Colombia Internacional
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Political Science • Universidad de los Andes (Colombia)

Colombia Internacional journal invites the academic community to participate in its call for papers for its special issue on Memory and Truth Commissions, coordinated by the investigators Marije Hristova (Spanish National Research Council) and Gabriel Ruiz Romero (Universidad de Medellín, Colombia). The articles may be submitted between March 15th and April 15th, 2018.

This issue will focus on the analysis of endeavors to recover memory which take place in the framework of Truth Commissions formed as a mechanism for confronting and overcoming violent pasts. It aims to explore the political and social processes through which memory is built in these scenarios.

Societies which seek to leave stages of grave and massive violations of human dignity behind must deal with the troubling question of how to confront the legacy of that recent past of violence. The debates about it and development of a transitional justice to deal with the problem arose precisely when the victims began to have a leading role in shaping such responses. When the victims began to make themselves visible on the social and political scenario of discussions about the transition from war to peace or from dictatorship to democracy, a concept of restorative justice began to emerge, where, before, there had only been room to think of it in retributive terms. Thus, the victims began to call for a recognition which, as the philosopher Manuel Reyes Mate puts it, is only possible when we, as a society, understand and assume the actuality of the injustices the victims were subjected to. It is only in that sense that memory becomes linked with justice.

The acknowledgment of the violations of rights, the reparation of those violations and the effort to prevent their repetition, as well as the strengthening of a State of Law, are summed up by the principle of “truth, justice and repairation”. In the quest to reach those objectives, the creation of Truth Commissions appears as an extra-judicial mechanism which aims to use the exercise of memory as a way to restore the sense of human dignity which has been jeopardized by the continuance of violence. At least 15 countries around the world (six Latin American ones, among them) have resorted to this tool out of the longing to create a narrative which enables people to understand the storylines of signification in which violence was deployed. Each country has given its own particular mandate to the commission it created, charging it with a specific task in accordance the contexts and needs which led to its creation.

But, while, in theory, these commissions set out to ensure that processes of transition do not take place without a confrontation with the truth as one of their foundations, they have sometimes wound up wielding a discourse of instant reconciliation as their objective. Truth commissions are also vulnerable to political, social and economic powers which try to attain a privileged place in the processes of transition. In that regard, memory and truth are exposed to manipulations which may even turn them into traps which are used to justify new exercises of violence.

As part of the implementation of the peace agreements reached between the Colombian government and the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the country has joined the list of nations which employ this mechanism in order to recognize the rights of the victims within a framework of restorative
The mandate of the body known as the Commission to Clarify Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia and la No Repetición) is to clear up and win an acknowledgement of the practices and deeds which amounted to the grave violations of Human Rights and grave infractions of International Humanitarian Law which took place during the Colombian armed conflict.

It is likewise responsible for determining the human and social impact of the conflict on society and different sectors of the population; the collective responsibilities for those practices and deeds; the impact of the conflict on the practice of politics and the functioning of democracies; and the factors and conditions which facilitated or contributed to the persistence of the conflict. It is a rather daunting task which implies dealing with more than fifty years of armed conflict and, despite that, it must be accomplished in a period of three years.

In this special issue of Colombia Internacional, we invite academics and investigators to submit articles which, from the standpoint of different disciplines and methodologies, make a contribution to a critical study of Truth Commissions as a tool of transitional justice and a scenario for the construction of memory. We are particularly interested in studies which, focused on some of the following subjects, place a special emphasis on the relation between Truth Commissions and the construction of memory:

- Truth Commissions and policies of memory
- The role of Truth Commissions in the construction of historical memory
- The pitfalls of memory
- Memory and processes of reconciliation
- Political challenges faced by the forming of a Truth Commission
- Pressure groups which affect the work of Truth Commissions
- Differential approaches to the work of Truth Commissions
- Truth Commissions and the construction of the State
- The extra-judicial nature of Truth Commissions: advantages and disadvantages for the construction of truth
- Comparative studies of the different experiences of Truth Commissions as a mechanism of transitional justice
- The experience of Truth Commissions in Latin America
- The experience of the work of the Historical Memory Group of the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation (GMH-CNRR) and the National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH) as precursors of the work of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition
- The perspectives and challenges of the Truth Commission in the case of Colombia

Colombia Internacional also publishes book reviews, bibliographical essays and brief studies with a critical focus on the specific subject of the special issue. They may be submitted in English, Spanish and Portuguese. We also publish articles of general interest in other sections of the journal.

The editorial norms and criteria for the presentation of articles can be found at the website of the magazine: http://revistas.uniandes.edu.co/journal/colombiaint

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