

In/security in Colombia: Peace and War at the Crossroads*

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Abstract

How do security policies and practices inform our imaginaries of peace and war? How do these imaginaries play a role in the way we envisage possible solutions to the armed conflict? How to draw insights from these findings in order to help shape public policies as to delegitimize the use of violence and create conditions for peaceful conflict transformation? These questions drive the research on the security problem in the Colombian setting. In particular, this paper discusses the official Democratic Security Policy (DSP) and examines how it delimits politics, the political, and the imaginaries of peace and war by conditioning the possibilities for identity formation. By investigating micro-practices of power constitutive of President Uribe's DSP, I argue that the promise of security ultimately feeds the violence it intends to halt. By exploring peaceful resistance discourses, this paper also reflects how the constitution of political identities is a negotiated process in which official definitions of peace and security are contested. This paper so draws a framework in which several notions of peace and security are sketched in the Colombian context by state and non-state actors, opening the door for a dialogue between state entities and civil society organizations.

Introduction

Since the launching of the US-led global war on terror, the prolonged violent conflict in Colombia, which now has persisted for over five decades, has gained global attention as an example of the pervasiveness of globalised terrorism as well as of the danger of 'failed

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states'. In addition to serving as a vaguely defined example of the evils of terrorism, the situation of violence has been analysed from several perspectives that define it in multiple ways: armed groups struggling to take over power, a low intensity armed conflict are amongst the most common interpretations and, perhaps most famously, Mary Kaldor's use of Colombia as a quintessential 'new war' has gained widespread appeal among both policy elites and academics.

Thus far, political analysts and academics, as well as politicians, have scarcely considered the role that security policies play in the continuation and legitimation of state and non-state violence, nor have they paid enough attention to what security practices do to identity in the Colombian context. This paper offers such perspective. This research interrogates the self-evident goodness of security. It is a way not of asking what has to be secured to secure security. Instead, I ask what has to be foreclosed, expelled from the public sphere, erased and taken for granted to offer the promise of security (Dillon, 1996). This is the reason why the term 'security' appears as 'in/security' throughout the text.¹

My focus of attention is the Democratic Security Policy (DSP), officially launched in 2003² with the promise of recovering state authority, of bringing back security to all Colombians waiting for the birth of peace. I claim that the current Colombian security policy delimits politics, the political, and the conditions of possibility for identity formation. This research shows that the promise of in/security written into the DSP ultimately feeds the violence it pledges to halt.

Because the DSP aims to control the political and physical lives of the population, its primary state aim has been disseminated among members of society in such a way that 'everybody's responsibility' is to achieve security. The DSP is an in/security discourse that makes complementary the *dispositif* of biopolitical and geopolitical security (Dillon, 2007). The effects of the DSP have extended beyond conventional warfare strategies to combat narco-terrorism and have entered the political realm of institutional and informal politics, washing away dissent, debate and criticism of violence and state policies. This has been achieved, in part, by producing subject categories for a new type of 'good Colombian'.

In this war against terror, 'good Colombians' are part of the army of 'good people' who fight the 'terrorists'. Citizens offer the transparency of their apolitical ways of life (Vattimo, 1992) to the government and the army, share their data and communicate constantly among themselves through networks of informants. Those in rural areas and from lower socio-economic classes are sent to the barricades to bolster the national army. As is common, the poorer sacrifice their lives for the continuation of the nation. The realm of state actions performed in the name of national security is enlarged and so the state enjoys less public scrutiny (Jabri, 2006). Its actions are sheltered in secrecy under the label 'security issues' (Wæver, 1995), and democratic debate about state actions is suspended. Society turns transparent and the government more opaque (Vattimo, 1992).

I focus on how the DSP is brought to life by the government and how it informs state and non-state actions, establishing the foundations that authorise certain subjects and their ways of interacting politically, and, at the same time, de-authorises others. My primary concern is the violence generated and legitimised by the identity categories that the DSP constructs for the state itself, 'nationals' and 'others' which, just like all identity categories, are not 'merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary' (Butler, 1995: 50).

Hence, at the heart of this particular interrogation about the state in/security discourse in Colombia, the question of identity is paramount. The critique of the DSP here offered is directed at drawing attention to the kinds of assumptions and unchallenged ways of thinking upon which our accepted security practices rest. The present paper questions that security signifies a state or a process that is 'right, good and beautiful' (Wæver, 1995; 2004). On the contrary, this examination is driven by the distrust in the balm that legitimises the violence security brings about for freezing possibilities of becoming subjects that exceed the fixed positions informed by security concerns.

By exploring the resistance discourses of the peace programme of the Province of Antioquia and the indigenous group Paeces del Cauca, this paper also reflects discourses that have been provoked by the state security policy. This last move shows how the

constitution of political identities, as they are written in the Colombian security policy, is a much-negotiated process in which the very definition of peace and security is contested.

Structure overview

I approach this investigation by first contextualising the Democratic Security Policy (DSP) and then identifying the discursive formations that the DSP creates for political categories: 'state', 'nationals' and 'others'. Since the DSP is a state security discourse that mobilises manifold resources, from political and symbolic imaginaries to large amounts of money, arms and bodies, the ideal categories devised in the DSP have clear material effects in the form of specific state and non-state actions. Among these, we find the creation of peasant soldiers' battalions, the establishment of large networks of informants and the demobilisation of former paramilitary groups. This materiality hails subjects into place; it summons people to adopt the necessary gestures and expressions that allow distinguishing 'who belongs' or does not belong to the 'good nationals'.

