

Chapter 1

Turbulent Peace, Power, and Ethics

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ABSTRACT

A situation of turbulent peace is defined as an ambiguous transition from direct violence (which ends by means a fragile and incomplete peace agreement among enemies) to an indirect and subtle violence euphemistically denominated as progress. Indeed, a big rate of economic growth implies growing prosperity, incremented consumption, and increasing investment in the present but, sadly, the consequence of this material progress will be the suffering of future generations because the exhaustion and deterioration of nature in a world where the entropy is worsened by the rapacity of actual generations. The depletion and contamination of natural resources is the inherent cost of material progress and development of “productive” forces. The ideological, coercive and economic power of some organized minorities, and the acquiescence of a big majority of human beings constitutes the root of this problem. The antidote against this power is the critical examination of values by active citizens and the guide of ethics. In the long run this problem can be solved promoting a nonviolent economy.

INTRODUCTION

A century ago a pessimistic visionary, the author of the Devil’s Dictionary (Bierce, 2004), stated that peace is “... a period of cheating between two periods of fighting”. This significance was referred to the arena of international affairs but also is valid in the context of internal conflict or civil war. Without doubts this accurate meaning is a variation by a minor composer on a theme composed by an original Master. The memorable Heraclitus of Ephesus stated wisely two famous

sentences: “Everything flows and nothing stays” and “War is the father and king of all: some he has made gods, and some men; some slaves and some free.”

The turbulence invades the different attempts to attain peace because destructive power and unethical deals are very frequent in the human relationships (and force, fraud and deception are the main strategies of powerful people). Exist at least three kinds of turbulences in the process of peace, namely: a) Peace agreements can be used like a Trojan horse by opportunistic rivals; b) Conflict

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is an agonistic game among several adversaries and, consequently, peace agreements are partial consensus and, consequently, are source of new unconformity and renovated confrontations (all the sectors of a society want peace but each sector have different views of peace); and c) During and after a flourishing peacetime a reconciled society can promote material progress (unbound economic growth, incessant development of productive forces) which is in an inclement and violent process of creative destruction. Colombia and Iraq are paradigmatic and clear examples of turbulent peace because opportunistic rivals and biased peace agreements, nevertheless the rest of the supposedly peaceful and prosperous nations are carriers of others turbulences because they are promoting destructive progress.

In the recent history of Colombia (IEPRI, 2006) there are three process of turbulent peace, and each one has been cause of new kinds of war, and the next is the synthesis:

- **National Front (1958-1974):** Coalition between the leadership of two main traditional political parties (Liberal and Conservative), in order to finish the partisan violence, by means the rotation of power each four years between this two parties. Nevertheless this implied the abolition of a real political opposition, and the violent exclusion of leftist and populist political parties. The country experienced capitalist progress: urbanization, growth in the construction of cities and infrastructure and massive displacement of peasants to cities. Colombian governments followed the National Security Doctrine promoted by USA (in the context of Cold War). During these period was the birth of leftist guerrillas: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (originated in a repression of Colombian State against a peasant resistance), National Liberation Army, Popular Liberation Army, Quintin Lame (an armed

resistance of indigenous people), and 19th of April Movement (created because the electoral fraud in 1974 against the populist National Popular Alliance).

- **Bittersweet Bargaining with Insurgent Guerrillas (1982-2002):** The quasi-annihilated 19th of April Movement attained a total demobilization and successful reintegration of combatants to the democratic competition (with a soft social-democratic proposal); after another peace agreement the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia made a coalition with popular leaders, and a majority of its combatants were demobilized and they formed the Patriotic Union (UP) a party of left wing; indeed, the Patriotic Union was successful in local elections, but a majority of the militants of this party have been murdered by paramilitary groups of extreme-right and drug traffickers and, of course, this caused the radicalization of warriors in the ranks of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia ; posteriorly the neoliberal government of the President Cesar Gaviria and some sectors of the social-democratic political opposition construed a new Political Constitution at 1991 (which is a pact between soft social-democracy and neoliberalism); at the beginning of the century the government of Pastrana and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia played a deceitful game of peace; and, simultaneously, some sectors of non-violent opposition founded the Democratic Pole which is a party of center left. During the same period evolved the drug-traffickers (from the market of marihuana to the most profitable business of cocaine), and they construed alliances with legal entrepreneurs and politicians, and even with guerrillas; a majority of the Colombian municipalities participated passively or actively in the organization and consolidation of the right-

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