

The Colombian peace process from the entrepreneur's viewpoint

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Abstract

Colombia is going through a historic moment that began with the signing of an agreement between the national government and the Guerrilla of the FARC, in November 2016. This agreement opened the doors to a post-conflict and peacebuilding stage. The entrepreneurs and the enterprises are key players because they can contribute significantly to achieve a stable and lasting peace. This paper analyzes the perspective of the entrepreneurs of cities in southwestern Colombia, directly affected by the conflict, on the new business conditions.

The sample covered 310 entrepreneurs / businesspersons (E/BP), of which 26 were from large companies, 29 from medium-sized companies, 80 from small companies and 175 from micro-enterprises.

45% of the E/BP think that the economic situation in the country in 2017 was worse than it was before the signing of the Peace Agreement. However 57,3% of E/BP consider that the Peace Agreement has not altered the situation of their company and 21,2% consider that the company situation has improved. The E/BP

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identify the main effects, for their companies, of the conflict in the last five years: decrease in sales, loss of business opportunities, increase in security expenses

They strongly agree that the peace agreement is conducive to attract foreign investment, , will increase the tax burden, will generate well-being and development for the country; but they disagree , with the ideas that the armed sector will demobilize, that the gestures and wills of the armed actor are genuine, that the process is reliable

They identified the change in business variables when comparing 2017 with the previous five years, and they forecast what could happen in their companies in the next two years (2018-2019). A 60,9% expect the sales volume to improve, 56,3% think they will have more employees, 51,7% are thinking to invest in new assets, 45% consider that company will have positive options for a geographical expansion of the enterprise and 37,7% have a negative conception with respect to what can be expected on tax issues. Two negative factor were identified: smuggling and corruption

The research explored the willingness of E/BP to work on peace building lines and the likelihood that their company supports such processes. It was found that : 82,7% would support initiatives aimed at integrating and building a support system; 76,5% would create jobs for victims ; 54,6% would create jobs for the demobilized; 68,9% would support process of creation of new companies for demobilized and 60,2% would support the formation of an economic fund for the construction of peace in the country.

In terms of the main challenges that companies will face in the post-conflict: 68,9% of entrepreneurs consider that they will work in the development of an employee orientation system for the demobilized and 71,5% will work toward the formation and training of demobilized persons.

Chi square procedure allowed checking the independence of the position taken by the E/BP with two independent variables: size of the enterprise and direct effect of the conflict. Some statements were dependent of those variables.

Keywords: Enterprises, post conflict, peace building, Colombia, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction

Political events that took place in 1948, in particular, “El Bogotazo”, reinforced, in Colombia, the processes of political and social instability and they altered power relations throughout the 1950s.

However, in the midst of this situation, the fifties brought a business strengthening in Colombia, due to the establishment of some multinationals and the creation of a significant number of Colombian companies. The economic effects of the post-Second World War accelerated Colombian business development.

In the sixties, new political forces appeared in the Colombian environment and the “Guerrilla process” began. The creation of FARC, ELN, EPL and other groups started their influence in rural areas of the country and later terrorist acts in the main cities of Colombia. However, the 80s and 90s have another disruptive and violent force, drug trafficking, which, in addition to all its negative effects on society and the economy, corrupts many segments of Colombian activity, and becomes a source of financing for the “guerrillas”. For these times, paramilitary actions increased the levels of violence and insecurity. This set of negative forces is responsible for more than 200,000 deaths and about 6 million people affected either as direct victims or as displaced persons.

The Colombian government makes its best efforts to dismember these groups and with some achieved peace agreements in the 90s and beginning of this century, while with others manage to reduce their areas of influence. However, the difficulties continue, affecting business activity, generating a notion of insecurity, deteriorating the international image of the country, forcing the state to devote large amounts of resources to combat these groups, generating a large number of victims, causing displacement, family dismemberment, and loss of property.

Due of the level of violence that exists in certain areas of the country some business sectors ceased their activities and many people must abandon properties, means of production, farms, and houses.

In 2010, President Santos took the historic decision to try to develop a process for peace agreement with the main guerrilla group, the FARC, which at that time had between 10,000 and 15,000 men and women in arms and who dominated a good number of municipalities. Thanks to the support of several countries, which acted as guarantors of the process, a long and difficult negotiation process

began in Havana (Cuba). The process always had a significant group of Colombians who did not accept it, as they did not consider fair and appropriate that those guerrilla's members who had, , committed so many crimes (directly or indirectly) could be exonerated of their sins and eventually be reintegrated into civil life without having to pay for the crimes committed.

After several years of work, the government signed an agreement with the FARC, and submitted it to a plebiscite, and against government forecasts, the Colombians in a tight vote (51% -49%) denied it. The government met with groups opposed to the agreement and after some adjustments, the original text was signed in Bogota, in November 2016.

The implementation of the peace agreement has not been easy, due to the polarization of the people around this agreement. Therefore it was considered convenient and timely to know the thinking and the feelings of the entrepreneurs, located in one of the zones of conflict, The idea was to learn the effects that this agreement has had, and could have on its companies and to identify in which activities of the Line of Peace that they are willing to support.

2. Theoretical Framework

The armed conflict in Colombia is a scourge that has hit the country for more than five decades and can be defined as "a conflict of a fundamentally political nature ... because it is not a conflict that finds its origin in deep ethnic, racial divisions, linguistic or religious, to then translate them into political terms, but it is a conflict whose main origin is an ideological-political animosity between its protagonists, who perceive each other as irreconcilable enemies."(Bejarano, 2010).

