



**COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF
A VEXING SOCIETY
STRUGGLING FOR INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

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Abstract

- After more of fifty years of guerrilla warfare, Colombia is enduring a peace process with the most important guerrilla group through a peace agreement signed by the end of 2016.
- Despite this achievement, the basic conditions determined by John Fagg Foster's for institutional adjustment were not fulfilled, affecting the implementation of the accord and facing strong opposition from conservative sectors.
- The resistance of the institutional matrix of this country's elites show the difficulties and defiance to even moderate institutional changes in a society with a deep divide in political, social and economic conditions. The case is unique despite the obvious economic and social advantages of the peace deal and reveals the deep crucial role of conservative institutions in blocking social progress.
- After six years of the agreement, an evaluation of the current process is presented and conclusions about possible outcomes are explored.

1.Introduction

- Colombia is a country with a population of almost 50 millions, a GDP per capita of US \$6325 (2017), and a life expectancy of 75 yrs.
- According to the National Survey on Quality of Life (2017), 29.6% of the households considered themselves poor. Monetary Poverty is 26.9%, Multidimensional Poverty is 17.8% and extreme poverty is 7.4%.
- 94,6 % of them has health coverage, with an average of 10,1 years of education. There has been social progress since the 1950's,
- But the armed conflict since 1964 has hindered economic growth and social progress. The pandemic just made the situation worst.

2. The theory of Institutional adjustment

- Original Institutional Economics has a theory of institutional adjustment that can help to understand recent events in Colombia (Foster , 1981), (Atkinson& Reed, 1990), Marc Tool, 1990):
- Foster proposed three basic principles for institutional adjustment:
 - 1)The principle of *technological determination*.
 - 2)The principle of *recognized interdependence*
 - 3) The principle of *minimal dislocation*

In the case of Colombia...

- In Parada (2006), I showed that Colombia's development path has not followed Foster's three principles of institutional adjustment, where the process of modernization even though very limited, has been imposed violating the third principle and many times the second one.
- The peace's process (2016) was a new opportunity that can be endangered again.

3. The profound inequality of Colombia

- Despite some progress , Colombia ranks as one of the most unequal society in Latin America, even higher than Brazil.
- Piketty: “Colombia has one of the highest inequality in the world”.
- According to Palma’s Index (the earnings of the wealthiest 10%/the poorer 40%), Colombia’s index is 3.9, higher than Brazil –Norway has index of 0,9. The Gini’s coefficient of stock ownership is 0,92.

Gráfico 1

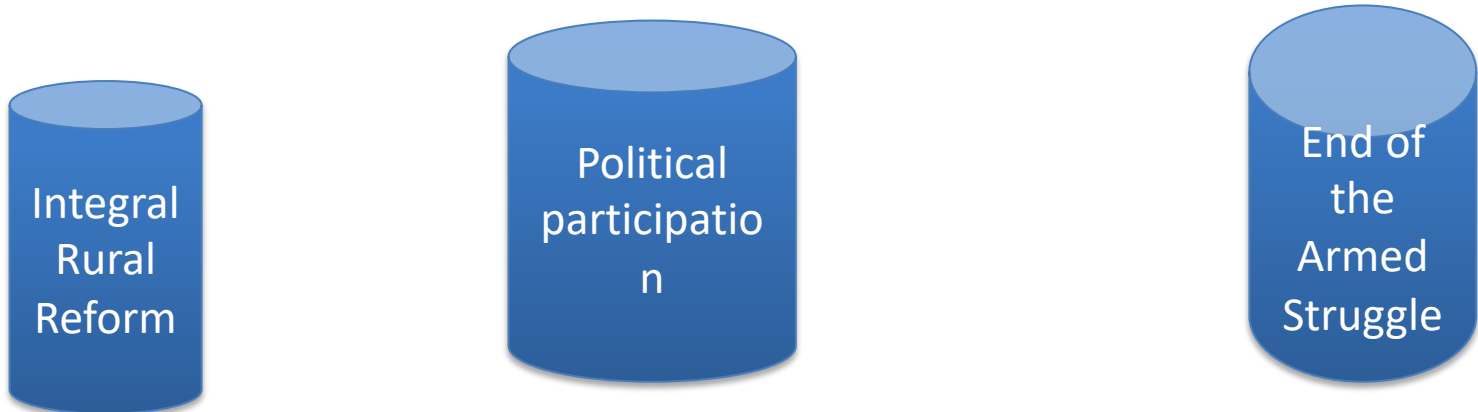
América Latina (17 países): coeficiente de Gini, alrededor de 2008, de 2012 y de 2015^{a b}

A. Alrededor de 2008 y de 2012



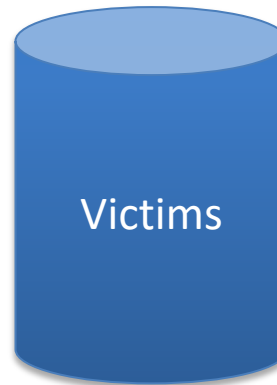
4. The main elements of the peace agreement

FARC Guerrilla- 1964-2016-7,000 members



The conditions of the peace agreement

- And...



