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The FARC's behavior after the signing of the Peace Agreement

Section: MILITARY STUDIES

Scientific and technological research article

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El comportamiento de las FARC tras la firma de los acuerdos de La Habana

O comportamento das FARC após a assinatura do acordo de paz

Le comportement des FARC après la signature de l'accord de paix

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Abstract. The conjuncture produced by the convergence of multiple key events in the Colombian peace process, such as the signing of the final agreement ending the conflict and building a stable and lasting peace, the controversial plebiscite on the Colombian peace agreements in 2016, and the transformation of the insurgent Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) into the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force arouse the need to review the changes in strategy of the actors of this process. Accordingly, this article proposes a qualitative analysis of the evolution of the FARC's strategic behavior, in light of the conceptual developments of the theory of revolutionary fertility, which is based on the construction of a model with four study variables. The review from this model reveals that the guerrillas continue their process of adaptation and strategic insertion.

Keywords: internal armed conflict; non-obvious warfare; peace agreement; revolutionary war; strategic behavior.

Resumen. La coyuntura producida con ocasión de la convergencia de múltiples hechos clave en el proceso de paz colombiano (tales como la firma del Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera, el polémico plebiscito sobre los acuerdos de paz de Colombia en 2016 y la transformación del grupo insurgente Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia en Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común) plantea la necesidad de revisar los cambios en las estrategias de los actores de dicho proceso. Conforme a esto, el presente artículo propone un análisis cualitativo de la evolución del comportamiento estratégico de las FARC, a la luz de los desarrollos conceptuales de la teoría de la fertilidad revolucionaria, en la cual se toma como base la construcción de un modelo con cuatro variables de estudio. La revisión desde dicho modelo permite observar que la guerrilla continúa su proceso de adaptación e inserción estratégica.

Palabras clave: acuerdo de paz; comportamiento estratégico; conflicto armado interno; guerra no evidente; guerra revolucionaria.

Resumo. A conjuntura produzida pela convergência de vários eventos-chave no processo de paz na Colômbia, como a assinatura do acordo final para o término do conflito e a construção de uma paz estável e duradoura, o plebiscito controversa em acordos de paz na Colômbia em 2016, e a transformação do grupo insurgente Forças Armadas Revolucionárias da Colômbia (FARC) em Força Alternativa Revolucionária do Comum desperta a necessidade de rever as mudanças na estratégia dos atores desse processo. Conseqüentemente, este artigo propõe uma análise qualitativa da evolução do comportamento estratégico das FARC, à luz dos desenvolvimentos conceituais da teoria da fertilidade revolucionária, que se baseia na construção de um modelo com quatro variáveis de estudo. A revisão desse modelo revela que os guerrilheiros continuam seu processo de adaptação e inserção estratégica.

Palavras-chave: acordo de paz; comportamento estratégico; conflito armado interno; guerra não óbvia; guerra revolucionária.

Résumé. La conjuncture produite par la convergence de plusieurs faits clés du processus de paix en Colombie, comme la signature de l'accord final d'achèvement du conflit et de la construction d'une paix stable et durable, le plébiscite controversé sur les accords de paix colombien en 2016 et la transformation du groupe d'insurgés Forces armées révolutionnaires de Colombie (FARC) en la Force alternative révolutionnaire commune soulève le besoin de revoir les changements dans la stratégie des acteurs de ce processus. En conséquence, cet article propose une analyse qualitative de l'évolution du comportement stratégique des FARC, à la lumière des développements conceptuels de la théorie de la fertilité révolutionnaire, qui est basé sur la construction d'un modèle à quatre variables d'études. La révision de ce modèle révèle que la guérilla poursuit son processus d'adaptation et d'insertion stratégique.

Mots-clés: accord de paix ; comportement stratégique ; conflit armé interne ; guerre non évidente ; guerre révolutionnaire.

Introduction

This document is the product of a keenness to understand how the prominent events prompted by the current situation of peace and conflict in Colombia has generated an impact and a change in the strategies of the actors involved. Specifically, the need surfaces to review the transformation of the strategic behavior of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (today, Common Alternative Revolutionary Force) in its pursuit for an effective and sustainable insertion in the different areas of political, economic, and ideological life of society (Pécaut, 2008; “La reincorporación de las FARC...”, 2017).

The relevance of analyzing the phenomenon described derives not only from the objective of achieving greater clarity on the perpetually complex process and dynamics of the Colombian internal armed conflict, but also from the immense need to find comprehensive and adequate approaches to understand (and, in the best of the cases, to warn and predict) the behaviors, sometimes enigmatic before the non-informed point of view, of the FARC.

For these reasons, and with the aim of addressing such issues theoretically and analytically, this article aims to provide an informed and qualitative reflection on the evolution of the FARC's strategic behavior. It considers the conceptual developments of the theory of revolutionary fertility,¹ in which the construction of a model composed of four study variables is used as the basis of analysis. The review of the behavior based on this qualitative model allows us to observe that, despite the multiple challenges and problems, the guerrillas continue their process of adaptation and strategic insertion in the new dynamics of peace and conflict in Colombia.

To achieve this objective, and to examine and support these assertions, the document proposes a structure of three interconnected parts. The first part explores the conjuncture of the internal armed conflict that took place between 2016 and 2017, in which particular emphasis is placed on the milestones that constituted its factual dynamic while exploring some of its implications regarding the strategic behavior of the FARC.

In the second part, the self-developed theoretical-practical model, aimed at studying the strategic behavior of the FARC (inspired by the theory of revolutionary fertility), is presented, and the corresponding analysis is carried out, using this actor's activities and discourses as a reference. Finally, in the third part, an account of the

1 In general terms, this concept refers to the study of the conditions and probabilities under which it is more or less feasible to seriously consider (and in terms of scores) the seizure of power by an insurgent group. It should be noted that such studies take into account variables of context and compositional variables of the armed groups, their relative position among the population, and the possibilities of solving structural problems endured by particular societies, among other factors (Torrijos, 2006).

main findings of the analysis is made, in which a series of conclusions of the study of the FARC's strategic insertion in key areas of the policy, economy, and ideology of national life.

The conjuncture of the internal armed conflict between 2016 and 2017

The conjuncture of the internal armed conflict can be summarized, non-exclusively, by the confluence of three milestones of high relevance for Colombia: a) the signing of a final peace agreement between the delegations in August 2016 (with the subsequent rejection of this first agreement at the polls, in October of that same year); 2) the signing of a second agreement in November 2016, after adjustments by the delegations after considering the claims and proposals of the spokespersons of the “no,” after the plebiscite; and 3) the beginning of the formal transition of the FARC towards legality as a future political party, with the implication –among others– of its new moniker, Common Alternative Revolutionary Force.

