RESEARCH ARTICLE

SECURITY STRESS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENEMY IN COLOMBIA WITH THE END OF THE FARC-EP

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ABSTRACT: How does the transformation of the FARC-EP from an enemy to a legitimate political adversary affect the definition of security and its application in Colombia? This question is of great significance, particularly in the context of the *security stress* experienced by the country after the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement. Our analysis demonstrates that there is a disconnection between decision-makers and citizen realities, which is affecting territorial security. The orthodox notions of official security operators, the increase in massacres, and the murder of social leaders and ex-combatants who signed the Agreement provide evidence of this phenomenon. To understand the dynamics at play, we conducted a theoretical and empirical study of the years following the signing of the Havana Peace Agreement. Our analysis reveals that *security stress* is the accumulation of uncertainties generated by the vexations of the conflict on state institutions, as well as social fears of the exacerbation of violence.

KEYWORDS: Armed conflict, internal enemy, security, security stress, state.

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1. Introduction

For more than half a century the Colombian state has experienced an armed conflict defined in terms of the counterinsurgent and anti-communist struggle, in the framework of the *National Security Doctrine*, based on the existence of an internal communist enemy (Leal 2003, 2011). In this sense, despite the presence of multiple armed actors outside the law, the FARC-EP occupied that position of enmity, with significant repercussions on the way in which the state was configured in security matters. The state's actions focused on combating and eliminating this guerrilla group, with the counterproductive consequence of leaving aside other equally pressing aspects of national security not directly related to the armed conflict (Niño and Castillo 2022). This is peculiar if one considers that, by the end of the 20th century, the Colombian state had already been alerted by academics (commissioned by the government) that other types of violence were operating in Colombian society that did not necessarily come from the armed conflict (Comisión de la Verdad 2022).

However, after the negotiated end of the FARC-EP in 2016, which led them to become a valid democratic interlocutor, the Colombian political system entered a context lacking definition as there was no antagonistic actor through which to maintain its identity. Thus, the current design of national security policies corresponds to an orthodox notion that is distant from the territorial reality, and which contrasts with contemporary violence and insecurity in Colombia. After the fifth year of the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the disassociation of this guerrilla group from the classic state security agenda, the deterioration of security and proliferation of political violence is notable and worrying. This situation is what, in the framework of this article, is known as *security stress*.

Security stress thus refers to a new scenario in which the great referent of enmity has disappeared and, therefore, a lack of definition regarding current security priorities and guidelines is evident, resulting in a state of anxiety and uncertainty at the state level and in society in general, with respect to the growing violence in the country. These circumstances are aggravated by the fact that Colombia lacks a clear security law that dictates its actions and the way to face the new challenges. A similar opinion is presented by Francisco Leal Buitrago (2011) to whom the handling of security by the Armed Forces has been broadly autonomous and the political direction seems to have been absent for most of the part since the 1960s.

Additionally, even though academic studies on security have begun to broaden their horizons, until the 1990s most of them continued to be based on the existence of an internal enemy to analyse the Colombian situation (Niño and Castillo 2022). In short, a deep and meticulous reflection on the subject is necessary to outline a renewed security policy that corresponds to this new challenging reality. A different scenario that is mainly characterized by the disappearance of the bipolar world of the Cold War on which the Colombian security agenda was built for many years. It is also a context in which other types of violence that were obscured by the conflict between the state and the FARC-EP are now a major concern.

Based on the above, this article is organised as follows. First, the methodological design is outlined, the research question and hypothesis to be addressed are presented, as well as the sources on which the analysis is based and the system of collecting information. Second, the theoretical approach is presented as a perspective through which to interpret the Colombian case. Third, the main point of the research is explained, which is to show the conceptual proposal of *security stress*, as a scenario under construction in the contemporary dynamics of security in Colombia. Finally, the conclusions and closing reflections are set out.

2. Methodological design: an introductory question and a hypothesis in construction

This article departs from the following research question: How does the transformation of the FARC-EP from an enemy to a legitimate political adversary affect the definition of security and its application in Colombia?

