Citizenship in Times of Exception: The Turn to Security and the Politics of Human Rights in Valle del Cauca, Colombia

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CITIZENSHIP IN TIMES OF EXCEPTION: THE TURN TO SECURITY AND THE POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VALLE DEL CAUCA, COLOMBIA

A Dissertation Presented

by

ERIKA MARQUEZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Sociology
CITIZENSHIP IN TIMES OF EXCEPTION: THE TURN TO SECURITY AND THE POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VALLE DEL CAUCA, COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

CITIZENSHIP IN TIMES OF EXCEPTION: THE TURN TO SECURITY AND THE POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VALLE DEL CAUCA, COLOMBIA

FEBRUARY 2012

ERIKA MARQUEZ MONTANO, B.A., UNIVERSIDAD EXTERNADO DE COLOMBIA
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Since at least the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, security has emerged as a major political paradigm built upon an expansive definition of state control emphasizing not only the mere policing of violations of law, but the means through which the state asserts itself as a particular political entity through the militarized management of social actors both inside and outside its borders. Through an analysis of the case of Colombia's Democratic Security policy, this dissertation documents the transformations of social mobilization within the boundaries of the newly politicized, and newly globalized, security state.

The research builds upon six months of ethnographic work and in-depth interviews with Valle del Cauca regional chapters of pacifist feminist grassroots network Women's Peaceful Route, with human rights advocacy organization Permanent Committee for Human Rights, and with afrodescendant movement Process of Black Communities. Analyzing the work of these organizations, this dissertation assesses the uneven impact of security policies on social actors claiming territorial, cultural, and political rights. Through these organizations the work illuminates how security is gendered and
racialized, while it is strongly resisted by the movements’ challenge to the model of
citizenship promoted by the state. The research poses that, no longer able to see human
rights work in terms of the defense of individuals, social movements have instead
redeployed the concept of human rights as a mode of articulating radical democratic
demands reflecting a collective social struggle.

Illustrating the connections between neoliberal development and security, and its
impact for afrodescendants and women’s claims for rights and recognition, the
dissertation shows how global discourses on security influence the constitution of new
social identities through the constant re-iteration of the question 'who is the terrorist,' and
the subsequent re-articulation of new parameters of citizenship. Beyond Colombia’s case,
this research advances existing scholarship regarding the technologies of statehood in the
post September 11 era, at the same time that it contributes to an understanding of social
mobilization in the context of global and hemispheric governance.
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INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE SECURITY STATE

In 2003, the Colombian government launched its Defense and Democratic Security policy—a comprehensive strategy designed to strengthen the rule of law and to recover territorial control from illegal armed groups and drug traffickers. According to governmental rhetoric, the main feature of the policy (hereinafter, Democratic Security) is that society, and not the armed forces, is in charge of carrying out state security. Amidst the highest rates of popularity a Colombian president has ever enjoyed (Posada Carbó, 2006), Alvaro Uribe Vélez’ government (2002-2006 and 2006-2010) positioned Democratic Security, the main pillar of his mandate, as the greatest indicator of his administration’s success. For its detractors, however, Democratic Security represented nothing less than a thoroughly authoritarian policy built over the innumerable human rights violations its text implicitly endorsed.

While Democratic Security has come to be at the center of both public policy and popular rhetoric in Colombia, the implications of such centrality remain largely understudied. As a contribution to fill such gap, this work analyzes the daily life of Democratic Security in the practice of social movements in Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Focusing on the effects of security on social movements, I address the question of how state and social movements are transformed under a political order based on the logic of security.

Democratic Security appears as the quintessential manifestation of an emerging
paradigm of state control that rests on the idea of security. If in previous decades etiological, disciplinary, and punitive models of social control\(^1\) were dominant, we can say that today we live in a time of security. Under the security paradigm, the system of constitutional guarantees dilutes in order to protect a higher interest: security. In this model, the state punitive apparatus is conceived as not only facing the violation of criminal codes, but a threat against its own existence.

Colombia’s adoption of the security model is, without a doubt, a case exemplifying such paradigmatic transformations. Since the governmental attempt to have an Anti-Terrorist Reform and a Law of National Security approved by the Congress in 2003, it was apparent that a change in power rationality was at work. These legal reforms suggested that under Alvaro Uribe’s government not only was there a switch from constitutionalism to exceptionality as the prevalent state model, (Carvajal, 2008) the governmental discourse of this regime, moreover, stressed security over plain military repression or penal control. As Posada Carbó (2006) points out, “Uribe kept insisting that he was not seeking to install a police state, but "security for all" as a "founding value of democracy.""

This discursive transformation seemed to draw from changes in the rhetoric of security that started to manifest itself at the end of the Cold War. The doctrine of National Security, that domestically pursued the destruction of the internal enemy and, internationally, the military dissuasion of foreign threats, was replaced by the rhetoric of democratic, human, or shared securities. In Latin America, this transition manifested in

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\(^1\) For a discussion of etiological models of social control see Sumner’s work (1994) on deviance and Pavarini’s (1983) presentation of bourgeois criminological theories. For disciplinary approaches of control see Foucault (1979) and Cohen (1985); and for the turn from a ‘social’ state to a ‘punitive’ state, see Garland (2001).
the approval of the 1987 Peace Agreement of Esquipulas II, which created a Security Commission for Central America, as part of a comprehensive effort to reconstruct and democratize Central America after years of military conflict in the region. The Security Commission, reactivated in the 1994 International Conference for Peace and Development of Central America, finally formulated the 1995 Central American Democratic Security Treaty (Tratado Marco de Seguridad Democrática en Centroamérica) from San Pedro Sula, Honduras. In this treaty, Central American governments, without the intervention of foreign powers that had previously been key in the military conflicts throughout the region, decided to put an end to the defense doctrines based on the ideas of internal or external enemies and to formulate a security model based on mutual cooperation, civilian control over the military, politico-diplomatic (and not military) direction of national defense agendas, among others. (Zamora Corderos, 2005)

The Colombian national government has, in a way, subscribed to this paradigmatic shift from national to democratic security by claiming that its model of security is a democratic one, rejecting the idea of the internal enemy and focusing on the equal protection of all citizens. For instance, in the presentation of Democratic Security policy, president Uribe stated,

Democratic Security is different from the conception of authoritarian regimes, which supported ideological hegemony and political exclusion. This Government does not embrace conceptions from other times, such as “National Security” in Latin America, which considered an ideological group or political party as an “internal enemy”. We predicate that everyone is welcome in democracy. The opposition, those who dissent from the Government’s ideas or its party, will be protected with the same care that the friends or supporters of the Government. There is no contradiction between security and democracy.” (Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática. Carta del Presidente de la República, Alvaro
Yet, on the other hand, Democratic Security draws on the version of security that in Latin America has followed the implementation of free trade agreements in the framework of regional neoliberalization. Such agreements have mediated the emergence of a new hemispheric security perspective built upon the idea that terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration are threats for the region’s economic stability. This perspective, that broadly targets whatever it identifies with a terrorist, existential threat for the region, substitutes constitutionalism for exceptionality, while it claims that this substitution is fundamental to ensure every citizen’s security.

Indeed, throughout President Uribe’s two terms in power, measures emblematic of Democratic Security were justified as conditions of survival for Colombian society. In this way, while Democratic Security’s measures such as massive detentions limit due process, prohibition of administrative capture, right to defense, among other liberal democratic principles, they are presented as the necessary mechanisms to effectively protect a presumably endangered citizenry.

At the same time, Democratic Security depends on a climate of consensus—a climate that relies on the discursive principle that only through security can society’s subsistence and best interests be guaranteed. Under the official rhetoric an agreement is presupposed that society is a homogeneous body that fights an internal common enemy—not a conflict, but a legitimate crusade of the good society to eliminate a minority of deviant elements. As President Uribe puts it in a speech before the armed forces in 2003: “This is not a war. This is not a conflict. This is a law-abiding democracy at the service
of 44 million citizens, defied by some rich terrorists.” In this rhetorical maneuver, the language of war is substituted by a reference to democracy at the service of citizens—perhaps one of the most recurrent tropes in governmental discourse in the last years.

The glue that holds this discursive apparatus together is the idea that addressing security risks is above all a necessary part of the path towards welfare and development. Security measures appear indistinguishably linked to the possibility of economic progress—citizens must support their own securitization if they are to enjoy improved living conditions. The strategy of consolidation of Democratic Security (2007) states this principle when it points out that there is a “virtuous circle of security” which implies that the more security, the more trust and stability and consequently, given this climate, greater private investment resulting in higher economic growth.

Simultaneously, Democratic Security’s appeal to ideas of democracy and development are inseparable from a substantial military program. If security, as previously noted, equates to development under liberalism, it also means war. In his 1978-1979 lectures at the College of France, Michel Foucault has noted this founding tension in modern government pointing out that liberalism exists as both a promise of democracy and as the capacity to wage war. In the Colombian case this tension is constantly evoked in the dynamic between state and social movements, where the latter not only denounce the state’s role in furthering neoliberal development, but also its responsibility in implementing authoritarian measures to achieve such a goal.

At the core of the social movement critique of the logic of security is the collapse of the system of constitutional guarantees that such a logic entails. Because governmental

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rhetoric assumes a univocal civil society fighting against a common internal enemy in the pursuit of a shared development project, it comes to support a military and intelligence apparatus in charge of identifying potential violators of this presumed social pact. Policing of such nature provoked an increase in violations to civil liberties, especially for human rights defenders and grassroots organizations denouncing governmental indictment of political opposition. As part of the so-called war against terrorism, governmental action targeted not only guerrillas but also political opponents or even unarmed citizens, often executed by the army and then falsely reported as insurgents.

As part of the military measures deployed with Democratic Security, military and police action have ordinarily relied on massive and selective detentions of peasants, human rights defenders, and activists; illegal data gathering by intelligence bodies; restrictions to carry combustible or food in conflict, usually rural, areas; census and identification of population in conflict areas. Rhetorically, the government and its ideologues have produced a prolific body of literature in defense of Democratic Security and its theses, which have been consigned in written media, books, speeches, and in presidential oral interventions in popular open forums baptized as community councils.

Throughout President Uribe’s terms, governmental rhetoric gained great traction as it drew on the idea that there is a terrorist threat that can only be managed through security mechanisms. Militarily, this meant the implementation of both strategies of low intensity war against social sectors and, simultaneously, elements of conventional war including the massive display of artillery, great troop concentrations, reorganization of military divisions in more specialized units, etcetera. Ideologically, a counter-terrorist agenda became the main expressed motivation of Democratic Security, one that conveyed
a dire urgency to repeal the ultimate threat of terrorism.

It is important to stress that despite the emphasis on the “democratic” component in the Democratic Security model, it is this military-ridden model that provided coherence to the entire project. Development was thus tied to successful military action, and even though development maintains a great centrality in governmental discourse, this cannot be understood in isolation from the militaristic project that guarantees the condition for its execution. Development, in this model, became expressed in a variety of ways, as prosperity, welfare, economic progress, but always attached to security.

At the same time, if the presidential program self-proclaimed as “democratic” because it produced protection for everybody, it praised itself not less for being the result of democracy with everybody. While military tactics and the criminalization of dissidence constituted one side of the security edifice, mechanisms like welfare programs aimed to ensure greater cohesion around the security project. Other efforts to consolidate security included periodical governmental interventions to garner support among social movements. The sponsorship of a new indigenous organization in opposition to the traditional, progressive indigenous national leadership in early 2009 constitutes only one glaring example of how the military strategy of Democratic Security is balanced by intense campaigns to strengthen the ideological tenets of the security discourse. Significantly, during the controversy that followed the constitution of the new indigenous organization, its leaders declared that they supported Democratic Security arguing that "we (indigenous people) are the government." (Nasa ACIN, 2010).

Following both coercive and ideological threads of Democratic Security policy, this work engages with the conditions that allow for its emergence in Colombia, as well
as with the implications for citizenship in general and social mobilization in particular. Connecting Democratic Security with larger security formations, I address the question about the relationship between security and current economic designs. In particular, to what extent is security central for contemporary forms of neoliberalism? By studying Democratic Security, I address the relationship between global designs, national policies, and local fields of power that constitute security as a political rationality. On the other hand, by analyzing security as a distinct rationality with its own particular governmental technologies, I assess its effects on the social. The questions that emerge refer to the way in which social mobilization confronts, negotiates, and transforms security logics, and what kind of trajectories do movements follow when they are subject to state security policies. In those cases, does their project gravitate towards scenarios of greater autonomy or does the organization become atomized?

*The Nexus Security - Social Movements in Local and Global Perspective*

My entry point to the study of security is the intersection between state policies and social mobilization in the department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia. By examining social mobilization, I follow Mitchell’s (1999) understanding that “the state is a structural effect—not a real structure, but a powerful and metaphysical effect that sustains the myth of its coherence, unity, and distinction from society” (Puri, 2008). In this research, both the mythical construction of security as an articulated, intelligible project, and the materiality of its measures are analyzed through the experience of social movements and organizations. Throughout the chapters, administrative powers, use of legal faculties under states of exception, exercise of territorial sovereignty, and other forms of enacting
state security policies, will be revised in light of state-social movements relations in Valle del Cauca.

Studying security as an effect responds to the idea that security is configured in the struggles between state and social movements. Challenging administrative or judicial security measures is, for instance, an opportunity for social organizations to produce a language of contention and for the state to shape its repertoire of responses against the perceived threats to security. In the same way, ambiguities in the use of security vocabulary illustrate how conceptions of security are built. In other words, it is not only the government’s application of draconian security measures disproportionately affecting social movements or social movements’ constant criticism of Democratic Security what configures security as rationality and governmental technique, but the sustained interaction of both security and mobilization fields.

An example of the ambiguities in using the security discourse often occurs when both state and social movements appeal to the concept of “human” security. The fact that emerging conceptions of “democratic” and “human” security are invoked as rhetorical tools in support of vastly different programs to ensure security by state and social movements indicates that security is far from a program hierarchically imposed by the state. Rather, it is a field defined in competing understandings of social life. These conflicting conceptions call for an analysis of security within and outside the state apparatus and of what cross-links occur among state-sponsored and non-state conceptions of security. For instance, a pressing question in this type of inquiry would be, when the state appeals to a program of “human” (non-militarized) security to reinforce its sovereignty in marginalized communities, what is left of the national (defense-oriented)
security model? Or, conversely, when a social movement uses “human” security as an ideological platform, what idea of development underlines its vision? When social movements pose alternative security conceptions, do they become agents spreading the security paradigm? Is it possible for the state to develop a truly democratic security model?

These questions, I argue, can most properly be addressed through an analysis of social organizations working on the ground in Valle del Cauca. While defying the state-endorsed idea of security, they still operate in the shadow of an all-encompassing security paradigm. It is this tension that I document when I examine, on the one hand, the effect of Democratic Security on social movements, and on the other, alternative conceptions of security that movements formulate as well as the extent to which their alternatives present a challenge to the principles of security. Ultimately, I intend to disentangle the discursive transformations brought about by the struggles around security and their effect at institutional and movement levels.

Of special concern in this research is the impact of global security discourses on state and social movements. There is widespread agreement that after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a new era of anti-terrorist security has emerged. In the post-2001 security regime there is a predominance of the logic of security in more and more varied fields of social life, from immigration to policing, disaster prevention, urban management and ecology (Risley, 2006), at the same time that exceptionality substitutes constitutionalism as the main framework for state action. Yet, as I show in chapter 1, there are important continuities in security discourses. The emergence of the Homeland Security apparatus in the United States, for instance, can be linked to landmarks in
American politics such as the anti-communist program of McCarthyism and the domestic militarization that paralleled the Vietnam war, while, as Davis (2005) points out, the terrorist has become only an updated version of the traditionally racialized internal enemy.

At the same time, security is tied to particular regimes of political economy. As global models of security unfold with the trends of capitalist accumulation, current security policies can be seen, essentially, as an expression of neoliberal globalization. This being the case, social movements’ reading of security as ravage is particularly relevant, and this work largely focuses on the consequences of Democratic Security for afrodescendants, peasant communities, as it is in their territories and lives where the continuous militarization enabled by security underpins the super-exploitation of natural resources and people. In this analysis I follow De Sousa Santos’ (2008) suggestion that security discourses and practices are fundamental tools to facilitate the non-contested extraction of natural resources in ancestral territories. In chapter 2 I explore this idea and also touch on the argument that since it is racial and ethnic communities that have come to be identified as threats to economic liberalization, it is possible to say that security is a racialized project. At the same time, inscribed in the security program is also its gendered character as it intends to impose a militaristic logic with devastating effects disproportionately impacting women. As I will show in chapter 3, the national women’s movement has denounced, state security policies further create situations of insecurity for women within the Colombian conflict rather than mitigate the violations of armed actors against women.

By discussing social movements’ responses to security policies I also explore
these policies’ impact on citizenship. In chapter 4, I examine how social organizations formulate alternative conceptions of security through their discourses and practices around rights. Women, and their conception of women’s rights as anti-patriarchal and anti-militaristic, afrodescendants through collective rights in their ancestral territories, and human rights advocates with a vision of human rights as part of social struggles, challenge and redefine state conceptions of security. With chapter 4, I further the argument, suggested throughout the previous chapters, that using existing traditions of human rights mobilization, social movements connect the defense of life, severely threatened with the biopolitical governance of Democratic Security, and the movements’ larger collective projects. Discussing the experience of social movements in times of security, I conclude that human rights mobilization has been key for both launching a critique to the ongoing securitization of society, but also to envisioning citizenship within and beyond the security paradigm.

**Mapping the Terrain**

This work examines the impact and negotiation of security policies by social organizations in the southwestern department of Valle del Cauca in Colombia. The analysis is based on seven months of field research, mostly done in the fall of 2008 and on 35 in-depth interviews with organizations’ participants and with members of human rights organizations. I did additional research and held follow-up conversations with organizations’ members during shorter visits in the summers of 2007, 2009, and 2010. During this period I also maintained periodical electronic correspondence with a few activists from Cali.
My ethnographic research involved work with Comité Permanente para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos - Valle (Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, or CPDH) and Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres - Valle (Women’s Peaceful Route). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the following organizations: Proceso de Comunidades Negras (Black Communities Process - PCN); Proceso de Unidad Popular del Suroccidente Colombiano (Process of Popular Unity from the Colombian Southwest - PUPSOC) and its Human Rights Network “Francisco Isaías Cifuentes” (Red de Derechos Humanos “Francisco Isaías Cifuentes”); Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (Foundation Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners – FCSP); Asociación Nacional de Ayuda Solidaria (National Association of Aid in Solidarity - ANDAS); Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (Workers’ Unitary Central Human Rights Comisión); Colectivo Feminista “Fulanas, Menganas y Perencejo” (Feminist Collective “Fulanas, Menganas y Perencejo”). Additional interviews were conducted with individual members of Colectivo de Abogados Suyana (Suyana—Lawyers Collective); Movimiento de los Sin Tierra – Nietos de Quintín Lame (Landless Movement – Quintín Lame’s Gradsons); Foro Nacional por Colombia (Nacional Forum for Colombia); and Coordinación Colombia - Europa – Estados Unidos (Coordination Colombia - Europe – United Status – CCEEU).

I also interviewed or had conversations with representatives of the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman Office), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cali, and the Metropolitan Police in Cali. Throughout the summer and semester of my fieldwork I also held interviews and invaluable conversations with
unionists, cultural workers, students, teachers, lawyers, and indigenous people in various spaces were issues of human rights were discussed. I received assistance, also, from persons affiliated to the Cali smayor’s office, Valle del Cauca Secretary of Education, and Teatro La Máscara.

In addition, I consulted organizations’ literature as well reports from international governance bodies and non-governmental organizations. Official national documents consulted included bills of law and approved legislation, presidential decrees and resolutions, constitutional and judicial decisions, and government reports. National and local newspapers as well as electronic listserves run by social organizations were also key sources of information for the project.

As part of my ethnographic work with CPDH, I attended their meetings and events during the second semester of 2008. While establishing relations of trust with human rights workers under situations of intense violence as in contemporary Colombia, I relied on acquaintances already part of organizations in order to establish my first contacts. Thanks to the openness and generosity of CPDH members, who adopted me as an ad-hoc participant in the organizations’ regular activities, I got to meet and talk with a range of activists, as well as take part in the multiple events and mobilizations that took place in the southwest of Colombia during late 2008, including the important “Minga” or indigenous mobilization against free trade and security policies, a large sugar cane workers’ strike, and the various human rights forums where organizations converged.

An important component of the work with CPDH was my collaboration to build an archive for the organization. As I will discuss in chapter 1, current understandings of human rights are highly mediated by security global and national agendas. In that sense,
recording human rights violations (what constitutes a violation, what type of violation is it, and who is responsible for it) becomes a highly contested part of human rights activism. Participating in the construction of the CPDH archive alongside members of the organization allowed me to understand better how they themselves understood and advocated for human rights and how they used these understandings to engage with the state.

The work with *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* (Ruta) involved weekly participation in meetings. Twice a month these meetings included an all-day series of workshops with women from a variety of women’s organizations throughout Valle del Cauca. I participated in regular meetings with the leading team and once a month attended the “plantón” of Women in Black—a silent demonstration where women from Ruta and other organizations, including women in media and theater stood outside the governor’s building in downtown Cali to protest militarization and its pernicious effects on Colombian women. The character of my participation in Ruta’s activities varied widely depending on my own and their needs, but they were generously willing to accommodate me and the multiple identities I claimed or they ascribed me, some times as a “researcher from the United States”, as a student, as a participant woman, as a sociologist investigating security, or, at several occasions, as a lawyer.

I am very grateful to both CPDH and Ruta because they welcomed my presence with total openness and generosity, allowing me to know and participate in their work without restrictions despite the difficult security conditions that they as organizations and many of their participants lived. In the spirit of solidarity characteristic of their work, CPDH and Ruta shared from food to friendship in the multiple work days I joined them
for. PUPSOC members that I met through activist networks were also key to have a broader view of the social mobilization situation in the region, especially across peasant and popular organizations. During the fieldwork, I attended a number of events such as forums, conferences, meetings, and demonstrations that largely broaden my view of social mobilization in the Colombian southwest. Two events that were particularly importante for this purpose were PUPSOC’s 3-day IV Encuentro Internacional de Pueblos y Semillas por la Autonomía, Identidad y Unidad de los Pueblos--celebrated in October, 2008 in the town of La Vega, Cauca (Macizo Colombiano)--and the IV Encuentro por la Vida y Libertad de los Pueblos del Suroccidente Colombiano, celebrated in Buenaventura in December, 2008. I am very grateful to PUPSOC members as well as to activists from Palenque El Congal, from Proceso de Comunidades Negras, for inviting me to these forums.

The main organizations I will feature in this work are CPDH, Ruta, PCN, and PUPSOC. CPDH is a national organization created in 1979 by a group of activist-intellectuals to promote the respect of human right abuses threatened by authoritarian governments at the end of the seventies. Ruta is a national feminist, pacifist network of over 350 women’s organizations created in 1996 working for a negotiated solution to the conflict and to make visible the effects of the conflict on women. PCN is a national network of afrodescendant organizations that struggles for the collective rights of Black communities. PUPSOC is a network of peasant and popular organizations in the Colombian southwest.

Although these organizations and networks, with the exception of CPDH, do not identify their work as primarily human rights-based, I approached them because, in the
current conjuncture of militarization and paramilitarization within Colombia, they have combined their regular work (for women, afrodescendants, popular, and peasant sectors) with the defense of human rights of their members.

Other collectives that provided a useful point of contrast and helped me further understand the work of these organizations were FCSSP, which defends the human rights of political prisoners and defends victims of state crimes; the Red de Derechos Humanos “Francisco Isaias Cifuentes”, which defends the human rights of peasants, students, and workers who are part of PUPSOC; and the Colectivo Feminista “Fulanas, Menganas y Perencejo” (now Feminist Collective “Fulanas, Menganas y Perencejas”), which is a feminist student collective with an emphasis on popular and peasant women.

Valle del Cauca and Security

The choice of Valle del Cauca as the site for fieldwork in this research is significant, as this region displays many of the factors associated with the emergence of a security state. Acute class and ethnic conflicts, as well as a history of political violence sparked or supported by the power elites have marked the region. The region’s history is, to a large extent, the history of the displacement of peasant communities by the sugar-cane latifundia and the forced colonization of the highlands.

Valle del Cauca is located in the southwest of Colombia, between the Andes and the Pacific coast. Although a small department, Valle del Cauca is of great importance as it harbors the main port in the Colombian Pacific and also because it counts with an active agricultural production, including mono-cultives like sugar cane and oil palm. Agro-industry has become a source of unrest as the cultivation of products like sugar cane, oil palm and its use as alternative fuel sources has been associated to the
displacement of populations, the presence of paramilitary groups, and the deterioration of labor conditions for agricultural workers. Development projects of great magnitude also proliferate in the region and in particular in Buenaventura, the city that hosts the main port in the Colombian Pacific. Development in Cali, the department capital, has also been prompted by government-sponsored projects to execute 21 “mega-works” of infrastructure for the city. Development projects’ potential to displace populations and to disrupt social structures also figure as a source of human rights violations and social unrest.

Workers, afrodescendants, indigenous people, and leftist groups in Valle del Cauca have historically commanded mobilization against these forms of exploitation. The historical strikes of the regional teachers’ union and of the sugar cane workers, the continuous resistance of the indigenous peoples and the emergence of Black movements speak to the continuous mobilization in Valle del Cauca in response to declining labor and living conditions deepened by neoliberal policies.

Historically, battles for political power have taken place in Valle del Cauca in a particularly dramatic way. La Violencia, a 1948-1957 confrontation between Liberal and Conservative partisans, had an especially harsh manifestation in Valle del Cauca. The armed bands of conservative supporters have been identified as the origin of drug trafficking and later on, narco-paramilitaries that came to operate in the north of the department (Betancourt, 1990).

Violence has often been the focus of studies about Valle del Cauca. Studies about earlier decades dealt with events tied to La Violencia; more recent ones address insurgent actions of guerrilla groups. Notably, violence has been the main currency of drug-
trafficking wars in the region, and common-crime related violence has reached very high levels. Violence against women continues being particularly acute, and Cali, the capital, is the city with the highest number of feminicides in all Colombia (Sánchez, 2008).

In this research I investigate the state’s administrative, ideological, and military responses to the real and presumed threats created by such violence and criminality, as well as the violence generated by the state through the application of security policies. Valle del Cauca is only a local example of the national project to enact a security policy that connects the possibility of economic development with a close penal, military, and administrative control of the population. With its monumental development projects, social movements repression, and counter-insurgency operations, Valle del Cauca poses an important case regarding the evolution of the punitive power of the state under the security paradigm.

A final note regarding the identity of all people interviewed and referenced in this work. For security reasons, and due to the multiple threats that many activists face by virtue of their political views or work, in this work I have changed all of their names or references that might identify them.
CHAPTER 1

SECURITY AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE POLITICAL

Towards the early Two Thousands, the idea of security became a staple in the political vocabulary of Colombians. While not a new term, it was only with the political campaign of president-elect Alvaro Uribe Vélez that pushed it into the national political mainstream as the policy that would, finally, allow Colombians to overcome the threat guerrilla, drug traffickers, and common delinquency pose for the great majority of “honest, hard-working” Colombians. Uribe’s promise resonated with the broader appeals to security that--commanded by the United States’ government in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York--reverberated in the political and mediatic international scenarios. As the idea of security took hold of Colombians as a new political common sense—who would not want to be secure and eliminate the sources of insecurity--pressing questions emerged as to the precise possibilities and implications of this proposed formula for peace and prosperity.3

My attempt to investigate security as the key concept defining the field of the political in Colombia during the first decade of the twenty-first century began only partially by researching the speeches, decrees, and policies of Alvaro Uribe Vélez’ Democratic Security government, as he baptized his political project. Because I intended to establish the roots of this project as a political logic with historical roots and global

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3 I use the idea of political common sense in reference to Gramsci’s concept of common sense, or the "diffuse, unco-ordinated features of a general form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment" (Gramsci 1971: 330n).
correspondances, I calibrated my research to locate the effects of security as it played out in Colombian society, as much as its current expression within government and politicians. My entry points into the effects of security—what security did and transformed—were social organizations engaged, in some capacity, in defending human rights. The choice seemed logical at the moment of starting the research (when Democratic Security had already been in place for about six years) as the criticisms against Democratic Security questioned its potential to violate human rights. But my choice of human rights-related mobilization as a vintage point to security also had to do with the possibility this examination offered to understanding the structure of the political field resulting from the state security project, along with the challenges that movements faced while engaging with security.

In this chapter I want to draw a cartography of security as a field of power with a particular historical trajectory. In the first part, I will analyze the concept of security and will trace its constitution as a dominant political rationality attached to neoliberalism, gaining visibility in particular moments of hemispheric and global geopolitics. In the second part, I will concentrate on the re-configuration of the political in Colombia through the growing use of security discourse as the counter face of economic prosperity and the social struggles challenging this project.

1.1 Security and Liberalism

Within the field of international relations security has been understood as a transcendental value—a quality necessary for the existance of the state (Chatterjee, 2003). Alternative formulations have characterized security as a technique of government
within liberalism (Foucault, 2008), as a tool to produce citizens for deregulated markets (Dillon, 2004), as a mechanism to manage the insecurities of capitalism (Wacquant, 2008), or as a contemporary dominant cultural logic (Bajc 2011)\(^4\).

Here I am interested in exploring the Foucauldian approach as it engages elements of political economy relevant to understand the current conjuncture of governance within a framework of economic liberalization. Under the tradition started by Foucault, security is rather defined as a governmental technology “through which individuals, groups, classes and (…) the modern capital are molded and re-ordered.” (Neocleous, 2008: 4). In *Society Must be Defended* (2003) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), Foucault proposes the idea that after the second half of the eighteenth century a modern governmental reason emerges with the goal of calculating and regulating resources, including, especially, population. The basis of this order is the government itself and not, as it occurred in precedent periods, the law (Hindess, 1997). The new governmental reason or governmentality presented itself as an ensemble of institutions, procedures, and tactics that allow the exercise of the government. This form of governmentality has a foundation not in sovereignty derived from the law, but rather in *reason d’etre*, or, in other words, in the governmental objectives of the state (Foucault, 2008; 3-10). The novelty of this model is that in it, government objectives are determined by the index of national welfare and not the mere exercise of sovereignty. That is, in order to achieve the welfare of the nation, the government will have to be focused on the organization, distribution, and

calculation of resources and populations. This utility calculation (a calculation that produces a value measurable according to the political economy) is the foundation of a new rationality and it is this the model that, according to Foucault, we know as liberalism.

Security is a central mechanism in this liberal rationality, organizing several aspects central to liberalism, from liberty to the regulation of populations. Security is, on the one hand, the principle with which the cost of producing liberty is calculated. Because liberty in liberalism is not given but in fact always requires a previous regulation or recognition by the state, it needs to be produced through security mechanisms and with specific costs that are defined by the state. As Foucault (2008, 65) defines it, “(...)

liberalism, the liberal art of government, is forced to determine the precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all. The problem of security is the protection of the collective interest against individual interests”

On the other hand, security is also one of the techniques, mentalities or rationalities that, according to Foucault, are employed to govern individuals and populations within the liberal order. The notion of biopower works to understand the centrality of the population as an object of governmental power. At the same time, the idea of biopolitics refers to the political rationality that seeks to guarantee the biological existance of the population while it extensively deploys the security apparatus (Dillon, 2004). In this framework, security appears not as a negative concept referring to the exercise of a type of hierarchical police power, but rather as a mechanism that makes
possible the management of individuals in the form of bodies and populations. Through security the state justifies launching the war for it appears as the best mechanism to protect the population. Because biopower refers to the coexistence of liberty with the logics of war, the idea of security appears as the best framework to unite concerns about the welfare of the population with the need to secure liberties through surveillance or war. In this way, by protecting the population, the state finds itself in the paradoxical situation of defending life through the security apparatus. (Gordon, 1991: 10). Or, as Foucault’s work suggests, there is no power over life without exposing it to mortal danger (Dillon, 2004) Thus, we can say, security, as expression of governmentality, is tied both to liberty and to the mechanisms to make liberty possible, that is, to surveillance and war.

A contemporary example that illustrates the governmental character of security within liberalism has to do with its double-faced intervention within the apparatus of National Security in the hemisphere during the Cold War period. As Neocleous (2008) has shown, both social security and military security are expressions of economic security, or, in other words, of the need to protect capitalism from any disruptions. Although National Security has relied on militarism and violent intervention, it, on the other hand, has drawn on narratives of social protection and correlate mechanisms such as social security or international aid. In that way, to talk about social security as domestic security in opposition to national security as external security is not necessarily adequate. Moreover, As Neocleous (2008) states, National Security arises from the ideological program of social security, as it was with this model that a new approach to administration of capital was promoted with the New Deal in the United States towards
the mid nineteen-thirties.

