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## **La perspectiva de los medios norteamericanos sobre el Tratado de Paz con la Guerrilla Colombiana: FARC.**

### **The North American Newspapers Perspective about the Peace Treaty with the Colombian Guerrilla: FARC**

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## Resumen

Este trabajo es el resultado de un proyecto de investigación desarrollado por el semillero de Investigación *Peace, Communication, and Journalism* de la Fundación Universitaria para el Desarrollo Humano – UNINPAHU. Su objetivo es describir y analizar la forma como dos medios masivos influyentes en Estados Unidos, el New York Times y el Washington Post, abordaron el proceso de paz que se firmó en Colombia en el 2016 entre la guerrilla de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) y el gobierno nacional liderado en ese momento por el presidente Juan Manuel Santos Calderón.

Para esto, se realiza una descripción del contexto de la violencia en Colombia con el objetivo de destacar la importancia del acuerdo con una guerrilla como las FARC, cuya guerra duró casi 60 años, luego se establecen las categorías de análisis y finalmente se presentan los resultados.

En términos generales, el artículo describe la percepción que se tuvo a nivel internacional sobre el acuerdo de paz, así como de sus líderes y opositores a partir de la información difundida por los dos medios analizados. Esto permite enriquecer el debate sobre la labor y los aportes de los medios de comunicación en contextos de guerra y paz.

**Palabras clave:** acuerdo de paz, guerrilla, medios de comunicación de masas, periodismo.

## Abstract

This paper is the result of the research project developed by the research group Peace, communication, and journalism by the *Fundación Universitaria para el Desarrollo Humano – UNINPAHU (Colombia)*. The target is to describe and analyse the way two important North American newspapers approached the peace process signed in Colombia in 2016 between the Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government led by President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon.

First at all, it is important to describe the Colombia violence context to highlight the peace treaty with the FARC guerrilla after almost 60 years of war. After that, there is a description of the analysis categories and the results.

All in all, the paper describes the Americans perception about the peace treaty, its leaders and opponents through the two-mass media published information. This allows to enhance the debate about the role and the contribution of the mass media in peace or war context.

**Key words:** peace treaty, guerrilla, mass media, journalism.

## **Introduction.**

Colombian conflict is the most ancient in the American continent. Due to its violence level, the continue human rights violation, its relations with the country social and political context, it has drawn attention of many parts of the world. Consequently, other foreign characters have been involved into it, for example, Venezuela and Ecuador and, indeed, the most valuable Colombia ally, The United States of America (USA). These countries influences have been decisive in many stages, not just during the peace process but the conflict itself. Based on this, it is relevant to consider its role but, in a deeper way, it is important to highlight the role of their mass media.

The mass media have become a very powerful tool since its establishment and many studies claim the great influence they have in social and political context of a country. Colombia has not been the exception and, due to its context, studying the role of the mass media have been necessary to know and understand Colombia history. In general terms, this paper analyses the role of foreign mass media and their influence in a specific moment of Colombian conflict.

Certainly, the topic is not new and has been studied before. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the approach based on a specific moment of the conflict, considering that it has been dynamic and changeable with many characters that appeared or disappeared due to the prevailing circumstances. In that order, it is important to understand that any approach about the conflict must considered a specific moment into the whole context.

Therefore, an important fact took place in 2016 when the Colombian government headed by Juan Manuel Santos, and the guerrilla group Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a peace treaty to finish almost a half century of war and death. This event was particularly important for many reasons: it was the end of a long war with one of the most ancient guerrillas in South America; It took place in Cuba for almost four years; It had a plebiscite that rejected the agreement; It had a great support of several nations like Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, and the USA; among other facts.

Colombia and its peace treaty were in the reports of the main media of the world. The USA media were not the exception. Two of them, The New York Times (NYT) and The Washington Post (WP), covered the most important facts of the process. This information spread around United States and several countries around the world through them. Considering the international scope of the two diaries, it is important to analyze and describe their reports about the conflict to understand the perspective of the diaries and the perception of the world about it.

As it was mentioned before, the USA and Colombia have had a close relationship which include military and economic support against terrorism, communism, and drug traffic. This relationship is not a central idea, but it is important to considerer this fact during the paper, not just because its support but its influence through the mass media into the Colombian politics. This is a strong reason to consider the selection of the newspapers.

