

# Peace in protracted conflicts

## *Explaining peace negotiation onset in the Colombian armed conflict*

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Master's Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies  
Department of Political Science

University of Oslo  
Spring 2017



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## **Abstract**

A central puzzle in peace and conflict studies is why wars end. This study focuses on an aspect of this puzzle: Why do armed actors at some point decide to negotiate? I use empirical data collected on two peace processes in the protracted Government of Colombia-FARC conflict to explain why one pre-negotiation (2010-2012) culminated in proper negotiations, while another (1999-2002) did not. Three important theory-derived explanatory factors are examined: Military power relations, external actors, and leaders. This thesis traces armed groups' inclinations towards negotiations (the political route) or continued fighting (the military route) back to underlying conditions like battlefield performance, the costs of war, and external actors' involvement. Also, I analyze actors' and leaders' subjective interpretations of these conditions. These factors' importance is measured by if and how they shift parties' preferences towards the political or military route.

Comparing a positive and negative case of peace negotiation onset enhances our ability to pinpoint important factors for why parties at some point reach a 'turning point of seriousness' and show willingness to 'lose' a little to 'win' a little. My results suggest the military weakening of the FARC between 2002 and 2010, and consequential change in military power relations, is fundamental for understanding peace negotiation onset in 2012. The second essential factor is the rise of a new president in 2010, in that it changes the Government's interpretation of the conflict and pushes it towards a preference for the political route. Also, it raises hopes for the FARC to realistically reach some of its aims through negotiation. The findings in this thesis suggest that the more protracted and hostile a conflict is, the more pragmatism will be needed to end it. Moreover, external actors' military involvement may contribute to peace negotiation onset, while public support for peace is not necessarily constructive to that end. Findings in this thesis point to the importance of being more sensitive to how objective conditions and subjective interpretations interact.

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Errors in this thesis are mine only.

Bård Drange,

23 May 2017

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## **List of abbreviations**

AUC: United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia)

BACRIM: Criminal Bands (Bandas Criminales)

ELN: National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional)

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

GoC: Government of Colombia

PNO: Peace negotiation onset

UP: Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica)

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## 1. Introduction

There are at least three big puzzles about wars. Given their devastating consequences, one puzzle is why they occur and recur. Another is why wars continue for years, even for decades. A third big puzzle is why wars end.

This study focuses on an aspect of the third puzzle: Why do armed actors at some point prefer a negotiated strategy over a military one? While it is certainly puzzling that actors chose to adopt the strategy of war in the first place, this decision is made only once. The decision to remain at war, however, is made continuously—year after year, decade after decade. Indeed, once embroiled in war, leaving it becomes difficult. However, after years and decades of fighting, the puzzle no longer is why armed actors keep fighting, but rather why they pursue a negotiated way out.

This thesis examines armed actors' decision to negotiate an end to war. Ending a war through negotiation is not the most common way a war ends. Usually conflicts end because one side defeats its opponent militarily, or because violence levels drop and the conflicts “fizzle out” (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011: 172). However, negotiated war endings are becoming increasingly common (Fixdal 2016: 10).

The topic of my thesis is the protracted conflict between the Government of Colombia (GoC) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—FARC). Protracted conflicts are considered especially hard to end. In Colombia, the GoC-FARC conflict started in 1964. During most of these years, it was a conflict of low intensity and fought almost exclusively by means of guerrilla warfare. While all Colombian presidents (seven) since 1982 attempted to make peace with the FARC, one usually reckons with four peace processes. The first took place between 1984-1987, the second 1991-1992, the third 1999-2002, and the fourth 2010-2016.

In my thesis I study the last two peace processes. Both processes sought—officially—to end the conflict. However, the Caguán peace process (1999-2002) was characterized by several periods of ‘pauses’ and practically no negotiation between the adversaries. More than peace negotiations, the Caguán peace process—often called the Caguán dialogue—resembled, more than proper peace negotiations, a case of public pre-negotiation. The Havana peace process, on the other hand, started with a secret pre-negotiation phase (between 2010 and 2012) and

culminated in a peace negotiation onset in 2012.<sup>1</sup> As opposed to Caguán, the armed actors (or parties) quickly progressed to negotiations about agenda points. These are two peace processes with diverging outcomes: One never moved beyond pre-negotiations (Caguán), while the other pre-negotiation culminated in peace negotiations (Havana). My research question, then, is: Why did peace negotiations commence in Havana, while they failed to start during the Caguán dialogue?

The primary objective of this thesis is to empirically examine peace negotiation onset (PNO) and non-PNO in Havana and Caguán. As far as the author is aware, this is novel,<sup>2</sup> and can help us pin-point “the conditions under which attempts to end conflict are likely to succeed” (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011: 175). The secondary objective is to expand research on negotiated war endings, PNO in particular. While the primary objective of this study is not to test theories, the empirical results may have theoretical implications for how we examine and theorize about PNO.

To examine PNO, we need a practical and intuitive way to approach it. How can we understand parties’ considerations of the different available strategies? I argue that, fundamentally, parties decide to negotiate when they view the political route (negotiations) preferable to the military route (continued fighting).<sup>3</sup> This, one may argue, is slightly tautological—one negotiates because one prefers to do so. What I do in this thesis, is to trace armed groups’ inclinations towards negotiations or continued fighting back to underlying elements such as battlefield performance and the costs of war. I try to measure the importance of these underlying elements by examining whether and how these factors shift a party’s preference towards the political or military route. While these underlying elements influence each actor’s preference for the military or political route, also their interactions during pre-negotiations matter for how they view the prospects of pursuing the political route. Indeed, starting peace negotiations is a joint effort.

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<sup>1</sup> While the Havana peace process progressed beyond 2012, this study only examines the pre-negotiation period.

<sup>2</sup> Others have, however, explored other aspects of these cases, for example Rettberg (2016) on the role of the private sector and Rios (2015) with a military focus.

<sup>3</sup> I assume that not deciding to negotiate essentially means one chooses the default alternative (continued fighting).

To explain why peace negotiations start, I examine the Caguán and the Havana peace processes through an analytical framework composed of three explanatory factors. These factors are derived from existing literature. The first concerns military power relations, and the way in which battlefield performance and the costs of war can explain why parties decide to continue fighting or negotiate. The second concerns the influence of external actors on this decision, and is further subdivided into external actors' indirect influence through the regional and international environment, external actors' military involvement, and external actors' peace support. The third looks at leaders, where both changes in leadership and leaders' background and personality matter.

This thesis, then, examines PNO with this analytical framework,<sup>4</sup> and based on empirical data collected (35 interviews with experts and persons involved with the peace processes). My analysis suggests two factors are essential in explaining PNO in Havana in 2012. The first essential factor is military power relations: Due to parties' battlefield performance and inability to militarily defeat its opponent, the political route was preferable to the military route. This factor concerns underlying conflict dynamics, most importantly the GoC's military weakening of the FARC between 2002 and 2010. The second essential factor for PNO in 2012 is the government's leadership. Juan Manuel Santos perceived a higher possibility of—and perceived more benefits from—ending the war through negotiations than his predecessor Álvaro Uribe, who had built his political platform on war against the FARC. Santos understood better how to politically exploit the Government's strategic military advantage and took pragmatic and determined steps to pursue and create the conditions for peace negotiations. The leadership is central because, as scholars stress, an actor may objectively speaking have incentives to negotiate, but does not seek a political solution unless the leadership recognizes and acts on these objective conditions.

Pin-pointing these factors as essential is aided by the analysis of why peace negotiations did not start in Caguán. While there were several flaws with the Caguán dialogue, the underlying reason for lack of progress was military power relations: Large segments within each party thought they could win or at least overwhelm their adversary through future military action. Underlying strategic considerations within both parties essentially undermined any political effort by segments within each party and efforts by other internal and external actors. Based on

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<sup>4</sup> Two modifications to the analytical framework were made during data collection and analysis (see Chapter 2.5).

this finding, I propose that without the militarily weakening of the FARC during president Uribe's two administrations (2002-2010), negotiations would not have occurred. That Santos is found essential is in part due to his distinct perception and interpretation of the conflict (compared to his predecessor); he recognized that the military solution would be prolonged and risky and that negotiations had the potential to succeed and could provide several benefits.

Beyond these two essential ones, also other factors mattered. Right-wing paramilitary groups played an important spoiler role in Caguán, but had less influence in the build-up to negotiation onset in Havana. Paramilitaries' counterinsurgency against the FARC also, indirectly, influenced the military power relations between the GoC and the FARC. The USA is the most important external actor, whose military aid package (Plan Colombia) gradually formed an integral part of the Government's counterinsurgency against the FARC. Also, external actors' peace support helped facilitate PNO. Moreover, civil society was important in pushing actors to the Caguán dialogue, but was found less important for PNO in 2012.<sup>5</sup> Private business interests have also mattered, but are not tackled here.<sup>6</sup>

Several questions asked and examined in this thesis feed directly into important debates and controversies in Colombia. One controversy concerns which president—Uribe who conducted an effective counterinsurgency against the FARC or Santos who started the peace process—made peace negotiation possible. This thesis argues that Uribe and Santos played somewhat complementary roles: Uribe's military weakening of the FARC gradually lowered FARC's belief in the military route, while Santos' pragmatic and risky political efforts raised hopes within the FARC that the political route might lead somewhere. Another controversy concerns the FARC: Did they suddenly abandon terrorism and embrace peace and politics? This thesis argues that the FARC has always had a political agenda, but that as opposed to in Caguán, when military action was perceived as the preferred way to achieve its political goals, it realized—gradually during the 2000s—that negotiating was the best strategy to pursue its goals. In other words, the FARC seems to have leaned towards negotiations or fighting largely because of military power relations. Its decision to negotiate in Havana, then, is based on both a changing military and political context and its leadership's perception and interpretation of it.

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<sup>5</sup> Civil society was critical in demanding peace dialogue before Caguán. In this thesis, however, its role was not found important for PNO in 2012. See discussion in 7.4 for more.

<sup>6</sup> See Rettberg (2016) for a comparative analysis of the role of the private sector in Caguán and Havana.

Having touched on the ingredients and the main propositions of this thesis, the remainder of this chapter defines key concepts and provides a brief background to the Colombian conflict, including my cases.

## **1.1. Key concepts**

### **1.1.1. What is negotiation, pre-negotiation, and peace negotiation onset?**

Negotiation is needed when parties have conflicting interests. Together, through negotiation, parties can settle their differences peacefully. According to Iklé (1964: 3-4), “negotiation is a process in which explicit proposals are put forward ostensibly for the purpose of reaching agreement on an exchange or on the realization of a common interest where conflicting interests are present”. These explicit proposals are then discussed and argued for and against. Sometimes, parties compromise and settle.

Before negotiations start, actors must agree on what, how, and when to negotiate. This phase has been labelled the pre-negotiation phase (Stein 1989).<sup>7</sup> In this phase the parties attempt to establish a common understanding of their conflicting interests, and they pursue, according to Harold Saunders (Stein 1989: 248), a negotiated settlement in the belief that a “fair settlement is likely”. Rather than matters of substance, parties talk about how and what they will negotiate. They then create a negotiating framework composed of an agenda and methodology, and agree on when and where negotiations take place and who sits at the table.

According to Stein (1989: x), pre-negotiations start when “one or more parties consider negotiation as a policy option and communicates this intention to other parties”. I argue pre-negotiations start when *both* parties consider negotiation as a policy option, in effect that a proposal by one has been positively responded to by the other. Pre-negotiation ends in a failure as soon as one of the parties no longer considers negotiation a policy option (Stein 1989: 4).

Pre-negotiation may also end as parties start proper negotiations. In my thesis, I adopt a definition of peace negotiation onset that goes beyond agreeing to formal negotiations, or the official announcement of this intention. Peace negotiation onset is more than expressing intent; it is the actual onset of *negotiations*. Therefore, I define peace negotiations onset as the moment

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<sup>7</sup> This phase resembles the diagnostic phase developed by Zartman and Berman (1982).

in which armed actors (the parties) sit down at the negotiating table and negotiate agreed-upon agenda points according to an agreed-upon methodology.

The highly concrete definition I adopt largely corresponds to Zartman and Berman's concept of "turning point of seriousness". The essence of this concept is that parties perceive the other side to be "serious about finding a negotiated solution", and that they are "willing to 'lose' a little to 'win' a little (Zartman and Berman 1982: 87). In short, to negotiate, parties must be willing to compromise.

### **1.1.2. Protracted conflicts**

Making peace is particularly challenging in protracted conflicts. Protracted conflicts are those facing a "hostile relationship that lasts over a period of time, usually twenty years or more, punctuated by periodic recourse to war or large-scale violence, and characterized by numerous conflict management efforts" (Bercovitch and Kadayifci 2002: 114-15). The Colombian conflict exemplifies a protracted conflict, and features several typical characteristics. These include several armed actors (Cunningham 2006; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012), use of contrabands such as cocaine (Fearon 2004), large territory and rough terrain (Buhaug and Gates 2002), and external involvement (Cunningham 2010). Moreover, it has created animosity and vengeance between parties and within the population.

Per Bercovitch and Kadayifci's definition, the GoC-FARC conflict is one of two protracted conflicts in Colombia. The other is the conflict between the Government and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, henceforth ELN). The ELN, established in 1965, is a considerably smaller guerrilla, though still interlinked in the complex Colombian conflict. Hence, making peace with the FARC is only one of the 'pieces of peace' (pedazos de paz) in Colombia. However, it is by far the biggest piece.

## **1.2. Background to the conflict in Colombia**

The roots of the Colombian conflict go back to colonial history and a two-digit number of civil conflicts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the lead-up to the most recent civil war starting 1964 is often said to be the killing of the liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9 April 1948. This led to a ten-year long period of high-intensity violence (up to an estimated 300 000 casualties) between the Conservative and Liberal Party, the two dominating parties. It ended with The National Front, an agreement between the two parties that divided



power between them and had the parties alternate in occupying the presidency (Pécaut 2008: 18-19). This excluded opponents from putting forth their political agenda, leaving them without political influence.

In the 1960s, the FARC, among several other communist-inspired guerrilla groups, formed in the Colombian countryside. The FARC, established by Colombian farmers, was primarily concerned—from its very start—with agrarian reform (Medina Gallego 2009). Inequality in rural zones of Colombia has its roots in colonial history, and has persisted in Colombian society for centuries; Colombia continues to be one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of distribution of wealth, land, and income (Isacson and Poe 2009: 3). Beyond the FARC, some smaller guerrilla groups demobilized in the early 1990s. The ELN has yet to lay down arms, but is per May 2017 in peace talks with the Government in Quito, Ecuador.

Other important armed groups in the Colombian conflict are right-wing self-defense groups, which expanded most rapidly in the 1990s. Many self-defense groups (paramilitaries) formed in 1997 the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, henceforth AUC). Beyond self-protection and counterinsurgency against guerrilla groups, the AUC has been known to cooperate with—and at times to do the ‘dirty work’ for—the official Colombian military. The AUC ceased to exist in 2006, after around 30 000 members demobilized. However, several “neo-paramilitary” groups or “criminal bands” (BACRIM) arose in the AUC’s place. These new groups are more divided and do not have the national strategy or the power of the AUC. Paramilitaries are, in general, considered the most violent actor in the conflict. Some estimates suggest they were responsible for about 75 percent of violations of international human law (Chernick 2007: 76) and responsible for about 59 percent of massacres.<sup>8</sup>

While the cultivation of coca leaves in Colombia is ancient, its use for coca paste production and exportation grew exponentially in the 1980s and 1990s, making Colombia by far the greatest cocaine exporter in the world. Drug cartels controlled most of the export, but involvement in drug production soon generated enormous income for guerrilla groups. For the FARC it became the key source of income. Also paramilitary groups reaped from drug trafficking, conducting “the vast majority of drug trade” around the late 1990s (Tate 2015: 47).

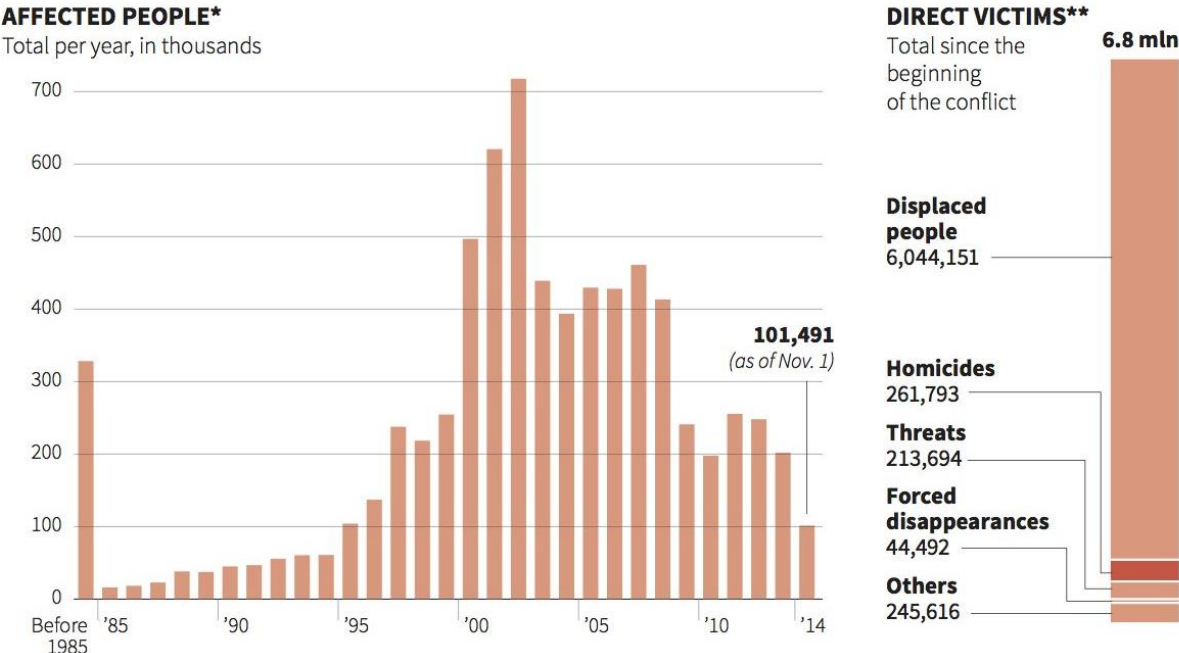
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<sup>8</sup> The guerrillas and the Colombian Public Force were responsible for, respectively, 17.3 and 7.9 percent. 14.8 percent were perpetrated by unconfirmed actors (CNRR 2013: 36).

The drug trade is an important connector between Colombia (the greatest exporter) and the USA (the greatest importer).

Human suffering in Colombia due to armed conflict has been enormous. In the most recent conflict (starting 1964), the number of recorded battle deaths is around 25 000 (UCDP 2017). In total, however, there have been approximately 220 000 deaths (also including civilians) as a result of the conflict, and around 7 million Colombians have been internally displaced (CNRR 2013). As these numbers suggest, the civilian population has suffered greatly. Beyond displacement and homicides, they have suffered from sexual violence, kidnapping, and extortion. The last two decades have been most intense (see Graph 1 below).

Graph 1: Colombia’s conflict victims<sup>9</sup>



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

Many efforts have been made to end the Colombian conflict. Usually, one counts four peace processes. The first, lasting several months, culminated in a 1984 cease fire which, one year later, led to the establishment of the Patriotic Union (Medina Gallego 2009: 180). The Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica—UP), the FARC’s political project, seemed at some point to gain some traction (Pécaut 2008: 51), but ended in the killing of around 3000 members—including

<sup>9</sup> Reproduced from (Woody 2015). Woody draws statistics from the Victims Unified Records (RUV) in the Colombian Government.

a presidential candidate—by the army and right-wing paramilitaries in the latter half of the 1980s (Puri 2016: 46). The second peace process started in Caracas, Venezuela, with two rounds in 1991 in which parties failed to agree on a cease fire. The next rounds were held in Tlaxcala, Mexico in March 1992, where “broader policy issues” were to be discussed, but “these negotiations never got off the ground” (Chernick 2007: 64). These negotiation attempts are important to keep in mind when understanding the Caguán and Havana peace processes. Particularly the wipe-out of FARC’s political project UP is central. While limited space prevents further discussion, the UP-experience is important in understanding the spoiler role of right-wing paramilitaries. The UP experience is also an important backdrop for understanding the FARC’s prospects for and faith in a political solution.

### **1.2.1. Background to the FARC guerrilla**

The symbolic origin story of the guerrilla is its resistance to a State-led (and US-supported) invasion of an area in Southern Colombia (Alape 1999: 264). What it saw as an invasion was the State’s “Operation Marquetalia” which viewed these areas as “illegal, communist ‘independent publics’” (Chernick 2007: 54). Two months later, the guerrilla put forth an agrarian reform plan which, as part of a larger set of five elements, demanded land to be given back to the farmers that worked it (Medina Gallego 2009: 93-95). The armed group named itself the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in 1966.

The FARC is ideologically Marxist (Peña 2012: 87), but has its roots in the Colombian context and the struggle against rural inequality. It is a hierarchically organized group, and structured into a Central High Command (Estado Mayor Central), consisting of around 30 members, which is led by a Secretariat (henceforth Secretariat) composed of around seven to nine members. Members of the Secretariat are the highest leaders in the FARC. Its military apparatus is divided into blocks that operate in different parts of the country. Each block has a leader in the Secretariat, and has several fronts composed of smaller units of varying sizes, including columns, companies, guerrillas, and squads (Pécaut 2008: 107). The leader of the FARC Secretariat was—for 44 years—one of its founding members; Manuel Marulanda.<sup>10</sup> Upon his death in March 2008, Alfonso Cano assumed the leadership of the Secretariat. When the Colombian Armed Forces killed Cano in November 2011, Timoleón Jiménez took over. Before

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<sup>10</sup> This thesis uses, as do most publications on the FARC, the leaders’ noms de guerre (aliases).

becoming FARC leaders, both Cano and Jiménez had more than three decades in the organization, and had spent most of this time in the Secretariat (Peña 2010: 119).

The FARC makes strategic decisions through intermittently held Conferences. The Seventh Conference in 1982 was crucial, as it set taking power in Colombia as its strategic aim, seeking to use a combination of all forms of struggle to achieve this. This Strategic Plan was followed by a eight-year plan, which was set in motion in the early 1990s and sought to move it from a guerrilla movement to become a full-fledge army. Hence, it added People's Army to its name—Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

The FARC's military expansion in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with an “explosion” in the drug trade in Colombia (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 288). The drug trade increased the FARC's financial resources dramatically. By controlling or taxing “the lower parts of the drug trade, coca cultivation, coca harvest, coca paste, airstrips, and some cocaine exports” (Chernick 2007: 71), its involvement in the drug trade accounted for an estimated 41 percent in the 1990s and over half from around 2003 (Peña 2010: 122-23).<sup>11</sup> Beyond the drug trade, kidnapping has been a key income generating activity, primarily so in the latter half of the 1990s and the earlier parts of the 2000s (Peña 2010: 124). Furthermore, the FARC has raised income from cattle rustling (Chernick 2007: 72) as well as through extortion and illegal mining (Peña 2014: 291). The group's involvement with such activities has been viewed with disdain by the public, hence lowering its belief in and support for its political motivations. This involvement it also important in understanding US' interests in and policies towards Colombia.

