

# What is the purpose of “multipurpose forces”? The case of the Colombian armed forces in the “post-agreement”

## Qual o propósito das “forças multi-propósito”? O caso das forças armadas colombianas no “pós-acordo”

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HÉCTOR LUIS SAINT-PIERRE  
MATÍAS FERREYRA WACHHOLTZ

### INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

After the Colombian Armed Forces have been involved in a prolonged internal conflict, today their Army faces the task of thinking of the future. Such endeavor is put forward in an exceptional moment, since the peace agreement struck with the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (Farc), in Habana, has expanded the ground of reflexion that involves the Colombian Armed Forces and society in general. One of the pivots of this reflexion is the already active *Plan de Transformación del Ejército de Futuro* (*PETEF*, Future Army's Transformation Plan), of which the most important influence and motivation lately comes from the possible scenario for a sustainable and stable peace for Colombia (Ramirez 2015).

The Colombian military Transformation Plan is oriented by the model of 'Multi-mission Force'. Under this concept, the armed forces would take on multiple functions, missions, and goals in different areas of defense, security, territorial and economic development, and even the environment. The strategic focus points to future scenarios where the main security challenges will not be dominated by internal armed conflicts, but by prob-

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**Héctor Luis Saint-Pierre** – Instituto de Políticas Públicas e Relações Internacionais. Programa de Pós-graduação em Relações Internacionais “San Tiago Dantas”. Professor Titular da UNESP. Pesquisador PQ CNPq. Pesquisador FAPESP.

**Matías Ferreyra Wachholtz** – Doutorando em Relações Internacionais pelo PPGRI “San Tiago Dantas” (UNESP, UNICAMP, PUC-SP). Pesquisador CAPES. Membro do Grupo de Estudos de Defesa e Segurança Internacional (GEDES).

lems such as organized crime and drug trafficking (CGFMC 2015). The option for this model of forces means the strengthening of military use in domestic security, just like it has been done during the last five decades while justified by the prevalence of the armed conflict. We believe that following this path, Colombia could put their Armed Forces in imminent institutional and doctrinal dangers, since a 'multipurpose force' can become a 'no-purpose force', with a doctrinal decharacterization that can lead to a de-professionalization of the military career.

Alternatively, there are propositions that understand that Colombia can choose different Public Force models, more adequate to those future scenarios, for example, the 'Specialized Forces' model (Alda 2016; Batagliano 2016; Vargas 2015; Buitrago 2015; Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2011). The gravitational center of this model of force is the institutionalization of 'Intermediate Forces', that is, Police Forces with military status, focused on dealing with fire capacities that surpass the conditions of police contention, such as those of mercenaries paid by the financial capacities of the organized crime and drug trafficking. With such resources in the hands of the State, the Armed Forces could prepare themselves operationally to better fulfill their primary and constitutional function, which is the protection of the sovereignty of the State and external defense, while the common police force would keep its operational autonomy to investigate illicit acts and maintaining the public order. This model addresses the political imperative of demilitarization of domestic security, within a framework of civil and democratic governance, but also obeys a strategic-operational objective: the creation of more efficient and effective forces formed according to the specific nature of the threats and the availability of modernized armed forces matching Colombian Foreign Policy in the scope of international interest.

The reflection concerning the modernization of Colombian Armed Forces in the post-agreement possesses a transcendence that is not exhausted by the problems of this country, but it reaches the regional context. More often than not, Latin American countries face security challenges and similar obstacles in relation to the reform and modernization of their security and defense sectors; that is, how to efficiently adjust the monopoly of state violence to successfully face the security challenges, marked by the increase in mercenary fire-power, the sophistication of intelligence and counterintelligence networks, and the enormous capacity of corruption that can fund organized crime and drug trafficking networks. Except for Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, Latin American governments show a dominant tendency of employing their armed forces to confront the aforementioned problems which turns out to be a rumbling failure in

all instances. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of clear and accurate regional responses to which could be more suitable models of forces.

In this sense, our objective with the present paper is to analyze possible modernizing military models to Colombia, from the eventual concretion of the peace process that develops with the guerrillas the FARC. We understand that the field of Defense constitutes, together with Diplomacy, one of the specific grammars of the Foreign Policy of country (Saint-Pierre 2007).<sup>1</sup> For this reason, we consider the management and the image of the military transformation in Colombia not only in its domestic order, but also regionally and globally.

We organize this reflection in three parts. In the first part, we describe the nature of the ‘post-agreement’ period and the concept of ‘military modernization’, in relation to the Colombian case. In the second part, we analyse the characteristics and the basic concepts of the ‘Multi-mission Forces’ — which we also understand as “multipurpose force” — and ‘Specialized Forces’ models together with their implications to the realm of defense and public security. In the third part, we develop a projection of the application of the ‘Specialized Forces’ model to the Colombian case and we propose the analysis of its functioning in three areas of management and image: national, regional and, global. Finally, we present some final considerations.