Furthermore, identity seems to be a constant process of negotiation of several (and often contradictory) subject positions that defy a perfectly articulated subject (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 1999; Hall, 1996; Stern, 2005). In a permanent negotiation, the subject never finds a proper fit into the ideal categories of identity she is supposed to occupy. Whether the issue is nationality, gender, class or ethnicity, the subject strives for an impossible completion and full representation of herself in the identity pictures depicted in discourse (Stern, 2005). Subjectivity seems to spill over, there is always too much or too little (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 1999). Thus the process of identification becomes an imperfect articulation between, on the one hand, the discourses that speak (to) 'us' and, on the other, the investment or resistance of the subject to occupy the positions designed for her in discourse (Hall, 1996; Stern, 2005).

According to this line of thinking, the mere production of identity categories does not necessarily imply that the subjects in question enact such constructions without

hesitation. Therefore, it becomes necessary to explore some responses that contest the official definitions of their subjectivities. The resistance discourses of the nonviolent programme of the Province of Antioquia and the discourse of the indigenous group Paeces del Cauca offer a spectrum of diverse and contradictory reactions to the DSP. Though this interrogation cannot provide a complete picture of the process of identification borne out of the DSP, it sheds some light on the workings that legitimise sacrificing lives and political liberties in Colombia today for a promise of a bright and secure future when the terrorist threat is mastered.

In the face of such an impossibility of achieving security, a call is made for the acceptance of uncertainty, insecurity, vulnerability and fragility. Only by recognising that it is precisely insecurity and uncertainty which make us free, to paraphrase Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1998; Dillon, 1996), can I imagine a way of becoming insecure, of dealing with differences without attempting to turn 'them' into 'one of us' (Dietrich and Sützl, 2006), without exercising violence to counterbalance violence. Accepting the impossibility to know in advance 'who' 'we' might become allows 'us' too to be something different than 'nationals' who fulfil their security duties, who shut up in the face of violence and conform to security measures that legitimise violence against the traces of the strangers in 'us' and try to erase the traces of our connectedness to 'others'. In short, I argue that opening up the possibilities to become something/somebody different necessarily implies living insecurely and, hopefully, it implies enjoying the possibility for imagining political options that stop the political violence that the DSP reinforces.

In order to develop these arguments, this presentation is structured as follows. First, it reviews the security policy of the Colombian government, pointing at how the naming of terrorism constructs identity categories for 'us' and 'them'. Then by examining the practices of networks of informants, peasant soldiers and the demobilization process in Medellín, Colombia this paper problematises a univocal definition of peace and security. By looking at two particular resistance discourses in Antioquia and by the Paeces

del Cauca, it shows that resistance from state and non-state organizations have the ability to rethink peace away from the secure grounds of the DSP.

Conceptual framework: Security and Identity

What is implied in this proposal is, on the one hand, that security discourses are crucial for the construction of identity categories and, on the other hand, that identity is a much negotiated process. The first assumption derives from the belief that discourses are living texts, which simultaneously describe and prescribe realities (Campbell, 1998; Hall, 1996; Stern, 2005; Weldes and others, 1999) and thus come into being within contexts, positioned, constituted and constitutive of power relations (Said, 2003; Butler, 1995). Following this argument, I focus specifically on the official Colombian Democratic Security discourse and how it constructs categories that play an important role in the process of identification. I use the term process because, first, discourses are not sufficient to constitute identity since not any subject fits into any category or can be removed or exchanged as a puppet in an unproblematic fashion (Hall, 1996: 6-10; Butler 1990). Social subjects are hailed into the positions created by discourses but they necessarily have to invest in those positions for articulating their identity. Identity, understood as this particular 'intersection' (Hall, 1996), needs the subject's response or investment to perform certain subject positions.

Moreover, the process of identification is imperfect, temporal and unsettling since "the subject never achieves the completion or wholeness toward which it strives [and] remains haunted by that which has to be excluded for subjectivity to be constituted in the first place" (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 1999: 1). In this sense, identification is a performance, a continuous doing by subjects who are always in the process of becoming, a constant negotiation that never finds a perfect fit (Stern, 2005).

This 'becoming' gains ever more importance when looking at the representations of identity categories. In Hall's view, "not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', as much

as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (Hall, 1996: 3-4) identities are constituted within representations. In this line of thinking, how identity categories are represented plays a vital role in the conditions of possibility for the constitution of the subject. Representations make feasible certain ways of becoming while necessarily rendering others irrational, abnormal and impossible.

In security discourses, such representations are evidently intertwined with identity categories such as state, nation and others. Security discourses generally emanate from state officials and commonly follow a simple structure in which threats are presented to the public, claiming that they are also – by extension – dangers to the nation, and from such denomination a list of measures is constructed (Weldes and others, 1999) that aims at blocking the development of whatever is said to be putting the collectivity at risk (Wæver, 1995). By naming dangers, security discourses function as “a specific sort of *boundary producing political performance*” to domesticate “the meaning of man [sic] by constructing his [sic] problems, his [sic] dangers, his [sic] fears” (Campbell, 1998: 62). State security discourses do not only construct ‘men’s’ problems, dangers and fears, they do also construct women’s problems, dangers and fears. In a differentiated manner, the construction of both manhood and womanhood in security discourses is then paramount, not only to point at what ‘good citizens’ should be afraid of, but also to construct citizens’ loves. “For security is a package which tells you what you are as it tells you what to die for; which tells you what to love as it tells you what to defend (*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*); and which tells you what is right as it tells you what is wrong” (Dillon, 1996: 33).

