

II. Out of the darkness? The hope for peace in Colombia

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On 24 November 2016, after more than five decades of armed conflict, several failed peace processes and four years of negotiations, the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, FARC–EP) signed the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace (the Accord).¹ The Accord ended a conflict that has cost the lives of around 220 000 people, led to the disappearance of 60 000 more, forcibly recruited 6000 minors and left 27 000 victims of kidnapping as well as more than 6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.² This section discusses the circumstances that made the Accord possible, the development of the process and the challenges that lie ahead.

Factors leading to negotiations

The origins of FARC can be traced to the peasant self-defence units created by the Communist Party during the inter-party conflicts of the 1940s and 1950s, known to Colombians simply as ‘The Violence’. After its formal creation in 1966 and throughout the 1970s, when the armed conflict was fairly marginal, FARC was closely allied with the Communist Party of Colombia. In the 1980s, however, it distanced itself from the Communist Party and promoted clandestine political structures, while attempting to expand into every province of the country, gain power at the local level, bring the war closer to the cities and increase its number of combatants and financial resources.³ To some observers, FARC abandoned Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in the 1990s in favour of a ‘less rigid ideological package’ that combined nationalist and left wing ideas and promoted ‘good government’ and a more efficient state.⁴ Others, however, argue that, although more flexible and less

¹ Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera [Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace], <<https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/sites/default/files/24-1480106030.11-1480106030.2016nuevoacuerdofinal-1480106030.pdf>>

² Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, ¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad [Colombia: memories of war and dignity] (Imprenta Nacional: Bogotá, 2013).

³ Ferro, J. and Uribe, G., *El Orden de la Guerra. Las FARC-EP: Entre la Organización y la Política* [The order of the war. The FARC-EP: Between organization and politics] (Centro Editorial Javeriano CEJA: Bogotá, 2002); and Pizarro, E., *Una Democracia Asediada: Balance y Perspectivas del Conflicto Armado en Colombia* [A democracy under siege: Balance and perspective on the armed conflict in Colombia] (Grupo Editorial Norma: Bogotá, 2003).

⁴ Ortiz, R., ‘Insurgent strategies in the post-cold war: the case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2002), pp. 127–43.

dogmatic after the crisis of socialism, FARC continued to defend the relevance of a socialist model adapted to Colombia's reality.⁵

After two decades of military ascendancy, with the balance clearly in favour of FARC, the professionalization of the national army, use of the air force, improved intelligence gathering and the adoption of a proactive, offensive strategy meant that the fortunes of war began to turn in 2003. FARC abandoned its positions near major cities, retreated to the hinterland and was forced once again to resort to classic guerrilla strategies. It operated in small units, kidnapping political figures, carrying out attacks on infrastructure and acts of sabotage, and seeking control of strategic routes.⁶ Several members of the FARC Secretariat, including several senior commanders and many mid-level cadres, were killed between 2008 and 2011.

Changes in the international context also played an important role. During the 1980s, the Colombian guerrillas saw themselves as 'a fundamental component of a vast revolutionary struggle' in Latin America. The peace processes in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, and the defeat of the Shining Path guerrilla movement in Peru, however, left FARC increasingly isolated.⁷ In addition, the transitions from military regimes to civilian governments and the rise to power by constitutional means of left-leaning political parties across Latin America weakened the legitimacy of armed struggle in the region.

While expressing sympathies for the guerrillas, all the region's leftist regimes supported a negotiated solution to the conflict. In 2005–2007, several rounds of conversations were held in Cuba between the National Liberation Army (ELN), Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, and the Colombian Government. The then President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, was central to convincing FARC to agree to a peace process and persist with the dialogues after FARC's most senior commander, Alfonso Cano, was killed by the army on 4 November 2011.⁸

At the same time, the country experienced mass demonstrations against the atrocities of the war and in favour of human rights, respect for international humanitarian law and a political solution to the conflict. A convergence of faith and civil society organizations, sectors of the entrepreneurial class, local and provincial governments, and former guerrilla fighters, among others, mobilized around 50 million people throughout the 1990s in all but

⁵ Ferro and Uribe (note 3), pp. 121–25.