After almost four years of arduous negotiations in Havana (Cuba), the obtaining of a first final agreement in August 2016 by the delegations of the Colombian government and the FARC, stands out. This momentous event, which marks for some the end of more than 52 years of war between the Colombian State and the FARC guerrillas, represents a point of substantial fracture in the history of the country, as peace has been a longstanding national desire, which has been impossible “due to the historical confrontation of Colombians, motivated by ideological, political, economic, and social interests, producers of the disintegration of the social fabric.” (Turriago, 2016, p.161)

Never in all its history has Colombia managed to close a bellicose chapter as far-reaching as the one ending the confrontation between the FARC and the Colombian State; nor does the scope of the latest agreements show greater precedents. In fact, only the Constitution of 1991 and the peace between Liberals and Conservatives (1957) set a precedent for a political pact of this caliber. Not since the *Revolución de los Comuneros*, at the end of the 18th century, had the populace seen such an ambitious political pact between the elite and popular sectors (“¿Es esta una paz sin precedentes?...”, 2016).

However, the result of the plebiscite for popular support of the agreement to end the armed conflict between the State and the FARC was mostly negative. Beyond the massive mobilizations called by the youth and promoters of the continuity of the peace agreements, the results in the polls revealed at least three significant implications:

1. The existence of a polarized Colombia, at least, regarding the mechanism for ending the war with the FARC, manifested in a kind of center-periphery relationship in which the geographical and institutional periphery voted “yes” massively, while the geographical and institutional center voted “no” in the same way.
2. Irrespective of the final result, the historical phenomenon of abstention persisted, added to the opposite effects of the political climate and indifference to a crucial juncture.
3. The low statistical difference between the “yes” and the “no,” which results in a sensitive dynamic for the parties in negotiation and a subject of debate against the viable perspectives of achieving the right of the victims to the anticipated guarantees and the constitutional right of everyone to live in peace (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento [CODHES], 2016).

Although the voting showed a majority tendency of 50.24% in favor of the “no” option, the final data revealed that the regions of the country were divided between the two options. The division was most evident in the way the department capitals voted given the situations in many of the areas considered the focal points of the armed conflict. For instance, the results revealed that the “no” won in 15 department capitals, while the “yes” prevailed in 17. In the coastal and border areas, the “yes” was predominant, while in the interior, where the largest electoral census is concentrated, the “no” won (Basset, 2018; “La periferia perdió ante el centro...”, 2016).

From an economic approach to the center-periphery aspect, a sort of relation was found between the most impoverished areas (measured according to the index of multidimensional poverty or unsatisfied basic needs [UBN]) and those that predominantly voted “yes.” In the regions with the highest percentage of UBN, the “yes” vote found solid support. Meanwhile, in a significant number of municipalities where the UBN was under 50% the vote for “yes” was marginal. An inverse relationship was found, when the “yes” vote is associated with the active presence of the State; that is, the fewer the formal institutions, the higher the favorability towards the Havana agreements (Álvarez & Garzón, 2016).

With the charge of attending to and scrutinizing the requirements of the sectors opposed to the original agreement, the delegations took more than forty days to adjust the original document, which included changes in almost sixty different topics. Having maintained its initial structure and deciding that Congress would endorse this second agreement, the parties made four main changes (Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz [OACP], 2016, “Los 10 cambios fundamentales...”, 2016):

1. Block of constitutionality: The peace agreement does not form part of the constitutional block. The guarantee of compliance is the commitment of the parties to carry out the agreement in good faith. Concerning the State, the principles of the agreement will be an interpretation parameter to guide its normative and practical application.
2. Writs of protection: it was established that the Constitutional Court would review the writs of protection against decisions by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz [JEP]*); this opens up the possibility that by way of exclusion of guardianship, the Constitutional Court becomes the court of absolute and definitive resolution.
3. Preciseness on the parameters of restriction of freedom: it was established that the Court for Peace must establish the territorial spaces where those punished must carry out their sentence and the schedules and place of residence of the persons carrying out the sentence.
4. Inventory of FARC assets: it was established that during the term of the abandonment of arms, the FARC would present an inventory of goods and assets, which will be used to repair the victims.

Because no other insurgent group has had the power and territorial control accumulated by the FARC, knowing how the armed group framed and developed its negotiating tactics is compelling, as well as visualizing, ultimately, the favorable and unfavorable results obtained, and the way in which they articulate transversally with a logic of strategic behavior coherent with their original objectives.

Therefore, when studying the evolution of this group's strategic behavior, the examination of the beginning of the FARC's formal transition to legality as a future political party constitutes an exercise of central importance. Its change of name from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia to Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, previously referenced as a milestone in the context of the internal armed conflict, evidences only one of many elements in the process of profound strategic adjustment that is well worth exploring.

The stride towards the conversion of the FARC from an illegal armed organization to a political party with legal identity is part of a larger process pertaining to the reincorporation of the insurgent group into civil life, politically, economically, and socially. As agreed during the negotiations, the new party would only be recognized after the end of the process of abandonment of arms and with the fulfillment of the conditions required by law, save the attainment of a determined number of votes in the Congressional elections (“Así será la participación política”, 2016; “Timochenko dice que con transición...”, 2017).

However, as a preamble to the FARC's last constituent congress, the group's leader confirmed that once they become a political party, they will not change their "ideological grounds" or their "society project" for Colombia.² This statement is coherent with the text, *Tesis de abril por un Partido para construir la paz y la perspectiva democrático-popular* (April Thesis; Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo [FARC-EP], 2017), a document of preparatory principles for the founding congress of the FARC Party.

In this regard, thesis 47, "The nature and organizational principles of the Party" states that it must be founded in consonance with the precepts defined during the Tenth National Guerrilla Conference, which establish a Party modeled "in Marxism, Leninism, Bolivarian emancipatory thinking and, in general, in the sources of critical and revolutionary thought of the peoples and in particular of the FARC-EP"; moreover, it must be "a revolutionary and class party, and according to its historical communist tradition. In this sense, its organizational principles will be inspired by Leninism and the accumulated experiences of organization and struggle of the popular camp." (FARC-EP, 2017, p. 36)

In the end, the founding congress, where it had been declared that the FARC would make important decisions for its political future (such as the new party's character and statutes or its possible courses of alliance in the face of the 2018 elections), derived in the following outcomes (also relevant in understanding the FARC's change of strategic behavior):

- a. Many of the delegates participating in the Congress to debate the pillars of the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force were from the Clandestine Colombian Communist Party, better known as PCCC.
- b. Luciano Marín (Iván Márquez) was elected director of the Party with 888 votes among the votes of almost 1,200 delegates who deliberated for five days. Pablo Catatumbo attained the second ballot with 866 votes.
- c. It was decided that Party leadership would be collegial and consist of 111 members. This body would be responsible for appointing the executive management body (National Political Council), the director of the Party and the ten militants who would occupy the seats in the Senate and House of Representatives the following year (Moreno, 2017).