Thus, when naming dangers the boundaries erected do not only involve delineating the territorial space of the state but, equally important, the cognitive and moral borders which divide homogeneity from diversity, inside from outside, self from other (Stern, 2005: 27; Walker, 1993). These borders presuppose “clear-cut, unambiguous, non-overlapping and defined” frontiers (Chilton, 1996: 64). Moreover, inside its borders, through the measures the state devises to cope with the dangers it

names, the state is supposed to secure the 'imagined political community' (Anderson, 1991).

In this direction, when security discourses establish which events and actors, what and whom we should fear, they necessarily establish the other, the outside and the *to be feared* at the same time that they establish the domestic, the safe and ordered. Both are constituted in what William Connolly (1991) has named the economy of identity/difference, implying that an "identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized" and that "are essential to its being" (Connolly, 1991: 64). If differences did not exist, neither would identity in its distinctness and solidity (ibid).

Through denominations of danger, the state partially creates those idealized representations of identity to which *national* and *foreign* are hailed. The ways subjects are hailed to adopt certain subject positions are multiple, involving institutional and security practices, such as informant networks, peasant soldiers and the demobilization process of former paramilitary. Their discursive representation and these particular security practices, 'how we are represented' and thus how those representations bear on 'who we might become', are the processes of identification I want to problematise.³

Contextualization: (New) war on terror in Colombia

In order to contextualize and position the DSP discourse and its security practices, it is crucial to comprehend how the armed conflict has been redefined according to the concepts of a (new) war on terror. This new framework for violence brings along its own interpretation on the causes of war and hence makes viable certain methods for conflict transformation while – necessarily – leaves others unconsidered.

Although traditionally defined by the government as a war between the state and communist guerrillas, since the decade of the eighties the naming of the Colombian conflict has changed radically (Nieto and Robledo, 2001). The expansion of drug cartels

and the creation of paramilitary groups increased the intensity and complexity of the war. The actors of the war proliferated and the connections between guerrillas and drug business, between drug cartels and politicians, between drug cartels and paramilitary groups and between politicians and paramilitary groups were evident. Violence rose to the ranks of the worldwide highest rates of murders, kidnapping and internally displaced persons, making civilians the number one target of the different armed groups, including the armed state forces.

Against this background, definitions and names of the Colombian war flourish.⁴ Aware of such multiplicity, I would like to concentrate on the official definition of the war according to the government, since this definition informs the security discourse. In contrast to (neo)idealist views which present the situation of violence as the result of economic, political and social conditions of 'underdevelopment',⁵ the current government has defined the war along the lines of a (neo)realist perspective. This perspective assumes that violence exists in individual 'men' free from laws and government. Thus, when there is no common power which keeps 'men' at awe, no authority can contain the unruliness of 'man' who lives in constant fear of 'a war of every man against every man' (Hobbes, 1651). The solution to this problem is to establish a common power – a sovereign state authority – that produces so much fear in 'men' that it makes them obey and restrain from waging war against their equals. In return, the government promises security and internal order.

These suppositions about subjectivity, violence, fear and consensus are echoed in the official narrative of the war on terror that, hand in hand with the concept of new wars,⁶ seem to flawlessly fit the Colombian conflict according to the government.⁷ President Alvaro Uribe argues that the guerrillas are narco-terrorist organizations whose mercenaries plunder, intimidate and serve criminal activities (Uribe, 2005). Thus, robust security measures, which undermine democracy, are necessary for the state to recover its lost authority. The President promises that once security is achieved, peace will be born out of authority and people will be able to enjoy freedoms (Uribe, 2002a: 20). So Uribe

(ibid: 27) proposes a strong state, a strong government, and good people collaborating with the armed forces to “close ranks against the terrorists”.

Since the (new) war on terror denies an ideological basis for struggle, a particular economic perspective on the causes of violence has gained momentum to comprehend the nexus between armed groups and drug business. This particular view, although contested by numerous political analysts (cf. IEPRI, 2006), has been made popular in Colombia through the design and implementation of World Bank projects. Former WB researcher Paul Collier (2006) holds that people naively believe in the discourse of the rebel groups that claim grievances – like inequality, political repression, and ethnic and religious divisions – as their motives for armed struggle. On the contrary, argues Collier (2006: 23), “[w]hile objective grievances do not generate violent conflict, violent conflict generates subjective grievances. This is not just a by-product of conflict, but an essential activity of a rebel organization.”

Following this thesis, the real cause of violent conflict is the possibility of the rebel groups to profit. There will be rebellions as long as the rebels and their leaders can fill their pockets with money. Hence, rebel groups need to be understood as rational economic agents who respond to incentives and sanctions (Collier, 2006). Consequently, to end violence the risk factors that feed the war need to be tackled with economic and financial instruments.

This definition of violence and its concomitant solutions resound in the current governmental understanding of the Colombian conflict. The government does not acknowledge a causal frame to comprehend violence but argues that grievances are the very consequences of insecurity. Poverty, exclusion, ecological degradation, political marginalization, violence, humanitarian crises and the ‘underdevelopment’ of the country are seen as effects of violence and not as conditions for its emergence or continuation (Uribe, 2004a). In this logic, the war will only end when the enemy is defeated militarily. To achieve this defeat, it will take organized state and non-state violence as well as weakening the enemy’s sources of income.

