TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE OF THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC FORCES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ARMED POSCONFLICT: FROM MILITARY VICTORY TO TERRITORIAL PEACE

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this article is to analyze how the narratives within the Army and the Colombian National Police regarding the understanding of the Colombian internal armed conflict and its cessation have been transformed. While over the last decade a public policy of direct confrontation against the guerrillas that encouraged military victory prevailed as the only way to end the conflict. Presently, however, with the congressional passage of the Peace Agreement signed on November 24, 2016, between the FARC and the Government, the Colombian State Forces have incorporated new elements, horizons, and challenges that show strinking differences in how they conceive ending the conflict, as well as to ensure its stability over time.

Keywords: Colombian Public Forces, Internal Armed Conflict, Peace Agreement, Negative Peace, Positive Peace

Título en Castellano: Transformaciones en las narrativas de la Fuerza pública colombiana en el marco del posconflicto armado: de la victoria militar a la paz territorial.

Resumen:

El siguiente artículo tiene como principal finalidad analizar de qué modo se han transformado las narrativas hacia dentro del Ejército y la Policía Nacional de Colombia en lo que respecta a la comprensión del conflicto armado interno colombiano y su superación. Así, mientras que en la década pasada predominó una política pública de confrontación directa contra las guerrillas que animaba a la victoria militar como única forma de superación del conflicto, en la actualidad, superado el proceso de negociación bajo el Acuerdo de Paz suscrito el pasado 24 de noviembre de 2016, la Fuerza Pública colombiana incorpora nuevos elementos, horizontes y desafíos que sustantivan una forma muy distinta tanto de entender la superación del conflicto interno como de garantizar su estabilidad en el tiempo.

Palabras clave: Fuerza pública colombiana, conflicto armado interno, acuerdo de paz, paz negativa, paz positiva

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1. Introduction.

The purpose of the following work is to reflect on the narratives that are emerging from the Colombian Public Forces, in particular the National Police and the National Army, concerning the armed conflict. These have shown significant changes following the dynamic of a five-decades-long conflict which was formally ended with the signing of the Peace Agreement in November 2016 between the guerrillas group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP by its abbreviation in Spanish) and the Colombian government.

This article therefore aims to determine the extent of this discursive change in a context which not only sees the Peace Agreement with its implication of ending the armed conflict, but also a post-conflict situation which requires that an integral peace process must be constructed to normalize the political, social and economic spheres that have for so long challenged the country.

In order words, this supposes a change from the long-established Schmitt friend/enemy conception in which armed conflict is understood by a non-recognition and mutual annihilation. The Peace Agreement, therefore entails a substantive shift in the notion of the enemy towards something which is humanized and recognized as an adversary. An adversary in this context can be identified as an actor in the armed conflict, and that to improve this armed conflict requires building bridges and cooperative exchanges.

In conceiving the Colombian process as such, one can see markedly distinct narratives before and after the Peace Agreement. This shift sees the FARC, who were for decades a guerilla armed force and the principal enemy of the State, in a transition from arms to the polls- a process of disarmament and a full reintegration into civil life.

Based on the above, one might ask, what are the characteristics of the armed forces' narrative surrounding the armed conflict and the FARC, both before and after the Peace Agreement? What are the main differences between these and what are the shifts in this discourse?

Narratives held by the Colombian Forces before the 2012 beginning of the peace talks conceived the FARC as a problematic enemy that could be defeated through the counter-insurgency strategy of reactive armed actions. Thereafter, and contrarily, the National Police and Army had to redefine their roles both in terms of the division of security and defense functions, as well as towards a post-deal peacebuilding.

This thesis is supported by the testimonies of four individuals from the Public Forces who have been instrumental in this transition towards a negotiated peace. From the National Police, two Major Generals are interviewed: Major General Jairo Delgado, responsible for the intelligence and police counterintelligence work under the presidency of Álvaro Uribe, and Major General Ricardo Restrepo, current Deputy Director of the National Police. On the part of the National Army, Major General and former Deputy Minister of Defense, Henry Medina Uribe, and Major General Carlos Rojas, responsible for the Transition Strategic Command and direct negotiator in the Havana Peace Process. Additionally, a brief testimony is taken from the former minister in the Government of Andres Pastrana, German Bula.

Excerpts from the interviews, will be interspersed through the article alongside an objective description of the armed conflict in order to show, to show two features. First, that in objective terms, figures of military expenditure, armed actions, and military operations show a maintenance to the narratives and strategy designed by military and police elites. Second, conversely, by using contrasting contexts, moments, imaginaries, and perspectives we can

observe the discursive change occurring in how the Public force are contributing towards peace. Thus, these two narratives from before and after the peace deal differ greatly.

