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## POSSIBILITIES FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN COLOMBIA FOLLOWING THE POST-CONFLICT PERIOD

### **Abstract**

This article aims to reflect on how to configure the security forces in Colombia once guerrilla warfare ceases to be the main threat to the country.

By analysing the current scenario of insecurity at regional and Colombian level, it intends to demonstrate which forces might be the most suitable for tackling existing threats. Two options were considered: those that cover many different missions, under the heading of multi-function forces and those which, despite their versatility, are specialised forces to address specific threats.

Colombia can become a point of reference, gearing the configuration of its forces towards specialisation, as the armed forces model most suitable for addressing the complex insecurity scenario. In order to enable this specialisation, a police force with a military status is proposed, to act alongside the armed forces and the police, as a means to release these forces from missions. This would make it possible to relieve existing forces of the completion of missions for which they are unprepared, while at the same time enabling this third force to specialise, particularly in the prosecution of organised crime.

### **KeyWords**

Armed forces, police, police with military status, multi-mission forces, specialised forces

## POSSIBILITIES FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN COLOMBIA FOLLOWING THE POST-CONFLICT PERIOD

### INTRODUCTION

This article aims to reflect on the armed forces model that should be configured in Colombia once guerrilla warfare ceases to be the main threat to the country. This possibility is virtually a reality, as the commitment achieved by the government of President Santos and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) to make peace in March 2016 seems to indicate.<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, ELN) also joined this process, as a guerrilla organisation that also expressed its desire to begin a dialogue for peace. However, the signing of a peace deal by no means equates to its immediate implementation, there would instead need to be a transitional period in order to ensure that the conflicts come to a definitive end.

Nonetheless, what seems to be certain is that this significant step entails a radical change to the security scenario. Therefore, once the internal conflict has ended and following the necessary period of transition, it would be necessary to address the institutional reorganisation of its security forces in accordance with the major security problems that exist within this new context.

For this purpose it would be useful to consider the experience garnered in Latin America that, since the end of guerrilla movements in the mid-nineties, has allowed the countries of the region to fully dedicate their efforts to tackling other types of threat. In the same vein, this reference point may be of great use for Colombia with a view to avoiding the mistakes that have already been identified in the fight against these new threats or to adopting the lessons learnt.

Taking this as a reference point, this article shall endeavour to demonstrate that the general trend in the region has essentially been the implementation of policies of a repressive nature and, within this framework, a gradual militarisation of these policies.

With the incorporation of the armed forces into the fight against intra-state violence, the number of missions that they perform has increased. Nor has this state of affairs spared the police. Both institutions have ended up joining forces in the com-

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<sup>1</sup> Peace negotiations began in 2012 when the Dialogue Table was opened. It is this document that launched the discussion that would lead to the signing of the peace accord in Havana, 26/08/2012, <https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/sites/default/files/AcuerdoGeneralTerminacionConflicto.pdf>.

bat against organised crime, through the fight against illegal trafficking that is taking place. These are missions undertaken in addition to those that traditionally fall to them. Consequently, in much of Latin America the armed forces are overburdened with missions and tasked with all different kinds of duties, without having the requisite preparation. In turn, the police also tackle all types of crime and perform duties related to internal security, without being in a position to address all existing needs either. Moreover, this process has encouraged the militarisation of police forces and led to the armed forces taking on missions that would be more suitable for the police.

The result of this trend has been the creation of security forces into which a gargantuan amount of money and human resources have been channelled, yet to little effect. It seems the right time to consider all these issues, or at least to discuss them, since Colombia's 'army of the future' is beginning to be envisaged as a multi-function army, that is to say that the armed institution must become various different types of forces at the same time: one force acting as a deterrent to the outside world, one that fights organised crime and criminal gangs and one that protects natural resources and contributes to national development. Such a profile would exceed the versatility, multi-functionality and scope of action that should characterise a modern military force, since it then runs the risk of deprofessionalisation.

This essay intends to bring an alternative option to the terms of this discussion. The proposal would be to configure specialised forces with the remit for which they were created. The result would see the armed forces ultimately devoted to external security, by means of an indispensable modernisation process that would allow them to act as a dissuasive force in the face of external enemies. Plus, in turn, the police would focus on public security, a need that all citizens are calling for. This clear distinction between their missions would make the security forces more effective, since they would focus their activities on specific missions for which, in addition, they would be adequately prepared.

Between the internal and external threat there is a space of insecurity where the new threats lie, as well as, in particular, organised crime, and everything seems to point to the latter having an increasing presence. In order to tackle this threat and due to its significance and complexity, it is proposed that intermediary forces be created, police with a military status whole profile would make them the most suitable for fighting these types of threats. This proposal necessitates a complex, yet feasible, transformation process, since it could usually be made up of the military and the police following a prior training process.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF SECURITY FORCES

Without a doubt, the efficiency of a security force cannot merely be considered in quantitative terms, the procurement of equipment or the bulk of the budget being earmarked for this field. An increase in resources, equipment or staff does not in itself

bring about results if the force in question is not trained and prepared for the missions assigned to it. This point, despite seeming obvious, has not stopped Latin American governments, for varying reasons, from resorting to the security forces for all types of missions, quite apart from their suitability for carrying these out.

Neither can the transformation challenges that the Colombian security forces face given the new scenario of insecurity be resolved by increasing or reducing troop numbers, equipment or resources, since these do not automatically guarantee optimal performance in the work of these public forces. Recent debate in Colombia seems to have partly surrounded these terms. On the one hand you find those who maintain that faced with this new situation, it is necessary to drastically scale down the armed forces and boost the police. Whilst on the other hand, there are those who defend maintaining the same number of troops that had been deployed to tackle the guerrilla groups.