What must be noticed here is that, in opposition to the traditional conception of liberalism as *laissez faire*, the Foucauldian notion of governmentality makes the structure needed in order for the free market to occur visible, and it does it by making explicit the antinomies constitutive of the liberal discourse. For instance, Foucault (2008, 78), referring to the relation between liberalism and neoliberalism, points to the double origin of neoliberalism in its German form in the Weimar Republic and the American New Deal. Contrary to what theoreticians from within the liberal tradition maintain, Foucault suggests that liberalism has been dependent since its origins on the re-structuring of a wartime economy for peacetime, wherein state intervention—rather than some form of natural or *a priori* logic—establishes market freedom as the economic foundation of society. In this sense, Foucault establishes how neoliberalism is really not a *laissez faire* doctrine. Instead, it is based on a re-organization of the state in a way that it intervenes to create conditions for market operations. This state intervention will affect every aspect of life and rely on the idea of competition. The market implies, then, not the equality, but the opportunity to compete. In this logic, from the most intimate aspects of life to public function will be based on the notion of competition between market and risk. Security will appear as a central mechanism mediating these competing realms.

In chapter 2, I will refer to the way security unfolds as a contemporary biopolitical technology under neoliberalism. Through the case of the Colombian Pacific, I will examine how in the last three decades, successive stages of neoliberalism—deregulation, mass extraction, dispossession to re-appraise population and territory (Svampa, 2008), have required security mechanisms oriented towards re-ordering, re-
populating territories, establishing militarization, or, often, systematically murdering and disappearing as mechanisms for ordering populations under neoliberalism. Here I would like to examine some of the key moments in which security has unfolded as a biopolitical governmental tool.

1.2 The Geopolitics of Security

The consolidation of security as a governmental rationality within liberalism was articulated with the re-accommodation of imperial power that occurred after the end of World War II. A central element of the postwar emerging political balance, security became an essential key to reconstruct a world order structured over the United States’ recently acquired condition of hegemonic power and its interest to consolidate this position in the new world geopolitics. In this period, the United States sought to solidify its economic hegemony through its “Open Door” policy, which aimed to support economic multilateralism based on the opening of commercial relations with former Asian and African colonies and the revitalization of war-devastated areas, especially Japan and Germany (as its bases in Asia and Europe), as a way to reestablishing the dollar in the international economy of the postwar. This process attempted to re-organize the center-periphery world-system scheme, which was then threatened by a series of liberation movements in both the core and the periphery.

As Reifer and Sudler (1996) explain it, the United States implemented a type of international military Keynesianism. Initially aimed to achieve economic goals, by the late 1960's--when the difficulties to establish a broad multilateral trade with the peripheries became evident-- US policy shifted towards the defense of national security.
It is important to remember that at this moment a series of decolonial movements took place in Asia and Africa, and that the United States played a key—though often ambivalent—role in this decolonialization process. On the one hand, Washington saw this conjuncture as an opportunity to break colonial commercial blocks in Asia and Africa and to impose its multilateralist trade policy. On the other hand, in this period the United States displayed what Reifer and Sudler (1996) have called a “global logic of counterrevolutionary violence” as a central mechanism of organization to face the threat to the existent order presented by the decolonial and nationalist movements. In this way, while the United States met its economic interests, it impeded the advance of decolonial movements and their subversive potential to alter the emerging hegemonic order, resulting in a process of controlled decolonization via the recently created United Nations.

In this context, and with the advent of the Cold War, security became a key dispositive in the redefinition of the United States’ imperial power and its relation with the world-system peripheries. With the emergence of the United States’ hegemonic power, a new economic map was constituted in parallel with a map of friends and enemies. The National Security that emerged in this period worked as an ideal instance to arbitrate the new cartography of the world-system with political rationalities that went from totalitarianism to nationalism and undemocratic parliamentarianism. In any case, security emerged as the imperial technology that provided a language of danger while facilitating the penetration of markets through a series of governmental and militaristic interventions later on articulated under the notion of development.

As Escobar (1992) shows, the discourse of development emerged after War
World II and under its powerful influence the world-system began reconfigure itself under a rubric of progress that thoroughly legitimated the unequal conditions of exchange between nations. It is in this historical conjuncture that discourses about security suffer important transformations and start acquiring their current character. With the discourse of development, a particular view of the world is re-created and normalized. In this view, the planet appears as divided into two parts: A modern and industrialized one (where the goals of development have been achieved), and the rest, which needs to be saved from its backward position in regard to the developed portion of the world. As a complement to this vision, development offered a model of social organization based on efficiency as a way to productivity; on science, as superior to culture; on scientific production, in opposition to vernacular knowledge. States were then catalogued as rich or poor depending on whether their population had access to a certain per capita income.

Development, with its hierarchical and essentially ethnocentric logic, helped reorganize the world-system in a way that the recently discovered First World reinforced its domination through its construction as advanced and enlightened—the referent that all countries, now labeled as poor and belonging to the Third World, should aspire. As it follows from Escobar’s (1992) work, the discourse of development helped to constitute a type of hegemony without conquest on Latin America, supported on the model of a free market that it had been promoting since earlier decades and on this free market’s assumed neutrality for its participant nations.

Once conditions for free trade in the hemisphere were established, along with the ideological justification of structural inequality provided by the discourse of development, a new balance of economic and political power regulated the geopolitical
world and hemispheric map. After the end of World War II, the United States’ new hegemonic role made it necessary for them to protect exploitation, production, exchange, as well as the social order brought about by the new model. As a result, a host of military bodies and civilian institutions, took a dominant role in planning, international relations, etcetera. It is at this point that security appears very strongly, supporting the post-war economic and social order underpinned by the discourse of development. The emerging economic program--whose foundation included expanding the international market for goods produced by US domestic industry, as well as investing the excess of capital and access raw materials for internal production (Escobar, 1996: 32)--required that optimal conditions were ensured through the prevention of risks that jeopardized its reproduction. By linking free trade to defense, security became the beachhead of the post-war order as a discourse and as a series of control techniques.

In the same way that development was a key apparatus in the East-West dispute (Escobar, 1996: 34), security was instrumental in fulfilling the goals of the Cold War largely because of the ease with which it easily articulated with defense and developmentalist programs. In Latin America, development and its correlate security agenda unfolded through the model of National Security. At the level of defense, the constitution of discourses of danger around the fear of advance of communism eventually led to an intense persecution of anyone suspect to profess a leftist ideology. In the following section I examine these trends through the case of Colombia, and then continue to show their transformations up until the current Democratic Security model first developed between 2002 and 2010.
1.3 Colombia: From National Security to Democratic Security

Although not written as an official policy, the National Security doctrine appeared as a set of practices and ideological principles that aimed to guarantee the internal order in Latin American countries through the systematic repression of individuals and organizations deemed to be committed to the spread of communism.

The emergence of this doctrine is largely shaped by the United States' nascent hegemony after World War II. In 1947, hemispheric nations subscribed to the Rio Pact or Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance whereby states commit to provide mutual defense assistance. The main provision of Rio Pact, also known as Defense Doctrine, was that an offense against one of the member states was an offense against all. Yet, given the United States' role as an emerging hegemonic power in the Americas, the Rio Pact's goal of mutual defense was in practice guided by the United States' preponderant role as hemispheric security enforcer. In this scenario, Latin American countries became limited to enforcers of security, but only for their own domestic affairs (Leal Buitrago, 2006). It is important to remember that the Rio Pact was signed almost at the same time that the Cold War was starting, and, in practice, it emerges as a way to counter the threat of communist expansion in Latin America. As Wolf (2002) states, the Cold War began in Latin America a year after the Pact was approved. It is precisely in this year, 1948, that the Ninth Panamerican Conference is organized in Bogota. The Conference expressly consagrates an anti-communist agenda in order to counter the perceived interventionist threat of the soviet communist regime.

In the decades following the signing of the Rio Pact, what occurs is a reiteration of the United States’ power of defining the politico-military agendas in the region, as
well as its accompanying tactics, in the sense of pursuing the internal enemy, using civil-military tactics to neutralize it, and using the state of exception as a mechanism to re-define the power of the state while also re-constituting the nation as a whole. It is important to remember that, with the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, the United States’ anti-communist agenda in Latin America had intensified, and that this agenda had led to increased militarization and surveillance of areas suspected of harboring similar upheavals or of what was perceived as the imminent outbreak of guerrilla warfare in the region. In this period, too, the Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev, had offered its support to the wars of liberation that were being fought around the world, to which the United States responded by implementing a plan to attack insurgencies from military and social fronts.

The major civil-military initiative that the United States set in motion under the administration of John F. Kennedy was the Alliance for Progress—a program designed to respond to the threat that insurgencies posed to the United States and its dominance in Latin America. The Alliance for Progress sought to mitigate the threat of communism in Latin America through a series of development programs that minimized the potential for social outbreaks, as well as strengthening the military and intelligence apparatus to defeat the nascent insurgency. The result was the emergence of an apparatus of civil-military security where both the civil and military components were at the service of the United States’ agenda during the Cold War, which internally worked to dismantle internal opposition forces to the newly formed Frente Nacional—a platform of the two traditional parties to rotate in the government of Colombia, and in the end, to contain a popular revolutionary movement in the country. The program that was set in motion included
housing and production loans, and militarily it emphasized the persecution of peasant leaders and former guerrillas, as well as engaging in extensive intelligence, especially in rural areas where it was believed guerrilla cells could arise.

A further development in this period was key to determining the way security would be configured in the institutional organization of Colombia. After the period of internal war known as *La Violencia* (1948-1957), the *Frente Nacional* government bipartisan coalition (in power between 1958-1974) established that the Liberal and Conservative governing parties would act with an administrative and not a political character. It was determined also that the Armed Forces would follow a technical,apolitical operation. In a subsequent development of this strategy, the government of president Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958-1962) implemented the principle that the military is autonomous regarding politics and that politics is autonomous vis a vis the military. Leal Buitrago (2006) shows how, a result of this trend towards neutrality and technocracy was the configuration of two tendencies within the Colombian Army: a developmentalist and a technical trend. The developmentalist trend developed the so-called Plan Lazo—a military strategy for pacification at the end of the alternated bipartisan government regime, *Frente Nacional*. The developmentalist trend continued Plan Lazo's principle that the best way to repeal communism was for the military to collaborate with community development through civic-military actions. Plan Lazo and the developmentalist trend aimed to gain civilian support against communist guerrillas through health brigades, literacy campaigns, roadworks, etcetera.

The opposite trend, known as technical, gained strength during Carlos Lleras Restrepo’s government (1966-1970). During this administration, supporters of a
technically ruled military advocated for the economic and military spheres to become autonomous from the realm of the political. Supporters of the technical tendency suggested that arms, not political maneuvers, would solve the armed conflict. The effects of this binary understanding of military responsibilities have deeply marked the national history and are apparent in subsequent decades through the intervention of the armed forces in both ideologically and militarily driven strategies. The current Democratic Security policy has, indeed, integrated versions of the developmentalist and technical military through its conception that the anti-insurgency agenda must be ideological (emphasizing the population’s adherence to the institutions’ side), but also highly specialized in terms of technology, training, and strategic organization.

The other key trend that arose during the Cold War was the collectivization of social control. As Cepeda-Castro (2003) explains, historically, the management of security tasks in Colombia has been shared between state, self-defense organizations, paramilitary groups, and more recently, stimulated by the state, common citizens. The genesis of this practice can be located towards 1965, when a conception of national security emerged with the Colombian National Defense Statute, and a year later, in 1966, with governmental Decree 893, which allowed civilians to carry arms. In 1974, Decree 1573 became the first norm to expressly use the concept of national security, which, according to the norm, meant that waging war was not only a function of the Army but also of the entire nation. In the decade of the 1980s, the history of collectivization of social control in Colombia dramatically manifested when a paramilitary strategy started to be heavily implemented with the systematic assassination, disappearance, and torture of over 5000 members of leftist party Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union) (Cepeda-Castro
2006). As it will be shown later in this chapter, Democratic Security Policy embraced the collectivization trend through its emphasis in the notion that security is to be performed by all, and not only by the Armed Forces, if it is to be successful.

As I have showed so far, the consolidation of an anti-communist ideology under the Cold War became the direct antecedent in the consolidation of an ideology of national defense in the hemisphere. After this point, state security would come to be seen as a synonym with the security of society. Brazil, Chile, and then Argentina's authoritarian regimes became the predecessors in the application of National Security in the region, yet the doctrine rapidly spread to other countries in Latin America. Under National Security, the figure of the internal enemy replaced that of the external enemy, and social protest turned to be a subversive manifestation. At the same time, under this doctrine, state terrorism became a form of political action and intelligence work turned into a central tactic for the contention of Communism. If in the past national defense was conceived as an instrument to protect sovereignty, in this period the emphasis was put on National Security, as an eminently anti-communist endeavor. Yet, the strategy to conduct this agenda was not limited to military elements carried through astringent defense policies. On the contrary, non-military mechanisms, such as cooperation on development projects, fulfilled an important ideological role turning citizens into supporters or informants of the governments' counterinsurgency project and facilitating the intervention of the United States in the terrain, as it was the case with Alliance for Progress and Plan Lazo.

The emergence of revolutionary guerrillas throughout Latin America and Colombia during the Sixties marked the highest point in the war against Communism. In order to counter guerrilla warfare, Latin American states led low-intensity wars, some of
which ended with military dictatorships in their territories and, in the case of Colombia, continued over time simultaneously with other strategies such as the paramilitary project.

In Colombia, National Security unfolded throughout the 1970’s and well after the mid 1980’s. Making heavy use of the state of exception, the state sought to control urban protests led by social movements. Unions, students, and human rights defenders become the preferred target of state policies inspired in the social defense ideology. The security statute instituted by President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala’s government was broadly known for having turned the country into a constitutional dictatorship (Garcia Villegas, 2001), as it used constitutionally authorized faculties to create a number of crimes whose definition was open to judicial interpretation, at the same time that it modified due process rules and granted broader powers to the armed forces, including the trial of civilians for largely political reasons.

To the extent that the end of the Cold War represented a new scenario in the world geopolitics, the National Security Doctrine was progressively articulated to new logics of power that, without eliminating it (rather, we could say, incorporating it to their operation) moved towards a different security paradigm. In the following section I will refer to this paradigm as Democratic Security.

1.3.1 The Advent of Democratic Security

Three trends, largely rooted in the National Security Doctrine, characterize the historical evolution of security and determine its consolidation as a dominant discourse in Colombia: First, the persistence of the exception as an instrument of war; second, the
coexistence of civil and military tactics as a security strategy; and third, the continuing appeal to the idea of a left dissidence as an internal political enemy that has to be combated by society. With the coming to power of President Alvaro Uribe in 2002, and his formulation of the Democratic Security policy as the flagship policy of his government, not only is security defined as the centerpiece of public policy and simultaneously as the axis of the public in Colombia, but there is also an articulation with the historical trends giving shape to previous moments of the security discourse. In other words, Democratic Security claims that security must return to the center of public life to re-define a field of power—a field that is constituted in reference to a particular discourse and historical practices historically defining security. In this way, the relatively new directions of security (who is inside or outside the nation, what are the contours of citizenship, and where are the limits of state power) are given by the meanings of this contested field. In this section I will review how existing meanings of security come to shape new directions in the configuration of power.

One of the changes that came to modify the exercise of security at the end of the Cold War was the intensification of globalization logics resulting from the growing deterritorialization of the world economy and the loss of state sovereignty vis a vis supranational bodies (Sassen, 1998). In this sense, a new security model based on supra-state definitions began to emerge. To the National Security led by the state in opposition to a single enemy (the Communist threat), an idea of security defined by multiple actors (international organizations, communities, countries, individuals, civil society) was configured. Threats became multiple and diffuse, and the enemy opaque, rather than simply being represented by Communism or rival states. At this point, a period of
securitization starts, to the extent that now a number of human, civic, environmental, urban "securities" proliferate. (Leal Buitrago, 2006).

Colombia has been at the center of these new securities because of its strategic position within the imperial orbit of the United States in the hemisphere. Both drug trafficking and the increase in guerrilla activity beyond the national borders have been subject of intense security-based activity in multiple scenarios (i.e., the creation of lists of individuals suspicious of drug-trafficking involvement, such as the so called “Clinton List”, military border conflicts, fumigations of coca crops, etc.). But also, as I will analyze in chapter 2, Colombia has been at the center of continental initiatives for market and their attempt to incorporate black and indigenous communities’ ancestral territories in the global economy through intense forms of securitization.

1.3.2 The Appeal to Emergency Powers

Much like what has occurred in other parts of the world, in Colombia the expansive definition of issues thought of as security threats or securitization process has been dealt with through emergency legislation. The state of exception has played a central role in executing security in a way that makes possible to connect National Security with Domestic Security. In the mid 1980’s Belisario Betancur Cuartas (1982-1986) and Virgilio Barco Vargas’ (1986-1990) governments led the so-called war against drug-trafficking, once again appealing to the juridical instruments facilitated by the state of exception (i.e., elimination of habeas corpus, authorization for home searches without judicial order, etcetera). Under the language of war and urgency typically shaping security and defense policies, the target in this period became “narco-terrorismo” or the
urban terrorism practiced by drug cartels to oppose governmental power expressed in measures such as extradition. In this period, the state made extensive use of the state of exception in light of its growing incapacity to repress the, so-defined, threats coming from the insurgency and the drug-trafficking.

With the advent of the 1991 political Constitution, the limits to apply the state of exception became stricter. A constitutional provision proscribed military-led investigation or trial of civilians and established limits in time to apply norms of exception. The constitution prescribed, too, that human rights could not be suspended under states of exception and established that the norms issued during the state of exception had to be connected with the reasons that motivated the declaration in the first place. The Constitutional Court became the guardian of this mandate and in the almost two decades following this provision, has acted as the filter for successive governmental attempts to continue the institutional tradition of making excessive use of the state of exception.

At the same time, there is a culture of exception that permanently appeals to the idea of threats so grave that the very existence of society is put in doubt. As Garcia Villegas (2001) puts it, the excessive use of the state of exception in the preceding decades has led to “the colonization of the political by the war and the substitution of political actors by armed actors”. Because successive governments have constantly appealed to issue a variety of penalties under states of exception, it is appropriate to talk about the normalization of emergency penalty and subsequently to what Iturralde (2008) calls authoritarian liberalism, a model “which encourages the hypertrophy of the penal state and the reduction of the social state.”
In more recent years, measures of exception have implied the extension of powers for state security forces in order to investigate and practice unwarranted arrests or other measures, and also the relaxation of procedural guarantees such as the requirement of publicity in trials or the terms for detention. Notably, states of exception have led to the enlargement of military capabilities to investigate and prosecute civilians, as well as to the indefinite transformation of exceptional norms into permanent legislation. And because states of exception tend to impose the logic of war over the logic of law, the state ends up permanently acting as in a state of war, using military urgency and not political necessity as the primary criterion of operation (García Villegas, 2001).

With the advent of Democratic Security policy in 2002, Colombia’s traditional state model based on the coexistence of exceptionality and constitutionalism has come to rely more heavily on the exception. Yet, observing the daily life of security in Colombia would make it more accurate to say that the security paradigm has come to substitute regimes of exception as a normal technique of government (Carvajal, 2008). Because in the security paradigm there is not an alteration of the constitutional order in light of an exceptional situation of emergency but rather the normalization of an order that securitizes against the constant risks that threaten state and citizens, security would appear as a successor but also as a new development of the regime of exception.

1.4 Democratic Security: Continuing Authoritarianism or New Governmental Technique?

A particular formation of the security rationality characteristic of liberalism, Democratic Security takes the shape of a governmental technique rooted in evolving geopolitical arrangements. In this section I will discuss the onset of Democratic Security
and the principles that propelled its constitution as a program with roots in earlier traditions of exceptionalism and a revamped governance based on the idea of friend-enemy. Throughout this section, I will examine how Democratic Security unfolded through a distinct set of discursive practices with effects on citizenship at large but also on collective mobilization.

As I suggested earlier in the chapter, Colombia has consistently drawn on a tradition of constitutional exceptionalism. Again, under Democratic Security, from 2002 to 2010, with the stated purpose of strengthening the rule of law, the government appealed to measures historically authorized only in periods of exception: due process restrictions, administrativization of the criminal justice system, extended powers for intelligence bodies, and extension of the military jurisdiction to judge civilian offenses.

Immediately after assuming the presidency in August, 2002, the government issued a series of decrees with legal force instituting the state of exception in order to “control the public order” in all the country and especially in some rural areas in conflict—the so-called “rehabilitation and consolidation zones”. Measures adopted in these norms-- and particularly in Decree 2002 which, significantly, was publicized in the Official Gazzette on September 11, 2002--authorized the armed forces to conduct captures and other ordinarily judicial measures such as household and vehicles inspections without judicial authorization. In terms of the “rehabilitation and consolidation zones”, the measures were much more restrictive. The decree established that the right to circulation or residency could be limited through measures such as curfews, checkpoints, special authorizations or restrictions to circulate for people or vehicles at determined times and places.
While initially presented as addressing zones of high conflict with a historical lack of state presence, the special measures, looking as a whole, clearly were part of a well-planned strategy of militarized governance and criminalization of dissent. Indeed, towards 2003, the government presented to the Congress a bill of law that instituted a catalogue of geographic areas and specific conducts to be controlled through the toughest means of military and criminal enforcement. A well-planned intervention of territories and communities presumably infiltrated by the insurgency, the new bill of law was formulated as an Anti-Terrorist Statute. Exposing its character as a well coordinated and planned strategy, the Statute developed a kind of structured de-centralization—a flexible yet planned governmental de-centering that allowed the strategic militarization of areas deemed as risky for both public order and economic development.

Initially covering only some rural areas from Sucre and Arauca, two departments with historical presence of insurgencies, and in the case of Arauca an important oil reserve, the decrees soon covered 14 (out of 33) departments and 23 so-called special points. Yet, while extending to other areas in the country, the decrees made it clear that this selective militarization constituted a targeted intervention with uneven application to areas that were seen as posing particular risks for national security. Built upon the uneven application of exceptional measures and through extraordinary means, this form of militarized governance would guarantee economic development through the thorough display of the security apparatus.

An example of this connection development-security, Decree 2002/2002, that adopts the exceptional measures, starts the motivation for this norm by stating: “Considering (…) that criminal groups have multiplied the attacks to infrastructure of the
essential services of energy, drinking water, highways and roads (...”). Also, Decree 1837/ 2002, whereby the government declared the state of exception, justified these measures, arguing that “(...) the whole nation is submitted to a terror regime in which democratic authority sinks and productive activity becomes more difficult and hazardous, multiplying unemployment and the misery of millions of compatriots”. Through this appeal to the country’s need to adopt means outside the ordinary constitutional ones in the case the national prosperity was compromised, the government posed security as the natural, appropriate means for national welfare.

The complement for this legal construction of security was the constitution of an uneven national geography where urban, developed areas were presented as predated by the risks posed by lawless rural areas. Furthermore, within rural areas there would be those that were compliant with the national policies and those that needed to be redeemed from their status as terror-prone regions through a comprehensive authorization for the armed forces to operate like a state subrogate. Decree 2002, for example, provided that the armed forces acted as judicial investigative authorities in those geographical areas where regular judicial investigators faced severe security risks to develop their task.

By constructing the notion of danger for some areas that appeared as saturated with threats in opposition to others that had to be defended from these perils, the official discourse instituted risk as the fundament of its governance. It was under this logic that throughout 2003 the legislation of exception and the Anti-Terrorist Statute justified measures in rural areas, and once the ideas of risk became normalized, also applied to some urban contexts constructed as dangerous. Thus, while targeted rural areas were heavily militarized, in cities, both the Police and the “Department Administrative of
Security”, an administrative intelligence body, intercepted private communications, practiced detentions, and executed raids without judicial warrant in cases where, as the law established, there were reasons to believe that the investigated person was implicated in the commission of a terrorist act (Alliance of Social and Like-Minded Organizations et al, 2008).

While the Anti-Terrorist Statute was ultimately declared unconstitutional (Sentences C-817 and C-818/2004), it left as a legacy a template to implement Democratic Security, which would be partially executed through administrative regulations as well as a vocabulary of danger that was broadly appropriated by media and publics. Key to the constitution of this geography of danger was not only the regional separation of areas to be protected and areas to be protected of, but also the unequal treatment of citizens as friends or enemies of the state. Since early in Uribe’s government, the official rhetoric pointed at the increased guerrilla actions at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, and to the need of making the government's anti-guerrilla offensive much firmer and effective.

The period between 2002 and 2004 saw the sharpest offensive against guerrillas. Yet, the interpretation the government would sustain throughout Uribe’s terms was that military and legal action should not only be to combat insurgencies’ armed structures, but also to de-legitimize any political or juridical recognition that allowed treating them as combatants in any type of symmetry with the state. Through the “Foundation-Center for Thought ‘Colombia First’”, Uribe and a team headed by then presidential advisor, José Obdulio Gaviria, defended the thesis that Colombia did not face an armed conflict but a terrorist threat (Botero, 2007). Maintaining that Colombia’s “disturbances” had to be
treated with criminal legislation and not with lax international law, the government dictated that the state was not at war but rather providing security for Colombians (Gaviria, 2007).

The discourse of the internal enemy was fundamental for Democratic Security’s positioning as an ethical and political imperative. Excluding some groups as enemies of the nation allowed to galvanize public support into a rather unified political whole. As a consequence of this discourse, citizens became automatically incorporated in the state security project as agents symmetrically struggling with the government against the terrorist threat that lied ahead (Rojas, 2009). Following a tradition of paramilitary mobilization, individuals were expected to collaborate with the state in defeating the terrorist enemy (Cepeda-Castro, 2003) either by providing information about suspicious movements in their areas or directly by combating as ad-hoc (non-professional) soldiers. State rhetoric soon translated into institutional programs such as “People’s Soldiers”, which recruited peasants to serve in the areas where they resided and therefore were familiar with the population after a brief military training.

Through the construction of social risks and by aggressively implementing a form of constitutional exceptionalism, the state re-constituted the geography of the political while delineating anew the contours of citizenship: At the onset of Democratic Security, broad but specific areas of the country had become “refuge for terrorists” (Decree 2002/2002) while some groups in the population were presented as “terrorist supporters”\(^5\). In what follows, I will examine the implications of this discursive

\(^5\) The third “Considerando” (motivation) of the Decree established: “Within the main forms of support to these organizations’ delinquent action we have, on the one hand, the camouflage of their members within the civilian population and the hiding of their
construction and its implications for social mobilization.

1.5 Legacies and Ruptures in the Security Field

Given Democratic Security’s pervasive presence in Colombians’ political vocabulary during the period 2002-2010, investigating it was a deceptively easy task. Towards 2008, when I started my fieldwork, news programs still featured various aspects of its application continuously, government officials invoked it in every public engagement, and political opponents of the government had it as a sure aim to their criticisms. Yet, with Democratic Security’s blinding visibility and also with its characterization as a discrete policy—an innovation brought about by the government—it became harder to decipher what was truly new about it and what was inherited from previous security policies iterations.

In order to establish these continuities and possible ruptures, I decided to engage with a social organization that had lived through various incarnations of national security policies. The Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (hereinafter CPDH, for its acronym in Spanish) offered an ideal vantage point towards security policies as they emerged precisely in response to Colombia’s adoption of a stringent security statute modeled after the National Security doctrine. CPDH was created in 1979 after a national meeting of individuals and organizations concerned with the human rights crisis the security statute motivated, including over 16,000 political prisoners, widespread torture, and due process violations (CPDH n.d). While not at all new in the long national telecommunications equipment in other towns, and on the other hand, the constant supply that occurs in the places where they stay.”
history of constitutional exceptionalism (García Villegas estimates that, considering its entire history, Colombia has lived under exceptional legislation for 36 years), the 1979 legislation or “Statute of Defense and National Security” became more significant as it occurred simultaneously and under the framework of the hemispheric National Security doctrine that supported ongoing dictatorships in Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia.

I approached CPDH through my work with its Valle del Cauca branch, not founded until 2002, but integrated, for the most part, by veterans in the regional human rights movement. Conducting archival work with CPDH Valle I learned about the chronology of CPDH’s work since their foundation in 1979 and the ways both the country and the organization had changed from National Security to Democratic Security. Going over the chronology, I was struck by the similarities between the security policies back in the late seventies and in the early two thousands, let alone the parallels between the opposition the policy faced back then and now. The types of violations in 1979 and 2003, the last year documented on this review, seemed to repeat themselves with slight variations: Arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearance, massacres, and forced displacement. Most outstanding in both periods was the persecution and elimination of community leaders and human rights defenders, including the assassinations of over thirty CPDH members throughout the late nineties. On the CPDH’s side, actions in this chronologic review included, chiefly, campaigns to revoke laws of exception, to defend human rights, and to reach a negotiated solution for the armed conflict.

Perhaps observing continuities from National Security to Democratic Security similar to those documented in CPDH’s review, many of the human rights militants I
interviewed in the cities of Cali and Buenaventura, reached similar conclusions in regards to the marked parallels between these two security models. To my question, what has changed from National Security to Democratic Security in Colombia? many answered that, despite its labeling as a new governance mechanism, Democratic Security reproduced almost identically the principles of National Security, chiefly the radical division between “good elements of society” and a dissident, internal enemy. To support this thesis, it was said that the United States’ intervention was then, as much as now, shaping Colombia’s defense of economic and imperial interests. An activist from CPDH and sister organization ANDAS remarked:

Democratic Security Policy is framed in something that is very old in Colombia, which is the National Security Statute; this is a thesis that comes from the government in the Sixties and is a concept which is very marked by the United States’ ideologies about the internal enemy, so from that point of view, the enemy for the government or the classes in power is all that who does political opposition, who does not agree with the government’s economic policies and, to that extent, makes use of a legitimate measure which is the right to protest, the right for communities to organize, of communities of any type… unions, students… so the concept of the internal enemy goes in that direction (Interview with Sofia)

During an interview with Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (FCSPP), a CPDH human rights sister organization, Jorge, a lawyer with the group, offered a similar interpretation to my question:

(T)he government continues applying a theory of national security, developed by the United States, which is to drain the water to the fish; (this theory) has been developed by paramilitary groups assassinating many people and terrorizing many people. This government intends to apply a new version that is not to kill, massacre or massively displace, but to detain people, which has a similar effect—that everybody gets scared of becoming a victim of one of these mass raids or these (cases of) unjust imprisoning that occurred, especially, in the government of Alvaro Uribe Vélez. (Interview with Jorge)
As this testimony highlighted, both security models were built upon a discourse of defense from an internal risk represented in politically dissident organized communities. However, while rooted in post World War II anti-communist ideology, the differences between both models were clear for activists I interviewed too. While still considering imperialist projects as being at the core of continuous security models, some activists said that Democratic Security responded to a different moment in the geopolitics of capital and the disputes for hegemonic power within the world-system.

1.5.1 Democratic Security and the Economy/Security Interface

Santiago, a leading militant with a network of popular and peasant organizations, *Proceso de Unidad Popular del Suroccidente Colombiano* (hereinafter PUPSOC), offered this reflection to contextualize current security policies:

> Here in Colombia we are talking about the problem of the hegemony between China, the United States, and the European Union. Those are the tigers that are disputing this (territory) among them. And the territory that they are fighting for is this… Colombia. (Interview with Santiago).

Santiago’s response rightfully included a concern that all activists I interviewed identified as a chief factor behind the intensification of coercion brought about by Democratic Security and its tighter articulation with ideas of economic prosperity and development. Indeed, while the generalized perception in media during the time of my fieldwork in Colombia was that Democratic Security would bring physical safety to all citizens to protect them from guerrillas or common delinquency, activists I interviewed were overwhelmingly clear that the government’s security program was closely intertwined with the country’s economy. In the testimonies I collected it was clear that
Democratic Security’s inclusion in the National Development Plan, next to development policies, was a clear indication that this policy was not only a criminal policy strategy but a component of larger state economic designs.

Despite activists’ agreement on the role Democratic Security played in national economic agendas, the question remained, why had Democratic Security remained so closely linked in its methods and logics to National Security’s punitive orientation? Furthermore, how did Democratic Security linked with the new geopolitical landscape of the war on terror while still emphasizing the primacy of security not as a control mechanism but as an avenue to prosperity?

Coronil’s (2007) discussion of power formations in the Americas in terms of the continuing imperial control of the United States and the losses in its capacity for global control sheds light on the role of security within current configurations of security. Following his presentation it is possible to see how both National Security and the war on terror (key coordinates for Colombia’s Democratic Security), constitute manifestations of the United States’ imperialist domination in the hemisphere. Coronil (2007: 266) suggests, in a reflection on the continuing importance of imperialist power, that “imperial control is achieved through the joining and transformation of distinct communities brought together by the force of the market as well as by armed force—whether actively deployed or kept as threat.”

Colombia’s adoption of Democratic Security occurs within this dual logic of forced incorporation into a market economy. The nature and intensity of this forced incorporation has varied historically depending on how much coercion has been needed
to establish imperial domination. This seems true from the post World War II situation where the United States consolidated its hegemony over segments of the Third World throughout the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union, but also more recently with its loss of centrality in the last few decades.

What seems key here is that despite and perhaps because of the United States’ eroded capacity to exercise global hegemonic power, imperial control has become exacerbated and more openly displayed through both economic and police-oriented policies (Steinmetz, 2003). In the Colombian case, a key feature of this exacerbated imperialist power is that it is not maintained through the ruling of a metropolis, but via national powers. As Panitch (2000, 264) has observed, the U.S. “non-territorial imperialism” is exercised by the “induced reproduction of the form of the dominant imperialist power within each national formation and its state.” It is this reproduction of the United States imperial power that we observe with clarity in the case of Colombia’s Democratic Security. While the Colombian state maintains an autonomy in the formulation of policies and laws, it appears that imperial designs shape security policies according to their goals of economic and political dominance.