The Democratic Security Policy

In order to defeat the terrorists, recover the authority of the state, bring back security to the country and unite Colombians, the government has designed the Democratic Security Policy (DSP). The DSP was the political platform used in the 2002 Presidential campaign of Alvaro Uribe⁸ and, once he was in office, it was launched as the security and defense strategy in June 2003 (DSP, 2003). Though Uribe has been in power for over seven years, the pillars of the DSP have been maintained throughout this administration.⁹

The structure of the DSP (2003) follows a conventional understanding of security discourses. It first produces the effects of a state subjectivity by invoking a primary and stable state identity; then it lists a collection of threats that are said to be endangering the state and by extension the nation; and from these representations of dangers the state imparts strategies to cope with the dangers it names and, simultaneously, legitimate the state's role as provider of security to its citizens. In this process, the categories of state, nation, and others are constructed and then produced as social facts according to state's actions (Weldes and others, 1999). Likewise, the border which divides, and at the same time joins, us and them is outlined following a set of markers which enable to distinguish the 'good nationals' from the 'terrorists' (Campbell, 1998).

Addressed to the whole society, the preface of the DSP by the President and the Minister of Defense states the theme perfectly. Everybody's goal is to achieve security: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary branches of the state, the military and the police especially, the civilian population, the industrial sector and the international community. To achieve security, all have to fight against terrorism (DSP, 2003: 6, 8). Thus, security is not reduced to a state obligation, but is a task that has to be undertaken by everybody. Security is proclaimed as an obligation for the whole society. Security is turned into everybody's problem and everybody's responsibility.

The naming of dangers in the DSP refers to six threats “which pose an immediate danger to the stability of the country, its democratic institutions, and the lives of Colombians” (DSP, 2003: §36). These dangers are terrorism, illegal drugs trade, illicit finance, traffic of arms, ammunition and explosives, kidnapping and extortion and homicide. Though these dangers comprise a wide spectrum, in the explanation developed in the DSP they all relate to terrorism.

Simultaneously, the notion of ‘terrorism’ is vaguely defined as a method for which “the only common denominator among [its] different variants [...] is the calculated use of deadly violence against civilians for political purposes” (DSP, 2003: §37). Terrorism turns into the label ascribed to all types of illegitimate violence and hence the term “is conceived as an action with no political ground, [and which] cannot be read politically. It emerges, as they say, from fanatics, extremists, who do not espouse a point of view, but rather exist outside of ‘reason’, and do not have part in the human community” (Butler, 2004: 88-89).

Leaving terrorism outside of the realm of politics turns ‘terrorists’ into invalid political interlocutors. Therefore, the ways of dealing with this threat are presented as apolitical. According to the government, the war on terror can only be won by military means (DSP, 2003: §88-§90). And since ‘we all have to fight terrorism’, the concept that the government introduces for marking the borders between ‘us’ (good citizens) and ‘them’ (terrorists) is the notion of ‘patriotic solidarity’, disguised as a Constitutional duty for all Colombians:

Solidarity demanded by the modern social democratic State to help prevent crime and terrorism, by providing information relating to the illegal armed groups. [...] If 44 million Colombians support and feel support by the State, terrorism can be defeated. (DSP, 2003: §130)

The government has placed its security's priority on the cities, where the plan is to "encourage the participation and co-operation of each and every citizen in the achievement and maintenance of security [through] alliances between the authorities and the citizenry [as] the quickest and surest way of restoring security" (DSP, 2003: §93-§94). This alliance comprises, amongst other elements, "active citizen co-operation, based on the common values of respect for the dignity of the people and the rejection of [non-state] violence" (DSP, 2003: §104).

Citizen's cooperation has been mainly institutionalized in rural and urban areas as networks which "in accordance with the principle of solidarity and the duty to contribute to common security, will provide the authorities with information which will help in the prevention of crime and the pursuit of criminals" (DSP, 2003: §131). This army of good people "will also participate in programmes aimed at promoting a culture of security" and act as "an extra set of eyes for the authorities with whom they will be in constant contact" (ibid).

In this fight of all against terrorism, the government aims at involving the whole society. Therefore, it is a key factor that the government controls what the media is allowed to communicate. Journalists are informed of their duties in this fight: they should report with responsibility and prudence "when releasing information which endangers lives or jeopardises [military] operations" (DSP, 2003: §136). The above includes "the use of the media by those who attack the civilian population as a sounding board to justify their actions, and the impact of the language that is used when reporting information" (DSP, 2003: §137). This way, the state dictates the limits of what can be spoken and what cannot be spoken about in the media, censoring criticism of state violence in the name of security (Butler, 2004).

Following Gianni Vattimo (1992), this image resembles the transparent society in which citizens' activities, thoughts, actions, plans, attitudes and behaviors are controlled by a government that is ever more opaque. The security functions of the state expand to a point in which it is no longer possible to control its actions. When the increase of

securitized issues is pervasive to the point of controlling the definitions of the armed conflict by the media, then such society can no longer contain that common power which 'keeps men at awe', to paraphrase Hobbes. The fear the Leviathan inflicts is overwhelming, it draws the boundaries of public speech, of a reasonable opinion in the media and it silences those who criticize state policies by labeling them unpatriotic and terrorist-sympathizers (Butler, 2004).¹⁰

Precisely in this direction, when security turns into a duty for everyone, then 'the people' have the obligation to accomplish their security duties or otherwise face the consequences of being labeled suspect, non-collaborator and, in this logic, a security threat in themselves. The call for security, based on a national fight against terrorism, not only includes those who commit acts of terror, but it stretches to include anyone who is suspect of doing so, as well as people who do not actively collaborate with the security forces to fight the war, who do not comply with security measures, those who criticize the government and those who do not want to be ruled this way (Butler, 2004).