Nevertheless, the transformation that should be made to the security forces requires a number of extraordinarily complex factors to be looked at. Statements made, a priori about a reduction to armed forces troop numbers and an automatic increase to police ranks, present shortcomings when it comes to combatting the new security scenario. It is not merely a quantitative issue, but also a qualitative one, based not only on having the forces available, but also making sure these are the most appropriate. Therefore, before identifying the need to increase or reduce troop numbers, it is imperative to analyse the forces that are required depending on the threats that exist.

Beyond this aspect, at any rate it must be stated that neither is it sufficient to create a suitable force for a threat, but that this force must also be incorporated into a public security and defence policy under civilian leadership and with specific institutional control measures in place.

### **The transformation of security forces within the framework of a democratic system**

The post-conflict period opens up a period of great hope, albeit one with a great deal of complexity and uncertainty. Securing peace sustainably involves preventing a repeat of the circumstances and situations that breed violence. This means that any reform of security forces cannot be cut off from reality or from the rest of the institutional set-up. For this reason, this reform should occur as part of the so-called Security and Defence Reform (RDS). In this regard, Colombia faces outstanding challenges in this area that are inescapable if it is considering the reform of its armed forces.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> GARCIA PINZON, Viviana. 'Reformas al Sector Seguridad en Contextos de Post-Conflicto Armado: Experiencias en Centroamérica y consideraciones sobre el Caso Colombiano', speech given at FLACSO-ISA Joint International Conference: 'Global and Regional Powers in a Changing World', Buenos Aires, July 2014,

This means that the reform of security forces must take place as part of a broader reform that encompasses the 'security sector' which, according to the OECD, includes central security actors (armed forces, the police and intelligence services); administration and control bodies (ministries of defence, financial administration organisations and citizen oversight committees); judicial and law enforcement institutions and non-state security forces (private security firms, militia and guerrilla groups).<sup>3</sup>

As a result, reform of the security forces does not go far enough if it does not also entail the necessary improvements within this institutional and legal fabric. This includes reforms to relevant ministries and their management capacity, as well as parliamentary and judicial supervision and control mechanisms. However, these changes will not be possible if, in turn, civilian leadership is not assured. The ultimate aim must be that of reinforcing civilian administration and democratic oversight of the security apparatus. It is only through this comprehensive reform that reforms to security forces will have a real effect. In this respect, Colombia has already carried out significant reforms that transcend the challenges that remain.<sup>4</sup>

Security depends on many factors and cannot be reduced to a guarantee of security for the armed forces, without forgetting that these also have to be inserted into the democratic system, just like all other institutions relating to security. Whilst continuing to bear in mind this holistic framework for the transformation of the security forces, a proposal will be made based on the configuration of security forces specialised to combat existing threats.

### The internal conflict and the new security situation

In relation to this issue, the Colombian specificity vis-à-vis the rest of the region, and even large parts of the rest of the world, has been the persistence of the internal conflict. For sixty years and from the moment this internal war broke out, the Colombian security agenda has continued to be set by the fight against guerrillas and, as a result, this threat has determined the missions, doctrine and configuration of its security forces, which have dedicated the majority of their efforts and resources to combating these groups.

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<http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/FLACSO-ISA%20BuenosAires%202014/Archive/6ceo4630-f865-4f27-9746-2e6bbc953154.pdf>

3 OECD (2007). Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR).  
<http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38406485.pdf>

4 SEPULVEDA, Isidro and ALDA MEJIAS, Sonia (eds.). La Administración de la Defensa en América Latina, Madrid: IUGM, 2008, Vols. I, II and III. Out of these volumes, it is recommended that the reader read the first chapter of vol. I and the chapters in the three volumes by Alejo Vargas dedicated to Colombia.

As a consequence, in a very particular way the armed forces have been geared towards missions relating to maintaining domestic public order, giving rise to a blurring of the difference between the functions of the military and the police. When in the eighties the relationship between drug trafficking and the guerrilla groups intensified, the involvement of the armed forces in fighting against serious organised crime exacerbated this particular situation.<sup>5</sup>

Under normal circumstances, the armed forces should be essentially devoted to the defence of national territory and sovereignty, whilst in the case of the police, this force should be dedicated to preventing crime and guaranteeing the co-existence of citizens. However, Colombia has not been able to consider the alternative of separating external and internal security and assigning a particular mission to each force, as has indeed been possible in several neighbouring countries following the transition to democracy. These same needs are what explains the fact the Colombia is today the only country in Latin America where the armed forces and the police both operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence.

The end of internal conflict spells the end of the counter-insurgency war, carried out by security forces, which obliges the Colombian state to work out how to deploy its security forces faced with a new situation that will be one very similar to that in the rest of the region. Nonetheless, one can assume that the intensity of the threats could be greater as it is calculated that between 23 and 26% of demobilised guerrilla fighters could end up in a life of crime, which translates into approximately 6,500 ex-guerrilla fighters who would become the manpower of organised crime and criminal gangs.<sup>6</sup>

As in other countries, given the characteristics that organised crime may acquire, Colombia is considering the need for the armed forces to contribute to fighting this. It would not be the only threat that the armed forces would have to fight since their work relating to national development, environmental protection and natural resources is also being considered. We should not overlook one other important challenge, which is ensuring that the Colombian armed forces act as a deterrent to potential external enemies. This is a vital element since after such a prolonged period of internal conflict, the defensive capacity of this armed institution if subject to attack from the outside world is minimal.

This begs the question as to whether one force may perform all these missions effectively, in accordance with the current backdrop of insecurity and the complexity of existing threats. For the moment, everything seems to indicate that a force dedicating itself to very different missions of very different natures does not deliver much by way

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5 VARGAS, Alejo. *Las Fuerzas Armadas en el conflicto colombiano: antecedentes y perspectivas*, Medellín: Editorial Lealon, 2010, pp, 231-240 and 'Diversos roles de la fuerza pública', *El Colombiano*, 18/072015, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/diversos-roles-de-la-fuerza-publica-BD2342715>.