To sum up, the results describe and analyze the position of the two newspapers towards the peace treaty, but also, it is possible to deduce their perspective about Colombia. In both cases, there are recurrent and repetitive ideas about drug-traffic and United States budget and, of course, the conflict and the peace treaty. In this way, the paper contributes to the debate about the role and the power of the mass media in a violence context and open the discussion about how they could support a peace process without any ideological perspective.

## 1. The methodology

The mass media have become relevant into the political context considering they control an important and powerful element such as information. According to this, we considered important to choose approaches related to the discourse of the mass media, especially the newspapers news.

As a result, this work is qualitative research with a hermeneutical approach, considering the objects to analyze were the North American mass media articles about the peace treaty with the FARC and Colombia government. The methodology was based on three different interdisciplinary approaches: The first one is *the Editorial Intent* by Victor Ducrot and Ernesto Espeche; the second one is *the Analysis of Argumentation* by Silvia Gutierrez; and the last one is based on Teun Van Dijk and his book *News as a discourse*.

These three approaches focus on the analysis of the news and the intentions behind its arguments. All of them provide a perspective to address the news as a structured and intentioned message. Based on them, the context, the structure, the arguments used in the message, the published information, the main characters become relevant elements that give an idea of the ideology and the perspective of the newspaper.

To achieve the objective, it was necessary to create a matrix to analyze the articles. This matrix was based on the approaches selected. The matrix describes the chosen categories to analyze the articles. In that order, the categories were:

The semantic macro – structure, to define the principal topics reported for the newspapers. The main event, and the subtopics. The main actors, and the arguments used by the newspapers to describe the event. In this part, and based on the Silvia Gutierrez approach, the arguments chosen were the evaluation, the comparison, the distance, and the use of the sources.

The approaches selected are theories which focus directly on journalism. It means, they are designed to analyze journalism's phenomena such as a newspaper, for example. Precisely, this is another important fact. They also suggest the importance of the writing news and the necessity to study articles published by the large corporations that the diaries have become.

All in all, the approaches and the categories were selected carefully and according to the objective defined for this paper.

## 2. Colombian context.

Colombia has been a country of peace treaties. Since 1953, eight (8) peace treaties have been signed between the governments and the different armed characters of the conflict. The last one, between the FARC and the Juan Manuel Santos government signed on November 24 of 2016, marked the end of 52-year armed conflict with the most ancient guerrilla of South America.

Before analyzing this last process, it is important to provide a context of the violence in Colombia. To describe it, two significant works were consulted because of its historical importance. The first one is *La Violencia en Colombia* (The violence in Colombia) written by Monsignor Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda y Eduardo Umaña Luna. These authors propose three important moments to understand the root of the violence in Colombia. The advent of Enrique Olaya Herrera to the Colombian presidency in 1930, the change of government in 1946, and April the 9<sup>th</sup> in 1948 when the liberal leader, Jorge Elicer Gaitán was murdered in Bogotá.

It is also important to understand that, before those events, Colombia was in a divided struggle between the main political parties, conservative and liberal, and, until 1930, the political power had been in the conservative party hands since 1886. In addition, this struggle for the political power was one of the causes of one of the most awful civil war in Colombian history: the one-thousand-day war, between 1899 and 1902.

In 1930, Enrique Olaya Herrera won the presidency. He represented the liberal party and broke the conservatism hegemonic. Despite what everybody thought, the conservative party also accepted the new president. Nevertheless, in the fields, the resentment of many years of war had poisoned the liberal supporters and the violence started again to spread into the country. The new president tried unsuccessfully to stop this new wave of violence.

In 1946, and after a period of liberal party domain, the conservatives assumed the presidency led by Mariano Ospina Perez. The liberal party was defeated also in the Congress. This situation increased the tension between the parties and their supporters. In addition to that, work stoppages and strikes spread for all the country as well as the violence. According to the authors, some people believed that the communist party was behind the protests and the strikes.

The violence increased slowly in the farthest regions of the country. Jorge Elicer Gaitán, the liberal leader, organized some marches to appeal to government to stop the violence. In October of 1947, Gaitán was appointed as head of the liberal party. Despite his efforts, the government did not control the violence. Moreover, everything got worse. On April 9 in 1948, in Bogotá, Gaitán was murdered. The consequences of this act are known as '*Bogotazo*'. A great wave of violence started in Bogota, spread through the whole country, several buildings were burned, and many people were killed.