⁶ Echandía, C., 'El fin de la invulnerabilidad de las FARC: El estado actual del conflicto armado en Colombia' [The end of FARC's invulnerability: the current state of the armed conflict in Colombia], *Nueva Sociedad*, vol. 217 (Sep.–Oct. 2008), pp. 4–13.

⁷ Pécaut, D., 'Las FARC: fuentes de su longevidad y de la conservación de su cohesión' [FARC: Reasons for its longevity and the preservation of its cohesion], *Análisis Político*, vol. 21, no. 63 (2008), pp. 22–50.

⁸ Gómez, M., *La Historia Secreta del Proceso de Paz* [The secret history of the peace process] (Intermedia: Bogotá, 2016).

one of the country's 32 departments and more than half of all municipalities.⁹ Public opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of a political solution, and support for a negotiated end to the conflict was even higher in the areas of conflict (77 per cent in 2015) than the national average (62 per cent between 2004 and 2014).¹⁰

The failure to gain widespread support among the bulk of society, especially in urban centres, or to generate a generalized insurrection, together with its military disadvantage and the public's rejection of the armed struggle convinced FARC leaders that continuation of the war would isolate them from the struggle of wider sectors of society, thereby reducing still further the possibility of building a significant social and political base.¹¹

Nonetheless, despite these important changes, at the beginning of the peace process FARC's options were not limited to negotiation or dissolution. Continued support among some sectors of society, particularly in the rural areas where it had historically been strongest, a significant presence in some municipalities and the financial resources at its disposal would probably have allowed FARC to persist with the armed struggle for years to come. The decision to negotiate cannot therefore be explained without consideration of two additional factors: the perception that the government was offering a dignified way out by not demanding a surrender in exchange for a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme; and proposed negotiations around FARC's traditional agenda of social and political reform. Even if such negotiations implied sacrificing the guerrillas' maximalist objectives, they were perceived as a preferable alternative to the continuation of the war. They provided the rebels with an opportunity to present themselves as spokespersons for the interests of the majority, advocating reforms that could have a significant impact on the socio-economic and political democratization of the country.¹²

On the government side, seeking a negotiated settlement had been government policy since 1982. Every government since then had attempted a peace process, while imposing different conditions and demands, many of which were unacceptable to FARC. The new elements in the current context were the willingness of President Juan Manuel Santos to accept limited reforms,

⁹ Villarraga, A., *Biblioteca de la Paz* [Library of peace] (Fundación Cultura Democrática: Bogotá, 2013).

¹⁰ García, M., Montalvo, J. and Seligson, M., *Cultura Política de la Democracia en Colombia, 2015: Actitudes Democráticas en Zonas de Consolidación Territorial* [Political culture of democracy in Colombia, 2015: Democratic attitudes in areas of territorial consolidation] (Universidad de los Andes, Observatorio de la Democracia, Centro nacional de consultoría, LAPOP and Vanderbilt University: Bogotá, 2015).

¹¹ Valenzuela, P., *El Fin del Conflicto Armado en Colombia y Retos Para la Paz y la Reconciliación* [The end of the armed conflict in Colombia and challenges for peace and reconciliation] (Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst: Lima, 2017).

¹² Valenzuela (note 11).

given the new stage of the conflict, and that modernizing Colombian elites favoured peace in order to integrate the country into the global economy.

The peace process

On 26 August 2012, after a number of discreet meetings, representatives of the Colombian Government and FARC signed the 'General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace' in Havana. The agreement set out the rules on negotiations and, in contrast to the previous peace process of 1999–2002, defined a limited agenda of six points: (a) integrated rural development; (b) political participation; (c) an end to the conflict; (d) a solution to the problem of illicit drugs; (e) victims and reparations; and (f) implementation and verification.¹³ The peace talks formally began in Oslo on 18 October 2012 and moved to Havana the following month, where they would remain until the signing of the agreement.

