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Trust and Distrust in the Resolution of Protracted Social Conflicts: The Case of Colombia

Dr anastasia filippidou, Cranfield Forensic Institute, Cranfield University, Shrivenham, E:a.filippidou@cranfield.ac.uk

Dr Thomas O'Brien, W/N/249, Department of SociologyHeslington, York, E: t.obrien@york.ac.uk

Abstract

In protracted social conflict, trust between the contending parties is absent and distrust can prevent or undermine attempts to find a sustainable resolution. It is important to recognise distrust as an active process, distinct from low trust or the absence of trust. Previous work has identified the difference between thick (internal) and thin (social) trust bonds within and between groups. Recognising the varied nature of trust and distrust can provide opportunities to create mechanisms to bridge divides. It may be

possible to create institutions able to guarantee agreements, as leading actors persuade followers by calling on thick trust. This paper examines the negotiation of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, following more than 50 years of conflict. The aims of the paper are to (1) identify the form and extent of trust and distrust between parties, and (2) determine how distrust was managed in negotiating the peace agreement. The findings point to the ability of elite actors to develop thin trust through repeated formal interactions and in turn use thick trust to bind followers.

Keywords: Colombia, FARC, trust, distrust, conflict resolution, identity

Introduction

Trust has been identified as key in resolving protracted social conflicts, as it enables the development of spaces necessary to establish a viable peace process (Brahimi and Salman, 2008). Processes aimed at resolving conflict operate across multiple-levels, as negotiators must gain the approval of various actors in distinct phases within a complex socio-political dynamic. Ties of trust and distrust are dispersed unevenly between actors and across these levels, having built up and solidified over time (see Anheier and Kendall, 2002; Bijlsma-Frankema et al, 2015). Combatant groups may have developed high levels of internal trust and similarly high levels of distrust regarding outsiders and opponents in order to maintain cohesion and commitment. Distrust of outsiders can serve as a mechanism for bonding members of a group by forming a collective identity that is 'produced and reproduced, negotiated and renegotiated, in the interactions of individuals embedded in particular sociocultural contexts' (Hunt and Benford, 2004: 447). Resolving such protracted conflicts requires more than simply engaging trust-building mechanisms, as the identity of combatant groups is forged in conflict and distrust

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of the opponent. Resolving protracted conflict may paradoxically involve weakening internal trust bonds to allow space for the removal of distrust towards other actors.

The peace process in Colombia symbolises a milestone in efforts to settle one of the world's most protracted violent conflicts. The roots of the conflict rested on a combination of factors including socio-economic inequality, political exclusion, weak state structures, land ownership and spatial fragmentation, all of which are conducive to violence (see Feldman, 2017). In this context, the negotiation of a comprehensive peace agreement in 2016 represents a significant achievement and provides an important point of reference for the development of political solutions to protracted conflicts (Sanchez and Illingworth, 2017). The conflicting parties appear to have taken stock of their own past failures and drawn lessons from other peace processes in determining a way forward (Westminster Hall Debate, 2019). An important element in the negotiations was the involvement of external actors, serving as guarantors and intermediaries. This approach facilitates conflicting parties to overcome distrust by relying on the establishment of formal safeguards managed by the external actors (see Lumineau, 2017). Distrust between the parties remained, but was reduced over time through the formulation of shared goals enabling a shift in identity over time (MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019; Kroc Institute, 2019).

Colombia represents a valuable case study when considering how pervasive distrust can be managed in formulating the resolution of protracted conflict. The article focuses on the negotiation of the peace agreement in 2016 between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC – *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), following more than 50 years of conflict. The aims of the article are to: (1) identify the form and extent of trust and distrust between parties, and (2) determine how distrust was

managed in negotiating the peace agreement. The article is divided into four sections. In the first section, the features of conflict resolution and the role of trust building mechanisms (TBM) in achieving and sustaining peace are examined. The article then focuses on the nature of trust and distrust, identifying their characteristics and the interaction between them. The third section outlines the methodology used to structure the case study. The fourth section presents a close examination of the resolution of conflict in Colombia, examining the mechanisms used to disrupt entrenched patterns of distrust and formulate a sustainable peace. The paper concludes by revisiting key elements of the Colombian negotiations to reflect on how the management of trust and distrust enabled agreement between the parties to the conflict.

Negotiating Conflict Resolution

Transitioning from violent to non-violent conflict entails the realisation among conflicting parties that a purely military solution is no longer the preferred option. Instead, the exploration and development of the possibilities to engage with the opponent in a constructive dialogue, replaces the focus on armed confrontation. In a situation of intractable conflict, varied and complementary approaches, responding to the many concerns and fears of the conflicting parties, are needed to achieve an accommodation (Bercovitch, 2014). For such a process to advance, all actors involved need to reach a point where they have a lot to gain and little to lose from entering into negotiations (Deutsch, 1960). A detailed and well-structured peace process generates hope for commitment from the parties involved to resolve conflict peacefully. By contrast, a loosely-structured peace process, coupled with the experience of past failure, can lead to a fear of the alternative and the possible escalation of conflict. This results as actors seek to safeguard their position in the face of uncertainty, demonstrating the critical importance of establishing stable social relations in conflict resolution.

Considering the roots that underpin violent conflict and work against the initiation of lasting, sustainable conflict resolution, we find issues of trust and distrust. The commitment required to sustain a conflict suggests bonds between members of each party to the conflict. The high costs associated with failure ensure adherence to a common goal. At the same time, it also implies an inability or unwillingness to recognise the validity of the opponent's position, a feeling rooted in distrust. These bonds are dynamic, subject to change over time in response to external conditions and shifts in internal interests. Characterising this dynamism, Bar Tal et al (2016: 210) argue that:

> even distrust that plagues intractable conflicts can be changed in a long, gradual, and nonlinear process… [and] the changing of distrust depends on the intensity of the ongoing conflict and especially the degree of violence.

