



Perspektiven auf globale Politik

COLOMBIA'S EMOTIONAL STRUGGLE WITH THE PAST – WHY PEACE WAS REJECTED

30. November 2016 · von bettinabenzing · in *Debatte* · [Hinterlasse einen Kommentar](#)

On October the 2nd the Colombian people rejected the **peace agreement** between the government and the FARC in a referendum with a very thin majority of 0.4%. With this unexpected rejection, the referendum was in some ways similar to the Brexit referendum, for the results of which David Cameron was as little prepared as Juan Manuel Santos for his rejection; there was obviously no Plan B. In the last weeks, the government undertook ten changes to the agreement, but it will not go through a referendum again. Santos, as he said, has learned his lesson from the rejection and will seek to have the amended **peace agreement approved in Congress**. This will likely lead to the implementation of the peace agreement and the furtherance of its goals, such as a DDR process, land reforms, a transitional justice process and reparations for victims, just to mention a few. But this progress in peace will be seen as being at odds with popular opinion. Many of the “no” voters are still not satisfied with the adjustments made by the government and the FARC, and neither are the sectors of the opposition mainly responsible for the rejection. Nevertheless, the government and the FARC are progressing with the implementation, and peace talks with the second-largest – and now the last standing – guerrilla group, the ELN, are scheduled to start in 2017. The prospects for 2018 and onwards, when the presidency election will be held, are more questionable.

In the aftermath of the **referendum, polls and statistics** showed that it was predominantly city dwellers who voted against the peace agreement – not the rural population, which was more exposed to violence. Especially in the areas most affected by the armed conflict, an



Folgt uns per E-Mail:

Schließe dich 1.188 Followern an

SUCHE

LETZTE KOMMENTARE

- [Kommentar zu Ein „westafrikanisches Afghanistan“? Staatskrise in Mali und Herausforderungen an eine ECOWAS-Intervention von Ein “westafrikanisches Afghanistan”? Zur Staatskrise in Mali und der bevorstehenden](#)

overwhelming majority backed the agreement, as in Chocó or Putumayo. In the Chocó department, over 95% of the population voted for the “yes” option, in Putumayo over 85%. In other areas, approval of the peace agreement was at least a two-third majority. Nevertheless, most of the Colombian people live in big cities where support for the peace agreement was not as clear as in the countryside. However, the **participation was poor** at just over 30%. The rejectionist position by the cities’ population is backed by the political opposition, and most prominently by senator and ex-president **Álvaro Uribe** and his party, the **Centro Democrático**. But why did a thin majority vote no?

Needless to say, it was not just the content of the peace agreement. As we saw prior to and as well later this year, populist propaganda – even if it is proved wrong – gains more attention than facts, create more fear and lead to vote against the EU and immigrants as in the UK, against the establishment, as in the US, or as in this case, against the acceptance of the FARC as political combatants and a future political party.

As the differentiation of voters outlined above demonstrates, Colombia is internally divided between those who really want the fighting to be over and those who really want the FARC to be seen as terrorists who deserve be punished for their crimes. The latter follow the course of **Álvaro Uribe**, whose father was reportedly killed by the FARC. He was a leader who wagered his time in office on the task of defeating the guerrilla, when people in the cities – especially the wealthier ones – were most afraid of the FARC. In their view, he made countryside roads safe again, and ended the kidnapping epidemic by fighting it so hard that it wasn’t lucrative anymore. And he defeated the FARC **with that much intensity** (see also), so they **finally winded up at the peace talks**. Because of this he is a savior for a lot of people in the cities. By many in the countryside, Uribe’s presidency is seen very differently because of the extreme violence which came with fighting against the FARC. There are thousands of cases of so called *falsos positivos* (see also, but also) – cases where innocent peasants were killed and dressed in FARC uniforms after their deaths to prove a monthly killing rate. There were several **massacres in which Uribe was implicated** (see also), not to mention **his deep ties to** and his **unquestioning support** of the actions of the **paramilitaries** (see also: **the demobilization of the AUC**). But besides the dubious figure of Uribe and his followers in the Centro Democrático, there is also the former **Attorney-General Alejandro Ordoñez** who predicted that all Colombian children would, under the peace agreement, be **taught to become homosexual in schools** (see also) and that the **traditional Colombian family would be in danger**. This just because of its emphasis on **gender issues**, the **United Nations welcomed** as the most progressive peace agreement ever written. Whereas Centro Democrático congresswomen **Paloma Valencia** and **María Fernanda Cabal** focused more on the danger of FARC leader **Timochenko becoming the next Colombian president** and blamed the government for **selling the country to the FARC** (see also), so it