2 In his speech, during the installation of the congress in which they will become a political party, Rodrigo Londoño explained that the FARC will persist in "taking Colombia to the full exercise of its national sovereignty and making it current," by seeking the establishment "a democratic political regime that guarantees peace with social justice, respect for human rights, and economic development with well-being for all." ("Timochenko dice que con transición...", 2017)

Along with the administrative and logistical decisions, and as expected after Londoño's opening speech, the group also adopted a series of resolutions of a political and discursive order, which would constitute the programmatic basis of action of the administrative apparatus already described.

Concerning this aspect, and using the contents of the Central Report to the Founding Congress of the new political Party (Estado Mayor Central de las FARC-EP, 2017) as a reference, four points stand out, among others.

The first is "reaching the heart of the population." For the group, this means overcoming the "social and cultural stigmatization and distortion" to which it has been subjected to undermine the true purposes of its armed uprising.

The second is the FARC's reaffirmation of its "full disposition to approach the Commission for the Clarification of Truth and Special Jurisdiction for Peace" to present the truth and assume responsibilities but demand that the same is done by the State and of all those involved in the conflict.

The third point is "the construction of a new political strategy." The FARC maintains its strategic plan of seizing power and aspires to "shape a new political and social power of transformation and improvement of the existing social order," advancing towards the achievement of a true, deep-rooted, advanced, direct, self-managed, and community-based democracy. This strategy is incorporated into a "dual political and strategic action." On the one hand, the FARC will conceive its political action as a cog in the dispute for the power of the State, including access to positions of representation and government at different levels³. On the other hand, they will conceive it as an axis in the production of a new "bottom-up" social power within the different social sectors.

Lastly, the need for a "transitional government" is highlighted, which is understood as an essential element to guarantee favorable conditions to implement the *final* Peace Agreement of 2016. To this end, the FARC intends to work "for a transitional government of great democratic coalition, at the same time, for a movement of movements of great national convergence" (Central Staff of the FARC-EP, 2017; Gómez, 2017a). Already in their "preparatory thesis of the founding congress," the FARC explain that, given that the "scope of a political transition after the signing of peace agreements cannot be left to the so-called traditional political class," it becomes peremptory the formation of a government of transition, which avoids the "closure of the rebellion consisting of simple systemic absorption" and in the opposite sense allows the proposal of an alternative vision to the current neoliberal policies for the 2018 elections (Arteta, 2017; FARC -EP, 2017).

3 For the FARC, access to all levels of the political-administrative organization of the State will solely be a means to influence the transformation from within, concerning budgets of democratic expansion and enabling better conditions for development (Estado Mayor Central de las FARC-EP, 2017).

The strategic behavior of the FARC: a critical look from the revolutionary fertility model

Understanding the peace processes in Colombia as a means to resolve the armed conflict peacefully is a mistake; this was acutely evident during the government of Andrés Pastrana. Any peace process must also be understood as an opportunity for the parties in conflict to achieve, through unarmed means, their different political objectives. In other words, they are instruments of peace that, without the will of all concerned, can or could have been “used as instruments to advance the war agendas of the actors.” (Kriger, 2003, p. 14)

In the Colombian case, the FARC has always surmised the negotiation processes as political alternatives to achieve objectives, unattainable for more than twenty years with the use of force; this is especially palpable in recent years, given that although, initially, the insurgent group formed of a capable army with the intention to cause the Armed Forces rout, with clear and forceful strategic value in the nineties, this escalation only lasted until 1998. This year, “the guerrillas sustained a strategic defeat that forced them to abandon the idea of advancing a war of positions and return to guerrilla warfare.” (Moreno, 2006, p. 606)

In a broad historical sense, all negotiations with the FARC have always transpired within the framework of a clash of perspectives and interests. On the one hand, the insurgent group has always aimed (indifferent to the deadline) to modify the Colombian political system, always considering its possible participation in the national government as an alternative. On the other hand, the various democratically elected governments have always pursued the group's disarmament, offering schemes for reinsertion to civilian life, however, subscribing to a restricted agenda of issues that do not contradict a current and “desirable” *status quo*. Given the implications of the issue, the researcher of the Institute of Geostrategic Studies (*Instituto de Estudios Geoestratégicos* [IEG]), Edgar Peñuela (2001, p. 28) advises that:

[...] it is necessary, in Colombia, to analyze the peace process, as a strategic game of the parties to obtain political ends, contrary to the current position of many sectors that see the process naively, summarized in the demobilization of the armed uprisings and the end of the armed actions. The peace process, as a strategic-political means, is another option that the parties have to achieve all or part of the goals proposed by the armed struggle.

Taking the bilateral ceasefire of 1982, during the administration of President Belisario Betancur as precedent, the FARC's innate strategic behavior has evolved and become so sophisticated that it has always managed to exploit numerous political advantages from each and every peace effort and dialogue. The roundtable of Havana,

by its characteristics, scope, dynamics, and time extension, constituted one of the best alternatives (if not the best opportunity, so far) for the rebel group to advance its agenda in all fields, especially, in politics and economics (Gonyalons, 2017; Peñuela, 2001).

The prior would be consistent with the FARC's position of the "combination of all forms of battle," which guided its political and military actions. This position consisted of combining all the possibilities of battle, including from legal to clandestine efforts, and from battles of revindication to the construction of a "revolutionary people's army"; this also meant actions aimed at converging the urban and popular uprisings in the main cities with the armed action of the insurgency in the countryside and rural areas. For the specific case of rural guerrilla activity, the FARC insisted on the need to be guided by the tactics of mobile guerrilla warfare.

Although the Government has also displayed a strategic behavior, in pursuit of a negotiated resolution to the oldest armed conflict in the hemisphere, its goal to convict the FARC by offering them in return all the guarantees necessary to achieve the successful end of the process—sometimes yielding to central and national issues—has evidently placed it in an intricate and disadvantageous position (Rodríguez, 2016).

The morphological changes in revolutionary warfare expose how relinquishing its apparatus for violence (through the abandonment of arms) shifts the FARC's efforts to new dimensions and new instruments of "non-obvious warfare⁴." These instruments manifestly aim to drive or coordinate their access to the State (both nationally and subnationally) and, from there, gradually implement the postulates of its Platform for a Government of National Reconciliation and Reconstruction (*Plataforma de un Gobierno de reconstrucción y reconciliación nacional*, 1993)⁵ and its "Revolutionary Rebirth of the Masses" (Plan Renacer Revolucionario de las Masas,

4 The term refers to a method of veiled aggression in which the State or other actors with true capacity and will manage to attack each other in multiple ways without the victim being clear on exactly (and in a rather simple way) who did it or even who was responsible for the action (Libicki, 2012, p. 19).