These discursive formations, which construct an ideal picture of 'the Colombian national', are articulated as the history of an imagined political community organized as a fraternity for which its members should be willing to kill and die for (Anderson, 1991). In the DSP, the political community has clear origins, current attributes and a common future. According to official security discourses, 'Colombia' is a great nation born in the war of independence and later on shaped by an authoritarian military figure (Simón Bolívar) who was able to bring security to the country. Only afterwards, its counter figure, symbolizing civilian freedoms (Francisco de Paula Santander), had the chance to erect norms and rules which brought civil liberties to the people (Uribe, 2002b). The government recalls this 'historical event' as a *coup de force*, which legitimizes current public policies and the sacrifices it demands from the citizenry based on the birth of the nation (Campbell, 1999).

At the present moment, this nation is portrayed as weak, a conglomerate of people who "cannot mourn their dead anymore, [as a] nation who is agonizing" and,

consequently, it needs a strong state to support 'her' in the war on terror (Uribe, 2002b). Hence, the nation's unity is based upon the exclusion of those who have harmed 'her'. 'We' are bound by the pain that has been inflicted upon 'us' by 'them'. 'We' are defined by the enemies *we face* (Saco, 1999). At the same time, the state promises that this enemy – terrorism – will be defeated, only if 'we' all collaborate with the security forces. The unity of millions who make up the army of 'good people', under the command of a strong state authority, is the necessary combined force that will be able to defeat the narco-terrorists.

The President claims that, on the day in which security prevail, uncertainty will be mastered and peace will be born out of authority (Uribe, 2002a). On that day of victory, the sacrifices of today will be worth it. Hence, in this fight future scenarios are crucial. The future is the time-space that takes precedence over the present. All the sacrifices are made in the name not just of security, but also of "achieving security in the future" (ibid).

Citizens then are made in the concrete historical-political space that collapses fraternity into nation. This particular articulation unites the notions of citizen and patriot and makes their meaning synonymous. Just like in the nineteenth century wars, the figure of a patriotic citizen does not just entail rights, but also obligations to the homeland, which explicitly include the call for rising up in arms to defend 'her' (Uribe de H., 2004: 88-89). The representation of a patriotic citizen, as discursive identity category, also implies matters of imagination, desires and inventions in which public speech has an important role to play for the very ways in which 'we' conceive 'us' as social subjects (ibid: 76-77).

Such temporal elements are carefully constructed in a way that the story of 'who we are', 'where we come from' and 'where we are heading to' is presented as coherent, unitary and consistent. This narrative makes the nation's identity fixed, its borders clear-cut and its destiny certain. Each of these times and places confirms the thesis of the government that only when the nation participates actively in the war and fulfils its patriotic duties, security will be achieved and then, only then, peace will be born out of authority and people will be able to exercise their freedoms.

Security practice of the demobilization process

The DSP has informed manifold practices in the past years, which demonstrate how the power of security discourses play a crucial role in the process of identification.¹¹ In this section, because of its political relevance and pertinence to this presentation, I want to focus on only one of these practices, the demobilization process. The project of defeating terrorism with a military campaign and with the 'patriotic solidarity of the good citizens' is the basis for the demobilization process. It was inaugurated by President Uribe on 23 December 2002 when enabling the state to initiate processes of demobilization with armed groups without recognizing their political status (Law 782/2002). This legal prerogative was designed for the paramilitary forces, which had promised to enter a ceasefire since November 2002. However, "[d]espite the declared cease-fire, paramilitaries were still responsible for massacres, targeted killings, 'disappearances', torture, kidnappings and threats" (Amnesty International, 2004: 5-6).

In July 2003, government representatives and paramilitary leaders of the group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) signed the Agreement Santa Fé de Ralito and paved the way for the demobilization process to take place outside the frame of a peace agreement. The demobilizations were so agreed to result in the reincorporation of former combatants into civilian life and contribute to the state's security strategy by reducing the 'man'-power of illegal armed groups and using their confessions as a source of military information "to stop illegal armed groups' assaults and formulate military counterattacks" (Anaya, 2006: 2).

It was made clear that the demobilization process was not a pillar in a peace process but a key element in winning the war on terror, and herein rests one of the biggest difficulties. The legal procedures for demobilization were signed before the reincorporation into civilian life had been thought out and before it was clear how the rights of the victims could be safeguarded and protected. This sequence in time reflects

the priorities of the security agenda and severely diminishes the possibilities of turning this war strategy into a peace process.

From November 2002 until May 2007, the government's invitation for terrorists to lay down their arms, return to "the nuclear family and abandon a clandestine life" (DSP, 2003: §116) was headed by circa 44,500 demobilized persons (Presidency of Colombia, 2007). Out of this group, 31,000 are combatants who have demobilized in collective acts and the rest individually. Out of all the demobilized combatants in the three years period, approximately 3,400 (eight percent) are women (Policía Nacional, 2007).¹²

The main common characteristic between collective and individual demobilizations is that both imply disarmament, provision of information to the security forces and reincorporation into civilian life. However, there are great differences between collective and individual demobilizations. Collective demobilizations take place because of the order of the armed group leader, which implies a hierarchical structure and obedience, relations that do not automatically disappear with the demobilization act (Iniciativa de Mujeres por la Paz, 2006: 15; Restrepo, 2009). On the other hand, individual demobilizations take place on the basis of combatants voluntarily abandoning the armed group, which for many of them implies being labeled as traitors and thus living in constant fear of getting killed by former comrades (Anaya, 2007: 16).

Collective demobilization in Medellín

Once the national government signed demobilization agreements with paramilitary leaders, local administrations found themselves faced with the question of how to deal with thousands of former combatants who were disarming. As it was mentioned above, the state first decided upon disarmament and only later concerned itself with the question of reincorporation. In other words, since 2003 cities like Medellín have received thousands of demobilized persons without any specific plan for reintegration except the central government instruction of 'turning warriors into citizens' (Iniciativa de Mujeres por

la Paz, 2006: 15). From 2003 until 2006, the city of Medellín received approximately 4,000 demobilized men and 40 women, a total number equivalent to thirteen percent of the total demobilizations in the country (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006: 5).

