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The possibilities of journalism as peace building on the periphery: The Colombian case²

Kurzfassung: Der Artikel analysiert Darstellungen des Kolumbien-Konflikts in den Leitartikeln unabhängiger kolumbianischer und internationaler Medien sowie den Einfluss dieser Darstellungen auf das Konfliktverständnis der Leser.

Zwar gibt es in Kolumbien unabhängige Journalisten, nach den Prämissen dieser Forschungsarbeit jedoch müssen sie als Opfer der Polarisierung bezeichnet werden, weil sie unbewusst den Krieg unterstützen. Jedoch könnte es mit der Hilfe internationaler renommierter Medien gelingen, den unabhängigen kolumbianischen Journalismus in Richtung eines Friedensjournalismus zu verändern, denn die Untersuchung hat gezeigt, wie er verändert werden muss, damit er seiner Funktion, die Bürger über den Konflikt zu informieren und aufzuklären, gerecht werden kann. Die Ergebnisse des Experiments waren ermutigend, und wenn sie in die Praxis umgesetzt werden, könnten sie einem Land eine Chance geben, das dringend Frieden braucht.

Abstract: This article analyzes the way the Colombian conflict is represented in Colombian and international qualitative independent opinion articles and their influence on readers' understanding of the conflict.

In Colombia there are independent journalists, but according to this research, they are victims of polarization and for this reason support the war, although without a conscious intention to do so. Nevertheless, with the help of international qualitative media it would be possible to reorient Colombian journalism to journalism pro peace.

This research suggests that Colombian journalism must and can be reoriented to a more proactive approach. The results of this experiment are encouraging, and perhaps if they were introduced into praxis, they would provide an opportunity for a country that desperately needs peace.

1. Introduction

The main goal of this study is to analyze the representations of the Colombian Conflict in Colombian and international opinion articles and to study their effects on readers' understanding of the conflict. In the Twentieth Century, three civil wars have wrought havoc in Colombia, and yet today war still seems a distant phenomenon for the majority of Colombians. The country's largest and most important cities have been growing and have experienced construction booms in the last few years, especially private developments featuring luxury apartments, houses and shopping malls offering prestige brands. Many of their residents purchase luxury goods at Calvin Klein, Versace or Hugo Boss boutiques and enjoy coffee or cocktails in elegant and exclusive bars and restaurants. At the same time, however, thousands of people have lost their lives in the fighting, millions are displaced (Colombia has one of the worst indices of displacement in the world, surpassed only by Sudan), and hundreds of people languish in the hands of kidnappers. In fact, Colombia is one of the ten least peaceful countries in the world,³ close in the rankings to Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan, among others. How can two such different countries coexist side by side?



Picture 1: Bogotá City – The Capital of Colombia

Even more surprising is that the average Colombian does not know much about the Colombian conflict. For them, Colombia has problems just like any other country, and the situation is nothing unusual or remarkable. In the same way, they cannot explain why the guerrillas are fighting or what the relations are between the paramilitaries and the government. Furthermore – although Colombia is one of the three most important recipients of U.S economic aid – they also cannot explain what exactly this US aid consists in.

1. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Kempf (University of Konstanz) for his guidance and for providing an example of research excellence. I am also very grateful to Professors Sean McCrea (University of Wyoming) and Georg Lind (University of Konstanz) for their valuable comments. In the same way, I appreciate the continual advice, feedback and constructive criticism of the Peace Research Group at the University of Konstanz.
2. This research would have been impossible without the scholarship and help of *Colfuturo* and the *DAAD* (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst – German Academic Exchange Service).
3. The Economist Intelligent Unit (2008): *Global Peace Index*. London: The Economist.

This lack of awareness and the apparent economic boom are part of the same conflict that has displaced millions of people in the last 20 years. On the one hand, the government is conducting a massive propaganda campaign to promote disinformation and to keep people from learning about its paramilitary aims. It wants a country free of guerrillas with a weakened opposition so that the paramilitary mafia can more freely exercise significant political and economic influence to partially legalize its criminal activity in a country already highly corrupted by the Narcotraffic¹. Corruption has distorted the actions of the guerrillas and of a significant share of Columbia's politicians and businesspeople. However, the US War on Drugs demands some results, which up to now have been minimal with respect to the Narcotraffic, but very successful against the guerrillas, who are to some extent the competitors of the paramilitaries in the drug trade.² Another consequence of the war on drugs is the imprisonment of some drug dealers, although under very comfortable and lenient conditions. For this reason, we can regard these jail terms as a form of legalization: After serving a short jail sentence, the drug dealer is washed "clean" and returns to his illegal business activities^{3,4}. All this explains the disinformation promoted by official propaganda and the average Colombian's lack of knowledge about it.

On the other hand, the apparent economic boom in Colombia represents the infiltration of the illegal economy into the legal one. Many enterprises and investments are simply fronts for money-laundering activities; others are set up using illegal money, although their activities are actually legal and may even be profitable. Many investors belong to small drug cartels, an effective strategy, in contrast to the big and highly visible cartels of the 80s (Pablo Escobar's cartel, for example). These small cartels represent a new emergent social class in Colombia, whose investments create apparent prosperity in some sectors, while for the majority of Colombians the economic situation is very harsh. Many of the three million people displaced by the conflict are refugees, and hundreds of thousands have become economic migrants living in Europe and North America. Others suffer from unemployment, and many others cannot compete with the enterprises founded by the drug traffickers.⁵ The government spends most of its budget on the military. Key sectors such as logistics and scientific research receive little attention, which makes Colombia's industries and economy uncompetitive and unattractive for foreign investments. However, the partial defeat of the guerrillas and the imposition of the paramilitary regime have produced a *Pax Mafiosa*^{6,7} (a period when an illegal party won the war and imposed its order), which offers better general indicators (fewer violent deaths, for example) and attracts some legal national and foreign investment.

To avoid further escalation of the Colombian Conflict, it is essential to have independent media that can expose the lies of the official propaganda, alert citizens to the risks of accepting the illegal system (the *Pax Mafiosa*) and enlighten them about the importance of democratic means for solving the conflict. (In the current climate of polarization, the official propaganda denounces the opposition and independent candidates as "enemies" and "guerrilleros"). With better information, the media audience would be in a better position to choose politicians who are interested in peace and in peaceful conflict resolution. Understanding what is happening in Colombia would enable citizens to reject illegal practices and the use of force as a solution (the current military strategy and the infiltration of the paramilitary mafia into the government).

But, this task is very difficult for the Colombian media. Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work.⁸ Media workers face intimidation by drug traffickers, guerrillas and paramilitary groups. More than 120 Colombian journalists were killed in the 1990s, many for reporting on drug traffic and corruption.⁹

However, there is an initiative by leading Colombian journalists: *Medios Para la Paz* (Media for Peace), established to address the difficulties of reporting the news in the midst of a violent conflict. Much of its work focuses on approaches to reporting that can have a positive impact on efforts to achieve peace. But its philosophy: "The first commitment of the journalist is to the victims of the war, and not to the soldiers,"¹⁰ chooses advocacy in favor of the victims and against the victimizers, and thereby promotes more polarization. These kinds of approach are common with Colombian journalists, probably because many of them have been victims of the violence or are afraid of becoming future victims.

