

## RECOGNIZING CONFLICT & ESCAPING VIOLENCE: CONTEMPORARY COLOMBIAN MIGRATION

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For those in the field of migration studies, 3.378.345 citizens abroad (out of 43.000.000 nationals) classify it as a sending country. Those interested in Truth & Reconciliation and works of memory, will find in the country an example of transitional justice implemented in the middle of a war.<sup>1</sup> If read through the lens of peace & security, the conflict in Colombia constitutes a risk to hemispheric security and its solution a challenge to human development.

First, an overview of the stages of the conflict and the related international migration waves will be presented, as an initial advance to the violence- migration nexus. Next, the work will address the narratives of violence and of movement, as inscribed by the members of the *Lettered City* in the country's official national memory. Then, the possibility of reading international populations flows through the concept of conflict-generated diaspora, and including the accounts of amnesties and pardons in Colombia's political history is proposed. This paper argues that a historical approach to analyzing the conflict in Colombia and the resulting population movements across borders encompasses and articulates all these dimensions.

The recognition of the conflict as such (rather than framing it in terms of 'fight against terrorism') would impact national reality and identity by promoting environments conducive to working on peace, reconciliation, and memory; and restoring the dignity of victims. Moreover, this would impact on the character of the country's international migration flows (1950 -2009), as it would legitimize movement as resulting from war in the homeland (as opposed to being labelled as 'fortune-seekers', or rationalized as economic migrants).

Finally, writing the history of Colombians abroad means not only recording and analyzing the relations between a home country and its migrant communities. The history of a nation-state is usually attached to the idea of a territory. Incorporating those beyond borders implies a shifting of the boundary separating insiders and outsiders (of a same national community) and deterritorializing the national narrative.

### LIVING OR LEAVING COLOMBIA'S CONFLICT – OVERVIEWS

#### PERMANENT AND ENDEMIC WARFARE: TIMES AND STAGES OF THE CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA

Studying the Colombian conflict, the possible continuities, the particularities of its actors, scenarios and motivations, requires the initial exercises of attempting to elaborate a typology and a periodization. Thus, armed struggles and confrontations in

Colombia can be divided into five categories and chronological periods<sup>2</sup>: Independence Wars, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Civil Wars, *La Violencia*, the Revolutionary Wars, and the 'Current War'<sup>3</sup>. Independence Wars (1810 – 1830) against the Spanish monarchy are defined through a model opposing local populations (*criollos*) to domination by a colonial power. The representatives of the King (*peninsulares*), both administrative and military are the occupier- a foreign force in a territory that is in dispute.

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<sup>1</sup> Castillejo, Alejandro "Compromising the Future: Truth, Archives, and the Articulations of the Past as a Political Problem", Paper presented at the conference *The Limits of Memory*, NSSR, 6 March 2010; Springer, Natalia María, "Setting up a Truth Commission in the Middle of the Conflict: A Case Study of Colombia", Leuven University, Master's Thesis, 2001; Sánchez G., Gonzalo. *Guerras, Memoria e Historia*. Bogotá, Colombia: Bogotá, Colombia : Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Afanador Ulloa, Miguel Angel. *Amnistias e Indultos: La Historia Reciente (1948-1992)*. Ed. Escuela Superior de Administración Pública (Colombia). Santafé de Bogotá: Santafé de Bogotá : ESAP, Centro de Publicaciones, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Though I agree with the Group on Historical Memory's statement that "choosing where one starts the narratives of the conflict constitutes an ideological statement", I do tend to join those who see the origins of violence in Colombia as tied to the flaws inherent to the country's state formation process (19<sup>th</sup> century).

The Civil Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were marked by the ambition of the parties engaged in the armed conflict of obtaining command over the state's resources and power quotas. They were confrontations among the members of the country's ruling class<sup>4</sup>, with the purpose of balancing out their internal rivalries. The stakes were the role of the church in state affairs, the abolition or preservation of slavery, and the establishment of a political regime (federalists vs. centralists).

The following stage of warfare is *La Violencia* (1945-1958). It develops from a context of increasingly open confrontation between the ruling and the ruled classes. What characterizes this period is that the ideological management of the conflict is the privilege of the ruling classes – exercised through the constituted political parties (Conservatives –in office; and Liberals–then the opposition). The fighting, however, is assumed by their rank and file members (namely peasants). The initial targets were all those who had been engaged in the “*Revolución en Marcha*” a governmental project carried out under the Alfonso López Pumarejo administration (1934 – 1938); and which had as pillars the redistribution of lands, the promotion and propugnation of workers' rights, and the secularization of the State. The governmental response was a defence of the country's Catholic tradition and of an idea of democracy exclusive to elites. In 1953 an end to the conflict is sought by placing General Rojas Pinilla in office. Rojas Pinilla would soon start exercising his own agenda and promoting a model of state both authoritarian and populist, as well as the creation of a third political party (whose base would be constituted by a ‘couple armed forces-people’). Traditional elites would then react in a so-called “defence of democracy”, deposing Rojas Pinilla (1953) and establishing the *Frente Nacional*. Under the principle of political alternation in office, this arrangement between Conservatives and Liberals would last for sixteen years.

The Revolutionary Wars/ Internal Armed Conflicts: though they have their origins in the previous period, their consolidation comes in the nineteen-sixties. It is characterized by a fight by the guerrilla movements ‘for the people’ and against the established regime; with the ruling classes losing both the command over the ideological and military dimensions of the confrontations. These disputes are also engaged in a wider context of simultaneous worldwide struggles for power (e.g. Cuban Revolution, Punta del Este Conference, Lazzo Plan). It is during this period that some of the main guerrilla groups will be formed: bombings and attacks against the ‘Independent Republics’<sup>5</sup> would result in the birth of the FARC (with the 1964 bombing of the Marquetalia Camp being usually referred to as their founding moment); the secession of the Communist Party would be the origin of the EPL; the members/defenders of the Theology of Liberation and the extreme wing of the MRL would join to form to ELN. Eduardo Pizarro has classified the guerrilla movements in Colombia according to three ideal types<sup>6</sup>: Military Guerrilla, Party Guerrilla, and Societal Guerrilla. Two of the four guerrilla movements we will be making reference to fall into the category of Party Guerrilla- the EPL<sup>7</sup> and the PRT<sup>8</sup>.

The third one, the Quintín Lame would correspond to the Societal Guerrilla type. The M-19<sup>9</sup>, according to Pizarro Leongómez, was a *sui generis* movement<sup>10</sup>. The 1980s would see Drug Lords (Narcos) shift from side roles to main actors of violent confrontations in Colombia; with the resulting ‘*traquetization*<sup>11</sup>’ of society, and the extended impunity and corruption. The ‘Current War’ is a multi-faced monster<sup>12</sup>, the sum of diverse types of wars/fronts: the Guerrilla War, the Narco War (War against the drug cartels), and the Para-War (War against the paramilitaries/ Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia- AUC). Each armed group being, at the same time (and in varying degrees): “a political project, a military apparatus, an actor in social conflicts, a rent seeker, a way of life, a territorial power, an author of degraded violence, and –consequently- an obstacle to human development”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Gonzalo Sánchez uses the expression “gentlemen of a single lineage”. Sánchez, Gonzalo and Peter Bakewell. "La Violencia in Colombia: New Research, New Questions." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 65.4 (1985): 789-807, pg. 790.

