



US and EU online media diplomacy in Colombia: Mixed messages in the promotion of a fragile peace

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Abstract:	<p>The signature of the revised Peace Agreement by the Colombian Government and FARC and its ratification by the Colombian Congress in November 2016 not only marked a promising stage in the resolution of the armed conflict, but also a challenging one in the sustainability of multilateral peacebuilding efforts. Drawing on qualitative framing analysis, this article explores whether differing frames projected by the USA and the EU shaped cooperative or competitive efforts for peace between the signature of the revised Peace Agreement and the forming of the new Colombian Government of President Ivan Duque by December 2018. The results highlight competitive priorities of the USA and the EU regarding the agreement. While the USA made the Peace Agreement a function of the war against drugs, the EU fundamentally maintained its commitment with the implementation of the agreement.</p>

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US and EU online media diplomacy in Colombia: Mixed messages in the promotion of a fragile peace**Introduction**

International community has been involved in peacebuilding efforts in Colombia since 1998, when Colombian President Andrés Pastrana, under his “Diplomacy for Peace” policy, called for international support for political negotiation with left-wing guerrillas and strengthening Colombian security forces. Between 2015 and 2017, Colombia was the second highest Official Development Assistance recipient in the Americas region after Cuba (USD\$1,102 million) (OECD, 2019, p.6). By 2017, Colombia was internationally presented as a successful case of peacebuilding (Tickner and Morales, 2015, Morales and Tickner, 2017, EEAS, June 13, 2017, May 31, 2018b). President Juan Manuel Santos received the Nobel Peace Prize in December 10, 2016 for an historic Peace Agreement signed with FARC¹ on November 24 and ratified by Congress in November 30, 2016.

Literature on international cooperation and the Colombian armed conflict suggests a differentiated agenda by key US and EU donors from 1998 to 2010 (e.g. Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013, Zorro-Sánchez 2013, Moreno 2009, Gómez-Quintero 2007, Castañeda 2017, Tassara, 2017), and a more convergent one towards creating conditions for post-conflict from 2010 to 2017 (e.g. Rojas, 2013, Gomis 2015, Cepeda-Másmela 2015, Cujabante-Villamil 2016). However, changes in administration in Colombia and the USA in a crucial period for the implementation of the Peace Agreement with FARC and the consolidation of peace (2016-2018) opens the question of the maintenance of such convergence in this key transitional period.

¹ The FARC acronym changed from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia to Common Alternative Revolutionary Forces (political party).

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In this context, this article explores framing (definitions of a situation which support interpretations and political solutions) of the revised Peace Agreement between FARC and the Colombian Government by the USA and the EU, the main international donors in Colombia (Agencia Presidencial de Cooperación, 2016, 2017, 2018)². In particular, whether their frames shaped cooperative or competitive efforts for peace between November 2016 and December 2018. Drawing upon framing analysis of official communications, we argue that the EU and USA reflected competitive priorities regarding the consolidation of the agreement. While the USA ~~made~~promoted the Peace Agreement as a function of the war against drugs, the EU maintained its-an outspoken commitment with the implementation of the agreement during this period.

Literature review

This research aims to contribute to existing literature, first, by incorporating a political communication dimension to the important body of existing literature evaluating international cooperation received by Colombia from a political and jurisprudence perspective. Such work details decision-making processes, institutional programmes and emphasis of cooperation. However, the ways in which international community has built a narrative about Colombia and the dynamics of dissent and consensus by the plurality of actors operating in Colombia have been seldom explored in a systematic fashion.

Secondly, the work aims to advance our understanding of multilateral framing projection and its role in peacebuilding. Incipient research in international framing in Colombia encompasses US foreign policy projection in Colombian media regarding the management of the armed conflict (NAME DELETED FOR REVIEW); and Colombian Government projection of frames

² APC identified USA (32.88%) and the EU (23.81%) as main donors in Colombia in 2016 (APC, 2016:9). In 2017 this trend was maintained with USA (48%) and the EU (10%) as the main donors in Colombia (APC, 2017:6). In 2018, APC (2018:12) reported that the EU became the main donor with the Trust Fund (USD\$39,285,447 million, equivalent to approximately 12.5%) followed closely by USA (USD\$37,934,307 million, or the 12.1%).

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about peace negotiations internationally (Dießelmann and Hetzer 2015) ~~and; dynamics of frame convergence between international and domestic sectors in relation to transitional justice (NAME DELETED FOR REVIEW)~~. These works focus ~~either~~ on the promotion of frames by one international actor, ~~or on the convergence between local and international frames regarding transitional justice~~. This paper focuses on multilateral framing projection in Colombia regarding the Peace Agreement and reflects on the implication of such frames for the sustainability of peacebuilding in a post-conflict scenario. It builds on works that, in different contexts, have assessed multi-stakeholder public diplomacy (Yang et al 2012, Ting Lee and Lin 2015, 2017, Höglund and Orjuela 2016), have promoted the need to understand its role in building public goods (Zhang and Swartz 2009), and more specifically, in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016, Ates and Barut 2018). This article explores those issues on the oldest conflict in the Western Hemisphere, and the one is attracting a greater deal of international cooperation.

The initial assumption is that misalignment of public diplomacy frames among international actors is likely to affect peacebuilding negatively by making mutual understanding and multilateral cooperation less plausible. Schnekener notes that the lack of coordination results in “duplicating, competing or even contradicting efforts” which “may severely harm one’s own ambitions” in peacebuilding efforts (Schnekener, 2016: 11). Conversely, Hensell (2015: 94) observes that “coordination among the ever-increasing number of actors will make intervention more operationally effective and efficient”. Accordingly, the less alignment among international actors regarding peacebuilding agendas, the less possibility of substantive coordination.

