

“Shattering Peace”. Peace Agreements and Public Opinion in Colombia during Iván Duque’s Administration*

“Haciendo trizas la paz”. Acuerdos de paz y opinión pública en Colombia durante el gobierno de Iván Duque

“Arrasando a paz”. Acordos de paz e formação de opinião pública na Colômbia durante o governo de Iván Duque

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Abstract:

Based on an analysis of the main trends expressed by some of the most influential Colombian media, this research addresses the dynamics of public opinion regarding peace and peace agreements in Colombia. In light of the fact that the country is going through the implementation stage of the agreements signed with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), we analyze the question of whether there have been substantial changes in how the subject of peace is presented and established by the media during the government of the Iván Duque and how these changes potentially impact public discussion. The proposed approach is based on mixed methods applied to the analysis of media discourse. This approach allows us to combine an analysis of trends to form an analysis of content drawn from semantic association networks.

Keywords: Colombia, peace agreements, public opinion, media, mixed methods.

Resumen:

A partir del análisis de las principales tendencias expresadas por algunos de los medios de comunicación colombianos más influyentes, esta investigación aborda la dinámica de la opinión pública frente a la paz y los acuerdos de paz en Colombia. Teniendo en cuenta que el país se encuentra en la etapa de implementación de los acuerdos firmados con las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), se analiza si ha habido cambios sustanciales en la forma como el tema de la paz es presentado y establecido por los medios de comunicación durante el gobierno de Iván Duque y cómo estos cambios impactan potencialmente la discusión pública. El enfoque propuesto se basa en métodos mixtos aplicados al análisis del discurso mediático. Este enfoque permite combinar un análisis de tendencias para conformar un análisis de contenido a partir de redes de asociación semántica.

Palabras clave: Colombia, acuerdos de paz, opinión pública, medios de comunicación, métodos mixtos.

Resumo:

A partir de uma análise das principais tendências expressadas por alguns dos mais influentes meios de comunicação colombianos, esta pesquisa aborda a maneira como se configuraram as dinâmicas de opinião pública em torno da paz e dos acordos de paz na Colômbia. Partindo do fato de que o país atravessa o estágio de implementação dos acordos assinados com as FARC, analisa-se se durante o governo de Iván Duque aconteceram mudanças substanciais na forma como é apresentado e estabelecido o tema da paz na agenda mediática e seus possíveis efeitos na discussão pública. A abordagem proposta baseia-se nos métodos mistos aplicados à análise do discurso mediático, que permitem fazer de maneira conjunta a análise de tendências e conteúdo a partir de redes de associação semântica.

Palavras-chave: Colômbia, acordos de paz, opinião pública, médios de comunicação, métodos mistos.

Introduction

After the execution of peace agreements between the Colombian government and the now extinct guerilla group, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC),

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the agreement implementation phase was marked by a traumatic government transition between Juan Manuel Santos's term of office (2010–2014 and 2014–2018) and the administration of Iván Duque Márquez (2018–2022).

There are possible ideological differences between these two heads of state, differences which are consistent with differences in governing style, ways of relating to members of the Congress, and different ways of interacting with the media and the political opposition. In addition to these ideological differences, the Colombian society is still a long way from leaving behind the polarization, ideological tension, and altercations with regard to peace, which exist within a dynamic that fluctuates back and forth from periods of tension to periods of accommodation. This dynamic has become increasingly more complex since the referendum to approve the peace agreements of October 2016 (Charry, 2018).

For this reason, peace and the implementation of the agreements continue to be subjects of debate and of ongoing ideological and partisan differentiation. These factors have had a considerable impact on the functioning of Colombian politics and on the current president's capacity to govern (Carvajal, 2019; Gonzales, 2018).

This inquiry emerges from the premise that all discourse is structured by macro- and micro-level discourse propositions through which ideological, ontological, and/or cognitive positions are expressed. These positions become explicit, in part, through the linguistic mechanisms of semantization and adjectivization. We can, therefore, trace these positions and identify their underlying directionality or logic (Benford & Snow, 2000; Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Goffman, 2006; Ruíz, 2009; Snow et al., 1986; Sádaba, 2001; Van Dijk, 1997, 2000).

Specifically, we believe that discourse phenomena cannot be limited to an abstract or ephemeral social realm. Rather, it is through these phenomena that social actors define and give meaning to reality itself, making these tools essential for understanding the various social structuring mechanisms (Snow, 2007). Therefore, such discursive strategies are, in practice, rhetorical models (Ricoeur, 2009) with which social actors expect to change the said reality, as it is clear that both the traditional media and the social media play leading (although non-determinant) roles in the definition of the properties and boundaries of the social sphere of public opinion (Calderón & Castells, 2019; Grossi, 2007; Vizcaíno, 2018).

Therefore, in this study, the analysis of social expression as shaped through discourse is understood as a space where the precarious nature of meaning can be systematically questioned: a space which certainly provides an opportunity to explore “how ideas and objects were created, and how they are maintained over time” (Vasilachis, 2014, p. 148).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to render an account of the information trends established in Colombia, as these relate to the subject of peace and to the implementation of agreements. These trends are inextricably associated with a set of discursive practices that relate to interactions between stakeholders in both the political and media arenas (Castells, 2009; Castells et al., 2007). All of this will allow us to account for the information available to the general public, so they may have an approximate idea of how the agreements are being implemented and of the difficulties and obstacles related to the establishment of peace in this country.

To this end, in the next section of this paper, we present several contextual elements which offer the reader a general understanding of the events and dynamics that have marked political process. In the third section, we describe the characteristics of the methodological design that was developed and the way in which data collection was carried out according to the type of media selected for analysis. In the fourth section, the findings of the study are described and analyzed. Finally, this paper ends with a few general conclusions about the case study being examined.

Contextual Elements

Since he took office, Colombia's current president has been enthroned in complex disputes that caused damage in the sphere of public opinion (Barrera, 2019; Ramírez, 2019). This was partly due to the campaign rhetoric advanced by some members of his political party, namely, the Centro Democrático that referred to "shattering the agreements" in the event that they won the election. This rhetorical style was evident in the speech of Ernesto Macías, the elected president of the Congress of the Republic in 2018, who in addition to being a fellow member of Iván Duque's party, also took advantage of the presidential inauguration to rally against peace agreements and against the overall social and economic conditions that former President Juan Manuel Santos had left (Charry et al., 2019)¹.

This event caused tension while also creating a contradiction, because both the president and his vice presidential running mate, Marta Lucía Ramírez, emphasized during the course of the campaign that their eventual government would not shatter the peace deals and that, on the contrary, they would make a few adjustments to assure that the accord would be properly implemented, continuing with the slogan "*paz sí, pero no así*" ("peace indeed, but not like this") that had already set a trend in the 2016 plebiscite.