5 A programmatic proposal based on a document signed in 1993 on the thirtieth anniversary of the former guerrilla organization. At that time, the project proposed a ten-point agenda to guide the work of a "pluralist, patriotic, and democratic" national government, namely: 1) a political solution to the serious conflict in the country; 2) the imposition of a "Bolivarian" military doctrine and national defense of the State; 3) national, regional, and municipal democratic participation in decisions affecting society's future; 4) development and economic modernization with social justice, being the State the primary holder and administrator in the strategic sectors; that is, the energy and communications sector, public services, roads, ports, and natural resources; 5) 50% of the national budget invested in social welfare; 6) higher taxes will be imposed on those with greater wealth to make the redistribution of income effective; 7) an agrarian policy that democratizes credit, technical assistance, and marketing (total stimulus to industry and agricultural production); 8) exploitation of natural resources such as oil, gas, coal, gold, nickel, emeralds, and others to benefit the country and its regions; 9) international relationships with all the countries of the world in compliance with the right to self-determination of peoples and mutual benefit, as well as the complete revision of the military pacts and the interference of the powers in Colombian internal affairs; and 10) provide a solution to the issues of production, commercialization, and consumption of narcotics and hallucinogens, understood, above all, as a critical social problem that cannot be dealt with militarily (Conferencia Nacional de Guerrilleros, 1993).

2008)⁶,” projects that they have not abandoned, merely adjusted strategically because of their correlation with their persistent ideological discourse.

This study proposes an analytical approach based on the theory of revolutionary fertility, combined with contributions from other relevant sources and disciplines to analyze this complex phenomenon of strategic behavior. In keeping with the reflections by Torrijos (2006) and the contributions and ideas of Farah (2016), Sindre and Söderström (2016), Raymond (2014), De Zeeuw (2008), Dudouet (2007), and Goldman (1990), the model implemented for this research (Figure 1) is based on four interdependent analytical variables, designed to examine the nature and extent of the FARC's formal transformation into a political party. This transformation is understood here as a product of the evolution and sophistication of its strategic behavior.

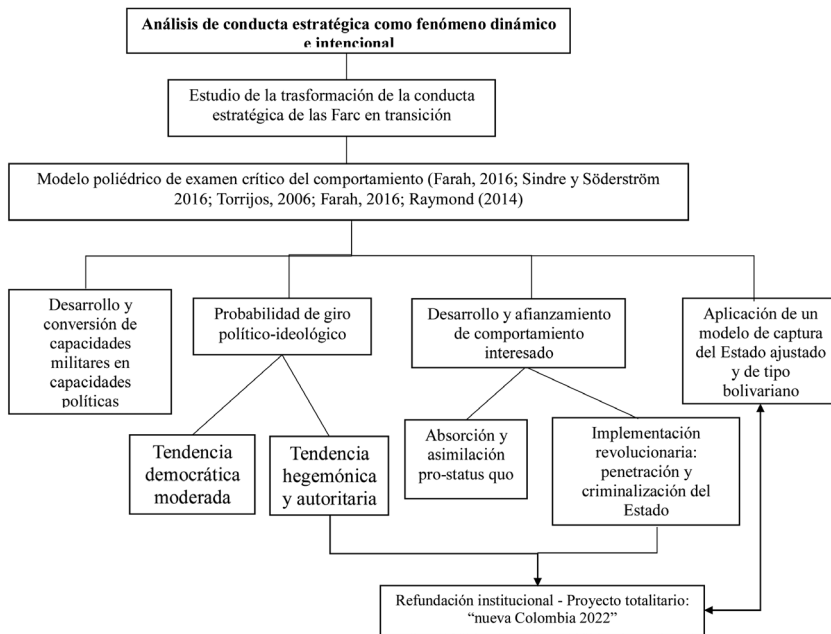


Figure 1. Polyhedral model of critical examination of strategic behavior.

Source: Created by the authors based on information by Dudouet (2007), De Zeeuw (2008), Farah (2016), Goldman (1990), Sindre and Söderström (2016), Söderström (2014), Raymond (2014), and Torrijos (2006).

6 This new protocol, outlined by the Secretariat in 2008, is an attempt to prevent a military defeat and recover lost political leverage, seeking to “resuscitate” the organization before national and international public opinion. It proposes, among other things: 1) a strong effort of infiltration and control of movements and social organizations; 2) the use of guerrilla warfare in response to Plan Colombia and the Democratic Security Policy; 3) rethinking failing international efforts, after the death of Raúl Reyes and the evidence found on their computers; and 4) strengthen relations with Venezuela and develop joint work with the ELN in some regions of the country (Castaño, 2008).

A central component to ending civil wars and, hence, insurgent activity is to find new political solutions to old political conflicts. One of these solutions has sometimes been to convert armed groups into political parties. However, convincing long-standing belligerent structures to shift from arms to the formalized democratic political polls is not an easy task. Even when armed groups are converted into political parties, the challenges for democracy, peace, and security continue in the long term. Here, an analysis from each of the four variables that make up the polyhedral model of critical analysis of the FARC's strategic behavior is proposed to expose some of the central challenges in converting this group into a political party.

Development and conversion of military capabilities into political capacities

The majority of internal wars ended since 1989 have included some efforts to implement or strengthen democracy as part of peace commitments. It is usually thought that democratic devices are powerful, non-violent strategies implemented to adjust and resolve social conflicts, allowing the advancement of one of the key transformations in societies that have endured the horrors of war. This implementation or strengthening—which may well include activities such as the restructuring of the old constitutions, training, and formation of new political parties, and organization of elections—is also seen as an effort to normalize politics and transfer the competence for aggression to the polls⁷ (Raymond, 2017; Vorrath, 2010).

Although success has been obtained in some sense, formal development is not enough. In recent years, various scholars have cautioned that processes such as periodic elections and other formal, democratic devices do not necessarily lead to functional democracy (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2010). In this regard, despite the global reach of democratic ideas and institutes after wars, a significant disparity between experiences and results persists. Some accomplishments are registered in the promotion of peaceful political competition, but failures persist, including the return of violence or the emergence of highly authoritarian regimes⁸ (Brancati & Snyder, 2011).

Reflecting on the reasons that explain this fluctuation in the electoral competitiveness of countries exiting conflict by implementing democratic devices, Raymond

7 This vision of democracy as a peacekeeping force has become a central element of development aid after a civil war, which can be traced back to the United Nations Peace Agenda of 1992. It is important to note that this conception of peacebuilding has evolved and other elements have been included, such as institutional construction, the prioritization of the formation of democratic governance, and the strengthening of the rule of law (Grasa & Mateos, 2014; Raymond, 2017).

8 While in Sierra Leone or El Salvador the transition from war to electoral peace actually seemed to lay a formal foundation for a strong democratic system of competition and political alternation, in cases like Tajikistan, post-conflict elections quickly became a seal of permanence for the government in office, which left the opposition with little or no chance of success (Raymond, 2017; Sriram, 2011).