Moreover, misalignment of public diplomacy frames may endorse, implicitly or explicitly, governmental sectors or domestic elites with alternative agendas. Schnekener (2016:11) observes that incoherence “is often welcomed by political actors – not only by external peace

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builders themselves, but more so by powerful local actors who know perfectly well how to take advantage of incoherent policies”. ~~Höglund and Orjuela (2016) research in the context of transitional justice and Sri Lanka is illustrative, as the authors show that international divisions over transitional justice and terrorism were mirrored domestically, in detriment of building the necessary consensus for the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity.~~

Thirdly, our work aims to focus on complex interactions between global actors and problematise homogenising assumptions about the western liberal peacebuilding narrative. We understand peacebuilding as a process which facilitates cooperation between global and local actors (and norms), geared towards transforming power relations in the countries where it takes place. In this process, international community negotiate their own priorities and agendas with other international actors and with local actors (Björkdahl et al, 2016, p.3). Literature in peacebuilding has acknowledged these complex interactions, outcomes and processes, particularly between global and local actors in peacebuilding processes through concepts such as hybridity (e.g. Boege, et al 2008, 2009, Mac Ginty, 2011, Jarstad and Belloni, 2012, Laffey and Nadarajah, 2012, Richmond and Mitchell, 2012) and friction (Tsing 2005, Björkdahl and Höglund, 2013, Björkdahl et al, 2016, Millar 2013, 2016, Höglund and Orjuela, 2016). However, this literature tends to emphasise interactions between local and global actors, overlooking the potential complexity regarding differences and interactions between global actors themselves, including what it sometimes referred monolithically as “the West”. This research contributes to that discussion by illuminating differences in two key Western actors when approaching to intervention in a country such as Colombia. Thus, it aims to illustrate that what is being labelled as “the West” displays more differentiated approaches to peacebuilding than those currently granted by the “local turn” in peacebuilding studies.

Theoretical approach: multilateral framing in peacebuilding contexts

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Framing is understood in this study as a process by which political actors select, hierarchically organise, define and communicate perceived realities such as events or issues to news professionals and the wider public. The resulting strategic meanings conveyed promote preferred interpretations, solutions and broader principles by using symbolic, argumentative and rhetorical devices. Framing is a key concept in understanding the struggle to shape political consensus among stakeholders and vis-à-vis the society at large (D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010, p.1, Goffman 1975, p 10-11, Entman, 1991, p. 7, 1993, p. 52; 2004, p. 5; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, pp. 3—4; Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 64).

There is a relatively recent body of literature focused on the issue of frame projection in international scenarios using concepts such as public and mediated diplomacy. Public diplomacy is understood broadly as the systematic use of targeted communication by state, state-sanctioned and non-state actors to advance the image, policies and long-term goals of a country vis-à-vis foreign publics. Such engagement with foreign publics includes a wide repertory of short and long-term strategies including monitoring public opinion overseas, broadcasting, cultural exports, cultural and academic exchanges, language education, advocacy campaigns, and daily communications with the press-(Melissen 2007, Nye, 2008, Gilboa 2008, Cull, 2008, Zhang and Chinn Swartz 2009, Snow 2009, Yang et al 2012, Sevin 2015, ~~Timf~~Ting Lee and Lin 2017, 2015). In particular, communications with the press have been conceptualised as mediated public diplomacy, which is the focus of this article. It encompasses the short term use of targeted communications via online newsrooms and information subsidies (e.g. press briefings and statements) aimed at shaping foreign news media environments through highlighting issues (setting the agenda) and framing-(Entman 2008, Sheafer and Gabay 2009, Sheafer and Shenhav, 2010, Fahmy, et al. 2012, Sheafer et al 2013, Arif et al., 2014).

Relatively recent research has started to approach systematically to the study of multilateral mediated public diplomacy and international framing in scenarios-contexts of conflict and

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peacebuilding, although quite different from the Colombian context. In the best of the author's knowledge, no studies to date have been carried out on multilateral mediated public diplomacy in contexts of conflict comparable to Colombia's. Such studies identify either competitive, incongruent, or homogeneous uses of mediated public diplomacy by international actors and draw different implications for image building, public relations or interaction with local narratives. Although these incipient works point to the importance of observing public diplomacy framing from a multilateral perspective, do not provide unequivocal answers about its actual use and implications for cooperation and peacebuilding.

Yang et al (2012:654) observes competitive use of mediated public diplomacy for enhancing a countryChina's image against ~~other countries~~Russia and the USA in the context of the 2011 Libyan crisis, or the "use multipolar thinking to achieve soft balancing". Multipolar thinking suggests that countries, rather than simply calculating public diplomacy efforts in relation to another country in a binary fashion, always have more than one country in mind. The notion of soft balancing is taken from Pape (2005:10), meaning non-military actions that seek to challenge hegemony or instability between competing actors indirectly, rather than through military (hard power) means. ~~Drawing on semantic network analysis of the co-occurrence of words in the government's media outlet the People's Daily, the authors find out China's framing of its role in the 2011 Libyan crisis in relation to USA and Russia as a pacific raising power against US intervention.~~The authors do not draw implications for Libya's crisis directly but point out to self-centred and multipolar public diplomacy calculations by countries intervening in contexts of conflict.