6 DELGADO, Jairo. 'Una aproximación a los nuevos paradigmas de seguridad pública en el contexto del postconflicto', *Observatorio de Política & Estrategia en América Latina*, July 2014, [http://opeal.net/images/APE\\_posconflicto\\_paradigmas\\_seguridadF.pdf](http://opeal.net/images/APE_posconflicto_paradigmas_seguridadF.pdf).

of results. Taking it to the extreme, it may be said that this type of forces, by dealing with all areas, run the risk of spreading themselves too thinly as they cannot effectively address anything.

What is certain is that if we boil this matter down to practical terms, results have not been of significance either. At this moment in time, the region is one of the most violent in the world and the growing trend of violence and conflict has not ceased.<sup>7</sup> This is despite the efforts made in the political sphere, which have been of a fundamentally repressive nature and which have involved the armed forces in internal security missions.

## THREAT ANALYSIS

If we follow the line of argument presented, we are forced to consider the current international and regional insecurity scenario in order to analyse the possible alternatives for a more effective model for the security forces.

### **A complex period of international insecurity: the simultaneous existence of different threats of a diverse nature**

There is currently no country in the world that is not affected by the new security situation. Thus, consequently, there is no government that has not given thought to the best way to counter new threats. Latin America is no exception. Quite to the contrary, it is a region that has experienced this insecurity with particular intensity and hence this problem is a priority for governments and citizens.

In this situation it is essential to be aware of the threats and their dimension, because this also makes it possible to address them using more analytical and criteria-based tools to identify the forces required to provide the highest level of security in the most effective way possible, in accordance with the current environment.

The complexity of the current reality does not lie so much in tackling a radically new situation, but in the necessary transition. This means that alongside radical changes, significant things remain the same and while the so-called traditional threats continue to exist, new ones have been added to the list and it might be envisaged that these become the principal threats.

The coexistence of old and new threats is what is fuelling debate between specialists about who should be protected. In fact, there are two clearly opposing schools

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7 UNDOC. The Global Study on Homicide, 2013,  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014\\_GLOBAL\\_HOMICIDE\\_BOOK\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf).

of thought. Whilst one defends the basic premises of a central state vision and the military solution as the only possible solution, the other defends a multi-dimensional approach to security that surpasses this traditional vision<sup>8</sup>.

If we adopt the most critical lines of argument, the changes listed above would oblige us to focus security on people and not on states. Consequently, not only does the concept of security then need to acquire a multi-dimensional dimension, but the distinction drawn between internal and external security also becomes less clear-cut.

From this perspective, security cannot be guaranteed with a military solution. In fact, and according to the implications arising from this new security situation, the substitution of the armed forces by other forces may be able to be justified, since they were created to tackle a very different security situation. Indeed, the very *raison d'être* of the armed forces is the protection of states rather than of people. In other words, and remaining consistent with this vision, it can be deduced that the armed forces and the police force would have ultimately become obsolete and it would be necessary to replace them by other forces, or even to undertake such a far-reaching reform to their mission that it would have nothing to do with its original design.

However, the nub of the issue is that in this complex world in transition, it is not possible to do without any of the existing forces, either the armed forces or the police, since the threats that they were originally intended to address continue to exist. In other words, one could argue that some of the interpretations within this debate do not match up with reality, neither with the varying nature of existing threats, since the current outlook is not one of a radically new world, but instead one in which different aspects both change and persist. It is for this reason that a set of forces is required in order to address all these threats, both old and new threats. This makes it essential for the existing forces to remain, i.e. the armed forces and the police, but also for new specialised forces to be created in order to tackle the new threats.

## Threats in Latin America and in Colombia

Latin America is considered to be the most violent region in the world in terms of intrastate conflicts. Nonetheless, as regards interstate conflicts it is known as a peaceful region.

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8 For analysis of the evolution of the concept of security, see LABORIE, Mario. 'La evolución del concepto de Seguridad', IEEE, June 2011, [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_marco/2011/DIEEEM05-2011EvolucionConceptoSeguridad.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2011/DIEEEM05-2011EvolucionConceptoSeguridad.pdf). Another very complete review of the different tendencies with regard to the concept of security would be BARTOLOMÉ, Mariano. 'Una visión de América Latina desde la perspectiva de la agenda internacional contemporánea', *Relaciones Internacionales*, no. 23, June-September 2013, pp. 35-64. By the same author. 'Redefiniendo la seguridad internacional contemporánea', (part I), *Revista Política y Estrategia*, no. 94, 9-26.

*Inter-state conflicts*

Unlike what has occurred in Europe, the coexistence between states in the 20th century has been exemplary albeit not idyllic in Latin America. Compared with the two world wars in Europe, the region hardly fell victim to armed conflicts over the course of the 20th century.<sup>9</sup>

Yet it is indisputable that there have been major tensions, although, until now, presidential diplomacy has prevented potential conflicts from escalating. One example is the crisis between Ecuador and Colombia, which was sparked by the Colombian military operation against the FARC on Ecuadorian territory. This crisis was resolved as part of the 20th Rio Group Summit held in the Dominican Republic in 2008.

Despite the difficulties and tensions that arose, both countries have normalised their relations and are currently developing cross-border cooperation programmes.

The unlikely possibility of a clash between Latin American countries, despite the numerous border disputes that exist, has not led any government to dissolve their armed forces. At any rate, whether or not these types of conflicts arise, it is not this factor that warrants the existence of national armies but instead the fact that nation states remain in place.<sup>10</sup> In fact, there is a pro-sovereignty culture that bears an extraordinary weight in the region and that for the moment stops it from envisaging other forms of supranational organisation, whether this be social, political or economic. This concept of nation in itself justifies the existence of armies, since it goes hand in hand with the possibility that its integrity be violated by another.<sup>11</sup>

In the Colombian case, the need to have a credible deterrent and specialisation of the armed forces in external defence would be particularly justified, once the internal conflict has been overcome. Over and above border disputes with its neighbouring countries, defending the country's sovereignty is the primary mission of the armed forces recognised in the current constitution. As a result, the existence of the armed forces is more than justified, both in Latin America and Colombia more specifically.