The peace agreements arise from a negotiation between the Colombian government and the FARC, generating innumerable political, legal, social, and economic changes that radically affect all environments, including the Colombian business environment. These changes require the development of programs, strategies and public policies that allow an adequate transition from a state of war to a sustainable peace (CONPES 3554), and they demand the participation of civil society and entrepreneurs on several areas that will be described later-

According to the UN, the process of transition to peace is made up of four components: **a) disarmament:** which includes the collection, documentation, control and disposal of all weapons,

ammunition and explosives of combatants; **b) demobilization**: which includes the assignment and concentration of ex-combatants to temporary centers; **c) reinsertion** : which includes the assistance offered to ex-combatants during the demobilization, covering their basic and immediate needs, those of their family and giving an economic assistance; **d) reintegration**: which includes the process by which ex-combatants acquire civil status and obtain sustainable income.

In the last two years, Colombia has started the transition from a Post-Agreement zone to a post-conflict zone, with the hope of reaching a stable and lasting peace zone in a few years (Cepeda 2016)

In this sense, talking about post-conflict involves important actions and above all due compliance with the points agreed between the parties, because the final results depends on how the process is carried out following the defined terms and looking for the expected results . Acevedo and Rojas (2016) describe it as a "stage in which aspects that should have been planned during the peace process come into play, such as reconstruction (referring to the physical structures damaged in conflict), rehabilitation, integral reparation to the victims, the role of military forces in the conflict, among others. Ghali (1992) indicates," that peace is not achieved only with negotiation "and " peace building consists of actions aimed at identifying and supporting structures tending to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict"

As a result of the processes of negotiation, participation and agreement between national entities and national cooperation, the National Social and Economic Reintegration Policy (PRSE) was formulated, which focuses on three demographic groups a) demobilized and disengaged b) family groups of the demobilized person and c) the receiving communities. It also includes the participation of other actors such as public and private organizations, national and international institutions, commissions, NGO's, government among others.

This research focuses on some of the activities that the process of reintegration of ex-combatants and victims must fulfill, and that have a strong impact on the economy of the country and the construction of the desired sustainable peace. The Agreements establish that the Government must provide guarantees and means that allow the demobilized and the victims to identify and develop

a stable source of income that allows them to reach the ideal of economic reintegration to civil society. The agreement proposes two main sources of productive income generation:

- Labor reincorporation as employees of public and private companies
- The creation and development of productive projects that reincorporate them as business leaders and allow them to generate employment for themselves, their families, their combatants and in general for Colombians

Reintegration is the process that demands greater efforts and management, since different actors intervene in this: institutions, programs, public policies, projects, etc., with the aim of guaranteeing an economic sustenance for the demobilized and their families. According to Salazar (2006), "is the process in which the combatants recover the civil character and, therefore, their livelihood comes from lawful and violence-free activities. It is essentially an economic and psychosocial process that has to do primarily with the work and commitment of the communities at the local level". According to the CONPES 3554, reintegration has two approaches: from the individual and from the communities, the second being a strategy to "create communication spaces between receiving communities and the demobilized, to create a deeper integration." (CONPES 2008)

It is relevant to highlight the importance of the business sector in all these reintegration processes, from their role as employers as well as from the contributions and support they can give as promoters of the country's economy. In other words, "the link between peace and economic growth and prosperity increases the participation and influence of companies in peace processes. Entrepreneurs can build bridges between different communities, participate directly in conversations with belligerents, provide information, act as pacifist electorates, pay for peace processes, strengthen entrepreneurship, build trust, foster responsibility and limit access to funds to continue the conflict "(Berdal and Wennmann, 2013). In addition, Mahmoud, Makoond and Naik also indicate, "A strong local private sector can directly and tangibly contribute to the restoration and maintenance of peace" (2017).

The reintegration, of ex-combatants and victims, as employees, requires the elimination of several barriers: the first of these is the lack of training in value creation processes, since many of

them have peasant origins and have been away from productive processes for 20 or 30 years; the second is the willingness of employers to receive in their organizations persons with a history of crimes; the third is the desire for independence and in a certain way its notion of rebellion that will make it difficult for them to accept the structure of corporate governance; the fourth is the remuneration level, because they may only classify, in most cases, for minimum wage positions, which may be lower than what they received in the guerrilla.

Fortunately, several Colombian and multinational companies have already taken steps to form and train these people so that they can apply for positions of employment and others have already opened the doors, as employees, to some of the ex-combatants.

But it is also necessary to identify the barriers and difficulties that they have in the processes of creating a company: the first is that many of them, ideologically, do not see themselves as leaders of profit-oriented companies, because in their imagination some still see the private sector as the cause of the inequalities and political processes that took them many years ago to take up arms. (Therefore it is essential to work on the development of the spirit and business culture); the second is their lack of training and development of entrepreneurial competences and for this, specialized training and accompaniment will be required; The third is that their residential areas and where they want to develop their activities may not have the business infrastructure required for a successful company (electricity, communications, roads, services, markets, means of transport, etc.); the fourth will be the distrust that can be generated by all of its suppliers (financial entities, suppliers, customers, authorities, partners, businessmen of the region, governmental officials, etc.), the fifth is the limitation of the generation of value of its companies and the limitations in the sustainability and growth of them; the sixth is the need for advice, mentoring and sponsorship not only of experts in entrepreneurial issues, but also of entrepreneurs who integrate them into the entrepreneurial network of their regions; the seventh and perhaps the most difficult, the full attainment of the resources that their companies require for assembly and later for growth, because although it is true that the government has allocated resources to productive initiatives they are limited by quantity and by time limits

There are lines of action that can be good options for them, such as the creation of social enterprises and the creation of associative forms of work among them.

