

## FOREWORD

Fundacion Ideas para la Paz (FIP) was created in late 1999 as a result of the concern of a group of businessmen at the serious situation in Colombia, and the relative lack of awareness and knowledge among the general public in this country, with regard to peace processes and negotiations.

During the first two years of activities, and as a priority task, FIP has promoted the production of articles and documents which will contribute to the understanding of the conflict in Colombia and of the processes of dialogue and negotiation.

Aware of the importance of wide and effective dissemination of this material, which should have the broadest possible readership, FIP joins the efforts of the magazine Cambio and publisher Alfaomega Colombiana S.A. in the publication of the series "Libros de Cambio".

As a third product of this teamwork, we publish the essay of historian Eduardo Posada-Carbo: "Peace and Principles".

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

“The book of peace remains open”, said President Pastrana in a broadcast to the nation on 20 February 2002, announcing that he had officially broken off negotiations with the FARC, which had by then been running for over three years, since 7 January 1999.<sup>2</sup>

With only a few months of his period of office left, it is highly unlikely that Pastrana will re-start conversations with FARC; but public opinion in Colombia and elsewhere has said that, despite the breakdown in the talks, armed internal conflict in Colombia can only be brought to an end through political solutions.<sup>3</sup> Sooner or later we would be involved in another peace process with the FARC. In the face of that – and with the continuation of talks with the ELN, journalist Roberto Pombo suggested that “we must start thinking now on that the future negotiating model will be”.

“Negotiating model” – the phrase has passed into our everyday language. It means a definition of the central objectives of the talks, and the conditions on which they develop. The Pastrana government’s talks with the FARC mainly addressed questions of the restructuring of Colombian society – the elimination of the “objective causes of violence in the country. The conditions of the talks were generous to the guerrillas: no cease-fire, and an enormous demilitarized zone left in the hands of the guerrillas.

The crisis of this “negotiating model” had been foreseen long before the talks broke down. In their dying moments in January 2002, a new consensus seemed to have taken hold of public opinion: far-reaching changes were needed for a peace process which then seemed to be at its last gasp. “As things were, we are lucky that it’s over” wrote Sergio Fajardo on 13 January, and the same day the newspaper *El Colombiano* said, “A new process, if it starts, cannot be a second edition of the previous one, and it must start with a totally new proposition”.<sup>4</sup>

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The original version of this essay was specially written for Fundación Ideas para la Paz (“the Foundation”) in July 2001, as “Principles and Content of Peace Negotiations in Colombia. Some Considerations in the Context of the Presidential Campaign 2001-2. This is a slightly revised version which does not alter the body of the narrative or the arguments. Rodrigo Pardo, Hernando Yepes and Luis Jorge Garay made some valuable written comments for the Foundation, for which we thank them. We also thank the Foundation for having authorized and supported this publications.

<sup>2</sup> As published in *El Tiempo.com* on 21 February 2002. Foreign Minister Guillermo Fernandez spoke in much the same terms on his visit to Madrid (*El Pais*, 22 February 2002)

<sup>3</sup> “Even though it is contrary to the present situation, we must insist on the virtues of a negotiated solution” said the leading article in *El Tiempo* on 22 February, asking for “Clarity in the face of what comes next.”. A few hours later there was an announcement that “the FARC would be ready to negotiate with the next government”; and that the presidential candidates “would negotiate with them”, but on other conditions. The national news programs on Caracol received statements from candidates Horacio Serpa, Luis E. Garzon, Noemi Sanin and Juan Camilo Restrepo. And Alvaro Uribe said “Our government will not be one of war, and we shall not close the doors on peace”. By the time that this essay came to be revised, the Foreign Ministers for Latin America of the United Kingdom and Germany had issued a joint statement insisting on negotiations. *El Tiempo* reported this under the headline “Europeans call for negotiated solution in Colombia” on 30 March 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Article, “A new opportunity”, and leader “Stand on the brakes or jump into the abyss?” *El Colombiano*, 13 January 2002. The presidential candidates and the media made similar comments on the need for a substantial revision of conditions. For example, *El Tiempo*, “The candidates and the breakdown” (14 January), and “Closing ranks” (same day); and “The secrets of the breakdown” in *Cambio*, 13 January.

Despite the expected crisis in January, and in the midst of a debate which suggested much confusion and disappointment with the way the talks had been managed, many insisted that what was needed was a long-term peace strategy, something which had persistently been demanded in recent years. “Colombia needs a peace with principles and not a bloody battle between brothers” said a document signed by a group of intellectuals and journalists who asked the presidential candidates to make an agreement which would set the basic parameters of possible future State policy on the matter, and to commit themselves to supporting that policy, regardless of who wins the election.”<sup>5</sup>

If what failed, as commentator Carlos Eduardo Jaramillo suggested, was “a negotiating model and not the peace alternative negotiated for Colombia”<sup>6</sup>, how could the terms of a new peace process be defined? Was it possible to conceive a policy for an enduring peace – the State peace policy which had so often be called for? What was *meant* by the expression “State peace policy”? Did it mean that the issue of peace was to be removed from the electoral campaign? And if so, what meaning would that policy have for a democracy?.

Any “totally new proposition” for a negotiated peace would have to start with some new basic concepts – such as that of “peace” itself, as it had so far been understood. And it would have to take account of a variable in any negotiations between the State and the guerrillas, and one whose significance is all too often forgotten: the limitations which democracy as practiced today imposes on governments, while the guerrillas suffer from no such limitations. The limitation par excellence of a democracy, essential to its definition, is the electoral cycle. A democratic government can ill afford to disregard public opinion, which is the very foundation of the electoral support which maintains it. The climate of opinion – in other words, the set of ideas prevalent in society at any given time – has been decisive in the evolution of peace processes in Colombia, and decisive to an extent which perhaps few appreciate.

The purpose of this essay is to identify the principles which, in the context of a democracy, should form the framework of future negotiations, and what the content of those negotiations should be. The first section examines the idea of “Peace as a State policy”, and suggests that it neither possible nor desirable to avoid a debate on peace during an election campaign. In order to gain a better understanding of the dilemmas faced by any democracy confronted by an illegal armed group during an election process, we then look at the experiences of Britain and Spain. The third section explores the basic and underlying principles needed, in the light of progress made during the Pastrana government. The fourth section is an attempt to provide a degree of clarity as to the prevalent definition of peace, since that definition has conditioned the agenda for talks and the priorities on that agenda, and has indeed helped to frustrate expectations of “peace” in Colombia.

## PEACE AS A STATE POLICY?

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<sup>5</sup> El Tiempo, 12 January 2002 “Intellectuals ask for UN Special Mission”.

<sup>6</sup> “The last gasp of the Caguan”, Cambio, 13 January

In his last address to Congress in July 1998, President Ernesto Samper, noted that peace could “require the untiring work of several governments” and he therefore recommended”, “that it should be taken up as a state policy, and not for a four-year period of office<sup>7</sup>.” It was perhaps not the first time in which this proposal has been made public. During the next four years, however, the demand to adopt peace as a “state policy”, was increasingly persistent, both in the national and foreign media.<sup>8</sup>

The Pastrana administration always made clear that it intended to build a peace process of an enduring nature. In November 2000, the government and representatives of the opposition signed an agreement for the formation of a “common front for peace and against violence”, in which they stated that they were ready to take part in the quest for a negotiated solution to the armed conflict, “so that peace policy may not be that of just one government, but a genuine state policy, autonomous and natural, in which all political forces and civil societies are represented.”<sup>9</sup> Later, government spokesmen have stated, as of the peace commissioner Camilo Gómez, that in effect, there was “a state policy, shared in the common front.”<sup>10</sup>

This idea was not reserved for government speeches, or for political leaders. It was imposed by a wide sector of public opinion. “Peace”-stated an editorial article in *El Espectador*-“also supposes a state policy. It is not simply the work of a leader, nor indeed of a single government.”<sup>11</sup> Similar demands were heard from representatives of the international community. The declaration of the president of the European Union on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in which it was stated that the European Union would like that the presidential candidates to make from a negotiated peace a “state policy”, was only one of many European expressions of this kind<sup>12</sup>.

So, what does the adoption of peace as a “state policy” mean, in the manner so insistently demanded in recent years? From the quotations given above, we can identify some of the elements which would characterize it: It would take longer than a four year government period, and it would be shared by a wide range of social and political forces. Former President Alfonso López-Michelsen defined it in contrast to a “specific policy”, as “an agreement to remove the subject (peace), from the electoral campaign

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<sup>7</sup> “Peace, a State policy, not a term of office”, speech of President Samper at the inauguration of ordinary sessions of Congress, *El Tiempo.com* July 22, 1998

<sup>8</sup> See Eduardo Posada-Carbo, “Peace as a State policy, [www.ideaspaz.org](http://www.ideaspaz.org)

<sup>9</sup> Text of the national accord to form the Commob Front for Peace, Ancol, Bogota, Novembe 2,2000

<sup>10</sup> “The Constituent Asssembly is a starting point” *El Espectador*, July 7, 2001. “Peace has become State policy” said the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace (q.v. [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)) in a speech in Brussels on April 30, 2001

<sup>11</sup> “Peace as a State Policy”, *El Espectador*, November 11, 2000. At the height of the January crisis, a leading article in *El Colombiano* said, “The contribution of the presidential candidates will be vital, and as we have said before, they could make a united stand for the draaftinmg of a State policy for peace”, in “An about-face to take a step forward” *EL Colombiano*, January 22, 2002

<sup>12</sup> Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union, on the peace process in Colombia, Brussels December 7, 2001. For other similar expressions see Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union, on the peace process in Colombia, Brussels January 19, 2001,. UE Colombia: peace process – Council conclusions, March 4, 2001 in [xxx.europa.eu.int](http://xxx.europa.eu.int). “Press conference by Christopher Patten, European Commission, Bogota, Ansol March 27, 2001. Statement of Ms. Gun-Britt Anderson on behalf of the European Union, Brussels, April 30, 2001. For a critique of this call from Europe, which appears not to recognize the Government’s persistence in negotiating, see statements of Fernando Cepeda in the Paris seminar in March 2002 “Without understanding”, *Cambio* March 31, 2002-

and to adopt a common policy for the parties of the democratic order.”<sup>13</sup> Let us look at these two components, which will be fundamental.

