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CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA: THE BREAKING POINTS IN THE PEACE PROCESS WITH THE FARC

Néstor David MEDINA* **Yaşar Pınar ÖZMEN****

Abstract

The violence in Colombia since the 1950s has generated more than 8 million victims and a phenomenon of internal conflict with different actors. Colombia has strived with drug trafficking, government corruption, social inequality, terror and violence for more than 50 years. This analysis covers the history of violence and peace deals with some guerrillas group, especially the final negotiation process with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) which some difficulties have not allowed a successful implementation of signed agreements. This literature-based study aims to outline the Colombian conflict from a historical perspective, evaluate the peace process with one of the longest-running terrorist organizations in the world, and the reasons for the problems encountered. This paper mainly focused on Colombian armed conflict by analyzing the roots, the ideological foundations, and the characteristics of the FARC and evaluated the peace process between the FARC and the Colombian government and revealed the recent peace process's vulnerabilities.

Keywords: *Colombian Politics, Colombian Conflict, Peace Process, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC-EP.*

KOLOMBİYA'DA ÇATIŞMA VE ŞİDDET: FARC İLE BARIŞ SÜRECİNDEKİ KIRILMA NOKTALARI

Öz

Kolombiya'da 1950'lerde başlayan şiddet dönemi sekiz milyondan fazla kurbana mal olmuş ve farklı aktörlerin dahil olduğu iç çatışma olgusunu oluşturmuştur. Kolombiya, elli yıldan uzun bir süredir uyuşturucu kaçakçılığı, hükümet yolsuzluğu, sosyal eşitsizlik, terör ve şiddet ile uğraşmaktadır. Bu analiz, Kolombiya'da başta FARC (Kolombiya Devrimci Silahlı Kuvvetleri) olmak üzere çeşitli gerilla gruplarıyla şiddet ve barış anlaşmalarının tarihini ve bazı zorlukların imzalanan anlaşmaların başarılı bir şekilde uygulanmasına izin vermediği FARC müzakere sürecini

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kapsamaktadır. Bu literatüre dayalı çalışma, Kolombiya çatışmasını tarihsel bir perspektiften özetlemeyi, dünyanın en uzun soluklu terör örgütlerinden biriyle barış sürecini ve karşılaşılan sorunların nedenlerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makale esas olarak FARC'ın köklerini, ideolojik temellerini ve özelliklerini analiz ederek Kolombiya silahlı çatışmasına odaklanmakta, FARC ile Kolombiya hükümeti arasındaki barış sürecini değerlendirerek barış sürecinin kırılganlıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kolombiya Siyaseti, Kolombiya İç Çatışması, Barış Süreci, Kolombiya Devrimci Silahlı Kuvvetleri, FARC-EP.*

Introduction

The Violence in Colombia since the 1950s has generated millions of victims, and there has been a bundle of issues such as drug trafficking, government corruption, and social inequality besides terrorism. The Colombian conflict has been the outcome of "an incomplete and problematic state-building *process* characterized by structural deficiencies", as Feldman (2018) stated well, consisting of *a skewed land tenure system, exploitative labor conditions, disenfranchisement, repression, and massive population displacement*, and the violence only has reinforced the process.

There have always been different (f)actors, including armed peasant confrontations against government policies and the revolutionary guerrillas who later changed their peasant struggle due to the boom in the drug trafficking business and the emergence of some of the biggest mafia bosses in the world. Drug trafficking, government corruption, social inequality, and violence all mixed to generate more than 50 years of war.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was a peasant-based guerilla organization that emerged as a Marxist-Leninist insurgency union. Since its emergence, it has increased its influence in Colombian politics. Since the signing of the peace agreement with FARC on November 24, 2016, several difficulties have not allowed a successful implementation of signed agreements, generating a full risk of the process and encouraging the reappearance of current violence with the indetermination in the process. As mentioned by Özkan (2018) in his study providing a comparison between Colombia and Turkey peace process attempts; it was the "*Fixed Agenda*" the bases of a relatively successful stage in the Colombian case. According to Özkan, the well-structured negotiation process was determinant to consolidate the final agreement, "stipulating which demands could be made and which could not." Despite having achieved a good beginning that put the process has reached an irreversible point, the final agreement of the peace presents some

risks of breakage that must be addressed immediately and urgently by the current government for progression.

This literature-based study aims to outline the Colombian conflict from a historical perspective, evaluate the peace process with one of the longest-running terrorist organizations in the world, and the reasons for the problems encountered. The history of Colombia's problems is the history of the conflict, and confidence is required that a serious roadmap will be applied to the solution of the main problems for the conflict to end. This paper mainly focuses on Colombian armed conflict by analyzing the roots, the ideological foundations, and the characteristics of the FARC and evaluates the peace process between the FARC and the Colombian government and reveals the recent peace process's vulnerabilities.