1. Rensselaer W. Lee III and Thoumi, Francisco E. (2003). "Drugs and Democracy in Colombia." In: Godson, Roy (Ed.) *Menace to Society: Political Criminal Collaboration around the world*. Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick: (U.S.A) and London. P. 73.
2. Pizarro, Eduardo and Gaitán, Pilar (2006). "Plan Colombia and the Andean Regional Initiative: Lights and Shadows." In: Loveman, Bryan (Ed). *Addicted to Failure*. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield. Publishers. Pp. 53-79.
3. Amnesty International. (2005). *Colombia, The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization or Legalization*. Pp. 48-49. Available at: www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR23/019/2005/en/dom-AMR230192005en.pdf.
4. The New York Times: "Colombia's Capitulation." July 4, 2005.
5. Camacho Guizado, Alvaro. "Paramilitarismo y Mafia" (Paramilitarism and Mafia). In: *El Espectador*. October 3, 2004.
6. Herran, Jairo cited by Bristow, Matthew. "Pax Mafiosa." In: *Colombia Reports*. December 11/2005. Available at: Colombia-reports.blogspot.com/2005/12/pax-mafiosa.html.
7. Duzán, María Jimena. "La Paz no es el Fin de lo Ilegal" (Peace is not the End of the Illegal). In: *El Tiempo*. September 13, 2005.
8. Moreno, Gloria. "Colombian Journalists are haunted by fear of death." In: *Press Freedom: Safety of journalists and impunity*. New York: Unesco, 2007.
9. BBC.com Country Profile: Colombia
10. Corporate website of Media for Peace. www.mediosparalapaz.org

In contrast, the international qualitative media are in a better position to report on the Colombian conflict; they are not directly involved, have economic and technological resources and are sufficiently "distant" to avoid censorship and pressure from armed actors.

2. Aim of the study

In Colombia, there are independent journalists, but according to this research, they are victims of the polarization and, therefore, they support war, although this is not their intention. However, with the help of international qualitative media, it would be possible to redirect this independent journalism toward a less polarized form of journalism.

We will analyze how Colombian journalists portray the Colombian conflict using escalation-supporting schemes:¹

1. Focusing on violence, sensationalism, personalization, patriotism and exclusion-inclusion biases toward certain groups and persons
2. Using simplistic descriptions rather than analyses of complex conflict origins, causes and contexts
3. Opposing narrow aspects of the conflict instead of broader human and other conflict dimensions
4. Using schemes featuring sport-related terminology, e.g., "us" versus "them," "winners" and "losers," rather than longer processes of conflict resolution or transformation.

Also, we will analyze how international media portray the Colombia conflict using schemes that promote de-escalation:²

1. Exploring the backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on each side so as to portray the conflict in realistic terms, transparent to the audience
2. Giving voice to the views of all the rival parties
3. Offering creative ideas for conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacekeeping
4. Exposing lies, cover-up attempts and perpetrators on all sides, and revealing the excesses committed by, and the suffering inflicted on people of all factions
5. Paying more attention to peace stories than is common in conventional conflict coverage
6. Expressing criticism of all conflict parties, not just of certain ones

In order to examine the interaction effects of these two kinds of approach on representations of the Colombian Conflict, we chose three Colombian media for which independent journalists write: *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador* and *Cromos*, and from the international media we chose: *BBC News* (online version), *The New York Times* group, *The Washington Post* and *The Economist*. From these media we selected what we regarded as opinion articles (unlike news articles, opinion articles offer analyses and are critical). Using these sources, we tested the following hypotheses:

H1. The opinion article authors in the international media use their independence, resources and privileged positions to do depolarized journalism.

H2. In Colombia, independent and critical journalists publish qualitative opinion articles, but they have chosen advocacy (journalism of attachment) as a way to contribute to peace.

H3. Readers of international articles (depolarized journalism) can better understand the conflict than can the readers of the Colombian articles (advocacy journalism).

H4. Depolarized journalism represents an opportunity to re-contextualize and redirect independent Colombian journalism in a more proactive way and to produce the highest level of understanding about the Colombian conflict.

3. Methods and results

3.1 Methods used for the content analysis of the articles

For this analysis we selected articles published between 2005 and 2007, because in this period the Colombian conflict underwent significant transformations, among others:

- For the first time, a very large number of government coalition members (approx. 50, including members of Parliament, ministers, mayors, governors and other office holders) are in jail or being prosecuted on charges of having ties to the Mafia.³

1. Shinar, Dov (2007). "Peace Journalism: The State of the art." In: Shinar, Dov & Kempf, Wilhelm (Eds.), *Conflict & Communication Online*, 6 (1) 2007. Berlin: regener. Accessible at: www.cco.regener-online.de

2. Nohrstedt, Stig A. & Ottosen, Rune. "War Journalism in the Threat Society: Peace Journalism as a Strategy for Challenging the mediated Culture of Fear?" In: *Conflict and Communication on line*, 7 (2) 2008. Accessible at: www.cco.regener-online.de

3. El Tiempo. "Parapolitics caused confrontation between Congressmen and Ministries." In: *El Tiempo*. February 28, 2007.

- It is possible to assess the results of the government program "Democratic Security," a military strategy for achieving peace, after a first period of implementation (2002-2006) and the beginning of the second period (according to the government, the "solution" and "end" of the Colombian conflict).
- For the first time, the phenomenon of parapolitics (the relations between the Mafia and politics) is being widely discussed by the media and acknowledged by the government.
- For the first time, the guerrillas (especially FARC) seem to be losing the war.
- For the first time, a Colombian president has been re-elected to consecutive terms despite numerous accusations that he supports the Mafia.

The variables were defined in terms of the explanations of the Colombian conflict given in the selected articles. For example, in the selected articles the focus was on the paramilitaries, and for this reason, 'Paramilitaries' was chosen as a variable. Other criteria for selecting variables came from the following questions in the basic scheme of the *conflict*: Who is fighting (Armed Actors)? Who are the civilian victims? What is the political perspective of the conflict (Political Actors)? Are there any peace initiatives? The question: *Why are they fighting?* does not have a simple or direct answer, and it is answered with the other questions; for this reason there are no specific variables for this question.

To measure the variables, we used QDA Miner v 2.0.7, a computer program designed for quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Each article was entered into the program in the space created for each media (*The Economist*, *El Tiempo*, etc.) in the corresponding year (2005, 2006, 2007). After that, each category and its related variables was created in the program (the categories contain more than one variable), and when a variable was found in the text, it was coded, making it recognizable to the computer program. Once the variables were recognizable, it was possible to measure the number of times (presence) that each variable appears in the text. For example, if we search for the variable *Colombian President* in *El Tiempo* for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007, the program can count each code marked as *Colombian President* and indicate that this variable appears 293 times. For this analysis, a total of 7,171 codes were marked for all the variables. In some cases, the code has exactly the same name as the variable. In other cases, it is linked by a pronoun, name, adjective or any allusion to the variable made by the author of the article.

After measuring each variable, it was necessary to standardize the presence of each one according to the total number of codes in each media by year, in order to make a comparison of the standardized values and the corresponding statistical analysis of them.

Variable	Category
Colombian Government	Politics
Colombian President	Politics
USA	Politics
Parapolitics	Politics
Democracy	Politics
Killing	Killing
Massacre	Killing
Homicide	Killing
Genocide	Killing
Extra-Judicial Executions	Killing
Children	Civilian Victims
Indians	Civilian Victims
Journalists	Civilian Victims
Trade Unionists	Civilian Victims
Displaced Persons	Civilian Victims
Kidnappings	Civilian Victims
Peasants	Civilian Victims
Evictims	Civilian Victims
Colombian Armed Forces	Armed Actors
FARC	Armed Actors
Paramilitaries	Armed Actors

Variable	Category
Criminals	Armed Actors
Drug Trafficking	Armed Actors
Mafia	Armed Actors
Terrorism	Armed Actors
Peace	Peace
Demobilization	Peace

Table 1

To measure the results for each group, we used different tests, parametric as well as non-parametric: ANOVA, Kruskal Wallis, Mann Whitney U, and Bonferroni, to ensure the robustness of the results and to obtain clear differences among significant, tendency to be significant, and not significant. With only one test, this differentiation would be very weak, but with many tests, the differentiation becomes clear and very well supported.