This clearly points to the need to focus on reducing levels of distrust through the creation of trust building mechanisms (TBM). Effective TBMs are important, as they can mend relationships, suggest commitment to resolution, humanise the other, and facilitate the transformation from opponent to interlocutor. Therefore, any change must begin with the establishment of trust, providing a foundation for reconstituted relationships. Such processes must be grounded in a reduction in the intensity of conflict to be able to take root.

A key actor from the outset of the conflict resolution process is the broker, sitting outside of the conflict. Brokers who are seen as legitimate to actors on both sides are more able to bridge the divide and begin to forge ties (Goddard, 2012; Cunningham, 2013). The acceptance of a broker depends on their ability to represent or embody values recognised by all participants. A complex conflict resolution necessitates multi-level and multi-actor mediation, reflected in the distinct roles brokers take on. The type of brokers needed range from shorter-term and more limited problem-solving, through to transformative actors, focused on mending and building

sustainable relationships. Within the negotiation process, the broker can play an important role in providing reassurance when transparency is not viable. Striking a balance between secrecy and open disclosure in the negotiation process is vital. Where talks remain secret, there is a risk that suspicions will be raised and excluded parties may resist or attempt to disrupt progress (USIP, 2012; MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019). Talks that are opened too soon may undermine progress, as the bonds between contending parties may be too fragile to withstand public scrutiny and critique. An effective broker may therefore be able to smooth some of these tensions and respond to demands from parties inside and outside the talks.

Any change that begins with the building and the use of TBMs constitutes an effective means of establishing and deepening the relationship needed to sustain the process (Kreutz and Nussio, 2019). TBMs are a series of intentional actions, agreed upon and implemented by the conflicting parties, without focusing initially on the root causes of conflict. Trust-building is based on measurable and tangible components, but trust has to do with a psychological state, meaning elements of perception and subjectivity are central. The problem that arises is that trust-building is reciprocal by nature, so that one party does not take all the risk and make itself vulnerable. Failure to reciprocate in such a setting can lead to the collapse or reversal of progress made (Darby and MacGinty, 2008). Another challenge with goodwill gestures is that they are not necessarily measured in an equal manner. Recognising such divergent positions is an important element, as apparently small sacrifices may be heavily weighted by the experience and expectation of other actors. Appropriate use of TBMs is a vital auxiliary to establishing a peace process, necessitating equal commitment with equal impact creating a pragmatic working space to deal with the causes of conflict.

A detailed and well-structured peace process generates hope for commitment from the parties involved to resolve the conflict peacefully, which would enhance trust. A less thorough and more loosely-structured peace process, in conjunction with certainties of past derailed efforts, leads to the fear of the alternative to a peace process and the possible escalation of the violent conflict. This point highlights the complexity. If the paramilitary organisation for instance, gets it wrong then internal trust and cohesion are jeopardised, while a refusal to decommission would add further strain in an environment of distrust between the organisation, the government and the general population. Consequently, resolving deeply rooted and protracted conflicts cannot be limited to linear trust building. Organisations and groups are not homogeneous, and often they have varied degrees of loyalty to 'the cause' and of beliefs and commitment in a peace process. The risk is that this can lead to internal discontent and to an increase of internal distrust, which may create spoiler groups breaking away from the negotiation process.

If there is no political commitment and if parties are not entering negotiations in good faith, TBMs by themselves cannot resolve a conflict (MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019). Instead, TBMs become a stalling mechanism and can deflect or postpone negotiations on core issues (Desjardins, 1996). Desjardins (1996) argues that parties may be wary of TBMs, as they may be seen as the beginning of a slippery slope, leading to constraints and reduced autonomy. As a stalling mechanism, TBMs and concessions can be successful and end up acquiring a life of their own, distracting focus from negotiations. The paradox is that there must be sufficient TBMs to create a working space while leaving enough discontent with the status quo to ensure determination and commitment to negotiate are maintained. To this end, Pillar advocates getting to the table with a limited agenda aiming to reach an agreement to open negotiations, subtle or ambiguous enough, so that neither of the parties involved will have to admit to its

own public that it backed down (Pillar, 1983: 83; Herbolzheimer, 2019). Consequently, a minimal willingness to risk trusting each other and the peace process is essential to negotiate mutually acceptable outcomes, as expectations regarding the actions of the other party shift from negative to positive.

The socially constructed nature of conflict resolution points to the need to ensure external actors are considered. The role of the broker is noted above, but the view of other affected parties, such as neighbouring states, also needs to be weighed in negotiations. The inclusion of civil society in the wider peace process in particular is important for ensuing the development of stable, lasting resolutions. In cases of amnesty or advance release of members of conflicting parties may be a TBM necessary to keep participants engaged in negotiations. Such acts may be problematic or unpalatable for communities that have been victims of protracted conflict. Ensuring civil society support in spite of these actions is important in facilitating trust across conflict cleavages initially, but also in supporting the medium-term implementation of agreements (Abdi and Wachira, 2008). Initiatives that bring together representatives from the community can help create an atmosphere of trust within civil society and the peace process.