### **1.3. The cases**

#### **1.3.1. The Caguán dialogue**

The parties planned the Caguán dialogue in July 1998, when president elect Andrés Pastrana met with FARC leader Manuel Marulanda and agreed on conditions for the talks. The two most important conditions were the creation of a demilitarized zone of 42 000 square kilometers (larger than Switzerland) in which the dialogue took place, and the government's promise to dismantle paramilitary groups (Isacson 2003: 8). The immediate background for the dialogue was a Citizen's Mandate for Peace in 1997, in which 10 million Colombians expressed their

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<sup>11</sup> Figures on the FARC's reliance on the drug trade are subject to considerable uncertainty.

desire for peace after conflict intensity rose in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> President Pastrana saw it as his obligation to fulfill the mandate (Pastrana 2005: 39). On 7 January 1999 the dialogue was inaugurated, though without an agreed agenda (this was agreed on 6 May 1999), without a specified methodology,<sup>13</sup> and without FARC leader Marulanda. Marulanda's absence is often referred to as The empty chair (La Silla Vacía), referring to the empty chair next to Pastrana at the inauguration. The Caguán process continued until the FARC hijacked a domestic airliner and kidnapped a senator on 20 February 2002, which prompted Pastrana to end the peace process and order the retake of the demilitarized zone in Caguán (Isacson 2003: 3).

The Caguán dialogue was primarily a dialogue—an exchange of views—in which the armed actors explored the potential for peace. As Isacson (2003: 4) puts it, parties were “haggling over procedural questions between small, unrepresentative, mutually distrustful groups of negotiators”. The agenda, designed more after the wishes of the FARC than the government, was broad and covered numerous issues related to the structure of the Colombian state. Of the 12 points, and 47 sub-points, the first one the parties intended to discuss was “Revision of the economic development model” (Garcia-Duran 2004: 84-85). While the parties signed an agreement reaffirming willingness to negotiate (Acuerdo de los Pozos) as well as a humanitarian exchange accord (Medina Gallego 2009: 264 & 76), negotiations about the pre-approved agenda never took off (Villarraga R32). Rather than negotiations, the process is remembered for its more than one thousand “Public audiences” in which the public and civil society discussed a variety of topics. Results from these public audiences were supposed to be transmitted to the FARC and Government peace delegations (Medina Gallego 2009: 252). A variety of persons, including diplomats and other foreign visitors, journalists, activists, and businessmen attended, creating what several respondents describe as a “circus”. The lack of proper negotiations makes Caguán best described as a highly public case of pre-negotiation.

### **1.3.2. The Havana peace process**

The peace process in Havana is very distinct. One difference is how it came about. In September 2010 president Santos approached the FARC leader Alfonso Cano through a secret backchannel. Cano, through his fellow FARC secretariat member Pablo Catatumbo, responded

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<sup>12</sup> The Citizens' Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty was a Colombian civil society initiative (also supported by Unicef), where in a local election in 1997, 10 million Colombians signed a separate ballot expressing their desire for peace (Bouvier 2012: 53).

<sup>13</sup> A methodology was elaborated during the first meeting in 2000 (Medina 2009: 256-257).

positively to the president's request one month later, and a search for a peace process began (Acosta 2016). Four secret meetings took place between the parties close to Colombia's border with Venezuela and on a Venezuelan island. During these meetings, the parties decided to nominate two countries as guarantors (Cuba and Norway) and two as accompanying countries (Chile and Venezuela). Moreover, international negotiation experts were summoned to provide guidance (Santos Calderón 2014: 26). Between 24 February and 26 August 2012 the parties conducted formal and secret pre-negotiations, and created an agenda and a methodology (Gómez Giraldo 2016: 27-36). On 19 November the same year, they started negotiating the first agenda point.

Another difference between Caguán and Havana is the carefully designed pre-negotiations that took place in a secret environment with no unwanted interference. The pre-negotiations culminated in the signing of a realistic and well-designed agenda and methodology, on which parties quickly made progress.

#### **1.4. Structure of thesis**

I go about this study in the following manner. In Chapter 2 I present and discuss my research design and methods. In Chapter 3 I review key theoretical literature about why parties seek to negotiate, and I develop my analytical framework. There I also elaborate on how I understand actors' decision to negotiate, why I examine actors' considerations of alternatives through a rational actor approach, and why starting peace negotiations is understood as a bargaining process, i.e. a joint effort.

In Chapters 4-6 I analyze the three explanatory factors one by one: Chapter 4 examines military power relations; Chapter 5 looks at the influence of external actors; and Chapter 6 scrutinizes the influence of leaders.

These factors are each supposed to explain parts of why negotiations started. However, to understand the larger picture, Chapter 7 combines these different perspectives and discusses the most important factors, examines interactions, revisits theory, and identifies lessons learnt. Chapter 8 concludes and considers implications for Colombia and for other protracted conflicts.

## **2. Methods**

In this chapter I specify the research objective and connect this to the research design I adopt. I then elaborate on the case selection, methods, data collection, and data analysis.

### **2.1. Research objective and research design**

As alluded to earlier, while most conflicts “fizzle out” or end in a military victory (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011: 172), the percentage of conflicts ending with a negotiated outcome has increased since the Cold War (Fixdal 2016: 10). While a negotiated outcome may neither end nor resolve a conflict (Fixdal 2016: 15ff), it is considered the preferred war termination strategy per now. This warrants studies of why conflicts end with a negotiated outcome.

To understand why conflicts end, examining peace negotiations only is incomplete; to understand this process and how it ends, one must dig into the reasons for why peace negotiations started. While peace negotiations often derail before reaching agreement, it is important to ask why parties decided to negotiate in the first place. Indeed, PNO is a key turning point in pursuit of a negotiated settlement (Pillar 2014: 44). And even though the process leading up to it is not theoretically independent of the build-up to a negotiated outcome (Ghosn 2010: 1057), it is a distinct phase and deserves attention on its own.

To tap into the reasons why for peace negotiations commence, combining a positive case (PNO) and a negative one (non-PNO) is a prosperous approach. This research design is motivated by the literature that criticizes studies that examine a phenomenon by exclusively sampling cases with a specific outcome, of which Skocpol’s (1980) investigation of social revolutions is a prominent example. Indeed, choosing on the dependent variable can be a serious selection bias in case study research (Levy 2008: 8). As Levy (2008: 7) writes, it is valuable to study why World War I started; but “[w]e could learn a lot about the causes of WWI [...] by analysing why the numerous crises in the decade before 1914 did not lead to a general European war”. As Stein (1989: 261) argues in the context of peace negotiations; “a more robust explanation of ‘successful’ pre-negotiation must await detailed comparative examination of processes that failed to culminate in negotiation”.

### **2.2. Case selection**

The recent peace negotiation onset in the protracted conflict in Colombia merits careful study. Studying it is valuable for better understanding the Colombian conflict as a whole and the

dynamics that made the FARC and the GoC seek a negotiated solution. Studying it can also help us shed new light on the broader phenomenon of peace negotiation onsets in protracted conflicts. Taking advantage of this new case can help us identify dynamics and patterns that in turn may help us corroborate, question, or falsify established theories. Examining the GoC-FARC conflict is particularly valuable as we can study both the 2012 PNO and the lack of PNO during the Caguán dialogue. Such a comparative approach enhances our ability to pin-point what factors may be essential and which may not.

### **2.3. Method**

To exploit the full potential of a positive and negative case of PNO, I conduct a structured focused comparison. A structured comparison seeks to “standardize data collection”, making “systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases possible” (George and Bennett 2007: 67). In effect, I use the same framework and ask the same questions to explore both cases. A focused comparison means that only a certain number of aspects of cases are examined. While there is an infinite number of angles from which to study the peace processes in Caguán and Havana, I have a particular research objective and focus for my study (PNO). This enables other researchers to examine other cases in a similar way, hence further accumulating knowledge of the broader range of cases (George and Bennett 2007).

In George and Bennet’s framework, I conduct a disciplined configurative case study in the sense that I use established theories (or theoretical propositions) to guide my study. However, I also aim to interact with the theories that guide my research, as I may “impugn established theories if the theories ought to fit but do not”, or stress the “need for new theory in neglected areas” (George and Bennett 2007: 75). Indeed, my empirical results may have implications beyond my cases. For example, my findings seem to contradict the association some scholars have found between the costs of war and PNO. I also find that the Mutually Hurting Stalemate proposition does not fully explain PNO in 2012, and that applying it is problematic and requires solid qualifications. These and others are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Any individual explanatory factor investigated (e.g. external actors) could warrant its own master thesis. Even though investigating several explanatory factors may limit the researcher’s ability to accurately analyze any one, this broad approach enables the researcher to grasp the whole picture and pin-point the most important factors.



## 2.4. Data collection

The empirical data consists of 35 interviews collected in Bogotá, Colombia (November-December 2016) and in Norway (October 2016 and January-March 2017). On average, interviews lasted 45 minutes. Respondents agreed to be identified by name in the list of respondents. All direct and indirect quotes from interviews were, if not already in English, translated from Spanish or Norwegian to English by author. All direct and indirect quotes were approved by respondents before thesis submission. To distinguish in-text references to respondents from references to written sources, I refer to respondents by surnames and individual codes. While Lozano (2016) refers to a publication, Lozano (R16) refers to an interview (Respondent 16). Individual codes are given based on surnames, which are alphabetically arranged (see Appendix I).

All interviews started with an open question: Why do you think peace negotiations started in Havana in 2012, while they did not in Caguán (1999-2002)? Part two consisted of up to four questions pertaining to theoretical propositions, namely military power relations, the leaders, external actors, and third party peace support. Sometimes not all four aspects were covered. This happened a couple of times because time was cut short, but more often as I focused on factors or the specific peace process on which I thought the specific respondent would have particularly valuable insights.<sup>14</sup> I conducted interviews, instead of e.g. handing out a questionnaire or conducting a statistical analysis, because the ability to probe into why any factor really mattered is central. Extensive interviews were considered particularly valuable in understanding interactions between objective conditions (e.g. battlefield performance and the costs of war) and actors' subjective interpretations.

Respondents sampled were experts on the GoC-FARC conflict and the two peace processes as well as people involved in them. Beyond individuals with key roles (e.g. mediators or negotiators) during the peace processes, several professors and analysts with different areas of expertise were interviewed. Areas of expertise could be the FARC, peace processes, international actors, paramilitaries, and military history. Additionally, I interviewed leaders of civil society organizations.

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<sup>14</sup> With professor Borda Guzman, for example, who has published widely on the internationalization of the conflict, I focused on external actors. With Peace Commissioner Victor G. Ricardo (1998-2000) and UN special envoy Jan Egeland (1999-2002), I focused on the Caguán-process.

Interviewing a diverse set of respondents may help tackle key challenges in studying peace processes. One challenge is that secrecy often surrounds peace processes. Relatedly, actors often have incentives to misrepresent information (Fearon 1995). Hence, actors’ public and private intentions, and how their adversary and other actors perceive these intentions, may differ. Indeed, intentions may be ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Interviewing a diverse set of respondents may help account for a variety of interpretations of peace processes, actors, and their goals. Members of actors, for example, may provide the actors’ perspective. Analysts and professors, however, may provide a more neutral analysis (and perhaps closer to parties’ true intentions). Mediators, moreover, may provide valuable insights into parties’ considerations of strategy alternatives during peace processes.

*Table 1: Overview of respondents by category*

<i>Members of parties</i>	3
<i>Mediators</i>	7
<i>Professors</i>	11
<i>Analysts</i>	7
<i>Civil society</i>	4
<i>Members of the Colombian Public Forces</i>	3
<b>In total</b>	<b>35</b>

## **2.5. Data analysis**

The questions asked in interviews have implications for how interviews are analyzed. Part two of the interview—the largest part—concerned factors existing literature has found important, along with probing questions into why these factors mattered. The first open question served two purposes. First, it challenged respondents to name the most important factors. Second, it was a means of taking other potentially important factors not mentioned by theory into account. Hence, this open-ended question has served as a reliability-test. It is noteworthy that the answers respondents gave to this open question largely reflected the theory-derived explanatory factors that I probed into later in the interview. This may suggest that the explanatory power that lies in the factors I examine is significant.

The suggestion that considerable explanatory power lies in the factors I investigate indicates high internal validity. External validity, on the other hand, is likely to be lower: The importance of external actors, to take one example, may change considerably in other cases. What strengthens external validity, is that the framework used to study the Government of Colombia-FARC conflict relationship is theory-derived, and is therefore in essence based on the study of other cases. When applying this framework to other cases, it may be that the importance of any factor differs substantially, but that the three factors themselves will remain important.

George and Bennett (2007: 70-71) write that comparability to previous case studies may be lower if one re-defines key concepts. This thesis defines PNO as the moment when parties sit down and negotiate agreed-upon agenda points per an agreed-upon methodology. Compared to other definitions, this definition is more concrete. Schiff's (2014: 94) definition (in a similar study) of PNO is "commencement of negotiations" while Ghosn (2010: 1063), conducting a statistical study, defines it as "occurrence of negotiation (...) in a given month". The stricter definition adopted in this thesis seeks to separate more clearly the pre-negotiation and negotiation phase, which may be analytically valuable.

Several measures to increase reliability were taken. The first was to create a concise interview guide based on theoretical propositions. Second, the data collection process, including when, with whom, and how, have been clearly laid out. This includes, as George and Bennet (2007: 94) demand, reporting any changes to my initial analytical framework (discussed below). Third, given the many uncertainties inherent in such a study (like the real intentions of armed actors), interviewing respondents with diverse roles and backgrounds probably increased reliability. Fourth, the number of interviews conducted was high.

During data collection and analysis, I made two modifications to the analytical framework. First, I merged third party peace support with external actors' military involvement. One reason is that the peace support was, by respondents, not found to be as important as other factors to explain my cases; another is that it at times is difficult to distinguish between the two types of involvement. Second, leadership change was replaced with 'leaders'. The reason is that, beyond the change itself, leaders' background and personality mattered for PNO.

I use primarily qualitative means to analyze the data material. Instead of merely counting the number of times a certain argument was put forth, I examine for what reasons and with what data respondents put forth an argument. Moreover, I acknowledge the expertise of each

respondent: Experts on the paramilitaries, for example, may provide more accurate analyses of their role than respondents with other areas of expertise.

### **3. Theory and analytical framework**

First, this chapter reviews theories and theoretical propositions about why armed actors decide to negotiate. This section starts with three reasons for why peace negotiation onset in protracted conflicts is especially difficult. Second, drawing on the reviewed literature, I outline the analytical framework I use to empirically examine my cases. There, I specify how I understand actors' decision to negotiate, how I approach actors' considerations of alternatives, i.e. a rational actor approach, and that starting peace negotiations is understood as a joint effort, i.e. a bargaining process.

#### **3.1. Why do armed actors decide to negotiate?**

Peace attempts in protracted conflicts are particularly difficult. Compared to other conflicts, starting negotiations in protracted conflicts may be vulnerable to at least three further complicating elements. One element is that over the course of a long war, an actor may not decide to negotiate because it has “lost sight of the post-war objective”, or that the purpose itself has changed (Iklé 2005: 8). One may therefore end up fighting the opponent not to win, but because of vengeance caused by the war itself. As the Economist puts it (Economist 2013): “Civil wars unresolved for more than a decade seem to drag on for ever, with both sides resigned to perpetual fighting, too disgusted or exhausted to face their enemies across the negotiating table.” In other words, parties may agree on underlying issues, but do not negotiate due to sentiments produced by the armed conflict itself.

A second element is that protracted conflicts are often fought with guerrilla warfare, which tend to be of lower intensity. In low-intensity conflicts and in contexts where a particular conflict (e.g. the one with the FARC in the complex Colombian conflict) is less urgent than other issues, state's incentives to solve that particular conflict may be lower. A related element is that protracted conflicts, many of which are “peripheral insurgencies”, may be more difficult to end because rebel groups can hide in a vast and rough terrain without state interference (Fearon 2004: 277).

A third element is that armed actors do not decide to negotiate if it is engaged in a war not to gain some specified post-war objectives, but to reap from the war in itself, for example from the war economy. In this situation, war becomes the goal itself (Iklé 2005), from which an actor has no incentives to escape. Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom (2004: 255) call this “rebellion-as-business”, in that the payoff occurs during it. Fearon (2004: 277) finds that one of three

characteristics that tend to make conflicts last longer is the rebel group's use of contrabands such as "opium, diamonds, or coca". While income from contrabands is found to be a constraint, groups with income from such sources can also be motivated by non-economic objectives (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004: 255).

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to explain why armed actors pursue peace negotiations. The perhaps most well-known one is Zartman's ripeness theory, which seeks to explain why parties at a specific time decide to negotiate an end to the conflict.<sup>15</sup> Zartman's idea is that a conflict is 'ripe for resolution' when conflict participants find themselves in a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) and perceive a way out (WO) (Zartman 2000). A MHS is a situation in which both armed actors (mutually) are experiencing pain (hurting), and perceive themselves to be in a deadlocked position from which they cannot escalate their way to military victory (stalemate). A WO means a shared "sense that a negotiated solution is possible", and suggests that parties must not only seek to escape a MHS, but also have a sense of negotiations being a possible means of doing so (Zartman 2000: 229-231). While a mutually hurting stalemate and a way out 'ripen' the conflict, ripeness "is not self-fulfilling or self-implementing;" one must "seize [...] the 'ripe moment'" (Zartman 2000: 227).

Over time, many scholars have sought to refine ripeness theory. Mitchell (1995), for example, provided some early revisions of what conditions can induce a 'ripe moment'. He recognized the two mechanisms that had been proposed by Zartman; the MHS and the Imminent mutual catastrophe argument. He also argued one should recognize that sometimes a MHS can cause an entrapment mechanism, where in a MHS the parties become more committed to a military solution. Fourthly, he argued ripeness could be caused by an enticing opportunity. For example, a leader not committed to the "goals or methods of their predecessors" may change an actor's goals or interpretation of the conflict (Mitchell 1995: 44).

Another refinement, by Pruitt (1997, 2005), replaces mutual 'ripeness' with individual 'readiness' of each actor. Readiness theory is what Pruitt (2005) calls a recast of ripeness theory. In it, Pruitt seeks to tackle a key critique of ripeness theory, namely that ripeness "is viewed more as a state than a variable". Pruitt (1997) therefore makes it a variable: The readiness of each side, according to Pruitt, is composed of motivation to achieve de-escalation and optimism

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<sup>15</sup> From its original formulation in the 1990s, ripeness theory has changed over the years. I refer mostly to Zartman's 2000 refinement.

about finding a mutually acceptable agreement. It is then thought that motivation and optimism increase readiness to negotiate. While motivation is thought to be most important, higher levels of optimism can make up for lower levels of motivation (Pruitt 2005: 10). Also motivation and optimism consist of variables that may all increase the overall score. For example, some parties may be “motivated mainly by a belief that they cannot win, others mainly by the cost of the conflict, and still others mainly by the risk of a future catastrophe or pressure from a powerful third party” (Pruitt 2005: 9).

Beyond specific theories, such as ripeness and readiness theory, several scholars have attempted to identify the conditions in which a party (or both parties) see negotiations as a better policy option than continued fighting. Pruitt and Kim (2004: 173-74), for example, identify four major reasons for why a party concludes it is in a stalemate and seeks negotiations. These reasons are; (1) contentious tactics no longer works; (2) resources are depleted, be it ‘energy’ (physical or psychological stamina), financial costs, or time; (3) political backing and material support (e.g. supplies, recruits, safe havens etc.) are diminished; and (4) it perceives unacceptable costs/risks involved with continued fighting or escalation.

Kaplow (2016) approaches the topic differently and asks why parties in civil wars do not negotiate. He argues parties to a civil war can face pressure from external actors and difficulties with satisfying different internal voices. Obstacles for a government in particular, are that negotiating may send undesirable signals to other armed groups and may strengthen the rebel group by granting legitimacy as a belligerent. Moreover, a government may face (political) costs by negotiating with unwilling or insincere adversaries, or groups for various reasons unable to start a concessionary process (which negotiations fundamentally are).

Several scholars argue there is an association between the costs of war and negotiating (see e.g. Urlacher 2011, Ghosn 2010; Mason et al.). While high costs (greater conflict intensity) have been found to make parties seek a negotiated outcome, it has also been found to make parties want to “‘win’ at all costs” (Ghosn 2010: 1059). Another interpretation is that high costs of war make armed actors seek negotiations for short-term benefits, i.e. catch “a breather for rest and rearmament” (Ghosn 2010: 1059). Actors may also want to end war due to human suffering and economic losses (Iklé 2005: 20). Other explanations related to the costs of war is that public opinion shifts and economic crisis may incentivize actors to move away from fighting (Rasler 2000: 700).

Beyond abovementioned efforts to pin-point reasons for why parties negotiate or not, some scholars have focused on peace initiatives, mutual trust, or third party mediation. Others stress shifts in external power distribution or new perceived threats to security (Rasler 2000: 700). This long list suggests there are many types of events or developments within conflicts that can change an actor's outlook, its consideration of its policy options, and eventually its decision to negotiate or continue fighting.

The key turning point, however, is when armed actors themselves recognize that in their situation, negotiations are preferable to continued fighting. In other words, what matters is that an event (be it a shock or a slower development) changes armed actors' perceptions about the conflict and its evaluation of policy options (Rasler 2000: 702). Besides changing an actors' perception of how the war is going, important events may also corroborate it, creating no incentive to change policy (Rasler 2000: 702). Often, faced with large amounts of information about military, political, economic, and social events, leaders have great difficulties in deciding which to believe in and rely on (Iklé 2005: 17ff). In war, implications of military, political, social, and economic developments are difficult to read; decisions during war time are usually based on uncertain, false, and/or contradictory information about objective conditions—the “fog of war” as Clausewitz puts it (Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret 1984: 117). Uncertain information may lead to an inaccurate interpretation of how the war is really going, and may ultimately prevent a leader from recognizing that he may find himself at an opportune time to negotiate.

The importance of an armed actor's subjective interpretation enhances the importance of leaders' perceptions and interpretations. The importance of leaders' perceptions is perhaps most emphasized in Zartman's ripeness theory mentioned above. In his 2000 publication, he proposes that “[a]n MHS contains objective and subjective elements, of which only the latter are necessary and sufficient to its existence” (Zartman 2000: 229). Hence, he writes, a MHS does not exist if the parties do not recognize it, despite there being “clear evidence” in someone else's view. On the other hand, if the parties “perceive themselves to be in such a situation, no matter how flimsy the ‘evidence’, the MHS is present” (Zartman 2000: 229). (This reduction of the objective elements to almost irrelevance is discussed, based on the analysis, in Chapters 7 and 8.) In effect, Zartman says, as also Bercovitch and Kadayifci (2002: 126) say, that “ripe moments are perceptual”.



