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“Innovation and citizens’ participation in peacebuilding processes: necessary reconfigurations for conflict resolution”

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BRICS Policy Center Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS



GSUM
Global South Unit for Mediation

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“Innovation and citizens’ participation in peacebuilding processes: necessary reconfigurations for conflict resolution”¹

Msc./Lic. Cecilia Milesi

1. Introduction

This article aims at de-constructing some distinctive characteristics of the international peacebuilding dominant model² by pointing out examples, political innovations and practices of the current peace processes in the Philippines and Colombia. The examples are structured around the debate suggested by critical and systemic theories. Throughout the article, we propose ideas to encourage discussion within the field of international conflict resolution³ as a means to promote dignified, legitimate and sustainable peace.

The analysis is organised into three main sections: the first briefly states the reasons why we consider it necessary to transform the current conflict resolution dominant model. The second

(1) The original version of this paper was finalised in November 2014. It was written in Spanish and translated into English by Cláudia Almeida.

(2) By “dominant model” we understand a hegemonic system of conflict, security and peace-related ideas and practices which prevails thanks to the higher political, economic and military power of some nations over others. This hegemonic power guides the implementation of conflict resolution policies. Throughout this article, such model will be detailed. By “Sur Global” we understand the networks of countries and citizen organisations that share historic and cultural closeness, among other things, for their relatively subordinate position in terms of their global level political and economic decision-making power, and a few common socio-cultural traits.

(3) Throughout this text we mention the idea of “conflicts” or “international conflicts” as somewhat interchangeable. We refer to political and social conflicts that are oftentimes domestic – such as civil wars, state apparatus crises, several armed struggles – but that somehow became “international” due to legal benchmarks and current global practices, several kinds of support and their regionalisation. We do not refer to family or community conflicts.

section outlines the theoretical debate and academic criticism of the current peacebuilding model. The third section presents key characteristics of the case studies – Colombia and the Philippines – so as to de-construct a bit further certain fallacies of the dominant model, to give examples of innovations and to delve into the critical and systemic reasoning which highlights the possible advancements in the peacebuilding field. In this third section, we choose to analyse two topics regarding conflict transformation processes:

a. Militarization, use of force and demonization of the other as strategies and tactics that divert attention from the root causes of the conflicts. As an alternative, we present processes based – from the beginning – on approaching the structural causes of the conflict, while dialoguing with all armed non-state groups and citizens.

b. The dominant negotiation model based on elitism, individualism and arrogance. As an alternative, we present the acknowledgement of national and regional leaderships and capabilities, while strengthening dynamic and all-inclusive processes that embrace the voices of a plurality of countries, organisations and citizens. Therefore, we bring around the need to organise complex, transparent and participatory mediation processes and dialogue, aimed at building a new political “we”.

The conclusion includes a summary of the main arguments established in this article and suggests a few recommendations that we hope to be a contribution to the global peacebuilding efforts.

Throughout the text, the concept of “peace” will be shown in-between quotes when it describes the implementation of the dominant conflict resolution model. In contrast, in the sections where participatory and systemic alternatives are presented, the concept of peace is written with no quotation marks. This is the author’s decision, as a means to encourage the re-appropriation of the concept of peace: we find it essential not to confuse peace with the “peace” organizing stabilization scenarios based on control, the banning or annihilation of groups – whether armed or not – as well as civilians, while offering short-termed and toned-down mere aid solutions. The concept of peace – re-appropriated – is heralded as the consequence of strategies based on respect of the dignity and human rights of men and women, the main actors of this collective transformation.

The selected cases refer to the current peace processes in Colombia and the Philippines⁴. There are two main reasons for this choice: both countries have been trying to solve their conflicts for more than 40 years. For this reason, they have learned and innovated, accepting the fact that military impositions and simplifications do not evolve to long-term solutions. Secondly, the familiarity of the author with said countries due to her professional and direct involvement with both for the past few years. This has allowed for opportunities to carry out participative observation and to dialogue with relevant actors.

This article chooses to work on these “unfolding” cases and not to silence non-generalizable learnings. By not silencing narratives about innovative examples, we hope to overcome the

(4) Filipinas-Mindanao/ Bangsamoro: The conflict in the south of the Philippines started in 1970 between the national government and two Muslim secessionist groups – Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The peace agreement reached in 2012 is still in its first steps to implementation, which means the potential end to a civil war that has claimed more than 150.000 lives. In Colombia, the conflict between the government and the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) began in 1964 and has claimed more than 200.000 lives, as well as the displacement of more than 3.5 million citizens. It also involves paramilitary groups that have emerged throughout these years. In the second half of 2012, the national government started a dialogue process which is still open and which had been suspended for more than 10 years.

technocratic view that prioritizes “evidence” – allegedly objective – over constant learning and theorizing grounded on practice. This positivist position directly linked to the dominant “peace” model is restricted to the search of evidence – generally quantitative – in the short term. Thus, it limits the very definition of public policies created from the deliberation in participative processes (action-research⁵). In short, we acknowledge that it is crucial to share ideas, successes and failures and practices regarding processes in which political and epistemological risks are being taken. We believe that this nurtures innovation and encourages more room for analysis and action⁶, which are imperative in the peacebuilding field.

We do hope that this article inspires the creation of much-needed reconfigurations so as to guarantee dignified, legitimate, inclusive and sustainable peace.

2. The motivation: ineffectiveness and human suffering

The motivations to write this text – in this case from Global South – are basically two: the significant ineffectiveness of current “peace” interventions, considering the high human cost, the violations of human rights, and also their low transforming capacity in the long term. And secondly, we are motivated by the attempts at renovation reflected in certain processes such as the ones in Colombia and the Philippines, as well as other initiatives working for a dignified and lasting peace.

- **The ineffectiveness of the dominant model and the suffering of citizens.**

Firstly, it is important to point out the **blatant ineffectiveness of the dominant model that prioritizes militarization and imposition as means to achieve security and “peace”**. This paradigm negatively affects the life of millions of citizens: the so-called “human cost” is rising. Additionally, no results are reached: neither regarding stabilisation nor securing sustainable “peace” in the countries and regions which are the focus of international “peace-making” policies.

Nowadays, besides the millions of lives lost, it is estimated that there are between 33 and 52 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the main areas of conflict in the world⁷. This is the highest figure since the Second World War. The rates of poverty, hunger, crises, environmental degradation and divestment in the main countries and regions under conflict keep rising⁸. Ironically, the developing countries – oftentimes bordering countries – take the burden: they end up receiving 86% of the refugees, while the wealthier countries only take 14% and keep increasing immigration restrictions.

(5) The empirical and deep investigation must be carried out in the long run. Only after several years, and using the tools of Sociology and History, we will be able to find more concluding arguments regarding current conflicts.

(6) The ideas put forward here were collected through enriching exchanges held in the “Winter Mediation School” organized by the Global South Unit for Mediation of BRICS Policy Centre.

(7) According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center: (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures>) the current figure is 33 million. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in June 2014 there were 52 million refugees and displaced persons in the world: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>.

(8) The Human Development Report 2014 presents a deep analysis and relevant information on the topic: <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

It is important to highlight that **78% of the displaced persons and refugees come from conflicts that involve members of the UN Security Council (the United States, England, France and Russia) as direct or indirect antagonistic parties.** In each and every context detailed below, we point out their direct role in approving and financing the military advancement as an option for conflict resolution. More specifically, the highest figures of refugees and internally displaced persons are in **Colombia** (5.7 million) where – until the beginning of the current process – there were 10 years of military advancement: the “Plan Colombia” was financed by the United States and supported by a few regional countries aligned with the foreign policy of the main “patron” (US). **Syria** has 6.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons (this figure increases daily). In this country, the military combat between the Syrian government and the armed non-state groups is directly financed and supported by several countries belonging to the UN Security Council, as well as regional allies⁹. The mediation strategy did not thrive: in June 2014, Brahimi – the international UN and Arab League mediator – resigned in protest against “total lack of attention from the international community to the option of dialogue”¹⁰. **Iraq and Afghanistan** are the countries that have kept the number of refugees and displaced persons steady (3.2 million). These were the countries where the United States started its war on “terrorism”¹¹, which seems far from resolution. Right after is Pakistan, (1.15 million) – where the national government fights armed groups with the support of the US drone policy and their direct intervention in Pakistani sovereign territory. Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the South African Republic have 4 million refugees and displaced persons. These countries harbour costly “peace” operations and are the perfect example of the inefficacy of the dominant mediation and security model – several failures were registered in the achievement of agreements, control and transformation of the violence cycle. In the case of Libya, the military intervention in the name of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept caused a chaotic spiral of conflict that strongly limits governability after the assassination of Gaddafi and increased and regionalized violence. In all the above mentioned conflicts, priority was given to military victory, to the use of force in the name of humanitarianism or wellness.. Such interventions are costing more lives than saving them, and causing much more suffering. The efforts to promote a political, dialogical and localised alternative for human security are undervalued in favour of an ineffective and destructive militarism.