1. Main Characteristics of Armed Organizations in Colombia from a Historical Perspective

The assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948, led to riots in Colombia, and thousands of people died in the civil war between 1948-1957, known as *La Violencia*. After *La Violencia*, in 1958, a political agreement was established named *Frente Nacional* (National Front) between liberals and conservatives in force in Colombia. The National Front was a bipartisan agreement based on the alternation of the presidency and ministries every four years, dividing power between the two major political parties for sixteen years (1958-1974). This kind of political way out was far from representing the interests of the lower and middle classes of society. In more general terms, the lack of representation in the political arena, a low level of democracy sometimes leads to social movements (e.g., women's or LGBT movements) and populist politicians (see Müller, 2018). But in extreme cases, it creates an environment for the formation of armed resistance organizations (see also Baysal, 2017 about “mutually constitutive relationship between the level of democracy and (in)securitization”). A Colombian ex-guerilla Navarro expressed this as follows "they rose in arms because of the conviction that the institutions did not have a different way out" (El Tiempo, 2015). In Colombia, this situation is well aligned with the international conflicts of the period.

During the same period, guerrilla movements emerged as the projection of the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 in Colombia, where capitalist and socialist ideology confronted with concrete forces. During this period, guerrilla movements were emerged not only in Colombia but also in Nicaragua (1961), Guatemala (1962), Peru (1963), Argentina (1964), and Bolivia (1966). Rapoport (2013) has classified these organizations of the

1960s as the third wave of terrorism and identified as "new left wave". Faced with this "communist threat", the United States supported the authoritarian regimes ideologically and financially. Per the National Security Doctrine and within the framework of the "Operation Condor", military coup governments seized power in Brazil (1964), Bolivia (1964), Uruguay (1973), Chile (1973), and Argentina (1976). Military dictatorships have systematically and widely kidnapped, killed, imprisoned, and tortured thousands of people in Latin America (Gutiérrez Ramírez, 2015). Colombia is one of the few countries that have not experienced military dictatorship, except for the short dictatorial period of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla between 1953 and 1957.

The ideological conflict in the international arena during the Cold War fueled by agrarian and social disputes of the previous decades of Colombian history. At this point, we should emphasize that the governance of the state by the powers that protect the interests of foreign capitals, the trading bourgeoisie, and the great landowners is a common feature of post-independence Latin American history (Bulmer-Thomas, 1995:29-30). This phenomenon has also been the main ground of the current socioeconomic inequalities in the continent. Therefore, during the National Front period, coinciding with the Cold War period, political struggles had transformed from traditional and bipartisan political action mechanisms to the instruments of organization of the left-wing social groups. They had sought to claim their rights through a sheltered conception by the currents of Marxist, Leninist, Maoist, and Castroist ideologies (Plazas-Díaz, 2017). Groups that believed that their interests not been represented in the political arena, eventually organized as guerilla movements. According to the Global Terrorism Database, in Colombia, there have been more than 100 illegal armed organizations, large and small, since the 1970s.

The emergence of the FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) as a guerrilla organization was directly related to the Cold War environment's political atmosphere. Right after the Cuban revolution, on June 18, 1959, Alberto Lleras Camargo, the liberal head of the National Front, met with a group of US military advisers in Bogotá to mobilize and train counter-guerrilla units. Conservative President Guillermo León Valencia (1962-1966) then started "Operation Sovereignty" against the peasant and communist resistance in Marquetalia and Riochiquito (Plazas-Díaz, 2017). In 1964, the FARC, established in Marquetalia, interpreted Valencia's military operations as an aggression against the peasant population, the actors of the self-defense movement. From that point on, it became an armed revolutionary resistance group to represent the whole of Colombia countryside rather than a regional

movement (see FARC-EP, n.d.). The FARC had formed as the Colombian Communist Party's military wing but separated from the party in 1993.

Table 1. Major Guerilla Groups in Colombia

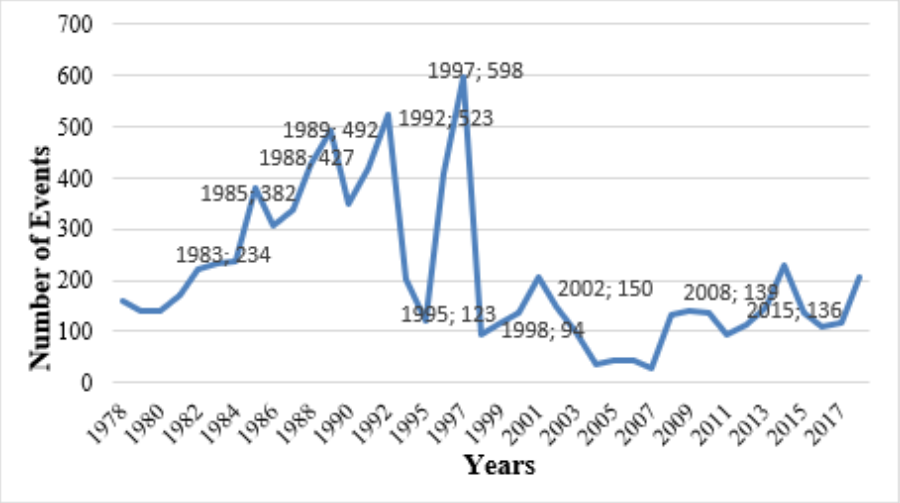
Name of organizations	Date of emergence	Ideological roots and main supporters in society
Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces	1964	Emerged as a Marxist-Leninist organization of self-defense groups of peasants dating back to the 1930s (See section 2)
Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN) National Liberation Army	1965	Supported by students, Catholic radicals and left-wing intellectuals hoping to replicate the Cuban Revolution.
Ejercito Popular de Liberación (EPL) People's Liberation Army	1967	Maoist
Movimiento 19 de abril (M-19) April 19 Movement	1974	Castroist organization fighting the oligarchic state; urban left-wing; emerged in response to election fraud, which prevented Gustavo Rojas Pinilla of National Popular Alliance from coming to power in the 1970 presidential elections.
Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores de Colombia (PRT) Revolutionary Workers Party of Colombia	1982	initially emerged as a group that had broken away from the Communist Party of Colombia in the mid-1970s.
Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame[1] (MAQL) The Quintin Lame Armed Movement	1984	Paez Indians; a reaction to the executions of indigenous peoples in the south of the country