Also other scholars focus on leaders in explaining PNO. A new leader, for example, may with less political cost be able to change policy, for example in the direction of negotiation, as they may not have committed themselves to specific demands beforehand (Ghosn 2010: 1062). Or, as Stedman puts it, a new leader may “add fluidity to what may have been a logjammed conflict” (Stedman 1991: 241). This is particularly the case if the previous leader was a spoiler (Stedman 1997: 11). Also the type of leader might matter. Shultz (2005), finds that “Hawkish” leaders may have several advantages in conflict resolution. While a “Dovish” leader might be better at creating cooperation in the short run, Hawkish leaders are more robust to future shocks. Importantly, “[a] hawk who cooperates reveals itself to be moderate, which means that it can be trusted to reciprocate cooperation but it cannot be exploited” (Schultz 2005: 5). In the end, whether a leader moves his party towards negotiations concerns the extent to which he changes actor’s perception and interpretation of the conflict, and acts on it: Actors look for alternative ways to end a conflict when they “question the viability of existing conflict patterns and repertoires of state action and adopt new ways of thinking about their adversaries” (Rasler 2000: 701).

It is important to acknowledge that armed actors may decide to negotiate for other reasons than reaching a negotiated settlement (Urlacher 2011: 82; Pillar 2014: 51-52; Zartman 2000: 227). This can be due to internal disagreement, where one wing or segment favors negotiations while another prefers continued fighting. It can also be a rational decision to engage in peace talks with other intentions—negotiating in “bad faith”—for example to buy time in order to re-arm military (Urlacher 2011; Zartman 2000). Put in other words, the purpose for talking may be “effects not concerning agreements” (Iklé 1964: 27). Engaging in talks for other reasons, e.g. to catch a break from fighting, is per Ghosn (2010: 1057) a “short-term” calculation, while deciding to negotiate for the purpose of reaching a negotiated agreement is based on a “long-term calculations”. Negotiating to for example strengthen its military forces implies that peace talks are used as a tactics to strengthen its war strategy; not as a strategy in itself.

### **3.2. Analytical framework**

In this section I firstly specify how I understand actors’ decision to negotiate and actors’ considerations of alternatives. Then I outline how peace negotiations are understood as a joint effort, a bargaining process. Afterwards, I elaborate on the fundamental ideas behind the explanatory factors I choose to investigate in my analytical framework. Last, I explore each factor in depth.

As mentioned in the introduction, I argue that armed actors decide to negotiate when they view the political route (negotiations) preferable to the military route (continued fighting). Their preferences can, rather than two boxes of which an actor can tick only one, be viewed as a spectrum in which actors find themselves inclined to pursue one or the other strategy. Parties may, theoretically speaking, also find both equally preferable (see Illustration 1 below). The further away from the center actors find themselves, the stronger is their preference for one alternative. As a war develops, preferences may change, and can sometimes change suddenly.

*Illustration 1: Armed actors' strategy alternatives*



To understanding how armed actors consider strategy alternatives, I take a rational actor approach. This is by e.g. Pillar (2014: 8) and Fixdal et al (2016: 32) considered to be a useful starting point. This approach assumes that when actors make decisions in war, they decide what strategy can best help them achieve their objectives (Pillar 2014: 8). Theoretically speaking, when rational actors decide to continue to fight or stop fighting, they consider four elements (Brandt et al. 2008: 417; Mason and Fett 1996: 549). These are; probability of military victory, expected payoff from victory, rate at which they suffer costs of continued fighting, and the estimated time until they achieve victory. For negotiations one can consider the same elements; prospects of reaching agreement, expected payoff from agreement, estimated time it would take to do so, and the costs (versus benefits) it would suffer until agreement is reached. In negotiation theory, one often uses the concept of BATNA: The Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (Hopmann 1998: 57). In this study, one could operate with a Best alternative to a decision to negotiate, which would be not to negotiate, i.e. continue fighting.

It is important to note that gains and losses are evaluated from the point of view of the actor itself: A rational decision is one in which decision-makers “choose that strategy which maximizes their subjective expected utilities” (Hopmann 1998: 40). In other words, these decisions are based on the group’s own consideration of objectives and on how they perceive the situation at that point in time. This implies that not only objective conditions are important, but also subjective interpretations. Hence, this examination of actors’ decisions in war will concern both objective conditions and subjective interpretations.

Understanding actors' decisions in a war context may be difficult. Indeed, when explaining actors' preference for the military or the political route, at least some of the actors' intentions or motivations are difficult to identify. One reason is that decision-makers may consider elements beyond those directly relevant to the conflict under investigation or even the actor as a whole, in that all individuals seek "multiple payoffs from any decision they take" (George and Bennett 2007: 98). For example, Colombian presidents may all have a common desire for making peace in Colombia, but whether they decide to negotiate may vary depending on their perceived payoffs from each alternative. In consequence, researchers "should be sensitive to the possibility that several considerations motivated the decision" (George and Bennett 2007: 98), and that there may be hidden agendas (Fixdal 2016: 39) or incentives to misrepresent information (Fearon 1995). Also, scholars may not want to "over-intellectualize" the process, assuming decision-making processes are more thought-through than they really are (George and Bennet 2007: 98). Hence, while decisions are understood to be rational, they are not expected to be meticulous assessments of all relevant variables. Indeed, that some leaders may come to different conclusions about a very similar conflict context suggests that leaders' subjective interpretation matters. Therefore, examining leaders' subjective interpretations is important in this thesis.

This thesis, moreover, understands negotiation—and peace negotiation onset in particular—to be a bargaining process. According to Schelling (1960: 5), bargaining situations "are situations in which the ability of one participant to gain his ends is dependent to an important degree on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make." Indeed, a party's decision to sit down at the negotiating table may be fruitfully studied as a bargaining situation; in order to pursue the political route, essentially a bilateral way to end the war, parties need to consider the other actor's demands. The decision to negotiate is one that each actor takes, taking the other actors' willingness to negotiate into account. Indeed, PNO is ultimately a joint effort, in which actors beforehand must bargain conditions, agenda, and methodology for negotiations together with their counterpart.

To identify which explanatory factors may explain why peace negotiations started in 2012 but did not in 1999-2002, I return to the fundamental question of why armed actors choose to negotiate. According to Pillar (2014: 46ff), there are three situations in which an actor in a conflict chooses to negotiate instead of continue fighting. First, an actor negotiates if the issue at hand requires the "continued existence and willing cooperation of the other side" (Pillar 2014:

46). If a party seeks to overthrow the government, for example, it does not require this cooperation. Second, even though the existence or cooperation of the belligerent is not necessary, a party negotiates if it does not have the capability to win: Given my current capabilities and potential for further mobilization, including all outside help I can get, will I be able to coerce the enemy into submission (Iklé 2005)? Third, even though the other side's existence and cooperation is not necessary, and one perceives a victory as possible, an actor seeks negotiation if it finds, after considering costs and benefits of both options, the total costs of continued conflict higher than that of negotiations (Pillar 2014: 47).

In civil wars, actors typically seek to secede or overthrow the government (or, for the government, to prevent these outcomes). To overthrow a government or defeat an insurgent, actors do not require the cooperation of its opponent. Therefore, the first of Pillar's conditions is seldom a reason to negotiate. Hence, the key questions armed actors in a civil war may ask—given that it seeks some post-war objective—are how feasible a military victory is, and what the costs of continued fighting (and hence a military victory) are.

Hence, to study PNO (and lack thereof), one may examine (a) feasibility of military victory and (b) the costs of war. In my analytical framework, these are central parts of “military power relations”, which is the first explanatory factor.

The second explanatory perspective analyses how external actors, including the regional and international environment influence the decision to negotiate. I divide the role of external actors into (a) changes in the international and regional environment, (b) introduction or withdrawal of military support, and (c) third party peace support.

My third explanatory perspective focuses on leaders of armed actors, who are ultimately the individuals with the most influence on how actors perceive, interpret and act in a conflict situation. I look at the influence of changes in leadership and leaders' personality and background.

### **3.2.1 Military power relations**

Military power relations form the basis for whether or not to negotiate. This is based on the idea that achieving all post-war objectives militarily is preferable to compromising with the opponent through negotiations. Hence, only when prospects for military victory decline is an actor expected to negotiate. To examine prospects for military victory, then, one examines each actor's possibility of militarily defeating its opponent.

To determine an actor's ability to defeat its opponent, Iklé (2005) suggests considering three elements. The first two elements are critical to determine the (current and future) military capability of each power, and hence prospects for military victory: What potential do actors have in mobilizing men and resources, and what external assistance may parties receive? Should military victory be in sight, an actor is expected to favor the military route.

The third element is; will the costs of war coerce its opponent into submission? Iklé argues that war's violence may affect the public morale and public support to the extent that the costs in themselves may have the actor change its consideration of what their preferred strategy is. Therefore, one may ask: To what extent am I willing to accept "[both past and expected] casualties, human suffering, and economic losses" to achieve my goals militarily (Iklé 2005: 20)? The third element depends on the political will and actors' goals at the time. More specifically, to what extent can it inflict and tolerate the costs of war? Actors make, suggests Pillar (1983: 47), an evaluation of "the costs and benefits of using each method".

In Colombia in the 1990s, the FARC grew in military strength, enjoyed plentiful financial resources, and gained control of strategically important territories around key cities. The FARC, with the military initiative, was thought to have high prospects for victory and therefore expected to favor continued fighting over negotiations. The government on the other hand, struggled with demoralized armed forces and several military defeats against the FARC. Even though prospects for victory were expected to be low, the Government gradually favored continued fighting. What can explain this preference?

During the 2000s, the Colombian Armed Forces weakened FARC significantly and killed key leaders. However, starting 2008, it adapted to the Colombian Armed Forces' increased use of aviation and intelligence, and slowed its own decline. As a result, prospects for victory is expected to have increased. To what extent did this adaptation to the Government's offensive raise FARC's expectations for military victory? Why did it, eventually, decide to negotiate? On the Government's side, as the FARC slowed down its progress, prospects for military victory for the Government declined. While prospects for victory were lower, so were the costs of war, hence providing less incentives to negotiate. What can explain the Government's decision to negotiate?

### 3.2.2 External actors

While assembled into one “factor”, external actors can influence armed actors’ decision to negotiate in a variety of ways. This thesis organizes external actors’ influence into three categories.

The first is changes in the international or regional environment. For example, after the end of the Cold War, “the capacity or willingness of external powers [like the USA or the Soviet Union] to support fighting factions” decreased across the world (Ramsbotham 2011: 178). With less outside support, prospects of military victory declined. Another example, from Central America, is that peace support from neighboring countries may contribute to bringing about peace negotiations (Nissen and Waage 2015).

Compared to the late 1990s, more dominated by neoliberal governments, Latin America was in the 2000s composed of more leftist governments that had gained power nonviolently (Bull 2013). Such a change is expected to have encouraged the FARC to settle peacefully.

Second, external actors may influence actors’ decision to negotiate by withdrawing or introducing military support. Fearon and Laitin (2008: 39) argue this has “fairly often directly caused civil wars (...) to end”. Such a change in external actors’ involvement can strengthen one side to the extent that it makes the losing side ask for peace. Alternatively, a change in military support may lead to a military victory. Further, a lack of change in military support may sustain the war (Fearon and Laitin 2008: 39). Military support can also hinder negotiations because the interests of one more actor, who—as it does not bear the costs to the same extent—may be less inclined to negotiate (Cunningham 2010). Moreover, military aid may push the recipient towards continued fighting because it strengthens the viability of the military route—its outside option (Muthoo 2000). This, consequently, may increase one’s bargaining power, and, relatedly, one’s demands.

In Caguán, during which the large US military aid package Plan Colombia was developed, the US is expected to have pushed the recipient—the Colombian Government—away from negotiations. Leading up to Havana, however, the US’ military contribution is thought to have contributed to the weakening of the FARC.

Third, external actors may provide peace support, both by direct involvement (often called mediation) or indirectly by for example convincing allies to pursue the political route. Third parties can, for example, help parties is by overcoming the difficult first step, as accepting

negotiations is less likely to be viewed as weakness than initiating them (Pillar 2014: 79). Also, mediation can serve to increase availability of information (Beardsley et al. 2006: 726); knowing its opponent's true intentions can make parties perceive a common ground (Pruitt 1997: 240). Moreover, good offices and secrecy can make members of the actors more inclined to trust each other (Pillar 2014: 80). Secrecy can increase a pre-negotiation's resilience by preventing interference by media and opposition leaders (Pruitt 1997: 245-46).

In Caguán, third parties were limited in their ability to mediate, and is expected not to have played a key role. In Havana, however, third parties played specified roles, and are expected to have contributed to the PNO. Moreover, the role of Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez was per FARC leader Timoleón Jiménez important in convincing the FARC to pursue negotiations (Gómez Giraldo 2016: 29).

### **3.2.3 Leaders**

One way to “add fluidity to what may have been a logjammed conflict” (Stedman 1991: 241) is a leadership change. Changes in leadership have been found by many to be associated with PNO (Fearon and Laitin 2008; Pruitt 2005; Mitchell 1995: 44; Ghosn 2010). A new leader may change policy with less political cost, for example in the direction of negotiation, as they may not have committed themselves to specific demands beforehand (Ghosn: 2010: 1062). A new leader—typically not part of the previous leadership—may also be better set to see the whole conflict picture (Pruitt 2005: 5). Moreover, a new leader may be expected to change policy, which may give him further incentives to really do so (Mitchell 2000: 90).

However, also old leaders may decide to negotiate (Pruitt 2005: 5). Regardless of whether a leader is new or old, examining leaders' subjective interpretations is important. What matters is if any leader alters an actor's goals and interpretations in a manner that changes an actor considerations of the military and political route (Ramsbotham et al. 2011: 175-176). Therefore, this thesis examines leaders' personality and background.

The Colombian president Pastrana established the Caguán dialogue in 1999, but failed to push them forward. What explanatory power does Pastrana's background and personality have for the initiation of dialogue but lack of PNO in 1999? Also in 2010-2012, a change in leadership is succeeded by a peace attempt. This time, around, however, proper negotiations commence. To what extent can the background and personality of Santos explain this PNO? The importance of Santos may be indicated by the extent to which he perceived the conflict differently from his

predecessor and changed how the Colombian Government interpreted the costs and gains of negotiations versus continued fighting.

On the FARC's side, the death in 2008 of its historic leader for 44 years Manuel Marulanda certainly was symbolic. However, was his death and the rise of a new leader essential for the FARC to pursue negotiations? And, what explanatory power do the new leader Cano's personality and background have?

In summary, I empirically examine my cases based on an analytical framework with three explanatory factors. I examine how these factors influence actor's preference for the political route (negotiations) or military route (continued fighting). To understand actors' preferences, I assume they choose the route that, rationally speaking, may lead them closest to their post-war objectives. Ultimately, peace negotiation onset is understood as a joint effort that requires parties to agree on what, when, and how to negotiate.

In the next three chapters, these factors—military power relations, external actors, and leaders—are examined one by one.



## **4. Analysis: Military power relations**

Military power relations is the first of three factors I investigate to explain the lack of PNO in Caguán and the PNO in Havana in 2012. Military power relations tend to relate to actors' perceived prospects of military victory. If prospects for military victory are high, parties to a conflict are expected to pursue the military route. A party may still negotiate—despite high prospects of military victory—if, having considered costs and benefits of both continued fighting and negotiations, it finds negotiations preferable (Pillar 2014). Assuming one deals with rational actors, this decision is taken in light of its key objectives (Pillar 2014: 8).

In this chapter, I firstly analyze military power relations in Caguán from the FARC's perspective. I argue that the FARC—in ascension, with substantial resources, and with control of strategically important territories—has few reasons to negotiate. Indeed, large segments believing in military victory—the taking of power in Colombia. However, I argue it would be interested in a settlement, but that no settlement range existed. On the government side, I try to solve the puzzle of why a weak armed actor, with demoralized armed forces, and facing economic hardship, does not whole-heartedly pursue a negotiated solution. The answer to this puzzle is three-fold; (1) despite limited public finances, it has the resources to strengthen militarily and put the FARC on the defensive, (2) it seems unable to unite around (or get support for) a coherent peace policy, and (3) a government is unlikely to negotiate if it means the rendition of its power.

Secondly, leading up to 2010-2012, I argue that prospects for victory had decreased significantly both for the FARC and the Government. While militarily weakened, and having lost important leaders in 2008, the FARC does not rush to the negotiating table to harness some grounds gained. Rather, it seems to halt the decline. Why, then, does it seek negotiations? I argue key reasons are the loss of key leaders, a certain loss of control and morale within the FARC, and increasing political isolation. On the government side, I argue that low prospects of military victory, and the costs involved with militarily defeating the FARC are important.

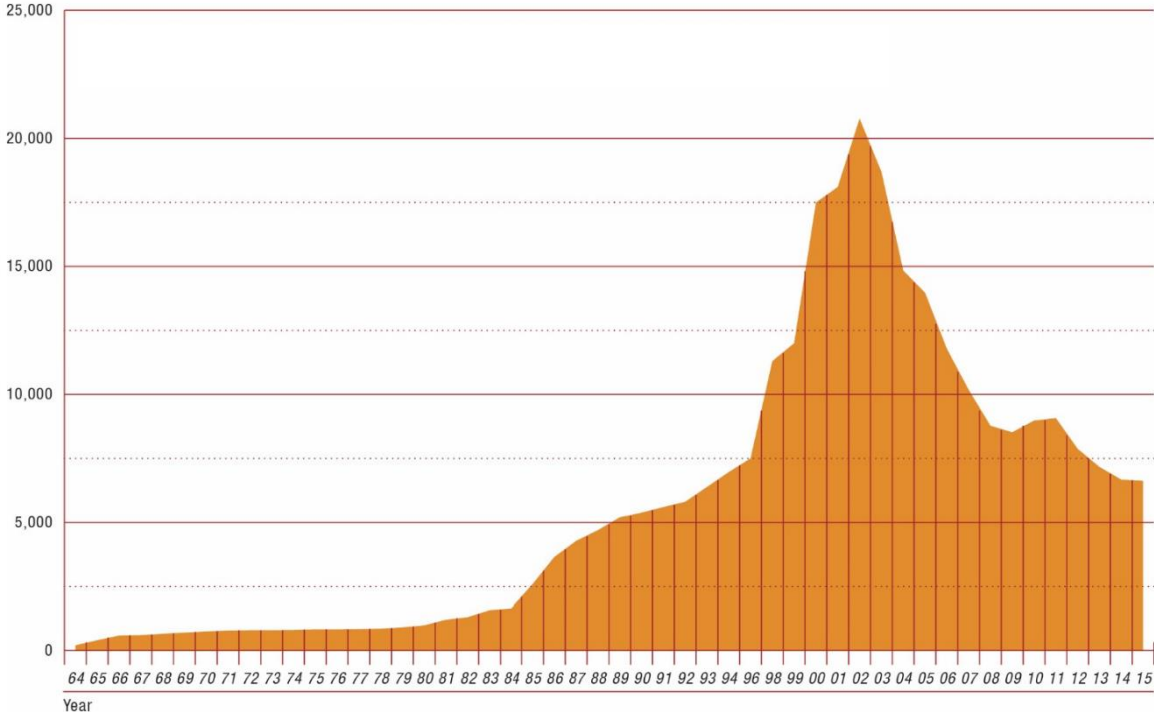
### **4.1. Military power relations in Caguán**

#### **4.1.1. The FARC**

Leading up to and during the Caguán dialogue (1999-2002), the FARC was increasing its military capability and had the military initiative. It had significantly increased its number of fighters—some estimate it had doubled within ten years, to around 12 000 in 1998 (see Figure

1 below)—and enjoyed large financial resources (Peña 2012: 94). Despite its massive absolute military inferiority compared to the 155 000 men strong Colombian Armed Forces and the 100 000 men strong Colombian police (Vargas Velásquez 2012: 244), the FARC was making up for this disadvantage with guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare enables a conventionally weaker military power to outmaneuver stronger ones. Such groups rely “on the mountains and forests to conceal and protect them” (Mack 1975: 177), and conduct surprise attacks with an overwhelming number of men, for example ten to one. Hence, groups can use tactics of guerrilla warfare to gradually expand despite a disadvantage in absolute military strength (Ljødal R14).

Graph 2: Number of FARC members by year from 1964-2015<sup>16</sup>



Starting around 1990, the FARC set in motion their Strategic Plan developed in 1982, in which it sought to grow militarily, expand its territorial reach, and, in general, prepare itself politically and militarily for the taking of power in Colombia (Peña 2012: 91). As part of this expansion, it would move from a war of guerrillas to include more elements of war of movement and position, in which it would, for example, attack military bases, take prisoners of war, and

<sup>16</sup> Reproduced from the ICG (2016: 31). The ICG cites Statistics drawn from the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and cited in Camilo Echandía, “Cincuenta años de cambios en el conflicto armado colombiano (1964-2014)”, Universidad del Externado, 27 August 2015. This data does not include urban militias, in 2002 said to number around 10 000 (Peña 2012: 93).

increasingly also hold territory (Peña 2012: 90ff; Pécaut 2008: 59). Starting 1996, the FARC conducted several such attacks and occupied key strategic locations (Peña 2012: 125). The FARC also increased its presence along the eastern mountain range in which Bogotá, the capital, lies, as well as its presence within Bogotá through urban militias (Peña 2012: 98). This enabled the FARC to conduct several attacks in the outskirts of the city.

While militarily strong, the military context in 1998 also shows that FARC's potential takeover of Bogotá was not imminent. Despite an increasingly strong presence not just around Bogotá, but also with militias within, the FARC was not considered able to take power. The government recognized the guerrilla's ability to conduct attacks in some zones of the capital, but meant the FARC "was not in a condition to sustain a military offensive for a longer duration" (Peña 2012: 99, my translation). Also, the late 1990s is the period with perhaps most cooperation between Colombian Armed Forces and right-wing paramilitary groups (from 1997 united in the umbrella organization AUC). Despite being "deeply involved in criminal activities and drug trafficking" and therefore undermining "institutional authority and legitimacy", the AUC played an important role in the counterinsurgency against the FARC (Chernick 2007: 59). Indeed, it contributed to limiting the guerrilla's expansion, for example by retaking FARC-controlled lands (Pécaut 2008: 61 & 133).

The FARC's capture of the provincial capital Mitú on 1 November 1998 exemplifies the guerrilla's strength, but also its inability to hold power for long—even in a highly remote provincial capital. The FARC expected to hold power for a month, but was thrown out by the Special Armed Forces after only three days (Borrero R3). In short, despite favorable military power relations, and an ability to conduct "dramatic assault against military barracks, during which hundreds of soldiers and police were killed or taken as prisoners" (Tate 2015: 53), the FARC was not in 1998 in a position to militarily overwhelm its opponent (Chernick R7).

Regardless, in 1999, at least parts of the FARC were convinced that they could take power.<sup>17</sup> To a large extent, the actions of the FARC during the peace process support this notion; their willingness to truly negotiate as a means of ending the war seems limited. Many respondents suggest its intentions in Caguán were to buy time to strengthen its military capabilities (e.g.