(2015, 2017) maintains that one of the key factors to understand this phenomenon is the type of skills developed by combatants during the civil war; some prove to be more useful than others in subsequent elections. In understanding a group's post-conflict political behavior, this reflection pivots around the need to distinguish the abilities of the ex-combatants, defined loosely as the resources, skills, and organizational structures used by the group to achieve their objectives.

Raymond (2017) also proposes a typology of these combat abilities developed during the conflict and divides them into *specific* and *transferable skills*. While the former's utility is largely restricted to violence (fighting skills, and knowledge of remote terrain and military hardware), the latter can be arranged for use in various types of social mobilization (ethnic support networks, a populist ideology, the financing of a comprehensive diaspora or a highly developed political organization, among others). Rebel groups with transferable skills can be especially important because they can eventually challenge the traditional political parties and groups at the polls and in political contentions more effectively, given their entrenchment in important bases and support networks among the population (Raymond, 2017).

It is certainly evident that specific skills prove less useful in helping ex-combatants to achieve their ends, after the conflict, through institutionalized political processes, such as elections. However, in some particular circumstances, and even in a planned and organized manner, "ex-combatants can force their opponent's hand with threats of renewed conflict, but this differs from success in adapting to new forms of competition."⁹ (Raymond, 2017, p. 243)

It is also important to highlight that the success in post-conflict election processes depends, to a large extent, on a combatant organization's transferable skills (evaluated in comparison to other actors). In this regard, when a single demobilized group has enough accumulated transferable skills, it could eventually "dominate post-conflict elections and consolidate political power, even when it has not managed to dominate the conflict militarily." (Raymond, 2017, p. 243) Differently, when multiple opposition groups seek individual access to power, traditional elites can maintain political dominance by buying the support of some of the groups and excluding others.

In the case of the FARC, although their repertoire of specific skills is undeniable, the evolution of strategic behavior that we are witnessing today indicates their deep trust in their transferable skills, aimed at achieving their historical, political objectives

9 "Participation in elections does not necessarily force combatants to renounce the option of renewed violence, particularly when their skills are transferable between military and electoral competition. While combatants, and particularly rebel groups, may prefer the resumption of violence to the risk of nearing elections, those with transferable skills may keep their options open. In fact, a group could organize their ethnic networks to vote while being warned about a possible return of the war, keeping secret hiding places for weapons, for example." (Raymond, 2017, p. 257)

in the long-term. Small wonder since for years, the FARC has been investing significant human and material resources in mass work, in the political struggle, urban action, terrorism with great publicity impact, penetration of State structures, justice, grassroots unions, and the consolidation of so-called popular power and the establishment of loyal political cadres (camouflaged within rural and indigenous communities, universities, academic centers, the media, and even some NGOs), emphasizing the strengthening of the “International Front.” (Pataquiva, 2009; Peñuela, 2001)

This reflection on transferable skills should not be taken lightly with groups such as the FARC that have a vision and a defined and explicit political plan for taking power. The decision and juncture of wagering on disarmament and reintegration must also be read tactically; it evidently finds its explanation in the insurgent planning in which FARC ideologists and strategists stressed the need to exploit the war effort “to put an end to the system of government and continue with a national insurrection product of well-studied and applied political stratagems in other parts of the world, yielding excellent results in achieving the consolidation of its objectives.” (Guaquez, 2013, pp. 7-8) By exhausting the armed route, reaching a point of diminishing returns, and suffering a strategic defeat in 1998, it is possible that the FARC considered a readjustment of its plans to reach the “ideally insurreccional climax 2019,” and would have preferred a false diplomacy (or of warriors) in the last peace negotiations in search of substantial political advantages (Guaquez, 2013).

This group’s practical decisions have always been exceptionally realistic and their discourse on the “political solution of the conflict” has incessantly maintained its original pretension of making the government yield in a context of “military neutralization of forces” and conditions at the negotiating table. In this way, they intended to end the direct military confrontation, discounting the possibility or desire to exterminate the institutional Armed Forces militarily. However, unlike the military component, the political and insurreccional component has never been abandoned, and since the Ninth National Conference of Guerrillas, the group has insisted on the occurrence of a popular and urban uprising in the capital, in which the PCCC would have an essential role. The latter would be supported by the multiple militias and networks united by a large Bolivarian movement, which would be called upon to manage and precipitate, at the end of the process, the creation of a “government of national reconstruction and reconciliation.” (Bronstein, 2017; Peñuela, 2001; “Lo que la guerrilla quiere...”, 1998)

The probability of a political-ideological shift

Post-conflict political reintegration is typically divided into three areas. The first is the transformation of the military elite into a political elite, the second is the trans-

formation of armed groups into political parties, and the third, the transformation of individual grass root combatants into citizens. Now, besides the legal and logistical issues, behind each of these interconnected processes is the underlying idea that each group of actors must operate democratically and adopt democratic norms. Despite its conceptual simplicity, this “last stretch” often becomes a substantial challenge because ex-combatants and commanders (and their new political parties) can become politically functional but not necessarily democratically functional (Söderström, 2014).

In recent years, more than forty cases of attempted transformation of armed groups into political parties have been witnessed worldwide. In many of these cases, the groups had a partially political past, both in somewhat legal movements during a period or hidden and clandestine after initiating their armed rebellion. This element of the past or political profile is relevant because “the degree to which these groups were institutionalized politically before the armed struggle has important implications for the ease with which they can enter or re-enter electoral politics.” (Söderström, 2014, p. 2)

Its worth noting that, in an ideal sense, the main argument favoring the transition of armed groups into political parties or movements is that these groups can become functional channels to approach the central causes of the conflict while allowing for a formalized space for political activity to advance following democratic practices¹⁰. However, the structural and long-term implications for the democratic system may be more problematic and have been under-examined. In this regard, the disturbing element is the unfolding of the “likelihood of a political-ideological shift” of the new movements that –conspired with other variables of context and conjuncture– presents a paradigmatic issue when evaluating the democratic contribution of reintegration. According to Söderström (2014, p. 3), the issue of this probability is critical because “although there are some cases of long-term successful activities in democratic politics, there are many more examples of former armed groups that, having become political parties, have become authoritarian and have, in fact, limited the political arena to one dominant party.”