The challenges that frame the reintegration of the demobilized in the economic and social activities of the host communities are innumerable and demand a complex and not immediate process, that is, it generates a direct impact on business activities, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Bruck and others, (2013) observed that the impacts of wars and conflicts on infrastructure, market stability and other macroeconomic outcomes negatively affect business opportunities to become profitable investments. Some situations that employers face in these conflict zones are: higher transactions cost, higher risks, limited and disorganized markets (Czinkota et al., 2010). Other challenges are: the lag of calculations on the number of combatants that will access the programs, the delay in the payment of the economic aid that decreases the incentive and the time in which the demobilization takes place.

The processes of creation, expansion and consolidation of companies affect the business dynamics and therefore the indicators of social and economic development of the regions (Crissien (2006), Varela (2014).) There are social, situational, psychological, cultural, political, technological, scientific and economic factors affecting the entrepreneurial process (Shapiro 1976), which determine the impact they will have on the generation of value, employment, welfare and peace (Varela 2014)

Existing entrepreneurs in conflict zones are forces that will play a crucial role in the implementation of these reintegration processes, be through employment or through new business orientation. They are regional leaders they can generate transformations and create currents of thought and action that contribute to the construction of peace and the strengthening of the economic and social fabric of the regions in which they had significant influence (Varela, 2014)

For this reason, this research intends to identify with the existing E/BP what are the perceptions, the beliefs, the orientations that they have about entrepreneurial and managerial variables, that might been affecting their activities in the past, or in the present, or in the future .

The investigation covered E/BP of companies of different sizes, from different sectors and inquired about the direct effects that the conflict has had on them, their families and their companies, to validate the independence of the perceptions as a function of size of the companies and of the experiences lived during the conflict.

This investigation will allow perceiving the willingness of entrepreneurs to collaborate in the process of reintegration of ex-combatants and victims

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this research had several steps:

- Definition of the main variables grouped into five categories
 - a. *The characterization of the company and the entrepreneur*: business activity of the company, products and / or services offered, location, number of employees, information on its main production and distribution processes, municipalities and / or countries where the company has a presence, company seniority, number of partners, basic financial information and socio-demographic characteristics of the entrepreneur.
 - b. *Perception of the impact of the conflict*: Opinion on the peace agreements, the economic situation of the country, direct affectations by the conflict, situation of the company before the agreements, direct affectation of the company by the conflict.
 - c. *Performance before and after the signing of the agreement*: current situation of the company and possible future situation of the company.
 - d. *Peace building line*: support of the company for peace in different lines of work.
 - e. *Challenges*: challenges that the company will be willing to accept facing the post-conflict.
- Preparation and test of the questionnaire
- Definition of the sample. The development of a representative sample includes the use of the data from the Chamber of Commerce of Cali, Popayán and Pasto, considering company size (large, medium, small and micro) and locations. The municipalities that appear in Table # 1 had suffered the rigor of the conflict or were departmental capitals of the south west of the country
- Conducting the survey. INFO, a company specialized in business research, was hired to carry out the telephone survey, focusing on E/BP. A structured questionnaire was used that required between 25 and 30 minutes to be answered

Table # 1
Sample composition

State	Cities	Big	Medium	Small	Micro	Total
Valle del Cauca	Cali	14	15	25	34	88
	Palmira	1	1	5	13	20
	Buenaventura	2		8	10	20
	Tuluá		2	1	9	12
	Yumbo	1	2	5	3	11
	Buga			6	4	10
	Cartago			2	5	7
	Jamundí			3	5	8
	Candelaria	1	1	1	2	5
	La Unión				2	2
	Pradera				2	2
	Florida			2	1	3
Cauca	Popayán		1	6	28	35
	Santander de Quilichao	1	1	2	6	10
	Puerto Tejada		1	1	4	6
	Corinto				2	2
	Toribio			1	1	2
	Piendamó				2	2
	Caldono	1			1	2
Nariño	Pasto	4	3	7	21	35
	Ipiales		2	4	5	11
	Tumaco	1		1	8	10
	Barbacoas				3	3
	Policarpa				2	2
	Ricaurte				2	2
Total		26	29	80	175	310

- Validation, organization and processing of information. In reviewing the surveys, it was necessary to eliminate eight of them because they presented problems of incomplete information or because they had atypical data.
- Statistical processing. Initially, with the support of SPSS a descriptive analysis of the variables allowed to get some basic information. Later a chi square test allowed validating the independence

of the positions to certain statements depending of two variables: the size of the companies and the impact that the family group, the E/BP and the companies has had due to the conflict,

4. Results

The main results of this investigation were:

4.1 Level of satisfaction with the peace agreement.

As indicated, Colombians in general are polarized and divided in relation to the peace agreement, since a significant percentage accepts the agreement as a necessary solution to the conflict and another significant percentage considers that the government was extremely generous with the guerrillas, and for that reason, this group continue to oppose and hinder the process.

The entrepreneurs of this research demonstrate a similar behavior, since 41,1% are satisfied and 38% are dissatisfied with the agreement

4.2 Economic situation of the country after the agreement

. When inquired about the perception of the state of the country's economy in 2007 with respect to previous years, it was found that 45% believe that the situation has deteriorated , 11,9% believe that it has improved and 43% believe that the situation has not changed. When analyzing these figures, it is necessary to remember that there are many forces affecting the Colombian economy and the signing of the peace agreement is just one of them.