Secondly, the ineffectiveness of the dominant model reflects yet another negative result: more than 32% of the peace agreements signed fail, despite the acknowledgement that they lead to a lower death rate¹². One of the most recent cases is South Sudan, where elections and celebrations for the recognition of a new country soon gave way more bloodbaths. Meanwhile, studies on the perception of international interventions locally show the increasing disapproval and consequent resistance to them, as well as their lack of legitimacy¹³.

- **Reform attempts and the revision of dominant peacebuilding model**

At the same time, we feel motivated by **the evidence and vision offered by some human rights**

(9) Open source information on the support from several countries to the Syrian internal conflict in: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_involvement_in_the_Syrian_Civil_War

(10) Video with Brahimi’s declarations to CNN: <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2014/06/09/former-special-envoy-to-syria-lakhdar-brahimi-i-resigned-in-protest/>

(11) It is important to explain that we do not call armed non-state groups “terrorists”, because terror can also be used by governments and other armed groups.

(12) An article with more information and simple statistics on peace agreements failures and numbers of lives lost can be found in the blog “Political Violence at a Glance” <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2012/08/10/even-failed-peace-agreements-save-lives/>

(13) Further on there is information on studies such as “Time to Listen”. One can also see findings on the negative perception of the role of the international community, for instance in regions such as the Middle East and Latin America.

and peacebuilding organisations promoting dialogue and monitoring several global conflicts. Such organisations are requesting that the UN Council members act with no double standards and that they commit to human rights and dialogue for conflict resolution. Backed up by empirical and legal analyses, these organisations report when governments and armed groups commit war crimes, the existence of illegal detention centres such as Guantánamo (and several others operating secretly), the direct support to wars when countries sell weapons and finance armed non-state actors, among other types of abuse of power¹⁴. It is important to notice a constant effort from a few countries in pursuit of a deep change in the United Nations and its Security Council, the establishment of regulatory frameworks such as the Arms Treaty and the critical and scrupulous analysis of the use and abuse of concepts such as the “Responsibility to Protect”¹⁵. In brief, we have observed a deeper debate on the importance of rethinking the international system and on the need to hold multipolar dialogues that encourage transparency and mutual control.

At the same time, all the evidence on failures has influenced the growing professionalization in the field. It is already acknowledged that this debate should not be limited to a technocratic minority from the Global North: multidisciplinary and diverse perspectives are recognised as essential to design systemic peace processes. We pinpoint a tendency to emphasize the importance of listening, integrating and harmonizing each strategy to the realities, perceptions and demands of all citizens directly affected by the conflicts: it is not an easy task for those used to turning the “other” invisible in order to impose “order” and traditional diplomatic procedures.

In brief, despite the challenges, these attempts to reform and review the dominant model encourage us to esteem and seek alternatives. Alternatives more committed to human dignity and rights as the central axis of processes promoting transformations of the primary causes of violence. The next section will present some of the main points of the theoretical debate in which a possible transformation is outlined.

3. Theoretical debate: critical and systemic research create necessary reconfigurations

Considering the remarkable ineffectiveness of the dominant model for conflict resolution, in the past few years there has been a growing production of theoretical-practical studies that thoroughly revise the assumptions and fallacies of the “peace” building dominant model.

The debate focuses on the limitations of the so-called “liberal peace” or “linear peace” – the dominant model – which works in perfect harmony with the geopolitical interests organising

(14) See for example the report from Amnesty International on the role of the United States in the weapon sale to Israel during the latest military operation on Palestine (July 2014): <https://campaigns.amnesty.org/campaigns/us-stop-arming-israel>. It is also worth seeing this declaration from leaders in the field of human rights summoned by Carter Center: http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/defenders_120308.html?gclid=CNqhsZ3GoMECFaZj7AodTjwAuQ

(15) See “From Non-Indifference to Responsibility while protecting: Brazil’s Diplomacy and the search for Global Norms” by Paula Wojcikiewicz Almeida, SAIIA (South African Institute of International Affairs), Occasional Paper 138, April 2013 y “Short war, long shadow, the political and military legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign” edited by Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

international relations¹⁶. The “liberal/linear peace” is based on Positivism’s epistemological assumptions developed in the heart of Western European cultures, and guiding the imperialist advancement into the Global South territories and societies throughout the centuries and until today. One of the main assumptions of the positivist view is the idea that reality can be controlled and manipulated by the rational individual who “objectively” studies and intervenes in such reality. The individuals – freed from their community and gods, disciplined according to legal frameworks and institutions of the national states (as established since the end of the Middle Age in Europe) – can now work and transform the social using technical-bureaucratic procedures: civilizing and development plans are started up so as to transform something from “A to B”. Positivism spread in the so-called new-Darwinism of social sciences, which, in turn, directed the consolidation of political processes and institutions in the Global South. The national states of the free territories were organized as a reflection of the North and also made headway in the technical-military control of the realities that did not adjust to the liberating project of the individuals who were still “tied” to community standards of ancient cultures and who, therefore, resisted becoming the labour force for state-controlled industrial capitalism, landowners and companies belonging to the emergent bourgeoisie. The central-state control logic was also established in alleged opposing forces to capitalism – blocs such as Russia and China – counterweighing by using the same strategies of subduing territories and individuals in favour of expanding growth.

Linearity can be seen in the plan to subdue, modernise and develop the “others” according to the “civilizing” model of progress. In the field of international relations, among nation-states, Positivism has left its mark in rational, materialist and institutional schools of thought shaping the logic of traditional diplomacy: manipulation, coercion and power control to achieve national or bloc interests. More specifically, in the case of the current “peace” building dominant model, the technical-bureaucratic positivism of the organizations that control its deployment globally, dictates the notion that it is also possible to observe and establish cause and effect chains regarding conflict. A series of predictable outcomes – described in several theoretical models and tools – dictates the management of interventions to move from violence to “peace”. In this linear model, peace (B) would be a consequence of (A): military intervention, elitist mediation among diplomats and armed groups, configuration or reconstruction of control and repressive state apparatuses, and deployment of reconstruction and development funds concisely displayed in logical frames established by the technocracy of the international cooperation industry (donors, international governmental and non-governmental organisations working in favour of the Global South)¹⁷. The external interventions for violence control give prominence to military control devices, to replication of state-centred organisational models following post-colonial territorial agreements and totalizing ethics, as well as to diplomatic strategies based on the manipulation of interests and plain logframes.

Meanwhile, denaturalizing this dominant “peace” building model, we find scholars and critical professionals associated with post-colonial and critical schools of thought. . These analysts reveal that international policies are directed to the promotion of order, and not so much to “peace” in its comprehensive sense. These are based on the positivist and state-centred axes described above: communities in the South demanded a level of simulation characterized as symbolic and political violence. For example, Siman and Fernández¹⁸ highlight the following when describing the framework in which the international “peace” forces operate: *“when establishing dichotomies (for*

(16) Part of the arguments in this debate can be found in “The non-linearity of peace processes, theory and practice of systemic conflict transformation”, edited by Daniel Korppen, Norbet Ropers and Hans Giessmann, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011; as well as other texts mentioned in this section.

(17) We further detail the imposing linearity in the following sections, in which we describe the dominant model.

