

**Reality and Illusion in Colombia: What were Five Years
of Transition Enough for after the Peace Agreement?**

Béke Kolumbiában: valóság és illúzió, avagy mire volt elég
az átmeneti időszak öt éve a békemegállapodás után?

ÁGNES DEÁK



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Abstract: In November 2016, Colombia's five decades of armed conflict, which had claimed hundreds of thousands of victims, ended in a peace agreement between the government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC guerrilla movement. This analysis examines the progress made in the five main points of the accord: comprehensive rural development reform, political transition, the process of demobilization and social inclusion, the eradication of illicit crop production, and the reform of the justice system. Although violence has decreased overall, and tens of thousands of families have been provided with legal ways of making a living as well as access to land and basic services, the results fall short of the stated goals, in which the changes in government and public policy that have taken place over the years have played a significant role.

Keywords: Colombia, FARC, peace agreement, transitional process, violence

Absztrakt: 2016 novemberében Kolumbia öt évtizednyi, több százezer áldozatot követelő fegyveres konfliktusának a Juan Manuel Santos elnök kormánya és a FARC gerilla mozgalom közötti békemegállapodás vetett véget. Jelen elemzés a megállapodás öt fő pontjában: az átfogó vidékfejlesztési reformban, a politikai átmenetben, a demobilizációk és társadalmi integráció folyamatában, a tiltott növénytermesztés felszámolásában és az igazságszolgáltatásban elért eredményeket veszi számba. Megállapítható, hogy bár összeségében csökkent az erőszak, és családok tízezreit sikerült törvényes megélhetéshez és földhöz, valamint alapvető szolgáltatásokhoz juttatni, az eredmények elmaradnak a megfogalmazott céloktól, amiben az időközben bekövetkezett kormány- és közpolitikai szemléletváltás jelentős szerepet játszott.

Kulcsszavak: Kolumbia, FARC, békemegállapodás, átmeneti folyamat, erőszak

INTRODUCTION

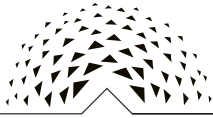
Not many Latin American scientists and politicians have received the Nobel Prize, especially not for peace or the promotion of human rights. Partly for this reason, the recognition former President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos received in 2016, when he became the sixth Latin American laureate is of particular importance. Santos' achievement, the peace agreement between the government, of Colombia and *FARC-EP* (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia –Ejército del Pueblo*, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army) after a decades-long armed conflict was an important milestone in the twentieth-century history of the country.

This analysis examines the political divisions during the period leading up to the adoption of the agreement, which had a significant impact on the success and acceptance of its implementation. It traces the most important features of the five years following the agreement, presenting what results have been achieved as well as the processes that have resulted in goals that remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, it explores the phenomena that have emerged in connection with the changes in economic activity that have taken place.

President Santos managed to negotiate the peace accord with an organization the name and activities of which have been completely intertwined with violence, terrorist acts, kidnappings, and illegal activities such as drug and arms trade and attacks on oil pipelines. The agreement was a major event not only for the citizens of the South American country but also for the entire Latin American and Caribbean region. The armed conflict had a decisive impact on the security policy of the entire hemisphere, due to the critical strategic location of Colombia on the continent.

At the same time, the ongoing violence in Colombia had been part of a complex set of problems that could not be resolved without reforms that would solve an array of economic and social structural root causes. In the early 2000s, the country faced a number of external and internal challenges, such as a precarious international economic situation, the weakening of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, migration fuelled by internal armed conflict in rural areas and urban flows, which contributed to an increase in the urban informal sector and inequalities in access to various services provided by the state, for example, education and healthcare. Today Colombia still ranks tenth in the South American region and 144th on the global scale of the [Global Peace Index](#) (behind Venezuela). Despite the official statements of the current government, the data shows that the hopes regarding the peace process have not been fully realized. The implementation of the accord has gone more slowly than expected, and the prospects to end the cycle of violence are vanishing.

New criminal and armed organizations have appeared and old ones reinforced in the vacuum resulting from a lack of law enforcement presence, mainly threatening rural indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and human rights defenders. In November 2021, [on the fifth anniversary](#) of the acceptance of the peace accord, several demonstrations supporting the deal were held under the initiative “Tejiendo un acuerdo de vida” (Weaving an agreement for life), for example, commemorative days in Medellín, the capital of the department of Antioquia, where the majority of votes against the agreement were cast during the referendum for peace in October, 2016. The events focused on reincorporation into the society and were organized by a variety of organizers and participants, for example, civil society organizations, institutions of public administration, academic institutions, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, victims and former combatants, showing the necessity of a joint and continuous effort on the part of many social actors to implement the original goals of the agreement.



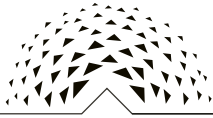
The first section of this paper provides an overview of the historical process that preceded the acceptance of the peace accord. The second section presents the achievements of the agreement until 2021, while the third section discusses the challenges related to the peace accord. The final part presents conclusions.