An example that illustrates current security policies’ ties to imperial designs and their larger political economic framework has to do with the criminalization of peasant modes of life and production. As PUPSOC has conceptualized it, the state has conceived a series of regulations that have attempted to drastically modify modes of peasant production by introducing a set of prohibitions to manufacture or commercialize products basic to both peasant subsistence consumption and trade. Through administrative resolutions, the government has tightly regulated the making and commercialization of
products like *panela*, a sugar cane derived product at the basis of working class and rural populations’ diet, and also the prohibition to commercialize farmer-bottled milk. But also, through the Statute of Rural Development (Law 1152) of 2007, proposed under Alvaro Uribe’s government, the state eliminated limitations to adjudicate so-called unproductive common lands to corporations. While ultimately declared unconstitutional, this statute limited the adjudication of collective lands to Black and indigenous communities, constituting what social organizations called a true counter-agrarian reform. Attempts to regulate woodlands (Law 1021 from 2006) and water use aimed at a complete privatization of the trade on these resources also put obstacles to afrocolombian and indigenous communities’ exercise of territorial autonomy, while allowing corporate interests to prevail over these communities’ collective rights.

While these measures fully incorporated Colombia into the second phase of neoliberalism, they also placed peasant, indigenous, and afrocolombian communities in a space of marginality with respect to the corporate production model actively facilitated by the state. By locating these groups’ production as peripheral, the state went even to constitute them as risks with respect to the normalcy represented by corporate production. Resolution 779 from 2006, which regulates *panela* production, for example, virtually eliminates the possibility of peasant and indigenous production as these groups’ processing techniques would fail to fulfill the tight regulations of *panela* under the new technical standards, even though its processing constitutes an ancestral practice at the core of communities’ dietary habits.

Citing technical regulations approved by Colombia in the framework of bodies of regional governance, Resolution 779 accurately establishes that technical regulations
guarantee “the imperatives of national security; the protection of health or human security, animal or vegetal life or health, or the environment and prevention of practices that may lead consumers to errors”. Turned into anomalies or risks, as it occurs with a taxative interpretation of this norm, communities can be subject to various forms of administrative control or even criminalization. As an activist from PUPSOC put it, referring to the agrarian regulations,

Pressure increases, outlets are closed, and fire flares up with measures like these... like the administrative criminalization that is in the panela Resolution. If you read it, it already has implicit the description of the crime with respect to panela, it’s said there. Obviously, (this is) in order to criminalize a way of life (...), the way of peasant production. And that is a war against all peoples. Not only the Colombian people. (Interview with Santiago)

The regulation of panela, and more recently farm-bottled milk, and farm hens, is part of a trend to regulate local production while removing obstacles for free trade. In this sense, Resolution 779 cites as one of this normative supports the World Trade Organization Agreement and its Agreement about Technical Obstacles to Commerce, which deals with product security and technical rules. In the trend to integrate the Americas along the lines of free trade, ensuring uniform sanitary conditions goes hand in hand with detecting and managing risks to this projected area of seemless commercial traffic.

Security provisions have become an integral part of the framework that will facilitate the process of consolidating free trade zones throughout the region. From Plan Puebla-Panama (U.S.-Central America-Colombia, 2001) to Plan Colombia (U.S.-EU-Colombia, 2001), and Merida Initiative (U.S.-Mexico, 2007) economic development has been connected to coercive regulations to facilitate this traffic. From sanitary conditions
to immigration and drug traffic, traffic on persons, and money laundering, more aspects have been regulated as risks to the region’s security, and treated as conducts deserving sanctions in a continuum from the administrative to the criminal.

As the counter-face of the economic liberalization policies that continued being implemented in Colombia towards the first decade of the twenty first century, security policies drew on both traditions of state authoritarianism and current designs of neoliberal governance. The effects of these measures for social mobilization have been significant, as I will show in chapters 2 and 3. In the final part of this chapter, I want to refer to an instance where national and international security frameworks have intersected with human rights mobilization in ways that illustrate the transformations in the field of the political in Colombia.

1.6 Human Rights in the Era of Security

By 2008, with Uribe entering the second half of his second term as president, it was clear that the anti-terrorist agenda of Democratic Security posed severe problems in terms of limiting freedoms and in aggravating the abuses that the armed forces had committed during decades of state of exception and dirty war against insurgent groups. On the other hand, it was also clear that, under the influx of the war on terror, political and legal frameworks to deal with state violence had dramatically changed. In the Colombian case, it was not that state violence ceased to be problematic, but that now it was justified as being in the name of everybody’s security. And since security was seen as the way to achieve prosperity, then some forms of state violence, even if they were excessive, were officially justified as necessary for everybody’s welfare.
In this conjuncture, the Colombian state emphasized its adherence to the framework posed by international principles to respond to what was viewed as the ultimate threat against society—terrorism. In the presentation of Democratic Security policy, president Uribe said, expressing the policy’s adherence to the war on terror doctrine, “in order to defeat terrorism there is no sovereignty of nations, but democratic sovereignty. The struggle is that of the state’s sovereignty and from democratic nations against the sovereignty of terrorism. The struggle is of all against terrorism” (Letter by President Alvaro Uribe introducing Democratic Security Policy, 2003). By vindicating the idea of “democratic sovereignty” or the power of the people vis a vis a diffusely-defined common terrorist threat irrespective of national limits, President Uribe appealed to the war on terror discourse about an expansive and continual threat to be addressed by equally drastic means.

How did this regime coexist with the existing international human rights system is a question that must be answered by attending not only to the more or less lax enforcement that particular agencies conduct under the framework of the war on terror, but to structural re-configurations of the national and international human rights system that allowed for this heightened security rationality to gain a foothold. In the micro-cosmos of human rights agencies, claims, and actors of Cali, a situation symptomatic of the institutional trends that had been ongoing during the last security-led decade was unfolding. Late in 2008, I visited the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) representation in Cali to explore how, in practice, human rights violations were conceived by an international agency in times of the war on terror, and also to get a sense of the relationship between this international agency and human
rights claims from social organizations and the state. OHCHR had been one of the key human rights international agencies since its arrival in the country in 1997. An office only opened previously in the so-called six other most violent countries in the world (Cambodia, Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia), the OHCHR was opened in light of the heightened armed conflict in the country.

A fairly active agency at the beginning of its mandate, OHCHR’s first directors for the Office in Colombia, Almudena Mazarrasa (1997-1999), Anders Kompass (1999-2002, and with a more moderate tone, Michael Fruhling (2002-2006) were so vocal in their tenure that armed forces, Congress, and government officials repeatedly accused them of exhibiting partiality because of their suggestions about the connivance between paramilitaries and the state or because of the official excess in implementing anti-terrorist measures (two examples of this were registered in El Tiempo, August 12, 1997 and Caracol, May 16, 2002).

In 2008, after eleven years of being in the country and while undergoing a process of re-structuration at the central level of the United Nations human rights system, OHCHR in Colombia was ostensibly lowering its profile. The panorama I observed during my visit to OHCHR graphically represented the Office’s ongoing transition. In that occasion, just after passing the security measures, I entered the emptied space of the office except for their furniture and documents packed in boxes. As I was soon informed, the Office was preparing to move from their current building at a highly-trafficked street in a commercial and residential sector in the north of Cali, to the city’s new industrial area in the outskirts of the metropolitan area, close to a number of corporate headquarters and difficult to access by public transportation.
Coincidental or not, the change of location for the Cali representation fit the Office trend to lower visibility that had started as early as 2005. More recently, not only was the Office starting to prepare for the end of its mandate, in 2010, but also, as I was informed by a source that preferred to remain anonymous, there was a clear awareness that the Colombia Office demanded the highest transference of resources among all the human rights missions the United Nations had opened in the world, and therefore budget issues were being considered for the current transition. However, another important consideration was a proposed re-orientation to have more cooperative relations with the state. Indeed, the Office registered, in the last period the relationship with the government had gained centrality while the ties with social organizations deteriorated.

In this period, the position of the Office in regards to Democratic Security was not one of confrontation but of respect. If particular human rights violations occurred as a result of the policy, the Office would take an official position, but would not publicly question the policy as such. An example of this occurred in 2008 when the Office condemned a number of cases of extrajudicial executions that were being attributed to the armed forces and asked that measures be taken by the national government, but did not claim that these cases were necessarily related to state policy. The official reasoning went that the presence of the Office in the country depended on maintaining existing working relations with the government.

The impending re-location of the Cali OHCHR representation as well as the changes in the Office orientation occurred also in the framework of major changes ongoing in the United Nations human rights system. Since 2006, the human rights main body at the United Nations went from being a Commission to a Council. The new
Council was praised as being more democratic as it would monitor the human rights situation of all 192 United Nations member states instead of a few “problem” states. Despite this optimism, international human rights workers in Colombia were concerned that under the new system it would be much easier for states that routinely committed human rights violations, such as Colombia, to become virtually invisible under the aspirations for a democratic system effective for all members.

In her book on the activism and politics of human rights in Colombia, Tate (2007) calls attention to the production of impunity in human rights cases, which she sees as connected to the proliferation of bureaucratic structures that overlap in functions. While this situation had not varied substantially under the Democratic Security government, now state security policies appeared as further connected to the international framework instituted after the war on terror, which expressly pushed for efficiency against terrorism even by sacrificing human rights. The re-structuration in the United Nations human rights system and the larger fact of the increasing acceptance of a security discourse that justifies notions like total war or war of low intensity with the purpose of combating terrorism were bound to produce more impunity as efficacy was privileged over human rights.

In the field, OHCHR’s lessen presence reflected on a reduction of visits to areas endangered by the presence of armed actors from 15 to 1 a month. At the same time, the reports they received from the population during their visits also decreased. The Office suspected pacts among armed actors to maintain their predominance in the area whereby the population was imposed a “law of silence.” Beyond that, it appeared that the Office’s drastic operative change affected the precarious ties of trust they might have established
in a community largely affected by the presence of multiple armed actors. By 2008, when I visited the Office, I hypothesized that their diminished access to especially rural populations in the area might have been responsible for the discrepancies in their violations reports and those presented by regional organizations. The case of the recently exposed extrajudicial executions committed by members of the Colombian armed forces was an example of this. As human rights organizations reported in an assembly of CCEEU that there was evidence of over 380 cases of extrajudicial executions in Valle del Cauca and nearby southwest departments of Colombia, an OHCHR extra-officially mentioned that Valle del Cauca was not affected by extrajudicial executions with the exception of two isolated possible cases in two separate towns.

The politics of visibility in human rights cases were key to not only formulate demands for justice in particular situations, but to even recognize those situations as deserving of intervention. When I asked an international human rights worker in Cali about their reduced access to communities in danger, the answer--“people can’t distinguish all the people that come in different vests every week” (referring to the multiple human rights groups that made sporadic presence in these areas) seemed to imply that it was actually unimportant who recorded the violations, or with what frequency. On the other hand, it is conceivable to think that the rupture of delicate ties of trust with communities might have been a factor affecting the registry of violations. Thinking of this scenario may be an explanation about why the figures of regional and international human rights bodies differ so drastically.

Despite their relative closeness in mission and fieldwork, local human rights organizations and international agencies like OHCHR have at certain points—as in the
issue of extrajudicial executions conjuncture—had radically divergent readings of the situation. As the war on terror continues and security as a dominant logic remains, contending definitions of state violence and the proper limits of state sovereignty continue to be at stake. As it appeared in Valle del Cauca’s case, the alleged democratization of the United Nations human rights system suggests that a modified politics of visibility for states’ violence and human rights is in the making.

As human rights violations are registered, evaluated, and categorized, the emergence of the security state as a central entity in the geopolitics of the war on terror marks the configuration of increasingly contested definitions of impunity, accountability, and victimization, as well as for the possibilities of intervention. CINEP (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular), an important Jesuit organization for human rights and social research, has posed the question of what constitutes a human rights violation for the purpose of its report. The definition they adopted—now applied by the multiple organizations that feed their “Noche y Niebla” database—proposed the criteria of socio-political violence that is exercised by the state as the main aspect in defining a human rights violation⁶ (CINEP, 2008). With the emergence of a securitized international governance, the United Nations’ evaluation and record of human rights violations gets to be about applying international human rights instruments inasmuch as it is about the

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⁶ Between 1995 and 1996, CINEP and Justicia y Paz, another organization recording human rights violations, led a process to sharpen and unify methodological criteria in human rights databases. The result was a conceptual framework that addresses both international instruments definitions and cases of social and political violence where authors are unknown but where there is indication that political motivations existed. As CINEP (2008) indicates, while the new conceptual framework is rigorous, it also addresses “the desire not to discard precarious information that manage to elude many censorships, pressures, fears, and deformations, but that are pointing the strategies through which media and justice administration apparatuses serve impunity, favoring the most perverse developments of the conflict.”
interpretations of those instruments in the face of the priorities that the war on terror poses: terrorist threats represented by state opponents, in the first place, and also drug-trafficking, trafficking on people, as well as a growing and hard to determine catalogue of so-considered threats.

Under Colombia’s Democratic Security, OHCHR drew on these interpretations to produce a particular type of human rights monitoring. In the case of arbitrary detentions, the Office expressed concern for their reliance on informants’ testimonies, but did not condemn the use of the informants as such. In cases of extrajudicial executions, while they condemned murders by the armed forces, the cases as such were not considered as part of a systematic practice across the armed forces. Also, when in 2010 social organizations denounced that a mass grave with the anonymous bodies of about 2000 people buried by the armed forces in southeastern town of La Macarena suggested a possible new case of mass extrajudicial executions, OHCHR said that this was evidence of non-identified bodies individually buried but not of a mass grave, and that this suggested possible violations in norms to identify corpses but not extrajudicial executions.

Reading and interpreting military practices and determining whether they respond to systematic policies or to the “minutiae” of war has opened a largely contested terrain whose definition might define, perhaps, criminal responsibilities, but also, importantly, the contours of governance in regards to what is permitted and forbidden in the management of the “enemy.” State security is regularly interpellated through the discussion about the use of secret informants in arbitrary detentions, the norms used to identify and manage corpses by the armed forces, the use of rewards for armed forces
members for deaths and not for captures, among other aspects involved in the day-to-day operation of Democratic Security.

The opacity of state military practices and policies has been the subject of a continuous effort from the state to establish criteria of visibility from an institutional perspective. With that purpose, the armed forces have incorporated instruction on human rights and international humanitarian law in the military curriculum, as well as human rights offices within military units. With the approval of the second phase of Democratic Security through the 2007 Policy of Democratic Security Consolidation, the government introduced a policy of human rights and international humanitarian law. This Policy emphasized instruction on international legislation to the armed forces, and contemplated also internal bureaucratic structures including advisors, researchers about military doctrine, inspectors, an informational system of investigations, a modified disciplinary regime, guidelines for attending to “special populations” such as ethnic groups, unionists, and human rights defenders, and a strengthened system of legal advising for investigations against armed forces members (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, 2008)

Despite this rather large bureaucratic apparatus, the prevailing narrative continued contemplating human rights violations by the military as individual actions of some “rotten apples”—problematic individuals that should be criminally prosecuted, but in no way the result of institutional designs or, less, a larger governance model.

In Cali, where figures of human rights violations attributed to the armed forces in 2008 were rather significant (CINEP, 2008), armed forces, including the police, also started implementing the model of state-led human rights offices. Referred by an acquaintance at a local human rights organization, I made an appointment with the
director of the Cali Metropolitan Police human rights office. In our conversation, I was struck by the officer’s elaborate language about human rights (doubtless the result of an intense exposure to institutional instruction on human rights) and the apparent assumption that the iteration of these rhetorical formulas shed light on the institutional dynamics allowing human rights violations.

Some of this rhetoric included statements such as these (I can only paraphrase as I was not allowed to record): “We have the material elements, but we need to be educated for the post-conflict”; “The ‘jungle’ course doesn’t work in civility”; “The principles of the National Police are those of Democratic Security”; “Security means tranquility, and democracy means participation”. In practice, the officer explained to me, the Police human rights agenda was one that emphasized educating Police officers and to explain this goal, he said, “We give Police officers ‘human rights pills’—what constitutes cruel or inhumane treatment; what is the Inter-American Human Rights Court....” The other major emphasis, he elaborated, was about how the Police could itself promote human rights in the community. Examples of this approach included the education of youth to be “community police-men” and in that way promote civic-mindedness, and the implementation of the American Police-led program DARE, Drug Abuse Resistance Education, in Cali schools.

While it remained unclear how the aspirations to respect human rights could be met through some lessons of human rights-related concepts or through the promotion of civic values, at another point of our conversation a more important issue for the question about the relation between police and human rights was raised: How can we know, in the case of a conflict between individuals’ rights and the existing order, which of these, rights
or order, should prevail? The officer responded to his own question that “we always need to limit some rights in order to protect other rights.” And he went on, saying “think of an eviction; on the one hand, you have someone’s right to housing; on the other, you have communities’ right to adequate sanitary conditions. If you have such conflict some rights will have to be limited in order to protect some others. In the spirit of recognizing human rights, however undetermined this notion remained in this interview, the officer conceded, rights conflict should be negotiated.” Yet, as the terms of this negotiation were definitely not determined during the interview, it seemed to me that the problem with the Police and other institutional approaches to human rights discourse under security was precisely that the idea of human rights took a particular value as an attribute defined in reference to security—in itself a rather polysemic concept.

Analyzing human rights in the current conjuncture of imperial re-configurations and state authoritarianism, one could say that they can be defined by negation, or at least by the struggles around their observance. In a context where those actors accused of being the greatest human rights violators become their greatest defenders, the reality of human rights (their definition and respect) seems to be more effectively formulated by conceiving them as a political postulate; a possibility contested in practice and an aspiration to be realized as an ongoing project. The presentation I have done here discusses how, under security, human rights are jeopardized both by their consistent violation and by the opacity of their definition under the changing geopolitics of security. In the second and third chapters I will explore the case of afrodescendant and women’s collectives and the meaning they attribute to human rights under the security paradigm.
CHAPTER 2
SECURITY AND TERRITORY: AFROCOLOMBIANS AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF THE PACIFIC COAST

In 1993, following the drafting of the multiculturally-oriented 1991 Colombian constitution, the afrocolombian communities’ claim for collective property titles over ancestral territories was finally attended with the approval of groundbreaking Law 70. Unfortunately, not long after this key legal and political victory, three related phenomena led to a dramatic reversal of the recent achievements. First, the increase of paramilitary violence in areas surrounding economic megaprojects; second, the push, under anti-narcotics Plan Colombia, of an illegal drugs market to areas bordering collective territories, and third, the escalation of the ongoing armed conflict between guerrillas and paramilitaries for the territorial control of these areas (Restrepo, 2010).

In the Pacific coast region—extending from the south of Panama to the north of Ecuador—murders, massacres, disappearances, threats, and other serious forms of violence came to configure the "geographies of terror"\(^7\) (Oslender, 2006) that the ongoing wars between legal and illegal armed actors drew. It was in precisely these territories that afrocolombian communities had been progressively constituting a project of ethnic and culturally distinctive organization whose main axis was the possibility to

\(^7\) For Oslender (2006:161), “geographies of terror” refer to “the transformation of places and regions in fear landscapes with specific spatial articulations that break in a dramatic manner, and often unforeseeable, local and regional social relations” (Author’s translation). In this chapter I subscribe to Oslender’s definition and also to his important observation that current geopolitical discourses emphasizing terrorism against the state must be re-oriented to also include those technologies of terror mobilized by the state or other actors against local populations.
live and produce in ancestral territories under principles of autonomous participation and
collective well-being. (Escobar, 2008)

To discuss a part of this process, I will focus on the city of Buenaventura, second
city in the Colombian southwestern department of Valle del Cauca, and a geopolitically
strategic location uniting the Colombian Pacific north and south. Afrodescendant
communities in the urban area of Buenaventura and in its neighboring river communities
have undergone, as much as their counterparts throughout the Colombian Pacific
systematic deterritorialization—the process of physically and socially expunging
communities from the territories that they had historically inhabited with distinct ways of
relation and regulation.

While afrodescendants claim the territory as the physical and social space to
recreate their identity and sociality within an ethnic and culturally distinct community,
several related wars occurred simultaneously in this location. Largely excluded from the
geography of the conflict, afrodescendants in the Pacific had become subject of mounting
forced displacement towards 1996, only a few years, and seemingly at least partially as a
reaction to the collective titulation that followed the 1993 approval of Law 70 (Escobar,
2004). Against this backdrop of economic development and further incorporation into
the global economy, Buenaventura saw an intensification of the confrontation between
right-wing AUC paramilitaries (Spanish acronym for Self-Defense United of Colombia)
and leftist guerrilla FARC (Spanish acronym for Revolutionary Armed Forces of
Colombia), who fought for the territorial control of areas historically occupied by
afrodescendants. Yet, the approval of multilateral, mainly Colombian-American anti-
narcotic, counter-insurgency Plan Colombia in 1999 marked a crucial moment for the
wars that were being fought in the Pacific. In this context, for the first time Plan Colombia began explicitly to define Colombia’s wars as being at the crux of both development and militarization, and the Colombian state as ensuring prosperity through intensive control.

Scholars on the Colombian Pacific have presented comprehensive explanations about how the Pacific became a key site for development, as social movements struggled to maintain this territory in ways compatible with their conceptions of culture, ethnicity, and socio-political organization. Escobar (1995 and 2008, especially) has extensively studied the construction of the Pacific as a site of development. He suggests that afrodescendant communities have claimed ancestral territories to be in permanent tension with the state and, more recently, with illegal armed actors. With a different emphasis, Asher (2009) has explained how the legal victories that allowed for the organizational peak of afrodescendant communities in the Pacific, mainly Law 70, were simultaneously a mechanism for the state to clarify the lands’ property regime as much as a conquest of the afrocolombian social movements.

Although this scholarship has shed considerable light on how the state uses institutional discourses and practices to mediate Colombia’s insertion into capitalist modernity, we know less about the coercive face of this process, especially when state coercion is deployed not as an overtly negative exercise of repression, but rather as an intervention in the name of progress and development. In this chapter I will focus on the maximization of governmental control technologies as a means to regulate the Pacific coast’s insertion into the global economy and not only as an exercise of the state sovereign powers. I sustain that, by relying on warfare security mechanisms, the state has
furthered afrodescendant communities’ deterritorialization as part of a process of violent capitalist accumulation. Through this strategy, the state engages in the use and legitimation of coercive power against those perceived as security threats for the free market.

In this analysis I address the growing militarization of everyday life in the urban and rural areas of Buenaventura not only as a display of force from the Colombian government or as an act of territorial sovereignty, but as a form of population control and economic development (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001). I am interested in how, by effecting an intervention in the Colombian Pacific, the state severely obfuscates the conception of the territory so central to afrodescendant communities’ experience, thereby leading the way to their extermination as a distinctive collective. If afrodescendant communities have led a struggle for the territory as a life space embodying a culturally and ethnically distinctive set of relations under conditions of self-determination, the pretension from the state to integrate this region into the global economy has necessitated a form of authoritarian governance.

Though heavily strained by armed actors and their disputes for controlling the territory within the drug business or as part of the armed conflict, the place of afrocolombian communities within the territory has been largely disrupted by the state’s attempted mediation of these conflicts, through its ongoing project to incorporate domestic wealth into the traffic of economic globalization. In Security, Territory and

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8 In this point, I follow Dean’s (2002) idea that ‘liberal mentalities of rule’ are not incompatible with coercive governmental programmes. To him, “governing liberally does not necessarily entail governing through freedom or even governing in a manner that respects individual liberty. It might mean, in ways quite compatible with a liberal rationality of government, overriding the exercise of specific freedoms in order to enforce obligations on members of the population”.

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Population, Foucault (2007: 13), reflecting on the emergence of liberalism in the seventeen and eighteen centuries, argues that the constitution of a territory requires not only that sovereign powers are exercised over such space but that there is a “spatial, juridical, administrative, and economic opening up of the town; resitutating the town in a space of circulation.” It is this management of circulation, of ordering anew the territory where the state looks to re-configure the territory as a space that articulates commercial traffic with the global economy; an enclave that connects but also works to rutinize and naturalize economic exchange.

In this chapter I draw on interviews I conducted with activists from Proceso de Comunidades Negras (Process of Black Communities) in Valle del Cauca cities, Cali and Buenaventura to establish the ways in which the state has effected this management of the circulation in the Pacific’s territories. Proceso de Comunidades Negras or PCN, by its acronym in Spanish is a network of organizations grouping afrocolombians living in the Pacific Region, and to a lesser extent, in Colombia's Inter-Andean Valleys and main urban areas. Their political program rests on a threefold claim for territory, identity and culture or, more specifically, the search for collective territorial autonomy based on their political identity as afrodescendant communities. (See, among others, Grueso et. al., 1998; Escobar, 2008; Asher, 2009)

Through their testimonies, and in conjunction with the ethnographic work with human rights and women’s organizations I conducted in this region, I examine the process of re-configuring the territory as that space that Foucault (2007: 21) calls a milieu—a field of intervention over a population in its relation to the material world they inhabit. As the Colombian state moves to intensify the country’s commitment to free-
market policies, myriad measures and devices have been mobilized in order to produce the space required for such a project. Through the modality of government Foucault (1991) termed governmentality, both state and nonstate actors, from anti-poverty to anti-drug agencies, assist in the production of the citizen, the community, and the territory appropriate for the liberalized space.

As the case of the Colombian Pacific shows, governmentality may grow increasingly dependant on coercion in order to produce citizens and territories that facilitate the form of liberalization it pursues. As Opitz (2010) has pointed out, “liberal rationality organizes the boundaries of the ‘powers of freedom’ and establishes ‘modes of illiberal rule’”; or, in other words, “illiberal governmentality is a potentiality of liberal reason” (Opitz, 2010: 94). In this double-faced governmentality, Foucault (2008: 65) designates as security “the principle of calculation for (the) cost of manufacturing freedom”. In the binary of freedom/security that supports liberalism, security appears as a mode or a technology that articulates the production of freedom with the logics of war (Dillon 2004). The anti-narcotics and anti-insurgency Plan Colombia was articulated as a chief security mechanism to mediate the liberalization of the Colombian Pacific through a comprehensive military ruling of the territory, in a project that is continued by Democratic Security policy.

While repression has been a daily product of this military-led governance, in the following sections I want to show how security mechanisms have been instrumental to re-organize the territory in ways functional to larger templates of economic neoliberal
development. In the second part of the chapter I will discuss the social appropriation of the territory as a chief deterritorialization mode under the governance of Plan Colombia and Democratic Security. The imposition of governmental logics that radically transform spatiality and temporality for communities as well as the social uses of the territory and the communities that inhabit it will be examined as part of a security mechanism and as shaping a form of illiberal governmentality.

2.1 Violent Accumulation in Valle del Cauca’s Pacific

Valle del Cauca is located in southwestern Colombia, between the Andean region and the Pacific coast, with much of its territory in the valley of Cauca river, the second most important of the country. Buenaventura, the second city in Valle del Cauca and the largest in the Colombian Pacific, is also the main port in the country. Buenaventura is separated from the Cali, the department capital, by 70 miles, as well as by the western branch of the Colombian Andes. Valle del Cauca is home to 42 municipalities where a variety of economic projects unfold: The north-center is dominated by agriculture, mining and logging, the south, by the cane agro-business, and in a smaller scale oil palm; and the Pacific, by shrimp farm, timber, and mining. The most important productive space in Valle del Cauca and the north border of the neighboring department of Cauca is the sugar cane latifundia, with its derived agro-businesses, sugar and ethanol. The other key economic activities are paper production through tree planting in vast mountainous areas of the department, industrial fishing in the Pacific, and mining of gold, platinum, and hydrocarbons. Illicit cultivation of coca and poppy flower have also become an
important part of the political economy of the region.

Simultaneously with these activities, economic projects have surrounded the port modernization in Buenaventura generating a large-scale intervention to execute a series of development mega-projects funded with both private and public capital. Some of the main projects include infrastructure works conceived under plans of continental development such as the Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America and the Puebla-Panamá Plan. Nationally, the most important plans are Arquimedes Project and the related Pacific Integral Regional Plan Initiative. Among the works that are already in execution there is the Atrato-Truandó Channel—the connection of natural channels to communicate the bay of Buenaventura with Pacific city, Tumaco, through an aquatic highway or Acuapista. Other local economic projects in the area include the Aguadulce Industrial Port, the Cement Harbor, the Dagua River Delta, the Bahía Málaga Deepwater Port, and the Port Expansion Project (Antón Sánchez, 2004).

While the official governmental narrative about these economic projects has presented them as opportunities for growth and development, social movements have a different take, arguing that this model of economic production is the primary factor in a process that has led to the increasing dispossession of afrodescendant, peasant, and indigenous communities. Through the elimination or outsourcing of jobs and the increase in costs of living that ensues with the privatization of public services, as--occurred in the early nineties when public enterprise, Puertos de Colombia, became privatized--economic megaprojects are charged with provoking the pauperization of populations in their area of influence.

Furthermore, afrodescendants have called attention to how privatization of public
services, unlimited extractive economic exploitation, and infrastructure megaprojects in the Pacific push communities away from the territories they inhabit, stripping them from the elements that identify them as communities with distinctive collective projects of culture, ethnicity and production. Catalyzing visions and claims of local afrodescendant communities, *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (PCN), a network of local organizations, builds this discussion on a conception of political ecology that understands the territory as a space where not only nature but also culture, production, and social organization take place. Under a vernacular, anti-capitalist paradigm of development, afrocolombian communities in the Pacific have struggled to achieve autonomy over ancestral territories within a framework of collective rights (Escobar, 2008).

After leading a campaign for collective titling and recognition of autonomy for afrodescendant communities that led to the approval of Law 70 in 1993--and the virtual demise of this legal and political victory within the following decade--PCN links the more recent and systematic expulsion of afrodescendant communities to the need of draining the territory in a way that allows its complete incorporation into the global economy. The result of this forced incorporation, communities claim, is deterritorialization—the process of physically and socially expunging communities from the territories that they had historically inhabited with distinct ways of relation and regulation. One of the PCN activists I interviewed explained this process alluding to the changing interventions in the Pacific from an untouched natural reservoir to a place for exploitation given its economic and geostrategic importance:

You know that for many years the Pacific has not been in the country's development policy; this was a place of community autonomy for excellence, so it was not in the map of development, there was not a connection between the state and society there; it
was very distant, if you can call it in some way. Yet, in the last 15 years, after the whole globalization process and of seeing oceans as the development strategy of countries, after the influence of the Asian Tigers and all that happening with the global economy, there is an attempt to start inserting Colombia in that model. That is a process that occurs with no planning, in a way that was disconnected from the social and cultural reality of the country, and in this framework is that the Pacific comes to the scene… because this region, for many years, many centuries was a region of resource conservation. (Interview with Esteban)

As explained by this activist, the Pacific’s forced transition from region of conservation to economic globalization pole has implied an active departure from earlier governmental agendas. In fact, developing the Pacific towards capitalist modernity has required an exercise of systematic forced expropriation.

The role of forced expropriation in the expansion of capitalist globality has long been recognized. In Volume I of Capital, Marx’s investigation of early capitalist primitive accumulation suggests that this was exactly the trajectory that of capitalist formation would follow. For him, the moment of creation of capitalism is nothing but the separation of the producer from the means of production through the expropriation of common lands and the degradation of people into conditions of servitude. Both by means of physical force like conquest, enslavement, robbery, and murder (1976: 874) and also through the law, capitalism inaugurated its history of violent accumulation. In its current moment of accelerated global expansion, this process manifests anew by casting peoples out from their rights and territories. For Marx, then, capitalist accumulation, with its de facto and de jure mechanisms, requires the production of a dispossessed class and

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9 For instance, Marx (1976: 899) recounts that, once expelled from his land through violent means, the agricultural folk was forced to leave his territory and labeled as a vagabond. This came accompanied by savage ways of punishment and a progressive disciplining that prepared his entrance into the emerging wage-labor system.
the maintenance of the frontiers that allows this class’ dispossession once there is a new productive and social order in place.

This process of violent accumulation transverses the history of afrodescendant peoples in Valle del Cauca with very concrete manifestations in the map of land tenure and social conflicts in the region. This testimony from a PCN activist illustrates how the recent labor conflicts in the regional sugar cane industry are connected with the historical dispossession of afrodescendants’ ancestral territories in the context of capitalist accumulation:

(W)e wanted to (...) articulate the topic of the sugar cane workers’ protest, a labor protest, in terms of (...) work flexibilization, of misery conditions, but we also wanted to articulate that to the question that all those territories used to belong to afrodescendants. It was afrodescendants who turned all of northern Cauca and south of Valle into a cultivable land. All the sugar cane you see belonged to the people who were cimarrones, who achieved their freedom when slavery was abolished, and those jungles started to be cut and they started making them cultivable. Then, when it starts all the interest, in the middle of the previous century, for agricultural production in general—first about livestock and then agriculture, basically sugar cane for exporting sugar to Europa, (a process of) enclosure and violent expropriation starts to occur. (Interview with Nancy)

This testimony points to the incorporation of the land into a regime of private property and the consequent dispossession of those who cultivated it. In Valle del Cauca, the sustained exploitation of labor power from slavery to the sugarcane latifundia, as well as the extraction of resources through mining, timber, and fishing has led to similar forms of deracination as the region has moved to capitalist modernity. Through a series of processes ranging from commodification and privatization of the land to transformation of proletarianization of the peasantry, establishment and protection of property rights, appropriation of resources, and institutionalization of credit the state leads the way to facilitate capitalist accumulation. (Harvey, 2004: 113)
If capitalism requires a sustained exploitation of labor power and a continued extraction of resources in its peripheries in order to ensure its expansion (Amin, 1976), the Pacific has appeared in the last decades of intensified uneven globalization as a key geo-strategic referent, as well as a pole of biodiversity, ecotourism, and cultural diversity. In this context, Colombia’s re-positioning as a reliable economic partner offering safe juridical bases for foreign capital, abundant natural and human resources, as well as geostrategic advantages, has been the governmental mantra to capture foreign investors for these projects. In “globalizing” the Pacific, the Colombian state has developed a body of laws and policies that facilitate the extensive exploitation of the region by national and foreign corporations. Through regulations enabling the privatization of the ports, laws guaranteeing property rights, a public registry to annotate and convalidate the transference of property, and a myriad other institutional mechanisms, the state has enabled while also reaping the benefits of capital accumulation.