To answer the question, we argue that the disappearance of the great historical internal enemy in Colombia (FARC-EP) means the country faces a new situation of precarious security and transformation of the armed conflict, which escapes the old logic of the friend/enemy relationship and, therefore, a new focus and updated guidelines for action are needed to respond to current problems. Otherwise, both the state and society as a whole will continue to experience uncertainty regarding the advance of political violence which overwhelms institutional responses and blurs not only the role of the official agencies responsible for security but also puts in doubt the legitimacy of the state as the concentrator of the means of coercion and the guarantor of public peace. In this article, this scenario has been called *security stress*.

To undertake the analysis proposed here, we start from a theoretical framework that goes beyond the state as the monopoliser of legitimate violence (Weber 2006), to question the sources of legitimacy for its effective use. For this reason, Weberian approaches are complemented with the theories of Carl Schmitt on enmity and *ius belli*, or the prerogative of the state to declare war on those enemies who threaten the survival of the political community (Schmitt 2009). The conclusion reached from this short theoretical analysis is that, in effect, the Colombian state derived its justification for the use of force based on a definition of an internal enemy against which it reaffirmed itself as a legal and legitimate structure. However, the current transformation of the armed conflict calls into question the effectiveness of this way of building national and state identity, demonstrating the need to change this paradigm.

On the other hand, to test the research hypothesis, the years following the signing of the 2016 Havana Peace Agreement are analysed. Nevertheless, more than a chronological retelling of this period, this study aims to observe specific cases in which it is possible to evaluate multiple factors that contribute to *security stress*: the deterioration of security and the increase in political violence, as well as the lack of direction on how to face this new reality and the continued militarization of security; the attempt to renew the old discourse of internal enmity to understand the current situation, in contrast to the proliferation of diverse threats; the way in which state security agencies attempt to securitise issues that are apparently not their responsibility while other higher priority issues escape the agenda or receive a weak response; and, finally, the disconnect between the positive balance presented by the former government (Duque administration) and the territorial logics that show the precariousness of security.

3. From the monopoly on legitimate violence to the existence of an enemy as justification for its use. A theoretical approach

The discussion begins with the definition of the state as understood by Max Weber (2006), which is as the political community that, in a delimited territory, has managed to successfully monopolise the legitimate means of coercion. However, beyond confirming that violence is the specific but not exclusive means of the state, what is interesting for this part of the analysis are the sources that legitimise the use of violence, that is, when the exercise of this state prerogative is justified and who can be subject to it.

Weber does not offer a specific answer to this. On the contrary, the author refers to the legitimacy of power. In this sense, the modern state justifies its dominance insofar as it is based on a whole framework of legal provisions, based on rationality, which guarantee the obedience of citizens, always with the possibility of exercising legitimate violence when these norms are not recognised (Weber 2006). For this reason, to the extent that this possibility exists, Javier Franzé (2012) states that the violence the state apparatus can employ is not only physical but also symbolic. Similarly, the fact that, in the modern state, the means the state possesses have been separated from the officials who represent it, in a historical process of expropriation and concentration, ensures –in theory– that its decisions are objective, even in relation to the application of violence (Weber 2006).

Given this generality of concepts, the specific question about who may eventually be subject to such power eludes Weber's argument. However, the fact that there is talk about the real possibility of using force when norms are transgressed is a starting point to delve into this issue. On this point, the theoretical proposal of Carl Schmitt (2009) becomes relevant, not only because of his reflection on the friend/enemy relationship, but also because of his concept of *ius belli* or the right to "declare war" that falls on the state.

Thus, in the book *The Concept of the Political* (2009), Schmitt affirms that the eminently political distinction is that which divides individuals into friends and enemies. The enemy does not necessarily have to be good or bad, from a moral point of view; beautiful or ugly, from an aesthetic perspective; or an economic competitor. Rather, the enemy is simply that whose very existence poses a threat to the survival of a given political community. Furthermore, the presence of this "other" is crucial because it is based on this "other" that a human group recognises itself (Schmitt 2009). As Franzé (2004) argues, in Schmitt's theory, identities are not self-referential, but are constituted in the presence of those other actors that deny them and with whom there is the possibility of going to war. In his words, "[…] every identity necessarily has an opposite; the two are not at constant war but rather in permanent contrast, which can become war if either of them feels their identity is threatened by that of their opposite" (Franzé 2004: 150).