(18) Fernandez Moreno, Braga and Siman Gomes, “Trapped between many worlds: a post-colonial perspective on the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), International Peacekeeping, 19:3, 377-392.

example, progress x non-progress, development x non-development), the attempt is to integrate and modernise the “other” to the image of the hegemonic power, in general, the countries in the North that control the peace production industry”. This simulation is imposed by military force, the demand to use predefined “peace” agreement templates and, to top it off, it is all done in a language (English) foreign to the local societies. In this same direction, several scholars warn that the dominant “peace” building policies allow for a level of international intervention that has not existed since colonial times¹⁹. The institutionalization of a security and justice framework that highlights the development of rules by interventionist means blind to the routines, local realities and multiple ways to organise the collective political life are openly criticised. These rules justify invasions and sanctions that result in the radicalization of local groups, the increase in chaos and suffering. The “peace” building model replicates hierarchies (superior – North / inferior – South) and demands the respect of territorial boundaries established in decolonisation processes led by a few and controlled by the winners of the Second World War. Lastly, these authors warn that the hegemonic power holds local communities responsible for all the violence and describe them as unable to exercise control over their lives and territories by themselves. It is vital to make these tensions clear in order to seek paths for a more legitimate peace.

Carrying on this epistemological and historic analysis, **Anthropology** reminds us that, still today, 80% of the world population live following some kind of ancestral and communal organisation. They use conflict mediation, reproduction and social communication methods based on different ways of thinking and recirculated in thousands of native languages²⁰. They do not necessarily follow linear guidelines: they are rather circular²¹, specific, localised and recreated according to several representation systems. Several repressive devices have not succeeded in reaching standardization or complete integration to the native cultures, nor to the multiplicity of groups and social movements that fight for the recognition of ancestral lands, for equitable resource redistribution – controlled by oligarchic or dictatorial apparatuses – for respect for their identities and for the overcoming of multiple exclusions created by the dominant system. This intense political life characterised by complex collective processes, is made invisible by the dominant positivist model. Similarly, **political scientists and sociologists** who study the “peace” building processes remind us of the subtle cultural and political dynamics constituting change processes (software). For **constructivism**, perceptions on security and insecurity and the legitimization of control devices mediating this tension are, above all, a communication process. The creation and recreation of thought and actions considering what is perceived as a threat (or not) are based on a dialogical process intrinsic to the social system. **Systemic theory** describes the social as complex patterns of human interaction. They cannot be controlled, divided or manipulated. For the systemic thinkers, coordinating change from the outside is not possible. Considering these lines of thought, a minor sector within the diplomatic sector advocates for “constructivist cosmopolitanism” and the peaceful intercultural dialogue among groups and nations²².

(19) See Richmond, Oliver, “Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace”, 2010, *Journal of International Studies* Vol. 38; Chandler, David, “From Kosovo to Kabul: Human Rights and International intervention”, Pluto Press, 2006; Heathershaw, J., “Unpacking the liberal peace: the dividing and merging of the peacebuilding discourses”, *Millennium, Journal of International Relations Studies*, 2008; Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltcheck, “On Western Terrorism, from Hiroshima to drone warfare”, Pluto Books, 2013.

(20) See Babo- Soares, D, “A brief overview of the role of customary law in East Timor”, 1999; and World Bank Indonesia, Social Development Unit, Justice for the poor, “Forging the middle ground: engaging non-state justice in Indonesia”, 2008.

(21) In Daniela Korppen’s text, she exemplifies this circularity in the Zulu native culture or Buddhism, which base their systems upon balance between community and spiritual-religious order. In these cases, restorative justice and narratives establish a systemic order beyond the written codes typical to Eurocentric organisations.

(22) A summary of this debate can be accessed in the online publication “Cosmopolitan constructivism: mapping a road to the future of cultural and public diplomacy” by Cesar Villanueva Rivas; and texts from the diplomat and anthropologist Edward T. Hall, Jr.

In short, these analysts remind us that the institutions are based on and by human life: the invisible world of beliefs and values organises legitimate (or illegitimate) ways of political and social organisation, and it also guides the decisions to choose (or not) violence as a means to solve issues perceived as unfair. Therefore, for the critical and systemic theory-practice, the current “peace” building paradigm is a deceitful project. Among other things, because the focus is mainly on building institutions which are empty of legitimacy, while justice and security institutions (hardware) are shaped according to Euro-centred, exogenous and biased standards overlooking the multiplicity of voices and realities making up the social.

At a practical level, the peace reconfigurations proposed in this article encourage the creation of action-research processes, also inspired by liberating projects such as the one conceived by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire²³ and by enabling long-term endogenous dialogue involving multiple actors. These processes are not neutral: it is necessary to specify tendencies and create more horizontal interactive discussions. Thus, the focus is on recognizing and working simultaneously on a multiplicity of interpretations for the conflict, including the structural causes perceived as the origin of violence. Dialogue is then a process of debate guided towards transforming the several kinds of exclusion and exploitation scenarios provoking violence. As put forward by Foucault: “*It is not a topic of anthropologists seeking information to try to understand and integrate the other, but the rescuing of local knowledge against the totalitarian power of scientificity and technocracy*”²⁴. Hence, the peace processes are understood as dynamic interactions among several “others” and the possibility of conceiving and carrying out new feasible policies.

To sum it up, we consider that the whole process of change from violence to peace is, above all, a process geared to creating a “*new political we*”. According to Hannah Arendt²⁵: “*the new political we cannot be trusted solely to the rule of law; in the end, it depends on the desire to live with others in their own ways of acting and speaking. This involves a legalistic faith, but also a political risk*”. Thinking about this political risk, we revisit critical thinkers who recognise the value of historical battles for liberation and construction of inclusion models led by citizens and inhabitants of the Global South²⁶. This re-politicization and reassertion of the local and citizen power to create alternatives rescues historical experiences of collective action in favour of freedom, peace and human security – including fights for independence from the imperialistic powers, as well as from the successive repressive systems financed by those very power centres. Thus, there is room to debate approaches that turn the historicity and power of the South invisible, while heralding the need to abandon linear proposals for building a “peace” which is state-centred, militarist, technocratic and based on the demonization of the “other”.

In the next section, we provide examples and practical advancements linked to a critical and systemic theory applied to the field of peacebuilding.

(23) See Paulo Freire, “*Pedagogía del Oprimido*” (Pedagogy of the Oppressed), Siglo Veintiuno Editores, latest Spanish edition, 2008.

(24) Foucault, Michael, “*Power and Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*”, Editorial C. Gordon, NY, 1981.

(25) Arendt, H., “*The human condition*”, first edition, University of Chicago Press, US, 1998.

(26) See Meera Sabaratnam, “*Avatars of Eurocentrism in the critique of the liberal peace*”, *Security Dialogue*, 2013, 44(3): 259-78.

4. Innovations and citizen participation for a dignified and sustainable peace

In this third section, we delve into the deconstruction of the dominant model under the light of case studies, as well as further the theoretical debate started above. The two topics chosen for this deconstruction are: a) Alternatives to the use of force; and b) Alternatives to elitism, individualism and arrogance of the main current mediation model.

4.1. Alternatives to the use of force as a means to transform the deepest causes of conflicts

- **The dominant model of conflict resolution: militarization and use of force**

According to the dominant model for conflict resolution, “peace” would be achieved after a series of steps, gradually managed by minoritiescontrolling “peace” interventions. This vision prioritizes stability over transformation of the main causes of conflicts.

One first aspect that exemplifies the dominant linear and militarist vision is the idea that only after negotiating a “ceasefire” and the reestablishment of some relative security guaranteed by military force will it be possible to start working on the root causes of the conflict. In brief, the enforcement of order comes first. Then, maybe, addressing the root causes.

To illustrate this point, it is interesting to highlight Mac Guinty²⁷, who explains how, in the past ten years, the word “stabilisation” was incorporated into all UN and other governmental agencies “Peace” missions and programmes. This language is aligned to an investment decision: most of the resources for “peace” building are allocated to repression and to stop direct violence. For the UN annual budget 2014-15, peacekeeping operations are allocated more than USD 7 billions while development programmes will receive much less than this. Further, global expenditure on military operations has reached a record high with an estimation of USD 1.75 trillion in 2013²⁸. An specific example is useful to assess this matter more clearly: the report²⁹ from one of the most recent UN Security Council retreats states that the mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace forces has a budget of \$1.5 billion/year, while the development programs only get \$1.5 million³⁰. In the same document, it is stated that the presence of military peacekeeping forces oftentimes make it easy for the political and structural side of the conflict to “be swept under the carpet”. These data back up what Mac Guinty describes as the conservative character of the UN Security Council decisions, which prioritize the military command over negotiation and structural transformation of the context of the conflict.