Other authors suggest a rather incongruent and unilateral public diplomacy, which limits the possibility of engagement and meaningful dialogue between countries. This is the case of USA, China and Singapore framing of human rights in online information subsidies between 2008 and 2012 (Ting Lee and Lin, 2015, 2017). The authors assume that public diplomacy, similarly

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to public relations, can facilitate exchange of information and contribute to goodwill and relationship building between countries. Thus, commonalities and dissonances in public diplomacy “could potentially impact engagement, dialogue and collaboration” (Ting Lee and Lin 2017: 4). ~~The authors analyse the co-occurrence of related words and themes in 13,714 online public information subsidies between 2008 and 2012, including words strongly linked to human rights. The findings show~~ However, the limited coincidence in the words related to human rights by the three countries, ~~thus limiting~~ limits the possibility of meaningful dialogue and cooperation. ~~The authors do not draw direct implications of such unilateral public diplomacy for the advancement of human rights.~~

Closer to western peacebuilding agendas, Mac Ginty and Firchow (2016) state that the material and discursive hegemony of liberal peace for “internationally sponsored peace making and peace building” (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016: 310) generate a top-down narrative shared by media, academics, policy-makers, and spokespeople. The authors assess differences in top-down (media, academics, policy-makers, spokespeople) and bottom-up narratives and understandings of conflict (through focus groups in communities), based on research in the context of South Sudan, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. ~~The~~ For the purposes of our work, ~~the~~ authors ~~conclude-observe~~ that the hegemonic narrative unleashed by liberal peace (identified through secondary sources) makes top-down actors share a sense of entitlement to name conflicts and actors, legitimise the right of intervention in the global north, as well as the political and economic models that come with it. They also share a technocratic, academic and homogenising approach to contexts of intervention, ~~which often over-ride rather than relate to everyday narratives of those experiencing conflicts on the ground.~~

In sum, these works suggest that international community frames can be either mutually competitive (soft-balancing), incongruent or homogeneous. While the work of Yang et al (2012) draws implications for image building in terms of competition and states’ soft balance

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of power, Ting Lee and Lin (2015, 2017), point to the limits to collaboration between countries emerging from more unilateral framings. In both cases, the observation includes Asian countries outside the liberal peacebuilding model and the authors do not outline direct implications for peacebuilding. The work on Mac Ginty and Firchow (2016) however, accounts for a rather homogenous and hegemonic western liberal peacebuilding narrative, ~~which overrides local narratives about peacebuilding.~~ Such observation contradicts insights from Schnekener (2016) ~~and Höglund and Orjuela (2016)~~ for whom incoherence and international divisions in peacebuilding ~~and transitional justice~~ is a more likely scenario, and one that is used strategically and/or mirrored locally by national actors.

The present paper evaluates these insights in the case of US and EU cooperation in Colombia. Following the literature, the assumption is that the prevalence of framing competition or incongruence are likely to hamper peacebuilding cooperation between these actors, potentially feeding into existing divisions within Colombia. Conversely, a rather homogeneous peacebuilding narrative would foster greater good will and potential cooperation between them; ~~although this would run the risk of still overriding local narratives with negative implications for peacebuilding.~~ The results show competing priorities underpinned by common themes but differentiated agendas, rather more complex than the one envisioned by the literature so far on western narratives of liberal peace.

Research methods

This article forms part of a broader research focused on mediated diplomacy by international community actors supporting peacebuilding efforts in Colombia since 2016 and reports preliminary findings on USA and EU specific framing of the Peace Agreement with FARC. Although the research allows us to see broader peacebuilding agendas at play, detailing the

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framing of the revised Peace Agreement is key to appreciate the main donors' stances in a key moment for the consolidation of peace between the Government and FARC.

Framing analysis focused on online information subsidies published in English and Spanish in online newsrooms of institutional webpages³, as they are a primary tool for public and mediated diplomacy (Ting Lee and Lin 2015, 2017). The analysis included both languages as the US Embassy in Colombia and the EU external Action service make material in both languages publicly available. While the US Embassy in Colombia is the main point of communication and contact for the US within Colombia, the European Action Service manages relations and partnerships between the EU and non-EU countries. The initial search for information in the news and events section of both webpages included all the online subsidies explicitly including the topic of Colombian peace and peacebuilding in its title or content. We found 50 subsidies in the US Embassy in Colombia⁴ and 62 in the EU External Action Service, from the signature of revised peacebuilding accords (November 2016) until definition of the new Colombian government (Dec 2018). This article focuses on a subsample of 58 articles referring explicitly to the peace process with FARC, 15 from the USA and 43 from the EU.

Going back to the insights provided by previous research, Yang et al (2012) operationalised competitive framing (soft balancing) as words related to Russia and the USA in the People's Daily (framing of actors) which built an image of those countries' role in Libya. However, no references were found to the United States in EU subsidies and vice versa⁵. Accordingly, and closer to Ting Lee and Lin (2015, 2017), this article analyses (in)congruent framing around the

³ The types of online communications included news stories (USA 30, EU 43), statements (USA 10, EU 11), press briefings (USA 4, EU 1), discourses (USA 2, EU 5), fact sheets (USA 1, EU 2), and memorandum (USA 1).

⁴ The US Embassy in Colombia published some communications by the White House (17) and the Bureau of Public Affairs of the State Department (1). When the information was available in both English (19 US and 11 EU subsidies) and Spanish (31 US and 51 EU subsidies), the researcher relied on the original document (English) rather than the courtesy translation.

⁵ Text searches were run using cognates, abbreviations and full words, as well as reading of all the sample.

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peace process, although using thematic analysis rather than word clustering. A congruent framing of the peace process would confirm Mac Ginty and Firchow (2016)'s observation of a homogenising ~~approach-narrative to-regarding~~ contexts of intervention.

~~Although looking into local narratives —as the latter authors do, is outside the scope of this study, attention has been paid to the inclusion of local voices in US and EU subsidies and how close their frames align with current Colombian Administration policy.~~

Drawing on Entman (1991, 1993, 2004) the author synthesized the framing functions of issues linked to peacebuilding, including definitions, causal attributions, recommendations and principles related to the peace agreement conveyed in expressions or phrases using NVivo software. In addition, the author observed how close US and EU frames aligned with the new Colombian Administration priorities in order to reflect on the sustainability of the peace process signed by the previous government. The analysis was qualitative; in order to capture nuances in the frames promoted by these actors, and it was carried out by the author of this paper, fluent in English and Spanish.