The process of negotiating a resolution rests on the ability to establish and strengthen trust among all parties. Trust building is not just between parties to the conflict, but also stakeholders within society. Deeply rooted patterns of distrust must be dealt with and a paradigm shift is needed from violent and confrontational attitudes towards tolerance and humanisation of the other. In the case of Colombia for instance the leaders of FARC were called the social leaders (Santos, 29 October 2019). The challenge with this process is the complex and multi-faceted nature of both trust and distrust. To fully understand what is required in the dual process of reducing distrust and building trust, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of each.

Rather than existing on a spectrum, it is argued that distrust and trust are active processes that operate alongside and in opposition to one another. The paper now examines the components of trust and distrust as a way of building on the approach to conflict resolution outlined above.

Trust, Distrust and Identity

The ability to establish meaningful TBMs and bridge divides between conflicting groups requires a deeper understanding of trust and distrust. Previous work on conflict situations has highlighted the importance of trust (Bar-Tal et al, 2016; Cox, 2008; Booth and Wheeler, 2007; Pillar, 1983). At the simplest level, trust is the belief that another party will follow through on an expectation. Möllering (2001) argues that while the experience (interpretation) can serve as a guide regarding what may happen (expectation), it is necessary to suspend concern regarding the failure of expectations. As a social exercise, trust is a process that will be strengthened or weakened over time through repeated exposure. Such relationships are at the core of TBMs, as exposure creates a foundation on which more fundamental concerns can be addressed. The dynamic nature of trust means that bonds between parties will be repeatedly tested, as bridging the gap and trusting another party carries the risk of failure (frustrated expectations).

There is an additional level of challenge in conflict situations, as the risks are amplified by significantly higher costs of failure. To understand the depth of antipathy and the effects of the conflict divide, it is necessary to consider the distinct character of distrust. Bijlsma-Frankema et al (2015: 1020) argue for a fuller treatment of distrust, noting that:

> distinct from low trust, which reflects the lower end of a continuum of positive expectations, distrust appears to occupy its own cognitive state, a pervasive negative lens through which others are perceived.

Identifying distrust in the manner highlights the challenge facing TBM efforts, as distrust between parties will require steps to dismantle negative views before or in conjunction with efforts to build trust. Tracing the roots of distrust, Saunders et al (2014: 659) argue it is 'prompted by incidents of injustice or harm', in contrast to low trust, related to passive issues such as lack of competence. Adopting a negative perspective in this manner leads to a situation where 'wariness, watchfulness, and anticipation of injurious conduct' (Lumineau, 2017: 1557) characterise social relations. In this way, distrust is seen as a protection mechanism.

Distrust is likely to be pervasive in a conflict situation, represented in the fact that contending parties are unable to find non-violent routes to resolve differences. Emphasising the importance of the context in creating distrust, Guo et al (2017) note a negative (distrustful) perspective will be more likely where scarcity, competition or negative institutions prevail. In such settings, 'Distrust simplifies the social world' (Lewicki et al, 1998: 444) making it easier for individuals and groups to act, as they can disregard the views of the other. Distrust can therefore serve as a protection against the risks of failure, pre-empting and reducing potential harms. Within the broader frame of distrust, lower levels are identified as domain specific and compartmentalised (Bijlsma-Frankema et al, 2015), potentially allowing actors to identify areas where trust building efforts can be targeted. Where distrust is pervasive, the ability to bridge the divide is reduced, requiring efforts to lower levels of distrust and identify areas that can serve to initiate cooperation. As with trust, distrust is an active process, involving conscious decisions based on an assessment of the prevailing conditions.

When considering trust and distrust in conflict settings it is also necessary to recognise the importance of group bonds. Within the broad framework of trust, a division is made between thick (particularistic) trust based on shared identity or experience, and 'thin trust or social trust,

based on everyday contacts, professional acquaintance networks' (Anheier and Kendall, 2002: 350). These two types of trust are not mutually exclusive and co-exist within and between different areas of social interaction. Thin trust works to smooth the functioning of the social order (Khodyakov, 2007). The willingness to take the risk represented by thin trust is premised on the idea that 'People may reap the rewards of solving larger-scale collective actions' (Uslaner, 2002: 9), reinforcing the social character of trust. Where conflict is prevalent, thin trust is less likely to exist, as social polarisation and unpredictability prevents the formation of the necessary ties as well as the idea of a collective good (Clark, 2012). In such a situation, pervasive distrust between opponents can block attempts to cooperate, reinforcing the need for TBMs focused on addressing areas of low-level distrust. Targeting domain specific areas can serve as a way to begin to forge thin trust, which actors can begin to rely on.

The strength of thick trust rests on bonds that are reinforced through repeated exposure, leading to the creation of maintenance of a shared identity. Outlining the characteristics of identities, Hunt and Benford (2004: 447) argue they are 'a cultural representation, a set of shared meanings that are produced and reproduced, negotiated and renegotiated, in the interactions of individuals embedded in particular sociocultural contexts.' Construction of a shared identity provides a basis on which actors can generate commitment that can manage institutional failure. Frederiksen (2012) reinforces this point, noting that bonds of thick trust can move beyond bounds of expectation, as breaches are more likely to be tolerated, suggesting a more stable and robust form of social relation. The cost associated with maintaining and honouring thick trust means that it is deployed more selectively. Returning to the role of identity, Tilly (2003: 132) argues that they can enable the 'activation of available us-them boundaries'. In a conflict situation, these boundaries can serve as a means of binding the group, while sustaining distrust to outsiders, as 'uncertainty rises across the boundary as actors on each side have less

reliable information (and hence more exaggerated estimates) concerning the likely actions on the other side' (Tilly, 2003: 76). Therefore, in a conflict situation thick trust may hinder attempts to reduce levels of distrust through the implementation of TBMs. As collective identities are latent, activating in response to perceived threats (Klandermans, 2004), the external locus of control embodied by distrust (Guo et al, 2017) can become a self-perpetuating process, leading actors to resist efforts to bridge divides.