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<sup>17</sup> While diverging opinions existed within the FARC in Caguán, all respondents (no-one disagrees) suggest the FARC thought victory was imminent. A quote by Secretariat member Jorge Briceño underlines this conviction: "See what I do with 20 000 men? Imagine what I can do with 40 000" (Johnson R12).

through more recruitment and imports of arms). However, it also intended to transform its military victory into political capital. As FARC leader Manuel Marulanda allegedly said in 1998, “the goal of the FARC is to conduct 3 or 4 rounds [...] and leave negotiations with a good image and gaining time to prepare for a possible invasion” (Castro 2008: 106, my translation).<sup>18</sup> The FARC, then, felt it was winning the war and made strong demands. As the UN Special Envoy to Colombia from 1999-2001 rhetorically asks; if the FARC is winning, “why should it negotiate its surrender?” (Egeland R9).

In other words, it is unlikely that the FARC considered negotiations Plan A (Villarraga R32). This fits well with the proposition that armed groups with high prospects of military victory do not have incentives to negotiate. Indeed, the favorable military power relations at the time pushed them towards a military route. Moreover, they were skeptical about the government’s willingness to compromise in an eventual political solution. Thus, the FARC had incentives to create a space in which they could gain time to strengthen its military capabilities, and simultaneously build political capital (Villaveces R33). Indeed, while the FARC was militarily strong, it was in political decline, both domestically due to a growing civil society pointed to human rights abuses and more attention on kidnappings, and internationally as it in 1997 was put on the US list of terrorist organizations, with its ties to drug trafficking further highlighted (Johnson R12). The FARC had, then, two key goals which could be reached by these two means; a demilitarized zone where they could operate without scrutiny and a political platform (dialogue) where they could speak about their political and social agenda. The way the process ended up, then, seemed to benefit the FARC in many ways.

Even though strengthening its military seems to have been plan A, it is likely that a negotiated settlement was plan B. As some respondents point to, the FARC—like the government—fluctuates between favoring continued warfare and favoring negotiations. In the 1980s, when the FARC established a political party—UP—it seemed to prefer a political strategy (Pécaut 2008: 51). After around 3000 members were massacred by right-wing paramilitaries and Colombian forces, however, its preference seemed to be the military strategy (Pécaut 2008: 51). In Caguán, the FARC most likely thought like FARC member Simon Trinidad in 2001, if “[the oligarchy] is willing to change things in this country, such as to give up its privileges, we will do it through peaceful means, through dialogue, and if not we will continue the armed struggle

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<sup>18</sup> The possible invasion was thought to come from the USA. See Chapter 5 for more.

in combination with other forms of struggle” (Isacson 2003: 6). It is quite likely, as Villarraga (R32) says, that the FARC “experimented with a political solution, but when seeing the precarious results, the great challenges, they were inclined to maintain the military dynamic, which seemed like a more secure path”.

#### **4.1.2. The Colombian Government**

The Colombian state faced many challenges in 1998. A key one was the military defeats it had suffered against the FARC. The two-year period before is by Borrero (Borrero 2006: 131) considered “a nightmare” by the Colombian Armed Forces; beyond several military defeats, they suffered from scarcity of ammunition and old armament, military vehicles were old or out of service, and few helicopters were functioning (Borrero 2006: 131). Relatedly, they were financially marginalized compared to the National Police who were getting funds from the US for their antinarcotics operations (Borrero 2006: 131). Moreover, around 500 soldiers and police were in FARC captivity (Pastrana 2005: 40), the FARC was present in around 40 percent of all municipalities, and acted as de facto government in several (though primarily remote and sparsely populated ones) (Tate 2015: 53; Medina Gallego 2009: 237). Apart from rebel groups—both FARC and the ELN—the war became more complicated and reached higher intensity as right-wing paramilitary groups in 1997 joined forces and created the AUC (Duncan 2015; Puri 2016: 47). The Colombian Public Forces felt, as Pastrana (2005: 40) puts it, demoralized. Furthermore, the Government faced substantial economic hardship (Pécaut 2008: 58), and came out from a four-year period under president Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) with low domestic and international legitimacy due to Samper’s presidential campaign allegedly having received funding from a drug cartel.

Pastrana, becoming president in 1998, sought—according to his own writings—to do two things. First, confronting a country he describes as “on the border of collapse” (Pastrana 2005: 38), he strengthened the Army’s military capacity to control the country’s territory and react toward any potential threats (Vargas Velásquez 2012: 188). Second, having promised it during the presidential elections, pushed by the Citizens’ Mandate for Peace, Pastrana was eager to start peace talks (Medina Gallego 2009: 234-35). In his and the US’ view (Tate 2015: 147), these two policies fit together nicely, where military prowess can force the FARC to the table. From the FARC’s perspective, however, the Colombian government was talking peace but preparing for war through increased mobilization of its military forces (Aldecoa R1; Calarcá 2013: 232).

As an armed group in decline, the Colombian government would be expected to want to negotiate. However, it seemed to lean towards continued fighting. The government's preference for continued fighting is likely to be the case for three reasons. Firstly, Pastrana had not given up hopes of military victory. While he recognized the many military defeats suffered by the previous administration, he saw the potential to use its own financial resources—perhaps coupled with that of allied nations—to overpower the guerrilla. Indeed, Pastrana hoped, through rebuilding the Armed Forces, to either (1) convince the FARC of the heightened cost of leaving the negotiating table; and, should talks fail, (2) confront the FARC with a “stronger, more modern, and more professional Army that [the FARC] could not defeat” (Borda Guzmán 2012: 57, my translation). He had, in other words, an outside option which could lead to negotiations within a more favorable military context or outright victory. In 1999, however, in a situation of military fatigue and demoralization, Colombia was not able to substantially change the military power relations in the short term.

A second reason for the Government's preference for continued fighting, was the lack of support from Colombian elites and the Military for Pastrana's peace efforts. The military context of the time, in which the FARC was growing, enabled the guerrilla to impose its terms and conditions for peace talks (exemplified by the demilitarized zone) and demand a broad and transformative negotiating agenda. Large parts of the Colombian political elite were not willing to accept the large transformations of society the FARC demanded: “Pastrana was left to himself”, unable to—even though he may have wanted to—accept the necessary compromises (Lozano R16). Also, large parts of the Military, demoralized after hard military setbacks in the years before 1998, were skeptical about the peace process. The Military's opposition increased when asked to move out of Caguán as a concession to the FARC, a move Isacson (2003: 21) describes as “a humiliating step for an institution charged with maintaining the country's territorial integrity”.

A third reason is that the potential negotiated outcome reached in Caguán, would—given the correlation of forces in favor of the FARC—have led to large structural changes to the Colombian state. Respondents suggest that the Colombian Government would only negotiate such changes in a last desperate attempt before succumbing to a rebel group. Another facet is that the government's weakness may in part explain why it could not move negotiations forward, both because it had not the institutional capacity to do so, and because it was unable to gather peace support from many powerful actors in the country. Still, the Colombian

Government—which certainly had at least some ability to strike back—was not willing to negotiate the FARC’s high demands.

Beyond opposition from other political actors and the Military, also the AUC (most directly) and the USA (more directly) pushed Pastrana away from negotiations. Right-wing paramilitary groups, whose anti-guerrilla purpose solidified with the creation of the AUC in 1997 (Duncan 2015: 344), were intent on stopping peace talks with the guerrilla. The AUC (and paramilitaries in general) was militarily strong during Caguán, and is known to have cooperated with the official Colombian Armed Forces against the FARC in the late 1990s (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 290; Chernick 2007: 58). It has been argued that the Armed Forces’ weakness coupled with their inability to control paramilitaries, led to a situation in which “the state became a collaborator rather than a principal actor, while the paramilitaries [took] the center stage in the conflict” (Chernick 1998: 29). The AUC was—both indirectly and directly—a major obstacle (and spoiler) in Caguán. Most importantly, the Armed Forces’ inability, unwillingness, or both to fight the paramilitaries (a key FARC demand and condition for the Caguán dialogue) became a constant issue in Caguán (Isacson 2003: 8 & 22). A part of the Armed Forces’ unwillingness to fight them was that paramilitaries were viewed as allies against a common enemy (Chernick 2007: 59). The AUC both threatened to kidnap government negotiators and increased the “pace and severity of their massacres to register displeasure with [the peace process]” (Isacson 2003: 22). Moreover, it threatened Peace Commissioner Ricardo to the extent that he fled the country in April 2000.

The USA, while initially a reluctant supporter, turned skeptical of Pastrana’s peace process rather quickly when seeing the FARC’s high demands. US support shrank further when the FARC kidnapped and murdered three American citizens in March 1999. Next, US support to the process dropped to “near zero” as the 11 September 2001 attacks on the USA led to, among others, Secretary of State Colin Powell lumping the FARC together with the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda in public statements (Isacson 2003: 17-18). The US, then, was not optimistic about the peace process, and was intent on strengthening the Colombian state’s military capacity. The USA’s influence is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

In short, in Caguán, it is likely that both parties at first considered negotiations an alternative, and that their calls for peace had some basis of sincerity. Still, even from the onset, both the Government and the FARC seemed set to talk peace but prepare for war (Bouvier 2012: 58). While some political willingness existed within both sides, this was not sufficient to close the

large gap between what the FARC wanted and what the government was ready to concede. During the process, little progress was made, and the large gorge of mistrust that existed beforehand, only increased until Pastrana shut off negotiations on 20 February 2002. While having played with the idea of a political solution, parties realized prospects of a political solution were small, and they leaned—increasingly so throughout the peace process—toward a military solution to the conflict.

## **4.2. Military power relations in Havana**

### **4.2.1. The FARC**

Between 2002 and 2010, the military power relations changed, leaving the government with the initiative. The FARC was expelled from key strongholds, further driven into the periphery, and suffered from three related dynamics; the deaths of key leaders, uncertainty and temporary loss of control and trust within the organization, and political isolation. It then revamped military efforts, which seemed to halt the decline. However, prospects of military victory—the taking of Bogotá—remained low. At the same time, the FARC saw—increasingly—negotiations as a favorable route to achieve its goals.

During the Caguán dialogue, the FARC used the demilitarized zone to strengthen militarily. It almost doubled troop numbers (see Graph 2 on page 33), it imported arms—including 10 000 guns from Jordan via Peru (Pécaut 2008: 117)—and continued to get income from various illegal activities such as kidnapping, extortion, cattle rustling, and control or taxation of the lower parts of the drug trade (Chernick 2007: 71). However, while numbers increased, the quality of recruited soldiers was relatively speaking poor (Eduardo Celis R6).

While the FARC grew in strength, the Colombian Armed Forces grew more. Within four years (1998-2002), the number of professional soldiers tripled (20 000 to 60 000), that of fighting soldiers rose from 79 000 to almost 140 000, the number of mobile brigades doubled, and they acquired more helicopters as well as precise shooting-helicopters, satellite information, and planes with radars (Vargas Velásquez 2012: 192). The modernization and professionalization of the Armed Forces started during Pastrana's administration, in which counterinsurgency strategy started to play a role (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 298). It is Álvaro Uribe, however, elected on a platform to fight 'the terrorists', who started an effective counterinsurgency upon taking power in 2002 (Grenoble and Rose 2011).



Uribe's counterinsurgency weakened the FARC substantially. In 2003-2004, the Armed Forces dismantled two FARC fronts from the areas around Bogotá (Vargas Velásquez 2012: 202). Hence, the FARC no longer posed a direct threat to the nation's capital. Next, Uribe pressed the FARC further towards the periphery. From then onwards, the Colombian government increasingly gained from using its key tactical advantages; aviation, technology, and intelligence. Instead of fighting FARC on foot, the military used chips and intelligence to locate FARC troops in the forests, and then dropped bombs from planes, without the loss of men (Medina R18). Consequently, the FARC had to, over a span of time, end its attempts to lead a war of movement and position it had started—with some initial success—in the late 1990s. In effect, the Colombian Armed Forces disallowed the FARC large attacks on e.g. military installations and holding territory. Now, FARC had to rely more on its traditional war of guerrillas. Beyond denying FARC's presence around Bogotá, Uribe's counterinsurgency led to a rapid decline of FARC soldiers; beyond those killed in combat, several thousand demobilized (Peña 2014: 282). Particularly three key elements lowered prospects of military victory and served to push the FARC towards negotiations.

The first is the targeting of top leaders within the FARC, a key goal in the counterinsurgency against the FARC (Pécaut 2008: 127). For the first time in history, the Colombian Armed Forces killed a FARC Secretariat member—Raul Reyes in March 2008. Moreover, they killed Jorge Briceño, considered the military leader, in September 2010, and the FARC leader Cano in November 2011. Also several lower-level FARC leaders were killed, approximately 16 during Uribe's presidency, and around the double until PNO in 2012 (Priest 2013). Though difficult to verify, these killings may have made the new leaders feel vulnerable, afraid of losing their lives in further combat, and more eager to end the war. The operation that killed Reyes is a case in point; the FARC was attacked in “a place they felt safe (in Ecuador)”, and could henceforth “no longer sleep calmly” (Castellanos R5).

A more verifiable consequence of the killings of FARC leaders is the loss of important personalities. “When leaders are removed, it impacts any organization”, FARC member Aldecoa says. They (deceased members of the Secretariat) were “the leaders with the most experience, most knowledge, best leadership, and most authority within the organization” (Aldecoa R1). Moreover, as Johnson (R12) argues, the losses of key historic leaders like Marulanda and Jorge Briceño, may have (over time) challenged the ideological connection and construction of guerrilla identity which new recruits had with the FARC leadership.

Secondly, the gradual military weakening increased pressure on the organization and seemed, in the FARC's case linked, beyond demobilization, to a certain loss of morale and control within the organization. Some specific events are important, or at least illustrative. In operation Jaque, where the former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancur, three American contractors and 11 members of the security forces were freed in July 2008 (Vargas Velásquez 2012: 211-12), the FARC was infiltrated and let prisoners enter a helicopter it thought belonged to a supposed international humanitarian organization (Borrero R3). Also the operation that killed Reyes in March 2008 (where spies infiltrated Reyes' close circle) and the killing of another member of the Secretariat, Ivan Rios, by his own bodyguard, probably caused some weariness within the organization (Pécaut 2008: 84). Rios' bodyguard, who had been complaining about poor living conditions and proceeded to reclaim a reward for having killed Rios, exemplified some of the challenges the FARC was facing. Some FARC members complained that leaders and even hostages enjoyed better conditions than the fighters themselves (Pécaut 2008: 85). Also the leadership had a tougher time, where better technology forced FARC leaders to constantly be on the run, and eventually hold its 9<sup>th</sup> Conference online. These developments show the stress the organization and its leaders faced, a certain loss of morale within the organization, as well as mistrust among the soldiers.

A third consequence is that the FARC, politically, became increasingly isolated. While the FARC also before Caguán had been politically weakened by, for example, revelations of its involvement in the drug trade and extensive use of kidnapping, this increased in the 2000s. Some reasons are Uribe's strong anti-terrorist rhetoric, and the FARC's extensive use of kidnappings, which fueled condemnation (Villarraga R32). Also its use of snipers and landmines (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 304; Peña 2014: 305) contributed to this trend, as well as extortion in both rural and urban areas (Peña 2014: 268). This condemnation of the FARC seemed to increase until a high point in 2008, when several large marches across the country in support of human rights condemned the 'dirty war' (Peña 2014: 267). The FARC, Castellanos (R5) argues, realized it suffered increasingly high political costs, and would continue to do so as the government continued its counterinsurgency operations.

The FARC sought to adapt to Uribe's counterinsurgency with Plan Rebirth in 2008 (Peña 2014: 273ff). Though many points originated from Marulanda, Alfonso Cano brought them forward after the FARC's disastrous year of 2008. In Plan Rebirth, the FARC sought to retreat from a war of movement and positions, and sought instead to "intensify guerrilla warfare" (Aldecoa

R1). Other elements were re-structuring its armed apparatus and purchasing military and logistical equipment (Peña 2014: 274). Plan Rebirth also included efforts to strengthen its political and social work: It reconstructed its political party abroad and sought to mobilize the masses in favor of their political work. Moreover, it wanted international recognition, contacts, and financing (Peña 2014: 274-75).

Plan Rebirth did to a certain extent revamp the FARC's military and political efforts. It also helped the FARC adapt, with some success, to the State's use of aviation and intelligence. Moreover, while many new recruits during Caguán had been of "poor quality", towards the end of the 2000s, only the most "ideological members, with a great capacity to fight" remained in the group (Eduardo Celis R6). From around 2008 to 2011, FARC increased military operations and their lethality (Valencia and Ávila 2011: 3), showing continued ability to challenge the government. Also, the FARC continued to have the resources to continue its struggle. While the loss of territories and Uribe's counterinsurgency efforts decreased its drug related income as well as income from kidnappings, it continued to get financing from illegal mining and extortion (Peña 2013: 291). According to Norway's Special Envoy to the peace process Dag Nylander (R20), the FARC recognized it had been weakened militarily, but maintained it could survive another 50 years.

Respondents agree that the FARC sought negotiations because it could not win militarily. In guerrilla warfare, some suggest the mere existence of a guerrilla group is a loss for the State and a victory for the guerrilla group. This is best summarized by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1969: 214), who stated that "the guerrilla wins if he does not lose". For the FARC, however, increasingly politically isolated, this seemed not to be the case. Indeed, support for its political project beyond key strongholds seemed to decrease during Uribe and Santos' presidency. More than popular support, key reasons for its continued survival seemed to be involvement in income generating activities like drug trafficking and kidnappings, activities viewed with disdain by the Colombian public (Peña 2014: 290).

Low prospects of military victory, however, cannot by itself explain PNO; for negotiations to start, one must place some faith in negotiations actually leading somewhere. In this respect, as Chapter 6 elaborates on, the rise of Santos is essential. Beyond changing the government's approach to the conflict, he provided the FARC with an opportune time at which to engage in negotiations. Increasingly throughout the pre-negotiation phase, and supported by Chávez' support (telling the FARC that Santos was sincere), the FARC found negotiations with Santos

potentially satisfactory. Keeping in mind that the FARC has always been guided by the idea of combining both military and political means to achieve its goals, the FARC's move toward peace negotiations in Havana can be viewed as a process in which the military route was viewed with less optimism, and the political route with more optimism.

#### **4.2.2. The Colombian Government**

The rise of Uribe and his all-out counterinsurgency against the FARC changed military power relations dramatically. From the 1980s until 2002, “the history of the FARC has been a history of peace negotiations”(Molano 2016). Uribe, however, is elected president during a time of strong resentment towards the FARC after the failed Caguán process, and embarked on a plan of war. Through his Democratic Security and Defense Policy (henceforth Democratic Security), Uribe sought to defeat the guerrilla group militarily. Indeed, during his time in office (2002-2010), he weakened the FARC substantially. While Uribe showed interest in in conversations with the FARC, he showed no signs of wanting to negotiate anything more than their surrender.

Uribe's war on the FARC can be interpreted in different ways. The first one is that Uribe, elected on a platform of war against the guerrillas, led what theorists claim was a successful counterinsurgency operation and “left his successor with a safer territory, a stronger economy, and the domestic support necessary to continue the transition toward peace” (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 300). Indeed, Colombia experienced significantly fewer numbers of kidnappings, extortions, terrorist attacks (among them attacks on oil pipelines and transmission towers) and insurgent actions from 2002 to 2007 (Vargas 2012: 207), which numbers have—in general—continued in a downward trend since. A concrete example, perhaps most important for the political and urban elite, was securing roads between major cities in Colombia where the risks of kidnappings had been very high. While Uribe manage to instill state presence and power in far from the entire guerrilla or paramilitary controlled territories in Colombia, the advancements—compared to his predecessors in the 1990s—were dramatic.

The most important consequence of Uribe's policy for FARC's willingness to negotiate, was without doubt the massive military weakening of the FARC (as described above). Uribe pushed the FARC further into the periphery, and had them retreat to a war of guerrillas. Forcing the FARC on the defensive made them resort to several measures which further weakened them politically.

An important part of the conflict dynamics was the demobilization of the AUC, a coordinating body of many right-wing paramilitary groups. As alluded to earlier, parts of the Colombian Armed Forces—as well as Colombian politicians—have, at times, cooperated with paramilitaries, most closely in the late 1990s. With time, while paramilitaries continued to be important in “keeping the FARC in check and in reversing many of its gains” (Chernick 2007: 59), they were increasingly viewed by the state as a security threat and a liability in the counterinsurgency efforts (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 299). As the Colombian Armed Forces grew stronger, pushed by US military aid, the AUC started to “lose its utility and *raison d'être* as a counterinsurgency group” (Massé 2011a: 47-48, my translation). In this way, the weakening of the FARC, and Uribe’s refusal to engage in a transformational process with it, probably served to reassure the AUC that the state was determined to fight the guerrilla, and, moreover, that the AUC’s counterinsurgency efforts were no longer needed (Massé 2011a: 47-48).

The demobilization of the AUC also seemed to improve the government’s counterinsurgency efforts against the FARC (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 299). Uribe—through the demobilization between 2003 and 2006—removed paramilitaries’ national and initially more ideological project (the AUC). While paramilitary groups persist through so-called “neo-paramilitary organizations” or criminal bands, these groups seem less politically motivated, and are, with the weakening of the FARC and the strengthening of the official Armed Forces, less concerned with self-defense and counterinsurgency activities (Massé 2011a). These groups remained important until 2012 (Keen 2012: 152), but the abovementioned elements may have contributed to the paramilitaries not spoiling the 2012 PNO.<sup>19</sup>

According to this interpretation, which Uribe ascribed to, prospects of military victory were relatively speaking high, which made negotiating—hence compromising on one’s goals—less preferable. Uribe gave, in 2008 and March 2010, the secret back-channel between him and the FARC, Henry Acosta, the green light to propose conversations about peace with the FARC (Acosta 2016: 131 & 70). However, Uribe sought the FARC’s demobilization, not dialogue or negotiations about its political agenda—which he claimed did not exist (Borda Guzmán 2012: 31). Uribe seemed to adhere to a counterinsurgency logic where peace with insurgents is transactional, and that a State must only negotiate with (in effect demobilize) its opponent “from

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<sup>19</sup> Also pre-negotiations taking place abroad may have prevented paramilitaries from spoiling PNO.

a position of strength” (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 285). No talks would take place, Uribe said, “before we have broken their offensive military capabilities” (Egeland 2008: 75). Also Acosta (2016: 144 & 71) writes that Uribe sought not to negotiate social, political and economic causes of the conflict, but the FARC’s rendition. As the FARC leader from 2011 Timoleón Jiménez states, with Uribe, negotiations were—“for his open dis-acknowledgement of our political condition/nature”—not possible (Lozano 2016: 62)

The Uribe administration became more convinced of military victory after the year 2008, a year in which the government collected several important military victories, including killing Reyes (second in command in the FARC Secretariat) and rescuing high profile political hostages from the guerrilla group. General Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces Freddy Padilla suggested in 2008 that they had reached the end of the end in the war on the FARC (Beltrán Villegas 2015: 50).