The second phase was guided by several principles, many of which clearly differentiated these negotiations from the failed process of a decade before. First, negotiations would be conducted abroad. Cuba and Norway were made 'guarantor countries', and Chile and Venezuela 'accompanying countries'. Second, military operations would continue while negotiations took place. No part of the national territory would be demilitarized and, against FARC's stated preference, a bilateral ceasefire would be the point of arrival and not of departure. Third, negotiations would be confidential. Fourth, the process would end with the demobilization of FARC and the decommissioning of its weapons. Finally, nothing would be agreed until everything was agreed.¹⁴

Although it had been agreed that the actions of the warring parties in Colombia would not affect the progress of negotiations, continued confrontations and attacks on infrastructure by FARC, which affected thousands of people and caused serious environmental damage, brought negotiations to the brink of collapse on several occasions. Amid mutual recriminations, the situation clearly damaged the credibility and legitimacy of the process. The popularity of President Santos dramatically declined, while that of opponents of the process rose accordingly. This was demonstrated in the 2014 presidential election, when the political party of former President Álvaro Uribe, the main critic of the negotiations, won the first round, only to lose to the incumbent in the second round thanks to a broad coalition with support from the left.

¹³ Jaramillo, S., *Todo lo que Debería Saber Sobre el Proceso de Paz* [Everything you should know about the peace process] (Oficina del Alto comisionado para la Paz: Bogotá, Apr. 2014), p. 8.

¹⁴ Jaramillo (note 13).

The positive impact of the process was palpable. According to the United Nations, in the first three years of the peace process, the mass displacement of populations and the number of civilian and military casualties decreased by 27 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively, compared to the 32 months prior to negotiations. During FARC's five temporary unilateral ceasefires throughout 2014, the number of IDPs declined by 52 per cent and the number of armed actions by 48 per cent.¹⁵

In July 2015, after a campaign of attacks against infrastructure that severely affected civilians, the parties agreed to expedite negotiations in Havana and de-escalate the conflict in Colombia. FARC declared a new ceasefire with the aim of creating 'an appropriate political environment', and the following month announced that the ceasefire would be indefinite. The government, in turn, ordered the suspension of airstrikes. After eight months, the result of the ceasefire was encouraging. Despite confrontations in the early days, no hostilities were registered between December 2015 and March 2016, making this period the least intense in the 51 years of conflict.¹⁶

Progress at the negotiating table also helped restore confidence in the process, as partial agreements were reached and concrete measures were implemented, such as a pilot de-mining project with FARC's cooperation. International support and the intervention of the guarantor countries at critical moments were also crucial.

The peace process and civil society

De-escalation of violence encouraged further mobilization in the form of demonstrations, forums, seminars, cultural activities and educational campaigns on the content of the agreements. Civil society organizations and national, regional and local government were most involved as conveners and participants.¹⁷

Several mechanisms were established to give civil society an input into the process. Proposals advanced by thousands of people and organizations that participated in forums organized by the UN and the National University, or in 'Regional Round Tables', were systematized and sent to the negotiators in Havana. In addition, thousands of proposals were invited through a dedicated government web page. The negotiating teams held multiple meetings with delegations from the Congress, and of victims' and civil society

¹⁵ *El Tiempo*, 'Las Farc anuncian que mantendrán el cese al fuego unilateral' [FARC announces continuation of unilateral ceasefire], 20 Aug. 2015.

¹⁶ *El Tiempo*, 'En tregua de Farc: 113 días sin acciones ofensivas de esa guerrilla', [FARC ceasefire: 113 days without military action by guerrillas], 23 Mar. 2016.

¹⁷ Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP), *Mobilización por la Paz en Colombia: Una Infraestructura Social Clave para la Paz* [Mobilization for peace in Colombia: A key social infrastructure for peace] (CINEP/Programa por la Paz: Bogotá, March 2016).

organizations. Academics and experts were also invited to contribute to the discussions.

