

Globalization and development in the current political context in Colombia; approximations to resistance of women victims of forced displacement

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1. Introduction

The present article aims to reflect on globalization and development in the current political context in Colombia, characterized by the emergence of the right and far-right in Latin America and the continuous US intervention in the region, and to emphasize the role of resistance on the part of women victims of forced displacement precipitated by the social, political, and armed conflict in the country.

Forced displacement in Colombia, and transnational migration of Venezuelans in the region and especially into Colombia, represent a critical situation on the regional and global levels, since they represent the highest rate of forced migration in the Western hemisphere and one of the highest in the world. This turns the region into the scenario for the most critical humanitarian crisis in the hemisphere, with its origins on both the blight of political, social economic and armed Colombian conflict and the political and economic juncture in Venezuela.

Displacement in Colombia is considered an extremely complex phenomenon of forced internal migration, with multiple causes and several modalities. During the country's history, a total of 8.405.614 people have been displaced (both from the urban and rural settings) according to the Red Nacional de Información (RNI) sources (2019). It is reductive to presume that this phenomenon is solely a linear consequence of the rural population fleeing the countryside to escape the encounters between actors of the armed conflict; but a more critical perspective will be adopted in the present article, similar to the considerations of the economy professor, as well as exile Héctor Mondragón (2002), who said: *“Displaced peoples exist not only because there is war, there is war especially so that there are displaced people.”*

This poignant criticism by professor Mondragón frames the complexity of the phenomenon of displacement in Colombia. We start from the hypothesis that the logic of appropriation and concentration of land on behalf of State actors, the economic elites and transnational corporations has driven to the violent exclusion of the Colombian peasantry from the productive agricultural processes and the expulsion from the land.

Forced displacement cuts through all sectors of the Colombian population, predominantly the inhabitants of the rural areas and the popular neighborhoods of the big cities, but the effect is more severe over some vulnerable groups. According to published statistics and specific studies, women, children, indigenous communities and afro-Colombian descendants are disproportionately affected. ACNUR (2000), the first international organization to present the need to work on the issue of displacement with a gender-specific and ethnic-aware approach, explains: Forced displacement has more pronounced effects for women than for men, namely splits and losses. In the urban setting, unemployment affects men in a bigger proportion than women. Women and men seek support from their network in a differentiated manner: men look for assistance from the government, whereas the women look for more practical strategies for the survival of the family. Facing a return that does not guarantee personal safety or access to employment or property, displaced women tend to prefer urban integration. (ACNUR, 2000, p. 6) As exposed in the ACNUR (UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.) - Colombian office report, displacement has affected the Colombian population in Colombia for decades, but with severe, differential consequences for minority groups like peasant women, indigenous peoples and afro-descendants.

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The number of women victims of displacement totals 4.205.808[†] and the LGTBI population displaced numbers 3.281[‡], that is, more than half of the victim population in Colombia; many of them have to take over fully providing for their families, often using survival strategies in the informal economy and building support networks with the local population and the victims movement, which has joined them within the political context where they vindicate their rights as women victims.

Some women have also been targeted because of the social and political leadership roles they have exercised in their communities. There is a relevant presence of women in social processes and political action. This leadership has on occasion cost these women their lives or forced them to be forcefully displaced. The militant women of the victims movement are a symbol of strength, day to day, who aim to be recognized not just as victims since they symbolize an American continent that struggles. They take on leadership roles in both domestic and public spaces and reclaim their self-esteem and social recognition.

2. Recent history–Paramilitarism and the Responsibility of the Colombian State

During the last two decades-90s y 2000s-, according to Bello (2003) the neoliberal model consolidated in the country and the state modernization were framed, which implied the redefinition of the territory and the relationships according to production and commercialization needs without regard for the political, social and cultural costs. According to Fajardo (2015), the critical situation characterized by the concentration of wealth, an exclusive access to political power, the prevalence of extreme poverty in the countryside, massive displacement (by then notorious even at the international level), the persisting repressive military treatment of social conflict and the shifting of some expressions of the conflict to the borders (involving countries like Ecuador and Venezuela).

With the arrival of president Álvaro Uribe Vélez to power, the *Plan Colombia* continued and the *Plan Patriota*[§] is introduced, with the strategy called “*democratic security*”^{**}.

