in Geneva, Switzerland, between representatives of the Civil Society, the ELN and the government. The same year the ELN and the government met in La Habana, Cuba, and agreed to create a demilitarized area, “Zona de Encuentro”, in the south of the Department of Bolivar (Magdalena Medio region). The group “Paises Amigos” accompanied the

⁴⁷ Many times the conflict parts threatened of interrupting dialogue . The facilitators countries and the special representatives for the UN Secretary, Jan Egeland from 1999-2002) and James Lemoyne (2002-2005) played an important role for rescuing the negotiations with the ELN and the dialogues with the FARC. But in January 2002 Pastrana interrupted the process after the detention of IRA members in the Despeje Zone. The president gave 48 hours to the International Community for rescuing the process. The representative for the Secretary General, the French Ambassador (coordinator of the group of facilitators) and the Colombian Catholic Church were actively looking for a compromise and achieved it on time. But the process survived until February the 20th 2002 when Pastrana declared the end of the Dialogues. It was the official response to the FARC who took way an airplane and kidnapped the Senator presiding the Peace Commission.

⁴⁸ CARAVAJAL, Leonardo, PARDO, Rodrigo, « Internationalizacion del conflicto y Procesos de Paz », in ARDILA, Martha, et al, *Prioridades y Desafios de la politica exterior colombiana*, pp 182-236.

negotiations and Germany, Canada, Japan, Portugal were designed ‘audits’ of the zone⁴⁹.

The principal international actor in Colombia, the USA, was absent from this process. The US supported the peace process in 1998 and Peter Romero, assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, sent a representative for a “secret” meeting with the FARC international representative Raul Reyes, in December 1998 in Costa Rica. But the US position changed after the assassination of three American indigenists in February 1999⁵⁰. The US became more reluctant to participate politically in the dialogue and supported the effort mainly through the Plan Colombia, an aid package for the Colombian government in the fight against drugs.

EU and US’ roles followed the Colombian dichotomy towards the resolution of the armed conflict: war or peaceful means ?

The Plan Colombia was at core of Pastrana’s international action. It created a lot of debate in the Andean Region and among donors in Colombia because it was the result of a double dealing by the government. Indeed, the Plan Colombia was originally conceived as a “Plan Marshall” and as such, it was presented at the donors’ tables. But, as the peace process progressed with difficulties and US involvement was increasingly reluctant towards the dialogue with the FARC, two version of the plan began circulating. There was one version aiming to please more pacifist leaning members of the international community such as the EU and some of its member states, and another version done with and for the US

⁴⁹ Ibid, p 195

⁵⁰ Semana, « Jaque a la paz », in *Semana*, N 879, 8-15 March 1999, pp 22-26.

government⁵¹. The final version of the Plan Colombia was presented in Madrid, during the donors' roundtable of July 2000⁵². It was a plan strongly focused on the US strategy against drugs (70% of the budget for police, military action and fumigations) with a social component (30%). Then, under the George W. Bush administration (elected in November 2000, in office in January 2001), the Plan Colombia became regional and the military component was strengthened by merging by the war on drugs with the war against terrorism.

When the Plan Colombia turned out to be more military oriented than expected and closer to US views and preferences, the transnational network was the one who mobilized the most. Despite the heterogeneity of its members, there was a common purpose: stop the Plan Colombia and increase the European cooperation for peace and HR respect in Colombia. In 2000, the network organized multiple actions under the name "Paz Colombia", notably the Alternative Table in Madrid (June 2000) and the International conference for peace, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Colombia, held in Costa Rica (October 2000). Representatives of different governments, guerrillas and Colombian civil society organizations discussed the HR and IHL, the consequences of the war against drugs, the importance of land reform, the danger of the Plan Colombia, and put forward alternatives they expected would receive support from international organizations (mainly European). As one active member of the network writes : "Ces événements créèrent une prise de distance de l'Union européenne par rapport au Plan Colombien des Etats-Unis et l'annonce d'un programme indépendant pour appuyer le processus

⁵¹ More details about the Plan Colombia and donors' reactions are discussed in the section 2 of this chapter treating the Transatlantic relations.

⁵² RAMIREZ, Socorro, *Intervencion en Conflictos Externos. El Caso Colombiano (1994-2003)*, Colección Sede, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogota, 2004, p197

de paix. Ce fut sans conteste un succès concerté des sociétés civiles de Colombie et d'Europe »⁵³.

Indeed, the EU was not clear about how to deal with the change of perspective in the Plan Colombia. A first European attempt to clarify its support to the peace process was during the donors' table in Bogota, October 2000. The European Council announced that the EU was distancing itself from the Plan Colombia and was developing a European program in support to the peace dialogues, the civil society, the HR and IHL, the environment and regional cooperation⁵⁴. Then, in January 2001, the European Parliament made a clear statement against the Plan Colombia with 474 votes for, one against and 33 abstentions⁵⁵. It declared that the EU strongly supported the Peace process and did not accept the military strategy embedded in the Plan Colombia, viewed by the EU to be against its objectives. The resolution called for the creation of a real European program. Finally, the EU's announced 300 million dollars⁵⁶ for the Peace Process at the Donors' table of April 2001 in Brussels, and refused to participate in the Plan Colombia⁵⁷. Member states followed the common position with varying levels of conviction and also took their distance from the Plan.

While the US decided to support the Central government of Colombia, the EU listened to the civil society's claim. Indeed, Paz Colombia wanted the EU to support the peace process without being part of the Plan Colombia. The reasons: first the EU was seen as a step for pushing the HR subject on the UN agenda and therefore on the Colombian agenda, and second, it was

⁵³ These events caused the EU to take its distance from this US version of the Plan Colombia and to announce the realization of an independent program for peace in Colombia. Without a doubt This is a success attributable to the joint action of the European and Colombian civil societies³ (personal translation). WOLF, Ibid, p114

⁵⁴ COMUNICADO French Ambassador, Renaud Vignal as a representative of the EU's Council in Colombia, October 9 2000 (Quoted by CARVAJAL et al, p204)

⁵⁵ PE Resolution 1 February 2001

⁵⁶ Taking into account the EU's and member states aid.

⁵⁷ RAMIREZ, Op.Cit. p 288

the only actor capable to act as a counterweight to US cooperation. The network reached the EU by two ways: lobbying in Brussels, and lobbying in capitals such as Paris, Madrid, Rome and Berlin. In Brussels, the Commission and the Parliament were continuously informed and invited to events where the Colombian Civil society expressed their views on the conflict situation. However, the most influential lobbying was done on EU's policies in an "uploading" process coming from the capitals. The coordinator of the Colombian projects at the Secour Catholique - France, member of the Paz Colombia, has in fact pointed out that "it is more efficient to deal with national parliaments than with the European Parliament. Our NGOs are very effective in each member state. Through them information arrives in Brussels"⁵⁸.

Moreover, this transnational network was more active than the Colombian official diplomacy. For years, the information in Europe about the Colombian conflict was rather biased. News mostly came from NGOs. In fact, Colombian NGOs advocating for HR and their European partners were integrated by leftist members, some of them former guerrilleros of the M19, ELN, EPL guerrillas. The organizations gave a more radical version of facts in Europe than they did in Colombia, painting a strongly negative picture of the Colombia State⁵⁹. Until now, they denounce HR violations mostly committed by paramilitaries and militaries; ignoring the guerrillas' exactions⁶⁰. A German cooperation officer in Colombia recognises that the western newspapers do not often talk of Colombia, "there is no interest or analysis. The leftist NGOs are well organized and monopolize the debate. When Uribe comes to power and declares the NGOs as terrorists havens,

⁵⁸ Interview with Hilda Carrera, in charge of Colombia at the Secours Catholique, NGO. Paris, 5 March 2007.

⁵⁹ DAVIAUD, Op Cit; p7.

⁶⁰ This is a main point of discord among the members of the network. There are organizations that do not consider the armed struggle illegitimate and others that condemn any kind of HR violations coming from all armed actors. ROJAS, Jorge, "La construcción de la paz en Colombia: un desafío de la sociedad civil", *Controversia*, February 2004

international NGOs radicalized their position”⁶¹. Besides, there has been a vague rhetoric of peace based on the denunciation of violence which lacks concrete proposals for the government or the international cooperation⁶².

In 2001, it was clear that the US and the EU were pointing in opposite directions for the resolution of the Colombia armed conflict. During the third Donors Table, the Colombian government wanted to engage the EU in the Plan Colombia. The movement against the Plan Colombia wanted to confirm the EU’s opposition to it. By that time, the EU’s aid package was already determined but not the way it was going to be implemented. The idea of working with local organizations in the Magdalena Medio⁶³ was in the pipe. After the table, two points became clear. First, the EU did not support the Plan Colombia as was expressed before the Table by the PE and the CE. Second, the European contribution to peace was through ODA for the Peace Laboratories, and through the support to UNHCHR presence in Colombia and United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Adviser⁶⁴.