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9 The most recent would be the 'Football War' between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969, which lasted 6 days, or the la Cenepa War, between Ecuador and Peru in 1995, which lasted five weeks.

10 ALDA, Sonia. 'América Latina, un territorio de paz ¿con aspiraciones a llegar a ser un actor global?', in Sonia ALDA and Susana FERREIRA. *La Multidimensionalidad de la Seguridad Nacional: Retos y desafíos de la región para su implantación*, Madrid: IUGM-SEDENA, 2015.

11 This premise does not imply alignment with the narrowest of theses that equip state security with the idea of defence and limit it to the deployment of armed forces. It is about recourse to a combination of economic and diplomatic instruments, as part of a multidimensional security concept, but despite this it does not eschew the use of military force. The consideration of these elements corresponds to the three 'Ds' of security, Defence, Diplomacy and Development. For analysis of this concept see GARCIA SANCHEZ, Ignacio. 'La Primera Revisión Estratégica Cuatrienal de la Diplomacia y el Desarrollo de los Estados Unidos de América: 'Leading Through Civilian Power'', IEEE Analysis Document 20/2010, 23/12/2010, [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2010/DIEEEA20\\_2010LaQDDR\\_deEEUU.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2010/DIEEEA20_2010LaQDDR_deEEUU.pdf).

*Intra-state conflicts: common and organised crime*

In the intra-state sphere, the role of the police is as equally essential, since public security is a fundamental problem for national, regional and local governments in Latin American countries. Crime is perceived by citizens as their main security concern. In fact, this type of crime feeds into the high levels of violence that the population endures. This concern and the real issue of public security is also what warrants the role of the police, which is also Impossible to dispense with.

Moreover, within the intra-state context lie the so-called new threats, although these may have a field of action that transcends borders. This type of crime is a real concern within the region and has been classified as a new threat or an intermediate threat and framed within the so-called Grey Area Phenomena (GAP) as a threat to the stability of the sovereignty of countries arising from non-state actors who pursue objectives of an economic nature.<sup>12</sup>

The main avenue used by these actors to gain a foothold and amass power and influence is the corruption of public and private institutions and its filtration down to society until they manage to take control of large swathes of the country, both in urban and rural areas. The ways in which they act are not always violent, but violence remains an important instrument for carrying out their activities, essentially illicit smuggling, and more specifically, drugs trafficking. This violence is committed against the state or against their competitors, but at the end of the day it does not only affect the latter two, but also citizens, as these actors operate in rural areas or in the centres of the large capitals.<sup>13</sup>

Levels of violence and the fatality rates vary greatly and in some cases are extreme. There exist cartels and criminal gangs that are very well organised and armed and which, despite not constituting an army, can neither be defined as common criminals. One cannot speak of a civil war (despite the levels of violence and the number of victims claimed); nor, of course, can this be described as a situation of normality. All in all, it is a situation of neither peace nor war, but instead is a grey area.

For a threat with these characteristics, the armed forces are a very cumbersome force and the police a very agile one. Hence the proposal is to configure a specialised and proportionate force. In Latin America, in general, as well as in Colombia, in particular, the new scale of this threat justifies this particular configuration of a force that by its nature, status, doctrine and operational profile would be more suitable to tackling this kind of threat.

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12 MAKARENKO, Tamara. 'Terrorism, and Transnational Crime. Tracing the crime Terror-Nexus in South-east Asia', in SMITH, Paul, J. (Ed.). *Terrorism and violence in South East Asia. Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability*, New York, 2005, pp. 169-187.

13 ALDA MEJÍAS, Sonia. 'La debilidad del imperio de la ley en América Latina: un factor para entender la implantación del crimen organizado', *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, no. 37, March 2015, <http://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/recp/article/view/37649>.

It must, however, be stressed that disposing of forces with resources, equipment and fighting potential does not mean that they are suitable for fighting against all existing threats.

## SECURITY FORCES AVAILABLE AND REQUIRED

The configuration of a new force does not diminish the importance of existing forces. As has already been stated, it is necessary to maintain the continuity of the armed forces. This does not mean, however, that provision should not be made for in-depth reforms that are geared towards their modernisation in order to further consolidate their strength in terms of troop numbers, their use of advanced technologies and their capacity for rapid mobilisation.

In Latin America, except from some exceptional cases such as the Chilean one, these modernisation processes have been lagging behind since the priority has been to deploy the armed forces for very different types of missions. The current trend, therefore, would not be one whereby forces are specialised, but instead indiscriminate recourse to all those that are available with a view to dealing with very different threats.

### Armed forces and the police involved in the fight against new threats

The generalisation of policies that involve the armed forces in tasks that up until now have been viewed to be part of internal security has given rise to an important academic and political debate at regional level about the missions that should be allocated to these forces. There are whole swathes who defend the idea that the armed forces should be incorporated into internal security as they consider the dimension of the threat to necessitate such an approach, particularly when a competent police force to guarantee such security is believed to be lacking.

Confronted with this argument, those of the opposite view would like to see a reinforcement of the role of the police in order to avoid the risk of the militarisation of internal security. In other words, they would still continue to be necessary for tackling problems such as common crime, but not necessarily for all those threats arising in the intra-state sphere, such as organised crime. Repeated attempts to 'reinforce' police forces by adding directorate generals and different subdivisions with a view to combatting all different types of crime, both common and organised and that affecting public order and public security, have not led to positive results.

We once again refer to the new world in the transition that is underway, characterised by the different security needs that require that the different forces act and be specialised in the tasks for which they are better prepared.

