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‘Give War A Chance’: All-Out War as a Means of Ending Conflict in the Cases of Sri Lanka and Colombia

FABIO ANDRES DIAZ AND
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This article investigates the military approach as a means of solving protracted civil conflicts, in particular focusing on the cases of Sri Lanka and Colombia in comparison. The approach adopted is to study the emergence of these military options within the context of each country's history and to assess whether the call for war was merely a consequence of the international 'war on terror', or driven by internal elements. The article explores the epistemological groundings and pitfalls of the all-out war theory informing this approach, before reassessing the significance and validity of the theory in relation to Sri Lanka and Colombia.

INTRODUCTION

Protracted and intractable internal conflicts present a major challenge to scholars studying civil wars and ‘complex’ wars.¹ Their resolution tends to be difficult and complicated, with no accepted frameworks for understanding why peace initiatives so often fail.² Cases such as Colombia and Sri Lanka can be framed as examples where elements such as the greed and/or the grievances of those involved in the fighting have affected the feasibility of peace.³

The usual frameworks proposed for conflict solution include negotiations, third party intervention and mediation, development programmes, as well as policies geared towards social change which eliminates the social injustices and structural violence thought to underpin violence and grievances.⁴ However, these efforts have not proven to be effective methods of achieving peace in very protracted conflict situations such as Sri Lanka and Colombia.⁵ What if we were to reconsider the military solution to civil violence; the imposition of peace through force of arms? In other terms, this study will look at war as a means of achieving peace in civil wars part of an exercise of states in the making consolidating the Weberian monopoly of violence.⁶

Irrespective of the deep-rooted causes of conflict (greed or historical group grievances), the failure of the state to address these symptoms arises in the context of weak state capacity to use force to quell rebellion and assuage grievance via public policies and government expenditure. The security perspective, particularly after the

end of the Cold War and in the post-9/11 war on terror, stresses weak state capacity in the context of failing states. The development community stresses development failure, emphasizing weak fiscal capacities of the state to provide public goods and infrastructure. In reality, both the security and development agendas are inseparable. Both, however, stress the importance of state capacity. In this connection, war, including civil war, may have a role to play in adding to, or further undermining, state capacity. It may enhance to the fiscal capacity of the state (or reduce it); it may strengthen (or weaken) state monopoly over the use of violence. In this connection, all-out war strategies against those who violently challenge the authority of state may require greater state resource mobilization and secure a greater degree of state power over the use of force, compared to a negotiated end to civil war. We test these two hypotheses in the cases of the protracted Sri Lankan and Colombian civil wars. It should be, however, pointed out that even if all-out war achieves a military victory (which in some instances could be less costly in terms of lives than negotiated peace treaties that repeatedly fail), it may not resolve the underlying inequalities and injustices that cause conflict in the first place leading to a negative peace or 'appeasement'. Thus, it is a conflict management strategy which is bound to fail unless accompanied by other countervailing socio-economic and power sharing policies.

To explore this question, we present here a comparative study of war as a means of achieving 'peace' in Sri Lanka and Colombia. The military solution is considered by some to have brought about an 'end' to 26 years of civil war in the former.⁷ In the case of the latter, the Colombian conflict has dragged on for more than 50 years, with a policy of all-out war having been in place for 8 years (2002–10).⁸ In both cases, Colombia and Sri Lanka have managed to have positive GDP growth rates on average in the years where the conflict has lasted, as opposed to many other nations undergoing civil war. This study will explore, compare and contrast both cases. The aim is to deepen our insight into the underpinnings of how military approaches gained momentum in each country, and understand the rationale that was behind this shift in policy towards 'peace' (in both cases the military option emerged after a failed peace process).

The examples demonstrate, in the case of Sri Lanka, a case of military force used to establish a monopoly of violence by the state in the country; and in the case of Colombia, an ongoing effort by the state in its quest for the monopolization of violence. In this sense, these examples show how the search for the monopoly of force and the defeat of the rebel groups make reference to the idea that war can be seen as an instrument for state making and statebuilding coined by the American sociologist Charles Tilly.⁹ Curiously, war, in these two particular cases, may have facilitated (or be related with processes of) the development of state capacity as in the case of European states since the 15th century.

The development of the modern European state was closely linked to external war: war made the state and the state made war. A prominent feudal oligarch might establish a Weberian monopoly of violence within a society previously characterized by competing warlords. The coercive activity of state making

(removing rivals and challengers to the sovereign's power) was complemented by other wars against external enemies, as well as protecting the interests of his support group. These activities required resources, initially funded by the means directly at the ruler's disposal or tributes exacted from the population, particularly in conquered regions. Eventually, however, state capacity develops, including state institutions, tax capacity and the widening scope of governmental activity, giving birth to the modern national state.

In a nutshell, war could go in hand with the development of state capacity, primitive accumulation and in some cases metamorphoses into modern economic growth led by technical progress and industrialization. A history of making war against a nation's common external enemies may lay the foundations for future state capacity, and assist nationbuilding, as it lays the foundations for fiscal and legal institutions. This process, however, may not apply to internal conflict, which can undermine institutions, as well as interest in the universal provision of public goods. In other words, civil wars in contemporary developing countries may retard, rather than enhance, state and fiscal capacity. To analyse this possibility, we assess the case of two protracted conflicts, Colombia and Sri Lanka.

