

The Securitisation of Food Security in Colombia, 1970–2010

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Abstract. After the world food crisis of the early 1970s, food policies became a ‘national priority’ for Colombian development. Colombia was the first country to implement the multi-sectoral approach proposed by international organisations. However, in the past 30 years Colombian governments have presented nutrition as a minor health issue. During the recent world food crisis, the government insisted that Colombia was one of the most food-secure countries in the world. In seemingly similar circumstances, why was food policy made a priority in the 1970s and not in the new millennium? We address this question with the help of securitisation theory. We argue that in the 1970s, the government successfully securitised the food issue in the context of a reduction of external food aid and a failed land reform. Recent national governments (as opposed to some local governments) have had little interest in a securitising move since the related food sovereignty discourses threaten their free market policies.

Keywords: food security, securitisation, food sovereignty, Colombia

Introduction

When hunger and malnutrition gained global public attention in the early 1970s, it was under the heading of ‘food security’. Experts had been using the expression earlier, but it was the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome that popularised the term, which then referred to ‘the availability at all times of

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adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs'.¹ Since that time, the concept of food security has evolved considerably.² First, experts such as Amartya Sen have insisted that the global or even national availability of food was not the most important determinant for hunger – rather, poverty and lack of access to food led to famines.³ In the 1980s, international organisations followed the lead of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in expanding the concept to include the notion of security of access, right down to the household and individual level. The World Food Summit of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1996 enshrined an expansive definition that is still widely used today: 'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.'⁴ On the most general level, food availability and access to food are the main components of any recent food security definition.

In this article, we examine the Colombian government's stance on food security. In the 1970s, shortages in external food aid due to the world food crisis and a failed land reform brought the food problem to the fore and Colombia became the first country to implement an internationally advocated multi-sectoral food policy, called the Plan de Alimentación y Nutrición (Food and Nutrition Plan, PAN). The Colombian policy highlighted access to food as an important dimension along with food availability, reflecting a more advanced understanding of the food problem than the availability-centred food security concept emerging from the World Food Conference. But during the 1980s and 1990s, governmental rhetoric reframed malnutrition as a low-profile health issue.

It is only in recent years that the public debate about food security in Colombia has been revived. In 2008, technocrats and third-tier government officials attempted to turn food security once again into an issue of 'national

¹ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), *Report of the World Food Conference, Rome, 5–16 November 1974* (Rome: FAO, 1974).

² See Simon Maxwell, 'Food Security: A Post-Modern Perspective', *Food Policy*, 21: 2 (1996), pp. 155–70; Bryan L. McDonald, *Food Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); Kerstin Mechlem, 'Food Security and the Right to Food in the Discourse of the United Nations', *European Law Journal*, 10: 5 (2004), pp. 631–48; Colin Sage, 'Food Security', in Edward Page and Michael R. Redclift (eds.), *Human Security and the Environment: International Comparisons* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002), pp. 128–53.

³ Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Although food access is largely associated with Sen, the topic had been an issue at least since Josué de Castro, *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1951). Nutrition planners in the early 1970s also included this dimension without using the term 'food security': see Simon Maxwell and Timothy R. Frankenberger, *Household Food Security: Concepts, Indicators, and Measurements* (Rome: UNICEF and IFAD, 1992).

⁴ FAO, 'Rome Declaration on World Food Security' (Rome: FAO, 1996).

security' and proposed a new, integrated policy in order to deal with the Colombian food problems, which are mostly access-related.⁵ Yet, under presidents Uribe and Santos, the executive has refused to make food security an important issue, insisting that the country is self-sufficient while neglecting the question of food access.⁶ As a consequence, food security programmes have shifted to the regional or municipal level (as outlined in the final section of this paper). The large-scale Bogotá sin Hambre programme, for instance, implemented in the capital in 2004, demonstrated that even in the most developed area of the country with the strongest state presence, access to food remained a critical issue.

When comparing the 1970s with the 2000s, some contextual similarities are striking, such as a world food crisis (starting in 1972 and 2007 respectively) and an advanced food policy proposal elaborated by both national and international experts. However, only in the 1970s did the government promote the topic as a national priority, while in the 2000s it took the opposite stance. This article adopts a constructivist approach to examine these divergent approaches to food security through the prism of securitisation theory. Even though food security is one of the issues explicitly included in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) extensive human security catalogue of 1994, securitisation theory has hardly ever been applied to food security.⁷

Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory was originally developed by the Copenhagen School in the 1990s, which argued that 'security is a speech act'.⁸ Invoking security, a securitising actor attaches the attributes of exceptionality, priority or emergency to a certain issue. As such, a topic is not inherently a security issue

⁵ Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (National Council for Social and Economic Policy, CONPES), 'Política Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional', Documento CONPES Social 113 (Bogotá: CONPES, 2008) (hereafter CONPES 113).

⁶ 'Colombia enfrenta una grave crisis alimentaria similar a la de Haití y África, advirtió la FAO', *El Universal* (Cartagena), 18 March 2011.

⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: UNDP, 1994). One exception is Meagan A. Kay, 'Securitization before Recognition: International Organizations' Entrenchment of Food Security within the Developing World – Premature or Predictive?', paper presented at the conference 'Challenging Canada: Strategic Threats and Shared Responsibility in an Insecure World', Dalhousie University, 2008.

⁸ The Copenhagen School formulation of the theory can be found in Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998). See also Barry Buzan, 'Rethinking Security after the Cold War', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 32: 1 (1997), pp. 5–28; and Ole Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 55.

but is rather turned into one through a constructivist process; referent objects are those issues that have a legitimate claim to survival.⁹ If the relevant audience accepts the securitising move, the issue in question becomes securitised, which legitimates the use of extraordinary policy measures.

For our analysis, we draw on Thierry Balzacq's 'sociological variant' (as opposed to the original 'philosophical variant') of securitisation theory.¹⁰ Balzacq does not accept the 'magical power' of speech acts and interprets securitisation as an intersubjective process which constructs threats. In this variant, securitisation is seen as a 'strategic (pragmatic) process that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction'.¹¹

Balzacq takes the audience, context and 'dispositif' as the main sites for the analysis of a securitisation process. The first element refers to the need for an 'empowering audience' to agree with the claims made by the securitising actor, who must persuade the audience by tuning his or her language to their experience.¹² Second, although external events do not reliably generate a security problem per se, certain contexts facilitate the construction of a security problem. When a securitising actor claims that a certain issue is a threat, he or she 'forces the audience to "look around" in order to identify the conditions that justify its articulation'.¹³ The success of securitisation depends on the perception of contexts, which becomes the second point of inquiry. The third site of analysis consists of practices enacted through policy tools – Balzacq calls them 'dispositifs'. Actors involved in a securitisation process hold certain beliefs about the issue in question and develop certain practices, policies and social devices to respond to the threat. The analysis of these tools provides us with a further element for the understanding of securitisation, since 'security tools are the social devices through which professionals of (in)security think about a threat'.¹⁴ The dispositif rests upon a specific know-how, prescribes procedures and rules, defines public action and embodies what needs to be done about a threat. Key to the empirical analysis

⁹ In contrast to the traditional security understanding of military threats to national security, see Arnold Wolfers, "National Security" as an Ambiguous Symbol', *Political Science Quarterly*, 67: 4 (1952), pp. 481–502; and Stephen M. Walt, 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 35: 2 (1991), pp. 211–39.

¹⁰ Thierry Balzacq (ed.), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011). See also Thierry Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11: 2 (2005), pp. 171–201.

¹¹ Thierry Balzacq, 'A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants', in Balzacq (ed.), *Securitization Theory*, p. 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

of the dispositif are not only the securitising actors, but also the functional actors who prepare the ground for a securitising move.¹⁵

For Balzacq, one of the best ways to establish the causes of securitisation, desecuritisation (that is, the dissolution of security issues) and failed securitisation is to examine the 'degree of congruence between different circumstances driving and/or constraining securitisation', rather than the identification of one-directional causal relationships between these and other concepts.¹⁶ Audience, context and dispositif are thus the relevant factors to analyse with regard to the potential securitisation of food in the 1970s and the 2000s in Colombia.

For the present article, we rely on various types of sources. We identify food security discourses of the executive mainly in public policy documents, notably in the National Development Plans which bring together the campaign proposals of presidential candidates and the objectives of their four-year government programmes. We also touch on the guiding principles of international organisations, newspapers, and academic and NGO literature, and finally we use interviews with key informants conducted between October 2010 and May 2011 to complement our data and identify the contexts in which the respective discourses have emerged.