THE ROAD TO THE PEACE AGREEMENT

To understand the current political and social processes, one must look back to the situation the country was in from the mid-twentieth century. Violent actions began to have a major impact on the country with the appearance of guerrilla organizations between 1948-1960. This period is referred to as “La Violencia” (The Violence) [in Colombian history](#), with around 200,000 victims, mainly in rural areas. It started with the “Bogotazo” riot, which took place in the capital after popular presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán had been assassinated. Guerrilla groups were established to defend against the atrocities of the Conservatives, with FARC (FARC is the abbreviation of *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* – Ejército del Pueblo, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army) launched as a guerrilla movement during a conference in 1964. Guerrilla operations were mainly carried out in the countryside rather than large cities. Against the monopolistic power of the National Front through arrangement of oligarchs, election frauds, groups emerged from “The Violence” created the basis of the setup of the most important (originally revolutionary) guerrilla groups with decades long persistence, such as FARC and ELN (ELN is the abbreviation of *Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, National Liberation Army). Conflicts over the agrarian sector, and especially over land ownership, had started decades earlier, resulting in the formation of several smaller “autodefensas campesinas guerrilla” (Peasant groups were originally formed in the 1920s and 1930s due to conflicts in the agricultural sector, and guerrillas belonging to the Communist Party joined these groups in the 1950s. Some of these peasant groups later formed FARC), partly with support from the Communist Party. Although FARC was mostly created by groups of peasants in rural areas, it cannot be considered an uprising movement, as its members also came from several other conflicts: rival “autodefensas campesinas”, liberals, and communists, all in union against the police, the army, and the landowners. In the first few decades, agrarian reform was constantly on the agenda, but as military achievements became increasingly important in the 1980s and 1990s, this demand faded that they did not oppose the land acquisitions of paramilitary forces and leaders of drug organizations. In addition to the peasantry, many of the FARC members have included young people lacking opportunities of education and employment over the decades, as well as coca growers who either volunteered or were forced to do so.

However, [the international context](#) also played a significant role. The Cuban revolution had a major impact, best shown by the formation of ELN, the most significant guerrilla group alongside FARC. Many events in the Latin American region during the 1980s also served as a reinforcing factor, especially the activities of the guerrilla groups in Central American states (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua). Later the turn of the left at the millennium with the rise of Hugo Chávez to power in Venezuela served as another supporting element. The beginnings of peace talks with the guerrillas date back to the presidency of [Belisario Betancur](#) (1982-1986). Following him, [Virgilio Barco's](#) (1986-1990) efforts initially focused on the fight against drug cartels, later changing his attention towards weakening the paramilitary groups as well as the guerrillas. Although during the following presidents the problem of security became a priority, it was only under President [Andrés Pastrana](#) (1998-2002) that the peace talks were reopened. Supporting his efforts, the Clinton administration launched the [Plan Colombia initiative](#) as a counterinsurgency project to eradicate drug production and trafficking activities. The importance of a US presence in the operations aiming to resolve the problems of the country had already been demonstrated in the liquidation of the Medellín and Cali cartels during the 1990s. The failure of Pastrana's negotiations eventually led to Álvaro Uribe's rise and the strengthening of militarism.

[President Álvaro Uribe](#) (2002-2010) took office with the promise of improving security and combating guerrilla groups, refusing deal with the insurgents' movement. Following the vision that the country was not facing internal armed conflict but terrorism, he changed approaches and promoted security and eliminated domestic turmoil by increasing the role of the army, which carried out several successful military actions against FARC. His most significant achievement after 2005 was the disarmament and demobilisation of AUC, which were right-wing paramilitary self-defence militias (*AUC*: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)). Colombian paramilitary groups are offensive armies supported by regional landowners, drug traffickers, and members of the Colombian military. They are also responsible for political violence in the country, attacking journalists, human rights defenders, and leftist guerrillas, and massacring peasant farmers who cooperate with drug cartels across the countryside. The growing strength of paramilitary groups led to their [demobilization process](#), orchestrated by president Uribe during the second half of the 2000s.). President Uribe received support from different US administrations within the framework of Plan Colombia, receiving almost USD 8 billion in US aid for his "democratic security" initiative, which succeeded in reducing the country's drug-related violence but preserved its position as a main coca leaf producer. Despite his achievements, new forms of criminal organizations called [BACRIM](#) (*Bandas Criminales*, Criminal Bands) emerged, which were involved in illicit activities such as drug and arms trafficking, evolving into an internal security problem.



Uribe's entire presidency and narrative focused on neutralizing FARC, and the public policies of his era revealed that little attention was paid to the other urgent pressing problems of the country, such as poverty, environmental degradation, a lack of civil rights, and a weak institutional system plagued by corruption. The events that determined Álvaro Uribe's presidency and his attitude towards FARC go beyond the peace agreement and have had significant consequences for the current political atmosphere in the country.

PRESIDENT SANTOS'S APPROACH AND THE PEACE AGREEMENT

In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos, Uribe's former defence minister, won the elections. Shortly after his election, however, he broke with the political direction of his predecessor and defined two fundamental goals in his agenda: establishing a peace agreement with FARC and reducing poverty. He thus began to pursue a completely new policy both with the insurgent movement and in terms of public policy. Peace talks (Previous [peace negotiations](#) with Colombian presidents: Belisario Betancur and Virgilio Barco: 1984-90, César Gaviria and Ernesto Samper: 1993-1999, Andrés Pastrana 1998-2002) resumed with the guerrilla group in 2012, announcing a consensus in October 2016. Right-wing politicians, including Uribe, used every social media platform to constantly attack the negotiations between the parties, campaigning for a "No" in the referendum on it and promising the suspension of its possible future implementation.

The transition process from armed conflict is not unprecedented in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Central American states such as Guatemala and El Salvador, which ended their long armed conflict through peace agreements in the early 1990s, provide a useful example of the difficulties that need to be addressed in order to make a truly successful post-conflict transition. After the armed conflict had ended in these countries, there has been a surprising increase¹ in the number of acts of violence of a non-political nature linked to organized criminal groups and perpetrated by young people in the urban environment. [The phenomenon](#) is partly explained by rural-urban migration processes, as the previous conflict mainly took place in rural areas, leading the unemployed masses to increasingly move to the cities. Violence is justified and legitimized by the vicious cycle by those who perform violent actions due to the lack of economic and social integration opportunities resulting from structural constraints and of those who experience violence and

1 The homicide rate is the most commonly used indicator of violent crime. In 1998 the average homicide rate in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua was over [10 times the global rate](#). The data show that young men are most likely to be the victim of homicide, who between the ages of 20 and 29 accounted for 29% of all violent deaths during the 1991-1996 period. The [estimated number of youth gang members](#) in 1999 was: El Salvador 264,600, Guatemala n/a, Honduras 25,940, Nicaragua 2,081.

crime. Changing this requires the commitment of a large part of the society, and social trust needs to be restored. Another important element is the extent of community engagement and the ability to have a personal authoritative role when participating in long-term initiatives. Furthermore, [the social reintegration](#) of people who were formerly accustomed to committing violent acts and participating in war has proven to be a crucial issue. Offering job opportunities and psychosocial support for the affected population, both former guerrillas and the physically and mentally traumatized population, is essential during the integration process.