Within the conflict studies area, the negotiated settlement approach is far more pervasive, appealing and influential compared to what we describe as 'all-out war theory', or what Luttwak terms 'give war a chance',¹⁰ despite the fact that decisive victory, military victory, victor's peace and militarily imposed political settlements tend to last longer than negotiated peace.¹¹

For example, according to Page, 52 per cent of peace agreements went back to war within a period of 5 years;¹² more favourable estimates put the risk of recurrence between 46¹³ and 37 per cent.¹⁴ In contrast, wars that end in military victory have a recurrence rate of between 6 and 17 per cent.¹⁵ This may be a consequence of decisive military victories allowing for the institutionalization of large power asymmetries, and particularly the consolidation of the state institutions and thus reducing the chance of conflict re-emergence in the case of a government's victory.¹⁶

In both cases (Colombia and Sri Lanka), the decision to engage in full-on war followed a failed negotiation attempt and was supported by, and frames itself within, the discourse of the war on terror. Despite the fact that Sri Lanka and Colombia experienced what appeared to be an ethnic-based conflict (other authors argue is more the consequence of the failure of state formation) and a class-based conflict (Colombia being one of the most unequal countries in the world), respectively, in both cases inequality seems to have increased after the war.¹⁷ The policies implemented in these countries have become a case study that has informed discussions on how to deal with irregular forces in military academies.¹⁸ They have likewise informed the policy-making processes of other countries facing security issues/insurgencies.¹⁹

This study aims to critically question such approaches, and the underlying assumptions that allow the comparison of one kind of military approach with another in terms of their 'efficacy' in ending warfare or violence. To some extent, this study will suggest that whilst such approaches may end war, they may not

resolve many of the underlying elements that fuelled violence in the first place, in accordance with Galtung's concept of the positive peace.²⁰

COLOMBIA AND SRI LANKA: FROM COLONY TO ALL-OUT WAR

When conflicts are assessed, their presentation involves the idea that the outbreak of conflict resembles a conflagration arising from the striking of a match (single issue). In reality, what happens is a concatenation of a series of historical, political, economical and structural elements that become aligned to ignite conflict. Table 1 presents a picture of both conflicts, but their understanding will be complemented by the histories of both countries from colony to the war on terror.

Colonial Times: Seeds of Destruction?

In Colombia, colonisation introduced a strong class component, with an elitist social system, which favoured the 'criollos'.²¹ The drive towards independence demanded a reconfiguration of the distribution of power rather than a revolution. An example of this is the pleading of offenses (memorial de agravios) that criticized the exclusion of 'white' Americans, and defended the rights of 'criollos' to govern the country.²²

Since the 14th and the 15th centuries, Sri Lanka has been an important port for commerce, having been colonized by different countries: the Portuguese (1505–1638), the Dutch (1638–1796) and finally the British (1796–1948). Miscegenation in Sri Lanka was less common than in the Spanish colony of Colombia, yet administrative control was held mainly by the Ceylonese Tamils. Another category, Indian Tamils, were 'introduced' to the country to work in tea plantations, and the Ceylonese Tamils were a minority present on the island long before it became a colony, but were given a preponderant role in the administration of the colony.²³

As in Colombia, grievances related to mistreatment and discrimination gave rise to several struggles for independence, but the grip on the colony remained strong. Rebellions in 1817, riots in 1915 and claims in 1919 for greater autonomy, among other events, demonstrated the national desire for independence in Sri Lanka. While a rebel army was not formed in these times, and there was not an armed struggle for independence, plans existed for rebel forces trained in neighbouring countries such as India to arrive and liberate the country. Consequently, in 1948 the British granted independence to Ceylon.²⁴

The Struggle After Independence: Looking for a Nation and Finding Civil War

Internal political settlements and the dynamics of internal social, economic and political struggles within both countries determined the elements favouring the emergence of conflict. Internal grievances, ethnic (or class) inequalities and the lack of a strong state defined the elements that led to the emergence of civil war (see Table 2).

In Sri Lanka, conflict emerged relatively soon after independence, as the post-decolonization years saw the country moving towards a natural change in structures and power distribution. These changes created new grievances among the former

TABLE 1
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COLOMBIAN AND SRI LANKAN CONFLICTS

Description of the countries	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Area of the country	1,141,748 km ²	65,610 km ²
Size of the military (before the offensive)	441,000 (262,000)	223,000 (213,000)
Size of the rebel forces (before the offensive)	8,000 (11,000)	Unknown (9,000)
Presence of paramilitary forces	No formal presence; there are groups called paramilitaries, but they are not independent of military units	Present, but most were former Tamil groups that inclined towards the government in the internal struggles between Tamil groups
Main political parties within the country	Liberal Party, Conservative Party	SNL, UNP
Year in which the country achieved independence	1819	1948
Was independence achieved through a peaceful movement or an armed insurrection?	Armed insurrection	Peaceful transition, preceded by strikes and riots
Ethnic distribution of the country	Mestizo 58 per cent, white 20 per cent, mulatto 14 per cent, black 4 per cent, mixed black-Amerindian 3 per cent, Amerindian 1 per cent	Sinhalese 73.8 per cent, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2 per cent, Indian Tamil 4.6 per cent, Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9 per cent, other 0.5 per cent, unspecified 10 per cent
Origin of the conflict	Grievances around land and class inequality	Redistribution of power and wealth after independence
Political discourse/ideologies of rebels	Marxist Leninist discourse. Mainly based on the class inequalities within the country	Ethno nationalistic discourse. Not a strong discourse on power and inequality beyond the categories of ethnic groups.
Sources of rebel funding	Extortion, kidnapping and drug trafficking	Extortion, Diaspora remittances
How soon after the end of colonialism did conflict emerge?	Officially in 1964 with the origin of the guerrillas, but affected by prior events	Conflict began officially 35 years after independence, but the violence that fuelled it can be traced back to the years following independence