Therefore, it can be said that, for Schmitt, enmity is closely linked to the possibility of war. Thus, *ius belli* is the prerogative of the state to define the enemy(s) and to declare war on it/them (Schmitt 2009). In other words, the legitimacy of the use of force by the state is conditioned by the existence of a clear enemy against which the state must defend itself. It is often argued that these postulates of Schmitt only apply to interstate wars and not to civil wars within political communities (Franzé 2012), and by extension, they would not be applicable to internal armed conflicts like the Colombian case. Such is the opinion of Jacques Derrida (1998), who criticises Schmitt, affirming that his argument is based on a strict distinction between the inter- and intrastate planes.

However, in contrast to this affirmation, Schmitt does indeed consider the possible existence of enmity and conflict at the intrastate level. The author argues that in order to guarantee the applicability of legal norms and avoid the possible dissolution of a political community, the state must ensure the establishment of a situation of normality and order through effective pacification within its borders (Schmitt 2009). Likewise, in Schmitt's *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Notion of the Political* (2016), published after the previously referenced text, through a historical analysis of the changes around war involved in the appearance of the figure of the partisan, he reaches a resounding conclusion: "A declaration of war is always a declaration of enmity, this goes without saying; and this is true *a forteriori* of a declaration of civil war" (Schmitt 2016:

88). From this, it thus follows that the *ius belli* is also the power to define internal enemies in order to eventually declare war on them.

In short, the state monopoly on legitimate violence spoken of by Weber, made real through the possibility of making use of it in the declaration of war, and about which Schmitt theorises, is legitimate as long as there is an "other", an enemy on which to apply this monopoly as soon as it becomes threatening. However, this is only a partial solution to the question from which this section started because who can be defined as an enemy remains to be clarified. Therefore, it is necessary to consider what is implied in the construction of the enemy.

The threat contained within enmity comes down to the fact that the enemy represents everything that one is not, that is, all those attributes opposite to he who considers the "other" converge in the enemy. For this reason, like Schmitt, Umberto Eco (2011) maintains that the construction of the enemy is essential to give meaning to one's own identity, but he adds that its existence offers a way of measuring one's own value: "Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity, but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our value system and to show, by facing it, our value" (Eco 2011: 7, 8). César Niño and Alberto Castillo (2022: 80) have a similar opinion, defining the friend/enemy distinction as:

[…] marking the border of a political community that establishes certain values which guide the behaviour of society as a whole, and everything that is outside politics is considered an enemy, since it calls into question the values of the political community.

On the other hand, as was previously mentioned, in Schmitt's theory the enemy does not have to give rise to characterisations of a moral, aesthetic, or economic nature. Nevertheless, Schmitt does not outright deny that this can happen in reality (Schmitt 2009). In fact, the author affirms that because the friend/enemy duo is a relationship whose intensity can lead to violence, it takes its strength from any distinction so that, in reality, it is plausible that the enemy is defined through value judgements (Schmitt 2009). In this same line of thought, Reinhart Koselleck (2012) argues that, in language, enmity is constructed from the implementation of what he calls *counter-concepts,* which involves the use of contrary concepts to define the "other", in light of those one uses to define oneself.

At this point, to give an answer to the question that opened this section, one can recapitulate what has been said in the following way: the place of enmity is occupied by that, or those, who represent everything that one is not and, therefore, its or their existence implies a difference that, if necessary, could become a threat to the community. For this reason, the state, as the monopoliser of legitimate violence and the right to declare war, would be legitimated to make use of these attributes with a view to defending its integrity. Ultimately, the definition of a clear enemy, understood as that "other" who can threaten me, is crucial to justify the application of the means of state coercion and the subjection of the enemy to violence.

4. Security stress: what happens when the enemy is lost?

Turning our view to reality: what is the relevance of these theoretical postulates for the Colombian case in the framework of this article?

