# Uncertain Peace in Columbia

## What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- The Columbian leftist militant group FARC had entered into a peace accord with the government of President Juan Manuel Santos in 2016.
\n
- While further negotiations are already on a wobbly path, results of the recent parliamentary elections have complicated matters further.
\n

\n\n

## What are the political developments in Columbia?

\n\n

\n
- FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was an armed leftist militia that was involved in a protracted civil war with the Columbian government.
\n
- **Peace -** The rebels reached an understanding (accord) with the Columbian government in 2016 to surrender arms and demilitarize permanently.
\n
- Colombia’s presidential election is due in May 2018, which is critical for the fragile peace accord with FARC that ended a 50 year civil war.
\n

\n\n

\n
- Also, President Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for having piloted the peace initiative despite political pressures.
\n
- Notably, Mr. Santos has been implementing the accord in bits and pieces despite strong right-wing opposition led by former President Álvaro Uribe.
\n
- **The Setback -** Parliamentary elections in Columbia were held this month and the results have presented a clear setback to peace-backers.
\n
- In the parliamentary vote, Mr. Uribe’s Democratic Centre Party has emerged

as the largest bloc in the Senate with 19 seats.
\n
- Also, two other right-wing parties, Radical Change and Conservative Party, finished second and third with 16 and 15 seats, respectively.
\n
- While the anti-accord parties haven't managed a clear majority, they now account for 50 of the 102 seats, implying that they do enjoy popular support.
\n
- The ruling Social Party of Mr. Santos's won just 14 seats and FARC which contested polls for the 1$^{st}$ time couldn't even muster 1% of the votes.
\n
- But FARC will still get an assured representation in parliament as agreed in the disputed accord.
\n

\n\n

## How has the Peace Accord worked thus far?

\n\n

\n
- Though the implementation of the peace accord thus far has been patchy, major strides were made in demilitarisation and disbanding of the FARC.
\n
- Also, there are clear indications that FARC is transitioning into a genuine political force that has completely shunned violence.
\n
- The accord also granted protect to mainstreamed FARC leaders and vouched to prevent right-wing militias from targeting its members and sympathisers.
\n
- Yet, several left-wing activists and trade union leaders have been assassinated by right-wing militia groups, thereby hindering effective reconciliation.
\n
- Also, such trends are making it harder to get other currently armed insurgents to give up militancy as they fear rightist attacks.
\n

\n\n

## What is the way ahead?

\n\n

\n
- As the verdict of the parliamentary elections show, the pro-accord forces will have to strengthen public support for their efforts in order to sustain it

\n
- It needs to be recognized that the memories of the civil war are still quite raw among many and genuine reconciliatory efforts are needed.
\n
- Dedicated steps to overcome the urban-rural disconnect and economic disparity is needed for a permanently reigning in violence.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