During his two terms, Álvaro Uribe enjoys unprecedented popularity, which undoubtedly comes from his ability to produce an appearance of direct democracy: in the “community councils”, that he summons every week in the most marginalized counties in Colombia, he addresses the problems of “the people” without any political intermediary. The popularity stems predominantly from the rhetoric of a double adversary, the guerrilla groups and the chavist Venezuela, accused of complicity with said groups, and to portray the dichotomy of “friend-enemy”. By doing this, he brings together two elements of populism: the relationship between the leader and his audience and the nationalist thread. However, social equality measures are absent, and his intervention deliberately favors the privileged and the conservative values. (Pecaut. 2015)

President Uribe supposedly achieved a demobilization of the paramilitary armies^{††}, but according to the analysis

[†]Source: RNI - *Red Nacional de Información*, 01 feb. 2019.

[‡] Idem.

[§] The *Plan Patriota* was a renewed initiative against the FARC- EP guerrilla supervised by the United States, involving the military deployment of 15.000 in the South of the country. It has been regarded as the openly military arm of the *Plan Colombia*, which included the installation of US military bases in Colombian territory.

^{**} In spite of an increase in military deployment, the guerrillas have continued their action and have resisted critical situations like the natural death of Manuel Marulanda, its principal chief, the ambush and death of Raúl Reyes in Ecuadorian territory through an illegal invasion of the neighboring country and the death of Alfonso Cano, the successor of Marulanda.

^{††} At this point in time, several scandals affecting president Uribe begin to surface. He is criticized by the mistreatment of judicial institutions, he is suspected of having given paramilitary groups an open field, and even having contributed to their expansion, the revelation of the “parapolítica” scandals [links of regional politicians to paramilitary groups] where an elevated percentage of the elected members of the legislature owed their election to the contributions of paramilitary

of Giraldo (2015), what was really designed with the 975 of 2005^{‡‡}, inspired in transnational justice and the Law 782 of 2002, was a framework for impunity that raised a lot of criticism inside the country and from the international community. The negotiation with the paramilitary groups (for demobilization and reinsertion) was a process that ended up favoring the perpetrators and not the victims under a perverse argument that conflates justice and revenge and gave rise to great impunity.

During the two Uribe administrations, the policy for democratic security, military investment and the strengthening of security measures prevailed over the demands for social investment, aggravating poverty in the country.

Additionally, the anti-terror rhetoric, framed within the US foreign policy and the pressures over the military to show immediate results from the armed conflict originated the so-called “false positives”^{§§}. The strategies related to the “Rehabilitation Zones”, the Farmer soldiers, the informant networks, defined as innovations of the “Community State and democratic security” ended up blurring the boundaries between the civil population and combatants, forcing the civil population to actively participate in the war. (BELLO. 2003)

According to Giraldo (2015), after the alleged demobilization of the paramilitary groups, in the past few years, paramilitary action has been disguised as common crime under the acronym BACRIM (for the Spanish spelling of criminal gangs^{***}), but the truth remains that the violence exploding everywhere reveals the persisting links between such groups and State and corporate actors.

The military strategy creates an atmosphere of apparent control of the armed conflict by the Colombian and US armed forces. Additionally, in order to fulfill a US military strategy in Latin America, in 2010 an agreement between the US and Colombian government was established, to found seven military bases in Colombian territory in the framework of the “Global en Route Strategy” that seeks to support military operations in America and Africa. (Fajardo, 2015), that creates a sense of security for the people looking on from the outside and the higher socioeconomic stratum in the biggest Colombian cities. However, in truth what happens is a mutation of the characteristics of the conflict and a greater political unrest in the South American region.

The conflict begins to link up with the extractive engine of the mining and natural resources exploitation projects. The violent encounters shift to concentrate in the border regions and the great displacement crisis transforms the trajectories of migration flow. In this context, the government, public opinion and the media continue to spread the hegemonic discourse from businessmen and government officials that seeks to reinforce the message that the country is entering a post conflict phase.

