

# Unmasking the Colombian Peace Accord: FARC Strategy in a Never-Ending Conflict

Written by Javier Martín Merchán

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## Unmasking the Colombian Peace Accord: FARC Strategy in a Never-Ending Conflict

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JAVIER MARTÍN MERCHÁN, APR 1 2018

Colombia constitutes one of the most open, enterprising and qualified societies of Latin America, a society that, simultaneously, has experienced an unparalleled state of violence in the continent due to its magnitude, ferocity and duration. Colombians have witnessed a complex sequence of civil strives, sometimes overlapped among each other, in which multiple actors have fought differently since the historic *Bogotazo* in 1948. Indeed, armed conflict in Colombia possesses very profound roots, which go beyond the emergence of the FARC guerrillas in the 60s (Hopmann and Zartman, 2015). From the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the National Front period (1958-1978), the vehemence of a palpating violence characterised the relationship between liberals and conservatives. To this must be added the repression against any alternative political choice. Thus, politics at the service of elites' interests, as well as social exclusion and the lack of democratic opposition forces, might explain the emergence of the various guerrilla groups during the 60s and the 70s. Among these groupings, especially significant were the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army, both founded in 1964 and having around 10.000 and 3.000 effective members, respectively. It is then in this context that the FARC emerges as a militant group which would later result in one of the central focal points of violence, struggle and conflict in the country. A conflict that has left as many as 220,000 dead, 25,000 disappeared, and 7 million displaced over the last half century (*The Economist*, 2016a).

Under the umbrella of this cruel reality, Juan Manuel Santos was first elected as the President of Colombia in 2010, and re-elected four years later, in 2014. In a display of pragmatism, Santos stopped executing the drastic security guidelines promoted by his predecessor, Álvaro Uribe, who advocated for a great deal of determination against terrorism (Zárata, 2017). The new president thus began to approach to the FARC insurgency within a possibilist philosophy that searched for a negotiated solution to this armed conflict, but lacking any ceasefire in the meanwhile. This change of strategy was denied to entail contradiction, since subversion continued to be combatted. Furthermore, it allowed the President not to divert from his promise and "constitutional obligation of seeking the peace" (Zeidler, 2015).

Backed by his party, the Social Party of National Unity, as well as by the Liberal Party, Radical Change and certain sectors of the Conservative Party, Santos ordered his deputies to accelerate the Government-FARC conversations, in process since 2012, even though the guerrilla made it hard for the government due to its criminal provocations (Felter and Renwick, 2017). In 2015, after months of bloody ambushes, attacks and unilateral partial truces, the two parties announced a potential peace accord, which would be signed for the first time in June 2016 by Santos and the guerrilla leader, *Timochenko*. Nevertheless, all that glitters is not gold, and Santos still needed to hold a plebiscite in order to endorse the aforementioned peace accord. After the termination of military operations —and against all odds—, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Colombians rejected this agreement in the referendum by an exiguous margin of 50.2 % of the total vote. Thus, further changes were made in the original text aiming at seeking greater consensus among the Colombian society. This led to the consolidation of a presumably definitive agreement by November 13<sup>th</sup> of 2016 (Oficina de Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016). These strategic make-up solutions might indeed have improved the previous accord; however, they cannot divert attention away from the core nature of the problem: a polarised and divided society regarding whether to make peace with the FARC and whether to endorse a peace deal that, even after several changes, offers some leniency to war criminals and perpetrators of violence.

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Colombia has thus increasingly become a one-issue country: the peace agreement with the FARC guerrillas dominates the political and media agenda. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to determine whether the peace agreement supposes a panacea for the country. Neither is to discover the underlying dynamics why Colombians decided to reject the original text. The central purpose of this paper is rather to focus on the main driving force of the peace accord, as well as on the future prospects that derive from the signing of the deal. In this sense, this essay offers a completely innovative perspective: on the one hand, countering those who see Santos as the only promoter of the agreement, it argues that the Colombian peace accord is owed to the FARC, which wanted and needed such an agreement; on the other hand, it suggests that the peace accord does not come accompanied by the definitive end of the existing conflict.