There is a general agreement between many academics about the several and awful consequences that Gaitan's death brought to the country. From that moment, the period called '*La Violencia*' started in Colombia.

Our second reference, the Historical Memory Group (NNMH), in its *report ¡Stop now! Colombia: memories of war and dignity* describes the violence in four different periods of the history of Colombia. The first one was between 1958 and 1982. Of course, the CNMH considers the time before 1958 a violence period, but it focuses on the period called '*La Violencia*' (The violence). Before 1958, the conflict in Colombia had just two principal actors: The conservative and the liberal parties. According to the CNMH, in this first period, the violence in Colombia suffered a sudden change, from a bipartisan conflict to a subversive conflict.

This change was due to '*El Frente Nacional*' (National Front), an agreement between the conservative and liberal parties to share the political power each four years. In that way every four years, each party had the opportunity to rule the country. This treaty mitigates the dispute between the two hegemonic parties. Nevertheless, another minority groups sought to participate; the communist party, for example, but they were persecuted and attacked. In addition to that, the government did not have a strong presence in some far places of the country, so this increased the peasants' struggle and the influence of the communist party.

Then, the retreat of the state, the persecution suffered by the communist party and the land dispute gave rise to the main Colombian guerrillas. It is important to say that, before this period, after Gaitan's death, the first guerrilla of Colombia arose in the Llanos region. The liberal guerrilla of the Llanos was under the leadership of Guadalupe Salcedo. This guerrilla signed the peace treaty in 1953. However, during the National Front, guerrillas like M-19, FARC, and the National Liberation Army (ELN) among others, started growing in the far fields of Colombia.

The second period was between 1982 and 1992. During that time, the guerrillas grow stronger, and the conflict moved from the fields to the cities. Besides, new characters appeared in the conflict: the paramilitary groups and the drug traffickers. According to the CNMH, the violence became acute, the drug cartels controlled the cities, and in the fields, the war displaced hundreds of peasants. Also evident was the great influence of the North American government in the Colombian politics.

It is also important to mention, that, in this second period, some guerrillas, like the M – 19, Popular Liberation Army (EPL), Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT), Quintín Lame Armed Movement (MAQL), signed a peace treaty with the Colombian government.

The third period was between 1992 and 2005 and it characterized by the growth of the paramilitary groups and the increase of the struggle against the guerrilla. In addition, the idea to defeat the guerrilla by an army and military incursion was discussed during this period.

The last one was between 2005 and 2012, and the main facts were the strong commitment of the government attacking the guerrilla; they were weakening but not defeated. This led the guerrilla to change the way they were operating in the country. It is also underscoring the failed negotiations of some governments and the guerrillas, more specially, the FARC.

Finally, in 2016, the FARC and the government of Juan Manuel Santos signed the peace and finished a long history of war and death. Now days, in Colombia, there exists one big guerrilla, the ELN, and small groups like the EPL, and the FARC's dissents. The dialogues between the ELN with the current government have taken a new breath. Hopefully, before this government ends, Colombia will have a new peace agreement.

### **3. The peace process with the FARC.**

Farc was one of the most ancient guerrillas in South America. Its origin is bounded to the communist party and the cold war. Its history is related with the lack of presence of the state in the farthest regions of Colombia, poverty, social problems, rebellion, and inequity. But also with kidnapping, bombs, death, and drug traffic.

Some governments tried to face FARC in many ways. Most of them tried to defeat them through the force and others intended through the dialogue. Before 2016, three presidents set a dialogue up with them. In 1982, Belisario Betancur agreed to cease fire with the intention of stablish dialogues. After that, the Patriotic Union (UP) political party was created to reduce violence and promote the political participation of the illegal armed groups. Nevertheless, it did not work, and several members of the UP were killed by paramilitarism, drug traffickers and the state.

Some years later, between 1991 and 1994, liberal party president Cesar Gaviria called the guerrilla armed groups to create a new constitution and sign a peace agreement. Some of them like M-19, CRS, (Socialist Renewal Current), Quintin Lame, EPL (The Popular Liberation Army) and, PRT (Workers Revolutionary Party) agreed with the government, and they demobilized.