Some figures about the conflict

- 225,000 persons killed from 1980 to 2010.
- 7 millions persons affected by the armed conflict.
- 6,5 million were domestically displaced as war refugees.
- GDP growth per year was affected by 1,5%.

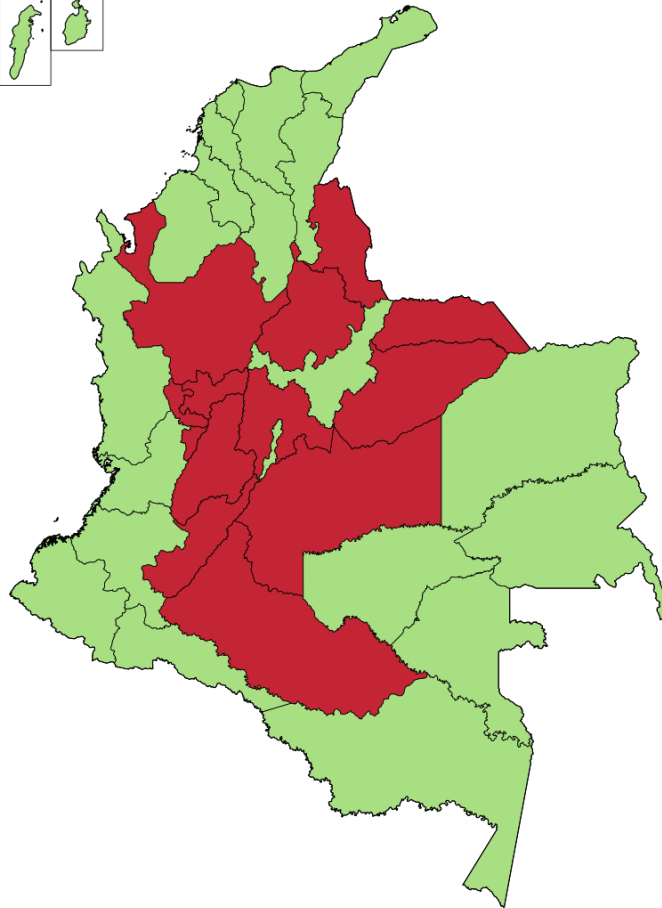
The outcome of the plebiscite

- October 2, 2016.
- Political participation 37,43%
- Yes 49,78%
- **No 50,21 %**
- Right wing parties criticized and used faked propaganda to convince people the agreement will lead Colombia to a Venezuelan situation. They criticized the Special Justice System created by the agreement.

Geographical distribution of voting for the Plebiscite



Green Voted Yes
RED Voted No



But...

- The agreement was validated anyway through a political pact of the main parties with the exception of the right-wing party (Centro Democrático) in Nov 2016.
- A big political divide emerged in such a way that created a path dependence process of polarization in Colombia that still goes on.

The agreement

- It is a timid attempt to diminish rural inequality.
- They don't mean a deep structural reform.
- The agreement implies an investment of 31,000 million dollars through 10 years, which is affordable.
- It implies government expenditure in health, education, roads, water supply, institutional developments of local governments, rural development on the regions that suffered most the war

Subregions selected for development planning



Subregión PDET

- Sur de Tolima (4)
- Arauca (4)
- Pacífico medio (4)
- Sur de Córdoba (5)
- Sur de Bolívar (7)
- Catatumbo (8)
- Urabá antioqueño (8)
- Putumayo (9)
- Pacífico y frontera nariñense (11)
- Macarena - Guaviare (12)
- Bajo Cauca y nordeste antioqueño (13)
- Chocó (14)
- Sierra Nevada - Perijá (15)
- Montes de María (15)
- Cuenca del Caguán y piedemonte caqueteño (17)
- Alto Patía - Norte del Cauca (24)