⁶¹ Interview with Olivier Lanner, Second Secretary in charge of Cooperation at the German Embassy in Colombia, Bogota, May 20 2008

⁶² DAVIAUD, Op.Cit ; p11

⁶³ Magdalena Medio is strategic region in the north of Colombia that all armed actors want to control. It has oil and mineral resources as well as fertile lands and the main river connecting the South of the country with the Atlantic. Since 1997 the Diocesis of the main city (Barrancabermeja) with a Jeuste research center (CINEP) and the National Enterprise of extraction of Oil (ECOPEtrol) launched the Peace and Development Progrma for the Magdalena Medio as a reaction to increasing violence. It is known as the PDPMM.

⁶⁴ The PDPMM experience reached the EU through the network. Francisco de Roux, PDPMM’s director, was an active member of the movement against Plan Colombia. In contrast to the NGOs advocating for HR, he had a real proposal for peace already in place. He enjoyed a strong leadership in the movement because of its charismatic personality and the Catholic Church network backing the PDPMM. In Europe, Caritas International supported his lobbying for resources in Brussels. He was looking for the EU support because the PDPMM needed 1) more money than the NGOs could bring, and 2) continuity for planning action (asking money to the government makes the budget vulnerable to political changes and transforms the civil society initiative). For the person in charge of Colombia at Secours Catholique, Pacho de Roux had a different vision of what the role of the EU could be in Colombia. While the network was demanding the application of HR exigencies for trade and cooperation relations with Colombia, Pacho de Roux saw the EU as a donor and political support for peace .

To Summarize, the EU was caught in the polarization of the Colombian society concerning the best means to reach peace. The HR network and the movement against Plan Colombia succeeded in their main objectives, to push the Colombian case in the UN Human Rights agenda with the European support and prevent the EU from supporting the Plan Colombia. For its part, the (Colombian?) government succeeded in securing Bush's support to the conflict resolution: the Plan Colombia ended up combining war against drugs (fumigations and police control) with counterinsurgency activities (military support, training, arms). However, the division among donors concerning the Plan Colombia reveals structural differences of perception between the EU and the US.

■ **Why the EU's approach to peace in Colombia is so different from the USA's approach? Motivations/justifications**

The EU announced its development programs for supporting the Peace Process, the Peace Laboratories, at the end of 2001. But by the time the programs were approved and ready, the peace processes with the FARC and the ELN were over. The guerrillas were not considered political interlocutors but rather "narcoterrorist" groups that threatened the stability of a democratic state⁶⁵. The potential "zona de encuentro" for dialogues with the ELN in the Magdalena Medio was impossible. Colombian public opinion was tired of violence and was angry against failed negotiations. This general mood was expressed in the vote for the most radical candidate of 2002 Presidential elections, Alvaro Uribe Velez. Since he took power in august 2002 until the end, in august 2010, his program focused on regaining security all over the territory. In this way,

⁶⁵ After the end of the Peace Process, Pastrana's speeches mentioned the FARC only as terrorists and "narcotraficantes" like the White House did. CEPEDA ULLOA, Op.Cit., p 90.

the guerrillas should eventually weaken to the point of being forced to sit down and negotiate their demobilization.

By the end of 2002, the Peace Laboratories seemed like an anachronism. They were meant to be programs for supporting the Peace Processes but no peace process with guerrillas was on the way⁶⁶. However, the EU kept its commitment and carried out the programs. The first laboratory started in 2002, the second in 2003 and the third peace laboratory in 2006. Why and how did the EU decide to support peace in Colombia through ODA, and to go through with the peace laboratories despite the peace process failure? A look at the US approach to peace in Colombia give some hints as to the European choice of action.

Three aspects of the international actor's rationality help to understand why the EU's proposal was willing to be original.

	<i>US</i>	EU
Threat perception	National interests, threats containment	Not clear
Reading of the conflict	Democratic State attacked by terrorists (financed with drugs)	Armed conflict with social and economic roots. State under construction
Solution at hand	Security reinforcement. Military aid complemented with ODA	Peacebuilding, support for dialogues ODA

Perception of the threat

⁶⁶ Between 2003 and 2006 there was a demobilization of paramilitary (and self-defence) groups. It is officially called a "peace process" but it is mostly a demobilization of an armed group partisan of the State. It can be seen as the legitimate recovery of the control over military operations. A peace process comprehends, by definition, opposing parties. See CHERNICK, Op.Cit. p 34.

How the Colombian conflict and its transnational dimension could represent a threat to international actors' "national" interests? From the American perspective, it is in the national interest to defend Colombia because of its geographical position and energy and natural resources in the Andean region. Military and transport control in the zone have always been important to the US. Therefore, when the US turned over the Howard base to the Panamanian government in 1999, Colombia and its borders became of particular interest to new military and transport control points in the region. Besides, US imports from Colombia as well as American capital are concentrated in energy resources such as petroleum and coal which are extracted in conflict areas⁶⁷.

The USA would also perceive action in Colombia as a way of containing threats. The main threat is drug production and commercialisation, as 90% of the cocaine consumed in the USA comes from Colombia⁶⁸. Other perceived threats may involve illegal migration as the American territory is the primary destination for the 3 million Colombians living outside the country⁶⁹. There also could be a perception of the regional stability being threatened by the Colombian conflict or by its neighbour, Venezuela. Indeed, even before 9/11, the Colombian conflict was seen as risky for the region because of possible spillovers. Moreover, today Colombia is the most loyal ally of the USA in leftist South America and the closest neighbour of Hugo Chavez's Venezuela.

From the European perspective, the defence of national interest is less clear and the politics are unexpected regarding threat containment. First of all, because of the existing complexities implied in defining European

⁶⁷ Colombia represents the 4th largest partner in the continent, notably with petroleum and coal. 40% of Colombian exports go to USA, 30% of imports come from the US and the US is the largest foreign investor in petroleum and coal. Source: WB, IMF

⁶⁸ Colombia profile, published at the web site of State Department: www>state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm

⁶⁹ GIUGALE, Marcelo, LAFOURCADE, Olivier, LUFF, Connie, Colombia. The Economic Foundation of Peace, The World Bank, Washington, dic ???2002.

interests. Second, because the relations between the EU and Colombia are more recent and superficial than those with the US. Still, taken together, EU member states are the second largest foreign investors and trade partners in the Colombian economy⁷⁰, concentrating their capital in electricity, water, gas, the financial sector and metal-mining. Notably, French, Spanish and German investments are quite high in the region., one could think that European concerns are more focused in containing threats such as drugs and illegal migration. But Europe is orienting its counter drug policy⁷¹ towards Asia and the transport circuits in the Caribbean Sea. Concerning illegal migration, South America is not considered a priority source of migrants as compared to neighbouring Africa and Eastern Europe.

Reading of the Colombian situation

What do international actors understand about the Colombian conflict and the Colombian state? Their perspective means, on one hand, having a vision of the Colombian conflict: identifying who the actors are, why they are fighting, the causes of the conflict and the dimensions (regional, national, local). On the other hand, it means measuring (a) the Colombian State's capacity to deal with internal violent conflict and transnational problems, and (b) civil society organizations' capacity to participate.

For the US, the Colombian conflict is internal, in which the state is attacked by leftist guerrillas considered to be terrorist groups and more recently by paramilitaries. Furthermore, the drug economy imposes its logic over political grievances. Consequently, the Colombian State is seen as a victim of the transnational forces which overwhelm it.

⁷⁰ The EU receives 20% of Colombian exports, 16% of imports come from EU. 26% of foreign investment is European: water, coal, electricity

⁷¹ LABROUSSE, Alain, VANHOUT, Ann, *Final Report: Study, the EC financing for the fight against drugs in developing countries*, IBF International Consulting, October 2004.

Conversely, for the EU, the conflict in Colombia is internal with a regional dimension, the Andean region. Fighting parties are the Colombian State and the guerrilla groups. Paramilitaries used to be considered “peace enemies” until 2006 when they were tacitly recognised as valid political interlocutors⁷². According to EU declarations, the conflict is a cancer that allowed political and everyday violence to be added to historical problems such as poverty, social inequality, injustice, corruption and impunity⁷³. In this perspective, the Colombian state has been reduced by this cancer and the still weak democracy could be seen as a possible threat for regional stability due to its cocaine production, flows of refugees, environmental problems, etc.

Possible solutions at hand

International actors propose or support a solution to the conflict and designate a role to ODA and military action accordingly.

The general solution from an American point of view is security reinforcement: destruction of the drug economy, leaving the warring parties without financial means. Until 2003, there was a clear difference between the war against drugs and the rebels’ conflict. Since then, they have been mutually entailed: war against drugs became war against “narco”-terrorism. The specific solution aims to strengthen the Colombian state’s military capacity in order to help it recover its control of the whole

⁷² It happened when the EU changed its attitude towards the peace process with Paramilitary Forces initiated by President Uribe in 2005. After demanding a clear legal framework for the process, the EU Council tacitly accepted the political status of the illegal armed group (Luxembourg, 2678th EU Council session- General Affairs, 3/ October/ 2005). Once the “Law of Justice and Peace” was launched, the EU decided to indirectly support the reinsertion process and the judicial system reform. The mechanism of rapid action was launched December 22, 2005 for 1.5 million Euros in order to guarantee the application of the transparency of the law.