## POST-AGREEMENT AND MILITARY MODERNIZATION

The German political philosopher Hannah Arendt has said that every civilization is founded over a blood confrontation between brothers: ‘[...] whatever brotherhood human beings may be capable of has grown out of fratricide, whatever political organization men may have achieved has its origin in crime’ (Arendt 2011, 46). The Jewish civilization (Cain and Abel) as much as the Romans (Romulus and Remus) have their foundations in this myth of blood. For this reason, this exceptional moment that Colombia lives through can be one of consecration (in the strictest sense of the term) of a harmonious and long-lasting relationship between Colombians. Nevertheless, this ‘final stage’ in which the historical process of the conflict finds itself, known as the ‘post-agreement’, is estimated to be the longest, most onerous, and the one which will have to face the most challenges.<sup>2</sup> There are many obstacles to the implementation of reforms and measures that will lead to a profound transformation of the conflict and that will allow the reestablishment of a genuine national reconciliation (Rojas 2016). Colombia has lived many years in war and has had a unique experience with thwarted processes of peace. Since the wars of

national independence, through the Thousand Days' War (*Guerra de los Mil Días*, in Spanish) and *La Violencia*, up to the current peace process, there have been many occasions in which they have intended to bring the conflict to an end and begin a stage in which there would be no outbreaks of violence (Benavides 2004).

Post-agreement is not a situation in which the conflict has ceased at some point in all parts of the country; differently, it is a process that is supposed to lead to the desired peace. However, a stable and lasting peace requires additional construction, which goes beyond the absence of conflict. This process of adjustment, reconciliation and reunion of the national project cannot be an incomplete peace (Cepeda 2016). The agreement with the FARC would imply an important advance, but it would be limited to a “negative peace”, in the sense that the cease-fire, disarmament and the end of hostilities are the door to advance to the “post-conflict” where one would have to work for a “positive peace” (Galtung 1998), in which structurally the minimum conditions of development and justice for most Colombians must be guaranteed to transform the causes of conflicts that were not resolved through the peace agreement. In that sense, according to Cepeda (2016, 202), Rodríguez and Bedoya (2016), among others, the signing of peace means — despite its great value — just the arrival of the post-agreement, but not necessarily that of the post-conflict, in which the construction of peace can take as long as the armed conflict experienced.

According to Galtung's perspective (1998), in order to transform a conflict, it is necessary end up all kinds of violence (not only the armed kind) and begin a long process that entails: a reconstruction, a reconciliation and a resolution (the three 'R'). Therefore, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Boutros Boutros-Ghali, emphasized the need for a new institutional environment to the consolidation of peace: 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (ONU 1992, 6). In fact, this period demands the implementation of important institutional reforms on the armed, civil, and military structures involved in the conflict. Thereupon, the current period in Colombia is essential to legitimize the reflection on the transformation of the Army, that will be more profound, consistent, and permanent if it can count on a legitimacy achieved through an open dialogue with Colombian society. The reputation of the Armed Forces in the present, nationally and internationally, will be enhanced by this transformation in the light of this new Colombian and global reality.

Transformation, restructuring, or modernization of the Armed Forces refers to a process of adjustment of the military institution so as to meet

a series of factors such as changes in the paradigms and agendas of security, political changes, international and regional order, integration processes, among others (Vela 2002, 12). The military restructuring implies a transformation in the perceptions that the armed forces have about their function, their mission, their interaction with society, as well as their organizational structure. According to Vela (2002, 13), a central factor in this process is the doctrine, given that its axiological matrix grants the foundations to all of the redefining relationships between society, the State, and the armed forces. Precisely, a military restructuring process is expected to be concluded at the moment when a real doctrinal change is achieved, that is to say, with the internalization of new values and norms in accordance with a democratic context, therefore, when it is possible to ascertain a cultural change in the organization and in the strategic thinking.

From a broader perspective, military reconstruction is part of a reform process of the 'security and defense sector' (SSR) that, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2007) includes the main security actors (armed forces, police, *gendarmería*, and intelligence); the bodies of administration and control (Ministries of Defense, financial administration organisms, and committees of civic monitoring); the legal institutions and the application of the law, and state security forces (private security companies, militias, and guerrillas) (Pinzón 2014).<sup>3</sup> Primarily, the SSR is focused in the provision of state and human security in the framework of democratic governance. According to Pinzón (2014), the governance of the security system can be considered the *software* that allows the completion of the reform/restructuring of the public force in accordance with the strengthening of democracy and not mainly in function of corporate, institutional, and political interests of the public force. In the history of Latin-american countries this *software* is important, mainly because the balance between the requirements of democracy and the ones of security have often been in conflict. The necessity to protect the nation against domestic violence or transnational threats has time and again been used to justify state action outside the law and limitations to the same rights they affirm to be protecting (Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2011).