<sup>5</sup> Zones of peasant installation, influenced by the Communist Party.

<sup>6</sup> Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez, “Elementos para una sociología de la guerrilla colombiana”, *Guerra en Colombia: Actores armados* (Bogotá 2004), pp. 29 - 74.

<sup>7</sup> Ejército Popular de Liberación.

<sup>8</sup> Quintín Lame Armed Movement, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores.

<sup>9</sup> Movimiento 19 de abril (A reference to the April 19<sup>th</sup> 1970, the date when Misael Pastrana Borrero won - allegedly fraudulently- the presidential elections over the ANAPO of former dictator General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.

<sup>10</sup> I have kept Pizarro Leongómez' typology, though he fails to fully explain the particularity of the M-19. Perhaps what made the movement special was that it was led by his late brother (Carlos Pizarro Leongómez); sacralising it by covering it with an aura of intimacy.

<sup>11</sup> *Traqueto* = Mafioso.

<sup>12</sup> Adopting UNDP HDR 2003 expression (though theirs is more specific, labelling the Colombian conflict as an “eight-faced Monster”).

<sup>13</sup> UNDP National Human Development Report 2003 for Colombia: “A cul-de-sac with ways out”, pg. 7.

### ESCAPING VIOLENCE: WAVES OF COLOMBIAN MIGRATION

The different periods of the conflict have resulted in important populations flows, both within and across borders, over which the State has had little (if at all) control. Even though the Colombian is politically below UN intervention level, it is recognized that the inability to solve it at the national level has impacted the country's international relations (at the global and hemispheric levels). The context of endemic violence and rule of the law of silence leads to constantly evaluate the risks of staying put, and the advantages that would come with leaving. In view of the high number of IDPs in Colombia (3,426,198 – placing it together with Sudan and Iraq as one of the top countries with largest IDP populations)<sup>14</sup>, international migration appears as the dilemma of the privileged.

According to scholarly and ministerial documents, three waves can be identified in the study of Colombian migration. The first wave of migration dates back to the 1960, the aftermath of the period of Colombian history known as “La Violencia” and had the US as its main destination. Its push & pull factors were both economic and political. A second migratory wave has been identified for the late 1970s, beginning of the 1980s. Even though migration to the US remained a constant through this period (with a shift in nature, as it becomes primarily illegal); the Venezuelan “oil-boom” and its consequent higher demand of labour make this country the predominant journey's end. Flows of Colombians across the eastern border decreased as the neighbouring country's (alike the entire continent's) economy hit a crisis in the eighties. Colombian migration during that same period was closely tied to the job opportunities created by the growing drug trade<sup>15</sup>.

Even though the ratio of drug-trafficking related migration is small (with ministerial data for 2003 estimating Colombian nationals imprisoned for drug-related crimes to 12,000); the stigma of the phenomenon highly marked the 1980s migration both inside the borders and abroad<sup>16</sup>. The third wave of migration began in the mid-1990s, with amounts escalating ever since. It is the result of distressingly severe combination of factors encompassing series of economic crises and growing violence (related to drug-trafficking, delinquency, organized crime, political confrontations; as well as the government led counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics responses<sup>17</sup>) which have led to increasing levels of sentiments of human insecurity. This last wave of migration is composed by individuals with higher levels of education (college graduates, entrepreneurs, upper middle class students).

The following table shows the distribution per country

Main Countries of Destination of Colombian Migrants <sup>18</sup>	
% per Country	
United States	35,4%
Spain	23,3%
Venezuela	18,5%
Others	13,9%
Ecuador	2,4%
Canada	2,2%
Panama	1,3%
Mexico	1,1%
Costa Rica	1,0%
Australia	0,5%
Peru	0,3%
Bolivia	0,1%
Total	100,0%

Source: DANE, 2005 Census.

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/latinamericathecaribbean/colombia/name,3213,en.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e492ad6>

<sup>15</sup> Bouvier, Virginia M., “A reluctant diaspora? The case of Colombia”, *Diasporas in Conflict: peace-makers or peace-wreckers?* Edited by Hazel Smith and Paul Stares. UNU Press, Tokio- Paris- New York, 2007, pg. 133

<sup>16</sup> Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo “El Estado y la migración global colombiana”, *Relaciones Estado – diáspora: la perspectiva de América latina y el Caribe*, Coordinador Carlos Gutiérrez González, Tomo II, SER – Instituto de los Mexicanos en el exterior, México, D.F., 2006, pg. 280.

<sup>17</sup> Bouvier, *Ibidem*, pg. 134

<sup>18</sup> Data for the 2005 Census available at: [www.dane.gov.co](http://www.dane.gov.co)

The number of possible destinations has also increased in variety. Sharing the same language and the facilities for integrating migrant collectives into the labour market (namely through governmental signature of bilateral agreements regarding seasonal work and temporary migration<sup>19</sup>) made Spain the favourite country of destination in Europe. Alternative places include countries such as Canada, England, Italy, France, and Germany. There exists, nonetheless, a hierarchy of destinations, with Europe, the US and Canada ranking in the first place; those unable to enter these countries direct themselves towards Mexico and Central America (mostly Costa Rica). Destinations located in the southern cone of South America and countries in the Caribbean (especially the Dominican Republic) rank last.<sup>20</sup> Figures from the 2005 Census show that there is a total of 3.378.345 Colombians living abroad<sup>21</sup>.

When examining the figures and percentages for countries such as Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, it is important to note that population movements towards neighbouring countries is, in the case of Colombia, directly linked to forced displacement resulting from the country's internal conflict. Migrants who choose adjacent States are, more than following a migratory project, looking for asylum and refuge across the border. They are usually the habitants of the territories near these borders, with low socio-economic levels<sup>22</sup>.

### **THE LETTERED CITY: MEMORY OF VIOLENCE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY INSCRIBING VIOLENCE AS CORE ELEMENT OF THE NATION**

"(...) We descended, brutally and abruptly, to extremes never heard of before. We observed, with stupor, the existence of a reserve of barbarism<sup>23</sup> in our peoples which defied entire centuries of Christian education (...)"<sup>24</sup>.

It would be possible to think that since 1962, when President Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958 – 1962) made this statement, the perception of the Colombian government of the national situation would have come to acknowledge that the country's political context is far from serene. Recently, however, an affirmation by the General Consul in New York City joined that line of thought, referring to the country as the "longest democracy in the continent" and to its citizens as the "peaceful guardians of just and right"<sup>25</sup>.

Both asseverations would imply, that "the country has been a paradigm of democracy and civilian administration in Latin America"<sup>26</sup> or at least, that there was once a peaceful past of which Colombians were separated, but to which they returned gloriously.