⁷³ Colombia, Country Strategy Paper, 2002-2007, p3.

national territory with military aid, which is the greatest portion of total US aid to Colombia (US\$6.03 billion for the period 2000-2008⁷⁴). Supporting the security task, US cooperation programs focus mostly on alternative development and eradication, than on humanitarian relief to displaced and vulnerable populations, and on reform of the judicial system⁷⁵. Although American official development aid for Colombia is 5 times less than the military aid, it is still 37%⁷⁶ of the total aid and continues to increase.

The EU proposal for peace has not been that clear. Relations between Colombia and the EU started in the 1980s with small bilateral aid projects?. At the end of the 1990s, the EU decided to participate in the struggle for peace. Since then, there has been a continuous construction of a common position, the basis for which is the European ODA, the only foreign policy instrument on which every member and EU institution agrees. Thus, the European position as a donor for peacebuilding in Colombia underwent different phases linked to the construction of the EU as a global actor. For instance, the enlargement processes, the growing economic power of the EU in Latin America, as well as the definition of the European profile as an ODA donor have affected the kind of action for peace the EU do in Colombia.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the European perspective has been different from the American one. For the EU, the general solution of the Colombian conflict is an extreme reform of the whole Colombian society at the political, economic and social levels. The specific solution proposed by

⁷⁴ Source: <http://justf.org/Country?country=Colombia>

⁷⁵ “The Colombia program's principal focus remains the promotion of alternative development, which coupled with U.S. government-supported eradication and interdiction efforts, is designed to reduce the cultivation of illicit crops and stem the production and flow of illicit drugs to the United States. The program will strengthen and expand the presence of state institutions while simultaneously weakening the efforts of the three principal illegal armed groups (a total of approximately 40,000) whose ruthless pursuit of drug profits has a destabilizing effect upon the country...” in “USAID Budget” available at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/lac/co.html>.

⁷⁶ Statistics from the Office of International Cooperation of Accion Social, Colombia.

the EU is the creation of spaces for dialogue, zones of “peace”, and the reinforcement of the local population’s capacity to defend human rights and acquire accountability over the State through ODA programs. Here, the first step towards conflict resolution implies rebuilding (or reweaving) the social fabric and giving the ex-combatants, coca producers and vulnerable populations, opportunities to leave the war and join the legal economy. In addition, the European cooperation situates the judicial system reform at the core of social transformation. EU’s aid for Colombia is 31% of the total aid in execution in 2008, 12.37% of total aid for the period 1998-2007 and 49% of total aid in Colombia considering member states bilateral contributions for the same period⁷⁷.

In sum, the US justifies its proposal as a security action for the American population. It is in line with the US policies towards the region, the so-called backyard, and totally in line with the war on terror that merged with the war against drugs. The Colombian government became US’ first ally in the leftist South America. The EU proposal of peace laboratories is justified as a civilian action for an international peace actor, which is how the EU wants to be seen on the international stage. Colombia offered an opportunity to jump on the stage where the USA is the central international actor, and be different to it. It also appeared to be a laboratory for a budding foreign policy mainly driven by the Commission (inspired in the EU’s action in Central America) and a way of opening new markets and to establish new relationships with Latin-America OU Latin-American States. Differences between both actors are evident since the US proposal emphasizes military security, whereas the European approach highlights the importance of peacebuilding. While the US states that the Central State is a partner for security, the EU has until now worked closely with “civil society”. The weight of US assistance since 2001 shows the importance given by the US government to being an actor in Colombia.

⁷⁷ Statistics from the Office of International Cooperation of Accion Social, Colombia, http://www.accionsocial.gov.co/acci/web_acci/nuevomapa/bienvenida.html.

Although considering only the “ODA” (i.e. Without the military aid), EU cooperation has been more stable than, and sometimes considerably superior to, the US cooperation (except for the period 2001-2005 where the EU’s ODA was between 14% and 40% of the US aid)⁷⁸. It stands out against the relatively low weight of the EU policies in the Colombian political scene.

C’est moi ou cette section est particulièrement redondante avec la section précédente? Quels sont les éléments nouveaux ici, à part quelques données chiffrées qui pourraient être mises dans la section précédente ?

■ **Learning process of the EU: analysis of the implementation and interaction with Colombian government and civil society**

The EU as an international actor had to decide whether or not to get involved in the search for peace in Colombia, and the best way to do it. Indeed, once the decision of becoming part of the peace struggle is taken, the question is how to participate. This means that the international actor has to decide who to work with, and at what level (national, regional, municipal). As seen in the previous section the EU and US answered these two questions differently, according to their perceptions and understandings of the Colombian situation. While the EU got closer to the civil society movement for peace, the US adopted the hard security position inside the government. As the peace process came to an end, the hard security line took over the other policies, peace dialogues and peacebuilding projects included. This change meant, on one side, that programs focused on the pacific resolution of the conflict in conflict regions were not welcome. Even more, they were regarded with mistrust.

⁷⁸ Source : SIAOD - DIRECCION DE COOPERACION INTERNACIONAL - AGENCIA PRESIDENCIAL PARA LA ACCION SOCIAL Y LA COOPERACION INTERNACIONAL

On the other hand, organizations working for peace by peaceful means could not agree with the official policy of fighting terrorism and denying the existence of socio-economic causes of the conflict. Then, donors' interrogations about who to work with became particularly delicate since working with one actor more than the other could be seen as taking a position in the conflict. Although the EU and the US came to a similar conclusion that in order to achieve "peace" sustainability the Colombian government had to be either "strengthen" or "transformed", there was a difference between European and American chosen means for reaching this objective. The US did choose to support entirely the official military policy, but the EU could not afford to do so. Working with the government meant abandoning the civil society organizations with which it had a close relationship (officially and through the strong transnational movement), and working uniquely with the civil society organizations meant an open confrontation with a democratically elected government (and the lost of economic and political relations).

EU's approach compared to the USA approach

	<i>US</i>	<i>EU</i>
Kind of approach	<i>Negative peace</i>	<i>Positive peace</i>
Who to work with?	Central Government	Civil society organizations
At what level?	National to local	Local (to national?)
Main objective:	State reinforcement	State transformation

The US approach to peace in Colombia straightforwardly answers the questions of who to work with at what level? The first South American ally in the US war on drugs and terrorism is the Colombian Central government. Then, the American approach to peace in Colombia starts at

the national level in order to reach the regional and local levels. This is a top-down strategy where civil society organizations and local institutions are the last beneficiaries. The main objective of the action is the reinforcement of the Central State for the recovery of the legitimate use of violence. Then, social projects are seen as stabilization elements of the strategy. In short, the US applies a negative peace perspective⁷⁹ where ODA is complementary to a military strategy that looks to impose the absence of overt violent conflict. Democratic Security achievements are due to American aid, ie more security in strategic zones of the country, general indicators of security improve⁸⁰, mobility and foreign investment increase, risk evaluation is reduced.

The limits of the US approach became evident at the end of President Uribe's second term of. In fact, the Colombian president established a personal relation with President Bush. This proximity brought on one hand, bad relations with Democrats and the new US president, Obama. On the other hand, it isolated the country from South and Latin America. This was especially critical for the relations with Venezuela and Equator, main commercial partners of Colombia.

Another limit is that by supporting a specific government, and not State bodies, the democratic institutions were destabilised. The fragile equilibrium of powers in Colombia was questioned by the re-election of Uribe and the possibility of a third term (which implied another change in the Constitution). Moreover, other political parties, opposition groups and media had been weakened all over the last decade⁸¹. If the US pretended

⁷⁹ Concept from Galtung, GALTUNG, Johan, *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace And Conflict, Development And Civilization*, SAGE publications, Oslo, 1996.

⁸⁰ Kidnaps reduced from 2882 in 2002, to 393 in 2007 (Jan –Sep); collective homicides from 680 to 98; terrorist attacks from 1645 to 262. See “logros y retos de la politica de seguridad democratica”, Ministerio de Defensa. Available at: <http://www.supervigilancia.gov.co/index.php?idcategoria=1742>

⁸¹ Three subjects have been on the media: 1) The “parapolitica”, meaning the relation between politicians –some very close to the President- and the paramilitaries for drug business and electoral manipulation (see Cambio.com special link parapolitica

to reinforce the State, maintaining one man in power can erase short and medium term achievements⁸². Thus, the causes of the war were not addressed.