*Military participation in tackling intra-state conflicts*

Security policies exhibit similarities across the entire region, since, with the exception of the Southern Cone, all governments in Central America, the Andes and Brazil have resorted to repressive and punitive policies within the armed forces framework in order to combat drugs trafficking and/or to protect their citizens.

These common traits can be observed even between governments of very different ideological persuasions. For that matter, there is not much of a difference between either right-wing governments or those to the left, whether moderate or more extreme, in terms of their security policies. In this regard, the push for fast and visible solutions, the failures of police forces and the collapse of the judiciary and penitential system have forced the majority of regional governments to develop this type of policies beyond their political spectrum.

In Mexico, as in the rest of Central America, the armed forces play a decisive role and have been fighting a war against drug trafficking since 2006. Since the 1990s in Central America, military participation in all problems relating to security has been on the rise with a backdrop of policies that are essentially of a repressive nature<sup>14</sup>.

In the Andean region, the armed forces are also tasked with fighting against drug trafficking. More recently they have seen their remit extended to include public security matters and have conducted patrols together with the police. In Ecuador, the military has been carrying out civilian patrol tasks since 2010 and, at the moment, the intention is to legalise this type of missions for the military by means of the reform of the Public and State Security Act. In this way the armed forces may support the police in their internal protection work and work to maintain and control public order and security.<sup>15</sup> In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro's government has continued the militarisation of security undertaken by his predecessor Hugo Chávez via the Plan Patria Segura (Secure Homeland Plan).<sup>16</sup> In Bolivia too, the military, dedicated to combatting drug trafficking, has been incorporated into the police in order to tackle public insecurity in the country's major cities.<sup>17</sup> The case of Peru is a rather exceptional one since, to

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14 ALDA MEJÍAS, Sonia. 'Políticas y fuerzas de seguridad alternativas ante los retos de la seguridad latinoamericana', in A. BONILLA (dir.). *Retos ante la criminalidad y la violencia en América Latina*, Secretary General of FLACSO-Costa Rica, San José, 2013, <http://www.flacso.org/sites/default/files/Documentos/libros/secretaria-general/Desaf%EDos%20estrat%E9gicos%20CELAC.pdf>.

15 PACHANO, Simon. 'Seguridad', *Infolatam*, 19/05/2014, <http://www.infolatam.com/2014/05/19/seguridad/>.

16 'Activado plan Patria Segura con 3 mil miembros de la FANB', May 2013, [http://argentina.emba-jada.gob.ve/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2195%3AActivado-plan-patria-segura-con-3-mil-miembros-de-la-fanb&catid=4%3Anoticias-de-venezuela-en-el-mundo&Itemid=39&lang=en](http://argentina.emba-jada.gob.ve/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2195%3AActivado-plan-patria-segura-con-3-mil-miembros-de-la-fanb&catid=4%3Anoticias-de-venezuela-en-el-mundo&Itemid=39&lang=en), may/2013; 'Resaltan logros del Plan Patria Segura en Venezuela'. *Gramma*, 13/05/14, <http://www.gramma.cu/mundo/2014-05-13/resaltan-logros-del-plan-patria-segura-en-venezuela>.

17 In 2012, the armed forces patrolled different cities for the first time, <http://www.la-razon.com/>

start off with, the armed forces were fighting the terrorist group the Shining Path and in certain areas they also supported the police as it tackled drugs trafficking, despite the fact that, unlike its neighbouring countries, they do not carry out tasks relating to public security, although there is a great deal of pressure from politics and from the population to do so. As part of the current election period, candidates such as former presidents Alan García and Alejandro Toledo have already announced this proposal in 2015.<sup>18</sup>

The Brazilian armed forces have combated insecurity and drug trafficking, however, the trend has been to restrict military tasks to national defence. With this purpose in mind, the police force has been boosted with a view to reducing the deployment of the armed forces for the fight against urban crime. However, they have been involved in the security provided for the Football World Cup.<sup>19</sup>

Within this trend the exceptions would be Chile, Argentina and Uruguay<sup>20</sup>. In these countries, the armed forces have maintained their specialisation as forces dedicated to external defence. The most striking example would be that of Chile, whose army has undergone a particularly noteworthy process of modernisation and specialisation as regards its external defence.

In addition to missions to tackle drug trafficking and/or civil insecurity, as has been envisaged in the majority of the countries of the region, the armed forces of the very same countries accumulate further missions of a very different nature. This means that apart from defending against an external enemy, they are also engaged in tasks relating to national development, since they are involved in reacting to natural disasters and in the protection of natural resources as well as carrying out duties designated as police support in order to combat different kinds of crime, from lesser crimes to organised crime.

### *Armed forces and police limitations in the fight against new threats*

An insistence on these types of policy essentially leads to very limited results, as has already been observed over the years. Understandably, given the existing context of insecurity, it puts a citizen's mind at ease to see the military patrolling in cities or fighting organised crime. Nevertheless, as professional as these forces may well be, they are not

index.php?\_url=/ciudades/seguridad\_ciudadana/militares-patrullan-ciudades\_o\_1579042106.html.

18 'Seguridad ciudadana en Perú', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnu8YkD6ulw>.

19 'Activan en Brasil esquema de seguridad para el Mundial de Futbol', El 19, 23/05/2014. <http://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:18646-activan-en-brasil-esquema-de-seguridad-para-mundial-de-futbol>, <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/article1920261.html>. Consulted on 2/10/2014

20 Although in the case of the latter country, the armed forces have been involved in the supervision of marijuana production after its legalisation. 'Las Fuerzas Armadas de Uruguay vigilarán la producción de marihuana', ABC, 14/03/2014, <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20140314/abci-marihuana-ejercito-uruguay-201403131749.html>.

prepared nor equipped to perform these types of missions. Even the police, on many occasions, is not in a position to tackle organised crime due to the resources that this requires, the number of police officers required and the level of specialised training that these would have to have.

