

Peace Accords or Political Surrender? Latin America, the Middle East, Ukraine

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In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

Over thirty year ago a savvy Colombian peasant leader told me, “Whenever I read the word ‘peace accords’ I hear the government sharpening its knives”.

In recent times, ‘peace accords’ (PAs) have become a common refrain across the world. In almost every region or country, which are in the midst of war or invasion, the prospects of negotiating ‘peace accords’ have been raised. In many cases, PA’s were signed and yet did not succeed in ending murder and mayhem at the hands of their US-backed interlocutors.

We will briefly review several past and present peace negotiations and ‘peace accords’ to understand the dynamics of the ‘peace process’ and the subsequent results.

The Peace Process

There are several ongoing negotiations today, purportedly designed to secure peace accords. These include discussions between (1) the Kiev-based US-NATO-backed junta in the west and the eastern ‘Donbas’ leadership opposed to the coup and NATO; (2) the Saudi US-NATO-armed terrorists in Syria and the Syrian government and its Russian, Iranian and Hezbollah allies; (3) the US-backed Israeli colonial regime and the Palestinian independence forces in the West Bank and Gaza; and (4) the US-backed Colombian regime of President Santos and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC).

There are also several other peace negotiations taking place, many of which have not received public attention.

Past and Present Outcomes of Peace Accords

Over the past quarter century several PAs were signed – all of which led to the virtual surrender of armed anti-imperialist protagonists and popular mass movements.

The Central-American PA’s, involving Salvador and Guatemala, led to the unilateral disarmament of the resistance movement, the consolidation of oligarchical control over the economy, the growth and proliferation of narco-gangs and unfettered government-sponsored death squads. As a consequence, internal terror escalated. Resistance leaders secured the vote, entered Congress as politicians, and, in the case of El Salvador, were elected to high office. Inequalities remained the same or worsened, and murders matched or exceeded the numbers recorded during the pre-Peace Accord period. Massive numbers of immigrants, often of internal refugees fleeing gang violence, entered the US illegally. The US consolidated its military bases and operations in Central America while the population

continued to suffer.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations did not lead to any accord. Instead 'negotiations' became a thin cover for increasing annexation of Palestinian land to construct racists 'Jews-Only' enclaves, resulting in the illegal settlement of over half a million Jewish settlers. The US-backed the entire farcical peace process, financing the corrupt Palestinian vassal-leaders and providing unconditional diplomatic, military and political support to Israel.

US-Soviet Union: Peace Accord

The Reagan/Bush-Gorbachev 'peace accords' were supposed to end the Cold War and secure global peace. Instead the US and the EU established military bases and client regimes/allies throughout Eastern Europe, the Baltic and Balkans, pillaged the national assets and took over their denationalized economies. US-based elites dominated the vassal Yeltsin regime and virtually stripped Russia of its resources and wealth. In alliance with gangster-oligarchs, they plundered the economy.

The post-Soviet Yeltsin regime ran elections, promoted multiple parties and presided over a desolate, isolated and increasingly surrounded nation - at least until Vladimir Putin was elected to 'decolonize' the State apparatus and partially reconstruct the economy and society.

Ukraine Peace Negotiations

In 2014 a US-sponsored violent coup brought together fascists, oligarchs, generals and pro-EU supporters seizing control of Kiev and the western part of Ukraine. The pro-democracy Eastern regions of the Donbas and Crimean Peninsula organized resistance to the putsch regime. Crimea voted overwhelmingly to re-unite Russia. The industrial centers in Eastern Ukraine (Donbas) formed popular militias to resist the armed forces and neo-Nazi paramilitaries of the US backed-junta. After a few years of mayhem and stalemate, a 'negotiation process' unfolded despite which the Kiev regime continued to attack the east. The tentative 'peace settlement' became the basis for the 'Minsk agreement', brokered by France, Russia and Germany, where the Kiev junta envisioned a disarming of the resistance movement, re-occupation of the Donbas and Crimea and eventual destruction of the cultural, political, economic and military autonomy of the ethnic Russian East Ukraine. As a result, the "Minsk Agreement" has been little more than a failed ploy to secure surrender. Meanwhile, the Kiev junta's massive pillage of the nation's economy has turned Ukraine into a failed state with 2.5 million fleeing to Russia and many thousands emigrating to the West to dig potatoes in Poland, or enter the brothels of London and Tel Aviv. The remaining unemployed youth are left to sell their services to Kiev's paramilitary fascist shock troops.