In the historical moment Colombia is living now, it is necessary to rethink the role of the State and the missions of its armed instruments, fit to their nature and in accordance with the democratic system, the non-traditional threats, and international peace. Neither losing sight nor forgetting the constitutional, doctrinal contours, specific armament, and preparation — which separate the use of the legitimate monopoly of force in their protective function of domestic security, on one side, and the use for ex-

ternal purposes in their lethal function of defense —, it is necessary to advance, defining clear roles, missions, and functions to the Armed Forces and to the Police, in order to address non-conventional threats and violent non-state actors that have the capacity to affect the constitutional order of a State, regions, or continents.

## DEFENSE, DOMESTIC SECURITY AND MODELS OF FORCE

In other papers,<sup>4</sup> we have shown the profound and essential difference between **defense** and **public security**, that allows us to decide on the armed structure of the State most adequate to the specific demands of each one of them. Here, we limit ourselves to say that the legitimate monopoly of violence that defines the contemporary State is, obviously, only one. On one side, this legitimate and concentrated force is able to guarantee the univocal application of one normative order to the entirety of the national territory ('good laws and good armies') that regulates the behavior of the human beings in the society. In a regular rule of Law, the actions and behaviors of the citizens are predictable precisely because of this adjustment to what is prescribed by the law. This situation provides the security that enables the citizens to live peacefully in a State in which conflicts can be solved legally through law adjustments. In this order of things, there is no 'enemy', but only adversaries, competitors, or deviation of behavior that can be solved agonistically, that is, by adjustment to the law and the application of punishment. Force, in this environment of conflict, seeks to protect the citizens from one another, it is enforced with a **protective** sense, which allows citizens to live with security and tranquility. Thus, it is established the protection of the normative social *status quo* safeguarded by the police.

On the other side, this state *status quo* exists among other States that, with their respective monopoly of violence, measure themselves mutually, they observe each other, and assess their strategic relevance in an environment where there is no bidding law for there is no there is no legitimate monopoly of force that can coerce and punish the offending States. This is an environment where, in light of the unpredictability generated by the anomie, a strategic calculus is required, and the legitimate monopoly of the state's force is used in a completely different way than the one used inside the national frontiers. In the international environment, where war is a legal instrument to settle differences and to solve conflicts, this force is directed towards an 'other', a '*xenos*', a foreigner that can threaten the existence of the citizens and the State, for which reason there is precaution, defense, and the use of total force. Concerning this foreigner, considered

the ‘enemy’, the force of the State is to be used with maximum **lethality**, be it for dissuasion or for annihilation. Therefore, the same legitimate monopoly of force is used internally as a **protection** to the citizens and externally as **lethal** violence against the enemy. Due to today’s complexity, both meanings of force are executed by the state’s stable and permanent administrative structures that, for their specificity, require specific education, preparation, training, and weaponry, as well as a precise and unambiguous doctrines for the different missions they are entrusted to fulfill.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, as aforementioned, in Colombia, the *Plan de Transformación del Ejército de Futuro (PETEF)*, in effect since 2011, has opted for a model of armed forces called “Multi-mission”, that contributes to the erosion of the essential and necessary limits between defense and domestic security. The plan proposes, until 2030, the projection of the Army as a ‘multi-purpose force’ qualified to answer to an array of responsibilities, roles, and missions, training for the consolidation of peace and the development of the country.<sup>6</sup> In the words of General Alberto José Mejía, commander of the Army:

It is an Army projected to the future to fulfill a portfolio of missions that will be given to us by the Ministry of National Defense, that encompass, specifically as a main effort, the protection in issues regarding internal order, the protection of our sovereignty, and support in areas of great importance to the global agenda, such as the environment, the prevention of disasters, humanitarian support, the projection of our capacities to support the strengthening of the social tissue in Colombia, and also our participation in international missions (El Colombiano 2016).

Within the scope of the new Damascus Doctrine that, since 2016, has been the main axis of the transformation plan, the Army adopted a unique operational concept for the performance of the Force, called “Unified Land Operations” (UTO). This concept is executed through the simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, stability and defense support tasks to the civil authority, in order to avoid or deter conflict, prevail in war and create favorable conditions for its resolution.<sup>7</sup> According to Mejía himself, this polyvalent model of force (similar to models already existing in other countries of the region) will not involve in the reduction of budget or personnel and seeks to adapt to the requirements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Indeed, although it is argued that the new doctrine is the result of “the natural evolution of our doctrinal thinking”, the fundamental role in doctrinal renewal has had the CADD (Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate), which is part of the U.S. Army Combined

Combined Arms Center (CAC) and the Tradoc (Training and Doctrine Command) (Rojas 2017, 102). Precisely the Doctrine Directorate of the United States Army has been advising directly since September 2015, through the management of the Army South and the Southern Command, to the Doctrine Center of the Colombian Army (Cedoe, for its acronym in Spanish), in the design of the Damascus doctrine and the incorporation of the operational concept UTO.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that the 'multi-purpose force' model is in accordance to the pressure exerted by the United States since the end of the Cold War with the intent to induce the transformation of Latin American Armed Forces in 'hemispherical guards', built to combat organized crime, specially drug-trafficking, to the protection of the environment, and to participate in Peace Operations (Silveira 2004). Thus, the conventional strategic-military matters in the hemisphere, such as the external defense of the States' sovereignty, would be put under the tutelage of North American armed forces. In fact, in many countries, such as Mexico, Bolivia, and Colombia, because of North American pressure, the Armed Forces have been concentrated and involved in the combat against drug-trafficking, purely a matter of domestic order for the police.