In order to tackle this type of crime, prevention, investigation and prosecution work is essential, which are aspects, however, lacking within the armed forces. Their structure, organisation and training are not the most appropriate for performing these tasks. The armed forces are trained and organised with a view to destroying an enemy by means of the use of extreme force. By way of contrast, the mission of the police is based on the protection of citizens' rights, the guarantee of an effective climate of public security and respect for the law by all members of society. Its main instrument is not that of force, but instead its capacity to mediate and to negotiate in the event of potential conflicts.

All this has a direct repercussion on the type of relationship that both institutions maintain with society. The armed forces must remain billeted in barracks and therefore find themselves on the margins of society. However, the police's very milieu is meeting and dealing with the civilian population. These differences afford each a completely different legal framework and capacity to act, since on the one hand the aim is to bring down an enemy of the state and on the other hand it is to prevent, or as a last resort, to arrest a criminal.

### Consequences arising from the multi-functional use of the armed forces

Moreover, the implications arising from the fight against these new threats must certainly be borne in mind since they may contribute to the deprofessionalisation and affect the identity of the military institution. Likewise, the lack of training within the armed forces for the performance of policing tasks may give rise to human rights violations on their part.<sup>21</sup>

Another risk that arises as a result of contact with the criminal world is corruption. There have been various cases of this reported among the armed forces of Mexico, Colombia and Peru. Last but not least, we should not overlook the lack of legal protection afforded to the military as they perform police missions. This may allow for official complaints and criminal convictions for which the military cannot avail themselves of legal defence as they carry out these functions.

Alongside these potential complications, it should be borne in mind that the in-

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21 GRAY, Colins. 'The 21st Century Environment and the Future of War', *Parameters*, 2005, 38, pp. 14-26. <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/o8winter/gray.pdf> and HARRIS, Geoff. 'The Military as a Resource for Peace Building: Time for Reconsideration?', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 2006, 6, pp. 241-52.

volvement of the armed forces in internal security may contribute to impeding the civil management of defence, one of the challenges that still lingers in Latin American democracies.<sup>22</sup> In such a situation, when the civil oversight and leadership process has not concluded, an excess of missions in the domestic sphere may encourage the militarisation of internal security and the consolidation or extension of military autonomy both in terms of its institutions and function.<sup>23</sup> If we add to this the lack of control as part of the performance of these missions and the legal lacunas that exist, there are additional factors that may consolidate this autonomy and influence and exacerbate the problem of the political leadership of the armed forces and institutional weakness within the dynamics of a vicious circle.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, everything seems to indicate that an increase in staffing, lethality and the main line of approach of the policies of a repressive nature that have widely been applied in the region will not resolve security problems, but instead may also have implications for the checks and balances that all institutions subject to democratic parameters must be subject to.

In accordance with all these arguments, critics of the militarisation of internal security believe the police to be the institution best placed to tackle the current problem of crime in the region. However, the police has fallen into extreme disrepute and requires significant reforms. At any rate, even if this major hurdle is overcome, the existence of professional police forces that act in accordance with the law is not enough to tackle the specific form of organised crime present in the region.

## ALTERNATIVE FORCES: POLICE WITH A MILITARY STATUS

Hitherto, the case for the specialisation of the security forces has been made. The proposal is based on capacity-building within the forces so that they are able to adapt, albeit without going so far as them losing their very nature.

Whilst recognising the need for forces for external defence or public security, the proposal is to assign the armed forces and the police to these missions, respectively, given that they are both vital areas for any state at this moment in time. One area that remains to be addressed is that of new threats, an area of insecurity that is likely to be the major cause of concern within the field of security in coming years. Within this

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22 ALDA, Sonia and SEPULVEDA, Isidro (eds.). *La administración de la Defensa en América Latina*, Madrid: Instituto Universitario General Gutierrez Mellado, 2008, t. I, II and III.

23 STEVENSON, Jonathan. 'Demilitarising the 'War of Terror'', *Survival*, 2006, 48, pp. 37-54. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396330600765443> and ALDA, Sonia. 'La participación militar en el combate de la violencia criminal'.

24 RASMUSEN, Maria. 'The Military Role in Internal Defense and Security: Some Problems'. CCMR Occasional Paper , No. 6, 1999, Monterrey: Naval Postgraduate School.

area of insecurity exists what we have called a 'grey area' where the police and military have converged, yet, as has been demonstrated, neither of these forces seem to be the most appropriate to combat this type of threats.

Depending on its particular configuration, and following an attempt to identify the limitations of both forces when it comes to fighting this type of threats, the proposal made by this article, based on the need for the specialisation of forces, is the creation of police forces with a military status, such as those that already exist in Europe and other countries in Latin America. In addition to fighting organised crime, these police forces, which were created in the 19th Century, also control traffic and carry out community policing duties.

The proposal in question intends to create police forces that take on a dual nature (civilian/military) and whose doctrine, capabilities and operational configuration, as robust forces, would focus their activity on fighting organised crime. This type of police would be equipped to tackle challenges that require a stronger response than one that could be provided by conventional civil police forces, but one less onerous than a military one. This is what makes these police forces particularly suitable for environments of insecurity described as 'security gaps', as the European Gendarmerie Force believes.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, whilst the essential reference points are the Spanish Guardia Civil, the French and Argentinian gendarmerie and the Italian and Chilean carabinieri, the idea is that the level of specialisation in these new police forces is greater, with a view to primarily focusing on fighting illegal smuggling activities carried out as part of organised crime.

A police force with a dual nature (civilian and military) encompasses the elements essential for effectively fighting against this type of threat, since it is able to combine intelligence capacity with powerful force projection, as is the case with the Guardia Civil in Spain.<sup>26</sup> Its versatility and flexibility allows it to act both as part of international missions and local ones; to be incorporated into organisations that are either military or purely civilian, as well as intelligence activities, such as the fight against terrorism or organised crime.<sup>27</sup>

All of the above not only transforms it into a prime instrument for tackling the emerging threats that arise within the new strategic environment, but also the cornerstone upon which to build the framework required for cooperation between the armed forces and security forces.<sup>28</sup>

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25 'European Gendarmerie Force', <http://www.eurogendfor.org/espa-ol/biblioteca/zona-de-descargas/libro-de-la-eurogendfor>, p. 42.

