

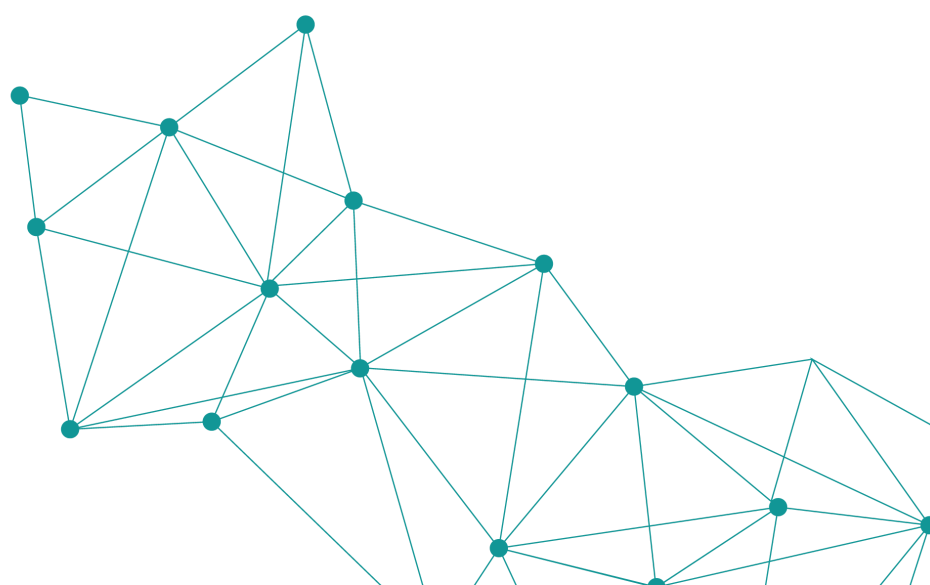
COLOMBIA

2020

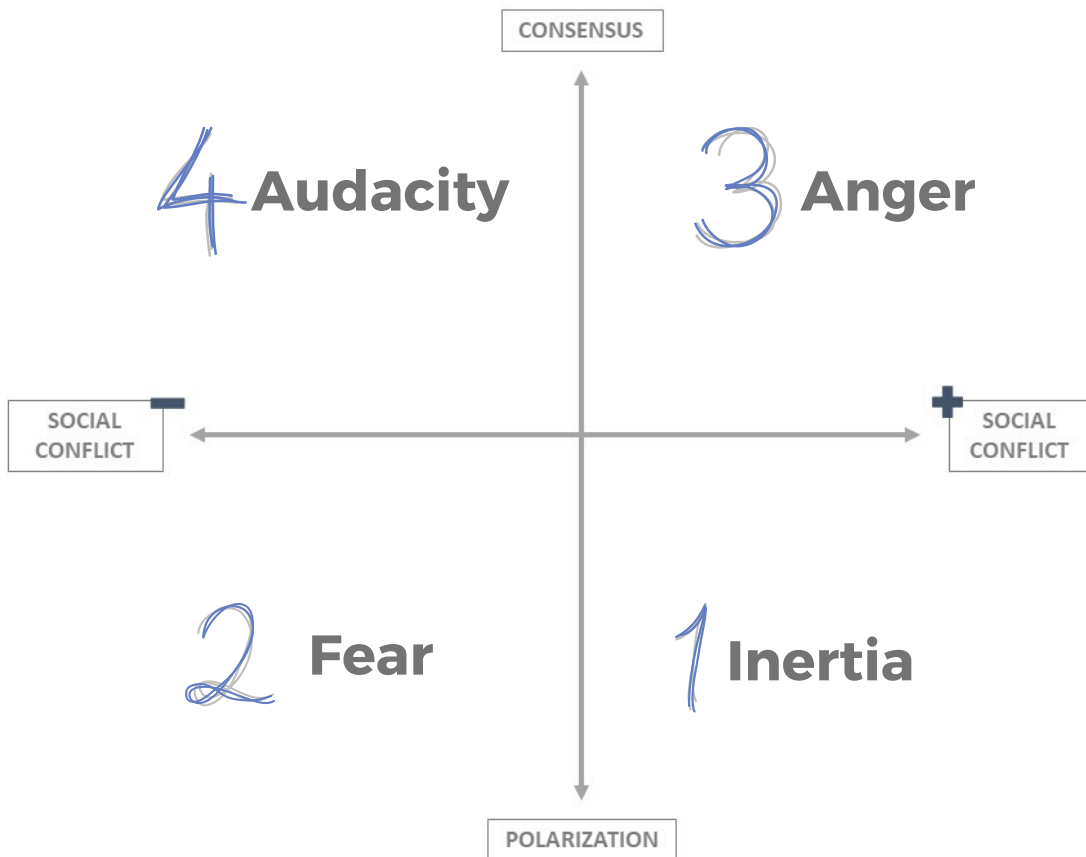
CHALLENGES OF THE YEAR AHEAD

DECEMBER 2019

A year ago Trust predicted a scenario of increased social mobilization and conflict between citizens and national institutions, in particular in terms of public order. This would be an effect of changes to, and growth of, citizens' expectations in the context of the end of the armed conflict between the state and the FARC. Among the causes of this scenario, we highlighted the fragile governance and low approval ratings of the national government, the slow and partial implementation of the peace accord with the FARC, and the reduced likelihood of negotiation with the ELN, all within a context of persistent political polarization. We further noted the impact that policies to combat illicit crops, the growth of dissident insurgent groups and the continuing selective violence against social leaders would have on politics and public opinion. We judged that the local elections would, in this context, be a struggle between those who seek a “political revolution” and those seeking to avoid one. We stated that the most important factor in this scenario would be the state of the economy.