Since the mid-20th century, the Colombian state has been experiencing an internal armed conflict which, despite having multiple faces over time, has largely been defined by the counterinsurgent and anti-communist

struggle (Niño and Castillo 2022) and, more recently, by the international discourse of the War on Terror, which emerged after the 9/11 attacks and came to play an important role in defining the situation of violence and perceived threats, to the point that there was even talk of the need to combat terrorism in Colombia (Delgado 2016). Similarly, in the terms of Schmitt, it is worth mentioning that throughout these decades –not only in the country but across Latin America– security was closely linked to the National Security Doctrine, which militarised security affairs based on the fight against an internal enemy (Leal 1992).

In this sense, although the number of actors outside the law that have challenged state sovereignty over the years is varied and complex, it can be said that, of all of them, the FARC-EP stood out as the great internal enemy of the Colombian political community, until its reincorporation into civilian life after the signing of the Havana Peace Agreement in 2016. In this regard, Niño and Castillo (2022: 81) argue that: "For almost six decades, the FARC-EP were that 'other' which operated as an enemy, that is, outside the limits set by the political community through the institutions and democratic norms that make up the Colombian state". In short, this guerrilla group became the identity that denied what the Colombian state and political community understood as their founding values and, therefore, occupied the position of enmity that legitimised the use of legitimate violence by the state apparatus.

This brought several consequences for the way in which the state was structured in terms of security. Given the definition of an internal enemy, the concept of security that guided the actions of the state was understood from the counterinsurgent struggle and focused on explaining and combating the guerrilla threat, neglecting and ignoring other sources of insecurity that were not directly related to the armed conflict (Niño and Castillo 2022). This became more evident in the first decade of the 21st century when, in view of the disillusion caused by the failure of the peace dialogues in El Caguán, the state would retake an even stronger warlike and militaristic vision of the situation of violence in the country, leading to an expansion of its military capabilities (Delgado 2016; González 2020; Niño and Castillo 2022). Thus, investment in security increased to more than 5% of GDP between 2002 and 2010, and new units were created within the army, the navy, the air force and the police (Delgado 2016). Finally, this enmity also affected the population which, in various moments, was closely watched and, in some cases, judged by military courts, under the suspicion of insurgency and communism (Leal, 1992 2003).

In short, the Colombian state was configured around an enemy that gave meaning and legitimacy to its actions (Gutiérrez 2008; Ronderos and Marín-López 2022), that is, an opposition of enmity was created, in which two opposing identities faced each other, in a fight that was framed in terms of the survival or disappearance of the political community.

However, the signing of the Havana Peace Agreement in 2016 changed everything. On one hand, the conversion of the FARC-EP from a group outside the law into a democratic political force entailed, in Mouffean terms, a transformation of the relationship from one of enmity to one of adversaries (Mouffe 1999, Niño and Palma 2018). On the other hand, with the disappearance of the great historical internal enemy, the state had to face the problem of having defined its security guidelines and actions based on this for more than half a century, to accommodate a more complex vision of the problems of the country, and therefore: "Perhaps, now more than ever, it is necessary to understand security as a polysemic issue, in continuous redefinition and resignification" (Niño and Castillo 2022: 83). Based on this, it is valid to affirm that the Colombian identity constructed in close relation to said enemy, is today adrift and without referents against which to reaffirm

itself, something that, in turn, brings difficulties in the moment of not only defining new security guidelines but also the sources of legitimacy for the use of force concentrated in the state.

Given this, it is time to return to the central question of this article: How does the transformation of the FARC-EP from an enemy to a legitimate political adversary affect the definition of security and its application in Colombia?

The change of actors and the transformation of the antagonistic phenomena against the Colombian establishment produce a scenario of growing tensions between the territorial reality and the strategic decision-making in terms of security policy. Based on the above, the disconnects between decision-making levels and day-to-day security (Huysmans 2011) are the window of opportunity for security stress. With the end of the armed FARC-EP, the Colombian political system entered a context lacking definition as there was no antagonistic actor that maintained a consistent identity. Effectively, the system reacted to the security logics in the country in a disorganised (Aneshensel 1992), imprecise, and overwhelmed way, producing both discursive and operational failures by official security actors.