In order to reach these conclusions, the present essay will comply with the following structure. Firstly, it will be argued that the peace accord directly derives from the FARC's strategy. Aiming to prove this argument, the FARC's decline will first be examined, suggesting that their weak situation led them to seek a strategic alternative to military means. This leads us to the second hypothesis: the alternative to a militant strategy may consist of the institutionalisation of the guerrilla through a negotiated peace agreement. This negotiated solution, far from weakening the guerrilla, could allow it to legitimately pursue its objectives, adjusting to the new environment in which it sees itself forced to operate. Precisely because the signing of the peace agreement depends on the FARC, this essay will thirdly propose that certain parts of the deal respond to their inflexible demands, analysing several key issues as case studies. Considering the line of reasoning developed throughout the essay, this paper will finally reach the conclusion that a peace accord which is so influenced by the FARC might put an end to terrorism, but will not end the Colombian conflict.

## **The peace accord as the perfect solution to the guerrilla's reality: the FARC's decline and the institutionalisation strategy**

Despite the great efforts made by several Colombian governments to achieve peace, the conviction existed until several years ago that the possibilities of reaching a stable and long-lasting peace agreement were almost non-existent and hardly feasible (see Núñez, 2001; Albert-Guardiola, 2004; Richani, 2013; Manrique, 2014). Something has therefore necessarily changed so that a peace accord has already been signed. By observing the nature of this change, the enormous significance that Santos's predisposition for dialogue has had in favouring such a deal cannot be denied (González-Muñoz, 2015). However, it does not seem the Colombian government that constitutes the essential driving force of such an agreement, but the FARC themselves and, concretely, their change of strategy. In other words, far from supposing a surrender of the guerrilla, the peace accord directly derives from their strategy to maintain their power and pursue their objectives within the new paradigmatic reality of the Colombian society. The question remains, nonetheless, of why the guerrilla has selected this moment to change its strategy. Equally important, the issue arises of why the signing of the agreement constitutes the best way for the insurgents to maintain the group's potential and rationale in a new environment. The subsequent passages provide two interrelated arguments to resolve these issues: the FARC's decline and their need for institutionalisation.

## **Discerning the FARC's decline and its consequences**

As stated above, the first question that needs to be addressed refers to the reason why the FARC have opted to take part of the peace talks in this moment: why such a radical strategical change towards dialogue. The answer provided by this essay resides in the progressive decline of the guerrilla. At certain point, the FARC have seen themselves so debilitated that the only solution for the non-extinction of the group implies to change their strategy and adjust to the new situation. It was already in 1999 when the Colombian armed forces managed to reverse a conflictive situation that had been favourable to the guerrilla until then (Granada, Restrepo and Vargas, 2009). Nevertheless, it was from 2008 that the insurgents began to evidently plunge into a deep crisis, especially because of the implementation of Uribe's Democratic Security Policy and "Patriot Plan" (Fisas, 2010). Countering those who argue that the FARC never experienced such a decline or that this decline does not constitute a crucial factor to be considered, the following paragraphs prove the guerrilla's decrepitude and its relevance for a strategical change.

The first factor illustrating the FARC's unprecedented crisis is the dislocation of their command structure. As a result

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of the pressures generated by the Democratic Security Policy, the FARC saw themselves forced to operate haphazardly in order to make it difficult for the government forces to localise their military units (Ortiz, 2008). This dilution of the military structure, in turn, increased the leaders' difficulties to maintain an effective control of their own forces. Furthermore, the interception of the FARC's electronic communications made it impossible for the group's leadership to maintain a stable order flow with respect to the units in their command (*ibid*). This led the insurgent organisation to send electronic mails via radio as the only means to preserve the security of its communications. This strategy, nevertheless, also started to fail, which forced the guerrilla to employ human couriers as an alternative. The problem then amplified itself, in that, besides the slowness of this process, the latter strategy did not resolve the problem of trustworthiness (*ibid*). As can be reasoned, the Colombian government capacity to collect information from human sources caused many FARC leaders' messages to end up in the hands of intelligence analysts.