In 1998, conservatism president, Andres Pastrana, demilitarized *Caguan*, a big area located at the southern of the country, to negotiate peace with FARC, Nevertheless and after 4 years of dialogues they failed, and the war returned.

Despite all the failures tries, the deaths, kidnappings, bombs, and many other cruelties, believing to end the war by dialogue still was an option. During Alvaro Uribe's government the war increased and the idea to force the end by arms took forms. Nevertheless, after two presidential periods, eight years of his government where not enough to defeat FARC.

A new president from the same political party of Alvaro Uribe assumed the government in 2010. Juan Manuel Santos had been the minister in charge of defeat FARC during Uribe's government. It seemed that war went on, but it did



not. Santos decided to take a different road from his predecessor and chose the dialogue. The dialogues started in 2011 and in 2016 they signed an agreement.

Some countries were involved in the process, like Cuba, Norway, Venezuela, and, indeed, USA. By extension, several media around the world followed and informed about the peace process, like the presidential elections in 2014, the first sign of the peace treaty in Cartagena in September 2016, the same year, in October a plebiscite rejected the agreement, marches for and against it and, the final signature on November 24, among other relevant events.

It has been a long process and, until today, it is trying to bring the peace to a country whose memories remains at war.

The main dates were selected from important newspapers like *El Espectador*, *El Heraldo* and *El Tiempo* because they are the most important in Colombia. After the selection of the most important events during the process, we consulted the articles related to the dates and the facts in the WP and NYT.

Noting the way selected American newspapers deal with the information helps to understand their perspective about the peace treaty.<

#### **4. Results**

The articles and the information analyzed here represent not just the newspapers perspective about such an important event for Colombian people, like the peace treaty with the guerrilla, but the way North American people, and many parts of the world, perceive Colombian conflict.

According to the proposal, the results are presented in this way: first, the number of articles, the arguments and the sources used by the newspapers; then, the main characters and finally the topics.

#### 4.1 General elements.

Table I describes a general idea of the number of articles analyzed, the selected ones of each newspaper, if it is informative or opinion one, the arguments used, and the amount of them keeping distance or not from the event selected.

Table I. General elements

Newspaper	# Articles.	Types		Arguments		Distance	
				Evaluation	Comparison	Yes	No
NYT	87	Informative	68	40	37	65	22
		Opinion	19				
WP	89	Informative	85	28	18	80	09
		Opinion	4				

Source: own elaborati

All the articles were found in the newspapers' web sides. Nevertheless, some of them were deleted from their database during research. In the NYT web site, 92 articles were found, but 87 were analyzed. In the WP 104 articles were found and 89 were analyzed. Naturally, all the articles were related with the peace process and the main events selected.

According to the information, most of the articles were informative in both newspapers. However, there is a great different in the number of articles published in the opinion section. This is consistent with the information about the arguments and the distance kept it by the newspaper because, it is clear that, the NYT is closer to the events and the situation it describes about Colombia considering the well-known characters closer to Colombian context who wrote articles, like the president Juan Manuel Santos and the Latin American journalist Martin Caparros.

According to Gutierrez (2003) the argumentation is the way to push a symbolic pressure to an audience. For this paper, it is important to understand how the newspapers support their own information and what kind of arguments they use for it. Despite Gutierrez (2003) proposes some important arguments to analyze a newspaper discourse, in this case, we selected the comparison and the evaluative arguments because they provide a specific idea of the way newspapers manage information and how they approach to the events. This is related to the distance they keep from each event and their editorial intention.

## 4.2 The sources.

Table II describes the sources used by the newspapers. It means, where the newspaper took the information or from who.

Table II. The sources

Sources	
New York Times	Washington Post
1. Juan Manuel Santos (A)	1. Juan Manuel Santos (A)
2. Victims (A)	2. Álvaro Uribe (D)
3. Álvaro Uribe (D)	3. Bernard Aronson (A)
4. Rodrigo Londoño (A)	4. Rodrigo Londoño (A)
5. Humberto de la Calle and Ariel Ávila. (A)	5. Sergio Jaramillo (A)

Source: own elaboration

The sources used by the newspapers are almost the same. In both cases Juan Manuel Santos, the Colombian president in that moment was the main source. Álvaro Uribe was another top character. He represented the opposition against the peace process. Rodrigo Londoño - Timochenko, a former guerrilla leader, was another important source. He represented FARC. Sergio Jaramillo and Humberto de la Calle were representatives of the government in the peace process. Ariel Avila was the director of the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation.