(27) See Mac Guinty, R. “Against Stabilization”, *Stability*, 1 (1): 20-30. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.ab>

(28) http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.5/68/26 and SIPRI reports

(29) See “Security Council Istanbul Retreat: the security nexus in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa”, report from the 4th UN Security Council Retreat, April 2013, Turkey. International Peace Institute.

(30) To mention another case, the UN operation in the Ivory Coast dealt with a budget of \$600 million/year, only \$25 million (4%) is destined to development. See text “The mistaken focus on counter-terrorism” by Cornelia Bayer and published online in SIPA, *Journal of International Affairs*: <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/ways-forward-global-counterterrorism/>

A second aspect that describes the dominant model can be seen in the strategy to promote “peace” through the expansion of **counter-insurgency** methodologies: “peace” would be achieved after wiping out the “cancer”³¹ represented by armed non-state groups. The current model even considers that conflicts can be solved through providing weapons and military training to combat groups – provision which is guaranteed by several members of the UN Security Council. This vision also justifies the overthrow of governments in the name of an alleged humanitarianism, shown, for example, in the questionable idea of the “Responsibility to Protect”. Chandler argues that there is no real division between “*Realpolitik*” and humanitarianism: the humanitarian morality cannot be clearly separated from geopolitical interests³².

Thirdly, it is highlighted that, in the dominant model, **security, politics and development are relatively independent spheres**, distributed in stages run over time. Discussing, designing and implementing strategies considering the demands of social and economic development, restructuring of political representation systems or transformation of dividing stereotypes supported by the parties involved in the conflict (combatant or not) as possible reasons to originate conflicts are left to a future time. For example, regarding the civilian aspect of the “peace” operations, Brahimi and Ahmed³³ recognize that there is a tendency to change the leadership of operations, going from a “political” leadership to one a bit more “development-oriented”, under the presumption that after a certain time, the conflict has shifted beyond a political crisis. According to this point of view, the “political” is solely what is linked to the negotiation of short-term formal agreements. That is, the mere diplomatic ability to bargain text content, based on the management of forces. Work division and action guided by artificial distinctions organise fragmented international interventions in barely known territories.

Lastly, nowadays, within the area of diplomatic academic training, theories and practices based on power manipulation and use of force to leverage a conflict’s state of “ripeness” are accepted: supposedly, a state of “**mutually hurting stalemate**” creates the possibility of sitting at the negotiation table³⁴. Therefore, it is estimated that it is legally feasible to apply sanctions and maintain strict conditions for aid distribution (aid conditionality). Even if they deepen economic and social crises and resentments in local populations, they are preferred because they would favour conditions for negotiation³⁵.

In a word, nowadays, the “political” is limited to the discussion and authorisation to use military force to combat demonised actors, to change governments according to standards established by the actors holding higher military power and veto power in the UN Security Council, to deploy troops to contain violence and to proceed the linear implementation of technocratic and normative impositions, oftentimes regardless of the citizens. Deaths, alienation, destruction of infrastructure,

(31) Direct quotes by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, regarding ISIS and the conflict in the Middle East, July 2014.

(32) See Chandler, David, “The responsibility to protect? Imposing the Liberal peace”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, N. 1, 2004.

(33) “In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace: The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation” by Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

(34) William I. Zartman, “The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments”, *The Global Review of Ethno-politics*, Vol. 1, no. 1, September 2001.

(35) For example, the UN Security Council Retreat report mentioned before is very specific: “conditions to bestow help can be considered by the governments that do not respect the rule of law. In Somalia, specifically, it was suggested that the threats to withdraw international support be made explicit in case the governmental efforts regarding counter-terrorist strategies do not work out. This logic of restrictions and threats tied to humanitarian help and to development is one of the main axes of the criticism from the countries in the Global South and the axes and principles of the so-called South-South and triangular cooperation.

displacements caused by the intensification of attacks, as well as the creation of poverty due to sanctions or interventionist restrictions, are justified as a pre-condition to “peace” building. The discussion of economic, political and cultural demands perceived as necessary by several groups, citizens and countries – in a setting of multilateralism and inclusive dialogue – is left for the future and after the assassination, impoverishment and displacement of thousands of men and women.

In brief, the current model assumes that violence, hurting, militarism and imposition are pre-conditions for a “peace” managed by groups either sufficiently armed or powerful so as to dictate the logic of a *later* reconstruction. In short: order to initiate progress. In this context, the citizens become *victims or targets*³⁶ of one group or another group – missing, dead or survivors – and also become *passive actors* – beneficiaries of programs based on the logic of an emergency created and managed by others who take decisions from distant countries. The semantics of the current paradigm is characterised by scarcity: citizens turned into victims, beneficiaries and targets are not able to glimpse a horizon of peace, nor become active agents in this peace building process. Citizens dance to the rhythm of fear.

- **Alternatives: recognition and negotiation of decisions to change the structural causes of conflicts, as in Colombia and The Philippines**

In contrast to this dominant tendency, the current peace processes in Colombia and the Philippines present political and practical alternatives that seek to innovate and elaborate the approach for peacebuilding, linked to systemic and critical perspectives (more detailed below).

Negotiation and dialogue to change the structural causes that give rise to conflicts: in both countries, we find a dialogic approach to assess and address the causes that originated the option for the armed conflict: on the one hand, land distribution and structural conditions of inequality and poverty for most people – in the case of Colombia; on the other hand, the right to an identity and self-determination in their native territories – in the case of the Moro in the south of the Philippines.

In the case of *Colombia*, the government and the FARC included, as one of the six points to be negotiated and agreed upon, the topic of land distribution and access as a means of production and livelihood for Colombian citizens. This is a key factor for achieving growth with equity³⁷. It is important to highlight that, contrary to the linear and segmented logic of the dominant model, the negotiation is going on without a ceasefire.

Political, economic and ideological differences regarding the agrarian reform are considered as one of the core reasons that gave **origin to the armed fight led by the FARC**. In Colombia, 80% of the land is concentrated in the hands of an elite made up of 14% of the population; Colombia is the eleventh country in the world ranking of countries with the worst land distribution, and the second in Latin America, just after Paraguay. Nowadays, 40% of the Colombian territory is under some kind of contract with some international corporation. This regressive picture regarding agrarian equity gets even more complex when we consider that 97% of the internal displaced persons live below the line of poverty³⁸. The agreement between the government and the FARC would put into practice an ambitious plan of restitution and land distribution to the poorest rural populations and the displaced persons. At the same time, the government and President Santos

(36) For examples, see list of international terrorist groups according to the US government standards. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

(37) The General Agreement that is leading the current negotiations include five: a) Agrarian Reform; b) Political Participation; c) Demobilisation and end of conflict; d) Solutions for the Illicit Drug Problem; and e) Victims.

(38) “Divide and Purchase: how land ownership is being concentrated in Colombia”, Oxfam Report, 2013.

approved Law 1448 (“Victims and Land Restitution Law”), which acknowledges the existence of the armed conflict, plans compensations for the survivors of human rights abuse and specifies measures for the rightful return of the owners of millions of hectares stolen by different groups, including paramilitaries working together with the national armed forces³⁹. The analysis of the context that guides the dialogue process is also present in topics such as drug trafficking and political participation as central concepts that worsened systemic violence. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that a structural topic linked to equity and control of means of production has been recognized as historically linked to the beginning of the armed conflict.

In the case of the *Philippines*, we find a peace process committed to searching multiple answers for the deepest causes of the conflict. The Moro fight for an independent administration and management of a land strip in the south of the country (native groups converted to Islam). At first, the government tried to achieve total victory based on military strategies guaranteed by martial law. Nevertheless, the government gradually changed its strategy: it created the Office of the President to coordinate the conflicts and search for alternatives to the national tensions, including answering the demands of the Moro. Point 5 of the peace agreement signed recently between the government and the MILF recognizes the Bangsamoro identity: “*those who in times of conquest and colonization were considered native and original inhabitants of the Mindanao region and the Sulu Archipelago and adjacent islands*”⁴⁰. This language represents some progress in terms of recognising the right to identity and self-determination of the original peoples. Also, the agreement establishes alignments to share wealth and vital resources such as water, as well as the creation of institutions – such as the police – coordinated by the new territorial entity. Beyond the fluctuations over time, this opening of the Filipino government to recognize the autonomy and right to identity of Islamic groups shows a critical and systemic approach to the conflict.