26 COSIDO, Ignacio. *La Guardia Civil más allá del año 2000*, Madrid: Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales, 2000, pp. 210 and ff.

27 For more on this proposal see ALDA MEJIAS, Sonia, 'La adaptación de las fuerzas de seguridad ante la violencia y el crimen organizado en América Latina', E. IGLESIAS (coord.). *Cooperación con Iberoamérica en materia de Defensa*, Strategy Paper, no. 171, IEEE-IUGM, 2014, [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/Cuaderno\\_Estrategia\\_171.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/Cuaderno_Estrategia_171.pdf).

28 COSIDO, Ignacio. *La Guardia Civil más allá del año 2000*, p. 213; LOPEZ, Santiago. 'Bases para el establecimiento de un nuevo modelo policial', *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil*, 21, p. 18.

## SPECIALISED SECURITY FORCES FOR COLOMBIA

At this moment in time, when Colombia has the possibility to rethink the configuration of its armed forces, it is also able to seize the opportunity to overcome the restraints that the region has seen until now with a view to combatting the current scenario of insecurity.

The adoption of an alternative model in Colombia would allow the country to become a point of reference for security not just at regional level but also international level. The specialised reconfiguration of the armed forces and the police and the creation of this intermediary force, dedicated to intermediary threats, would be the response that best matches the complexity of a world in which various different threats coexist, both traditional and new threats.

All sectors are fully aware of the need to undertake this task and the efforts of the executive and the armed forces themselves have focused on this accordingly. In fact, for President Santos, this process has already begun.

‘The transformation of the military forces and the Colombian police is not a distant goal but instead a reality. The future of our armed forces has already begun... our armed forces have stepped and are stepping up to the challenge of working on their transformation and designing their future’.<sup>29</sup>

It is certainly true that the armed forces have already been working on this process for some time. Since 2009, as Minister of Defence, President Santos began to work on this process of change in order to create the ‘army of the future’, in a three-stage process that would conclude in 2030.

### The proposal for a multi-function army

Colombia will opt for a multi-mission army,<sup>30</sup> which in terms of debate translates into armed forces that perform different tasks in the fields of internal and external security, national development and the protection of natural resources. A very similar

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29 [http://wsp.presidencia.gov.co/Prensa/2013/Agosto/Paginas/20130822\\_02-El-futuro-de-nuestra-Fuerza-Publica-ya-comenzo-Presidente-Santos.aspx](http://wsp.presidencia.gov.co/Prensa/2013/Agosto/Paginas/20130822_02-El-futuro-de-nuestra-Fuerza-Publica-ya-comenzo-Presidente-Santos.aspx).

30 CIRO GÓMEZ, A. R. and CORREA HENAO, M. ‘Transformación estructural del Ejército colombiano. Construcción de escenarios futuros’, *Revista Científica Gen. José María Córdova* 12, 20014 (13), 19-88 and ZULUAGA RAMIREZ, Sergio Paulo. ‘Impacto del actual proceso de paz y eventual postconflicto en el ejército nacional de Colombia. Evaluación y formulación de estrategias de transformación hacia un ejército multimisión y autosostenible’, Nueva Granada Military University, <http://repository.unimilitar.edu.co/bitstream/10654/13912/2/TRABAJO%20DE%20GRADO%20SERGIO%20ZULUAGA%20-%20Tipo%20articulo.pdf>.

model has been developed in the rest of the region. This decision is of major importance and it is thus worth reflecting upon the missions that would fall within the remit of this force model. In other words, it seems advisable to bear in mind the 'elasticity' limits envisaged for such an armed forces model.

It is certainly true that from this perspective, more and more missions have been added to the list, and in this regard the declarations made by the former Minister of Defence, Carlos Pinzón, as he revealed this option, are very significant. According to Minister Pinzón:

'The armed forces of Colombia have a duty to continue, tirelessly, to pursue terrorism, crime or anybody who has broken the law. Yet, at the same time, they have the possibility to begin now to start designing a future for any scenario, a future wherein, with a backdrop of peace –which would either be achieved by reasoning or by force–, they may guarantee stability, development and Colombia's contribution to the rest of the world of peace and global stability'.

It is obvious that in addition to preparation for external defence and international cooperation, there are many more missions that the Colombian armed forces must undertake:

'Today we can say that there are many tasks that we can already visualise for the armed forces. For example, guaranteeing territorial sovereignty on the ground, in rivers, on the sea, in the air. Protecting environmental resources and the hydro potential that Colombia has and, of course, the potential wealth of minerals and mining-energy capacity that the nation possesses'.

Alongside this, in the future the armed forces will have to deal with natural disasters, without forgetting their contribution towards 'promoting development by means of infrastructure projects carried out by military engineers'.<sup>31</sup>

There are many opinions advocating the multi-mission configuration of the armed forces.<sup>32</sup> A large proportion of the arguments are based on the use of available equipment and experience. However, not all the human or material resources available will necessarily be the most appropriate for performing any mission. It must be added that with regard to the Colombian army, no one can cast any doubt on it being the best-placed army in the world to combat the counterinsurgency. However, notwithstanding the significance of this experience and the value that this represents, it cannot

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31 'Fuerzas Armadas trabajan en su transformación ante el proceso de paz', 31/10/2012. <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/noticias/fuerzas-armadas-trabajan-su-transformacion-por-proceso-paz>,

32 CASTAÑO, Cesa. 'Fuerzas militares y postconflicto', *El Espectador*, 02/08/2015, <http://www.elspectador.com/opinion/fuerzas-militares-y-posconflicto-columna-542840>; ERASO AGUDELO, David. 'El papel social del militar en el postconflicto colombiano', argumentative essay, Nueva Granada Military University, 2012, p. 24, <http://repository.unimilitar.edu.co/bitstream/10654/6749/1/ErasoAgudeloDavidCamilo2012.pdf>; COLON, Rafael Alfredo. 'La transición y los militares del postconflicto', 08/09/2015, <http://www.las2orillas.co/la-transicion-y-los-militares-del-posconflicto/>.

necessarily be deployed for all the new missions that it would need to carry out. Similarly, for instance, some former guerrillas who end up in the world of organised crime will behave like criminals and not like combatants. Therefore, in order to tackle this, the counter-insurgency strategy will no longer be valid, but instead forms of police prevention and prosecution, as well as criminal investigation that has nothing to do with that strategy.