Characteristic of this stage has been the construction of megaprojects or large-scale investment project. As social geographer David Harvey (2004, 2006) writes, megaprojects--like the ones being developed by the dozen in the Colombian Pacific--dynamize capitalism by absorbing the excess of labor and capital that capitalism itself generates. Through fixed forms of capital such as infrastructural works, there is a “spatial fix” of capital that, at the same time that it might deal with issues such as unemployment (produced by an excess of available labor), it allows for further capital accumulation by generating new markets and productive capacity around this infrastructure (Harvey, 2006).

Yet, generating these new capitalist projects and private ventures--which, Harvey
(2004) explains, unfold as an active decision not to pursue social expenditure--requires a whole transformation of the physical and social landscape to allow for the re-
conditioning of the territory within the agenda of the megaproject. As expressed by a member of predominantly popular and peasant social movement, Proceso de Unidad Popular del Suroccidente Colombiano, “We can’t understand megaprojects only as a work, only as a cultivate, only as mineral extraction, as degradation of nature, but as the conditioning of the territory, the conditioning of the population so these are functional in the private accumulation of capital” (Interview with Cesar).

The proliferation of megaprojects in the Colombian Pacific inscribes itself in the end of the developmental state, and comes to represent Colombia’s model of capital accumulation under neoliberalism. Once a part of developmentalist economic agendas, the Pacific has long been a place for extractive exploitation of resources. But with the advent of neoliberalism, it also becomes subject to an agenda of privatization and more intensive extraction of resources through large infrastructure projects. In particular, with the 1993 privatization of the port of Buenaventura, modernization of the port has led to executing number projects that, according to the government rhetoric, intend to make it more competitive. A deep-water port with capacity to receive larger ships; an extension of the port (aguadulce industrial port), and the terrestrial improved access to the area are only some examples of megaprojects as large, complex infrastructures that organize labor, capital, and consumption (Harvey, 2006: 113).

The larger effects of this capital accumulation exercise have long been observed by various actors within the afrocolombian, labor, and human rights social movements. Their opposed interpretation of capital projects in itself has exarcebated the social
conflicts that this process is bounded to produce. Some of these effects have to do with the transformation of labor conditions that some have termed the “flexibilization” of labor (i.e., dismantling unions, substituting full-time workers by contractors, eliminating social security and employment benefits, etc.). Yet, other effects, which will be the focus of the remaining of this chapter, have to do with the violent deterritorialization of afrodescendant communities that is created at the crux of capitalist accumulation and two other key vectors of Colombian geopolitics: anti-drugs and counter-insurgency governance.

While the official rhetoric states that intensified extraction of resources and large infrastructure projects generate wealth “for all”, PCN has pointed at the ties between state-led capitalist accumulation, the armed conflict, and the territorial expropriation of communities:

(…) In the Pacific, given its natural wealth and strategic position, megaprojects designed and in the process of implementation for this region, mobilize national and international interests that turn the armed conflict into a strategy of control and expropriation of collective territories to afrocolombians and indigenous communities through massacres, selective assassinations, threats and mass desplacement of the rural population towards Buenaventura and other urban centers (PCN, n.d).

By leading the incorporation of labor and territory into the global economy, the state has been a key actor in the deterritorialization of communities in the Pacific. Relying on the conditions created by the conflict to solidify this deterritorialization, the state has aided in the everyday conditioning of the territory through intensive militarization. Through the discourse of security provided by policies contained in initiatives such as Plan Colombia and
Democratic Security, economic development has been connected to an agenda of forced re-accommodation. In the following section, I deal first with how the security paradigm, rooted in the geopolitics of the hemisphere, enables the state for afrocolombians’ deterritorialization, and, second, with militarization of the territory as an everyday form of executing the binary prosperity/security.

2.1.1 A Territory in Dispute

Buenaventura, a city with 324,207 inhabitants, 90% of which are afrodescendants, moves over 48% of the national market through the seaport it harbors (PCN et al, 2007). With the privatization of the port in the early nineties, the historic levels of poverty and marginalization grew in a dramatic way. With an unemployment rate of 60%, other serious social problems have increased to alarming levels (Salazar, 2007). At a Congressional forum on Buenaventura, PCN reported municipal figures indicating that illiteracy among adults aged 15 reaches 17% in urban areas and 22% in rural ones. This is in contrast to a national rate of 9%. In addition, 48% of school-age children are outside the education system, and the life expectancy is 51 years, versus the national average of 62.3 years (PCN et al, 2007).

In the shadow of these indicators, Buenaventura has become globalized, not only through the commercial connection with the port traffic, but also through the international traffic of drugs, structurally tied to the position and commercial function of the port (Betancourt Echeverry, 1998). At the heart of development projects, Buenaventura is a key geostrategic location both because of its status as the main national port, but also because of its positioning as a central city where the north and south Pacific converged—a position that subsequent state development and globalization integration
plans took into account (Escobar, 2008).

In this context, Buenaventura and the litoral became a fundamental point in the application of multi-million anti-narcotics, anti-insurgency Colombian-American initiative, Plan Colombia. Approved in 1999, Plan Colombia substantially increased the military presence of army, navy and air force, historically deployed along the Pacific coast and in the woods, rivers, and towns neighboring the. In total, for the first two years of the plan, 1,300 million dollars (Vaicius, 2002) were destined to strengthen, modernize, and increase the coverage of regional military structures.

Towards the end of the nineties, Buenaventura had became the epicenter of intense confrontations, as territorial struggles between armed actors in the national conflict—right-wing paramilitaries, leftist guerrillas and state--became more intense. While the local population reported that, before the late nineties left-wing insurgent groups were only spotted occasionally passing through the areas they inhabited (interview with Esteban), by 1999 right-wing paramilitaries, who had started ravaging and exterminating entire communities in other parts of the country, penetrated and eventually became consolidated in Valle del Cauca with the so-called Bloque Calima from the Auto-Defensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) towards 2000. In this way, Buenaventura and its neighboring rivers became sites of massacres and other serious violations such as those that occurred in the Naya River in 2001, when paramilitaries massacred 40 people in the community, including indigenous and afrodescendant, and other residents had to leave the area for fear of being killed. (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2009).

Activists I interviewed expressed that the first mass displacement of communities
in the Pacific had begun in Bajo Atrato, in the north part of the region, towards 1996, simultaneously with the beginning of discussions about the possibility to build the Interoceanic Canal Atrato - Truandó. Then, more than 8000 people were violently displaced from that area through aerial and land paramilitary incursions where people were intimidated through killings and threats. Since then, events of forced displacement by paramilitaries moved to areas further south in Valle del Cauca, Cauca and Nariño.

According to figures of Departamento Nacional de Planeación - DNP (the state agency dedicated to national economic planning), only between 2000 and 2001 46 massacres were reported in the Pacific coast of Valle del Cauca (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2006). The forced displacement caused by dynamics of expulsion and combats in areas inhabited by Black communities has reached an approximate figure of 1’000,000 afrocolombians fleeing from their territories (Afrodes and Global Rights, 2007). Often these displacements come with other grave violations, such as sexual violence against women as a way to control territories in the context of the war. The number of homicides in Buenaventura’s urban area (797 only between 2006 and 2007) is also alarming (PCN, 2007), as are cases of forced disappearances, which in 2009 reached 160 cases (2010). In a 2007 report to the Constitutional Court PCN provided evidence of 86 events related to the armed conflict that occurred in Buenaventura in 2006. Among them, there were cases of extrajudicial executions arbitrary detentions, collective assassinations, among others.. The Constitutional Court, in Auto 005 from 2009, on the protection of fundamental rights for the afrodescendant population that has been subject to forced displacement, recognizes the seriousness of human rights violations in the area and cites, within its decision, PCN testimonies that reflect the ongoing situation. As an
example of the gravity and extent of the situation the Court cites the following excerpt from PCN’s report: “Now, walking by Buenaventura, the traces of the war are around, anywhere. Everybody knows a victim, a wounded person, a widow, an orphan, a mutilated police officer, a closed business, an unfinished suffering” (Constitutional Court, Auto 009/2009).

In this scenario, Plan Colombia provided a robust framework of intervention that would, through large-scale militarization, address both the drug economy and the armed conflict, two serious obstacles for Colombia’s full incorporation into the free market. While the war on drugs had extended for several decades then and transnational corporations operating in Colombia seemed to co-exist with a certain ease with the geopolitics of the conflict (in fact, corporations like Coca-Cola, Chiquita, and Nestle were proved to have hired paramilitaries to provide security for their Colombia plants), Plan Colombia constituted a new, mass effort to facilitate Colombia’s transition to a fully regularized and liberalized market. An initiative of the Colombian government, Plan Colombia was quickly considered and endorsed by the United States Congress, which gave it a more militaristic emphasis, but still confirmed President Pastrana’s will to turn this initiative into a local “Marshall Plan” (2005) for Colombia’s further economic development. Using the rhetoric of anti-narcotics and anti-insurgency warfare, both Pastrana and the United States Congress’ plans converged in the militarization of the territory as a way to recover the control compromised in these wars.

2.1.2 Democratic Security: Militarization for Prosperity

After its implementation in 2002, Uribe’s presidential flagship policy, Democratic Security, followed the programmatic lead of Plan Colombia. Like Plan Colombia,
Democratic Security upheld the war on drugs' free market orientation, while also laying out a comprehensive anti-terrorist program where national security and national wealth were intrinsically tied. Yet, under Democratic Security it was apparent the growing articulation between risk management, military aid and market economy. An example of this connection was the greater use of state security resources to guarantee multinational corporations' operations, but also, as a central feature, the growing state intervention to facilitate the liberalization of the market. Indeed, Democratic Security Policy stated, as one of its principles, “Economic development and employment possibilities are equally subject to the reign of a security climate that allows for investment, commerce, and the expenditure of municipal resources in benefit of community, which are the goal of permanent depredation by all illegal armed organizations” (Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática, Par. 31).

The use of a security discourse has been an important part of governance repertoires during the development of neoliberalism in Latin America (Svampa, 2007). If in the first phase of neoliberalization in the 1990s the state moved to economic deregulation and privatization of public services, in the 2000s, it prepared the terrain for a new neoliberal phase of corporate-led extractive-exports (agrobusinesses, mega-mining, agro-fuels, and infrastructure works) (Svampa, 2008) with the support of growing militarization. Democratic Security provided an ideal framework to the former, second-wave, of neoliberal reform. While it has provided the ideological legitimation for corporate-led economic development, it has also facilitated the material conditions for

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10 A case of this was the use of Plan Colombia's military aid to protect companies that had lobbied for the Plan in the United States Congress, as it occurred, for instance, with the strengthening of the Army's 13th Brigade to protect the Caño Limón-Coveñas Pipeline operated by Oxidental Corporation (Estrada Alvarez, 2002).
this extractive project by conditioning the territory through the necessary legal and military means. In Colombia, Democratic Security became imbricated with the country's neoliberalized economy through its growing intermediation of the anti-drugs and anti-terrorist programs as well as with the recognition that this intermediation would aid the national economy open to global markets.

As a policy, Democratic Security was unveiled at the beginning of Alvaro Uribe’s first term in 2002 as a tool to address the complex problem of drug trafficking and armed conflict that continued growing throughout the country. As the government formulated it, the policy would be a tool for promoting foreign investment by re-gaining control of the national territory disputed by drug traffickers and guerrillas. To that extent, social policies as initially formulated by president Andrés Pastrana as being at the center of Plan Colombia, were expresedly substituted by a more clear free market orientation with the support of a strong militarization.

Democratic Security and the larger anti-narcotics militarization operated after the 2001 international anti-terror turn has been at the core of capitalist accumulation in the Colombian Pacific. As the war on terror provided further legitimacy to Plan Colombia's militarized agenda, the Colombian state revamped security notions through the newly implemented Democratic Security Policy and its declared goal of regaining territorial control lost to drug-traffickers and guerrillas. While in earlier stages of neoliberal economic management there was an emphasis on intervening in territories through a developmental, modernizing agenda, the continuation of this project has been rather tied to more accentuated situations of coercion.

This situation of “new imperialism”, or the growing reliance on military means to
maintain economic and political hegemonies under a scenario of systemic crisis (Harvey, 2004; Amin, 2001) posed a framework that under Democratic Security reunited a United States’ largely increased monetary, logistic, and advisory aid with the upgraded capacity of the Colombian armed forces. This policy was articulated within the dynamics of deterritorialization already occurring in the Pacific via the armed conflict and the drugs economy, incorporating a new series mechanisms to more fully effect this control. As I discuss in the next section, the state security policy actively led a process of territorial reorganization that was already in progress with the long-term plans to develop, modernize and globalize the Pacific but that now introduced clearer regulations to govern the territory at a more minute scale and with an everyday periodicity.

2.1.3 Territory and Racialized Militarization

To address the regional situation while taking into account the different characteristics of the national territory, Democratic Security established that "the instruments to be employed depend on the nature of the threat. Where territorial control is weak, the focus will be the security forces’ actions; where control of the territory is not threatened, but there exists a high impunity, for example, judicial bodies will have the initiative" (Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática, Par. 17). In that way, in Buenaventura’s case, given the many threats contained in the region in regards to drug trafficking and to guerrilla and paramilitary presence, Democratic Security was deployed with all its military force in the port and also in the predominantly afrodescendant areas of the neighboring rivers, thus becoming one of the spearheads of the governmental security project.
Yet, as a region predominantly populated by afrodescendants and indigenous peoples, the military intervention in the state in the Pacific inevitably raises the question about the significance of race and ethnicity in the process of securitizing this territory. Indeed, community and scholars (for one, Almario, 2004) have used the term “ethnocide” to suggest that the systematic extermination and displacement undergone by populations in the Pacific is correlated with their claim of a distinct racial or ethnicity identity. The argument that violence affecting afrocolombians connects with ideas of race and racism is also advanced by PCN activists, who sustain that racism has been a historical constant even if it has manifested with relatively different faces. As an activist expressed:

The structural point is that in Colombia there is a situation of structural racism and everything responds to that logic. At a time it was slavery, at another time it was the invisibilization of the Black community—saying that our territories were abandoned, that no one inhabited them, that there weren’t Black people in Colombia, and today is the repression and the attack against people. These are different scenarios but they all belong to a conjuncture—to a structure that is racist (Interview with Estela)

Using Quijano’s (2000) framework of the coloniality power, the continuing significance of race and racism that this activist recounts can be seen as a key mechanism making possible the configuration of a hierarchy between andean mestizos and racialized others. By virtue of this hierarchy, afrocolombians, as the subordinated end in this relation, have been historically incorporated as slaves and super-exploited workers and more recently displaced from their territories under the modernizing agenda of the neoliberal state.

The greater impact of the war on ethnic communities has been partly explained by the fact that, historically, the Pacific has been represented as a territory of lawlessness and its peoples as in need of civilization (Almario, 2004). Almario (2004) points out
how, up until the mid twentieth century, the myth of the good savage was used to characterize black and indigenous populations in the Pacific, yet this narrative gave place to the exploitation of these groups’ labor power under the idea that they possessed privileged knowledge about the topography and botanics of the local geography that was believed would facilitate the extractive economy taking over the region.

Underlying these views of ethnic communities as inferior or as subjects of exploitation, though, was the construction of black and indigenous populations of the Pacific and the territories they inhabited as incompatible with the modernity that the Colombian nation-state so decisively aimed to embrace. These representations, historically underlying various forms of racism, have contributed to the view that the Pacific should be incorporated into a project of development and modernization mutually benefiting their communities and the national economy as a whole. Yet, with the intensification of the conflict in the nineteen nineties and first decade of the Two-Thousands, the high numbers of displaced people from the Pacific and the extreme forms of violence these populations have endured suggests a different reading than the officially formulated at the local and national levels of the state. Extreme violence in the Pacific might be read at least partially as embedded in the historical representations of Black and indigenous communities in the Pacific as uncivilized, or pre-modern. Current state interventions in this region rely on the racialization of the Pacific as a space that can be subject to forcefully participate from a model of development foreign to their ways of living and producing in the territory, even at the cost of the elimination and dispossession of its peoples.

While a narrative of the Pacific as in need of development has been at the core of
state, corporate, and development agencies intervention, (Escobar, 2008: 160) it is also true that race and racism have chiefly shaped the more recent securitization of the region. A soldier deployed from Bogotá to Buenaventura whose testimony was published as part of a 2007 New York Times feature on Buenaventura gave an individual yet significant illustration of how the Pacific is racialized in the public imagination. The article transcribed the soldier’s testimony, “It’s as if we have a little Haiti within Colombia (…) It feels like another country”, and then continued to justapox images of Buenaventura with the headline “No Man’s Land” and a recount on the uselessness of Plan Colombia for Buenaventura given the particular ferociousness of the drug cartels operating locally (Romero, 2007). With this reference to Buenaventura as a local Haiti both the testimony and the article play on images of blackness and otherness as requiring radical interventions to bring both modernity and order.

Reports from both Afrodes (2007) and Observatorio de Discriminación Racial (Rodríguez Garavito et al, 2009) have offered important statistical evidence about the socio-economic disparities between afrocolombians and mestizos. These reports show that afrocolombians not only enjoy worse health, educational, and economic conditions than the rest of the Colombian population, but they are also more likely to be victims of some human rights violations such as forced displacement. Afrodes (2007:21), for example, shows that between 1997 and 2007 355,629 people were displaced from towns where collective territories were located. The fact that a large number of afrodescendants have been displaced from towns with collective territories speaks not only about territorial struggles among armed actors in the national conflict, but also about the significance race plays in this confrontation. In this sense, Afrodes notes, forced
displacement constitutes a war strategy against the afrocolombian population.

The significance of race under the Colombian conflict has also been documented through research on the exclusion rural afrocolombian migrants face when they relocate in urban areas such as Cali or Buenaventura, where they must endure conditions of discrimination, unemployment, lack of access to education, and residencial overcrowding, not to mention further prosecution or recruitment from armed groups (Urrea, 2002). While the ethnic dimension of violence has been stressed in the analysis of the conflict (Almario, 2004; Restrepo, 2002), this research suggests that the racism afrocolombians undergo is a major underlying cause of their current displacement and victimization under the conflict, as well as a situation they must endure after such displacement occurs.

2.2 The Internal Colonization of the Territory

In what ways has Democratic Security impacted afrocolombian communities within the framework of economic neoliberalism and new imperialism I have presented here? Drawing upon Proceso de Comunidades Negras’ experiences and movement literature as well as on state official documents, I want to suggest that the constant and extensive presence of the state through its security policy has been instrumental for deterritorializing communities. Through its position as central regulator and possessor of the monopoly of force, the state has commanded--or at least actively participated in--the violent re-accommodation that structured Law 70 from 1993. Spearheading the multiple interventions that occur in this region by agents that go from the international to the para-state level and the corporative, the state has commanded a militarized neoliberalization of
the Pacific.

Analyzing the process of deterritorialization that afrodescendant communities have suffered throughout the last decade, PCN activists recall how not long ago the territories of the Pacific were a space of conservation, only touched by capital to exclude it from its domains. In this narrative, Law 70 of 1993, which recognized afrodescendant communities’ right to get collective titles over the territory has been presented as the elevation to law of the ancestral communities’ practice of preserving the territory according to their ethno-cultural principles and as an organizing tool to maintain this order. Yet at the same time, they pose that the model of territoriality conceived with Law 70 of 1993 is at the core of the Pacific forced integration into the global economy. As an activist pointed:

We have an example every time we're in that state of despair… here law 70 did not exist, and people united and created their Law 70, and no one, including the government, believed that blacks could create a law, that’s why they gave them the chance, because they never believed that they would be able to create a law in less than a year, and finally it was done, and when they reacted it was a very powerful political situation, so they didn’t have another way, and they haven’t had another legislative way to hide it all, then they do it violently; it’s what they are doing. (Interview with Estela).

This activist’s testimony coincides with Asher’s perspective (2009, 65) that Law 70 deeply challenged the state’s neoliberal project towards eliminating goods of common use or any form of collective property. Yet, as Asher (2009) also suggests, the process of elevating notions of sustainable development to law, as it occurred with Law 70, was mediated by the need to clarify property rights and to reduce land conflicts as part of the neoliberalization process that Colombia underwent towards the early nineties.
Although popularly identified with the function of coercion, security policy has played a fundamental role in the insertion of the Pacific to the global economy. By providing the discourse of prosperity with security, Democratic Security has re-organized the territory in order to facilitate the exploitation of resources by foreign capital. Through the armed conflict and the state’s pretension to recover the territorial control lost to armed actors, the state becomes a control agent that, simultaneously with its role of facilitating punctual economic exploitation, manages the territory in favor of an abstract idea of nation-hood. As the nation is conceived as having precedence over communities’ collective rights, the intended territorial recovery by the state becomes a way of dispossessing of such communities via the pretended security for the nation.

PCN activists see how Democratic Security’s management of the armed conflict furthers the state positioning within the complex geopolitics of the war in a way that still allows it to achieve its goals of facilitating capital accumulation. As an activist put it,

Many times we think that the presence of guerrillas in the area—here there is a presence of the 30 front of FARC in Buenaventura, is a pretext for some actions against the people who inhabit this region, because we know that the Pacific region for its natural wealth generates interest for many. In this case for the government to manage and control, and in many cases to have the conditions to put natural resources under the international trade (...) Then, Democratic Security policy aims to create a territorial control that allows not to have much resistance to negotiate; in this case, the territories of ethnic groups. (Interview with Andrés)

In the attempt to re-configure the communities’ life space as a location for capital production, the territory, understood as a vital space for social, productive, cultural, and political relations, becomes a space in dispute. 

If, as Harvey (2006) has suggested, processes of capital accumulation are materially contained in the socio-ecological network of life, the territory, as a primary
vital space, must be the center to analyze a process as the one occurring in the Colombian Pacific. As articulated by afrodescendant communities in the Pacific, the territory is a complex space for life and resistance, which entails losses beyond a mere place of residency. A PCN activist put it this way, when reflecting about the importance of the territory as a space in dispute: “How do you lose the territory? Not inhabiting it, not living in it. When you no longer live in the territory you no longer have rights over it; the territory is a space for you to use, dwell on it, and it is impossible to inhabit it because there is no law 70 (effective) anymore. In the territory everything is re-created, absolutely everything” (Interview with Estela).

In the continuation of her testimony, this activist elaborates on the situation afrodescendant communities in the Pacific currently face when the state announced the recovery of the territory lost to drug-traffickers and guerrilas. This announcement implies, following the activists’ reading of the idea of territory, not only an increase in the state military presence, but a whole draining of the territory. To her, this strategy implies,

to extract, to take out (...); territories become cleaned up, clean for them to do whatever they want because people become a nuisance to them— “We have to take out so we can come” (is the position of the state), and their logic is that: To take people out of the territory, and for us the bet is to stay. (Interview with Estela)

As expressed in this quote, underlying the communities’ dispossession is the transformation of the territory into a space that fulfills functions other than hosting the community’s social, cultural, and productive space. To the violent deterritorialization effected through the paramilitary incursions to the region and subsequent forced displacement of population, the state intervention has added greater intensity to these
communities’ deracination. Through a variety of institutional mechanisms from the government of the military to administrative regulations, judicial decisions, and legislation, the state has consolidated a form of government that extends from the physical control of the territory to its broader social conditioning.

While Afrocolombian communities from the Pacific have endured multiple and serious forms of violence, the territorial re-accomodation here examined is particularly problematic because it involves the communities’ way of life and its severe disruption through a ‘war management’ of their everyday life. Taking into account the depth of this process, my contention is that deterritorialization of communities in favor of capital occurs not only through the expulsion provoked by forced displacement but also through the internal colonization of the territory by the state—indeed, the former should be thought of as a modality of the latter. Moreover, by internally colonizing the territory, the state both recovers territorial control of physical spaces occupied by communities, and, importantly, takes control of the social spaces that gave support to the communities.

The incorporation into global capital commanded by this strategy of control has occurred through minute territorial re-organizations, often focused on the smallest aspects of daily life. As an activist from PCN narrates, security policy is implemented on a structure of daily controls ranging from food access to the militarization of the space:

For Buenaventura’s case, Democratic Security Policy intends to restrict the mobility, in this case of supplies to rural areas. For some supplies like, for instance, gas, boats must keep their records and receipts of what they are carrying, and there are also a series of searches in checkpoints. On the other hand, there is the function of performing military operations in the area and also to generate, for the urban area, conditions that allow the functioning of a port society, as well as the import and export of commodities (Interview with Andrés)

In what follows of this section, I explore the mechanisms the state uses to militarize the
territory and its ways to effect social deterritorialization. Drawing on activists’ narratives I identify three types of manifestations of this military process and its utility to complete an internal colonization of the territory. First, the physical and functional transformation of the territory; second, the alteration of temporal and spatial logics; and third, the militarization of social life. I conclude by discussing some of the effects these measures produce in the organizing process of afrodescendant communities.

2.2.1 The Physical and Functional Transformation of the Territory as a Space For Social and Productive Life

A naval base located in Bahía Málaga, 27 miles from Buenaventura, is the main military garrison guarding the area. The base, built in 1982 with a loan from the Swedish government, had long been proposed as an alternative location to Buenaventura and its shallower shore (Campo, 1993). In 2009, the Colombian and United States governments signed an agreement to allow up to 800 military units and 600 contractors to use Naval base ARC Málaga as well as six other military bases throughout Colombia (Acuerdo Complementario para la Cooperación y Asistencia Técnica en Defensa y Seguridad, 2009). Although the Colombian Constitutional Court invalidated the agreement because it lacked congressional approval, the Bahía Málaga basis continued being the center of the Pacific Naval Force and an important center for drugs and anti-insurgency operations.

As the institutional website for this military body announces, the Pacific Naval Force and its naval basis constitute the “Beacon of the Colombian Pacific Century XXI” as they are “the guardians of security, sovereignty, and of the development pillars of the region at the gates of the new millennium” (Armada Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). With this imperative of securing Colombia’s future development, the naval force receives the
mandate of providing security for economic prosperity within the neoliberal framework established by Democratic Security.

By 2000, the Colombian armed forces prepared to receive Plan Colombia’s substantial military cooperation package, which would allow them to fight a “total war” with drug traffickers and insurgency in the middle of a whole “re-ingeneering” of its operational capabilities and the prospect of an extensive legislation of emergency which eliminated the need to observe civil liberties (Caycedo Turriago, 2002; 621). The Pacific Naval Force, as well as the High Mountain Battalions that were created under the support of Plan Colombia and Democratic Security, operated under this framework. Yet, as the testimonies of afrodescendant activists I compile below suggest, the war that was conducted in the territories inhabited by their communities far outdid the confrontation with drug traffickers and guerrillas. Instead, the territory itself, through the continued presence and command of the military and police forces, itself became the theatre of war.

The ways in which Democratic Security policy contributed to transform the territory included a radical spatial modification as well as a deep functional disruption. By turning Buenaventura’s space into a war zone, where inhabitants had minimal mobility, and by altering the productive functions of the territory, the military intervention produced a government of the territory that helped to operationalize the ongoing economic neoliberalization. Through the physical intervention in the territory, not only was it possible to further secure it towards a more planned economic exploitation, but also, through intensified forms of military and social control, to advance in the constitution of an area liberated for a market economy. In a context of social struggles and given the entrenched networks and mentalities knitting the fabric of local
communities, the militarization of everyday life became the beachhead of the internal colonization of the Pacific territory. The following sub-sections illustrate some aspects of this process through testimonies of social organizations’ activists.

2.2.2 Physical Transformation of the Territory

Under Plan Colombia and Democratic Security, armed forces have conducted intensive aerial fumigation of illicit crops and bombing of areas with suspected presence of guerrillas in a way that activists have seen as a “deterritorialization strategy”, given these operations’ long-lasting, uprooting effects. As an activist expressed in an interview:

These bombs thrown at the communities were really combined with aerial gliphosate aspersions, where what we were able to see was that, effectively, illicit crops were not being fumigated, but that what they were fumigating were the people, they fumigated communities, in a perfect strategy of deterritorialization, of displacement. Then, after all these situations, but also because you know that illicit crops are the most profitable business in the world, armed actors start also coming down and get stationed in these territories. So, communities are being pushed in two fronts: On the one hand, illegal armed groups, such as guerrillas and paramilitaries, and on the other, state pressure, through the armed forces; the army, the air force. (Interview with DG)

Anti-narcotics militarization has contributed to this deterritorialization strategy in various ways. As the communities have repeatedly denounced, Plan Colombia has produced a displacement of coca crops from its initially targeted departments in the south and southwest to the Pacific, creating the need for new interdiction activity in the Pacific area, as well as an important re-population of the area with growers and entrepreneurs that look for new business venues. The intensive aerial fumigations that have followed the emergence of the Pacific as a cultivation area have drastically affected the subsistence...
agricultural equilibrium but also, as they hardly discriminate licit and illicit crops or water sources, inhabitants’ physical integrity (PCN and Afrodes USA, 2010).

Legally, the threat to expropriate parts of collective territories where any drug trafficking-related activity occurs has been considered as a possibility under the national anti-narcotics regulations, yet communities, invoking the International Labor Organization Convention 169 and the United Nations 3rd World Conference against Racism, have argued that collective territories constitute an imprescriptible, inalienable unit, or, as a PCN activist put it, “you can’t expropriate a little portion; you expropriate all the title”. As such, PCN has deemed that legally-backed expropriation of the territory claimed by the state as a way of re-gaining territorial control under the conflict appears as a mechanism to “advance an economic model that doesn’t have anything to do with the communities’ project” (Interview with Esteban).

Bombing of territories where guerrilla presence is suspect has also become a regular tactic under Democratic Security. According to activists’ testimonies, marines brigades conduct so-called "sweeps", which consists of bombings by the headwaters between two and three times a year. Since these bombings occur in collective territories, it is difficult to discriminate their target. In some cases it has been reported that rural work zones have been affected by the bombings and that explosive devices remain unexploded, representing a serious risk for residents. As an activist states, bombings target the territory both as a place to inhabit, but also as a productive space for the community to use:

Every time it is decided to bomb one of the areas here in Valle del Cauca’s Pacific you find from south to north the Naya River, the Yurumanguí the Cajambre, Nadal, Raposo, Anchicayá, Dagua, Calima
and San Juan Rivers. The southern rivers. All these areas are populated and you find that in each river there are several towns, but all this mountainous area is for the use of the community, that is, it is not populated, but it is the area where one has the farm, agriculture, where one goes to pick bananas, *papachinas* and also goes fishing and hunting animals, the whole area is an area for the community’s usufruct. With any of those areas (used for) bombing to look for FARC, (what is being done is) bombing people; people’s work areas. (Interview with Andrés).

And then, on these tactics’ potential to displace:

(W)hen those bombings occur, people have to leave their work area towards other villages. It’s impossible to work because anything that moves in that work area is supposed to mean guerrilla presence (…) So, one of the things that affect us are bombings to collective territories, which happen constantly. This represents a displacement from our work areas (Interview with Andrés).

Also, with less drastic measures than bombs, but rather via the limitations to freely enjoy the territory, similar results of rendering it worthless for productive and community benefit have been achieved. An activist from the northern Cauca area narrated how it is not necessary to physically expel communities from the territory to make it impossible for them to subsist in it. By limiting the possibilities to use the territory in ways that allow for subsistance, the war on insurgency further creates situations of insecurity. According to the example she provided: “(P)eople who do artisanal (mining) need gunpowder to be able to have their work done, but they are not selling gunpowder to anyone. Then, people are being led to a situation of food insecurity, of not having any economic resource” (Interview with Nancy). Yet, invoking the security of the nation, the anti-narcotics and anti-insurgency militarization has also involved everyday securitization of the territory that make the effects of this intervention deeper.

2.2.3 Alteration of temporal and spatial logics
Altering communities’ ancestral ways of relating with the territory as well as imposing spatial and temporal logics on them is a part of this deterritorialization process. Examples abound and have to do with diverging conceptions of the territory for both the state and communities. A PCN activist illustrates this by stating,

The problem is that there is a reality that has been going on for over 400 years here in the Pacific. Here people come at any hour of any of the rivers and then leave; people don’t use radio communication, all those things tourist boats use, for example; that’s where the first conflict began. (The fact) that whoever was going to sail had to have all the equipment required for shipping at the national level. So for a fisherman who goes out and casts his net and draws his fish for house consumption… when will he be able to buy all that equipment? So, the conflict began there, with the Port Command. (Interview with Andrés).