In both countries, recent developments show that the challenges of the conflict were not simplified in favour of militarism and a superficial approach: the discussion of the underlying causes guided the negotiations throughout recent years.

- **The theoretical debate: approaching the structural causes for the resolution of international conflicts.**

Having considered the characteristics of the dominant model, as well as the case of Colombia and the Philippines, it is relevant to question this comparison weighing up critical and systemic theoretical perspectives for peacebuilding.

Approaching the structural causes of the conflicts during the *whole* transformation process: firstly, it would be imperative to review the logic of the dominant model, according to which, in general, addressing the structural causes of the conflicts is consistently pushed aside to ***soon after*** the establishment of weak agreements copied from one country to another and sustained with exogenous-military stabilization strategies. From a critical and systemic point of view, the review of the causes of conflicts and the conditions that worsen them -failing to comply with human rights- should not be pushed aside or to a future phase of “peace consolidation”. Addressing the root causes is a priority and the organizing axis of complex long-term interaction and dialogue processes directed to their sustainable transformation. What prevails is the acknowledgement of the historicity, the reasons perceived by ***all*** the actors and the investigation of the socio-

(39) See “Colombia: the victims and land restitution law; an Amnesty International analysis”, 2012.

(40) The agreement and other texts and relevant information on the peace process can be found in the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process web page: <http://opapp.gov.ph/>

economic, political and cultural realities that had progressively fuelled the option of violence as a tool towards context transformation. It is not a control problem as seen by the techno-military positivist postures, but a dynamic readjustment of the structures of exclusion. These considerations are based on theoretical arguments of peace studies such as the one of Lederach⁴¹, who warns about the superficial effects of what he called “negative peace”: the one that favours containment of violence over structural transformation. Colombia and the Philippines, as many others in the world⁴², had to admit that military force does not guarantee the highly sought after “peace” and much less a solution that takes into account the rights of all citizens and the transformation of the structural causes of the exclusion. In this same line of thought, authors such as Galtung⁴³ demonstrate the need to address not only direct violence but also **the so-called structural and cultural violence**. In Colombia, the approach contemplates the attention to aspects related to key “structural violence” – land distribution – as much as violence suffered by the victims (another agenda item). In the case of the Philippines, both the “cultural violence” suffered by the Moro – discrimination regarding identity, religion – as well as the structural violence – right to ancestral territories – are acknowledged. Systemic perspectives such as the one of Ricigliano⁴⁴ propose a similar holistic approach. This scholar argues that, to achieve sustainable peace, it is essential to design and create transformations based on the honest attention to the **structure of the conflict**: that is, the analysis on how society and its institutions answer (or not) people’s needs. In short, the organising axis of systemic peace processes is, like in Colombia and the Philippines, to actively work in the discussion and agreement – since the very beginning of the peace transformation cycle – of reforms based on debating, listening and paying attention to the deepest causes of conflicts.

In brief, a critical and systemic approach **re-politicises and re-historicises violence and peace** to question the multiple causes linked to the beginning, the maintenance and the expansion of the conflict. Recognising these historical conditions of exclusion in order to search for real transformation cannot be the sole responsibility of, and neither carried out by, external actors worried only about weapons control and rules. To hold external actors responsible would be – according to Chandler, Richmond and others – a step back to colonialist practices and to the “Realpolitik”. Besides, it would be denying a crucial consideration on how social systems work: the ones who understand, live, interpret, re-signify and change the course of history are those belonging to the system – citizens, groups, and local leaders⁴⁵.

Dialogue with armed non-state groups instead of demonising them: Secondly, it is important to highlight that, from a systemic point of view, conflict transformation cannot happen if the “other” is not involved. Demonization, lack of recognition and symbolic denial of armed non-state groups – either by trying to exterminate them through military victory or by taking the decision to only hold talks with groups that are more favourable to the government and/or the international community – is a factor that would give rise to new violence cycles and would weaken the long-term chances of transformation. In this sense, Ricigliano also points out that a systemic approach needs to do parallel work to distinguish and transform not only the structural causes (above), but also **attitudes and relationship patterns** perpetuating violence. Therefore, it is necessary to address

(41) See Lederach, John Paul, “El ABC de la paz y los conflictos: educar para la paz”, Los libros de la Catarata, 2000 and other texts by the same author, such as “The Moral Imagination, the art and soul of building peace”, Oxford University, 2005.

(42) A recent article published by Joseph Powell provides a list of examples in which negotiation was accepted as the best path: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/-sp-how-to-talk-to-terrorists-isis-al-qaida?CMP=fb_gu

(43) See Galtung, Johan, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research”, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Journal of Peace Research and “Cultural Violence”, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27, No. 3., 1990, pp. 291-305.

(44) See Ricigliano, Robert, “Making peace last: a toolbox for sustainable peacebuilding”, Paperback, 2012.

(45) We delve deeper into this point in the next section of this article.

the rules, beliefs and ideas that affect the possibility of cooperation, while working on the level of trust among the contending groups. From the point of view of Sociology and Political Theory, we distinguish arguments such as Weber’s⁴⁶: legitimacy is the basic source of monopoly of force; it can have traditional, charismatic or rational sources. Therefore, denying organisational ways and several aspirations would hinder the consolidation of legitimate powers. In terms of the socio-constructivism suggested by Wendt⁴⁷, it is important to support inter-subjectivity and dialogical interconnection between “one” and the “other” as parts of the same whole. In the diplomatic sector, these ideas are backed up by those who promote multilateral diplomacy, collective security and cooperation over coercion (for example, sanctions) or self-interest (for instance, fear of an attack). The challenge is to balance transformation of structural and material causes of conflicts – such as the ones highlighted above – with the value of dialogue.

From a more pragmatic point of view, and based on the observation of behaviours in contexts of violence, the main peace organisations and analysts working on a global scale summon governments to promote an active dialogue with armed non-state groups. This appeal is based on the ascertainment that moderation and cooperation are the consequence of “proximity”: several empirical studies highlight that it is possible to observe that the attack and the isolation of armed non-state groups tend to increase radicalisation and intolerance, with negative repercussions for most of the citizens⁴⁸.

Both in Colombia and the Philippines, the governments chose dialogue and negotiation instead of the complete demonization of armed non-state groups which justified military operations to exterminate the “other”. In Colombia, as we mentioned before, the new attempts to reach peace started after 10 very difficult years of military advancements from the Uribe administration, supported with US funding. The FARC were removed from the terrorist list, and that was the beginning of negotiations that included the voices of armed groups as citizens. In the Philippines, dialogue is achieving advances towards consolidating a dignified and long-lasting peace.

In brief, it is vital to deepen the analysis and create strategies considering key dilemmas posed by academic theory and research: it would be unlikely to recreate stable and inclusive societies and institutions without considering the citizens represented by armed non-state groups fighting the governments. In sum, armed non-state groups represent the values of human groups brought together by common ideals.

In the next section, nonetheless, we wish to address an extra challenge for achieving dignified and sustainable peace: that negotiations – in case they do exist – should not be limited to armed elites nor should they be characterized by secrecy and arrogance. Citizen inclusion is vital.

4.2. Alternatives to elitism, individualism and arrogance in order to promote participative processes for conflict transformation.

- **The dominant model: elitism, individualism and arrogance (kept in secret)**

Wherever there are negotiations, the dominant model for conflict resolution, in very general terms, is characterized by a certain emphasis in **the individual power of the international mediator**. The

(46) Weber, “The three types of legitimate rule”, Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions 4(1): 1-11, 1958.

(47) See Copeland, Dale C., “The constructivist challenge to structural realism: a review essay”, International Security, Vol. 25, 2000, pp 187-212.