3.2 Results of the content analysis by categories

The general results of the content analysis by categories and their variables are summarized in the following analysis:

Politics. This category refers to the role in the Colombian conflict of the Colombian government, the Colombian President, the opposition, the phenomenon of parapolitics (infiltration of paramilitaries into the government) and the War on Drugs, in which the USA plays a very important role.

The international articles place more emphasis on the role of the USA in the Colombian conflict, for which it is a highly significant variable. They also devote somewhat more space to the phenomenon of "parapolitics." Both are key topics for understanding the course of the war over the last few years, the defeat of the guerillas and the consolidation of the Mafia's political and economic power.

On the other side, the Colombian articles tend to emphasize Alvaro Uribe (personalization of the conflict) and say more about democracy, but do so only in order to make a clear distinction between good and bad. All the variables related to *Politics*, with the exception of *USA (what it is significant)*, have a tendency to be significant when we compare both media. This means that the presence of each variable and the identification of key political actors have a tendency to be significantly different in the Colombian and the international articles.

Killing. It is possible to say that the international articles have a general view of the category of *Killing*. They prefer to speak about killings and massacres, but do not say much about polemical and dramatic situations with strong political connotations like genocide. The American media deviate somewhat from this tendency, probably because of the great involvement of the USA in the Colombian conflict.

On the other side, the Colombian articles, especially in *El Espectador*, give a more detailed explanation of the different kinds of Killing in Colombia, although *El Tiempo* is an exception to this tendency and is close to the international articles. Two variables in this category have a significant P value, *Homicide* and *Genocide*, which appear more frequently in the Colombian articles, thereby creating a clear difference in their communicative style in comparison with the international articles. The Colombians are more specific about *Killing* than the general view found in the international articles.

The other variables related to *Killing* have a tendency to be significant when we compare both media. This means that in this category the presence of each variable and the relevance of each kind of Killing have tendency to be significantly different in the Colombian and the international articles.

Civil Victims. This category refers to the civilian victims named in the selected articles: Child Soldiers, Displaced, Elite Victims, Indians, Peasants and Trade Unionists. In this category, we found that *Peasants* and *Displaced Persons* have a tendency to be significant, but only when we make comparisons with the Colombian articles. It is interesting to see how, regardless of the dramatic situation of the *Trade Unionists* in Colombia (the country has the highest rate of crimes against trade unionists in the world¹), none of the media emphasize this topic, and to the contrary it is in part ignored. Because of this, both media are similar in this "ignorance" and do not show a significant difference in the presence (in this case, actually absence) of these civilian victims.

1. International Herald Tribune/Associated Press. 91 trade unionists killed in 2007. November 20, 2008.

The other variables related to *Civilian Victims* have a tendency to be significant when we compare both media. This means that the presence of each variable and the relevance of each civil victim has tendency to be significantly different in the Colombian and the international articles.

Variable	Results of the tests	Media Compared
Trade Unionists	Not significant	
Terrorism	Not significant	
Peace	Not significant	
Displaced Persons	Tendency to be significant	Only in The Colombian media
Peasants	Tendency to be significant	Only in the Colombian media
Col Gov	Tendency to be significant	Both
Col. Pres	Tendency to be significant	Both
Parapolitics	Tendency to be significant	Both
Killing	Tendency to be significant	Both
Massacre	Tendency to be significant	Both
Extra-Jud Exec.	Tendency to be significant	Both
Children	Tendency to be significant	Both
Indians	Tendency to be significant	Both
Journalists	Tendency to be significant	Both
Kidnapped Persons	Tendency to be significant	Both
E Victims	Tendency to be significant	Both
Guerrillas	Tendency to be significant	Both
Paramilitaries	Tendency to be significant	Both
Drug Trafficking	Significant	Both
Mafia	Significant	Both
Homicide	Significant	Both
Genocide	Significant	Both
Demob.	Significant	Both
Democracy	Significant	Both
Col Arm.Force	Significant	Both
USA	Highly Significant	Both
Criminals	Highly Significant	Both

Table 2: Variables and levels of significance

Armed Actors. This category refers to the armed actors named in the selected articles: the Colombian Armed Forces, Criminals, Drug Trafficking, the Colombian Secret Police, Mafia, Paramilitaries and Terrorism. When the Colombian articles discuss *Armed Actors*, they focus on *Criminals*, *Colombian Armed Forces* and the *Mafia* (for which the P values exhibit significance or high significance when we compare the Colombian articles with the international articles). Although the Colombian articles are very critical of the government, they have a tendency to use more terminology borrowed from official propaganda, such as *Criminals*. Likewise, they have a tendency to give more space to the *Colombian Armed Forces*, making a clear differentiation between "them" and "us" (journalists as "good" and the Colombian Armed Forces as "bad"). In contrast, international articles avoid the terminology and conceptions of official propaganda.

Colombian articles also devote more space to the *Mafia* variable than do international articles, although both media give it a marginal presence, the only exception being *El Tiempo*. However, its presence is significantly greater in the Colombian articles, and this is a very important point, because *Mafia* is a concept that the official propaganda avoids. It is a concept that helps us to understand the new political and economic situation in Colombia.

The international articles focus on *Drug Trafficking* (whose P value is significant when we compare the Colombian articles with the international articles). *Drug Trafficking* is one of the principal "Armed Actors" and one of the most important causes of the war.

Terrorism, a typical concept in official propaganda, is avoided by both media, and consequently its presence is very marginal. The presence of this variable does not show a significant difference between the articles.

Paramilitaries and Guerrillas also have a tendency to be significant when we compare both media. In general, this means that the presence of each variable and the emphasis on each armed actor has tendency to be significantly different when we compare Colombian articles with international articles.

Peace. This category refers to the peace process between the Colombian government and the paramilitaries. For this study we chose the term "demobilization," which was often used in the media. This category has a very marginal presence in both media, and therefore it does not reveal a significant difference. On the contrary, the paramilitaries' demobilization process displays a significant difference in its presence. This could reflect the strong criticism in both media, made in different ways. It has more presence in the international articles, where this polemical process is clearly defined as a legalization of the crimes of the paramilitaries, rather than as a process of justice intended to build peace.

3.2.1 Correlations in the Colombian Articles

In the Colombian articles, the highest correlation values are concentrated in the following variables:

USA. In the Colombian articles, this variable has a negative correlation with *Democracy*. For the Colombian articles, *USA* and *Democracy* are opposites and mutually exclusive.

Parapolitics. This variable has a negative correlation with *Massacre*, *Homicide* and *Indians*. Colombian articles prefer to speak separately about the political strategies and the violence, massacres, homicides and attacks of the paramilitaries against Indians, although both phenomena are very closely related.

Killing. This variable has a negative correlation with *Journalists*, *Drug Trafficking* and *Demobilization*. Despite attacks on journalists, it is very clear in the Colombian articles that they are not the principal victims of the war. However, these articles do not relate *Killing* with *Drug Trafficking*, although drug trafficking is one of the most important causes of the conflict.¹ Journalists treat *Demobilization* as an independent phenomenon unrelated to *Killing*, although the most important Colombian drug lords take part in it and for many this process is a legalization of their crimes, which include homicides, massacres, killings and many others.

Killing also has a positive correlation with *Democracy* and *Criminals*. For the Colombian articles, *Killing* is a threat to *Democracy*, and for this reason, they make parallel comments on *Killing* (as a problem) and *Democracy* (as the solution). The relationship between *Criminal* and *Killing* corresponds with the scheme Perpetrator – Crime.