Food as 'One of the Most Acute Problems' in the 1970s

In Colombia, the construction of a food problem in the 1970s was intimately connected with the way food issues were framed on an international level. International organisations reconceptualised food and nutrition from being a health matter to being a development topic, effectively providing a frame through which a later securitisation of food could be established.¹⁷ Escobar identifies this turn in what he calls the 'new discipline'. The Food and Nutrition Policy and Planning (FNPP) initiative emerged after the failure of the green revolution and the agrarian reforms in the 1960s.¹⁸ In 1971, experts

¹⁵ See also Thierry Balzacq, 'Enquiries into Methods: A New Framework for Securitization Analysis', in Balzacq (ed.), *Securitization Theory*, pp. 31–54.

¹⁶ See Balzacq, 'A Theory of Securitization', p. 18. A similar view is held by Salter, who argues that success is measured 'by ranking the degree to which policies, legislation, and opinion accords with the prescriptions of the speech act': see Mark B. Salter, 'Securitization and Desecuritization: A Dramaturgical Analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11 (2008), p. 325.

¹⁷ This was not the first time that nutrition had been put in a development perspective. In the interwar period, economists and nutrition specialists had proposed the 'marriage of agriculture and health'. See League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee of the League of Nations on the Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture and Economic Policy* (Geneva: League of Nations Publications, 1937).

¹⁸ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 113.

in various fields, including economists and other social scientists, gathered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to discuss new solutions to the persistent food problem at the first international conference on nutrition, national development and planning.¹⁹ Alan Berg's book *Nutrition Factor* (1973) was a clear expression of this newly recognised need to address the food problem from a development stance.²⁰ Until then, international organisations had pushed for increased production and otherwise left the food issue mostly in the hands of medical personnel who were not able to significantly reduce malnutrition with fragmented public health policies. According to the 'new discipline', an integrated planning policy should deal with the food problem: Berg called for 'macronutritionists' who should convert the findings of the scientific community into large-scale, multi-sectoral programmes that would address the various factors causing hunger.²¹ Nutritional planning featured several formal steps: analysis of the malnutrition problem and its main causes, identification of promising intervention points, calculation of the cost-effectiveness of alternative interventions and finally the monitoring and evaluation of performance.²² These policy innovations could be classified as what Balzacq calls *dispositifs*. They are the proposed practices that the international experts, functional actors in the later securitisation in Colombia, proposed to tackle the food problem.

The reconceptualisation of food as a development issue among scholars and technocrats pervaded the UN. The World Food Conference held in Rome in November 1974 evidenced this topic's renewed importance as the concept of food security was launched to a broad international public.²³ Certainly, the world food crisis and particularly the widespread famines in Africa in the first half of the 1970s helped to propel and legitimise the food problem on an international level, creating a favourable context for the *dispositif* elaborated by international experts. Accordingly, new international bodies such as the World Food Council, the FAO Committee on World Food Security and the International Fund for Agricultural Development sprang up as the international community was 'positioning itself for a major assault against malnutrition. National governments were invited to do likewise.'²⁴

¹⁹ Alan Berg, Nevin S. Scrimshaw and David L. Call, *Nutrition, National Development, and Planning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973).

²⁰ Alan Berg, *The Nutrition Factor in National Development* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1973). See also Leonard Joy, 'Food and Nutrition Planning', *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 24: 1 (1973), pp. 165–97.

²¹ Berg, *The Nutrition Factor*, p. 206.

²² John Osgood Field, 'Multisectoral Nutrition Planning: A Post-Mortem', *Food Policy*, 12: 1 (1987), pp. 15–28.

²³ United Nations, *Report of the World Food Conference* (New York: United Nations, 1975).

²⁴ Field, 'Multisectoral Nutrition Planning', p. 18.

In Latin America, UNESCO, the FAO, the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the UN Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, CEPAL/ECLAC) collaborated to create a regionally located functional actor, the Inter-Agency Project for the Promotion of National Food and Nutrition Policies (IAP), located in Santiago, in 1971. Adopting the policy tools provided by the international nutrition experts, the IAP elaborated a methodological guide for the implementation of national food policies which were intended to become an integral part of national development plans.²⁵ This guide postulated that the level of nutrition of a certain population depended on the food available, the demand for food and the appropriate nutritional use of foodstuffs. It is remarkable that in including an access-oriented view, the IAP foreshadowed our current understanding of food security, while the concept pushed by the FAO's World Food Conference in 1974 was availability-centred and focused on the global and national level.²⁶

Due to its open economy, Colombia had been considered an interesting 'testing ground' for various development agencies since the Second World War.²⁷ The World Bank, for example, dedicated its first comprehensive country survey from 1950 (better known as the Currie Report) to Colombia.²⁸ Also, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee showed an extraordinary interest in Colombia in the 1960s, as it hoped to make the country a 'showcase of the Alliance [for Progress]', believing that it had a good chance for rapid economic and social development.²⁹ So it is not surprising that Colombia was the first country to implement an IAP-fashioned plan (see the description of the PAN below).³⁰

Similar to international trends, the food issue within Colombia had been largely framed as a matter of public health before the 1970s. The exchanges between Colombia and the international nutrition community can be traced

²⁵ IAP, *Guía metodológica para planificación de políticas nacionales de alimentación y nutrición* (Santiago: IAP, 1973).

²⁶ Berg, *The Nutrition Factor*; Joy, 'Food and Nutrition Planning'; Franklin James Levinson, *Morinda: An Economic Analysis of Malnutrition among Young Children in Rural India* (Cambridge: Cornell/MIT International Nutrition Policy Series, 1974); Simon Maxwell and Rachel Slater, 'Food Policy Old and New', *Development Policy Review*, 21: 5–6 (2003), pp. 531–53.

²⁷ Rosemary E. Galli, 'The United Nations Development System and Colombia', *Latin American Perspectives*, 2: 3 (1975), pp. 36–52.

²⁸ Lauchlin Currie, *The Basis of a Development Program for Colombia* (New York: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1950).

²⁹ As quoted in Galli, 'The United Nations Development System and Colombia', p. 37. This trusting relationship was still in place during the government of López, starting in 1974: see 'Agencias internacionales tienen confianza en López', *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), 5 July 1974.

³⁰ Together with the Philippines: see Field, 'Multisectoral Nutrition Planning'.

back to the 1940s, when various Colombian scholars collaborated with US universities and became active in the expanding Latin American nutrition circles, which were also supported by the FAO and PAHO.³¹ The creation of the Instituto Nacional de Nutrición (National Nutrition Institute) in 1947 led to a number of investigations, and as a consequence various programmes on health-related nutritional issues were launched in the 1950s and 1960s: the Programa Integrado de Nutrición Aplicada (Integrated Programme of Applied Nutrition, PINA, 1964) developed by international organisations, the Programa de Atención Materno-Infantil (Mother and Child Attention Programme, 1969) of the Health Ministry, and the Programa Nacional de Educación Nutricional y Complementación Alimentaria (National Programme of Nutritional Education and Complementary Food, PRONENCA, 1969) of the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Family Welfare Institute, ICBF).³² The interaction between Colombia and the international organisations working on nutrition must be seen in the context of this 30-year-long cooperation.

The Colombian government had its first contacts with the IAP in 1971 and shortly thereafter created the Comité Nacional de Investigación en Tecnología de Alimentos y Nutrición (National Committee on Food and Nutrition Technology) to evaluate the food problem and issue recommendations to tackle it. The international and national spheres in the development of food policies even merged on a personal level: Guillermo Varela, in charge of developing the food programme at the Dirección Nacional de Planeación (National Planning Department, DNP) in Colombia, also worked for the UN-promoted IAP.³³

At the same time, the world food crisis moved the attention of the broader public to the food issue, creating a favourable context for the securitisation of food. Hunger was suddenly an important topic in newspapers, and studies on malnutrition were discussed for the first time beyond academic circles.³⁴

³¹ Luis Fajardo, 'Apuntes de la historia de la nutrición en Colombia', in Héctor Bourges, José Bengoa and Alejandro O'Donnell (eds.), *Historias de la nutrición en América Latina* (Santiago: Sociedad Latinoamericana de Nutrición, 2005).

³² For early food policies in Colombia, see Adriana Alcira Bautista Castillo, *Políticas y programa de alimentación y nutrición en Colombia durante el periodo de 1940–1968* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 1998); Orlando Chacón, 'Roberto Rueda Williamson: su gestión en la enseñanza de la nutrición y la creación del Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar', *Revista Facultad de Medicina*, 53: 3 (2005), pp. 160–8; and Roberto Rueda Williamson, 'El programa de nutrición aplicada', *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana*, 68: 3 (1970), pp. 187–200.

³³ Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 238.