Some basic quantitative trends are offered, in which the unit of analysis was the article, in terms of the presence or absence of attributes in the information rather than how many times the attribute appears in a single item (Holsti, 1969, p.121)⁶. Accordingly, the broader research counted how many articles referred to different issues related to peacebuilding and this article specifically reports the extent to which the revised Peace Agreement was the dominant issue discussed in online communications, and the amount of articles in which the themes discussed were present.

Results

⁶ Such method, according to the author improves reliability of findings, as it is easier to agree with an external coder whether an attribute is present in an item rather than how many times it appears. In addition, the repetition of a given attribute within a sentence, paragraph or item does not change the tally.

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The revised Peace Agreement with FARC was mentioned in 15 US online subsidies (out of 50 or 30% of the whole sample), coming second after drug production and trafficking (28 online subsidies). The European External Action Service referred to the agreement in 43 subsidies (out of 62 or 60% of the sample), being the dominant issue referred to⁷. The following pages summarize the framing of the Peace Agreement by both actors and compares similitudes and differences in their projection.

Common ground in frames promoted by USA and the EU

Table 1 summarizes converging framing functions and the number of subsidies (items) in which those were present. ~~In sum, b~~Both USA and EU subsidies acknowledged the historic importance of the Agreement as signifying either the end of the conflict (US Embassy, February 13, 2017, May 9, 2017, July 20, 2017, The White House, May 18, 2017, August 13, 2017, EEAS, December 12, 2016b, June 27, 2017, July 24, 2017, December 13, 2017, May 29, 2018, May 31, 2018a), a post-conflict scenario (US Embassy Bogota, May 29, 2018, The White House, May 18, 2017, EEAS, February 8, 2017, February 20, 2017, July 6, 2017, July 12, 2017, July 13, 2017, August 31, 2017, January 24, 2018, September 11 2018), or a step towards peace (US Embassy Bogota, November 12, 2016, December 12, 2016b, The White House, August 13, 2017, EEAS, June 27, 2017, June 29, 2017, December 13, 2017).

US and EU subsidies linked the agreement causally to economic opportunity and investment in areas such as agro-industry, manufacturing and tourism (The White House, August 13, 2017, EEAS, December 12, 2016b, EEAS, February 20, 2017, EEAS, July 12, 2017), a de-escalation in violence (The White House, May 18, 2017⁸, EEAS, December 12, 2016a, January 16, 2018)

⁷ From the whole sample, other issues linked to peacebuilding in Colombia included the peace process with the ELN, development and trade, social fabric and reconciliation, institutionalization, illegal mining, drug-trafficking, violence of human rights defenders, although subsidies mentioning these themes did not necessarily link them with the peace agreement between the Government and FARC.

⁸ Ex-President Santos was quoted in a joint press conference about the peace process fostering the transformation of Colombia into a more peaceful, modern, fairer society

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and demobilization of combatants (US Embassy, December 1, 2016, The White House, May 18, 2017, EEAS, May 31, 2018a, September 11, 2018).

Accordingly, both actors supported the Peace Agreement implementation underpinned by principles of durable peace, including the removal of antipersonnel landmines (US Embassy, December 1, 2016, May 9, 2017, EEAS, January 30, 2017, January 24, 2018)⁹ and reintegration programmes (US Embassy Bogota, December 14, 2017, The White House, August 13, 2017, EEAS, January 16, 2018, November 27, 2017, January 24, 2018, February 7, 2018, February 26, 2018, December 7, 2018), with the EU's stressing support on for children combatants (EEAS, February 1, 2017, March 5, 2018, May 31, 2018a) and women ex-combatants (EEAS, December 7, 2018).

Support for civil society reconciliation and social fabric was more evident in US communications advocating public-private alliances for development, social inclusion and transference of tools for pacific co-existence (US Embassy Bogota, January 12, 2018). Also, reconciliation was linked to education projects (US Embassy Bogota, February 3, 2017, December 14, 2017, January 18, 2018, February 26, 2018a, February 26, 2018b, May 29, 2018), and reconstruction of social fabric and inclusion through sports (US Embassy, November 17, 2017). The Peace Colombia programme for peace-building was also mentioned in relation to reconciliation (The White House, August 13 2017). The stated goals of Peace Colombia were expanding counter-narcotics, security and reintegration of FARC ex-combatants, strengthening the state, the rule of law and rural economies, as well as justice and service provision for victims of conflict (The White House, February 4 2016).

⁹ A US joint press conference quoted President Santos acknowledging that “with the robust support of your government, we are removing thousands of anti-personnel mines that murdered and mutilated children, women and soldiers” (The White House, May 18, 2017).

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Reconciliation and reconstruction of social fabric were more explicitly linked to consolidating the peace agreement in EU subsidies (EEAS, April 4, 2017, May 25, 2017, October 6, 2017, January 16, 2018, December 7, 2018). Reconciliation and social fabric were linked to cooperative work with other international actors, national and local government officials within Colombia and civil society sectors (EEAS, July 6, 2017, July 13, 2017). Projects mentioned included scholarships for victims and ex-combatants (EEAS, September 11, 2018), support for community radios to produce messages in favor of peace (EEAS, February 8, 2017, April 4, 2017), peace pedagogy for young people (EEAS, March 15, 2017, May 5, 2017), projects in areas of displacement including humanitarian aid, service provision and monitoring displacement risks associated to mining exploitation and presence of illicit crops (EEAS, May 25, 2017, EEAS, January 16, 2018), support for human rights and victims (EEAS, December 12, 2016d), and gender-focused projects for victims of violence (EEAS, December 6, 2017).

