FOREWORD

From War to Peace: Security and the Stabilization of Colombia

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Foreword for the Special Collection Citizen Security Dialogues in Colombia: Controlling the territory and building security and justice in post-conflict contexts From war to peace: security and the stabilization of Colombia, gathers research form leading scholars and practitioners to discuss key topics regarding recent developments around the peace process, between national government and the FARC rebels, in Colombia. After taking into account the impact of security policies implemented during the first decade of the twenty-first century (demobilization of paramilitary groups, strengthening of national armed forces and the containment and weakening of guerrilla groups), this issue further explores challenges, as well as policy options, faced by the state during a post conflict scenario, given a positive outcome of the ongoing peace process. Specifically, and using a broad data analysis, issues such as the ability of organized crime to sabotage post-conflict policy implementation, the absence of state and the rule of law in isolated areas of the country or the importance of local justice as an institutional strengthening strategy for stabilization, are addressed in order to draw important conclusions regarding the problems associated to the persistence of ungoverned and unstable territories in post-conflict contexts all over the world.

Colombia is currently in the midst of a negotiation process to end the conflict with the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC by its Spanish acronym)[1], the oldest leftist guerrilla group in the western hemisphere which has historically had the greatest capacity to challenge the Colombian State. Negotiations are also progressing, although in a less advanced phase, with the National Liberation Army (ELN by its Spanish acronym)[2], the second most significant insurgent group in the country.

This peace process began more than three years ago and is the focus of national attention, besides having awoken great interest at the international level. This attention is not undeserved: five decades of bloody conflict has involved guerrillas, paramilitaries, and mafias, and has created at least seven million victims. Multiple peace processes have been held with various illegal armed groups, including some failed discussions with the FARC and the ELN. However, it now seems possible that a peace agreement will bring about a definitive conclusion to the conflict with the insurgent groups.

These negotiations are part of a pacification process that the country has engaged in for the past 15 years. At the end of the first decade

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of the twenty-first century, Colombia was considered to be a miracle. Five years before, it had been categorized as a nation on the edge of an abyss, and held the fourteenth place in the international index of failed states.[3] By 2010, Colombia had fallen to number 46, situating itself among the medium-risk countries.[4] There were numerous publications at the time which highlighted the achievements of the so-called Democratic Security Policy (2002-2010) in improving security conditions, generating investor trust, and motivating admiration at the international level for the country's economic prosperity (DeShazo et. al. 2007; Boot and Bennet 2009; Bourdillon 2011; Forero 2012).

This policy[5] had two parallel dimensions whose ultimate goal was to deactivate the factors that most contributed to violence in Colombia: insurgency, paramilitaries, and drug trafficking. The first dimension was implemented through a process of negotiation to bring paramilitary groups to justice. This resulted in the demobilization of more than 30,000 members of those groups, and marked the beginning of an unprecedented and complex chapter of justice, truth, and victims' reparations. The second dimension of this policy, and perhaps the one that most characterizes it, was a counter-insurgency and anti-narcotics campaign that required great effort to strengthen and modernize the military, police, and intelligence forces. This initiative entailed a record increase in the national security and defense budget, and received support from the United States through Plan Colombia.

The progress achieved in the implementation of this policy was key in containing threats to national security, reducing levels of violence, and bringing the FARC to the negotiating table in a strategically inferior position. However, the guerrilla groups maintain the capacity for tactical assaults in the areas to which they have confined themselves, and which are also areas where the state is weakest. Similarly, there exists a complex security context that involves other illegal armed actors, especially criminal group heirs to the

paramilitaries who demobilized ten years ago. These groups are heavily associated with drug trafficking, illegal mining, contraband, and other criminal practices that have increased over the last few years, including extortion and 'micro-trafficking'.

This issue is not prevalent in all of the national territory. Rather, it is concentrated in at least a quarter of the municipalities in the country – mainly rural, peripheral, and border areas that have been trapped in cycles of violence for decades and whose unsatisfied basic needs indexes are at levels well below the national average (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2015). In these areas, inhabitants rarely exercise their civil rights and have profound mistrust for the state, whose presence is precarious if not non-existent. Local institutions are chronically weak, social regulation is more under the control of the illegal armed actors than the state, and informal and criminal businesses are the principal means of subsistence.

It must be noted that organized crime in Colombia also has significant urban manifestations. Criminal networks have evolved in various cities, where they often extort the population and businesses in the areas under their influence. These networks also regulate underworld businesses (prostitution, illegal gambling, etc.), as well as local drug markets, and are an important factor to consider in the high levels of violence faced by some urban areas of the country.

This context implies significant challenges for the transition from war to peace, many more than the classic stabilization and post-conflict agendas that usually focus on DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) (Colletta 2012). It will be crucial to prevent other organized criminal groups from filling the space left by the guerrillas, and to avoid the 'recycling' of ex-combatants and weapons in these groups, as happened after the demobilization of the paramilitaries. In that case, there was a large-scale demobilization but the illegal economies were left intact at the regional level,

and the guerrillas and criminal groups who descended from the paramilitaries took over.