Or, as in this case, where the clash is between the military temporality and the sense of time dictated by the community’s productive needs:

In Buenaventura’s case, all these areas you see here are surrounded by sea; their productive activity is fishing. They leave in their little boats to fish and they have their houses on the rivers’ and mangroves’ sides, and here the time to leave is not defined by the clock but by the tide (…) Then, there is a restriction here imposed by the second Brigade, and the Port Command, that here in Buenaventura boats cannot enter before 6 a.m. and boats cannot leave before 6 am. So, that contradicts the nature of our peoples’ productive activity here because people are used to getting up early. So if at 4 am the water is high, I leave at this time, because if I stay until 6 am I cannot leave anymore because the water goes down, because it was low tide. Or if I come from any of the rivers and at that time the tide is high, I have to leave at that time because if I have to wait until the hours established by the military authorities, I have to stay outside, running more risks (Interview with Andrés).

In the case of fuel limit regulations in the context of drug interdiction there is one more example that makes it further evident how the militarization of the territory not only facilitates its physical transformation but its dislocation as a life-space for communities through the imposition of foreign logics:

There is a resolution, the 014 from the Anti-Narcotics Direction that applies
in (...) Buenaventura, Tumaco, and other towns in the Pacific region. The boats that travel cannot load more than 55 gallons of gasoline (...) Then the restriction of gasoline is because there are laboratories (for cocaine production); that did not exist before, but now they produce the base here (...) So that’s what the restriction is for, but why does this affect us? For instance, me, I am from the Naya River, one of the rivers of Buenaventura. If I leave on a boat from here to my house, if I want to return, I have to spend about 170 gallons of gasoline. And there are communities that are more distant than from where I am. Then the restriction is created by many people who do not know the Pacific. We think it is created from the point of view of a reality—that of cars, because I put a gallon of gas in a car and (with that I) go two, three kilometers, but the outboard motors are another reality. (Interview with Andrés).

Administrative acts, resolutions, and decrees in these cases constitute technologies of power that, by establishing a course of conduct for the population and certain logics for its everyday operation, facilitate the constitution of a political economic order other than the one ancestrally directing communities. While administrative regulations are not new state mechanisms, its articulation with a larger governmental scheme to transform populations and territories functional to capital accumulation and free market leaves them in a privileged position for, in a quotidian, permanent fashion, command the minute functioning of the territory.

2.3 The Militarization of Social Life

One of the most outstanding features of territorial government under the security paradigm is the militarization of social life. This means that organizational, functional and ideological structures of the military substitute those of civilian authority, reconfiguring the state-citizenship relation as one of hierarchical command, enemy neutralization, and subordination of material rights to formal rules. If by virtue of the unequal development characteristic of the world system urban core countries’ urban space control occurs through architectural security technologies and electronic
surveillance administered under the mechanism some have called the militarization of public space, (Davis, 1992) under Valle del Cauca’s application of Democratic Security we can see a militarization of life through the pervasive and commanding presence of the armed forces. As a force display, military territorial government is daily verified with the conditioning of the territory as a theater of war. For example, as stated by a human rights worker in the towns of Cisneros and Queremal, nearby Buenaventura:

(I)n the framework of the accompaniment (to the community) we (monitored) the presence of the armed forces and we (analyzed) how to (…) look (at) the institutional in that area in order to reduce the actions from the armed forces, that were very strong at that time. The police had a firing range in that zone, so they were shooting every day, they carried on bombings, supposedly training their troops, but if this is a conflict zone, where there is guerrilla presence and also paramilitary presence, which worked jointly with the police and with the army, then how are they going to have people in such fear; people were thinking there were combats all the time and also in the middle of all that, a peasant or any person appeared dead around there; that was a zone of throwing corpses, so it was a very hard time and also, besides (mass) detentions, this situation was occurring. (Interview with María)

This transformation of the territory into a space with the physical characteristics of a combat zone occurred in tandem with the ordering of the population under criteria functional to military needs. Through censuses and information requirements to the local population, and also with the expectation that they act as informants for military forces, communities were subject to permanent management and ordering. This situation was presented in the following account of a human rights activist in an area nearby Buenaventura:

As there is a permanent presence of the police and the army, the army is always conducting a registry, updating the census, and fingerprinting men, especially when they leave the mines, as they leave their job and pass a checkpoint the police fingerprints them and take their pictures. Sometimes the police arrive, the narcotics police is around that area a lot, and they come to the houses to ask if guerrillas have been around, who live there;
they tell people that they are going to have a campaign about anything, then they take everybody’s names, from the youngest to the oldest. And especially, they ask about the men… where they are, where they work…

(Interview with María)

Although in its justification of the security policy the government has argued that this is not a new form of national security doctrine--where borders between the state and citizen are blurred--the de facto territorial government carried out by the armed forces in Valle del Cauca reveals a different narrative. It seems clear that the state aspiration is to provide security to citizens but only to the extent that they become a part of the state security apparatus. Such a security model has notorious effects on social life, not only to the extent that the military organizational and functional structure becomes elevated over the social organization existing in the territory, but also because the values present in the military ethos acquire a place and a significance amplified by the character of maximum territorial authority that troops have in this model.

As part of the military government and following the legacy of counter-insurgency struggle established with the Alliance for Progress between Colombia and the United States during the cold war, the militarization of the social does not only occur in regards to the military but it also assumes a pseudo-civilian form through the so-called civic-military actions. As illustrated with the following testimony, even when there is not a manifest military urgency, a pseudo-civilian structure is deployed in order to execute the intervention, and with it, the hierarchy underlying this operation is conveyed: First, the military, then, in a much lower level, civilians, and, at the end, degraded to animal-status, women:

(... We fought a lot (with the commander of the High Mountain Battalion No. 3) because what he did was to generate terror in the population, and then he came with the famous civic-military actions. So
first came the arrest, prosecution, taking pictures; treating women as “bitches”, in literal terms, then he arrived with his troops to talk with leaders, he summoned them to the headquarters of the battalion and organized the civic-military actions. This was to bring hairdressers, to play football with the army, to bring doctors and groceries. Then we were able to avoid that several of these happened. (We said) well, what is this? First he comes and threatens people, and then he comes to generate a worse situation in the population because if there is movement of the insurgency here, simply with a civic military action what will happen is that the civilian population becomes a military objective of both the army and the insurgency, so we asked them to respect that. (Interview with María)

Civic-military actions have been an important vehicle in attempting to channel communities’ discomfort with the militarization of the territory, superficially addressing some of the basic material needs of the population without providing a stable structure to appropriately provide these services in a stable and reliable manner. In addition, civic-military actions contributed to the militarization of the territory by its tendency to override the existing community organizational resources and substitute it with a hierarchical, unilateral definition of public administration priorities. As a human rights activist pointed out, “(…) there have not been clashes with the insurgency in the area, only with the civilian population, then after generating all that situation, civic-military actions started. And civic-military actions started precisely because of the demonstrations generated within the population. Then immediately it was not the mayor, but the high mountain battalion commander who went to talk directly with the community” (Interview with María). In this case, military commanders substituted the autonomy reached by the communities in providing self-government as the needs of the war overrode the mayor as a civilian authority and also the community councils or other authorities defined by the communities.

Yet, highlighting the role of the military as pseudo-civilian authority cannot
obscure its strong repressive orientation and heavy emphasis on control. One example is how, as the military authority takes on a governance role, sectors usually considered as dangerous become further securitized as potential threats to the social order underlying the war. The youth, for instance, under the logic of permanent threat, have passed from being considered unfit or immature to being potential criminals or insurgents, as they fail to meet the official expectations of collaborating with military authorities. The criminalization of the youth is consistent with a growing punitive approach towards citizens that fail to conform to the expectations of such governance model. An activist with Proceso de Comunidades Negras offered a valuable testimony in this regard. In her words:

In these raids done by the authorities, the military came and there was a group of youngsters playing on the (soccer) field… since these youngsters don’t have tennis shoes, they don’t have anything, then they play in shorts, barefoot in a mud field. They (the military) came and (the youths) were just playing soccer. They took them to the precinct, fingerprinted them, and after that, they left them sleeping in there as if they were criminals, and that was it; the next day it was necessary to push for them to be released (...) And you hear a mother say—See? I told you to stop standing on that corner and going to that field… When this child has every right to go there! (Interview with Estela)

The testimony continues questioning the way in which the everyday life of Buenaventura communities is continuously shaped through surveillance and policing that warn the population that they are living under a state of exception and therefore are subject to any form of preventive monitoring. As the youth appropriate public spaces for entertainment or socializing, and to the extent that by virtue of their age they might exercise a limited citizenship to demand the protection of their rights, they are easily turned into dangerous subjects or criminals after the account of military authorities:

Young people have lost the right to social mobility. If they are in the
neighborhoods, for example in the San Francisco neighborhood, which is a very tough area, and if they are on a corner they can be abused, they can be thrown into a car, and anything can happen to them and they have no right to claim, say or demand anything because it is state policy; we are in a state of siege. Then, he can’t claim, he can’t do anything… one, as an organization, can’t do anything… that is the way in which they control, to provide security, then one cannot do anything. (Interview with Estela)

Yet, while there is a selection of dangerous groups, security policy has limited possibilities to discriminate the destinataries of its action, as one of its conditions of efficacy is to be thoroughly displayed throughout all of the territory. As stated by an activist:

Democratic Security policy aims to dismantle FARC, or rather, insurgent groups. The problem is that those insurgent groups are rural, there’s no way to attack insurgent groups that leaves peasants on the side (…) How are they going to take FARC outside Raposo river? They can say—we bomb the Raposo, but the Raposo is full of people. So, for us, in all this policy those who suffer the most are the country’s peasants. (Interview with Andrés)

These testimonies suggest that security draws on efficiency criteria and on a type of governance that, unlike the law, targets entire populations through a general threat or expectation of repression, and not only punishes specific individuals. Concomitantly, repression of the population can carry with it the negation of any recognition to the collective’s social, political or cultural identity. For the case of northern Cauca, an activist narrated an episode when the national government, in violation of national and international legislation, started building a maximum-security prison in afrodescendants’ ancestral territories without consulting the community:

(...) The community did not know there existed (the obligation of) a previous consultation (with the community to build a prison in a collective territory) (...) So when by chance we met, I said, you need to use the consultation, then we started the whole process, it was sent to the Ministry, but the paradox of this situation is that the Ministry responded
that there is no black community; how are they going to say that there is not a black community when there is one? Then the process continued and what they argued was so absurd because a man came from the Ministry, from the direction for community affairs (...) So what (he) said was that in the grid where they were building the prison, there were no black communities. So, how can this be? Did we have to kill ourselves (to prove that we existed)? This is the ancestral territory where they have lived for centuries, it belongs to the black community. We fought for it until it was recognized that there was a black community. (Interview with Nancy)

As expressed by Nancy in this part of our interview, security needs as those expressed in the building of this prison have been put forward to selectively recognize the existence of afrodescendant communities in a way that effectively dispossess them from the territory and negates their existence as an obstacle for further implementing security measures.

2.4 Effects of the Militarization in the Organizative Process

As it consolidates, the logic of security and the subsequent militarization has affected the structures of solidarity within communities. A PCN activist summarized this process of growing mistrust and weakening of social ties under the armed conflict by stating,

(…) There is a great impact (…) mistrust is one, weakening of people’s values is another (…) You can’t be in solidarity in those conditions, because if the neighbor’s son was killed (…) and he wants to claim his son (in the forensics office) there’s no other neighbor that joins him because he knows that he is going to also suffer the consequences. Or if he’s going to have a wake, no one will be with him for this. Then the sense of solidarity, all the existing ties, that had allowed life in community aren’t possible today because they have been cut. (Interview with Estela)

As political, financial, and logistical ties between elected officials and members of the armed forces, on the one hand, and paramilitary groups on the other, have been
revealed in multiple judicial investigations (see, for instance, the Inter-American Court of
Human Rights 2006 sentence in the Ituango massacres), communities experience
increasing mistrust and fear in their interactions with state representatives, especially
when such interactions put them in evidence with other possible armed actors. In order to
avoid reprisals, communities and activists adopt silence or codes that protect them in this
uncertain terrain. As an activist explains:

People impose self-limitations, one has to self-limit in what one says
because one can’t talk as one normally does it, or the way one should talk,
but rather one has to try to mask data, mask words because you never
know who is that person, or if this woman is the aunt of who knows what
person, and also people don’t say things because they are afraid. Because
he knows that she is the aunt of some given person and even if it’s not
something that interests her, he’s not going to say it because she’s that
other person’s aunt. (Interview with Estela)

Underlying this process of social de-stabilization is what an activist names as
“Pedagogy of War” or the more or less organized set of practices and messages that
provide a horizon of what is possible or not in the context of the armed conflict—a type
of ethos supported on an economy of destruction which is forcefully imposed by all
armed actors, included the state armed forces, as a condition to gain control of the
territory and its communities. As this activist put it,

(...) people are prepared and they understand that there are some things
they should do and others that they shouldn’t, what I call the pedagogy of
war. They have taught people that war is displacement, that it is
massacres, tortures, murders and then through the war they teach people
that they cannot continue living as they have always lived because if they
don’t leave, they can be massacred, dismembered, chopped, whatever they
want to call it… tortured, disappeared. Then within the methodology they
use, which is displacement, which is massacre, torture, there is the
pedagogy that is chopping them with cruelty, to be taught, if they speak,
what can happen is this… so they learn in the framework of this pedagogy
of war (Interview with Estela).

As this activist explains, within this climate of intimidation, communities are
taught by regulation, intimidation, and coercion against the option of collective work. As another testimony suggests, a result of this pedagogy is that initiatives to organize the community have been particularly affected and the possibility of continuing to develop a political project undermined. The consequence of this situation is, as this activist explains, the prospect of the physical and social elimination of the communities as they had existed in the territory:

Because I tell you that some times guerrilla becomes a pretext, because one knows about the interest of weakening organizing processes. That is to say, every time there is an event in one of our towns and a displacement is generated, the community organization weakens. This organizational debility does not allow to resist and to project the territory, which is a space of life, in the case of Black communities. In Colombia the reason for a community to exist is that it has a territory where it can exercise its traditions, its cultural practices, its practices of production, everything. When a Black community ends up without a territory, it’s just one more individual, it becomes nothing, it loses autonomy, it loses everything (Interview with Andrés).

The relative precision of this pedagogy and its consequent deterritorialization is established in a testimony that compares the Valle del Cauca Pacific port area to the Andean, agricultural department south:

Here (in northern Cauca and south Valle del Cauca) restrictions to mobility are not an official thing (as in Buenaventura), that is, a police officer doesn’t tell you but in practice it exists. Because corpses appear everywhere (...) so people don’t get out. Mainly, there is not an explicit law but that it is implying that people don’t move around as freely as before. Then, in some way, it’s as if we were in this territory but it wasn’t ours (...) Here the problem is mobility but through terror, people are in the territory but they don’t own the territory. In the past, people walked out at 1 a.m., at 10 p.m., now they know they can’t do it, even if there’s not an order, which is different from what happens in the Pacific. “You don’t move from this to that day, nobody leaves”. They haven’t gotten to that type of order. Then it’s not said explicitly but if you do it, you die, so they don’t have to tell you (Interview with Nancy).

This testimony establishes how militarization in the Pacific, beyond the multiple
paramilitary terror campaigns from the last decade, has consolidated with a set of mandates and regulations that have normalized the existence of restrictions in mobility and use of the territory.

On the other hand, incentives and subsidies from the state are the counterpart of a pedagogy of war as they intend to create a climate of obligatory consent. An activist rightfully exposed this situation stating:

Yes, there is a strategy that has generated a lot of benefits for them (…) it is the question of *Families in Action, Youth in Action, Mothers in Action* (programs). (Governmental agency) *Social Action* has made possible that what the government has to give as an obligation, can be disguised as the government’s great kindness, in a state that never has given anything to anybody (…) now with seventy thousand pesos (35 dollars) that an elderly person receives that is (seen) as a great wonder, so I think that *Social Action*’s strategy has favored the (government’s) popularity and if you ask people if violence has decreased or not, (if) the threats (have lowered) or not, people will not answer yes or not; they don’t have elements to say yes or no because they are living in a space of general terror (Interview with Nancy).

The progressive erosion of the collective consciousness converges with the dispossession of autonomy to decide about the conflict to aggravate the position of the organizative process. An activist evaluates the situation observing:

Because communities were able to manage the situation for a long time, that is, the relationship with the armed actors, communities were able to limit the mobility of each of them in the territory. Then, for instance, armed groups didn’t reach the urban areas because they had to be at a certain distance; at a distance from populated areas, community centers; all that strategy designed by the communities themselves. What Democratic Security policy did was to bring the different armed actors to function in the communities, pressuring community leaders… everybody, so they (armed actors) operate (exclusively) under their (own) logics (…) (Interview with Esteban).

As these testimonies illustrate, deterritorialization has included the physical and social dispossession of the territory. Stripping communities of their political autonomy to
organize the territory furthers this process as maneuvering powers to deal with armed actors are also de facto eliminated.

2.5 Collective Rights, Human Rights, and Resistance Strategies

While deterritorialization continues in the Pacific, the testimonies of PCN activists also speak to the potentialities of long-term organizing processes. As economic projects continue developing and military control maintains a hold on the Pacific, existing social mobilization projects such as those structured around PCN provide a framework for negotiating the ongoing violence. A PCN activist offered the following story, which occurred in a northern Cauca town in 1998, to illustrate the immediate risks the community confronts as a result of the ongoing process of violent accumulation, as well as the type of grassroots resistance that it has been mobilizing:

(The company was) drawing soil samples (...) and the (community) went and asked what was going on there. They said they were taking samples because they were from (company) Agua de Barcelona and they wanted to examine the hydric resources from the region. So people asked them, well, where’s the authorization? And they didn’t have anything (...) Then they threatened them and since the community wasn’t scared, many women faced this and the community told them—“if you don’t leave, we throw this into the river”. And those machines, that are very expensive… then those guys got scared and left, but three months later paramilitaries arrived, so one starts making connections (Interview with Nancy).

This situation illustrates the vast obstacles that communities at the center of neoliberal globalization face, but also the type of consciousness and tactics they have been able to develop to guarantee their survival. In the Pacific, the imminence of deracination jointly sustained by legal and illegal armies has led social organizations to persist in a strategy of collective rights based on their cultural and political identity as afrodescendant peoples (Rosero, 2002).
As PCN activists insist, collective rights constitute a relational category that implies both afrodescendant communities and the larger Colombian society as being both part of an aspiration for pluralism and equality, and not only as a unilateral claim for a discrete group. As an activist pointed:

When we talk about collective rights we are not only defending the territory of black communities. We are defending the right to the territory of all the Colombian people. We are guaranteeing food autonomy, the right to food of all the Colombian people, because there’s where food comes from. People don’t understand; they say, “you (afrocolombians) are talking and struggling among yourselves”, and we say no, water is a public good, and if we (...) denounce the situation that is occurring in the low Anchicayá, with the dam (...), we are making evident what is happening here because Anchicayá’s water doesn’t supply only Buenaventura… I understand that even Europeans are drinking that water, so we don’t (use) an individualistic perspective. For us, it has to be collective because it is the conception that exists. I told them yesterday, you can have anything, might be very rich, but if at any point you have to walk by a corner and you see marginality, you will live it and may even be robbed there. Then, you (...) have to think of yourself after the collective because the individual depends on the collective. (Interview with Estela)

As stated by this activist, collective rights as proposed by PCN are, too, rights for all. In this understanding, collective rights are also connected with human rights, as a broader platform providing elements for survival within the ongoing deterritorialization.

At one level, communications and reports from afrocolombian organizations to international bodies locate human rights violations against communities within the framework of international obligations of the Colombian state infringed either by action or omission (for instance, PCN n.d. b). Yet, afrocolombian communities have also used human rights in the larger regional and national map of human rights activism and against militarism and securitization.

Using human rights within larger activist arenas makes it evident that there are discursive and practical challenges that may collapse with the needs of the community as
a distinct group. The human rights public hearing sponsored by the national Congressional Human Rights commission in 2006 was an example of this. In this case, after denouncing serious human rights violations in the context of the hearing, afrodescendant communities were wary not because they did not know about these cases, but rather because for the first time they were openly exposed. With this action of disclosure, strategic silence as a key survival within the dynamics of an armed conflict was disrupted. Despite the general success of the hearing, this exercise made it evident that democratic institutional arenas where human rights are invoked, do not necessarily coincide, in its enunciative possibilities, with those communities enjoy. In these different registers of violations, various definitions of human rights seem to be at work. The risk communities face at assuming the open, impersonal language of the law instead of the coded, place-based vocabulary of the war eventually has materialized in equally serious but less visible violations, like the growing ones that ended with forced disappearances.

Still, simultaneously invoking collective rights and human rights, PCN has strived to guarantee the communities’ survival. In interviews I conducted with PCN activists, they summarized some of the strategies that they implemented with the ongoing crises\textsuperscript{11}. Among others, they mentioned guaranteeing food autonomy by maintaining food deposits that could be used in case of blockages or combats that impeded people to access crops, and establishing safe places to re-locate groups trapped in a point of the confrontation. Also, one of the chief strategies was to resist drawing on cultural elements, especially in what referred to maintain both cultural manifestations as well as continuous

\textsuperscript{11} These measures were first accorded in the First National Meeting of Displaced Afrocolombians celebrated in 2000. Escobar (2004a), Antón Sánchez (2004), and Rosero (2002) discuss some of the proposed alternatives.
dialogue to avoid a psycho-social chaos in the middle of armed confrontation involving elements of the community. Politically negotiating with armed groups at some point facilitated too the continuity of the communities in the territory, although in some failed negotiations the results included even the assassinations of leaders or community members. Finally, and not less important, a strategy of everyday resistance involved the so-called “early alerts” to official institutions whenever the community foresaw combats, paramilitary incursions, forced displacements or other threatening events.

2.6 Neoliberal Governmentality and the Anti-Drugs/Counter-Terror Continuum

Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality refers to the way governments try to produce the citizen best suited to fulfill those governments' policies within a framework of market liberalization. As the following phrase pronounced by a US State Secretary in an anti-drugs summit in Bolivia suggests, the war on drugs has been one of the best mechanisms to, domestically or internationally, achieve such “conduct of conducts”, as Foucault would describe the exercise of governmentality. According to the official, “Ultimately, self-government in the political sense depends on self-government in the personal and moral sense … A person must say “‘no’” to drug abuse or eventually he will say “‘no’” to life. A nation must say “‘no’” to narcotics or eventually it will say “‘no’” to democracy” (cited by Corva, 2008). This phrase expresses how the war on drugs has been instrumental for spreading national, international (Hindess, 2004), and transnational (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Ong, 2006) governmentality towards consolidating neoliberal globalization.

An example of international governmentality facilitated by the war on drugs is how
the United States-led anti-drug agenda has portrayed drug-traffic as an impediment for countries to join the free market given the lack of clear conditions for foreign investment to compete in “narcotized” economies. As a result, a series of bi-national governmental technologies has been implemented (development assistance, fumigation, electronic surveillance, etc.), with the ultimate goal of turning countries like Colombia from “narco-democracies” to modern, open-to-the-market business partners. To the extent that such governmental power draws on the market as its propelling force, it can be characterized as an exercise of neoliberal governmentality (Harvey, 2006 and 2007; Dean, 1999; Hindess, 2004).

Using this framework, we can say that 1998 multimillion anti-drug, counter-insurgency Colombian-American initiative, Plan Colombia, constituted a prime example of neoliberal governmentality. This is so first because while Plan Colombia was initially conceived by the Colombian government as an economic and social aid package for rural populations, under the war on drugs' liberalizing agenda it became a militarized anti-narcotics, counter-insurgency program aimed to insert Colombia in the free market economy. (Vaicius, 2002). Second, Plan Colombia became a surrogated national development plan to serve the interests and profitability of corporations and their domestic allies in accordance with the International Monetary Fund economic adjustment measures such as state diminished intervention through reduction in public expenditure and increased indirect taxation (Estrada Alvarez, 2002). Third, anti-narcotics programs themselves became heavily privatized through sub-contracted surveillance and military advising services.

At the same time, as an eminently coercive enterprise that involved the large-scale
militarization of territories in the Pacific, Plan Colombia displayed a form of illiberal
governmentality (Hindess, 2004; Dean, 1999). As Opitz (2010; 107) states, in relation to
illiberal governmentality: “Liberalism not only exhibits a de-territorializing vector, but
also moves towards re-territorialization. It aims not only at enabling circulation, but also
at securing and regulating such mobility”. As shown in this work, the application of
Democratic Security Policy and of its predecessor Plan Colombia constituted forms of
illiberal governmentality as they aimed to manage, discipline and coerce those opposed to
the commodification of the territory or to its cession for the designs of the global
economy. However, the function of this dynamic was not only to control population and
territory but rather to, through that control, impulse their re-signification within the free
market and its new economy of space and relations.

Social organizations have not assisted passively to this process, yet their
possibilities to organize alternatives to negotiate or resist have been deeply impacted,
especially in light of other ongoing forms of coercion, such as those brought with the
paramilitary violence or its more recent, so-called “neo-paramilitary” manifestations
(Human Rights Watch, 2010). The communities’ insistence in continuing, while
strengthening their ecologico-political project in the social, cultural, productive territory
of the Pacific continues and takes the form of claims for collective and human rights.
The dialogues here gathered and analyzed are, in part, testimony of that will to insist.
CHAPTER 3

GENDERING SECURITY: PACIFIST-FEMINISTS INTERPELLATE THE STATE

Over the last decade, the worsening conditions of women under the armed conflict has become a central concern for the women’s movement in Colombia. Exposing the grievous effects of the confrontation on women, the movement has not only critiqued illegal armed actors, but also the state’s conduction of the war. Focusing on their analysis of the state, this chapter examines the women’s movement contention that security, as a key governmental discourse and policy, contributes to aggravate women’s conditions of subordination. As part of a political, juridical, and military strategy to end the armed conflict, state security policies have been widely discussed by Colombian feminists, their effects assessed through the accounts of women from across the country.

Because Democratic Security imposed a neoliberal model of citizenship where individuals are in charge of their own security and have duties to make state security possible, women’s insistence on political empowerment and effective enjoyment of rights became an important addition to the re-formulation of citizenship that social movements posed in response to the state. This emphasis on empowerment and rights gave me a point of contrast with other movements whose engagement with the state relied on a platform of opposition and not of claims for inclusion. Also, engaging with the women’s movement allowed me to explore the way critiques to the state, collective agendas, and participants’ personal experiences were intertwined and mutually determined in ways that appeared less clearly articulated in other movements.

My entry point to the Colombian women’s movement was through the work of
*Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* (hereafter, *Ruta*), a national feminist network of over 350 women’s organizations and 9 regional branches whose main goals are to find a negotiated end to the armed conflict and to make visible the effects of war on women (*Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, 2003).

*Ruta*’s platform draws on the long-held feminist critique of the private-public divide (Pateman, 1989; Okin, 1989). Through the phrase attributed to Spanish feminists, “Neither War that Kills Us, Nor Peace that Oppresses Us” *Ruta* expresses its opposition to all forms of domination against women in times of war or peace, while it brings to light the fact that gendered violence is a continuum that extends from the household to the battlefield. In the context of the Colombian armed conflict, *Ruta* has maintained that guerrillas, paramilitaries, and state agents each victimize women, often turning them into “spoils of war”. In the household, on the other hand, women are subject to pervasive forms of domestic violence, while children are indirectly taught to reproduce their fathers’ abusive behavior, further perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Vigorously committed to expose the effects of this violence, *Ruta* suggests that the crime statistics on the conflict reflect gender disparities in times of peace. To be sure, men’s higher rate of victimization in the conflict mirrors their greater involvement as combatants. Women, on the other hand, while not prominently figuring as victims in conflict crime statistics, appear as targets of crimes that unequivocally respond to a pattern of acute gender subordination. An indicator of this trend is, for example, that conflict-related crimes against women are often committed in or near the household. An

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12 While this research focuses only on *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, other important actors of the national women’s movement include *Red Nacional de Mujeres*, *Mesa Nacional de Concertación*, *Organización Femenina Popular*, and *Alianza Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz-IMP*, among others.
insidious example that women’s insecurity is closely connected to their subordination in non-conflict contexts, crimes committed in the victim’s household send a message to men in the opposite band as they are assumed to have a patriarchal jurisdiction over women (Sánchez, 2008). These crimes reflect, too, women’s confinement to domestic spaces while their husbands become part of either side of the conflict.

Ruta has documented, along with the national women’s movement, how violence against women under the armed conflict has been strategically used by all armed actors to “dominate, regulate, silence, obtain information, punish, expropriate, exterminate, reward the members of an armed group” (Barraza, 2009). At the same time, the Colombian women’s movement has become increasingly aware that crimes against women are largely under-reported, when not completely normalized as cases of domestic disputes. The figures of the National Forensics Institute have been, as part of this analysis of conflict-crimes against women, subject of criticism due to its failure to provide disaggregated information that clarifies the nature of violence women face (Buriticá, 2007). National Forensics Institute data, for instance, suggest that between 2004 and 2008 only 534 women had been victims of sexual violence in connection with “the logics of war” (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal, 2010). This figure dramatically contrasts with survey data from international non-governmental organization Oxfam and several Colombian organizations indicating that between 2001 and 2009, 489,687 women, or an average of 6 women every hour, were victims of sexual violence perpetrated by legal or illegal armed actors (Oxfam, 2011).

In order to problematize the official discourse that obscures the victimization of women under the conflict and its connections with broader violence in the household,
Ruta has made strategic use of categories such as feminicides. Along with feminists who analyze the assassination of women in Ciudad Juárez and throughout Latin America (Carmona López et al., 2010), Ruta has used this term to signal the systematic killing of women because of their gender. With the category of feminicides, Ruta intends to make visible those cases of women killed as part of a gender subordination pattern that extends beyond the conflict. Whether committed by armed actors or not, feminicides evidence women’s exposure to a continuum of violence from the household to war territories. In an environment where threats come equally from partners and armed actors, women suffer a pervasive situation of insecurity hardly addressed by the state.

Valle del Cauca, the site of this research and location of one of Ruta’s regional branches, has been a prime example of how this continuum of violence amounts to high levels of crimes against women in and outside the household. This department has the highest number of suspected feminicides (239 cases between 2002 and 2006), a fact that might be tied to the prevalence of drug cartels violence in some areas of the department (Sánchez, 2008, 83). At the same time, the formidable increase in the operational capacity of the regional military units facilitated by the state security policies throughout the 2000s, has led to mounting controls over the body and autonomy of Valle del Cauca women. In this respect, Ruta’s mission has been to call attention to the normalization of violence against women, as well as to problematize a narrative that conceives of this violence as an exclusively private matter—a case of so-called “crimes of passion” or of jealousy between romantic partners.

To explore Ruta’s critique of gendered violence under the security turn, I joined its Valle del Cauca branch, in the department’s capital, Cali, between August and
December of 2008. There, not long after participating in the first activities at Ruta Valle’s house in downtown Cali, the movement offered an analysis of this continuity between public and private types of violence against women that resonated throughout my work with them. While Ruta regional coordinators were meeting in Medellín, a city harshly beaten by drugs cartels and then paramilitary violence, Ruta activist Olga Marina Vergara was killed together with her son, daughter-in-law and 5-year-old grandchildren. While the multiple killing was attributed to the son’s alleged participation in illicit businesses, Ruta members assessed the role of gender relations to explain the nature of this crime. To them, even though the event might have been triggered by the son’s alleged participation in illicit activities, its effects were amplified by the closeness of both his mother and female partner, who surely provided care for the son and husband in a difficult moment. As in other instances of Colombia’s conflict and non-conflict derived violence, Ruta concluded, women are victimized in ways that parallel the roles assigned to them in a deeply patriarchal society: Selfless mothers, devoted wives, family pillars, but ultimately dependant and subordinated individuals.

As if to underscore their point, at the time this crime occurred, Ruta had recently launched the book “Violence Against Women in a Society at War” (2008) in Bogotá. There, the author, and Ruta leader, Olga Amparo Sánchez, discussed the connection between different forms of violence against women and the larger structures of violence in a society at war. Sánchez’ book addressed exactly the problems made evident by the assassination of her colleague in Medellín: that in contexts of heavy violence and guns use, women are victimized in forms closely related to their role as mothers, sisters or lovers, usually mirroring their position within dense family networks.
This pattern of victimization, which persists throughout different expressions of the armed conflict in Colombia, has led *Ruta* to question militaristic solutions to the conflict, arguing that they only aggravate women’s situation. Because both illegal and state actors within the conflict are embedded in a deeply patriarchal system of social relations, they are bound to reproduce their gender roles while they operate as combatants. By deploying their armed power against women and by using them against their military adversary, armed actors in all sides compound women’s historical subordinated situation.

In light of the growing militarization of the conflict in the last decade, *Ruta* has interpellated the state and its role in the conflict. Questioning the unrestrained adscription to a security model that relies on the division between society’s friends and enemies, they point at how the security state ostensibly fails to address women’s victimization because of its reliance on a liberal conception that sees society as divided into independent public and private spheres (Sánchez, 2008, 82). To the extent that the standard liberal position disregards the significance of gendered violence--and particularly its pervasiveness inside as well as outside the household--it is unable to achieve its declared purpose of guaranteeing security for all.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will draw on my ethnographic work with activists from the Valle del Cauca chapter of *Ruta* to investigate the claim that the turn to security has disregarded, while further intensifying, the multiple types of violence Colombian women face. In the first part of the chapter I will characterize *Ruta*’s principles and the context for its critique, and then will move to examine its analysis of state security. In the final section, I will focus on *Ruta*’s work to re-narrativize security
and the role of the human rights discourse in this process.