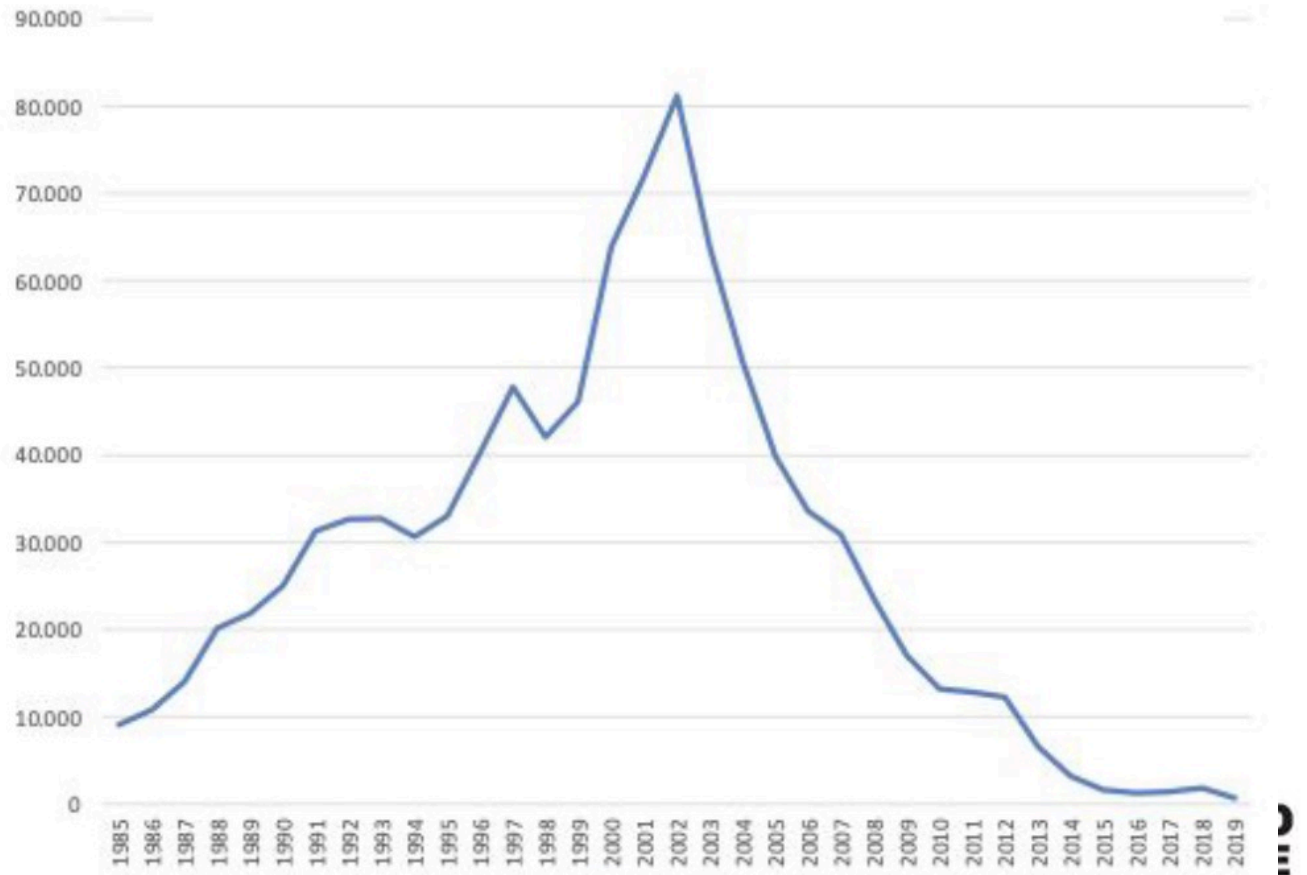
A balance of the agreement

- Farc surrendered 8,994 weapons. And transformed them into a political party that went to elections recently. The outcome was very poor. They got five seats in the senate thanks to the agreements not because the votes.
- The government issued many laws enforcing the peace process, liberated prisoners, but the process is a reality only in a 20%.
- 1270 social and human rights leaders have been murdered and 300 members of FARC have been killed.