Source: *Troyan, 2008; Gutiérrez Ramírez, 2015; Plazas-Díaz, 2017.*

Major guerrilla groups in Colombia are given in Table 1. They have had very similar motivations and objectives; they have all claimed to represent the rural poor and oppose violence supported by the state. The conflicts have occurred mostly among left-wing guerillas and military and right-wing paramilitaries. There were territorial disputes besides strategical differences (Feldmann, 2018) among FARC, ELN, and EPL, increasing the armed conflict's complexity and violence (Plazas-Díaz, 2017). MAQL was more characterized by the identity-based social movements of the 1980s. This is a fundamental difference that distinguishes MAQL from others. Before the splintering of the left into factions, the other organizations were more attractive to the indigenous peasants seeking justice in the distribution of resources. The FARC, which is particularly dogmatic and tries to impose its view unilaterally, has gradually lost its appeal among the indigenous people (Troyan, 2008). As will be given more details in the next section, some peace negotiations have been done with those organizations. But the only successful example was the M-19, and the FARC process that is still going on.

Since the 1980s, there was a significant increase in armed violence with paramilitary groups and drug cartels (see Figure 1). Violence is no longer solely related to ideological demands but also becomes where conflicts of interest related to drug trafficking come into play. The guerrillas of the 1960s began to lose their legitimacy due to their military and economic practices linked to drug trafficking. In line with US foreign policy, the internal enemy and national security doctrine emerged as a struggle against narco-terrorism (Plazas-Díaz, 2017). Furthermore, Colombia's mountainous geography has always made land transport difficult and harms the economy. In addition to these, the drug market's dynamism prevented industrial development in the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 1. Distribution of Terrorist Incidents by Years in Colombia



Source: *Global Terrorism Database (n.d.).*

When the distribution of 8,536 incidents between 1970-2018 (in Turkey, it is about half that number in the same period) by genre is examined; the most observed are bombing/explosion with 38%, armed assault with 24%, assassination with 16%, and kidnapping with 13% (Global Terrorism Database, n.d.). We should note that these organizations have not directly or indirectly founded on the religious, ethnic, or racial basis; they all have socioeconomic and political foundations. These armed movements, mainly formed by the Cold War geopolitics, have been under different influences in time.

The paramilitary groups[2] strengthened in 1978-2007 with the weakening of the armed resistance organizations' reputation acting with guerrilla reflex among the people. In the 1980s, state weakness and widespread corruption caused drug traffickers and significant landowners to become more effective in the government, and severe public security problems arose. The right-wing paramilitary group, which is financed by multinational corporations, land owners, and industrial elites, has emerged, seeking to protect their interests against left-wing organizations and to take control. In many occasion, the Colombian state's official army and police also cooperated with these paramilitary groups (Gutiérrez Ramírez, 2015). The alliance of paramilitary groups with drug cartels, which emerged as the most critical factor in the strategy of combating resistance groups, further complicated the extent of conflicts between state forces, society, and insurgents. The phenomenon of paramilitarism was dealt with by President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, with the Law on Justice and Peace (2005), in which the various organic structures were liquidated (Reyes, 2007). The evidence provided by Feldmann (2018) clearly reveals how the rise of terror attacks and their geographical and functional distribution could be in line with the increasing competition with paramilitary groups around the mid-1990s.

The presidency of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) and Uribe (2002-2010) was was marked with the intensification of the United States on drug trafficking. In Latin America, Colombia is one of the countries with the most developed collaboration with the US. The US provided military logistical and training assistance to Colombia, the most significant support in the armed struggle against the FARC, and benefited from Colombia's geopolitical situation in the region.

In recent years, although partial success in the fight against the informal economy that started in the 1990s has paved the way for economic development, income inequality, corruption, and security have still been among the country's biggest problems.