The distinct character of trust and distrust makes strategies to build trust and reduce distrust particularly challenging with different approaches required for each. Whereas building trust relies on successful repeated interactions, the task of tackling distrust is more complicated and involves loosening thick within-group bonds in favour of establishing generalised trust bonds. Addressing this point, Lumineau (2017: 1563) notes that 'when distrust is based on non-calculative judgements, a strong focus on contractual control may diminish the negative outcomes of distrust'. Lewicki et al (1998: 439) support this point, arguing that 'both trust and distrust involve movements toward certainty: trust concerning expectations of things hoped for and distrust concerning expectations of things feared.' Bijlsma et al (2015) note, distrust builds over time through a self-reinforcing cycle, so reduction in distrust must also develop in a cyclical fashion. As noted, the aim is to reduce distrust sufficiently to allow space for trust building, as Guo et al (2017: 24) note 'Trust and distrust must work *together* as fundamental elements to a strategic relationship'. The result being that while individuals trust, recognition of shared values by the organisation may enable de-escalation at the elite level that can then influence individuals at lower levels. Where the strength of internal trust bonds is sufficiently robust to convey a reduced sense of vulnerability de-escalation may be possible.

More sustainable forms of generalised trust therefore rest on institutions and practices that can guarantee a degree of certainty and predictability. Kaina (2011: 285) notes that, in such relations, institutions can play a supporting role as 'they relieve people from uncertainty… [and] make social action more predictable'. The significance of such institutions derives from the fact that they provide mechanisms by which boundaries between in-groups can be transcended or managed. When addressing this point, Vanneste (2016: 7) notes that 'it is people who trust – not organizations', with the effect that individuals will have varying levels of trust, potentially increasing or decreasing the likelihood of trust between organisations or groups being sustained. To facilitate the transition to trust a key element is a reduction in the level of value incongruence to a level at which common goals can be identified (Bijlsma-Frankema et al, 2015). Situations of protracted conflict present a clear case of value incongruence and strong shared identities developed over a period of time and repeated interactions. In such context, the costs of failure (frustrated expectations) are high, making the transition from distrust to trust a considerable challenge. Having outlined the relationship between conflict resolution efforts and trust, the paper next turns to consider the case of the negotiated peace in Colombia.

Methodology

Through the application of a qualitative approach the article builds up from primary and secondary document analysis and aims to provide an empirically in depth account of specific phenomena. The article focuses on the single case study analysis of the Colombian peace process, and the theorised causal mechanisms underlying the role of trust in the peace negotiations are tested using process tracing. The analysis adopts an exploratory approach that seeks to explain a specific episode with a theory-guided case study. For the process tracing, the data collection is through primary sources, including government material and statements from the Colombian government, as well as documents and proceedings from the peace process. In

this way the decisions and the sequence of events which led to the outcome are traced to determine if the mechanisms in the first part of the article are present and valid. This approach incorporates 'single-outcome' studies concerned with establishing causal inference (Gerring, 2006). The incorporation of an inductive approach has the advantage of potentially producing new hypotheses, either specific to the case study or possibly generalisable and applicable to further cases.

Examining the question of distrust management in the resolution of the protracted conflict of Colombia is highly relevant when it comes to the incorporation of more effective trust building efforts, especially against the background of other protracted social conflicts. The single case study analysis provides the opportunity for 'thick description' and for a level of detail and understanding that allows for the in-depth analysis of the complex and idiosyncratic nature of distinct phenomena (Yin, 2009). Beach and Pedersen (2013) identify three different types of process tracing: theory-building, theory-testing and explaining-outcome process tracing. The current research engages in explaining-outcome process tracing, which is theory-guided research, and aims to find an explanation for a puzzling outcome in a specific case (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 3). The research follows a theory-testing approach as it tests the applicability of the concepts of thin and thick trust during the Colombian peace process. Moreover this case study portrays a puzzling outcome in a single case, with the Colombian process reaching a relatively successful outcome despite the lack of trust or the presence of predominantly thin trust and the resistance from the conflicting parties and general population. Consequently, explaining-outcome process tracing is a fitting and viable methodological approach.

The Protracted Conflict in Colombia and the Peace Process

For the last five decades Colombia has faced a violent intrastate conflict, with an excess of 200,000 deaths, thousands of forced disappearances and kidnappings, and approximately 7 million people displaced (Registro Único de Victimas, 2019). In the period 1964-1971 a number of non-state armed groups emerged in Colombia, and the roots of their campaign lies in *La Violencia*, a ten-year civil war from 1948-1957 between the Liberal and Conservative parties in Colombia. These non-state actors were concentrated predominantly in rural areas and grew to control significant proportions of territory. The FARC were initially formed in the 1960s to defend the rural poor, rebalance resource distribution and to overthrow the government, with deep roots in left-wing ideology. Since its founding, the FARC became a major military force, deeply embedding itself into the licit and illicit socio-economic life of Colombia (Saab and Taylor, 2009). Over the years, it managed to maintain significant public support, and became impossible to defeat by purely military means (Villamarin-Pulido, 2017).