Among the variables that influence a strategic behavior towards a moderate democratic tendency or a hegemonic and authoritarian shift in trend, there are: a) the persistence of an armed organization's hierarchical and militant features; b) a set

10 Finding ways to approach conflicts peacefully is essential to building peace; this has often been the logic behind the international community's support for this transformation, beyond the fact that vital local actors can command this political haul to sign a peace treaty. Moving towards peace, the signing of an agreement is an important step, and offering promising external support or institutional protection and space for armed groups in transition can be an important incentive for signing the agreement. Interestingly, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, only 30 of the 216 peace agreements signed between 1975 and 2011 included provisions for the transformation of armed groups into parties or political movements (Söderström, 2014, pp. 2-3).

of politico-ideological values rooted in anti-democratic, nationalist or religious fundamentalist lines, partially or wholly opposed to the system established; and c) the patronage and high personalized leadership, even after completing its peaceful transition to the political scene. The combination of these variables, added to elements of context, increases the probability of affecting the pre-existing democratic system to the domain of a single party. This type of hegemonic and authoritarian shift was, and is, particularly evident in the case of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the Eritrean People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), and Uganda's National Resistance Movement (NRM) (Sindre & Söderström, 2016).

Table 1 is an effort to examine, partially and from the factors described above, the evolution of the FARC's strategic behavior, concerning its reincorporation as a party and the transfer of its revolutionary efforts to the field of electoral competition.

Table 1. Screening of the study factors of the political-ideological shift for armed groups in transition (case: FARC)

Factor	Elements evidenced in the FARC
Persistence of hierarchical and militant features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The FARC registers a hierarchical organization and a responsible high command. In fact, a structure and military hierarchy are easily distinguishable; this has allowed it to advance multiple functions throughout the territory, over an extended period. - The FARC and its members have shown, throughout the transition process, a high degree of discipline and political structure. - Institutionally, the internal hierarchies of the demobilized group have been taken into account. This has been done given the lessons of other worldwide processes, which suggest that granting a sort of preferential treatment to the middle cadres and managers “contributes to temporarily maintain the leadership structures and guide the bulk of the demobilized during the reincorporation.” - The nature and relevance of the internal hierarchy in the FARC is of such magnitude that it has challenged the very process of institutionalized Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) proposed by the government and has hampered the performance of the National Reincorporation Council (CNR)¹. The group's static discipline has been reflected in its demand for a collective process of reintegration “with cooperative projects in which the communities also participate and are rooted in the regions.”

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* According to Decree 2012 of 2016, the CNR is the “instance responsible for defining the activities and schedule, as well monitoring the process of reincorporation of the members into legal life, economically, socially, and politically, concomitant with their interests, and according to what is established in the Final Agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of stable and lasting peace.”

Factor	Elements evidenced in the FARC
Set of political-ideological values rooted in anti-democratic, nationalist or religious fundamentalist lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 61 “April theses” or the founding principles of the FARC political party reveal a consistent and strategic insistence on the old political and ideological visions and schemes of the guerrillas. In fact, the document reaffirms that the party will be based “on Marxism, Leninism, Bolivarian emancipatory thinking, and, in general, on the sources of critical and revolutionary thought of the peoples.” - As to the above, and by reason of thesis 47, this group establishes that the developing party construction, while continuing its long trajectory of struggle and ideology, “must comprehend efforts for new developments that enable the winning of the heart of the humble, the expropriated, and the dispossessed.” - In August 2017, during the first congress of the FARC as a political party, the supreme guerrilla leader, Rodrigo Londoño, affirmed that, although the FARC would be transformed into a “new exclusively political organization, which will exercise its activity by legal means,” it does not mean that they would renounce, in any way, to their ideological foundations or social projects. - During the same congress, the ex-combatants commended their leader when he confirmed that they will continue to be “as revolutionary” as when they were born, more than fifty years ago, and when he insisted that they will persist in their effort to “bring Colombia to full exercise of its national sovereignty and make it effective.”
Patronage and highly personalized leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The former guerrilla group’s high degree of personalized leadership has not only been a historical identity element, but it has also been acknowledged as one of its characteristic elements in its transition to political life. In this regard, it should be noted that, from Havana, the personalization took two ideological shades: a more open and wide-platform nuance, led by Londoño, Alape, Catatumbo, Granda, and Losada, and another, more conservative and dogmatic, headed by Márquez, Santrich, and Joaquín Gómez. - Although not an exact model replicating the internal dynamics of an existing secretariat and military command line (where the commander in chief had the last word), the revelation of a party that portrays a strongly static structure that is highly ideological and excluding of the dissidence, which poses serious risks of reproduction of such schemes in its external activity is remarkable. Among some of the identifiable elements in this trend are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internal structure divided into communes made up of five members, organized according to geographical criteria or by economic and social activity. • A high probability of occupying the spaces for institutional presentation based on the secretariat and the media and senior management. It is affirmed that Márquez and Catatumbo would head the lists of candidates for the Senate and the House of Representatives. Additionally, the 111 members of the Party leadership elected Rodrigo Londoño as the president of the Common Revolutionary Alternative Force.

Continúa tabla...

Factor	Elements evidenced in the FARC
Patronage and highly personalized leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization's exercise of veiled discrimination against dissidents or possible opponents, who must decide between the two lines raised by the high command or endure the indifference of the whole (this issue affects militants, militias, and members of the PCCC) .

Source: Created by the authors based on information by Arias, Herrera and Prieto (2010), Fundación Las Dos Orillas (2017), González (2016), Gómez (2017), Guaquez (2013), León (2017), “Farc dicen que seguirán con sus fundamentos...”, (2017), “El proyecto político de las Farc”, (2017), Robledo and Serrano (1999), and “Las FARC aún no resuelven...” (2017).

We can extract multiple and varied conclusions and reflections from the screening. However, for this analysis, we consider that these are the most prominent: a) The FARC is still concerned that they will be the “wrong type of political group”; this means that, in the end, they will be a political party without the ability or determination to sustain democratic lines; b) Several values historically expressed by the ex-insurgents, both expressly and collectively discussed internally, are generally located in an undemocratic dimension and, therefore, represent an obstacle to the parties’ democratic politics and each member’s democratic participation; and c) because of its record of human rights abuses and commission of war crimes –and its insistence on reproducing an internal political culture dominated by hierarchical and militant traits– it is natural (and even advisable) to review its proposals and strategic actions thoroughly, as well as question the feasibility of including this type of groups in the country’s political and institutional dynamics (Sindre & Söderström, 2016; Söderström, 2014).

Added to the above is the concern, in the short term, about what would ensue if the group find the results illegitimate in their first electoral competition and consequently decide to return to the mountains and weapons –as occurred in 1992 with the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

It is worth mentioning that, although these are real issues, they do not dictate the absolute compulsion to exclude all insurgent groups, *a priori*, from attempting this transformation (Leão, 2007; Söderström, 2014). Not only because of the possibility that peace processes introduce to obtain political benefits as an incentive to stop violence, but also because of the real possibilities that participation in regular politics will gradually tame and moderate the anti-democratic and authoritarian values of a determined re-integrated structure, re-channeling it in a genuine democratic direction. It can also be said that excluding all groups from participating in politics can instigate the radicalization of their followers markedly, providing grounds for a return to war. Contemporary examples such as the Nicaraguan case can illustrate, to a certain extent, these intertwined phenomena (Söderström, 2014).