Precisely for dealing with the demobilization process, the local administration of Medellín designed the institutional Program “Peace and Reconciliation: Model of Intervention for Returning to Legality” (*Paz y Reconciliación: Modelo de intervención de regreso a la legalidad*, hereafter PPR). The PPR should then make sure that former combatants are successfully turned into citizens, defined by the local administration as a process in which the individual is prepared to fully enter society and acquire a formal job (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007: 6).

The PPR was designed upon an initial diagnosis based on testimonies of former combatants as regards their motives for joining illegal armed groups. The information provided by demobilized people and collected by the local government shows that the main reasons for joining armed groups are external threats (25 percent), death of a loved one (25 percent), stressful economic situation (23 percent), conflict with family members, friends or neighbors (7 percent) and others (20 percent) (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007: 2). Despite of this initial diagnosis, which hints that most of the motives for joining armed groups are found at the relational level, only two out of seven areas of intervention deal with non-financial aspects of violence (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006: 9). Hence, no institutional line of action was designed to respond to relational conflicts in the reincorporation programs implemented by the state.

For example, the psychosocial support area aims at providing familiar and communitarian psychological support, creating and strengthening trust, promoting communitarian development and establishing processes of compensation and reconciliation (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007: 3). However, once set into motion this support program aims at providing education and job opportunities to former combatants. This lack of consistency is made clear in the first question posed to the demobilized person within the framework of the psychosocial program: “In which area would you like to study

or work”? (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006: 11). The multiple choice answers offered to the interviewed are: finish primary school, finish high school, professional training, high-level education, and social and communitarian action (ibid).

The PPR supplies former combatants with two years of monthly stipends, training courses and jobs offers. These conditions seek to make the demobilized persons economically productive and politically active citizens with cleaned criminal records.

An obvious yet unauthorized question that needs to be asked is why are relational aspects of violence not dealt with in the PPR? What is at stake when taking seriously the testimonies of former combatants? I believe that some answers to these questions are to be found in the effort to fence off counter-articulations to the identity of the nation as it is constructed in the security discourse of the Colombian government.

On the one hand, if demobilized persons contend that their motives to join illegal armed groups were not financial reasons but external threats, the death of a loved one or conflicts with family members, friends and neighbors, then the picture that arises enters in clear contradiction with the definition of violence espoused by the government. The latter defines violence in Colombia because of a weak state authority in the past and nurtured by the desire of narco-terrorists to fill their pockets with money. The state promises that peace will be born out of authority, only if we follow the security measures and actively participate in the ‘army of good people’. Peace then turns into a certain promise, a knowable stage, always deferred in the future, for which we sacrifice today. This promise “overshadows the conviviality of individuals and communities” (Dietrich, 2006: 29) and, problematically, is unresponsive to the situation at hand, while constantly referring to highest principles beyond the present moment (Dietrich, 2008: 178).

Thus, listening to the testimonies of demobilized persons dissolves the frame for understanding violence within the (new) war on terror. These testimonies highlight the fact that there is much more to collective violence than greed and disobedience to sovereign authority. The testimonies hint at violent conflicts that express feelings,

thoughts, words, actions and reactions in their own communities, relationally, in a particular context with concrete persons (Dietrich, 2006: 42). Consequently, these testimonies cannot be inscribed upon conventional divisions between sovereign/non-sovereign and us/them. Most importantly, when we listen carefully to the testimonies we realize that they defy the violent inscription of 'otherness' as a threat to 'our' national and territorial unity and to 'our' war on terror. Yet, articulated along the DSP lines of exclusion and violence against 'otherness', the Colombian government cannot come to terms with these particular understanding of violence and relationality.

Secondly, taking serious relational aspects of violence implies looking at the ways in which these relationships have worked and have constituted themselves in Medellín in order to recognize which role they have played in the legitimation of violence. In other words, this reflection would imply making visible relational aspects that account for collective violence with the aim of transforming them (Galtung, 2004). I would argue that gender does not only shape the institutional, political and economic structural levels, but also that at the relational level gender relationships play a decisive role. Yet, since the state project of security is based in particular on the construction of traditional gender relationships in the form of nuclear families, a profound transformative gender perspective is banned from public debate.

Let us briefly take the example of the "death of a loved one" to make this point clearer. In former versions of the PPR made public by the local administration in July 2006, instead of 'the death of a loved one' accounting for 25 percent of the motives alleged by demobilized combatants to join the armed groups, the official document read "personal vengeance". One could argue that the motivation for joining the armed group is the desire to avenge the death of a loved one, not necessarily the death in itself.

The topic of revenge has been widely researched by cultural scholars in Medellín (Salazar, 1993, 2002; León, 2004; Blair, 1999, 2005; Vélez, 2000). What some of these findings suggest is that in many cases acts of violence perpetrated by young males have been justified and encouraged by the figure of motherhood (Vélez, 2000).¹³ The feminine

figure of the mother in need of protection by a hyper-masculine warrior son keeps feeding the cycle of revenge. Paradoxically, then, the relationships of a mother taking care of her children and in need of protection by a male figure which is strong, exhibits warrior features and acts as financial support of the family is precisely the representation of the family encouraged at the institutional level as part of the national security strategy.