(48) Dudoet, Veronique, “Mediating peace with armed groups”, United States Institute for Peace Special Report, 2009.

worry about status prevails over the training of the mediator in mediation theory and practice and over his previous experience in establishing complex political dialogues, including local leaders and communities of the context in question. The international mediator generally does not speak or live the language of the local communities. It seems that there is a tendency to negotiate based on the manipulation of interests, on threats and on bargaining, that is, realistic and institutional negotiation prevails over the constructivist one⁴⁹. Thus, political processes are managed by a manipulative minority. As mentioned above, these characteristics are in accordance with an ahistorical and linear view of the social and the role of the majorities – the citizens – is diminished in favour of an authoritarianism supported by the hierarchies of the few sitting at the negotiating table, who work sheltered by secrecy⁵⁰.

In this context, we would like to emphasise the conclusions from one of the senior mediators with the United Nations. Brahimi⁵¹ lists seven “sins” committed by international mediators. Two of these “sins” are **ignorance and arrogance**: to Brahimi, mediators and their teams do not know and do not understand the conflicts. They do not speak the local languages and estimate that in the short term – between trips – they can manage sustainable resolutions of long-standing conflicts that bear deep into socio-historical roots. The history and the place –made up of a multiplicity of happenings with diverse interpretations – are undervalued, in favour of an exogenous, fast and superficial process.

Maybe ignorance and arrogance would not exist without a considerable **linguistic and symbolic tactic** in the field of international relations: the countries and their inhabitants are classified as “fragile”, “failed”, “underdeveloped”, “emerging” or “third world”. These designations establish modernizing scales – such as the ones disclosed by post-colonial studies; this way, local ideas, capabilities and abilities are denied, while historical conditions of co-responsibility in the generation of problems and conflicts are practically made invisible. In doing so, there is more room for intervention: in such a “chaotic” situation that is amplified to a point that it creates the perception that such conflict cannot be managed by anyone other than someone from the outside. Such space would not be there without the complicity of local leaders and governments that, in search of donations and financing, also focus more on the problems than on the internal capabilities to create options and solutions. In this context, countries like Brazil and China, for instance, are unwilling to actively join initiatives like the G7+⁵² (led by dominant countries – “developed” – of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD). Among many other reasons, this is because it considers it a fallacy to start thinking of options while discrediting countries in conflict by calling them “fragile”⁵³.

Secondly, the dominant model is characterized by **elitism**. In general, a few analyses on causes, possibilities and effects are created behind closed doors, during conferences and meetings organised by and for the elites under conflict and their teams, followed by some reports provided by a small group of advisors – mostly technicians from the Global North. The concerns and demands from the citizens who are the main actors either in conflict or in peace, are pushed back to a future

(49) See Hoffman, Claudia and Schneckener, Ulrich, “Engaging non-state armed groups in peacebuilding and state-building”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Volume 93, N. 883, 2011.

(50) In the academic training of diplomats, there is strong emphasis in the so-called “first generation” mediation (bargaining and power manipulation) over others more directed towards active listening and mutual recognition (second and third generations).

(51) Brahimi, Lakhdar y Ahmed, Salman, “In pursuit of Sustainable Peace, the seven deadly sins of mediation”, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

(52) <http://www.g7plus.org/>

(53) See “Beyond the New Deal: Global collaboration and peacebuilding with BRICS countries”, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Policy Briefing, Issue 59, 2014.

pre-defined by just a few. Recent studies like “Time to Listen”⁵⁴ – an listening exercise in which citizens from 29 countries “receiving” international cooperation initiatives were consulted – came to the conclusion that the communities do not feel included in the definition of strategies, and that, in the long term, these communities produce dependency and disempowerment. Citizens feel that they are not respected and become frustrated with the tools of the international cooperation. Feminist perspectives highlight that *“local knowledge is not seen as a resource, but as an obstacle to the technocratic execution of the pacts; they do not reinforce local processes or just duplicate local knowledge. Patronage leads to a legitimacy crisis to the locals. This ends up having a patronizing effect not democratic at all”*⁵⁵.

Thirdly, the dominant model for negotiation and conflict resolution is based on another worrisome aspect, which is the **decontextualized replication of models and texts** supporting the building of “peace”: once the negotiation starts, agreements pre-established by the “international community” include aspects just copied from a place to the other, with complete disregard for context. Re-used text templates tend to include repeated points (for example, power-sharing among contenders, and blanket pardons, elections and combatant demobilization). Denkus⁵⁶ compares the “peace” building dominant model with Auge’s “no-place” concept: *“peacebuilding has turned into a word that designates an imaginary space, a discourse of interactions governed by methodologies and tools which are accepted without criticism, terms and reference frameworks to promote dialogue. Thus, “peace” building is like a user instruction set that Auge describes as no-places”*. Furthering this situation of decontextualized copy as a hegemonic tactic, it is noteworthy that oftentimes the support to the transition from war to peace has, as a pre-condition, the establishment of Western-like democratic governmental systems and open-market policies guided towards a potential economic growth led by major international corporations, the IMF and the World Bank. It could be said that this is an example of the arrogance of the dominant model: the countries are compelled to comply with the conditions set out by external actors.

In practice, there have been some recent advances: for example, the mediation guide published by the UN Mediation Support Unit includes, as one of its points, the advice to guarantee inclusivity as a basic point in conflict mediation. This recognition is an innovation in the field of conflict resolution: only recently have we started to think beyond this elitism, while validating the idea of joining efforts with diplomats so as to promote legitimacy and sustainability in peace processes.

Last but not least, it is necessary to highlight that the dominant model takes it for granted that mediation is always impartial. However, Brahimi points out that impartiality is expressed both in the way the mediator leads the conversations and also in the perception of the parties regarding the mediator’s nationality, organisation that he represents, religion and background. Then, we should re-discuss the idea of impartiality: if the idea is to promote legitimate and sustainable peace, as we will observe in the case studies below, the careful consideration of political balance in the mediation process, as well as the citizen perceptions regarding external actors, are of utmost importance. Lastly, it should be accepted that the choice of certain *modus operandi*, devices and tools is a choice for the techno-liberal peace; they are neither apolitical nor objective.

In short, the dominant model is organised around elitist guidelines that foment arrogance and de-contextualization. Through the case studies, we will see how – in practice – it is possible to seek

(54) Anderson, Mary, Brown, Dayna, Jean, Isabella, “Time to Listen, Hearing people on the receiving end of international aid”, Collaborative Learning Project (CDA), 2012.

(55) See, for example, Hudson, Heidi, “La violencia de la construcción de paz neoliberal en África: analizando sus “trampas” a través de una lente de género”, Relaciones Internacionales, GERI-UAM, N. 16, 2011.

(56) Denkus Tobias, “Peacebuilding does not build peace”, Development in Practice, Vol. 17, N. 4/5, pp 656-662.

alternatives, thus promoting a more legitimate peace.

- **Alternatives: complex and participative processes in which local-regional leaderships transform the conflicts in Colombia and the Philippines**

The challenge is to reflect on how to overcome this dominant model based on individualism, elitism, arrogance, ignorance and political and cultural imposition. The cases of Colombia and the Philippines provide, once again, an opportunity to debate necessary reconfigurations.

National-regional leadership and the role of facilitators and other team members: a first remarkable aspect in the cases of Colombia and the Philippines is that, nowadays, the national governments show **leadership** oriented towards the **peaceful resolution** of conflicts. At the same time, they have preserved their political space in order to create a dialogue process involving all citizens.

In the case of the Philippines, for many years the government and the armed groups maintained conversations and negotiations without the intervention of external groups. The Philippines created an endogenous and multifaceted peacebuilding process called “Six Paths to Peace”⁵⁷. Until today, this is the guideline for the systemic and participative conflict transformation. Besides, the Philippines established the “ICG-International Contact Group” with Malaysia as facilitator – instead of mediator – a country with similar religious and cultural values. The group is made up of four more States – Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Kingdom – and four non-governmental organisations⁵⁸. Further, the ICG is an innovation because it includes some international civil society organisations at the negotiation table⁵⁹. The diversity in ICG counterweighs the interest of the armed non-state group (MILF) to internationalise their peace conversations and the government’s aversion to external interference in sovereign matters. This collective voice has allowed the integration of perspectives while avoiding the arrogant manipulation of an individual representative of a single organisation or country with excessive control of a national peace process.