2. Who is the FARC and How Did it Emerge?

The indisputable fact to know about the FARC is that it has a rural/agrarian origin. Since the 1930s, there had been agrarian movements, self-defense groups of peasants, and guerrillas fighting in the resistance against the Colombian government, both in Marquetalia and in other settlements. The FARC was established in 1964 as the Southern Bloc incorporating peasant resistance groups. At the first conference, drafted an Agrarian Reform Plan demanding structural change in the countryside based

upon a land reform to achieve better conditions for peasants, indigenous communities, and workers (Holmes et al., 2006). Southern Bloc turned into the FARC in 1966.

Founders of the organization were 48 farmers who lived in the Marquetalia region, an agricultural colony founded by themselves ten years earlier. Its foremost leaders were Manuel Marulanda Vélez and Jacobo Arenas (FARC-EP, 2019). Marquetalia region was the first of the guerrilla bases later came to be known as independent republics, which had an autonomous economy, armed self-defense, and of course, was out of the state control (Molano, 2000). Besides, the Colombian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Colombiano-PCC) had been very effective in organizing and politizing peasants since its foundation from 1930 to 1956, when PCC was declared illegal by the dictator Rojas Pinilla. The FARC had been formed as the military wing of the PCC and separated from the party in 1993.

López-Uribe and Sanchez Torres (2018) have demonstrated that the rise of peasant grievances after experiencing land dispossessions during the export boom period (1914-1946) facilitated the presence of the rural guerrilla movement. The increasing international demand for agricultural products (especially coffee) had caused that public land was increasingly allocated to private individuals and exchanged in the land markets at high values. Increasing tensions and conflicts led to Colombia's first land reform law in 1936, supposedly, which protected and expanded property rights in favor of the peasants. But the law could not be applied correctly, which is considered the starting point of "La Violencia" in Colombia history (López-Uribe & Sanchez Torres, 2018).

In the National Front period (1958-1974), the civil conflict of rural origin was remarkably based on party loyalties (conservatives and liberals) rather than class basis or any other pattern such as land tenure or education level (Bailey, 1967; Oquist, 1980). The bond between political parties and lower classes was quite loose. The fact remains that the state had embarked on a comprehensive struggle against the peasant and communist resistance in cooperation with the US in compliance with the period's international conjuncture. It is a fact that the origin of FARC was based on state repression and the failure of liberals to make significant social reforms as a sign of a serious lack of representation (see Holmes et al. 2008:53-54).

The FARC has aimed to seize power through all forms of military, political or social struggle and sought to carry out a radical agricultural reform based on the confiscation of landowners' property and including the granting

of land to the peasants. In 1982, the FARC changed its name to the FARC-EP, adding Ejército del Pueblo, meaning "People's Army", which can be interpreted as a sign for a transformation of much more aggressive expansion. Yet, the government and the media continued to refer to the group as 'the FARC' (Stanford University, n.d.). The FARC, which is the largest of Colombia's rebel groups, has been influential in Colombia for many years, with its 10,000 members and sympathizers. In 1990, it had more than 8,000 active members, and in 2000 the number exceeded 17,000 (Gutiérrez Ramírez, 2015).

In time, the FARC have involved in the drug trade and became more of a kind of criminal organization with less ideologically-motivation. The weakening of the ideological commitment of the base as such was evident. But resources earned from illegal activities have played an essential role in strengthening the FARC's challenge to the government. It is argued that the organization's involvement in the drug business serves as a means to the political ends (Saskiewicz, 2005; Özkan, 2018).

3. The Colombian Experience of Peace Talks with the Armed Groups

The possible scenarios to end an internal conflict include, firstly, the final solution of the conflict motivating factors, secondly, ensure the forceful victory of one of the sides, and thirdly, arrange the surrender terms (see United Nations, 2012). The negotiation process is linked to finding meeting points to bring a solution to conflict motivation factors. The Colombian government has used every one of these strategies in four different periods to end the guerrilla's conflict.

The first of peace dialogs with leftist guerrilla organizations were developed in the President Belisario Betancur government. Between 1982 to 1985, Betancur proposed some pacts with ELN, M-19, and the FARC (Uribe Agreements). The ceasefire agreements' intention was searching for a "national dialog" involving every insurgent group. The weakness in those pacts was the lack of verification mechanisms and unclear criteria about side compromises; the FARC never stopped kidnappings, and the government did not demand to disarm. For the year 1986, FARC's organization become from nine fronts to more than thirty, and the homicide rate was increased by 50% in four years (Melo, 2017). Meanwhile, in November 1985, M-19 attacked the Supreme Court of Justice Palace and, killed seventeen magistrates and almost a hundred civilians. In the end, no peace agreement was reached; however, those attempts were relevant precedent in the political agenda as a possible way to a negotiated solution to the conflict.