In addition to this, once in office, the current head of state of Colombia had to confront bitter political disputes, which quickly became media controversies. These disputes included the question of whether to continue to approach the guerilla leaders of the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN), who were in La Habana, Cuba, waiting for a greenlight from the president before formally starting peace dialogues. On the contrary, there is the stance that the government would take regarding the detention (and potential extradition to the United States) of former FARC leader, alias "Jesús Santrich," for the alleged crime of drug trafficking. Subsequent to these events, ex-FARC leaders, known by their aliases "Iván Márquez," "El Paisa," and "Romaña," exited from territorial peace areas. Toward the end of August 2019, this group of FARC leaders would appear together with "Santrich" in a non-defined location in Venezuela, announcing on a video recording that they would become armed dissidents. This situation resulted in their immediate ousting from the new party that had been created for the former guerrilla movement. The incident was just one more factor in the already deteriorated relationship between Colombia and Venezuela (Barrera, 2019).

Yet, the most significant, and also controversial, activities of the current Colombian government, with regard to the subject of peace and the implementation of the agreements entered into with the FARC, have been the objections to the law, which created the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz*, JEP), expressed by the president. These objections were submitted in March 2019. The ruling party had been seriously battered in Congress with regard to this issue, after a stunning approval by a majority of legislators associated with former President Santos's administration, with alternative and left parties following suit.

Finally, after a critical debate in the Congress, the government was defeated once again when attempting to object to specific sections of the JEP Statutory Law. The Congress eventually referred the case to the country's supreme judicial authority, the Constitutional Court, where the president's objections were dismissed, because the Court held that the abovementioned bill should be approved as passed by the Congress. All of this has resulted in a tense (if not pugnacious) relationship between the government and the JEP.

Along with these controversies, there are also the events associated with the car bomb attack at a police academy in Bogota by a faction of ELN in January 2019, which unfortunately left 21 young people dead and dozens more injured. These events put an end to any possibility of moving toward the initiation of formal peace dialogues between the illegal armed group and the Colombian government. As expected, after the massive repudiation by the public at large of these infamous acts of violence, the response of Iván Duque's

government was to mount a worldwide offensive to report crimes against humanity by the ELN and require the Cuban government to extradite the ELN guerrilla leaders who were still in Cuba.

Furthermore, in October 2019, there were regional elections, in which Colombian citizens elected their municipal mayors and department governors. These elections were characterized by a friend vs. foe divide between the candidates and parties. The latter were either for or against the implementation of the peace agreements, which partly served to revive the polarized environment seen in the 2018 presidential election and in the 2016 so called plebiscite for peace (Reyes, 2016; Botero et al., 2018).

It is worth stating that all of these controversies evolved within the context of widespread disapproval by a sizable portion of the population, with regard to the increased number of assassinations of social leaders, human rights advocates, and environmentalists. These issues, along with the economic slowdown and the plan to introduce a pension reform and a reform for the payment of hourly wages, have resulted in Duque's administration get the lowest popularity rates (Restrepo, 2019), with some surveys showing that disapproval of the current government had reached 71% by December 2019 (Cano, 2020).

Methodology

This inquiry is intended to identify the trends and effects of media discourse with regard to peace and the implementation of peace agreements through the examination of news broadcasts produced by four of the leading sources of Colombian media. For this purpose, we selected the news programs of the two leading television networks, Noticias Caracol and Noticias RCN. Both of these networks provide national coverage and receive the highest ratings. Additionally, we selected the most prestigious and reputable newspapers in the history of Colombia, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*. Both these newspapers have national circulation and the greatest dissemination rates within the Colombian press.

Regarding data collection, we monitored the information reported by each of the above media through their official Twitter accounts. The publishing houses which direct these media organizations purport to keep these Twitter accounts updated, as they are used to establish more direct contact with their respective audiences and readerships (Mancera & Pano, 2013). This exercise enabled us to conduct a more effective comparison of information, because Twitter accounts all consist of the same format (tweets), which makes it possible to standardize the content of recorded information, regardless of the format in which such content was originally disseminated (television broadcast or print journalism).

We collected news on the subject of peace and on the subject of the implementation of the agreements by utilizing the Twitter data capture application available in the specialized mixed methods research software MAXQDA, a function which allows the compilation of up to 10,000 tweets per week (Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2020). The capture of news (tweets) was based on a search pattern including the words "*paz*" (peace), "*implementación*" (implementation), and "*acuerdos*" (agreements) and the acronyms JEP (*Justicia Especial para la Paz*, [Special Justice for Peace]), FARC, and ELN. We classified and systematized this information in an SPSS database where different variables were created, separating news types by topic, news bias, news actor, and bias attributed to the news actor by the media.

News items were classified and systematized by topic according to the points defined by the government and the FARC, including (i) the subject of land restitution, (ii) political participation, (iii) focus on gender, (iv) the battle against drug trafficking, (v) victim participation and reparation, and (vi) reintegration into civilian life. Other subjects were included along with the above topic categories, such as (vii) human rights, (viii) the environment, (ix) dissent, (x) peace talks with the ELN, (xi) reactions of the international community to the implementation of the peace agreements, (xii) political struggles among political parties, (xiii) implementation procedures, and (xiv) judicial issues.

Concurrently, the information from the official Twitter accounts of the media sources was classified based on the bias that the media producer attributed to the news item. Biases were classified as "negative," "neutral," or "positive." This feature can be identified on the basis of the adjectivization that may be either present or absent in the headline. As stated in the introduction, adjectivization and semantization reveal the ideological orientation of media editorialists, and it is clear that the unit of analysis is the headline itself, because it has the greatest cognitive load of the news (Van Dijk, 1990).

Meanwhile, the news actors considered in the classification on the information were the government, the FARC, the opponents to and supporters of peace agreements, FARC dissidents, victims, the organized civil society, the military (including all members of the armed forces), industry, the Church, non-governmental organizations, academicians, members of the international community or international organizations, the ELN, JEP magistrates, the higher courts (Supreme Court of Justice and Constitutional Court and Council of State), members of paramilitary groups who have expressed their stance regarding the peace agreements and their implementation, the political parties, and finally, the judicial stakeholders, including news actors, such as the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic, and the judges of the Republic.

Likewise, we created a variable for the identification of the bias assigned by the media to the actions and statements of the different news actors. This bias was classified as "against," "neutral to," or "in favor of" peace and the implementation of the agreements. In the cases where the information in the headline did not convey the attribution of the ideological position of news actors, it was classified as "Not Applicable (N/A)."

Information was captured from the months of January to December 2019, resulting in a database of over 7500 tweets. It is necessary to clarify that the frequency or number of times that the same piece of news was posted or retweeted by each medium were considered during the data collection process. This is because frequency indicates that the news item in question is perceived by the editors of that medium as having (or being in need of having) a greater degree of relevance or visibility.

Because this is a capture and systematization exercise, it should be noted that the intention of this investigation is not the procurement of a statistically significant sample, as the software we used retrieves tweets issued by the media according to the search parameters that were selected. Some posts that did not refer directly to the topic under examination were eliminated during the data cleansing process. These posts did not represent more than 5% of the initially collected data, totaling 7510 final tweets.