At the micro level, USAID development programs have limits. First, 40% of resources go to US operators reducing considerably the “social” aspect of the general policy⁸³. Second, working with foreigners in conflict zones diminishes the sustainability of the projects (although it helps to avoid corruption). Finally, US aid is seen with apprehension because of the Plan Colombia military component. Therefore well established organizations may be reticent to work with US aid. However, after years of presence, NGOs are now open to working with any donor.

<http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-3479594> . 2) the “false positives» or the assassination of civilian by military forces in order to increase statistics of guerrilla’s combatants deaths (see Cambio October 28 2008). 3) the “chuzadas” :The Administrative Department of Security (DAS) has been monitoring critics of the government, intercepting e-mail and calls from opposition parties, journalists and human rights activists (See article “Pruebas reinas en chuzadas del DAS encienden debate” at Semana, 28 February 2009. Available at: <http://www.semana.com/noticias-nacion/pruebas-reinas-chuzadas-del-das-encienden-debate/123941.aspx>). One of the most important weekly magazines of the country, Revista Cambio, was suddenly taken out of circulation after making public these three subjects. The closure before electoral elections was seen with mistrust by journalist and opposition groups. See (<http://www.lasillavacia.com/elblogueo/lospina/6626/cambio-censura-dura-y-pura>) as well as internationally (<http://mexico.cnn.com/mundo/2010/02/24/el-cierre-de-cambio-causa-polemica-en-colombia>).

⁸² President Obama seemed to understand the fragility of democracy and refused publicly to support another campaign of Uribe. In their meeting the 29th June 2009, Obama answered to the Colombian journalist question about his perspective of Uribe’s possible third term: “We know that our experience in the United States is that two terms works for us and that after eight years, usually the American people want a change. I related to President Uribe the fact that our most revered President, or at least one of our two most revered Presidents, George Washington, part of what made him so great was not just being a founder of our country, but also the fact that at a time when he could have stayed President for life, he made a decision that after service, he was able to step aside and return to civilian life. And that set a precedent then for the future”. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-uribe-colombia-joint-press-availability>

⁸³ Average calculated by Action Aid, British NGO, in their work on Phantom Aid, <http://actionaidusa.org/>

The US approach has had short term achievements in a negative peace perspective. Nevertheless, the programs can weaken the institutional level and thus put at risk the long term stability. The European approach was initially opposed to this military perspective but ended up adapting to the new context and learning about the complexity of the relations between Civil Society and State, explained further in the next section. Thus the EU gauged its initial position and employed different strategies of action. Each Peace Laboratory, executed at different periods, represents a strategy of action of the EU who is constantly building up its participation in the search for peace. All together the strategies describe a learning process of the EU as a peace actor. Between the first peace Laboratory, launched in December 2002, and the third one, carried on since 2007, the EU has unintentionally adjusted its initial approach to peace in Colombia. The core element of the strategies is the EU's relationship with the Colombian state and civil society. The success of the action depends on EU's capacity to keep working with both and to bring them together despite mutual mistrust.

■ **The European approach to peace**

This section focuses on the relations of the European Commission, the main interlocutor in Colombia for the Peace Laboratories, and the Colombian government and civil society organizations carrying on the programs. It analyses how the EU has transformed its programs in order to take in the new parameters of the Colombian conflict. General trends of the EU's actions are established based on the perception of public servants of the Colombian government and members of the civil society organizations executing programs⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ This part is based on interviews and visits to five peace Laboratories in 2008.

It is difficult to evaluate EU's programs in Colombia. Their impact depends on macro variables that are not under international actors' control. First of all, national context changed dramatically in the first period of Uribe. i.e. overwhelming concentration of power in the Colombian President hands, a military balance advantaging the Colombian State, official denial of the existence of an armed conflict in Colombia, rejection of the political stage of talks for a peaceful resolution, and demobilization of paramilitary forces.

Second, national policies can affect certain areas and institutions that are in direct relation with the EU's programs. As an example, the concentration of military attacks in one area, may affect the development of any program in the same region. For instance, civilian population may be forced to move in order to avoid armed confrontations, social leaders may be compelled to stop activities or abandon the area either by petition of security forces or threats by legal and illegal armed groups, mobility is reduced and the local economy is in standby. Another example is the national policies on land property and victims. Uribe's government did not emphasize the importance of giving land back to victims of any armed actors, and ignored the illegal character of land takeovers by many former paramilitaries. Thus land ownership became even more concentrated in the last decade in a country with an already highly uneven distribution of land . Being a land owner is one of the main grievances of indigenous and peasants movements; concentration in such a few hands fuels tense relations and clashes with state institutions and make the implementation of productive agricultural projects even more difficult Equally important, the relations with neighbouring countries, Venezuela and Equator, can radically transform the implementation of development programs in frontier regions. In fact, conditions on the border area with Venezuela deteriorated to the point of creating local economic crisis that prevented the implementation of any project. Finally, electoral cycles profoundly affect the implementation of programs in all areas. On one side, national and

local electoral cycles can force a stand-by in any official activity. On the other side, local cycles generate uncertainty with respect to illegal armed groups' strategy for controlling the process. Thus, projects are in limbo for months.

Third, the execution of programs is also affected by local conditions such as the intensity of the conflict in particular regions, political tradition of the region, guerrilla and/ or paramilitary presence, social organizations capacity and tradition, local institution permeability to armed actors and narcotraffic. Local societies develop different kinds of relations with illegal armed actors depending on their capacity to organize themselves. In newly colonized areas, such as the regions close to the Amazon, the presence of the State has been almost non-existent⁸⁵. Law and order have been guaranteed by the most powerful local actor, ie. Landlord, guerrilla, paramilitary, private corporations (oil company or mining companies). In older regions, society was more structured around common rules and some civilian state institutions were present. Although power was in the hands of economic and political traditional elites, there was a sort of community regulation of social life. However, both kinds of regions were under strain since the late 90s when paramilitary forces and guerrillas were fighting for the control of the territory. Controlling a territory meant controlling the economy, legal and illegal, the transport, military presence, legal system, etc. Nevertheless, in traditional regions this control did not reach all social and political strata. In newly colonized areas however, the control reached even private life⁸⁶. Thus conditions are not the same for

⁸⁵ GONZALEZ, Fernan, « Ciudadanía, ley y presencia diferenciada del Estado », in GONZALEZ, Fernan, OCAMPO, Gloria (ed), *Globalización, Cultura y poder en Colombia: una mirada interdisciplinaria*, Colciencias, Medellín, 2006

⁸⁶ See the work of DUNCAN, Gustavo, *Los Señores de la guerra. De paramilitiaresn mafiosos y autodefensas en Colombia*. Planeta, Bogota, 2006, CORPORACIÓN OBSERVATORIO PARA LA PAZ. Las verdaderas intenciones de los paramilitares. Santa Fe de Bogotá: Intermedio Editores, 2002, GUTIÉRREZ, Francisco. Estado, control paramilitar y orden político en Colombia. En: *Nuestra guerra sin nombre. Transformaciones del conflicto en Colombia*. Bogotá: Norma – IEPRI, 2006, ROMERO, Mauricio (Editor). *Parapolítica. La ruta de la expansión paramilitar y los acuerdos*

the program implementation when the civilian population enjoys a minimum of liberty than when it is under total control of illegal armed groups.

The EU initially designed the Peace Laboratory I with a civil society organization mistrustful of the Colombian State institutions and keen to establish a “neutral” program with respect to armed actors. The European approach basics were settled at that time and can be synthesized as follows: the level of action of European programs is mostly regional with the perspective of achieving the results at the national level by replicating the experience in many regions. The main objective is to build peace through the reconstruction of the social fabric, the installation of a participative democracy, the establishment of peace dialogues with armed actors and the restoration of a dynamic legal economy. This implies the creation of a critical citizen able to ask for accountability, and even more, to participate in the decisions and political life of his/her closest institutions. This proposal seems close to Galtung’s “positive peace” approach⁸⁷, based on the idea that not only does direct violence must be stopped but also structural and cultural violence⁸⁸. Thus, EU’s programs support a kind of “negative peace” actions for protecting physically people lives from armed conflict (ie. humanitarian spaces where civilians ban armed actors access), and “positive peace” actions for generating better life conditions (economic development) and increasing political freedoms

políticos. Bogotá: Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris-CERC-ASDI, 2007. For an global analysis on control over local population see ARJONA, Ana Maria, « Grupos armados, comunidades y órdenes locales : interacciones complejas », in GONZALEZ, Fernan (ed) *Hacia la reconstrucción del país: Desarrollo, política y territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado*, CINEP, 2008

⁸⁷ GALTUNG, Johan, *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace And Conflict, Development And Civilization*, SAGE publications, Oslo, 1996.