The protracted nature of the conflict means that there have been several attempts to find a negotiated resolution (Table 1). The first conflict resolution effort was in 1984 when the Colombian government and the FARC agreed a ceasefire. One of the outcomes of the agreement was the creation of the leftist political organisation Patriotic Union (PU) in 1985. However, over 3,000 members of the PU were killed by paramilitary organisations connected to the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), often in collusion with state security forces (Schemo, 1997). The ceasefire broke down in 1987 and three years later the talks officially ceased. In 1999, the Colombian government and the FARC initiated a second effort to resolve the conflict. However, following from the previous experience, distrust was high and the conflicting parties limited themselves to ‘talking about talks’, failing to address any of the structural issues. Consequently, this second round of talks also collapsed, and the government

of Álvaro Uribe adopted a more martial solution as a way out of the conflict. Within this context, the government felt no need for trust building measures with the FARC.

[table 1]

The most recent round of talks, known as the Havana talks, were the third major attempt to reach a negotiated agreement (Table 1). The main strength of this round of talks derived from innovative frameworks introduced by the conflicting parties to manage distrust. These frameworks can be summarised as being inclusive, positioning the rights of the victims at the epicentre of the talks, the creation of a Gender Subcommission, and planning for the implementation well before the agreement was signed. A significant difference of the Havana talks with previous peace efforts is the inclusive nature with regard to subjects and participants. The process combined greater depth, as indicated by its different frameworks, and greater breadth, based on the parties prepared to come to the table, and the number of the international brokers involved. In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos, Defence Minister under President Álvaro Uribe, gained power and shifted the emphasis towards a negotiated agreement, even though ongoing military operations kept pressure on the FARC. Santos won by a landslide with 69% of the vote, which was the largest in the history of Colombia (Port of Destiny, 2018). Under Uribe's tenure, sixteen FARC leaders were killed, and forty-seven were killed under Santos by 2013, which was a year over into the Havana talks (Priest, 2013). In parallel there were secret talks with the FARC in preparation for the negotiations in Havana in 2012. This latest round of talks, which started in Norway and then moved to Havana, led to the General Agreement for the Termination of the Armed Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace (General Agreement, 2016).

Prior to the negotiations, the government acknowledged the key root causes of the armed conflict and initiated a process of legislative reforms to address the deeply rooted problems of victims and of land dispossession. This change signalled the preparedness of the Colombian government to initiate a process of a peaceful resolution and, in turn, the FARC publicly pledged to stop the kidnapping of civilians and the recruitment of children. Procedurally, the peace process in Colombia was clearly structured with several measures to protect from derailment and safeguard progress. The adoption of the negotiating rule that '*nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' (World Report News, 2017)* provided the necessary flexibility to absorb the impact of constantly changing circumstances, and the reassurance needed in such a protracted conflict where trust has been chronically low on many levels or there has been high distrust. Given the killings of the mid-1980s mentioned above, in the recent round of talks the main immediate concern of the FARC was personal security, as protection was in the hands of their former enemy. This required a significant leap of faith from FARC, as it can be challenging for any organisation to decommission before they feel they have secured compliance and commitment to resolve a conflict. During the transitional period from violent conflict towards negotiations there have been shifts within the FARC where the 'hawks' were put to the background, while the 'doves' were brought to the fore to give peace a chance.

In 2016 the Colombian government and the FARC issued a joint communiqué asking the Security Council to establish a political mission consisting of unarmed international observers and civilians, drawn predominantly from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Granma, 2016). A week later the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2261 establishing this kind of political mission to monitor and verify a definitive ceasefire, and the decommissioning of weapons (UN, 2016). The FARC would have to lay down its weapons

within six months of the signing of the final accord with the decommissioning process to be implemented by the Colombian armed forces, the FARC, and a 500-member unarmed UN team, charged with monitoring and verification (Chatham House, 2016). However, the limited six-month mandate of the UN team also required ties to be established relatively swiftly. A valuable innovation of the General Agreement was the distinction between the talks, which took place in Cuba between the Colombian government and the FARC with a limited agenda (conflict termination), and the broader peace process, which would take place after the signing of the agreement, with the broad participation of the Colombian population (conflict transformation).

There were a number of conditions that led to the signing of the agreement. Santos summarised the key conditions as

> the landslide victory in 2010, giving me a strong mandate. Also what was different this time was that there was the imagination and vision that the conflict could be resolved, and there was willingness to learn from past processes (1999, 100-points agenda), and I was prepared to look outside the borders at other peace processes, such as Northern Ireland and Palestine (Santos statement, 29 October 2019).

At the same time Santos adopted a pragmatic approach toward the peace process and confidence building, and he 'negotiated as if there is no terrorism. Neither hawk nor dove. An effective hawk to achieve peace' (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). He stated that 'they [FARC] could sustain the conflict for 8-10 years more and realised that I needed the FARC weakened, so I asked for help for intelligence from the UK' (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). On the other the FARC has a monolithic structure, which according to Santos was easier

to deal with it (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). As is often the case with protracted social conflicts and their resolution, there are different explanations regarding the decision of the key conflicting parties to negotiate. Certain analysts attribute this decision to the systematic military weakening of the FARC, especially under Uribe's militaristic approaches discussed above, but also under Santos, as his previous statement makes clear. Other analysts attribute the decision to negotiate on the high and increasing socio-economic costs of the conflict on the state. Indeed the FARC had been weakened, but were not entering negotiations from a position of defeat. The months prior to the talks saw increased attacks on coal, gas, oil infrastructures, which accounted for 50 percent of total foreign direct investment in Colombia (Rettberg, 2015: 7). Still, although the FARC had enough funds to continue the war, they did not have enough to win the war without negotiations with their unavoidable concessions and compromises. According to Enrique Santos, brother of Juan Manuel Santos, and his extensive pre-negotiation talks with the FARC, the organisation no longer considered the armed struggle the main or most realistic mean to achieve their long term political goals (Santos Calderón, 2014: 71).