Former president Juan Manuel Santos implemented the Law for Victims 1448 of 2011, which aims to obtain comprehensive reparations (both material and psychological) for victims of the conflict. This law originated not only in the preoccupation of the Colombian state for the victimized populations, but also in the demands of the

groups, and the unconditional support for sections of the military with the most dubious involvement (Pecaut. 2015)

^{‡‡} The Law 975 of 2005 is framed within a political context where there was denial of a social and political armed conflict. It was proposed that the situation in Colombia was due to a terrorist onslaught by the guerrilla, where the perpetrators (demobilized paramilitaries) were given ample political, media and judicial visibility. The demobilized paramilitaries contributed to reveal certain truths that had been denounced before or were half-said truths. This raised widespread complaints and social mobilization by victims and human rights organizations throughout the country.

^{§§} The false positives are civilians murdered by the army and presented as rebels slain in combat. In 2008 the “false positives” came to light and the State responsibility during the conflict was well established from this moment onward. (Pecaut. 2015)

^{***} The dissident paramilitary groups (remnants of the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - AUC, composed of structures that never demobilized, structures and combatants that demobilized and then returned to arms and new paramilitary groups and criminal gangs (BACRIM).

international community that the administration attended the serious humanitarian crisis in the country and the pressure exerted by the US to legitimize the free trade agreements between the two countries, to be signed after the enactment of the law.

On the 26th of September 2016, the Colombian state and the FARC-EP signed the peace agreement^{†††}. The final agreement consists of seven main points: (a) Comprehensive agrarian development policy, including a Comprehensive Agrarian Reform, where the fund for women's access to land is proposed. (b) Political Participation, in which a differentiated place for women's political participation is guaranteed. (c) A solution to the problem of illicit drugs. (d) About the victims of the armed conflict: a Comprehensive System with a dedicated truth, social coexistence and non-repetition Commission is created, along with a task force for the investigation of missing person cases linked to the conflict. Additionally, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is created, including measures for comprehensive reparations for the construction of peace and guarantees for non-recidivism. (e) The agreement defined the terms for ending the confrontations with FARC. (f) Implementation, verification and endorsement.

On October 2nd, 2016, the agreement was verified by a plebiscite that rejected the agreement. This event framed the reforming of the final document, which was enacted by Congress and dictated the pulse of what would become the next electoral period of 2017, with high likelihood that the candidate for the Democratic Center (that represents the Uribe supporters in Colombia) will regain the presidency.

Iván Duque, of the Democratic Center, won the elections and the Uribe supporters air out their "parapolitical" strategies in order to destabilize all instances related to the peace agreements: (a) the development plan for victims is completely, (b) the dismantling of the Special Justice for Peace (JEP), (c) the implementation of the traditional logic of terror, with the systematic assassinations of social leaders in all regions of the country, with approximately 156 social leaders murdered in less than fourteen month according to the Ombudsman office.

We want to emphasize the humanitarian emergency that has been triggered in the province of Chocó on the medium and low Atrato river basin, because of the dispute over territory of interest and natural resources. There has also been repression against social organizations in the province of Cauca, which continue with resistance, where president Duque is looking for and applying a military solution for the "mingueros"^{††††} that are continually presenting resistance. This current juncture has led the country to take to the streets using social mobilization as the grounds of resistance to denounce to the world what is happening in Colombia.

This scenario of violence is directly related to the phenomenon of paramilitarism in Colombia, which has mutated during the course of recent history and is currently happening under the "criminal gangs" phenomenon like Las Águilas Negras, Los Rastrojos and El Golfo, among others, related to a change in official language to refer to people considered victims and perpetrators.

3. Thinking with others, the conclusion that is never concluded

To close, we will introduce some reflections by Arturo Escobar and Boaventura de Souza Santos that will help us understand how the globalization phenomenon and development are intertwined with the political juncture and aim to suppress social movements that get in the way of their objectives.

Displacement is a migration phenomenon related to hegemonic globalization^{§§§}, the economic, social and political

^{†††} The agenda for the peace talks between the government and FARC-EP is divided in six items: (a) comprehensive agrarian development policy, (b) political participation, (c) conflict end, (d) solution to the problem of illicit drugs, (e) victims, (f) mechanisms for verification of the agreements.

^{††††} It is a pre-Columbian tradition of community work for purposes of social utility.