⁸⁸ Direct violence refers to acts of physical violence produced by a particular actor with a clear intention, structural violence concerns the kind of violence provoked by the social structure (economic, political and social inequalities), and cultural violence is the legitimization of the other two kind of violences by symbols, religion, media. GALTUNG, J, *Ibid.*

(democratic participation and accountability). European actions seem to be placed at the basis of Lederach's pyramid where a bottom-up peacebuilding process can emerge⁸⁹. Indeed, Lederach places the most of people directly affected by violence at the basis of a pyramid of actors, followed by middle range actors such as leaders respected in particular sectors (ethnic, religious, academics, NGOs) and finally the top level actors, or elites like the military, political, and religious leaders. A bottom-up approach implies the establishment of networks among actors within each level and among levels.

However, the official character of the cooperation resources and the fact that the EU wanted to include at least the central State in the implementation of the programs, obliged the gradual inclusion of central government agencies and local institutions in the Peace Laboratory II and III (as well as in the second phase of the Peace Laboratory I). After eight years of execution, the programs forged relations between donor- State institutions- Civil Society Organizations in conflict areas and at the national level. What are the achievements of the program and its limits with respect to the capacity to strengthen both Colombian actors and to recover the link among them?

EU's programs have known successes and as well as failures. Indeed, they have succeeded in creating spaces for dialogue between local institutions (mistrusted because of relations with paramilitaries or guerrilla) and civil society organizations. They have also opened spaces for discussing subjects that were not publicly discussed such as forms of violence, paramilitary links with local institutions and army, coca crops and massive land sales in conflict regions. The programs have helped to protect initiatives (considered leftist) that would have otherwise disappeared under President Uribe's main policy, Seguridad Democrática, by bringing

⁸⁹ LEDERACH, John Paul, "Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies", United States Institute of Peace press, Washington, 1997.

international observers on the ground. They have also succeeded in alternative development projects (as opposed to the failure of fumigation policies⁹⁰) and in bringing back HR priorities, especially the arrival of ombudsman offices in conflict areas. Although, the impact is nuanced at the national level, the programs managed to slip in the government agenda discussions about “peace policy”. This is particularly noteworthy since the government denies the existence of an armed conflict in the country and therefore the need for a policy for peace.

The most evident failure is the lack of national impact. The Peace Laboratories can be seen as replicable experiences that together could transform conflict causes from the regional level. However, their few accomplishments are weak without national government support.

Learning process: gauging strategies of action

Each strategy corresponds to the way every Peace Laboratory has been carried out. This section highlights their limits and achievements with the purpose of contributing to the experience systematisation.

1) First strategy: as mentioned above, the first strategy of the EU for peace in Colombia was closely related to a civil society organization working in one of the most violent regions of the country, Magdalena Medio. Their perspective of the conflict as a historical, socio-political phenomenon was shared by the EU, as well as the belief that a peaceful resolution may be possible. Then, the first strategy of the EU consisted in supporting almost directly grassroots initiatives from the with ODA. The Colombian

⁹⁰ See Time and CNN brief history of the war on drugs
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1887488,00.html>

institutions at the local and national level were left as spectators of the EU's engagement with peace.

The limits of this strategy quickly became evident. The most important one is the lack of contact with the national level. The program in the Magdalena Medio was big compared to any other cooperation program in the Andean region⁹¹, but too small for the challenge and its ambitious objectives. Locally conflict dynamics overwhelmed the program with the increasing power of paramilitary forces and the absence of political ways out of the conflict with the guerrillas. Moreover, the EU 's political presence on the national stage was almost invisible because of the member states divisions on the Colombian subject and the EU's global weakness after the foreign policy crisis generated by the war in Iraq.

The general conclusion from the CSO side is that the region- central state link was not created, putting the whole effort in jeopardy. In order to create this link, local organizations requested that more pressure be exerted by the EU over the Colombian central government for opening spaces of dialogue for a public policy for peace. Official denial of the existence of a conflict precluded any possibility of dialogue with armed actors in the regions and, even worst, it declared illegal any kind of initiative looking to build one. The Democratic Security policy also increased military presence with a welcome decrease in violent attacks but with the inconvenience of exposing civilian population. Indeed, the official strategy involved the use of civilian population as informants, non uniformed combatants and workers for manual coca eradication operations. The difference between civilians/ andcombatants was difficult to make and the government was demanding total support for this policy otherwise the risk was to be considered against the State (traitor??). Any declared neutrality was looked on with suspicion from the Central State.

⁹¹ According to PALOMARES, Gustavo, Spanish professor at the UNED and at Spain's Diplomatic School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. He lead a program financed by the Peace Laboratory II. Interview, 23th November 2010, Bogota.

Thus civil society organizations at the local level working on peacebuilding were asking for more tolerance and support from the central government, and expected the EU to support their grievances.

However, the EU was neither capable nor willing to take this political stand. Consequently the civil society organizations were constantly disappointed and local programs ended up confined to the regional level. Moreover, EU's relations with the Central government were difficult and therefore the EU lost some capacity of action for peace. In fact, in this strategy, the central government was used as a channel to bring ODA to civil society organizations in conflict zones (otherwise resources would not be considered Official Aid). This channelling role was not well perceived by the civil society organizations nor by the government itself. Indeed, most Peace laboratories were constructed as alternatives to Plan Colombia, the official policy. Besides, the government mistrusts organizations that do not agree with its main policies and thus the donors supporting them. This created trouble relations between the EU and the President with the consequence of losing central government support for the regional programs (thus condemning them to low impact), or even, gaining its hostility because the regional experience can be considered "enemies" of the security policy (thus making them the target of paramilitary forces)⁹².

At the local level, according to interviews in the Peace Laboratories' regions, local institutions felt challenged by the executors of the Peace Laboratories. A civil servant at the Presidential agency finds that EU's executors are seen locally and nationally as efficient with money, able to find resources for the region without political engagement or corruption⁹³. In contrast, local institutions are perceived as corrupt and incompetent.

⁹² President Uribe declared publicly that the PDP, executors of the Peace laboratories, were a haven for guerrilla activists in critical zones. He then publicly retracted.

⁹³ Interview at Accion Social, Bogota, 19 May 2008

The risk is that the Peace Laboratories executors could end up doing the job local institutions are supposed to do⁹⁴. This attitude reduces the sustainability of the programs because it does not improve the relations between the civil society and the state institutions, and it increases the dependency on foreign resources.

Besides, in the short term, participative citizens can be seen as a danger for traditional local politics. A too critical citizen is not always welcome in political arenas where the rules are imposed by conflict actors. Thus, the security of a social leader supported by the program but not by the government is at risk.

2) Second strategy : for the Peace Laboratory II, the EU got closer to the Central government and forced Civil Society organizations to establish alliances with local institutions. Indeed, the call for proposals launched in every region of the program was designed with the bureau of Presidency in charge of international cooperation, social programs and illicit crop manual eradication (Accion Social⁹⁵). The call for proposals advantaged those projects that were submitted by a civil society organization and a public institution such as Majors and Governors. Civil society organizations were expected to be the performers of the project, while official bodies would engage financially and politically. Moreover, the Central State office was considered the main interlocutor of the EU while the Civil society organizations a the regional level were “coordinators” of the program under the control of the State.

This second strategy had two major general limits. First, Central government’s increasing participation in the programs implied

⁹⁴ Interviews with civil servants of the Gobernacion, Alcaldias in Narino. 14 September 2008

⁹⁵ Agencia Presidencial para la Accion Social y la Cooperacion Internacional: Presidential Agency for the Social Action and the Internaitonal Cooperation, created in 2005

governmental control over resources. Accion Social was directly under the control of the President office. There was a constant demand for using the European money for other presidential purposes such as subsidized programs like Familias en Accion and Familias Guardabosques. There was also a tendency to use resources for productive projects leaving behind other dimensions of the programs such as HR and political participation. Moreover, the government used a World Bank program for humanitarian assistance as counterpart resources for the EU's ODA⁹⁶. This meant that two different programs, one developmental and the other one humanitarian, were forced to match on the ground. The result was that civil society organizations coordinating activities were overwhelmed with projects and procedures. The coordination role became an extenuating administrative role.

Second, the strategy led to distortions in the political work of the Peace Laboratories. Although the national government's involvement in the program could be positive for increasing state presence in conflict regions, the message of the Peace Laboratories became blurred. In fact, Accion Social gained visibility with the Peace Laboratories and the executors were seen as working for the government. Moreover, civil society organizations in the regions did not have the time to do political work because of the high charge in administrative procedures (partly because of the extremely complex and ever-changing European rules). The combination of these two factors lowered the political profile of the program and transformed it in a more classical development program with strong emphasis on technical aspects. The peace dimension got blurred.