2. State of the art and theoretical framework

The study of the armed conflict during the last three decades has generated an enormous body of research, focusing in particular on the history of the three principal armed groups, the FARC[2], the National Liberation Army[3] (ELN by its abbreviation in Spanish), and the paramilitaries[4]. Similarly, studies focusing on how to resolve the conflict are prominent, often from Europe[5] or the United States[6]. These tend to focus on the economic resources that have fueled the conflict, such as drug trafficking[7], illegal mining[8], the dispossession of land[9], and monoculture[10]. There is additional research that examines the territorial dimensions to the conflict [11] or of econometrics, for example focusing on how the conflict has affected the Colombian Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[12].

From the perspectives that underpin this study- military studies as well as communication and discourse analysis- it is possible to view two clearly defined and differentiated patterns. On one hand, concerning the role of the Public Forces is the influence of national security doctrines, and the existence of armed internal enemies. These factors have been heavily influenced, and therefore largely coincide with US conceptions about how the Colombian conflict should be handled[13]. These studies have been enriched by analyzes of the

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[2] Pécaut, Daniel (2008): *Las FARC, ¿una guerrilla sin fin o sin fines?* Bogota, Norma; Pizarro, Eduardo (2011): *Las FARC (1949-2011). De guerrilla campesina a máquina de guerra*, Bogota, Norma.

[3] Medina, Carlos (1996): *ELN: una historia contada a dos voces*, Bogotá, Rodríguez Quito Editores.

[4] Ronderos, Teresa (2014): *Guerras recicladas. Una historia periodística del paramilitarismo en Colombia*, Bogota, Aguilar.

[5] Castañeda, Dorly: "Qué significan los Laboratorios de Paz para la Unión Europea", *Colombia Internacional*, n° 69 (2009): pp. 162-179; Barreto, Miguel (2016): *Laboratorios de paz en territorios de violencia(s): ¿abriendo caminos para la paz positiva en Colombia?*, Bogota, Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano.

[6] Tickner, Arlene: "Intervención por invitación. Claves de la política exterior colombiana y de sus debilidades principales", *Colombia Internacional*, n° 65 (2007): pp. 90-111; Tokatlian, Juan: "Colombia, el Plan Colombia y la región andina", *Nueva Sociedad*, n° 173 (2011): pp. 126-143.

[7] Ríos, Jerónimo: "La narcotización del activismo guerrillero de las FARC y el ELN", *Revista UNISCI*, n° 41, (2016): pp. 205-233.

[8] Romero, Mauricio: "Minería ilícita: Incidencia en la convivencia y seguridad ciudadana en diez departamentos de Colombia", *Revista Criminalidad*, Vol. 58, n°1 (2016): pp. 47-65.

[9] Reyes, Alejandro (2009): *Guerreros y campesinos. El despojo de la tierra en Colombia*, Bogotá, Norma.

[10] Ocampo, Sebastián: "Agroindustria y conflicto armado", *Colombia Internacional*, n° 70 (2009): pp. 169-190.

[11] Vásquez, Teófilo; Vargas, Andrés & Restrepo, Jorge (2011): *Una vieja guerra en un nuevo contexto. Conflicto y territorio en el sur de Colombia*, Bogotá, CINEP, ODECOFI, Colciencias, Universidad Javeriana; González, Fernán; Quiroga, Diego & Porras, Eduardo (2014): *Territorio y conflicto en la Costa Caribe*, Bogota, CINEP; Salas, Luis: "Lógicas territoriales y relaciones de poder en el espacio de los actores armados: un aporte desde la geografía política al estudio de la violencia y el conflicto armado en Colombia, 1990-2012", *Cuadernos de Geografía*, Vol. 24, n°1 (2015): pp. 157-172; Ríos, Jerónimo: "Determinantes geográfico-políticos de la acción violenta guerrillera: un análisis de la concurrencia regional de guerrillas y paramilitares en el conflicto colombiano", *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, n° 44 (2017): pp. 121-149.

[12] Deas, Malcom & Gaitán, Fernando (1995): *Dos ensayos especulativos sobre la violencia en Colombia*, Bogotá, Tercer Mundo Editores; Trujillo, Edgar & Badel, Martha: "Los costos económicos de la criminalidad y la violencia en Colombia: 1991-1996", *Archivos de Macroeconomía*, n° 76 (1998): pp. 1-49; Castro, Manuel; Arabia, Jorge & Celis, Eduardo: "El conflicto armado: la estrategia económica de los principales actores y su incidencia en los costos de la violencia 1990-1998", *Revista de Planeación y Desarrollo*, Vol. 30, n° 3 (2003): pp. 81-105.