Yet, the complexity of the relations between violence, gender and agency would point to the urgency of recognizing the multiple roles and relationships between women and men, womanhood and manhood, in war and peace that challenge a clear dividing line between victim and perpetrator along gender identifications. This implies that the stereotypical dynamics of patriarchal culture in Medellín “in terms of the bipolar concepts of *machismo* – hypervirility – and *marianismo* – a female archetype of purity and submissiveness; in other words, violent subjects (men) and peaceful ones (women)” (Riaño-Alcalá, 2006: 143), need to be closely scrutinized and thought out in their complexity. The call for understanding the violent conflict as systemic, relational and contextual then also requires that gender categories are open for recognizing how men and women are “instigators of conflict, perpetrators of violence, victims of conflict and eligible for demobilisation and reincorporation processes” (Schwitalla and Dietrich, 2007: 58). Their gender identities allow for multiple positions that are being limited and restricted by simplified, fixed and stereotypical traditional gender identities in the DSP which, ultimately, rework the same gender divisions that feed violence in the first place.

Nonviolent discourses of resistance

The provocations that the DSP and its practices have produced in Colombia are countless. One of them was the Congruent Peace Plan of the Province of Antioquia. Another important movement has been the case of the indigenous group Paeces del Cauca. For this presentation, I would like to focus on the former movement, which shows an

alternative understanding of peace in plural, contextual and a non-sovereign cosmovision that defies the logic of the DSP.

Conclusion: Peace, security and identity

By looking at the discourses of security of the DSP, the practice of the demobilization process and the particular discourse of resistance of the Paeces del Cauca, it is evident that in Colombia several notions of peace and security are being negotiated constantly.

For instance, the demobilisation process of paramilitary groups, as both a geopolitical and a biopolitical strategy of in/security in Colombia, discloses the notion of a *secure peace*. The process of demobilisation of paramilitary groups has been based on the notion that peace will come after security is achieved, guarding off unauthorised narratives (Edkins, 2003) of demobilised persons who challenge the official definition of collective and individual violence in Colombia as the result of a weak state authority. The reincorporation of former paramilitaries into society through the figure of warrior citizens, who collaborate with information in the war on terror, in addition to the lack of transparency to guarantee the victims' rights to truth, have prevented this process from becoming a reconciliatory mechanism. A *secure peace* is put forward by the state in such a way that grief and pain fuel the cycle of revenge and violence. The logic of in/security of the DSP inscribes itself in the notion of peace as, once more, the pursuit of 'the war of all against terrorism'.

By reading some resistance discourses to the DSP in the case of the Paeces del Cauca, I argue that alternative concepts of peace and security emanate from the very subjects governed and regulated by the DSP. These alternatives include various options to contrast with the widely acknowledged and too easily accepted notion of a *secure peace*.

Precisely by challenging sovereign discourses, the nonviolent movement of the indigenous groups Paeces del Cauca has called into question the largely unquestioned notions of peace/security of the DSP. The main element with which the Paeces contest the

DSP is the unique way in which they merge spirituality with politics based on unqualified nonviolence. One of its effects is to bring back politics to the public debate, eroding the apparent consensus that politics should be postponed until in/security brings us peace.

In direct contravention to the DSP precepts, the Paeces face the grief and pain of violence with an open invitation to join political spaces for conversations, both within and outside institutional frameworks. They openly and unapologetically defy the regulation of their circulation through securitised rules. This notion of insecure politics is based on their concept of *trans-rational peace*. This type of peace is vernacular, relational and, consequently, neither subject to export nor import. The Paeces merge rational arguments about democratic governance with spiritual components that do not recognise the sovereign power of the state over their lives and deaths.

Moreover, by refusing to reconstruct their resistance as competing sovereign claims, the Paeces reject enrolment in the 'army of good people' to be ruled according to the in/security concerns of the DSP. They demand both politics and peaces that cannot be postponed but are past due and ought to be delivered more immediately. It is here and now among 'us' – indigenous and non-indigenous peoples – and with the 'others' – army, paramilitaries and guerrillas – that they propose to recreate spaces and times for peaceful conflict transformation. In this sense, the resistance discourse of the Paeces challenges the monopoly of the state in defining what security and peace (partially) mean, who is endangering whom and at what price we are willing to postpone politics until in/security supposedly brings us the long-awaited freedom promised so easily but as yet undelivered.

By embracing this call for non-closure, I have attempted to bring forth several calls for insecure politics and insecure peaces (as I read them). What these proposals have in common is their call for attention to the violence that is constantly being reproduced in the war against terror and its promise of in/security to ground politics. What type of politics, political imaginaries and peaces would they bring to light? Away from the *secure peace* inscribed in the DSP, this is precisely the question that I hope to raise not only as a

general principle, but also as a time-sensitive and crucial question in the pressing case of Colombia.

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¹ Michael Dillon's (ibid.) work on *The Politics of Security* precisely points to the agonal relationship between security and insecurity: because we can never think security without insecurity, both terms contour each other (ibid.: 120). Contrary to the conventional mode in which security and insecurity are portrayed in official accounts, they are not opposites, but rather are two terms that dynamically define one another. Any discourse about security necessitates insecurity, dangers, the uncanny, the strange and the unknown. Without insecurity, there is no security. Hence, insecurity is security's very possibility for existence. Furthermore, when any security discourse names the dangers that 'threaten us' (Campbell, 1998), it in turn also proscribes, sanctions and propels actions and measures to secure whichever object or subject is said to be at risk (Dillon, 1996: 121). Therefore, any discourse on security is, at the same time, a discourse of insecurity. The term 'in/security' thus precisely aims to make visible the inherent contradiction that the word bears within itself.