Thus, security stress is the accumulation of uncertainties generated by the negative effects of the conflict on state institutions, which are related to social fears of the exacerbation of violence. This uncertainty is experienced by both the state architecture and society in general. In effect, the process of disarmament and desecuritisation of the FARC-EP in the national security agenda (Castillo and Niño 2020; Knudsen 2001), produced an institutional trauma of identifying and defining security in the country with the loss of the enemy (Niño and Palma 2017). At the same time, while political narratives began to involve ex-combatants in political and civilian dynamics, political violence continued to cut across society, a situation that triggered a generalised trauma of constant insecurity and collective anxiety.

Accordingly, the architecture and design of security policy during the administration of Iván Duque (2018-2022) coincided with the third, fourth, and fifth years of the implementation of the Peace Agreement (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional 2020), which brought with them serious problems of increased criminal governances, political violence, and difficulties in materialising territorial peace (Ríos and Gago 2018, Ríos and González 2021). Specifically, between 2016 and 2021, 1,270 social leaders and 299 signatories of the Agreement have been murdered, and 179 massacres were recorded between January 2020 and November 2021 (Indepaz 2021a). According to the Peace Accords Matrix of the Kroc Institute (2021), only 30% of what was agreed in Havana has been fulfilled.

Consequently, the situation of imbalance in security policy goes through the institutional abstraction of the social complexities and territorial dynamics after the disarmament of the FARC-EP. Following this logic, the state still retains orthodox notions about the enemies of the establishment, which is to say that, in terms of the protection of ex-combatants from the former FARC-EP, the forces responsible for security and the protection of rights have seriously breached the Peace Agreement. In effect, it can be inferred that, despite ex-combatants moving to a state of legality by laying down their weapons and leaving behind illicit activities, the state continues to marginalise these individuals. Although the public force no longer fights them in the same way as when they were part of the internal enemy, the institutions do not protect them either.

In this sense, as a result of security stress and non-compliance with what was agreed by the Colombian state in terms of security guarantees for ex-combatants, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling declaring an

Unconstitutional State of Affairs: a state ruling that calls the attention to the massive and generalized cases of the violation of constitutional rights that affect a significant number of people (Corte Constitucional 2020). Consequently, the Colombian judicial branch recognises that the basic rights of ex-combatants have been ignored and made invisible, and that the signatories of the Agreement have been left without the protection of public institutions. This highlights the seriousness of the situation of the country, and even makes it clear that, although the former members of the armed FARC-EP have created a political party under the umbrella of constitutional guarantees for electoral participation, the Partido Comunes (Commons Party), they continue to be marginalised actors and the target of political violence (Pinto 2022; Ríos, Cairo, and Gómez 2023).

While this has occurred, the government has presented as operational successes facts like, from 2018 to 2021, it managed to demobilise 994 people belonging to groups such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, National Liberation Army) and dissidents of the FARC (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional 2021), the reduction of illicit crops from 173,000 to 143,000 hectares between 2018 and the first half of 2021, as well as a 33% increase in actions against illegal mining. In this sense, the government has also presented as an achievement the increase in operations against and captures of important leaders of groups outside the law (El País 2021). In this case, security stress materialises in that, while the government reports data on improvements in the fight against criminal factions, people across the country experience other security realities and dynamics of territorial violence, such as the high levels of targeting and assassinating social leaders in municipalities like Morales, Cali, Caldono, and Alto Baudó (Indepaz 2021b). Additionally, in 2021, at least 73,000 people were displaced by violence, an increase of 200% (El Espectador 2022), a situation that reveals a huge disconnect between high politics and the daily life of the population in terms of security. The disconnect between the national, regional and local orders is evident.

This panorama is produced by the atomisation of violence in armed groups, the clash between irregular actors, the absence of the state in peripheral areas, the territorial control of criminal groups, and the unleashing of forced confinement that, in 2021, deprived around 100,000 people of their rights (El Espectador 2022; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2021).