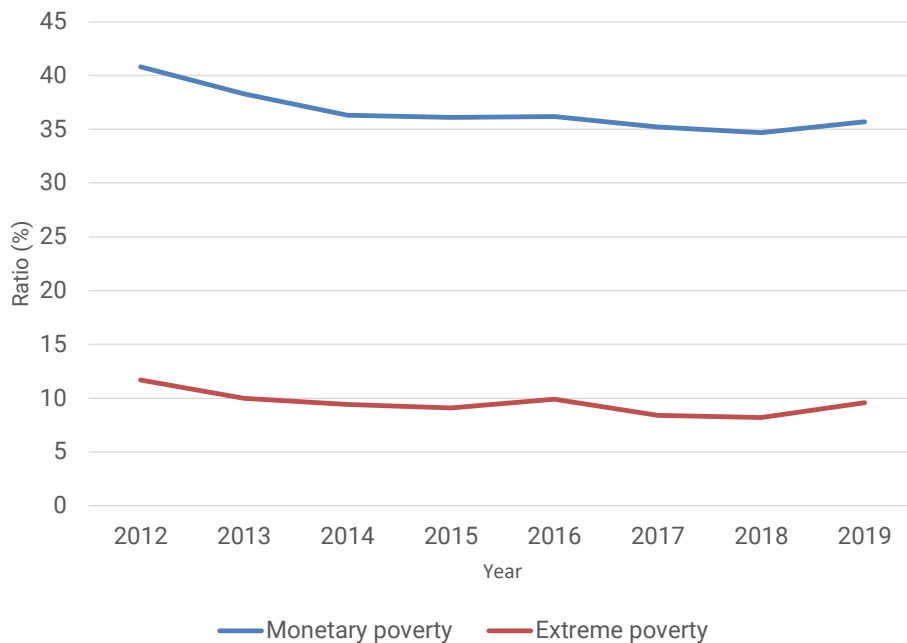
Santos's approach built on these experiences and the failure of previous peace negotiations in Colombia, complemented by his views on drug policy. [He criticised](#) the US drug policy, arguing that the century-long "war on drugs"² was a failure on a global scale and that it stopped development and caused violence. According to his vision, efforts must be made on several levels at the same time. At the institutional level it is indispensable to strengthen legislation and regulatory action against criminal groups, drug producers, and drug traffickers. Small coca cultivators and drug users should be supported through prevention, health services, and social programs creating new opportunities to make a living. He also considered the agreement with FARC an outstanding opportunity, as the operation and financial resources of the organization were related to the cultivation of coca. Therefore, maintaining the coca eradication strategy with the help of the US, he also introduced a voluntary crop substitution program³ and incorporated it into the peace agreement. This more complex approach provided a new source of living for 62,000 families in 2017.

One of the key elements of the national development plan of the Santos government was poverty reduction, which, as a preliminary public policy step, was later closely linked to the rural development goal of the peace agreement, as the population in rural areas was characterized by more severe deprivation. New measures of income and multidimensional poverty were introduced in 2011. The measurement of multidimensional poverty was specifically designed to enable consistent analysis and for it to become a basis for changes in public policy, and so that it is representative of Colombians' living situations.

- 2 In 1912 [the Hague Opium Convention](#) was signed by member states aiming to reduce the abuse of opium and other illicit substances, establishing the control of this narcotic as an important component of international law. Half a century later the United Nations adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which in 1971 led to creating the global legal framework for controlling psychoactive substances, with [President Nixon](#) declaring a "war on drugs" by increasing measures through different agencies.
- 3 Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos (National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, PNIS) is part of the peace accord. The program offers financial and technical assistance to coca farmers to change their economic activity from the cultivation of coca leaf to other legal crops.



Figure 1.
Trends of poverty and extreme poverty in Colombia between 2012 and 2019



Based on DANE

Santos to catalyse the peace accord was very specific about the five issues related to the conflict and counting on a supportive international atmosphere. In the referendum⁴ held in October 2016, the “No” votes won by only 0.4%, a result that showed deep divisions in Colombian society. However, the modified version was approved by Congress on 30 November, with [five main objectives](#) and one operational point⁵: rural development, building a more inclusive democracy with political participation, justice for the victims, tackling the problem of illegal drugs, and ending the conflict by demobilizing FARC guerrillas and reintegrating them into society. Despite the ratification, the political intentions surrounding the agreement continued during the

4 Right-wing politicians have systematically attacked the agreement process and voiced the lack of legal prosecution of FARC guerrillas offering former guerrillas the opportunity to transition into the political sphere. Furthermore, relying on the shared interests of right-wing religious groups, conservative political forces, and the army, they spread fear concerning the agreement, while the Santos government emphasized peace and its positive economic benefits.

5 The operational point regulates the implementation of the agreement, its ratification into law, as well as the verification of its fulfilment. This point is not analysed in this study.

following presidential elections, as evidenced by the intentions of Ivan Duque (an ideological follower of Uribe) and his *Democratic Centre Party (Partido Centro Democrático)* [to amend the agreement](#).

ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

This section takes stock of what results have been achieved in connection with the five main points of the peace agreement, using data from NGO and governmental reports, scientific papers, and the June 2021 report of the Secretary-General United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The analysis concludes that the implementation of the agreement has not achieved the original objectives in several respects.