The removal of peace from the elections: This has been an almost constant proposal between important institutions, such as the Church. In the words of Mgr. Alberto Giraldo, President of the Episcopal Conference, “if peace becomes a political standard, it would go no further than that; if it is an election platform, it will fail.”<sup>14</sup> At first sight, the rhetoric seems attractive. Nonetheless, looked up in greater depth, we can say it is opened to doubt. As former minister Rudolph Hommes said “The future of Colombia is defined by how we are going bring peace to the country. So, if the candidates do not speak of it, what are they going to speak about?”<sup>15</sup>

There are even more complex questions, which face Colombian society with dilemmas, which are deduced from the nature of the political system itself- dilemmas with dimensions, which have not been sufficiently appreciated. If we remove the primary concern of the nation from a four-year period of office, we would in effect be undermining the element which essentially defines democracy: That of being a “pro tempore government,” in the words of Juan Linz. We will not be examining some light-hearted demand. From that point of view, as Andreas Schedler and Javier Santiso suggest, democracy sets itself up against authoritarianism- the system of “future without limits,”-and direct democracy- the system of “the present without limits.” By contrast, representative democracy is determined by “regular elections, which confer on governing elites and only provisional legitimacy, which is never indefinite.”<sup>16</sup>

We must emphasize the meaning of this idea of temporary element: Democracy is defined by its electoral cycles. It is at election time when those in government or those who aspire to govern put forward their programs and proposals for the approval of the governed. How then could we remove from an electoral campaign the discussion of what is today in Colombia the priority problem (the achievement of peace) without affecting the very nature of a democratic regime into an ordeal? Further, this would pose an enormous practical problem. For how long should the subject of peace be removed from elections: For one, two, or three full-periods? And, as Fernando Cepeda-Ulloa correctly observed, “The truth is that the peace policy began in the Turbay administration. We have already had 21 years of conversations, with ups and downs, and silences, some longer than others.” Peace, converted into a “routine” for government and guerillas, as described by Marco Palacios<sup>17</sup> and at whom Cepeda

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<sup>13</sup> Alfonso Lopez, The face of war. EL Tiempo February 17, 2002. According to former minister Rodrigo Pardo, the construction of a “State position” for the peace process means that it must be “sustainable in the longer term and armored against position adopted by candidates in their electoral marketing strategies”. Pardo, “On line from Los Pozos”, EL Tiempo February 17, 2002. The European Commission Christopher Patten, when calling for a “State peace Policy in Colombia” defined it in similar terms: “A priority which should last beyond election campaigns and be embraced by all the leading candidates”, Patten, “Colombia, an international commitment to peace”, Brussels, April 30, 2001, in [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)

<sup>14</sup> “Church calls for peace not to be on the election platform” EL Espectador, March 10. 2001

<sup>15</sup> “Peace in times of political campaigns”, EL Espectador, March 10, 2002

<sup>16</sup> See essays of Linz, Schedler and Santiso in “Democracy and time: an invitation” International Political Science Review (1988) 19:1 pp. 7-14, 19 and 32

<sup>17</sup> See essays “Agenda for denmocracy and negotiation with the guerrillas”, in Francisco Leal-Buitrago ed. The labyrinths of war. Utopias and uncertainties regarding peace. (Bogota 1999) pp. 90ff and “A historical review of perace processes in Colombia: the peace process?”, in Fernando Cepeda-Ulloa ed. Making Peace. Reflections and Perspectives for the peace process in Colombia (Bogota 2001) pp41ff.

echoes before making his conclusive suggestion: “This must not and can not be a state policy.”<sup>18</sup>

The problem becomes more serious is for this unlimited series of temporary periods, we add the second component of the definition suggested: A broad social and political consensus, which “state policy” will seem to have. And it becomes more serious because the peace, which was proposed to Colombians in recent years, has not been confined to the quest for the end of the armed conflict, but it extends to the solution of almost all the problems of society. This “maximalist” peace would demand very high levels of homogeneity, which will be impossible to conceive in a pluralist society; which aspires to even higher degrees of respect for pluralism. The common agenda agreed between the FARC and the government was so broad that it had been adopted as a “state policy” and it would leave any electoral debate without any substance<sup>19</sup>. On the basis of the concept of peace, which has prevailed in this country, we will be demanding a consensus, which would turn out to be impractical and anti-democratic.

Nor would it be desirable to remove the subject of peace from the electoral campaigns. This decision could seriously affect the already precarious conditions on which public opinion holds its debates in Colombia. It should be noted that some of the measures adopted by the Pastrana administration with regards to the peace process- today the object of serious questioning- were taken, and at the time there were no serious critical responses by significant sectors of public opinion. According to Daniel Pécaut, “To establish a demilitarized zone without setting out any conditions to guarantee the social state of law, was a very long bet;” to which he added: “But this was not simply a mistake of government. Few voices, including those of the media, said: “watch out!”<sup>20</sup>

As we should try to show later, it would seem that peace processes followed the pace of a very particular and confused climate of public opinion, in which nonetheless, certain consensus has been formed and this anticipated and indeed conditions, decision-making in high spheres of the state. What would therefore be required, is to open and strengthen public debate, and not to close-off opportunities to fill such debates, as would happen should the subject of peace be removed from the electoral campaigns. Now, we must insist, the democratic thing. In the quest for a political solution to the armed conflict, the major challenge which Colombian democracy faces, is precisely that of advancing a negotiation with illegal armed groups, without undermining the principles which define it. This challenge is even more evident when we contrast this temporal variable, which defines the democratic system- the electoral cycle- with the unlimited concept of time, which the illegal armed groups have. According to Alfredo Rangel, FARC have a “rural” perception of time- “time”- for them is an “abundant and widely available

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<sup>18</sup> Fernando Cepeda-Ulloa “Just continuity?”, *El Tiempo*, December 4, 2001

<sup>19</sup> Most of the reform issues, such as those which appear in the FARC 10-Point Platform, affect the present and future of all in such a way that one cannot understand how a guerrilla elite on one side of the table and a government elite on the other can decide on such things” Palacios, *Agenda for Democracy and Negotiation with the guerrillas*, in Leal-Buitrago ed. *Op cit.* P. 64. The Common Agenda was published by the Office of the President, *Hechos de Paz* (Bogota 1999), vols. V-VI pp. 543-548.

<sup>20</sup> “The demilitarization exercise was too long a bet”, interview with *El Espectador*, April 6, 2000. Other components of the peace process, also much questioned today – such as negotiating under fire – received the explicit support of some media. See for example the leading article in *EL Colombiano*, January 21, 1999 where it was said that the decision was “a sign of maturity”; “..This commitment to talk in the midst of conflict is good because it stops the closet enemies of peace from acting to ensure that talks are suspended”.

resource.” The ELN, for their part, “see time in almost biblical terms,” a reflection of a supposedly religious vision of their role as redeemers of Colombian society<sup>21</sup>. Such differences in the concept of time, however, do not simply have strategic consequences. As it has already been suggested, they correspond to opposite notions as to the handling of power. The concept of time held by the illegal armed groups corresponds to that of the authoritarian regimes, with no limitations of time such as those of the democratic governments. As Schedler and Santiso note, “while authoritarian regimes may maximize their ability to be evasive, proposing targets and not deadlines, the agents of democracy must be concerned for the future of society (and their own) within the anti-utopian limits of regular elections.”<sup>22</sup>

After the breakdown of negotiations with the FARC, these demands have not ceased: “In the quest for peace,” wrote senator German Vargas Lleras, “The country should have a state policy, and not a government program.”<sup>23</sup> With this persistence, of the demands, it is therefore urgent to have greater clarity as to what is understood by “a state of peace policy,” and to appreciate how cannot be managed lightly with vague definitions on a matter of such significance for the future of Colombian democracy. By this, we do not mean to suggest, with regards to the subject of peace, that the forces of Colombian democracy should flee from the possibility of reaching agreements, which will allow the state’s position to be consolidated – we should adopt, and we can put it this was, a “state peace policy,” - or in the most appropriate words of *El Tiempo*, a “state policy to face armed conflict.”<sup>24</sup> Such agreements, however, we have to make explicit recognition of some minimum principles, which could not be given up in any democracy, and would in some way have to warn of the enormous difficulties inherent in its eventual development, as is suggested by the experiences of other countries, which we will now discuss.