It is essential to indicate that at the time of data capture, Noticias Caracol had 8.5 million Twitter followers, followed by Noticias RCN with 7.8 million. For its part, El Tiempo boasted 6.7 million followers, while El Espectador had 4.9 million. These figures have been increasing over time, revealing the heavy impact and influence of these media outlets upon their respective audiences.

Finally, although some studies have approached the issue of peace and peace agreements in Colombia from the perspective of discourse analysis (Cairo & Ríos, 2019; Olave, 2019), such approaches have highlighted the discourses of the actors involved or of the elites from a qualitative perspective, being clear that our approach is based on the frames that the media have given to this subject, from the scope that allows a mixed research methodology, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative elements.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Trend Analysis

Upon analyzing the frequency or number of news events by date (figure 1), the first thing we can identify is that there were news trends with distinctly greater and lesser levels of visibility and relevance.

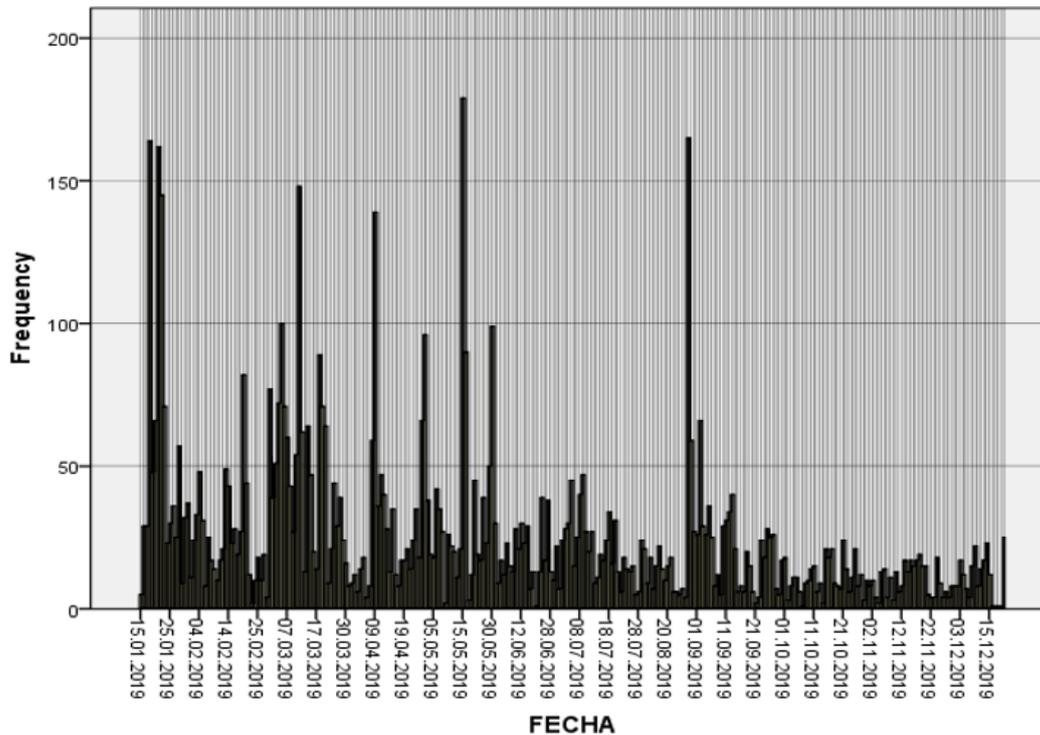


FIGURE 1
Frequency of news events by date
Source: own elaboration

Thus, we can identify five news trends that stand out in the figure above, because they corresponded to more than one hundred news events. The first of these is associated with the car bomb attack at the police academy in Bogota by the ELN. This event had received a high degree of coverage for at least one week during the second half of January. Alternately, we can see the trend related to the president's objections to the JEP Statutory Law, which he submitted during the second week of March. The third news trend with a high degree of media coverage took place on April 9, the date on which Colombia celebrates the National Day of Victims of the Armed Conflict. Additionally, on the same day, the House of Representatives voted on the president's objections to the JEP Statutory Law, which resulted on its abolition. In addition to amounting to a defeat for the government, these events soon gave rise to an internal struggle within the president's party, with calls for the removal of the then minister of justice, which was indicative of the tenuous nature of the president's role as leader.

The news trend with the highest level of coverage appeared mid-May. The trend was related to the JEP's decision to deny the extradition of the former FARC leader under the alias "Jesús Santrich," and to, instead, order his immediate release, arguing that procedural errors had occurred and that these prevented a clear cut determination as to whether the crime involved in the alleged drug trafficking charge had been committed (or not) before or after the agreements were signed. This decision accelerated the resignation of the Prosecutor General of the Republic, Néstor Humberto Martínez, who had the full support of President Iván Duque. The president had publicly stated that he would do his best to continue jailing guerrilla fighters who are repeat offenders and to extradite "Santrich," if necessary. However, this decision by the JEP forced the president to accept the decision and to attend to the release of the former FARC leader, ostensibly to avoid altering the system of checks and balances.

Finally, the fifth news trend with high media coverage or visibility occurred between August 31 and September 1, 2019, when the video recorded by former FARC leaders under the aliases of "Iván Márquez,"

"Jesús Santrich," "El Paisa," and "Romaña" was made available to the public. In the video, the ex-leaders, surrounded by a few mid-level commanders of the extinct guerrilla group, announced to the public their decision to abandon the peace process with the Colombian government. The video showed the dissidents to be equipped with high caliber weapons, engaging in a kind of improvised scenario that was filled with propaganda, in a jungle presumably located in the Orinoquia region, adjacent to the border with Venezuela.

TABLE 1
Percentage distribution by medium

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CARACOL	1290	17.2	17.2	17.2
	RCN	2371	31.6	31.6	48.8
	TIEMPO	1394	18.6	18.6	67.3
	ESPECTADOR	2454	32.7	32.7	100.0
	Total	7509	100.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.0		
Total		7510	100.0		

Source: own elaboration

We can see that the five news trends with the greatest visibility and media coverage during the follow-up period are associated with controversial and/or polemical events, which cast doubts upon the continuity of the peace process (e.g., the president's objections to the JEP and the withdrawal from the accords of important FARC leaders), or with violent events, which questioned the existence of a genuine state of peace in the country after the signing of the agreements (e.g., the ELN attack in Bogota in January 2019). We will come back to this issue later on, during the observation of news distribution by topic.

When we analyze the distribution of the news events posted by each medium, as shown in table 1, we see that the media sources with the greatest level of participation were El Espectador (32.7%) and Noticias RCN (31.6%). From prior studies (Charry, 2018), we know that these two media sources represent the two extremes of the ideological spectrum with regard to peace: the former shows a trend clearly in favor of peace, while the latter is more skeptical and negative toward the peace process. These two media sources are followed, at considerably different levels, by El Tiempo (18.6%), a newspaper whose editorial supported peace during the negotiation process, and finally, by Noticias Caracol (17.2%), a media source that had demonstrated skepticism about peace, just like Noticias RCN.