On the ground, the strategy of the Peace Laboratory II presented more constraints than the first strategy. Projects were delayed because of Central State difficulties in giving the money to the organization in the

⁹⁶ EU demands financial participation from the government in order to execute the cooperation programs (EU's perspective of ownership). See annexe I "national contribution" line.

field. One of the reasons for these delays was that European procedures and Official Colombian procedures did not match. Thus legally the money was blocked. Once the inconvenienced was fixed, the initiatives started with delay and without the benefice of the “guiding” projects that were intended to give coherence to the set of projects chosen through the call for proposals. Besides, many projects lost essential regional and municipal support. One of the reasons explaining this lack of interest from local political bodies is that financial resources tagged for cooperation are monitored and earmarked. This does not leave space for addressing specific local needs or for more “traditional” cronyism. Local authorities do not have the control over implementation, and cannot use the results as part of their activities. This means that political gains (votes) are not immediate. Then, some institutions lost interest for the Peace Laboratories or went against their work as was the case in the Macizo region.

There is also an impasse in working with local institutions permeated by conflict actors. For instance, elected mayors in conflict zones have inevitably dealt with armed actors, otherwise they would not have been elected. Is it desirable to work with them? In theory there is a risk of ending up serving armed actors interests or raising hostility from the non-benefited party of the conflict. In reality, armed actors did question civil society projects, threatened some leaders and tried to channel thr projects to their “social basis”⁹⁷ s. Some executors assert that money may have been employed at the project level to benefit people related to illegal armed actors⁹⁸. In municipalities under paramilitary control new illegal armed groups (linked to demobilised paramilitary groups) threatened programs’ staff. In guerrillas’ zones the fact that money came from the EU

⁹⁷ Refers to population living in areas under armed actors’ domination. It does not imply a voluntary political or military participation on or sympathy with illegal armed actors’ activities.

⁹⁸ Interviews with Peace Laboratory coordinators, Bogota, 2010.

and not from the US was rather positive. However guerrillas questioned the active participation of the Central government and the relations with paramilitary forces. Some actors even considered that the government used the Peace Laboratories as a way of giving money to social movements in order to calm them down and stop their grievances for land and justice⁹⁹.

3) Third strategy: the Peace Laboratory III tested another model of action that, on one hand tried, to keep in the Central Government's leadership in the project, and on the other hand, to support civil society organizations that followed the example of other Peace Laboratories. This third strategy had three components: regional, public policy and peace initiatives. In general, this division reduced financial resources for the regions and tried to increase participation from other state institutions close to the central decision making system, as the Central Department of National Planning in charge of designing the Development Plan. It also created a budget line for supporting any civil society organization working with displaced populations and the communities taking them in. This component answered requests from a) civil society organizations that felt excluded from the European approach (focused on regional initiatives), and b) from the government willing to use cooperation money in more areas of the country. At the end, Accion Social worked hand in hand with the EU's Delegation in the identification of regions and social partners and took in charge the evaluation and implementation responsibility of the regional component of the Laboratory.

This strategy is still under implementation. The main limit has been that the EU's action for peace is not clear for either Civil Society or for the government. The initial political message, support to peacebuilding

⁹⁹ Interview Marco Fidel Vargas, CINEP, Bogota, December 7 2010.

process respectful of HR and open to dialogue, is still absent. From the perspective of civil society organizations and some state institutions, European cooperation seems supportive of governmental policies such as fumigation, military strategy, and demobilization of paramilitary forces. This happens because the strategy succeeded in slipping the Peace Laboratories in the National Plan of Development. Considering the government's attitude against any "peace policy", this is a not a trivial achievement. But, the problem is the how the government accepted to include the programs. In fact, they are shown as being the social part of the counterinsurgency strategy. Indeed, Accion Social is carrying on the social recovery plan and consolidation of the Democratic Security Policy. This means that a team of representatives of the military forces and civilian institutions (ministries) are working together for bringing back the State to already "pacified" zones. In this perspective, the Peace Laboratories are a regional instrument for consolidating military achievements with social programs¹⁰⁰.

On the ground, civil society organizations executing the Peace Laboratories declare to have good relations with the Accion Social offices leading the program but not so with the general coordination office that implements the civil-military plan of territory recovery. For local organizations, it is not easy to be labelled the "social arm" of the government, at least not in the current context. At the beginning, the Central office of Accion Social did exert a lot of pressure on civil society organizations in the regions to include military aspects in the general development of the Peace Laboratory. This meant working with militaries and demobilized combatants. Civil society organizations unwilling to be part of the general program were questioned because they did benefit of increased security in some areas. Indeed, where the military had gained control over guerrilla and where paramilitaries had truly demobilised, it was easier to carry on

¹⁰⁰ There is a "coincidence" of Peace laboratory III regions, Meta and Montes de Maria, and the main actions of the National Consolidation Plan..

projects (people can move easily, products can be transported, fear of talking decreases, expectations of peace raise, etc). However full alignment with the military strategy was not an option for them. The dialogue was hard to establish until the change of government in 2010.

In fact, since President Santos took office, civil society organizations working on peace matters have felt more welcome. Although he follows the former President main policies, his government seeks to establish a more open political stage to discuss delicate subjects as victims' rights and land ownership¹⁰¹. During the first quarter of his administration, two laws addressing these subjects were under discussion with many actors of society. There are also dialogues with guerrilla groups for liberating kidnapped people as well as a radical transformation of the foreign policy that welcomes international actors such as the CICR and Brazil¹⁰². Relations with Venezuela and Equator were normalised after many months of intense crisis.

Thus, civil society organizations working with the Peace Laboratory III have established a better dialogue with the newly created office in charge of the Consolidation program - this means better, though indirect, relations with the military present in the region. They were consulted and even invited to design the general plan of action¹⁰³. However, their participation was not harmonious since they openly criticize the fact that militaries are expecting to lead the development process and also the fact that central state bodies are taking decisions without local institutions consultation. In any case, in the two regions, civil society organizations see the central state program (directly supported by the US) as a huge investment in the region for the

¹⁰¹ See the analysis and dossier made by <http://www.debatiendo.org/>

¹⁰² SEMANA, "Logística en liberación de cinco secuestrados, a cargo de Brasil y el CICR", Thursday 23th December 2010 at <http://www.semana.com/noticias-nacion/logistica-liberacion-cinco-secuestrados-cargo-brasil-cicr/149469.aspx>

¹⁰³ Interview with the former coordinator of the Foundation Montes de Maria, Fabio Canchila, Bogota, 14 December 2010, and with current director of Cordepaz in the Meta region, Sonia Pabon, the 5 November 2010.

consolidation of military achievements with two main handicaps: a) thinking in a three years perspective, b) not addressing local institutions weaknesses that perpetuate social inequalities and impunity. Thus, civil society organizations coordinating the Peace Laboratories have joined the central state program despite profound differences of perspective but with the conviction that the EU's support being small compared to the size of the Macarena and Montes de Maria operations, they better adapt to these new conditions than being pushed out of the picture.

In short, the three strategies of the EU's cooperation have been the result of the interaction with the Central government of Colombia. The more open the government is to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the more space there is for the EU to propose an original program for peacebuilding. The link between regional initiatives and national public policies seems to be at the heart of the impact of cooperation aid. However, programs implementation requires minimum security conditions on the ground as well as central government capacity to reach conflict zones with civilian institutions. Thus, the European proposal of peabuilding, created on the making, do not give a clear answer to an essential question: how to carry on peacebuilding activities in the midst of an armed conflict. Either the European action has a deficiency in its design, or the EU has tacitly accepted the use of military means as a first approach to be completed/ corrected/ calibrated in a second phase with social, economic and political programs, as Rolland Paris¹⁰⁴ suggests. In any case, the EU's capacity for building peace in conflict contexts depends on the recipient country's conditions as much as on its own capacity to be present as a political actor. This challenge implies that the EU's ODA must create synergies with other EU's policies such as the commercial one, and respond clearly to donors dilemmas in conflict countries.

¹⁰⁴ PARIS, Rolland, "Wilson's ghost: the faulty assumptions of post-conflict rebuilding ?", in CR CROCKER, Chester et al, (eds) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges Of Managing International Conflict*, United States Institution for peace press, Washington, 2001, pp 765-784

Dilemmas of the EU as a peace actor in Colombia

The European Union, as any international actor in a conflict country, had to tackle important decisions before and during the execution of its programs. In fact, once an actor takes the decision to participate, it has to decide how to do it. This decision is not only constrained by conflict country contexts but also by donors' financial and time restrictions, as well as their domestic lobbies. In previous sections of this paper, the comparison between the European programs and US action in Colombia helped grasp how the EU had structured its proposal of peacebuilding. This section summarizes the numerous dilemmas the EU has confronted during its learning process as a peace actor in Colombia. There are at least five main tight spots where the EU has been forced to take a position as a donor. However, these are not final answers in this ever changing? Adapting? approach.

The first dilemma is between giving priority to Security or development. The main argument of former Colombian president was that security conditions are needed to adrese development challenges. This statement corresponds to the realist vision of using hard power for guaranteeing security in order to establish the conditions for democracy and economic prosperity. On the other side, civil society organizations working on peace initiatives consider that an armed conflict has socio-economic and political roots that have to be addressed first in order to reach any level of security. In this positive peace perspective, development problems such as inequalities, poverty, lack of education and democracy have to be tackled in order to reach security for everyone. Thus for an international actor the question remains: What comes first, security action or development programs?