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<sup>21</sup> Alfredo Rangel. “The weapon of time in the peace process” *EL Tiempo*, May 28, 2002

<sup>22</sup> Schedler and Santiso, *Democracy and Time: an invitation*, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> German Vargas-Lleras. “The most urgent tasks” *Cambio*, March 10, 2002

<sup>24</sup> “On the ELN and the paramilitaries” *EL Tiempo*, September 1, 2001

## EXPERIENCES IN SPAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

The dilemmas of the democracy, in facing armed groups, which disputes the authority of the State by violence, can be illustrated by an examination of other experiences than that of Colombia. In particular, an analysis of the accords signed by the Spanish parties to approach the problem of ETA, and the British government policy regarding the peace process in Northern Ireland, may provide interesting lessons.

As can be seen in the Appendix, “In Spain, political parties were forced to live with the ETA-led terrorism ever since the birth of the democratic system, after the death of Franco in 1975.”<sup>25</sup> From that time on, the different faces of democracy tried on many occasions to reach certain consensus with regard to struggle against terrorism.

In the 1980’s, “the two major Spanish parties shared a common diagnosis of the terrorist problem, and the policies of the PSOE with regard to its explicit support of the AP.”<sup>26</sup> The “most specific form of this multi-party consensus” as described in the annex “was the so-called Pact of Madrid, signed in November 1987 by all the parties with parliamentary representation, (including the PNV- from the Basque country) except the HB, the political wing of ETA, and it was replicated at Basque-level only, in the Ajuria Enea Pact, signed in January 1988. The most important article of that accord stated that “if the conditions necessary for a final dialogue on violence are reduced, based on a clear will to put an end to that violence, and with unmistakable attitudes which may lead to this conviction, we support talks between the competent powers of the State, and those who decide to abandon violence, at all times respecting the unshakable democratic principle that political questions must be resolved uniquely through legitimate representatives of the popular will.”<sup>27</sup>

It is important to remember the central elements on the basis of which these accords were written: 1. Support for the process of dialogue whose aim would be to put an end to violence; 2. The dialogues would be conditioned by expressions of “unmistakable” will regarding the abandonment of the use of violence; 3. The dialogues talks would not discuss “political questions” - since that discussion was considered to be prerogative of “the legitimate representatives of popular will.” In other words, this was an accord between democratic forces to seek “a negotiated end to violence” without discussing substantive matters. These agreements removed “the debate on government anti-terrorist policy of PSOE from the political arena.”

The Pacts of Madrid and Ajuria Enea had “an ephemeral life.” For various reasons, as explained in the Appendix, they were abandoned. Amongst them we should specifically mention: First, the radicalization of Basque nationalist discourse, which included “the recognition of the right to self-determination among their political objectives,” and, second, the differences between the PSOE government anti-terrorist policy, and the new leader of the opposition, José María Aznar, which became evident during the general elections of 1993. To the extent that Basque nationalists seemed to broaden the agenda

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix, Charles Powell, Party Rivalry and the Challenge of Terrorism. Some comments on the Spanish situation.” P. 43

<sup>26</sup> Idem.

<sup>27</sup> Idem. For a more detailed discussion See Charles Powell, Spain in Democracy, 1975-2000. The keys to the deep changes in Spain (Barcelona, 2991) pp. 492ff

to include constitutional matters, the permanence of the accords made with them became impossible. In addition, the leaders of the national parties, Aznar and González, began to expand different diagnosis of the “Political and social realities of the Basque country” and finally, adopted different policies towards terrorism.

In the 1993 general elections, when at the time “the Pact of Madrid had ceased to be valid” and a “greater show of intransigence, in relation to terrorism became profitable in electoral terms” for Aznar<sup>28</sup>. After those elections, “anti-terrorist policy of the PSOE governments took a central place in the Spanish political debate.” During the 1996 and 2000 general elections, the situation of the Basque country and policies towards terrorism were the objects of “a very lively political and media debate”<sup>29</sup> between the parties. Meanwhile, the radicalized national position of the PNV distanced it from the PSOE and the PP, and they began for their own account to make approaches to ETA, and this gave rise to a truce, which lasted until the end of 1999, when ETA renewed its “armed struggle.”

With the new ETA offensive and the independent Basque elections of May 2001, the PP and the PSOE, signed another anti-terrorist pact in Madrid, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000, which “unlike the Madrid and Ajuria Enea agreements, provoked the explicit rejection of the PNV.” This accord adopted terrorism as a “state problem” and recognized that it was the responsibility of the government of Spain “to direct the anti-terrorist struggle, but fighting terrorism is a task, which corresponds to all democratic political parties.” In this agreement, the PP and the PSOE expressed their will to eliminate policies to anti-terrorism from the ambit of legitimate political electoral debate between our two parties.” The agreement “for liberty and against terrorism” as it tends to be called, did not exclude discussion of the issue of ETA or the future of the Basque country” the “autonomous elections,” indeed, quite the contrary. The triumph of the PNV in the May 2001 elections, will condition perhaps some changes, or even cause the agreement to be abandoned<sup>30</sup>.

In Colombia, perhaps, there is a lack of understanding as to the nature of Spanish government policy towards ETA terrorism. Similarly, it would be worth examining the “state policy”<sup>31</sup> of the British government towards the conflict in Northern Ireland. A far understanding would also be useful, in order to appreciate the meaning of any state peace policy, and its effects on democracy, particularly, during the electoral campaigns, and of the way in which parties and candidates behave in them.

What exists in the United Kingdom is an agreement between the non-northern Ireland parties in the Westminster Parliament, not to make the Northern Ireland issue a matter of party policy. Thus, the labor party (in par), the conservative party (the principal opposition party), and the liberal-democrats (opposition) have agreed on a two- or multi-party policy to support the government in par (the agreement is an old one- it goes back many years before the Blair government) in the management of the controversial matter of Northern Ireland.

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<sup>28</sup> Idem

<sup>29</sup> Idem

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it would be better to speak of “Government policy” between parties. Nonetheless we insist that there should be greater clarity of what is meant by a “State policy”

Although there have been some dissident voices, both from the right and the left, this agreement has prevented any attempt by the armed groups, or by the most sectarian elements in Northern Ireland, to manipulate the differences between the parties in the rest of the United Kingdom for their own purposes. The policy towards Northern Ireland in its main characteristics, is therefore, product of an agreement of British parties. This policy, prior to the Good Friday Agreement (April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1998), which is still in force, included some years of direct government by Westminster over Northern Ireland.<sup>32</sup>

This agreement, has in no way, impeded discussion, and peaceful and even violence struggles, regarding all aspects of peace process within Northern Ireland. Peace, and the arrangements made for the process are the central point in the policy in that province, and any attempt to limit the debate there would be completely useless.

At present, the Good Friday Agreement has established a precarious power sharing government, which includes four main elements:

Unionists: The protestant majority party, which supports the agreement with bad grace, and many reservations.

Democratic Unionists: The minority protestant party, which does not support the agreement, thus, takes part.

SDLP: The majority catholic party, which supports the agreement.

Sinn Fein: The minority catholic party, linked to the provisional IRA, which supports the agreement, but has at times resisted in compliance with some of its parts- for example, disarmament, although progress has been made in that area.

The debate on all elements within these groups is intense. The most recent elections in Northern Ireland (for the Westminster Parliament) have been described as “a referendum on the Good Friday Agreement.” There is no agreement on the escape of the debate: No holds barred. The British government is well aware that any attempt on its part to limit the debate, or to make it follow a certain course, would be counter-productive.

It should be noted that the British parties- Labor, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat- Do not try to attract votes in Northern Ireland, and do not recruit members in that province. Although there are some British connections with some Northern Ireland parties, such as those between the Unionists and the Conservatives in England, are effectively different organizations.

The electoral debate in Northern Ireland, covers incompatible positions, and some of the leading figures employ harsh and challenging language- and there have been some small outbreaks of violence. But analysts are not entirely pessimistic about the results. It may be that the impulse of the Good Friday Agreement would continue, and that the devolution of power from Westminster to Belfast will survive.

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<sup>32</sup> The text of the agreement is published in Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, eds. *After the Good Friday Agreement. Analyzing political change in Northern Ireland* (Dublin, 1999) oo. 171-201. See in this book the authors' essay introducing the Agreement, “The Belfast Agreement: context, content, consequences” , pp. 1-29

Naturally, there are significant differences between the situation of Colombia and those of Spain or Northern Ireland. In particular, the nationalist component in these regions introduces a constitutional element not present in the Colombian situation. The course of talks in Colombia- the circumstances in which the talks have been held and the contents of the talks themselves- is also very different from what is happened in the two experiences examined here. Nonetheless, it would seem to be relevant, at least, to take them into account when considering the possibilities of agreeing multi-party consensus for the peace process in Colombia.

As the preceding description suggests, inter-party consensus in Spain was produced only as a passing phase, and on very specific subjects: The quest for “a negotiated end of violence” in 1987-88, and open opposition to terrorism since 2000. In neither case, was it accepted that discussion between democratic parties in substantive matters. In the accords of 1987-88, it was the “unshakable Democratic principle” that “political matters must be resolved solely through the legitimate representatives of popular will, was firmly established. In the 2000 pact, there was also rejection of the possibility of negotiating with those who engage in violence “morally abhorrent, and radically incompatible with the exercise of democratic political action. Those who engage in violence..only deserve condemnation and disapproval of Democratic parties and society as a whole.”

