

International Colloquium

IS TOTAL PEACE POSSIBLE? QUESTIONS FOR LATIN AMERICA

Collegium de Lyon – Institut d'études avancées (IEA) – Université Lumière Lyon 2 –
Triangle UMR 5206
Lyon, June 6 and 7, 2023

Newly elected Colombian President Gustavo Petro has made “total peace” a cornerstone of his government’s agenda. Past attempts at peace agreements between non-state armed organizations and the Colombian State generally ended in partial disarmament, demobilization, and reincorporation processes. *Total Peace*, in contrast, aims for a "Grand National Agreement" that will include a vast array of armed groups, including paramilitaries and guerrillas (reactivating the dialogues with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN), and the novelty of promoting other armed groups “the submission to justice”, including criminal organizations (Alvarez Vanegas, 2022).¹.

The discussion of total peace is relevant across the region. In countries such as Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela local powers embodied by non-state armed actors prevail and fulfill state functions in urban and rural sectors where the State has historically maintained a precarious presence (Idler, 2021). Additionally, the Total Peace policy expands the recognition of important political informal power that other non-state armed groups (beyond the traditional guerrillas, militias, and paramilitaries) have in the territories under their control —such as criminal organizations and gangs— and the need to tackle a novel approach to these groups in the path to peacebuilding (Wennmann, 2014; Puig, 2022).

Previous attempts to deal with armed groups in the region have been characterized by failed militarized and heavy-handed policies, coupled with widespread awareness of the informal political power held by these actors (Rodgers & Muggah, 2009; Smilde, Hanson & Zubillaga, forthcoming). This failure has produced a body of scholarship focused on violence reduction and the construction of peace through more pragmatic approaches (Wennmann & Jütersonke; 2018; Van den Eertwegh, 2018). This literature states that more realistic political vocabularies are needed to deal with urban conflict and the powerful interests of criminal groups; it highlights the need to move from prejudice to pragmatism in policies towards these groups, pointing to harm reduction strategies for which the priority is the right to life, peace, and dignity of the inhabitants.

These debates also arise from recent experiences in Latin America that have made evident that in specific contexts, under certain political conditions, some governments do engage in negotiations or agreements with criminal organizations to reduce violence (Cruz and Durán Martínez, 2016; Felbab-Brown, 2020). Before Colombia, the government in El Salvador’s promoted a truce in 2012 between MS-13 gangs and Barrio 18 factions, leading to a 50 percent reduction in homicides in one year. This truce fueled the debate over whether it is possible to use negotiation principles with criminal groups (Durán Martínez, 2022). Less public, in Venezuela, in 2017, the Maduro

¹ Total Peace also points out to wider structural transformations for Colombian society –being the most achieved de 2016 agreement with the FARC-EP in 2016, nevertheless slowed down by Iván Duque (Alvarez Vanegas, 2022).

Government engaged in less visible agreements with criminal organizations in a context of massive public protests in the streets and an intense question of the legitimacy of his government to reduce homicides and spectacular criminal violence that terrified the population (Zubillaga & Hanson, 2022).

Past experiences of negotiated resolution and essays of reincorporation with guerrilla groups in El Salvador and Colombia show the extreme difficulties these members find in re-locating a place in society and their communities and building masculine identities detached from weapons and militarization (Garibay 2009; Theidon, 2009). A follow-up of the debate in Colombian and international media reveals that there are more uncertainties than clarities on the thorny horizon of negotiating with armed criminal groups. These uncertainties and questions are relevant reasons for gathering a group of scholars and researchers to reflect upon these themes today.

Furthermore, the gathering of scholars from France, Geneva, the United Kingdom and the Americas in France, reflects the Hexagon's close relationship to the region and its continuing diplomatic efforts to support peacebuilding in Latin-America². This colloquium aims to contribute to the academic and civil society discussions on peace so much needed in Latin-America, and to the bilateral relations between both regions.

Specifically, this interdisciplinary colloquium will bring together scholars studying the array of relationships between the State, non-state armed actors and civil society in Latin America to reflect upon the following questions:

- What type of relationships and agreements (explicit or not) do non-state armed groups develop with the State?
- What transformations and configurations in the exercise of violence have these exchanges produced?
- Under what conditions are negotiations with non-state armed actors desirable to reduce violence?
- What legitimacy do they have in negotiations?
- What lessons can we learn from demobilization processes and reinsertion attempts in contexts of armed conflict for contexts of urban conflict?
- How civic society organizations can participate in local efforts of peacebuilding?
- What can we learn from the different relationships held between State, non-state armed actors, and local communities for strengthening peace-building efforts in Latin America?