To facilitate trust building there also had to be internal changes within the government and within the FARC. As discussed in the first part of the article, there were numerous instances where the participants had to sacrifice internal trust bonds to allow space for the removal of distrust towards other actors. During the negotiations for instance, Santos showed his preparedness for the state to criticise its own record and to correct historic injustices (Santos Calderón, 2014: 47). Likewise, aware of the strong internal opposition, the Colombian Congress passed a law that protects the peace agreement from possible amendments by later administrations (Marco Jurídico para la Paz, 2017). On the other, by placing the victims in the epicentre of the process, the FARC also had to face the fact that in the name of their struggle they had committed violations of human rights. The leader of the FARC Rodrigo Londoño,

alias Timochenko, in his speech at the signing of the agreement offered his 'sincere apologies to all the victims of the conflict for all the pain we may have caused in this war' (Londoño, 2016). Even if the apology was just symbolic, it was welcomed by the associations of victims. 'I felt a great satisfaction. I wanted to hear this apology from them [FARC]', stated María Lobo, leader of the National Association of Rural Users. 'Those of us who have suffered the violence long for a country in peace. We lost our loved ones, how can we not want peace?' she asked (Fajardo, 2016).

The FARC actually demanded compromises from its own side to the point that they led to the formation of splinter groups, and the weakening of internal trust. These compromises were justified as a means to give space for the removal of distrust towards the government. Overall, the agreement includes a number of testing trade-offs between peace and justice for all the participants (Corrales, 2016; MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019). This paradox of internal weakening of trust bonds in order to allow space for the removal of distrust towards the other actors is a pragmatic and calculative approach (Filippidou, 2008).

The FARC also appeared to adopt a more pragmatic approach regarding the negotiating agenda. They accepted that the negotiations would not address all the core issues that inspired its struggle. The initial six-point agenda was limited and helped to start building trust and belief in the commitment of the conflicting parties to find a lasting solution. The idea was to help build a working space by addressing easier issues, which would then open the way for the parties to address the root causes of the conflict through in-depth negotiations (Kelman, 2005). The six-point agenda included agrarian reform, political inclusion, drug policy, victims' rights, DDR (disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration), and implementation. The breaking down of the agenda into manageable issues made it easier for the negotiating parties to tackle

and made it possible to show progress in the talks, which in turn facilitated trust building. The condensed but at the same time inclusive six-point agenda along with the mindset that '*nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' allowed time and space for the participants to develop a degree of trust on different issues and with different participants. Trust and distrust are not binary, and a*s mentioned in the first part of the article, they are rather active processes that operate alongside and in opposition to one another instead of on a spectrum. Trust and distrust are dynamic and not exclusive. In a complex peace process like in Colombia, trust and distrust tend to be something that can exist to some degree and in different ways. To paraphrase Hosking (2014) there are constantly changing gradations of trust and distrust adding to the complexity of a peace process.

International involvement was constrained by the weakness of the process itself (Arnson and Whitfield, 2005). One of the outcomes of past unsuccessful peace efforts was the realisation that a greater international role would be necessary for any future peace process in Colombia to stand a chance of success. Also, the issue of representativeness and balance was dealt with through the breadth of the brokers, whereby four countries played formal roles in the negotiations after an invitation from the conflicting parties, with a UN mission establishing ties. Cuba and Norway were appointed as guarantor countries, and Venezuela and Chile were chosen as accompanying countries. Santos emphasised that 'without the international community I would not have signed the agreement' (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). The common denominator of the different brokers was the commitment to a peaceful resolution, while the number and different type of brokers gave the feeling of self-regulation, and at the same time allowed each conflicting side to feel represented (MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019; Kreutz and Nussio, 2019). This facilitated stages towards the reduction in levels of distrust between the conflicting parties. In this sense the negotiations had proactive external support,

even though they were conducted by the conflicting parties directly. The combination of external guarantors and local responsibility and ownership of the negotiations reassured the conflicting parties and civil society, and enhanced confidence and multi-level trust building.

During the talks in Havana, the FARC delegation was composed entirely of combatants, as the government chose to call the members of FARC, led by the second-in-command Iván Márquez (Mesa de Conversaciones, 2017). The FARC delegation was hosted in a residential area owned by the Cuban government near the hotel where the talks were taking place. To ensure internal ownership and commitment from the FARC, the organisation alternated the commanders participating in the talks. This approach enhanced internal trust and between the FARC and its supporters. The Colombian peace process adopted a multi-level approach to trust building. The trust building measures were not just addressed towards the two main conflicting parties, but also towards the public. In 2014, the Colombian government and the FARC announced a Joint Declaration of Principles outlining their commitment to ensure victims' rights to truth, justice reparations and guarantees of non-repetition (Mesa de Conversaciones, 2014). To enhance trust in the process the Colombian Congress passed several laws, including a law that shields the peace agreement from possible amendments by later administrations (Marco Jurídico para la Paz, 2017). In addition, the Congress created Peace Commissions in both houses of parliament and promoted several public fora.