According to Vargas (2008), this model of force poses a series of risks, such as the corruption of an activity that mobilizes an enormous amount of money and that undermines the division between national defense and public security. Likewise, as it is presented by Bataglini (2016), the application in Latin American countries of such models of force entails an enormous social cost not being able to stop the phenomenon. Mexico is a paradigmatic case. The increase in the crime rate and violations of human rights were a direct consequence of the politics of militarization of the combat against drug-trafficking that has been carried out since 2006 (Human Rights Watch 2018). The intervention of the armed forces has been massive. Around 96,000 military personnel have been mobilized to perform tasks of public security, among them, detentions, patrolling, inspections, and raids. The main effect of this intervention was an exponential boost of violence that has increased the homicide rate from 8 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2007 to 24 in 2013 (Bataglini 2016). Until July 2016, there have almost 10,000 reports of abuse perpetrated by the Army since 2006 (Human Rights Watch 2018). As Bataglini asserts (2016), even though Mexico can be considered an extreme case, the military intervention in a great part of the countries of the region has turned out to be a picture of all kinds of excesses, arbitrariness, and violations of human rights. Moreover, it is not confirmed that the intervention has promoted the decrease of drug-trafficking, which suggests that the only possible



result of the application of the multi-purpose model of force, in the long term, is military de-professionalization leaving the defense of national sovereignty forlorn.

In Colombia, the necessity of facing a prolonged internal armed conflict has converted the threshold between national defense and public security in something hazy and vague. The materialization of this lack of definition in the delimitation is the idea of 'Multi-mission Force', in which the police and the military functions are mixed together in a mangle of doctrines and even professional vocation. Orienting the process of military transformation according to the idea of 'multi-purpose forces' can mean going through a circular path that institutionalizes this dangerous fog. The concept of 'multi-purpose forces' hides the idea of 'no-purpose forces' and counting on armed forces with no clearly defined purpose can lead to the temptation of them being used for political ends to carry out the worst purposes. When the military component intervenes in domestic questions, they distort their primary and main purpose. This improves the chances of a de-professionalization process or, in other words, of a progressive loss of their material capacities and professional abilities to combat the enemy in a conventional military conflict. Confronting organized delinquency is not the same as confronting another armed force equipped with the classic means: tanks, airplanes, or vessels. The phenomenon of organized crime and especially drug-trafficking, in Colombia as well as in Latin America in general, has achieved such a degree of corporate complexity and organizational expansion that the Armed Forces and the Police because of their doctrine, training, education, organization, and generic equipment are not able to face them successfully. Organized crime can neither mimic a foreign military force that threatens the sovereignty of a country, nor some form of paramilitary insurgency that could be confronted with the maximum severity of the State's power, even though this kind of armed delinquency sometimes surpasses in firepower the capacity of the common Police.

Taking this projection and the growing firepower capacity of the militarized gangs at the service of crime into account, we consider it could be important the possibility of constituting an 'intermediate force', a specialized force that, because of its configuration, doctrine, and fighting skills, could be more adequate to face said problem. A police with a military status constituted as more robust than the police force, but less heavy than the armed forces, could combine more suitable characteristics to face criminal networks and count on its own legislation in order to safeguard its actions legally (Alda 2016). Therefore, as Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas (2011) point out, these 'hybrid forces' would occupy the so called security gap, since they would be a police force capable of investigating complex crim-

inal networks and, if necessary, could confront criminals with powerful weaponry, thanks to their configuration as a robust force. The nature of the bodies of intermediate forces is twofold (civil/military). Examples of these kind of forces already exist in Latin America and in Europe, such as the Spanish Civil Guard and the French and Argentinian *Gendarmerie*, and the Italian and Chilean *Carabineros*. This form of security force would be able to face challenges that demand a more robust and powerful response than the ones that the common police can give, but not as robust as a military one (Alda 2016). In turn, the creation of a specialized third force contributes to the specialization and professionalization of the Armed Forces and of the Police safeguarding their particularity. In fact, with the use of intermediate forces, the Armed Forces would be discharged of missions related to the combat of militarized groups of the organized crime and drug-trafficking, and would, thus, be able to resume their training and indoctrination to fulfill their constitutional missions with efficiency and effectiveness, which would keep them from being deprofessionalized.