The second attempt to dialog was realized in 1990 in the presidency of Virgilio Barco. Between 1984 and 1990, the number of paramilitary groups increased, especially in regions like Magdalena Medio, Urabá, Córdoba, and Norte de Santander. Thousands of civilians were massacred in direct fighting against the guerilla's organizations. Simultaneously, many drug traffickers supported paramilitary groups to protect their drug business (Melo, 2017). At that moment, the violence not only among paramilitary, mafia, and guerrilla had an exponential increase, but also against the government who tried to disarticulate the drug business structures as Cartel de Medellin and Cartel de Cali. The mafia killed ministers, prosecutors, and politicians. Barco generated a talk principally with M-19, PRT, EPL, and Quintin Lame organizations, with clear intentions that included disarmer and political participation of former guerrillas. The process concluded successfully, and in the same year, M-19 participated with their candidates in the regional election and the National Constituent Assembly in 1991 in the government of César Gaviria Trujillo[3].

However, the FARC and ELN, which had a strong military structure and have already disputes with each other (Buitrago Roa, 2016), were not interested in taking part in this peace process due to government requirements, i.e. ceasefire, disarmer. In 1991, the government of César Gaviria initiated a round of conversation with the "Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Board[4]" (FARC, ELN, and EPL) in Caracas, Venezuela, and it concluded in Tlaxcala, Mexico without favorable results.

In 1997, a work team was created called the "Situation Room", led by Francesco Vicenti, United Nations Resident Coordinator at the United Nations Development Program UNDP. It aimed to design a plan called the "Marshall Plan for Colombia" (Sierra & Pérez, 2019) delivered to Colombian President-elect Andres Pastrana in 1998. This document was the base to structure in part the "Caguan conversation and Plan Colombia", which was the effort of the Pastrana's Government to dialogue with the FARC guerrilla from 1999 to 2002. For three years, many national and international actors participated in the conversations, and 42,000 square kilometers of Colombian territory were demilitarized to create a neutral zone. However, FARC used this territory to create a kind of "para-state" and reorganize its structure. Ceasefire or disarmer was not included in the negotiation pacts, and all criminal actions of FARC continued during the process. An early milestone marked the process decline was the fact that the guerrilla commander Manuel Marulanda Velez never attended the opening ceremony for dialogue installation in January 1999 and left an empty chair next to President Pastrana (Economist, 2002). Finally, the

dialogues broke due to many terrorist attacks and an aircraft kidnapping with a senator on board in 2002.

3.1. From Socialist Guerrillas to Pure Terrorist Organization

In the 1990s, the Colombian state started to seek a more comprehensive path for dealing with the conflict. The critical political point of the period became evident with President Samper's involvement in the campaign-financing scandal. The scandal was that the presidential campaign of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) had been partially funded with illegal money from Cali Cartel (Process 8000). It was just after eliminating Pablo Escobar, drug trafficker, and head of the Medellin cartel in 1993 by the government. Therefore, other cartels were trying to dispute that space and violence were increasing in the country. Intending to improve US and Colombia relationships, president Pastrana presented a plan to President Bill Clinton, on which a military cooperation agreement focused on the fight against drug trafficking called "Plan Colombia". This plan was finally presented to the North American Congress on January 11, 2000, and approved by it with an aid budget of USD 1.3 billion. Plan Colombia was the strategy program to involve the US government with weakening guerrilla structures in Colombia from the military perspective (US Department of State, 2001).

In 1997, the FARC was included in the list of terrorist organizations of the US Department of State as a result of works that were carried out in the lobby before the American Congress and led by President Clinton. With the change to terrorism agenda in the world after the 2001 attacks, it was possible to reinforce the military combat with the guerrillas. The military equipment received through Plan Colombia (US Department of State, 2001) and whose exclusive use was authorized to fight illegal drugs was equally authorized by the North American Congress in 2002 to use for military operations against any terrorist organization in the country. The next step on the international agenda was a request in May 2002 to the President of Spain, José Maria Aznar, who was also helding the presidency of the European Union, to include the FARC as a terrorist organization. In this way, Colombia increasingly launched more robust military operations, weakening the guerrillas' criminal structure, who went from libertarian ideal to participating in all illegal businesses in the country such as production and trafficking of drugs and terror acts such as kidnappings, massacres and extortion. Terror acts have been used *to undermine the existing sociopolitical status quo* by delegitimizing the Colombian state and as military tools to control and contest territory with their enemies (Feldman, 2018), but involving the drug business was very much far from the liberating ideal.

As a result of this effort, with the British, Israel, and North American intelligence services training cooperation, intelligence services were transformed centralizing operations. This advice allowed the Colombian forces to give the most significant military blows to the structure and carry out military operations. The neutralization of Raúl Reyes, who was the general FARC commander dead in 2008 in Ecuador, and the liberation of 11 people kidnapped by the FARC without using a single shot called "Operation Jaque" (Santos Calderón, 2019) were successful moves among many.

It is also essential to clarify that we could not ignore the real motivators of the Colombian conflict. One of the crucial steps towards the path of reconciliation was the acceptance by the government of the historical fact of an "internal conflict" in Colombia and the recognition of the victim's rights within that conflict.