TABLE 2
COLOMBIAN AND SRI LANKAN CONFLICTS THROUGH THE LENSES OF DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

Key questions	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Are there elements related to micro foundations (Kaliyas) in the conflict?	Yes	Not clearly, but possibly present in the disorders in the 1980s, which were used to solve personal disputes
Is it a grievance-based conflict?	Yes. It can be asserted that a political conflict is born from the lack of representation of a particular class	Yes. As the power was redistributed, changes in the country, lack of representation and the presence of violence within the political system contributed to the idea that war/revolution was the only way to express the opinions and interests of the Tamil population
Did the economy play an important role in the rebels functioning?	Definitely, in fact several authors argue that the growth and strength of FARC is justified by their strong economic structure	Yes. The rebels depended mostly on taxation and remittances from the Tamil Diaspora to fund their war. At some stages, they also relied on support from India
Ethnically based?	No. The insurgents came from particular areas or social classes, mainly the poorer areas of the country	Yes. It can be argued that ethnicity actually provides a unifying element for a broad group suffering grievances. Tamils can be divided in two or further sub-groups
Nature of the strategies and tactics used	Mainly guerrilla tactics and use of terrorist attacks usually targeting military bases/police posts. They have not used strategic suicidal attacks, but in the late 1990s used more classic warfare strategies	Mix of irregular tactics (ambushes), terrorist tactics and conventional warfare tactics
Do they pay their fighters?	No, but in case of death or 'retirement' they offer welfare programmes	No. In case of death they offer a coconut tree
Do they use forced recruitment?	Not primarily, but it appears that some of their cadres are forcibly recruited	Yes
Organization of their leadership (rebel forces)	Strong hierarchical structure, with concentration on the secretariat. However, their units have strong autonomy within their operations	Strongly hierarchical structure, concentrated on the leader

TABLE 2 – *Continued*

Key questions	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Are there other armed groups within the conflict?	Yes. Two left wing, one 'right' wing	Yes, but most groups defending the Tamil cause were annihilated, absorbed or joined the government paramilitary forces
Are the rebels based in a particular territory?	No. Guerrillas are highly mobile, but violence can be traced historically to particular areas of the country	Yes, mostly the northeast of the country
Can this be called a proxy war in the Cold War era? Which countries have supported the government? Is (was) it a regional conflict?	No USA No, but the conflict has had consequences for neighbouring countries	No India, Pakistan, China and the USA No, but neighbouring countries have interfered, favouring some of the warring factions
Were (are) there associations among the rebel groups?	Yes. The CGSB was an attempt to coordinate efforts and carry out joint operations	No. There has been co-optation of some groups under the LTTE
Which countries supported the rebels?	Cuba supported the rebels in the 1960s and 1970s, but ideological differences made the guerrillas independent	In the 1970s and 1980s, India provided training and weapons for the rebels

elite of the country. The Sinhalese demanded a bigger share of power in the country, corresponding to the demographic composition of the country. The former elite (Tamil) resented these changes, claiming to have been marginalized within a national project more centred on the Sinhalese ethos than an ethnic-pluralism.²⁵ As the internal politics undermined the possibility of building a plural nation state, the initial social movements of the Tamils became increasingly radical, as did those of the Sinhalese, thus fuelling the emergence of armed groups that embraced war.²⁶ Nevertheless, conflict prevailed within the framework of protests (sometimes violent), but not in the shape of an armed uprising against the central government.

Consolidation of the state did not occur in the 'early' period of Colombian independence. The civil war as we know it today did not emerge immediately after independence, but was the product of multiple transformations within the Colombian nation and its state. The conflict was also a consequence of several previous civil wars, which occurred between 1834 and 1903 and had impeded the consolidation of a strong political system and a strong state presence.²⁷ Hatreds rooted in previous conflicts and partisan politics weakened the state. This lack of state presence created a political economy of violence, where violence became a means of acquiring local power.

The violence in Colombia reached its climax in 'la violencia', an episode in which almost 2 per cent of the population of the country died between 1948 and 1950.²⁸ The eventual result of this bloodbath was a population that did not trust state institutions, for whom self-defence organizations and the privatization of security became acceptable. The whiplash effect which followed gave rise to multiple guerrilla groups (Maoist, Marxist and charismatic), as well as right wing 'paramilitary' groups in an environment where drug trafficking plays a key role.²⁹ Therefore, it can be seen as a civil war in which the limits between grievances, opportunism, politics, warlordism, ideology and micro foundations become blurred, making it a difficult phenomenon to comprehend.³⁰ Also, it is a civil war with multiple dyads fighting each other: the state, left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries.

In Sri Lanka, the conflict can be described as a more 'classic' conflict, having its origins in an 'ethnic' post-colonial civil war between the majority Sinhalese and an erstwhile privileged minority group, the Ceylonese Tamils. The conflict had different actors and claims (armed groups claiming to represent the Tamil interests) as well as some pro-Sinhalese armed groups,³¹ but the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) managed to gain a monopoly by violent means over the armed struggle for the Tamil cause (this does not imply the absorption of the pro-Sinhalese groups). A series of violent actions preceded the 'formal' emergence of the civil war in a similar way to the case of Colombia, which in the Sri Lankan case is dated around 1983, but was anticipated by a series of pogroms and 'tit for tat' retaliations between Sinhalese and Tamils. Despite the fact that the Sri Lankan civil war was a continuous process, it has been framed within five different historical epochs such as the Eelam War I (1983–87), the Indian intervention (1987–90), the Eelam War II (1990–95), the Eelam War III (1995–2000) and the Eelam War IV (2006–09).