COMPREHENSIVE RURAL REFORM

One of the key points of the peace agreement is comprehensive rural reform, which has been on the agenda since the beginning of the negotiations due to the disparities in ownership and access to land that had also originally contributed to the formation of the guerrilla movement. The lack of a rural development program since the 1970s, which has been exacerbated by violence in rural areas, has contributed to a persistently high level of internal migration. This was further strengthened by insufficient infrastructural investment and a lack of public services, especially in the peripheral areas, which led to further rural-urban migration. All of these processes have had an impact on employment, leading to a persistently high level of informality and inequality, the latter especially manifested in land ownership and wealth. [The Latin American and Caribbean region](#) has the largest inequality in land distribution in the world, the Gini coefficient measuring inequality regarding the distribution of land in the region as a whole is as high as 0.79, far surpassing Europe (0.57), Africa (0.56), and Asia (0.55). Colombia also stands out within the region, as land is excessively concentrated in the hands of the Colombian economic and political elite situated in the core regions of the country. At the same time, in the peripheral departments the majority of the population ([Economic marginality](#) has been propelled by determination of the frontier status of departments in the country which are areas of failed development due to a lack of government support for conventional agriculture. Peasants' and indigenous communities' deprivation of political representation is strongly related to the agrarian issue.) has been abandoned by the Colombian state, as they lack political representation and socioeconomic advancement. [According to an Oxfam International report](#), 1% of the population owns 80% of the land, leaving the other 99% with just 20% (Figures 1 and 2).

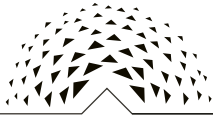
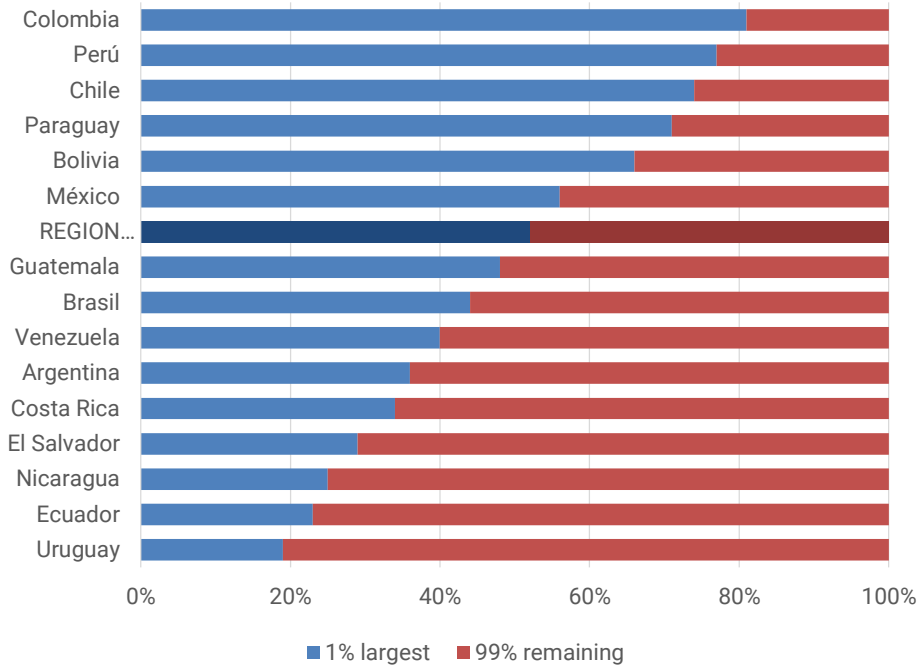
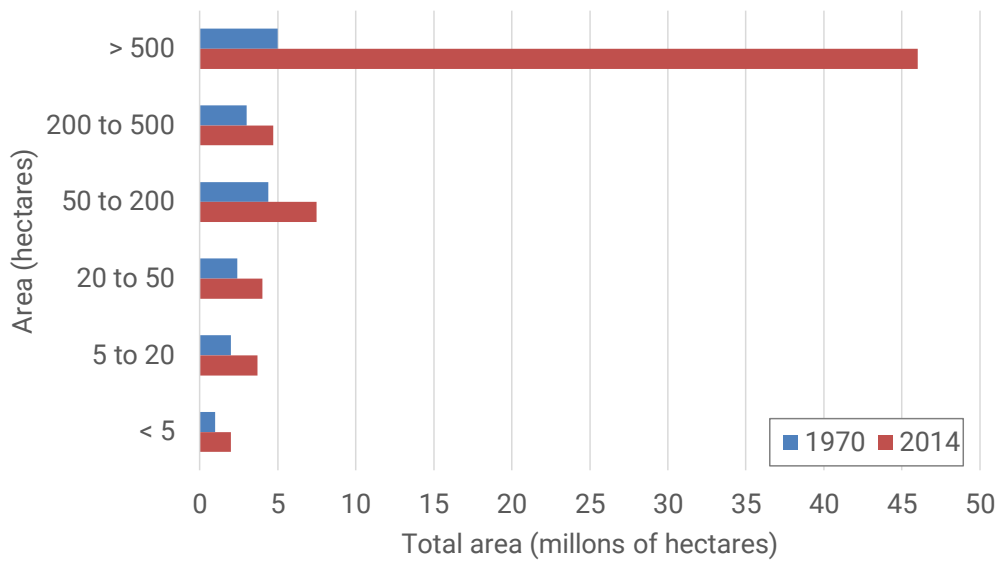


Figure 2.
Percentage of land controlled by the top 1%



Based on Oxfam, 2017

Figure 3.
Colombian land included in the agricultural census, by size of holding



Based on Oxfam, 2017

Consequently, an integral rural reform is of paramount importance, which was reflected in the 2018 implementation budget [plans](#) of the government as the Comprehensive Rural Reform, accounting for 85.4 percent of the total 15-year implementation expenses of the accord, partly funded through royalties from mineral and hydrocarbon extraction.