In a quest to challenge this official view and portray the country's nineteen years of Independence Wars, the eight general Civil Wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the wars with Peru and Ecuador at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the years of *La Violencia*, and the insurreccional movements of the 60s and 70s, the *Lettered City* (the sectors of the population exercising the monopoly over symbols and 'the written'<sup>27</sup>) offered a different narrative, that of a continuum of violence. Modernity and the writing of a national history constitute the triumph of *the Lettered City*. During this period, the historical production would focus on edifying a cult to national figures, placing them above any conflicting positions and presenting them as symbols of a national spirit<sup>28</sup>.

For Independence Wars, the patriot rebels - once victory is obtained - become national heroes and founding fathers. National narratives transform those fighting in 1810 (*i.e.* Comuneros) and the patriot army of 1819 into one homogenous block, from which all Colombians inherit their braveness. This is how the names of Jose Antonio Galán, Manuela Beltrán, Simón Bolívar and the revolutionary troops under his command have found their place in history. The narrative of their courage has been "sanctioned and valorised by institutional frameworks"<sup>29</sup>. The Civil Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are currently the objects of a new reading. Traditional historiography approached them through the lens of analysis of state-building processes.

<sup>19</sup> The main body of agreements was signed in 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Diego Borrero and Julia Carrillo "La diáspora colombiana: long-distance nationalism", *Cuadernos Americanos*, núm. 114 (2005), pp 85 – 101.

<sup>21</sup> In 2005, the total population in Colombia was 42.888.592. Population estimates for the year 2009 = 45.000.000

<sup>22</sup> "La Migración Internacional Colombiana". Documento Colombia Nos Une, pg. 3. This document is automatically distributed upon acquiring membership to RedEs Colombia.

<sup>23</sup> For a critique of this use of the term 'barbarism' see Asger Jørn: "Signes grave sur les églises de l'Eure et du Calvados".

<sup>24</sup> Alberto Lleras Camargo quoted in Fals-Borda Orlando, *El conflicto, la violencia y la estructura social*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogota, 1962, pg. 374

<sup>25</sup> Francisco Noguera Rocha, General Consul of Colombia in New York; Training for Electoral Juries, 8 March 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Sánchez, Gonzalo, and Peter Bakewell. "La Violencia in Colombia: New Research, New Questions." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 65.4 (1985): 789-807. Pg. 789

<sup>27</sup> Rama, Angel. *La Ciudad Letrada*. Hanover, N.H.: Hanover, N.H. : Ediciones del Norte, 1984.

<sup>28</sup> Angel Rama, *Ibid.* pp. 91-92.

<sup>29</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of remembering* (Berkeley, 1997), pg.

The narratives developed followed the establishment of a centralized nation-state and the lives of the heroic figures (mostly men) related to them (*i.e.* Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, José María Obando), as well as of the great battles fought (*i.e.* Peralonso, Humareda, Palonegro). Written reconstructions are usually those of the commanders and high rank officers, who saw in their exploits, a series of events that should be kept for posterity. Nevertheless, the memory kept of them is tragic and tied to dichotomies like liberal/conservative, pacifists/jingoists. More recently, attempts to understanding the on-going conflict are leading scholars to re-read these wars through a new prism. The war that has received the greatest attention is the *Guerra de los Mil Días* (1899 – 1902), namely because of elements relevant to today's context, such as: prisoner exchange, the principle of *ius in bellum*, rules for conflict negotiation, and the lingering menace of a national secession<sup>30</sup>.

Following a period when every mention to 'it' was deleted from manuals and textbooks (or dismissed as bad literature), *La Violencia* marked the Colombian academic production of the 1970s and 1980s to an extent that a very prolific *courant* carried its name: *Violentólogos*. Their works and publication – of over two decades of research - appears mostly as a way of 'deciphering the trauma'<sup>31</sup>. Their work was an academic response to the 'Apologetic Writings' and 'Testimonial Literature'<sup>32</sup> produced by of the political elites and the members of the church and the army; in which they either denounce the crimes that were perpetrated against them (Conservatives), the fraudulent origins of the government (Liberals), their defence of national sovereignty against communist forces (army), or their siding with one of the parties (church). Their discourse, nonetheless, reinforces a national identity through the notion of continuous conflict – where acts of violence are a constitutive element of being Colombian. For a majority of them, *La Violencia* was not a stranger. They belonged to a generation born in the mid-1940s- when the confrontation between *pájaros* and the *guerrillas liberales* was at its summit.

They grew up running away from massacres and party executions, and worked their ways from rural environments into urban academia<sup>33</sup>. *La Violencia* is then presented as a tangible memory. It remained written in the bodies of those who survived, and was transmitted from generation to generation as memories of *La Violencia* could not be separated from family histories (*i.e.* many of the first guerrilla leaders joined the armed struggled to clean the name and honour of their families who had fallen as victims). These ties and sense of continuity are among the reasons why violence would appear as a normal and endless phenomenon to Colombians. The history and memory of the *successful* peace processes of the late 1980s and early 1990s follows a different logic [twofold – separating the official memory from the popular memory] and would be more close to the official image of "Colombia - standard of democracy". On the one hand, the country's media and groups of victims continue to commemorate grievous episodes such as the Palace of Justice siege<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, the government emphasizes on the peace process (and resulting amnesty and reintegration of former guerrilla combatants) giving them a place of honour as embodiments of the possibility of regulating conflict through democracy and reinforcing state legitimacy and sovereignty.

The inclusion of the once anti-democratic political forces<sup>35</sup> praises the rule of law, the embracing of difference, the union of past and present and the social reunification of the nation<sup>36</sup>.

#### RECOGNIZING DEPARTURES: BOUNDARIES AND EXTENDING 'COLOMBIANNES' TO POPULATIONS ABROAD

As it is often the case with national communities abroad, it was the weight of their remittances in the country's economy that lead to official recognition by the state<sup>37</sup>. This recognition meant a shift in the perception of migrants and migration on the governmental side; from an image tied to treason to the motherland and criminal activities, to one of source of cultural, economic and social enrichment for Colombia<sup>38</sup>. Colombians abroad are now recognized by the government as a 'transnational community', and referred to as the country's ambassadors of peace. Extending a

<sup>30</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 26.

<sup>31</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Categories developed in Sánchez, Gonzalo, and Peter Bakewell. "La Violencia in Colombia: New Research, New Questions." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 65.4 (1985): 789-807. Pg. 793

<sup>33</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg 11.

<sup>34</sup> The siege took place on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1985. In Colombian history, this event is referred to as the 'holocaust' - with a small 'H'.

<sup>35</sup> David Plotke "Democratic Politics and Anti-democratic Politics", *Theoria* 111 (December 2006), pp. 6 - 44

<sup>36</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 63.

<sup>37</sup> According to data from the *Banco de la República*, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has meant an increase in the remittances, transforming them into the second source of income (over coffee and coal). José Darío Uribe quoted in Luis Eduardo Guarnizo "el Estado y la migración global colombiana", *Relaciones Estado – diáspora: la perspectiva de América latina y el Caribe*, Coordinador Carlos Gutiérrez González, Tomo II, SER – Instituto de los Mexicanos en el exterior, México, D.F., 2006, pg. 298.

<sup>38</sup> This is not a particularity of Colombia. Jorge Castañeda notes the same phenomenon for Mexican migrants/migration. Jorge Castañeda, *Ex Mex- From Migrants to Immigrants*. The New Press, 2007.