3.2. Ideological Contradictions with the Neighbouring Countries and the Bridge for Peace with the FARC

The Uribe presidency (2002-2010) was a right-wing government with a firm hand against the FARC. With a weaker FARC structure, were also made attempts in 2005 to resume the peace talks starting with the humanitarian exchange. At that time, the governments of France, Spain, and Switzerland participated. However, the guerrillas closed the possibility of dialogue, arguing that under President Uribe's government, they were not willing to carry out any negotiations due to the lack of political will of the president, as reported by the FARC through a statement on its website. "With Uribe, there will be no humanitarian exchange" (FARC-EP, 2005). Even, according to Frank Pearl, High Commissioner for Peace of the Uribe presidency, claimed that on March 5, 2010, President Uribe authorized him as High Commissioner for Peace to send a letter to Alfonso Cano and Pablo Catatumbo, the FARC commanders of that time. The letter's message was remarking that the government's interest in having a direct and secret meeting in Brazil with the FARC to explore the possibilities of starting a peace process. However, Uribe refused all these (Semana, 2014).

At that time, tremendous political enmity was generated in the region due to ideological differences. South American presidents had more tending to leftist ideologies such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. In the late 1990s, it was already begun to seek a rapprochement between the Cuban governments led by Fidel Castro and a newly elected president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez. As Colombia shares borders with these two countries (Venezuela and Ecuador), it has also shared all security

problems. Diplomatic relations between Colombia and Venezuela in 2010 were broken in part due to a complaint through the Organization of American States (OAS) about the guerrilla camps' presence in Venezuela land, which suggests complicity by the Venezuela government (Altmann Borbón et al., 2011).

The involvement of international actors at the regional level was essential in developing the dialogues and the final signing of the agreement. When Juan Manuel Santos, who had been the defense minister of the previous government, assumed the Colombian presidency (2010-2018), most South American countries had turned their governments towards the leftist ideologies. In Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was the president. Néstor Kirchner, who had also been president of Argentina, was now general secretary of the Union of South American Nations UNASUR. He was the bridge to re-start Colombian and Venezuela relations. Apart from diplomatic relations, personal relationships were also broken due to earlier claims on affinity for the government of Chávez with the Colombian guerrillas.

President Santos had served as a minister in Colombia three times, his formation and life turn around the elite and the intelligentsia of the country. He had studied in the US and closely followed many issues related to peace and war. He knew that he needed the help of the region's countries and especially of figures that could provide a degree of confidence to the FARC guerrillas in the process, i.e., as a guarantor of Chávez and Fidel Castro. Venezuela, Cuba, Chile, and Norway were the principal countries directly involved in the peace process.

The first official meeting took place in March 2011 near the Venezuelan border, among the agreements there was establishing Cuba as a meeting place for dialogues with the consent of Raúl Castro. Likewise, every movement of the FARC negotiators would be made through a neighbouring country like Venezuela with the accompaniment of the Red Cross and Norway. In November 2011, FARC announced its first unilateral ceasefire between November 20 and January 20, 2014[5].

Özkan (2018), in his study providing a comparison between Colombia and Turkey peace process attempts, notices the importance of the "secret negotiation" made in Havana (Cuba) during this period of exploratory meetings (23 Feb 2012 to 26 Aug 2012). Santos's administration and FARC structured the pillar for conversation and this was the perfect time to prove by both sides the seriousness that the process was conducting. Finally, on September 4, 2012, it was officially announced by the Colombian government

the public agenda of FARC`s conversations that took place during the next four years in Havana. The most important point for more than six years of negotiations, from 2010 to the final signature of the agreement of 2016, was keeping the first part of the talks (exploratory meetings) secret due to primary commitment. Confidentiality was proof of the seriousness of the process for both parties.

4. Weak Spots and Vulnerabilities on the Peace Deal Implementation with the FARC

The peace agreement process has seven risking topics for the implementation: 1. Formation of a special court (Special Jurisdiction for Peace), 2. Creation of the territorial places of incorporation, 3. Participation in politics, 4. Assassinations of social leaders and former combatants, 5. Return under State control of the territories previously dominated by the FARC guerrillas, 6. Extrajudicial executions by the Colombian Army, 7. Rural transformation. This section will briefly focus on the first six points, considering that the issue is still on the agenda.

4.1. Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdiccion Especial para la Paz, JEP) is the transitory institution of justice; the purpose is to know and analyze all the criminal conduct incurred in the framework except those committed after the peace deal signed (November 24, 2016). The principal function is the guaranty of the victims' rights to justice, offer them the truth, and contribute to their reparation, to build stable and lasting peace. The principal function is the guaranty of the victims' rights to justice, offer them the truth, and contribute to their reparation, to build stable and lasting peace. Beyond the peace opponents' claim of "an impunity pact" (Cortés Rodas, 2020:161), the JEP's work will focus on the most dangerous and representative crimes of the armed conflict by selection and prioritization criteria defined by the law and the magistrates. In particular, we can learn about the crimes committed by ex-combatants of the FARC-EP, public force members, other State agents, and civil third parties. On these last two, the Constitutional Court clarified that its participation in the JEP would be voluntary (Jurisdiccion Especial para la Paz, 2019).