Table 1. Summary of common themes promoted by the USA and the EU

Framing functions	Specific theme	Items	
		USA	EU
Definitions	Historical - ended the region's longest conflict	5	6
	A step towards peace (agreement, disarmament)	3	3
	Post-conflict era	2	8
Causal links (agreement as a cause of)	Economic opportunity	1	3
	De-escalation of violence	1	2
	Demobilization of combatants	2	2
Recommendations	Support implementation of the agreement and consolidation of peace	9	10
	Support for reconciliation and reintegration programmes	2	9

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	Removal of antipersonnel mines	3	2
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Differences in frames promoted by the USA and the EU

Table 2 summarizes the diverging framing functions identified and the number of articles in which those functions were present per actor's subsidy. While US subsidies linked the agreement to the war against drugs, the EU promoted the continuation of political mediation to make it sustainable.

Table 2. Differences between US and EU frames

Actors	USA		EU	
Frames	Post-conflict security		Emphasis on post-conflict sustainability	
<i>Functions</i>	Theme	Items	Theme	Items
<i>Definition</i>	Triumph for democracy	1	Good news	1
			Irreversible	2
			Success for Europeans, Latin America, the world	4
			A model for other conflicts	2
<i>Causal links</i>	Drugs: risk for peace consolidation	2	Individual advancement for ex-combatants and those affected by violence	2
	Drugs surge: unintended consequence of peace process	1		
	Peace deal provides opportunity for fighting drugs	2		

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<i>Recommendations</i>	Shared work on counter-narcotics and TOC (shared security aims with Colombian government)	2	Presence of the Peace Envoy (global mediator)	12
			Support for UN Verification Mission	1
			Trust Fund (and related projects)	21
			Community media	1
			Humanitarian challenges related to drug trafficking and TOC	2

US subsidies called the peace process a “triumph for democracy” (The White House, August 13, 2017) and established causal links between the Agreement and drug production and trafficking. Firstly, drug production and trafficking were a direct risk for the consolidation of peace (US Embassy Bogota, December 14, 2017, The White House, August 13, 2017). Secondly, the increase in drugs production was a consequence of the peace process, as “the rapid increase in coca cultivation in many respects was an unintended consequence of the peace that was negotiated with the FARC” (US Embassy Bogota, February 6, 2018). Thirdly, the Peace Agreement provided an opportunity to be more effective in the war against drugs with FARC out of the picture (The White House, August 13, 2017, May 18, 2017). In relation to the latter, ex-President Santos was quoted in a joint press conference about the peace process opening opportunities for manual eradication of coca crops (The White House, May 18, 2017). Consequently, the US promoted tackling counter-narcotics and transnational organized crime, underpinned by a framework of security shared aims with the Colombian government (The White House, May 4, 2017, US Embassy, May 9, 2017) and the principle of “just peace” (US Embassy, November 12, 2016, November 21, 2016, December 1, 2016, February 13, 2017, June 22, 2017, June 18, 2018, July 9, 2018).

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The EU defined the Agreement and FARC's disarmament as "good news" (EEAS, November 13, 2016), "irreversible" (EEAS, June 29, 2017, May 31, 2018a), and "a success" and "a major achievement" for Europeans, Latin America and the rest of the world (EEAS, December 12, 2016b, June 27, 2017, May 29, 2018, May 31, 2018a). EU subsidies also referred to the agreement as an example of reconciliation (EEAS, June 13, 2017) and construction of sustainable peacebuilding for other conflicts (EEAS, May 31, 2018b).

The agreement was causally linked to opportunities for individual advancement for ex-combatants through education (EEAS, September 11, 2018), and children being able to imagine a social life (EEAS, May 31, 2018a). For example, regarding scholarships received by ex-combatants and families to study medicine in Cuba supported by the EU, Ambassador of the EU, Patricia Llombart, quoted one a beneficiary's relative: "we never gave up a negotiated peace and today we can see it was worth working for it and the present we can give to our children" (EEAS, September 11, 2018).

EU subsidies advocated strategies, which enhanced its image as mediator and peace broker at a local and international level. Firstly, EU officials reaffirmed the continued presence of the EU Peace Envoy mediating with all the relevant national and international actors (EEAS, December 1, 2016, December 12, 2016d, May 24, 2017, June 13, 2017, June 29, 2017, July 19, 2017, August 15, 2017, November 27, 2017, January 16, 2018, January 24, 2018, February 26, 2018, May 31, 2018a). Secondly, EU communications also expressed their support for the UN Verification Mission (EEAS, December 13, 2017). Thirdly, the EU called for all actors in Colombia to fulfill their responsibilities and make a long-term commitment to the process (EEAS, December 1, 2016, February 8, 2017b, June 13, 2017, June 29, 2017).

In addition, EU subsidies promoted the EU Trust Fund for Colombia (EEAS, December 1, 2016a, December 12, 2016b, December 12, 2016c, December 12, 2016d, October 6, 2017, May

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31, 2018a, October 24, 2018) and local initiatives such as peace education for the armed forces (EEAS, December 12, 2016d), support for human rights activists (EEAS, December 12, 2016d, May 25, 2017), and support to the Prosecutor's office to protect human rights activists and fight organized crime (EEAS, December 12, 2016d, January 16, 2018). Projects on integral rural development and reform to fulfill the first point of the Peace Agreement (EEAS, January 20, 2017, April 24, 2017, May 5, 2017, July 6, 2017, July 13, 2017, July 19, 2017, July 21, 2017, October 6, 2017, November 27, 2017, January 16, 2018, January 24, 2018, February 7, 2018, October 24, 2018, December 7, 2018). Support to the "National Summit of Women and Peace" and a broader agenda of women and peacebuilding accompanying efforts to guarantee their participation in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in local territories (EEAS, March 7, 2017). Initiatives of community media and the support for the peace process (EEAS, April 24, 2017), as well as tackling humanitarian challenges related to drug trafficking (EEAS, 31 May 2018) and organized crime (EEAS, 12 Dec 2016d).