Nevertheless, the differences are in two sources: Bernard Aronson and Victims. For the NYT was easier to get into the Colombian lands to report. In some articles, it is evident that NYT had some journalists who wrote from Colombia. For example, the article written by Nicholas Casey named *In a Rebel camp in Colombia, Marx and Free Love Reign* is a chronicle of the journalist visiting a Farc camp. Therefore, it means that the NYT had the opportunity to talk directly with all the main characters of the peace process, including the victims. On the other hand, The WP did not have the same opportunity to talk directly with the victims, but, instead of it, Bernard Aronson, the USA Special Envoy to the peace process with the FARC, was one of its principal sources. But Aronson is not one of its principal sources because the WP did not have access to the victims, it is also, because one of the principal topics for the newspaper was the

role of the United States in the peace process and the struggle against the drug trafficking, but this topic will be developed later.

### 4.3 The main actors.

Table III describes the principal characters of the news. Indeed, we found many characters almost in each article, but, usually, there was a main character whose relationship with the peace process were directly bounded. The characters were part of the process and easy to identify but, the relevance given by the newspaper in the articles, contributed to the main target of this paper.

Table III. Main characters

Actors	
New York Times	Washington Post
1. Juan Manuel Santos	1. Farc
2. Farc	2. Juan Manuel Santos
3. Álvaro Uribe	3. Álvaro Uribe
4. Victims	4. The United States
5. The United States.	5. Colombian Government / Obama

Source: own elaboration

It was clear that the principal characters of the peace process were the president of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, the FARC and the opposition represented by Álvaro Uribe Velez. Nevertheless, different to Colombian newspapers like *El Espectador* or *El Tiempo*, USA appeared like another very important character that has a strong influence in the peace process.

#### 4.4 The topics.

Table IV describes the main topics identified in the newspapers.

Table IV. Main topics

Topics	
New York Times	Washington Post
1. Peace Process	1. Peace process
2. Plebiscite	2. The U.S support
3. Farc Drug – trafficking	3. Farc Drug - trafficking
4. Peace Process opposition.	4. Peace process opposition.
5. The U.S support.	5. Plebiscite.

Source: own elaboration

Clearly, the main topic was the peace process and all the things related with it, like the dialogues, reforms, demobilization, and the signature among other things. In addition, the most relevant topics were the same for both newspapers. However, the difference between the newspapers is the way they handle it.

The NYT gave rise to the plebiscite. This happened in the last moments before the final signature of the treaty. At the beginning, when it was very unfamiliar the strategy of the government, the newspaper called a referendum, but later, it called plebiscite. In its articles, the NYT criticized the strategy used by the government of Juan Manuel Santos to approve the treaty, for example, Martín Caparros wrote about it:

“President Juan Manuel Santos (who won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday) could have made the agreement official without the need of a plebiscite, but he yielded to the temptation of obtaining, through this peace accord, the support of his fugitive voters.” (The New York Times, October 7 – 2016. Web)

On the other hand, WP just referenced the plebiscite avoiding criticizing it. Different to NYT, WP gave it more importance after the defeated.

Another important topic for both newspapers was the relation between drug trafficking and FARC. Clearly, drug trafficking has been a problem in Colombia since the 80s and it was well known that FARC used the drug trafficking to financial their struggle and both newspapers exposed it like that. However, there is a difference in how they perceived this topic.

The NYT presented drug trafficking as one of the most important topics during the talks. Both, Colombia Government and FARC, argued about this topic. The

NYT published: “The other four points include participation in the political process by demobilized guerrillas; an end to the fighting, including the laying down of arms by the guerrillas; drug trafficking; and the rights of victims of the conflict.” (Neuman, 2015, Web). Both parts reached agreement about this topic among others.

The drug trafficking was also a source for FARC and the NYT published like this: “The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which has long used drug trafficking to finance its activities” (Neuman, May 6, 2015. Web). Generally, the NYT perspective about this topic was neutral considering that it was more critical than the WP.