3.1 Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres and the Pacifist-Feminist Critique

*Ruta* was born as a national platform in 1995 at the initiative of a national coalition of women from various non-profit and labor organizations.\(^{13}\) Moved by the idea of supporting women victimized by the war, *Ruta* conveners initiated a series of national marches, now amounting to over ten, whose long-term goal was to help end the armed conflict while, in the short term, exposing its effects on Colombian women. The first *Ruta* mobilization reunited nearly one thousand women from all over the country in Mutatá, Urabá, a Northwest region devastated by sharp and continual confrontations between the FARC guerrilla, paramilitaries, and the state. Dismayed by a testimony that about 95% women had been raped in an Urabá town (*Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, 2003, 13), *Ruta* militants organized a bus caravan to the area in order to join local women and express their solidarity with them.

Geographically mobilizing through the country or, as the name of the organization suggests, being in “Route”, activists have continued organizing periodical demonstrations in the towns most affected by the conflict. Besides redressing women’s disproportionate victimization under the war, the movement aims to contribute to a negotiated exit to the conflict, while, most immediately, palliating the devastating impact of war through adequate services and reparation for war victims. As a broader goal, *Ruta*’s strategy also

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\(^{13}\) The organizations that participated in this call were union-organized *Programa de Mujeres de la Escuela Nacional Sindical* (National Unionist School—women’s program), and *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores—Departamento de Mujer* (Workers’ Unitarian Central—Woman Department), as well as non-profit *Casa de la Mujer* Bogotá (Women’s House Bogota). *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* (2003).
expects to address pervasive violence against women through the irruption of women’s claims into public spaces, while also turning women’s victimization into a matter of public interest.

Physical displacement to areas affected by the conflict has been a key methodology to Ruta as it has allowed for women’s direct participation. As Ruta claims that none of the legal or illegal armed groups represent them, they are invested in having women directly assume peacemaking work if they are to obtain any gains in this process. In this pursuit, Ruta has drawn from both feminist and pacifist doctrines. With the chant, “Women Do not Give Birth to Sons or Daughters for the War”, Ruta summons women to take an active stance in the conflict while drawing on and also subverting their traditional gender roles.

Ruta leader, Susana Pineda, launched a similar call to women joining Ruta in a 1998 document entitled “Colombian Lysistratas before the New Millenium” (“Lisístratas Colombianas a las Puertas del Nuevo Milenio”). In this text, Pineda incites women to follow the example of Lysistrata, the Greek literary character who refused to fulfill her conjugal duties as a way to force men to pact peace in the Peloponnesian war. As Pineda (1998) points out:

Lysistrata, who knew more about psychology than today’s rulers, devised a way to force men to pact peace: She incites women to make war in their households (which is not the same as violence) adding that the nation is a federation of households. Feminine audacity that today I put before you as a symbol, as a way to recognize that we can also aim to end with the barbarity that beats us and exhausts us.

Pineda’s reading embraces Ruta’s principle that women must actively interpellate armed actors to demand that they cease patriarchal violence in the war and in the household. It also stresses that women’s commitment must be informed by their gender positionality,
Ruta has identified this framework as one of pacifism-feminism. Abandoning the position of neutrality that was the basis of their initial work, they have taken a more vocal commitment to end the war by challenging patriarchy and militarism at large in society. In my interviews with Ruta Valle del Cauca activists, they often expressed their identification with feminist principles as a form of empowerment, and acquisition of political subjecthood. Susana, a self-taught photographer of humble background, reflected on her experience of acquiring a political consciousness articulated around feminism by pointing:

We came to realize that women couldn’t keep being the same invisible beings, the household figure, the one who goes with her little basket every week grocery shopping. No. We, the ones who do the mobilizations, the ones who are here, we are here because we are also political actors. We don’t want to be made invisible, be thought of as the ones who only cook or are in the house with the children. We also have a political responsibility in our country, and we are capable of advancing towards a negotiated solution for the armed conflict because the war affects us all. The fact that a bomb doesn’t fall here doesn’t mean that the war is not affecting my right to education, opportunities for the youth, health, opportunity for housing, because everything is going for the war. (Interview with Susana).

Susana’s claim for political agency was characteristic of Ruta’s plea that women participate in finding a negotiated end for the war while in the long run addressing the conditions that contribute to their subordination. By connecting the realities of the war with the persistent socioeconomic inequalities women face, Susana puts on the table Ruta’s claim for a broadened citizenship where women can exercise a comprehensive political participation within a framework of social rights for all.

The framework in which Ruta formulates this agenda is one of pacifism, which, in the context of Colombia’s securitized state, perhaps can be seen not only as neutrality but
also as breaking the binary friend-enemy. As the state allies/opponents division relies on the ability for the state to trace a clear-cut division that justifies an intervention on the ‘enemy’ side of the pair, women’s strategy of pacifism complicates this political terrain through the inclusion of new parameters within the highly regimented political geography of the war.

The testimony of Rosa, a long-time activist who briefly participated as an unarmed member of urban, Bolivarian guerrilla M-19 long before she joined *Ruta*, illustrated *Ruta*’s pacifist stance by saying,

> I identify myself with *Ruta* as they propose to transform the political but not with guns because I don’t think this country is going to change with arms and force. I think that people are not willing to do that, people are afraid of violence and flee from it because they have experienced it. My mother, who lived throughout it, tells me stories about La Violencia. And I talk to older people and they speak to you horrified; they don’t want that. What they want is a state that defends them all the time from people who want to attack them. (Interview with Rosa)

In this passage of Rosa’s interview, she references *La Violencia*, a ten-year period of bipartisan political rivalry between supporters of the liberal and conservative parties that left over 200,000 assassinated people in the eighteen years that followed its eruption in 1948. While over half a century has passed since this period, scholars have seen some continuities between the conditions that triggered *La Violencia* and contemporary issues such as land expropriation, violent displacement, and political exclusion (Camacho Guizado, 1991; Medina Pineda, 1990). By invoking *La Violencia*, Rosa’s testimony speaks to the unresolved conflict in Colombia and the need to politically address its roots through the non-armed intervention of the state.

*Ruta*’s analysis of the armed conflict addresses both Susana and Rosa’s points of view in that they understand that adopting a pacifist agenda with a feminist perspective
implies not only to empower women to claim for legal rights, but also to work for a post-
conflict scenario that incorporates women’s perspective (Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres,
2003). With almost half a million women reportedly victims of sexual violence by armed
actors between 2001 and 2009 (Oxfam, 2011). Ruta aims to make visible the realities of
war for women, but its goal is not only to show solidarity with female victims of the
war—a key goal in itself—but to ensure women’s full participation in remedying the
conditions that cause their subordination both in times of war and peace. As the war
represented a central coordinate defining conditions of governance in Colombia, Ruta’s
mobilization project along the lines of the conflict and its management, posed an
important challenge to the state and to the model of limited citizenship that was promoted
under the country’s prevailing situation of exceptionalism.

3.2 Ruta and the Peace Policy

In the relatively short interval between Ruta’s first mobilization in Mutatá in 1995
and the advent of the decade of 2000, the peace policy that had led to two separate peace
processes with the guerrilla groups National Liberation Army and Revolutionary Armed
Forces of Colombia (ELN and FARC, for their acronyms in Spanish, respectively) was
completely reversed. If under Andrés Pastrana’s presidency (1998 – 2002), social
organizations actively participated in negotiation roundtables between government,
guerrillas, and civil society, after 2002, under Alvaro Uribe’s administration, the peace
processes, already liquidated during Pastrana’s term, was declared completely defunct
and soon replaced by an entirely militaristic offensive against guerrilla groups.

During this period, towards the end of the 1990s, Ruta had gained national
recognition as a political actor thanks to its national demonstrations to support women affected by the war. Having mobilized thousands of women in towns seriously affected by the conflict, *Ruta* had soon become a political actor in the conflict negotiation scenarios. In fact, during the peace process with FARC, *Ruta* was invited to attend the negotiations between the government, civil society, and the guerrilla group. *Ruta* declined, though, because the subject they had been assigned to was labor—not a priority in their political agenda and therefore a possible move towards trivializing their participation.

Soon after this, the political landscape changed considerably. With the failure of the peace process in 1999, a negotiated way out of the conflict became an enterprise increasingly difficult to defend. Instead, Colombia signed the cooperation agreement, known as Plan Colombia, with United States and the European Union, the latter two providing enormous monetary and ideological support to a recharged—and never completely abandoned—military approach to guerrilla insurgency. While *Ruta* continued struggling for non-violent conflict resolution in Colombia, the approval of Plan Colombia and the coming into power in 2002 of Alvaro Uribe’s right-wing government radically changed the panorama for negotiated peace in Colombia. With its emphasis on a military defeat of the guerrillas, an emphasis fully supported by Plan Colombia, Uribe’s government represented the antithesis of *Ruta*’s dialogical, non-violent peace proposal. In this government’s model, not only combatants become terrorists, but the door to any possible dialogue became closed, and the participation of civil mediators became largely irrelevant.

Even before the 2003 implementation of Uribe’s flagship policy, Democratic
Security, *Ruta* had spoken against the patriarchal character of the violence exercised by all sides in Colombia’s long-term conflict. Thus, the exacerbated militarization that came about with Uribe’s government elicited *Ruta’s* complete disapproval due to the policy’s exclusive appeal to military strength as a means for conflict resolution. *Ruta* also criticized the Uribe administration’s displacement of civil society from the role it had assumed during the preceding peace dialogues. Indeed, under Uribe’s government, peace policy became itself a problem and not a possible avenue to work in coordination with the state towards a negotiated peace.

As the main public policy addressing war and significantly shaping the conditions for peace during the first decade of the 21st Century, state security came to be at the center of *Ruta’s* agenda. Problematizing women’s engagement with the fundamentally militaristic governance of this policy, *Ruta* women challenged state security policy’s mandates. In a response to the optimism regarding indicators like reduction of homicides, guerrilla kidnappings, and government takes of towns and roads, *Ruta* has pointed at Democratic Security’s alarming disregard of crimes against women and girls, who continue being victimized by both armed actors and partners even at a time when the success of the governmental security program is loudly proclaimed. Instead, *Ruta* has proposed that Democratic Security has not made women, or citizens in general, more secure.

3.3 Interpellating the Security State

With security and defense policies replacing a peace policy as the state’s organized response to the conflict, *Ruta* has been critical of how the logic of security
threatens people’s rights as a pre-condition to achieve its goals. As security measures bow to efficiency considerations, civil liberties have commonly been made subordinate to public order as the supreme common good. From Ruta’s point of view, state policies and discourse of the last decade have also turned the neutral attribute of “security” into a patriarchal device that perpetuates women’s subordination under the pretense of securing the population.

Observing the increasing concentration of powers that security justified all throughout the 2000s, women’s organizations have represented the state as a punitive father who has to protect his children while denying them the possibility to determine the terms of such protection. Instead, the state, using the metaphor of the “family” to refer to society (Rojas, 2009) has implemented a body of measures appealing to citizen’s loyalty as members of an allegedly unified political body.

The governmental programs Network of Informants and Network of Collaborators, launched by the government in 2002, became a prime example of this trend. This initiative aimed to establish a force of one million civilians in charge of providing authorities with information about the activities of organizations considered as terrorists (Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática, 2002; Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Directiva 16/2003). As president Alvaro Uribe indicated at the beginning of his mandate as a justification for this measure, Colombia faces a threat that can only be suppressed by the complete elimination of the enemy in a collective effort by state and society. As Uribe pointed during an event launching a regional network of informants in the department of Cesar, “what we have here is a risk for 40 million citizens. If we all work, we’ll get rid of that risk” (Esparza, BBC Mundo 2002). Through the imposition of
a duty to accuse others, the state posed an ethical asymmetry whereby a good society faces an evil threat from terrorist forces. Assumed to have a duty of loyalty with the state, citizens are expected to fulfill roles determined by the needs of war and the military imperatives to defeat the enemy.

_Ruta_ has exposed the effects of this pretended division between friends and enemies by stating how the presence of informants has fractured the trust and solidarity inside entire communities, as all individuals’ actions are potentially suspicious and citizens possible informants. Women have been particularly impacted by these breaches in trust within communities because, being the main bearers of social networks in their communities, they are more likely to be associated with any of the sides in conflict whenever they cultivate family, affective, or other relations of care with an armed actor or someone suspected of being one (Mesa de Trabajo “Mujer y Conflictot Armado”, 2008)

Another major state security mechanism has been the training of 100,000 non-professional peasant soldiers who, after only four months of preparation, become part of the armed forces, and thus immediately able to participate in combat in conflict areas. Instead of joining the army and being assigned to other areas where their services are required, as happens with regular soldiers, “Peasant Soldiers”—as civilians entering this program have been called—remain in their areas of origin, where they know both the geography and the movement of armed actors. Critics of this program have pointed to the requirement for peasant soldiers to remain in their areas of origin in what constitutes a clear violation of the international human rights distinction principle, which establishes that those who participate directly or indirectly in the hostilities have to be clearly
distinguishable from those who do not do it.

The peasant soldiers program poses other extremely problematic implications for women. Giraldo Mendoza (2006) has noted that the graduation ceremony protocol for new peasant soldiers, requires mothers to be the ones who, during the ceremony, pass the arms to their graduating sons, while they recite an oath offering the son to the motherland. Giraldo Mendoza (2006) expresses Ruta’s opposition to this practice by stating, “even though women have said that we don’t give birth to sons and daughters for the war, we must attend this arms-handing ceremony in order not to unleash a punishment for these young people or to see ourselves stigmatized”. At the same time, through their participation as soldiers’ mothers, women are constituted as bearers of patriotic values, loyal subjects to the state, and producers of the military reserve forces.

Human rights organizations have criticized the informants and peasant soldiers programs for violating the international humanitarian law distinction principle that civilians are to be distinguished from actors in conflict and protected from the effects of the war (Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines et al, 2008). In both of these programs, individuals are required to act as state agents and yet, as they remain part of their communities, they are virtually indistinguishable from civilians. Being embedded in dense family and affect networks, women have been endangered by remaining close to male relatives and partners who participate as informants and soldiers in these programs. Women are also often portrayed as providers of intelligence information to informants and soldiers as they have a potentially greater access to information and might be used by men in their surroundings to gather data.

In their critique of these institutions of the security state, Ruta has followed the
tradition of the first Latin American feminist groups that in the nineteen-seventies opposed authoritarian regimes as an expression of patriarchy (Saporta Stenbach et al, 1994). Analyzing the Colombian case, *Ruta* women have strongly criticized this instrumentalization of civil society and of women for the constitution of a security state. For them, the figure of the peasant soldier underscores the fact that under the security paradigm, civil society is conflated with the state and subject to a process of heavy militarization.

3.4 Militarization and its Effects on Women’s Lives

The result of a 1999 multilateral agreement between Colombia, the United States, and the European Union, Plan Colombia has provided the framework and resources for security policies during the last decade. With the United States contributing 7,500 million dollars for military and intelligence resources during the first phase of Plan Colombia (1999 – 2006), and 3,600 million dollars, destined to consolidate territorial control and civic-military aid in the second phase (2007 – 2013) (Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear, 2008) military presence has multiplied and gained greater control, in many areas becoming the primary or only state representation. If in the first phase of Plan Colombia most attention was dedicated to eradicating coca crops in southern Colombian departments, in the second phase, the southwestern departments of Nariño, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca have become further endowed with additional resources coming from Plan Colombia successors, Plan Patriota and Plan Destructor. In this new strategic phase, military units not only improved their mobility and adaptability to difficult environmental conditions, but, in an attempt to recoup state presence, they have established tighter
controls over the population. As historically subject to the control of their autonomy, women have been further affected by the new restrictions brought by the militarization of everyday life under Colombia’s armed conflict.

Due to its primary focus on a military solution of the conflict, security policies have compounded women’s subordination, particularly in areas under territorial dispute by guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the state armed forces. Furthermore, the greater reliance on arms, hierarchical command, and disciplinary regulation of everyday life that comes with militarization has contributed to already tighten social controls on women’s sexuality and autonomy.

Discursively, Democratic Security has exalted the soldier as the new national hero, a hyper-masculine, aggressive, commanding figure. In connection to this ideal image, military control of extensive territories is naturalized, as it is troops’ ability to exercise control in people’s, and very particularly, women’s everyday lives. In urban areas—where the conflict manifests in forms other than combat—elevating an aggressive masculinity as a paradigmatic social identity, has made it more difficult and, in many occasions, deadly, to be a woman and to deviate from social roles, let alone to protest the patriarchal, economic, or racial dominant structures.

*Mesa de Trabajo “Mujer y Conflicto Armado”* (2008, 14), a national coalition for women’s rights under the armed conflict has documented this relationship between militarization and sexual violence by examining official sources such as the Attorney General’s Office and the National Forensics Institute reports. While largely under-representing sexual violence against women, the National Forensics Institute data from 2006 and 2007 show that 49 (71%) of the cases where attributed to state Armed Forces
either by action or tolerance with paramilitaries; 15 cases (21.7%) to guerrillas, and 5 (7.2%) to paramilitaries. While the National Forensics Institute has been criticized for not having clear mechanisms to identify violence against women under the conflict, these statistics reveal a pattern of Armed Forces members’ involvement in sexual violence against women.

Democratic Security’s growing militarization has greatly contributed to the aggravation of women’s situation of subordination at the hands of those who hold and dispute military power, and especially of national armed forces. Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (2008), for instance, has held that sexual violence against women has drastically augmented in comparison to years before Democratic Security was in place. Indeed, according to their figures for 1997-2002 and for July 2002-December 2007, state armed forces participation in cases of sexual violence against women in the second period (2002-2007) tripled with respect to the first one (1997-2002, pre-Democratic Security). The report shows that similar patterns appear by studying other sources such as the Attorney General’s Office and the National Forensics Institute’s statistics. These figures indicate that under the period of application of Democratic Security policy sexual violence against women has increased almost threefold, a significant figure that further supports women’s verbal accounts in this sense14.

The vast growth of specialized military anti-guerilla units under Plan Colombia in areas like the high altitude towns of Valle del Cauca has been one of the problematic

14 The study revealed that 52% of sexual crimes were committed directly by state agents and 42% by paramilitaries. This means that, if one considers that in the case of paramilitary violations state agents have tolerated or supported violations committed by paramilitaries, the figure for state violations would have to be about 94% of cases attributed to the state, either by direct or indirect perpetration of its agents.
aspects in the execution of security policies, given the broad powers these units enjoy in areas otherwise out of the state purview. A female human rights activist, for instance, offered the following testimony of military-led violence against women in an area where her organization had developed work against mass detentions in the west of Valle del Cauca. According to her, during a meeting with the commander of an especially problematic battalion in the area,

(P)eople were criticizing the soldiers, complaining with this man that his soldiers had raped several girls or that they were seducing them, and that several of them had become pregnant. Then the man made a comparison that seemed to me horrible; he said, ‘the only thing I tell you is that my soldiers are not to blame, they are men and they are in the military. I tell you gentlemen, tie your bitches because my dogs are loose (...)’ (And) people could only laugh because of the fear this generated in them, people did not have the ability to think or react to a situation like that, so that was it. The girls stayed pregnant; the ones who were raped stayed raped because (according to the commander), it was not his soldiers’ fault. (Interview with Maria).

While mediated by the commander’s intimidating presence, the statements justifying forced sexual relations with troops rather continued the widespread rhetoric that women are passive subjects destined to bear men’s sexual urges—a narrative in effect within the context of the conflict but also outside of it. Rooted on the popular view of masculine sexuality as uncontrollable, these statements are the more serious given the overall control that the military exercises over the communities were the troops are stationed. In these sites, the accounts abound of women sexually and affectively involved with soldiers in areas most affected by the conflict, where highly asymmetrical relations leave local women bearing the burden of unplanned parenthood and transient emotional relations.

Valle del Cauca Ruta activist, Rosa, narrated one of these instances of violent sexual relations with soldiers stationed at a Valle del Cauca town. She referred to the
impact of militarization by recalling the narrative of a female domestic worker whom she met at a rural area in northern Valle del Cauca, where anti-guerrilla and anti-drug military and police bodies is very strong. Rosa recalls the domestic worker stating,

(T)he military comes to town, gets close to our girls and so in this town almost all girls have soldiers’ children and so they (the soldiers) go like that; they arrive, come to your door, take a look in an aggressive way, conquest the girls, get them pregnant, and then leave. (Interview with Rosa)

While it is hard to determine the extent to which women engage in forced affective relations with soldiers, it seems clear that these relations are mediated by the fact of the soldiers’ position of armed superiority. And even when there is consent, other problematic situations in these relations arise when women must face single mothering given the parent’s geographical mobility or reluctance to accept parenting responsibilities.

Indigenous and Black women have been particularly affected by these cases of forced intimacy or by different forms of outright sexual violence. The National Indigenous Organization in Colombia—ONIC (2009), for instance, stated in a report to the United Nations Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples that since 2006 there have been cases in which indigenous girls have been sexually abused by soldiers from High Mountain Battalions, Counter-guerrilla Police, and other military and police unit.

Observing this trend, Ruta, in coordination with other social organizations, has suggested that, while enhanced military units such as high mountain battalions in Valle del Cauca have spearheaded Democratic Security’s defense program for urban, middle classes to have unrestricted access to all the territory, increased military control has further marginalized rural and working class populations and, within these populations,
reinforced the subordination of women and girls.

3.5 Women in the War

In its examination of sexual violence against women, Ruta sees state security policies as a continuation of an authoritarian and patriarchal tradition that privileges male military authority over dialogic, horizontal decision-making. The systematic violence against women by armed actors and, in particular, by members of the military, appears to be correlated with the trend towards the militarization of society. Under this trend, the military is entitled to exercise absolute local command in order to produce effective results, in a display of force that disproportionally impacts women, ethnic communities, and other groups already subordinated.

This point is consistent with the findings of the Rapporteur for Women’s Rights from the Human Rights Inter-American Commission (2006), who established that armed actors use physical, psychological, or sexual violence against women in four major forms: first, to punish the enemy with the purpose of controlling territories and resources; second, to cause displacement from the territory; third, to sexually exploit women in situations of forced recruitment; and forth, as a form of social control in areas dominated by illegal armed groups.

It is in this context of forced territorial and social control that Corporación Humanas - Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género (2009), has documented a number of crimes against women. Among others, they found that armed actors, in pursuit of territorial control, engaged in a long list of serious crimes against women including forced sexual relations, sexual violation by one aggressor, sexual
violation by more than one man, violations repeated in time, sexual harassment, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, people trafficking, genital mutilations, forced abortion, threats to commit sexual violence, insults of sexual nature, controls over sexuality and sexual life, improper touching, forced and public nudity, breast beating, and forced unions.

When not subject to punishment for relating with the enemy side, women with any level of proximity to armed actors and their children have become subject to stigmatization by communities that see them as threats to local peace. A human rights activist from afrodescendant group Proceso de Comunidades Negras, for example, explained to me how northern Cauca paramilitaries engaged in extreme forms of violence against women in a mode of operation that served their overall strategy of terrorizing communities to gain territorial dominion over areas previously dominated by guerrillas, but also in everyday forms of violence where coercion merged with more or less forced co-existence. In her words:

Paramilitaries entered in 1999 killing, threatening many people but there were also relationships between them and some women, and there is an area where many children are called “paraquitos” because they are children of women in this area with paramilitaries who are not there anymore. (Interview with Mariana)

These examples suggest how, while connected to larger struggles for political and economic power in Colombia, official and para-state armed forces have relied on both state hyper-militaristic discourses of social control and patriarchal narratives of violent masculinity. Various engaged with armed actors—, Campaña Ni Una Más (2009) describes these relations as usually motivated on needs of gaining economic security or status, women continue enduring violence as the weak link of the predominant
militaristic masculinity discourse.

3.6 Women and National Security

The prevalence of violence against women associated with militarization in Colombia dovetails with Ruta’s feminist analyses in the sense that sexual violence has historically been used as a systematic practice to impose a version of national security (Enloe 2000, 123). Compared to other cases of militarization such as Chile’s dictatorial regime between 1973 and 1990, Colombia’s model suggests, too, that sexual violence is broadly used to reinforce models of subordinate femininity. While not identical, the cases of Colombia and Chile suggest some parallels. As documented by Bunster-Burotto (1994), under the Chilean dictatorship rape was used as a form of torture and torturers relied on images of Marianismo—the exaltation of traditional femininity based on catholic images of the Virgin Mary as pure and virginal. Women raped by military torturers were perceived as deviating from this role and therefore as giving up their feminine respectability. Ultimately, rape appeared as a way for ‘deviant’ women to newly assume their role as respectable women. Through physical violence and forced sexual relations, women in Colombia have been kept in roles as passive, submissive, naturally suited to satisfy masculine sexual desires, and ready to assume the role of mothering.

When women participate in political activities or develop some type of activism they have also met severe forms of repression. In my conversations with human rights female activists, they indicated that it was a common practice of security forces to attack activist women who participate in demonstrations by hitting their breasts and genital area
(Interview with Maria). In events such as the 2008 strike of sugar cane workers in Cali, Candelaria, Florida and other surrounding towns, women of various organizations and particularly workers’ wives faced police repression when they protested on the roads surrounding their husbands’ strike locations.

Lola, a female leftist activist doing community organizing at an impoverished Afrodescendant area revealed to me at an informal conversation that at a protest she attended, an anti-riot police agent hit her and then threw her on the floor after lifting her from where she was standing because her and her group refused to abandon an area where they protested. As a result, she received a severe and chronic back. A member of a popular-peasant organization also provided me with an example of how, when a protestor is killed during a demonstration and his mother comes to recover his corpse, the anti-riots police address her with insults in order to demoralize the rest of the movement. Keeping a relative semblance with the Chilean case, these situations reveal how women in Colombia, and especially those who hold activist roles, have been subjected to numerous forms of violence in an explicit declaration that any deviance from their reproductive or domestic role will not be tolerated.

As perpetual targets of state violence, women’s bodies—as sites of social and biological reproduction—have become focal points for state violence against leftist and radical democratic social movements. Indeed, women holding leadership roles within their communities bear high consequences for challenging the state instead of passively accepting their fate under the conflict. Through their vocal participation, and also by reclaiming their right to the territory before the state, women have come to face threats both as organizers in their communities and when they collaborate with allied non-
governmental organizations. Cecilia, a professional woman working with a non-profit organization itself heavily threatened due to its work with forcefully-displaced women, explained this situation to me, emphasizing how the persecution some women endure is selective and directly intended to undermine their centrality in displaced communities’ organizing processes:

A lot of displaced people from different regions, especially northern Nariño and southern Cauca are followed to the places where they migrate to and paramilitary groups continue pressuring displaced women (there). All the population in situation of displacement continues being followed—well, not everyone, only those who have showed a leadership profile before migrating, and those in a high percentage are women because within the displaced population female leadership stands out since women constitute the majority of the displaced people. And women (…), together with the people who depend on them, children and the elderly, constitute about 74% of the displaced population (…) In addition, women are generally the ones who make the decision to migrate in the areas where they are displaced in order to save the lives of their families. Men often stay to cope with the situation or disappear—that is to say, they abandon their family responsibility; they look for their own salvation but do not assume the family responsibility because coming to the city to have the family get ahead is very complex; women make these decisions.

Cecilia continues to explain that, once displaced, and doubly burdened by paramilitary violence and by the subsequent absence of their partner, women assume leadership roles that bring new vulnerabilities when they denounce crimes such as land dispossession and violations of their social and political rights:
(M)any (of these women) are being surveiled on what they're doing in the place where they have arrived, and since it is women who are responsible for their families, they fight for their rights, they fight for all the aids the state provides because they are seeing the situation of their children, the situation about education, food, food security… then you see that much of the population that is organized leading these processes of displaced people are women; there are also men but a high percentage of those struggling are women. So these women who often are tied to programs such as Familias en Acción are mothers leaders of (different) organizations. And they are often getting threats from paramilitary groups because they are organized; because they already know how to write a right to petition\textsuperscript{15}, how to file a writ for the protection of constitutional rights, they know how legislation operates here, how to claim for their rights, all that. So they are being called to account, and we know cases of women who receive a visit in their organizations and are warned that they are being watched, also others have received threats in letters and things like that, so many women are under pressure (…) (Interview with Cecilia).

As Cecilia narrates, women in situation of displacement assume roles of leadership partly in response to the needs they have to sustain their families in the chaotic situation that ensues after leaving both their places of residence and, for many of them, as dependant from their partners. Women who act as advocates for their communities become “dangerous,” their capacity to demand remedies making visible the injustices which have led to their displacement. Paradoxically, by using the constitutional mechanisms guaranteed to any citizen, displaced women are further targeted and, after having their physical existence compromised, they are also stripped from their capacity to exist as legal subjects.

A similar situation of legal exclusion for displaced women and other victims of paramilitarism arose with the questioned governmental attempts to address their claims for justice and reparation. Law 975 of 2005, or Law of Justice and Peace (Ley de Justicia

\textsuperscript{15} The national constitution establishes that any person has the right to formulate petitions to authorities for reasons of general or particular interest and also the right to obtain prompt response. Public employees face disciplinary sanctions if they fail to comply with this obligation.
y Paz), whose text states as goals, truth, justice, and reparation for victims of crimes committed by paramilitaries, has been an example of this situation. Law 975 was conceived as a component of Democratic Security policy that would regulate the demobilization of thirty thousand members of paramilitary groups in exchange for prison terms of 5 to 8 years, and the obligation to confess and make reparations to the victims of their crimes. Despite paramilitaries’ admitted engagement in multiple crimes affecting women, the extremely low sanctions to these acts has created outrage among women’s organizations, which, like Corporación Humanas insist in the need to judge acts of sexual violence as crimes against humanity given its systematic use as a tool of war (Barraza 2009).

In Mesa Mujer y Conflicto Armado’s VIII Report of Socio-Political Violence against Women and Girls (2008), non-profit organization Comisión Colombiana de Juristas has also pointed at a series of grave problems in the application of Law of Justice and Peace. Among others, they found that sexual violence against women is often treated as a secondary crime, rarely investigated with specialized teams or with the proper depth. Furthermore Comisión Colombiana de Juristas found that prosecutors seldom ask demobilized paramilitaries about this type of violence when they are confessing other crimes or about control patterns this army exercised over women. Moreover, in their confessions, paramilitaries habitually tried to trivialize violent relations between their troops and local women. Finally, the report states that because the newly created Justice and Peace jurisdiction has allowed that paramilitary commanders be extradited to the United States, it has been impossible to know all the truth about their crimes when establish the actual facts of their action was one of the main goals of this law (Comisión
In collaboration with human rights organizations like *Movimiento Nacional de Crímenes de Estado* (National Movement of State Crime Victims), women’s social movements have demanded greater governmental commitment to guarantee victims of state crimes adequate judicial protection given the danger they continue to face after the questioned state-led demobilization process. Strongly criticized by human rights organizations, the Justice and Peace jurisdiction has been particularly opposed by the women’s movement because it has excluded women from designing instruments to protect victims, even though a large number of victims are female. This is in spite of the fact that Colombia signed the UN convention for women in security. Widespread evidence that many of the old paramilitary structures have gone back to commit crimes under different identities (Human Rights Watch, 2010), has put women’s organizations in alert after they continued receiving threats by what the government has euphemistically denominated “emerging bands” or former paramilitary groups.

The threats have in fact given way to actual violence against some displaced women leaders. A leader from afrodescendant organization for displaced persons, Afrodes, based in the predominantly Black port of Buenaventura told me in October 2008 that 27 afrodescendant female community leaders had been assassinated in the last years by paramilitary organizations due to their attempts to organize the community to claim for their rights. During the time I conducted this research, in June 2008, Martha Cecilia Obando, a social worker known in the community as “Doña Chila”, was assassinated in Buenaventura and at the time there were very little concrete progress to clarify this crime. Yet, despite the official inaction in these cases, activists continued upholding the long-
time reached conclusion that Human Rights Inter-American Commission (2008) enunciated in a report on the subject: “(A)rmed actors find that leadership exercised by women, represents an obstacle to advance their social and territorial control”.

The militarization of women’s lives also appears when they, invoking their roles as mothers or wives, raise concerns about human rights violations against their relatives or communities. Nationally, the most emblematic case of this type is probably that of mothers demanding investigations to clarify their sons’ extrajudicial executions by state security forces in 2008. A practice long documented by human rights organizations in Colombia, recent extrajudicial executions occurred mostly in rural areas, where Democratic Security policy operations were conducted. Victims of extrajudicial executions or so-called ‘false positives’, often men residing in marginalized neighborhoods, peasants, indigenous or community leaders, were falsely presented by the Army as guerrillas killed in combat.

An independent Mission to verify the existence of these crimes corroborated in October 2007 that impunity was the rule in official investigations for these cases (Coordinación Colombia - Europa - Estados Unidos, 2008). Other observations from the Mission included the confirmation that there was a pattern of concealing victims’ identities as well as a strong intimidation fed by the army’s presentation of the victim as a guerrilla member and, consequently, the whole stigmatization of the family. Mothers of Soacha, a marginalized Bogotá neighborhood where a number of victims resided before they were taken with false pretexts to later be executed, have since worked, under constant death threats, to demand justice for their sons’ deaths.