Colombian identity to those abroad has meant dynamics of negotiation and incorporation, resulting in a modification of the initial division between insiders and outsiders both belonging to a same national community. The notions of *boundary blurring* and *boundary shifting*<sup>39</sup> will be articulated into the analysis of how this incorporation modifies how “Colombia” is conceived as a community of memory.

*Boundary blurring* is “based on a broader definition of integration – one that affects the structure of the (...) society. Its core feature is the tolerance of multiple memberships and an overlapping of collective identities hitherto thought to be separated and mutually exclusive”. Examples of this are the amendments that have been made to Colombia’s legal corpus (Constitutions, laws, rights and decrees), as well as to the functioning of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Colombians living abroad have been granted the right to double citizenship (1991), overseas electoral participation<sup>40</sup>, and representation in the Congress’ Chamber of Representatives as well as in governmental programs and initiatives that aim at promoting their engagement and active participation in national endeavours, such as *Colombia Nos Une*<sup>41</sup>, *RedEs*

*Colombia*<sup>42</sup>, and the *Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional*<sup>43</sup>. Modifications to the governmental approach to migration phenomena have followed international legal frameworks and standards, as shows the signature and ratification of the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, the structure and functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its diplomatic missions, and consular services have been adjusted with a view to better responding to the challenges in terms of public policy drafting that come with a population abroad that is steadily growing, has higher levels of education<sup>45</sup>, and is conscious of its right to inclusion into the national community. Among these institutional remodellings is the creation of the Inter-institutional Committee for Assisting Colombians Abroad (1995)<sup>46</sup>. It reported to the MFA and elaborates recommendations concerning the assistance to Colombians abroad. The Committee was also in charge of public campaigns aiming at informing migrants about their rights and duties as Colombian citizens. It was replaced in 2001 by the Committee for the Assistance of Nationals Abroad, which had at the core of its mission the identification, evaluation, and analysis of the needs of Colombia’s population abroad, as well as drafting the budgets and projects necessary to their fulfilment.

Law 991 (2005)<sup>47</sup> and Decree 2884 (2008)<sup>48</sup> afford evidence of the government’s desire to expand the scope of its relation with its citizens abroad. Law 991 has the attention provided by the consular representatives to Colombian nationals in their host countries, at the centre of its concerns. It aims at protecting and assisting Colombians residing abroad at a more comprehensive level. Guidance and aid should cover not only the judicial level, but extend to the realm of the social. Capacity of action, however, is limited to the particular circumscription of each consular office; and services are to be provided by contractors external to the Colombian diplomatic service. Decree 2884 (2008) defines the structure of the National Administrative System for Foreign Policy and International Relations and of each one of its members, as well as their interaction. The objective of the National Administrative System is to bring together all actors concerned (government and civil society) by Colombia’s position regarding international affairs and the promotion of the country’s interests abroad.

*Boundary shifting*, serves in examining the reconstruction of the group identity as well as the relocation of the line differentiating members and non-members. In this case, it would mean the remodelling of the Colombian identity as national community, in order to include those Colombian living abroad.

<sup>39</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg and Long Litt Woon, “Why Islam is Like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States” in *Politics and Society*, 27, No.1 (March 1999).pp. 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Right to vote in presidential elections (1961); right to vote in parliamentary elections (1997).

<sup>41</sup> This program, launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2003, aims at establishing close relations between Colombians abroad and the national government via the country’s diplomatic missions.

<sup>42</sup> Jointly created by *Colombia Nos Une* and the IOM Country Office, its objective is the establishment and reinforcing of networks of nationals living both at home and abroad.

<http://www.redescolombia.org/Inicio/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.accionsocial.gov.co/portal/default.aspx>

<sup>44</sup> Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990. Ratified by Colombia through Law 146 (3 July) of 1994.

<sup>45</sup> According to Cárdenas and Mejía, Colombian migrants have higher levels of education than those ‘within’. “*Migraciones Internacionales en Colombia: ¿Qué sabemos?* Documentos de Trabajo N° 30, Fedesarrollo, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Decree 1974. “La Migración Internacional Colombiana”. Documento Colombia Nos Une, pg. 7.

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.cancilleria.gov.co:82/wps/wcm/connect/8f5a18004d284548bfa8ffa2b6965cda/LEY\\_991\\_2005.htm?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.cancilleria.gov.co:82/wps/wcm/connect/8f5a18004d284548bfa8ffa2b6965cda/LEY_991_2005.htm?MOD=AJPERES)

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.cancilleria.gov.co:82/wps/wcm/connect/eb6a35804d2842d7bb07ffa2b6965cda/Decreto\\_2884\\_de\\_2008.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.cancilleria.gov.co:82/wps/wcm/connect/eb6a35804d2842d7bb07ffa2b6965cda/Decreto_2884_de_2008.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

Examining Colombia's Holistic Migration Policy and the different initiatives launched by the Colombian government<sup>49</sup> presents the extent to which the idea of an 'extension of Colombianness' is expressed in terms of public policies. For decades, the assistance provided to nationals abroad was limited to consular services. The growing numbers, however, also meant an increase in the demands in terms of the scope of State assistance (to cover health, pensions, education, labour issues, as well as cultural, political, participative, and security matters). The response to this 'claim to vulnerability' came in September 2009, with the launching of the new Colombian MFA's Holistic Migration Policy; whose objective is to tackle the needs of Colombians abroad in the realms of labour, education, culture, and citizenship.<sup>50</sup>

The overall objective is "to strengthen the ties that bind to the motherland, those who have left, and for a variety of reasons and circumstances, find themselves now beyond the country's borders"<sup>51</sup>; allowing the development of a strategy that allows the safeguarding of the idea of a national attachment. Accordingly, the HMP promotes programs and activities in the areas of i) Networking and construction of a transnational citizenship (i.e. *Colombia Nos Une, RedEs Colombia, Plan Comunidad en el Exterior*<sup>52</sup>); ii) Education, where beneficiaries are divided into two main groups: adults (for whom online educational programs are designed<sup>53</sup>) and children (for whom programs are designed so that they continue to learn national history, while schooled abroad<sup>54</sup>); iii) Pensions (through programs allowing Colombians to establish a retirement fund and contribute to it via Western Union<sup>55</sup>); iv) Savings and Remittances (by allowing migrants the opening of bank accounts and investments - and by controlling the entrance of assets, the State tackles possible money laundering situations); and v) Health (by combining its mobile consular services initiatives with health promotion activities and providing basic health services<sup>56</sup>). "Extending colombianness" would result from by the State's exercise of its legitimating functions beyond its territorial borders.

#### **REREADING THE VERY PRESENT AND THE ACTUAL PAST OMITTED AMNESTIES & TRUTH COMMISSIONS: PACTISM AND A NARRATIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The first traces of amnesties and political pardons in Colombian political life can be found in the country's colonial past: Caballero y Góngora's (Viceroy and Archbishop) "Royal Pardon" to the Comuneros of New Granada of 1782. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, amnesty and indult were the means used to end conflict and war – the essential elements in the country's political reconstruction. Some of the amnesties and indults given had a national scope, others a regional / local one; they could be given to only certain members of the rebel groups or encompass it as a whole; they could be conditional or general. Amnesties were not only offered by those in power, they also marked the end of wars and were the outcome of negotiations.