The other interpretation of the military developments in the 2000s is that the government, despite a massive effort, was unable to militarily defeat the guerrilla. The military power relations were now overwhelmingly in favor of the Government. The Public Force counted close to half a million men, while the FARC was thought to have below 9000. However, the FARC was persistent. During his last years as president, Johnson (R12) argues, Uribe’s overarching policy of Democratic Security reached a “glass ceiling” when the FARC adjusted to Uribe’s policy through Plan Rebirth adopted in 2008. Rios (2015: 10) makes a different point, that as the weakening of the FARC moved fighting to further remote and mountainous areas of the country with little institutional presence, military operations against the FARC became more difficult. Therefore, defeating the guerrilla became “a more uncertain and prolonged scenario” (Eduardo Celis R6). The years beyond the 2008 Plan Rebirth show that, despite an increasingly powerful and technologically advanced Colombian Armed Forces, the FARC was able to replace its leaders with new ones and continue military operations.

This second interpretation corresponds largely to that of Santos. He recognized the huge difficulty with which one could defeat the guerrilla militarily. Moreover, he saw, as he tells it himself, that the three necessary conditions to negotiate with the FARC were—at the start of his presidency—given (Gomez Giraldo 2016: 23). The first was a favorable correlation of forces, “because while the guerrilla would think it could win, they would never seriously negotiate”. The second and third were that leaders felt vulnerable, and that there was regional support for peace. Santos, then, continued both to target key leaders and communicate a

willingness to negotiate with the FARC. He also actively sought to secure regional support for his peace efforts. Compared to the chaotic Caguán process, Santos (with the help of aides and advisors, head of the pre-negotiation peace delegation Sergio Jaramillo in particular) designed a realistic peace process. Respondents suggest that Santos' background and personality enabled him to understand not just the political situation, but also the military dynamics better. Santos interpreted the conflict differently, and saw more potential for and benefits from ending the conflict through negotiations.<sup>20</sup>

In short, the government's motivation to negotiate with the FARC stemmed from favorable military power relations, a result of the weakening of the FARC during the Uribe administration (2002-2010). Despite having the military initiative, prospects of military victory were low. Still, with a favorable military power relations, Santos was able to initiate peace negotiations without the FARC's strong demands from Caguán. As theory on counterinsurgency suggests (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 285), and as Guarín (R11) argues in the context of Colombia, negotiations are difficult to conduct with a weak state. While a favorable correlation of forces reduced FARC's demands dramatically, its demands did not vanish. Hence, it is crucial that Santos realized the process had to include transformative elements (Massé R17; Lozano R16); the government had to compromise. This produced a settlement range, a necessity for proper negotiations.

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<sup>20</sup> The influence of Uribe and Santos' background and personality is analyzed further in Chapter 6.

## **5. Analysis: External actors**

This chapter analyzes the influence of external actors on the parties' decision to negotiate. External actors' influences are diverse, and divided in three: Military involvement, third party peace support, and changes in the international and regional environment. The military involvement is found to be most important, while the international and regional environment and third party peace support are found less important. Within each section (Caguán and Havana), military involvement is analyzed first. Then, the latter two elements are analyzed jointly.

The Caguán section of this chapter focuses on the role of the US' military aid package Plan Colombia—the most important external element. In the peace support section, the US' reluctant peace support is considered, along with the limited role of other external actors' peace support.

US military aid is the key component also in the Havana section because of its contribution to the military weakening of the FARC. In Havana, third party peace support played a more central role as they were given a clear mandate for how to contribute to the pre-negotiation phase. Moreover, the contributions of Hugo Chávez are analyzed.

### **5.1. External actors in Caguán**

#### **5.1.1. Military involvement**

The key question concerning US involvement is if it spoiled the peace process. One argument in favor may be that US military support strengthened Pastrana's outside option; continued fighting. A second argument is that the US seemed to push the Plan's originally more economic and social focus to military efforts directed at drug trafficking. Plan Colombia therefore became an obstacle at the negotiating table as the FARC saw it more as a plan for war than a plan for peace (Beltrán Villegas 2015: 369; Calarcá 2013: 232). However, to determine the US' role in the decision to negotiate, it is important to establish if Pastrana intended to attract military aid all along. If Pastrana sought military aid and favoured a military solution from the start, US involvement cannot be said to have spoiled an otherwise functioning peace process. The alternative, that US involvement served to push Pastrana away from negotiations toward a military solution, would suggest the US did indeed act as a spoiler.

Pastrana's ambiguous intentions make clear-cut answers difficult. Indeed, all respondents suggest Pastrana wanted to make peace with the FARC, but his overarching goal, clearly, was to strengthen "crumbling institutions" (Long 2015: 174) and hence strengthen the state at a time



of high instability (Pastrana 2005: 38).<sup>21</sup> Initially, on 8 June 1998, Pastrana spoke of a “Marshall Plan for Colombia” where, beyond dialogue with the guerrilla and a war on paramilitaries, he sought to gather “international support for the war on drug trafficking and the promotion of social investment in areas of strong guerrilla presence” (Pastrana 2005: 48). Through interaction with US president Bill Clinton (Rojas 2012: 162), and with the US Congress’ demand for a shift towards the war on drugs, the plan became increasingly militaristic and focused on fighting drug trafficking (Tate 2015: 155).

While some view this as a rendition to US interests, Colombia’s agency in driving forth this agreement is important. Indeed, Pastrana and his government’s interests and agency in attracting US aid was considerable (Borda-Guzman 2012: 57; Long 2015; Sanin 2001: 418). Also the Colombian Armed forces seemed eager to attract financial support, exemplified by a leaflet overstating the FARC’s connections with drug traffickers and its role in drug trafficking (Chernick 2005: 201). Eventually, aided by the US’ exaggeration of the guerrilla’s involvement in the drug trafficking, the anti-narcotics focus shifted towards counterinsurgency measures (Tate 2015: 47-48). As Borrero (2006: 134) writes, to defeat the second (drug traffickers), one had to fight the first (the guerrilla). While the content of the plan is formulated through interactions with US policy makers and US interests, Plan Colombia arose to a large extent from a weak Colombian state in desperate need of resources and assistance to confront “crumbling [...] institutions” and an array of armed actors (Long 2015: 174 & 80).

Sanin (2001: 418) argues that “Plan Colombia was a calculated step designed to induce movement in the peace process and break the protracted stalemate”. Indeed, the strengthening of Colombia’s military structures and ability to conduct antinarcotics and counterinsurgency operations were by both Pastrana and the USA seen as plans for peace. This could serve to (1) keep the FARC in talks due to higher costs of leaving them or, if talks failed, fight the FARC with a stronger Army (Borda Guzmán 2012: 57). In this way, military strengthening seems to have been used both as a tactics (to keep the FARC in the peace process) and as a strategy (to confront the FARC with a stronger Armed Forces). However, the relationship between the US and Pastrana was at time uneasy; while the US from the onset supported Pastrana’s peace efforts, it was critical towards the demilitarized zone and saw little progress in talks (Tate 2015: 153). Therefore, in August 1999, the US warns Pastrana that he risked “losing U.S. support if

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<sup>21</sup> He writes, for example: “One must construct the military route, but act, simultaneously, in the political terrain” (Pastrana 2005: 38).

he would make further concessions to the insurgents in an effort to restart stalled negotiations” (Farah 1999). The US played, in other words, two opposing roles; one supporting Pastrana’s peace efforts and another supporting his military strengthening (Borda Guzman R2). Still, as stressed in the previous section, the US is only one of many actors putting pressure on Pastrana.

While Plan Colombia did probably not change the Colombian Government’s true incentives from negotiating to continue fighting, the US’ role in the conflict probably strengthened FARC’s insistence on military strengthening. From the FARC’s view, Plan Colombia represented the US’ imperial interests, and was a key obstacle to the peace process (Beltrán Villegas 2015: 369). FARC leader Marulanda allegedly feared a US military invasion, something the Cuban leader Fidel Castro was told by the FARC spokesperson Marcos Calarcá. According to Castro (2008: 105 & 22), Marulanda expressed this in secret in July 1998 and reiterated it after the Caguán dialogue’s inauguration in January 1999. Apparently, the US invasion made it necessary to “gain time, using at least two years to get hold of resources and produce tactics that will enable the FARC to resist the impact of the invasion” (Castro 2008: 105, my translation). Given the larger political-military considerations of the FARC, however, it is unlikely that the fear of a US invasion prevented a PNO. While the fear of a US invasion probably increased the urgency with which the FARC sought to mobilize militarily, leaders might have already considered the need to increase military capability in order to prepare for the taking of power. Moreover, having gotten (without having to compromise) the demilitarized zone in the first place, it would be logical for the guerrilla to hold it and use it for military strengthening, including rearmament and recruitment. In other words, the fear of a US invasion may have incentivized the FARC to mobilize, but cannot by itself explain why the FARC sought to prepare for war instead of negotiating.

### **5.1.2. Peace support**

In Caguán, regional actors were, except for Venezuela—and president Hugo Chávez in particular—less important. In 1998, before what has later been called the pink tide in Latin America (Bull 2013), the FARC had few leftist governments to look to for support or inspiration. As a result, “the FARC arrived in Caguán with uncertainty about possibilities of getting to power through political means” (Guarín R11). The key exception to this, was Venezuela and president Hugo Chávez. A year before the Caguán process, the FARC—with an initiative taken by Alfonso Cano—established the Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia (Medina Gallego 2009: 358). With this initiative, the FARC placed itself ideologically close to

the Venezuelan President Chavez' project. Chávez, publicly, said he would welcome FARC fighters to Venezuelan territory if they would lay down arms and ask for asylum, and, also, "convince them that peace is the path" (Borda Guzmán 2012: 129, my translation). While the FARC officially invited Chávez to Caguán, Colombian authorities denied him access (Borda Guzman 2012: 129); the Colombian authorities were generally "very reluctant to invite a neighbor and historical rival—much less a figure many viewed as a leftist troublemaker—to play a central role in their internal affairs" (Isacson 2003: 18).

This tension on the issue of Venezuela is part of a larger picture in Caguán, where the Government and the FARC did not agree on how the international community would participate. While several heads of state and diplomatic representatives visited Caguán, their role was limited. In Caguán, the parties agreed to establish a Group of Friends—ten countries that would support peace efforts (Borda Guzman 2012: 84). However, the international community acted in the periphery and was excluded when the two parties' peace delegations met (Chernick R7). Only in the last couple of weeks did they play a role in trying to prevent the breakdown of talks, at which point it was already too late. From his experience as UN Special Envoy to Colombia during Caguán, Jan Egeland (R9) suggests it was not the choice of tactics that prevented a peace negotiation onset; but rather the dynamic between the parties and the underlying lack of willingness from the FARC leadership at that time. Indeed, third parties' limited influence cannot be said, in itself, to be an important reason for the lack of PNO in Caguán.

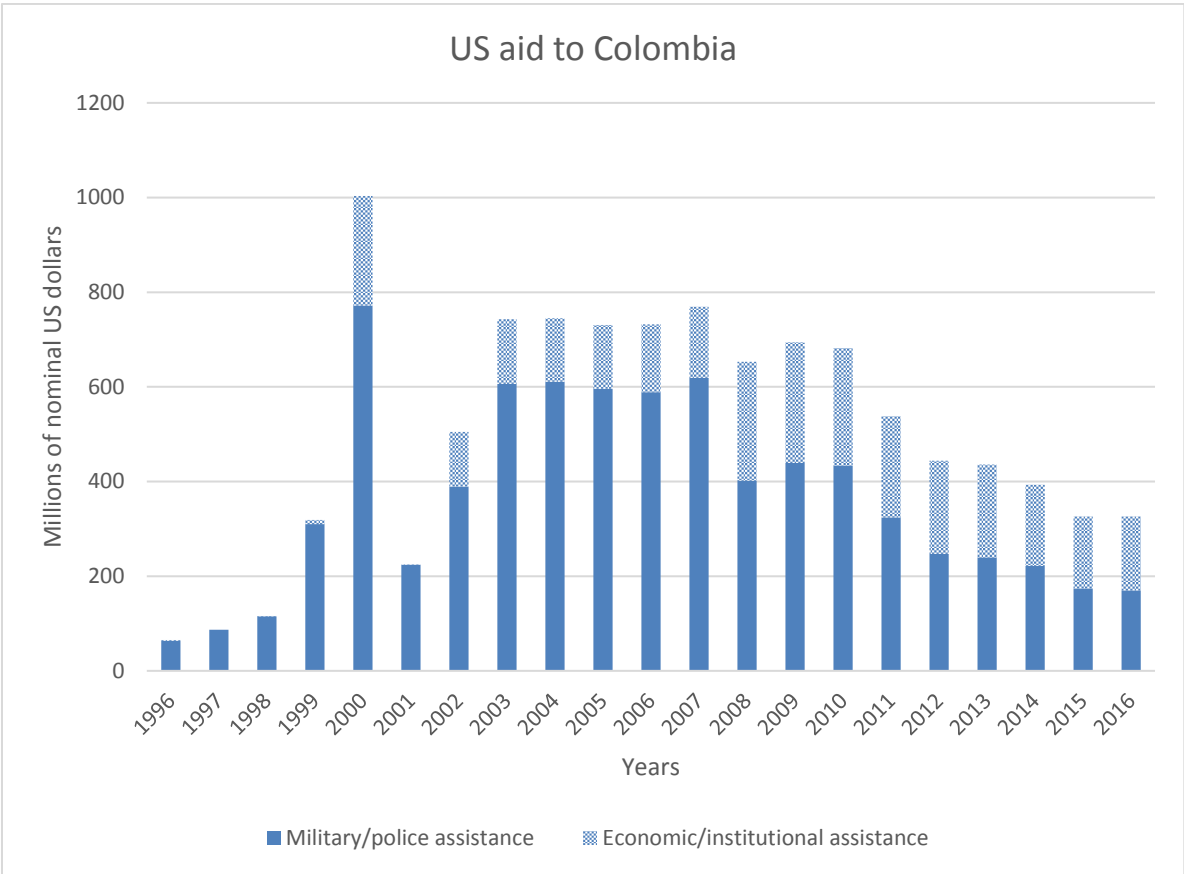
## **5.2. External actors in Havana**

In the build-up to the 2012 PNO in Havana, external actors' involvement was increasingly directed towards peace support. Most importantly, the US, having contributed to the military fight against FARC, revised its peace policy towards Colombia. As opposed to in Caguán, the US supported the Colombian president's efforts to negotiate. While US' (verbal) support for the peace process may have been important for negotiations to start, the contributions of four facilitating countries in the pre-negotiations phase were more concrete. Moreover, the regional environment in Latin America was quite distinct from that of the late 1990s, now characterized by many leftist forces having gained power non-violently. As in Caguán, Chávez wanted to play a role. This time, the Colombian president actively sought the Venezuelan leader's support.

**5.2.1. Military involvement**

The US support for Santos’ peace efforts is grounded in a belief that Plan Colombia successfully brought Colombia “back from the brink” (Tate 2015: 3). While it failed to achieve its counternarcotic goals, the US military aid package did contribute to the strengthening of the Colombian Armed Forces, which in turn helped enable the weakening of the FARC under the Uribe administration. While most of the Plan Colombia resources came from Colombia’s treasury, the US contributed with substantial resources. Within Plan Colombia itself (lasting until 2006), the US spent 5 billion USD (of which about 80 percent were military aid) (Tate 2015: 3). Afterwards, the US continued to provide aid, and disbursed an additional 3.8 billion USD between 2006 and 2012 (of which about 54 percent were military aid, see Graph 3 below).

*Graph 3: US Aid to Colombia 2000-2016<sup>22</sup>*



<sup>22</sup> Graph produced with data from the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA 2016), “U.S. Aid Over the Years”, 1 February 2016, available at <[https://www.wola.org/files/1602\\_plancol/content.php?id=us\\_aid](https://www.wola.org/files/1602_plancol/content.php?id=us_aid)> [Accessed 1 May 2017]. WOLA cites “numerous U.S. government documents compiled at [www.securityassistance.org/Colombia](http://www.securityassistance.org/Colombia)”.

Qualitatively important US contributions were military intelligence, technology, and aviation. These elements significantly increased the government's operational capacity to retake the military initiative (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 297). This helped force the FARC to retreat from its attempts to conduct larger military attacks and hold territory, and again rely on guerrilla warfare. As FARC leader Timochenko stresses, aviation was particularly difficult to counteract for the FARC (Lozano 2016: 66). Moreover, recent revelations say a covert CIA operation (outside of Plan Colombia) provided the Colombian Armed Forces with "real-time intelligence" (enabling easier location of FARC members) as well as "highly accurate smart bombs" (enhancing ability to kill) (Priest 2013). Killing individuals is—more than an end in itself—also a way to cause "chaos and dysfunction" in an organization (Priest 2013).

Even though US contributions certainly were important, the Colombian Armed Forces used aviation to weaken the FARC also before the adoption of Plan Colombia (Pécaut 2008: 120). Indeed, many respondents point to 1998 as the point of inflexion in the conflict, where the Colombian Armed Forces started to better handle FARC's large attacks on strategically important sites such as military installations. Moreover, a joint command over the three components of the Colombian Armed Forces—the army, the navy, and the air force—started to work (Ugarriza R29). The Armed Forces' quick retaking of the provincial capital Mitú within three days of the FARC's attack is one example. Hence, while the US certainly increased the Armed Forces' operational capacity, the extent to which this was necessary for re-taking the military initiative is uncertain.

At some point between Caguán and Havana, the US' approach to Colombia changed drastically. Officially, the US talked of a "perfect narrative" where Plan Colombia contributed to the military weakening of the FARC which in turn allowed for negotiations, but now from a position of strength (Borda Guzman R2). This allowed the US to think like they did in El Salvador in the early 1990s, that it would firstly weaken the guerrilla military, and then negotiate peace (Tate 2015: 145). Other elements were important, among these the gradual realization (backed by empirical results) of the war on drugs failure, as well as increasing US scepticism towards the war on terror, e.g. from the US' experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan (Chernick R7). Moreover, as Colombia was not exclusively viewed as the key exporter of cocaine to the US, it increasingly saw Colombia as "a potentially major market for trade and investment [...] held back as long as you have a civil war" (Cassel R4). Lastly, in a post 2008

financial crisis context, the US is served with limiting costs on military aid (Borda Guzman 2012: 3; Cassel R4).

### **5.2.2. Peace support**

The FARC, which has remained self-sustained throughout its existence, was neither in Caguán nor in Havana dependent on foreign military or financial support (Borda Guzman R2). While there were revelations that the FARC had received 300 millions USD from Chávez (Borda Guzmán 2012: 138; Grenoble and Rose 2011: 301), and that the FARC had used Venezuela as a “safe heaven” to hide during the most intense military offensive by president Uribe (Borda Guzman R2), external actors have been of more importance symbolically than materially. Ecuador let FARC troops reside within its territory, and its president declared already in 2006 that “the FARC was not a terrorist organization, but a guerrilla movement” (Borda Guzmán 2012: 137, my translation). The Nicaraguan president granted asylum to some members of the FARC, and there is also evidence that he helped the FARC buy arms (Borda Guzmán 2012: 138). The Cuban leader Fidel Castro, while symbolically very important, did not seem to have much influence on the FARC compared to Chávez (Borda Guzmán 2012: 80).

The most important regional actor was Chávez. He convinced FARC leader Timoleón Jiménez to continue the peace process despite the death of Cano on 4 November 2011 (Gomez Giraldo 2016: 30). Beyond suggesting to the FARC that with arms one no longer can take power, Chávez was probably important in convincing the FARC of Santos’ sincere intentions (Massé R17). Chavez also said he would guarantee the FARC peace delegation’s security (Gomez Giraldo 2016: 31). Most importantly, however, as its key external ally, Chávez probably had a great resonance within the FARC when urging its leaders to pursue political power with peaceful means.

While Hugo Chávez might have played an important role, the larger regional developments are by some respondents thought to be more important. While Chávez’ Venezuela is the most important one, it was only one of several leftist governments in Latin America at the time—among these Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Bull 2013: 83). It is fundamental that all rose to power without the use of arms. While there in Caguán was more of a revolutionary atmosphere (Velandia R31), this had changed by the late 2000s. Santos recognized the importance of regional actors, Chávez in particular, and re-established bilateral relations with Venezuela within his first week in office for the purpose of getting him on board with his negotiation plans (Gomez Giraldo 2016: 17).

Beyond Latin America, one must note the overwhelming international support for the peace process (Velandia R31). Once announced, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, key world leaders, and practically all heads of states and multilateral organizations expressed their support for peace in Colombia.

Also third parties' direct peace support mattered for the 2012 PNO. First, Havana, a sufficiently safe and secret location (i.e. good offices and secrecy), enabled pre-negotiations to proceed without news of contact leaking to the media. Second, it is likely that the presence of third parties influenced pre-negotiations in different ways. One is that their presence seemed to help convince the FARC that the talks were sincere and the scheme safe (Nylander R20). Particularly Venezuela and Chávez are thought to have been important in this regard. Another is that Cuba and Norway's presence seem to have contributed to a positive atmosphere, enabling the parties to develop a negotiating agenda and realistic methodology. FARC member Aldecoa (R1) stresses, there is an ideological connection between the FARC and Cuba, and Norway is recognized for its role in peace processes around the world.

However, as Villarraga (R32) underlines, third parties were not necessary in making contact in the first place. As Santos writes himself in the first letter to the FARC in 2010, "peace in Colombia is the responsibility of us Colombians and no-one else" (Acosta 2016: 201, my translation). It was therefore decided not to include a mediator, but rather facilitators, or guarantors, as Cuba, Norway, Venezuela, and Chile were to be called. According to the categories provided by Beardsley et al. (2006: 66)—facilitation, formulation, and manipulation—the third party peace support in pre-negotiations in Havana seemed to be facilitation. While the role they played in is thought to be significant (though very difficult to measure), the lack of need for a mediator between the parties suggests parties had high political willingness.

In summary, when comparing the influence of external actors in Caguán and Havana, the military involvement of the US is the most important element. The key reason for which the US supported negotiations in 2012, and not in Caguán, seems to have been the prospects of a completely different negotiation and potential negotiated outcome. In Caguán, the US had little belief in the peace process, and was weary about the communist guerrilla getting more power. Compared to the FARC's military strength and leverage in potential negotiations in Caguán, this had been lowered substantially during Uribe's administrations. A negotiated outcome in Havana would, then, not threaten US interests in Colombia because the transformations the

guerrilla could demand in Havana were minimal. The key change for the US, then, was that the state retook the military initiative, something the US itself directly and substantially contributed to through Plan Colombia.

Compared to military support, external actors' peace support is less important, but still significant. In Caguán, tens of foreign governments with their diplomats were not able to make a big difference. In the 2010-2012 pre-negotiations, however, two guarantors and two accompanying countries were given more concrete roles. Their facilitation mattered, and most probably served to create a favorable framework and atmosphere for talks. Apart from this, Hugo Chávez, as the FARC's key external ally, helped convince the FARC of the prospects of pursuing its aims through the political route, as well as of Santos' sincere intentions. The regional environment in Latin America was probably important; several leftist movements had gained power nonviolently, showing the FARC that one could gain power through political means.



