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## FEATURED Q&A

# Is the Colombia-FARC Peace Deal Doomed to Fail?



Luciano Marín, also known as Iván Márquez, was the chief peace negotiator of Colombia's FARC. Last month, he appeared in a video to issue a new call to arms, saying the government has failed to live up to the promises of its 2016 peace deal. // Photo: FARC.

**Q** Former commanders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, rebel group on Sept. 4 launched a “clandestine political movement,” a week after issuing a call to arms and vowing to return to war with the country's government. How significant are the former commanders' moves, and how would a “clandestine” political movement take shape? How should President Iván Duque's government respond? Is Colombia's peace deal doomed to fail?

**A** Humberto de la Calle, former Colombian vice president, interior minister and chief negotiator in the peace process with the FARC: “The bulk of the former combatants remain firm in compliance with the peace accord. According to official figures, this group constitutes more than 90 percent of former combatants. Additionally, the leaders of the new FARC party that surged from the agreement have unanimously rejected Márquez and his companions' actions and have renewed their irrevocable decision for peace. The government, political forces and public opinion have indicated that we are not in the presence of a new guerrilla, but rather of deserters who have been left out of the agreement and must be met with all instruments that the rule of law provides. However, it is clear that there are some dangers: The project of unifying forces with the ELN that Márquez described, although it has been historically impossible, cannot be flatly ruled out. The announcement of continuing to collect ‘taxes’ on illegal activities causes concern, as well as the presence of urban terrorists in

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## U.S., Brazil Agree to Strengthen Trade Relations

The agreement to bolster ties came as Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo met his counterpart, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in Washington.

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### BUSINESS

## Mexico Sees 12.7% Drop in Vehicle Exports

The president of the Mexican Association of the Automotive Industry, or AMIA, said lower demand from the United States, Canada and Brazil, which buy 90 percent of Mexico's vehicle exports, were to blame for the lower level of exports.

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### ECONOMIC

## Cuba Takes New Measures to Fight Fuel Shortages

Cuba reduced public transportation services and halted some manufacturing. President Miguel Díaz-Canel said the fuel shortages, which the government blamed on U.S. sanctions, are temporary.

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Díaz-Canel // File Photo: Cuban Government.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## U.S., Brazil Agree to Strengthen Trade Relations

The United States and Brazil on Friday agreed to strengthen ties as the two countries held their first high-level strategic dialogue in seven years on topics that included bolstering trade relations and protecting the Brazilian Amazon rain forest, the Associated Press reported.



Araújo and Pompeo (L-R) met Friday in Washington. // Photo: U.S. State Department.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met in Washington on Friday, in Araújo's sixth visit to the United States this year. Both nations will seek to boost binational trade, which already surpasses \$100 billion a year, as well as a plan to create a \$100 million investment fund to protect biodiversity in the Amazon region, Pompeo said following the meeting. Additionally, the

two countries agreed to promote private-sector development in the Amazon, BBC News reported. Pompeo also applauded the administration of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for supporting Israel and pushing for democratic change in Venezuela, the AP reported. "Together, we are seizing the opportunity to cement a future of security, prosperity and democracy for our people and for the entire hemisphere," Pompeo said, the AP reported. Araújo said he had extended an invitation to U.S. President Donald Trump to visit Brazil next year, Reuters reported. He added that the level of engagement between both countries is already "without precedent." During his three-day trip to Washington, Araújo said he also met with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to discuss a potential free trade agreement between the two countries. "There is no specific timeline, but we want it soon," Araújo said, referring to a bilateral trade deal. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Nov. 7 issue of the Advisor.]

## Cuba Takes New Measures to Fight Fuel Shortages

Cuba's government on Friday announced emergency measures in order to grapple with fuel shortages and avoid blackouts, a situation it blames on U.S. sanctions, The Wall Street

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Guaidó Denies Claims of Links to Illegal Armed Group in Colombia

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó has denied claims that he is linked to an illegal armed group in Colombia after photos surfaced online in which he appeared to be posing with two members of the Rastrojos criminal gang, the Associated Press reported Friday. The photos were reportedly taken in February during an event in a Colombian border city. Guaidó said he took pictures with many people that day and that there is no way to know every individual's background.

## Peru's Economy Grows 3.28 Percent in July

Peru's economy expanded 3.28 percent in July, as compared to the same month a year earlier, driven by healthy domestic demand and a hike in the mining sector, the government said Sunday, Reuters reported. The figure was in line with analysts' estimates in a Reuters poll. The Peruvian economy grew 2.74 percent in the last 12 months to July. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Sept. 11 issue of the Advisor.]