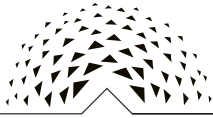
Two kinds of areas were defined in the peace accord with FARC: [PDET](#) (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial* Development Programs with a Territorial Approach) and [PNIS](#) (*Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos*, Comprehensive National Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops). territories. According to the agreement, these areas should be given particular attention in the post-conflict period, with particular consideration of territory and demographic issues, because they had suffered the most from the long-running armed conflict and thus have the highest number of victims of violence. Chapter 1 of the agreement addresses landholding problems (inequality, informality) and enhances the sustainability of the small-farmer economy, including 16 sectoral plans for increased government investment, a land management and registration system with mapping and a land cadastre, a land distribution fund, and other measures.

After the introduction of the peace accord, progress was made in both programs by the Santos government during the 2016-2018 period. The main aim was to restore peace, especially in accordance with the comprehensive rural reform, to (re)build communities via the formation of common visions of development in the PDET and PNIS territories.

The PDET programs are a set of strategies that were created in collaboration with local leaders, reaching an agreement on 16 subregions of the nation, which includes 170 of Colombia's 1,122 municipalities (comprising 11,000 villages, hamlets, and towns); 755 indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities; comprises 36 percent of the national territory, with 6.6 million people or 13 percent of the population, 31 percent of registered victims, all with higher poverty rates than the national average.

With more emphasis in the PDET territories in rural areas, communities and local governments were mobilized around the priority of social, economic, and productive investment programs, such as housing, sanitation, education, healthcare facilities, and road building. [ART](#) (*Agencia de Renovación Territorial*, Territorial Renewal Agency) was set up to carry out a complex process of consultation with communities and people in the affected areas, exploring their specific local needs and creating 32,808 initiatives for [PATR](#) (*Planes de Acción para la Transformación regional*, Action Plans for Regional Transformation).

The [results](#) show progress during the 2016-2021 period: 220,000 individuals now have access to potable water and sanitation, 50,000 people have access to electricity, and over 5,000 rural households have been allocated to vulnerable families. Land redistribution is benefiting many families, thus somewhat



changing the previous situation of injustice: out of the three million hectares targeted, 1.3 million hectares have been added to the Land Fund. 232,539 hectares have been distributed to 9,335 households.

Despite the significant progress achieved through the creation of the PDETs in rural communities, the arrival of the Duque administration significantly altered the arrangement of the implementation process in the affected areas. While during the Santos era the program was based on a bottom-up approach, sustaining a peace-building dynamic through local actors participating in development planning, the new government strategy, called Peace with Legality⁶, neglected the role and engagement of communities in the local projects. It has not only introduced another institutional setup, the so-called Strategic Zones of Comprehensive Intervention ([Zonas Estratégicas de Intervención Integral ZEII](#)) Strategic Zones of Comprehensive Intervention) Development of particular strategies to foster the social rule of law as well as protective measures for the population.) and created new programs called [Zona Futuro](#) (Future Zones) and [Hoja de Ruta](#) ([Hoja de Ruta](#) Roadmap), changing the plans that had been agreed upon in the peace accord, but it has also significantly reduced the size of the territory and the financial support assigned for the governmental developmental scheme for the post-conflict period. The concept comprised only 2.4% of the national territory (the Pacific regions of Nariño, Catatumbo, Bajo Cauca, and south of Córdoba, Arauca, and the neighbouring National Parks).

[Changing the previous mechanism](#), the Duque administration introduced a top-down approach in executing the PDET and PNIS projects. The [Hoja de Ruta](#) concept seeks to prioritize among the previously accepted projects for each PDET zone, assigning resources for local governments to organize plans into proposals. The reorganization has reduced local community participation and slowed down the original process. At the same time, the Future Zones initiative seeks to accelerate PDET processes in selected sub-regions with a more significant state-building intention reflected in major investments, as well as radical coca eradication efforts with stronger military and police presence.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The second chapter of the peace agreement sets out a number of ambitious goals for more inclusive and democratic political participation. This is a particularly important step for the proportion of the population that had been left without the opportunity to express its political voice as residents of remote, conflict-affected peripheral areas that were ignored by the central political elite and those engaging in political activity on the opposition side. The ambitious intentions include the

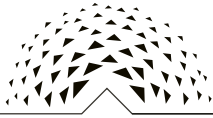
6 [Paz con Legalidad](#). The policy of stabilization launched by Iván Duque's government, which includes his administration's plan for implementing the Final Agreement for the termination of the armed conflict and the establishment of permanent peace.

promotion of establishing new parties, the creation of 16 transitional districts for peace (Special Transitory Peace Circumscriptions), and an equal number of seats to represent victims' organizations (independent of the existing parties) in Colombia's House of Representatives, promoting women's participation, space for social movements and protests fighting corruption and championing other social issues, as well as the creation of institutions such as [Opposition Statute](#)⁷ and the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence⁸. According to the original idea, the agreement would offer two four-year periods for victims' representatives to sit in the House of Representatives between 2018-2026, although they will only participate in the 2022 elections (and thus until 2030), partly because traditional Colombian parties were not interested in setting up the necessary legal framework for the 2018 elections. Although the current Duque administration has not argued against the 16 seats, members of his party have opposed it, assuming that it will provide an opportunity to increase the political role of former combatants in Congress. Meanwhile, the victims' organizations have expressed worries about the possible loss of opportunity due to political and ethnic division, as well as clientelism in rural areas creating an advantage for those already in power as landowners and politically influential local actors. The widespread social protests of recent years have shown that citizens demand more political space and want to seize the opportunities set out in the peace agreement. However, the brutal and often excessive police violence that took place during the [2019-2021](#)⁹ protests shows that the guarantees of political participation can only be seen in normative changes rather than in the reform of the legal conditions or the actions of the state apparatus.

DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION

The dismantling of FARC and the reintegration of former guerrillas into society is a multi-step process with many difficulties and parties with diverging original interests. While demobilization and disarmament have proceeded relatively quickly, the reintegration of people into civilian life from the very strict hierarchical system of FARC is a complex issue both at the individual and the community

- 7 Estatuto para la Oposición el Consejo Nacional para la Reconciliación y la Convivencia. It is a normative tool that ensures the democratic participation of the opposition on a rotating basis at various geographical levels.
- 8 [El Consejo Nacional para la Reconciliación y la Convivencia](#). Its mission is to achieve and sustain peace, foster reconciliation, coexistence, and non-stigmatization, and facilitate the cooperation of the state's entities and organs, with an emphasis on political alternatives for resolving internal armed conflict.
- 9 In recent years, there have been protests across Colombia for a number of reasons: violence against environmental activists and community leaders, tax increase plans by the Duque government, poverty and inequality, police brutality.



level, as well as regarding society as a whole. [The Demobilization, Disarmament and Reincorporation or DDR process](#)¹⁰ and its various institutions are not new for Colombian society. It has been used as part of previous agreements with various guerrilla movements since the 1980s by Presidents Betancur and Barco. In previous cases the Colombian state followed a policy of reintegrating each disarmed former combatant into society by offering individual paths for them. FARC, on the other hand, focused on integrating former guerrillas into the community by creating economic entities organized on a territorial basis, which built on previous ties to maintain or enhance their political influence in the post-conflict situation.

The demilitarization process, which took place under trilateral control (FARC, the government, and the UN Verification Mission), is one of the most successful points in the implementation of the peace agreement. Since the agreement, more than 13,000 former guerrillas have joined the process and were entitled to a two-year stipend equal to 90 percent of the Colombian minimum wage (about USD 250 per month), as well as a package of training, education, and assistance in productive initiatives. The stipend has been renewed and is still in effect for the majority, although two-thirds live outside the training and reintegration area ([Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration](#), Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces) serve in a community reincorporation model to help members of FARC-EP in their reintegration into civil life as well as offering technical training to them), mainly in rural areas. 54% are beneficiaries of various collective or individual producer projects, as a part of which 155 cooperatives have been set up nationwide, 80% of them in rural areas. [The reintegration process](#) requires an effort from all social groups and members of the society, which is especially important in rural communities, where former victims and former FARC members must build a new community together, all on a daily basis of cooperation, reciprocity, and reconciliation. At the same time, atrocities affecting former guerrillas are also part of this reality, manifesting in their stigmatization, as well as threats and even fatal attacks against them. According to a [recent UN report](#), nearly 300 former combatants have been fatally attacked so far, 22.8% of whom belonged to an indigenous or Afro-Colombian ethnic group, with the majority of cases in the departments of Nariño, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca. [In the majority of cases](#) the perpetrators were former FARC dissidents, members of organized crime groups, or the neo-paramilitary group El Clan del Golfo. There are many causes of the violence against ex-guerrillas, including the lack of protection promised by state authorities, the low social recognition of demobilization, and the stigmatization and lack of education concerning reconciliation.

As one of the pillars of the peace talks, FARC has been offered a guarantee to become a political force as part of the construction of a more inclusive democratic society. Based on this approach, they have been granted a two-term representation

10 [Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration](#) is a process that aims to assist former combatants and members of armed groups in becoming active participants in the peace process by removing their weapons and supporting them in reintegrating into society as civilians.

in Congress with a minimum of five senators and five representatives. After the agreement, FARC initially operated under the name [People's Alternative Common Force](#) (although they continued to use the FARC acronym), then in 2021 the political party was renamed Comunes (Commons) on the occasion of its second convention. On the one hand, the name refers to the foundations of FARC. On the other hand, it was necessary to separate the political movement from the dispersed FARC dissidents who refuse to be disarmed and are still not participating in the implementation of the agreement to obtain political support from the electorate, since the party did not gain a seat in either chamber in [the previous election](#).

ILLICIT CROP CULTIVATION

The efforts to eradicate the cultivation of illicit crops (Mainly coca leaf, as well as marijuana and poppy. UNODC documents focus on coca eradication.) within the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS), established for this specific purpose, play an indispensable part among the complex objectives of the comprehensive rural program. Coca paste as a product from coca leaf cultivation offers income to families in remote, rural areas that have been abandoned by the state. The Santos administration suspended the originally US-backed aerial fumigation program in 2015 and following the peace accord, introduced the voluntary eradication and assistance program for coca cultivator farmers in 2017. [The families](#) shifting from coca to the cultivation of legal crops would get financial and technical assistance to meet basic necessities for two years, to a total of 36 million pesos (about USD 10,000). In its last year, the Santos government created the framework for a collective agreement, which was later realized in [individual contracts](#) with 99,097 families (from a potential 170-180,000 families) located in 56 municipalities in 14 departments, with 43,711 hectares of voluntary eradication mainly in the departments of Putumayo, Caquetá, and Nariño, where 65% of the country's illicit crops are concentrated (Total area covered with coca plantations comprises 143,000 hectares according to the latest [UNODC report](#) (2021), investing USD 369 million in the whole project. However, many families did not receive the money in time due to the long verification process managed by UNODC, or those who entered the program often had to endure the threats of organized drug trafficking groups. [The government of Iván Duque](#) took office in August 2018 and remained determined to eradicate coca plantations, but instead of following the PNIS program, they deprived it of its financial resources and emphasized the use of aerial spraying instead. Thus, the forced eradication method, despite previous evidence of its adverse environmental and health effects, returned.



TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

The process of transitional justice¹¹, one of the cornerstones of the whole post-conflict situation, has been included in the accord in order to contribute to the exploration of the past and the grievances suffered by the victims through the establishment of the “Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Recurrence”. Its goals are achieved through the joint work of three institutions¹². The Special Jurisdiction for Peace is responsible for ensuring access to justice, selecting cases, and organizing the participation of victims, by now covering more than [300,000](#) cases, in particular the atrocities committed by public authorities and the violent actions committed by FARC during the 1996-2016 period. The JEP is set to work for 15 years, which can be extended to 20 years, until 2037. It organizes hearings of conflict-related crimes, including torture, hostage-taking, forced disappearance, sexual violence, and child abduction, all by perpetrators such as former FARC members and security force members who may not receive amnesty. However, this is a very controversial point in the convention, also criticized by President Duque, because it also includes a “non-prison” option.

[The Commission](#) has listened to a total of 24,854 people (victims, social leaders, etc.) in individual and collective exercises. The role of the Commission is to investigate the processes in the conflict, help victims, and recommend measures to prevent the occurrence of violent acts. It organizes meetings with members of former FARC and paramilitary groups at the national and regional level, including senior leaders such as Rodrigo Londoño, to explore their operations and events with former presidents. Originally, it should have provided a final report on the issues of the past conflict within three years, which was prolonged to June 2022 due to the interruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commission has the obligation to release its findings in 2022, when JEP will also announce its first sentences. However, the Unit for the Search for disappeared persons, which looks for victims of disappearances, has only managed to resolve 193 cases from [the 5,195 requests](#) made until April 2020 about missing persons.

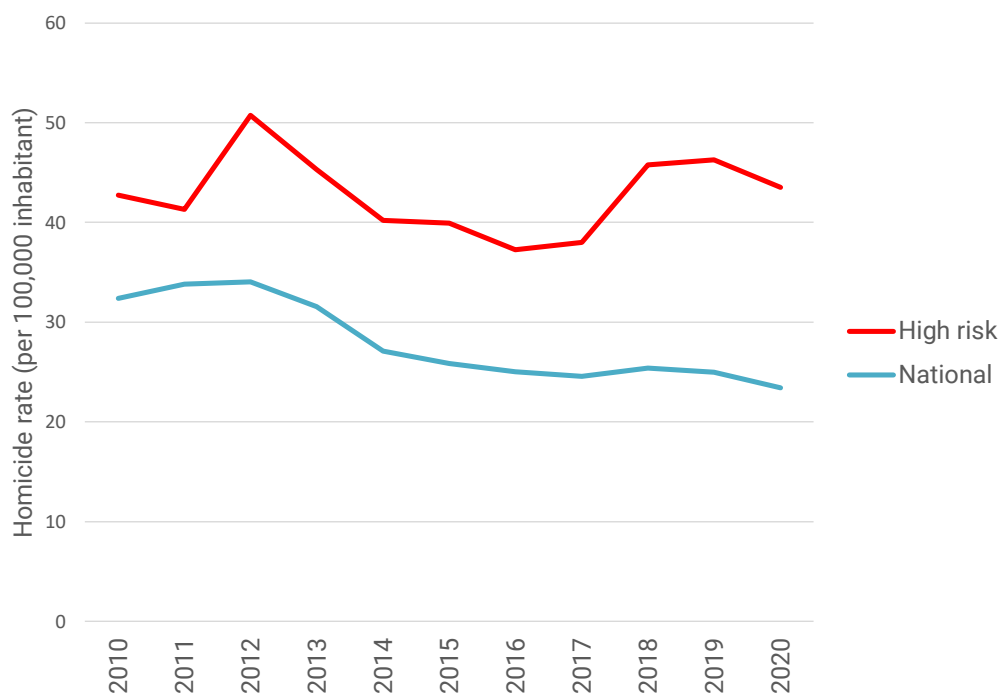
11 [Transitional justice](#) is an approach to provide recognition of the systemic abuse of a large number of victims by offering a certain level of justice with the help of criminal, restorative, and social components. It also aims to promote opportunities to solve conflicts through democratic institutions and reconciliation.

12 The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing

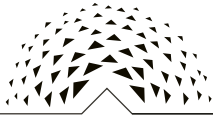
THE CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

[The statistics](#) demonstrate a decreasing trend in the homicide rate over the last decade at the national level, although with substantial heterogeneity within the country departments. The provinces with the highest rates include those along the southern border of the country, particularly Putumayo, as well as those in the Pacific and Amazon areas, for example, the Valle de Cauca, Cauca, Antioquia, and Arauca departments (Figure 3). But the simple data does not reveal the characteristics and distinctive elements of the dynamics associated with different areas, ethnicities, and social groups. Despite the general trend, [the number of assaults and deaths of environmental activists](#) and human rights defenders is high in Colombia (64 persons) accounting for 30% of all incidents worldwide. The last year the number of cases shows a 150% growth over the previous year, with community and social leaders in the indigenous populations accounting for half of the fatalities.