In 2008, when cases of extrajudicial execution gained notoriety and the
government had to remove 27 armed forces officers, including 3 generals connected to human rights violations, new cases in different parts of the country started to emerge. In this context, Melba, a Ruta activist I interviewed spoke about the role of women in mediating cases where community youth are recruited by paramilitaries in situations that resembled youth’s extrajudicial executions cases and the difficulties they face in this activism. Though Melba did not link the case of youth recruitment in her neighborhood with the ongoing extrajudicial executions, she did introduce the issue of how women who assume positions of leadership in their neighborhoods face obstacles because their work is seen as unduly politicized. In her case, when community women who had started working to recuperate public spaces for the youth heard local youth were being recruited by paramilitaries, they rejected the work of the most vocal female activists by stating that they were “too political”. In Melba’s account:

In the neighborhood (…) there are situations of paramilitarism. Youths are invited to a firing range, they are taken blindfolded from the neighborhood, boys tell their experiences but they don’t know where they have been taken, only that they are in luxurious country houses, with many girls and lots of alcohol… that’s a delicate situation. On the other hand, the working community is very indifferent towards that. The rest of women from our Association don’t want to know anything about politics (…) Naturally what I bring from Ruta, I bring it to them. Some of them are very conscious (…) but one invites them to the activities of Ruta and they say “We don’t want (…) because there’s too much politics there” (…) I tell them, what you do, this concern you have about the youth and childhood is political, therefore we have to continue, we have to go on. And they say, “sorry but no, we are fine like this”. (Interview with Melba)

As Melba explained, when women’s roles as caretakers or guardians of family values takes on a character other than that of submission and passivity, they are severely interpellated both by the men that see their privilege questioned with their actions or, as in this case, by other women entangled in a patriarchal discursive framework.
Under the model of militarized security, the state has drawn on deeply patriarchal narratives as a mode of reproducing structures of gender subordination. Governmental programs such as “Peasant Soldiers” have borrowed from cultural scripts conceiving of women as naturally subservient and suited to serve the state through their capacity to reproduce and sustain the family. The widespread militarization of the state security has worsened the situation of women who already had to deal with sexual violence, forced single pregnancy, controls over their bodies, and other types of violence.

Because the trope of security involves the notion that state power aims to protect helpless citizens from external threats, it is uncommon that these types of violations are associated with the state or to a specific pattern of human rights violations. Yet, for women who challenge militarily enforced authority it is apparent that not only the promise of security is illusory; in fact the securitization of everyday life has also greatly aggravated their subordination.

In forms of aggression ranging from death threats to trivialization, women’s work against violence and discrimination affecting women has been met with hostility as it transgresses imaginaries of women as loyal to the state. Women’s human rights are threatened because they dare to challenge the matrix of patriarchal, economic, power and the racial hierarchy in which this is sustained.

With the most serious cases affecting women in marginalized communities, militarized securitization reinforces and replicates the systematic devaluation of those who deviate from the expectations attached to being a women in a society at war, expectations that value loyalty to the state while sustaining traditional structures of race, gender, economic, and political power. An anecdote provided by a Ruta Valle member
alludes to the exact nature of these loyalties. A member of a landowning and politically influential family, she narrated how her predominantly male colleagues at a local professional association criticized her by comparing her with Piedad Cordoba, a progressive female afrodescendant senator whose support of a negotiated end to the conflict has subjected her to accusations of being a collaborator of both guerrillas and the socialist Venezuelan government, not to mention a host of sexualized jokes associating her with Venezuelan President, Hugo Chávez. At an assembly of this organization, members joked about the fact that the Ruta member “should marry Hugo Chávez” too. The incident was the more telling about ongoing imaginaries of femininity and political properness since the Ruta member comes from a wealthy family and on all counts, except for her feminist activism, she represents the local establishment as much as her professional colleagues. Questioning her lack of loyalty to her class and to her male counterparts, her colleagues invoked ideas of racial and political properness in order to call her to ranks or else face ridicule and exclusion.

Because security discourses rest on the idea of a homogeneous community fighting an external threat, they require the continual reproduction of the family as the main locus to guaranty such homogeneity. In this model, both men and women are bound to conform to a tight gender binary where women are expected to be submissive and men committed to militarization. An expectation for women of all backgrounds, gender securitization most harshly affects afrodescendant, indigenous, peasant, and working class women as they not only defy gender roles, but also challenge the larger socioeconomic and racial hierarchies that compound their subordination.

In order to address these problems, women in different social sectors have turned
to organized mobilization. In the next section I will turn to women’s mobilization and to the alternatives they have proposed in the face of the militarization of society and the securitization of gender.

3.7 Women’s Rights as Human Rights

As I have shown so far in this chapter, Ruta’s critique emphasizes the differential impact of security policies on women, as well as the fact that women’s victimization under the conflict parallels their subordinate condition in other social realms. The question remains, what are the alternatives to securitization and militarism the women’s movement has proposed. In addressing this issue, I’ll focus on the ways the feminist analysis of securitization has been influenced by human rights discourses on the security state, and how, at the same time, human rights mobilization engages with women’s claims.

During the last decades, women have advocated for a legal framework that protects their human rights at a supra-national level. A redundant category for some, women’s human rights have been vindicated by the women’s movement in order to correct the misconception that crimes against women are a form of “private” violence between partners—an event too discrete and gender-specific as to merit the universal protection of international human rights law (Bunch and Frost, 2000). In the context of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, feminist scholar Catharine A. Mackinnon (1994) defended the importance of recognizing women’s human rights by critically stating, “[W]hat is done to women is either too specific to women to be seen as human or too generic to human beings to be seen as specific to women”.
In Colombia, the discourse of human rights has been influential for the field of social mobilization, yet it is clear that there is not a unique approach to the nature of rights and their use for different struggles. Below I briefly present two perspectives on human rights and their implications for the local women’s movement using the case of Ruta Pacífica. In the first, I address the human rights movement’s systemic view of human rights violations as power-ridden, and then reflect on the view of women’s human rights as part of a legal and political platform to reach women’s empowerment.

3.8 Rights for Women

The Colombian women’s movement has advocated to extend human rights protection for women, yet there have been widely divergent opinions about how to implement this protection. Overall, the movement has embraced human rights as a legal platform to provide women with a repertoire of protective mechanisms, a catalogue of state obligations, and a legal vocabulary to express their grievances. Yet, for some feminist sectors, the focus has been on the idea that women’s human rights can potentially address the multiple forms of economic, racial, and patriarchal exploitation that underlie violence against women. Ruta Valle del Cauca showcases these different orientations in their own pedagogical work by including both an emphasis on legal equality and a concern with patriarchal structures in Colombian society.

Some of the tensions and negotiations about the role of rights emerged in the workshops that the group held in Ruta’s “Itinerant School for Political Training, Peace Education and Democracy – Weaving Knowledges and Powers”. In one of these workshops I participated in, on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination against Women—CEDAW, where women were asked, in groups, to come up with examples of the three generations of rights—individual, political, and social, and to illustrate these categories with situations from their own lives. Groups gave experiential examples of cases that ranged from the forced disappearance of one participant’s husband, to the dumping of toxic substances in a river close to someone else’s community. This exercise illustrated that the plurality of issues that converge in Ruta, and further illuminates their understanding of the problems they deal with. On the one hand, the focus on individual, legal-based action as a privileged form of action spoke to the liberal tradition that was part of Ruta Valle’s organizing. On the other, women’s suggestion that legal remedies are to correct structural imbalances enabled by a patriarchal society also emerged as an important element of the discussion.

*Ruta*—Valle del Cauca’s origin as an outgrowth of *Unión de Ciudadanas de Colombia*—a pioneer organization of professional women founded soon after a 1954 law granted Colombian women the right to vote—partly accounted for their focus on women’s equality and political participation. Still functioning in a house that belongs to *Unión de Ciudadanas* and sharing a handful of its members, *Ruta*—Valle del Cauca has taken this interest in equal political participation into new terrain by focusing on the introduction of women’s perspectives, and not simply physical presence, in public policy-making. Equal participation of women is now deemed a critical goal, but only through the full empowerment of all women as political subjects, regardless of their possibility to access a position in the public sector.

*Ruta*—Valle del Cauca’s coexisting goals of equality and empowerment manifest in their agenda of women education to influence public policies in areas where women’s
interests are neglected—an exercise they call “incidence”. Through advocacy with public agencies, *Ruta* strives to influence institutional agendas while they empower women to claim for their rights.

In an interview, the *Ruta*--Valle director explained their “incidence” work stating that, while the problem of the absence of a gender perspective in public institutions is about lack of women’s representation, it is also about power. *Ruta* Valle del Cauca director expressed this duality, observing that,

> (T)he state is not prepared for our challenge to inequality. There’s only 14% of state offices filled by women when we should have parity. (On the other hand,) the state accepts claims only until power is questioned; then it’s the end of any negotiation. This shows how power is the great struggle; from the family to the state (Interview with Alicia).

*Ruta* activist, Rosa, also explained, through her experience, the salience of both equal participation and political empowerment as a goal of feminist politics. In her words:

> In the 80s all my feminist friends had a, let’s say, vengeful way of thinking. This attitude towards men didn’t seem ok to me. Because if we wanted to effect all those social transformations, we had to transform both men and women’s relationships (…) (Today) the most important aspect is the political. There’s where we have to learn so we can exercise incidence, because ultimately the political has to do with power and if we don’t get there, we’ll be doing the same stupid thing of protesting here and there but we will never exercise incidence. (Interview with Rosa).

In this testimony, Rosa refers to the work of influencing institutional agendas in areas where women’s interests are neglected. She also puts emphasis on the work of empowering women to make claims for their rights. Other participants, such as Elena, a professional and unionist, explained incidence as a mechanism that allowed them to obtain their rights’ effective protection against governmental arbitrariness. In a brief conversation we held at the beginning of a *Ruta* School session she said: “It is as with your research subject, Democratic Security. Reading CEDAW is easy to know that this
policy violates first generation rights such as mobility, expression, and political participation; as a feminist and as a unionist, this policy infringes upon all my rights”. In this conversation, Elena stressed the importance of legal action as a platform to address the multiple facets of their subordination.

Indeed, a number of important women’s human rights victories have been won through the strategic promotion of this combined perspective. One of the most resounding occurred in 2008, when the Constitutional Court issued Auto 092/08, a judicial decision protecting the rights of forcefully displaced women. Auto 092 was the result of a process where women from 27 organizations led by Casa de la Mujer and Ruta testified about the disproportionate impact the conflict has on them. After receiving testimonies from 600 forcefully displaced women, the Court determined that displaced women are at a greater risk of suffering sexual violence, exploitation, forced labor and social control by armed actors. Women are also at risk to be dispossessed, discriminated by institutions, and overall to be unprotected and separated from their partners that economically provided for the household. Once they have been displaced, the Court pointed out, women must become providers themselves as well as to be responsible of dealing with state institutions in charge of providing them aids and subsidies. For this reason, the Court stated, state institutions must implement a series of 12 different programs to address this vulnerability and prevent further victimization of displaced women.

The process that led to issuing this constitutional decision was important not only because of the participation it elicited, and the actual institutional protection achieved, but because it is a step in empowering women—and in particular disenfranchised women to
demand their rights from the state. *Ruta* Valle del Cauca women had raised this point repeatedly at a workshop I attended where participants questioned how state policies such as Plan Colombia and Democratic Security conceive of women as welfare subjects and not as citizens. Through a critical reading of state assistential policies and their entanglement with militarism, women concluded that the consequence of this practice was to turn them into passive spectators of state policies and potential collaborators of these policies’ militaristic goals. By autonomously representing their situation in the security state, women re-formulated their position as political actors vis a vis the state while also setting the basis for operating in this contradictory location both with and against this state.

3.9 Women and Human Rights

As part of their rights activism, *Ruta* has been rather autonomous from the broader human rights movement, yet the potential for theoretical and political collaboration is apparent. Human rights organizations led by Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP), for example, have developed a framework to document human rights that might be useful to understand the violence women experience in a securitized society. To them, human rights violations refer to the violence that the state or its agents systematically deploy in order to dominate a population that is seen as a threat to a particular model of state or society (García Méndez, 2011; CINEP, 2008). Under this definition, violations to women’s human rights might correspond to those that affect both women and men equally, like the cases of arbitrary detentions that increased threefold for both genders between the periods 2002-2007 and 1997-2002, or they could
be violations that differentially affect women—for example, the cases of female prisoners subject to sexual abuse by state guards during their detention.

Defining human rights as part of a pattern of state-led socio-political violence might also help to make visible violations to women’s transgressions of social roles under contexts of securitization. As I discussed in the previous section of this chapter, when women claim their rights as women and also as peasants, workers, part of a threatened ethnic or racial minority, or as uprooted from their territories demanding restitution of their land they might meet very strong reactions as they elevate claims potentially destabilizing against both capitalist and patriarchal arrangements.

Using the language of human rights in the Colombian case is potentially useful in uncovering the role of the state in perpetuating violence against women. As I suggested in the previous sections of this chapter, the security discourse has provided a vocabulary, an imaginary, and a military structure to reproduce a public sphere already entrenched in gender subordination. Democratic Security policy came to elevate violent, militarized masculinity as the center of Colombia’s political discourse and in that way, to endorse or legitimize abuses against women. If analyzed in the tradition of the Colombian human rights movement (see chapter three of this dissertation), human rights violations against women, in tandem with all forms of state-supported socio-political violence, can be read as attempts to contain any challenge to the patriarchal, economic, and racial hierarchies of power. While often downplayed as discrete abuses product of the degradation of the conflict or the exceptional wrongdoing of some dysfunctional individuals, violations of women’s human rights sustain, at an everyday level a larger structure built upon gender, class and race privilege.
3.10 Women’s Praxis as Critique

Being political actors in a context of securitization, where the state assumes both arbitrary and protective facets, poses important challenges to the women’s movement. For one thing, it is likely that judicial remedies have limited effectiveness in the larger context of the state security program.

In response to the difficulties in the work with the state, Ruta has continued strengthening the movement internally. Perhaps the two elements that have most decisively pushed this process forward have been consolidating a feminist consciousness in response to the country’s armed conflict, and articulating this consciousness in the form of a national mobilization in solidarity with women victim of the conflict. Ruta activist Rosa’s testimony spoke to her process of acquiring a feminist consciousness as a political process where women’s oppression was historicized and connected to a context of systematic subordination. In an interview, when I asked her about the feasibility of translating Ruta’s political program to communities she stated,

Since I have always been there, for me it’s not difficult; on the contrary, it has strengthened me. In the spaces I work, the people with whom I work, they have told me, ‘awesome, now you sound more secure, it’s as if you approach the political question and the women’s question better’ (…) “Because the type of feminism I felt I identified with was that of being rebellious, but I didn’t have the historical consciousness about women and that is what I have achieved here in Ruta, to have that historical consciousness and that gives you a base to talk in a more coherent and forceful way in any space. (Interview with Rosa).

Ruta’s key mechanism to connect this feminist consciousness with the concrete experience of women in a context of war has been national mobilization. Ruta participants’ testimonies show how participating in large-scale national demonstrations
has allowed them to connect their personal issues with regional and national problems. Through their participation in national marches, *Ruta* participants report further achieving a consciousness that a feminist perspective will be instrumental to solve these issues.

Rocio offered an illustrative account of her more intense involvement with a pacifist feminist perspective after mobilizations like this one, where she and other women from *Ruta* Valle traveled by bus to Chocó, a predominantly afrodescendant area in the Pacific greatly affected by the conflict and difficult to access by land, in order to join activists from all over Colombia in solidarity with local women. In the following part of her testimony, she connected this mobilization experience with her rising feminist consciousness. Rocio stated, in the first part,

Going to Chocó was hard, the roads were destroyed, at some point we lost communication with the world because phones didn’t work there, we had to arrive one day and we actually arrived the following, and everyone was scared because those were some immense jungles and we didn’t know where we were, there was no food, we arrived exhausted... but when we got there it was like we were born again (...) Chocó, to us, was a different people, a different culture. It’s the Colombia that one sees so far, because one thinks that this, the city (where we live), is the center of Colombia, but then it turns out that Colombia is jungle, water, biodiversity, flora (...) The roads were in very bad shape so we all, like little ants, pushed the bus together (...) We helped fill those holes with rocks, we did operation “rock in hand” and that was something that made us focus more in the reality that Colombia lives, that this is not only a problem of guerrillas, it is a social problem where there is not social investment from the government’s part, so these are forgotten populations. I myself said, “Oh well, I’ll bathe in Rio Atrato”, but then, oh surprise! When I went to bathe I couldn’t because it was so fast-flowing, but especially because the only thing that came down was mud and then we went to a house but could only shower one hour later when it rained and they collected water. Then, the problem there is about water supply, roads, social investment (...).

Here, Susana--like other women who have joined Ruta and in there learned by experience that their problems are the same of women and people all over the country--narrates the way in which she has come to realize that any diagnostic and solution to
these issues has to be the result of a dialogue inspired by recognition and solidarity. Promoting feminine solidarity or, in Ruta’s parlance, sorority, presumes the collective construction of security where problems are defined side by side in a dialogue of equals.

Ruta--Valle del Cauca leader Martha Elena Giraldo (2006) has pointed out, in this respect, that it is women who, recovering “feminine traditions”, can support each other in an environment otherwise adverse for them. “Ollas comunitarias” or community potlucks, for instance, are ways in which women can provide for their families and resist hunger, as well as the blockades that armed actors often impose on civilian population. In her research, Giraldo (2006) highlights how, as women’s customary ways of approaching the public sphere, “feminine traditions”, provide women with an outlet in situations of danger and scarcity. For example, she refers to gossip or small talk among “comadres” (godsisters) and its use to communicate crucial information in contexts of war where open communication could be deadly.

Work with the symbolic has also been central to reinforce sorority around alternative representations of the public sphere. Symbols to represent hope, resistance or sorority have been part of Ruta’s work to replace the logos of war and a way to make their claims visible. Colors, rituals, performances, have gone hand in hand with the use of legal mechanisms to represent the state and the possibilities women have to interpellate it. Analyzing these “feminine traditions” and the entire feminist challenge of the state through symbolic and practical actions, it remains as an open question the extent to which this exercise of re-thinking women under the war will have an impact not only in the everyday of the ongoing securitization of society but also, importantly, in the larger, proximate, human rights movement. The experience of women becoming active around a
feminist-pacifist project opens also a window to social movements possibilities to create alternative narratives of security and citizenship.
CHAPTER 4
CITIZENSHIP IN TIMES OF EXCEPTION

In this chapter I examine the relation between security and citizenship through the lens of social mobilization. Jorge, one of the heads of a national human rights organization, referred, bluntly, to this relation in an interview on the meaning of the recent turn to security for Colombian society: “(...) what (security policy) has produced is that a lot of people have been assassinated, taken to mass graves; the number of victims is incalculable. The situation in Colombia is that social mobilization has not become consolidated towards the creation of a more democratic and just society” (Interview with Jorge). This claim, often stated by activists in various Colombian social movements, leads me to inquire about the ways in which social mobilization is modified under the security state and the consequences this pose for citizenship.

My focus in this inquiry will be Valle del Cauca and its human rights-based mobilization in response to Colombia’s security policy. I will analyze the transformations of citizenship throughout this process of confronting the security discourse. The thread for this discussion will be given by the question, how does security, as a principle of governmentality transforms citizenship and what challenges have been posed to such governmental rule? Human rights-based mobilization in Valle del Cauca suggests that, by relying on existing human rights repertoires, regional social movements have articulated a critique both of security discourses and the citizenship model promoted

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16 I use the concept of “repertoires”, in the sense suggested by Tilly (2006), as the sets of tools through which mobilization is conducted, but also recognize that the use of the category of human rights is problematic and involve various and often conflicting understandings (Speed, 2007).
under the security turn. At the same time, nourished by regional social mobilization, human rights organizations have challenged security policies with political contentions much broader than those contained in the international law of human rights. It is my argument that, confronted with the predominance of security-centered governance, human rights organizations and broader social movements have grown increasingly interconnected around a human rights-based mobilization to reclaim full citizenship.

My focus in this chapter is the work of *CPDH for the Defense of Human Rights* (CPDH) - Valle del Cauca, with whom I developed ethnographic work in the second half of 2011, but, in order to complement the analysis, I will also include aspects pertaining to the work of Valle del Cauca chapter of *Foundation-Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners* (FCSPP) and Human Rights Network “Francisco Isaias Cifuentes” (Red FIC), affiliated to the *Process of Popular Unity from the Colombian South West* (PUPSOC). While part of broader, older national organizations, the first two, and of a regional multi-sectorial grassroots network the second, these three organizations have been founded in the 2000s in response to sharpening regional human rights crisis.

Through the analysis of these organizations I will claim that human rights mobilization operates as a central location articulating different modes of social mobilization against bio-political governance—that mode of government which relies on the constant production of mortal violence (Foucault, 1997). I will argue that, while

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17 I conceive this location as equivalent to Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) “nodal point” or the privileged position that operates as a discursive center from which other subject positions are defined.

18 Castro-Gómez (2007) succinctly summarizes Foucault’s notion of biopolitics by stating: “Foucault intends to think how biopolitics sought to favor the emergence of a desired type of population (as a prototype of normality) in contrast and through the violent exclusion of his/her “otherness”. Biopolitics declares as “enemies” of society all
fraught with tensions and programmatic differences, Valle del Cauca social movements converge in the use of human rights tools and vocabulary. Through this human rights-based mobilization, social movements have, in many ways, re-worked state-imposed designs of citizenship. In order to understand the role of social mobilization in challenging these designs, I will analyze how human rights-based mobilization has engaged in re-signifying citizenship while it goes through a double and interrelated process of, on the one hand, adopting an increasingly politicized definition of human rights and, on the other, working in further inter-penetration with broader social mobilization and their struggles for social rights, identity, autonomy, and territory.

4.1 A Politics of Human Rights: From Individual Rights to Collective Projects of Citizenship

To a large extent, the considerable increase in number and severity of human rights violations is the common ground for human rights-based mobilization. Human rights organizations and social organizations alike have denounced that during the first five years of Democratic Security policy, serious human rights violations such as extrajudicial executions, disappearance, tortures, and arbitrary detentions almost tripled, compared to the previous five years, and that their constituencies were disproportionately targeted by such violations (Report for the Universal Periodic Review on Colombia 2008). As actions perpetrated or tolerated by the state, these violations speak about the fundamental
erosion of citizenship rights under the security paradigm.

In response, through human rights-based mobilization, organizations of diverse origins have implemented a politics of human rights to challenge this democratic deficit. Relying on existing human rights repertoires, social movements articulated a critique of security discourses that, at the same time that it has challenged the state conception of rights under security, it has started to re-narrativize citizenship within the parameters of broader expressions of social mobilizations such as those coming from women, students, afro, indigenous peoples, and popular sectors.

In his analyses on the relation between state and citizenship, Etienne Balibar (1994 and 2001) has used the concept of politics of human rights or politics of civility as the projects necessary to extend individuals’ universal citizenship (in Arendt’s words, “the right to have rights”). I draw on these ideas and at the same time attempt to further them by introducing the role of social movements in reclaiming collectively forged citizenship. My argument is that, in defying the state trend to dismantle, criminalize or co-opt them, social movements have deployed an alternative politics—one that both interpellated security as a technique of government and proposed different frameworks for their relation with the state. I contend that if under the security turn state-defined security needs became the essential condition shaping social life, human rights as a discourse and as a politics of mobilization, became a key terrain to re-claim collective rights so drastically undermined under the security paradigm.

I start this chapter laying out a brief theoretical discussion of the impact constitutional exceptionalism has had on citizenship. I discuss, too, the role of human and political rights activism in repealing exception measures. After laying out these
theoretical points, I will discuss the case of mass detentions as an example that illustrates human rights organizations’ use of the human rights tradition in order to constitute a politics of human rights in Colombia. Through this case refer to the use of litigation as an element to deconstruct security and to, in the process, build mobilization at the local level. I take this example to illustrate some of the concrete human rights repertoires that organizations have used to re-politicize citizenship amidst the ongoing national and global securitization processes.

As I show in this chapter, mobilization against security policies’ bio-political governance draws on human rights as the foundation to claim for a strengthened citizenship. I use the example of arbitrary detentions to reflect on the interpretations of human rights that militants effect. In doing so, I problematize Balibar’s (2001) view that full political recognition entails an intervention based on political rights and not on human rights. In previous works, Balibar has called for the need to recover the political foundations of rights as a response to the violence inscribed in the state production of citizenship. Here I analyze how Valle del Cauca human rights mobilization engages in a similar project of human rights politicization, yet for it, human rights, as much as political rights, constitute a central element to re-formulate a relation with the state. In fact, I will argue, human rights constitute an ethical horizon, a strategic tool, and a narrative framework. Ultimately, it is my argument that if observed in a broad manner, human rights constitute a nodal point uniting the defense of individual rights with broader, collective, political aspirations across diverse modes of regional mobilization.

4.2 State of Exception, Citizenship, and Human Rights

If we understand citizenship not only as the legal, but also as the political ties
mediating individuals’ relationship with the state and with others in the polis, we can say that the emergence of the security paradigm has led both to increasingly limit constitutional rights and to considerable transformations in the relation between citizens and the state. As theorized in the tradition of German philosopher Carl Schmitt, the juridico-political structure that has facilitated such re-alignment has been the state of exception, or the condition that allows for the state to suspend the law while still operating under the law’s authorization (Schmitt, 1996). Turned into a major paradigm of government during the late twentieth century, the state of exception has allowed states to strip individuals of their citizenship rights and to, ultimately, erase them as legal subjects (Agamben, 2005).

The result of this trend has been a split in the body politic between those who enjoy citizen rights and those marked as state enemies, who must exist in the outside of the law (Arendt, 1973). A constitutive feature of contemporary politics, the state of exception has turned liberal democracy into a site of legally authorized state violence whose main political subject is not the citizen but the subject stripped of rights. As Agamben’s (1998) work articulates it, it is bare life and not the qualified life of the citizen that defines current liberal democracy.

The centrality of bare life and the radical relativization of citizenship operated under the security paradigm beg the question about the power struggles redefining this organization. What discourses and practices are used by the state to enforce this order, and, under what conditions do social actors challenge the politics of the exception? In light of the duality between life existing outside the law and fully-endowed citizens, what instruments are being used to respond to this fractured body politic?
My analysis of human rights mobilization in Valle del Cauca follows up on this
duality outside of the law–citizenship observing that Colombia’s “permanent exception”
(GarcíaVillegas, 2001) has created vast zones of no-law. While everyday fulfillment of
state constitutional mandates for all citizens is, at any rate, precarious, (De Sousa Santos
and García Villegas, 2001) and greatly determined by emergency powers, there are, yet,
more drastic levels of legal exclusion. Through the constant application of the state of
exception, large groups of the population have been deprived of basic due process rights
under the assumption that they might become potential risks for national security. At the
same time, within military and paramilitary forces have been found responsible of
assassinating civilians as part of a dirty war strategy to eliminate guerrilla combatants in
cases of extrajudicial executions, massacres, and human rights violations.

An analysis of this multi-layered state-perpetrated or tolerated violence in times
of exception has partly followed Hanna Arendt’s (1973) critique of totalitarianism by
pointing at the nature of the human after the severe erosion of citizenship emerging from
this political order. Arendt, herself, concluded that reinstating the parameters of the
human required a discussion about the state or the development of what she called
agonistic politics. Engaging with Arendt’s quest, Agamben formulated his thesis that the
central feature of Western political history is “the distinction between natural being and
the legal existence of a person” (Lemke, 2011), concluding, from that point, that the
sovereign power of the state is given by its capacity to include life stripped of rights into
the political realm or, as he called it, in the production of the bio-political body.

Under the conditions of coloniality dominant in Latin America, bio-political
governmentality can be best understood by observing that it lies at the crux of economic,
political, epistemic and gender domination or what Quijano (2000) has defined as a colonial matrix of power. The key constitutive mechanism of such a matrix is the production of a power differential through a hierarchy of race. Focusing on this colonial condition (and its character as the necessary underside of modernity) illuminates continuities in national projects as well as the significance of race for the production of citizenship. In the case of Colombia, the disproportionate victimization of Black and indigenous peoples within Democratic Security can be seen within a continuum of colonial power where national borders are built at the expense of the exclusion of large segments of the population and their racial otherness. This history of inclusion – exclusion connects with the current security state in which racial others are excluded or often eliminated in order to produce the conditions for projects of neoliberal development to be implemented. Attending to Hindess’ (2002) discussion of liberal citizenship in what he calls the system of states, it would be possible to say that the advance of citizenship in the colonial world is to be secured under neo-liberal political conditions.

State mediation of Colombia’s conflict has largely been based on producing a framework of liberal democratic rights which in appearance is universal but in practice relies on a model of drastically unequal application. Following Agamben, we could say that, in fact, Colombia’s rule of law has at its core the production of citizenship on the basis of the systematic physical or legal elimination of entire segments of the population. The systematic assassination 5,000 members of leftist political party Union Patriótica (Cepeda-Castro, 2006) speaks to this project. But also, state-tolerated or supported paramilitary massacres and “cleanings” (Taussig, 2005) reveal Colombia as a biopolitically produced democracy, where disposing of life is a constitutive element of
The case of Buenaventura in Valle del Cauca is illustrative in this respect. As I showed in chapter 2, the predicament of the predominantly afrodescendant populations of this area illustrates the paradox many disenfranchised communities throughout the country experience. On the one hand, they have achieved constitutional and legal protection of ancestral rights over the territory; on the other, they have been systematically extricated from their lands and many of them assassinated as part of a paramilitary strategy to re-populate the territory (Escobar, 2004b; Oslender, 2006). Sometimes by action and always by omission, the Colombian state has exposed its citizens to death in a form of extremely racialized governance (Foucault, 2003; Fanon, 2004).

As I show in this chapter, social movements’ response to bio-political governance has been multifaceted. From national and international juridical reclamation, to protest, memorialization, forms of self-policing, and simultaneously blaming the state and requesting its protection, movements have attempted to re-establish their rights through a broad repertoire of recourses. Social mobilization against security policies in Colombia shows that, in struggling against bio-political governance, it has relied on an extended conception of human rights. In response to systematic elimination and de-facto exclusion from the law, social movements have used the human rights discourse not only as a protective shield against violations, but also as a vantage point to articulate local and transnational mobilization. I refer to this articulation as human rights mobilization or the multi-sided struggle of social movements against bio-political power that converges in the use of human rights repertoires while still maintaining a distinctive political program.
If, as Arendt (1973) reminds us, the paradox of contemporary politics is that only citizens can enjoy human rights, I find that human rights mobilization effects a radical re-appropriation of human rights repertoires in order to re-establish or institute citizenship. In the Colombian context, human rights repertoires address the institutional duality that situates the state between a progressive structure of constitutional rights and the systematic violation for such rights. In this context, human rights repertoires fulfill various key roles in making political, social, and collective rights contained in the national constitution a possibility. Both through intervention in the legislative process and through courts litigation, human rights mobilization engage with the constitutional state but also with the bio-political state. By constantly raising juridical claims around the state’s continuous violation or inability to protect individual’s human rights, activists have continuously struggled to rebuild citizenship ties between individuals and the state. Moreover, with the continuing application of the state of exception and the growing significance of security policies, human rights mobilization and long-term human rights repertoires have played a key role in re-working undermined citizenship. Through both legal-oriented activism and by continuously re-framing the legacies of politically motivated violence with the current, intensified trend of human rights violations under Democratic Security policy, human rights mobilization has maintained open the possibility to constitute an alternative, more inclusive common sense on the political violence in Colombia. In the process, human rights mobilization has provided a space for broader social movements to re-work bio-political governance based on both their own agendas and on the human rights tradition.

While not unified or articulated under the same organizational or ideological
principles, human rights organizations in Valle del Cauca have worked, relatively synchronized, towards problematizing security as a governmental tool whose application entails the production of violence. In the following section I will discuss some of the mechanisms organizations have used to challenge of the discourse and effects of state security policies. I will use the case of mass detentions for this purpose. The three axes that will articulate this discussion will be 1) The engagement with the constitutional and the bio-political levels of the state, 2) The use and articulation of human rights and collective rights as defense against and alternatives to security, and 3) The bridges towards broader social mobilization or otherwise constitution of larger publics around the rhetoric of human rights. The overall argument I will advance through these points contends that human rights has been a key discursive and strategic field to negotiate the state of exception and its effects on citizenship.

4.3 Engaging the State: Mass Detentions and Bio-Political Governance

During the brief but active life of Uribe government’s Anti-Terrorist Statute (2003-2004) and throughout Democratic Security (2002-2010), the state armed forces commanded a large offensive against guerrillas which ended up with the collateral result of intimidating, submitting to surveillance, and imprisoning a number of peasants, indigenous, and workers rarely tied to social movements. One of the chief mechanisms used during this period were mass detentions—armed forces-led operations where large groups of people were detained under charges of collaborating with guerrillas. Typically, detentions involved police or army-initiated arrests in rural areas under the basis of secret informants’ testimonies. The majority of arrestees were usually released due to weak evidence after being in prison for terms of up to two or three years, while the judicial
This practice, which extended throughout the whole country, was widely applied in Valle del Cauca rural areas. According to human rights platform, Coordinación Colombia – Europa – Estados Unidos (CCEEU), in the period of 2002-2004, mass detentions left over 6,300 detainees after 77 mass arrests throughout the country (Eminent Jurists Panel, 2006). Human rights organizations showed that mass detentions were part of a systematic pattern introduced with Democratic Security by showing how the number of mass detentions had almost tripled in regards to the previous five years (Alliance of Social and Like-Minded Organizations et al, 2008).