We should note that the Spanish agreements have been more effective in achieving social condemnation of terrorism and of the use of violence; that they have not been easy to put into practice; and that, in any case they have not been an impediment to the discussion of anti-terrorist policy, and even less, the problem of the Basque country during elections.

Seen from afar, a Colombian observer might think, that a “state” policy on the part of the British government, has imposed limits on Democratic debates on Northern Ireland. Seen from closer too, this is not so. In effect, the conflict has been on the battlefield, with the exception of certain violent acts, for Northern Ireland, and it is precisely there where the peace policies are subject to the most intensive debates.

Therefore, given the substantial significance of elections to Democracy- as we showed in the previous chapter- and taking account of the experiences of other countries, as we have seen here with the examples of Spain and the United Kingdom- and above all the circumstances in which the Colombian peace process has evolved, it would not be desirable or indeed, perhaps, possible, to exclude the subject of peace from electoral campaigns. Nor it would be Democratic. These points must be properly appreciated, so that we can, therefore, explore the possibility of minimum political consensus between democratic forces of the two central areas, which this essay will cover in the following chapters: The principles and the contents of negotiations.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF PEACE

In the quest of negotiations with illegal armed organizations in Colombia, we note a worrying “desensitization in the area of principles;” “there is such eagerness for peace, that it is gradually increasing indifference, as to how and at what cost it can be

achieved.” This desensitization “has invaded the area of the principles of democracy”.<sup>33</sup> What then, are these principles? And what importance do they have to the peace process?

We will begin with the second question. The meaning of clarity with regard to certain principles helps to help to recognize the limits of negotiations of what is and what is not negotiable. It is not practical to negotiate without principles. To ignore them is to risk the end of the negotiated process, either for lack of results or because they produce counter-productive results. Jorge Orlando Melo has suggested a “fundamental hypothesis:” “We have to decide if the specific form adopted by peace negotiations at a given moment is a source for greater violence”<sup>34</sup>. This suggestion refers us precisely to the validity and relevance of the principles, which should support all negotiating processes.

The recognition of the existence of certain principles, which establish limits to negotiations, requires clarity of the purposes, expressed in clear language. Or better, we must avoid a rhetoric, which only helps to accommodate concealed objectives. In particular, the representatives of State should make a very thorough appreciation of the parameters of the peace negotiations, particularly in the phase of the demands, which may denote lack of sincerity “that those who pronounce their opinions do not wish to negotiate.”<sup>35</sup> We should also note that the principles, which the representatives of the State should defend, may be or in effect are in conflict with the principles, which the guerrillas defend. In the words of one guerrilla leader, “the FARC cannot negotiate their principles, the first of them being ‘the taking of power to establish the government which we decide through a constituent assembly.”<sup>36</sup>

Both the government and the democratic opposition, have recognized the existence of certain fundamental principles, which as Camilo Gómez, the peace commissioner said, are “not for negotiation.” : “The principles of democracy, the principles of individual liberties, such as private property, are not in discussion.”<sup>37</sup> In the ceremony launching his book in April, 2001, Liberal candidate, Horacio Serpa-Uribe, identified certain points in which Colombian society will not negotiate, nor compromise in a settlement”: The integrity of territory and national unity, democracy and rights of ownership and private initiative, he said were “intangible principles” in his subsequent speech to the banking convention last June<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, the candidate Noemí Sanín, also told the banking convention that “negotiations must have principles. Democracy is not for negotiation. Life and freedom are not for negotiation either: Nor is the right to private ownership, and its social function. Territorial integrity is also not for negotiation..”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Malcolm Deas “Peace: between principles and practice” in Leal-Buitrago ed. Op cit p. 175

<sup>34</sup> Jorge Orlando Melo “Negotiating processes – a strategy against peace?”, lecture delivered in Medellin, July 30, 2001

<sup>35</sup> Deas, op. Cit p. 180

<sup>36</sup> “FARC pessimistic about cease-fire” Nuevo Herald, July 6, 2991

<sup>37</sup> “The Government is not handing over the country” EL Tiempo July 8, 2001. In the same interview, the High Commissioner emphasized that the Government had already signed documents with the guerrillas “stating that territorial unity is not at stake .. that private ownership is not at stake, and that democratic principles are not at stake.”

<sup>38</sup> Speeches of Horacio Serpa-Uribe at the launching of the book “Testimonio de solidaridad con le democracia” Bogota, April 3, 2001 and at the Banking Convention in Cartagena, Cartagena, June 2001

<sup>39</sup> Speech of Npoemi Sanin to the Banking Convention, Cartagena, June 2001

In turn, the former minister and senator Rafael Pardo-Rueda, has said that “A state can negotiate but with a minimum of principles.”<sup>40</sup>

Peace processes, other than Colombian, had been advanced on the basis of the recognitions of certain fundamental principles. In particular, Northern Ireland peace process, although subject to recurring crisis, has made important progress, in particular since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which was reached after the acceptance of certain basic principles by all those taking part at the negotiating table. Known as the “Mitchell principles”- The name of the US senator who acted as mediator and who proposed them- these principles were proposed in relation to the respect for democracy and rejection of violence. Senator Mitchell himself expanded the principles of democracy and non-violence in the following terms:

In order to reach a political agreement, and to eliminate arms from Irish policy, there must be a commitment and adherence to the principles of democracy and non-violence. Those who take part in the negotiations with all parties, should reassert that commitment to such principles.

Therefore, we recommend that the parties for such negotiations assert an absolute and total commitment to the following:

Democratic and exclusively peaceful means to resolve political differences.

Total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations.

That disarmament should be verified to the satisfaction of an independent commission.

Themselves to give up, and to oppose any attempt by any person to use force or who threatens to use force, in order to influence the course or results of negotiations between all parties.

To accept the need to respect the terms of any agreement reached in negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods when attempting to modify any aspect of the results with which they disagree.

To urge an end to murder, and to “punishment” beatings, and to take effective measures to prevent such actions.<sup>41</sup>

Naturally, the circumstances of the Northern Ireland peace process are substantially different from those in Colombian. It would not be appropriate for that reason, to think of copying such principles with no adaptations whatsoever. Nonetheless, it is important to note at least their existence and the role, which they have played in the course of the negotiations. It is also important to note that the “Mitchell principles” refer directly, not so much to the content of the negotiations, as to the conditions in which they should develop. Principles and content are in all events closely related. The acceptance to negotiate with violence would be to indicate, for example, that human life and freedom are negotiable. The commitment with the democratic principles is an agreement on procedure, but it also involves substantive contents- the will of the majority, and the rights of citizens should not be for negotiations.

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<sup>40</sup> Rafael Pardo-Rueda, “Peace, a return to principle”, Sunday Supplement El Tiemñpo January 20, 2002. See also article by Eduardo Pizarro-Leongomez, “The limitations to a negotiation for peace”, El Espectador, June 20, 1999

<sup>41</sup> George Mitchell. Making Peace, The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement (London 1999) pp. 35-36

The conditions on which the peace process in Colombia began- negotiation under fire, and a limited agenda, and a large demilitarized zone with too few mechanisms of verifications of respect for the state and the law inside it- are from the point of view fundamental principles, very opened to question. This is not the appropriate place to discuss how and why the peace process followed that direction. Nonetheless, we should reflect on the need to defend and establish some fundamental principles, which should guide any negotiating process in the future. A minimum list should include the following:

The defense of basic rights and freedoms, beginning with the right to life, should be the guiding principle in the quest for peace. There are serious of rights traditionally incorporated in the constitutional history of Colombia, which needs to be defended with firmness. The right to life, free expression, freedom of association and movement, or the right to private ownership and freedom of the press, for example, are not for negotiation.

Violence and terrorism cannot be accepted as negotiating weapons. There could be a distinction between a negotiation, which takes place with no cease-fire agreement and a negotiation in which violence and terrorism are explicitly used to place pressure on different interests at the negotiating table. But, definitely, such a distinction would be illusory. The Colombian experience of these years, have demonstrated that negotiations in the midst of war is an invitation to intensify the conflict.

Democracy must be respected. The government has a mandate and has tools to negotiate. But its mandate is not unlimited. There are constitutional and political barriers. For example, it does not have a mandate to “change the economic model”, either the existent model today, nor any other which may exist tomorrow. And this is not because “the economic model”- whatever the meaning of that expression may be- sacred; the point is that decisions on the economy, which always requires adjustments, cannot be taken by a simple route of making agreements with the armed groups. The principle of democracy, therefore shows, that there are issues that can only be resolved at the voting-booth. The proposition of a possible constituent assembly, and the formation of any government, can only be the result of free elections.<sup>42</sup>

The process of negotiations cannot exclude the continuity of government in all orders. Up to a certain point, this is a development of the preceding point. As recent experience has shown, the negotiation process may be very prolonged. The changes, which Colombian realities require- in political, economic, and social context- cannot be frozen, on the pretext of being part on a negotiating agenda with the guerrillas.