Massacre. This variable correlates positively with *Terrorism*. For the Colombian articles, *Massacres* are *Terrorism*. However, this equation is inaccurate, because usually *Massacres* are committed for economic benefits, and they are not committed as retaliation against state actions, as is *Terrorism*.

Homicide. This variable has a positive correlation with *Extra-Judicial Executions*, *Indians*, and *Colombian Armed Forces*. For the Colombian articles, some homicides are *Extra-Judicial Executions*. They emphasize that the Indians are victims of homicide and in many cases describe these homicides as crimes committed by the Colombian Armed Forces (extra-judicial executions).

In the Colombian articles, this variable also has a negative correlation with *Mafia*. It means that the *Mafia* variable is not directly related to *Homicide*, although the *Mafia* commits many crimes in Colombia. The Colombian articles prefer to use other names for the *Mafia*, and consequently the *Mafia* seems an isolated phenomenon.

Trade Unionists. This variable has a negative correlation with *Demobilization*. The Colombian articles do not directly link crimes against *Trade Unionists* to the *Demobilization Process*, although it is likely that many of the perpetrators of these crimes are participating in the process.

Kidnapped Persons. This variable has a positive correlation with *Guerrillas* and *Elite Victims*. For the Colombian articles, in the majority of cases *Guerrillas* are behind kidnappings, and the articles have a strong tendency to identify the kidnapped persons with Ingrid Betancourt (the *Elite Victim* of this analysis).

Criminals. This variable has a positive correlation with *Trade Unionists* and *Peasants*. When the Colombian articles refer to *Criminals* without identifying *Guerrillas*, *Paramilitaries* or any others, they relate these *Criminals* to *Trade Unionists* and *Peasants* as their victims.

1. Lektzian, David; Gates Scott (2005). *Drug, Governance and Civil War*. Oslo: Center for the Study of Civil War & Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

Colombian Armed Forces. This variable has a negative correlation with *Peace*. For the Colombian articles, the *Colombian Armed Forces* are synonymous with war and for this reason represent the antithesis of *Peace*, and in the articles, the presence of one excludes that of the other.

Paramilitaries. This variable has a positive correlation with *Mafia*. For the Colombian articles, '*Paramilitaries*' is related to *Mafia*, but although this correlation is strong, it is not very frequent.

Drug Trafficking. This variable has a positive correlation with *Journalists*, *Mafia* and *Demobilization*. For the Colombian articles, *Drug Trafficking* is a threat to freedom of the press. *Drug Trafficking* is related to the Colombian *Mafia* and the Process of *Demobilization*, in which many drug lords take part covertly.

In general, the content analysis shows that the Colombian journalists chosen for this study use emotional schemes to explain and represent the Colombian conflict, preferring personalization to the analysis of objective causes. In the same way, the Colombian media describe more than they analyze and make a clear differentiation between victimizers (for example, The Colombian Armed Forces) and victims (for example, Indians). With this simplification, the Colombian media avoid examining very complex actors like the USA, which at the same time supports and attacks the paramilitaries, or actors like the peasants, which are impossible to classify as solely victims or victimizers. The Colombian media ignore the fact that in any conflict all the parties tend to be both victimizers and victims at one time or another.

3.2.2 Correlations in the international articles

In the international articles, the highest correlation values are concentrated in the following variables:

USA. This variable has a negative correlation with *Colombian President*. For the international articles, the *USA* is an independent power in the Colombian conflict. For this issue, they write separately about the *Colombian President* and the *USA*. The *USA*, with its high level of intervention in and policy-making for Colombia, is seen as an independent key actor, although an intruder and in opposition to the Official Government.

Parapolitics. This variable has a positive correlation with *Kidnapped Persons* and *Elite Victims*. For the international articles, *Parapolitics*, *Kidnapped Persons* and the Kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt (an *Elite Victim*) are symptoms of the political crisis in Colombia. *Parapolitics* represents the infiltration of the Mafia into the government, and the Kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt the failure to reach an agreement with the guerrillas to liberate hundreds of politicians, members of the Colombian Armed Forces and civilians – in other words, the inability of the government to successfully negotiate with the guerrillas.

Parapolitics also has a negative correlation with the *USA* and *Drug Trafficking*. For the international articles, *Parapolitics* is a very independent and local phenomenon not directly related to the *USA* or *Drug Trafficking*.

Killing. This variable has a positive correlation with *Trade Unionists*. For the international articles, there is a very clear pattern of *Killings* committed against members of trade unions, many of them committed with impunity and probably by paramilitaries or state agents.

Peace. This variable has a negative correlation with *Killing*, *Journalists* and *Trade Unionists*. For the international articles, the *Killing* of civilians, the censorship of *Journalists* and attacks on *Trade Unionists* are the opposite of a democratic peace. Consequently, when they speak about peace they avoid these terms and prefer to relate peace to democracy.

Guerrillas. This variable has a negative correlation with *Criminals*. As opposed to the official propaganda, the international articles treat the *guerrillas* as not simply criminals. In this way, the international articles distance themselves from the official propaganda and define the guerrillas in their own terms.

Demobilization. This variable presents a negative correlation with *Parapolitics*, *Kidnapped Persons*, *Colombian Armed Forces* and *Elite Victims*. For the international articles, the *Demobilization Process*, although controversial and closely related to the other circumstances of the war, is analyzed separately from other very important aspects of the war.

This variable also has a positive correlation with *Paramilitaries*, because the demobilization process focuses on the paramilitaries. Moreover, the articles focus on this process because it does not have clear rules, is very lax with the paramilitaries and doesn't offer adequate compensation to victims.

In general, the content analysis shows that the international qualitative media use analytical schemes to explain and represent the Colombian conflict, preferring to seek the objective causes of the conflict rather than to personalize it. In the same way, the international qualitative media analyze more than describe and display a clear effort to place information in context without taking sides with any of the actors. The International qualitative media seem interested in listening to all parties and do not find it hard to criticize them. Unlike the Colombian media, the international qualitative media present and propose possible solutions.

3.3 Methods used in the experiment

We carried out an experiment to compare the impact on readers of the representations of the Colombian conflict in selected independent opinion articles in Colombian and international media.

The impact on readers of an article on the Colombian conflict is measurable by determining their degree of understanding and ability to coherently explain the conflict and distinguish among the actors and their roles after reading the article. This implies coherence between the subjects' answers and the facts of the conflict. For example, take this fact: The Chief of the Colombian Secret Police (DAS) was prosecuted for having relations with the Colombian Mafia. If a subject responds with *Disagree* to the statement: *The Chief of the Colombian Secret Police had relations with the Mafia*, the answer is false. We understand *coherence* in the sense of the following example: If the chief of the Colombian Secret Police and other important police officials have close relations with the Colombian Mafia, it is obvious that the Mafia has relations with the Colombian Secret Police. But if a subject answers that important officials of the Colombian Secret Police have relations with the Mafia, but the Mafia does *not* have relations with the Colombian Secret Police, his response is not coherent.

To compare the two kinds of journalism, we created three groups and assigned their members the task of reading Colombian and/or international articles (which were published between 01 January 2005 and 31 December 2007):

- Group 1 read 22 articles taken from the Colombian media.
- Group 2 read 22 articles taken from the international media.
- Group 3 read both the Colombian and the international articles, so that we could compare and measure the influence of each of the media when readers have a chance to read both kinds of article.

Each group of articles contained the same amount of information, as much as is possible when articles are used without manipulation. Figure 1 illustrates the amount of information in each kind of article.