The EU's programs in Colombia were initially thought for the post-conflict period in a linear perspective of the conflict. They were expected to accompany a peace process and therefore to be carried out with a minimum of security conditions guaranteed by the cease fire and demobilization processes. Since this never happened, the EU transformed its proposal to an "on conflict" action of peacebuilding giving priority to development issues in order to change conditions and avoid new recruitments. However, programs have benefited from the increasing security on the ground and have joined, maybe unintentionally, institutional efforts to consolidate the military strategy. Moreover, since the military policy of the state had not been efficient in conflict zones (not as much as in corridor zones and urban areas)¹⁰⁵, Peace laboratory initiatives were perceived as a way to reach, institutionally, those areas.

Hence a lesson from the Colombian experience is that reinforcing security and transforming the causes of conflict are both important. However, both elements, carrot and stick, are difficult to be carried out by the same international actor. Indeed, the role played by the EU as an actor of peace (not involved with the military strategy) was particularly welcome in the field as it stood as an alternative to the US- Colombian military approach. The differentiation of military and civilian actions seems as important as the differentiation between combatants and civilian population. US and the EU can remain strategic actors by keeping their differences clear.

The second dilemma concerns neutrality. Peacebuilding programs tend to be presented as development and humanitarian projects without a political position. But, ODA is a political tool in any context and even more

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Arturo Garica, consultant at Econometria, group in charge of the Impact evaluation of the Peace Laboratory programs and the Peace and Development program for the Department of National Planning of Colombia. Bogota, November 2010.

so when used to promote peace in conflict zones¹⁰⁶. Indeed, recipients of EU's aid do expect some kind of engagement from the institution. For instance, the recipient government, the Colombian one, did not welcome EU's declared "neutrality" because it placed State institutions at the same level as illegal armed groups. The central state was fighting a war against an international terrorist organization and could not afford to maintain relations with an international actor that merely tolerated it. Therefore, the EU was expected to support the central government institutions, military forces and police included. On the other hand, civil society organizations performing the programs and in relation with European NGOs expected the EU to fight with them for Human Rights respect, which involved the denunciation of violations committed directly by state institutions or by governmental support to paramilitary forces.

Thus, the dilemma of an international actor consists in keeping enough distance from conflict stakeholders (armed and not armed) but winning their trust. ODA programs give an easy technical façade for addressing root and immediate causes of armed conflict. However it hides the danger of "technicizing" relations with political actors on the ground, such as the civil society organizations and local institutions, and losing impact. In Colombia, the EU has been able to maintain a continuous ambiguity over its demands to the central government with regards to HR respect (the EU's Parliament makes engaged declarations condemning government links with paramilitaries as well as military abuses, but the EU's Council

¹⁰⁶ For the political dimension of Peacebuilding and ODA see. UVIN, Peter, "The influence of aid in situations of violent conflict: a synthesis and a commentary on the lessons learned from case studies on the limits and scope for the use of development assistance incentives and disincentives for influencing conflict situations", OECD, Paris, September 1999. RETTBERG, Angelika, "Diseñar futuro: una revisión de los dilemas de la construcción de paz para el postconflicto", *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, No 15, June 2003, pp 15-28. BENDANA, Alejandro, "What kind of peace is being built? Critical assessments from the south", A discussion paper prepared on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of An Agenda for Peace for the International Development Research Center, Ottawa, January 2003. DAVID Charles-Phillippe, "Does peacebuilding build peace? Liberal (mis)steps in the peace process", in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 30, No 1, March, 1999, pp 25-41.

retains a low-profile position on the topic). Nevertheless, this attitude may not be sustainable over time (signature of TLC).

The third dilemma concerns two principles of the Paris Declaration¹⁰⁷ “ownership” and “alignment”. Closely related to the neutrality dilemma, the question here is how to respect the international engagement of the Paris Declaration without becoming a party to the conflict. The European presence in Colombia has brought concepts such as dialogue, humanitarian spaces, HR defence, that civil society organizations have adopted as their own and introduced in their vocabulary. Each peace Laboratory shows a common understanding between donor and recipient organizations of the need to transform root causes of the armed conflict. However, the Colombian government does not recognise the conflict and forbids any dialogue with “terrorists”. Then, how can the EU be coherent with its principles and at the same time support the local and national government as the Paris Declaration suggests?

In fact, the EU has contradicted national policies by defending the perspective of peacebuilding at the local level. There are two clear examples. First, it has been impossible to carry on Peace Laboratories’ projects in conflict zones without establishing a dialogue with illegal armed actors. The EU and some member states did have dialogues with guerrillas groups during the Peace process of the late 90s, however under Uribe’s government this became illegal. As mentioned before, local civil society organizations were looked at with suspicion if they tried to engage with illegal armed actors. However in conflict regions, “terrorists” are an

¹⁰⁷ At the OECD site: “The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered and committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators”,
http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html

integral part of social networks, not to mention their control over economic and even political and social aspects of societies under their domination. Thus it is impossible to avoid programs contact with illegal actors. The second example is the clash between the antidrug policy of the Colombian government -designed with and supported by the US, and the European proposal of an alternative development. The government considers peasants with coca crops as criminals because it is illegal to have coca plants. Then the official way of reducing crops is by destroying them through fumigation, forced manual eradication or voluntary eradication in exchange of aid for productive projects. The EU programs are clearly against fumigations and consider alternative development as a progressive process. Thus, peasants keep their coca crops until they can produce something else. This can be seen illegal and risky because coca crops can increase in the Peace Laboratory zones, or the government can be tempted to fumigate EU's programs. The first situation did not happen according to official statistics on coca crops, while the second occurred in the south of the country. The EU found itself in a very difficult situation since Cosurca, the coffee producers association of the Cauca region supported by the Peace Laboratory and UNDP, expected donors to reply officially to the antinarcotics bureau that sprayed the coffee crops. At the end Cosurca broke up with UN offices because of their lack of reaction and received support from the EU who apparently protested officially for the action (although documents are not public)¹⁰⁸.

Therefore, the donors' dilemma is to keep the commitment to the Paris Declaration process that seeks to enhance aid effectiveness, and avoid becoming a tool used by local government to the detriment of peace initiatives. The EU has been able to hold its position on essential subjects that may be useful for future governments' development plans respectful of the environment and willing to include peasants' economy

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Rene Useche, Director of Cosurca, Popayan 2008.

The fourth dilemma concerns transparency. The EU established meticulous criteria of transparency in Brussels. Standards correspond to the European understanding of the correct use of resources coming from EU's taxpayers, and to a liberal perspective of relations with developing countries. Indeed, as Paris suggests¹⁰⁹, liberal politics and economics are implicit in the way European resources must be employed. Thus, local recipients' way of doing politics is not taken in consideration and a priori considered unsuitable. In the Colombian case, donors and central government institutions fear local cronyism and corruption. Then strict procedures such as call for proposals for project implementation and general functioning of civil society organizations are put into practice. Problems arise in regions where the competition over resources can fuel old confrontations or leave aside pertinent actions from vulnerable groups unable to respond to the sophisticated criteria (usually, the most globalized and least local NGOs are the ones able to submit a proposal). There are also functional dead-ends when legal call for proposals are requested for the most simple actions such as serving lunches during a workshop in isolated regions. Since local people do not formalize their "enterprises", they cannot hand in receipts. Then organizers have to buy the lunches to an officialised enterprise in the closest urban area that can be extremely far increasing transport costs considerably as well as consuming everyone's time

Consequently the donors' dilemma consists of being accountable of taxpayers' resources without strangling local organizations with strict procedures. The EU has been particularly unilateral in designing how to use its resources, more than any other donor according to interviews (compared to USAID and the World Bank). There are also difficult to solve

¹⁰⁹ See Paris, how liberal criteria slips through peacebuilding projects and put at risk the « benefited » society. PARIS, Roland, "Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism", in *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Autumn, 1997, pp. 54-89.

inconsistencies between the EU's rules and the Colombian government laws for spending public resources. The harmonization of rules would reduce the burden on civil society organizations and government institutions' work.

The fifth dilemma concerns the promotion of participation. In fact, in an effort to become relevant, donors consult many stakeholders on the ground before deciding their action. Some of them use participative methods in order to reach most of the people and make their own conclusions as to what is needed and how to best address those needs. At the same time, there is a constant pressure not only over the correct use of ODA resources, but also over their efficient implementation. Programs have a clear timeline and performers on the ground are forced to respect donors' timing. The more resources are well expended in the shortest time, the more efficient is considered the donor office. Unfortunately, following these two objectives can be contradictory. From one side, real participation of local stakeholders implies time and resources. Consulting many people gives a lot of valuable information for the design of projects but demands flexibility in donors' timing because such processes of summoning in conflict zones are uncertain.