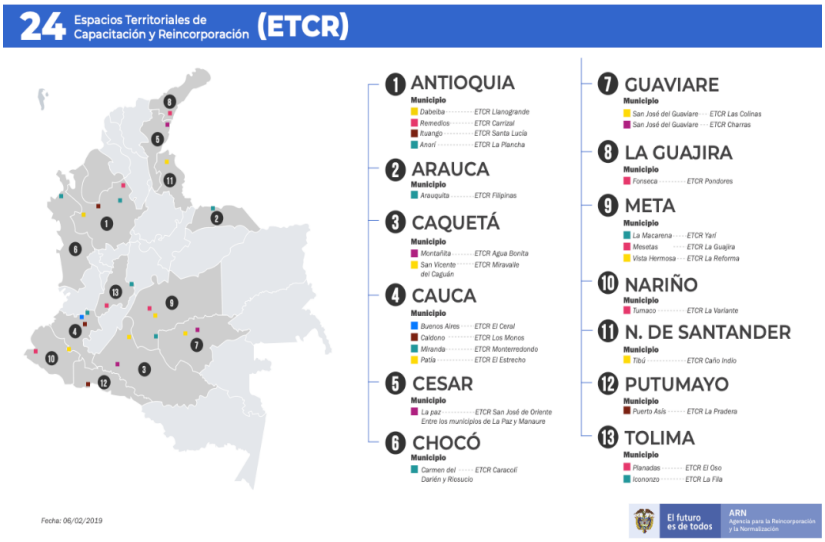
Even when the final deal was signed on November 24, 2016, the statutory law as mechanisms to implement the JEP was barely approved until June 6, 2019. The principal obstacles were long and fruitless delays on the National Congress formalities, bureaucracy, and obstinate opposition of the far-right political party, even though the Colombian Constitutional Court (C-080/2018)

made the previously favorable decision about this law. The current Colombia president Iván Duque Márquez made objections about this law; however, these presidential objections were rejected in the court revision. The principal objection was against the ex-guerrilla members living in an impunity status because none was sentenced or judged. Finally, two and a half years after this mechanism has a complete structure to accelerate more than ten thousand individual judicial processes in the next 20 years.

4.2. Territorial's Places of Training and Reincorporation

The 24 transitional spaces for incorporating former FARC guerrillas have become permanent (see Figure 2). According to the agreement's schedule, these should be temporary grouping zones until all the ex-guerrillas arrived and the weapons were delivered, that is until the violent actions ended. In total, the agreement provided a 180-day time to group the personnel inside these sites; but the date could not be enough due to multiple difficulties and needed to be extended.

Figure 2: Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (ETCR)



Source: *Reincorporation and Normalization Agency [ARN], 2019.*

Once the weapons were delivered, and the United Nations removed the verified containers on August 15, 2017, these spaces became to training sites for the return to civilian life, as well as the realization of productive projects

that would represent a resource of work for former guerrillas (García, 2017). However, the implementation of productive projects has severe failures due to lack of resources; some successful cases of ventures already generate their income as a sustainable model. Likewise, perhaps another three years of extension ends in 2020, without satisfying the purpose of returning civilian life to many former combatants. Currently, those ETCR have supervision by the Colombia government and the International guarantors, including United Nations.

4.3. FARC, The Political Party

One of the greatest achievements of the peace agreement was allocating five seats in the National Congress for the political party created by formers FARC-EP, which has the same acronym FARC (Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común) but now means "Common Alternative Revolutionary Force". During its transition to a political party, the FARC had excluded "arms" from its name also adopted a rose logo as its new symbol. According to its statutes, the party has a profile like the left European parties. It has the mission of implementing the final agreement to terminate the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace (Partido FARC, 2017).

This new scheme does not allow the use of force or violent actions, and the only legitimized way is democratic debate and institutional mechanisms to exercise their political right. The lack of political maturity in the Colombian Congress has led to multiple Congress sessions being suspended or interrupted, especially by constant shouting and fighting of the right-wing parties with insults to the FARC's representatives. One of the theses lies behind this attitude is that the Political Participation Agreement has been built in order to pave the way to Castro-Chavismo through the unjustified election of the FARC leaders to the Senate, the governorships, and mayors (Cortés Rodas, 2020:161).

The path of acceptance by Colombian society would not be easy, first because the party decided to keep the same acronym, which has been marked by many violent events full of pain for people. Likewise, it is necessary to accelerate all the justice procedures and processes to conduct the victims' reparations to guarantee the truth about so many years of war. It allows greater confidence from the society to the FARC party, opening the window to processes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and non-repetition commitments.

4.4. Murder of Social Leaders and Former Guerrillas

According to the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation (2019), approximately 700 social leaders and 173 former FARC guerrillas (according to the report of United Nations, 2020) were killed in strange circumstances since the peace process. One of the most famous cases was the former guerrilla Dimar Torres. According to Minister of Defense Guillermo Botero declarations, he had tried to take off the gun from a soldier patrolling the area near where Torres lived; in the struggle, the weapon was activated and caused death of Torres. However, the neighbors and community hearing the gunshots went out to see what was happening. They found the Torres's motorcycle and his body with three shots next to a hole in the ground opened by soldiers, presumably planning to bury him in secret. Ombudsman's Office in Colombia and the Office of the Prosecutor were concerned about; the army commander in the zone intended a public event to apologize; however, the Defense Minister has disallowed him. Currently, the case is in the investigation process (see Semana, 2020).