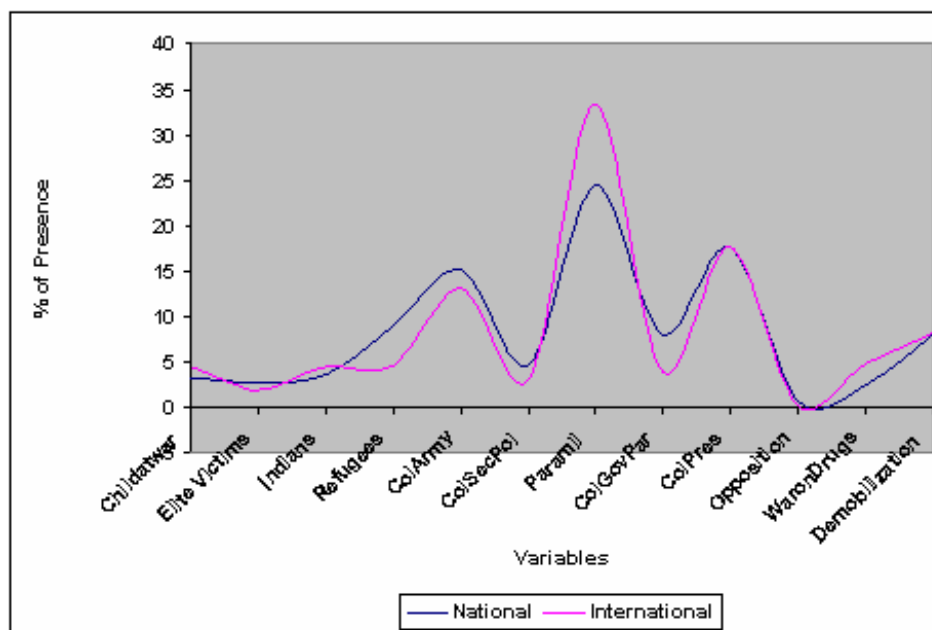


Figure 1

Each group included 22 subjects, and in order to preclude "contamination," before the experiment all subjects were given a preliminary test to make sure that they had no previous knowledge of the Colombian conflict. During the experiment, they had to make every effort to avoid exposure to media programs on or reading about the Colombian conflict (each subject was required to sign a consent form). Likewise, persons from America (North, Central and South) and Spain, and persons with contacts to or knowledge about Colombia, were excluded in the study, because it would be impossible to tell whether they were responding to the selected articles or to their previous knowledge and experiences.

The members of each of the groups were asked to evaluate 122 statements in order to measure their level of understanding and coherence regarding the Colombian Conflict.

Each statement had 5 possible responses (we used a variation of the Likert Scale), for example:

Peasants earn more from drug crops than from pineapples or other traditional products.

Agree – Agree Partially – Don't know – Disagree partially – Disagree

We defined understanding as knowledge that permits subjects to link the actors in the conflict with their actions, explain the true causes and true consequences of measurable and relevant facts, and dispose of a temporal perspective on the conflict.

The average subject was fairly young; the mean age was 24. The majority of the subjects were students at the University of Konstanz, and 94% were of German nationality. The remaining 6% were from other countries of Europe, Asia and Oceania; 47% were men and 53% women.

In all, we chose 44 articles from the Colombian and international media for content analysis. From Colombia: "El Espectador," "El Tiempo," "Cromos." From the international media: "The New York Times" (USA), "The International Herald Tribune" (USA – France), "The Economist" (GB), and "BBC NEWS" (World Online version).

We used four criteria for this selection: 1) Presence of independent and qualitative opinion articles about Colombia; 2) Parallelism of topic; 3) Conflict Illustration: topics relevant for understanding the Colombian conflict; 4) Contextualization: presence of enough explanatory details to make each article understandable without additional information.

To measure the results for each group, we performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA). This is a method that is widely used when it is necessary to compare and analyze more than two variables. As a follow-up to ANOVA, we used the non-parametric *Kruskal Wallis* and *Mann Whitney U* tests to ensure the robustness of the results and to distinguish clearly among significant, tendency to be significant, and not significant. Using only one test, the differentiation would be weak, but with follow-up tests, the differentiation becomes clear and very well supported. Non-parametric tests were preferred, because the number of subjects was limited to 66.

It was very difficult to find subjects with little knowledge about Colombia, a conflict with a long-term presence in the media. Moreover, subjects had to have enough time to read all the articles, which took 5 to 10 hours or more, depending on the group (the articles were divided into three groups and sent by e-mail, and after each set of articles, a questionnaire was sent by e-mail as well; in all, each subject received 3 set of articles and 3 questionnaires).

We conducted the experiment in Germany with the support of the Peace Research Group at the University of Konstanz. For this reason, we translated all the articles into German, and all the questionnaires were likewise in German.

3.4 Results of the Experiment

Concerning the categories and their variables, the general results of the experiment are summarized in the following analysis:

Politics. Table 3 illustrates the level of understanding in each group of each variable in relation to this category:

Variable / Group	Politics		
	1	2	3
Colombian Government / Parapolitics**	35.04%	43.73%	46.78%
Colombian President***	36.36%	29.34%	40.50%
Opposition**	26.26%	31.31%	39.90%
War on Drugs**	41.36%	51.82%	52.73%

***Significant between Groups 2 and 3

** Significant between Groups 1 and 3

Table 3

The variable *Colombian Government Parapolitics* is significant when we compare Groups 1 (Colombian Media) and 3 (Colombian and International Media). For the readers of the international media, it is very clear that the paramilitaries are infiltrating the government, as well as that the Colombian government plays a key role in the conflict, since the government supports the paramilitaries. For the readers of the Colombian articles, this relation is not so clear, and consequently readers can learn more from the international articles, which had the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 2 – International Media – and 3).

The variable *Colombian Government* is significant when we compare Groups 2 and 3. This difference in the level of under-

standing arose because the Colombian media emphasize the President of Colombia (as the opposite of the "good" citizens) and offer many details about him. For this reason, it is possible for readers to get a more complete and balanced picture of the President when they have both versions. It is important to note that despite the emotional attachment of the Colombian articles, they enable a higher percentage of understanding than do international media and therefore have the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 1 and 3).

The variable *Opposition* is significant when we compare Groups 1 and 3. The Colombian media have a tendency to speak more about concrete persons and concrete situations, but not to analyze phenomena as a whole, e.g., the political opposition (although in some cases the Colombian media offer more information and details). For this reason, readers can learn more about the opposition from the international articles, which analyze the topic and have the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 2 and 3).

The variable *War on Drugs* is significant when we compare Groups 1 and 3. The international media have a general tendency to show an interest in the role of the USA for Colombia and its War on Drugs, in which Colombia plays a central role. In contrast, Colombian media tend to make more local references. Even though the USA invests billions of dollars to support the war, the Colombian media seldom mention the USA in this connection. For this reason, the reader can understand more if they read the international media, and these media have the strongest influence on Group 3 (There is no significant difference between Groups 2 and 3).

Civilian Victims. The variable *Child Soldiers* is significant when we compare Groups 1 and 2, and 1 and 3. The international media put more emphasis on the situations of child soldiers than do the Colombian media, because Colombia and Haiti are unique cases in the Americas.¹ In these countries children serve in private armies, and from this perspective they are interesting cases for the international press. In contrast, the Colombian media see the situation as more "normal," and consequently they do not explain the problem of child soldiers in depth, resulting in the lowest level of understanding on the part of readers. Moreover, the international media have the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 2 and 3) Table 4 illustrates the percent of understanding in each group.