[13] Blair, Elsa (1993): *Las fuerzas armadas. Una mirada civil*, Bogotá, CINEP; Leal, Francisco (1994): *El oficio de la Guerra: la seguridad nacional en Colombia*, Bogota, Tercer Mundo Editores.

modernization process of the Colombian Military Forces[14], as well as studies that are more focused on the use of counterinsurgency as an instrument for weakening armed groups[15].

On the other hand, discourse analyses on the conflict highlight, amongst others things, discourse from the government of Juan Manuel Santos [16], which show the FARC being legitimized throughout the negotiations. Other recent studies are noteworthy as they detail the transformation in the guerilla's rhetoric in recent years[17], as well as how victims of the conflict are constructed discursively[18].

In terms of the discourse of the Public Forces, studies up until now have focused on the role of the Military Forces and the National Police in a post-agreement context. This role is must redefine their relationship with the citizen and with the contexts that have been favored by the end of the violence with the FARC. In addition to this they must address a differentiation between the tasks of security and defense, which for decades were integrated in the same direction along with the preponderance of both the internal armed conflict and ways of strategic thinking based on on the old cold-war doctrines of national security.

For theoretical purposes, it could be said that the security policy has moved from an enemy-centered position to that centered around the population, and that this does only arise from the objective transformation of the conflict, but also from discourse provided by prominent figures in the Colombian Public Forces. The discourses of these Forces, when understood along the Galtonian notion of "negative peace" - that is, the absence of war[1920] - show evidence that during most of the last decade they conceived the end of the conflict as a military victory. This minimalist notion of peace therefore advocates directing efforts towards armed victory over insurgency rather than constructing elements of local governance[21].

Conversely, narratives and practices are changing not because of the military defeat of the guerrillas, but from their weakening. The situation of a mutually hurting stalemate has come about, which will be discussed below, hich turns the armed conflict into a mutually unfavorable reality for both the state and the guerrillas. This, coupled with a shared interest in finding alternatives to the conflict leads Harto[22] to conclude that the conflict had reached a "ripe

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[14] Rangel, Alfredo (2003): *Fuerzas Militares para la guerra. La agenda pendiente de la reforma militar*, Bogota, Fundación Seguridad y Democracia.

[15] Zuluaga, Jaime: "U.S. security policies and United States-Colombia relations", *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 34, n° 1, (2007): pp. 112-119; Delgado, Jorge: "Colombian Military Thinking and the Fight against the FARC-EP Insurgency, 2002–2014", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, n° 6 (2015): pp. 826-851; Kilcullen, David; Davis, Daniel; Mills, Greg, & Spencer, David (2016): *A Great Perhaps? Colombia: Conflict and Convergence,* Londres, C Hurst & Co Publishers.

[16] Dießelmann, Anna & Hetzer, Andreas: "La representación del gobierno Santos y su repercusión en el discurso mediático-político en Europa y Colombia", *Análisis Político*, vol. 28, n° 84 (2015): pp. 3-22.

[17] Olave, Giohanny: "De la oposición política en el discurso: La reformulación polémica en la retórica de la guerrilla", *Palabra Clave*, vol. 19, n°2 (2016): pp. 398-421.

[18] Herrera, Martha & Pertuz, Carol: "Narrativas femeninas del conflicto armado y la violencia política en Colombia: Contar para rehacerse", *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, n° 53, (2015): pp. 150-162.

[19] Galtung, Johan: "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, n° 3 (1969): pp. 167-191; Galtung, Johan (1985): *Sobre la paz*, Barcelona, Fontamara.

[20] Rapoport, Anatol (1960): *Fights, games and debates*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press; Boulding, Kenneth (1962): *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory*, New York, Harper & Row.

[21] Hazelton, Jacqueline: "The False Promise of the Governance Model of Counterinsurgency Warfare", *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting 2013,* (2013), at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2300032; Hazelton, Jacqueline (2017): "The Hearts and Minds Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare", *International Security*, Vol. 42, n°1 (2017): pp. 80-113.

[22] Harto, Fernando (2005): *Investigación para la paz y resolución de conflictos*, Valencia, Tirant Lo Blanch.

moment" in which a negotiated improvement or settlement to the conflict becomes feasible. This is defined by Vicenç Fisas as:

> a stage in which it is possible to achieve a change of mentality of the parties, so that instead of seeking victory they pursue conciliation, pointing out the role of systemic and structural factors, and those related to decision making, that is, to the subjective dimensions of maturity[23].