Conclusions and discussion

Incongruent frames (Ting Lee and Lin, 2015, 2017) were identified in US subsidies praising the Agreement as a triumph for democracy while linking it with both fostering a surge in drugs and enabling a more effective war against drugs. Meanwhile, the EU defined it as a global achievement and a model for other conflicts with the potential to improve the lives of people involved in the conflict and thus, in need of continuous support to consolidate it. Accordingly, US subsidies placed illegal drugs at the core of violence in Colombia, while the EU placed the continuation of the armed conflict as central to Colombian violence.

Although EU and US subsidies did not build an image of themselves through mutual references, distinctive roles were identified in the way in which the EU positioned itself as a global mediator and a peace guarantor, while the USA profiled itself predominantly as a security guarantor.

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Going back to Yang et al (2012) soft balancing is at play in this case, not in the way these actors referred to each other (they didn't at all), but in their interpretations of the Agreement's repercussions for overcoming violence and their own role as international supporters in the process.

In line with Mac Guinty and Firchow (2016), both actors shared a sense of entitlement to intervene (although in different ways) and an engagement with liberal peace in Colombia. Accordingly, their subsidies evidenced a commitment to sovereignty, rights, the market and the rule of law (Richmond et al, 2011: 450), through the opportunities linked with the Agreement: economic advancement, the diminution of violence, the reintegration of combatants, and the removal of anti-personnel mines, under common principles of durable peace. However, different priorities were evidenced through their public communications, as shown in the previous section. ~~In addition, EU subsidies included local narratives by quoting civil society beneficiaries while US communications quoted the Colombian President.~~

Frames and diplomatic strategies

Existing literature shows differing regional emphasis of cooperation towards the resolution of the Colombian Conflict since the programme of Diplomacy for Peace under President Andres Pastrana Administration (1998-2002). Although the US Administration supported counter-narcotic operations since 1980s (Congressional Research Service, 2019a) and peace negotiations with FARC at the beginning of the process (1999), congressional opposition within the US and the killings by FARC of three American citizens working with the Uwa' indigenous tribe fixed US support since 2001 on strengthening the military in the war against drugs and terrorism (particularly from left-wing guerrillas) through Plan Colombia (REFERENCE DELETED FOR REVIEW, Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013: 169). Plan Colombia destined 74% to strengthening the military and 26% to Social development (Grupo de Memoria

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Histórica, 2013: 167). The Congressional Research Service (2019a) reports 10\$USD million appropriated by Congress between FY2000 and FY2016 for Plan Colombia and follow up programmes.

Meanwhile, the EU focused their support on the socio-economic causes of the conflict, the humanitarian situation, and peace negotiations (Cano Linares 2013, García 2015a, 2015b, Moreno 2009, Gómez Quintero 2007). The “Tables of Donors” organised during the Pastrana Administration by International Development Bank (IDB) in European cities (Madrid July 7, 2000, and Bogota, 24 October, 2000), and lobby against Plan Colombia by more than 100 NGO were key in engaging differentiated support by the EU in the peace process (Moreno, 2009). In this context, a tour of 6 European countries was carried out by the guerrilla and government delegation in 2000 to learn from their socio-political models in February 2000 (Barreto Henriques 2014a:230-231, Moreno 2009: 154).

The Government of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010) focused on defeating left-wing guerrillas militarily and negotiating demobilization with right wing paramilitaries. In addition, the Administration aligned the war against terror with the war against left-wing guerrillas (Arroyave Quintero and Macana 2015: 398). The Administration received continued US support against left-wing guerrillas within the framework of the wars against drugs and terrorism in what Tickner has called “intervention by invitation” (2007) and the follow up programme from Plan Colombia, the National Consolidation Plan (2009), geared to increase state presence in territories affected by conflict through security, development and anti-drug operations (Congressional Research Service, 2019a).

Meanwhile, the EU kept focusing on the socio-economic causes of the conflict and support to peace negotiations and human rights (Cano Linares, 2013). The European Commission accounts for €1.5 billion in aid between 2002-2007 focused on local production, income

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generation, citizen's participation and victims' rights (European Commission, December 9, 2016).

The Peace Labs were a particularly important strategy of the EU in this direction (2002-2012), an initiative built upon a strategy led by the Company of Jesus in Colombia since 1995 called Programme of Development and Peace of Middle Magdalena PDPMM. In the context of the Peace Labs, the EU Commission provided €140 million to support projects based on the resources of local NGO and build alliances with other NGO and entities (Moreno 2009, Barreto Henriques, 2014a: 230-231, European Commission, December 9, 2016, Cano Linares 2013). Although the EU emphasised peace and the inclusion of civil society actors, the US-led War on Terror and the inclusion of guerrillas and paramilitary groups in the list of terrorist organizations limited and distanced the support of the EU in peace processes (Gómez Quintero 2007, Moreno 2009, Cepeda Másmela 2015: 416).