Such qualities would convert the model of specialized forces in a bedrock over which it would be possible to build the demilitarization of public security and over which it would be possible to build a new framework of management and perception for the Armed Forces and the policy of Defense, for the relationship with citizens as well as for the regional and global contexts. For this reason, in the next section, we consider the model of specialized forces to the Colombian Armed Forces from its implications regarding the management and perception in the domestic, regional, and global order.

## LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT AND PERCEPTION OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE POST-AGREEMENT

### Domestic perception

The construction of the domestic perception is the representation of the perspective of reconciliation of the Colombian, their social protection, and the defense of this mutual understanding. The protection of the citizens in charge of a robust and renewed police system and penitentiary system that would allow the projection of order, justice, and security to all regions of the country to support a free and secure citizenship. In some countries, these systems belong to the Ministry of Internal Administration, in others to the Ministry of Justice, and more recently, some countries have created the Ministry of Security. In all of these instances, those systems are independent from the Ministry of Defense,

which allows it to dedicate itself to its main mission, that is to say, as the specific lexicon of foreign policy of the country to national defense.

In this direction, a profound reflection on the type of relationship that is to be built with Colombian society is necessary, for they will be the ones to legitimize the main purpose of the armed forces. The transformation plan carried out by the armed forces, with purposes oriented towards the international context, can only be made possible in its entirety with the internal transformations mentioned above. The challenge resides in designing a viable model of social cohesion, centered around the institutions and civic aspirations (Patiño 2015). In turn, according to Alejo Vargas (2015), the main task in this context will be pedagogical of which the means of communication, educational institutions, and churches will be in charge with the objective of creating an environment of coexistence and reconciliation. One of the fundamentals of this strategy is the integral development of society in different regions of the national territory, that would allow the mitigation of the negative impact of the asymmetries of the structure of Colombian society. One of the strategic vulnerabilities of the State is, precisely, the existence of a wide range of social sectors devoid of basic rights and of a decent living standard, and that, for these reasons, feel neglected by the State.

In order for the State to transmit security to the perception of its citizens, the continuity of the military activity in domestic security in the post-conflict can risk enhancing the contrary effect to the image of the Armed Forces, that can also be perceived as a threat by some sectors of society. The threat only exists *to* and *in* a perception, and these perceptions depend on the specific characteristics of the recipient, that is, on the specific historical, cultural, geopolitical, institutional, and political situation of the idiosyncrasy of each country that decodes the signals and socially constructs their particular perceptions (Saint-Pierre 2011). In the Colombian case, the last six decades of the conflict have conditioned certain shared perceptions in society that have been culturally crystallized. Among them, the one which ties the situations related to political life and military life is through a lens of friend/enemy logic (Buitrago 2015). This polarization induces one to act as if they were in a warlike domestic environment, which presents as a consequence the decoding of entrenched perceptions polemologically — of war as a socially trivial phenomenon — that are taken into account in decisions regarding public policy. Usually, different social sectors, insurgent groups, and even military tiers have the tendency of perceiving the State's decisions as a threat to their existential and organizational interests. It is even claimed that there is a 'legal war' that tends to construe legal decisions to the detriment of the military (Torres 2012).

The Colombian State has, thus, lost the image of necessary neutrality and impartiality to society. From the domestic perspective, this seems to have hampered the professionalization of their Armed Forces according to the attributions defined by the Constitution; to wit, as an instrument oriented to the protection of the sovereignty and the national interests in the international context. These factors seem to be culturally entrenched in time, hampering their modification as a necessary principle, albeit not enough, to obtain a favorable environment to the conclusion of the armed conflict (Vargas 2015). Nonetheless, the disarmament of the FARC and possibly of other armed groups, their incorporation to the political system, the charter of the opposition, and the **guarantee that no one would resort to arms in the political arena** are fundamental steps to overcome these difficulties (Patiño 2015).

It is not possible to discard the possibility of some illegal armed groups maintaining the dispute for the monopoly of force that legitimately belongs to the Colombian State. Neither can it be ignored the possible existence of dissident groups that can remain at war or integrate criminal gangs. It is not an easy or immediate task to coordinate a police force capable of controlling these internal threats, trained and armed to jungle warfare such as have been the capacities of the Colombian Army. These possibilities, for the danger they entail, will continue to demand the dedication of the National Army, at least of a prominent part that, after the threat is unveiled, can become a permanent ‘force of intermediate contention’, similar to the Argentinian *gendarmería* or the Chilean *carabineros*.

Such institutional changes should come about in the framework of broader reforms, engaging other State institutions, such as the reorganization of the agencies of intelligence, indoctrinated in a Manichean conception of friends and internal enemies, and questioned for their lack of supervision by civil authorities. Another point that needs to be discussed — despite of resistance — is the military budget, the size of the military component, and compulsory military service. However, according to Buitrago (2015), these resistances would diminish with the success of the negotiations with the FARC. Conversely, the reorganization and demilitarization of the National Police, considered a loose end within the Ministry of Defense, is crucial to the management of civic security (Buitrago 2015). Withdrawing them from the Ministry of Defense, as it was established in 1960, and place it under the Ministry of Internal Administration would allow the definition of their functions without interferences from the military sectors.