The long duration of the conflict in Colombia led to the formation of a very active civil society with extensive experience in recording and monitoring human rights violations and promoting peace at multiple levels. In past negotiations the government and the FARC saw themselves as the true and sole representatives of the Colombian society (Equipo Paz Gobierno, 2017). During the latest round of talks public opinion and public participation were fundamental. Civil

society formally participated in the process through public fora in Colombia, which the government and the FARC commissioned the National University and the UNDP to convene. At the same time, the Colombian Congress convened several roundtables in different regions of the country. Throughout the talks the Peace Panels engaged with civil society and they invited Colombians to submit written proposals (Equipo Paz Gobierno, 2017). The parties jointly invited five delegations of twelve victims, carefully chosen by the UN, to represent the diversity of the victims, as well as a Gender Subcommission inviting three delegations from women's organisations (BBC, 2016).

Both informal and formal civil society participation in the talks had a strong impact on the peace process. Participation was reflected by the fact that each agenda item in the Havana negotiations was followed by public discussions in Colombia, and in turn these discussions influenced the direction of the peace talks in Havana. Methodologically, the process included both secret and public talks. The public nature of the talks facilitated trust building between the conflicting parties and the people. Initially, when trust was lower, civil participation was more informal; as the process progressed and some level of trust was achieved, then civil participation became more formal.

Processes aimed at resolving lasting conflicts operate across multiple-levels, and they necessitate the buying in of various actors in distinct phases and to a different extent within a constantly changing socio-political environment. Under these circumstances and realistically, different shades of trust are dispersed unevenly between actors, across the different levels, and over different issues. The Colombian peace process included a number of actors dispersed across different levels, and included a number of issues summarised within the six-issue agenda. The more complex the process and the more actors involved the higher the risk for the

process to collapse. On the other however, the more inclusive the process, subject and actor-wise, the more the opportunities for trust building (Filippidou, 2008). Furthermore, when negotiations on a number of issues take place in parallel and simultaneously this increases the chances for overall progress. That is, if there is lack of progress on one subject, progress can still be made on other issues on the agenda. The logic behind parallel simultaneous talks is that enough time, and effort is invested that helps maintain momentum, which in turn shows commitment to the peace process, leading to further trust building and to buying in from the participants to tackle the remaining issues (Filippidou, 2008). Adding to the above complexity is the fact that trust is not uniform and homogeneous. During a peace process an actor for instance, may trust a government or another actor on certain issues but not on others, or may have varied degrees of trust, and this would be true for all participants involved. As the diagram below demonstrates, once an organisation or a person decides to participate in a process with the intent to resolve a conflict, to a different extent they all play a role in building either thin or thick trust. Trust building has to take place within each different level and across the different levels, and the more time, and effort is invested on the process the more trust is build or the deeper trust becomes. For a peace process to stand a chance of success the broader community represented at the lower level of the pyramid, and the political elite, at the top of the pyramid, who negotiate the agreement have to work together towards a common end. Thus, there should not be a distinction between public and elite trust regarding trust building. After all, the political elite is also part of the broader community, and any peace agreement is from all involved for all involved.

Table 2 please

The above does not mean that the process was straightforward, and with no risks of failure. Killings of guerrillas, activists, and soldiers continued throughout the peace process and after the signing of the agreement (Fundación Paz y Reconcilación, 2018; The New York Times, 2015; Reuters, 2019). However, the peace process had enough momentum, and there was enough domestic and international support, as well as pressure to protect the peace process and avoid its derailment. Every time the peace process reached a low point, it chipped away from whatever little trust there was. Still, the process did not collapse which at the very least indicates that there was enough will to trust. Furthermore, the very structure of the talks with their lengthy nature provided sufficient space and time for the participants to explore options and alternatives and facilitated mindset change. The alternative to the peace process and the risk of a return to the status quo ante acted as an incentive to reach a viable agreement.

Another very low point of the peace process was the referendum for the ratification of the agreement. When the Colombian people were asked to ratify the agreement in a referendum, the negotiators asked the people the question *¿Apoya el acuerdo final para terminación del conflicto y construcción de una paz estable y duradera?* (Do you support the final agreement to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace?) (El Tiempo, 2016). Trust is conditional, and it depends on output and not just outcome, and the people rejected the agreement in a surprise result, where 50.2% of voters rejected the agreement, compared to 49.8% who voted for it. However, the turnout was very low, with fewer than 38% of Colombians casting a vote (Registraduría nacional del estado civil, 2016). The majority of those who voted ‘no’ argued that the peace agreement was letting the FARC to ‘get away with murder’ (BBC, 2016). According to Juan Carlos Vélez, the campaign manager from the Uribista right, he encouraged an emotional reaction with the use of lies in order to vote ‘no’

out of anger (Vélez, 2016). For Santos 'the question is how much justice you sacrifice. People are always not satisfied. There is a need to draw the line in different places according to conditions of conflict. Better to live in imperfect peace. [The key is to] implement with more force instead of trying to change the agreement.' (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). Londoño after the referendum result was quick to assert that 'the FARC maintain their wish for peace and will only use words in order to build it' (Londoño, 2016). Enough time and effort had been invested and with some amendments the agreement received parliamentary approval. The more the Colombian government and the FARC invested in trust building measures and earned the people's trust, the more the agreement gained legitimacy, which in turn enhanced the trust in the negotiators and the peace process.