## 6. Analysis: Leaders

This chapter analyzes the influence of the third explanatory factor on the actors' decision to negotiate. What explanatory power do changes in leadership and leaders' background and personality have on peace negotiation onset in Havana and the lack of onset in Caguán?

Some scholars argue that the leader of armed groups, and his personality and background, can explain whether a group favors negotiations or continued fighting. The new leader theory (Pruitt 2005) belongs to this group of theories. New leaders can "add fluidity to what may have been a log-jammed conflict" (Urlacher 2011: 83). While a long-standing leader may face high political costs in changing policy (which could be viewed as a sign of weakness, admitting inability to win the war), a new leader may have more space and opportunity to change policy. However, what may matter more, is if any leader (new or old) somehow changes a group's values and objectives, evaluates the conflict context differently, and therefore weighs differently the costs and gains of negotiation versus continued fighting. Hence, this chapter analyzes leadership changes and the influence leaders' personality and background.

First I ask if Andrés Pastrana's personality and background affected the Colombian government's inclination towards negotiation or continued fighting. I argue that the most important explanations for the lack of PNO in Caguán can be found in the military power relations. Some flaws in Pastrana's approach, e.g. poor planning and a naïve belief in what was required for the process to progress, are evident. These probably slowed progress, but are not thought to be determining for the failure of the process.

Second I examine the rise of Alfonso Cano in the FARC in 2008, and compare his perception of the conflict to that of his predecessor Marulanda. Some respondents argue that the urban and university educated Cano probably viewed and interpreted the conflict differently than the farmer and historic leader of the FARC Marulanda, and that he was more disposed to seek a political solution. However, larger generational changes within the FARC Secretariat may have a greater explanatory power. In the years 2008-2010, members of the Secretariat became less rural and militaristic, and more urban, intellectual, and political, which, I argue, may have independently influenced the FARC's willingness to negotiate.

Third I ask if the personality and background of Juan Manuel Santos were crucial for the PNO in 2012. Respondents suggest he viewed the conflict in a different light, interpreted military dynamics differently, and that distinct interests made him take a whole-hearted effort to start

negotiations. Uribe, on the other hand, was found to be glued to his political platform of war against the “narcoterrorists”, and was unwilling to negotiate anything more than the FARC’s surrender. Hence, I argue that the leadership change from Uribe to Santos fits the new leader propositions very well, and that the background and personality of Santos was critical for peace negotiations to commence in 2012.

### **6.1. President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002)**

In Colombia, where the pendulum swings back and forth between governments seeking negotiations and breaking them off (Ljødal R14), “initiating peace processes [has been on the] check-list for all Colombian presidents” (Villaveces R33). In the 1990s, given the increasing intensity of conflict, the call for peace was particularly strong. Pastrana’s predecessor, Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) sought to make peace with the FARC, but was unable to in the face of low political legitimacy (both domestically and internationally), a result of accusations of having accepted money from a drug cartel to fund his presidential campaign (García-Peña R10). Therefore, one would have to wait until a new president took office before peace negotiations could start. And indeed, in 1998, a year after a large-scale social movement culminated in the Citizens’ Mandate for Peace (El Mandato por la paz), the presidential campaign came to focus on candidates’ proposals for peace. Pastrana, then, placing great emphasis in the importance of the Citizens’ Mandate for Peace, felt obliged to negotiate with the guerrilla groups, an obligation any president-elect in 1998 would have, according to Pastrana himself (Pastrana 2005: 39).

Respondents point to key flaws with Pastrana’s approach to the negotiations. The most mentioned flaw was Pastrana’s acceptance of FARC’s conditions for talks, including the demilitarized zone, without really negotiating them (Villarraga R32). Some suggest this was so as he feared being too hard as it could make the FARC refuse talks, which in turn meant Pastrana would fail on his key political promise. A second flaw was his poor planning and his improvisation during the process. The result, as many respondents point to, was a chaotic and incoherent peace process (Villarraga R32; Egeland R9). Many respondents label the Caguán dialogue a circus more than peace negotiations. Beyond the meetings between the peace delegations, which were frozen a third of the time (Isacson 2003: 27), the parties held over a thousand “Public Audiences”, in which civil society and many thousand Colombians participated. Beyond the media, foreign leaders, and diplomats, also the King of Jordan and the

chief of the New York Stock Exchange visited, emphasizing the spectacle the dialogue had become.

Overall, Pastrana's understanding of and approach to the peace process seems not to have been conducive to progress. As García-Peña (R10) argues, Pastrana had "little knowledge about what he was facing and what the real challenge was", and points out that he initiated a peace process without an agenda (this was only agreed on 6 May 1999), and without rules of the game (methodology was found to be unclear and/or not followed). Also a former government negotiator accused Pastrana "of ignorance of the FARC's real nature and intentions [...] and of lacking a clear conception of how to negotiate and about what" (ICG 2002: 21). Indeed, many respondents suggest Pastrana's improvised approach to the dialogue and naïve belief in peace with the guerrillas without concessions, was damaging to the process. Pastrana, then, seemed not to show a willingness to negotiate, something the FARC repeatedly pointed out. Without a willingness—or perhaps more pertinent in Pastrana's case, support—to compromise, one lacks the most basic aspect of a negotiation (García-Peña R10). Indeed, a fundamental reason for the lack of progress was insufficient political support. Pastrana, according to Isacson (2003: 14) never managed to unite "the many competing interests backing his government [around a] basic strategy". Moreover, he received contradictory signals from a variety of powerful actors such as the Colombian Military, the USA, and the AUC.

Contrary to the new leadership theory, then, Pastrana did not bring with him a new understanding or interpretation of the conflict. While he did seek to end the conflict through negotiations, he seemed to be driven by a need to establish negotiations, typically not a fruitful starting point. This led him to agree to a large demilitarized zone, which—most probably—made the FARC even more interested in stalling rather than progressing (Sanin 2001). This also, most likely, made him accept the guerrilla's abuse of the zone, instead of calling off the peace dialogue (Isacon 2003: 10). While military strengthening was a means of pushing the FARC to the negotiating table, it was also a means of fighting the FARC should the dialogue not progress. In effect, at the same time as Pastrana sought peace, he prepared for war by re-engineering Colombia's military apparatus and securing US military aid. While his peace efforts failed, the military reform and strengthening during his four years in office made Uribe inherit a dramatically stronger and growing Colombian Armed Forces than Pastrana had inherited.

## **6.2. FARC leaders Manuel Marulanda (1964-2008) and Alfonso Cano (2008-2011)**

On 26 March 2008 Manuel Marulanda, the founder and leader of the FARC for 44 years, died of natural causes in the Colombian jungle (Beltrán Villegas 2015: 170). Marulanda, a farmer with only a couple of years in school, joined his first guerrilla at the age of 19 (Borrero R3). From the FARC's origin in 1964, he had become the clear leader, and is inextricably linked to the history of the group. Upon his death, Alfonso Cano, an anthropologist from the National University in Bogotá (Pécaut 2008: 79), assumed power. Cano was first active in the Communist Party in the capital before he joined the ranks of the FARC in the 1970s. He joined the FARC Secretariat around 1980, and led the FARC's delegation to the 1991-1992 peace talks in Caracas and Tlaxcala (Garcia-Duran 2004: 83-84).

Some respondents suggest Cano was more inclined to peace negotiations than Marulanda would have been because he, due to his background, better understood the political, but also the military, realities in Colombia. Cano had for a long time—from before the Caguán process (Aldecoa R1)—been convinced that there had to be a political solution to the conflict. He has been considered a key political leader in the FARC, and led the FARC's political arm the Bolivarian Movement from its inauguration in 2000 (Medina Gallego 2009: 364). In the late 2008, after the death of three Secretariat members (including Marulanda) and operation Jaque that freed key hostages, Cano presented what in the media is known as “Plan Rebirth”.<sup>23</sup> While Marulanda planted many of the ideas in this plan before his death (Aldecoa R1; Peña 2014: 273), the analysts Valencia and Ávila give Cano the credit for “giving the guerrilla group a new military strategy and political direction” (Valencia and Ávila 2011: 14, my translation). Cano saw, according to Velandia (R31), that the FARC was losing soldiers, units, territory, and the initiative, and that a negotiated outcome was its best alternative and a way to get international recognition for its political agenda. Plan Rebirth sought to adapt to the new mode of operation, primarily the use of aerial bombardments which FARC leader Jiménez recognizes had hit the FARC hard (Lozano 2016: 65). Plan Rebirth sought to restructure its military apparatus and buy military equipment as well as hospitals and workshops. However, there was also a greater emphasis on the political and social struggle (Peña 2014: 275 & 301ff). Having recognized a gradual loss of political space before 2007 (Pécaut 2008: 67), it sought to regain this political space and named the plan “the Revolutionary Rebirth of the Masses” (Peña 2014: 275, my

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<sup>23</sup> Plan Rebirth has been a secret plan, and as Peña (2014: 303) mentions, the Secretariat may not have “officially” approved it.

translation). In short, Cano understood both the military and political context, and recognized the need to strengthen both aspects of its work at a time when the FARC faced massive protests in Colombia.

Other respondents argue the death of Marulanda and the rise of Cano, though certainly symbolic, did not change the FARC's outlook substantially. These respondents suggest that a peace process would also have progressed with Marulanda in charge. How may the death of its historic leader not have had the repercussions such a change sometimes has? The key explanation is that within the FARC, changing policy from continued fighting to negotiation—or rather slightly changing its consideration of which may be the preferred route in any given moment—is not as controversial as in other organizations. Historically, the FARC has coalesced between favoring the political route and the military route. Relatedly, as Jiménez underlines; discontinuing the armed struggle is not surrender. Rather, it means the change of scenario from the battlefield to “politics, civilized dialogue” (Lozano 2016: 65). Moreover, Marulanda had taken peace initiative earlier (Pécaut 2008: 44). It seems like Marulanda leaned “toward one tendency of the other, according to whether things [were] going well or badly for his fronts in the battlefield” (Isacson 2003: 13). Rather than the rise of Cano it was the realities that changed, along with the realization that at this point in time, no-one “promotes armed struggle as a solution to revolutionary processes” (Lozano R16).

Also in Caguán did realities most likely play a larger role than that of Marulanda. Would the death of Marulanda during the 1990s—and the ascension of Cano—have propelled the FARC toward the negotiating table? While Cano (or another member of the more political wing) would most likely have been more open to negotiations, he would have been—like Pastrana—hindered on the one hand by internal opponents who still viewed the military route as most prosperous, and by the continued lack of a settlement range. The fundamental issue in Caguán is that parties were, because large segments believed in a military victory, not ready to compromise.

As identifying Cano's role in this decision-making process is difficult (partly because he had a strong voice also before the death of Marulanda), two larger changes within the leadership of the FARC may have more explanatory power. One generational change seems to be from farmers from the Colombian countryside to “militant youth from the communist party” who joined the FARC in the 1970s and 1980s (Medina R18). One can also label it a generational change from farmers with little education to intellectuals (Chernick R7). The influence of Cano himself may be limited, but as a collective of individuals with more urban experiences, a more

political orientation, and a more contemporary discourse, the new leadership of the FARC was more able to speak the same language as that of the leaders in the Colombian government (Villarraga R32).

In addition to the rural-urban shift, there also seems to be a related move away from military leaders toward political leaders, or from “military strategists” to “politicians” (Medina R18). While Caguán was to a large extent dominated by the “military wing”, which includes those more inclined to favor the military route, the “political wing” (Rios 2015: 14) or the “ideologues” (Peña 2014: 318) are thought to have played a greater role in the lead-up to Havana. Importantly, the more politically oriented members may have had a stronger disposition to recognize a key concern; “loss of legitimacy in their project toward the national and international community” (Medina Gallego 2009: 340, my translation). According to Valenzuela (R30), apart from military weakening, the FARC started to feel politically isolated from the popular (and nonviolent) struggles, and thought it may become increasingly isolated should it continue the armed struggle. Compared to the military strategists, the “politicians” may have favored a political route and recognized as well as acted on this political isolation.

Beyond a rural-urban and a military-political shift within the FARC leadership, the death of Marulanda may have led to more dynamic discussions within the FARC. As Aldecoa (R1), member of the FARC’s Central High Command, explains; Marulanda “had such an authority within the FARC, was so wise, and had so much experience that one almost did not dispute him”. Hence, as Medina (R18) points to, when Marulanda died, the leaders—now with a similar seniority (though still several decades of experience in the guerrilla)—had a more horizontal relationship. This “political horizontality enabled it to fundamentally change its route” (Medina R18). According to (Velandia R31), the death of Marulanda “liberated a democratic force which had long been contained”, which enabled a greater degree of consultation within the Secretariat, in which one could see that Secretariat members could disagree.

Another factor related to leaders’ background concern their considerations of their own possible futures. A couple of respondents argue that pursuing a negotiated solution would mean that the older and tired guerrilla soldiers would finally be able to come out of the jungle. The younger generation, on the other hand, despite their 30 years of guerrilla fighting may, as some suggest, have been more willing and able to fight for many years on. Another interpretation is that the younger generation, given their urban and educational background, may more easily have seen the benefits of a negotiated solution and political participation. The farmers, however, with little

urban and political experience may choose the alternative they know, i.e. armed struggle in the countryside, rather than an uncertain political experience in an unfamiliar urban environment.

In conclusion, Cano's personality and background probably had some influence on willingness to negotiate. Cano had a strikingly different background, and it is likely that he perceived the conflict and its potential futures differently than Marulanda. While Marulanda planted the ideas behind Plan Rebirth, Cano brought them forward. The larger generational changes within the FARC Secretariat, however, seems to have had more explanatory power. As the more urban and intellectual members of the FARC Secretariat seemed to have gotten more power after Marulanda's death, it is possible that this pushed the FARC towards the negotiating table. As Guarín (R11) argues, however; the change Cano brings forth cannot have been too big, as breaking with the policy of its historical leader Marulanda would have created a significant split within the FARC. The more likely explanation is that a more political and urban Secretariat viewed the war in a slightly new way, both adapting to new circumstances and following its historic leader's directions.

### **6.3. President Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018)**

On the government side, respondents are, relatively to the rise of Cano, more willing to agree that the rise of Santos was key for PNO in Havana in 2012. Considering the theoretical propositions put forth, the theory seems to explain both Uribe's lack of willingness and Santos willingness to negotiate. In the following, five differences between the two presidents are examined.

First, while Uribe rejected it, Santos recognized the FARC's political agenda. After the failure of the Caguán process in 2002, Uribe was elected on a political platform that regarded the FARC a terrorist organization that threatened Colombian democratic institutions, lacked popular support, and "attacked civilians in its war against a legitimate state" (Borda Guzmán 2012: 94, my translation). By defining it a terrorist organization and not adversary, the Government justified the use of military force, rejected the FARC's political and social content, and, hence, removed the possibility of a political solution to the conflict (Borda Guzmán 2012: 75).

Santos, elected to continue in the footsteps of Uribe, changed—gradually—the discourse towards the FARC. While he publicly, for some time, continued to use the term terrorists, he recognized early on in secret communications that the "FARC's reasons for fighting are true and valid, but that the harm it brings onto the country comes from the methods they use" (Acosta

2016: 204, my translation). To build confidence, Santos re-reestablished relations with Chávez and Venezuela, and put his brother Enrique Santos Calderón—with a leftist background and personal relationships with historic FARC leaders—in the Government’s pre-negotiation team (Gomez Giraldo 2016: 35ff). Santos also pushed the Victims and Land Restitution Law through Congress, which officially recognized the armed conflict in Colombia, something the FARC had been requesting (Guarín R11). This is a game-changer, which, together with other signals, suggests to the FARC that with Santos there may be “a realistic chance to reach its goals through negotiations” (Nylander R20).

Second, their background and political interests have consequences for how they view the conflict. Uribe, part of what some call a rural elite owning large lands, is by some said to be the “arch-enemy” of the FARC. As the FARC’s project is based on redistributing lands back to Colombian farmers, and away from the large land-owners, Uribe—a large land-owner and a representative of big properties—is “the FARC’s real enemy” (Borrero R3). However, according to the FARC, it was not Uribe’s background that blocked a peace process. Rather, as the FARC leader Timoleón Jiménez explains, it was “his open dis-acknowledgement of our political nature” (Lozano 2016: 62). For Uribe, however, this might have mattered more. Some respondents point to Uribe’s personal history—his father was killed by the FARC in 1984 (Pécaut 2008: 62)—to further explain Uribe’s hard stance towards the guerrilla group.

Santos, part of a modern urban elite is, as García-Peña (R10) puts it, “more dependent on the New York Stock Exchange than the rural zones of Córdoba [a Colombian region]”. Santos saw an economic advantage in ending the conflict, in that it, for example, could facilitate growth in the extractive industries—many of which are in FARC-controlled territories. Indeed, Santos viewed making peace with the FARC both as an end and a means to modernize Colombia and decrease violence levels. Being more internationally oriented than his predecessor, he also sought to make it more attractive for foreign investment and tackle Colombia’s reputational problem abroad (Ljørdal R14). Hence, Colombia under Santos saw resolving the conflict as an opportunity. In short, while Uribe built his political platform on fighting the guerrilla groups, Santos had many reasons to end it.

While the background of Uribe and Santos certainly mattered for their view of the conflict, the importance of these differences in making the FARC believe the Government truly had sincere intentions can be overstated. As FARC Leader Jiménez stated in 2012, Santos is not just a “heir” of Uribe’s Democratic Security policy, but also one of its “star protagonists” (Lozano 2016:



62). Also FARC member Aldecoa (R1) underlines that both Uribe and Santos represented the economic and political elite in Colombia.

Third, Santos interpreted the dynamic of the conflict differently than Uribe. While Uribe was convinced of his ability to win militarily and seemed never interested in a peace beyond the guerrilla's rendition, Santos realized that one could not win militarily, and that a peace process with the FARC had to be somewhat transformational. His experience as Minister of Defense during the last period of Uribe was important; he came to understand not only the political dynamics, but also the potential and limits of military power (García-Peña R10). While Uribe believed in a military victory, Santos realized that while, in the long term, one may be able to defeat the FARC, the costs in doing so would be too high (Massé R17). Also the uncertainty connected with continued fighting would be high. Moreover, Santos took important steps to secure regional support for his peace efforts, most importantly by reestablishing friendly relations with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, who he knew was of great importance to the FARC.

Fourth, while Uribe, deeply engulfed in his terrorist-discourse towards FARC, did not seem able (or willing) to change policy, Santos was both able and willing. Uribe (as the new leader theory suggests) seemed glued to his political platform of all-out war, which is the political platform he built, and with which he achieved high popularity among the Colombian electorate (Fergusson et al. 2016: 1032). Changing his policy towards the FARC would mean giving up his political project (Villaveces R33). Some argue Uribe needed his enemy—the FARC—to sustain his political idea, and to be re-elected (Fergusson et al. 2016). Santos' case seems not that different: Having served as Defense Minister under Uribe, and having won the elections to continue in Uribe's military path, he would risk "a huge political scandal" should he approach the FARC (Santos Calderón 2014: 25, my translation). However, due to abovementioned reasons, he was willing to negotiate, and took the risk of contacting the FARC. While Pastrana had a political mandate to talk, Santos was expected to fight, but chose nevertheless to approach the FARC secretly to avoid interference by a skeptical Colombian population, and, probably, media and political opponents.<sup>24</sup>

Fifth, as opposed to Uribe, Santos drew up a strategic peace plan. He, together with his peace team, summoned international experts on conflict resolution, and learnt from earlier peace

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<sup>24</sup> Per Peña (2014: 324), support for a political solution was 47 percent (against 48 for a military one) in 2012. Per Sánchez et al. (2015: 195), support for negotiations was 55 percent in 2011 and 58 in 2012.

attempts at home and abroad (Santos Calderón 2014: 26). The design was remarkably opposite to the Caguán one; in 2012 negotiations were preceded by carefully elaborated pre-negotiations leading to a clear agenda, and they were held abroad with less interference from media and much less direct community participation (Johnson R12). That pre-negotiations were held secret for so long may be due to both a good design and well-made choices for negotiating teams and guarantors, as well as parties' strong willingness to do so. As García-Peña (R10) argues, maintaining secrecy is a show of willingness and dedication from both sides, particularly in a Colombian cultural context in which "one does not guard secrets".

In conclusion, while Uribe did make efforts to end the conflict, it happened amidst a discourse that labelled the FARC terrorists, which, as mentioned, delegitimized their political and social aspirations. He seemed not interested in discussing underlying issues, but asked rather for the guerrilla's surrender, something one asks from a defeated enemy. Santos, however, understood that winning the war was a risky and prolonged scenario and that the FARC would not engage in a transactional peace process. Also, he recognized the FARC's political agenda and showed willingness to tackle underlying issues. In short, after Uribe "pushed the FARC into a corner, Santos opens a door behind it" (Ljødal R14), providing the guerrilla group with a "dignified exit" out of war (Valenzuela R30).

## **7. Discussion**

In the previous three chapters I analyzed the three explanatory factors—military power relations, external actors, and leaders—individually. In this chapter, I firstly pin-point the most important explanatory factors. Secondly, I explore how these factors may interact, i.e. how one factor may depend on another. Thirdly, I examine possible implications for theory. Fourthly, I reflect on what lessons this investigation may have for war endings and PNO elsewhere.

### **7.1. Pin-pointing explanatory factors**

Pin-pointing the importance of explanatory factors has the continued danger of naming all factors essential. The Colombian business man Henry Acosta with connections with key FARC leaders, to take one example, played a key role as a secret back-channel between Santos and Cano in 2010. Saying peace negotiations would, in Acosta's absence, not have started, however, would be an analysis too caught up in a causal chain that views each link as irreplaceable. History would have played out somewhat differently in Acosta's absence, but there are few reasons to doubt Santos would have identified another messenger.

Based on the empirical data, then, I claim two factors were essential for the 2012 PNO. The fundamental factor is the military power relations between the two actors: Based on the correlation of forces and future potential of military combat, both parties viewed the political route as preferable to the military route. This factor revolves around Iklé's notion of military capability, which concerns not just an actor's current ability to impose submission onto its opponent, but also its future estimated ability to mobilize own men and resources and to get outside help (Iklé 2005: 28). In Caguán, the actor on the military defensive (the Government) managed to mobilize more of its own resources and attracted outside help (USA). In Havana, the disadvantaged side (the FARC) found itself in an increasingly precarious military quagmire from which prospects of retaking the military initiative and pursuing a military victory were almost non-existent. Despite efforts made from 2008 onwards, it served not to substantially change its prospects of military victory. In other words, the most important explanatory factor for the 2012 PNO was the military weakening of the FARC, the result of the reforms and military strengthening of the Colombian Armed Forces that Pastrana initiated and Uribe continued.