Development and strengthening of behaviors of interest

As a guerrilla group and political grouping of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the FARC have had and will always have (in their status and DNA) the objective of establishing a socialist state in Colombia (Farah, 2016). At a conceptual level, this issue should not be alarming, in the strict sense, especially recognizing that a political party can be defined as an association of persons whose primary goal is to have or exercise the power of the State through its leaders. However, given that the function of state power is creating (and restoring) a model of development, harmony, and social coexistence, which generates visible and lasting effects on the lives of peoples and individuals, it is vital to review the principles, content, and discourses that support the groups pursuing and holding this power (Gómez, 2017; Rúa, 2013).

This debate is of particular interest in the light of the perennial process of delegitimization of several of the dominant institutions, such as the traditional parties, which have been deprived of the favor of citizens, among other things “because they have lost their ability to act as mediators and supporters of the interests of unprotected or persecuted groups, and have tolerated social decomposition, as in Colombia with the *Violencia* and current terrorism.” (Fals Borda, 1989, p. 62) This discrediting process has shifted the attention of voters and politicians to the proposals for change and transformation carried out by the new “movements, which allude, in addition, to three specific components: “resistance, insurrection, and constituent power.” (Boron, 2003, p. 5)

Contrary to established models, many activists, including insurgent groups, have noted that neither armed struggle nor parties, in the classical sense, are the only viable options to consolidate and obtain state power. However, although a partisan structure has not been fundamental for alternative groups to gain power (in the case of Cuba and Nicaragua), some experiences in the Southern Cone and in Africa reveal how some of these groups (including those of ex-insurgents) result in a “negative weight for change” by overplaying hierarchy and verticality. This occurs because of the vested interests (group or social class) to which they are reduced given their recurrent idealization of force and implementation of violence, as well as the manipulation and degradation that they often endure, in favor of their revolutionary efforts (Fals Borda, 1989, p. 63; Paramio, 2006).

It is feasible that the political party born of the FARC could experience the sizeable dilemma described above, which, in the model explained, distinguishes between two scenarios. The first is one of absorption and assimilation, in which it becomes a grouping with particular “*pro status quo*” tendencies that concedes its position in the political arena and develops opposition or coalition work depending on the politi-

cal-electoral calculation. The second is one of “revolutionary implementation” in which the nascent structure decides to continue with the exercise of various forms of struggle (financing, sabotage, penetration, and criminalization of the State) in the pursuit for the seizure of power to govern and build the “new Colombia.” Thereon, the FARC’s design to form a “National Transitional Government for 2018” has generated considerable controversy, as this term ordinarily “applies when a constitutional rupture or a coup is intending to establish a new regime.” (“FARC hablan de...”, 2016)

Given the current absence of a figure in the Colombian Constitution that considers the eventual existence of a transitional government, the term evokes problematic events such as those that occurred after the release of Hugo Chávez –prosecuted for the coup of February 4 of 1992– when he promised a “political transition that implied, among other things, the appointment of a National Constituent Assembly to draft a new National Constitution, the ‘death’ of the old Adeco-Copeyano oligarchic model, the birth of the Fifth Republic, and the establishment of a new era called the Bolivarian Revolution.” (“La promesa con la que Chávez...”, 2015)

In this regard, it is particularly important to observe the evolution of the FARC’s behavior according to their interests within the formal dimension of electoral competition, and this against the possibilities that their integration into the system manages to “tame and moderate” their undemocratic and authoritarian values. In fact, several of the group’s issues and expressions draw attention when reflecting on their eventual reintegration into Colombian democratic politics, before and during the negotiations. In the first place, it is a mistake to say that the FARC knows nothing about the elections. In the past, the group was denounced for their lengthy violent, extortive, and covert management over some local democratic processes, which they carried out as a form of territorial control (Cosoy, 2017).

Secondly, the event occurred in February 2017, when during the visit of six members of Congress in Havana to talk about political participation and victims, the guerrillas manifested their unambiguous disinterest in reaching the Congress, perceiving it as a failed and corrupt expression that distorted the popular desires. In fact, in the past, several FARC leaders have spoken contemptuously about the possibility of coming to elected office as a way to end hostilities and demobilize (Massé, 2013).

Lastly, because the FARC has never renounced its doctrine of revolutionary action, some have warned that since its transition they will seek to consolidate their already accumulated territorial and popular power in some areas of the country to deepen and exploit discontent and social struggles, taking them to the level of mobilizations and political struggle to undermine governance. In this regard, their strategy is to consider themselves as a new actor (outsider) with whom they must

negotiate and cede necessarily to “prevent” a deepening of the conflict¹¹ (Aguilera, 2013; Calle, 2015).

Application of an adjusted and Bolivarian-type state capture model

Although the most negative predictions (even after the defeat of the agreement in the plebiscite) have had to be revised, uncertainties persist about the real and total disposition of the FARC to play according to the rules of participatory democracy. These concerns are understandable, in part, because the FARC—a Marxist insurgency, extant after more than fifty years of strife through the development of prosperous, highly criminalized, and enormously profitable clandestine structures—are not strictly enforced (given the State’s shortcomings and the impossibility of detailed control) to dismantle these dynamics, behaviors, and structures, even after a relatively formal transition from war to politics (Farah, 2016; Samacá, 2017).

It should be noted that some the FARC’s most important advisors during the negotiations were the highest leaders of other Latin American revolutionary movements that have maintained their clandestine structures intact, such as the Farabundo Martí Communist Party Front (FMLN) in El Salvador and the Ortega wing of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua. Not only have some of these structures become the most powerful organizations in Central America, but they have also played an important role in the preservation and strengthening of the parties and ex-insurgent groups’ power in their respective countries (Farah, 2016; González, 2009; Rogers, 2010).

These advisers, who still define themselves as Leninists in their discourse, affirm that the Marxist revolution must continue by any means available. The FARC are not alien to this belief and, having lost the war militarily, now aspire to redirect their revolutionary efforts from other areas (economy and politics), perhaps, not entirely playing a constructive democratic role but with the objective to take power and keep it in perpetuity, following the path outlined by Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, Daniel Ortega, and Evo Morales (Cohrs, 2015; Farah, 2016).

That said, if the variables for the case of the FARC take on the values of “hegemonic and authoritarian tendency” and “revolutionary implementation,” it is highly

11 It is worth remembering that, since 2013, during the complicated peace negotiations, the FARC have defended ironically “the idea that social movements are much more representative of the interests of the people than political parties (which they perceive as corrupt, with paltry autonomy against the government in power, not representative of the interests of their represented),” and even demanded at the roundtable in Havana “that the guarantees of a possible Statute for the Opposition be extended to these social mobilizations.” Then and now, both the government and observers have opposed these requirements “because they consider that, if it advances, the political parties would burst open and a path towards authoritarianism will be opened.” (León, 2013)

feasible to consider a high risk of attempting to apply a fitted and Bolivarian-type state capture model. If this is the case, they would be in harmony with the Bolivarian version of the FARC model, which borrows some elements from the experiences of several revolutionary movements that were much more successful in the political field than the Colombian group and also finds in the co-optation and accumulation of government resources the key to achieving almost total state control (Bulmer-Thomas, 2013; De la Torre, 2017; Farah, 2016).