This undoubtedly leads to a transformation of perceptions and the imaginary that enable the overcoming of the entrenched view of the conflict to conceive the enemy as an adversary[24]. Another part of the Public Forces' narrative transformation is an increasing emphasis on not only peace in the "negative" sense, but on something more akin to "positive peace", that is to tackle the structural and symbolic conditions that sustain the conflict.

Expressed differently, this entails redefining what the FARC represents, as well as reconceiving how security is provided so that rather than focusing efforts on an "enemy" efforts are aimed towards strengthening the local institutional framework[25].

3. The understanding of the Colombian armed conflict from the perspective of ending the conflict through a strict military means

The Colombian armed conflict saw a turning point with the arrival of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez in 2002. This followed the failure of the peace dialogues with the FARC known as "process of Caguán" under the previous President Andres Pastrana (1998-2002). These negotiation efforts arose from a context of drastically increased violence which preceding Pastrana's presidency. His predecessor Ernesto Samper's term in office was hampered by the discovery of significant finances that his election campaigned received from the Cali Cartel and an ensuing constitutional crisis. Concurrently, the armed conflict had deteriorated to a new historic low. By 1996, FARC troop numbers had exceeded 10,000 as part of the so-called "New Form of Operation"- inflicted humiliating defeats on relatively weak Colombian Public Forces.

In only one year, 1998 – Samper's final year as President – the FARC were able to carry out 365 combat actions in 185 municipalities (out of 1,110), with the ELN Guerillas executing an additional 229 in 94 municipalities. On the other hand, the Public Forces deployed only 294 military operations in 171 municipalities[26]. Additionally, the area of coca-cultivation had reached almost 150,000 hectares, and violence increased further as the heirs to the Cali and Medellin cartels, as well as the paramilitary groups which since 1997 had coalesced under the banner of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), all stepped up their role in the conflict. The scale of violence throughout the country exploded as a result, with 58.92 violent deaths per 100,000 in 1998, and up to 518,000 instances of forced displament between 1994 and 1998[27].

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[23] Fisas, Vicenç (2006): *Cultura de paz y gestión de conflictos*, Barcelona, Icaria, p. 192. Maturity, that has equally been approached by other authors like: Stedman, Stephen (1991): *Peacemaking in Civil War. International Mediation in Zimbaw, 1974-1980*, Boulder, Lynne Reinner Publishers; Haass, Richard (1990): *Conflicts Unending. The United States and Regional Disputes*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

[24] Harto, Fernando: "La mediación y la investigación para la paz: la búsqueda de alternativas pacíficas a los conflictos en la arena internacional", *Política y Sociedad*, Vol. 50, n°1 (2013): pp. 53-70.

[25] Taylor, Lee: "La estrategia contrainsurgente: El PCP-SL y la guerra civil en el Perú, 1980-1996", *Debate Agrario,* n° 26 (1997): pp. 81-110; Evans, Michael: "The shirt of nessus: The rise and fall of Western counterinsurgency, 2004-2014", *Quadrant,* Vol. 59, n°1/2 (2015): pp. 14-25.

[26] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence and armed confrontation in Colombia, 1998-2012 y 2015*, Bogota, Colombia.

[27] *Ibid*., n.p.

It is at this conjuncture that we can see a point of escalation in the Colombian conflict where for the first time the defeat of the Government was plausible. Therefore, the message of the 1998 electoral race emphasized the need to engage in dialogue with the various armed groups- particularly the FARC. Despite this consideration of a peace dialogue, the conflict was far from being "ripe" for resolution. To begin with, the group had in part given rise to the paramilitary phenomena, which was supported by parts of the Public Forces. This was compounded by the death of the great ideologue of the FARC Jacobo Arenas in 1990, as it allowed the most belligerent elements within the group to consolidate their power. Thus, within the FARC, but also within the framework of the peace process, names such as "Manuel Marulanda", "Mono Jojoy", "Raúl Reyes", and "Romaña" had gained importance, which would significantly reduce the likelihood of any meaningful negotiations.

An examination of the general dynamics of the conflict during the 1,139-day-duration of the Caguán process clearly demonstrates that the FARC were nowhere near a "mutually hurting stalemate". Here, the guerillas, for the first time, gained an effective presence in over 200 municipalities, and multiplied their battle fronts to almost 80. This was all underpinned by a sharp increase in combatants- from 14,000 to 18,000[28]. Combined with an increased presence and armed actions carried out in coca-growing areas in 60 municipalities, a total of 1,254 armed actions and revenues upwards of $1.3 billion were seen in this period[29]. The FARC's territorial controlled peaked between 2002 and 2003, with a presence in up to 346 municipalities and combat operations exceeding a thousand. Half of these operations were carried out in coca-growing regions as gaining revenue to allow the conflict to continue became of upmost importance[30].