In the case of Colombia, the current peace process is characterised by the leadership of the Santos administration, the FARC, civil society and Colombian citizens. More specifically, both parties – government and FARC – have decided to hold direct negotiations: this means that the process is led by Colombians and does not have an international mediator. The role of Cuba, Chile, Venezuela and Norway is to support as “guarantors” of the process. The backing of Latin American countries is a source of legitimacy for the strengthening and democratization of the region: one of the key messages from all countries to Colombia and the FARC was that their socio-economic claims could now be met by peaceful and democratic means. Similarly to the Philippines, the variety of observers and guarantors balances the over-manipulation tendency of one specific member or mediator.

(57) In 1993 the government enabled the process that ended up with this framework called “Six paths to peace”: there was public consultation throughout the country and the citizens were able to share their ideas on how to reach long-lasting peace. The “Six Paths to Peace” acknowledges that negotiations between the government and armed groups around a discussion table are just one of the paths. And it must be complemented by parallel and participative changes regarding: a) socio-economic reforms dealing with the very problems that created the conflicts; b) reconciliation; c) protection to civilians; d) creation of a supporting atmosphere for peacebuilding.

(58) Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Asia Foundation, Conciliation Resources and Muhammadiyah – one of the biggest Muslim organisations in Indonesia.

(59) Herbolzheimer, K. and Leslie, Emma, “Innovation in mediation support: The International Contact Group in Mindanao”, Practice Paper, Conciliation Resources, 2014.

The fact that both countries have chosen facilitators instead of mediators and have invited several neighbouring countries and civil society organisations as observers and guarantors is a noteworthy characteristic that shows attention and appreciation in creating a space for reflection in diversity. In this sense, Iji and Fuchinoue⁶⁰ argue that when states get together for joint mediation, private interests interact and the outcomes prove to be positive. Besides, it is important to highlight that both countries were very careful not to choose countries with direct geo-political interests. The Filipino government is reluctant to include multilateral powers and organisations, while MILF opposes countries that provide weapons and military support to the Philippines – such as the United States and Australia. This could be understood as an invitation to debate the need for mediators not to be linked to geo-political interests (real or perceived – for example, colonising powers or organisations controlled by them). Therefore, this could be evidence of the need to review the idea of impartiality, accepting the central role of different perceptions that must be considered in each and every mediation process.

One could argue that local leadership is possible because the Colombian and Filipino states have not collapsed. At this point, it is interesting to mention a counter-example that can be seen in Somaliland. This non-recognised country has led its peace process and creation of a national state without the intervention of external powers. Somaliland has used native methodologies for conflict resolution in a series of long citizen-financed conferences. The process ended up with the creation of a “hybrid” political order, which is nowadays an example of stability and growth in a region where international intervention has only failed (the example being Somalia, the “failed state” from which Somaliland has separated)⁶¹.

In brief, in contrast to the dominant view, the cases of Colombia and the Philippines (and Somaliland) indicate that the leaders and members of conflict-ridden societies show commitment and abilities to find their own solution to conflicts. Not only this, the internal political space that is created – balanced and attentive to the level of involvement of external actors – could be seen as a possible success factor. In turn, we highlight that the choice of countries shows that the perceptions on the dangers of manipulation based on cultural, ideological, military, economic and political interests is a vital issue.

Creation of a complex and participative process of communication: a second lesson can be learned from the cases of Colombia and the Philippines, a practical example on the possibility of de-constructing the dominant model for conflict resolution. This is directly related to the creation of a flexible framework of dialogue made up by several interrelated spaces for citizen participation. This flexible framework is an open communication process towards the deep and legitimate conflict transformation.

In the case of Colombia, several tools and processes were established, through which members at the negotiation table receive and deliberate on proposals sent by citizens and organisations, while providing information regarding the advancements in the negotiations⁶² (double feedback loop). More specifically, we can highlight the establishment and the work of the Peace Committee in the National Congress which, with the support of the United Nations and thousands of social organisations, started a process of national open consultations, including with the diaspora living

(60) Iji & Fuchinoue, “Toward a Better Understanding of Multiparty Mediation in International Relations” in *Hiroshima Peace Science*, Vol. 31 (2009), pp. 157-160.

(61) See Bradbury, Mark, “Becoming Somaliland”, *African Issues*, 2008.

(62) According to some analysts, this open space that has overcome the typical secrecy of negotiation tables has broadened and improved during the election process in the beginning of 2014, with the interest to re-elect President Santos.

abroad. In dozens of meetings, citizens shared their proposals with members of the Congress and, later, with the members of the negotiation table. Also, a web page⁶³ was created, where both individuals and legal entities send ideas about the several issues in the agenda: in November 2014, more than 8.000 proposals were received. In the web, the messages are written in Spanish, English and local languages (Sikuani, Wayuu and Embera) and in different formats so as to be accessible to differently-abled people. Finally, an essential innovation in the Colombian process is the participation of representatives of victims of the conflict in some of the negotiation table sections. In the June 2014 Declaration of Principles, the government and the FARC stated the philosophical and political framework to begin discussions about the victims: it is essential, first, that they be recognised as citizens with rights and, therefore, with the right to truth, justice and reparations⁶⁴. Before each section of direct dialogue with the victims, there were the “Forums for Victims’ Participation”. In the first one, 3,000 testimonies and reparation proposals were collected. This is the first step on a path to recover the truth and the memory through collective narrative, while negotiation is directly guided by the vision of the ones affected by the government decisions, the FARC and the several paramilitary forces supported by them. These innovations could be considered as communication spaces enabling the healing process and the re-creation of narratives about the past and the future. Importantly, this happens simultaneously with the discussion between the parties.

In the case of the Philippines, it is noteworthy that civil society organisations – full members of the negotiation table (ICG) – have established alliances for a systematic and constant work with dozens of national organisations and local representatives of different sectors – women, youth, indigenous groups, mass media representatives, social leaders linked to armed groups and the business sector. These organisations mobilise and interact directly with the citizens all over the country to enable and monitor the implementation of the peace agreement by managing expectations, keeping the population informed and providing the negotiation table with enriching ideas. Important topics such as transitional justice, indigenous rights, and the creation of a new police force are debated in local meetings that keep a communication and reflection channel open in order to achieve peace consolidation. One of the most significant activities to date was the planning of a national referendum so that citizens could share their ideas about the content of Bangsamoro’s new constitution (*Basic Law*). Thousands of proposals were delivered to the parties and their teams for proper consideration.

At last, and in a worrying global context regarding female participation in negotiation processes and implementation of peace agreements⁶⁵, the cases of the Philippines and Colombia give inspiring examples: both negotiation tables have female representatives with high levels of responsibility. This level of representation put into practice Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council on women,

(63) www.mesadeconversaciones.com

(64) More specifically, the government and the FARC clarified in Point 5 of General Lineaments about the Negotiation Framework: “Focus on rights: All the agreements we come to about the points in the Agenda and specifically about point 5 “Victims” should contribute to the protection and effective enjoyment of rights by all. Human rights are inherent to all human beings, which means that it is theirs by nature and, consequently, their acknowledgement is not a concession, inasmuch as they are universal, indivisible and interdependent, and must be considered globally and in a fair and equitable fashion”.

(65) Reports from the United Nations confirm that, from the 31 processes registered between 1992 and 2011, women were represented in only 9 negotiation tables, only 4 were signing parties of agreements and only 2.4 were mediators. According to reports from the UN, however, there is evidence suggesting that the participation of women in negotiation tables generates better outcomes. In El Salvador, Northern Ireland, the Philippines and South Africa, women helped create agreements that reflect more comprehensive interests of the civil society and, especially, of more marginalised groups.

peace and safety⁶⁶. Besides, women’s social mobilisation is of core importance: for example, in Colombia, the National Summit of Women for Peace is creating a cultural transformation of the patriarchal and militarist view of conflict resolution. More specifically, the “Ethical Pact for Peace” is organising the work in schools all over the country, public campaigns, action-research to delve into the perceptions and ideas of each citizen on security and peace, and influencing national and international instances on the creation of peace policies.

In conclusion, the processes in Colombia and the Philippines challenge the idea that “peace” is uniquely centred in the negotiation table of minorities surrounded by a wall of secrecy. They exemplify that it is necessary, from the beginning, to have a sensitive eye towards the notion of legitimacy and transformation of the culture of violence and exclusion. Thus, they design and reinforce participative, dynamic and flexible processes in which citizens can participate and negotiators have the opportunity to create and hear the several voices in a framework involving different actors and countries.