The Colombian peace agreement comprises 297 dense pages of text, embodying very challenging trade-offs. Colombia has tried to overcome the dilemma between peace and justice with the methodologically detailed peace process and the emphasis on people's participation in the process. Respect for human rights is one of the main indicators used to measure improvement and the implementation of the agreement. The agreement includes several testing trade-offs between peace and justice, and evidently this is another imperfect agreement. Ultimately, the success of any peace agreement depends on its implementation and Colombia is a country where the writ of the state extends to about 40 per cent of the country's territory. The local authorities of thirty-two departments will have to implement a programme of assistance and reparations for hundreds of thousands of registered victims and millions of internally displaced people. There will also be a need to reintegrate thousands of combatants and deal with restitution of land where several contradictory title deeds are in place (Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2017). For the implementation of the agreement, the challenge will be to strike a fine balance between credibility and compromise. The signing of

the final agreement and its ratification is just the beginning of a lengthy process of moving from conflict termination toward resolution and reconciliation. Throughout the distinct phases of the peace process trust-building has to be maintained, reviewed and enhanced constantly, to establish sustainable peace. For Santos

> Peace making is over and done. It was quicker than other agreements, but the process of healing of years of war has started. There is multiple overlapping forms of violence but there is also commitment for three governments to not change the agreement. A couple of dissidents are a lot of noise but no substance. More than 92% of FARC are complying (Santos statement, 29 October 2019).

The breaking down of the agenda into manageable issues helped the negotiating parties to show progress in the talks and therefore facilitate trust building. The idea was to create an initial working space by addressing easier issues, which would then open the way for the parties to address the deeper causes of the conflict, once distrust would start to reverse. Additionally, in order to boost trust the Colombian Congress passed several laws, including a law that protects the accord from possible amendments by later administrations (Marco Jurídico para la Paz, 2017). According to the third report of the Kroc Institute, which monitors the progress and implementation of the peace accord, one third (35%) of the accord's commitments have reached advanced levels of implementation. This means they have been fully implemented (23%) or are expected to be fully implemented (12%) within the timeframe stipulated by the Agreement. At the same time, thirty-four percent of the commitments are in a state of minimal implementation, and thirty-one percent of the total commitments have yet to begin implementation (Cortright, 2019).

In reality the signing of an agreement is just the beginning of a very lengthy and arduous period, where the momentum that existed during the talks and up to the signing of the agreement will have to be maintained during the implementation phase. However, more often than not the implementation phase is slow, and life does not allow a vacuum to exist. New and splinter armed groups have moved in to fill any vacuum left by the FARC or the government. When the peace agreement was signed, the estimated cost to materialise the promises was in the region of $45billion over a period of at least fifteen years in an economy that today is not doing as well as at the time of the signing of the agreement (Casey, 2019). Empirically, however, for a variety of reasons the signing of agreements is followed by splinter groups of different size and impact (MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019; Filippidou, 2008). The point is how expectations are managed and how much buying in there is from all those involved. After all, if an agreement is reached thanks to the contributions from all levels of society, the same should apply for its implementation. Reaching an agreement is hard, but implementing the agreement is even harder.

Conclusion

This article has examined the relatively successful negotiation of an end to the conflict between the government of Colombia and the FARC and has illustrated the challenges involved under conditions of distrust. The complex and multi-layered nature of the conflict had resulted in several failed attempts, frustrated by actions taken in bad faith on both sides, such as the destruction of the PU by the state and kidnappings by the FARC. These had a negative effect on the ability of participants to build relationships, as they reinforced perceptions of distrust and strengthened trust bonds within the contending groups. There had also been a low level of public support for demobilisation previously (Guáqueta, 2007), due to predatory behaviour of the FARC and right-wing paramilitary groups (see Nussio, 2011; Saab and Taylor, 2009). In

such an environment, moving away from conflict involves a coordinated approach between actors at various stages, which is difficult to achieve when the costs of failure may be significant. The diagram below, adapted from Verdeja, highlights the key ideas on thin and thick trust analysed in the article. In an ideal situation in a peace process there is a constant movement towards the direction of the arrow.

Table 3 please

However, as the article has demonstrated, life is neither this linear nor that simple. There are gradations of trust and distrust, and the two are not exclusive, rather there is a plethora of combinations between individuals, organisations and issues in a peace process. In the Colombian peace process, trust and distrust exists in different degrees and in different ways.

The analysis shows that a focus on trust building measures between conflicting parties alone is unlikely to be successful, due to entrenched distrust and the potential costs associated with failure. The case also demonstrates the importance of a contractual approach in providing certainty through the existence of sanction for breaches and defining clear roles for those involved. During the process it was possible to adopt a coordinated approach through the distinct stages of the negotiation, ensuring enough political will to achieve a solution that was maintained over time. The strengthening of ties meant that the result of the referendum did not undo the progress that had been achieved, as participants trusted that commitments would be honoured.

Although no two peace processes are identical, at the same time no peace process is entirely unique. Most conflict resolution efforts learn and borrow from other processes, but they have to innovate to reflect the challenges present in the local context. These innovations in turn become a reference point for other conflict resolution efforts. The main innovations of the Colombian peace process are the distinction between peace negotiations, which have a short term and immediate focus, and the peace process, which has a longer-term focus. A condensed but inclusive agenda of six points along with the negotiating rule '*nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' demonstrated commitment to discuss thoroughly all issues (*Herbolzheimer*, 2019).* The peace process positions the victims at the epicentre of the negotiations, giving them a direct role in the talks; addressing the structural problem of rural development; establishing a Gender Subcommission; and most importantly, planning and providing for the implementation of the agreement while it was still being negotiated well before it was signed. Reparation of victims, such as free housing was put at the centre of the process, and according to Santos people would say to him that 'I will never stop being a victim but now I can see the future' (Santos statement, 29 October 2019). In addition to the comprehensive approach, the Colombian process was inclusive regarding the number and variety of actors involved in the talks. As MacGinty's research demonstrates, the most significant factor in helping parties reach a negotiated settlement, and that settlement lasting, is inclusion (MacGinty and Özerdem, 2019).

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Filippidou, Anastasia; O'Brien, Thomas

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