Variables / Group	Civilian Victimes		
	1	2	3
Child Soldiers*	19.09%	52.73%	53.64%
Elite Victims	42.05%	51.14%	48.86%
Indians	32.47%	33.12%	38.96%
Refugees**	45.45%	34.85%	55.30%

*Significant between Groups 1 and 2, and 1 and 3

** Significant between Groups 2 and 3

Table 4

With the variable *Elite Victims*, it is possible to see that international articles enable a higher level of understanding than articles in the Colombian media with their affective attachment. However, this variable does not reflect a significant difference between the groups.

The explanation for this result lies in the style of informing readers about victims. Colombian journalism distinguishes between "important" and "unimportant victims." This means that victims who are considered to be "good" people are assigned more value than victims who are regarded as "bad people." Moreover, Colombian journalism tries to *commove*, and for this reason it identifies a victim and tries to create an emotional attachment between the reader and this victim. In contrast, international journalism tries to inform about victims belonging to all the parties, does not make a distinction between important and unimportant victims and does not try to create a special emotional relationship between the reader and a victim "from the good people." For this reason, readers of international media can understand more about Ingrid Betancourt (the elite victim referred to by the media in the selected articles) and her kidnapping. Since the articles are less emotional, readers are able to give a more analytical reading.

The variable *Refugees* is significant when we compare Groups 2 and 3. It implies that Colombian media have the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 1 and 3). This means that despite their emotional attachment, Colombian media make possible a higher level of understanding than do international media, probably because in order to create sympathy (attachment) Colombian media offer numerous details.

1. Human Rights Watch. "Colombia: Armed Groups Send Children to War." In: www.hrw.org February 22, 2005

Armed Actors. The variable *Colombian Army* is significant when we compare Groups 1 and 3, and 2 and 3. The level of understanding is practically the same in Groups 1 and 2. Probably in this case the two versions complement each other. Table 5 illustrates the level of understanding in each group.

Variables / Groups	Armed Actors		
	1	2	3
Colombian Army*	30.91%	30.00%	45.45%
Colombian Secret Police	45.45%	45.45%	45.45%
Paramilitaries**	29.22%	42.42%	47.84

*Significant between Groups 1 and 3, and 2 and 3

** Significant between Groups 1 and 2, and 1 and 3

Table 5

The variable *Colombian Secret Police* has the same level of understanding in all groups. Probably information about the Colombian Secret Police is very specific in Colombian and international media, and consequently the level of understanding is the same for all three groups of readers.

The variable *Paramilitaries* is significant when we compare Groups 1 and 2, and Groups 1 and 3. Colombian media devote much space to paramilitaries, but they do not give a concrete, clear and direct explanation. For this reason, these media contribute to the lowest level of understanding. In contrast, international media are very clear and direct, and therefore enable a higher level of understanding and are the strongest influence on Group 3 (there is no significant difference between Groups 2 and 3).

Peace. The variable demobilization does not represent a significant difference between the groups, although the level of understanding is higher in Group 1 than in Group 2, perhaps because for Colombian media the paramilitaries are "Bad People," and therefore they place greater emphasis on the paramilitaries and their actions. Table 6 shows the level of understanding in each group.

Variable / Group	Peace		
	1	2	3
Demobilization	48.48%	44.55%	51.52%

Table 6

In general, the variables display a clear tendency: Group 3 has the highest degree of understanding; Group 2 does better than Group 1, and in one case better than Group 3. International articles have the strongest influence on Group 3 (these groups share more similarities in their behavior than do Groups 1 and 3).

3.4.1 Coherence

Another category of analysis was the degree of coherence¹ within each group, in other words, the degree of coherence of each subject's answers. Similar to the score for understanding, we can see a clear difference between the groups.

Based on this data, we can affirm that Groups 1 and 2 have the same level of coherence, despite the great difference between the styles of journalism and despite Group 2's significantly greater number of correct answers. This means that each kind of article is coherent in its own way. As is a clear tendency throughout the analysis, Group 3 has the highest score.

1. To measure coherence, we analyzed 15 cases with 45 questions. It was not possible to measure all the questions, because not all the questions are related.

Statistics for Test ^{a,b}	
	Coherence
Chi-square	10,565
Df	2
Asymptotic significance	.005

a. Kruskal-Wallis Test
b. Group variables: All Groups

Table 7

Statistics for Test ^a	
	Coherence
Mann-Whitney U	236,500
Wilcoxon W	489,500
Z	-.130
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.897

a. Group variables: Groups 1, 2

Table 8

Statistics for Test ^{a,b}	
	Coherence
Mann-Whitney U	128,500
Wilcoxon W	381,500
Z	-2.681
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.007

a. Group variables: Groups 1, 3

Table 9

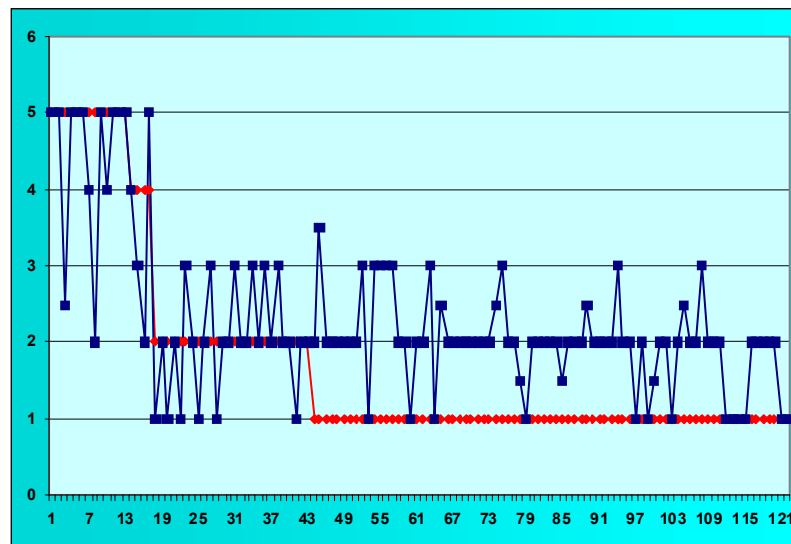
Statistics for Test ^a	
	Coherence
Mann-Whitney U	118,000
Wilcoxon W	371,000
Z	-2.934
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.003

a. Group variables: Groups 2, 3

Table 10

3.4.2 Dispersion

Further, we analyzed the dispersion of each group. This means the difference in each group between the statistical median value of the subjects' answers and the answers that match the facts of the conflict. Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the results in each case. The degree of dispersion is highest in Group 1, lowest in Group 3; and between Groups 1 and 2 there are many similarities, although in Group 2 the degree of dispersion is lower. This indicates that in all cases Group 3 has a tendency to come closer to giving answers that match the facts of the conflict, while in all cases Group 1 has a tendency to be farther from these answers; Group 2 is in the middle, although it is closer to Group 1 than is Group 3.



The red lines indicate the answers that should be marked to have concordance with the facts of the conflict.