The state cannot yield sovereignty, nor leave groups of citizens unprotected. This principle should be reasserted, when considering the sense and scope of the so- called “demilitarized zone.” The zone cannot cause a “variation in the rights of citizens.” “Thus, there cannot be territorial arrangements, which impair the rights and freedoms of citizens.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> According to Melo, the negotiating process “must be framed by the defense of the democratic order, in a real and substantial sense”. See his lecture, already cited “Negotiating processes- a strategy against peace?” p. 8

<sup>43</sup> See the comments of Deas, op cit. pp. 183-6

The state cannot and should not give up its legitimacy. The desensitization in the area of principles, perhaps, begins with language. The assignments made in rhetoric may also involve concessions of principles. The eagerness to recognize the guerrillas as the participant in the talks, cannot lead to permanent so-disqualifications, and much less, the giving up of legitimacy, which may well be imperfect, but which is an attribute, which the counterpart in the talks does not have.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps there should be insistence of not to confuse the principles of the talks with their content. We should also distinguish between what is discussed and what is agreed: Anything may be discussed between the government and the guerrillas; but not everything may be agreed. What is negotiable is precisely limited by some fundamental principles, which should guide the process, oriented by a thread: "That at the end of the process of the quest for peace and of the negotiations..the country must enjoy more and better democracy than before." The acceptance of democracy and the rejection of violence to settle conflict should definitely become the parameters of any negotiating process<sup>45</sup>.

## THE CONTENT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

According to Jorge Orlando Melo, the past two administrations abandoned two aspects which had guided negotiations with the guerrillas up to Gaviria's government (1990-1994): "one was that the objective of the process was the reinsertion of the guerrillas into a political system which, despite its limitations, was considered to be legitimate, and not the establishment of a new social model as a result of negotiations between two parties in conflict. The other..the will not to halt negotiations no matter what, the will to negotiate amidst the war."<sup>46</sup> This section will discuss the first aspect mentioned by Melo: how and how much was the content of negotiations changed? What has been the result and what impact did these changes have on the same peace process?

The answer to such questions is closely related to the manner in which peace has been predominantly defined in Colombia. There is a worrying social consensus here, the origin of which is difficult to trace but which ought to be explored. During the last decade the notion that peace involves the solution of the country's structural problems and not the solution of the armed conflict began to strengthen considerably, and has now become the general view. Businessmen and politicians, Church leaders and media reporters, government and guerrillas, all appear to uphold this view.

This perception led to the adoption of an extensive negotiation agenda in which the end of the armed conflict ceased to be a priority. The next step is to try and demonstrate how strong this notion of peace actually is, how it affected the content of negotiations and the results of the peace process themselves.

The idea of open negotiations with the guerrillas was a timid suggestion made by President Cesar Gaviria in his last speech before Congress on July 20, 1994. "Discussion of all issues must be open and sincere", he said, while he warned that society "had to be prepared to be generous". Gaviria, however, pointed out certain limits

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<sup>44</sup> Idem.

<sup>45</sup> Idem p. 183

<sup>46</sup> Jorge Orlando Melo. "Peace: A utopian reality?" *Semana*, December 13, 1999.

to that generosity: “we may not negotiate the democratically created institutions with guerrillas”.<sup>47</sup>

During his administration discrepancies regarding the content and objectives of the negotiations between Government and the guerrillas in Caracas in 1991 were evident. Jesus Antonio Bejarano, one of the Government representatives in the negotiations, clearly pointed out how the different concepts of the negotiations were expressed in the varied language used at the time: while the Government viewed negotiations as a vehicle for “solving the armed conflict”, the guerrillas viewed it as a means for “solving the country’s problems”.<sup>48</sup> According to Defense Minister Rafael Pardo, peace during the Barco government (1986-1990) and the Gaviria government (1990-1994) was understood as “the end of armed uprising”, the “result of a process of political access in the decision-making arena for those who have taken up arms.”<sup>49</sup>

How, why and since when did the alternative conception of the peace process and therefore the objective of the negotiations become predominant? These questions require a more systematic analysis than is allowed for in these notes. Nonetheless, a brief review of the press enables the identification of a significant number of renowned opinion formers- political and religious leaders, intellectuals and press columnists- who were redefining the concept of peace, and were therefore suggestion a negotiation process with the guerrillas which would involve more substantial issues.

The Church would appear to be one of the organizations which stood out for expressing its wide perspectives on the peace process- which is known as “comprehensive peace”. “Peace is not merely a cease fire between guerrillas and the army” stated Mgr. Pedro Rubiano in an interview for *El Tiempo* on February 12, 1995.<sup>50</sup> According to Mgr. Rubiano, “peace is social justice and refraining from threatening human life from birth”. In this interview, Mgr. Nel Beltrán explained that the Church had always “been present in everything which related to that notion of peace: welfare, justice, respect for human rights”. This was, according to the religious leader, “comprehensive peace.”

It is important to retain the elements of this definition, because it contains the essential characteristics of the notion of peace which predominated to this day: peace was identified there with the achievement of social justice and human welfare. It must be emphasized that in the views of these Church representatives, peace is not defined as the end of the confrontations between the guerrillas and the State. Its origin had to be traced; but Mgr. Rubiano’s phrase, -“Peace is not merely a cease-fire”- has become one of the most common phrases in any analysis on the Colombian conflict.

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<sup>47</sup> *El Tiempo*, July 24, 1994

<sup>48</sup> Jesus Antonio Bejarano. *An agenda for peace. An approach from the perspective of the theory of conflict solving*. (Bogotá, 1995) p.98

<sup>49</sup> Rafael Pardo Rueda. *First hand. Colombia 1986-1994: between conflicts and hopes* (Bogotá, 1996) p.506. In another section of the book, however, the former Minister stated that “Barco’s conception of peace was extensive and it involved much more than dialogue with the guerrillas”, *idem* p.72. Pardo has insisted on the existence of two apparently opposed perspectives regarding peace processes; one adopted in the Betancur and Pastrana administrations and the other in the Barco and Gaviria administrations. See: Article: “Peace: back to the principles” *Lecturas Dominicales. El Tiempo*, January 20, 2002. Jorge Orlando Melo, however, acknowledges that, “the invention of negotiating while at war had already been accepted under Gaviria’s administration.”, “Negotiation processes: A strategy against peace?”, p.12.

Regarding this view, refer to Pardo’s observations, in: *idem* p.507

<sup>50</sup> “This process needs more people.” *El Tiempo*, February 12, 1995

Such a redefinition of peace has very serious implications. Above all, it transforms the objectives of a negotiation process with illegal armed groups. It was no longer a question of mainly negotiating the conditions for their reinsertion into constitutional and civilian life, but rather a debate on how to transform the country's structures and achieve social justice. This change was reflected, and is still reflected, in a language which suggested, and continues to suggest, the supposed changes in previous models of negotiations with guerrillas.

On April 27, 1997, former president Alfonso Lopez expressed it in terms which had by then been accepted in public opinion: "...the mistake in the initial peace policies, conceived as an issue of reinsertion, "all found", was the right thing at the wrong time". In his column the former Liberal president called for "designing the future and burying the past in a reasonable manner." According to him, the future involved the need to discuss a new model of society with the guerrillas: "discuss with the armed insurrection...What type of society the Colombian society requires to live in peace. Understand what forms, changes and adjustments in the opposed forces could achieve peaceful coexistence."<sup>51</sup> The suggestion to "bury" previous models of negotiations was also widely accepted among the intellectuals. Researchers Francisco Gutierrez-Sanín and Ana María Puyana, from Universidad Nacional, on May 18, 1997, said that, "it is quite clear that the reinsertion models used with M-19, EPL, PRT and the MRS must not be used again." Why was it so clear? According to Gutierrez Sanín and Puyana, the problem with FARC and ELN was a different kettle of fish: "The geographical extension of their Fronts, the number of combatants in their ranks, their latest military developments and the economic resources involved indicate that it will not be easy to summon them for negotiations either during this government or during the next one."<sup>52</sup> The notion of "comprehensive peace" proposed by the Church and the identification of peace as a process for reformulating society were also systematically analyzed in an official document drafted by the Colombian Conservative Party, published in 1997.<sup>53</sup> After determining that insecurity was "one of the most drastic problems" in the country, the Conservative party suggested that it was "essential to review the meaning of conflict in Colombia". The "uniqueness" of our problems, according to the Conservative party, "is based on the fact that a significant percentage of violent acts in Colombia stem from juvenile contexts, many of them related to alcohol consumption". This diagnosis was far from innovative.<sup>54</sup> However, the conservative document insisted upon "the need to

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<sup>51</sup> Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, "Peace and War", *El Tiempo*, April 27, 1997. It may be worth noting that the previous model of negotiation could not be viewed simply as "a problem of "all found" reincorporation". Analyzing, for example, what the impact of all the discussions on peace which began in 1980 was in the drafting of a new constitution which redefined national representation is an issue which requires a more careful examination. Francisco Santos referred to this issue. "That peace process was anything but an "all found" process. Its legacy was no less than a Constitutional Assembly". "Where is public debate?" *El Tiempo*, May 13, 2001. "It was much more than a process of reincorporation", stated Antonio Navarro Wolf when evaluating peace process progress with M-19, "we exchanged bullets for votes and the results began appearing"; Navarro Wolf, "The de-mobilization of M-19, ten years later", in Cepeda Ulloa, ed. *Making Peace*. P.69. See: Ricardo Peñaranda and Javier Guerrero, eds. *From weapons to politics* (Bogotá, 1999)

<sup>52</sup> Francisco Gutierrez Sanín and Ana Maria Puyana, "Thinking about peace seriously", *El Tiempo*., may 18, 1997.