Faced with an overburdening the armed forces with missions within the field of internal security, several specialists propose that the police be reinforced. This alternative proposal is really not all that different, as it follows the same logic of overloading it with missions. This proposal aims to cover all security needs, both those of public security and organised crime, through the police force.<sup>33</sup> This would certainly avoid the problem of the militarisation of these areas of security, nevertheless, the question remains as to whether a ‘macro police force’ will be able to perform all its duties efficiently and effectively as it accumulates a multitude of missions.

One interesting proposal is organising the national police ‘depending on the type of activity or crime to be prevented or combatted’.<sup>34</sup> Functions relating to surveillance, control of public order and combatting organised crime must be separated.<sup>35</sup> This is, without a doubt, the best form of institutional organisation, although perhaps an insufficient one. The evolution and the complexity acquired by criminal gangs and organised crime should not be lost from sight. This ‘grey area’ of insecurity is not going to stop growing and that is the reason why it cannot be addressed by the creation of new units, within the police forces, which do not always possess the most appropriate capacities,<sup>36</sup> but why it would also necessitate autonomous police forces that were specialised in such threats.<sup>37</sup>

33 CARVAJAL, M. C. ‘La Policía Nacional en el postconflicto’, *Criminalidad* (47), 2004, 28-48,

34 MANRIQUE ZULUAGA, Viviana. ‘Después de la Habana: Un postconflicto relativo y armado’, *Observatory of Illicit Drugs and Weapons Paper* May 2013, <http://www.urosario.edu.co/cpg-ri/observatorio-ODA/Documentos/Conversatorio-policia-postconflicto-23-05-13.pdf>.

35 VARGAS, Alejo. ‘De una policía militarizada a una policía civil: el desafío colombiano en el postconflicto armado’, *Ciencia Política* (1), (2006 January-June), 179-212.

36 These would be cases such as the Mexican Gendarmerie or the TIGRES military police in Honduras. ALDA, Sonia. ‘Propuestas sobre seguridad y fuerzas públicas en Honduras: ¿Un futuro sin violencia?’, *Opinion Paper*, IEEE, 124/2012. 17/12/2012. [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2013/DIEEE0124-2013\\_Seguridad\\_FuerzasPublicas\\_Honduras\\_SoniaAlda.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2013/DIEEE0124-2013_Seguridad_FuerzasPublicas_Honduras_SoniaAlda.pdf) and ALDA, Sonia. ‘La Gendarmería en México: un proyecto frustrado pese a ser un eficaz instrumento contra el crimen organizado’, *Real Instituto Elcano Commentary*, No. 62/2013 - 16/10/2013, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/comentario-alda-reforma-gendarmeria-mexico-crimen-organizado](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/comentario-alda-reforma-gendarmeria-mexico-crimen-organizado).

37 For further information on intermediary forces in Colombia see, VELASQUEZ, Carlos Alfonso. ‘La fuerza pública que requiere el postconflicto’, working paper, 13,

<http://cdn.ideaspaz.org/media/website/document/5547dc7eef110.pdf>. Another proposal on the configuration of a third force is found in RODRIGUEZ CAMACHO, David, A. ‘La gendarmería como respuesta a los restos de

The debate is open, there is no doubt as to the importance of the issue and it is one that must be addressed. It is worth bearing in mind the international elements of the discussion, as well as the results achieved with this forces model in the region and the implications and long-term evolution that this may spell for the armed forces themselves.

## CONCLUSIONS

Colombia finds itself in an extremely complex security situation. Its forces have to face different insecurity scenarios, before an end to the conflict is even reached, since, in addition to guerrilla groups, drug trafficking, criminal gangs (Bacrim), common crime and illegal logging or mining have been worrying security problems for some time now. However, if we look beyond this issue, once the end of the internal conflict has been concluded and finalised, the police force would be able to focus a large proportion of its efforts on fighting organised crime. In this context, the specialisation of the armed forces could be the alternative adopted in order to conduct the necessary forces reconfiguration process that will need to be carried out.

The aforementioned debate as to whether it must be the armed forces or the police who combat threats does not necessarily match up with the real security needs that stem from the current situation. It is not a question of an exclusive either/or, but instead one of using the force appropriate to the type of threat. Therefore, as far as the new threats and their specific natures are concerned, thought may be given to having different forces to the armed forces and the police in order to respond in the most efficient way possible.

The proposal that emerges from such a standpoint is one of empowering police forces with a military status, so that they are understood to be intermediate forces. With such a force, it is also possible to avoid the disadvantages and limitations that arise from having to resort to the armed forces and the police for this area of activity.

Otherwise the overloading of missions would be detrimental to the forces themselves and, consequently, to their potential to combat insecurity. Allocating a multitude of missions of a very varied nature could lead to their deprofessionalisation. The main impact is that they would no longer be efficiently performing their primary mission and, what is more, they would not effectively carry out tasks for which they are not prepared. In fact, the existence of this third force would allow the police to dedicate itself to public security and for the armed forces to be dedicated to international cooperation, a field into which Colombia can channel all the experience it has accumulated.

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