The Public Force symbolizes the Gordian knot — seemingly unsolvable — of the Colombian problem regarding public security and defense. Its

solution is decisive to the formulation of a new perspective to the military force. According to estimations made by Alejo Vargas (2016), these changes would require at least a decade for they cannot be abrupt.<sup>9</sup> However, in order to build a new perspective in the reformulation of the Army, it is important to begin them immediately, in such a way that is constitutionally clear and operationally unequivocal. Once resolved the Colombian armed conflict, the military force could regain their place in the central mission of defense, that is, as a specific instrument of Colombian foreign policy and, collaterally, as the main instrument of national mobilization and logistical support to national public policy when requested.

### The regional perception

The reformulation of the Colombian Army should consider the challenge of the construction of their image in the South American regional context, which has been hindered by the internal armed conflict and, in the last few years, for some disagreements and political tension with some countries in the region.

This situation has happened mainly during Álvaro Uribe's administration (2002-2010), when Colombian Foreign Policy 'turned its back' on Latin America and when the internationalization of the conflict happened with the arrival of extra-regional actors such as the United States (Pedraza 2012). Many of the so called 'progressive governments' during the last decade have questioned Uribe's administration and their human rights policies, their anti-subversive, their definition of the *guerrilla* groups as 'terrorists', and their attempt of deploying North American military bases in Colombian territory. Nevertheless, since 2010, with Juan Manuel Santos as president, a change in foreign policy could be perceived. Firstly, it was sought to reintegrate the country in South America by rebuilding the relationship with countries in the region, beginning by the neighbors Venezuela and Ecuador (Restrepo 2016). In general terms, there has been a major opening towards the region and the world, without intending them to take care of Colombia's internal problem; that is, the foreign policy stops orbiting around domestic security in its military dimension, as did his predecessor, which has led Colombia to isolate itself from a great part of South America (Ramírez 2011).

However, in the current context, with Iván Duque in the presidency since 2018, to the extent that the military forces can recover conventional concepts of employment in the inherently international field of defense, there can be a greater conceptual convergence regarding defense and security among the countries in the region (Saint-Pierre and Lopes 2014) with

which Colombia will be able to assume a more proactive attitude in matters of regional cooperation. The success of the peace process in Colombia can catapult the country internationally as a paradigmatic example, not only for achieving internal peace, but also as a provider of regional peace. For the lessons the country has learned, Colombia would be capable of assuming leadership roles inside the South American regionalism, particularly in terms of cooperations to the peaceful resolution of crisis and conflicts.

Colombia will also be able to get closer to the path followed by other South American countries with a tradition in Peace Operations, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, but differing in terms of contributions, credentials, and institutional experience gained during the last decades facing the oldest and most resistant insurgency of the hemisphere. South America still suffers with the threat of armed gangs of drug-trafficking, but in this new context, they could be faced from within these scenarios of full cooperation and trust in the region (Vargas 2015). These are some paths to elaborate a positive regional perspective for a country that has once been perceived as a source of instability to the region. The challenge is to reverse this image in one of a provider of peace, with experience in peacekeeping and peacebuilding with the ability to spread its knowledge regionally.

Colombia will be able to profit from these forms of South American cooperation in the field of peaceful resolutions of crisis and conflicts developed in the last few years, which have deepened mutual trust measures between States and the interoperability and camaraderie between the national armed forces. In this process, experiences in regional cooperation are noteworthy: in the framework of the United Nations' Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (Minustah, in French) (Várgany 2010); the creation of the Council of South American Defense (CDS, in Spanish) in 2008; the creation of the Latin American Association of Peacekeeping Training Centers (Alcopaz), also in 2008; and the Combined Regional Exercises of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur, in Spanish) since 2011, to promote common standards of interoperability and a combined doctrine in peace operations.

These initiatives, most of them currently weakened or regionally deinstitutionalized, were in line with the United Nations Standby Arrangement Forces (UNSAS). Considering that recent past, Colombia could optimize its *Centro de Entrenamiento y Capacitación para Operaciones de Paz* (Cencopaz, Center for the Training and Education for Peace Operations) — recently created — and complement the education of its military with the assistance of training centers in other countries of the region. Thus, Colombia would be in great conditions to contribute to one of the main necessities of the UN that is the lack of troops and equipment to the rapid deployment in Peace Operations in zones of armed conflict around the world.

Lastly, with neighboring countries, such as Ecuador, but particularly with Venezuela — considering the current worsening of bilateral tensions — the future consolidation of peace in Colombia could help definitely abandon in strategic exercises the hypothesis of conflict, substituting them for the consolidation of measures of mutual trust, the development of shared security in the borders, and the generation a positive regional deterrence to extra-regional challenges.