The second reason for the FARC's decline resides in what Marks (2002, 2005) calls "the debilitation of the FARC's counter-State and hierarchically highest spheres of power," an achievement that came true after the coincidental deaths of three members of the FARC Secretariat: Raúl Reyes, Iván Ríos and the founder Manuel Marulanda. Even though the guerrilla found rapid replacement for these casualties, such a broad change in a leadership that had remained stable for a long time distorted the decision-making processes of the organisation. Consequently, the FARC entered into a state of paralysis, experiencing serious difficulties to elaborate a new political-military strategy which allowed the group to respond to the security campaign of the government.

Arguably, the best proof of the FARC's deterioration in this respect is given by the successful Operation Jaque, which allowed the Colombian government to release 15 hostages, among whom Ingrid Betancourt, the former presidential candidate, could be found. It could be argued that the destabilising effect of this operation was twofold (Ramsey, 2009). On the one hand, it deprived the guerrilla of an essential group of hostages for its international strategy, since the FARC had taken advantage of the captives' global importance in order to enlarge their significance abroad, as well as to present themselves to certain Latin American governments as a valid interlocutor to be considered. On the other hand, the Operation Jaque demonstrated that the guerrilla's chain of command and communications could be easily violated. In fact, the Colombian intelligence had been able to manipulate the FARC's information environment, leading them to voluntarily release the politically most valuable hostages in their possession.

The third issue evidencing the guerrilla's decay does not relate to the decomposition of the Secretariat itself, but to the high level of individual demobilisations within the militant followers of the FARC. Only between 2008 and 2009, around 12,700 members of the organisation surrendered to national authorities, and more than a thousand middle-ranking FARC officials laid down their arms (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2009). Moreover, this weakening process can also be observed in the regression of the territorial activity. After showing a clearly active presence in a vast amount of territories in 2002, being present in 377 municipalities, the number of communities influenced by the guerrilla reduced itself by more than a half in 2010, reaching only 142 municipalities and maintaining some influence just in relatively populated regions, as well as in those districts surrounded by border and wilderness areas (Aguilera-Peña, 2013).

A final consideration must be addressed that demonstrates the FARC's collapse: the discovery of Raúl Reyes's two computers, a significant setback against the international strategy of the guerrilla. The information contained herein revealed the guerrilla's relationship with the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian governments, as well as the FARC's partner networks in Latin America, the United States and Europe. As Inkster and Smith (2011) reason, the result was a generalized rupture of the group's international footholds. On the one hand, the aforementioned governments of Ecuador and Venezuela saw themselves forced to drift apart, at least temporarily, from the Colombian guerrilla. On the other, certain FARC's partners from Costa Rica, Spain, Chile and the United States, among others, were discovered and eventually arrested.

After this scrupulous analysis of the guerrilla's decline, little doubt remains with regards to the seemingly obvious symptoms of the FARC's rounding up. Logistical difficulties, low levels of effectiveness and political isolation appeared to be the terms of an equation that puts the guerrilla in a position of acute strategical crisis. It is thus at this point that such collapsed FARC could orient themselves in two principal directions in order not to disappear: the

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radicalisation of the group or the search for a negotiated solution with the Colombian government. The so-far-examined decay of the guerrilla therefore justifies, first, the necessary change in the strategy of the insurgents and, second, the moment selected by the group to do so. The following section will attempt to analyse the remaining issue: why the peace accord constitutes the best manner for the FARC not only to survive, but to largely maintain the group's potential.