³⁴ Fajardo, 'Apuntes de la historia de la nutrición en Colombia'. Some examples include 'Exceso de población agrava crisis de alimentos', *El Tiempo*, 3 Feb. 1974; 'Alarmante informe de Planeación sobre salud', *El Tiempo*, 2 May 1974; and 'Los alimentos no alcanzan', *El Tiempo*, 19 Nov. 1974.

Several expert and government initiatives positioned food issues as an objective, significant problem and proposed a multi-sectoral solution. A high-level conference in Palmira in December 1973 with national and international participants, the National Inter-Sectoral Conference on Food and Nutrition, exposed the magnitude of the food problem in Colombia. The National Committee on Food and Nutrition Technology cited low income and difficult access to food as great challenges and presented sobering nutrition statistics: around 60 per cent of all children under the age of five showed undernutrition, 30 per cent of all families suffered from malnutrition and 41 per cent of all deaths of children under five years old were due to nutritional deficiencies.³⁵ Also, international advisers of PAHO noted in 1974 that Colombian nutritional policies lacked coordination and needed more inter-sectoral planning.³⁶ The dispositif first elaborated by international nutrition experts, which called for food planning as an adequate solution to the food problem, along with a context of crisis and the strategic use of alarming numbers, set the scene for a securitising move.

The food planning and development discourse promoted by international organisations under the banner of the IAP was picked up by Alfonso López Michelsen, the Liberal Party's candidate for the 1974 elections. His campaign proposed 'development with social justice'.³⁷ After being elected president, López introduced a National Development Plan called 'Closing the Gap'.³⁸ The plan reproduced nutrition statistics and cited them as reasons for immediate action, effectively engaging in a securitising move: 'the nutritional situation of the Colombian population constitutes, without any doubt, one of the most acute social problems of the country'. This wording resembles earlier statements by international advisers who talked about the 'urgent need to tackle the deep nutritional problem' in Colombia and asked for the inclusion of the matter into the National Development Plan.³⁹

³⁵ DNP, 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1974–1978 "Para Cerrar la Brecha"' (Bogotá: DNP, 1975). Another study conducted by the ICBF includes similarly alarming numbers: see ICBF, *El problema nutricional y alimentario de Colombia* (Bogotá: ICBF, 1974). See also Jorge García, '¿Es importante la seguridad del suministro de alimentos en Colombia?', *Planeación y Desarrollo*, 11: 3 (1979), pp. 129–75.

³⁶ PAHO, *Informe de la asesoría sobre bases para la consolidación y expansión de los programas de la subdirección de nutrición del Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* (Washington, DC: PAHO, 1974). The lack of coordination had already been decried in the *Report of the Latin American Seminar on the Planning and Evaluation of Applied Nutrition Programs, Popayán, Colombia, 10–17 November 1966* (Washington, DC: WHO and PAHO, 1967).

³⁷ Elizabeth Ungar Bleier and Ángela Gómez, *Aspectos de la campaña presidencial de 1974: estrategias y resultados* (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1977).

³⁸ DNP, 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1974–1978'. All unsourced quotations in the following paragraphs are from this document.

³⁹ PAHO, *Informe de la asesoría*, p. 21.

Unlike his predecessors, López opted for a free market-oriented National Development Plan.⁴⁰ According to Zamosc, López had two goals in mind: ‘the stabilisation and rationalisation of the new accumulation model and the alleviation of some of its undesirable social effects’.⁴¹ The food policy was part of the second goal or, as Zamosc calls it, a ‘palliative for the “poorer strata of the population”’. The framework provided by multi-sectoral planning thus also coincided with other political interests of the president, which facilitated its inclusion into the governmental agenda. However, the PAN was considered one of the key issues on López’s presidential agenda in 1974, as evidenced by important policy documents that identified it as an ‘urgent national priority’.⁴²

The sense of crisis was magnified by the fact that Colombia, which had long been a major beneficiary of food aid, mainly from North America, was about to face significant cuts in external food assistance. The National Development Plan explicitly referred to this situation: ‘Rightly, the donor countries consider that these donations should go to Africa and Asia where entire populations are dying of starvation without the capacity to augment their production in the medium term.’ This implied that Colombia had the capacity to increase its production. Some experts consider the dismantling of external food aid as the main push factor in the adoption of the PAN.⁴³ The world food crisis, with resulting food aid shortages and inflationary food prices in Colombia, provided a ‘proximate context’, in Balzacq’s words, to make López’s case convincing for a broad audience.⁴⁴

Decreasing foreign aid certainly played a role in the government’s construction of the food problem, yet the Colombian executive did not publicly acknowledge the structural difficulties associated with food aid at the time: by the mid-1970s, it had become clear that aid based on Public Law 480 of 1954 (which allowed the export of US agricultural surpluses below market value) had a detrimental impact on Colombian food security. Local agricultural production declined because imported food aid depressed prices. Production of wheat, for instance, had dropped to one-third of the 1951

⁴⁰ Salomón Kalmanovitz, *La agricultura en Colombia entre 1950 y 2000* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2003); Stephen J. Randall, *Alfonso López Michelsen: su vida, su época* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2007).

⁴¹ León Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia: Struggles of the National Peasant Association, 1967–1981* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 123.

⁴² DNP, ‘Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1974–1978’; James M. Pines, ‘National Nutrition Planning: Lessons of Experience’, *Food Policy*, 7: 4 (1982), pp. 275–301.

⁴³ Absalón Machado, *Ensayos sobre seguridad alimentaria* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 2003), p. 84.

⁴⁴ Ungar Bleier and Gómez, *Aspectos de la campaña presidencial de 1974*; Balzacq, ‘A Theory of Securitization’, p. 37.

output by 1971, and was not compensated for by increases in other crops.⁴⁵ The resulting cost increases for wheat imports were widely discussed in the newspapers in 1974.⁴⁶

Rapidly increasing agricultural output thus became a central aim of the proposed policy: 'The first element of the Food and Nutrition Plan consists in a rural development strategy pointing at a higher productivity of the big mass of farmers with little land.' The plan thus raised hopes for rural development without changing agrarian structures, which to this day are considered one of the key causes for the long-standing armed conflict in Colombia.⁴⁷ The programme promised "everything" to the farmer, except one fundamental thing: the land.⁴⁸ Actually, many observers claim that the PAN was nothing but a substitute for the failed land reform.⁴⁹ The Colombian agrarian reform had started under the liberal president Alberto Lleras Camargo in 1961, but the redistributive features faced stiff resistance from the then senator Alfonso López Michelsen, among others.⁵⁰ Little was done to change agrarian structures, and in 1972, the Agreement of Chicoral between the government and congressmen with close ties to agricultural interests put an end to agrarian reform altogether.⁵¹ The agrarian question was widely present in the

⁴⁵ Leonard Dudley and Roger J. Sandilands, 'The Side Effects of Foreign Aid: The Case of Public Law 480 Wheat in Colombia', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 23: 2 (1975), pp. 325–36. Later Colombian literature points in the same direction – for example, Mario Valderrama, 'Efecto de las exportaciones norteamericanas de trigo en Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador y Colombia', *Estudios Rurales Latinoamericanos*, 2: 2 (1979), pp. 173–97. In the early 1960s, the impact of the 'Food for Peace' policy on the Colombian economy was still seen as favourable: see Theodore J. Goering, 'Public Law 480 in Colombia', *Journal of Farm Economics*, 44: 4 (1962), pp. 992–1004.

⁴⁶ "Guerra al trigo" en informe del Idema', *El Tiempo*, 8 April 1974.

⁴⁷ Alejandro Reyes, *Guerreros y campesinos: el despojo de la tierra en Colombia* (Bogotá: Norma, 2009).

⁴⁸ Gilberto Tobón, *La reforma agraria y el desarrollo capitalista: anotaciones al caso colombiano* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Digital UN, 1979), p. 57.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Kalmanovitz, *La agricultura en Colombia*; and José Antonio Ocampo and Joaquín Bernal, 'La consolidación del capitalismo moderno', in Germán Colmenares (ed.), *Historia económica de Colombia* (Bogotá: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1987). A similar argument can be found for the Philippines, where the government, which also engaged early on in multi-sectoral nutrition planning, embraced food policy as a low-cost, symbolically pleasing alternative to a failed land reform, according to Benedict J. Kerkvliet, 'Land Reform in the Philippines since the Marcos Coup', *Pacific Affairs*, 47: 3 (1974), pp. 286–304.

⁵⁰ For López, the agrarian reform was not about 'land distribution'; rather, it was a 'problem of distribution of people'. Quoted in Tobón, *La reforma agraria y el desarrollo capitalista*, p. 57.