However, aside from the serious humanitarian and territorial security situations, there were other events between 2019 and 2021 that generated greater stress in the country's security. From 2019 onwards, social unrest began to take shape and quickly turned into national protests around various issues such as: taxes and low wages, the need for greater investment in education, state corruption, the lack of protection of social leaders and peace signers, and the timid application of the Havana Peace Agreement (BBC 2019). In April 2021, a new social uprising erupted due to civilian discontent with the tax reform proposed by the Ministry of Finance. The protests led to a national strike that, under the orthodox security perspective of the Duque administration, became involved in the security agenda as a threat to the establishment. This led to the use of the military to support the police against the protests, resulting in human rights violations (CIDH 2021; Uprimny 2021), disappearances, and an eroded legitimacy of the state forces. The population was, at the same time, the victim of both irregular actors and the state (Ucko and Marks 2018).

In this latter case, it can clearly be seen how that definition of security, which for so many years was linked to the existence of an internal enemy and the armed conflict, refuses to disappear and shows no signs of transformation. Nevertheless, this is not only a problem of the state because, despite studies on security in the country that have begun to broaden their perspective in recent decades (Niño and Castillo 2022), it is also true that until well into the 1990s, a definition could still be found in academic works in which: "[…] given the

attributes of the internal enemy […] the difference between the police role of security and the military acquis of defence [did] not have a place" (Niño and Castillo 2022: 83).

Therefore, within the framework of security stress, security strategies, policies, and operations were configured in the country, but disconnected from the context of everyday security. For example, in March 2021, in the municipality of Calamar, Guaviare, a military operation was carried out against alias Gentil Duarte, leader of the FARC-EP dissidents. A minor was killed as a result of that armed incursion, bringing to mind events of 2019 in which, after a bombardment by the Army, 7 children were killed in a camp of irregular groups. That event led to the resignation of the then Minister of Defence, Guillermo Botero (El Tiempo 2019). However, in the 2021 event, the new Minister of Defence, Diego Molano, controversially referred to the children recruited by armed groups as "war machines", to justify the offensive actions of the state in the territories in which those groups are found (BBC 2021).

This case of the "war machines" does nothing more than ratify what was said above: the old perspective and obsolete discourse on security, anchored in internal enmity, continues trying to renew itself, defining those who are outside the law with counter-conceptual qualifiers (as used to be done with the FARC-EP) even when the current circumstances do nothing more than confirm that this has no place in the new post-agreement reality. Thus, as long as Colombian security forces continue with the old and disconnected security manoeuvres, operational errors and failures in decision-making result in infractions of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights, bringing with them dehumanisation through discourse, and a consequent loss of state legitimacy with respect to the use of force.

On the other hand, security stress continues in the form of errors in public policy facing the territorial reality. For example, the Minister of Defence appears in scenarios which, in terms of role and mission, do not correspond to him, while in those that do, his function is blurred and decontextualised. Proof of this is that, in January 2022, the a fore mentioned Minister Molano, announced that there was an international network of agitators led by Chilean citizens behind acts of civil disorder like the "colatón"1 in the Bogotá public transport system (Caracol Radio 2022), trying –discursively speaking– to revive the old idea that internal enmity is a manifestation of external enmity. This idea is a legacy of the National Security Doctrine, which, although it understood international communism as the great enemy, focused on combating its local manifestations (Leal 2003).

The fact that this Doctrine still resonates in the background and given the absence of a regulatory framework like the National Security and Defence Law, does not allow a focus or an institutional definition that is more in line with the new realities. In other words, while the Minister perceived the "colatón" in public transport as a threat to Colombian security, combats between the ELN and dissidents of the FARC-EP left 23 dead in the same month, raising serious questions about the priorities of the Ministry of Defence and, in turn, blurring its functions. It is worth mentioning that today, those armed groups control strategic areas of the Arauca Department, on the border with Venezuela (DW 2022).