Some authors refer to these as different wars, but we argue they correspond to different phases of the same conflict.

The LTTE was an armed group that acted, within their controlled areas, as a regular army, but when outside used guerrilla and irregular warfare tactics. Although coca and poppy crops do not feature in Sri Lanka, the conflict is to some extent associated with mafias and drug trafficking.³²

WAR AS STATEBUILDING: A PHOENIX PHENOMENON

In both Colombia and Sri Lanka, war emerged as a by-product of a failed peace process, where the flawed commitment of the actors, the difficulty of building trust and enforcing agreements drove public opinion and politicians towards the idea that a military solution could provide a useful alternative to the problems of the negotiated peace process. The outcome was a revolution in the ideas around the management of peace processes, where a victor's peace is an alternative to a negotiated peace.

Colombia: Deception, Reincarnation and Rebirth

By 1998, public opinion in Colombia favoured a peace process with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) (the third attempt of a peace process since the start of the Colombian conflict). The peace process started in 1998 and ended in 2002 with the breakdown of negotiations. From its inception, it was evident that the peace process had its own problems and difficulties. As negotiations were held without a ceasefire or a clear negotiation agenda, military actions from each side became instrumental in the negotiation itself. As the logic of the peace process became one of war, the credibility of the process itself was undermined.³³ The negotiation can be described as a 'broken phone', as the actors at the table approached talks with different time frames, logic and discourses in mind. This finally appears to have eroded the possibility of clear communication among them. An example of such breakdown in communication is the issue of the de-militarized zone (DMZ); military forces were opposed to the establishment of a the DMZ in the middle of the country (as big as Switzerland), as it would provide a training and preparation area for guerrilla fighters, but the guerrillas considered the DMZ vital to the commencement of negotiations, as the area provided a safe place to negotiate without any military interference.

This lack of trust and 'commitment' was latent during the whole peace process, as military forces accused the FARC of bringing kidnapped persons to the DMZ, and using the area to prepare attacks. The FARC continuously complained about the military forces' lack of results against paramilitarism.³⁴

The peace process never managed to progress beyond the negotiation of the agenda. Not only were the definitions and terms of negotiation troublesome, but they evidenced either parties' lack of experience in or commitment to the management of a peace process. These difficulties can be seen in the failure even to establish a verification commission, a simple element such as the naming of a friendly third party to solve disputes.³⁵

One of the elements that drove Colombian public opinion towards peace was their weariness of the consequences of war; kidnappings, attacks on small towns, death of civilians and members of the armed forces. The public expected that the peace process would decrease these grievances, but when it failed to do so, support for the peace process began to dwindle.³⁶

The involvement of the international community in the peace process was limited. The USA's so-called 'Plan Colombia' aimed at strengthening the military capacities of the government against drug production and drug trafficking, under the argument that the conflict was driven by a lack of government strength and revenues from illicit crops and drug trafficking.³⁷ The European Union accompanied the process, but did not have a strong role as mediator, and their economic support for the peace process was limited.

The limited involvement of the international community in the failed Colombian peace process presents a stark contrast with the Sri Lankan peace process. The Colombian government made efforts to involve the international community; even, 'touring' Europe with some guerrilla leaders to gather support for the peace process.³⁸ In spite of these efforts, the peace process was mostly ignored by the international community, and the international commitment which might have bonded the process and the actors never became a reality.

The end of the peace process was supported by Colombian public opinion; several attacks by guerrillas and the lack of results from the process had destroyed the remaining public support for peace. Although the FARC is only one of the actors involved on the violent conflict, it had been transformed into the public enemy of the country in popular perception.

Sri Lanka: Fight to the Bitter End

Towards the end of 2001, the LTTE expressed their intention to explore options for a peaceful settlement to the conflict, an initiative that was promoted by Norway and Civil Society Organizations, and was the result of a process that started in 2000.³⁹

After the elections, the UNP came to power, supported by a pro-peace agenda. By the beginning of 2002, the LTTE and the government had signed a Memorandum of Understanding and agreed on a ceasefire.⁴⁰ The parties also appointed a committee, headed by Norway, which would monitor the ceasefire.⁴¹ This body, the SLMM, created a promising environment where the costs of spoiling the process were 'high', and commitment technologies appeared to be strong.

The future seemed to be promising, expectations were high and substantial financial support was offered by the international community.⁴² These expectations were reinforced by the unilateral actions of the actors, as the LTTE initially agreed for the first time about the possibility of a federal solution to the conflict.⁴³

As in Colombia, endogenous factors worked against the initiative for peace, and the peace process was held captive by only one political party. It is therefore understandable that part of the political establishment opposed the peace process.⁴⁴ While good in theory, in practice the process was flawed, and although a ceasefire was signed, hostilities continued on both sides, albeit on a smaller scale.⁴⁵

As there was not a broad consensus in support of settlement, possible peace gestures, such as the LTTE's proposal to form an interim government in the north were misinterpreted as aggressions. These tensions influenced the political landscape, favouring the arrival of Rajapakse, who represented the political change that was occurring within Sri Lanka. Some sectors of society were frustrated by the peace process and parties such as Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) (nationalist Sinhalese parties) gained power and influence.⁴⁶ Changes also came within the LTTE, as there was an internal fracture, unrelated to the peace process, in the east, which led to the defection of 5,000 soldiers.⁴⁷

By 2005, the presidency of the country had been won by a narrow margin by Mahinda Rajapaksa. The victory actually appeared to have been determined by the LTTE election boycott in Tamil areas.⁴⁸ This strategy had been used previously in elections as a means to recompose the political order within Sri Lanka.⁴⁹

After the tsunami struck the country in 2004,⁵⁰ the peace process drove both parties to agree on a Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS), which emerged after harsh negotiations on how to redistribute resources.⁵¹ The agreement was finally scrapped, as opposing parties declared it to be secessionist and unconstitutional. Additionally, a series of military attacks eroded support for the process, and undermined the international credibility of the LTTE's commitment to agreements.