The role of women

Although the inclusion of women in decision-making spaces related to peace has been as poor in Colombia as it has been in peace processes elsewhere, their participation was neither marginal nor unimportant.¹⁸ Women's organizations made use of all the channels created for participation by civil society. They were 33 per cent of participants in the forums, 52 per cent in the Regional Round Table related to the victims of the conflict, and 66 per cent of the victims' representatives in Havana. Recommendations from the Women and Peace Summit, in which 500 women participated, led to the inclusion of two women (20 per cent) on the government's team as plenipotentiaries, bringing the representation of women in the entire government delegation to 80 per cent, more than double the percentage of women's representation in the FARC delegation.¹⁹

In September 2014, a Gender Sub-Commission was established to ensure that gender mainstreaming would be incorporated into existing agreements and those yet to be signed. As a result, 18 women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) organizations met with the Gender Sub-Commission to make recommendations on gender issues. Among these were national and international experts on sexual violence, and former female combatants from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Uruguay. The Sub-Commission was assisted by experts from Colombia, Cuba, Norway and the UN.²⁰ In addition, the FARC Women's Commission organized meetings by Skype with women's organizations in 27 municipalities across the country.²¹

The Accord

The 310-page Accord signed in August 2016 contained important proposals to tackle the socio-economic and political conditions that had perpetuated the violence.²² Chapter 1 of the Accord, on integrated rural reform, aims

¹⁸ 'Women's participation in peace processes remains one of the most unfulfilled aspects of the women, peace and security agenda', and women represent 'a strikingly low number of negotiators' in the 31 major peace processes since 1992. UN Women, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence* (UN Women: New York, Oct. 2012).

¹⁹ Segura, C., 'El 80% de la delegación de paz del gobierno somos mujeres' [80% of the government's peace delegation are women], *Pacifista*, 8 Mar. 2016.

²⁰ Jaramillo (note 13).

²¹ Verdad Abierta, 'En La Habana, enfoque de género se plasma en acuerdos' [In Havana, gender mainstreaming is reflected in the agreement], 26 July 2016.

²² 'Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y duradera' [Final accord to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace]. Bogotá, Equipo Paz Gobierno, 24 Aug. 2016.

to close the gap between urban and rural areas, protect the environment, ensure the right to food, and guarantee the well-being of peasant and ethnic communities. As part of the reform, a Land Fund will be created to distribute land to rural dwellers and to provide restitution for the forcibly dispossessed; titles to land will be formalized and the land registry updated; an Environmental Zoning Plan will prevent the further expansion of agriculture in order to protect biodiversity and protect areas of special environmental interest; and Peasant Reserve Zones will promote new forms of organization of the territory and strengthen rural agricultural economies. Development programmes will take a territorial approach. The Accord states that all ‘plans and programmes must consider the needs, characteristics and economic, cultural and social particularities of the territories . . . guaranteeing socio-environmental sustainability’ (author’s translation), as well as the provision of subsidies, credit, technical assistance and access to markets.

Chapter 2 of the Accord, on political participation, takes significant steps to strengthen pluralism and citizen participation. There are sections on guarantees to opposition parties and movements, the system of protection for human rights defenders and social organizations, the elimination of electoral thresholds for political parties, and the provision of financial support and access to the media. Especially important will be the 16 temporary constituencies for the House of Representatives set up for two electoral periods, in order to integrate areas severely affected by the conflict and with a weak institutional presence.

Chapter 3 sets out the tripartite mechanism made up of the government, FARC and an unarmed UN mission, mainly comprised of observers from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños, CELAC), which will monitor and verify the DDR process. FARC combatants will move to 20 Transitory Areas of Normalization and seven Transitory Points of Normalization. After a six-month process, all FARC weapons should be in the hands of the UN. Demobilized FARC members will receive financial aid for productive projects, a monthly stipend for two years and access to the social security system, education and housing. They will also benefit from psychosocial and family reunification programmes. The political party created by FARC will have 10 guaranteed seats in Congress from 2018 until 2026.

Chapter 4 discusses the creation of an Integrated National Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, provides legal alternatives for small cultivators and sets out that drug use should be treated as a public health problem. A special judicial unit and an elite body of the national police will be created to prosecute criminal organizations associated with drug trafficking, and an Integrated Security System will be adopted to protect communities and organizations in the territories.