TABLE 2
Percentage distribution of news bias

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negativo	2734	36.4	36.4	36.4
	Neutral	4211	56.1	56.1	92.5
	Positivo	565	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	7510	100.0	100.0	

Source: own elaboration

Meanwhile, in table 2, as we analyze the general distribution as per the bias imposed by editorialists on published news, we see that the prevailing trend can be qualified as “neutral–negative.” Here, it is apparent that the difference between the negative and positive trends goes up to 28.9 percentage points, a more marked difference than the 19.7 points existing between the neutral and negative trends.

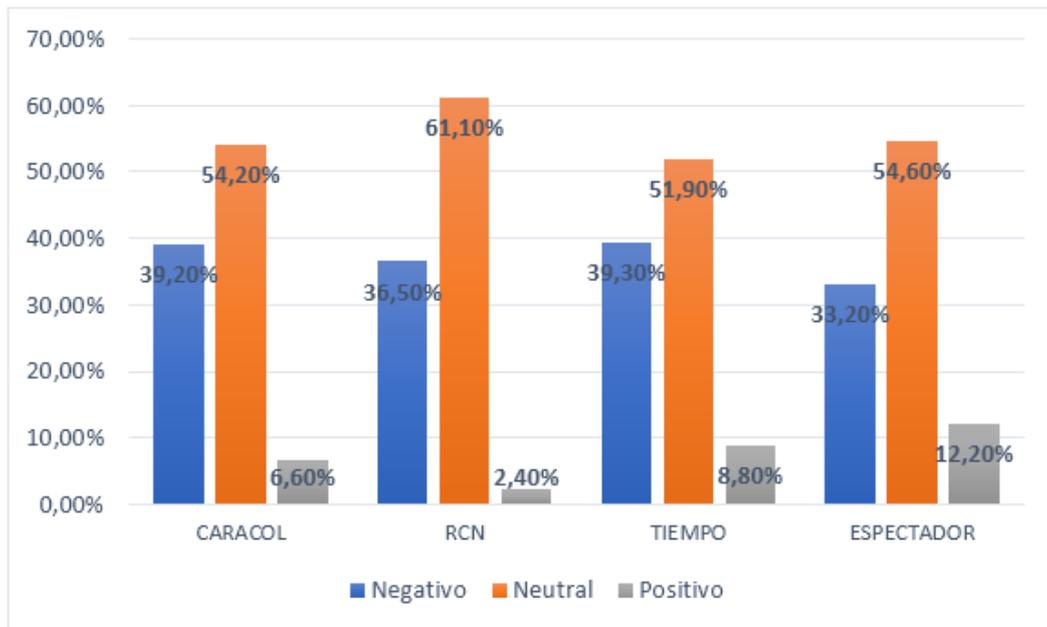


FIGURE 2
 Percentage distribution of news bias by medium
 Source: own elaboration

Likewise, figure 2 helps identify that the negative trend is remarkably similar among the media sources selected for analysis, ranging only from 33% to 39%. The negative trend is clearly higher than the positive trend in all cases. However, we might infer that the same ideological positions mentioned above are maintained, if we pay attention to the positive bias level of each media source, with El Espectador and El Tiempo leading the way (12.2% and 8.8%, respectively), whereas the positive percentages of Noticias Caracol and Noticias RCN represent half of or less than those seen in El Espectador. Thus, it is clear that Noticias RCN is the media source with the lowest percentage of positive positions (2.4%).

In fact, as we can see in figure 3, along with the progressive decrease in the number of news items posted by the media sources regarding peace and the implementation of the agreement, which attests to how much this topic has changed in terms of setting an agenda (McCombs, 2006), we also observe that during each month in which there was a news trend with a high level of media coverage, news stories containing negative and neutral biases also increased significantly. The same, however, was not true for stories with a positive bias. It is clear that in July, the negative bias was not only higher than the positive bias but also exceeded the neutral bias. This is the only juncture in which this situation occurred.

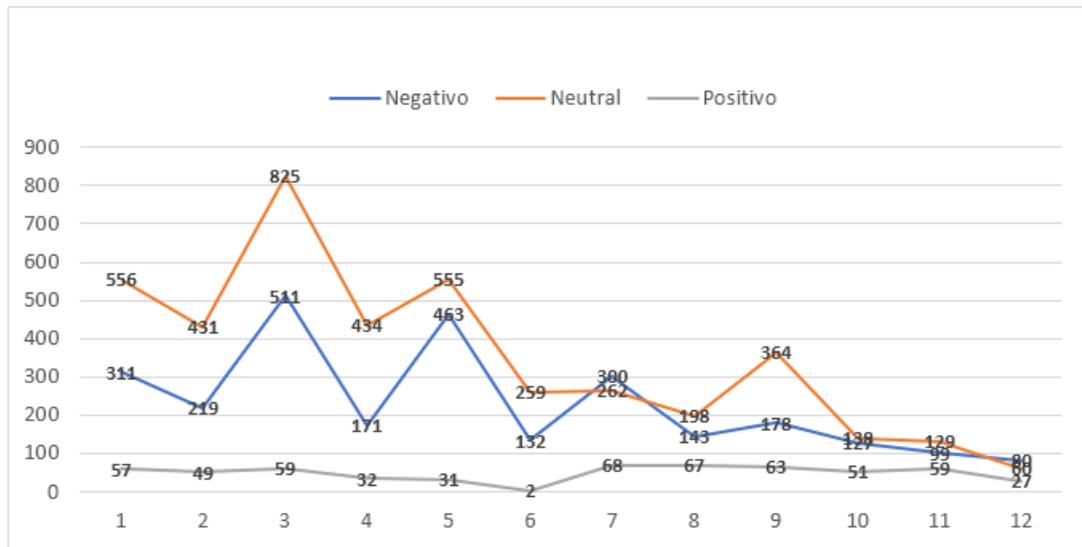


FIGURE 3
 Monthly distribution of news bias by number of cases
 Source: own elaboration

The above situation was a result of the impact upon informational dynamics and the formation of public opinion with regards to the news about the retreat of “Jesús Santrich” from the peaceful territorial space of he had been located at. Because Santrich was a congressman, this resulted in the disapproval of the government and other institutions, such as the Attorney General’s Office of the Republic. The representatives of all political parties also voiced their disapproval, including the Federal Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Common (*Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*, FARC) party, created by former guerrilla members as part of the implementation of the agreements. In a letter released in social and communication media, FARC party leaders stated that they were astonished by and dissatisfied with Santrich’s decision to announce his immediate removal from their political organization.