Rojas (2013) describes how the perception of US officials eventually changed from a problem country to an emerging one. Thus, there was a greater effort to open the bilateral agenda to issues beyond military strengthening, which had dominated the previous administration. The US' Colombia Strategic Development Initiative 2009-2013 was implemented to nationalise Plan Colombia's Programmes and although the resources were progressively cut (from 520\$ in 2010 to 319\$ in 2014), the country kept being the main recipient of aid in the region. Through the "Consolidation Plan", USAID provided support to assist victims of the armed conflict, demobilization, and attention to afrocolombian and indigenous tribes (p. 128-129). The Peace Corps, a 1960s strategy to facilitate American youngsters' trips to Colombia for voluntary work was relaunched in 2010. In addition, the US-Colombia Security Coordinating Group was created in 2013 to provide security assistance and fight transnational crime in other countries, particularly Central America.

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The EU Strategy for Colombia in 2014-2017 confirmed the strategic areas for cooperation present in its 2007-2013 strategy (rule of law, peace and development), destining 80% or €53.6 million to economic development. Such a strategy was complemented with a strategy for Civil Society 2014-2017 which prioritized a favourable environment for civil society organizations, their political participation and strengthening as independent development actors (Gomis 2015: 459-460, Birle 2015: 486). For some authors, there was a change of emphasis since 2013 from peace to trade and strengthening of competitiveness within the framework of the free trade agreement signed with Colombia and Peru that year (Zorro Sánchez, 2013: 91, Rojas, 2013: 128). In fact, the European Commission accounts for budget support operations channelled since 2012 towards rural (sustainable) development/policy and competitiveness (European Commission, December 9, 2016).

Meanwhile, the strategy of cooperation of USAID 2014-2018 sought to strengthen institutional presence and democracy in targeted areas, facilitate processes of reconciliation amongst different sectors, promote inclusive and sustainable rural economic development (USAID, 2014: 2). Pastrana Buelvas and Vera Piñeros also report that in a similar fashion to Germany, USA announced funds to support demobilization of combatants, attention and restitution of victims (Pastrana Buelvas and Vera Piñeros, 2015: 77-81).

In support of the peace process with FARC, the Obama Administration appointed Bernie Aronson as peace envoy in 2015 and co-sponsored the UN Verification Mission (UNSC Resolution 2261) for the implementation of the Peace Agreement in 2016. In addition, Peace Colombia was introduced in 2016 as a new post-conflict assistance framework, focused on security, antinarcotics and FARC's reintegration, strengthening state presence, the rule of law and economies, and support justice and services for victims (The White House, 2016). USAID strategy stated as a goal reconciliation between ex-combatants, citizens and victims through the strengthening of key state institutions involved in the process of repairing victims,

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reintegrating ex-combatants, rehabilitating children involved with illegal groups, and documenting the conflict -Centre of Historical Memory (USAID, 2014: 8-9).

Assistance to Colombia increased from about USD\$293 million in FY2016 to USD\$391.3 million in FY2017. Related programmes included strengthening government presence, crop substitution and manual eradication, assistance to victims, support to Colombian police, judicial reform, military financing and counterterrorism, anti-proliferation and demining programmes (Congressional Research Service, 2019a, 2019b). In addition, the USA (USD\$33 million in FY2017) and Norway (USD\$20 million in FY2017) led the Global Demining Initiative to clear landmines in Colombia, joined by the EU and other countries including UK, Spain, Sweden, Slovenia, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, South Korea and Japan (The White House, 2016).

In 2017, the year of implementation of the Peace Agreement, President Trump threatened to decertify Colombia in its fight against drugs (The White House 2017). This was despite Colombia having the largest figure (34%) of cocaine seized worldwide and in South America (57%) (UNODC, 2017, Booklet 3, p. 32), and overall reductions in cultivation, from an increase of 52% in 2015-2016 to 17% in 2016-2017 (Kroc Institute 2019:122). Trump would later refer to President Duque as a “nice guy” who “has done nothing for us” in terms of curbing drugs (The White House, 2019). The Trump Administration increased pressure for fumigation (Borda and Guzmán 2017, Wintour and Gayle, 2019) despite contradicting the spirit of manual eradication promoted in the agreement and the continuation of crop substitution programmes to date. Such voluntary programmes have shown a greater success in curbing cultivation than forced eradication (UNDOC 2018 report, quoted in Kroc Institute 2019:122). Moreover, requests for extraditions of former guerrilla fighters, including peace negotiator Jesus Santrich have caused further strain to the process (Department of Justice, 2018).

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The Trump Administration, in office since January 2017, has not only proposed an overall reduction in development assistance for Latin America and Colombia, but also a shift in focus from post-conflict to US national security including counter-narcotics and organised crime. Regarding development assistance, His Administration proposed USD\$251 million for FY2018 and USD\$265million in FY2019 for Colombia. (Congressional Research Service, 2019a, 2019b). In addition, and for FY2019, the highest percentage of the budget requested was for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) (Congressional Research Service, 2019b). The public communications analysed reflected Trump Administration by not only not treating the Peace Agreement as a priority, but also linking it more closely to the drug problem than to US peacebuilding policies more broadly.

However, USAID's priorities for 2014-2020 have maintained a focus on consolidation of peace through state presence, reconciliation rural economic growth and environmental resilience (USAID, 2014:2). In addition, the US Congress approved more than requested by the Administration: USD\$391.3million in FY2018 and USD\$418 in FY2019, mostly for the Economic Support Fund (ESF) followed by antinarcotics (INCLE) (Congressional Research Service, 2019a, 2019b). Still, the extra-resources appropriated in FY2019, in line with the Administration priority, were justified for the enhancement of drug eradication, interdiction and rural security (Lowey, 2019:62).

Meanwhile, with an investment of €160 million in rural development, rights of victims and democratic governance, the EU's stated priorities since 2002 have been tackling the root causes and consequences of the conflict in Colombia and generate a more favourable environment for trade. Consistent with the public communications analysed, its support to the peace process has focused on the areas of rural reform, reincorporation of combatants and establishment of a Special Investigation Unit for the Office of Public Prosecutions to combat organised crime (European Commission, 2018).