Not recognizing a situation of a "mutually hurting stalemate" was reciprocated by the Government, despite being the main driver in beginning negotiations. During the talks military expenditure sharply increased, for instance a rise from 2.9 to 3.5% from 1999 and 2002. Moreover, the US-Colombian Plan Colombia deal provided, from 1999-2002, over 2,000 million dollars, most of it towards military funding such as the acquisition of helicopters, as well as aerial combat and anti-narcotics equipment[31].

Resultantly, military operations against the FARC, which were only 201 in 1998, increased to 244, 352, 660 and 1,162 in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively[32]. It can be therefore surmised that despite the ongoing dialogue process, the conflict was far from any sort of the maturity required by a "ripe moment" as a re-invigorated military gave rise to the possibility of a military victory.

Additional evidence that points to a lack of genuine political will by both parties and the ultimate failure of the process: an overambitious agenda of 12 themes and 48 sub-themes[33], the belligerent nature of the composition of the FARC's negotiating team, the State's disregard of the support of the process offered by the international community, largely excluding civil

[28] Valencia, León (2002): *Adiós a la política, bienvenida la guerra. Secretos de un malogrado proceso de paz*, Bogota, Editorial Intermedio.

[29] Aguilera, Mario (2010): *Las FARC: la guerrilla campesina 1949-2010*, Bogota, Arfo.

[30] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

[31] Otero, Diego (2010): *El papel de los Estados Unidos en el conflicto armado colombiano*, Bogota, Ediciones Aurora.

[32] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

[33] Chernick, Mark (2012): *Acuerdo posible. Solución negociada al conflicto armado colombiano*, Bogota, Ediciones Aurora.

society from the process, and the absence of joint communiqués which damaged the publics confidence in the negotiations.

Alongside this concurrent lack of objective maturity in Colombia, we can also see a subjective immaturity when talking to representatives of the Government at the time of Caguán:

> With regard to El Caguán, I can tell you that nobody wanted to negotiate. Pastrana was nervous when he lost with Serpa in the first round […]but Pastrana wanted the presidency; and at the same time, the FARC wanted to grow and take power in any way that was possible. From there, we never went beyond the first of the three phases that a conflict like the Colombian one deserves: The word is support for the rifle. The rifle is support for the word. The rifle is an obstacle to the word. In Caguán, we never went beyond the first level (H. Medina, personal interview).

> The process of Caguán is interpreted as a failure due to various considerations. Rather, it is the opposite, insofar as it marks a turning point in the evolution of the armed conflict. Perhaps the most important turning point. While in Caguán, the Public Force was being strengthened and Plan Colombia was being negotiated. So, what is the result of all this? The FARC will never again defeat the state in the military way, and it is there when its process of gradual weakening begins (G. Bula, personal interview).

> During the presidency of Andrés Pastrana, it is necessary to emphasize and give credit to the introduction of a different vision that changed the centrality of the Public Forces, and that directed it towards a greater modernization which was bolstered by external resources. Even so, it should be noted that the interference within the Caguán negotiations also produced limitations to this modernization, but nonetheless a major change occurred: a change of strategy in which they moved from weakness to greater and better strategic conception (J. Delgado, personal interview).

As expected, the dialogue process of Caguán finished inconclusively in February 2002 during a time when the internal conflict was further intensified as the FARC and the Government strengthened and substantially improved their military forces. This frustrated end to the peace process not only undermined the image of President Pastrana, but also that of the FARC, who lost much of their credibility in the eyes of the Colombian public. Thus, it is in this context that an outsider of traditional bipartisan politics, Alvaro Uribe, won the Colombian presidency in August 2002, campaigning on a hardline policy of a military victory against the guerillas.

The reaction of the FARC thereon was an increase in the armed activism towards the longstanding objective of taking political power by force. This can be deduced from the all-time-high in the group's combat actions between 2002 and 2003, with 1,278 in 2003 and a territorial presence in over 300[34]. This peak turns in the face of exponential increases in Government investment in security and defense, but not before the highest levels of violence seen in the entire Colombian conflict between 2003 and 2005. By 2007, this shift in balance was obvious. At 414 in 152 municipalities, this represented a two-third decline in FARC combat actions[35].

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[34] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

[35] *Ibid*., n.p.