As had been the case in 1820 (founding of the Republic of Colombia) and 1821 (birth of the Gran Colombia), the 1863 Rionegro Constitution's final mark was a total amnesty – covering both common and political crimes. In 1880, a 'mutual amnesty' was signed between the State and the rebel factions<sup>57</sup>. The first amnesty of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was declared by law in 1908, and covered any action executed by either government representatives or members of the revolutionary forces during what were named the "past civil wars"<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> The working group in charge of drafting the working document reunited the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, Social Protection, Education, Environment, and Culture; together with national agencies in charge of statistics, Family Welfare, and Planning.

<sup>50</sup> CONPES 3603 – Document on Comprehensive Migration Policy (main focus: the improvement of livelihoods of Colombian nationals residing abroad and foreigners living in Colombia, according to the principle of reciprocity).

[http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/wps/portal/espanol/lut/p/c/1/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os.jQsKAwo2AXYwMLEz8nA0\\_\\_0DBD5yBnAwNXY6B8JJK8v2-QqYFRmI9ZoJersZGBpxkB3X4e-bmp-gW5EeUAwzFIIQ!!/d12/d1/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnB3LzZfVZSVjJTRDMwODROQjBJT1VWMUNSQzAwRTM/](http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/wps/portal/espanol/lut/p/c/1/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os.jQsKAwo2AXYwMLEz8nA0__0DBD5yBnAwNXY6B8JJK8v2-QqYFRmI9ZoJersZGBpxkB3X4e-bmp-gW5EeUAwzFIIQ!!/d12/d1/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnB3LzZfVZSVjJTRDMwODROQjBJT1VWMUNSQzAwRTM/)

<sup>51</sup> "Guía para colombianos en el exterior". File available through:

<http://www.redescolombia.org/Red/Archivos/tabid/61/GroupId/921/Default.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> The *Plan Comunidad en el Exterior* (Community Abroad Plan), as opposed to *RedEs Colombia* and *Colombia Nos Une*, which can be joined on an individual basis, aims at working with established migrants' associations.

<sup>53</sup> *Formación en Ambientes Virtuales*: Online Undergraduate and Graduate degrees offered by the UNAD (*Universidades Nacional a Distancia*) and the SENA (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*). Both institutions are recognized by the National Ministry of Education.

<sup>54</sup> The program designed for this target population is "*Colombia aprende*" (Colombia learns). It includes, among others, data on the Colombian history, political and economic organization, national symbols, maps, and music. It is destined, as stated above, to children in school age, both those born in Colombia, and those born abroad to Colombian parents. Its pilot version is being implemented in Spain. CONPES, pg 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Colombiano Seguro en el Exterior* (Ensured Colombian Abroad). Its pilot version started in 2007 in the US. It has extended its services to 158 countries. CONPES, pg.10

<sup>56</sup> The *Semanas Binacional de Salud* (Bi-national Health Weeks) are currently being carried-out in consulates in the US. Bi-national Agreements have been signed with countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Ecuador, so that health services are provided to their national as well. "Guía para colombianos en el exterior".

<sup>57</sup> Gonzalo Sánchez qualifies this as a lay version of the religious notion of pardon, tying it to the Catholic nature of the Colombian state at that time (Church – State separation would come with the 1991 Constitution).

<sup>58</sup> Gonzalo Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 38

The next amnesty was to come in 1953 under the military regime of General Rojas Pinilla; its objective was to put a closing point to *La Violencia*. Rojas Pinilla's policy aimed uniting the government's Army and at negotiating with the rebel groups to obtain their demobilization and reintegration. His model of amnesty was one to be carried out in two steps: the first step, the amnesty for the military (1953); followed by an amnesty of civilians who had participated in the armed conflict (1954). Rojas Pinilla resigned in 1957, and office was assured by a Military Junta for one year. In 1958 the *Frente Nacional*<sup>59</sup> was established. Its approach to conflict-resolution and peace-building was that of amnesty and rehabilitation of former combatants. In the last months of 1958 unconditional amnesty was given to *bandoleros*, communist guerrilla groups, and *pájaros*<sup>60</sup> in the departments of Caldas, Cauca, Huila, Tolima and Valle<sup>61</sup> - no disarmament was required.

The governments that succeeded the *Frente Nacional* all had their particular approaches to ending the conflict, with one point in common: maintaining open negotiations with the guerrilla movements. For example, Turbay Ayala (1978 – 1982) offered conditional amnesties<sup>62</sup> to all combatants, while maintaining a contra-revolutionary military struggle and a state-of-siège; while Betancur's amnesty and indult<sup>63</sup> offers to guerrilla members were general and unilateral. Nonetheless, these peace negotiations and amnesty proposals had no positive outcome. After the failure of the peace processes launched by President Betancur (1982 – 1986), the Barco administration (1986 – 1990) launched the *Policy for Reconciliation, Normalization, and Rehabilitation* (Política de Reconciliación, Normalización y Rehabilitación). This initiative aimed at reinitiating the negotiations with the rebel armed groups; enhancing the government-society relations, and overseeing the *National Plan for Rehabilitation* (Plan Nacional de Rehabilitación).

The government decided to take up on a national sentiment of support for negotiating with the guerrilla movements, mobilizing the idea that 'agreements between opposites' were a recurring element in the country's political life. Thus –this once- Colombia was not portrayed as a country divided in victors and defeated, but as a nation of treaties. The negotiations (as well as the amnesties and indults offered<sup>64</sup>) appeared as the continuation of those carried out at the end of the conflicts and civil wars fought over two centuries<sup>65</sup>. By the end of 1990, the M-19 had demobilized, rendered its arms, and reintegrated civil life<sup>66</sup>. In 1991, under President Gaviria, indults were granted to members of the EPL, Quintín Lame, and PRT guerrillas. These 26 amnesties and 63 political pardons are not the only endeavours to be constantly suppressed of the referents of national history and memory. It is also the case for works of the truth and rehabilitation commissions that preceded the establishment (2005) of the National Commission on Reparations and Reconciliation and its Group on Historical Memory<sup>67</sup>.

In the 1950s, the *Investigative Commission on the Causes of Violence* published "*La Violencia en Colombia*". This book<sup>68</sup> is the first record of the forms and dimensions of the horror of this period. Parallel to this Commission, a Tribunal for Equity and Conciliation was established. It aimed at identifying names, places, and dates, with a view to providing victims with material reparations. The Special Commission for Rehabilitation (1985 -1960), the Commission for the Investigation of the Violent Events of Trujillo (1994, and which results from hard international pressure on the Samper administration), the Truth Commission for Barrancabermeja (1998) constitute other unmentioned attempts at truth, reparations, and reconciliation.

<sup>59</sup> Frente Nacional / National Front (1958 – 1974): period during which, the two main political parties in Colombia (Liberal and Conservative) agreed to let the opposite alternated periods in office. It lasted four presidential terms: Lleras Camargo, Valencia, Lleras Restrepo, and Pastrana.