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In addition, the EU has contributed to the peace process through the presence of Eamon Gilmore, appointed in 2015 as EU Peace Envoy for the Peace Process in Colombia, the EU Trust Fund (EUTF) and the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability (IcSP) since 2016. The EU announced an initial budget for the EUTF of €95 million (EEAS, 2016a), and €28 million for the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability (IcSP) EEAS (2016d). IcSP has focused on peace education for the armed forces, demobilization of children combatants, local access to justice and demining (European Commission 2018).

Meanwhile, the EUTF supports the points of the Peace Agreement on integral rural development and reintegration of ex-combatants. The Fund envisioned support for producers' organizations, land formalization, private-public initiatives, green growth, women's entrepreneurship, food security, state capacity and civil participation (particularly women) in governance (EU, 2017). The EUTF reported 16 ongoing projects by the end of 2018 with an EU contribution of € 56.5 million, and 5 projects in the contracting process worth € 13 million (EU, 2018). Up to 2019, the EU has reported a budget of €120 million, so far committing €50 million to projects in Rural Development and €20 million in reincorporation projects, most of which started implementation in 2018 (Unión Europea, 2019).

Effects on peacebuilding efforts

The initial assumption was that the prevalence of framing competition or incongruence would hamper peacebuilding cooperation between these actors, potentially feeding existing divisions within Colombia. The results show that, although there is support from both the US and the EU to the Agreement, and a degree of cooperation on mechanisms such as the UN Verification mission, demining and reincorporation, framing incongruence led to competing priorities (soft balancing) between the USA and the EU. The place of the Peace Agreement in the fight against drugs or as a core peacebuilding mechanism are more likely to generate dynamics of

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competition and soft balancing than complementarity as the US throws its weight on law enforcement and state security while the EU prioritises human security and mediation.

This is particularly the case given that the differing approaches fed existing divisions in Colombia during electoral campaign, with the US Administration aligning itself more closely to the main opponents to the Peace Agreement. In April 2017, President Trump secretly met Colombian ex-Presidents Alvaro Uribe (political patron of elected President Duque and leader of the Democratic Centre Party), and Andres Pastrana (Conservative party) to discuss the ex-presidents' opposition to the Peace Agreement: the impunity the agreement would supposedly grant to FARC, the rise in coca crops within the country, and the danger of Colombia becoming like Venezuela if the Agreement went ahead (Miles 2017, Ordoñez and Kumar 2017).

Ivan Duque campaigned for tackling the surge in coca production, and conditioned political participation of FARC to telling the truth about their links with drug-trafficking, facing justice for drug-trafficking and other offenses and surrendering illegal profits and weapons. Duque vowed to reform the Agreement, so drug-trafficking would be a crime subject to ordinary ~~rather than transitional~~ justice, eradication of coca crops would be compulsory rather than voluntary and independent military justice would be guaranteed. The candidate promoted jail for guerrilla ex-combatants going back to arms and supported the capture and extradition of FARC commander "Jesus Santrich" over links with drug-trafficking¹⁰. While Ivan Duque won the presidential election in June 17, 2018, former guerrilla negotiators Jesus Santrich and Ivan Marquez publicly defected from the peace process on August 29, 2019 and went back to arms.

The US Administration's drug policy, according to US observers, is in line with the "more traditional" counter-drug approach of elected President Ivan Duque, including the return to aerial fumigations to crops and extradition measures. Such policy diverts from the emphasis

¹⁰ Summarised from the official communications published in the webpage of Ivan Duque's Campaign www.ivanduque.com accessed on April-June 2018.

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endorsed in the Peace Agreement under Santos government of alternative development, voluntary eradication, health and human rights (Congressional Research Service, 2018).

According to the Kroc Institute, any adjustment to the Peace Agreement should come as a result of a broad political consensus including FARC, victims and communities (2019:9). However, the tension between strategies of force eradication and voluntary substitution as well as clashes between security forces and coca growers on the ground undermine public confidence in the state (2019: 117). Concerns had already been expressed about the change of discourse regarding counterdrugs policy, as it legitimizes the return to practices which have violated rights and fostered violence without achieving effective results (Kroc Institute, 2019: 130, taken from Coalición Acciones por el Cambio, 2019). Moreover, the change of discourse has the potential to fuel entrenched divisions and endanger both the credibility of the Colombian government as a negotiator and US as a peacebuilding actor, as well as the necessary political consensus for seeing the implementation of the Agreement through.

Meanwhile, the EU has stated that the priorities of the EUTF on rural development and reincorporation remain valid for the new Colombian Administration, and that “the new government expressed its commitment to implement the peace agreement and has worked closely with the EU in all aspects pertaining to the Trust Fund” (EU 2018). Although Ivan Duque has not opposed to the points in the peace agreement supported by the EU, the Kroc Institute (2019) reports that the lowest levels of full implementation of the Agreement are the points on rural reform (51% of minimum level of implementation), and illicit drugs (46% of minimum level of implementation). Concerning reincorporation, the report warns about 89 ex-combatants killed by December 2018 (2019: 192), slow development of socio-economic projects and poor living conditions in the reincorporation spaces threatening ex-combatants confidence in the process.

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This work has focused on US and EU public diplomacy framing regarding the Peace Agreement and dynamics and dissent and consensus emerging as a result. At the same time, it reflects on potential implications for the sustainability of peacebuilding in a post-conflict scenario, with attention on the alignment between the US and the new Colombian Administration over a more heavy-handed approach to counter-drugs than the one contemplated in the agreement. More research into the resonance and use of US and EU frames among key stakeholders in Colombia could help to evaluate their local impact more broadly.

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