Figure 4.
Homicide rate in Colombia 2010-2020

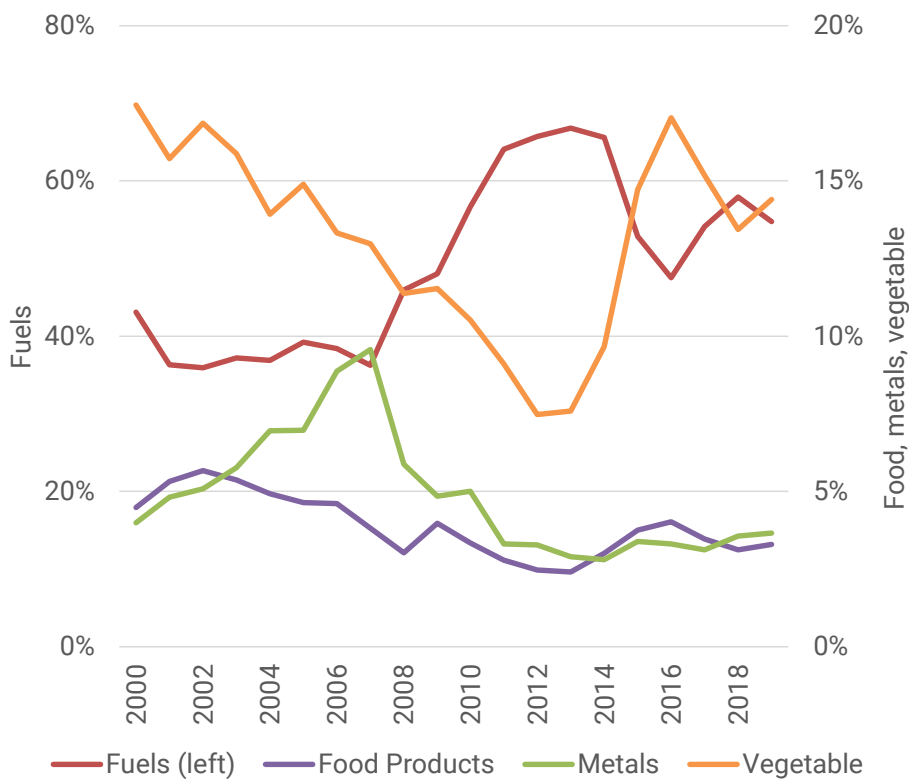


Based on National Police of Colombia
High-risk departments: Antioquia, Arauca, Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Guaviare, Quindío, Putumayo



Despite the significant reduction in the number and frequency of violent acts as a result of the peace agreement, new social tensions have emerged. Social conflicts persist in Colombia, in part as a result of the lack of law enforcement in cases of prior consultation, which is an institution that protects the fundamental rights of indigenous communities to have a consultation process before extractive mining and other kinds of megaprojects that affect their territories are started, set down by the 1991 Constitution of Colombia. Rural communities have been increasingly [restricted from consultation](#) in recent years, as the support of the Duque government for multinational mining companies and the agro-industry has extended the country's dependence on raw materials, creating further tensions over conflictive approaches in environmental protection and the diverse interests of different social groups (Figure 4). In addition to extractive industrial projects, various illegal and environmental criminal activities, for example, alluvial gold mining, illicit crop cultivation, deforestation, trafficking protected fauna and flora, and the remaining FARC groups with other guerrilla movements, mainly ELN, are also [sources of violence](#).

Figure 5.
Main resources as a percentage of the total value of exports



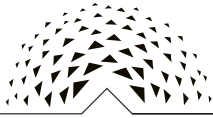
Based on [World Bank](#)

CONCLUSION

Today's Colombian society must face the consequences of the acts of violence that took place over more than half a century. Stepping forward for unity requires constant effort on behalf of the entire society as well as creating socioeconomic opportunities and psychosocial healing processes for all those affected. At the same time, establishing political responsibility and bringing perpetrators to justice must also be part of social reconciliation.

The first chapter of the peace agreement outlines a complex program of comprehensive rural reform with governmental presence aiming to make up for the historical abandonment of peripheral rural areas and invest in infrastructure in basic services and economic activities. The second chapter aims to increase participation in Colombia's political system by expanding opportunities for involvement and resistance. The third chapter aims to demobilize and reintegrate more than 13,000 former guerrillas into society and civilian life while also securing their safety. The fourth goal is to assist agricultural families in cultivating legal crops instead of coca, while the fifth establishes a transitional justice system with a truth commission and an institution looking for persons who disappeared during the conflict. Additionally, the sixth chapter establishes national and international procedures to check processes. Some of the most significant obligations of the agreement plan for a 15-year period, although certain elements (for example, the Truth Commission and the illicit crops replacement program) are expected to be completed sooner.

Summarizing the first period of the implementation of the peace agreement, it can be concluded that, despite some relevant successes, some of the goals are significantly behind schedule. Rural reform and other critical territorial development initiatives are going to be delayed, and they are becoming less participatory, for example, only 1.3 million hectares of the proclaimed 3 hectares have been transferred. While the accord provides an opportunity for political activity and representation via the creation of special congressional districts for victims, the political presence of FARC and former rebels and their role in the political arena is not significant. Demobilization has been a resounding success, and reintegration is proceeding, although atrocities against former combatants do occur, a significant portion of which remains without investigation due to insufficient effort on the part of the state. Violence poses great danger for social leaders and human rights advocates. Despite its initial rapid execution, crop substitution on a voluntary basis is on the brink of collapse. While transitional justice has made considerable strides, the current year will be critical due to the releasing of final findings. Despite the results achieved so far, Colombia is still a very unequal society, which will not change over the coming decades if the implementation process continues to be slow.



In recent years, the principle and practice of development based on local communities and their participation has been replaced by a territorial security policy that enhances the role of the state with a top-down approach. Relying more on the presence of the military and police forces alone, especially in areas that are particularly affected by the activities of organized criminal groups and illegal crop production, does not advance the realization of the points of the peace agreement in circumstances of weak law enforcement, corruption, and impunity. The presence of drug trafficking, armed groups, and organized crime is the result of these phenomena. The current Covid epidemic has also shown the importance of the effective presence and functioning of the state, not only in providing security and infrastructure for economic activities but also in offering basic services such as education and healthcare. [As an analysis](#) of the democratic changes in Latin America over the past thirty years points out, the intentions of the region, which are often ambitious on paper, like the peace agreement itself, fail in the implementation phase due to institutional weaknesses, for example, a lack of compliance and enforcement. The Colombian case also illustrates the fact that continuous political will and a vision with long-term commitment that spans consecutive presidential cycles is required to carry out complex processes, interacting with different societal actors. At the same time, the long time horizon (15 years) provides an opportunity for structural changes to take place, especially regarding the first chapter, with support from civil society and the international community. Thus, one of the major questions in the 2022 general elections is whether the country will have a government that will not further delay the promotion of progress in areas that the state has neglected so far by implementing the points of the peace agreement in a more decisive and urgent manner.