The role in the rebalancing of State Forces in this cannot be understated. Between 2002 and 2004, over 4% of GDP was allocated to security and defense. Together with the aid from Plan Colombia this represented over 12,000 million dollars. Additionally, the Public Forces saw improvements and modernization to its structure, organization and coordination- greatly increasing its combat capacity. The National Police, for instance increased its members from 110,000 to 160,000, whilst the Military Forces from 203,000 to 270,000[36]. The Armed Forces created 429 new operational structures, as well as 180 police stations and 152 police substations. Combined with the acquisition of dozens of helicopters and aircrafts, this allowed them to carry out an unpresented large number of military operations against the guerillas. Indeed, between 2003 and 2005, there were 4,450 combat actions against the guerrillas[37] compared to only 2,903 on the part of the FARC[38].

This critical and objective shift in the conflict is as readily observable from the FARC's perspective. First, the group's troop numbers reduced from almost 18,000 in 2003 to just over 8,000 in 2010[39]. Second, and in part in consequence of the first, the group lost 83% of their combat capacity over the same period. Thirdly, some its most significant commanders were killed- notably "Raul Reyes", "Mono Jojoy", "Alfonso Cano" and "Iván Ríos". We can therefore see how Uribe's "Democratic Security Policy" reversed the trajectory of the armed conflict to favor the State. Figures of combat actions from 2006-2010 dramatically underscore this, with the FARC's 3,027 being dwarfed by the 8,800 of the State.

This move towards a probable military victory over the FARC, and the understanding that all possible police and military efforts should be marshaled towards this, can be seen in the discourse of concurrent government representatives.

> When the Democratic Security Policy was implemented, the main threat was terrorism, which, above all, was identified with the FARC. A FARC to which a higher level of concentration of resources and strategy was allocated […] good for weakening this guerilla systematically between 2002 and 2008. This is how the main indicators of violence, such as the homicide or kidnapping rates were reduced, so that it became clear that the policy was producing results. The extent to which they felt the 2008 offence was recognized even by Alfonso Cano himself in what he refers to "the progressive defeat of the FARC" in the "Strategic Plan of Alfonso Cano". That is how the situation returns to guerrilla warfare and a turning point due to the change in the balancing of forces, and in light of the recovery and consolidation of these strategic advantages (J. Delgado, personal interview).

> Since the year 2000, the decline of the FARC has been permanent. In fact, in addition to Plan Colombia and the Democratic Security Policy, we must highlight the tax for the war, which provided us with 447,000 million pesos and was used for very specific events that affected the military relationship. Night combat capacity was strengthened, 25,000-night vision googles were purchased, Army aviation was created, helicopters for night operations were acquired, as well as better combat equipment. These are aspects that cannot be ignored. The

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[36] Ministerio de Defensa Nacional (Mindefensa) (2010): *Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática*, Bogota, p. 68.

[37] Between 1998 and 2002, the combats carried out by the Public Forces amounted 2,625.

[38] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

[39] Ríos, Jerónimo (2017): *Breve historia del conflicto armado en Colombia*, Madrid, La Catarata.

war against terrorism meant pushing the FARC into the darkness since they lost international visibility, diplomatic spaces, and justifying the tax on war. The FARC have been politically discredited- narcotrafficking deprives them from ideological strength that they once had (H. Medina, personal interview).

4. Public Forces, armed conflict, and the transformation of responsibilities

It could be deduced from the above that with the security policy of Uribe, the conflict in Colombia was closer than ever from being ended through State force. This assertion, however, has several flaws.

First, due to guerilla tactics practiced by the FARC, despite retreating they were far from being defeated militarily. While they weakened in numbers, the group resorted to what Rios[40] refers to as a double process of narcotization and periferialization, particularly between 2009 and 2012. This sees the regrouping of the FARC to more marginal areas of the country where fighting (and losses) from the State are less likely. This can be seen in a reversal in the downward trend in guerilla combat actions that had been seen since 2003; 2008 saw 381 armed actions in 131 municipalities, whilst 2012 saw 824 actions in 190 municipalities[41]. In tandem, their territorial presence increased during this time, particularly in coca-growing and border regions of the country. Indeed, 60% of these actions took place in coca-producing areas, mainly in the northeast and southwest of the country. Similarly, these two mountainous and jungle border regions saw around 50% of the armed actions[42]. Simultaneously the overall number of FARC combatants, around 8,000, remained constant during this period.

Therefore, after years of the Democratic Security Policy the FARC appeared to be fatally weakened. Since 2012, however, their position has become entrenched, albeit in the different arrangement as seen through the double phenomena of periferialization and narcotization. This helps us to understand the resilience of the guerillas, even in the face of a huge increase in combat actions carried out against them- some 6,118 between 2008-2012[43].