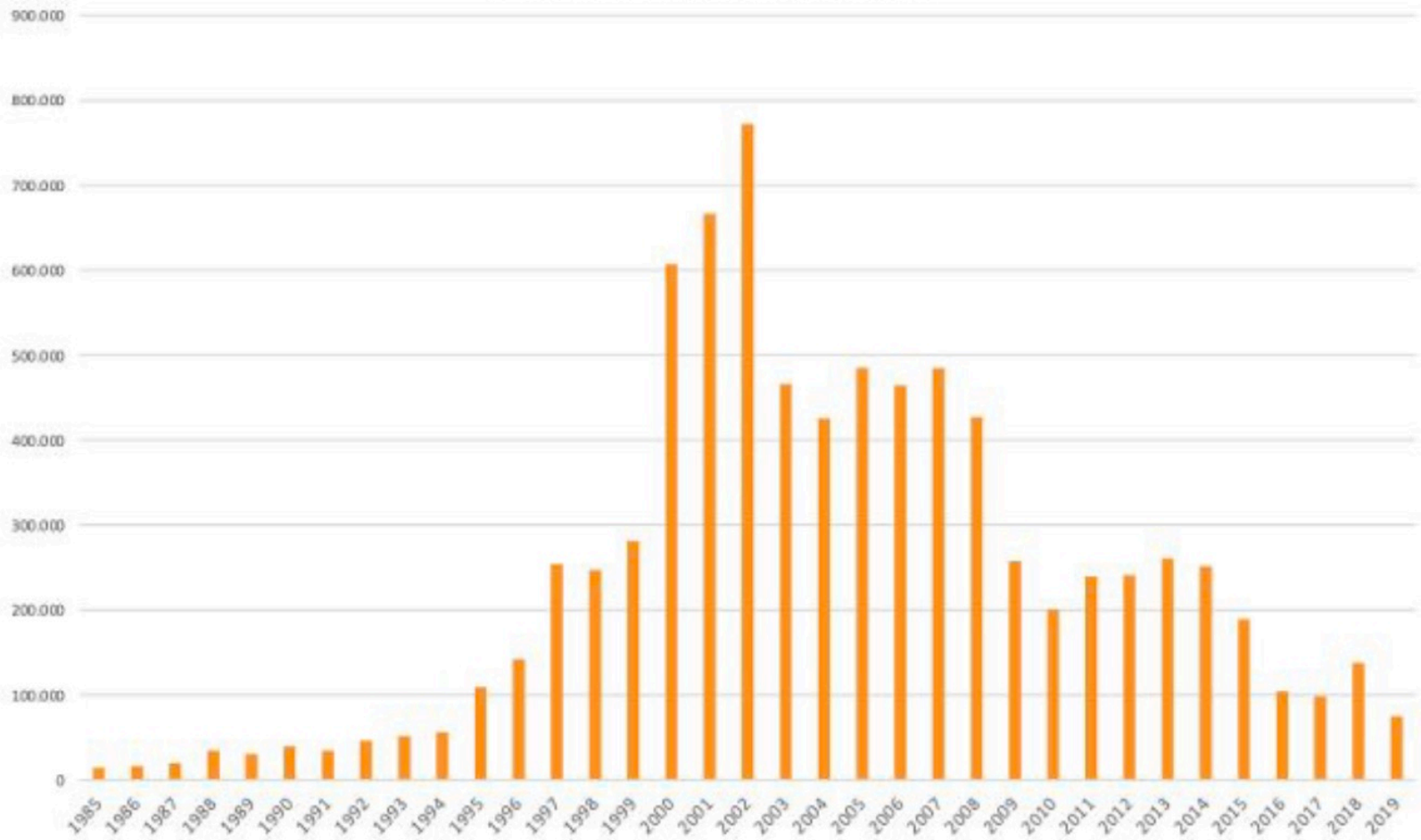
A balance of the process

- The rural legislation for some land reform is still pending.
- The political reform has not been approved.
- Special jurisdiction for victims allowing them to reach Congress finally was approved ordered by Constitutional Court sentence.
- The resistance of these minimal reforms is huge.