^{§§§} Where the globalization is led by European white men, segregating people under this condition. (Grosfoguel, 2007)

processes originated in this system drive the expulsion of peoples from their territories to prioritize the logic of development.^{***} Colombia is a country where these dynamics are displayed more acutely than other places, because its located at the gates of Latin America, has the second most biodiversity in the planet (full of natural and mineral resources), and becomes a strategic point for the US to exert control the subcontinent. According to Escobar (2004), the new capitalist empire operates through the imposition of rules and norms like the free market, democracy and American patterns of consumption. The underdeveloped countries of the so called “third world” present with a multiplicity of small, cruel wars that are linked the prevailing global logic. From Colombia Central America to Argelia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, these wars occur in countries or regions that represent no threat to the empire, but increase favorable conditions for the maintenance of said empire.

Civil wars and massive displacement occur frequently with the purpose of opening entire regions to transnational capital seeking petroleum, diamonds, Wood, water, genetic resources and arable lands. These wars are often used by the mafias of the powerful and aim for macroeconomic globalization. In Escobar (2004), it’s evident how globalization becomes a “*peaceful expansion*” of the free market economy over a backdrop of omnipresent violence in the regime of a global militarism and economy.

On the same line, Escobar (2004), argues that displacement is a consequence of the effects of globalization as a part of the Eurocentric modernity and the manifestations of said eurocentrism after WWII in Asia, Africa and Latin America under the name of *development*^{***}. Modernity as well as development is cultural and spatial projects that demand the incessant conquest of territories and peoples, as well as their ecologic and cultural transformations in accordance with a logocentric rational order.

The social, political, economic and armed Colombian conflict feeds on the production and trafficking of drugs, in addition to the interest of the government in exploiting the natural resources to draw transnational investment to the territory. These economic activities are immersed in the logic of globalization and seek to occupy rural territories in order to be able to maintain production. This is why transnational corporations, the Colombian army, and the armed groups aim to occupy territories that belonged to the civil peasant population. The Colombian armed conflict involves a matted complex of interests between the State and the armed groups for the occupation of territory. The consequence is a population forcefully displaced to the cities, fleeing the violence.

The reinforcement of walls around the center, separating it from the periphery as a product of globalization has sensitive consequences for the most vulnerable populations, such as the victims of displacement. De Souza Santos (2008) argues that, from a critical postcolonial stance, hegemonic globalization has augmented the vulnerability of regions, nations, subordinated and oppressed social groups. The social fascism is positioned as a social regime

^{****} Development starts with the individual, the capital, technology and the market. In the framework of big institutions like the World Bank and neoliberal for “development” patterns that should be achieved on a global scale, that in capitalist societies has been guided by the liberal development paradigm for over 60 years (Escobar, 2004).

Development, according to Escobar (2004) is a practice of linking knowledge and power from a rationale that is completely different from the existing rationale in each place. The experts started disembarking in the third world after WWII to free the third world from its ignorance and poverty. This has worked very effectively as a mechanism of knowledge and power. Considering programs like the Integrated Rural Development, one sees a machine that links the expert knowledge of the rural development planners, of agronomists, agricultural engineers, nutritionists, with technological packages, power strategies, extension investments, electrification, directing farmers to plant this or that, pesticides, fertilizers, a change in mentality and the rationale of the farmer. This can be clearly observed in the development discourse that arose as a form of “scientific” knowledge over the past sixty years. This knowledge favored “The West” as a development model. The development discourse offers a colonial recipe on how to imitate “The West” (Escobar, 1999).

and becomes a real threat to society, because it presents as pluralistic and can easily coexist within democratic states in space and time, but still favor global development.

4. Conclusión

This research paper reiterates that the armed conflict in Colombia is not over, it has merely mutated. The return of *uribism*, and the juncture in Venezuela, where the US has implemented economic sanctions for the past two years to justify a humanitarian and possibly a military intervention, with the support of the Colombian and Brazilian governments, with the eyes set on the oil resources of the neighboring country. All these violent processes, White, macho, eurocentric, capitalist, aim to destabilize the social movements of women victims; but we must keep in mind that the struggle has arisen in the midst of the conflict. They have been, are and will continue putting together their own processes, the struggle of these political actors persists, grows and is reorganized more strongly to continue pursuing a transformation in the country with and for the victims starting at the social bases levels.

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