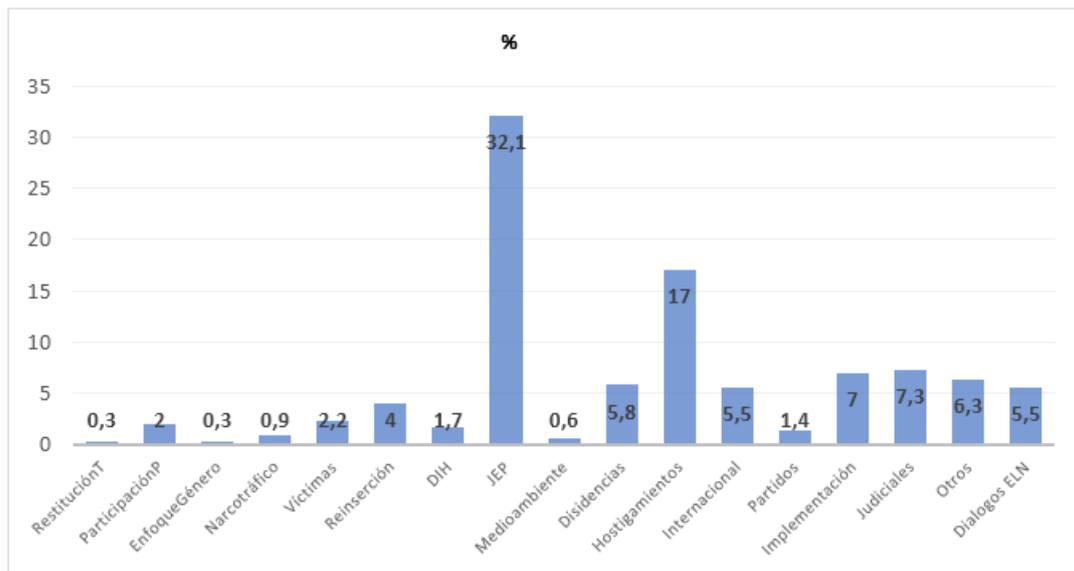


FIGURE 4
Percentage distribution of news by topic

Source: own elaboration²

With regard to the way in which news stories are distributed thematically in relation to peace and to the agreements during the observation period (figure 4), we see that the media agenda was dominated by two issues: JEP news (32.1%), followed by news associated with the armed attacks (17%). Meanwhile, news related to issues supporting the implementation of the agreements (land restitution, political participation, gender inequality, the battle against drug trafficking, victims of armed conflict, and reintegration of former guerrilla members) account for less than 4% of the stories broadcasted during this period of time, surpassed in terms of media visibility by news stories related to judicial issues (7.3%), stories related to implementation (7%), and even by news stories about dissidents of FARC (5.8%). All this illustrates that the most influential media sources in Colombia allocated greater prominence to stories relating to specific dynamics occurring within the political process during that time than to the potential advances and/or setbacks in the peace agreements or to the needs and/or demands of the victims, the coverage of which was only 2.2%.

It is worth indicating that with regard to the bias attributed by media producers according to the topic categories (figure 5), where the most frequent issues (JEP and harassment) account for nearly 50% of the entire news flow, we find that news stories associated with the Special Justice for Peace (*Justicia Especial de Paz*, JEP) have a negative framing of 34.2%, with only 3.3% being positive. Meanwhile, we see that 54.1% of the news stories about armed attacks are associated with a negative bias, with only 2.4% showing a positive bias. It should be noted that the only case in which the positive bias surpassed the neutral or negative bias was rehabilitation, with 41% of the 300 news events corresponding to this topic being framed positively, whereas 24% were framed with a negative bias.

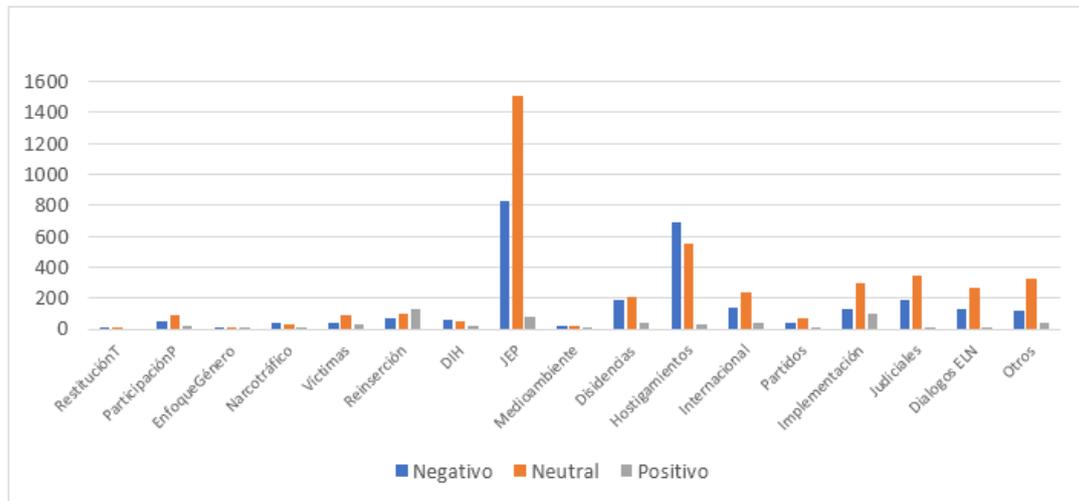


FIGURE 5
Distribution of news bias by topic in number of cases

Source: own elaboration³

Finally, we would like to take a moment to examine the principal news actors and the bias that media producers attributed to each of them with regard to the peace agreements. In this respect, as shown in figure 6, we see that the principal news actors associated with peace and the implementation of the agreements are the government (17.7%) and the FARC (16.6%). However, unlike during the negotiation period, a time frame during which media coverage was concentrated on these two actors (Charry, 2018), we see the emergence of new actors, such as the JEP (10.9%), the ELN (19.6%), the international community (5.5%), and FARC dissidents (4.95%), in the agreement implementation stage.