From the country's position today, we anticipate that the course of events in 2020 will be determined by two principal factors: more or less social protest, and greater or lesser political polarization. Therefore we identify four possible scenarios:

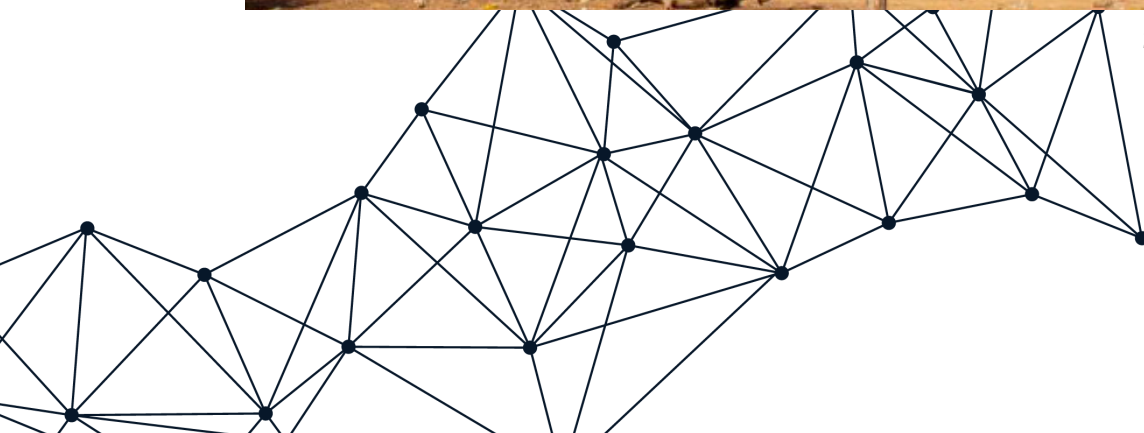


1. Inertia

- The absence of a narrative that convinces the country of a definite direction of travel toward clear objectives will create a sense of drift in 2020.
- The erratic nature of announcements and initiatives will deepen dislike of the government. Activism and the influence of diverse social actors will grow in the cities and the countryside. The diversity of interests and agendas will reinforce the reactive nature of the government's response.
- This lack of effective response will move dangerously close to a loss of control by the executive and to institutional and social disorder, with serious consequences. The government will be tormented by extremist forces which seek to impose their agendas, at the cost of effective governance.
- This scenario will be a point on a journey toward two possible radical options. Inertia serves those who would wish to force an early exit of the president, or who seek a drastic change in the economic model in the 2022 elections. The first group will use fear; the second, anger.