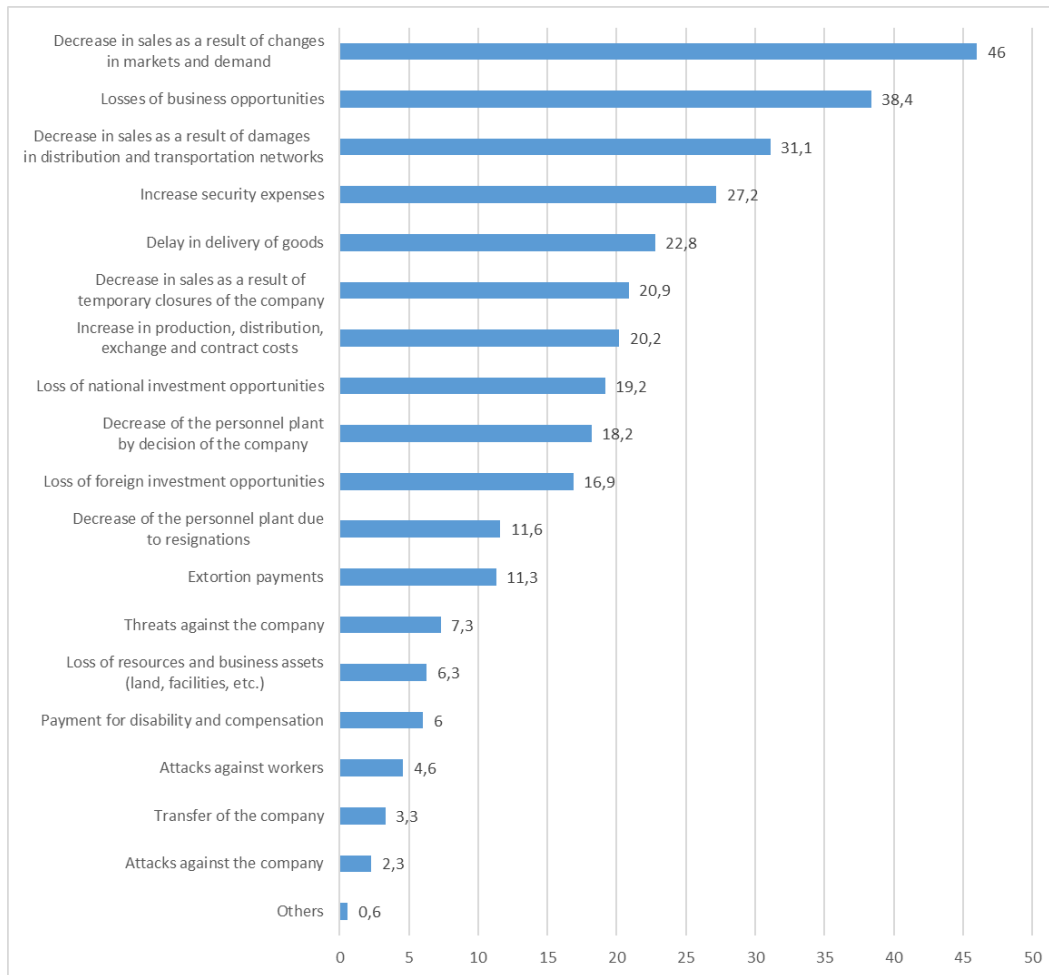
4.3 Current situation of the company (2017).

When inquiring about the current conditions of the company with respect to previous years , a position quite different from the data of the previous question was found, since 21,2% believe that the company situation has improved, 57,3% believe that there have not been significant changes and only 16,6% believe that the company situation has deteriorated

4.4 Effects of the conflict in the last 5 years

Graph # 1 identifies, in percentages, the various effects that the conflict has generated in the company in the last 5 years

Graph # 1.
Effects of the conflict in the last 5 years



The most frequent effects are :a) Decrease in sales due to changes in markets and demand (46%), delays in distribution and transportation networks (31.1%) and due to temporary closures of the business (20,9%) ;b) loss of business opportunities (38,4%); c) increase in security costs(27,2%); d) delay in delivery of goods (22.8%); e)increase in production and distribution costs (20,2%). In these results it is surprising the low percentage in facts , that in the daily life and in the news of recent years had appeared as frequent events: extortion (11,3%), threats to companies (7,3%) attack against the company (2,3%); attack against workers (4,6%); transfer of

company (3,3%) losses of resources and business assets (6,3%)

4.5 Perceptions about the Peace agreement

Graph # 2 presents the percentages of entrepreneurs who were “totally in agreement” or “totally in disagreement” with some statements about the peace agreement. There are dominant percentages in total agreement in statements such as: will generate more well-being and development to the country; will allow starting the search for peace; it will be favorable to attract foreign investment. There is also a preponderance in totally disagreement with statements such as: the process is reliable; is going to reduce war costs; the gestures and the wills of peace of the armed actors are genuine; the armed actors will demobilize.

4.6 Effect on business variables: past-vs-present analysis

For this section, E/BP were asked to make a comparison between the state of some business variables looking at the current situation of their companies (2017) and the situation of the previous 5 years (2011-2016). Graph # 3 collects the data and shows that in the vast majority of the variables, the entrepreneurs consider that they have remained the same, that is, there have not been great variations that could be associated with the peace agreements process. On the issues of corruption, taxes, and smuggling, they identified a deterioration of the situation, but these changes cannot be associated to the peace agreements