### The global perspective

The consolidation of a positive regional image is one of the prerequisites for Colombia to elaborate an self-image in the global perspective. Colombia has already started a process to try and reverse its image as a producer and exporter of insecurity to one of provider of security in the global system (Borda and Morales 2016). This transition of image and roles faces challenges in many international organizations, such as the UN, NATO, and its strategic relationship with the United States.

With reference to the UN, in September, 2015, president Santos has declared the intention of cooperating by sending up to 5000 members of the armed forces to Peace Operations in the next few years. According to his declarations, the military forces will have two main missions: share the knowledge acquired in the fight against drug-trafficking and irregular groups and strengthen the force for future missions (Bitar 2016). These initiatives are important to place Colombia together with the countries that contribute with troops and the training of police officers and civilians.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, it signals the legitimacy of the armed forces as an institution that complies with the norms of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Smith 2015). Finally, another challenge that needs to be faced in this multilateral organism refers to the contradiction of implementing a policy against drugs with a prohibitionist approach domestically while advocating for a transformation of this legal framework in the UN (Borda and Morales 2016).

With respect to NATO, because of its incorporation as a “global partner” in 2018, it is highly likely that in the next few years Colombia will deepen its cooperation agreements with said organization, capitalizing its aforementioned distinctive know-how with its North partners. Since 2008, for example, there have been considerations of official petitions for their armed forces to participate in operations of stabilization in post-conflict areas that NATO has conducted in Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Considering the incentive that NATO represents for adhering to models of “multimission forces”, Colombia is

challenged to insert itself as a “global partner” but to be guided in the future by other models of forces that respect the borders between its internal security and the defense. At the same time, if Colombia seeks to position itself as an influential player for regional security cooperation, must take care of dissipating possible mistrust by South American governments that may negatively perceive the geopolitical interests of NATO countries. Colombia needs to convince its neighbors that this link does not mean risks and contradictions for regional security. In other words, reconcile its South American policy with its approach to NATO.

Regarding the strategic relationship between Colombia and the United States, it will require an exchange that is functional to the global image intended by the country. Military aid and security provided by the United States has been progressively reduced in the last few years. Beyond possible criticisms such as those made by President Trump to President Duque because of drug trafficking control,<sup>11</sup> their bilateral agenda could be gradually oriented towards non-military and desecuritized themes such as trade, the environment, economic development, among others (Alegría and Gonzalez 2015). Thus, the diversification and demilitarization of Colombia’s agenda with its strategic ally would improve the construction of a global image of a “normal State” and improve its position in organizations of developed countries such as, for example, OECD.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To Raymond Aron (1962), the logic of foreign policy consists of two sets of specific rules (but not only): the diplomatic and the strategic. The subjects of these sets are the diplomacy and the military. The latter is prepared to be an effective and efficient instrument of the logic of foreign policy, both in its role of defending the sovereignty of national decisions and its projection of the state’s image in the international scenario, be it as military aggregates in military embassies or as active participants as blue helmets in the recurring missions under UN’s mandate. In the case of Colombia, accepting greater commitments in the international security agenda entails facing these kinds of challenges.

Concomitantly, the historical singularity of the Colombian case puts the country as a source of reflection that is worth monitoring to strategic studies. Firstly, to the epistemic area of peace studies, since it is one of the few negotiation processes of an armed conflict that has been successfully concluded. During many decades, the different attempts of negotiation have been a showcase of alternatives, with successes and failures, that needs to be thoroughly studied. Secondly, the post-agreement context



unveils a future that promotes reflection regarding possible prospective scenarios in a normative as much as institutional, social, and cultural way.

Finally, the main instrument used in this prolonged conflict, the security forces, show their desire of reform that is nothing but a reflection of the institutional needs that Colombia has to face in order to adapt its instruments of legal violence in this new historical stage. Given the long period of violent conflict, of which the bloody connotations have left deep scars, all the transformations that Colombia needs to go through will suffer with the rhythm and velocity of the cultural changes, including the institutional adjustment of legitimate violence. Therefore, the strategic adjustment of the armed forces on the way to reaching a postconflict scenario will demand multiple and simultaneous normative, cultural, legal, and operational reforms that connects them to society in order to promote a future of growth and peace in a cooperative region.