These military attacks occurred during a period of ceasefire, not during wartime negotiations as in Colombia. By 2006, the SLMM reported more than 3,400 violations of the ceasefire on the part of the LTTE and around 270 from the government.⁵² This can be considered as evidence of the LTTE's lack of commitment to the peace process, or as evidence of the difficulty of enforcing ceasefires. To the government of Sri Lanka, these violations clearly evidenced the former.

By late 2006, the LTTE officially and indefinitely pulled out of peace talks (but not out of the peace process), and accompanied this decision with a series of attacks. This triggered a strong military reaction from the government. The condemnation of the SLMM went unheeded by actors, and the path to war was paved once again.

War and Peace After 9/11: Justification, Endogeneity and Discourse

The effect of 9/11 was not only political, but also influenced discourses in such a way that the word 'terrorism' became a loaded expression going far beyond its original meaning.⁵³ On 5 October 2001, both FARC and LTTE were included in the US updated terrorist organizations list.

It would be naive to believe that the effect of the 9/11 dynamics alone determined the results of the Sri Lankan and Colombian conflicts and their peace processes. Both conflicts witnessed initial attempts at peace processes prior to 2001, in which economics, politics and internal conditions affected the stakes surrounding war and peace. Therefore, it can be said that 9/11 brought about changes in the international attitudes to conflict, rather than completely changing the nature of the conflict itself. The biggest change in international attitude was the creation of

'the war on terror' discourse post-9/11.⁵⁴ The same wars were being fought with almost the same actors, but the labels had changed. Within this new discourse, war against 'terrorist' organizations was presented as a virtuous campaign, where the violence of war could be justified as a moral obligation against terror.⁵⁵ Colombia and Sri Lanka were no exceptions.

The fighters in both Sri Lanka and Colombia can be, and have been, characterized simultaneously within several different categories over time. An historical understanding of the nature and history of conflict is thus imperative to comprehend the evolution of war in each context. In both conflicts, decisions made regarding war and peace after 9/11 was driven by internal processes and failed peace processes.

The 'new peace' concept was influenced by the new wars discourse that demonized conflicts as savage and non-ideological.⁵⁶ This, in conjunction with the war on terror, reduced the possibility of willing mediators and interested actors that could promote peace settlements, thus eliminating the barriers to resolving conflict through war, and actually creating indirect justifications for it.⁵⁷

Finally, what is seen in the Colombian and Sri Lankan conflicts is the result of different discourses and practices, where the category of 'new wars', merged with the post-9/11 securitization discourse, giving birth to a 'new peace' that can be defined as nationalist, militarist and chauvinist.⁵⁸ The case of Sri Lanka can be viewed as a consolidated model, while Colombia could be considered to be a work in progress, moving towards this 'new peace'.

The 'new peace' concept was influenced by the new wars discourse that demonized conflicts as savage and non-ideological. This, in conjunction with the war on terror, reduced the possibility of willing mediators and interested actors that could promote peace settlements, thus eliminating the restrictions on trying to solve war through war, and actually creating discursive justifications for it.

In both Colombia and Sri Lanka, war emerged after a failed peace process, where the imperfect commitment of the actors, the difficulty of building trust and enforcing agreements drove public opinion and politicians towards the idea of a military solution to the problems of the peace process.

Charles Tilly: A Rejoinder

Contrary to the arguments of some authors, the processes emerging in both Colombia and Sri Lanka during the peace process and after the breakout of the negotiations could be described as something that resembled statebuilding.⁵⁹ The cases of Sri Lanka and Colombia are, to some extent, exceptional cases in the contemporary developing world that seem to follow Charles Tilly's logic and characterization of war and its relation to statebuilding. The idea of is simple yet counter-intuitive: the statebuilding effort and the quest for the monopoly of violence can be aided by wars (the initial idea referred to external wars), as these promote the strengthening/development of vital state institutions, particularly fiscal capacity, to support the war effort. Tilly has argued that wars in the post-Cold War era would not necessarily follow the same pattern as in the case of Europe from the Renaissance up

to the Cold War; also it is important to notice that in several cases, civil wars undermine and weaken state presence.⁶⁰ Therefore, the study of these two cases can prove and interesting for the discussion for the role of war in statebuilding processes, but not necessarily applicable to other civil wars.

The Colombian and Sri Lankan conflicts have embraced all-out war with different results. As mentioned before, Sri Lanka seems to be a successful case of consolidation of a monopoly of violence. On the other hand, Colombia (in spite of the mixed results within its borders) can be seen as a closer 'Tillian' example of statebuilding and its relationship to war.

A THEORY OF PRACTICE?

An understanding of the all-out war approach requires a 'theory' that combines elements of conflict management, conflict resolution, international relations, conflict studies and sociology. In the literature reviewed, Lutwakk is the only author to argue that war could be beneficial.⁶¹ The area appears to be under-researched, as it is politically incorrect to assert that war might be considered as a legitimate action, despite the fact that in practice war or military means may be less preferred solution to disputes than negotiations and settlements.