In the early period of Democratic Security application, Valle del Cauca was the epicenter of several episodes of mass detention in semi-rural towns of Queremal, Juntas (Dagua), and Cisneros, close to the western Pacific coast, and also in the south eastern towns of Florida and Pradera (about 27 miles from Cali), which left over 120 detained people (CPDH Communique, 2003). The most emblematic cases occurred in the towns of Cisneros and El Queremal in June and September of 2003. 26 persons in Cisneros and 36 in El Queremal were simultaneously captured under charges of rebellion and terrorism. Some of the detainees were indigenous leaders, while the majority were workers without any political affiliation and broadly known and esteemed by the local population.\(^{19}\)

The first mass detention in Valle del Cauca, on July 27th, 2003, set the tone for

\[^{19}\text{Other mass detentions in the neighboring department of Cauca also brought the solidarity of Valle del Cauca organizations. In 2004 there were 12 indigenous people were captured in the town of Toribio, accused of having ties with FARC after the Army and that guerrilla group held combats in the area. Rumors spoke of 50 more possible captures of “guerrilla helpers”.}\]
the following ones. On this arrest, members of the Police, Army, DAS, and the Attorney General's Office entered Cisneros by air and land arresting and conducting raids. On September 25th and 27th, 2003, 45 peasants and workers were arrested, as well as 3 indigenous people from the Yu'Yic'Kwe and Kwez Kiwe cabildos, affiliated to the Association of Indigenous Cabildos from the Pacific-ACIVARP, who were buying and selling agricultural products at the local market (CPDH Communique, January 14th, 2004). On December 7th, 2003, two indigenous men were detained in Pradera and one more in the nearby town of Florida. Again, on December 20th and 27th, 2003, 51 people were detained in Popayán, Cajibío, Silvia, and Piendamó, in the neighboring department of Cauca, located just a few hours from Cali, in Valle del Cauca. Some of the detainees in this operation participated in social or political organizations in the area at the same time that they worked in agriculture, education, or commerce.

Detentions continued, although with lower intensity, until December 31st, 2006, when the police, executing “Operation Emperor”, detained a group of peasants and indigenous people who were selling their products at the market, in the town of Florida, under accusations of collaborating with guerrilla group FARC. As denounced by Cauca indigenous communities, the police agents did not have warrants and they proceeded to detain based on secret informants' accusations (Communique Valle del Cauca Indigenous Authorities, 2006). Indigenous authorities framed this detention as the government's revenge for the events surrounding a frustrated process to effect a humanitarian exchange with FARC in the towns of Florida and Pradera in Valle del Cauca, and presented the detentions as kidnappings and as part of a campaign to terrorize local populations. In San Isidro, Buenaventura, in Bajo Calima, 9 people were detained also in 2006. 2 of them
were, indeed, members of FARC and they negotiated with the prosecutor for a reduced sentence due to confession, but the remaining 7 went to trial and were finally absolved after 15 months in prison (Interview with Lawyer Duarte).

Cases in Valle del Cauca occurred almost simultaneously with other prominent mass detentions at the national level. In Arauca, on December 12, 2002, about 2000 people were detained (Organizaciones Sociales de Arauca, 2011); “Operación Orión”, on the other hand, left 422 people detained during a mass arrest in Medellín (Coordinación Colombia – Europa – Estados Unidos - CCEEU, 2006). In the following year, Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (2003), a national human rights organization with consultive status before the United Nations, determined that during 2003, 2,140 persons in Colombia were subject to arbitrary detentions or to detentions in violation of the due process.

As established by human rights organizations throughout the country, these detentions either flagrantly violated national and international guidelines regarding captures or, being slightly more adjusted to the law, they were still borderline arbitrary. More prominently, captures did not apprehend someone caught in the act, or they lacked judicial authorization, and, in most cases, ignored the requirements that the arrest has to be reasonable and proportional in regards to the act committed by the arrestee. In some occasions, warrants were filled up by the prosecutor during or after the detention, which spoke about the need to formally justify the capture but not having any previous justification to conduct the arrest.

Human Rights organizations characterized mass detentions as the direct consequence of the recently approved Anti-Terrorist Statute. Mass detentions and the
policy of “total war” advanced by the national government in practice established a system where all citizens had the official duty to surveil their own neighbors and relatives, as well as the presumption that human rights organizations were “political organizations at the service of terrorism”, as President Uribe indicated in a speech pronounced before the armed forces in September, 2003 (Presidencia de la República, 2003). In this context, activists characterized detentions as an instrument to criminalize social protest and detainees were presented as political prisoners.

The perceived injustice of mass detentions attracted manifestations of solidarity from both communities and different regional organizations. Simultaneously with the independent intervention of particular organizations, a coalition formed under the identity of Network of Valle del Cauca Human Rights Defenders. The Network grouped over twenty regional organizations of indigenous, forcefully displaced people, students, unionists, and human rights groups from the department. Among them, Organizations included CPDH - Valle del Cauca; Nomadesc; Foundation-Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners; Union of University Workers of Colombia-SINTRAUNICOL; Union of Workers from Cali Municipal Enterprises-SINTRAEMCALI; Prohibido Olvidar Campaign; National Association for Aid in Solidarity- ANDAS; Valle del Cauca Regional Indigenous Organization-ORIVAC; Association of Indigenous Cabildos from the Pacific-ACIVARP; Human Rights Network associated to the Valle del Cauca Union of Education Workers-SUTEV; Workers' Unitarian Central union-CUT (Valle del Cauca chapter).

As part of the Network and also as independent organizations, groups established contacts with local social leaders in order to conceive a coordinated response to the
current detentions and to what might come once random town inhabitants started to be pointed as suspect guerrilla collaborators. The first action was presented on the Network’s first press bulletin, dated January 26th, 2004. Here the coalition announced a peaceful mobilization to “take over” Cisneros and make the situation visible to all the country and to demand a fair, prompt resolution of the cases to the judicial authorities in charge of the investigations. The take, entitled “Jornada in Solidarity for the Life, Dignity, and Liberty of the Retained People,” would include a session for the detainees' families to present the different cases, as well as the take over, without blocking, the neighboring, key, Road to the Sea. Throughout the day, there would be cultural events with artists and collectives from the region.

In an unprecedented manifestation of solidarity, a host of community organizations from Cali joined the day of Jornada. Among others, DESEPAZ’ Youth Group; Universidad del Valle students; Youth House-Commune 16 (Cali); Association of Youth Groups LIBERTAD-ASOLIBERTAD, Community Cultural Center Las Colinas - CECUCOL participated in the events. Also, the Cisneros' Community Action Board (Junta de Acción Comunal) joined in support of the organization, as well as the relatives of detained persons in Cisneros, El Queremal, Juntas (Dagua), Pradera, and Florida participated in this effort. Furthermore, Valle del Cauca Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman Office); Valle del Cauca Gestión (Management) Office; and the Peace Advisory of the Cali Mayor's Office-DESEPAZ, three public departmental agencies supported the event in various capacities.

Later, in March of 2004, Network organizations and communities organized the “II Minga for Life and Dignity and Liberty of People Detained in Pradera, Queremal,
Juntas (Dagua), Cisneros, and Florida” in the town of Pradera. In the indigenous tradition *Minga* means communal work. Here, organizations and communities came together for a day to carry multiple cultural and political activities in solidarity with the detainees and their families. At the center of the day there was an activity where the detainees' pictures were collected and exhibited in what was called a “Gallery of Injustice”. The Gallery, inspired on MOVICE’s similar event, Gallery of Memory, attempted to make evident the unfairness of the detentions by telling the life story of the people detained and to generate an impact in media, and to stimulate mobilization among the affected community (Interview with María). Among the Network activities, there were also marches both in Cali and in the affected towns in order to give visibility to the situation. Nationally, responding to a report human rights organizations presented denouncing mass detentions as violations to the international law of human rights, the Inspector General (*Procurador General*) opened a disciplinary investigations against public officials presumably engaged in irregularities during the captures and requested guarantees and corrections to the mass detention policy from the national government.

In Cisneros, especially, the constant work with the community was key throughout this process, as it was the continuous presence of activists in the area. Furthermore, not only at the beginning of the process, but even when the first arrestees were released due to lack of evidence, there was presence of human rights activists and, at this final point, they managed to even organize a cultural event in celebration with participation of the community. Yet, what gave this process its distinctive character was its articulation around the tension between security and human rights. While national security as ideology and project were key in the previous decades, and whereas the state
of exception has been a constant in the constitutional history of Colombia (García Villegas, 2001), the current security-based governance, to a large extent inaugurated with mass detentions, instituted a coercive mode of governing that was still based on the idea of freedom for all (Hindess, 2001).

For human rights organizations mass detentions were the first encounter with the newly structured Security Policy and the chance to articulate a position about the draconian measures it started to imposed. While communities had lived the six-decade long national conflict in multiple ways that included display of excessive force by all armed actors, and were dramatically affected by paramilitary massacres in the recent years of the early 2000s, for the first time, in 2003, they witnessed such high level of conflict-related violence in the form of an institutionalized, governmental intervention that targeted them as enemies. In this conjuncture of state-inflicted violence a question emerged for the affected by arbitrary detentions and for the families of extrajudicially executed people, in particular--if with paramilitary massacres entire communities became forcefully displaced having to flee to urban areas, to other towns, and even to neighboring countries, what would be the place to go for those criminalized by the state in mass raids and detentions? While this question continues open in light of the persistent exclusion that broad sectors of the Colombian population face, the radicalization of state coercive governmentality led to a conjuncture where human rights mobilization became central for both human rights organizations and for other social organizations which had to incorporate this concern in light of the deepening forms of repressive governance.

As I show in the next section, throughout the mobilization around mass detentions the language of human rights was central. By virtue of the human rights mobilization
that took place, mass detentions were re-framed from security measures to arbitrary detentions; from legal captures to abuses of authority; from expressions of the sovereign people to state co-optation; from impartial judicial measure to targeted arbitrariness against peasants, workers, and indigenous; from expressions of popular sovereignty to elimination of dissidence; from expression of the rule of law to violation of citizens' rights. For a short but key period, human rights repertoires chiefly structured the reactions against the security state. Not only that; the collective work between organizations and communities generated both juridical, individual responses to the problem, and a beginning of a reflection on the larger issues of power and political economy underlying the detentions.

4.4 The Politicization of Human Rights

Having been present in the area due to previous cases of human rights violations by paramilitary and by army members, organizations such as Foundation-Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners (FCSPP) were able to re-activate ties with local communities in Cisneros and El Queremal, and in this way to collaborate in organizing a community response to the governmental measures over a three years period, between 2003 and 2006. FCSPP also accompanied communities in other towns with mass detention cases, such as Pradera, Florida, Buenaventura, and Corinto in the department of Cauca, yet, in these towns, they worked with detainees' families and not with the communities, as they had not developed organizing work there previously. An important component of this human rights organization's work was to generate social mobilization

21 In regards to the “Constitutional Bloc” see Constitutional Court Sentences C-225/1995, C-578/95, C-358/1997 and C-191/1998.
around the captures and what they meant for the communities.

Mass detentions were a key point to develop an organizing work around the recently approved governmental security policy. Given the way how the security policies unfolded, using the legal state apparatus, the first response co-generated by organizations and communities was juridical. Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners, in particular, brought about several lawyers that had worked associated to them to provide legal defense to the captured individuals. Officially accepted by the detainees’ families as legal counselors, lawyers repealed the evidence that motivated the capture. The defense pointed that testimonies supporting the capture came from secret witnesses, and also that information to detain was based on a military population census—a mechanism that had been previously declared unconstitutional by national courts.

Lawyers challenged the captures’ legality by stating that administrative detentions—those decreed by governmental agents such as a police officer or an army member and not by a judge, could only be practiced in very specific cases where delaying the capture created an imminent risk for the community. Human rights lawyers determined that in these captures, there had been a clear violation of international and Colombian constitutional principles about detention. In particular, as stated by the United Nations group for Arbitrary Detentions, which in 1995 established, as interpreting parameters, that detentions adopted in situations of exception must be proportional to the danger that is trying to be avoided with the capture.

Besides their role in facilitating legal counseling, FCSPP played a key role in making the legal process legible for communities. Not only did they discuss the significance of judicial decisions with the community and mediated the decision-making
process to respond to the measures adopted within the investigation, they also articulated the legal process with the surrounding political context. An activist pointed out, “(...) in the community there are many rumors, comments, and exaltation. If anything happened, the community was alarmed, so it was very interesting because we were clarifying things all the time (...) clarifying the juridical part, clarifying all that relationship between the political and the juridical. That is to say, that people found why this was happening, because their first question was, why is he detained? And that led for people to point at each other” (Interview with Maria). By ‘de-coding’ and discussing judicial decisions, human rights activists made governmental rationales more accessible for the community and to that extent prepared the terrain for them to engage along the lines of more concrete claims.

In this way, FCSPP, CPDH, and other regional human rights organizations started stressing the larger explanations of mass detentions as the political backdrop of criminal investigations. As a result, for instance, the systematic execution of mass detentions was seen not only as an initiative of the armed forces, but as the result of the government’s total war agenda throughout the national territory. In multiple public interventions, president Uribe asked military commanders to proceed with collective detentions as they “might be mass captures but not arbitrary detentions” (El Colombiano, 2003, July 11). Organizations’ work focused, to a large extent, on making apparent how particular presidential interventions were expression of a larger policy and, ultimately, of a broader discourse of security whose end was not only to end with terrorism, but with all expressions of dissent to political economic designs.

With their coordinated action, organizations and their associated lawyers
uncovered and challenged state security strategies in the terrain establishing that security was a state structuring principle and not only a policy of the current government. Through the various criminal actions raised with mass detentions, legal counselors for the arrestees determined that judges and prosecutors had assumed the role of ad-hoc Democratic Security defenders. In one case, for instance, the prosecutor defended a capture done during a mass detention by stating, “(collaboration with guerrillas) is causing much damage to Colombian society and especially to those places where there is not much presence of the State, as is the case of El Queremal, where there is only a minimum number of Police Officers. (These officers) not only have to surveil the town, but also live in fear of being attacked as they are so close to the camps of guerrillas” (CCEEU, 2006:165). Arrestees’ defense lawyers pointed at how, by emphasizing the threat posed to state security, prosecutors and judges privileged the position of the state over the rights of the individuals subject to the prosecution.

The resolution of these cases followed a similar pattern. Whereas El Queremal detainees were freed about a year and a half after the detentions, and most Cisneros' detainees were released on probation in 2005, for 21 people in these second group there had not been a sentence when these interviews were conducted, in september, 2010. This lack of judicial resolution was seen, by activists, as a way of maintaining this community under permanent pressure and fear that persons could go back to prison at any given point.

Organizations’ work was very important for the community to gain an understanding of the captures in the larger political scheme of the state security project. Importantly, through the legal strategy organizations established a clear tie between
Democratic Security’s mass detentions and the growing international trend to use detention as a political tool in cases where there was an impending conflict that required the state to affirm its power against an internal enemy. Organizations’ platform, Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos (CCEEU), for instance, cited, in one of their reports, a 2004 document of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions which stated: “(…) The Working Group received numerous reports according to which detention on charges of terrorism, with the ensuing limitations on the right of habeas corpus, is used to detain political opponents, religious dissenters, and other persons exercising their freedoms of opinion, expression, conscience and religion”. (UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions 2004, cited by CCEEU, 2006). With this horizon for their organizing work, human rights activists approached Democratic Security measures as part of a global discourse that, nevertheless, possessed concrete local manifestations and, as such, had to be addressed with domestic tools.

Through litigation in mass detention cases, human rights organizations appealed to the constitutional state structure under the figures of due process and right to defense, yet it was clear that these basic rights were conditioned to the governmental needs of the security state. Organizations appealed to conventional interpretations of the international law of human rights under the figure of Arbitrary Detentions, and, at the national level, exhausted all the possible judicial resources before the prescribed tribunals. Insisting on the Constitutional Court jurisprudence that international treaties signed by Colombia constitute a “constitutional bloc” or a unit with other constitutional internal norms and as such must be respected by the state at all times21, organizations challenged the legal erosion that Colombians faced with Democratic Security policy.
The law had a protagonic position in movements’ struggles. While movements had seen the law as a structuring factor of state security, they used judicial resources to strategically combat securitization through the law. Reflecting on the meaning of Democratic Security, organizations pointed at the type of governance deployed with this policy. In particular, they established how military authorities and not elected local officials exercised a de facto authority in areas where the armed forces conducted mass detentions.

4.4.1 From Human Rights to Social Mobilization

Parallel to this judicial involvement pursuing the defense of particular individuals’ rights violated during detentions, organizations also worked with families and communities in a comprehensive reflection on the implications of the judicial process for them. Organizing on this front chiefly included a pedagogical approach to establish the connection between the mass detentions and the larger context of conflict and human rights violations in the area, the larger region, and the country as a whole. With this goal in mind, both FCSPP and CPDH conducted periodic workshops and sessions with the local communities to try and collectively explain the broader meaning of what occurred on the background of the detentions. As an activist observed,

We started working using workshops (to find) in what ways there was a direct relationship with the political persecution and the community; that this (situation) was not aimed towards some specific persons, but towards the community. A community where there were some strategic, economic interests, in an area with mining resources, where transnational (corporations) have laid their eyes and there is a Colombian state interest that communities that reside there leave, especially black and indigenous communities (Interview with María).

Working to establish a political economy of local mass detentions in this region, activists showed how the arrests had been preceded by periodical paramilitary massacres in the
area, as well as by other less conspicuous collective detentions in other Valle del Cauca towns such as Pradera, Florida, Buenaventura, and also Caloto in the neighboring department of Cauca. Activists mapped the situation of human rights violations in the region and located instances of forced displacement, extrajudicial executions, threats, and other violations in the broader geopolitical context of regional forces. In Cisneros, specifically, mass detentions were seen by activists as part of a forced displacement strategy where detentions were the latest moment in a sequence of paramilitary massacres and military-ordered extrajudicial executions.

Activists analyzed mass detentions as scare tactics connected to a larger design to depopulate the region with the further purpose of appropriating the territory for exploiting the forest, water, and other natural resources. Indeed, not long after massive detentions and massacres occurred in the area, a new flux of coca growers coming from the south of the country (now under the military control of Plan Colombia) started to arrive to the region, largely replacing the original populations, who abandoned the area, fearful of new state or paramilitary actions. Workshops with local communities stressed the geopolitical importance of this region not only given its proximity to the Pacific coast, but also its biodiversity and location in a rainforest area. Monitoring the broader situation in the area, activists verified the climate of terror instilled by the permanent presence of army and police and the fear that their shooting aim practice would be in reality a combat with guerrillas. Furthermore, it became a relatively common occurrence that occasionally peasants' or random persons' corpses appeared nearby the town (Interview with María).

In this sense, activists highlighted that mass detentions were not individual isolated events but manifestations of a larger state strategy to guarantee the execution of
economic mega-projects, as well as the result of corporations attempting to exploit natural resources without even consulting with the communities that had been residing in those territories ancestrally. As a result of this work, not only individual rights were invoked in the process of repealing mass detentions, but also, importantly, there was a great concern for the social rights of those captured within mass detentions operations in questions such as right to land, housing, enjoying the natural resources.

The impact of mass detentions was analyzed, as well, in terms of their demobilizing potential for local communities. In this regard, a human rights defender from Cali who worked with the communities since the early 2000s pointed out how especially the criminal investigation in Cisneros “has split the community a lot. Besides the social tissue, it has lowered economic, social and cultural rights to the minimum, and also, organizationally, at the level of social cohesion. (...) People point: It was this person's fault, it was someone else's fault... they are all pointing at each other (...)” (Interview with María). The type of resolution that occurred in different cases also contributed to this fragmentation. In Cisneros, one of the groups was released from prison with parole after two years. A second group of 26 people was initially absolved and then, after the prosecutor appealed, it was declared guilty. This result was divisive for the communities, not only because of the prolonged criminal trial, but because by giving a differential treatment to the detainees, it ended up pitting detainees' families against each other. As a result of these divisions, the organizing process that had started in Cisneros back in 2000, with the first paramilitary massacres in the area, was affected too. After the split caused by mass detentions, community organizing eventually had to be separated from the work with families, as this work became more concentrated on the
particular cases and less on the organizing process that had been achieved with the whole community.

Nevertheless, the judicial process was key as a forum to articulate individual problems with political issues in the communities affected by mass detentions. Throughout the process, human rights repertoires, from legal tools to human rights vocabulary about violations, were key for local communities to organize a response to the state repression that was an integral part of Democratic Security's orientation. While this effort was, to a large extent, coordinated by human rights organizations, local communities and their organized bodies played an important role in the mobilization. A member of FCSPP explained this process noting, “(...) at the beginning what we wanted was to involve the community and we achieved this partially, we were able to have the Communal Action Board, the Community Council, the women's group participate... the detainees' families, they were all, for a while, organized” (Interview with María). Adverse judicial decisions became the main obstacle for this mobilization, yet, the conjuncture led to an unprecedented organization where the individual legal strategy gave place to a convergence around the political issues raised by the security policy. At the moment this research was conducted, in the second semester of 2008, a limited number of people still attended meetings with FCSPP, about 12 in the last meeting, yet the population had become more sensitive to the economic and political issues underlying mass detentions. The military and police presence continued and while detentions rates decreased, extrajudicial executions in the area have been reported, and the situation of socio-political and drug trafficking-related violence in neighboring port city of Buenaventura continues being dire.
At this point, the Army continued conducting censuses and collecting information about the population in the Juntas (Dagua) and Cisneros area. Registries, questioning, and photographing workers leaving the mines towards their homes in these towns have become common practices. Both anti-narcotic police and Army members enter houses asking whether guerrillas have been in the area, and occasionally, under the pretense of conducting social campaigns, take the names of all the house inhabitants, from children to elderly persons. Given the antecedents of mass detentions, communities take these practices seriously and often associate them with the possibility of a new mass detention (Interview with María).

Human rights activists have analyzed security policy not only as a set of surveilling, monitoring practices but also as a strategy to demarcate appropriate political behavior. Jorge, one of the national coordinator of a human rights organization expressed, “mass detentions (against) people with social leadership (...) have been the first expression of that action against the population, understanding that the government continues the doctrine of national security developed by the United States, which is to drain the water from the fish, that has been developed by paramilitary groups killing and terrorizing many people. This government intends to apply a new version, which is not to kill, massacre or massively displace, but to detain people, which has a similar effect of terrorizing the population being victim of these detentions or unfair imprisonment” (Interview with Jorge).

4.4.2 Citizenship in Times of Exception: Building upon Human Rights

While Democratic Security stigmatized human rights organizations and turned them into military aims, in the long run human rights mobilization persisted and, in fact, became more unified around issues like mass detentions and extrajudicial executions. FCSPP leader, Jorge, summarized human rights organizations' views in regards to Democratic Security. In his words, “what the security doctrine has done is to create the conditions so governments can destroy those oppositional social basis and working basis
for a different society” (Interview with Jorge). Largely as a result of this toughened repression, organizations throughout the country and in Valle del Cauca, too, coordinated sustained actions and demonstrations to protest the violation of rights and legal guarantees through the governmental policy.

In this effort, human rights repertoires of denunciation, *acompañamiento* (being with), and political mobilization were key to structure local manifestations against Democratic Security's effects. Colombian scholars like Martha Cecilia García V. (2008) suggest that social mobilization led by women, LGBT groups, and ethnic groups including Afro-Colombians and indigenous people have been key in social struggles for the right to life, integrity, and liberty during the last decade and a half. However, attending at the activism displayed around Democratic Security throughout the first decade of the Two Thousands, it is possible to observe that human rights mobilization has become an articulating point for defending the rights claimed by these “newer” social movements. Beyond the traditional role of denunciation in individual violation cases, human rights repertoire and networks have been central to preserve other activist expressions.

The work of networks *Black Communities Process* and *Process of Popular Unit from the Colombian Southwest*—PCN and PUPSOC, respectively for their Spanish acronyms, is significant in this respect. PCN and PUPSOC, both regional networks linking a plethora of local organizations represent forms of social mobilization that heavily rely on human rights repertoires as an integral part of their agenda. Both of these movements have advanced their collective projects amidst a war scenario that permanently threatens individuals' and communities' very existence. At the same time,
two aspects common to their experience are, on the one hand, their organic integration of the human rights discourse and tools, and on the other, their radical re-conceptualization of human rights as a central element of their collective struggle.

As I show in chapter 2, throughout its struggle for territory, culture, and identity, the organizations and communities that form PCN have seen a continuous and extremely serious attack of entire areas populated by afrocolombians. Explaining such attacks within the context of dispossession of their collective territories, PCN and its affiliated organizations and leadership bodies (*Palenques* and Community Councils) have articulated the protection of afrodescendants rights through human rights. After the systematic paramilitary attacks on collective territories after the early 2000s, initiatives to denounce and prevent cases of massacres and assassinations throughout the Pacific region, and especially in the port city of Buenaventura, led to a major effort to use and promote human rights instruments. PCN facilitated the denounce of human rights violations by legal and illegal armed actors, educated communities on human rights and international humanitarian law, promoted communities' mobilizations and food sovereignty, as well as their permanence in the territory, the contact with other organizations to give visibility to the conflict, while it educated on the negative impact of coca and monocultives in these communities and their relation with the conflict (PCN n.d. a, 38).

Between 2005 and 2007 PCN's Regional *Palenque* “El Congal” also subscribed to an agreement with British social justice NGO *War on Want*, as a result of which further attention was devoted to human rights, or, as the title of one of their publications put it, to the project of “supporting Black communities democratic processes through the
promotion of human rights” (PCN n.d. a). Both regional human rights organizations and the National Vice-presidency Human Rights program and the local ombudsman office supported this effort. With an emphasis on education, analysis, investigation, and exchange of experiences about human rights violations, the project reported achievements on the capacity to denounce; articulation with unions, students, transporters, and other social sectors; strategies to stay in the collective territories and to resist, as well as early alerts of armed actions (PCN n.d., a 40). Continuing this effort, Palenque “El Congal” formed a permanent team to coordinate actions in defense of human rights.

PUPSOC, on the other hand, constituted a similar project to use human rights in supporting their social mobilization agenda throughout four departments in the Colombian southwest. In 2000, following large mobilizations against state policies and economic initiatives such as the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, PUPSOC created a human rights network. Unlike existing human rights mobilization structures, PUPSOC's human rights network was an integral part of the larger movement, its members were representatives of the movement's organizations, and its task was to defend human rights and to denounce its violations in relation to the larger goals of the movement (Interview with César). Representing PUPSOC's mobilization for collective demands of land and autonomy, as well as against state's criminalization of their protest, in 2006, the human rights network took the name of ‘Francisco Isaías Cifuentes’. Cifuentes was a PUPSOC member, unionized teacher, agrarian leader of the rural sector, and human rights defender who was tortured and then died during the 2000 mobilizations. Invoking the spirit of popular unity and human rights struggle that

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Cifuentes incarnated, the new network was instituted (Interview with César).

Apart from their particular structure directly articulated to a larger social movement, PUPSOC’s human rights network, ‘Francisco Isaías Cifuentes’, is exemplary of the conception that guides human rights work in conjunction with broader social mobilization. As an activist told me, human rights activism not only responds to the denounce of individual violations, but it was mostly concerned with connecting human rights with broader popular struggles. In his words: “We don’t see human rights from an essentialist perspective or from a liberal vision, human rights as an entity, as an eternal or constant vision, but we see above all in the case of people’s struggles, that human rights are a tool for popular struggle and a flag of the popular movement in Colombia” (Interview with César). The orientation that guides this work is not the liberal conception of human rights as typically individual. Instead, network members conceive of human rights work as a defense of collective interests. In César's words, “We constantly claim for the rights of peoples, which comes from the Declaration of Algiers from 1976 and from different experiments of declarations of peoples carried throughout the world”.

While growing stronger, this trend to pair social mobilization and human rights mobilization has not spread to all social mobilization sectors in the region. Jorge, for instance, from FCSPP, stated, “I believe we, NGOs, have been assuming our role and social mobilization has taken its role, so there's no problem that we say we're the ones who mobilize indigenous people--no; indigenous people mobilize themselves, we protect them when they get mobilized. We demand guarantees for their mobilization (...) What we do is to serve as a shield so they can do their job” (Interview Jorge). Jorge’s position about human rights organizations as shields was certainly one of the ways human rights
activists saw their work, yet it was also clear that, for them, mobilizing communities around the type of governance that facilitated the growth of human rights violations required an effort to articulate the relationship between violations and larger political structures.

In cases like mass detentions, human rights organizations were key in bringing human rights vocabularies and repertoires that strengthened and structured movements' claims in a situation of severe, irregular armed conflict. Because the state was a major actor within this context of sociopolitical violence and, in fact, it utilized such violence as a central governmental tool, human rights repertoires brought by these organizations were instrumental to articulate a reaction from collective actors affected by the state action. In that sense, human rights mobilization has made social struggles more legible for some community sectors and has more effectively connected their situation to an overarching narrative of opposition against repressive governance.

Throughout the proliferation of human rights violations occurred during the application of Democratic Security, human rights organizations’ traditional roles as vehicles for victims to denounce violations against them or their relatives became reevaluated. Although continuing with this task of denunciation, organizations turned to “acompañamiento”, or the task of being with/supporting communities while they organized to present their claims on their own behalf. While human rights organizations varied in the level of their work with communities, the mobilization generated with mass detentions showed that human rights work in the region was clearly moving towards further involvement with collective (rather than exclusively individual) rights and that their work became further entrenched with broader social mobilization efforts. Mass
detentions offered a conjuncture for human rights organizations (which in the past advocated for the rights of particular individuals given their political militance or their opposition to the state) to re-formulate their role at a time when individuals' rights violations became entrenched with abuses against entire communities.

The degree to which this has happened varies considerably across the spectrum of human rights organizations, yet it is this trend towards what I call the politicization of human rights what has marked the period of Democratic Security. The case of mass detentions illustrates an early moment in this politicization process where organizations like FCSPP and CPDH more clearly articulate human rights as integrated to collective rights of a broader community. While this political character of human rights has always characterized their work, as human rights violations are usually responses to those who question state power extra-limitation, I sustain that the activism elicited by mass detentions motivated an enhanced and further politicized conception of human rights violations as part of a broader state political project entailing harsher control and coercion of entire populations and not anymore, exclusively, of individual opponents.

4.5 Re-constituting Narratives of Security and Citizenship through Human Rights Activism

The activism deployed with mass detentions brought about a combination of tactics ranging from denunciation to pedagogy, judicial confrontation, protest, and, very importantly, use of human rights repertoires as a tool in building community organization. While neither of these tactics is new in the veteran work of human rights activists in Colombia, the latest battles against institutional developments of Democratic Security policy show that the old-time tactics have sedimented into a more solid
understanding that juridical and political work need to go hand in hand.

Organizations understood that the human rights framework both constitute a protective shield for individuals in a community, but also that violations usually coincide with a state design, with a policy, where the violation is but the spearheading of a more systematic project.

Human Rights activism around massive detentions also showed that organizations’ mission has evolved from denunciation of violations to pedagogy and “acompañamiento” or active assistance to communities. Human rights activism has come to address a variety of grievances or injustices which were once the subject of leftist politics. In that shift, human rights have become the singular discursive terrain for addressing a wide variety of social issues, an articulating point where all social mobilization converges to challenge securitization and advance their agendas of change.

Incorporating the human rights tradition in their respective movement agendas, organizations have managed, with an important degree of success, to face Colombia’s “permanent exception” (García Villegas, 2001) and to continue with their movement agendas while they continue to pursue spaces of autonomy and dignity. Understandings of human rights are deeply rooted in broader political projects and are not only mere acts of condemnation of the state. While human rights denunciation is usually formulated in contexts of dire urgency and severe violence, it appears that human rights are not only used as a protective instrument; instead, I would like to argue that human rights and their meanings are part of a larger mobilization ethos.

Activists I interviewed saw human rights as rooted in broader views of justice, equality, and conduction of the state. Furthermore, they engaged in a politics of human
rights whose direction was largely defined by a critique of the state and by their own broader mobilization agenda. Elements of the human rights tradition, including the memorialization of human rights violations, have helped to establish a link with existing repertoires and the current political dilemmas posed by securitization.

22 “Gallery of Memory”—a mobile street exhibit of images pertaining to human rights violations’ victims created by the National Movement of Victims of State-Sponsored Crimes (MOVICE), is an example of the repertoire elements that configure the human rights mobilization culture. Gallery of Memory has become a strategic sites for human rights activists in times of securitization to the extent that it has contributed to develop a culture of contestation and of constructing citizenship and community-making in securitized Colombia. Although public space has become highly securitized in Colombia in the discourse of Democratic Security, as a sign of street criminality and urban decay, Gallery of Memory organizers managed to appropriate the space of city and town squares and to produce a disruption in current meanings about security while investing it with a different signification.
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