⁵¹ On the Colombian land reform, see Bruce Bagley, 'The State and the Peasantry in Contemporary Colombia', *Latin American Issues*, 6 (1989); Darío Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*, Cuadernos Tierra y Justicia no. 1 (Bogotá, 2002); Albert O. Hirschman, *Journeys Toward Progress: Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Absalón Machado, 'Reforma agraria: una mirada retrospectiva', *Economía Colombiana*, 160–1 (1984), pp. 55–68.

Colombian media during the year of López's election, generating a food-related policy issue that required immediate action.⁵²

After the failure of the reform, the government was hard-pressed to find alternative solutions for food security. One interviewee recalls: 'The question at that time was "how to resolve the food problem without touching the land?"'⁵³ The international proposals of inter-sectoral food planning were a welcome opportunity to combine food policy with rural development, understood as improved productivity through technical assistance, vocational training and more adequate infrastructure. Moreover, better nutrition was seen as one way to improve the productive capacity of the poor.⁵⁴ The dispositive provided by the international community allowed López to kill two birds with one stone, framing the agrarian issue as a nutritional problem.

The López administration was furthermore enticed to adopt the food platform because several international organisations were willing to support the Colombians in meeting the 'serious challenge' of replacing external donations with domestic production. That the international community was ready to assume a significant part of the costs of a new food policy facilitated the adoption of the plan. For the rural development part alone, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and Canada promised to pay half of the costs (US \$170 million) as outlined in the National Development Plan. The international community hence not only provided the Colombian government with an adequate dispositive for the promotion of food as a security issue, but also supported the policy implementation financially. Therefore, the international community was a crucial functional actor for the securitisation of food in the 1970s.

In conclusion, the PAN was framed as 'the central piece of the social programmes of [the] Development Plan, in order to confront the problem in an integral form and identify the food and nutritional welfare of the Colombian population as an extremely urgent national priority'. After the formal approval of the PAN in March 1975, the food policy started in 1976 and was combined with the Desarrollo Rural Integrado (Integrated Rural Development Plan, DRI), which was characterised as a 'fundamental part of the Nutrition Plan'.⁵⁵ The PAN largely relied on the IAP's vocabulary and

⁵² See, for example, 'Haremos una verdadera reforma agraria: López', *El Tiempo*, 6 Feb. 1974; and 'Surge polémica entre agricultores y Gobierno', *El Tiempo*, 8 Feb. 1974.

⁵³ Interview with Darío Fajardo, former FAO and PAN official, 5 Nov. 2010.

⁵⁴ The argument that better nutrition was needed for higher productivity of workers had been used in Latin America at least since the 1920s and was discussed in the publication of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau. For a summary see PAHO, 'Problemas relativos a la alimentación correcta', *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana*, 8: 9 (1929), pp. 968–70.

⁵⁵ See also Rosemary E. Galli, *The Political Economy of Rural Development: Peasants, International Capital, and the State* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1981).

policy suggestions.⁵⁶ It consisted of three concrete strategies implemented on the national, regional and local levels, targeting the poorest 30 per cent of the Colombian population. First, it focused on food production and distribution, including processed food (especially the protein supplement Bienestarina), food coupon distribution to subsidise the most nutritionally vulnerable people, and *pancoger* (basic foodstuff) production for the poorest rural inhabitants.⁵⁷ Second, it included nutrition and health education programmes, including interpersonal education with national and regional workshops, professional training at universities, mass media education and school gardens.⁵⁸ Third, it introduced programmes on the appropriate nutritional utilisation of food, including primary health care and environmental sanitation. Considering its budget (US \$222 million between 1976 and 1981), the PAN was a significant government intervention, and by 1980 the PAN budget accounted for more than 2 per cent of government spending.⁵⁹

The analysis thus far makes evident that there was a high degree of congruence between context, audience and dispositive, which led to the securitisation of the food problem in the 1970s.

Becoming a 'Health Issue' Once Again

The government agendas of the 1980s and 1990s reveal little interest in the topic of food security. Already in 1978, when Julio César Turbay (1978–82) took office, food policy had lost in importance. Turbay's National Development Plan noted that 'undoubtedly, the country has registered much progress in the food area through the past years'.⁶⁰ This statement corresponds to an act of desecuritisation by removing the emergency language from governmental rhetoric. Turbay's administration continued half-heartedly with the multi-sectoral approach, because food was still acknowledged as a

⁵⁶ For a description of the PAN, see Consuelo Uribe, 'Limitations and Constraints of Colombia's Food and Nutrition Plan (PAN)', *Food Policy*, 11: 1 (1986), pp. 47–70; Tomás Uribe, 'The Political Economy of Colombia's PAN', in *IFPRI/UNU Workshop on the Political Economy of Nutritional Improvements* (Berkeley Springs, WV, 1985); Escobar, *Encountering Development*; and Thomas G. Sanders, *PAN: A Description of the Colombian National Nutrition Program* (Washington, DC: USAID, 1980).

⁵⁷ Bienestarina was the Colombian version of Incaparina, a protein powder developed at the Instituto de Nutrición de Centroamérica y Panamá (Nutrition Institute of Central America and Panama, INCAP) in Guatemala, under the leadership of Nevin Scrimshaw. See Nevin S. Scrimshaw, 'New Food for a Hungry World', *Think*, 27: 9 (1961), pp. 10–13.

⁵⁸ For the educational dimension of the PAN, see Julia Mejía de Pizano, 'The Educational Approach within Colombia's Nutrition Plan (PAN)', *International Review of Education*, 26: 1 (1980), pp. 17–29.

⁵⁹ Uribe, 'Limitations and Constraints', p. 58.

⁶⁰ DNP, 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1978–1982 "Plan de Integración Social"' (Bogotá: DNP, 1978).

'problem', but the attributes of exceptionality or emergency disappeared, even though malnutrition was still widespread, particularly in urban areas.⁶¹

Matters became worse with the election of the conservative Belisario Betancur (1982–6), who showed no interest in food policies.⁶² The dispositif set in place during the López government was completely dismantled and 'the food topic disappeared from the public debate'.⁶³ Only a few rural development components of the DRI were integrated into the Ministry of Agriculture in the context of protectionist programmes. For most of the 1980s and 1990s, the food issue remained marginalised and was mentioned only in the context of breastfeeding and specific health problems in the National Development Plans. Food policy was no longer attached to broader questions of national development as it had been in 1974.⁶⁴

After the abandonment of multi-sectoral food policies, international agencies propounded macro-policies to boost the (export) economy and fight poverty as the new approach to nutrition problems. The government of César Gaviria (1990–4) broke with the previous protectionist policies and opened the economy, introducing what has been the dominant development model since then. From this perspective, the individual problem of food insecurity should disappear automatically thanks to economic growth.⁶⁵

Various factors inhibited a renewed securitisation of the food problem. First, the international context had changed by the early 1980s. The reduction of food aid to Colombia in the 1970s proved to be temporary. Good global harvests in 1978 once again led to overproduction, which could be used for donations. The ICBF signed contracts with the World Food Programme (WFP) for renewed food aid as early as 1979 and 1983, so that other measures to ensure food security lost importance.⁶⁶ An interviewee familiar with the situation in the early 1980s paraphrased the general sentiment as

⁶¹ Favourable developments in terms of food security were registered in the comparison of the 1972 and 1981 nutritional studies: see Tomás Uribe, 'Revaluación de la inseguridad alimentaria en Colombia', *Coyuntura Económica*, 17: 1 (1987), pp. 157–96. But for urban populations, the results of a 1984–5 study indicate reduced consumption of fundamental nutrients: see Rosario Córdoba and Tomás Uribe, 'La inseguridad alimentaria urbana en Colombia entre 1984 y 1985', in Minagricultura (ed.), *La agricultura y las políticas sectoriales* (Bogotá: TM Editores, 1994).

⁶² Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

⁶³ Interview with Absalón Machado, technical director of the human development report on rural development and land in Colombia at the UNDP and former PROSEAN/FAO official, 22 Dec. 2010. ⁶⁴ Uribe, 'Limitations and Constraints'.

⁶⁵ Absalón Machado, 'Seguridad alimentaria: problemas y desafíos para un país en desarrollo', in Absalón Machado and Gustavo Montañez (eds.), *Desarrollo rural y seguridad alimentaria: un reto para Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 2002); UNDP, *Colombia rural: razones para la esperanza*, Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano (Bogotá: UNDP, 2011).

⁶⁶ Santiago Perry, 'La inseguridad alimentaria en Colombia', in Minagricultura (ed.), *La agricultura y las políticas sectoriales* (Bogotá: TM Editores, 1994); Uribe, 'Limitations and Constraints'.

follows: 'What we don't produce ourselves, we can import from the US.'⁶⁷ From the late 1970s onwards, the world food crisis had been forgotten and no longer provided a favourable context for advocates of food security.