Source: Semana



2. Fear

- Low levels of governance and the desire to contain the growth of protest lead to political measures being imposed rather than introduced through consensus, justified on grounds of security and public order.
- The narrative of the government would – again – be the “plot theory” and the necessity of containing “*castrochavismo*”. In this case the multiple causes of the protest movement are denied and the narrative seeks to delegitimize expression of positions that are not aligned with the government.
- This scenario cannot be discounted and has strong supporters, particularly in sectors opposed to the full implementation of the peace accord, especially its provisions on transitional justice and rural development. But this scenario would go against the prevailing trends in politics in Colombia. The 2019 local elections and recent opinion polls confirm that neither factor is a priority for the majority of citizens.
- This scenario opens space for “black swans”. Serious and unexpected events, such as increased and expanded targeted killings, an implosion of Venezuela, confrontation between branches of the state, or terrorism, could occur and in this environment have a very large impact on stability.



Source: Pulzo

3. Anger

- An alternative scenario for Colombia in 2020 is that social protest runs out of control and it is not possible to implement effective agreements with political and social forces. There are already indications that this will be the trend.
- Prominent in the protests are factions that seek a change of government. Their strategy for 2020 will be to maintain a high tempo of protest in both urban and rural contexts. It is possible that 2020 will begin with marches by *campesino* groups.
- However, the protests contain diverse opinions, with many overlapping agendas but also with clear sectoral interests. Many originate in global trends: climate, generational and technological change. In the regional context, while it is unable to export its failed economic model, Venezuela will continue to export its humanitarian crisis.
- This multi-causal character of growing protest could cause it to run out of control, of its promoters as much as of the authorities. The government's reactive and defensive attitude will contribute to the growth of the protest movement.
- The extreme consequence of this scenario would be institutional reform, forced upon the government by the disorder and rushed in its execution. As we indicated for 2019, in 2020 there will continue to be the possibility of a Constitutional Assembly, with uncertain outcomes.



Source: CityTV

4. Audacity

- For 2020 a further alternative scenario is the construction of political and social consensus, which permits improved governance and reduces protests.
- Current conditions allow for a high probability of this scenario occurring: there is a new political map in which both extremes have lost ground and been replaced by independents and coalitions in various parts of the country; a generational change which brings with it weariness of polarization and changes in public opinion; a deterioration in the image of leaders or political extremes; and a series of issues which require national consensus.
- To navigate this course implies a change of direction and of engine, and to do this would require will, leadership, a sense of urgency and a narrative – absent thus far – of the journey and the destination.
- This scenario would imply, for the government, a cabinet reshuffle, construction of new congressional majorities, deepening compliance with the peace accord with the FARC, and negotiation with the ELN, all of which weigh heavily on governance and the protest movement.
- The main resistance to this direction is in radical factions, defeated in last October's local elections. Looking toward the 2022 presidential election, for both the government and the radical opposition, their only option is to increase polarization, one side using fear and the other, anger.



Source: Álvaro Forero Tascón

PREDICTION



The most likely scenario for 2020 is that which we have called “anger”. Due to the strategy of those who wish to replace the government, and the motivations of particular sectors, social mobilization and inconformity are likely to increase. The government’s reactive nature will contribute to this tendency. Fragmented and delayed responses will catalyze the process.

To break this trend requires audacity, leadership and a disruptive agenda. It will be necessary to challenge current paradigms. Only a new and powerful narrative will change the course of events.

As we said a year ago, the state of the economy will be an important regulating factor in the near future. As long as there are positive signs on this front, there will be more room for maneuver for the government. But a deterioration will bring the opposite.





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