<sup>60</sup> Also known as 'chulavitas', they were the armed-wing of the Conservative Party. Among them one could find ex-police members. The greatest of them all was León María Lozano, '*El condor*' from Tulua (a small town in the Valle del Cauca). A portrait of this period and its characters is provided by Gustavo Alvarez Gardeazábal in his "*Cóndores no entierran todos los días*" (Condors are not buried every day). This book was to become a movie, directed by Francisco Norden and produced by FOCINE (the national film company – liquidated in the early nineteen-nineties).

<sup>61</sup> Afanador Ulloa, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 57.

<sup>62</sup> Law 37 (1981) and Legislative Decree 474 (1982).

Full texts available at: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/proyecto03/boletines/boletin05.htm>

<sup>63</sup> Law 35 (1982) and Law 49 (1985).

Full texts available at: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/proyecto03/boletines/boletin05.htm>

<sup>64</sup> Law 77 (1989), Decree 0206 (1990).

Full texts available at: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/proyecto03/boletines/boletin05.htm>

<sup>65</sup> Ricardo Santamaría Salamanca, "Aspectos políticos del gobierno de Barco", *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, pp. 61 – 82.

<sup>66</sup> One of the main items in this peace agreement was the call for a referendum leading to the Constituent Assembly of 1990, and the resulting Constitution of 1991.

<sup>67</sup> The Group on Historical Memory is coordinated by Gonzalo Sánchez, one of the main figures of the '*Violentología*'.

<sup>68</sup> This book remains a classic. It is important to note that most of its authors are currently working with Gonzalo Sánchez as part of the NCCR's Group on Historical Memory.

In 2005, two new Commissions were established. The National Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation is a governmental initiative launched as part of the peace dialogues with the paramilitaries. Its legal framework (Law 975, 2005) decrees that it should also advance work on “the causes leading to the emergence and development illegal armed groups”<sup>69</sup>. This particular task is assigned to its Group on Historical Memory. The team in charge of the works of memory is composed by big figures of the *Violentología*. The mandate given to this group states that their work should be understood as a first step in a process of reparation (preservation of memory being understood as symbolic reparation), and should closely follow international legal frameworks in reconstructing memory and truth (particularly a Human Rights Based Approach and the principles of Humanitarian Law) More importantly, the guidelines for the Group on Historical Memory clearly note that its work should not be taken as that of a Truth Commission (the GMH is not assigned any executive functions) nor those of a Reconciliation Commission (as it is established amid the conflict, and not part of a process of transitional justice). Their approach has been a regional and contemporary one: its first publication (2008) was the Report on the Massacre of Trujillo (1990), for which the State has been found responsible, and for which public apologies have been presented.

The CPVJ (*Comisión por la Verdad del Palacio de Justicia*) was created in November of 2005, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Siège. It is an independent commission; its funding comes from the Commissioners themselves<sup>70</sup> - with methodological and technical support being provided by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Ford Foundation and the European Commission. Its mandate is essentially ethical, academic, and historical. Among its objectives are the breaking the pact of silence (explicit or implicit) established around the events of the 6-7 November 1985; and the restoration of the dignity of the families of the victims, whose psychic and moral integrity have been violated, making them victims as well; and provide the elements for the analysis of Colombian institutions and society. Their focus is the rewriting of what happened – the wide and painful nature of the horror- with a view to providing a complete portrait of the siege of the Palace of Justice to the international community, but above all to the new generations, so as to honour the victims’ sacrifice and guarantee that such events will not repeat themselves<sup>71</sup>.

While the idea of chronic violence as inherent to Colombia’s imagining of its community<sup>72</sup> and touching both populations within state borders as well as those abroad appears as the dominant discourse, it would be possible to juxtapose a national tradition of consensus. The narratives preserved and reproduced by collective memory play a causal role in influencing people’s disposition. They also play a normative role by providing the criteria by which contemporary models of action can be framed and modified; or by which specific proposals (ethical or political) can be regulated (by approval or criticism)<sup>73</sup>. On the one hand, the narrative placing violence as core element of national identity has been employed in explaining the country’s high rates of domestic abuses<sup>74</sup>. On the other hand, the multiple political pardons and amnesties have resulted in a belief that anything and everything can be negotiated-all the time. This phenomenon, “*pactism*”<sup>75</sup>, is seen as leading to the dilution of the basic rules of coexistence and the social contract. A situation deemed unacceptable by international legal norms that frame the use of memory as key component in transitional justice (warning against any use of it as an excuse for inaction towards grappling with present contexts of violent conflict).

This notion of ‘*pactism*’ would imply, however, that Colombians know of the political pardons of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and that they partake of a collectivity with a “negative heritage of violence”<sup>76</sup>, living in and of a ‘collective fear of the past’- the apprehension that memory<sup>77</sup> may serve as the igniter of inherited hatreds, unclosed resentment, and unfulfilled desires for revenge; thus deciding to present “its other cheek”. This idea would be at odds with the evidence that shows growing numbers of descendants of victims joining either illegal armed groups, or civil society organizations, in the quest to honour the names and memories of their departed, and mobilizing the around the notion of the past’s ethical claims on the present.

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.cnrr.org.co/funciones.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> The majority of whom are sons and daughters of the Magistrates killed and disappeared during the Siège of the Palace of Justice.

<sup>71</sup> “Que cese el fuego”, Informe Final, Comisión de la Verdad sobre los hechos del Palacio de Justicia, § 1 -20. <http://www.verdadpalacio.org.co/>

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, Benedict R.O’G.(Benedict Richard O’Gorman), 1936-. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: London : Verso, 1983.

<sup>73</sup> Knapp, Steven, “Collective Memory and the Actual Past”, *Representations* (26), Spring 1989, pp.123 -149, pg. 123.

<sup>74</sup> Jimeno Santoyo, Myriam, “Identidad y experiencias cotidianas de violencia”, *Las guerras civiles desde 1830: Memorias de la II Cátedra Anual de Historia ‘Ernesto Restrepo Tirado’: 22, 23 y 24 de octubre de 1997, Auditorio Teresa Cuervo Borde, Museo Nacional de Colombia*, (Bogotá 1998), pp. 247 248.

<sup>75</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 37

<sup>76</sup> Sánchez, *Op. Cit* pg. 84

<sup>77</sup> Taken here as the recognition of insurrectional martyrs.

But this brings in an element often overlooked, the role of Catholicism in how conflict, negotiations, peace-building, and political pardons are conceived. Even though religious pluralism was recognized in the 1991 Constitution, Colombia remains a Catholic country in majority (85% of the population). Therefore faith is one of the psychological mechanisms people integrate into dealing with failure of peace efforts; “people say: ‘this time we will win’ (when referring to applying an ‘iron fist’ approach to war) or ‘this time we will sign’ (when it comes to negotiations), rapidly relegating each successive failure to the realm of oblivion.”<sup>78</sup> How do this account, again, for those past peace efforts silenced<sup>79</sup> from history? Perhaps, the equation often repeated in catechism “sin + confession + prayer=salvation” would serve as explanation. Colombian-to-Colombian violence would be confessed through the mosaic works of the different Truth Commissions, leading to assuming a religiously-laden political pardon with its resulting deliverance (with forgiving and forgetting being regarded as equivalents). The obligations, debts and inheritances of the Past are constantly brought to closure through the parcelled narratives of the Truth Commissions. Claiming membership to the national community does not entail an essential engagement in peacebuilding<sup>80</sup>.