## The need for a new strategy: institutionalisation and the peace accord

Indeed, the Colombian peace process and the FARC-Government negotiations have not come by happenstance. As this essay argues, they directly derive from the FARC's strategy. Nonetheless, the question remains: what strategy? As observed above, the traditional military methods conducted by the FARC began to collapse during 2008. In this way, the mere survival of the group depended on the adoption of a different line of action: either radicalisation or institutionalisation via a mediation with the government. By adjusting to the latter option, the guerrilla was precisely giving room for commencing some negotiations which, in turn, were likely to entail the signing of a peace accord. Hence, this agreement is neither an actual victory of the government, nor a capitulation of the FARC. Instead, it is the path through the FARC's institutionalisation, in other words, the path through FARC's survival.

Before proceeding to examine how the FARC opted for a negotiated solution that aimed to sign a peace agreement guaranteeing their existence, it is necessary to clarify why the alternative strategy, radicalisation, was casted aside as a feasible option. Firstly, the radicalisation strategy does not divert from the military methods existing at that time, but attempts to intensify them. If what was mortally wounded was the very nature of the FARC's strategy, changing the degree of violence or the intensity of their terrorist acts could favour certain short-run interests, but was unlikely to produce different results in the long run, leading to the extinction of the guerrilla. Writing in 2010, Ortiz (2010, pp.29-34) identifies two alternatives to modify the guerrilla situation within the radicalisation scenario, arguing that both options would lead the organisation to its total collapse. On the one hand: the introduction of high-powered weapon systems, such as surface-to-air missiles. Even though these systems would challenge the government's monopoly regarding the use of the space, launching a notable number of these weapons not far from the American territory would probably lead to a military reaction from Washington. On the other hand: the possibility of conducting tactical innovations oriented to the perpetration of indiscriminate terrorist attacks in urban areas. In this case, it must be considered that such attacks have traditionally not only increased an absolute discredit towards the armed group, but have also encouraged the public opinion to rally round the Colombian government. Thus, a campaign of indiscriminate attacks seemed likely to provoke exactly the opposite effect to the one desired by the guerrilla, generating a massive opinion movement in favour of the State.

Having suggested the unfeasibility of the radicalisation alternative, this section now moves on to consider what this essay calls the "institutionalisation strategy." Far from supposing the political demise of the group, the dissolution of its political capital, or the tacit acknowledgement of its defeat at the hands of the Colombian government (Llorente and Arnson, 2010), negotiating with the government towards a potential disarmament has precisely –and paradoxically– allowed the FARC to enjoy a favourable situation in comparison with the imminent military defeat that otherwise awaited the guerrilla. As Ortiz (2010) notes, when the FARC realised the seriousness of their decline, they automatically started to improve the political image of the organisation through a set of concessions in pursuit of preparing the ideal scenario for a negotiation. These rapprochement movements could indeed be exemplified by the liberation of political hostages, militaries and police officers.

Thus, as Aguilera-Peña (2013) observes, the FARC started turning into a political guerrilla, rather than a military one; in other words, a group concerned with penetrating and influencing the Colombian social organisations, rather than attempting to rethink its military operations. It is exactly here that the FARC's new strategy begins to be perceived: a political FARC. The *new* FARC possessed a firmly insurrectionary emphasis, which linked the group not only to the aforementioned concern with social organisations, but also to novel attempts to penetrate in urban fringes, as well as in the Bolivarian Movement, and social protests and conflicts (Leech, 2011). It is hence evident that, by varying their strategy, the FARC were also redesigning their relationship with the civil population. The insurgents stopped being a guerrilla attempting to become a popular army in order to constitute, in the first instance, an "armed party" fighting for the interests of the social and popular classes.

