Columbian Peace in Jitters

What is the issue?

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- Columbian peace was negotiated by outgoing president “Juan Mauel Santos” and FARC leadership (communist rebels), which ended the 50 year civil war.
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- But the election of rightist Iván Duque as Colombia’s next President has raised concerns on the sustainability of the deal.
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What is the changing political dynamics in Columbia?

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- The current election was the 1st since peace was negotiated with the FARC Marxist guerrillas in 2016.
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- The poll saw ‘Iván Duque’ (a political novice) beat ‘Gustavo Etro’ (an erstwhile insurgent), by a whopping 12% margin.
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- Mr. Duque’s victory will consolidate the conservatives further in the Congress, where the centrists led by current president ‘Santos’ are already weakened.
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- Duque’s economic agenda is also clearly rightist - he proposes to cut corporate taxes and promote a better investment climate in the oil sector.
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- He is a protégé of the former conservative President Álvaro Uribe, and is backed by Uribe’s “Democratic Centre party”.
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- Duque’s team and his backers are openly cynical of the peace deal and already decry the amnesty given to the rebels.
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What are the challenges ahead?

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- There has been a steady marginalisation of centrist forces, leaving the field open to the extremists on both ends.
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- While the peace accord provided for FARC to contest elections, violent attacks on FARC candidates forced them to withdraw from the presidential race.
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- Subsequently, FARC also suspended its campaign for the congress, an action that is seen as a precursor to the total collapse of the deal.
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- It is also saddening that the judicial and other institutional mechanisms to advance the objectives of the deal are still not in place.
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- A return to the brutal and protracted civil war is to nobody's favour, and hence policy makers need to show more rationality for sustained reconciliation.
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- In this tense political context, it is critical to appreciate the efforts of Mr. Santos who leaves behind a legacy of courage to advance a tough deal.
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Source: The Hindu

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