In terms of the current peace process, the greatest challenge therefore lies in installing state authority in areas where the guerrillas and other illegal armed groups have disputed the monopoly on violence, justice, and taxation. This means taking control of the territory from the illegals, as well as gaining populations that have been under illegal groups' control, so that these groups cannot reproduce or preserve their power (Villalobos 2015). Ultimately, the goal is to build the state and democratic institutions in regions that have been under illegal control, thereby guaranteeing citizen security, provision of public goods, and enjoyment of civil rights by the citizens.

This special Colombia issue in *Stability Journal* brings together four articles that analyze the challenge of state territorial control from different angles, as well as examine public policy options. First, the text by Juan Carlos Garzón warns of criminal economies' ability to destabilize and sabotage the post-conflict phase, and identifies dilemmas the state must confront in response to this possibility. Garzón lays out an analytical model to define differential policy options according to the degree of evolution of organized crime in a region. Finally, the author makes an innovative proposal on how to contain organized crime in the early stages of the post-conflict process and thereby avoid what he considers to be 'the perfect storm.' This proposal is based on work by Colletta and Muggah (2009) in which they refer to interim stabilization measures that aim to generate the time and space necessary to facilitate a minimum level of trust between key actors. This in turn allows for the creation of the basic conditions necessary for later stages in the process of regaining state territorial control.

Next in this issue, there are two articles that analyze the absence of the state and its weak basic capacity for rule of law in rural and isolated areas. The article by Patricia Bulla and Sergio Guarín reflects on security challenges in rural areas of Colombia and proposes that security institution reform in the post-conflict phase could be an opportunity to consolidate the Colombian State in its entirety. The article shows the inequality of security provision in Colombia by comparing urban and rural areas, as well as municipal centers and areas of low population density. The authors then demonstrate how the armed conflict has heightened state incapacity to enforce the law, resolve citizen conflicts, and promote a social order based on peaceful coexistence. This article examines not only the presence and activity of illegal armed actors, but also the military perspective on citizen security. From this perspective, territorial control exercised in the framework of armed confrontation does not imply rule of law or the construction of legitimate authorities. Bulla and Guarín highlight the need to design regionally-focused rural security strategies, which require the predominance of citizen security, as well as a series of institutional adjustments and the permanent strengthening of local-level citizen, civil, and military capacity.

The article by Mauricio García and José Rafael Espinosa reflects on the role of local justice in the institutional strengthening process required for the post-conflict phase. The authors suggest that populations in the peripheral areas of Colombia are in a situation of permanent vulnerability because they cannot rely on institutions to fulfill their rights. The authors reveal a dramatic diagnosis of justice in areas of the country where institutional scarcity combines with inefficiency in settling conflicts and fulfilling agreements. The authors also expose the perverse relationship between the weakness of justice and the intensity of the armed conflict. With respect to the post-conflict phase, García and Espinosa highlight the importance of considering not only the type of justice we must implement to guarantee victims' rights and prosecute those responsible for atrocities, but also the institutions required to bring peace to the territories through the resolution (formal and/or informal) of social conflicts. Here, the role of local justice is highlighted and the

authors lay out a series of parameters relating to the definition and implementation of a regional approach to public policy that aims to improve justice functions.

Finally, this special issue contains an article by Jorge Giraldo and Andres Preciado about the case of Medellin, Colombia's second largest city that has historically been one of the urban centers most affected by the armed conflict's intersection with drug trafficking. However, Medellin has recently become a national and international example of a sharp drop in homicides. This article shows the milestones that mark Medellin's trajectory as the site of Colombia's urban theater for national and regional armed disputes, to its current position as a model for public and private security innovations. The authors also call attention to the fragility of these achievements, not only because security is always subject to unforeseen risks and indeterminate threats, but also because organized crime and the lack of adherence to norms by a considerable part of the population continue to generate significant challenges to security governability in the city.

This special edition is another outcome of the Citizen Security Dialogues, an initiative to explore in a south-south approach what works and what does not in public security. This project, funded by the International Development Research Centre in Canada (IDRC), is a partnership between the Igarapé Institute in Rio de Janeiro, the Foundation Ideas for Peace (FIP) in Bogotá, the Institute for Security and Democracy (INSYDE) in Mexico City, and the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) in Cape Town. The latest of the Dialogues 'Controlling territory and building security and justice in post-conflict contexts,' took place in Bogotá on April 16–17, 2015. This two day Dialogue, brought together more than a 100 experts to participate in a critical debate and reflection about innovations to recover territorial control and restore legitimacy in so-called ungoverned spaces, and practicable ways to diminish organized crime in urban settings and thereby facilitate continued development.

Competing Interests

Notes

[1] The FARC arose in the sixties, and since then they have evolved into the most significant insurgent group in the country. At their peak in the nineties, the group had approximately 20,000 combatants and an active presence in at least half of the municipalities in the country. Today, they have between 6,000 and 7,000 combatants with operational fronts in less than 180 municipalities.

[2] The ELN was also established in the sixties, and currently has approximately 1,300 combatants with a presence in less than 20 municipalities.

[3] The Failed States Index 2005 http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2005-sortable.

[4] The Failed States Index 2010 http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2010-sortable.

[5] For a summary and evaluation of this policy, see Llorente, MV and McDermott, J (2014)

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