Figure 2: Group 1

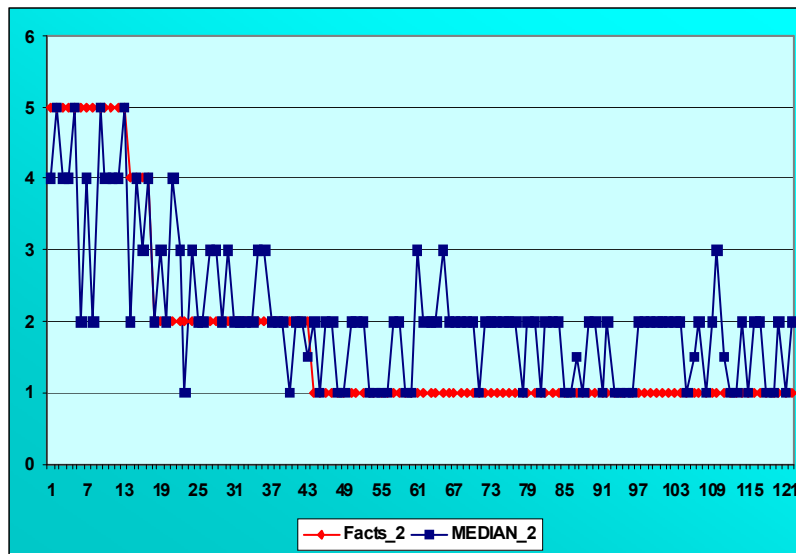


Figure 3

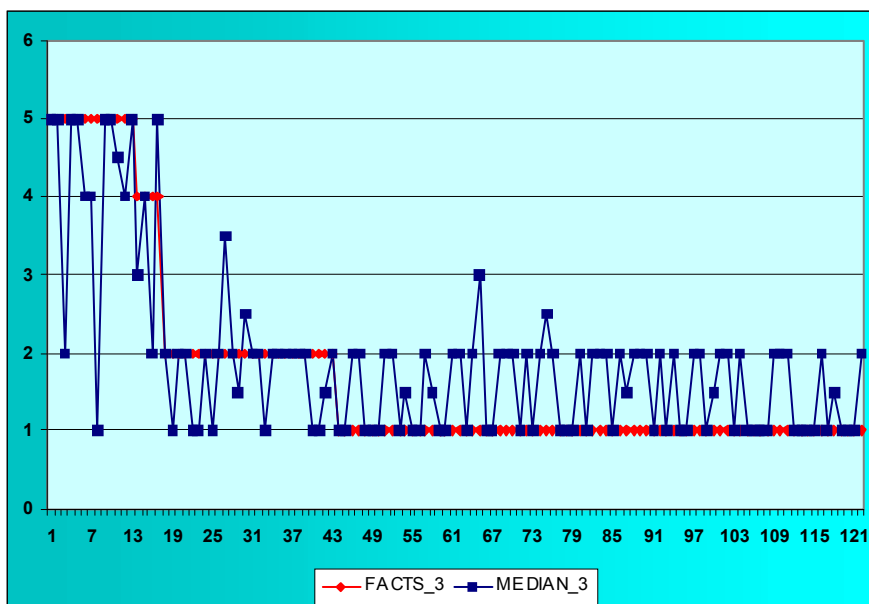


Figure 4

3.4.3 Undecided

In order to measure whether readers were confused or not, the category of "Undecided" was defined. This refers to the number of "I don't know" responses. The more often a subject answers "I don't know," the higher is his degree of confusion. Similarly, fewer "I don't know" responses indicate a lower degree of confusion. In Group 1 there were 17.81% undecided, in Group 2 12.89% and in Group 3 8.72%. This difference between the percentages is always significant when we compare all the groups, or when we compare any two of them, as the following tables show:

Statistics for Test ^{a,b}	
	Undecided
Chi-square	19,155
Df	2
Asymptotic significance	.000

a. Kruskal-Wallis Test
b. Group variables: All Groups

Table 11: All groups

Statistics for Test ^a	
	Undecided
Mann-Whitney U	139,500
Wilcoxon W	392,500
Z	-2.410
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.016

a. Group variables: Groups 1, 2

Table 12: Groups 1 and 2

Statistics for Test ^{a,b}	
	Undecided
Mann-Whitney U	70,500
Wilcoxon W	323,500
Z	-4.030
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.000

a. Group variables: Groups 1, 3

Table 13: Groups 1 and 3

Statistics for Test ^a	
	Undecided
Mann-Whitney U	131,000
Wilcoxon W	384,000
Z	-2.610
Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	.009

a. Group variables: Groups 2, 3

Table 14: Groups 2 and 3

The relationship with the degree of understanding is inversely proportional to the degree of confusion: With more understanding, there is less confusion and vice versa. Therefore, Group 1, with the lowest degree of understanding (35.88%), has the highest level of indecision (17.81%). Group 3, which has the highest level of understanding (47.17%), has the lowest degree of indecision (8.72%). Group 2 is in the middle, with 41.13% understanding and 12.89% displaying confusion.

This indicates that the readers of the Colombian articles were confused about 18% of the questions. For the readers of both versions, with only 9% confused readers, there were 50% fewer confused readers in comparison with Group 1. Some 13% of the readers of international articles were undecided; this means 25% fewer were undecided than in Group 1. According to this data, it is evident that Colombian journalism has a greater tendency to create confusion. Although these differences are not significant, it is possible to see a clear tendency to more understanding with the international articles.

4. Discussion

This study's hypotheses are supported by the tests and the experiment performed:

H1 The opinion article authors in the international media use their independence, resources and privileged positions to do depolarized journalism.

This hypothesis receives complete support. The international articles offer explanations with more depth, focus on topics and causes related to the conflict, avoid using Manichean schemes, refrain from assigning guilt, and devote space to explaining the actions and motives of all parties. They use a more scientific scheme: Usually they present a thesis, offer some arguments and reach a conclusion. However, they offer only limited information about Colombia, because, as international media, they do not assign Colombia high priority. Consequently, international articles provide information irregularly and are less detailed than Colombian articles. More information and details about Colombia would be desirable, especially because the Colombian conflict is one of the worst in the world and is increasingly becoming a destabilizing factor in Latin America. This is suggested by Mexican involvement in Colombian drug distribution networks.¹

H2. In Colombia, independent and critical journalists publish qualitative opinion articles, but they have chosen advocacy (journalism of attachment) as a way to contribute to peace.

This hypothesis receives full support. The Colombian authors clearly take sides in favor of the victims of the conflict, and in this way they use a Manichean scheme, where the "bad" President, the rich and the paramilitaries attack the "innocent"

1. San Pedro, Emilio. "US ready to aid Mexico Drug Fight." In: *BBC News on line*. March 2, 2009. Available at: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7918101.stm

peasants. In this scheme, the favored groups are easily identifiable as the Indians and the journalists themselves, while complex phenomena such as child soldiers receive less attention. Due to this simplification, complex and key military actors such as the USA (which finances the war, is playing a key role in the current defeat of the guerrillas and supports, but at the same time combats, the paramilitaries) have a marginal presence in the analysis. To a similar extent, the Colombian authors offer little space to the violence against trade unionists, which is among the worst in the world. This may be because the trade unionists, although a small group, are very diverse, and infiltration by the guerrillas and the paramilitaries makes it difficult to place them in a Manichean scheme

H3. Readers of international articles (depolarized journalism) can better understand the conflict than can readers of the Colombian articles (advocacy journalism).

There is partial support for this hypothesis. With the international articles, the reader can understand better, more easily identify the causes of the conflict and explain it consistently, but this higher level of understanding is not statistically significant, only higher in percentage. Moreover the level of understanding about actors and their roles in the conflict is complex and not clear. For 8 actors selected, in two cases (*Child Soldiers* and *Paramilitaries*) the international articles enable greater, statistically significant understanding. In two cases, they enable greater understanding that is not statistically significant (*Opposition* and *USA*). In 3 cases (*Colombian Army*, *Colombian Secret Police* and *Indians*) the level of understanding is practically the same, and in one case the level of understanding is lower, but not in a statistically significant manner.

H4. Depolarized Journalism represents an opportunity to re-contextualize independent Colombian journalism in a more proactive way and to produce the highest level of understanding about the Colombian conflict.

There is full support for this hypothesis. Colombian articles have a tendency to use concepts borrowed from official propaganda more frequently than do international articles (e.g., *Criminals*), which demonstrates the power of these concepts to simplify the conflict and define "good" and "bad." This is no surprise, because Colombian journalism is propaganda, although in a reverse sense, since it sides with the victims against the government.