Peace settlements are processes that have a clear start but an uncertain outcome. In 50 per cent of civil wars, parties engage in negotiations, but less than 20 per cent achieve settlements.⁶² In addition, some authors argue that by definition civil wars divert resources from the statebuilding effort, so it is hard to foresee the 'Tillian' idea of how and why war can help in this regard.⁶³

Nowadays, the existence of a peace treaty does not guarantee its durability, as 37 per cent of peace agreements fail within 5 years.⁶⁴ This can be the consequence of a number of reasons, where small failures within the negotiations or slight changes in the post-settlement environment entail dramatic results.⁶⁵

If those involved in an agreement believe (perceive) that there is a good chance of gaining a profit/benefit from renegeing on the treaty, such as the renegotiation of better terms, they will reignite war.⁶⁶ When renegotiated agreements offer higher incentives for peace, an unexpected incentive is created to renege in search for greater benefits.⁶⁷

In war-torn areas future benefits are heavily discounted, as are the future costs of current actions that undermine peace,⁶⁸ and agreements are therefore more prone to the risk of commitment failure.⁶⁹ This combined with the common overestimation of the chances of a potential military victory diminish the possible benefits of a long lasting peace.⁷⁰

The inability to commit is the main challenge for peace deals.⁷¹ This is because in many post-conflict environments, there is an absence of institutions that would guarantee commitment to the agreements signed.⁷²

The presence of third party actors could discourage renegeing⁷³ and enforce the commitment technologies necessary to restoring peace.⁷⁴ This set-up can create artificial incentives for settling differences, or a 'big brother' dependent peace.⁷⁵

Indivisibility usually emerges when the future is heavily discounted.⁷⁶ Some authors go as far to suggest that if stakes are completely indivisible, the only option for real peace is a military victory for one of the parties involved in the conflict.⁷⁷

Democratization and power sharing measures can be necessary, but not always sufficient to consolidate peace and credibility, but there is a strong incentive to distrust the other party, as the relationship between both actors has been mediated by violence, treachery, treason and war.⁷⁸

Sanctions, arms control, trade restrictions, foreign aid, power sharing mechanisms and strong Disarmament, Reintegration and Demobilization (DDR) programmes can clearly contribute to the peace building process.⁷⁹ The problem is how to go about enforcing these commitments.⁸⁰ This is particularly important in an environment in which there are no strong institutions upon which to anchor the promises of a peace deal.⁸¹

Quackenbush argues that imposed settlements can be pacifying and more 'stable' compared to negotiated peace.⁸² Therefore, research on the existence of this kind of military imposed peace settlements can shed light on their real stability and nature, as neither peace agreements nor ceasefires significantly reduce the risk of relapse into violent conflict as much as victories do.⁸³

Based on this evidence, it appears plausible to support the idea that war in some cases could save lives in the long term.⁸⁴ Even pacifists must acknowledge that the benefits of lasting peace in terms of saved lives could be substantial enough to justify war as a means to achieving peace.⁸⁵ It would be even possible to ask, is a military solution (and a short war) cheaper than a protracted and recurring conflict?

Sociologists have seen the nationbuilding process either as a violent process or as a process of checking violence.⁸⁶ This argument can be extrapolated to the notion that war makes states or that war is inherent to the process of state making.⁸⁷ Some authors, such as Schumpeter and Sanin present some of the possible positive externalities of war within these processes.⁸⁸

The underlying argument is that if countries suffer internal violence, it is because they are not consolidated states; they have weak governments and problems raising resources to fund their state apparatus.⁸⁹ Providing territorial security guarantees the presence of other state institutions; an insurgent group would have problems contesting government authority if it faces a strong, well-financed, organizationally secure military structure.⁹⁰ Additionally, for the state, war necessitates two strong institutions that are the base of modern state making: a strong bureaucracy for taxation and a strong military presence across the territory.⁹¹

The idea of establishing a monopoly of violence is at the heart of the Weberian idea of the state. Historically, these processes of monopolization of violence have checked, or went through, violence.⁹² However, war by itself is not sustainable and these efforts require some kind of institutional support, logistics and finances. In order to achieve a monopoly, in this extent the taxation institution is vital, as war cannot happen without resources supporting them.

The consequences of the establishment of taxation agreements usually are the creation of social contracts with their constituencies (the FARC and the LTTE taxed

the population in the areas under their control), as levying taxes without any retribution from the armed groups hinders the legitimacy that armed groups look for in revolutionary or separatists wars.

The cases of Colombia and Sri Lanka are different in the sense that the groups who did the military escalation were not strictly irregular forces. In this sense, it could correspond more to the Tillian ideal of proto-states consolidating their presence.⁹³ Yet both these countries are (or were) nations with a medium to high state presence, without a monopoly of force in all of its territory. We argue that Colombia and Sri Lanka both conform to the theory that war is the consequence of a weak state that does not possess a monopoly of force, or the powers of taxation or the provision of common interest public goods.⁹⁴

The 'give war a chance' theory can be described by the four attributes presented in Figure 1. The failure of a peace process can lead to an interest in military actions against rebel groups, with the aim of achieving the total defeat and surrender of these rebels. This demands a powerful military apparatus, implying the need for hardware (weaponry, technology), training and man power. These three inputs necessitate a

FIGURE 1
QUINTESENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE 'GIVE WAR A CHANCE' THEORY

Source: Own elaboration.

strong state and national investment in resource mobilization. In turn, resource mobilization requires higher efficiency in government expenditure and revenue collection; the role of taxation becomes vital, as this allows the government to fund the military option. This is where the Tillian process becomes operational.