Victims' rights are at the heart of the Accord. Among the most important measures are the creation of a Truth Commission, a special unit to search for disappeared persons and a Special Peace Tribunal to prosecute crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict. The Accord rejects the extremes of 'amnesic pardons' and 'punitive transitions', and opts instead for granting benefits on the basis of individual responsibility in exchange for truth, confession of crimes, reparations to victims and guarantees of non-repetition. Crimes against humanity, genocide, serious war crimes, kidnapping, torture, extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, forced displacement and child recruitment are excluded from any amnesties or pardons. Those responsible for serious crimes who recognize their responsibility will receive a sentence of 5–8 years, to be served in 'areas of restriction of liberty', while those who do not recognize their responsibility will serve jail terms of 15–20 years in ordinary prisons. The Accord also establishes a programme of integral reparations for victims.

The gender mainstreaming in the Accord, which seeks to ensure that 'women and people with diverse sexual identities may enjoy in conditions of equality the benefits of peace', has been widely acclaimed.²³ Women will have special access to the Land Fund, subsidies and credit. Formalization of titles will be conducted on the basis of equality, and men and women will have balanced representation in the high-level decision-making entities created by the Accord. Women and the LGBTI community will receive legal and technical assistance to strengthen their organizations. A gender working group will be created to investigate the differential impact of the conflict, and a special team in the Unit of Investigation and Accusation will investigate cases of sexual violence. Action will be taken to prevent stigmatization based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and psychological services will be provided for women and the LGBTI community involved in the conflict.²⁴

At the same time, the territorial approach recognizes the varied causes and impacts of the armed conflict on different regions of the country. As a consequence, implementation of the Accord must be based on proposals and actions articulated by the people in the territories, according to the particularities of the context, in a highly participatory process.²⁵

²³ Comunicado Conjunto 82 [Joint Communique 82], La Habana, Cuba, 24 July 2016.

²⁴ *El Tiempo*, 'Así será el papel de las mujeres y los LGBTI en el posconflicto' [This will be the role of women and LGBTI after the conflict], 24 July 2016.

²⁵ Jaramillo (note 13).

Popular rejection of the Accord and the road ahead

Despite its insistence on a Constituent Assembly, FARC finally accepted the Government's proposal for a referendum as a form of democratic ratification of the Accord. After approval by Congress and validation by the Constitutional Court, the referendum took place on 2 October 2016. Rather than voting individually on each point of the agreement, Colombians had to approve or reject the entire package. The result was an almost evenly divided electorate. On a turnout of 13 066 047 voters, or 37 per cent of those registered to vote, 'No' obtained 6 431 376 votes (50.21 per cent) and 'Yes' 6 377 482 (49.78 per cent).²⁶

Analysts have attributed the result to the absence of a pedagogic campaign on the content of the Accord, the traditional low rate of electoral participation by Colombians, exacerbated by the weather conditions in some areas, excessive confidence and differences of opinion between urban centres and the countryside. Particular blame has been placed on the aggressive campaign of disinformation and scare tactics by opponents of the process, in particular the claims that the 'gender ideology' in the Accord opened the door to a 'homosexual dictatorship' and the 'destruction of the family', that retirees would have to give up part of their meagre pensions to subsidize demobilized FARC combatants and that the country was being turned over to the 'Castro-Chavismo'.²⁷

All these factors undoubtedly played a role but in retrospect it cannot be denied that while support for peace in the abstract was widespread, support for the peace process was more nuanced. By 2014 it had solid backing on the Caribbean coast (67 per cent) and majority support in Bogotá (56 per cent), the eastern part of the country (54 per cent) and the pacific region (53 per cent). In the central region and the former National Territories, however, it had only 42 per cent and 40 per cent support, respectively. The polls also showed strong opposition to granting amnesties to the FARC rank and file and to a reduction in sentences for confessing to crimes and assisting with demining. More than 50 per cent in a national opinion poll believed that prison sentences for FARC members should exceed 8 years. Only 28 per cent approved of political participation by the former guerrillas and only 19 per cent supported the creation of a FARC political party.²⁸

²⁶ *El Colombiano*, 'Uribe habla de renegociar acuerdo y descarta una Constituyente' [Uribe talks about renegotiating the accord and dismisses a Constituent Assembly], 4 Oct. 2016.