There are many ways in which the changed military power relations and military weakening of the FARC can explain PNO in 2012. The most important element, is that Uribe's

counterinsurgency put the FARC under hard military pressure and lowered its belief in the military route. Beyond the deaths of soldiers and loss of territory, the counterinsurgency increased desertions (demobilization), and led to a certain loss of morale and control within the organization. Also, the State's quite successful targeting of top FARC leaders probably made them (and future leaders) feel vulnerable and consequently more disposed to ending the conflict. Furthermore, Uribe's military campaigns combined with his strong narco-terrorist discourse towards the FARC, contributed to the FARC's increasing political isolation.

The second essential element for PNO in 2012 in Havana is the rise of Santos. Santos recognized the FARC's political agenda and that negotiations—based on his interpretation of the conflict—was the more prosperous route. In other words, his interpretation of the conflict as the leader of the actor, changed the way the actor itself viewed the situation. While also other presidents elected might have preferred peace talks (e.g. his 2010 presidential contender Antanas Mockus), pursuing peace negotiations in 2010 demanded a combination of skills, pragmatism, and personality that, arguably, few others had. Indeed, president Santos' unprecedented combination of determination, strategic outlook, and an ability to see the process through was, this thesis finds, essential. As Delgado Mora (R8) argues, Santos understood better how to utilize politically the strategic military advantage Uribe had created in the 2000s. Santos' actions are also important in that they raised the FARC's hopes of achieving some objectives through negotiations.

These two elements—military power relations and the rise of Santos—are key in explaining why parties, in Havana, were willing to compromise. Willingness to compromise is a requirement for negotiations. On the FARC side, its military weakening in the 2000s made it unable to demand large structural changes to the Colombian society. On the government side, Santos recognized that the Government had to accept some compromises for the FARC to pursue the political route. Hence, parties moved away from their respective extremes—high demands for structural changes to Colombian society and a refusal to negotiate the FARC's underlying political agenda—and towards some middle ground.

## **7.2. Interactions between explanatory factors**

The two abovementioned essential elements—military power relations and president Santos—do not independently explain a certain percentage of the puzzle. Rather, they explain dynamics behind the PNO through the way they interact. While Santos was essential for PNO in 2012, in Caguán, Pastrana's ability to get negotiations started were limited. Indeed, it is primarily the

military power relations that explain why peace negotiations did not start in Caguan: Large segments within both parties had a firmer belief in the military than the political route. Therefore, the military power relations limited the efforts of a leader who eventually found himself alone in his peace efforts. Hence, this thesis finds that leaders may be essential in starting peace negotiations (as Santos in Havana), but may be unable to depending on the military power relations (as Pastrana in Caguán). In other words, as is discussed further in the next section, parties' perceptions of the conflict are important, but they are interrelated with contextual factors.

Two key factors this thesis examines matter greatly through the way they interact with the military power relations: US' military aid and paramilitaries' anti-guerrilla efforts. The US military support to the Colombian Armed Forces has been integral in the military power relations between the GoC and the FARC. US military support enabled the Colombian Armed Forces to grow quicker, and was qualitatively very important through its contribution within the fields of aviation, intelligence, and technology. In short, US military support helped the GoC re-take the military initiative and put the FARC on the defensive.

The US' stance on the Colombian conflict seems, however, to have depended on the military power relations between the guerrilla and the Government. In Caguán, the Government accepted a broad agenda with topics such as the economic and social structure as well as justice and state reform (Garcia-Duran 2004: 84). Also, it agreed to dialogue on Colombian soil and accepted all FARC's initial conditions for talks. This is largely the result of the FARC having the military initiative, and having leverage to almost dictate how the peace process would progress. The US, seeing a potential negotiated outcome of peace negotiations being close to the wishes of the guerrilla (and far away from its own), did not see the political route leading anywhere. In Havana, however, with a changed military power relations, a negotiated outcome with the FARC would not include major structural changes. In fact, for the US, ending it through negotiations became the preferred way to handle the conflict.

The demobilization of the AUC, which limited paramilitaries' counterinsurgency operations, seems both to have been a cause and a consequence of the FARC weakening. At the end of the 1990s, the AUC, and the powerful regional and local leaders it responded to (Duncan 2015: 344), enjoyed considerable military power and political influence and played an important role in preventing further FARC expansion. The AUC acted as a spoiler in Caguán by kidnapping and threatening negotiators, but, most importantly, because of the State's inability and/or

unwillingness to fight it. Dismantling paramilitary groups—a key condition for the FARC to start talks—became, at two occasions, the expressed reason for the FARC to suspend the dialogue (Ljørdal 2002: 209).<sup>25</sup> As the Government fought the FARC with a stronger, modernized, and professionalized Armed Forces, paramilitaries started to lose their counterinsurgency purpose. Hence, the weakening of the FARC seemed to contribute to the demobilization of the AUC. The demobilization of the AUC also had consequences for the weakening of the FARC. The AUC, having become more fragmented, was difficult to control. It also caused substantially more displacements and conducted more massacres than other armed groups, and became a security liability. Demobilizing the AUC, then, helped its counterinsurgency efforts (Grenoble and Rose 2011: 299).

### **7.3. Revisiting theory**

This section tackles three implications for theory. Specifically, it discusses what insights these findings may have for our understanding of the costs of war, new leaders, and the mutually hurting stalemate argument.

#### **7.3.1. Costs of war**

A striking finding is that the Caguán dialogue failed during the most intense period of the conflict. Not only was the FARC imposing several military defeats on the government, also the ELN, the AUC, and drug traffickers challenged the authority of the state. Moreover, during the first years of Caguán, Colombia suffered the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. As Rettberg (2016: 5) writes, Caguán was “preceded by economic stagnation, conflict escalation, and crisis of governance”. Still, both the Government and the FARC passed through years of heavy fighting, suggesting that parties could tolerate significant suffering without lowering their demands. They were, in other words, willing to pursue continued fighting despite the costs of war.

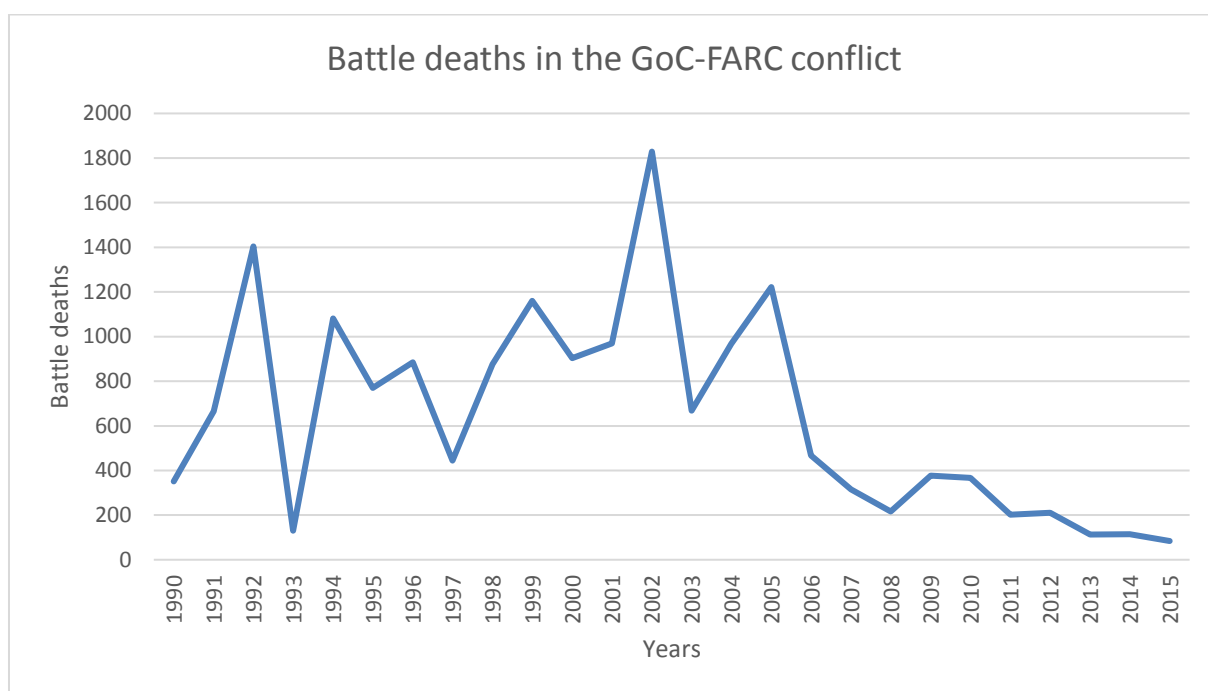
In 2010, the situation was markedly different; the fighting was ongoing but the intensity of the conflict had decreased significantly (see Graph 4). Moreover, both kidnappings and civilian casualties (CNRR 2013: 67) as well as displacement rates dropped dramatically. And, compared to Caguán, the number of kidnapped soldiers and police was minimal. As Rettberg (2016: 5) puts it, Havana was preceded “by economic boom [and] reduction in homicides”. While 64

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<sup>25</sup> In total, the FARC suspended talks four times and the Government two times (Isacson 2003: 27).

percent found the armed conflict the greatest problem facing Colombia in 2008, this number remained below 30 percent from 2009 and onwards (Sánchez et al. 2015: 194). This enabled Santos, elected to continue Uribe’s military offensive, to initiate a peace process not as a means of halting fighting in the short-term, but to reap the long-term benefits of ending the conflict. This seems to contradict findings that the costs of war seem associated with the onset of negotiations (Mason and Fett 1996; Urlacher 2011; Ghosn 2010). In the case of Ghosn, however, this may rather be because his vague definition of “occurrence of negotiations” (Ghosn 2010: 1063) may very well include the case of Caguán. Another explanation could be that higher intensity leads to greater hostility, which makes actors reject settlements (Brandt et al. 2008: 428).

*Graph 4: Annual deaths in the GoC-FARC conflict 1990-2015<sup>26</sup>*



There is, as Guarín (R11) points to, a paradox here: “When the state is weak [in Caguán], the people want peace, [but when] the state is strong [in Havana], the people don’t want it.” As he stresses, a weak state would have had to negotiate its own existence, which the Colombian state during Caguán was not ready to do. In other words, while public support may be high in times of high costs of war, this does not always correspond to actors’ willingness to negotiate. It may seem, then, that Caguán arose out of need and Havana out of desire. Santos did not need to

<sup>26</sup> Graph produced with data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s (UCDP 2017). Data on battle deaths retrieved 8 April 2017 from the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia.

establish dialogue—neither for his political career nor to save the Colombian Armed Forces from exhaustion. It seems, then, that low costs of war may enable, as Mitchell (1995: 44) suggested, a leader to view a negotiated solution as an opportunity and not as a need. Furthermore, it may seem that while public support is critical in creating lasting peace, it may not be for peace negotiations to start.

### **7.3.2. New leader theory**

This thesis finds strong support for the potential role of leaders in getting armed actors to the negotiating table. While an actor may have certain stable objectives over time, it is the leader's (or leaders') job to at any point in time define these objectives and act upon his interpretation of the conflict. In times of war, a leader's subjective interpretation may be even more important than at other times. With contradictory, false, or uncertain information, numerous interpretations of the same situation are possible (Iklé 2005: 17). This gives leaders significant room for maneuvering. Particularly wars fought with guerrilla warfare may be hard to interpret (Licklider 1993: 15), as the “asymmetrical nature of the fighting makes judgements on the exact state of the military balance truly subjective” (Preston 2004: 80). This thesis, then, adds to other scholars' findings that changes in leadership have been found to be associated with the onset of peace negotiations (Fearon 2008; Pruitt 2005; Mitchell 1995: 44; Ghosn 2010). However, it stresses that more than a change per se, leaders' personality and background matter.

Indeed, findings in this thesis stress the centrality of subjective interpretations, or, as Bercovitch and Kadayifci (2002) and Zartman's (2000) put it, perceptual factors. Sometimes, leaders may not recognize what contextually speaking may be a possibility to end the conflict through negotiations. What may be necessary is a leader that transforms e.g. the actor or an issue. Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse (2011: 176) find that “[c]hanges of leadership may precipitate change in protracted conflicts”. This can, for example, happen through re-defining the actor's perspective or goals, or changing the weight given to specific issues. Uribe, popular in part because of his hard stance towards the guerrilla and the increased security he brought to Colombian cities, did not find the political route the best way to reach his objectives. Santos, in 2010, however, focused more on the opportunities that resolving the armed conflict could bring. More concerned with Colombia's international reputation, the opportunities for economic growth and investment, and other issues, he favored the political route.

Typically, the reason for which leadership changes bring about negotiations is that a new leader is not committed to the policies of his predecessor (Mitchell 2000: 89; Pruitt 2005: 5). Colombia



is a special case, where the expectation was rather that the new leader would *continue* the policies of his predecessor. Indeed, having served as Uribe's Defense Minister until 2009, Santos was elected president as Uribe's candidate (LaSillaVacía 2010). It is likely that the lack of expectations (and to some extent also lack of public demand) for negotiation was beneficial, and that it in part can explain why pre-negotiations were kept secret. Because no one expected pre-negotiations to occur, it did not catch the attention of the media.<sup>27</sup> Hence, in a similar manner as the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (Pruitt 1997), the secrecy allowed parties to explore potential for peace negotiations without public interference.

Moreover, this thesis suggests that leaders' personal stakes may matter. Mitchell (1995: 45) writes that for leaders to pursue a political solution, they must anticipate "that they will continue to play some future leadership role". Uribe seemed unwilling to move away from his political platform of war, and would, should negotiations have started in e.g. 2009, not have been the president to see them through. Santos, on the other hand, approached the FARC a month into his presidency, and could become the key protagonist in the transformation. While not a determining factor, it may have had some influence.

Mitchell's notion may also help explain why an increasingly urban and political Secretariat could be linked to the FARC's inclination towards the political route. This more political orientation may have been important for leaders to be motivated not just to end the war, but optimistic about playing a role in the future political struggle. Compared to Marulanda, unfamiliar with both the urban and the political context in Colombia, the new FARC leaders, more urban and political, may have been more encouraged to and interested in leading their group in the political battlefield.

### **7.3.3. Mutually hurting stalemate**

The mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) argument is often put forth—together with a way out—to explain PNO. Zartman's idea (2000: 228) is that when "parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degrees or for the same reasons), they seek a way out". For the FARC, further combat seemed unlikely to bring about significant changes in the military

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<sup>27</sup> In fact, not even the article called "Rumors of peace" (Massé 2011b) about a possible peace process (published 21 September 2011) caught much attention.

arena. It was increasingly politically isolated, and had few reasons to hope to challenge the immensely superior Colombian Armed Forces. The FARC—counting around 9000 armed soldiers—was a very small armed group compared to the modern and professional Colombian Public Forces (counting almost half a million) with advanced aviation, intelligence, and technology. However, while the government could target its opponent for years to come, it seemed unable to eliminate it completely. The government, then, also seemed to have reached a deadlock. However, while the FARC was hurting militarily and politically, the Colombian government was both militarily and politically in a better standing compared to a decade earlier. In other words, I argue Zartman’s concept of a mutually hurting stalemate is not fit to explain the 2012 PNO in Colombia.

Comparing PNO in Colombia in 2012 with that in El Salvador in 1990 is instructive. El Salvador, according to Zartman and the UN special representative Álvaro de Soto, “codified the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate” (Zartman 2001: 11). In the year before negotiation onset in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front guerrilla entered main cities and launched an offensive on the capital with “an impressive show of firepower, [but] was not able to ignite a popular insurrection” (Kruijt 2013: 141). While the El Salvadorian army prevented a rebel victory, it showed the elites that “that the armed forces could not defend them, let alone crush the insurgents” (Zartman 2001: 11). The shared pain and inability to keep its opponent under control in El Salvador is strikingly different from the PNO in Colombia in 2012, in which a guerrilla group pushed into the periphery posed no existential threat to a stable government with strong Armed Forces.

Indeed, this thesis suggests examining parties’ individual preferences for the military or political route may be a better approach. On the FARC side, the idea of a hurting stalemate (not, then, to be confused with Zartman’s *mutually* hurting stalemate) may have some bearing. On the Government side, however, the more appropriate term to use may be an “enticing opportunity”. In this enticing opportunity, one changes perception of the conflict in that “leaders see a much better alternative way of achieving their goals than ‘slogging on’ with the continuing and costly struggle” (Mitchell 1995: 44). In the Colombian case, a new leadership and a new interpretation of the conflict coincided with a conflict context which allowed a leader to see opportunities and not cost avoidance. Therefore, the lower costs of war mattered. While Pastrana started the Caguán dialogue out of a political (and perhaps military) need, Santos—

with no need, but many opportunities—could think further ahead, and consider the long-term benefits an end to the conflict could bring.

This discussion of implications for theory finds that identifying links between rather objective conditions (like army sizes and casualties) and subjective factors (like actors' and leaders' interpretations) remains challenging. Specifically, more research is needed to disentangle the role of costs of war, prospects of victory, and public support for PNO. It also finds that leaders can, sometimes, kick-start negotiations even in protracted conflicts. Along with Preston and Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse, this thesis argues that the mutually hurting stalemate has the “attraction of simplicity” (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011: 179), but, if perceptions are “divorced from events on the ground, the concept of [...] military [...] stalemate may not actually say very much about why civil wars end” (Preston 2004: 80). Specifically, viewing subjectivity (and not objective conditions) as essential, it remains somewhat tautological (as a conflict is thought to be ripe when leaders think it is). Therefore, examining parties' individual preferences—including how interactions between parties influence these preferences—may be a better approach. This corresponds to the basic idea behind readiness theory (Pruitt 1997: 241-42).

#### **7.4. What have we learnt?**

This section discusses five lessons learnt from this investigation. These lessons concern the relationship between leaders and military power relations, public support, third party peace support, external military involvement, and the FARC's responses to its gradual weakening.

The first lesson is that the military power relations were found more important than leaders in pushing parties to the negotiating table. While a leader has significant space in which to maneuver, the political efforts of a leader or leaders seem not (in the short term) able to change the underlying military dynamics. During Caguán, Pastrana faced much opposition from large segments within the Military and the political and economic elite that saw low prospects of and benefits from a negotiated effort. Pastrana, then, was ‘left alone’ in his peace efforts. Could a different and better constructed process have led to another result? Considering the large degree of mistrust between parties and uncertainty and risk connected with a bilateral political solution, their preference for a unilateral solution could hardly have been very amendable by neither leaders nor mediators. It is also unlikely that a key aspect of, and problem with, the Caguán dialogue—the demilitarized zone—could have been handled differently. Given the FARC's insistence on the dialogue taking place in a demilitarized zone in Colombia, and their leverage

in imposing this conditions on Government, it is unlikely another president could have been able to conduct a different process.<sup>28</sup> There are, in other words, reasons to believe that parties' high demands and unwillingness to compromise would have remained. Hence, irrespective of political action, a peace process in the late 1990s would have faced great obstacles.

While a peace process can be viewed as leaders' political efforts to end the conflict, leaders can—at the same time—also use military means. While it remains true that the Government preferred the military route in Caguán, one can also view Pastrana's military strengthening and efforts to secure US military aid as a military means of increasing the FARC's costs of withdrawing from the peace talks. This attempt failed, however, and served to damage confidence between the peace delegations and came to be viewed by the FARC as an attempt of US invasion (Borda Guzmán 2012: 57-59). Pastrana's implicit threat to the FARC, to later fight it with more strength, failed to bring about peace negotiations. What worked for the Government of Colombia, however, was the all-out war on the FARC that this massive strengthening facilitated. Indeed, the military efforts of Uribe during the 2000s enabled, a decade later, another Colombian president to re-start a peace process, now from a position of strength.

The second lesson is that public support may not necessarily be conducive to PNO. While public support is central during peace negotiations, and vital afterwards, it may be counterproductive during a pre-negotiation. In fact, the non-interference of others may help actors sit down and talk uninterrupted. Holding pre-negotiations in a secret location is controversial, and it probably served to create a certain distance between the average Colombian and the actors' peace teams. However, the calm atmosphere enabled parties to exchange views and information more easily, diagnose conflicting interests, and reach a viable agenda and methodology.

Relatedly, this thesis finds that a strong civil society push for peace talks does not necessarily mean that parties are ready to negotiate. Civil society, in the Mandate for Peace in 1997, was primarily driven by a tiredness of war and a wish for peace. This corresponds well with increasing costs of war in the late 1990s. However, it pushed a dialogue that armed actors were not motivated (or able) to bring forward. Before 2010 and during the secret pre-negotiations, civil society continuously called for peace talks and gradually distanced itself from the

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, Juan Manuel Santos—whom one in hindsight might have expect to have had a more pragmatic approach—was in the late 1990s part of the UN team from which the idea of a demilitarized zone with the FARC arose (León 2010).

guerrilla's violent actions (Salgado R26). Moreover, civil society put victims center stage, and supported the Victims and Land Restitution Law adopted in 2011 (Chernick R7). However, the secrecy with which Santos brought the peace process forward prevented civil society from playing an active role in pre-negotiations. In terms of PNO, then, civil society seemed not to have a large influence.

The third lesson concerns external actors' peace support which was, in the Havana pre-negotiations, not found to be among the most important factors. To conclude that it was, therefore, less valuable, is incorrect. In fact, literature on mediation suggests that less third party engagement may be more constructive in the long term. Per the categorization by Beardsley et al. (2006), third party peace support in Havana was 'facilitation'. Facilitation is the least active approach, in which actors provide good offices (e.g. safe and secret) and facilitate the flow of information, but do not interfere directly (Beardsley et al. 2006: 63). More active approaches have been found better at getting talks started or even reaching agreement. However, when third party contributions are limited to facilitation, they may better contribute to securing "a more lasting resolution to the underlying conflict" (Beardsley et al. 2006: 83). Third parties' more facilitative approach in Havana, then, suggests the prospects of solving the underlying conflict was higher than it would have been with a more active third party approach. However, this thesis has not sought to reveal how the pre-negotiations progressed, nor specifically comment on third parties' contributions. Therefore, to draw conclusions on third parties' influence, further investigations of their peace support during pre-negotiations (how parties interacted with third parties etc.) is necessary.

The fourth lesson is that external involvement may be constructive in bringing about PNO. External involvement is, as the recent cases of Yemen and Syria exemplify, an incredibly delicate matter. The analysis of Colombia did not find strong support for the USA being a determining spoiler in Caguán. While it became an important point of contention, this thesis argues that US involvement did not by itself push the parties away from the political route towards the military route. In Havana, however, this thesis finds US support to be very important in weakening the FARC in the 2000s, which, by changing military power relations, was found essential for PNO in 2012. Cunningham (2006) argues external interventions may preclude war ending because new actors tend to have independent agendas which must be considered in a peace process. In fact, it may have been the case that the US involvement

prolonged the fighting. This would need further examination. However, also its seemingly constructive role in helping to create the conditions for PNO warrants more research.

Fifth, the analysis finds that the FARC's preference for the military or political route has been quite closely associated with its gradual military weakening and changed military power relations. In Caguán, the prospects of pursuing the military route were higher, while in Havana, the prospects were higher for the political route. As mentioned above, FARC leaders seemed not to drastically change the course of its predecessor to the same degree as the leader of the Colombian Government. There seems, in other words, to be more continuity in the FARC's preferences, and that the Government's preferences are more amenable to change with new presidents. While other insurgents—in other contexts—may make significantly different considerations, this continuity is interesting to note.