Another sign of the disconnect is that, during the visit of President Duque and the military leadership to Arauca on January 16th, 2022, in the framework of a Security Council, only 18.4 kilometres away members

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[1] The "*colatón*" was a call to citizens to enter the Bogotá public transport system without paying, as a way of protesting against high ticket prices.

of the ELN were walking through the main streets of La Esmeralda, in the municipality of Arauquita, terrifying the civilian population (Blu Radio 2022). That these events are happening today revives the old fear that Colombian society is besieged and surrounded, and strengthens collective anxiety (Krickel-Choi 2022). Similarly, it is another argument to raise questions about the priorities, focus and management of security in the face of growing violence.

In summary, the political transformation of the FARC-EP and its disappearance as the great enemy created the conditions for the state to come face to face with a problem it had ignored for a long time: its inability to think about security beyond enmity with a counterpart through which it gave meaning to its own identity as a concentrator of the means of coercion and with the prerogative of declaring war. This is why, even if it is late, there must be debate and deep reflection to achieve security guidelines that make it possible to generate institutional responses more in line with the new realities. Otherwise, both the Colombian state and society in general will continue to face security stress, a changing and polysemic scenario that generates uncertainty, and even perplexity and paralysis, regarding a situation of violence that seems to worsen every day.

5. Conclusions

This article began by reviewing a theoretical discussion about the State as monopoliser of the means of coercion, and the existence of a clear enemy as a basis for the legitimate use of force. However, it does not try to defend this approach. Instead, as it has been demonstrated through the analysis of concrete events, the current security problems in Colombia are produced by continuing to use old solutions in new realities. In effect, this critique aims to open a path for reflection on the way in which the security architecture in Colombia functions, and how the fact that it continues to be anchored in the idea of an internal enemy, even after the disappearance of the FARC-EP, creates the perfect scenario for the escalation of violence and *security stress*.

As a consequence, the current situation in Colombia, characterized by diffuse threats and the transformation of the armed conflict, cannot be understood solely through the rigid idea of the existence of a single enemy. This one-dimensional approach has led to several negative consequences. First, it has exposed the lack of clear guidelines in defense matters, resulting in the blurring of the functions of security agencies. Moreover, it has revealed the absence of definition of the scope and limits of the security agenda, further exacerbating the situation. As a result, issues that should not be addressed from a security perspective have been securitized, while weak responses to other issues and situations closely linked to the conflict raise questions about state priorities. To address this complex situation, it is necessary to adopt a multidimensional approach that considers the diverse and dynamic nature of the threats facing Colombia. This requires a comprehensive redefinition of the country's security agenda, based on a thorough analysis of the root causes of the conflict and a recognition of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political factors that contribute to insecurity. Moreover, a multi-stakeholder approach that involves civil society, academia, and international actors is crucial to ensure effective implementation of any security strategy.

Second, the lack of clear definition of security guidelines has resulted in positive reports from the government on the fight against criminality, while simultaneously showing alarming figures regarding the protection of the civilian population. The situation of the ex-combatants of the former FARC-EP is a noteworthy example in this context. Despite having chosen the path of legality, they continue to face persecution and their rights are unrecognized. This can be attributed to the discourse of internal enmity that persists and categorizes them as the "other," which for a long time posed a threat to the community. Such a discourse refuses to disappear and continues to perpetuate the marginalization of ex-combatants in post-

conflict Colombia. To address this issue, the government needs to ensure that the rights of ex-combatants are respected, and they are integrated into society. This requires a comprehensive approach that involves not only the government but also civil society, international organizations, and the private sector. Furthermore, there is a need for a shift in the discourse around ex-combatants, which must move beyond the one-dimensional notion of them being "the other" to a more inclusive perspective that recognizes their contributions to society and their potential as agents of change.

Finally, the phenomenon of *security stress* characterizes the current situation in Colombia, where state institutions and citizens face a disconnection between the realities on the ground and the strategic dimensions of public policy. The persistence of political violence and social uncertainty reveals a weakness in the orthodox and binary security logics that guide decision-makers. Focusing solely on seizing shipments of illicit drugs or weapons from criminal structures is insufficient in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the country. Instead, a more comprehensive approach is necessary to tackle the underlying causes of insecurity and promote sustainable territorial security.

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