Another contextual reason for the declining importance of food issues, often mentioned by interviewees for this study, was the intensification of political conflict and drug trafficking in the 1980s, which resulted in a sharp increase in homicides.⁶⁸ The National Development Plans in the 1980s and 1990s thus focused on peace and violence-reduction initiatives, and the food issue moved near the bottom of the agenda. The government seemed to be of the opinion that physical violence necessitated urgent action while malnutrition could be dealt with later, apparently adhering to the Colombian saying 'Primero lo urgente y luego lo importante' (First the urgent things, then the important things). According to this interpretation, a saturated security agenda, an element not explicitly contemplated in securitisation theory, might partially account for the lower priority of food issues.⁶⁹

Moreover, the central functional actors, the former advocates of multi-sectoral planning as the main dispositif for tackling the food problem, had become less enthusiastic about their policy proposals on the basis of some disappointing results: 'Multi-sectoral nutrition planning, oversold and under-political from the start, stands discredited for failure to bring about nutrition improvement that realistic initial assessment would have shown to be far beyond it.'⁷⁰ Field even wrote a 'post-mortem' for multi-sectoral food planning.⁷¹ Similar misgivings floated around in the Colombian policy community. A former PAN evaluator thought that 'the nutrition planning method, with its systemic and overextended approach to the solution of malnutrition, is both unpractical and politically vulnerable'.⁷² Yet some actors within the Colombian policy community tried to resuscitate multi-sectoral planning. Technocrats and staff of 28 government institutions organised an 'inter-sectoral nutrition and food security workshop' in 1984, mostly financed

⁶⁷ Interview with Darío Fajardo, 5 Nov. 2010.

⁶⁸ Interviews with Darío Fajardo and Absalón Machado; for increasing violence in the 1980s, see Gonzalo Sánchez, *Colombia: violencia y democracia – Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia* (Bogotá: Iepri, 1987).

⁶⁹ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (New York: Longman Higher Education, 2003).

⁷⁰ Pines, 'National Nutrition Planning', p. 275. One such 'realistic initial assessment' can be found in McLaren, who referred to the multi-sectoral approach as 'holistic daydreaming'. Donald S. McLaren, 'Nutrition Planning: The Poverty of Holism', *Nature*, 267: 5614 (1977), p. 742.

⁷¹ Field, 'Multisectoral Nutrition Planning'. Berg replied that multi-sectoral planning was still executed in countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco and Papua New Guinea. See Alan Berg, 'Nutrition Planning is Alive and Well, Thank You', *Food Policy*, 12: 4 (1987), pp. 365–75.

⁷² Uribe, 'Limitations and Constraints', 68.

by international organisations. The proponents argued that there was an ‘urgent need of *re-activating* and putting into practice a National Food and Nutrition Policy’.⁷³ Indeed, the initiative constituted a last effort to keep food planning alive.⁷⁴ While this approach had provided an adequate frame for the construction of food security in the 1970s, it had definitively lost traction in the 1980s. No strategic process has been set in motion after the desecuritisation of food in the late 1970s – rather, food issues were seen as a health matter during the 1980s and 1990s.

‘One of the Most Self-Sufficient Countries’ in the 2000s

While Colombia was scaling down its food security policies, the concept gained in importance on an international level once again. In 1992, the FAO issued a World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. The UNDP introduced the human security framework in 1994, making reference to food security, and the 1996 World Food Summit of Rome provided a boost to the concept of food security.⁷⁵ Colombia jumped on the bandwagon with a new Plan Nacional de Alimentación y Nutrición (National Food and Nutrition Plan, PNAN) in 1996.⁷⁶ Despite its grandiose name, the ‘*National Plan*’ was a rather innocuous project.⁷⁷ A mainly health-oriented nutrition policy under the ICBF, it lacked articulation with agrarian and commercial policies and conflicted with economic policies while contending with increasing levels of poverty.⁷⁸ Although it survived until 2005, the PNAN was completely marginalised in the respective National Development Plans. Its official – and highly negative – evaluation led the ICBF to reconsider formulating a broader

⁷³ Ministerio de Salud, ‘Taller intersectorial de nutrición y seguridad alimentaria’ (Bogotá: Ministerio de Salud, 1984), emphasis added.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Perry, ‘La inseguridad alimentaria en Colombia’.

⁷⁵ FAO, ‘World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition’ (FAO and WHO, 1992); UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*; FAO, ‘Rome Declaration on World Food Security’. For a response to the Rome Declaration in the Colombian context, see Carlos Fernando Rivera, *El pan nuestro: problemas de la seguridad alimentaria* (Bogotá: IICA, 1998).

⁷⁶ CONPES, ‘Plan Nacional de Alimentación y Nutrición 1996–2005’, Documento CONPES Social 2847 (Bogotá: DNP, 1996). CONPES is Colombia’s highest planning authority, and approves public policy documents.

⁷⁷ Interview with Ana Mercedes Cepeda, former sub-director for nutrition at the ICBF, responsible for PNAN and CONPES 113, 17 May 2011. At first the DNP was in charge of the PNAN, but from 1998 the execution moved to the ICBF.

⁷⁸ María del Rocío Ortiz, Carlos Álvarez-Dardet, María Teresa Ruiz and Encarna Gascón, ‘Identificación de barreras a las políticas de nutrición y alimentación en Colombia: estudio por el método Delfos’, *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública*, 14: 3 (2003), pp. 186–92; María del Rocío Ortiz, María T. Ruiz and Carlos Álvarez, ‘Análisis de la política de nutrición en Colombia’, *Revista Salud Pública*, 8: 1 (2006), pp. 1–13.

food policy by bringing together a large number of governmental institutions, members of civil society and professional associations.⁷⁹

Some civil society members and scholars complemented this vibrant policy community of second-tier government officials, representatives of professional associations and international organisations.⁸⁰ In October of 2004, the FAO's director-general Jacques Diouf visited Colombia and offered the government its assistance in the development of a new food policy in the context of its Special Programme for Food Security. The result was a cooperation project, the Proyecto de Fortalecimiento a la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional en Colombia (Project to Strengthen Food and Nutritional Security in Colombia, PROSEAN), between the FAO and the government agency Acción Social. Thus, at the same time that the ICBF intended to develop a new food security policy, the FAO offered assistance in its elaboration but partnered mostly with Acción Social. As a result, unclear responsibilities and institutional animosities hampered the collaboration between the FAO and the national institutions.⁸¹ As opposed to the developments in the 1970s, the influence of an external functional actor in the construction of a food security policy was therefore limited.

In 2006 the DNP took over the lead in the making of a food security policy from the ICBF, and it eventually managed to provide a framework for a 'minimal consensus' within the policy community: the 2008 Documento CONPES Social 113 report on a National Food and Nutritional Security Policy.⁸² Since CONPES 113 emphasised access to food (rather than its availability) as the crucial problem, it called for social strategies to raise incomes. Hence, for the first time since the 1970s, food policy was primarily seen from a socio-economic perspective. Moreover, CONPES 113 engaged in a securitising move as it stated that 'the country has to consider Food and Nutritional

⁷⁹ ICBF and Ministerio de Protección Social, 'Plan Nacional de Alimentación y Nutrición 1996–2005: Informe de evaluación 1996–2002' (Bogotá: ICBF and Ministerio de Protección Social, 2004).

⁸⁰ See, for example, Juan Carlos Morales and Alejandro Mantilla, *El derecho a la alimentación en Colombia: situación, contextos y vacíos – una aproximación al compromiso del Estado Colombiano a la luz de las directrices voluntarias sobre el derecho a la alimentación* (Bogotá: Plataforma Colombiana, OBSAN, Comisión Interfranciscana, Fundaexpresión, FIAN and Agro Acción Alemana, 2007). As an academic contribution, the Observatorio de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Observatory of Food and Nutritional Security, OBSAN) at the National University of Colombia was founded in 2005.

⁸¹ Interview with Ana Mercedes Cepeda, 17 May 2011. As an example of misunderstandings and poor coordination, an author of an FAO study who was a former consultant of the ICBF wrote a public policy document without indicating that its ideas were the result of work led by the ICBF. See FAO, *Propuesta de estrategia e instrumentos para mejorar la seguridad alimentaria en Colombia* (Bogotá: FAO, 2004).

⁸² The term 'minimal consensus' was used by an interviewee, but it also reflects our impression from various interviews with food security experts in Colombia. See CONPES 113.