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The political FARC that emerged as a result of the strategical change needed, nevertheless, one last step for their complete normalisation: institutionalisation. The institutionalised FARC could not only guarantee the survival of the group, but also maintain their essence and potential, as well as a wide range of options to influence the Colombian society. Consequently, as Thomson (2010) states, the new political and social designs of the organisation moved towards certain desire for materialising a peace accord negotiated with the government, since it was precisely this agreement that epitomised the goal of institutionalisation. In other words, the FARC new strategical designs have concentrated on the tendency to recuperate their political dimension; therefore, the signing of a peace accord has constituted the central objective of the guerrilla, since it entails the materialisation of the ultimate political dimension: the one represented by institutionalisation. The whole argument falls now into place: an acute decline of the organisation forced it to change its strategy; the guerrilla thus adopted a political dimension that guaranteed both its survival and its power within the Colombian society; this dimension would eventually lead to institutionalisation; institutionalisation is reached through a negotiated peace agreement with the government. Finally, it can hence be fathomed that the peace accord cannot be understood but within the FARC's strategy to survive and protect their essence and objectives in the Colombian society.

## The Colombian peace agreement as the epitome of the FARC's strategy: an empirical evidence

As examined above, after years of decline, the FARC leaders appeared to realise that their armed struggle had no prospects of success. As a component of their revised emphasis on political aspects of the struggle, they promoted new peace talks but remained determined to obtain as much advantage as possible by exploiting the government's eagerness to obtain peace through negotiation and compromise. Indeed, the question arises: what to expect from a negotiation in which the guerrilla constitutes the driving vector of the process? It seems probable that, by analysing the accord, the text provides empirical evidence that certain points of the agreement suppose a capitulation of the government with regards to the guerrilla. Thus, the thesis that signing the peace agreement dovetails with an intelligent movement of the guerrilla would be confirmed.

The paper has demonstrated so far that the Colombian peace accord epitomises the new FARC strategy, but it has not shown how this is empirically reflected in the agreement itself. In this respect, it is necessary to distinguish between the original text, rejected in plebiscite by the Colombians, and the definitive one, endorsed by the government on a parliamentary basis. As Fernández-Lasquetty (2016) states, the original peace accord perfectly exemplifies the capitulation of the government, the rendition to the group's demands. The FARC Secretariat succeeded in introducing controversial requirements in the negotiating table, requirements that would later be incorporated into the agreement. Thus, the first agreement did not only guarantee the survival of the FARC, but also intensified their power as far as possible within the new operating context. The FARC would turn into a legal political party and become an active part of the legislature, with representatives in both houses; no FARC member would be imprisoned or tried by the Colombian justice system; the Colombian justice system would have no moral authority or jurisdiction by itself to judge FARC's deeds; the FARC cadres would not surrender their weapons to the government; and Colombia's rural regions would enjoy political and economic autonomy (Oppenheimer, 2016).

These points made evident FARC's concept and goals in the peace negotiations. As Ospina (2016) argues, by adjusting to a new environment, the FARC had two main objectives. First, they sought to obtain legitimacy before the Colombian people and the international community by showing goodwill in their pursuit of peace and a political settlement to the conflict. Second, considering the demands present in the peace accord, the guerrilla would have control over important rural regions, especially in the southern part of the country, where it has long been active. This would allow the Secretariat to have its own political and geographical capital, as well as access to resources in those regions. Having abandoned the military strategy and pursuing institutionalisation through the peace accord, FARC leaders believed that they would have better chances to gain political power through elections. Furthermore, in time, the guerrilla would be *entitled* to change the nature of the state and turn Colombia into a socialist polity resembling, for instance, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with its neo-Marxist ideology (*ibid*).

Thus, it seems obvious that the initial accord empirically contains certain clauses which fall within the theory that the peace process is the product of FARC's interests. Notwithstanding, a final issue remains to be addressed to complete the central argument of this essay: is the definitive agreement also framed under the FARC's strategy?