Meanwhile, WP talked about drug trafficking considering the same aspects as the NYT did. It means, the drug trafficking as one of the topics argued during the peace talks and as a form to fund the FARC struggle. Nevertheless, the perspective of the WP was different because it related the drug trafficking with the United States support to Colombia and the way it affected. For example:

- The United States views the FARC as the hemisphere’s most powerful terrorist organization and one of the largest drug trafficking groups in the Americas. Washington has sent at least \$9 billion in security aid since 2000, more than anywhere else outside the Middle East, through “Plan Colombia.” (Miroff, May 24 2014. Web)
- Some Republicans have questioned what they see as impunity for guerrilla leaders responsible for years of human rights atrocities, kidnappings — including of U.S. citizens — and deep involvement in drug trafficking. (De Young, Feb, 03 2016. Web)

WP perspective showed how the drug trafficking problem in Colombia is a matter of the United States policies and what the Colombia struggle against the guerrilla represents for its own interests. For WP this topic goes hand in hand with the United States support to Colombia struggle.

The USA support was another important topic for the newspapers, and the most repeated during the peace talks’ time. The perspective of the USA support was in different forms: The Plan Colombia, which includes the struggle against the guerrillas, drug trafficking, free trade, and crop substitution. This support means a lot of money inverted to help Colombia government in different moments of the war.

For the NYT, first, the USA support is because Colombia is the closer ally, here some examples:

- Washington’s top ally in South America (Romero, Aug 12, 2013. Web)
- Colombia is the United States’ closest ally in South America (Neuman, June 15, 2014. Web)
- A top ally of Washington in Latin America (Romero. Oct. 3, 2016. Web)

This condition of the closer ally in Latin America is the first perspective found in the NYT. In addition, the USA has supported his ally during the conflict:

- The FARC has been at war with the government of Colombia for nearly 50 years. The United States has supported Colombia in that fight with billions of dollars in aid and, at times, hundreds of troops and private contractors. (Neuman, July 20, 2013. Web)
- The United States, which has provided Colombia with more than \$8 billion in security and antinarcotics aid since the 1990s, is still channeling more than \$300 million a year as the country contends with a five-decade-old insurgency led by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, and resilient drug-trafficking networks. (Romero. Aug, 12, 2013. Web)

The USA support has helped to weaken the guerrilla as it published:

- The FARC has been weakened over the last decade, with the help of United States military support to the Colombian government. Last November, the FARC's top leader, Alfonso Cano, was killed in a government operation." (González and Neuman, Aug, 28 2012. Web).

Another important data for the newspaper was the money that the USA has spent to Colombia in this war:

The United States has supported Colombia in that fight with billions of dollars in aid and, at times, hundreds of troops and private contractors. (Neuman, July 20, 2013. Web)

- Having spent \$10 billion over the past 15 years training and supporting Colombia's security forces, Washington officials are understandably feeling proud of America's contribution to the country's turnaround." (NYT, Feb. 5, 2016. Web)

On the other hand, WP has the same perspective as the NYT, the Colombia as the principal ally:

- But also the United States, Bogota's closest ally and benefactor" (Forero, Sep 4, 2012. Web)
- Running for reelection is incumbent Juan Manuel Santos, a close U.S. ally who seemed to be cruising toward an easy win." (Miroff, May, 14, 2014. Web)

The support and the help given by the USA to Colombia and its war against the FARC and the drug trafficking:

- Plan Colombia, a 15-year effort to support the Colombian army against rural- based militants deeply enmeshed in drug trafficking (WP. Feb, 14, 2016. Web)

- Foremost among them is former president Álvaro Uribe, who initiated the U.S.-backed military offensive that broke the back of the FARC and forced it to negotiate.” (WP, Oct, 9, 2015. Web)

WP also focused, more than the NYT, on the money spent by USA to support Colombia:

- The government also has a powerful benefactor in the United States, which has provided an average of \$700 million in mostly military and anti-drug aid each year since 2000.” (Forero, Oct, 18, 2012. Web)
- Since 2000, the United States has spent about \$10 billion in training and equipment for Colombian security forces and in aircraft and helicopters for anti- narcotics forces that strike directly at coca plantations.” (Forero, Nov, 9, 2013. Web)

The results presented let understand the perspective of the main newspapers of the USA about Colombia and its peace treaty. Clearly, the main topic was the peace process between the Government and the FARC. However, underneath it all, the most important topics for the Washington Post and the New York Times were the drug trafficking and the USA support to Colombia’s struggle.