Security as an issue of national security' and that 'hunger is a crime against freedom'.⁸³ It prioritised assistance to the most vulnerable groups of the population, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), victims of natural disasters, ethnic minorities, children and breastfeeding mothers, and the poorest farmers. It defined 'food and nutritional security' as 'the sufficient and stable availability, the access to and adequate and permanent consumption in quantity, quality and innocuousness of foodstuffs for all persons, under conditions that allow their adequate biological utilisation in order to live a healthy and active life'.⁸⁴

On the basis of this dispositif put forward by the national nutrition community, the relevant institutions were invited to elaborate a more specific National Plan for Food and Nutritional Security under the guidance of yet another newly created agency, the Comisión Intersectorial de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Inter-Sectoral Committee on Food and Nutritional Security, CISAN). Although this plan should have been finished at the time of writing this article, it was still under revision and the intended multi-sectoral approach of CONPES 113 has not yet become reality. Colombia's food security policies are still fragmented and farmed out to various institutions which sometimes pursue conflicting interests. This had been one of the main criticisms expressed in CONPES 113 and the reason for its demand for a multi-sectoral approach: 'One of the principal restrictions for the achievement of food and nutritional security has been the inexistence of a high-level instance that links all the sectors and levels ... and articulates food and nutritional security with other public policies as for example the ones concerning poverty'.⁸⁵ Alignment of the relevant actors along the same food security language, as happened in the 1970s, cannot be observed for the 2000s.

Despite the efforts of the technocratic community, its securitising move has not been taken up by the discourse of the Colombian executive. Food security never ranked highly in the governmental agenda during the 2000s. With the exception of CONPES 113, central government documents like the National Development Plan have not given weight to food security in either the two Uribe administrations (2002–10) or the government of Juan Manuel Santos (2010–present). Although the Food and Nutritional Policy is mentioned several times in the National Plans for 2006–10 and 2010–14, the references to it are spread throughout these documents, reflecting its fragmented nature and secondary importance. One interviewee commented that policy

⁸³ CONPES 113, pp. 25, 26.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24. For an overview of the different policies currently in place, see Lynnette Neufeld, Mónica Rubio, Leonardo Pinzón and Lizbeth Tolentino, *Nutrición en Colombia: estrategia de país 2011–2014*, División de Protección Social y Salud, Notas Técnicas 243 (Bogotá: Inter-American Development Bank, 2010).

development with respect to food security took place 'in spite of the Uribe government'.⁸⁶

The marked disinterest among high-ranking officials of the Uribe government stood in stark contrast to the attention that food security was receiving due to the new world food crisis, all the more so as inflation affected Colombia's food security.⁸⁷ Yet this context did not facilitate the securitisation of food security, as the officials involved in CONPES 113 were not able to win the ear of the executive branch. The Uribe government, narrowly focusing on the issue of food availability, simply claimed that Colombia was not touched by the crisis and stated that, on the contrary, it was a highly self-sufficient country.⁸⁸ The government's framework undermined the access-based argument of the technocratic community and foiled its attempt at securitisation.

Yet the government's claim grew increasingly debatable as Colombia became a net importer of basic staples. The expansion of cattle-ranching and non-traditional export crops such as cut flowers as well as shifts to produce biofuel have contributed to pressure on agricultural trade balances.⁸⁹ Such structural changes were compounded by the world food crisis in 2007 and 2008 and the disastrous floods caused by prolonged heavy rain during 2010 and 2011. Vast areas were flooded, affecting a large number of farmers in over 700 municipalities and more than two million people.⁹⁰ As a result, the FAO categorised Colombia in its Global Information and Early Warning System as a 'country in crisis requiring external assistance', joining Haiti and developing countries from Africa and Asia. Instead of producing a favourable context for the food issue, however, the FAO report provoked strident reactions in the Colombian media and the government.⁹¹ The minister of agriculture called the report 'ridiculous' and proudly claimed that Colombia was one of the most self-sufficient countries in the world.⁹² Important agricultural associations sided with the minister, emphasising that Colombia was a country with 'food

⁸⁶ Interview with Dora Aya, sub-director for nutrition at the ICBF, 15 April 2011.

⁸⁷ Ana María Ibáñez and Juan Carlos Muñoz, *Rising Food Prices: Impact and Policy Responses in Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009).

⁸⁸ 'Colombia y la crisis de alimentos', *Portafolio*, 30 April 2008.

⁸⁹ Fernando Soto Baquero and Sergio Gomez, *Dinámicas del mercado de la tierra en América Latina y el Caribe: concentración y entranjerización* (FAO, 2011), pp. 179–208; Anouk Patel-Campillo, 'Agro-export Specialization and Food Security in a Sub-national Context: The Case of Colombian Cut Flowers', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy & Society*, 3: 2 (2010), pp. 279–94; Nazih Richani, 'The Agrarian Rentier Political Economy: Land Concentration and Food Insecurity in Colombia', *Latin American Research Review*, 47: 2 (2012), pp. 51–78.

⁹⁰ DANE, 'Registro único de damnificados por la emergencia invernal 2010-2011' (DANE, Acción Social, Presidencia de Colombia, 19 May 2011).

⁹¹ 'La locomotora del agro está varada', *La República* (Bogotá), 22 March 2011; 'Críticas a la política agropecuaria', *El Tiempo*, 24 March 2011.

⁹² 'Colombia enfrenta una grave crisis alimentaria', *El Universal*, 18 March 2011.

abundance'.⁹³ After the minister complained to Jacques Diouf, Colombia was taken off the list of food-insecure countries; the FAO even published a press release to clarify the issue.⁹⁴ These incidents show that the policy community and high-ranking government officials talked at cross purposes. CONPES 113 argued that food insecurity persisted in terms of access to food rather than in its availability. Yet this diagnosis put forward by technocrats and mid-ranking government officials was not reflected in the discourses of high-level government members.

The government of Juan Manuel Santos has not changed this stance. Although some interviewees identify a more open attitude towards food security issues in key institutions like the Ministry of Agriculture, food security is not a priority of the Santos administration. The first step of his government towards the food security topic took place at the regional level, when Santos signed an Agreement on Food and Nutritional Security in Valledupar in March 2011. This event was not even reported in the national media, indicating its marginal importance.

One apparent exception to this pattern of downplaying the importance of food security, the Red de Seguridad Alimentaria (Food Security Network, ReSA) programme, which started in 2003, does not hold up to closer scrutiny.⁹⁵ The Uribe government and its agency responsible for IDPs, Acción Social, developed this programme to 'stimulate the permanence in rural areas of the population in risk of displacement and to allow the return of displaced people to their lands'.⁹⁶ According to official figures, some 3,711,745 people were forcibly displaced due to political violence between 1997 and April 2011.⁹⁷ Many IDPs were subsistence farmers before their displacement and have to adapt their ways of accessing food after abandoning their land. They often show high levels of undernutrition, and are widely recognised as suffering from significant food-related problems.⁹⁸ But rather than resolving the difficult situation of small-scale farmers, ReSA mitigates their problems and leaves field workers frustrated because they see little sustainable

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ FAO, 'Nota aclaratoria informe perspectivas de las cosechas y seguridad alimentaria Diciembre de 2010' (FAO, 23 March 2011).

⁹⁵ Acción Social, *Sistematización de experiencias y aprendizajes del Programa Red de Seguridad Alimentaria – ReSa* (Bogotá: Acción Social, 2007).

⁹⁶ Presidencia de Colombia, 'Resolución 3300', 2003.

⁹⁷ See also Ana María Ibáñez, 'Forced Displacement in Colombia: Magnitude and Causes', *Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, 4: 1 (2009), pp. 48–54.

⁹⁸ See for example ICRC and WFP, *Una mirada a la población desplazada en ocho ciudades de Colombia: respuesta institucional local, condiciones de vida y recomendaciones para su atención* (Bogotá: ICRC and WFP, 2007); and WFP and GTZ, *La vulnerabilidad alimentaria de hogares desplazados y no desplazados: un estudio de caso en ocho departamentos de Colombia* (Bogotá: WFP, 2006).

impact.⁹⁹ At any rate, the securitised issue in this case is that of Colombia's IDPs and not food security, which was tacked on as a complement to the IDP policies.¹⁰⁰ Many organisations focus specifically on IDPs when it comes to food security – for instance, the WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Is the focus on IDPs justified? When it comes to undernutrition in the general population, the picture is mixed. The comprehensive Encuestas Nacionales de la Situación Nutricional en Colombia (National Surveys on the Nutritional Situation in Colombia, ENSIN) of 2005 and 2011 show a decline in chronic and acute malnutrition since 1990, but these figures mask considerable regional variation. Moreover, the surveys reveal that obesity has become more prevalent, and both the government and the press seem far more concerned with obesity than with food security.¹⁰¹ Recent studies by the National University of Colombia and the Industrial University of Santander have questioned the results of the ENSIN surveys.¹⁰² Indeed, the latest figures published by the FAO confirm the mixed picture. While some progress in combating malnutrition was being made in the 1990s, efforts have stalled since then. According to the FAO, around 12 per cent of the Colombian population still suffers from malnutrition, and the country is lagging behind its neighbours in its efforts to solve the problem. Raúl Benítez, regional director of the FAO, put it bluntly when he indicated that the 'political will' was lacking to improve the situation.¹⁰³ However, the complexities of determining malnutrition have hampered the mobilisation of support for securitisation of the issue.