These shifting conflict dynamics means that it is not until 2010 that Touval and Zartman[44] and Zartman's[45] "mutually hurting stalemate" becomes apparent. Despite all the efforts of the Democratic Security Policy and Plan Colombia, as well as the weakening of the FARC, a time of maturity on the objective conditions of the conflict is reached, in which the only possibility is its de-escalation is a negotiated solution.

From the FARC's perspective, in spite of its entrenchment, under an evident unfavorable re-balancing of State forces, the FARC sees the possibility of taking power by force as an impossibility. Similarly, the State, after investing 13,000 million dollars towards defeating the guerillas, sees the objective is far from being possible. This is exacerbated by the fact that operations against the FARC increasingly have to take place in more inhospitable terrain, such as jungle and border areas awash with landmines and terrain that provides great

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[40] Ríos, Jerónimo: "Dinámicas de la violencia guerrillera en Colombia", *Revista de Ciencias Sociales,* vol. 22, n° 3, (2016): pp. 84-103; Ríos, Jerónimo: "La periferialización del conflicto armado colombiano, 2002-2014", *Geopolítica(s). Revista de Estudios sobre Espacio y Poder,* Vol. 7, n° 2 (2016): pp. 251-275.

[41] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

[42] *Ibid.*, n.p.

[43] *Ibid.*, n.p.

[44] Touval, Saadia & Zartman, William (1985): *International mediation in theory and practice*, Boulder, Westview.

[45] Zartman, William (1993): "The unfinished agenda. Negotiating internal conflicts", in *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, Nueva York, New York University Press, pp. 20-34; Zartman, William: "The timing of peace initiatives: hurting stalemates and ripe moments", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, n° 1 (2001): pp. 8-18.

difficulty to the Air Force to gain the effective superiority they they might enjoy in other environments. In sum, military operations were forced to be conducted in more difficult contexts, where military knowledge and the certainties of success are far lower than in the operations of previous years.

What is perhaps a recognition of this is the election of Uribe's former defense minister Juan Manuel Santos. Showing a marked change in direction from his predecessor, Santos immediately normalized relations with Venezuela and Ecuador due to their stated support for the process. This was followed by entrusting Sergio Jaramillo Caro with the task of initiating informal contacts with the FARC that would pave the way for the 2012 formal talks in Havana, Cuba.

Henceforth, and until November 2016, and in spite of the challenges inherent in any peace process, there were many indications that the thinking of the conflict had reached its maturity, and unlike Caguán, a peaceful end to the conflict could be envisioned. A perfect measure of this was the dramatic reduction of combat actions conducted by the guerillas, falling from 824 across 190 municipalities in 2012 to 94 across 62 municipalities in 2015. This represents the lowest amount of combat actions and territorial presence in the last thirty years[46]. Despite there being no formal bilateral ceasefire, this pattern was reciprocal by the Public Forces, and overall military operations were almost non-existent between 2015 and 2016, and the 500 fatalities from 2012 to 2013 dropped to less than ten between 2015 and 2016.

Equally importantly, other aspects to the negotiations were key to its final conclusion- the Peace Agreement. For example, the Agenda was kept to a manageable six items to be negotiated. The first two consisted of longstanding grievances of the FARC to improve agrarian development and political participation. The second two sought to address requests from the Colombian public through solving the problem of illicit drugs and another on victims and truth. The final two concerned ending the conflict - about how to achieve a definitive bilateral ceasefire – and the implementation, verification, and endorsement of the deal.

The composition of the respective teams also showed a greater will to a negotiated settlement. The FARC has chosen more political delegation, rather than the military orientation of Caguán. The head of the team, "Iván Márquez", had been a congressman during the 1980s, through the *Patriotic Union*. Aside from him, the greatest negotiating weight was given to Pablo Catatumbo who followed the less belligerent FARC ideologue "Jesus Santrich". Likewise, to avoid fractures in the civil-military relationship, the Government's delegation invited General Mora, of the Military Forces, and General Naranjo, of the National Police.

Unlike El Caguán, two more nuetral negotiating locations were established. Norway, with its extensive experience in conflict resolution, financed and hosted the initial informal dialogues. Following this, Havana provided a place for these talks to continue at the formal level. Along with these two guarantor countries, Chile and Venezuela had a role in facilitating and mediating the dialogues.

The treatment of victims showed that other pitfalls of Caguán had been avoided. The Episcopal Conference and the United Nations chose members to represent minority groups that had also suffered the conflict: ethnic minorities, LGBT groups, businesspeople, trade unionists, the military and peasants. This lent a legitimacy to the process as it allowed these groups to articulate and develop proposals, some of which were incorporated into the negotiating agenda and final agreement.