²⁷ *Las 2 Orillas*, 'El acuerdo con las Farc nos lleva de narices a una peligrosa dictadura homosexual: concejal de la familia' [The Accord with FARC will lead us straight to a dangerous homosexual dictatorship], 23 Sep. 2016; *Semana*, "'Roy Barreras": la ley que se "aprobó" en las redes sociales', ["Roy Barreras": the law that was approved by social media], 21 Sep. 2016; and *La Silla Vacía*, 'Los temores del no. 4. El CastroChavismo' [Fear of the no. 4: Catrochavism], 29 Sep. 2016.

²⁸ García et. al. (note 10).

Just 53 days after the referendum, a new agreement was signed on 24 November 2016. Without changing the essence of the original agreement, as set out above, the revised Final Agreement incorporates many of the concerns expressed by the winners of the referendum. The new Accord clarifies the size of the restricted areas in which sentences must be served, and specifies that the UN will monitor these sentences. It commits FARC to provide a list of possessions to enable reparations for victims, and states that the Special Peace Jurisdiction will operate for a period of 15 years, that all magistrates and prosecutors will be Colombian and that drug trafficking for personal gain will not be amnestied. In order to address the reservations of religious groups, the references to ‘gender focus’ and ‘diverse sexual identity’ were replaced by ‘non-discrimination focus’, ‘affirmative measures vis-à-vis groups that have been discriminated against’ and ‘equality between men and women’ (author’s translation). The proposal to incorporate the entire Accord into the constitution was dropped, and the constitutional right to private property and the coexistence of peasant and commercial agricultures were reiterated.²⁹

Unlike the original Accord, the revised agreement was not submitted for popular endorsement but instead approved by Congress. Congress passed and the Constitutional Court validated a fast track procedure, reducing the amount of debate required for the passage of the related laws and constitutional reforms to a period of up to 180 days. Given the governing coalition’s majority in Congress, no major obstacles were expected. President Santos summoned Congress to hold extraordinary sessions during the December recess, with the aim of having an amnesty law approved by the end of the year. The law was approved on 28 December by 117 votes to 3 in the House of Representatives, and 69 votes in favour and none against in the Senate, with the abstention of the party of former President Uribe.³⁰ Approval made it possible to start the process of demobilizing the FARC fighters and decommissioning weapons.

Undoubtedly, important foundations have been laid for transforming the main underlying causes of the armed conflict: socio-economic inequality and exclusion, particularly in the countryside, and a political system that has not been able to overcome the ‘anomaly’ of appearing at the same time both too democratic and too repressive.³¹ However, the problems that confront societies as they make the transition from war to peace are compounded in

²⁹ *El Tiempo*, ‘Una reflexión para quienes votaron “No” en el plebiscito’ [A reflection for those who voted ‘No’ in the referendum], 17 Nov. 2016.

³⁰ *El Tiempo*, ‘Congreso aprobó ley de amnistía a excombatientes de Farc y militares’, [Congress passes amnesty law for FARC excombatants and military], 28 Dec. 2016.

³¹ Gutiérrez, F., ‘El déficit civilizatorio de nuestro régimen político: La otra anomalía en una perspectiva comparada’ [The civilizational deficit of our political regime: the other anomaly in comparative perspective], *Análisis Político*, vol. 25, no. 76 (2012), pp. 59–82.

Colombia by the continued existence of structures of authority—criminal organizations and neo-paramilitary groups linked to legal and illegal interests—bent on subverting the implementation of the Accord. Effectively neutralizing the effects of these groups and reducing the level of polarization will be essential to the implementation of the agreement and to ensuring a lasting peace.