Colombia: Peace Accord or Graveyard?

Any celebration of the Colombian FARC - President Santos' 'Peace Accord' would be premature if we examine its past incarnations and present experience.

Over the past four decades, Colombian oligarchical regimes, backed by the military, death squads and Washington have invoked innumerable 'peace commissions', inaugurated negotiations with the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and proceeded to both break off negotiations and relaunch full-scale wars using 'peace accords' as a pretext to decimate and demoralize political activists.

In 1984, then-President Belisario Betancur signed a peace accord with the FARC, known as the 'Uribe Agreement'. Under this agreement, thousands of FARC activists and supporters demobilized, formed the Patriotic Union (UP), a legal electoral party, and participated in elections. In the 1986 Colombian elections, the UP candidates were elected as Senators, Congress people, mayors and city council members, and their Presidential candidate gained over 20% of the national vote. Over the next 4 years, from 1986-1989, over 5,000 UP leaders, elected officials and Presidential candidates were assassinated in a campaign of nationwide terror. Scores of thousands of peasants, oil workers, miners and plantation laborers were murdered, tortured and driven into exile. Paramilitary death squads and landlord-backed private armies, allied with the Colombian Armed Forces, assassinated thousands of union leaders, workers and their families members. The Colombian military's 'paramilitary strategy' against non-combatants and villagers was developed in the 1960's by US Army General William Yarborough, Commandant, US Army Special Warfare Center and 'Father of the Green Beret' Special Forces.

Within five years of its formation, the Patriotic Union no longer existed: Its surviving members had fled or gone into hiding.

In 1990, newly-elected President Cesar Gaviria proclaimed new peace negotiations with the FARC. Within months of his proclamation, the president ordered the bombing of the 'Green House', where the FARC leaders and negotiating team were being lodged. Fortunately, they had fled before the treacherous attack.

President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2001) called for new peace negotiations with the FARC to be held 'in a demilitarized zone'. Peace talks began in the jungle region of El Caguan in November 1998. President Pastrana had made numerous pledges, concessions and reforms with the FARC and social activists, but, at the same time he had signed a ten-year multi-billion dollar military aid agreement with US President Clinton, known as 'Plan Colombia'. This practice of 'double-dealing' culminated with the Colombian Armed Forces launching a 'scorched earth policy' against the 'demilitarized zones' under the newly elected (and death-squad linked) President Alvaro Uribe Velez. Over the next eight years, President Uribe drove nearly four million Colombian peasants into internal exile. With the multi-billion dollar funding from Washington, Uribe was able to double the size of the Colombian Armed Forces to over 350,000 troops, incorporating members of the death squads into the military. He also oversaw the formation of new paramilitary armies. By 2010 the FARC had declined from eighteen thousand to under ten thousand fighters - with hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties and millions rendered homeless.

In 2010 Uribe's former Minister of Defense, Juan Manuel Santos was elected President. By 2012 Santos initiated another "peace process" with the FARC, which was signed by the end of 2016. Under the new 'Peace Accord', signed in Cuba, hundreds of officers implicated in torture, assassinations and forced relocation of peasants were given immunity from prosecution while FARC guerillas were to face trial. The government promised land reform and the right to return for displaced farmers and their families. However, when peasants returned to claim their land they were driven away or even killed.

FARC leaders agreed to demobilize and disarm unilaterally by June 2017. The military and their paramilitary allies would retain their arms and gain total control over previous FARC-liberated zones.

President Santos ensured that the 'Peace Accord' would include a series of Presidential

Decrees - privatizing the country's mineral and oil resources and converting small family farms to commercial plantations. Demobilized peasant-rebels were offered plots of infertile marginal lands, without government support or funding for roads, tools, seed and fertilizer or even schools and housing, necessary for the transition. While some FARC leaders secured seats in Congress and the freedom to run in elections unmolested, the young rank and file FARC fighters and peasants were left without many alternatives but to join paramilitary or 'narco' gangs.

In summary, the historical record demonstrates that a series of Colombian presidents and regimes have systematically violated all peace agreements and accords, assassinated the rebel signees and retained elite control over the economy and labor force. Before his election, the current President Santos presided over the most deadly decade when he was Uribe's Defense Minister.