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## NOTAS

- 1 This perspective consists in conceiving the Defense themes not only from the domestic perspective, but also from its specific international nature since the sense of Defense is none other than the environment where the country is. For more details, see: Saint-Pierre, Héctor. “A Revolução Copernicana nos Estudos da Defesa.” [https://www.academia.edu/3768143/A\\_REVOLU%C3%87%C3%83O\\_COPERNICANA\\_NOS\\_ESTUDOS\\_DA\\_DEFESA](https://www.academia.edu/3768143/A_REVOLU%C3%87%C3%83O_COPERNICANA_NOS_ESTUDOS_DA_DEFESA).
2. The conflict in Colombia has developed in three stages: the initial, the intermediate, and the final, with their own dynamics and challenges. For more information, see: Rojas, Jonathan Calderón. “Etapas del Conflicto Armado en Colombia: hacia el Postconflicto.” *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 62 Ed. Latinoamérica, (2016): 227–257.
- 3 For more details, see: OECD. “Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR).” <http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38406485.pdf>. (accessed on February 20, 2018).
4. Saint-Pierre, Héctor Luis. ““Defesa” ou “Segurança”? Reflexões em torno de Conceitos e Ideologias.” *Revista Contexto Internacional* vol 33, no. 2 (2011): 407–433, and also in Saint-Pierre, Héctor Luis. “Breve reflexión sobre el empleo de las fuerzas armadas.” *Voces en el Fénix* no. 48 (2015): 14–21.
5. For example, in the domestic level with weapons of contention and repression under the doctrine of Human Rights; and In the international level with lethal weaponry and under the doctrine of the International Humanitarian Law.
6. The transformation process of the Army has been designed in three time periods: in Time Period 1.0 (2014–2018) an effort is made to fulfill the constitutional mission, it would be a phase of stabilization and consolidation to give support to the implementation of peace agreements and to counteract the evolution of the threat; in Time Period 2.0 (2018–2022) the capacities divided by areas of operation would be strengthened and the combat power by the use of the Functions of the Conduction of War (FCW). Lastly, in the Time Period 3.0 (2023–2030) the Multi-mission Army would be consolidated and prepared to answer to different missions. For more details, see: Comando General Fuerzas Militares de Colombia). 2015. “Plan Estratégico Militar 2030”. [https://www.fac.mil.co/sites/default/files/plan\\_estrategico\\_militar\\_2030.pdf](https://www.fac.mil.co/sites/default/files/plan_estrategico_militar_2030.pdf).
7. This combined action is inserted in what they call “Decisive Action”, which is reflected in the execution of their distinctive powers:

- Maniobra de Armas Combinadas* (MAC), *Seguridad de Área Extensa* (SAE) and *Operaciones Especiales* (OE). These doctrinal principles require commanders who are completely familiar with the “*Mando Tipo Misión*” (MTM) - Mission Type Command -, as a philosophy and new role in the conduct of war. For more details, see: Rojas, P. J. Doctrina Damasco: eje articulador de la segunda gran reforma del Ejército Nacional de Colombia. *Rev. Cient. Gen. José María Córdova* 15, (2017): 95-119. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21830/19006586.78>
8. The assistance of colonels James F. Benn Jr. and Carlos L. Soto, deputy director of the CADD and terminologist and symbologist of the US Army in NATO, respectively, has been decisive in the elaboration of the goals proposed in the Damascus doctrine. For more details, see: Rojas, Pedro. Doctrina Damasco: eje articulador de la segunda gran reforma del Ejército Nacional de Colombia. *Rev. Cient. Gen. José María Córdova* 15, (2017): 95-119. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21830/19006586.78>
  9. For more details, see: Unimedios. 2016. “Transformación de la Fuerza Pública tardará una década: Alejo Vargas.” <https://agenciadenoticias.unal.edu.co/detalle/articulo/transformacion-de-la-fuerza-publicatarda-rauna-decada-alejo-vargas.html>.
  10. In fact, the only deployment of Colombia troops abroad — and one of the few cases in which it has sent any armed contingent in UN operations — happened with its participation in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), in the Sinai peninsula.
  11. For more details about this, see: MESA, Jesus. La difícil relación entre Donald Trump y Colombia. *El Espectador*. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/la-dificil-relacion-entre-donald-trump-y-colombia-articulo-850015>.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF “MULTIPURPOSE FORCES”?  
THE CASE OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE “POST-AGREEMENT”

**ABSTRACT**

In this article, we analyze possible models of military modernization to Colombia from the “post-agreement” stage initiated with the guerrilla group FARC, considering implications on management and perception in the domestic, regional, and global order. We contemplate the “Multi-mission Force” model and the “Specialized Force” model, to conclude the latter as the best fit for Colombia and that could be mirrored to all of Latin America.

Keywords: Colombian post-agreement; Modernization; Multi-mission Forces; Specialized Forces.

**RESUMO**

Neste artigo, analisamos possíveis modelos de modernização militar para a Colômbia a partir da fase de “pós-acordo” iniciado com a guerrilha das FARC, considerando implicações de gestão e imagem na ordem doméstica, regional e global. Contemplamos o modelo de “Forças Multimissão” e o modelo de “Forças Especializadas”, para concluir pela melhor adequação desse último para Colômbia e que pode ser espelhado para toda América Latina.

Palavras-chave: Pós-acordo colombiano; Modernização; Forças Multimissão; Forças Especializadas.