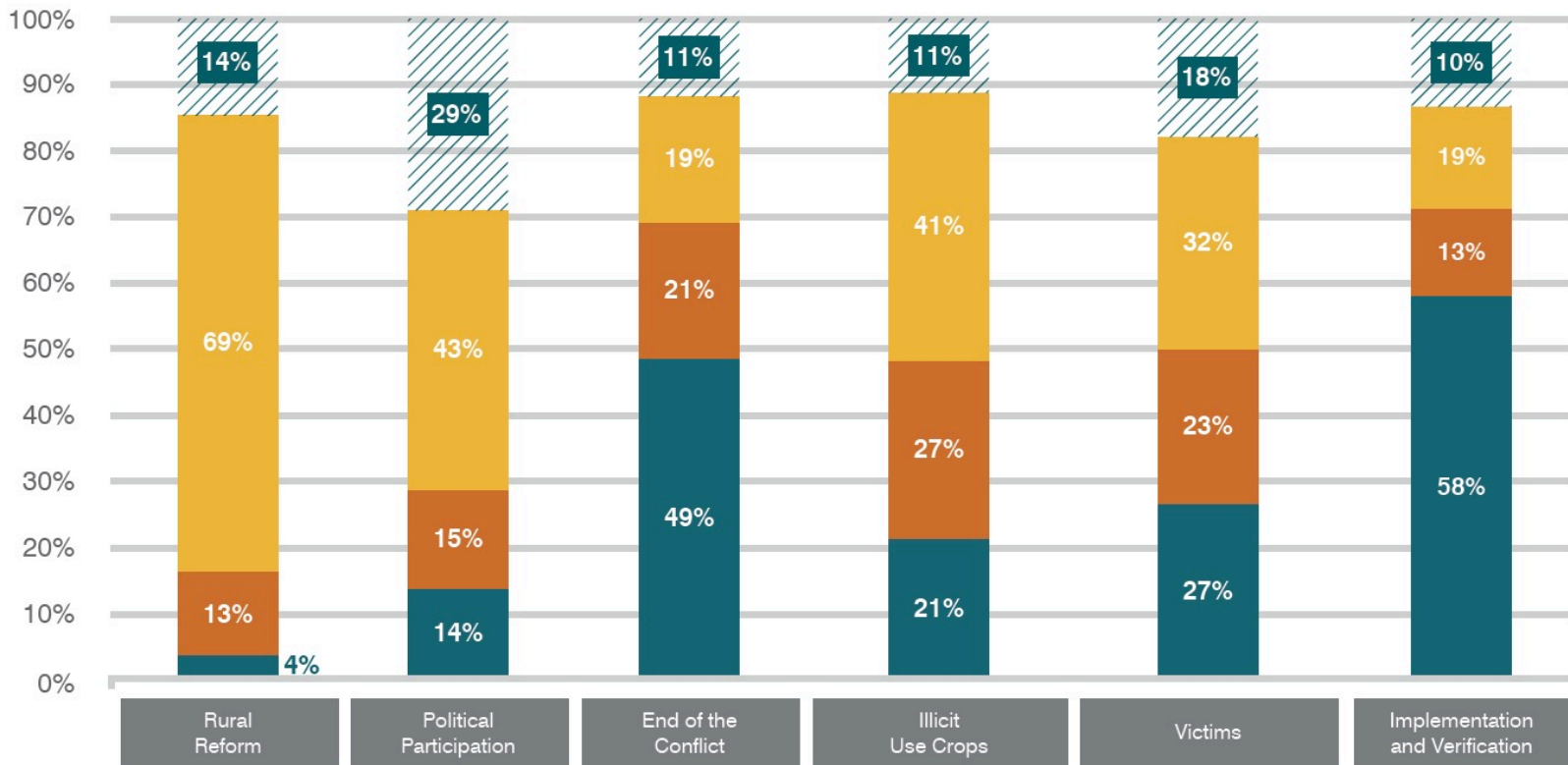
Homicides



Displaced people



A balance by Kroc Institute



In sum

- Despite the obvious advantages of the peace process regarding economic growth and defense expenditure, power elites seem to be more interested in maintaining the status quo.
- The second condition of institutional change that Foster established has not been fulfilled. Resistance to minimal reforms are very strong.
- Social movements are very weak and are mediatized by clientelist political parties.

In sum...

- Years of war and FARC's war activities like attacks of towns, kidnappings, ransoms, recruitment of children, moved people to a very conservative political profile.
- Power elites in Colombia are very jealous of their privileges and not willing to allow deep reforms.
- The future of the peace process is also endangered by the activities of the other guerrilla (ELN) and other illegal armed groups orientated to drug trafficking and coca crops.

About the Peace...

- Peace can be conceived in a minimal way as the absence of war, or from elite's standpoint aiming to disarm the opponent.
- But Peace is not just a state of the world or a situation but a complex process through which society must undergo to improve the conditions of the underlying population.
- As Kurtenbach posits, peace is not a linear process, where the main objectives of preserving the physical integrity of the population, guaranteeing individual and collective rights amidst ethnic differences, and a constructive transformation of conflicts should be the main targets (Kurtenbach, *Un concepto global de Paz*, 2021).

Conclusions

- The problems stem out from the second condition: Colombian society is deeply divided regarding the process and the principle of recognized interdependence does not prevail.
- The process is opposed by powerful sectors of the elite and large portions of the population, especially in rural areas and minor cities. The current extractive model based on controlling the land presents a powerful obstacle to implementing the first point of the agreement despite its modesty.

Conclusions

- The third condition is also difficult to achieve. The agreement promotes political transformations in political participation, that entrenched elites are not willing to allow. War still remains in many areas fueled by monetary resources that come from drug trafficking and illegal rents.
- Yet Colombian society must pursue the agreement cementing future accords with political armed organizations, as we are convinced, following Clarence Ayres 'words, social progress is inevitable despite all the obstacles we find on the road.