Intervention - Genocide
Alert 3. September 2016

- Kommentar zu Über uns / About von Roberta Ioana 4. Mai 2016

TWITTER

- Colombia’s emotional struggle with the past – why peace was rejected [ibkommentar.wordpress.de/2016/11/30/col... |](#)
1 day ago
- RT @bretterblog: Our series on the interrelation of social movements & institutions is complete. Check out the eleven contributions! [https:... |](#)
3 days ago

BLOGROLL

- A View From the Cave
- Aidnography
- ArmsControlWonk
- Chris Blattman
- Göttinger Institut für Demokratieforschung
- Inner City Press
- International Law Observer
- IR Blog (Berlin)
- ISN Blog ETH Zürich
- Jihadica
- Junge UN Forschung
- Junge Wissenschaft im öffentlichen Recht
- Justice in Conflict
- Kings of War

could **become the next Venezuela**. These are just short extracts of the fairy tales the opposition created to block the agreement.

Nevertheless, both sides of the voters have in common that almost no one really had read the agreement, perhaps besides university staff and national media. However, the **national print and screen media** as the usual first for public information source – which are also well represented in the social media, such as facebook and twitter – can't be blamed for misinforming the people. At the start of the peace process, President Santos came together with representatives of all main media outlets to ensure their support for the process. The visual media have a huge influence on Colombian public opinion, especially due to a low willingness of people reading a lot in general. The information campaign therefore extended to social media. The newspaper *El Espectador*, for example, posted explanatory videos (**for example this one**) to refute false information and rumors. This was a well thought-out initiative against the populist “no” campaign of ex-president Uribe. But his **still ongoing campaign** (**see also**) is triggering some of Colombians' old fears and therefore is more influential than media informing on the basis of facts – because of emotions. **Emotions are a well proved indicator** for people's decision what to vote for. With the bottom line in the agreement of the FARC not simple being treated as criminals and terrorists, a lot of old fears and hate is coming up again and blogged the minds for fact-based information and rationality. In contrast to other populist movements, who like Donald Trump or UKIP tend to blame entrenched elites for society's perceived ills, Uribe could count on an established majority, in many cases well-educated and influential; among new and old elites. These will not be reassured easily and with the continuing campaign against the government by the Centro Democrático, Santos has to face a hard time left in office. His party's campaign for the presidency in 2018 will also not be made easier by this. Even though he welcomed Uribe and discussed **his ideas for an adjustment**, the final changes in the peace agreement signed this week did not go far enough for his opponents. Due to this it is still questionable whether the peace agreement would now be accepted in a popular vote.

It seems that pragmatic efforts for the common good were trumped by an emotional appeal to old fears and the unifying symbolic power of an absolute enemy. The referendum in Colombia seems to suggest that the global populist wave has already arrived in Colombia. A Centro Democrático administration winning the presidency in 2018 could cut short all attempts to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It remains to hope that most of the incipient transitional justice process and DDR efforts will be implemented by then, and that a peace agreement with the ELN will be reached as well.

- menschenhandel heute
- Mobilizing Ideas
- Opinio Juris
- Political Violence @ a Glance
- Pundicity – Aymen Jawad Al-Tamimi
- Radikale Ansichten
- Sicherheitspolitik-Blog
- Stephen M. Walt
- Syria Comment
- The Disorder of Things
- The Duck of Minerva
- The Monkey Cage
- Theorieblog
- Theorieleben
- Theory Talks
- Thought Economics
- Völkerrechtsblog
- World Peace Foundation – Reinventing Peace
- zoon politikon

META

- Registrieren
- Anmelden
- Beitrags-Feed (RSS)
- Kommentare als RSS
- WordPress.com

**I have to apologize that most of the sources are in Spanish, due to the fact that the national discussions are almost not reflected in international media.*

Über diese Anzeigen



Bewerten:

Rate This

Teilen mit:



Sei der Erste dem dies gefällt.

Ähnlich

IB Online (3/2): Eine kleine Netzschau In "Links"

IB Online (1/10): Eine kleine Netzschau In "Links"

IB Online (1/6): eine kleine Netzschau In "Links"

Tags: Colombia, FARC, peace

Schreibe einen Kommentar

Gib hier Deinen Kommentar ein ...

← [Conclusion: Outlook for Studying the Interaction between Social Movements and Institutions](#)

Bloggen auf WordPress.com.

☺