Another important element concerning the FARC, is that its involvement in drug trafficking seemed not to have changed its key motivations from ideological/political ones to criminal/economic ones. Its determined pursuit of a political solution in Havana supports this argument. In other conflicts, the war economy sometimes becomes an end, which means that actors involved in illegal activities often have “more to gain from a continuation of conflict than from peace” (Arnsen 2005: 3). Despite its involvement in the war economy including drug trafficking, the FARC's political motivations seemed to have trumped its economic ones (Chernick 2005: 202). This warrants more research, and may also have implications for how Government leaders deal with insurgents. Uribe's rejection of the FARC's political agenda prevented negotiations, as also FARC leader Jiménez recognizes (Lozano 2016: 62). Therefore, Santos' rejection of the FARC's methods—not its agenda—was essential. This suggests that while leaders may play an essential role in bringing about peace negotiations, they can also play a key role in preventing them. It also points to the importance of understanding its adversary, both its nature and goals.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis asked why the Government of Colombia (GoC) and the FARC initiated peace negotiations in 2012. To pin-point the most important explanatory factors, it compared the 2012 peace negotiation onset (PNO) with the lack of PNO during the Caguán dialogue (1999-2002). This research design was adopted to enhance our ability to reach solid conclusions about what factors were essential and which were not. The empirical data collected were 35 interviews with experts and persons involved with the peace processes. Respondents were members of the actors, mediators, analysts, professors, military personnel, and civil society. Respondents were sampled to garner diverse views of the conflict, and as an attempt to account for the most influential factors.<sup>29</sup>

The analytical framework adopted to empirically study these cases is based on existing literature and composed of three factors: Military power relations, external actors, and leaders. These three factors were first examined individually (Chapters 4-6) and then examined together (Chapter 7). Factors were found important as far as they affected armed actors' inclination to pursue the military route (continued fighting) or the political route (negotiations). These explanatory factors are not thought to operate as three independent variables that each explain a certain percentage of PNO. They can be examined independently, but the way they interact and influence each other over time matter greatly. For example, military support from external actors directly influences the military power relations, but also the military power relations may influence the external actors' interest in engaging in the first place. Moreover, the factors are qualitatively different. Military power relations, for example, are among other elements based on larger military developments over time, e.g. the Colombian State's counterinsurgency against the FARC in the 2000s. The leader, on the other hand, concerns the background and personality of a specific person as well as his perception and interpretation of military developments. A leader is thought to matter greatly for how an actor understands and acts in war.

In this conclusion, I first present main findings from the empirical study and, second, connect them to current and future developments in the Colombian conflict. Third, I provide, based on

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<sup>29</sup> Specifically, the open question with which all interviews started (“why do you think peace negotiations started in Havana, while they did not in Caguán?”) intended to account for a variety of explanations.

the findings in this thesis, recommendations for how future research can approach PNO. Fourth, I discuss implications my findings may have for other protracted conflicts.

## **8.1. Main findings**

The two peace processes examined were—in many regards—strikingly different. In Caguán, the FARC was militarily strong and had conducted several successful attacks against the State. In addition to the FARC, the other guerrilla group ELN, right-wing paramilitaries through the AUC, and drug-related violence challenged the Government’s legitimacy and territorial control. The Caguán dialogue was characterized by several disruptions and pauses, and parties were—at best—ambiguous about their commitment to a political route. Despite more than three years of talks, the parties did not start actual negotiations, i.e. negotiating agreed-upon agenda points according to a specified methodology. President Pastrana sought peace with the guerrilla, but engaged in a peace process with many flaws, and was unable (or to some extent unwilling) to compromise, without which progress is infeasible. The FARC perceived high prospects of military victory, and demanded large structural changes, something the government was not ready to concede. Put in other words, parties were not ready to compromise, i.e. “willing to ‘lose’ a little to ‘win’ a little” (Zartman and Berman 1982: 87). Hence, they did not reach the “turning point of seriousness”, where parties perceive its adversary to be “serious about finding a negotiated solution” (Zartman and Berman 1982: 87).

Before the Havana pre-negotiations, the FARC had been militarily weakened by Uribe’s counterinsurgency operations. Uribe had expelled the guerrilla from areas around Bogotá, pushed it further into remote parts of the country, and, in general, put large pressure on the FARC’s leaders, resources, and political support. Santos, determined to end the conflict through negotiation, invited the FARC to negotiate its political agenda, and made strategically important moves that facilitated a peace process. While the FARC’s demands were lower after several military defeats, Santos was—compared to his predecessor Uribe—more willing to compromise. The secret pre-negotiations were pragmatic and results-oriented; both parties showed willingness to negotiate. Negotiations started in November 2012, and progressed somewhat quickly, reaching the first partial agreement after six months.

The most important explanatory factor for the PNO in 2012 is the dramatic change in military power relations that took place in the years between the two peace processes. These years made both actors perceive lower prospects of military victory: The FARC faced the immensely superior Colombian Armed Forces, and the Government a weaker though cohesive and



persistent guerrilla group that used the mountains and impenetrable jungle to hide and survive. The military route closed gradually, something the FARC recognized at some point in the late 2000s. The government's preference changed only as Santos became president in 2010, and, having different interests than his predecessor, found a negotiated solution preferable. Importantly, Santos also raised expectations within the FARC that the political route may be a realistic way to reach its goals. Santos, then, is the second-most important explanatory factor for the PNO. It is unlikely that another president would have managed to construct and conduct a peace process as conducive to PNO as Santos. This thesis finds his strategic thinking, pragmatism, and determination crucial.

Some other elements investigated in this thesis affected the armed actors' preference for the political route. One was US military aid, including assistance in aviation, intelligence, and technology, which substantially contributed to Uribe's counterinsurgency operations, and indirectly pushed the FARC to the table. Also the transformation of the paramilitaries in the 2000s was important. Different aspects explain why they spoiled the Caguán process, but not the 2012 PNO. These include the demobilization of its coordinating body AUC, decrease in military power and political motivation, and the secrecy of pre-negotiations which avoided direct interference. Moreover, for the FARC, a continent with more leftist governments raised hopes for achieving its goals through political means. Its key external ally Hugo Chávez in Venezuela helped convince the guerrilla of pursuing the political route. Further, once engaged by the parties, third parties facilitated progress in pre-negotiations.

## **8.2. Implications for the conflict in Colombia**

This section firstly discusses three implications for how we understand ending armed conflict in Colombia. Afterwards, it provides concluding remarks on the future of the GoC-FARC conflict and the prospects for peace.

First, this thesis suggests that military means are fundamental in ending armed conflict, but that politics matters too. A starting point is an internal discussion on what (and who, Uribe or Santos) contributed most to directing the Colombian conflict to the political route. This discussion is less academically interesting, but sheds light on a more important question; namely, the role of military and political means of ending a conflict. This thesis finds that parties' military performance is key; the strategic military advantage that Pastrana built the foundation for and which Uribe brought forth allowed Santos to start peace negotiations without facing a strong and demanding guerrilla. Santos recognized the FARC's political agenda and

made some compromises without driving away key groups like the political and economic elite and the Colombian Armed Forces. Indeed, Santos' strategically effective and pragmatic political efforts were important. However, during pre-negotiations, Santos continued to use military means, including targeting FARC leaders, like he had as Defense Minister during important years in the conflict (2006-2009). Hence, Uribe and military means on the one hand, and Santos and (primarily) political means on the other, played complementary roles in starting peace negotiations in 2012.

Second, the designers of the Havana pre-negotiations seemed to have learnt more from previous war endings than the designers of Caguán. For Santos and his team, not repeating Caguán was a central aim. However, also several other peace efforts around the world (e.g. El Salvador, South Africa, Ireland, and Guatemala) were examined, all of which ended before Caguán started. While one in Caguán also sought to learn from other processes, the lessons seem not to have been the right ones, or they were not properly implemented. While Santos' peace team in 2010 had, theoretically speaking, an additional 12 years of peace processes around the world (including Caguán) to study, this was, most probably, not the key difference. Rather than the availability of peace processes to learn from, the willingness and ability to learn and implement lessons from past process seems to be the starker difference.

Third, the peace talks with ELN in Quito seem, compared to the FARC, to face greater challenges. While one may hope and believe key lessons (e.g. concerning design) are learnt from the FARC peace process, other hindrances may be harder to surpass. While also the ELN is militarily weakened, its decision to negotiate seems per analyst Eduardo Celis (Brodzinsky 2016) not to be as firm as the FARC's decision prior to 2012. While the FARC has remained remarkably cohesive (Walch 2016), the horizontal leadership structure of the ELN poses problems: It is "unable to commit to anything because it does not have control of its structures", according to Gómez Giraldo (2017).<sup>30</sup>

When looking beyond the 2012 peace negotiation onset and considering Colombia's prospects for peace, certain precautions are advised. This analysis focused on the period up to 2012. Implicitly, however, it has done so knowing that the peace negotiations ended in an agreement in June 2016 and then in a revised agreement in November 2016 after a referendum reject the

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<sup>30</sup> With time, interesting research opportunities may lie in comparative studies of peace talks with the FARC (in Caguán and Havana) and the ELN (in Havana in the mid-2000s and in Quito starting 2014).

June one. Therefore, from a 2017 perspective, the first precaution one must take is not seeing these peace agreements as an automatic result of the 2012 PNO. Indeed, the peace negotiations in Havana (2012-2016) could have derailed for a variety of reasons. The breakdown of talks for example within a year could have impacted the analysis. Perhaps one would have found parties' willingness to negotiate higher *because* negotiations progressed as they did. Still, this does not, I argue, change the fact that the 2010-2012 pre-negotiations occurred in a very distinct context compared to Caguán, and was initiated by actors with distinct prospects of pursuing the political versus military route.

One must also be cautious not to equate peace agreement with the resolution of the conflict or the end of war. One reason is that other armed groups exist in Colombia; beyond the other guerrilla group ELN, the groups that arose in the AUC's place remain key obstacles.<sup>31</sup> A second reason is that the implementation of such an agreement is costly and requires continued political will. Currently, the process faces considerable challenges, and if not implemented in a timely manner, the underlying conflicting interests will remain and one risks a recourse to war.

A third precaution is that, in the likely scenario that the agreement is partially implemented and prevents a recourse to armed conflict, Colombia will still face numerous challenges. These include high socio-economic inequality, large drug production and export, and a limited democratic space. Finally, one could argue that there is an even more fundamental problem that underlie these issues and the various civil wars Colombia has faced the past two centuries. Robinson (2013: 44) argues the problem is a failure of governance; that national politicians, by ceding power to local elites, only indirectly rule peripheries. Robinsons argues that, "[I]ike the drug economy, Colombia's left-wing insurgency is an outcome of the style of indirect rule that spawns violence and illegality in the periphery."

Indeed, Colombia faces a variety of challenges. Having reached an agreement with the FARC, it is easy to forget that the conflict is only a symptom of more chronic diseases. To cure these, substantial reforms are required. These will at least take decades. However, stopping fighting with the largest guerrilla group provides a fruitful starting point.

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<sup>31</sup> In fact, in 2016, president Santos changed the legal status of three criminal bands (BACRIM) (Semana 2016). They are now "Armed Organized Groups" (Grupos armados organizados), and can be attacked by the Colombian Military.

### **8.3. How to examine actors' decision to start negotiations**

To study and understand why armed actors start negotiations, this thesis sought to generate an overarching and analytically useful framework. While it was slightly modified to fit the Colombian case, I argue that it being derived from key scholarship on the topic suggests it may also be applied elsewhere. Its broad approach—to identify the most important factors for PNO—is important because it puts different factor up against each other. For example, while studies of third party peace support (mediation) are important to identify how such support can contribute, one may be served with not exaggerating its importance or misunderstand its role. Mediation is not the key reason parties seek to end war, but can potentially help armed actors start negotiations and resolve their conflicting interests.

Indeed, broad and open approaches are useful because they allow us to take a step back and examine the underlying reasons for why wars end. This thesis examined neither reaching peace agreements nor implementing them, but why armed actors start negotiations. The process leading up to negotiation onset and the peace negotiation process itself are often studied separately and do—to a large extent—answer different questions (Ghosn 2010: 57). To explain why parties reach agreements, one may examine—among other elements—what substantive proposals parties bring forth, how they bargain, and how they eventually settle. To answer why parties start negotiations, attention to how parties interact and build sufficient trust and optimism is one important component. Compared to negotiations themselves, however, studying negotiation onset is much more concerned with each actor's underlying motivation to negotiate; why they consider the political route a desirable strategy end war. When examining why wars end, therefore, one may be served with recognizing what functions each part plays, and that both are important to understand whole peace processes.

One way to examine actor's considerations of alternatives, is to view it as an interaction between military power relations (objective conditions) and the leaders' perceptions (subjective interpretations). In the analysis of military power relations, one may investigate objective conditions such as the costs of war and battlefield performance and their influence on parties' inclination towards a military or political route. In the analysis of leaders, one may examine the leaders' subjective interpretation of these objective conditions. One question is whether the actor objectively speaking should pursue a political solution, another is if the leader of the armed groups actually does this.

A rational actor approach—which assumes that actors “choose the action that offers the greatest expected utility” (Hopmann 1998: 40)—helps researchers examine objective conditions in light of an actor’s goals and characteristics. This approach is also valuable in studying leaders’ perceptions, interpretations, and actions in war, in that decisions are—to some extent—made on an evaluation of alternatives. It is important, when examining subjective interpretations, that leaders often make decisions based not on an in-depth evaluation of all relevant variables, but rather based on an evaluation of factors he finds important. While not all variables are considered, they may still be analyzed rationally. Some specifications are pertinent. First, also factors beyond the immediate conflict context influence leaders’ decisions (George and Bennett 2007: 98). Second, whatever information leaders have on factors they consider key, are evaluated based on leaders’ familiarity with the conflict and their way of analyzing them. Last, when making decisions, leaders’ personal interests (some of which may be hidden) mix together with the actor’s more general interests.

Both objective conditions and subjective interpretations are important, but one should recognize the limits of either one. Some scholars merely try to establish correlations between, for example, the costs of war and ending war. Mason and Fett (1996) may be one example. These studies are important, but do not by themselves reveal the underlying reasons for which parties seek their way out of war. Others rely too much on subjective interpretations. This may include Zartman, who at some point seems to consider objective conditions irrelevant (Zartman 2000: 229). This limits what concrete contributions such studies can have to our understanding of why conflicts end (Preston 2004: 80).

I propose that a middle way between these extremes may be the most useful. Such studies can start off with analyzing why actors seek to end war with a rational actor approach in which one examines the conflict contexts and the alternatives an actor has. While the costs of war (e.g. casualties) and army size matter, close attention is warranted to how these elements interact with the type of actor one deals with, the actor’s goals etc. In such an analysis, examining external actors’ influence separately may be a fruitful approach. Next, such analyses can consider the subjective interpretations of this conflict context, most importantly by examining the conflict from the leader or leaders’ viewpoint.

#### **8.4. Implications for other protracted conflicts**

The analysis conducted in this thesis may have important implications for the study of other protracted conflicts. The main one is that ending protracted conflicts may need large doses of

pragmatism. The second and third are that external military involvement may—under certain conditions—be constructive, and that examining how objective conditions and subjective interpretations interact is crucial to identify whether—in a specific moment—peace stands a chance.

First, as animosity between actors and within the civilian population tend to be particularly strong in protracted conflicts, pragmatic action might be necessary to stop fighting in protracted conflicts and provide an opportunity for a long-term reconciliation process. Beyond civilians, who usually suffer the most, the members and leaders of the armed groups may even reject the thought of talking with its enemy. Often, parties create enemy images of their opponents, and see their opponents as dishonest, cruel, and unwilling to make peace. Such enemy images grow stronger with propaganda, and may prevent negotiations. During the 2010-2012 pre-negotiations between the peace delegations of the Government of Colombia and the FARC, the secrecy may have been key to enable negotiators to talk calmly and without the media and the public's interference. Before the secret process was revealed in 2012, the peace process had already seen significant progress. Had the peace process been revealed earlier, large segments of the actors and their constituents might have more feverously opposed further rapprochement and perhaps prevented progress. One may therefore suggest that the more protracted a conflict is, the more pragmatism might be needed to end it.

Second, and relatedly, external actors' military contribution may—under certain conditions—be constructive. While peace support may be valuable, this does not in itself make actors seek negotiations. Military action is problematic for a variety of reasons, and may exasperate the suffering of the population. In the case of the FARC, however, this analysis finds that US support through Plan Colombia (despite being an issue of contention) was not a determining reason for which the Caguán process did not progress. US military support was, however, an important part of Uribe's counterinsurgency, which was essential in weakening the FARC and pushing them towards negotiations. This is not to say that military interventions always work or that this was the US' key intention with Plan Colombia. Still, Colombia is—compared to several other recent examples of external involvement in civil wars—a case of external military involvement that contributed to creating military power relations conducive to PNO.

Third, the findings in this thesis may have implications for how to provide “live” analysis of the prospects of any peace process. How can leaders or mediators analyze prospects of pursuing the military compared to the political route amidst a conflict? How can one tell when parties

are ready to compromise in order to search for a joint political solution? Besides the uncertain, false, or contradictory information leaders of armed groups have in war, identifying their real intentions—and how their adversary views them—is an extremely challenging task. A key lesson is that good intentions are neither sufficient nor the most important. To end protracted conflicts, parties must truly be willing to do so and be able to conduct a full conflict transformation. Knowing what prospects a peace process has will remain difficult. However, a prosperous approach may be to recognize that objective conditions and subjective interpretations interact. Next, one can learn from previous war endings—and peace attempts which did not get off the ground—to identify patterns across cases.

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## 10. Appendix I: Respondents

Code	Name	Date & place	Position
R1	‘Aldecoa, Matías’ (Luis Eliécer Rueda)	19 December 2016, Bogotá	Member of the Higher Central Command of the FARC, member of the Technical Sub-commission for the End of Conflict, and member of the UN Monitoring and Verification Mechanisms from the FARC.
R2	Borda Guzmán, Sandra	13 December 2016, Bogotá	Dean of the Social Science Faculty at the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogotá.
R3	Borrero Mansilla, Armando	25 November 2016, Bogotá	Sociologist, education in sociology, political science, as well as defense and security studies. Member of the national defense council from 1994-1996.
R4	Cassel, Douglas	17 October 2016, Skype	Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame, member of the Colombian government's sub-commission on transitional justice in the peace negotiations in Havana (2015).
R5	Castellanos Jimenez, Hugo Hernán	29 November 2016, Bogotá	Retired colonel in the Colombian Military.
R6	Celis Méndez, Luis Eduardo	10 November 2016, Bogotá	Analyst and journalist, working with Las2Orillas, previously with Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris.
R7	Chernick, Marc	23 November 2016, Bogotá	Professor of the Practice of Conflict Resolution and Human Rights in the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. Currently professor at the Andes University in Bogotá.
R8	Delgado Mora, Jairo Rolando	22 November 2016, Bogotá	Former Chief in the National Police, Ex-Director of the Colombian intelligence agency.
R9	Egeland, Jan	17 January 2017, Oslo	UN special envoy to the Caguán dialogue (1999-2002).
R10	García-Peña, Daniel	11 November 2016, Bogotá	High Commissioner for peace (1995-1998), and professor of political science at the National University in Bogotá.
R11	Guarín, Sergio	17 November 2016, Bogotá	Director of the Post-conflict and peacebuilding program at <i>Fundación ideas para la paz</i> , a think tank in Bogotá. Historian and political scientist.

R12	Johnson, Kyle	13 December 2016, Bogotá	Senior Analyst for Colombia at the International Crisis Group.
R13	Larsen, Gry	18 October 2016, Oslo	State secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009-2013
R14	Ljødal, Tron	18 October 2016, Oslo	Former analyst for the Organization of American States in Colombia. Was engaged with the demobilization of the AUC in Colombia.
R15	López de la Roche, Fabio	9 December 2016, Bogotá	Director of the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations (IEPRI) at the National University in Bogotá.
R16	Lozano, Carlos A.	16 November 2016, Bogotá	Leader of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) and director of the Party's weekly Voz newspaper.
R17	Massé, Frédéric	29 November 2016, Bogotá	Director of the Research Center and Special Projects at University Externado in Bogotá.
R18	Medina Gallego, Carlos	30 November 2016, Bogotá	Professor and researcher at the National University, Bogotá, and investigator at <i>Centro de Pensamiento y Seguimiento al Proceso de Paz</i> , a think tank.
R19	Medina, Claudia and Germana Vallejo	24 November 2016, Bogotá	Director and Adviser at the Toledo International Center for Peace (CITpax-Colombia), respectively.
R20	Nylander, Dag	8 February 2017, Oslo	Norway's Special Envoy to the Havana peace process (2011-2016).
R21	Peña, Abilio	5 December 2016, Bogotá	Human rights defender in the Inter-church Justice and Peace Commission.
R22	Ricardo, Victor G.	16 November 2016, Bogotá	High commissioner for peace (1998-2000).
R23	Rojas, Carlos	28 March 2017, Oslo	General in the Colombian Armed Forces, and Commander of the Command for the UN Mechanism for Monitoring and Verification of the FARC peace process.
R24	Romero, Marco	19 December 2016, Bogotá	Director at the Consultancy for human rights and displaced persons (CODHES), and professor at the National University in Bogotá.
R25	Ruiz, Manuel	13 December 2016, Bogotá	Analyst, film producer, previously historian at the National University in Bogotá.

R26	Salgado, Carlos	1 December 2016, Bogotá	Director of the civil society organization Planeta Paz (until 2016).
R27	Salvesen, Hilde and Torleif Kveim	21 October 2016, Oslo	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the Norwegian facilitation team to the Colombian peace talks with the FARC and the ELN.
R28	Skretteberg, Martha Rubiano	12 October 2016, Oslo	Secretary General of Caritas Norway.
R29	Ugarriza Uribe, Juan Esteban	16 November 2016, Bogotá	Professor of political science at the University of Rosario
R30	Valenzuela, Pedro	9 December 2016, Bogotá	Director of the Department of political science at the Javeriana University in Bogotá.
R31	Velandia, Carlos Arturo	29 November 2016, Bogotá	Analyst, ex-member of the High Command of ELN.
R32	Villarraga Sarmiento, Álvaro	13 December 2016, Bogotá	Political scientist, author of nine volumes on peace processes in Colombia, president of <i>Fundación Cultura Democrática</i> and investigator at the National Center for Historical Memory.
R33	Villaveces-Niño, Juanita	30 November 2016, Bogotá	Professor and researcher at the School of Economics at the National University in Bogotá.
R34	Visnes, Christian	2 December 2016, Bogotá	Country Director in Colombia for the Norwegian Refugee Council.
R35	Aasheim, Arne	22 December 2016, Oslo	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, special adviser for peace and reconciliation in Latin America 2000-2003