For brokering the peace of the graveyard for scores of thousands of Colombian peasants and activists, President Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In Havana, FARC leaders and negotiators were praised by Cuban President Raul Castro, President Obama, Venezuelan President Maduro and the vast majority of 'progressives' and rightists in North and South America and Europe.

Colombia's bloody history, including the widespread murder of Colombian civil rights activists and peasant leaders, has continued even as the documents finalizing the Peace Accords were being signed. During the first month of 2017, five human right activists were murdered by death squads - linked to the oligarchy and military. In 2015, while the FARC was negotiating over several clauses in the agreement, over 122 peasant and human rights activists were murdered by paramilitary groups who continued to operate freely in areas controlled by Santos' army. The mass media propaganda mills continue to repeat the lie that '200,000 people were killed by the guerillas (FARC) and the government' when the vast majority of the killings were committed by the government and its allied death squads; a calumny, which guerilla leaders fail to challenge. Prominent Jesuit researcher Javier Giraldo has provided a detailed factual account documenting that over three quarters of the killings were committed by the Army and paramilitary.

We are asked to believe presidential regimes that have murdered and continue to murder over 150,000 Colombian workers, peasants, indigenous leaders and professionals are suddenly transformed into justice-loving partners in peace. During the first three months of this year, activists, sympathetic to the peace agreement with the FARC, continue to be targeted and killed by supposedly demobilized paramilitary murderers.

Social movement leaders report rising political violence by military forces and their allies. Even peace monitors and the UN Human Rights Office admit that state and paramilitary violence are destroying any structure that President Santos could hope to implement the reforms. As the FARC withdraws from regions under popular control, peasants seeking land reform are targeted by private armies. The Santos regime is more concerned with protecting the massive land grabs by big mining consortiums.

As the killing of FARC supporters and human rights activists multiply, as President Santos and Washington look to take advantage of a disarmed and demobilized guerilla army, the 'historic peace accord' becomes a great deceit designed to expand imperial power.

Conclusion: Epitaph for Peace Accords

Time and again throughout the world, imperial-brokered peace negotiations and accords have served only one goal: to disarm, demobilize, defeat and demoralize resistance fighters and their allies.

'Peace Accords', as we know them, have served to rearm and regroup US-backed forces following tactical setbacks of the guerrilla struggle. 'PA's are encouraged to divide the opposition ('salami tactics') and facilitate conquest. The rhetoric of 'peace' as in 'peace negotiations' are terms which actually mean 'unilateral disarmament' of the resistance fighters, the surrender of territory and the abandonment of civilian sympathizers. The so-called 'war zones', which contain fertile lands and valuable mineral reserves are 'pacified' by being absorbed by the 'peace loving' regime. This serves their privatization programs and promote the pillage of the 'developmental state'. Negotiated peace settlements are overseen by US officials, who praise and laud the rebel leaders while they sign agreements to be implemented by US vassal regimes . . . The latter will ensure the rejection of any realignment of foreign policy and any structural socio-economic changes.

Some peace accords may allow former guerilla leaders to compete and in some cases win elections as marginal representatives, while their mass base is decimated.

In most cases, during the peace process, and especially after signing 'peace accords', social organizations and movements and their supporters among the peasantry and working class, as well as human rights activists, end up being targeted by the military and para-military death-squads operating around government military bases.

Often, the international allies of resistance movements have encouraged them to negotiate PAs, in order to demonstrate to the US that 'they are responsible'— hoping to secure improved diplomatic and trade relations. Needless to say, 'responsible negotiations' will merely strengthen imperial resolve to press for further concessions, and encourage military aggression and new conquests.

Just 'peace accords' are based on mutual disarmament, recognition of territorial autonomy and the authority of local insurgent administration over agreed upon land reforms, retaining mineral rights and military-public security.

PA's should be the first step in the political agendas, implemented under the control of independent rebel military and civil monitors.

The disastrous outcome of unilateral disarmament is due to the non-implementation of progressive, independent foreign policy and structural changes.

Past and present peace negotiations, based on the recognition of the sovereignty of an independent state linked to mass movements, have always ended in the US breaking the agreements. True 'peace accords' contradict the imperial goal of conquering via the negotiating table what could not be won through war.

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