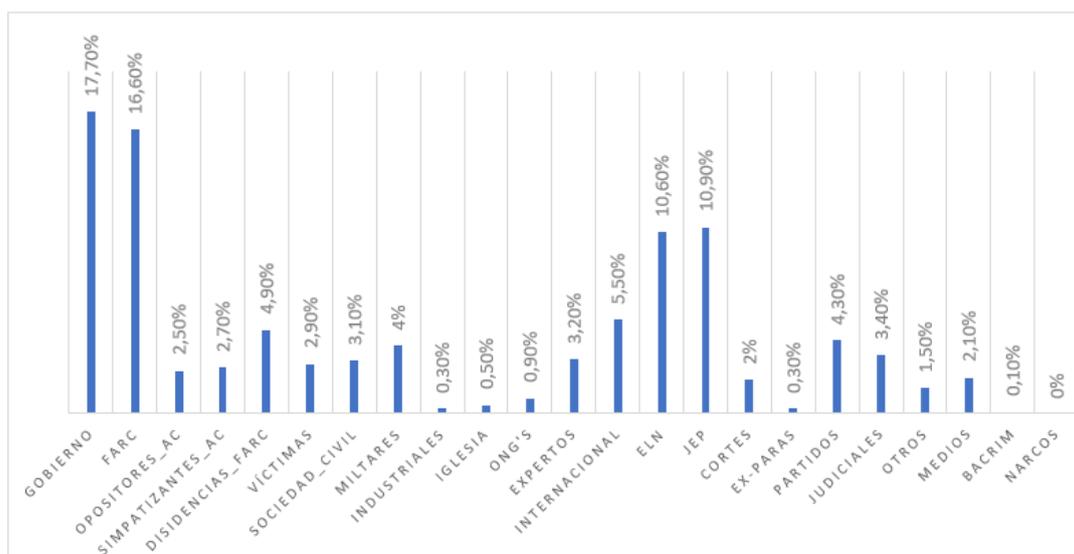


FIGURE 6
Percentage distribution of news by news actor

Source: own elaboration⁴

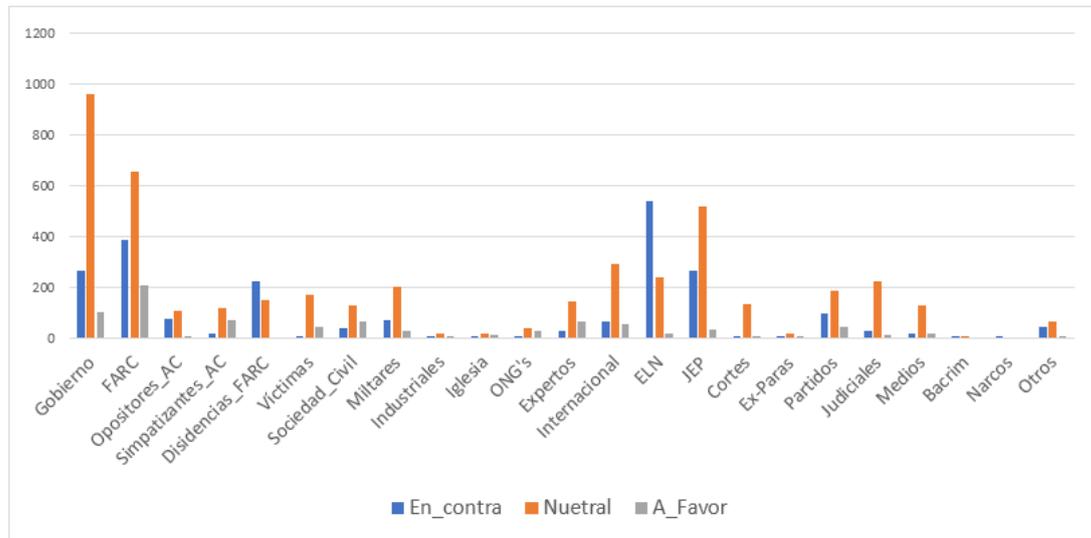


FIGURE 7
Distribution in number of cases by actor and bias of news actor

Source: own elaboration ⁵

As far as the principal news actors and the stance attributed to each of them by the media with regard to whether they are in favor of, against, or neutral toward the peace agreements (figure 7), again, we see a significant departure from previous studies regarding the negotiation phase (Charry, 2018). In previous studies, we could see that the framing of the most frequent news actors, the government and FARC, was markedly in favor of the agreements. In contrast, here we see that, according to media, the stance of these two actors changes to a “neutral–negative” framing, a trend also seen for the most visible third media actor, the JEP.

Furthermore, we observe that some actors are associated with a mostly negative trend. Such is the case with the actors associated with the armed attacks: the ELN and FARC dissidents. This attribute was associated with the opponents of the agreements during the negotiation phase (Charry, 2018). The military had a “neutral–negative” framing, and none of the cases presented an actor whose image, in favor of the agreements, accounted for the highest trend. All of these components, viewed as a whole, evidence drastic changes with regard to the subject of peace and the issue of the implementation of agreements.

Analysis of Semantic Networks Applied to Media Discourse

In addition to the trend analysis discussed in the preceding section, there is the analysis of semantic networks, which not only allows us to look into the most frequent words in a text or within a group of texts but also allows us to identify the most significant associations among words in a discursive context (Mahalem de Lima, 2018). Thus, we draw on the assumption that the mixed methods analysis applied to media discourse enables the correlation of general data on trends with issues related to meaning (Soloshchenko, 2018).

With this methodology, we expect to find some qualitative clues to help us understand the discursive trends in the headlines of news that are produced and posted by the media source selected for analysis. An investigation of these factors can provide a context for the quantitative trends presented in the previous section, and they can also deepen our insight.

By processing the most frequent words in all the headlines of the 7510 news stories we compiled, we can see the semantic hierarchization applied by the media sources and then analyze the semantic networks of

the three most frequent words in these headlines. With regard to the first factor we mentioned, we see that the most frequent words in the discourse of the selected media source under analysis are "JEP" (3.18%), "FARC" (2.24%), "ELN" (1.90%), "paz" [peace] (1.70%), and "no" (1.13%). After that, the rate of occurrence for the remaining group of words is less than 1%, i.e., lower than the third part of the most frequent word (table 3).

TABLE 3
Frequency of words by percentage of occurrence

Ranking	Word	Frequency	% of occurrence
1	JEP	2652	3.18
2	Farc	1872	2.24
3	Eln	1581	1.90
4	Paz (peace)	1420	1.70
5	No (no)	940	1.13
6	Santrich	752	0.90
7	Duque	699	0.84
8	Objeciones (objections)	616	0.74
9	Gobierno (government)	571	0.68
10	Colombia	487	0.58
11	Presidente (president)	464	0.56
12	Ley (law)	427	0.51
13	Estatutaria (statutory)	408	0.49
14	Acuerdo (Agreement)	347	0.42
15	Fiscal (Fiscal)	341	0.41
16	Más (more)	315	0.38
17	Caso (case)	306	0.37
18	Disidencias (dissidences)	294	0.35
19	Atentado (attack)	290	0.35
20	Partido (party)	278	0.33

Source: own elaboration

Nevertheless, generally speaking, this list of frequent words already reveals a group of discursive trends, such as the trend in the media to cover JEP, FARC, and ELN related topics and also topics associated with the president's objections to the statutory law whereby the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial de Paz*) would be created, the attacks by illegal armed groups (such as the ELN or the FARC dissidents), or

topics directly related to the agreements. Moreover, it is clear that other individuals emerged who enjoyed high levels of media visibility, such as the former FARC leader, alias “Jesús Santrich,” or President Duque.