- **The theoretical debate: systemic approach and complexity theory for the resolution of international conflicts**

Having considered the characteristics of the dominant model, as well as a few cases such as Colombia and the Philippines, it is relevant to question this tension taking into account theoretical arguments offered by the critical and systemic theory.

It seems international intervention is debatable not only from the point of view of the need to respect international rules of sovereignty and self-determination. International intervention may be questioned under the light of critical and systemic arguments. Especially if these interventions, as we observed in the previous sections, still have a militarist, exogenous, imposing and elitist character. The linear and manipulative advancement inspired by epistemologies and policies of the positivist rationalism and institutionalism is inefficient and fallacious: the systemic notion of the social reinforces the criticism from post-colonialism and arguments that seek a “third position” to the theory and practice in the field of conflict resolution.

The first factor for considering the dominant model a fallacy, according to critical and systemic arguments, refers to the notion that the problems of a system can only be approached and transformed – always in open processes – by the same actors in the system. Those are the ones who can easily adjust to the changes, dynamically react to the alternatives and share contextualised information so as to promote effective and long-lasting transformations. In this sense, it is important to highlight that, from a systemic perspective, it is not possible to find definitive and stable “solutions” to the problems: the only permanent thing is change. Systems are self-regulatory in dynamic processes, made up by infinite interactions between the parties constantly finding new phases of change and stability. Therefore, the active monitoring of these daily transformations – socio-political dialogue between citizens and several groups that reedit praxis and reconfigure public spaces and institutions – is only possible to be carried out by those who are part of the process. It cannot be controlled by exogenous actors. In peace initiatives, what can be done is to design processes with emphasis on the creation of a flexible framework that interconnects several spaces for dialogue and reflection, guided towards giving feedback on ideas, decisions

(66) Following the analysis of critical and feminist theories, women participation is vital so that “the ideas about human development, human rights and human security” do not fall through by assuming that male experience is the norm and failing to acknowledge gender differences. There is real danger that, when merging masculinity and femininity under the umbrella term “human”, we end up concealing gender basis from the security or power practices”.

and possibilities: that is, an environment that enables exchange and participation. This point of view is complemented with the ideas – in the field of conflict resolution – of multi-track diplomacy and citizen diplomacy, as well as those actors who emphasise the validity of process facilitation over a mediation style centred on interest-gearred manipulation.

The cases of Colombia and the Philippines offer concrete examples of a direct connection with the critical and systemic theory: these countries have learned to preserve their local leadership, and the members of the negotiation table have been chosen to deal with delicate matters such as diversity and political balance. At the same time, they support practical innovations opening the negotiation table to several citizens and groups⁶⁷. It is relevant that, in these cases, the openness to further the dialogue is linked to the intention to transform the structural causes of exclusion which create and maintain the conflict: a criticism to peace organisations has been that they have emphasised more the conversations about topics of identity and emotions, while downscaling the transformation of macro-structural inequities that result in more suffering for great majorities and specific groups. As seen in the beginning of this article, it is vital to guide the dialogue towards changing the causes for exclusion.

Importantly, one key question would be: where does a system begin and end? (especially nowadays). We are very much aware of the multiple solidarities, legal frameworks and global challenges that do not consider national borders: climate change, international jurisdictions remind us that national states are historical constructions and cooperating parties of a whole. At the same time, new technologies – with endless potentials for creating knowledge and social movements – demystify institutional and cultural walls. More than ever, it is important to critically and thoughtfully enable change processes, aware of the need for equitable, interactive and multiple dialogues among and with all the parties involved. Rigidity and endogenous imposition are not feasible in a world more dynamic and open than ever. It is vital to acknowledge the essential role of the actors who are able to transform the conflicts, and promote legitimate processes transforming conflict root causes.

In brief, the right to citizen participation and to civilian protection is justified from a legal point of view. But it is also justified by critical and systemic theories. These perspectives are about emancipation: active participation is a pre-requisite for co-creation of new realities that place life before death and all the current suffering. A biased, centralizing, imposing model that silences the narratives and practices of the leading actors of change in their conflict systems would be bound to fail or would achieve short-term success based on extermination and oppression of a few over others. As stated by Eneko Sanz: *“it is necessary to rescue the power of narratives; we must understand that planning and developing peace processes is more ethical and political than a technical issue. Then our responsibility is to listen and, above all, suggest new possible stories”*⁶⁸.

When we emphasise the central role of the new forms of dialogue, we are stressing the importance of de-constructing power structures and hierarchies that hinder horizontality and multiplicity of voices. Therefore, it is mandatory to de-structure hegemonies and supremacies and totalising discourses that concentrate the power and the truth in the hands of a few. Contradictions cannot be solved, but transformed: it is necessary to resist the univocal proliferation of only a few ways of reasoning and organising things. This resistance is political and aims at removing the obstacles to a more unbiased communication. In this peacebuilding field, it is essential to contextualize this

(67) The publication Accord, Issue 25, “Legitimacy and peace processes, from coercion to consent”, 2014, Conciliation Resources offers examples and more details on the debate regarding participation and legitimacy in peace processes.

(68) Sanz, Eneko, “The peacebuilding Story”, paper presented at the CPCS Peace Practitioners Research Conference.

project in the political change processes led by citizens and countries in the Global South.

This is the political risk in the field of peacebuilding: all the voices for a new “political we”.

5. Conclusion: opportunities in the field of building international peace

This article has sought to promote the debate about the necessary renovation in policy and strategies in order to solve international conflicts and build peace.

We do so in a historical moment which, as described, is characterized by the increase in human suffering and advancement of militaristic postures, degrading to several “others”. This interferes in the search for dialogue and in the transformation of the structural causes of conflicts. We highlight theoretical analyses that report this neo-colonising tendency and explain systemic options in which the participation of several countries, organisations and citizens is not dismissed to a “soon-to-be” guaranteed by the military “stabilisation” that limits and hinders the legitimate building of a real structural change.

By focusing on the concrete examples of the peace processes in Colombia and the Philippines, we have been able to observe that it is possible to choose peaceful means to solve conflicts if backed up by local leaderships committed to counteracting the elitist and arrogant tendencies that characterize the international mediation traditional practice. These countries have designed complex long-term processes that go beyond signing agreements: they define conflict resolution as the building of a new political “we”. This cannot be undertaken by external actors: those actors should limit themselves to support and accompany the search for paths defined by those historically affected by violence.

We acknowledge that there is some recognition of the limitations of the dominant model: for instance, need to address the causes of the conflict, while critically analysing the role of peacekeeping forces and the possible manipulation of concepts such as the “Responsibility to Protect”. Nevertheless, there is a long way ahead: besides debating and implementing the necessary innovations such as the ones set forth in this article, we believe it is necessary to do some research to determine how and why UN members encourage the increase in the trade of arms (for warfare and other purposes), while financing and training armed groups that work for their geopolitical interests. In sum, it would be necessary to de-construct this connection between economic interests (weapons commerce) and the expansion of military options for “peace”. Besides, it is vital to further discuss how national and international companies and development banks – chiefly controlled by the Global North – spoon-feed exclusion processes and thus increase the probability of medium and long term conflicts.

The attempts to transform the current context should reject simplifications that consider international mediation of conflicts as a transitional technicality towards peace or just consider necessary an adjustment in procedure: it is also necessary to criticise and change the structures that hold together the hegemonic pillars of the world order, as well as to suggest proposals that have an impact on the main causes of the conflicts without belittling all the voices involved. These

are pre-requisites for a dignified and long-lasting peace.

Ultimately, it is crucial to intermingle change processes that critically connect the areas of peace, rights, development, economic justice and international relations. The dispersal of forces promotes the advancement of short-minded and short-termed views that work to the detriment of real and dignified peace.

The challenge requires that centralized power is redefined and redistributed. This could be achieved through a transforming political process addressing the structural causes of the conflicts and through multipolar dialogue enabling the re-imagination of the social: a scenario in which rights for all citizens without distinction is the corner-stone of a new system—no more victims, beneficiaries or targets of an outdated model.

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