



## Building Peace in Colombia Understanding a Transatlantic Discord

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### Abstract

While the 52-years long conflict in Colombia ended with a landmark peace agreement in 2016, the road to peace was contentious and challenging. This thesis studies the divergent peacebuilding strategies developed by the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (U.S.) in that troubled journey. It problematizes in particular, the way in which the EU and the U.S. have engaged with local actors and organizations, acting as a magnifying glass for the transatlantic discord.

To make sense of this *conundrum*, this thesis uses and amends Olivier Richmond, Annika Björkdahl and Stefanie Kappler's peacebuilding framework. It deconstructs European and American approaches through the prism of the authors' peacebuilding scale; that comprises namely; the emancipatory, the orthodox and the conservative models. As the different features of the European and American peacebuilding models are examined, in-depth divergences and strategic interests in solving the longest conflict in the Western Hemisphere emerge. By exploring these fundamental characteristics, we will move beyond official policy discourses and principles, and gain a more nuanced insight on the nature of this transatlantic rift. Our analysis will show how the framing of an American 'security priority', as opposed to a European 'peace opportunity', shaped the margins of their peacebuilding policies, and specifically the emphasis placed on supporting the local-level. On one hand, the U.S. prioritized a security-led approach that aimed at statebuilding, while subordinating peacebuilding concerns to a militarized-agenda. On the other hand, the EU's comprehensive approach produced a locally-grounded response and commitments to peacebuilding with a strong societal focus. From this observation, the U.S. peacebuilding strategy displayed a predominantly conservative approach, while the EU resembled the general principles of an emancipatory model.

Nonetheless, this *a priori* strict dichotomy reflects only a partial approximation to reality. Indeed, our findings point to the need for a more realistic and dynamic approach that takes stock of the EU's internal contradictions and limitations, as well as the U.S.'s evolving foreign policy objectives. To this end, our critical reflections on Richmond et al.'s framework will underscore the articulations and linkages between the American and European approaches, and suggest that these overlaps bring new opportunities for transatlantic cooperation. The predominance of both stakeholders' conservative and orthodox practices of peacebuilding leaves ample room for new approaches that rely more on emancipatory models.



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Written in an environment of serious political uncertainty between the EU and the U.S., this thesis argues that a shift towards less hegemonic and more inclusive peacebuilding approaches has become an imperative. From current challenges emerge new opportunities for American and European counterparts to reassess their peacebuilding myths and policy assumptions, and to commit to prioritizing local peacebuilding.