Nevertheless, Colombian articles have some merits; they can more precisely define the kinds of *Killing* taking place in Colombia (*Genocide*, *Extra-Judicial Executions*, etc.) and their perpetrators. On the other side, international articles focus on very important issues, like the role in the conflict of the USA, a key actor that has defined the course of the war with money and technology. For this reason, it is indispensable to understand the USA's role in the Colombian war.

In the same way, international articles say more about the most important Armed Actors: Guerrillas, Paramilitaries and Drug Traffickers, one of the most relevant issues of the Colombian war. This is because the illegal drug traffic finances illegal private armies, promotes the corruption of the government, strengthens the Mafia and produces phenomena like *Parapolitics*, the infiltration of the Mafia into the government. Clearly, *Drug Trafficking* is a key topic for explaining and understanding the Colombian war.

However, both media offer a very low presence to key issues like the *Mafia* (although with significantly more presence in the Colombian articles), *Parapolitics* and *Peace*. The Mafia is a vast, complex phenomenon with political, social and economic implications and national and international consequences. The Mafia helps to explain the growth of the Colombian economy, the development of criminal organizations to import and export drugs, weapons and "money laundering" through many complex procedures. Moreover, the Mafia represents the new political and economic powers that control the country.

We could see how when dealing with very complex phenomena, the Colombian media have a tendency to speak about each actor separately and not identify the deeper relationships between and among them. In contrast, international media tend to present more complex relationships. One example of this is *Parapolitics*, which no media relate to the *Colombian Government*, the *Colombian President*, *Democracy* or *Peace*. Nevertheless, the international articles offer a correlation between *Parapolitics* and *Demobilization*. This correlation in the international articles helps us to more clearly understand how paramilitarism is being pardoned (under the facade of a demobilization process) and is constituting itself as the most relevant actor in the most important political and military spheres. Its victims, to the contrary, are being persecuted, and the opposition to the government and to the demobilization process is being defamed, disqualified, persecuted, and censored.¹

However, peace is a marginal topic in both media, although it should be a very important issue in order to initiate a discussion, at least among readers, of the peaceful resolution of the conflict. To the contrary, both media devote space principally to *Armed Actors* (an average of 48% of all the analyzed codes). Another very important topic for both media is the political aspect of the conflict (*Government*, *President*, *USA*, figures of *Parapolitics* – elite paramilitaries and politicians), with an average of 30% of all the analyzed codes, indicating the elite orientation of both media. The victims appear in third place in terms of presence, with only 12% on the average of all the analyzed codes. In fourth place comes *Peace*, with an average of 6% of all analyzed codes. In last place, in terms of level of presence, we find *Killing*, with an average of 4% of

1. Duzán María Jimena. "Las Víctimas Somos Invisibles" (We the Victims are Invisible). In: *El Tiempo*. June 27, 2005.

all analyzed codes. Perhaps devoting more space to variables related to the category of *Killing*, like *Extra-Judicial Executions*, *Genocide* and *Massacre*, could help readers to understand the critical human rights situation in Colombia and would therefore sensitize people to the war crimes taking place in the country.

After this analysis, it is clear that each of the media offers different percentages of presence for each of the most important categories and variables they use to explain the Colombian conflict (56% of the variables have a tendency to be significant, 26% are significant, 7.5 % have high significance, and only 11% are not significant). In the same way, each of the media portrays different relationships between the variables, offering different pictures of the conflict. Each media offers a different version, permits different levels of understanding and in some cases presents contradictions and similarities which the reader has to confront in order to achieve a greater level of understanding than each of the media offers separately.

The readers of the Colombian articles have the lowest level of understanding (consistency with the facts of the conflict) regarding the majority of the statements.

Although Groups 1 and 2 of the experiment exhibit the same level of coherence, despite the differences between the styles and the levels of understanding, the coherence in Group 1 (Colombian articles) is not related to agreement with the facts of the conflict, while the coherence in Group 2 (international articles) is related to agreement with the facts of the conflict.

Despite the contradictions between the Colombian and the international articles, the readers in Group 3 (the group given both types of article to read) have a tendency to choose the answer most consistent with the facts of the conflict, to give more consistent answers and to be less confused. This indicates that readers separate "advocacy" from "analysis" and prefer the latter, because, as we see, the international articles exert the strongest influence on Group 3.

Those who read only international articles understand better than those who read only Colombian articles, but not very much better. It is only when the reader can read both types of article that he acquires a better and more complete understanding. This shows that international articles (depolarized journalism) alone are not enough to explain the conflict, but they offer an adequate frame to re-contextualize and clarify Colombian articles for readers, as Figure 5 shows.

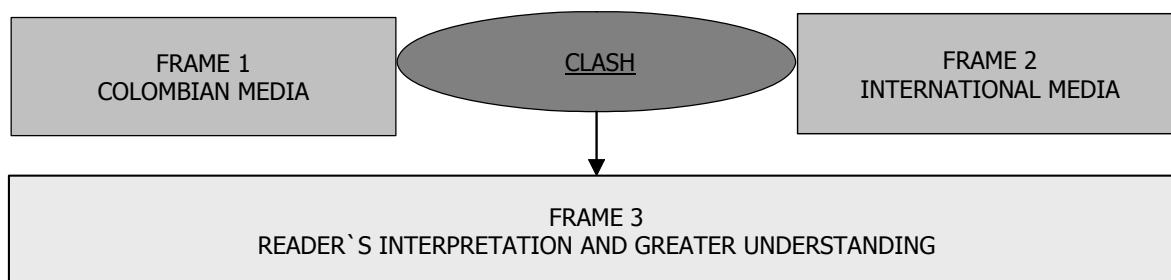


Figure 5

This also indicates that international journalism (when it is depolarized journalism) is an adequate frame in order to redirect Colombian journalism to depolarized journalism, because international qualitative articles focus on facts, data and trying to find the objective causes of the conflict. This could be a temporary or permanent solution, in order to correct communication deficiencies (Figure 6) in Colombia and in countries where independent journalists use the journalism of advocacy.

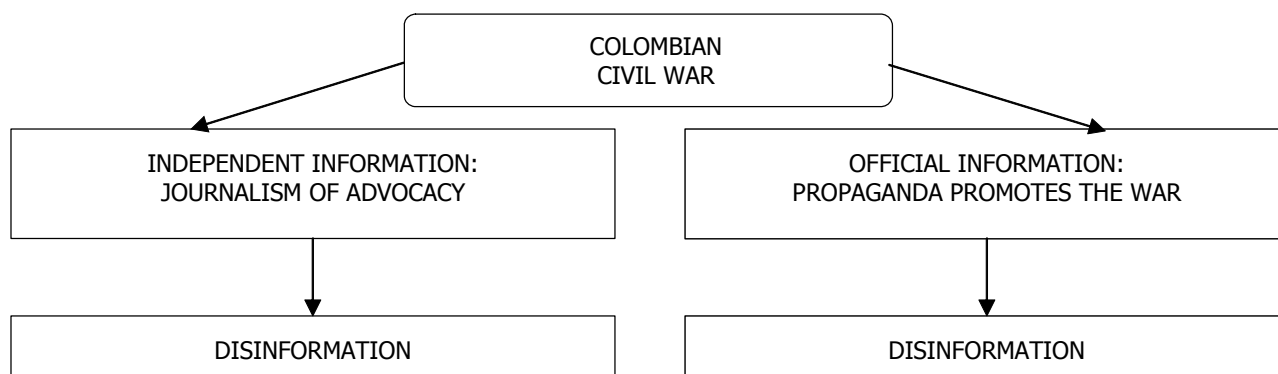


Figure 6

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