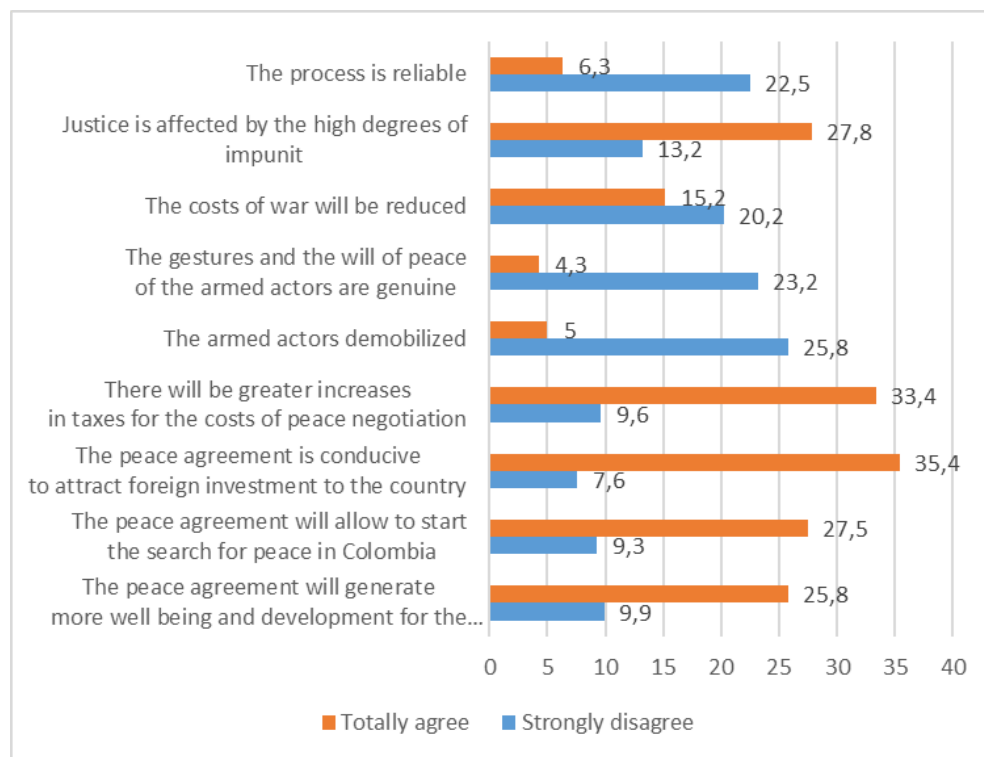
4.7 Effects on business variables: Future –vs-present analysis

When inquiring about the business variables in the near future (2018-2019) versus the current conditions (2017), then E/BP present a very positive perspective, because they consider that the future will be better than the present, except in the phenomena of corruption and smuggling. Again, this result should not be interpreted as being caused solely by the peace agreement, since there are many forces that converge for these results.

4.8 Participation in the construction of the peace line

One of the innovative themes of this research was to identify the position of the entrepreneurs about the probability to participate actively in the activities that constitute "the Peace Line ". The measurement was made on a Likert scale where there were five levels: "I am already doing it", "

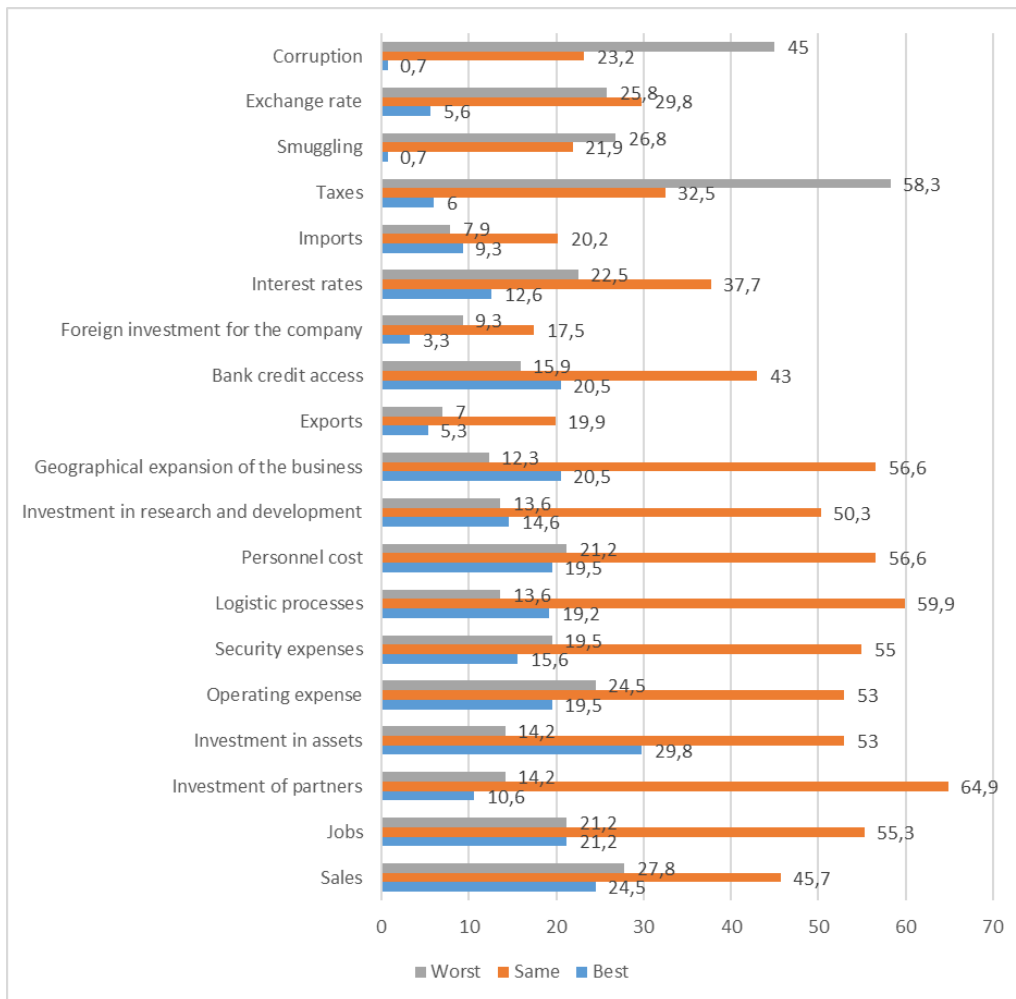
Graph # 2
Perceptions about the peace agreement