Scholars that have extensive and cutting-edge research on the subject are invited to reflect upon these questions in the Colloquium organized by the Collegium de Lyon, the Institut d'études avancées (IEA), the Université Lumière Lyon 2 and the research laboratory Triangle UMR 5206 on the 6th and 7th of June 2023.

² No longer than last autumn, during the Paris' Peace Forum, France received Venezuela's government and opposition representants in a dialogue effort accompanied by different Latin-America's Head of State, with Colombia's President Gustavo Petro among them.

PROGRAM
TUESDAY, JUNE 6TH

9h – 9h30: Introduction: welcoming remarks and presentation of our common goals by Verónica Zubillaga and Yoletty Bracho.

9h30 – 11h: Session 1 – State and organized armed actors: what kind of relationships?

Speakers:

- Jacobo Grajales, Professeur de sciences politiques, Université de Lille, CERAPS.
- Verónica Zubillaga, Profesora Universidad Simón Bolívar. Visiting Fellow at Collegium de Lyon – Institut d'études avancées (IEA).

Moderator: Yoletty Bracho

11h: Coffee-break

11h15 –13h: Session 2 – Is total peace conceivable? Negotiations with armed actors and experiences of demobilization and insertion.

Speakers:

- Achim Wennmann, Senior researcher at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP). Geneva Graduate Institute.
- David Garibay, Professeur de sciences politiques, Université Lumière Lyon 2, Triangle UMR 5206.
- Diego Sanchez Valencia, PhD student, Université Lumière Lyon, Triangle UMR 5206.

Moderator: Verónica Zubillaga

13h – 14h30: Lunch break

14h30 – 16h15: Session 3 – The State, its bureaucrats, and their readjustments within transition processes: searching for justice and democratization.

Speakers:

- Rebecca Hanson, Assistant professor, University of Florida, Center for Latin American Studies.
- Yoletty Bracho, PhD in Political Science. Université Lumière Lyon 2, Triangle UMR 5206.
- Sophie Daviaud, Maîtresse des conférences, Sciences-Po Aix, Mesopholis

Moderator: David Garibay

16h15: Coffee break

16h45 – 18h15: Session 4 – Broadening civic space and civil society participation in authoritarian and chronically violent contexts.

Speakers:

- Jenny Pearce, Research Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science – Latin America and Caribbean Center (LACC).
- David Smilde, Charles A. and Leo M. Favrot Professor of Human Relations, Tulane University.

Moderator: Rebecca Hanson

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7TH

9h00 – 9h15: Welcome and recap

9h15 – 10h45: Session 5 – Searching for justice and reparation of victims.

Speakers:

- Tiphaine Duriez, Maîtresse des Conférences, Université Lumière Lyon 2, LADEC.
- Manuel Llorens, Profesor, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

Moderator: Sophie Daviaud

10h45: Coffee break

11h – 12h45: Session 6 – Peacebuilding and Public Social Science.

Speakers:

- Jenny Pearce, Research Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science - Latin America and Caribbean Center (LACC).
- David Smilde, Charles A. and Leo M. Favrot Professor of Human Relations, Tulane University.
- Achim Wennmann, Senior researcher at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP). Geneva Graduate Institut.
- David Garibay, Professeur de sciences politiques, Université Lumière Lyon 2, Triangle UMR 5206.

12h45 – 14h15: Lunch break

14h15 – 16h: Conclusion, balance, and future prospects.

- General conclusion: Cyril Magnon-Pujo, Maître de conférences en science politique, Université Lumière Lyon 2.
- Concluding remarks: Jean Michel Roi, Director, Collegium de Lyon.
- Balance and prospects: collective discussion.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Colloquium sessions will take place at:

- Campus: Campus “Berges du Rhône” of the Université Lumière Lyon 2 (you can find a map of the University campus [here](#)).
- Classroom: CLIO 005, inside the “Clio” building.
- Address: 4 bis rue de l'Université, 69007, Lyon.
- To get there: tramway T1, stop “Universités”.

If you need any information, please do not hesitate to contact the organizers:

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