The discussions on food security have also been complicated by the attention given to the related concept of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty considers the feeding of the population as a matter of national security, but insists on 'the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to

⁹⁹ Interview with Absalón Machado, 22 Dec. 2010; and interview with anonymous member of a foundation in Villavicencio, 10 Nov. 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Carlos del Valle, programme officer at FAO Colombia and former official of the Ministry of Agriculture, 14 April 2011.

¹⁰¹ ICBF, *Encuesta nacional de la situación nutricional en Colombia 2005* (Bogotá: ICBF, 2005); and *Encuesta nacional de la situación nutricional en Colombia 2011* (Bogotá: ICBF, 2011). In the largest Colombian newspaper, *El Tiempo*, the search term 'obesity' appears in 308 articles during 2010, while 'food security' gets 146 entries. The obesity problem has been recognised in different forms: there has been a Law against Obesity from 2009 (Ley 1355 de octubre 14 de 2009), and it is explicitly mentioned as a health problem in the National Development Plan of the Santos government: see DNP, 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010–2014 "Prosperidad para Todos"' (Bogotá: DNP, 2011).

¹⁰² Agencia de Noticias UN, 'Gobierno subestima el hambre', Bogotá, 29 Aug. 2010.

¹⁰³ 'FAO le pide al país un 'empujoncito' contra el hambre', *El Tiempo*, 22 Oct. 2012.

achieve sustainable development objectives'.¹⁰⁴ Colombian NGOs in recent years have engaged in campaigns such as Soberanía Alimentaria, Seguridad y Autonomía (Food Sovereignty, Security and Autonomy, SALSA), which have attempted to strengthen linkages between urban consumers and rural producers. They have also addressed petitions to the Colombian government to engage in policies of food sovereignty rather than focusing on the expansion of agro-exports.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the NGOs have upped the ante in the food discussions by following transnational agrarian groups in questioning trade-based food security and agro-industrial food production, thus raising the spectre of alternative development models.¹⁰⁶

These discussions about food sovereignty have been inconvenient for the Colombian government, and one interviewee referred to them as 'noise' which complicated the process of policy development and implementation. One of the ministers of agriculture during the Uribe government apparently refused to talk about food security as long as it was related to 'food sovereignty'.¹⁰⁷ The Santos administration has introduced the concept of 'food autonomy', but has been careful to limit it exclusively to the practices of indigenous people.¹⁰⁸

Bogotá sin Hambre as local exception

In some regions and cities, however, food security has become an important issue. The Plan de Mejoramiento Alimentario y Nutricional de Antioquia (Food and Nutritional Improvement Plan of Antioquia, MANA), the Caribe sin Hambre (Caribbean without Hunger) programme in the Caribbean region, and the Eje Cafetero sin Hambre (Coffee Axis without Hunger) programme in the Coffee Region have been important, but perhaps the most prominent example has been Bogotá sin Hambre (Bogotá without Hunger).¹⁰⁹ During the election campaign for the mayor's office in 2003,

¹⁰⁴ Michael Windfuhr and Jennie Jonsén, FIAN International, *Food Sovereignty: Towards Democracy in Localized Food Systems* (Rugby: ITDG Publishing, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Harvy Rodríguez Ortiz and Jorge Rubiano Paez, *Aportes para la Construcción Participativa de una Propuesta de Política Pública en Soberanía, Seguridad y Autonomía Alimentaria y Nutricional – SSAN – en Colombia* (Bogotá: Corporación Ecofondo, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Tatiana Roa, Hernán Darío Correa and Alejandro Galeano, *Primero la comida: ingredientes para el debate sobre soberanía, seguridad y autonomía alimentaria en Colombia* (Bogotá: Corporación Ecofondo, 2010). A similar debate is described for the case of Honduras: see Jefferson Boyer, 'Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Local Challenges for Transnational Agrarian Movements: The Honduras Case', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37: 2 (2010), pp. 319–51. ¹⁰⁷ Interview with Carlos del Valle, 14 April 2011.

¹⁰⁸ DNP, 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010–2014', p. 664.

¹⁰⁹ James Garrett, 'MANA: Improving Food and Nutrition Security in Antioquia, Colombia', in James Garrett and Marcela Natalicchio (eds.), *Working Multisectorally in Nutrition: Principles, Practices, and Case Studies* (Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2011).

the leftist candidate and former labour union representative Luis Eduardo Garzón was inspired by the Brazilian Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) programme introduced by President Lula da Silva in the same year and proposed to attend to the food needs of vulnerable people with his flagship Bogotá sin Hambre programme.¹¹⁰ His campaign presented hunger as a threat to Bogotá's welfare and won the support of the city's electorate.

A team of advisers began to elaborate a food policy for the capital city which drew on the Brazilian programme and earlier experiences in Bogotá like the Food and Nutrition Plan for the Capital District of 1999–2003.¹¹¹ To set the stage, statistics about poverty and IDPs residing in Bogotá were used to prove the need for a hunger eradication strategy. We can identify, therefore, a high degree of congruence between context, empowering audience and dispositif that led to the securitisation of food during Garzón's term of office. This securitisation of food stood in contrast to politics at the national level. Indeed, the association of food security with the leftist position of Garzón and the latter's affinities to Lula's policy strategies may have hardened the stance of the Uribe and Santos administrations, which have studiously avoided putting food security on the national agenda and have stuck to emphasising the generally high level of food availability in Colombia.¹¹²

As newly elected mayor, Garzón's first policy measure was the *Día sin Hambre* (Day without Hunger). Thereafter, in practice, Bogotá sin Hambre was primarily an effort to better coordinate existing institutional offers, complemented with a system of community soup kitchens (*comedores comunitarios*) for the poor. It was evaluated positively and its budget amounted to 3 per cent of total Capital District spending during 2005 and 2006.¹¹³ The related Master Plan of Food Supply and Food Security for Bogotá of 2006 aimed at guaranteeing the sufficient and stable provision of food and access to it, by reducing prices.¹¹⁴ The plan also strengthened the economic exchange between urban and rural areas under the banner of food autonomy.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Eduardo Díaz, former director of the programme Bogotá sin Hambre, former minister of health and member of the Liberal Party, 4 April 2011. For a description of Fome Zero, see Anthony Hall, 'From Fome Zero to Bolsa Família: Social Policies and Poverty Alleviation under Lula', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38: 4 (2006), pp. 689–709.

¹¹¹ CEPAL, *Hambre y desigualdad en los países andinos: la desnutrición y la vulnerabilidad alimentaria en Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador y Perú* (Santiago: CEPAL, 2005).

¹¹² Interview with Eduardo Díaz, 4 April 2011.

¹¹³ Jairo Núñez and Laura Cuesta, *¿Cómo va 'Bogotá sin Hambre'?* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2007).

¹¹⁴ Jaime Forero et al., *Bogotá: autonomía agroalimentaria – diálogos y controversias* (Bogotá: Planeta Paz, 2006).

Conclusion

Securitisation theory has provided us with a useful frame for the analysis of food security policies in Colombia, not only for the securitisation that took place in the 1970s, but also for the process of desecuritisation starting in the late 1970s and the failed securitisation of the 2000s. Before summarising our findings from an application of the theory, however, it is useful to consider how the empirical applicability of the sociological variant of securitisation theory could be improved. Above all, we suggest that the theory would benefit from specification of its constituents and a better integration of these with the core assumptions of audience, context and *dispositif*.¹¹⁵ For example, it is often unclear how the different agents involved (especially the securitising actors and functional actors) can be differentiated. Functional actors could be seen as part of the context, providing the discursive ground on which securitising actors move, but it seems inaccurate to frame them as merely pertaining to the context when their agency is a *sine qua non* for a successful securitising act. We therefore suggest a model of cascades of dynamic actor–audience relationships. In our case, the international food experts in the 1970s can be conceptualised as actors who tried to persuade governments by drawing on their *dispositif* of expert policy communication. As soon as the Colombian government was persuaded, it turned into an actor which tried to convince its own audience – the Colombian electorate and Congress. In this article we have referred to the securitising actor only as the last link in this actor–audience chain, yet such a framing might undervalue the importance of earlier links in the chain.