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*Prima facie*, it might be claimed that the new accord indeed assures peace and distances itself from the guerrilla's purposes, since 56 of the 57 points that opponents of the agreement had criticised are affected by a significant change (International Crisis Group, 2017). However, it cannot be ignored that the FARC continued to be the driving vector of the second agreement. Therefore, since they were the main subject behind the peace accord, they were not willing to sign a document that was detrimental for the organisation itself. Even though up to 56 clauses were indeed modified, the guerrilla was totally aware of the demands which it could retract and those which seemed essential for the FARC's future. In this sense, the group may have made some concessions in terms of military hardware or transparency regarding illicit activities; however, it has not relinquished absolutely anything regarding the central concerns for its future, namely, the aforementioned political participation and the programme of agricultural and rural policies, which allows the FARC to directly influence the political spectrum while maintaining their political and geographical capital (*The Economist*, 2016b).

On the one hand, the clauses referring to the group's political participation in the original text remain immutable in the definitive agreement. The eligibility of FARC members to run for public office is emphasised, and the guerrilla is guaranteed five seats in each of the two chambers of the legislature in the next two elections. Moreover, instead of, as Malamud (2016) requests, renovating a traditional leadership closely linked to violence and terrorism, the definitive agreement assures the possibility for convicted war criminals to occupy those seats (*The Economist*, 2016b). On the other hand, the rural programme agreed between the Colombian government and the guerrilla does not only move towards the left-wing spectrum, but also contains some provisions that complicate the modification of that programme in the future. As Serrano (2017) illustrates, although more territories will not be expropriated, the peace accord establishes that the government will provide the guerrilla with almost ten million hectares, which will be part of a "peasant, familiar and communal economy" socially, politically and economically dominated by the group itself.

This analysis suggests that the peace accord, even the definitive one, does not only respond to the FARC's strategy, but also reflects their pretensions in an empirical manner. Although subtler, the modified text still constitutes a concession of certain prerogatives, which turns logical if considering that the organisation is an essential promoter of the agreement. Simultaneously, as Ospina (2016) reasons, the "FARC-favourable" provisions of the accord have allowed the guerrilla to claim that the inequities and brutality of the state compelled it to wage its insurgency in the past. The armed group claims to speak for a broad social base and simply denies the extent to which it has, for decades, privileged assault on the innocent as its principle methodology for waging war. Even though there is no crime that it has not committed, the FARC dares to insist that the facts of history "are being decided by various truth commissions and international panels."

## Final findings: the peace agreement is unlikely to end conflict

The peace accord emanates from the FARC. This has been the central argument of this essay. Notwithstanding, a last question remains unaddressed: what derives from such a statement? Here it is where this essay proposes its final finding: the signing of the peace accord is unlikely to entail the end of Colombia's conflict. Indeed, the rationale behind this argument is based on the idea that a peace process that has mainly depended on the guerrilla's will might hardly have a totally positive impact on the Colombian society. When this essay suggests, however, that the end of the conflict is not likely to occur, it is not claiming that terrorism and violence will continue to devastate the Colombian society. On the contrary, it seems probable that the accord initiates a period of peace that uproots the issue of terrorism from the Colombian nation. However, considering the underlying origin of the agreement and the examined dynamics in this essay, it seems equally probable that the Colombian conflict does not organise in terms of terrorism, but in political and social terms. In other words, the end of violence and terrorism in Colombia does not mean the end of conflict.

Assuming the successful signing of the peace accord, there can be two forms in which conflict may materialise in Colombia. The first one refers to the new political dimension of the FARC that has been analysed previously in this essay. The FARC might use the long-drawn-out peace talks and their potential new status to cultivate the position that Colombian democracy is not "authentic" or even not legitimate (Ospina, 2016). The government tend to argue that, if such ideas are defended from a legal framework and a political perspective, the situation will be healthy.