<sup>53</sup> Conservatismo Colombiano (edited by Germán Manga). *True Peace. Base proposal for a permanent peace process* (Bogotá, 1997) This document appears not to have sought much public opinion. When published, the president of the National Conservative Party was Fabio Valencia Cossio, who would then be appointed Government negotiator for peace talks with the guerrillas in Pastrana's administration.

<sup>54</sup> The same conclusions were released in the analysis conducted by the commission for research on violence, commissioned by the Barco administration. This report was published in 1997, and since then it

rethink the objectives of peace”. This entailed “ a new relationship between citizens and all sectors of society, based on acceptance, respect for life and the rights of others”. In other words, the aspired peace was not simply a reconciliation between guerrillas and the State, but also the reconciliation of all society. According to the conservative proposal, solving the armed conflict was a secondary issue compared to other objectives: “The Conservative party believes that the quest for permanent peace in Colombia must be more ambitious than a limited though legitimate desire to solve the armed conflict or eliminate drug trafficking; it must be, above all, a large project for rebuilding national identity and social cohesion”<sup>55</sup> As defined by the Conservatives, peace therefore involves “redefining the society we want.”<sup>56</sup>

We should note how the representatives of very different shades of opinion coincide with regard to the redefinition of peace where objectives presuppose a reorganization of society: the Church, a former Liberal President, university lecturers and the Conservatives. This redefinition was also a part of the peace policies of the Samper administration (1994-8) during which, according to Daniel Garcia-Peña, then Peace Commissioner, the State “maintained a broad and generous offer for dialogue with the guerrillas, based on a recognition of the political character of this armed conflict .; on negotiation in the midst of war, and on active participation by society as a whole in building peace.”<sup>57</sup>

We may pause to reflect on that administration’s concept of peace, clearly set out by President Samper in his final speech to Congress on July 20, 1998. “The problem of peace,” he said, “cannot be simplistically reduced to silencing the guns, because what is at stake is the model of the country which Colombians want so that we can live together for the next century”. He accepted that “the armed groups, especially the ELN, are right to suggest that a true peace agreement will be one in which we all agree on the development model which Colombia needs to achieve greater social justice”. Samper’s language went further than the offer of a diagnosis to identify the problems of a nation which a history of violence that “has engaged us for 120 years in a fratricidal war which has been depressingly fierce and chillingly bloody”. In his words, we in Colombia have “an almost unlimited capacity for self-destruction”. In this speech, then, the origin of the problem has cultural connotations. He therefore defended the Ministry of Culture as “converted into the Ministry of Peace, because it is reeducating us to live together in the midst of our differences”. Finally, Samper said that peace needed “the untiring work of several governments”. And he recommended that peace “should become a State policy, and not a policy for one four-term term.”

In the four years following the election of Andres Pastrana in 1998, peace was proposed as a break away from the Samper approach. It has never been accepted that a “State peace policy” has been adopted once a new government has taken office. Nonetheless – and this is indeed a surprise – the substantial continuity in peace policy

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became the base of official political discussions in the country. The Conservative document, however, accused the State and “different sectors” of adopting a “short-sighted and distorted view of our reality”. The Conservatives therefore appeared to ignore that their proposal was in fact a repetition of ideas which were strongly defended even within the State itself.

<sup>55</sup> *True Peace*. P.11-12.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*. P.15

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Garcia-Peña “La guerra de los 8000 dias”, *El Tiempo*, June 30, 1996

between the Samper and Pastrana administrations has been largely ignored.<sup>58</sup> The identification of such affinities should not be confined to those two presidencies, but extended to large sectors of opinion which coincide with the thinking which is the basis a redefinition of peace and its objectives.

The Pastrana government's concept of peace is clearly outlined in the document "A peace policy for change" signed on June 8, 1998 when Pastrana was still a candidate.<sup>59</sup> He referred to a "comprehensive peace policy" which started from "the basis of what the guerrillas want is a transformation of political and economic structures of this country." Without far-reaching political reforms, without a solution to the problem of hunger, he said, there would be no peace. The negotiations with the guerrillas would go further than putting an end to armed conflict: "it would guarantee that a broad consensus on a new model for the country would be the basis for true reconciliation". He accepted also that "all the issues" on the agenda for reconciliation proposed by the FARC and ELNB were "open to negotiation".<sup>60</sup> The actions of the State would concentrated on "the so-called objective causes of violence: poverty, and the inequitable distribution of income".<sup>61</sup>

Several speeches by Pastrana and his close colleagues and other official documents of his administration, broaden this concept of peace and its objectives as outlined in the election campaign. The notion of "comprehensive peace" appears often. On December 19, 1998, Pastrana said expressly that the peace which he had proposed went "beyond the solution of armed conflict" .. In other words, peace was identified by the proposal to "build a new Colombia, juster, more democratic, more developed and more equitable".<sup>62</sup> That same month the government presented a proposal to a wide range of social and political sectors: the idea was to obtain a national agreement on peace, and the second point of the proposal read "Peace transcends the silencing of the guns". There, the basis of a "genuine and lasting peace" were set alongside "full democracy, freedom, social justice, development, equity and human rights"<sup>63</sup>. The contents of the wide-ranging common agenda, agreed by representatives of the Government and FARC on May 6, 1999, is a reflection of the idea of peace as the negotiation of a new model of society. It must be appreciated that far from being new, the concept of peace proposed by Pastrana was not only very much part of the climate of opinion at the time he took office, but had also been adopted as a central element in State thinking during the preceding administration. But with the high expectations of a new peace process, especially after a personal meeting between the President and the leader of the FARC – and even more so, after the official opening of talks in January 1999 – the concept gained wider acceptance.

The Church is perhaps the government's principal ally in flying the flag of "comprehensive peace". "Peace ..is not only the result of negotiating ourselves out of the conflict" said Mgr. Giraldo at the closing ceremony of the Episcopal Conference on

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<sup>58</sup> Open and public talks, the greater participation of the international community in solving the conflict, the demilitarized zone, the need to negotiate a new model of Colombia – were all central to the Pastrana peace policy, and were all part of the policy proposed by Samper in his speech to Congress. The model of negotiation under fire was also accepted by Samper. The legal weapon (Law 418/97) used by the Pastrana administration to advance the peace process was approved by the previous administration. In this essay we only analyze continuities with regard to the concept of peace and the content of negotiations.

<sup>59</sup> Office of the President Hechos de Paz, V-VI (Bogota, 1999) pp.29ff

<sup>60</sup> Idem. P. 30-31

<sup>61</sup> Idem p.36

<sup>62</sup> Idem p. 89

<sup>63</sup> Idem pp. 429-430

July 9, 1999. He added that peace was something all-embracing which should not exclude social justice”<sup>64</sup>. Months later at the 57<sup>th</sup> Coffee-Growers Congress Mgr. Giraldo described the effects of this concept of peace on the course of negotiations in the following words: “The quest for a negotiated political solution presupposes and requires steady and continuous work to be done in favor of social justice and sustainable human growth; and this implies far-reaching structural reforms and true political will”<sup>65</sup>. And more than that, according to this senior member of the Catholic Church, “the solution to armed conflict is not yet the road to peace for Colombia. If we think of our culture of violence and death and all these factors .. the work will not only be one of dialogue, but of a whole process of education for peace “<sup>66</sup>. Once again, the Church was not alone. As during the previous administration, the concept of peace in Pastrana’s government was also in general shared by other sectors in Colombia and abroad. Political leaders such as Noemi Sanin, said that “true peace” is “the reconstruction of social justice, the economy, opportunities, the war on poverty, the reopening of opportunities”<sup>67</sup>. At a meeting arranged by the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, leaders of industry associations and business “proclaimed bluntly that the country was crying out for the guns to be silenced and for re-direction of all orders in society, a profound change in all institutions”<sup>68</sup>. Eugenio Marulanda, president of the Federation, wrote in *El Espectador* that “negotiations should represent a process of re-founding of the nation, not simply limited to the solution of the armed conflict”<sup>69</sup>. According to the Director of Redepaz, Ana Teresa Bernal, peace is “not only the reconciliation of the insurgents with the State, it is the reconciliation of all Colombians”<sup>70</sup>. These concepts of peace were repeated by well-known foreign academics such as Pierre Gilhodes, who, despite its adoption in official discourse and general recognition by public opinion, insisted that “people do not want to understand that peace is not only the laying down of arms”<sup>71</sup>. Definitions of peace in Anglo-Saxon terms (such as that proposed by Marco Palacios), as “the absence of armed conflict in the struggle for power”<sup>72</sup>. – seem to have been the exception and not the rule in recent years.

It is important to note that this social consensus regarding a concept of peace (and it should be repeated, not in terms of the solution of armed conflict, but in terms of the wholesale reconstruction of society) coincides with the concept of peace expressed many years ago by the guerrillas organizations. The language of armed insurance and of the State and society which it opposes, is paradoxically similar. “Peace is not only the silencing of the guns, and it is not the end to military confrontation” wrote of the FARC leaders. Raul Reyes said that peace would flourish “only in a society with social justice,

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<sup>64</sup> *El Tiempo*, July 10, 1999

<sup>65</sup> In *Revista Cafetera de Colombia*, No. 210, December 2, 1999 p. 13 For a critique of Mgr. Giraldo’s position see the comments of Fernando Cepeda-Ulloa idem p. 19ff.