According to the report of United Nations (2020), "approximately 73 per cent of killings of former combatants have occurred in rural areas characterized by a limited State presence, poverty, illicit economies and the proliferation of criminal organizations". Most of the attacks on former guerrillas are linked to illegal armed groups and criminal organizations.

4.5. Re-occupation of Areas Left by FARC to Other Illegal Groups

For many years the FARC has controlled some areas with its rules dominating the territory. According to official information, around 7,000 guerrilla members were demobilized, with more than 8,000 weapons delivered. However, currently, 2,300 dissidents have returned to the terrorist and illegal activities according to Prosecutor's Office information (La Reintegración en cifras, 2018). The current new dominators of those areas (e.g. Clan del Golfo, Los Urabeños, Las Águillas Negras, etc.) have carried out some activities such as control the drug trafficking business, routes, extortion, and common criminal actions.

The state's lack of immediate actions and the low capacity for developing those territories due to government corruption and incompetency policies have served the action of those emerging groups, and no substantive decisions that have been taken against the drug business. The government insists on using the same technique of spraying illicit crops with Glyphosate spray from airplanes, which has been implemented for almost thirty years without any significant results.

4.6. Extrajudicial Executions by The Army

Transitional justice is not only responsible for FARC processes but also for those who want to participate in supporting with evidence their implications with crimes or actions committed within the framework of the conflict. This included former guerrillas, military forces, politicians, business people, and any individual affected or involved. In this process, many military personnel accused of extrajudicial executions or "Falsos positivos," as well as military personnel engaged in corruption or support to paramilitary groups, have joined the JEP and begun to present statements. As retaliation on June 23, 2019, the Colombian magazine (Semana, 2019) delivered a detailed investigation with audio intercepted and documents against the personnel with whom they are collaborating.

Conclusion

The history of Colombian conflict has long traditions supported by different public and private actors. Despite having achieved a historical event and disarticulated the oldest guerrilla organization in the Americas, the final agreement of the peace presents some risks of breakage that must be addressed immediately and urgently by the current government for continuity of the process. Despite the challenges, the process has reached a point irreversible because of the government and institution's articulation. On the other hand, many former combatants' families have had an opportunity to change their lives in the illegality in the legal framework. It could be an opportunity to develop many territories severely attacked by all kinds of direct and structural violence factors and, as well as to strengthen the presence and sovereignty in the territory by the state.

The economic investment demands rigorous supervision. The political debate between political actors and the institutional sector needs to dispassion and more objective points of view to analyze the challenges and problems methodically. Social investment directed towards the attention of the population's primary needs under the influence of guerrilla groups will generate an atmosphere of trust in the face of the process and the guarantee of the armed conflict non-repetition.

Strengthening the debate around illicit crops, drug trafficking, and money laundering should be a priority in the domestic government agenda as well as the academic study subject, and treated through all possible international channels. The new FARC as the political party requires strengthening its structure and reengineering looking for sustainable political participation in the country to maintain its seats and its active political voice, in addition to the fulfilling the agreements with the government, and the civil society including the victims.

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[1]The movement took their name from Manuel Quintín Lame, an Indian rights rebellion who had started a campaign in Tierradentro, Cauca, in the 1910s and 1920s to recover indigenous communal lands. MAQL had claimed a social change based on identity by owning the legacy of indigenous leader Quintín Lame (Troyan, 2008).

[2] One important example of these paramilitary groups was organized in 1997 under the name of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia-AUC). The AUC, which was later named Bacrim (bandas criminales), had become effective in the government until 2006, causing millions of people to suffer (hundreds of thousands of dead and lost, much more displacement) (See McDermott, 2014).

[3] The Colombian state signed the peace agreements with the M-19 guerrillas that allowed the incorporation into the political and civil life of its members in 1990 (Radio Nacional de Colombia, 2016). Moreover, ex-guerrilla and the founder of the political party "M-19 Democratic Alliance" Antonio José Navarro Wolff was elected to the National Constituent Assembly of 1991 Colombian Constitution in force as co-president, they all won 19 seats in a 73-member Assembly. Some of the members of M-19 ran for the presidency of Colombia after the demobilization. The leaders of M-19 met with the FARC to convince them to join the negotiation going on at that time, but FARC rejected this idea. (El Tiempo, 2015).

[4] FARC, ELN and EPL, formed Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Board (Coordinadora Guerrillera Simon Bolivar - CGSB) in 1987 and dissolved in 1994 (Lee, 2012), due to disputes between the ELN, and the FARC-EP (see Buitrago Roa, 2016)

[5] For the full timeline of peace process see Portal para la paz, n.d.