² Candidate Alvaro Uribe first used the DSP as his political platform for the 2002 presidential elections. 'Democratic security' became Uribe's main thesis in the Political Manifesto, his candidacy program. Later on, after Uribe was elected President in May 2002, in August of the same year the DSP was adopted as the government's plan and was officially released in June 2003 by the presidency and ministry of defence.

Hence, although the references made allude to the year 2003, the DSP has been in place since 2001 as political proposal.

³ This examination hence does not consider the investment, resistance or reaction of subjects to those practices, which are necessary to articulate the process of identification. In this regard, see especially Pearce (2007).

⁴ The definitions on the characterization of violence in Colombia also abound in academia. Some Colombian academicians have focused their attention on the causes for the war, privileging political and social explanations that mainly address injustice and inequality issues, as well as the inability of the state to accomplish its functions (Angarita, 2001; Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia, 1995). Other currents have centered their attention on the characteristics of the armed struggle, first classifying the armed actors and, from there, inferring conclusions about the character of the conflict (Franco, 2002; Pizarro, 1990; 1991; Rangel, 2005). The financing of the guerrillas and paramilitary groups with drug money has marked economic analyses by denying much of the political character to the armed conflict (Deas and Gaitán, 1995). Several academics have tried to trace the development, evolution or transformation of the armed groups in the past four decades and to assign to each period a different characterization (Nieto and Robledo, 2001). Finally, a considerable number of academics comprehend the history of the conflict within a wider spectrum. They trace the causes of the current armed conflict to the day of independence in the nineteenth century as a way of highlighting it as a long and violent process of nation building (Ramírez, 2002; Uribe de H. and López, 2006). A recent paper that compiles in succinct and well-elaborated manner discussions on the importance of defining the war is the edited collection by the IEPRI (2006) *Nuestra Guerra sin Nombre* [Our Nameless War].

⁵ A contrasting view is held by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In the 2003 Annual Report, the UNDP depicts the Colombian armed conflict caused by structural circumstances such as the weakness of the state and the political exclusion of alternative tendencies from the political legal system, amongst which the UN acknowledges the political project of the armed groups. In this light, the UNDP proposes to strengthen development programs, which would bring about an improvement in the socio-economical conditions and, so it is assumed, alleviate poverty and exclusion which shall foster economic growth and peace (UNDP, 2003).

⁶ Mary Kaldor's use of Colombia as a quintessential 'new war' (Kaldor, 1999) has gained widespread appeal among both policy elites and academics. This has also provoked heated debates in Colombia that are concisely discussed in Marshal and Messiant (2004).

⁷ The international dimension of the conflict, especially the political, military and economic alliance between the US government and Colombia, plays a chief role in the denomination of the conflict. Plan Colombia may be the clearest expression of the US government's official understanding of the Colombian situation as a democratic state fighting narco-terrorism. Envisaged in 2000 under the Presidency of Pastrana and approved at that time by the US Congress, Plan Colombia has been controversial since its publication and, although it may fit neatly into the war on terror rhetoric, it was conceived before 9/11. This makes clear that, although the DSP intertextually and contextually fits into the war on terror, the war against narco-terrorism through military means has enjoyed a longer tradition in the country.

⁸ Alvaro Uribe was first elected as President in May 2002, a couple of months after the breakdown of peace dialogues between the government of President Andrés Pastrana and the guerrillas Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). This breakdown was crucial for the election of the popular right wing politician Uribe, who proposed to end the war by defeating the guerrillas militarily. For a discussion on the culturally produced crisis of the peace talks and the designation of an open war as the only plausible option left for Colombians, see Echavarría (2010).

⁹ In 2007, the government issued a consolidation strategy for the DSP, which should serve the second Presidency of Uribe (2006-2010). This new document mainly reworks the DSP original geopolitical objectives of territorial control while emphasizing biopolitical practices, especially the management of the population through reducing their movement and circulation (Ministerio de Defensa, 2007).

¹⁰ A well-known international example in which the current government equated criticism of public policies with terrorist-sympathy is the accusation of President Uribe to Amnesty International (AI) in 2004. After the massacre of La Gabarra, in a speech President Uribe (2004b) questioned why AI had kept silence when narco-terrorists (the guerrillas FARC-EP) committed acts of violence, whereas AI constantly denounced state's actions. The President reminded AI of the obligation to take sides, either it was with the terrorists or with the Colombian state institutions.

¹¹ Warning networks and battalions of peasant soldiers reveal how the DSP works to regulate the circulation and connection of the population. It additionally illuminates how the state governs with sovereignty to send 'its' people to die in war. The combination of these in/security measures reinforces the in/security promise through diffuse mechanisms of power that reduce political spaces for encounters between 'us' and 'them' and to prevent the possibilities for becoming something/somebody else other than the fixed identity categories that the DSP designs for subjects at war.

¹² Since the demobilization process is labeled as a national security issue, official information about demobilized persons, like their gender, is restricted and fragmented in different public communications. The gender data offered here derives from several sources (Presidency of Colombia, 2007; Policía Nacional, 2007; Anaya 2006, 2007; Iniciativa de Mujeres por la Paz, 2006; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006).

¹³ Especially salient has been the phenomena of hired assassins (*sicarios*). For instance, authors like Vélez (2000: 172) argue that distinctively in this case violent manifestations can be viewed as the emergence of unconscious content that has been excluded and repressed consciously by a dominant culture that honours violence. Thus, the emergence of violence should be addressed in a collective manner by embracing the manifestations of violence – individualized in the *sicarios* – and should allow for the expression of intergenerational traumata and the revalorization of the feminine.