<sup>66</sup> Idem p. 20

<sup>67</sup> *El Tiempo*, February 8, 2001

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in the column of Leon Valencia in *El Tiempo*, date unknown

<sup>69</sup> Eugenio Marulanda, “Los empresarios y la paz, hora de actuar” *EL Espectador*, March 21, 2001

<sup>70</sup> In Cepeda Ulloa, ed. *Haciendo Paz*

<sup>71</sup> *El Espectador*, March 11, 2001

<sup>72</sup> Palacios, *Agenda para la democracia* p. 63 More recently Antonio Navarro-Wolf suggested a definition which also differed from the consensus described here: “peace only means changing the methods of political action, that is, exchanging bullets for votes in the search for the only objective of politics: power”. See his essay in Cepeda-Ulloa ed. *Haciendo Paz* p.- 72

and economic, dignified, free independent and sovereign equity”<sup>73</sup>. AN ELN leader also defined peace in similar terms: “peace in Colombia ..depends how far or how near social justice, democracy and respect for human rights are.”<sup>74</sup>

We thus have a concept of peace which favors negotiation of substantive matters over procedural matters. Finally, we should add that the search for such a broad consensus on matters of substance – as the product of a maximalist definition of peace – would at times seem to entail acceptance of a premise which needs to be discussed in greater depth: that there are no fundamental differences between the demands of the guerrillas and the proposals for reform advanced by some sectors of the State and society. As the then Minister of Defense Luis Fernando Ramirez put it, “would it really be so hard for us to reach an agreement if apparently we share the same ideals?”<sup>75</sup>. Perhaps, then it may be that they do not share the same ideals.

The false appreciation that there are no fundamental differences between the guerrillas and the representatives of the State and society could be distorting the meaning of a process whose purpose must be to bring forces which have historically expressed disagreement with the organization of Colombian society with their arms, into that society. This seems to pay too little attention to the apparent contradiction between the principles and the content of negotiations. If what is wanted is the consolidation of a society which guarantees pluralism, tolerates difference and democratically respects dissent, then the problem is not so much how to reach a consensus, but how to live without such consensus.<sup>76</sup> In other words, the consensus basically required should be those which concern procedures which will then allow differences to be peacefully aired.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, this section has shown how, at least since 1994, State peace policies have been accompanied - or rather preceded – by a broad consensus in society as to how peace is to be defined and what its objectives are. Peace is not defined here as the end of armed confrontation between the State and insurgents but in general terms, as the reconciliation of society with itself.

This broad concept of peace has shaped the content and pace of negotiations.

Content: It is clear that if peace is defined as the reconstruction of an entire society, negotiations must concern themselves with the structural reforms which will make reconstruction possible – the “new model of society”. The common agenda agreed between the Government and the guerrillas was a reflection of this concept of peace.

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<sup>73</sup> “The commitment to peace with social justice” El Tiempo, November 7, 1999. Similar ideas were expressed again in an interview with the Spanish newspaper El Pais: “Peace in Colombia will come when people have employment”, El Pais, March 2, 2000

<sup>74</sup> El Tiempo, January 10, 1999

<sup>75</sup> “Support our troops and police”, speech of the Minister on taking office on June 18, 1999 in [www.mindefensa.gov.co](http://www.mindefensa.gov.co); “there are no irreconcilable differences between the guerrillas and the establishment”, wrote Hernando Gomez-Buendia in El Tiempo in 1998. See his book *El lio de Colombia ¿Por que no logramos salir de la crisis?* (Bogota 2000 p. 93)

<sup>76</sup> This is echoed in the words of anthropologist Clifford Geertz “it is less consensus that is at issue than a viable way of doing without it.” According to Jonathan Stevenson, this is one of the lessons that can be taken from the results of the Northern Ireland peace process, where the agendas of the opposed parties are incompatible. See his essay “Irreversible peace in Northern Ireland?”, *Survival*, 42 (2000) p. 21.

<sup>77</sup> For a systematic analysis of the type of consensus that prevails today in democratic societies see George Klosko, *Democratic procedures and liberal consensus* (Oxford 2000)

The pace: If peace is not defined as the end of the war, then discussions about the reinsertion of guerrilla groups into the political system passes onto the back burner, being subject to the successes of the discussions of structural reforms. The FARC leaders themselves from the start discarded the option of a truce until “ at least some eight of the ten points which merit a cease-fire” are approved”<sup>78</sup>; in other words, reform first, then peace. On the same day that talks formally started with the FARC in January 1999, a FARC leader made this clear in terms which left little room for doubt, “When we have solved the problems, we can start talking about peace”.<sup>79</sup>

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This essay attempts to examine two central areas of peace talks in Colombia: what principles should underlie a future negotiating agenda, and what the content of that agenda should be. It seems an appropriate time to analyze these points, after three of frustrated talks between representatives of the State and the guerrillas, after the breakdown of the peace process, and with the advent of a new administration. The purpose of this exercise has been to identify some minimal criteria of consensus between democratic forces, which would in turn strengthen the position of the State in the face of threats of violence and terrorism in the effective quest for a solution to the conflict in the near future. To summarize and draw conclusions from this exercise, we offer the following:

1. In recent years the demand for a “State peace policy” has been persistent, and has even become a commonplace which survived the breakdown of the talks with the FARC during the Pastrana administration. Yet it is a demand which has been formulated in vague terms. Attempts to define it suggest that such a policy of the State would mean a broad social and political consensus to exclude peace from election campaigns, and that peace policies should continue for longer than four-year presidential terms. Such a proposal would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to put into practice. It would have undesirable effects which would be counter-productive in the quest for peace. It would also be counter to the sense of a democratic system and the purposes of a pluralist society.
2. There have nonetheless been significant continuities from one government to the next, regarding the concept and objectives of peace, even though this has never formally been defined as a State peace policy. At least during the last two administrations since 1994, there have been the common elements of a maximalist notion of peace and its objectives in negotiating a new model for society, as well as many circumstances and conditions of negotiation not discussed in this essay – such as talks under fire, the existence of a demilitarized zone, the participation of society or the internationalization of the peace process.
3. The negotiations with the guerrillas cannot be unlimited: there must be a framework of basic principles – the parameters which any negotiations need: the defense of freedoms and basic rights, starting with the right to life, must be the guiding principles

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<sup>78</sup> El Espectador. January 10, 1999

<sup>79</sup> El Espectador. January 8, 1999. Note that the expression accepts that peace is the silencing of the guns or the end of the war.

of any peace effort. Violence and terrorism cannot be accepted as a negotiating weapon. Democracy must be respected. The negotiation process cannot exclude the continuity of government. The State cannot cede sovereignty or leave groups of citizens unprotected. The State cannot and must not give up its own legitimacy; indeed it must defend it.

4. The negotiating process with the guerrillas has been largely shaped by a broad concept of peace which in turn defines the content and pace of negotiations. According to that concept, peace does not mean the solution of the armed conflict between State and insurgents who dispute its authority: peace is to find the solution to social, economic and political problems – and even cultural ones. This differentiation of concepts is not just a matter of words: it has contributed to the acceptance of a highly-ambitious negotiating agenda to draw a blueprint for a new society. It would therefore seem that the attempts to put an end to armed conflict are not a priority: the priority is to discuss the blueprint. Meanwhile, therefore, any discussion of the reinsertion of armed groups into civil society and constitutional life are relegated (unless it is understood that those conditions are precisely the solution to the country's problems – and if that is so, the idea of peace becomes simply a utopian dream).

5. Any reconsideration of the content of negotiations should start by a redefinition of the concept of peace which is held prevalent today, and accept a minimalist notion which clearly sees peace as the end of armed conflict or the “silencing of the guns” in the terms of the popular expression. The redefinition could be doubly important in practice, with the prospect of future negotiations. First, there can be a strategic direction to any negotiating process, aiming for a specific object which can be defined and achieved in the short term. Second, priority can be given to discussion of procedural matters. As Marco Palacios has suggested, “...specific negotiations with the guerrillas ..should eliminate the matters of substance which are part of a democratic agenda and dedicate themselves to the demobilization of the armed groups and their reinsertion into political life”<sup>80</sup>. Or, in the words of *The Economist*, the focus should be “the end of conflict, rather than philosophical discussions on world economic injustices”<sup>81</sup>

6. The decisions of the State regarding peace have been accompanied – or rather preceded – by broad consensus between many shades of public opinion including intellectuals, economic interests and political groups. When referring to these forms of consensus, we must make it clear that we are not talking of agreements between elites, but of the whole set of notions and ideas of peace that have been taking hold in public opinion. As the evidence shows throughout this essay, the redefinition of peace should go further than the end of the armed conflict in order to negotiate a new society, was not the sole work of successive governments, nor of isolated sectors of society. With this, the intention is not to open a debate on responsibilities, but simply to state the importance which the climate of public opinion has and will continue to have on the definition of peace, and therefore, on the content of negotiations.

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<sup>80</sup> Palacios “Agenda para la democracia” p.64

<sup>81</sup> “The FARC’s moment of truth”, *The Economist* January 19, 2002

## APPENDIX

### PARTY RIVALRY AND THE CHALLENGE OF TERRORISM SOME COMMENTS ON THE SPANISH SITUATION

By Charles Powell.

This section attempts to make a brief analysis of the conduct of the Spanish political parties in relation to the terrorist movement led by ETA, and more specifically, the consensus and conflicts which that movement has produced among them. Special attention is paid to the presence or absence of the problem of terrorism in party rivalries, and more specifically still, in election campaigns.