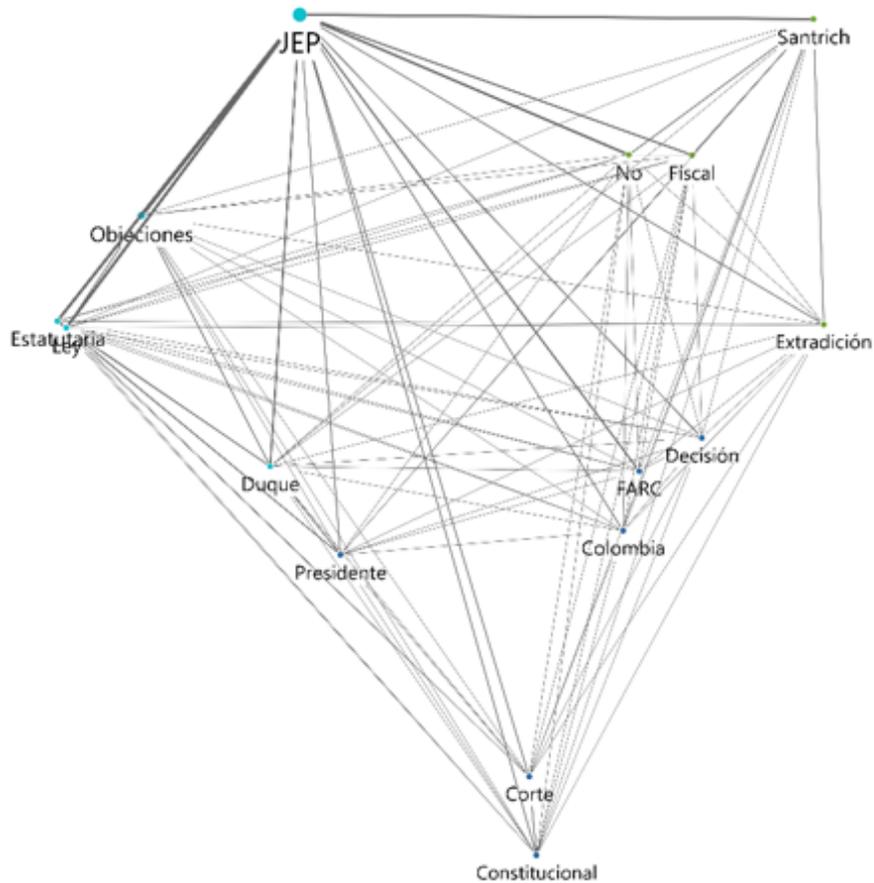


FIGURE 8
 Semantic network of headlines for the word “JEP”
 Source: own elaboration

Meanwhile, the analysis of significant associations between words shows that the word “JEP” (figure 8) presents at least two nodes with high cohesion or association level⁶. One of these nodes relates the word “JEP” to “*objecciones*” (objections), “*ley*” (law), and “*estatutaria*” (statutory). This means that there was a trend in the headlines posted by the media sources under analysis toward associating the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) with the president’s objections to the law that would legally create the JEP. On the contrary, there is another important set of associations with the words “Santrich,” “*no*,” and “*fiscal*,” all of which are associated with “*extradición*” (extradition). This relates to the JEP’s decision to not support the extradition of the then political leader of the FARC party. For this reason there appears to be a third cluster of word associated to each other, all of which correlate to the word “JEP.” These words are “*decisión*” (decision), “FARC,” and “Colombia.” Therefore, the decision of the JEP is associated with a matter of national concern.

With regard to the semantic networks within the news headlines that are associated with the word “FARC” (figure 9), we find that there is strong cohesion with the word “*disidencias*” (dissidents). This reveals an implicit correlation (the association of which is still difficult to avoid for the general public) between this political group and the armed dissidents who emerged and kept, like the new party, the old

name of the extinct guerrilla group. This poses a hazard for the future of that party. Furthermore, there is another less strong association between the word "FARC" and the words "partido" and "Santrich," clearly hinting at the controversy after Santrich was released from prison and his subsequent avoidance of the peace process. Again, this gave rise to dissonance with regard to the operation of the party. Moreover, there is a group of associated words with a weaker relationship to "FARC." These words are nonetheless significant: "JEP," "Márquez" (referring to the individual going by the alias of "Iván Márquez"), "paz" (peace), "gobierno" (government), "excombatientes" (ex-combatants), and "Duque." All these elements brought together speak of the tensions related to the JEP, which have affected the implementation of the peace agreements with the former guerrilla groups. Additional sources of tension are the claims and issues that were brought before the president by former combatants whose complaints had to do with the conditions at the territorial areas of peace (*Espacios Territoriales de Paz*). This association has a negative bias, because the word "no" is present. Finally, there is a third and more distant group of words associated with "Cauca" (a Colombian department where dissidents have had a major impact in terms of number of attacks), "ELN," "bienes" (assets), and "víctimas" (victims). The last set of words are associated with claims, on the part of some political groups, that FARC leaders have not handed over their assets as reparation to the victims.

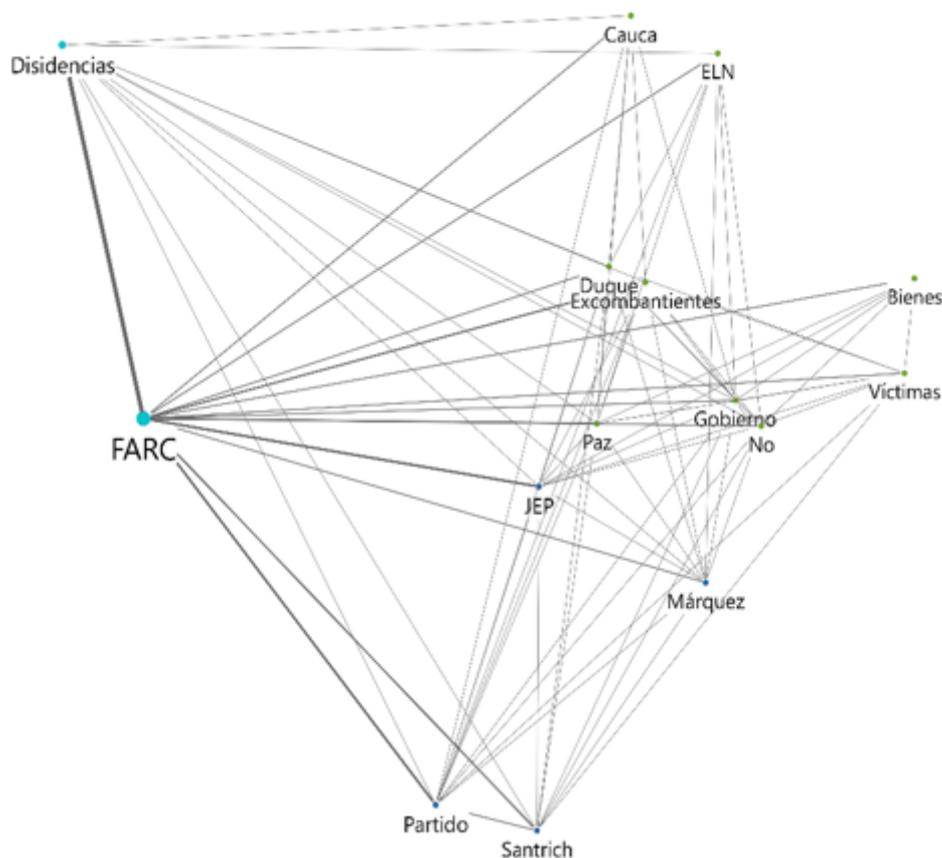


FIGURE 9
Semantic network of headlines for the word "FARC"

Source: own elaboration

Finally, a much denser and more conflicting semantic network emerges for the word "ELN" (figure 10). On the one hand, we can see an association that relates this actor with the attack to the General Santander Police Academy in January 2019. On the other hand, there is an equally negative association due to the presence

of the word “no,” in which the words “*gobierno*,” (government) “Cuba,” “Duque,” and “*paz*” (peace) are also related, thus conveying the two greatest controversies surrounding this guerrilla group, a group which appears as an actor flagrantly opposed to peace.