Colombia: The Good Student with Bad Grades?

In theory, Colombia could be analysed as a perfect example of the quest for peace through war, yet with 'bad grades'. In the period between 2002 and 2010, the country has almost doubled the size of the armed forces within the country. This increase in weaponry, equipment and soldiers was accompanied by training in a reengineering process that started with the introduction of Plan Colombia by the Pastrana government (1998–2002).

Parallel to this process we can observe in Figure 2 that the increase of revenue as a share of the GDP increased in net terms in comparison with early 2000, and in relative terms to 2002, it increased slightly after a reduction between 2007 and 2008 (this decrease, however, was associated with policies aimed to promote investment rather than a decrease in the taxation capacities of the state).

The presence of the state, commonly measured in empirical (econometric) studies by the variable GDP per capita,⁹⁵ is increasing in the case of Colombia, although there are indications of falling government expenditure as a proportion of GDP.

It is interesting to note here that in spite of government efforts to weaken and destroy the guerrillas, there have been a series of attacks from these groups demonstrating that, tactically and strategically, they maintain their operational capabilities, and a possible military defeat is not yet in sight. On the other hand, as the government devoted their attention mostly against guerrillas, other groups such as paramilitaries and drug traffickers have not disappeared from the landscape, therefore complicating the prospects of a monopoly of violence.

FIGURE 2
SIZE OF THE MILITARY FORCES, GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE IN COLOMBIA

Source: World Bank 2011. Data retrieved from <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/>>.

Sri Lanka: The Bad Student with Good Grades

Sri Lanka, although different to Colombia, is also an example of the quest for the monopoly of violence by the state. For example, the size of the military forces is not as substantial as in the Colombian case, but the size of the military increased during the years of the offensive (2007–09). Interestingly, the size of military forces is smaller than in the mid-1990 or early 2000 (Figure 3). This points to a qualitative change in the capabilities (enhanced force multiplier) of the Sri Lankan forces, as the Sri Lankan Armed forces destroyed, killed or captured most of the LTTE forces. The strengthening of the Sri Lankan armed forces is thus clearly indisputable.

In this particular case, an understanding of state presence in terms of government expenditure or strength of military forces seems to best fit the definition of an increased state presence. Having dramatically increased in the years in which the government carried out military offensives, government expenditure decreased sharply after the defeat of the LTTE.

The role of taxation seems curiously in line with ‘Tillian’ logic. The revenues of the country appear to have a decreasing tendency (Figure 4). However, when we compare this with the percentage of the revenues obtained from taxes on income and capital gains, revenues have an increasing tendency, which could be the consequence of a more efficient tax bureaucracy. This may reflect a greater reliance on taxes than other sources of revenue, such as state property.

It appears that Colombia is currently in the process of building up a stronger military, and is thus a clear example of the all-out war in theory. Both Colombia and Sri Lanka have increased their military expenditure in the last years, although Sri Lanka has not increased expenditure to the same extent as Colombia has. In terms of the proportion of the GDP being invested in military spending, both countries appear to show a slight increasing pattern. However, when compared to previous years, it becomes clear that

FIGURE 3
SIZE OF THE MILITARY FORCES AND REVENUE IN SRI LANKA

Source: World Bank 2011. Data retrieved from <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/>>.

FIGURE 4
REVENUES AND TAXES ON INCOME IN SRI LANKA

Source: World Bank 2011. Data retrieved from <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/>>.

Sri Lanka is actually reducing the percentage of GDP being spent on the military. In contrast to what Besley and Persson argue,⁹⁶ we find that military solutions to conflict can to some extent manifest themselves within internal wars, and have 'positive' impacts in the notion of statebuilding similar to the idea proposed by Tilly.

In addition, it is important to point to the changes on the legitimacy of the political institution and their democratic systems. Both countries are labelled as illiberal democracies according to Doyle,⁹⁷ and in spite of improvements in some areas, certain negative features outweigh the gains in relationship to the performance of democracy, sovereignty or civil rights. Regardless, it can be asserted that in both cases these models share a notion of development that centres on and is informed by economic improvement as a common pattern that relies on a top-down definition of development and is a by-product of reducing group grievances to a mere economic proxy (per capita income).

It has been established, on the basis of the data and literature, that the 'peace' which follows civil wars ending in military victory tends to last longer.⁹⁸ In the cases of both Colombia and Sri Lanka, the logic that prevailed was the necessity of achieving the monopoly of violence without the necessity of land reforms (Colombia), giving more autonomy or the claims for sharing power have not been met (Sri Lanka). The logic of a 'Tillian' definition of the consolidation of the nation-state, where the 'legitimate' use of force is central to the process of statebuilding, also applies in both cases.⁹⁹ One thing is achieving the monopoly of violence and another is being a legitimate force; in both countries, it is still unclear if these processes of military escalation have increased the legitimacy of the state.

These processes of 'creative destruction' have several positive externalities that could explain the potential for war to be functional and instrumental to statebuilding. Particularly in the cases of Colombia and Sri Lanka, the results are not clear-cut, as

variables such as taxation, number of soldiers, number of rebels and number of battle deaths do not follow a clear pattern that could support the idea of 'all-out war'. It may be that we are in the presence of a new breed of 'new peace' born in the womb of the 'new wars'.