Similarly, the *dispositif* requires a better integration into the empirical constituents. Our paper has made evident that both securitising and functional actors use all sorts of activities (conferences, policy documents, public communication and so on) to impose their frame of understanding. However, as of now, it is not clear which practices by which actors qualify as *dispositif* and how they are differentiated from policies and heuristic artefacts as separate acts. Finally, another element that should be more explicitly formalised is the role of ‘agenda saturation’.¹¹⁶ Instead of looking at one potential security issue at a time, it may be fruitful to look at the interplay of various potential security issues and assess how the securitisation of one issue influences the securitisation of another. We have shown that the emergence of a securitised peace agenda in the context of rising violence in the early 1980s contributed to the relegation of food security to a low priority.

¹¹⁵ Balzacq, ‘Enquiries into Methods’, pp. 35–8.

¹¹⁶ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, p. 184.

Our study has shown that food was a securitised issue during the 1970s but not in more recent years despite similar circumstances. First, a major international food crisis occurred in both periods, which (could have) facilitated the securitisation of food. Second, the international community as an important functional actor insisted on the implementation of national food policies and was ready to contribute financially (the FNPP initiative in the 1970s and the FAO's Special Programme for Food Security in recent years). Third, the national policy community identified in both cases a lack of coordination in earlier food policies and hence developed new policies based on the internationally available set of integrated food security practices (the National Committee on Food and Nutrition Technology in the 1970s and the initiative led by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute and later the National Planning Department in the 2000s). Finally, in both cases, the underlying food security concepts were defined by very similar dimensions (availability, access, consumption and appropriate nutritional use). Despite these similarities, the outcomes were quite different. While food was framed as a national priority in the 1970s and a multi-sectoral policy was implemented, the governments in the 2000s have insisted that Colombia is a food-secure country and the respective policies remain fragmented. How can we explain these outcomes in terms of discourses and policies under seemingly similar circumstances?

Although in both periods there was a major world food crisis, the effects were more severe and directly apparent in the 1970s. Then, the reduction of external food aid for Colombia obliged an urgent rethinking of food policies. In 2008, by contrast, the government claimed that Colombia was immune to the crisis, dissipating the sense of emergency required for securitisation. In the earlier case, the policy community found in President López a strong advocate for its cause, but both presidents Uribe and Santos have been less interested in food security issues. Hence, the same problem affects the construction of an integrated food policy today as in the 1980s, when the planning policies were dismantled. The lack of a strong securitising actor who adopts the food security discourse of the policy community helps explain differences in approach and outcome.

The point is underscored at the city level. The replacement of Garzón by a new mayor, Samuel Moreno, in 2008 meant that the former's commitment to food security as an issue was watered down. The name of the programme was amended to Bogotá Bien Alimentada (Well-Fed Bogotá). The new label alluded to improved circumstances – basic needs were fulfilled and policy was now geared towards improvements to nourishment. However, the reason for the change lay in personal animosities rather than actual conditions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Interview with Eduardo Díaz, 4 April 2011.

Moreno's opponent, Garzón, had left office just when the National Food and Nutritional Security Policy entered into its implementation phase after 2008. The failed securitisation of food security might, in part, be due to the lack of a powerful securitising actor. Yet the popularity of the programme in Bogotá has so far prevented its complete dismantlement.

The international community was a very important functional actor for the development of a multi-sectoral food policy in the 1970s. The collaboration was extremely close, and Colombia was willing to apply international standards. 'Today, there are sufficient national experts', said one interviewee.¹¹⁸ Certainly, with increasing autonomy and confidence in Colombia, international collaboration has lost some of its appeal as well as authority over the past decades. Yet there is still much exchange of experiences with different policies and rotation of personnel between different organisations, while international NGOs are contributing to the diffusion of new policy initiatives. Indeed, the policy community has been an element of continuity that has helped to keep some know-how available which can be drawn upon if needed. However, the recent favouring of food sovereignty as a path to food security has interfered with the adoption of a food policy in Colombia. The concept of food sovereignty challenges the supremacy of the market for food-related policy, which would go against the grain of recent free trade policies. Given the association of food sovereignty with food security, it is not surprising that the government wants to avoid discussion of either.

Various interviewees of this study, many of whom participated in the development of food policies, yearn for the 1970s, when the food issue received more attention. A recurring perception among them is that the same issues are relevant now as back then, and that they have not been seriously addressed since. A similar belief is expressed in a recent article by Maxwell and Slater, who claim that 'the mainstream answer ... is easy, and is the same as in the 1970s: prepare a food strategy'.¹¹⁹ Alan Berg, one of the masterminds of multi-sectoral planning, foresaw this nostalgia just when food planning was being criticised in the 1980s: 'Prophecy is a risky business but it would not surprise me, once the air clears, to find those who are truly interested in nutrition hailing the folks who rode in and raised all that ruckus that put nutrition on national agendas.'¹²⁰

The integrated food strategy that has been developed in Colombia during the past years has faced a major obstacle for its implementation: a lack of interest in the executive branch. In a context like Colombia, with a series of urgent policy needs (inequality, organised crime, armed conflict), a

¹¹⁸ Interview with Absalón Machado, 22 Dec. 2010.

¹¹⁹ Maxwell and Slater, 'Food Policy Old and New', p. 544.

¹²⁰ Berg, 'Nutrition Planning is Alive and Well', p. 375.

securitisation process may be necessary to grab attention for the issue in question. But the example of the successful securitisation in the 1970s also demonstrates that without a subsequent institutionalisation independent of political leaders, the issue is prone to disappear from the agenda. The Colombian food policy community is thus well advised to spend some time constructing broad support for another attempt at integrated policy before engaging in a securitising move on a national scale. A new opportunity may arise soon, considering that not even the current government fully believes in its discourse of food self-sufficiency and security. Otherwise, how can we explain that the government allowed the WFP to execute a massive programme of food assistance to IDPs and other highly food-insecure populations? Certainly, at the local level, we find divergent perceptions. The Bogotá sin Hambre programme and similar initiatives in the provinces are instances of food securitisation. Even if at a national level Colombia has not seen a successful securitisation of food security in recent decades, the issue remains critical.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Tras la crisis mundial de alimentos de principios de los años 70, las políticas alimentarias se hicieron una 'prioridad nacional' para el desarrollo colombiano. Fue el primer país en implementar un enfoque multisectorial propuesto por organizaciones internacionales. Sin embargo, en los últimos 30 años los gobiernos colombianos han visto a la nutrición como un asunto de salud de menor importancia. Durante la reciente crisis alimentaria mundial, el gobierno insistió que Colombia era uno de los países con mayor seguridad alimentaria. Con circunstancias aparentemente similares, ¿por qué las políticas alimentarias fueron una prioridad en los 70 y no en el nuevo milenio? Abordamos la pregunta con la ayuda de la teoría de la securitización. Sostenemos que en los 70 el gobierno logró securitizar el tema de la alimentación en el contexto de una reducción de la ayuda exterior alimentaria y de una fallida reforma agraria. Gobiernos nacionales recientes (al contrario de algunos gobiernos locales) han tenido poco interés en retomar esta tendencia ya que los discursos relacionados de la soberanía alimentaria amenazan sus políticas de libre mercado.

Spanish keywords: seguridad alimentaria, securitización, soberanía alimentaria, Colombia

Portuguese abstract. Após a crise mundial de alimentos do início da década de 1970, políticas relacionadas a alimentação tornaram-se uma 'prioridade nacional' para o avanço do desenvolvimento colombiano. A Colômbia foi o primeiro país a implementar a abordagem multi-setorial proposta por organizações internacionais. Contudo, nos últimos trinta anos, os governos colombianos têm encarado a nutrição como um problema de saúde secundário. Durante a recente crise mundial de alimentos, o governo insistiu que a Colômbia era um dos países com maior segurança

alimentar. Em circunstâncias aparentemente parecidas, por que a política alimentar foi tratada como prioridade no início da década de 1970 e não no novo milênio? Trataremos esta questão com o auxílio da teoria da securitização. Propomos que na década de 1970, o governo securitizou a questão alimentar com êxito no contexto de uma redução na assistência alimentícia internacional e de uma reforma agrária fracassada. Os governos nacionais recentes (ao contrário de alguns governos locais) têm demonstrado pouco interesse em dar um passo em direção à securitização, devido ao fato de que os discursos relacionados à soberania alimentar ameaçam suas políticas de livre mercado.

Portuguese keywords: segurança alimentar, securitização, soberania alimentar, Colômbia