### THE VIOLENCE – MIGRATION NEXUS: COLOMBIAN MIGRANTS AS A CONFLICT-GENERATED DIASPORA

Diasporic communities, according to their nature, practices, and experiences in their host countries can be consequently categorized into victim, labour/imperial, trade, and cultural diasporas<sup>81</sup>. The Colombian case, if analyzed through Cohen’s ideal-types would show elements pertaining to all four formations.<sup>82</sup> For example, the last migration wave is a mixture of individuals fleeing the country’s internal conflict and the resulting political persecutions (elements which would bring it closer to an identification as a victim diaspora), with those leaving in the hunt for jobs (and who would not label their displacement as an exile). However, academic research and body of literature dealing with the conflict-resources-political economy nexus draws upon a characterization which could prove relevant to the study of the Colombian transnational community and its bond to the homeland, that of “Conflict-generated Diaspora” – a crossing of borders that is the result of a violent conflict.

“Conflict-generated diasporas are characterized by the source of their displacement (violent, forced separation rather than relatively voluntary pursuit of economic incentives) and by the consequent nature of their ties to the homeland (identities that emphasize links to symbolically valuable territory).” The trauma of displacement is another important element in the constitution of an identity of diaspora. The phenomena of remembrance and grievance that are tied to it are constantly re-enacted through commemorations and symbols with a view to keeping their memory (as well as their connection to violence/conflict – the original cause) alive for and in next generations<sup>83</sup>. It is this duple of remembrance and grievance that gives the Colombian transnational community its air of diaspora. In the same way that nation states shift and adapt their discourse following a “boomerang pattern”, diasporic and transnational communities learn to speak the language of international causes so as to fully obtain support and recognition. Facing elevated levels of migration, receiving states responded by increasing the legal restrictions to entry, making political asylum the only viable alternative to migrants highly valuing legality. Figures place the country among those with highest rates of violent deaths (80 per 100.000 inhabitants, out of which 6%-7% have a definite political nature). Armed conflict touches urban and rural areas. It affects the daily lives of all sectors of the population.

<sup>78</sup> UNDP HDR 2003, pg. 12

<sup>79</sup> Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Mass.: Boston, Mass. : Beacon Press, 1995, pg. 26.

<sup>80</sup> This would make stronger the points of those who state that even though Colombians abroad do not fund the conflict directly, they do have a negative impact in peace-making by presenting migration as an ‘exit-strategy’. See Bouvier, Virginia M., “A reluctant diaspora? The case of Colombia”, *Diasporas in Conflict: peace-makers or peace-wreckers?* Edited by Hazel Smith and Paul Stares. UNU Press, Tokio- Paris- New York, 2007.

<sup>81</sup> Robin Cohen. *Global Diasporas – An Introduction*, University of Washington Press, 1997.

A schema of Cohen’s typology would be:

- Victim diasporas (with the main examples used by the author being the African and Armenian cases): where there is a high element of displacement and persecution of a particular group/population.
- Labor and Imperial Diaspora (with the main examples used by the author being the Indian and British cases): where population movement is related to overseas settlement and the quest for market and work opportunities.
- Trade diasporas (with the Chinese and the Lebanese being made reference to as prototypical cases of ethnic entrepreneurship): This describes the networks of merchants who exchange goods over long distances, while learning the business practices of hostlands.
- Cultural diasporas (using as case the Caribbean migration): where interrelations and interactions are marked by postmodernism and phenomena of ‘hybridized’ and fragmented identities that deeply mark the host country.

<sup>82</sup> Borrero and Carrillo, *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Terrence Lyons “Diasporas and homeland conflict”, *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization*, edited by Miles Kahler and Barbara F. Walter, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pg. 113.

It concerns not only the zones dissociated from national institutions and their authority; it also disturbs institutions themselves by altering and paralyzing their functioning<sup>84</sup>. A large number of Colombians has left the country following death menaces (to them and their family) and sought refuge abroad<sup>85</sup>; nonetheless, their numbers are surpassed by those for whom migration is the result of the country's degenerating economic situation. Obtaining and maintaining the protection under the grounds of political asylum requires construction of an identity tied to the image of a homeland in suffering and torn by war.

#### ACROSS THE BORDERS: LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM

##### THE *LETTERED CITY* IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL FLOWS: LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM

In transnational contexts, the elaboration of a nationalist discourse is claimed, not by the state, but by the *Lettered City*, via two of its main actors: the elites and the intellectuals (namely those 'in exile'). They do not only act in view of mobilizing and assembling the population abroad. Their instrumentalization of the elements of loyalty to a nation state, and the politics of belonging that are inherent to it, constitute the means for reproducing and guaranteeing their position and prestige as power elite. As stated by Max Weber in his chapter on 'The Nation', to these advocates, their monopoly over the cultural goods is to be justified by calling on the belief in a responsibility towards a future generation, and the legend of a 'providential mission' whose essence is the zealous keeping of the unqualified devotion that is demanded by the state (as an imperialist power structure).<sup>86</sup> *Conexión Colombia*<sup>87</sup>, a site resulting from a private sector initiative is an example of how actors others than the state mobilize elements of identity in campaigning for the construction of a national selfhood.

The founding members of the project include companies as Leo Burnett (marketing), *Semana* (weekly magazine), DHL, *Davivienda*, and Visa (postal services and financial institutions), as well as funds and agencies working in international cooperation. *Conexión* is the Colombian government's privileged partner, funding and information on the network's projects is channelled via the country's diplomatic service.<sup>88</sup> In its initial version (2003), the website offered videos where a variety of testimonies (ranging from President Uribe's intervention during the launching of the initiative, to TV and music stars) calling on all nationals and reminding them of the need to join a certain sentiment of 'Colombianness'. The initial idea was to expand the idea of national identity beyond the holding of a passport to the identification with the founding fathers in their mission of 'nurturing the motherland' – by means such as collecting funds to help the victims of the conflict (*i.e.* IDP's, veterans, orphans). The discourse moved around mottos such as "solidarity towards those born on your same soil", "these are groups of women, men, and children who carry the motherland in their hearts", and "the need to keep alive those roots on which memories find their bedrocks". Seven years later, the display of the site has changed, but the core idea remains. The elements mobilized, however, have left the realm of the 'providential mission' to become embedded in more day-to-day practices.

Visitors to the site are exposed to four main features: a tab on "What is it to be Colombian?" which gives information on the country's latest news; a "Dictionary of Colombianness" meant to serve as tool for "uncovering the details and particularities of all those things which identify the country and its culture<sup>89</sup>"; a series of blogs written by correspondents all over the world; and a special section on "Information for Migrants" which focuses on migratory processes for both leaving the country and returning to it<sup>90</sup>. Facing the stigma of violence, illegality, and drug trafficking in their host countries, members of the diasporic community respond with dynamics of reconstruction and revalorization of the national identity. Those "here" and those "there" become part of the same 'imagined community' via newspapers and TV and radio broadcasts<sup>91</sup> over the World Wide Web.