## Mexico Sees 12.7% Drop in Vehicle Exports

Mexico, which is among the world's largest exporters of vehicles, saw a 12.7 percent year-on-year drop last month in total vehicle exports, FreightWaves reported Friday. Vehicle manufacturers in the country shipped 281,811 units in August, as compared to 322,779 units in the same month last year, according to the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography and the Mexican Association of the Automotive Industry, or AMIA. The association's president, Eduardo Solís Sánchez, blamed lower demand from the United States, Canada and Brazil. Vehicle manufacturers with plants in Mexico include Ford, Honda, BMW, Toyota, General Motors and Fiat-Chrysler.

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the group. The government's initial step is to prevent connections Márquez can establish with these groups and with FARC dissidents who came about earlier. All Colombians support the government. We recognize that while there is a clear commitment from the government to reinstate former combatants, their call to ignore other essential points of the accord may constitute an incentive for future dissidents. The road map is a judicial and military response, but also the integral preservation of the agreement to avoid further defections."

**A** **Adam Isacson, director for defense oversight at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA):** "Colombia's peace deal is by no means doomed, but the ex-FARC faction's announced rearmament is an urgent warning sign. The leaders of this faction could attract disenchanted ex-guerrillas, while recruiting new fighters with no FARC background. Iván Márquez, the faction's chief spokesman, has a following within the organization: he led internal voting when the new FARC party chose its leader-

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Journal reported. Cuban officials announced reductions to public transportation services and halted manufacturing at government-run plants that produce cement and steel. Additionally, the government is postponing some investments that rely heavily on energy, and the government asked residents to work from home if possible, Reuters reported. Cuba's communist government has blamed the problem on U.S. attempts to cut off Cuba's oil supply from Venezuela. New U.S. sanctions on Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA have made it more difficult for Cuba to receive oil from the South American country, its chief supplier, Reuters reported. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said last week that fuel shortages would be temporary, as an oil tanker was scheduled to arrive on Saturday, adding that the country would seek to make those supplies last until the end of September, when additional shipments were expected to arrive, The Wall Street Journal reported. "Cuba is not paralyzed," said Cuban Economy Minister Alejandro Gil Fernández. On Friday, Cubans waited in long lines in searing heat at public transportation stations in Havana, and lines at gas stations stretched for several blocks, Reuters reported. Inspectors stopped workers in state cars so that they could pick up other passengers. Years ago, Cuba started rationing energy amid falling oil imports from Venezuela, reducing the use of electricity at state institutions and reducing street lighting. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Aug. 9 issue of the Energy Advisor.]

## POLITICAL NEWS

### Chávez Sought to Ship Cocaine to U.S.: Prosecutors

Then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in the mid-2000s ordered his lieutenants to work with Colombian Marxist guerrillas to ship cocaine to the United States in an effort to combat the administration of then-U.S. President George W. Bush, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday, citing U.S. documents it obtained. The documents, which federal prosecutors from the

## THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

### Why Is Paraguay's President Seeing His Support Evaporate?

**Q** Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez on Aug. 15 marked one year in office. Abdo Benítez has faced a high disapproval rate, of nearly 70 percent, and he survived a recent push for his impeachment over a controversial energy deal with Brazil. What is behind Abdo Benítez's high disapproval rate? How well has he led Paraguay over the past year? What are the main challenges he faces in his second year in office?

**A** Gerardo Ramón Ruiz Godoy, partner at PCG Auditores—Consultores: "Abdo Benítez surged as the option to maintain the country's institutionalism, in the face of former President Cartes' persistent political maneuvers to force a constitutional amendment to allow presidential re-election. Abdo Benítez used these initiatives, which citizens rejected as unconstitutional, to lead an institutionalism movement, gaining citizens' trust and winning the presidential election. He began his government by causing outrage through the appointments of questionable politicians to ministerial

posts. He carried out a massive hiring of state officials without regard for the fiscal responsibility law. Foreign policy deteriorated following his decisions to remove Paraguay's ambassador to Israel. He also didn't support Cartes' swearing-in as an active senator, which generated great rejection from his own party members. Undoubtedly, the bad management of the economy disappointed the markets and citizens, prompting a significant fall in economic forecasts for 2019. The Itaipú deal signed with President Bolsonaro was considered treason, because it would have greatly damaged Paraguay. Abdo Benítez will have to regain citizens' confidence in order to have governability. He will have to improve economic policy by increasing public investments, generating employment and boosting confidence of the markets, which have been hit by the region's recent recession, especially in Argentina."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The comment above is a continuation of the [Q&A](#) published in the Sept. 4 issue of the Advisor.