If this model produces a long-term stability and results beneficial to the government, it could become a new model for conflict management in other countries that have 'weak states'; in fact, some adapted versions of these policies are already being implemented (as in Mexico against the drug cartels).¹⁰⁰

Finally, in the case of those insurgencies that are motivated more by greed than political or societal grievances, political solutions could be futile¹⁰¹ and the need for a full scale military intervention could be more evident. But the difficulty remains; what if the other armed group within the country has valid and legitimate grievances, and we are confusing means and ends, tactics and strategies?

CONCLUSIONS AND OTHER OPEN QUESTIONS

It is noteworthy that the decision to choose the military option was marked by uncertainty.¹⁰² In terms of scale, Colombia has exerted a greater effort, but has not achieved the same results as Sri Lanka in achieving a monopoly of violence within its borders. Therefore, there are elements beyond the three described by Tilly that must be incorporated into our comprehension of the effectiveness of the all-out war theory. Such elements, among others, are: the nature of the insurgency, the tactics used by the insurgents, their structure, their adaptability and the terrain on which the war is fought, and most importantly the legitimacy of the state. In the case of Colombia, dramatic changes in the nature of the tactics used 'rebalanced' the stakes against a possible military victory, as opposed to the case of Sri Lanka, where the government managed to achieve victory, as the LTTE never changed their strategies, and the military might of the army was sufficient to defeat the LTTE forces in a smaller area, with terrain conditions that made a full-on military operation more effective.

The case of Colombia can be defined as a partial success in the quest for the monopoly of violence, as the guerrillas have been weakened, making the government closer to better control over its territory. On the other hand, the rise of paramilitary forces or the so called 'emerging bands' has proven that in spite of following a 'Tillian' model of investment in military capacity, and more taxation, it not necessarily led to a Weberian monopoly of violence.

Sri Lanka on the other hand is a perfect example of the achievement of the monopoly of force, and the achievement of peace through military means following a Tillian model. The achievement of the monopoly of violence and its forcefulness has put aside the necessity of taking up the grievances of the Tamil population. This poses questions on the nature of the social contract established after a military victory, and reminds us that the achievement of the monopoly of violence and the consolidation of a particular state model would not necessarily imply a legitimate state.

In both cases, it is important to highlight that the Tillian interpretation of statebuilding provides a framework for understanding quests for the monopoly of force in some countries, yet it is important to note two things: first, the Tillian trajectory in the case of internal civil war could lead to a stronger state as well to a state collapse in the cases where state institutions are eroded and weakened by war. Second, war itself is unpopular and could only be justified after failed attempts at conducting a peace settlement.

In both countries, peace settlements failed for myriad reasons, such as poor negotiation skills, instrumentalisation of the peace process itself, lack of compromise and commitment from the parties, and this built the frustration around the peace processes that justified the call for an all-out war. Most importantly, there was a lack of real involvement from civil society and other political parties, which helped some political groups capture the peace process, and eroded the possibility of broad public and political support for peace. Additionally, the post-9/11 environment created a perfect framework in which the justification for war as a legitimate quest in an international and intra-national context became credible and justifiable.

No civil war analysis can be separated from a detailed analysis of its environment and its relation to development, which allows for the comprehension of particular dynamics affecting decision-making processes. War exists as a blatant example of the failure of the development model undertaken by a country. That is why it is necessary to avoid the separation of the security and the development agendas as both are constitutive of the state, and it is also necessary to understand how these military campaigns are related to particular development projects.¹⁰³ As development (or its failure) may by itself be a cause of violence,¹⁰⁴ it is necessary to assess the development models embraced in both countries.

In both Sri Lanka and Colombia, during and after the military escalation, a new development model was consolidated. The model in both cases is a top-down take on development, which sees economic growth as central to development.¹⁰⁵ This is a by-product of the way the all-out war theory conceives victory and frames development (probably as a by-product of the interest in resources to fund war). It could be defined as a 'liberal peace' model, in which governments focus on security as a precondition for economic growth and development (Colombia), where economic growth and stabilization are sought as a consolidation of victory, and where grievances are reduced to economic dimensions (Sri Lanka).¹⁰⁶

This approach to post-conflict development disregards the fact that inequality could have played a role in the outbreak of conflict itself, and that the possibility of increased inequalities can refuel or create new grievances, thus fostering new conflicts or reigniting existing ones.¹⁰⁷ Some authors refer to such attempts, which bypass the involvement of the parties affected by new policies in achieving sustainable arrangements, as 'power building'.¹⁰⁸

It can be said that war emerged as the governments were unable to settle internal political and societal disputes, and not simply because there was a chance of profiting from war or because there were not enough troops to deter violence. Civil war is an endogenous process, and finally points to the failure of the state and its

institutions. The question that remains open is what institutions are vital for this? Tilly suggested the military, the taxation bureaucracy and the institutions that provided the backbone of a social contract; we would go further to point to the legal institutions, judicial institutions and the provision of public services as part of the exercise of statebuilding.

We argue that the Colombian and Sri Lankan cases present a new breed of peace, as seen from the perspective of Mary Kaldor's characterization of new wars.¹⁰⁹ The truth is that war, by definition, has always been savage, and its idealization in discourse and the media will not assist conflict resolution and development studies, and the development of the modern nation state is often depicted as a romantic process; history reminds us that nationbuilding and state consolidation has been mostly a bloody process.

We find that, contrary to Kaldor's theories, in a post-globalization planet, civil wars that seem to strengthen state presence do exist. Also, wars and policies for state strengthening are under researched because a gap exists between general findings and case studies; it is still not clear what a strong state is and exactly what constitutes strong state presence.

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