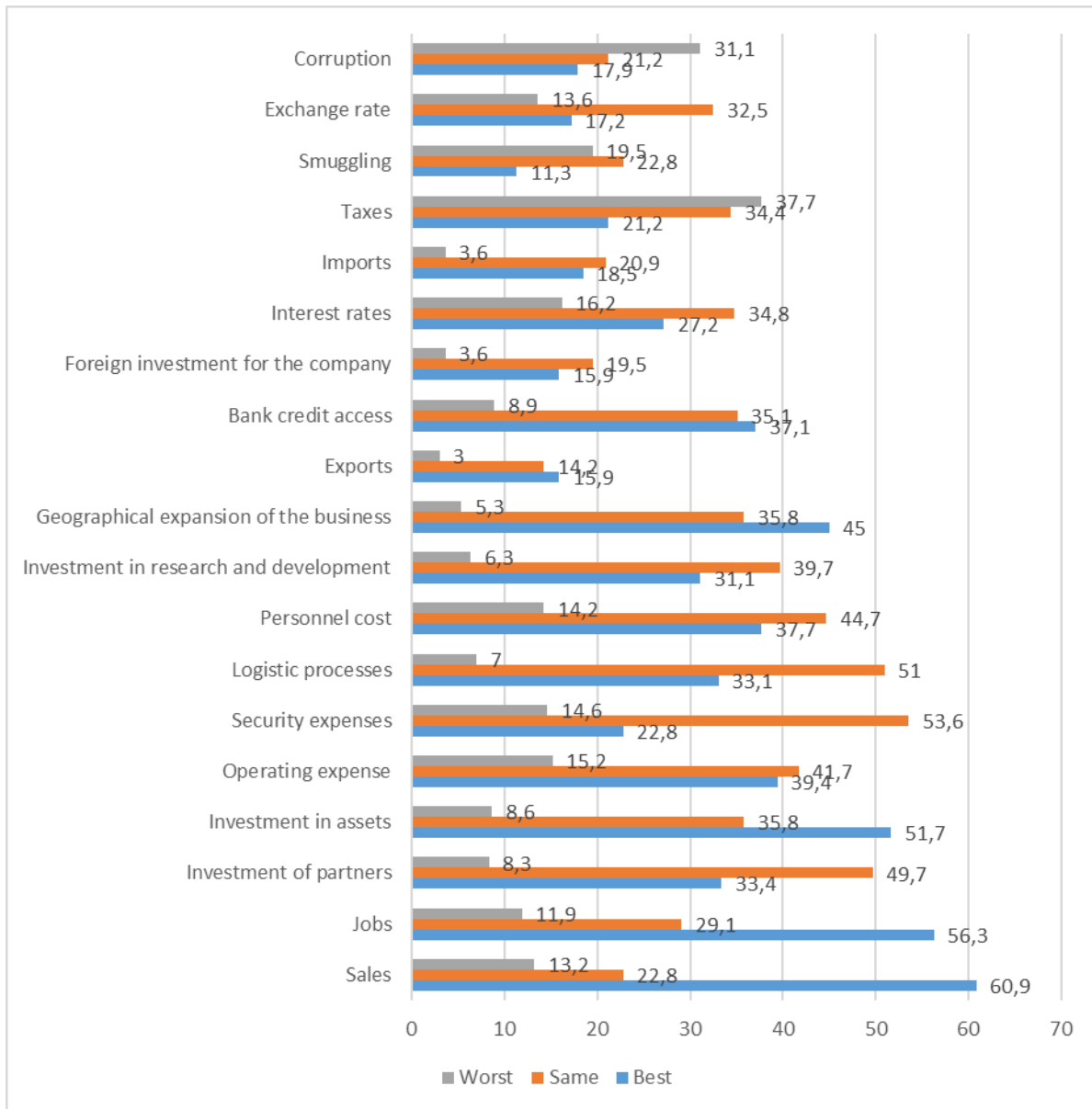
it is very likely that I will do “,” it is probable that I will do It”, “it is unlikely that I will do it”, and “it is not likely that I will do it”. Graph # 5 presents the detailed results. If the first 3 categories are grouped and it is considered that they indicate “favorability” to the active participation in the activities, and the last two are grouped and it is considered that they indicate “no favorability” towards active participation, it is observed , in figure #5,that in all the categories the favorability is

between 54,6% and 82,7%. The lowest favorability values were for: I would create employment for the demobilized, I support peace agreements with other armed groups, and I support the construction of an economic fund for the construction of peace

Graph # 3
Business variables : Present (2017) Vs Past (2011-2016)



Graph # 4.
Business variables : Present (2017) Vs Future (2018-2019)



These results raise, for the Colombian case, a positive interpretation in social sensitivity of entrepreneurs, in terms of actively linking to some of the activities of the peace line

4.8 Time to perceive changes

Such a complex process, like this peace agreement, requires the patience of all Colombians and international observers, because the accumulated in 60 years requires time. When inquiring about the time horizons required seeing the effects of the peace agreement 44,6% of E/BP indicate that it will take more than 3 years and only 17,3% believe that this will happen in the next 12 months