In this regard, the FARC can already count on many useful lessons from its allies in the Bolivarian Revolution, which triumphed in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Suriname. Among the most significant teachings is the recognition that the time of the armed revolution in Latin America had passed and, in its place, the insurgent groups had to look for realistic and duly elaborated means towards lasting power. As an adaptable booklet, the described cases reveal the continuation of the following tactics for the achievement of this objective (Åsedotter, 2016; Corrales, 2010; Farah, 2016; Pestana & Latell, 2017):

- De-legitimize corrupt and inefficient democratic governments through mass civil unrest and selective violence.
- Attain the elections with a broad coalition and subsequently demand a “re-founding” of the State based on the rewriting of the Constitution and a dynamic of alternating power, unsustainable for the opposition.
- Oust all moderates from the governing party and label those who resist deviating towards authoritarianism as “traitors” and “counterrevolutionaries.”
- Decollate the army and police from their leadership and replace the high command with ideologically compatible officers, by the implementation of a policy of strict and permanent doctrinal training.
- Promote criminal activity, in particular, the trafficking of cocaine, as a way to generate resources to buy the loyalty of the armed forces, the political base, and the corruptible members of the corporate elites.
- Suppress free media, corrupt and cooperative judicial powers, and weaken state institutions through media laws, tests of allegiance, and control of all branches of government, allowing political opponents to be imprisoned without charge and to replace critical media with government information offers of a national and permanent nature.

Some points of the previous, added to the contents in several of the known governing documents of the nascent FARC political group, reflect that they are already taking some concrete actions to follow this model. For example, they have designed a roadmap with the help of their advisers from the Bolivarian bloc who know first-

hand the successes and errors of this strategy when it comes to taking and maintaining power for years. It can also be seen how the ex-insurgents, while anticipating to transfer their considerable economic sums to safe haven in El Salvador, Panama, and Nicaragua, have helped to finance and support transport strikes and civil unrest, and have even admitted to other movements that, although not ideologically related, are disposed to collaborate in certain lines of action (“Fiscal general confirma ...”, 2014; Instituto de Estudios Geoestratégicos y Asuntos Políticos [Iegap], 2012; “De la fortuna oculta de las FARC...”, 2016).

It should also be noted that the FARC has incessantly requested a constituent assembly to rewrite the Constitution; this is read, from the model described previously, as a strategic effort to obtain a more manipulable, new social contract that would grant the group the power and impunity that could not possibly be obtained through the ballot box or a traditional parliamentary activity. More boldly (compared to the less successful attempt by the FMLN), the FARC has also managed to regain the “control” of a large part of the territory lost between 2002 and 2013 by negotiating the conservation of some of the designated territories as “concentration zones.” Undoubtedly, regaining territorial control over large swathes of territory without firing a single shot is a coveted accolade for any political group raised in arms, even in transition (Farah, 2016; González, 2011)

Despite being originally considered “transitory,” many of these areas are becoming permanent, favoring the FARC’s territorial control, who maintain that “they have already established neighborhoods near the areas and municipalities where they can start to do politics,” and also “because, for them, one of the greatest strengths is collective life.” In return, the Government has only demanded “case by case, that is, zone by zone” reviews as long as the FARC commits to lay down their weapons within the agreed period (Vélez, 2017). With this, the group has apparently managed to maintain its influence and power in regions that once constituted fortresses and areas of retreat, obtaining the clout and power unseen before with another pre-existing political party (Castañeda, 2016).

Should the application of the Bolivarian model continue, the future occurrence of the following complex phenomena is feasible: a) the expulsion of the “moderate” FARC leaders who may exist and want to nurture a genuine democratic transition; b) a drastic increase in civil unrest fueled by the FARC, which is executed tactically as the group advances in its endeavor to delegitimize government and state institutions; and c) the deliberate filtration of the FARC’s substantial illicit resources into its political wing, from the criminalized clandestine structures, which provide a constant flow of resources from drug trafficking, illegal gold mining, and other illicit activities. In this regard, despite the almost simultaneous announcement of several fronts known for

their links with drug trafficking to not accompany the peace process, it is likely that this does not reflect a true dissidence within the organization, but rather the execution of the FARC's plan of the taking power (Álvarez, 2016; Farah, 2016; Pardo, 2014; Socratidis, 2017).

Conclusions

This study endeavors to understand how the multiple milestones resulting from the present conjuncture of peace and conflict in Colombia have impacted and changed the strategies of the actors involved. With this, we recognize the urgent need to review the transformation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (today the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force) strategic behavior and its implications for the permanence of democracy in Colombia.

To address these issues in a theoretical and analytical manner, in this article we strived to offer an informed and qualitative reflection on the evolution of the FARC's strategic behavior, in light of the conceptual developments of the theory of revolutionary fertility and using as a basis of examination the construction of a model composed of four study variables.

The use of this qualitative model to review the group's behavior brought forth the following: a) That the guerrillas continue their process of adaptation and strategic insertion in the new dynamics of peace and conflict in Colombia. Moreover, there are some elements of judgment that hint towards their advancement within the framework of a Bolivarian-type adjusted state capture model; b) Regarding the likelihood of political-ideological turnaround, the screening of study factors for armed groups in transition reveals that there can and should be a concern that the FARC is the "wrong type of political group"; that is, that in the end, they constitute a political party without the capacity or will to sustain genuine democratic lines; and c) Regarding the development and consolidation of the interested behavior, there are several problematic issues when considering the possibility that the integration of the FARC into the formal political system manages to "tame and moderate" its anti-democratic and authoritarian values.

Among these issues are, in the first place, the risks of reproducing violent, extortive, and covert behavior against electoral processes. Secondly, there are the dangers of seeking, from new positions, a consolidation of their already accumulated territorial and popular power in some areas of the country, deepening and capitalizing on social discontent intending to undermine political governability. The latter would make them a sort of compulsory actor that must be negotiated with and given in to "prevent" a deepening of the

That said, it is necessary to continue with the analytical examination of this evolution, not only because of its changing and dynamic nature but also because of the limited conclusive elements of judgment that allow its circumstances, information, and facts. In this regard, the model proposed here can constitute an input of exceptional utility and importance at the time of persisting in this important and necessary task of reviewing an actor that, due to the characteristics of its identity, has and will have implications for Colombia's institutional, democratic, and social development.

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