## **Conclusions**

The main objective of this work was to research the perspective of two of the most important newspapers about Colombia during its peace process with the FARC. The idea was to understand what is the perception of the North American people about the peace process in Colombia, and how the newspapers, the most read, published and presented the information to the world.

Clearly, the main topic of the articles analyzed was the peace process. The newspapers published the main information about the most important events during it like the treaty signature, the plebiscite, the ceremony, among others. Nevertheless, there were some topics that, during the peace process, were repetitive like the USA support and the drug trafficking.

Therefore, the first perspective found in the newspapers was the problem of the drug trafficking in Colombia, and the source of money it represents for the FARC and other illegal groups. The newspapers express concern about the coca trade and the among of drugs that get into the North American territory.

For many years, Colombia has been one of the main exporters of cocaine, and this topic was highlighted by the newspapers but, in this case, it was related to the FARC and the way the used the drug trafficking to fund its struggle. Naturally, this is a very important topic for the USA, because it has been a great market for the cocaine traffickers, but also, because the USA has invested a lot of money in Colombia to fight against this problem.



Like a leitmotiv, the newspapers were continually repeated the USA support to drug trafficking war in Colombia. It started with the Plan Colombia, an agreement between the two governments led by Andres Pastrana and Bill Clinton, to help Colombia in its war against the drug trafficking and the guerrillas.

As the Plan Colombia was a huge investment, the newspapers highlighted specially the amount and the results. About the amount, the NYT posted, 'But resolve from the government and a \$10 billion aid package from the United States, has left the rebels on the run.' (Casey, March 18, 2016. Web)

In addition, the WP: 'During his 2002-2010 presidency, Uribe debilitated the guerrilla ranks and killed several top rebel leaders with help from the United States through the \$10 billion Plan Colombia.' (Miroff, June 22, 2016. Web)

In addition, in these two quotes, the newspapers give glimpses of the results of the Plan Colombia, a weakened guerrilla, hardly stricken by the Colombian government and the USA support that made the guerrilla signed a peace treaty. For the newspapers, not just the peace treaty was a result of the USA support to Colombian government; also, this support made the guerrilla looked for another solution different to war. This is evident in both newspapers, but more in the WP. On August 27, 2016, it published an article named: *Colombian peace deal could mark rare victory for U.S. diplomacy* where the author wrote:

When Plan Colombia was launched in the late 1990s, the country had one of the world's highest homicide rates and the FARC's guerrilla armies had grown to nearly 20,000 troops, controlling as much as a third of Colombian territory. With U.S. military hardware, training and other assistance, the Colombian government reduced the rebels' ranks by more than half, driving them into the country's most remote corners, particularly during Uribe's 2002-2010 presidency. (Miroff, Web)

The second perspective found was that the North American newspapers consider the peace treaty between the FARC and the Colombian government a success of the United States foreign policies. Especially, a result of the Plan Colombia. This was not a repeated idea, but it could be deduced from some articles, and, clearly from the quotes referenced before.

Indeed, Plan Colombia was a huge investment of the USA government, and it helped to make the guerrilla a weaken group. Nevertheless, the guerrilla was not defeated in the moment they chose to have a dialogue with the Colombia government.

On the other hand, the newspapers consider Colombia as the main ally of the USA in Latin America. This is a recurrent idea in the analyzed articles and the word 'ally, backed, support' let understand the strong relation between the two countries. This is the third perspective found in the newspapers.

The fourth perspective is about the number of people affected in Colombia during the war. On a repetitive manner, the newspapers gave the information about the historical record of deaths in Colombia during the conflict.

Finally, it is important to argue that the newspapers used the repetition to focus on these perspectives presented. It means that, they constantly repeat the same idea in different articles; also, it can be assuming that the same sentences are repeated in many of them. Clearly, this is a form to express and reinforce the idea of Colombia as an ally of USA, as a drug trafficking and violent country, that depends on the USA support.

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