As everyone knows, political parties in Spain have been forced to live with ETA-led terrorism ever since democracy returned to the country after the death of Franco in 1975. Therefore, before analyzing the matters mentioned in the preceding paragraph, we need to make a brief review of previous history in order to identify the stages through which party rivalry has evolved in Spain.

In the period 1977-1982, the government was in the hands of the UCD, a center-right coalition presided over first by Adolfo Suarez and later by Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo. This was a “constituent” period in which both Suarez and Calvo needed to find parliamentary support in order to stay in power. Their anti-terrorist policies therefore had to be based on a multiparty consensus. Also at that time, it was thought that the concession of a generous Statute of Autonomy for the Basque Country, which came into effect in 1980, and was from the outset managed by the Basque party PNV – the political majority in Basque Country – would eventually lead to the disappearance of ETA. In those years, the UCD maintained various contacts with ETA and its political arm Herri Batasuna. This strategy enjoyed the full support of the PSOE, which was the main opposition party. In 1981, the negotiations persuaded one wing of the ETA (the “political-military wing”) to give up armed conflict in order to become a part of the democratic system in all ways. It formed part of the Euskadiko Eskerra party, which later joined the Basque wing of the PSOE.

The overwhelming victory of the PSOE in the 1982 elections and the subsequent disappearance of the UCD, marked the start of a second stage in which the main opposition party, the Alianza Popular, led by Manuel Fraga, considered that the consensus of the constituent stage had been superseded. However, during those years the two major parties shared a common diagnosis of the problem of terrorism and PSOE policy was openly supported by AP. (Although it is not easy to prove it, it also seems that the AP implicitly supported the “dirty war” against the ETA started by this socialist government, which organized and financed the so-called Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) which killed 28 people between 1983 and 1987). The most refined expression of the multiparty consensus in anti-terrorist matters was the Pact of Madrid, signed in 1987 by all parties with representation in Parliament (including the PNV) – except the HB – the political wing of the ETA – which was repeated exclusively in the Basque Country by the Ajuria Enea Pact of January 1988. The most important article of that Pact stated that “if the conditions required to end the violence through dialogue are obtained, based on a clear will to end violence and with unambiguous intentions which could lead to such a conviction, we support the processes of dialogue between the competent authorities of the State and those who decide to abandon

violence, at all times respecting the democratic principle, which can never be given up, that political questions must be resolved solely by the legitimate representatives of the popular will". In practice, then, the signature of these two agreements removed the debate concerning the anti-terrorist policy of the PSOE from the political arena through the existence of a broad consensus on the subject. With this, the Government started conversations with ETA representatives in Algiers in 1988-9. The conversations brought a brief truce, but no agreement was reached.

Unfortunately, the consensus had a short life, due to three major changes of circumstance. First, PSOE lost its absolute majority, held since 1982, in the 1989 elections, and was forced to take account of the demands of the Catalan and Basque nationalists. Second, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Basques radicalized their discourse and among their political objectives was the recognition of the right to self-determination, which had not been included as a possibility in the 1978 Constitution or the Statute of Autonomy. Finally, in 1990 Jose Maria Aznar replaced Fraga as the leader of the Spanish right, and this was to have important consequences for the future relations between two major national parties.

Unlike Fraga – as he was a much younger man – Aznar had not taken part the transition process, and was not afraid to question some of the basic principles of the democratic system which it had produced; among them, the idea that consensus was a supreme political value. He thus rejected the principle of non-inclusion of anti-terrorist policy in party rivalries, and became increasingly critical of the actions of Felipe Gonzalez and his governments in this area. More specifically, the new conservative leader called for the full application of prison sentences imposed on terrorists, and their physical dispersion across the country in order to hamper the work of the convict support organizations (traditionally controlled by ETA). He also claimed that the government's policy of maintaining regular though informal contacts with ETA leaders was a failure. As might be expected, this position of intransigence with regard to terrorism was profitable in electoral terms, and indeed the PSOE barely held onto power in the 1993 elections. In practice, the Pact of Madrid was a dead letter, not only due to the position of the PP but also due to the way in which the PNV became more accommodating to the positions of the HB, and hence, by the nature of things, to those of the ETA.

After the 1993 elections the PSOE anti-terrorist policy became central to political debate in Spain, and was indeed sometimes the most important issue on the agenda. Although, as noted earlier, Fraga shows no interest in denouncing the actions of the GAL (perhaps because, as Minister of the Interior in 1976, he may have encouraged similar actions), during the Aznar administration the PP had no hesitation in placing the "dirty war" at the center of its campaign to harass and overthrow Gonzalez. The fact that several officials of the Ministry of the Interior, including the Director General of the Guardia Civil – the police force most directly implicated in the anti-terrorist struggle – had been the leading participants in the most serious cases of corruption and personal enrichment at the expense of the public purse, made it easy (and to a large extent justifiable) for the main opposition party to adopt this as a strategy. The socialists in turn accused the PP of lack of maturity and lack of a proper sense of State, and even came to look on the PP as a party beyond the pale of Constitutional consensus, which would not hesitate to endanger the stability of democracy if that would enable them to bring down the government. This crisis remained largely unresolved until the 1996

elections forced a change of government, and the PP were able to form their first administration.

Since the PP did not win an absolute majority in 1996, during the first administration of the popular majority (1996-2000) Aznar governed with the support of the Catalan and Basque nationalists in Parliament. Despite that, there was no attempt to revive the Pact of Madrid and the Pact of Ajuria Enea, basically because the PNV were not much interested in doing so. Also, unlike Gonzalez, Aznar believed that the ETA could be beaten through a combination of measures involving the police, the prisons and policies, persistently and firmly applied over time; he believed that this had never been tried in the past. It should be noted that, unlike Gonzalez, Aznar was not afraid to censure the PNV in public for never having wanted to defeat the ETA with police actions, or policies or social measures, since in the last instance this would mean to some extent the defeat (or at least weakening) of Basque nationalism as a whole. In other words, the real difference between Aznar's approach and Gonzalez's strategy was in their diagnoses of the social and political realities of the Basque Country. So, it seems to us, the debate open by the Conservative leader to dispute Gonzalez's antiterrorist policies was fully justified, since it allowed a democratic comparison of two different visions of Basque realities.

Alarmed by the slow decline in electoral support for Basque nationalism throughout the 1990s, and encouraged by the possibility of re-uniting a "nationalist family" which had been split into two ever since the ETA came into being, in March 1998 the PNV launched what it called "Plan Ardanza". The Plan rejected the existence of an alleged "democratic deficit" in the Basque political system, which had to be remedied in order to put an end to violence, he also tried to open up negotiations with the ETA, through the HB, in order to provide a response to the civic-political dissidence in a substantial proportion of society which, acting in terms of "terrorism" (sic) was not prepared to accept the status quo." For this, the intention was that, once an indefinite cessation of ETA violence had been achieved, talks would be opened with all the Basque political forces, with no preconditions and no limitations in results, which at all events would be the responsibility of central government and other State institutions. As might be expected, both the PP and the PSOE rejected the plan, and the PNV made an agreement with the terrorists for an indefinite truce in the summer of 1998, in exchange for access to a new stage of the process of "Basque National Construction". This implied a break from the Statute of Autonomy and the legislation in force at the time. The break was made in September with the signature of the Declaration of Stella-Lizarra, signed by the PNV, HB and others. Despite this, the Government agreed to meet ETA representatives in May 1999, a decision which received lengthy debate in Parliament and the press. In the absence of any agreement, at the end of 1999 the ETA announced that the truce was terminated, and the "armed struggle" was resumed in early 2000.

Inevitably, the political situation of the Basque Country was very much in evidence in the run-up to the general elections in March 2000. According to the opinion polls, terrorism had again become the main source of concern for the Spanish voter. It would be difficult for it not to have been, In sum, the voters could choose between the more belligerent position vaunted by the PP since 1996 and the more accommodating stance developed by the PSOE in the past; and in particular, they could choose between two clearly different approaches to the Basque problem. The fact that, against all the forecasts, the PP won an overwhelming majority in the elections, similar to that of the

PSOE in 1982, seems to show that the more belligerent position is the more credible and more popular alternative. Be that as it may, the important fact is that all of this was the object of a very lively political and media debate.

Since the ETA had resumed the offensive after the termination of the truce, on the eve of the Basque autonomous elections of May 2001 the PP and PSOE signed a new anti-terrorist pact which, unlike those of Madrid and Ajuria Enea, provoked the explicit rejection of the PNV. The pact reflected the desire of both parties to remove the struggle against terrorism from the electoral agenda in the Basque Country and to achieve the political and social isolation of the supporters of violence – an objective which earned the fierce rejection of the PNV. For the same reason, the triumph of the PNV in the Basque elections and the poor results of the PSOE tested the solidity of its consensus with the PP, leading to subsequent recriminations on the grounds of lack of political constancy and loyalty.

In summary, we could conclude that first, the broader and more solid the political consensus about terrorism, the more effective the struggle against it. More specifically, the agreement between the two major national parties, PP and PSOE, must be considered as essential to the effectiveness of the police, the courts and policies. But this does not mean that the parties should shy from political debates on these matters: on the contrary, true unity of purpose in anti-terrorist matters can only come from a widely shared diagnosis, which in turn would be the fruits of a debate, under the spotlights and on the record.