<sup>84</sup> Pécaut, Daniel, "Presente, Pasado y Futuro de la Violencia en Colombia", *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 36, No 144 (enero – marzo 1997), pp 891 – 930.

<sup>85</sup> *Memoria De Los Silenciados : El Baile Rojo : Relatos*. Ed. Yezid Campos. Bogotá, Colombia: Bogotá, Colombia : Ceicos, 2003.

Full-length documentary is available at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8981304868098159223#>

<sup>86</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Guenther Ross and Claus Wittich, Eds., Bedminster Pres, New York, 1968, pp 921 – 926.

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.conexioncolombia.com/>

<sup>88</sup> The latest Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 1 April 2009. The main objective of the agreement is the promotion of the projects and activities being currently undertaken by *Conexión Colombia* through the network of Colombian Embassies. Information on how to donate (and how the different donations are managed and distributed) as well as details of *Conexión*'s "Project Bank"<sup>88</sup> will be provided via the website of the national embassies in host-countries.

<http://www.conexioncolombia.com/20090401877/Protagonistas/Conexion-Colombia-y-la-Cancilleria-unen-esfuerzos.html>

<sup>89</sup> Including, among others: Typical dresses and costumes, celebrities and famous personages, descriptions of the country's main cities, as well as national rhythms, holidays and celebrations.

<sup>90</sup> Special attention is given to the "*Directiva del Retorno*".

<sup>91</sup> By channels such as TV Colombia, radio stations like "La W", newspapers like "El Tiempo" (one of the founding members of *Conexión Colombia*), as well as RCN (now providing news both in Spanish and English).

### THE 'VERY PRESENT', E-CARRIERS OF MEMORY, AND TRANSNATIONALIZING NATIONAL HISTORIES: CHALLENGES FACING CONTEMPORARY HISTORY AND THE STUDY OF COLOMBIAN MIGRATION

The current governmental efforts at administering the paramilitaries' DDR and construction a memory of the conflict that encompasses the narratives of the different actors has been described as 'transition in the middle of a war'. Also, the Colombian community has been portrayed as a 'diaspora in the making'. Writing on the history of Colombian migration is, at its turn, a work-in progress. Only recently have the memories and experiences of those who left the country have started to be gathered. This work has been undertaken by sociologists and cultural psychologists; and focuses mainly on the reasons promoting or hindering solidarity among Colombians abroad. A more comprehensive analysis needs work on the relation of the Colombian government with its population abroad throughout the different waves. The challenges inherent to such endeavour are manifold. Working with the present comes first. Colombian migration is a contemporary subject. The practice of the 'Grand Tour' was common to Latin American elites.

For a period when there was no restrictive legislation for movement, one is able to trace the phenomenon to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the country's founding fathers<sup>92</sup>: Antonio Nariño (1765 – 1824) and Simon Bolivar (1783 - 1830). Nariño translated in 1794 the Declaration of the Rights of Man from its original French into Spanish (a pamphlet he had been distributed on a visit to the French Assembly). Bolivar lived in Napoleonic France, as part of the Grand Tour aristocrats used to take to 'complete their education'<sup>93</sup>. These two examples, nonetheless, would not feed into works on Colombian conflict and Migration, as individual boundary crossing does not question, or affect, the division between a state's insiders and outsiders<sup>94</sup>; whether it is part of a permanent migration project, or a circular one. Chronological distance –though delicately limited- would only be possible for research on the first wave of migration. Historians working on the subject would have to constantly be mindful of the ubiquity of the 'very present' and of their personal experiences in their works. Historical research on the subject is needed, "even if only if to save from oblivion and destruction the sources that will be indispensable to the historians of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium."<sup>95</sup>

When writing on France's relation to the Vichy Regime in national historiography, Henry Rousso used as sources literary fashions, films, and political crises. His work resulted, among others, in the identification of a series of carriers of memory. Carriers, "any source that proposes a deliberate reconstruction of an event for a social purpose"<sup>96</sup> can be: official (*i.e.* ceremonies, monuments, and government-organized celebrations), organizational (*i.e.* groups formed and mobilized for the purpose of preserving and unifying the personal memories of its members), cultural (the of individualistic views of the past in different media, such as films, literature, television), and scholarly (which in turn influence textbooks and school curricula). The study of the relation of sending countries and their population abroad brings into the equation of sources the internet and its variety of social networks, as they play a major role in the development of virtual nations by "ensuring the continued loyalty and identification of citizens or ex-citizens living abroad."<sup>97</sup> Would the use of the notion of social networks as carriers of memory imply the creation of a new category (e-carriers of memory, perhaps?) or would it result in the establishment of Rousso's classification as ideal-types? Additionally, the question of access to content creation and management appears.

The transnational public sphere is seen as a more open and democratic space for participation<sup>98</sup>, nevertheless, the degree of access, knowledge and familiarity with information technology plays the role of filter, as the networks and materials made available on-line. Levels of computer literacy are not only tied to educational backgrounds, but also to generations; posing the question of how these networks are reaching out those belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> wave of Colombian migration.

<sup>92</sup> More recently, one could bring in the name of Ingrid Betancour. However, she is a better example of *boundary shifting*, as she was claimed as a French citizen during her period when she was held as hostage by the FARC guerrilla (to sell to French public opinion a military campaign and meddling into a sovereign state's affairs that would otherwise fall under the category of *ingérence*).

<sup>93</sup> It is rumored that he met Alexander von Humboldt during this stay.

<sup>94</sup> Zolberg and Woon, *Ibid.* pp. 8-9

<sup>95</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, « *Un historien et son temps présent* », *Ecrire l'Histoire Du Temps Présent : En Hommage à François Bédarida : Actes De La Journée d'Études De l'IHTP*, Paris, CNRS, 14 Mai 1992. Ed. François Bédarida. Paris: Paris : CNRS Editions, 1993. pg. 102.

<sup>96</sup> Rousso, Henry, 1954-. *The Vichy Syndrome : History and Memory in France since 1944*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1991, pg. 219

<sup>97</sup> T.H. Eriksen, Nationalism and the Internet, *Nations and Nationalisms*, vol. 13, no.1, pg. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Transnationalizing the Public Sphere. On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2007, Vol. 24(4): 7-30.

Another challenge of working on the relationship between a sending country and its migrant communities is the issue of bringing a transnational dimension into the rewriting of national history. “Wisdom sits in places”<sup>99</sup>, and national history is also the narrative of those place and landscapes on which national memory resides. One thing is writing on how Colombian governments have recognized their populations abroad over different periods of time. Writing a Colombian national history that encompasses the realities of those living in Paris as well as those leaving in New York would imply deterritorializing it. What would be the way of grappling with this complexity, when territory being one of the core elements of national history (as is for the Weberian definition of state)?

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<sup>99</sup> Basso, Keith H., 1940-. Wisdom Sits in Places : Landscape and Language among the Western Apache. Albuquerque: Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1996.