4.9 The challenges

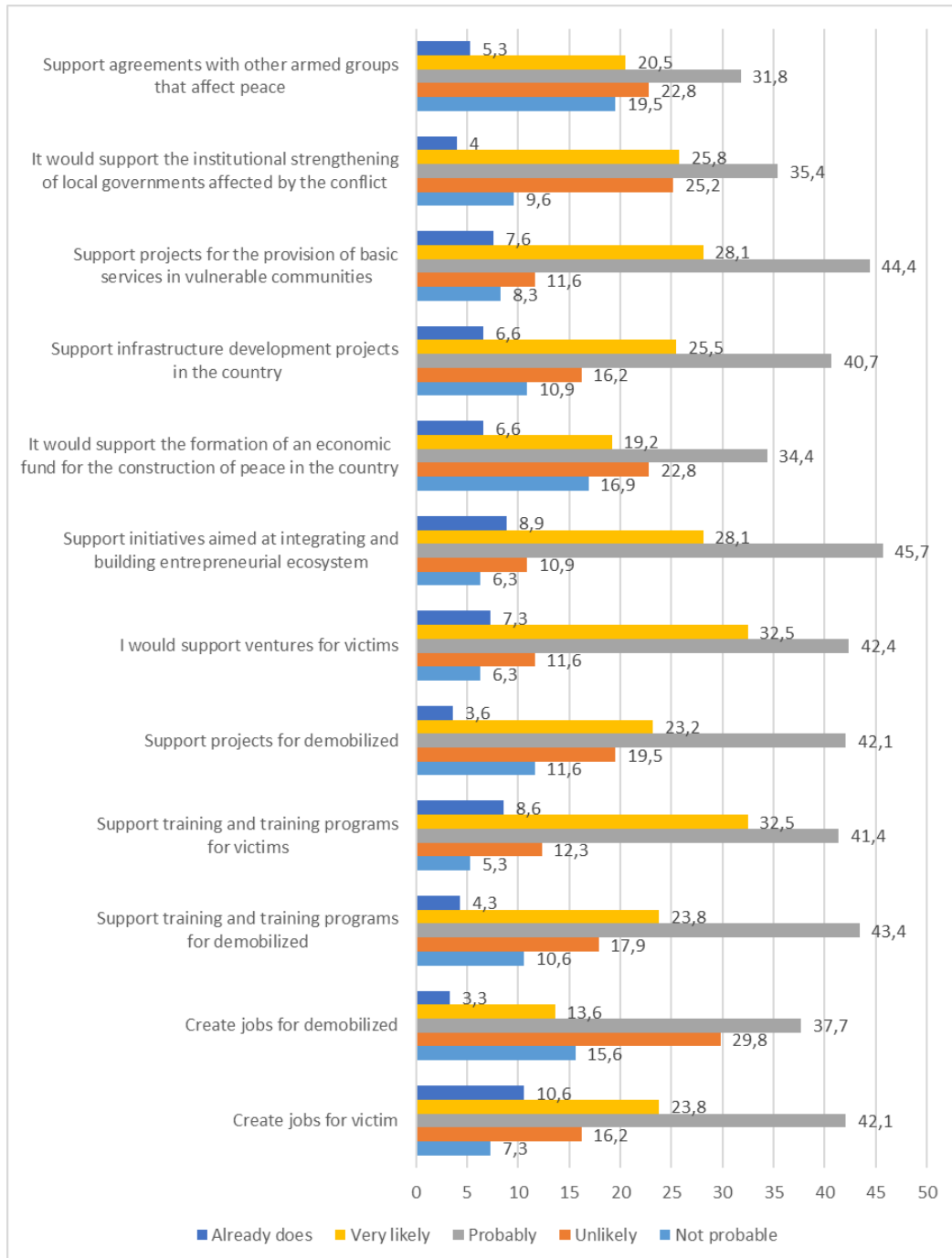
Among the new conditions that E/BP and companies will have to face, we inquired about the major challenges that they perceived in the coming years, associated with the Peace Agreement. Graph # 6 presents the positions of the E/BP about assuming the great challenges that they must solve to contribute to the peace agreement. If the percentages of “total agreement” and “agreement” are added and they are given the notion of "Very important", and if the percentages of "disagreement" and "totally disagree" are added and they are giving the notion of "Not Important", is possible to observe that in general all the challenges are considered very important ranging from 35,1% (Adaptation of the demobilized as employees of the company) to 61,5 % (Training in business development issues). The challenges that had the highest percentages in the "Not very important" area were: Adaptation of demobilized workers as employees (31,1%) and post-conflict financing with new taxes (30,8%)