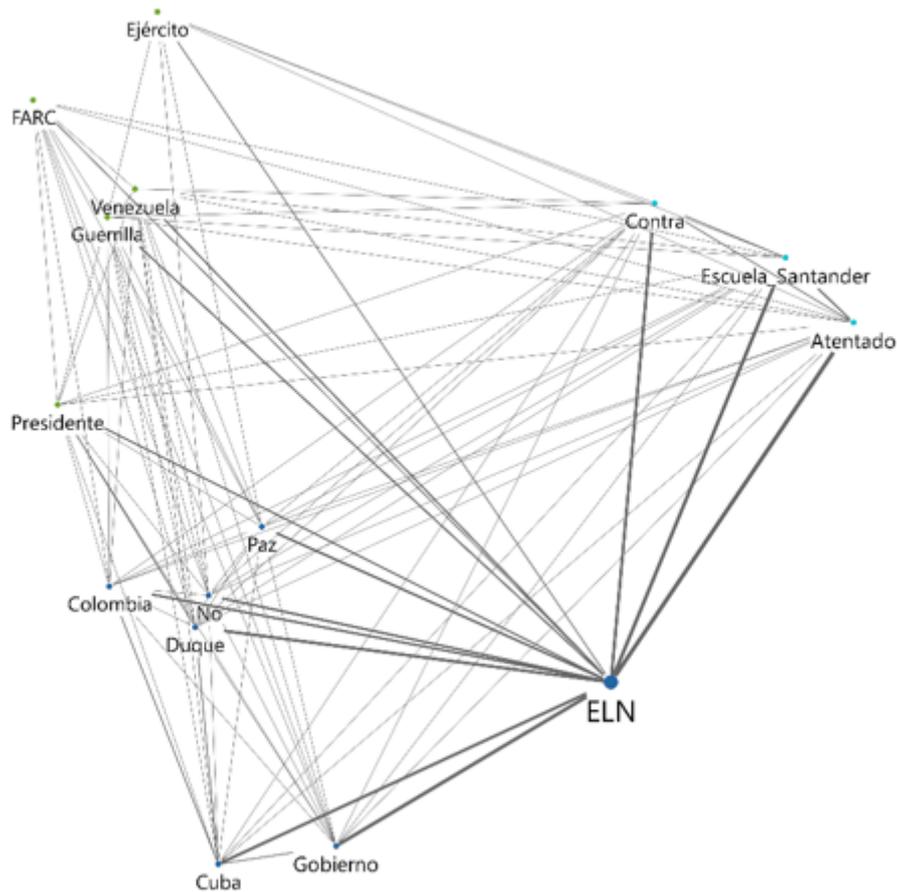


FIGURE 10
 Semantic network of headlines for the word “ELN”
 Source: own elaboration

Conclusions

Based on evidence provided by our analysis of the political and media controversies which, during the term of the administration of Iván Duque, have served to enshrine the topics of peace and the implementation of the agreements signed with the extinct FARC guerrilla group. One of the principal findings of the study is found in the “neutral–negative” and downward trend of the news flow with regard to these two topics within the media agenda over the course of the year 2019. Furthermore, we have been able to establish that most news stories are related to topics associated with the JEP and the armed attacks and that the framing of the main news actors is either “neutral–negative” or “negative.”

Additionally, when we analyze the semantic networks of the most frequent headlines posted by the media sources selected for this study, we see that peace and the implementation of the agreements were topics intertwined in negative controversies, including the president’s objections to the JEP, the association of the FARC with the armed dissidents who emerged, the exit of “Jesús Santrich” from the peace process, and the violence linked to ELN actions.

These controversies were framed in the political polarization that emerged from the peace agreements and their implementation. These controversies have been an impediment to the fulfillment of the terms of the agreements, thus affecting the consolidation of the legitimization (Bourdieu, 2001) around the peace process and of the agreements that had been reached. However, the progress and the achievements embodied by the peace process and the agreements have been overlooked by the most influential media sources. All of this indicates that the public may actually have access to little, if any, information regarding this important matter, and it is a great illustration of how the peace agreements which have been attained are slowly "torn apart."

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Notes

* Research article.

- 1 The origin of this phrase is due to the statements made in 2017 by Fernando Londoño, former minister of the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who gave these statements at a convention of the Centro Democrático, stating that this should be the main objective of that party. Initiative which was backed by another important referent of the Colombian right of the moment, former attorney, Alejandro Ordoñez. In this regard, there is the journalistic note of the independent news program Noticias Uno, which can be consulted at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIRJK2d84-8>
- 2 English labels: RestituciónT: Land restitution, ParticipaciónP: Political participation, EnfoqueGénero: Gender approach, Narcotráfico: Drug trafficking, Víctimas: Victims, Reinserción: Reintegration, DIH: IHL, JEP: JEP, Medioambiente: Environment
- 3 English labels: RestituciónT: Land restitution, ParticipaciónP: Political participation, EnfoqueGénero: Gender approach, Narcotráfico: Drug trafficking, Víctimas: Victims, Reinserción: Reintegration, DIH: IHL, JEP: JEP, Medioambiente: Environment.
- 4 English labels: Gobierno: Government, Farc: Farc, Opositores_Ac: Opponents_Agt, Simpatizantes_ac: Supporters_Agt, Disidencias_Farc: Dissidents_Farc, Víctimas: Victims, Sociedad_civil: Civil Society, Militares: Military, Industriales: Industry, Iglesia: Church, Ong's: ONGs, Expertos: Academics, Internacional: International, ELN:

- ELN, JEP: JEP, Cortes: Courts, Ex-paras: Ex-Paramilitary Groups, Partidos: Parties, Judiciales: Judicial Actors, Otros: Others, Medios: Media, BACRIM: Criminal Gangs, Narcos: Narcos
- 5 English labels: Gobierno: Government, Farc: Farc, Opositores_Ac: Opponents_Agt, Simpatizantes_ac: Supporters_Agt, Disidencias_Farc: Dissidents_Farc, Víctimas: Victims, Sociedad_civil: Civil Society, Militares: Military, Industriales: Industry, Iglesia: Church, Ong's: ONGs, Expertos: Academics, Internacional: International, ELN: ELN, JEP: JEP, Cortes: Courts, Ex-paras: Ex-Paramilitary Groups, Partidos: Parties, Judiciales: Judicial Actors, Otros: Others, Medios: Media, BACRIM: Criminal Gangs, Narcos: Narcos, Otros: Others.
- 6 The intensity of the associations is identified by line thickness and closeness among concepts or words.
- * Research article

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