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[46] Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (OHRIHL) (n.d.): *Synthesis of violence… op. cit.,* n.p.

The communication strategy was also taken far more seriously. Whereas Caguán had seen only misleading and often conflicting unilateral communiques, some 109 joint communiques were issued which saw that information emerging from the talks could be disseminated to civil society and the media in a previously discussed and agreed upon manner.

As a result of this process, it is striking how such an important transformation has not only affected the Army and Police's conception of the armed conflict, but also its perception of its role and duties to the country.

> For the police, armed post-conflict is simply the return to what we in our conception call rural citizen security. That is, perhaps because of the conflict, the rural people in Colombia, in terms of security have been somewhat neglected because the Military Forces and the Police, which I represent, have been more focused on combating the phenomenon of the guerrillas that were in, or that still persist in Colombia. Returning to a peace process, implementing the agreements allows the Police to return to its essential work. And what is its essence? Precisely, service to the community. In this case, the return of the Police is related to the countryside, to work with the rural peasants- not only to generate security. Not only to combat the criminal phenomena that will arise through or after post-conflict, but also to accompany those peasants in everything that has to do with rural development (R. Restrepo, personal interview).

> Nowadays, the role of the Military Forces will of course, have a more social-developmental support, working with the community. The Ministry of Defense had handed over to the General Command of the Armed Forces three great pathways. We have a pathway that was the path of security. Also, we have a path of transition, which was the path where we participated, it was the pathway in charge of facilitating and supporting the national government, in everything that was related to the peace agreements; and an pathway of transformation that was the path that we have been working for years which focuses on the Forces that we want to have by the year 2030 (C. Rojas, personal interview).

However, even considering the above excerpt, it is not only that the Peace Agreement leaves with it the possibility of changing the logic behind the work of the Public Forces regarding its relationship with the community and the hundreds of municipalities that were deprived of State protection for so many years. Crucially, a post-agreement context without a belligerent FARC could offer greater capability to combat other non-state armed groups, to the left and the right, which continue to contribute to widespread violence across much of the country.

> We are moving from the National Security to a citizen security as such. We have been working on the issue of roles, but what happens is that we come from a conflict lasting more than fifty years where the Colombians became accustomed to seeing the Forces in a combined way, we could almost say, the Military Forces and the National Police acting against insurgencies. If there is a peace process, and if this continues to advance as we expect, then obviously the Military Forces will have to redefine their action and activity in terms of citizen security. Also, the National Police has to redefine itself a lot, which was its method on national security issues. That is to say, each of its activities, I believe, must be adjusted gradually because, as I said, Colombians got used to that. So, let's say that getting to a point where there is a real separation of roles will take

some time, but I am absolutely sure that that this will happen (R. Restrepo, personal interview).

Negotiations with this group have taken place, and a peace process with all these organizations has started. This does not mean that violence will end. The truth is that it does not end. There are still important factors such as drug trafficking, illegal mining, and smuggling that generate violence. But yes, ending the confrontation with these guerilla groups generates conditions that allows the State to be more effective in consolidating and defending national security (C. Rojas, personal interview).

5. Conclusions

As can be seen in the above explanation, it is possible to see a substantial change in some of the narratives of the representatives of the National Army and National Police. These provide a belief that a new page has been turned in the context the Colombian conflict- particularly in the areas of security and defense.

Thus, until the beginning of the Havana Peace Process, the narratives all highlight an importance of confrontation and armed struggle against the FARC, even during the previous Caguán process. This has led to the perception that both the Democratic Security Policy and Plan Colombia have been successful instruments, not so much in the military defeat of the guerrilla, but in allowing a change in the balance of forces in favor of the State and the weakening of the guerillas.

This requires negotiating and promoting cooperative exchanges in the shared aspiration to overcome the armed conflict, both on the side of the FARC and the State. Indeed, in the new "post-agreement" situation there are no reports of military victory in favor of the State or of the persistence in the fight against the guerrillas. On the contrary, the narratives collected coincide in highlighting that the post-agreement with the FARC opens another door for Colombia in terms of security and defense, where roles and responsibilities must be rethought, redefined, and optimized.

This implies a greater involvement of the National Police with citizen security and defense of the territory (sovereignty) and that the Defense ministry must move beyond the current National Security paradigm which is more typical of the Cold War and the years of greater conflict intensity. In short, it is no longer a question of guiding efforts of war but of working resolutely and optimizing resources and structures in order to consolidate the new peace scenario that has begun in Colombia.

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