The Peace laboratories did present this constant contradiction. The problem resides in the European will to increase rules for expenditure and reduce times of execution (1 to 4 years) and launching participative workshops in each region in order to include a majority of stakeholders. Depending on local conditions, such as electoral cycles, these procedures were more or less feasible. In the end, some regions had to expend money planned for 4 years, in less than 2 years. For civil society coordinators in the regions, the quality of many projects and the credibility of the program were highly affected by the multiple delays in the execution of resources.

Thus, donors' dilemma consists of doing the most with the maximum of people with little money and time. When looking for peacebuilding, these objectives can be an impediment to medium and long term results. Efficiency indicators may include other criteria in order to find a way out of this impasse.

In brief, the EU confronted at least five dilemmas of donors' action in conflict countries. Some concern the philosophy of the projects, while others are more in the implementation itself. In any case, the EU has given answers to the questions on the making as part of its learning process. The experience in Colombia shows that keeping a clear position of peace may be helpful for protecting grassroots initiatives from the perverse collateral consequences of military focused policies. However, the peace position is not easy to find when the recipient state is strong enough as to demand alignment to its policies. The European strategy of putting together antagonist actors for the design and implementation of the programs has been successful in the creation of dialogue spaces among legal actors. The EU has found a way to build peace without involving illegal actors directly, thus respecting government position of banning relations with "terrorists". However on the ground rules are different and contradiction arises between donors' policies and central policies. Keeping a clear normal frame of action based on HR respect helps to build trust with both legal stakeholders. However, the EU is losing the flexibility it had in its first strategy, and thus losing its capacity to adapt to changing conditions in the field. Maybe it is worth thinking up new ways of guaranteeing transparency and efficiency with recipient actors.

■ Conclusion

The EU decided to participate in the Colombian peace efforts of the late 90s with the perspective of showing its capacities as a peace actor. The way to support these efforts was determined by the strong participation of the US in the definition of a military-based policy, and the consequent polarization of the Colombian society. The Peace Laboratories first appeared as the European alternative to the Plan Colombia but have gradually taken in the complexity of the Colombian conflict and the EU's internal processes, specially the Colombian total alignments with the US war against terrorism and the transatlantic relations crisis. This papers argues that for the EU, being different to the US was not only an opportunistic choice of action in a Latin American country, but also the result of deep differences between the two international actors. Nevertheless, as global contexts changed after 9/11 and Iraq war, the EU has gauged its approach to peace in Colombia.

What kind of peace actor is the EU in Colombia? The EU has been able to keep a program of peace in middle of a war, to talk to different actors with divergent views, to support a model of action from the bottom. But the EU has disappointed its partners. Indeed, the European approach to the Colombian conflict has been considered by the Colombian? civil society as a weak alternative to the militarist policy implemented by the government with US support. For the central government, the Peace Laboratories constitutes a bet for regional peace that should be complementary to the counterinsurgency policies. In fact, the execution of the Peace Laboratories has been caught in the polarization of the Colombian society. They have lost capacity of action because the EU has been required to juggle with many strategies in order to keep good relations with the democratically elected government of Colombia without abandoning compromises made with civil society organizations. In the end, the ensemble of Peace

Laboratories can be seen as peacebuilding programs on-the-making, from the donor- Central state negotiation table to the local level.

The EU can be seen as a mediocre actor of peace in terms of concrete measurable short term results in peace and development. Nevertheless, it is not so modest in terms of sustaining dialogues between antagonistic actors and mostly keeping the peace policy subject alive. The continuous construction of a common European foreign policy based on ODA has given advantages to the EU in the definition of its profile as a civilian actor. Among lessons learnt from EU's decisions on the ground there are: total differentiation from the US is useful although it does not equal an absence of dialogue, the preservation of good diplomatic relations with Colombian central governments is as essential as keeping clear principles of action based on HR respect and environment priorities, the excess of procedural norms made in Brussels can damage the political efforts of the EU.

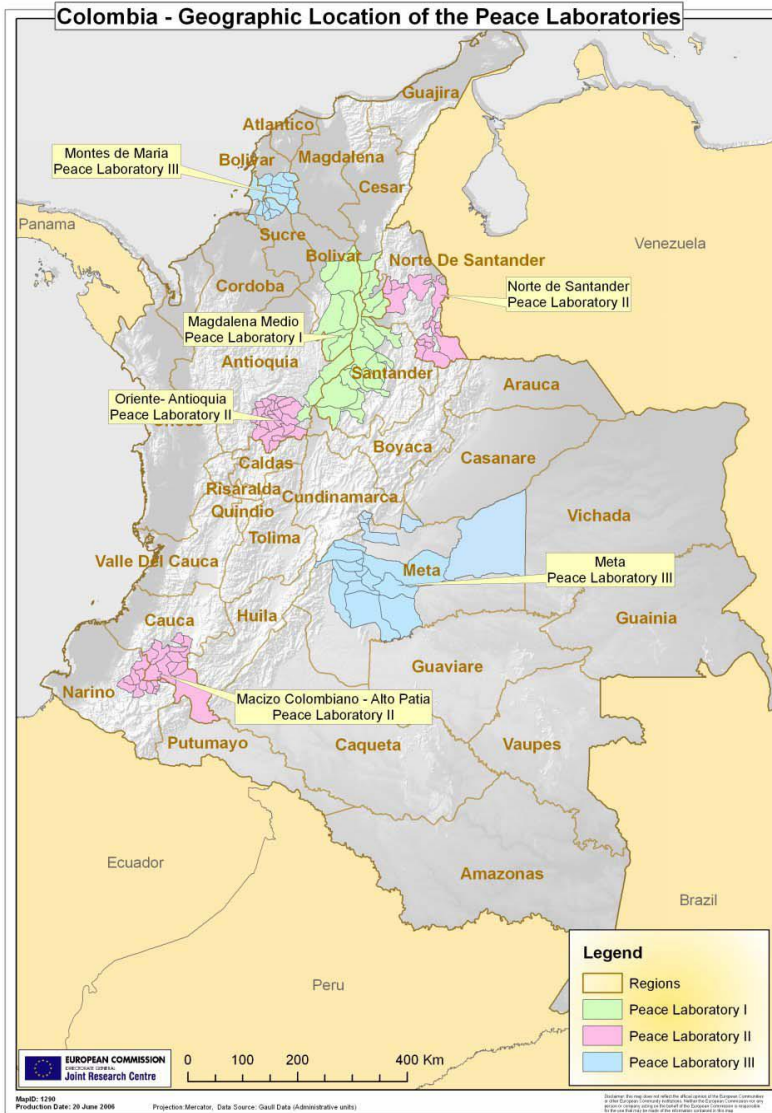
There is a gap in the general approach which is the lack of references to hard security conditions. In this learning process it has been comfortable to avoid discussions over hard security matters. The EU has addressed root causes of the conflict by using ODA's technical façade. Thus, the EU's action has taken advantage of the military emphasis of the government without losing its civilian approach. Then, the lack of hard security references has not been a handicap since the dimension has been quietly integrated. This situation has allowed the European Commission to lead the program avoiding internal member states' discussions on security and transatlantic matters, and also to participate somehow in an extremely expensive US policy in which the EU is not at all considered. However, the absence of a hard security dimension is seen as a weakness of the EU as a peace actor. In practice, peacebuilding programs may end up completing a military strategy not always respectful of Human rights and victims. The EU can appear as the small actor cleaning up US collateral effects.

Thus, EU's on-the-making strategy would be more pertinent if a clear approach to hard security were defined. Indeed, the military forces are an essential institution playing a key role in the Colombian conflict. To ignore its way of action pushes Europe away from central policy discussions. With a clear position of the EU and its member states over the military forces importance and responsibility would allow the EU to request a quality presence of the military in conflict areas where the programs are present, effective protection of everyone's life in the region (threatened especially social leaders), and total respect for civil society autonomy. Thus, the civilian actor profile is not necessarily damaged by a clear position towards security issues of an armed conflict.

The impact of peacebuilding programs is then determined by the EU's capacity of standing as an international actor for peace. However the Colombian context, particularly the Central State's position towards civilian means for peace is elementary. With the election of a new president, and the signs of openness to peace policy options from the US, Could the EU play a more decisive role? It depends on EU's ability to join the policy making discussion over essential subjects such as land reform, victims' rights, high standards of HR defence, and regional grassroots experiences. The almost 10 years experience of the EU in conflict zones in Colombia has not yet benne systematised in order to give hints on the construction of a peacebuilding oriented policy. Thus, the EU has supported many initiatives but has been unable to build the link between local/regional and national levels.

The Peace Laboratories are an example of the complexity of the EU as an international actor. They show at the same time the continuous hesitation of the EU in establishing a clear policy in an zone influenced to a large extent by the US and the great potential of European action for peace in the midst of an armed conflict. There also remains the question of

evaluation of the European experience in Colombia, the Peace Laboratories could become part of the EU's civilian action toolbox for peace.





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