4.10 Effects of company size

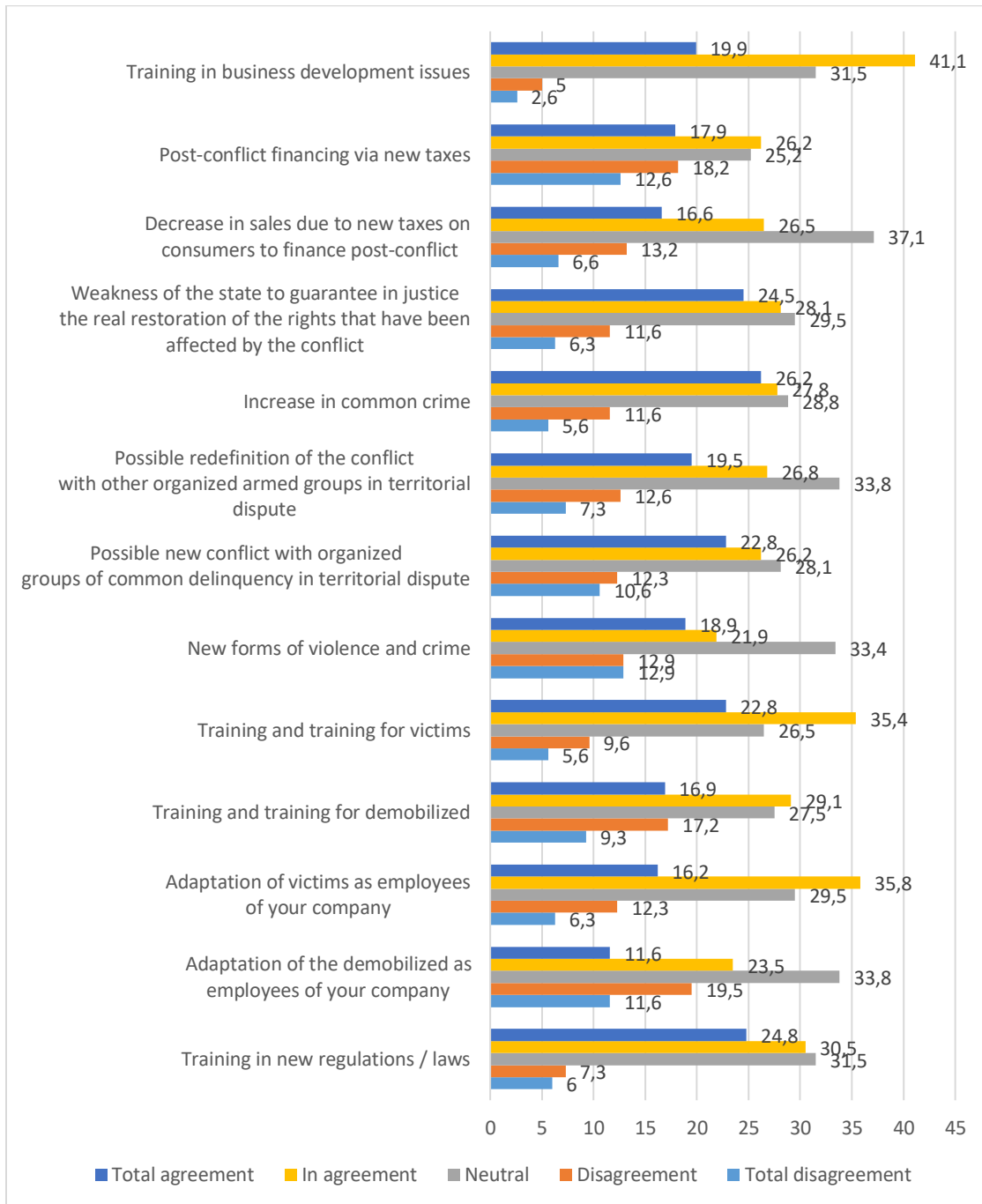
The chi-square test validated the statistical significance of some of the statements formulated in the study against the size of the organizations. In particular, to identify whether there is a highly differentiated positions in the answers, by an E/BP associated to a big, a medium, a small or a micro enterprise. The null hypothesis (Ho), in each statement, was the independence of the answer given with respect to the size of the company.

Graph # 5

Participation in the construction of the peace line



Graph # 6
Challenges



In the following statements, with a confidence equal or greater than 95% ($p < 0,05$) the hypothesis null was rejected:

- Would create jobs for victims
- Would support the institutional strengthening of affected local governments
- Would support the training in new regulations / new laws
- Would work in the adaptation of the demobilized as employees of my company
- Would work in adapting the victims as employees of my company
- Would work in the training for demobilized persons
- Would work in training for conflict victims
- Would support peace agreements with other groups

, meaning that the positions of the entrepreneurs in those statements depends of the size of the enterprises

4.11 Effects of having been a victim of the conflict

With the Chi Square test, a validation of the independence of the positions expressed with respect to the fact of having been a victim of the conflict or not, allowed to reject the independence of the variables, with a confidence equal or greater than 95% ($p < 0,05$) in the following statements:

- The peace agreement will generate more well-being and development for the country
- The gestures and the will of peace of the armed actors are genuine
- There is involvement in justice due to the high degrees of impunity
- Would create jobs for demobilized
- Would support training for demobilized
- Would support training for demobilized
- Would support new ventures developed by demobilized combatants.
- Would support new ventures developed by victims.
- Would support initiatives aimed at integrating and building new organizations
- Would support the formation of an economic fund for the construction of peace
- Would support infrastructure development projects in the country
- Would support projects for the provision of basic services in communities.
- Would support the institutional strengthening of local governments.
- Would support agreements with other armed groups that affect peace.

, which means that the answers given to these statements are related to the vital experience of the E/BP with respect to this situation of having been a victim or not of the conflict

5. Conclusions

- In this first exploratory study on the perceptions of Colombian E/BP located in municipalities affected by the armed conflict in south-western Colombia, a series of aspects were identified that indicate that, in general, the difficulties that were experienced in the Colombian economy in 2017, were not associated with the signing of the peace agreements and that the E/BP are optimistic about the results of 2018 and 2019
- On the other hand, the high level of acceptance shown by the peacebuilding lines is very positive, which suggests that there is a high probability that the process of reintegration of ex-combatants and victims can be carried out with the determined support of the entrepreneurs
- They identified a series of challenges that E/BP will have to face in the coming years, and this agenda will be very useful for the definition of business management in the face of the new political, economic and social considerations that the agreement will generate.
- The analyzes that were done on the effects of company sizes in the conceptual positions of the E/BP indicated the existence of differentiated positions in some of the statements when the company size is changed
- The analyzes that were done on the effects of having been a direct victim of the conflict in the conceptual positions of the E/BP, indicated the existence of differentiated positions in some of the statements when the conflict has directly affected or not the vital trajectory of the E/BP, or of their families or of their companies
- The research illustrate several areas that need to be considered for the reintegration process: a) the government and institutional entities involved in the post-conflict process must generate strategies and programs that will accompany entrepreneurs and demobilized persons to implement and develop activities related to peace building lines; b) It is important to create and design programs that enhance the entrepreneurial competences of demobilized people who are involved in the process of creating companies, c) It is necessary to adapt the business ecosystem

to support the creation and development of entrepreneurs, to meet these new players who will demand many services.

- There is an opportunity to research in some years what was the real level of participation of the E/BP in the process and how it finally affected the business environment of the regions.

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