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Indeed, the situation seems healthy in terms of violence, but this misses the point that FARC has shifted their emphasis to a different line of effort, away from “violence leads” to forming front organisations in order to wage political warfare, while solidifying their position abroad (*ibid*). Their intent is thus to emerge as a strong political party leading a rewriting of the constitution, which was the methodology for bringing the communist M19 group into the political mainstream in the late 1980s. FARC’s orientation is not one of reintegration into democratic politics, but one arguably designing a plan to destroy democracy in favour of their Marxist-Leninist alternative. As the FARC have not abandoned these Marxist-Leninist objectives, only cloaked their ideology with language appropriate to the twenty-first century, their mere presence in the political arena will presumably generate a considerable level of conflict in terms of social division and societal polarisation.

The second form in which conflict may materialise in the country refers to the possibility that certain members of the guerrilla lay down weapons in order to conduct other illicit activities. According to Petras (2017), the peace accord favours a situation in which, while some FARC leaders secure seats in Congress and the freedom to run in elections, the young rank and file FARC fighters and peasants are left without many alternatives but to join paramilitary or drug cartels. In this case, terrorism might also be eradicated from Colombia, but conflict appears in terms of illegality and drug trafficking. The incorporation of many FARC rebels to the drug trafficking cartels or any other illegal group or guerrilla, as Oppenheimer (2016) claims, would reinforce the final conclusion of this whole essay: the peace accord will not terminate the Colombian conflict.

## Conclusion

For the past half-century, Colombia has always been depicted within a narrative that portrays the violence of the country as a civil war. The societal turmoil of the country has made it to divide against itself, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 revealed to the world. In this respect, this essay has demonstrated the evident link existing between the peace accord and a renewed FARC strategy, reaching the innovative conclusion that the signing of the peace agreement will not end the Colombian conflict. The first contribution of this paper is the suggestion that the guerrilla constitutes the driving force promoting the peace agreement. By arguing this, the paper is not excluding the government’s role in the process. On the contrary, it assumes that the government has always searched for an agreement, but it reasons that the present deal has come in this moment precisely because it has been only now that the FARC has pursued such an agreement. The reason why the group has selected this moment to sign the peace resides in its decline. The FARC saw themselves in such a debilitated position that continuing with the traditional military strategy would have led to their extinction. Thus, the guerrilla contemplated two alternative strategies: radicalisation and institutionalisation. The radicalisation strategy would have changed the intensity the group’s violence, but not its nature, thus increasing the possibilities that the FARC extinguished. The institutionalisation strategy, for its part, allowed the guerrilla, through a process of political aperture, to increase its significance while maintaining its essence and its main objectives in the new Colombian context. As this strategy contemplated the negotiation with the government for a peace agreement, the conclusion is reached that such negotiation perfectly fits within the FARC renewed strategy, which suggests that the actor controlling the dynamics of the negotiations becomes the guerrilla itself.

In order to empirically prove the FARC’s influence over the peace accord, both the original and the definitive texts have been analysed. Arguably, the peace accords constitute a clear concession of certain prerogatives to the guerrilla, something which becomes logical by considering that the FARC are the driving vector of the agreement. Considering this meticulous assessment of the theme, the essay has concluded with its ultimate finding: the signing of the peace accord is unlikely to entail the end of Colombia’s conflict. Because the peace accord has mainly depended on the guerrilla, it seems logical that its implementation does not cause the Colombian conflict to disappear. This statement should not be confused with the possibility that the peace deal ends terrorism and violence. Indeed, these are more than possible outcomes of the peace accord; however, the new scenario is likely to entail a reconfiguration of the Colombian struggle in such a way that the conflict cannot be measured in terms of terrorism anymore, but in terms of social division, political turmoil, societal polarisation and confrontation of illicit activities. As Rafael Correa’s quote pointed out at the beginning of this paper, the majority of Colombians did not vote against peace on 2 October, but instead, against the peace treaty. No one in Colombia wants to continue the war. Therefore, it remains to be seen how Colombians will react when they realised that their home country is immerse

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within a never-ending conflict.

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*Written by: Javier Martín Merchán*  
*Written at: Comillas Pontifical University*  
*Written for: Dr. Javier Gil Pérez*  
*Date written: November 2017*