Southern District of New York prepared, for the first time describe the alleged role of Chávez, who died in 2013, in drug trafficking. The documents allege that several top Venezuelan leaders, who served Chávez and still have key posts in the Andean nation's government today, used cocaine trafficking as a weapon against the United States. Chávez in 2005 held a meeting with top officials to discuss plans to work with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, guerrillas to "flood" the United States with cocaine, according to a participant in the meeting, who at the time was a justice on Venezuela's supreme court, the papers said. U.S. officials filed the documents in a court in Spain, seeking the extradition of

Hugo Carvajal, a former general also known as "El Pollo" who led Chávez's military intelligence directorate, on drug trafficking charges. Spain

**Prosecutors allege Chávez used drugs as a weapon against the United States.**

today ordered Carvajal's release after rejecting the U.S. request of extradition, The New York Times reported. The court is set to publish its reasoning for denying extradition on Tuesday.

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ship in September 2017. Ex-commanders such as 'El Paisa' and 'Romaña,' meanwhile, have decades of experience leading large, militarily effective and ruthlessly bloody units. That said, in the videos they have released, Márquez and his colleagues showed no evidence that they have attracted fighters to their group (only about 20 people appear), or that they have joined forces with any of the more than 20 ex-FARC 'dissident' bands already active in rural Colombia. It's possible that they could end up being just one more of those bands: a security challenge, but not a first-tier one. And as a political force, the 'clandestine' movement is unlikely to prosper. In the early 2000s, the FARC declared the formation of a 'Clandestine Colombian Communist Party,' which, after the guerrillas demobilized, did not help the FARC party get more than 0.3 percent of votes in the March 2018 congressional elections. Still, when chief peace negotiators rearm, that's a sign of trouble for the process. President Iván Duque's government must do more—not just make promises, but also devote resources—to reassure ex-combatants that their economic future is secure, their judicial path is certain and reforms promised in the accord are moving forward."

**A** **Javier Ciurlizza, director of the Andean region at The Ford Foundation in Bogotá:** "This is regrettable news for Colombia and the region. However, the peace process in Colombia is stronger than specific crises and situations, mostly because Colombian society is diverse, and many are deeply committed to achieving peace. This challenge only adds complexity for everybody—government, civil society organizations, the international community—in order to work harder and together to bring sustainable peace in the territories. It represents an immediate and clear danger for social activists and human rights defenders, and we all have to renew our efforts to protect them and to turn

the promise of peace into a clear dividend for them."

**A** **Maria Velez de Berliner, managing director of RTG-Red Team Group, Inc.:** "There is nothing 'clandestine' about former commanders of FARC I launching FARC II's 'new phase of the struggle' against Colombia's government, institutions and society. Anyone who listened to then-Senator Iván Márquez say in January 2019, 'the mistake we made was to disarm ahead of the government fulfilling its promises,' learned it was a matter of time for him, 'Santrich,' 'El Paisa' and others to return to arms, if they had disarmed at all. Today FARC II has two branches: 1.) a political branch through FARC I's remaining senators and representatives and their supporters in Congress; and, 2) FARC II's armed struggle with the help of Venezuela's colectivos, military and police forces, and the collaboration of criminal organizations in Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Guyana. Let's not ignore the alliance among FARC II and the ELN, EPL, the Gulf Cartel and the Sinisterra and Gentil Duarte Groups. FARC II's return to war means President Duque is caught between ensuring citizens' security in an environment where violence, criminality and insecurity increase exponentially, while concurrently combating FARC II by deploying all available resources against it. Were FARC II to survive and grow within Colombia, the credibility and power of Duque's government and Colombia's military and police will diminish progressively. The peace agreement was doomed by the judicial concessions made to the FARC in the illusion of peace and by the disapproval of a majority of Colombians. The peace agreement will remain in the letter of the articles that constitutionalized it, but not in practice."

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org).*

## LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue, Copyright © 2019

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**Latin America Advisor** is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005

[www.thedialogue.org](http://www.thedialogue.org)

ISSN 2163-7962

Subscription inquiries are welcomed at [ebrand@thedialogue.org](mailto:ebrand@thedialogue.org)

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