

# Performative discourse and political lie in the peace process with the FARC

## Discurso performativo y mentira política durante el proceso de paz con las FARC

### *Discurso performativo e mentira política durante o processo de paz das FARC*

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**ABSTRACT** | This article analyzes the line of argumentation of President Juan Manuel Santos during the peace process with the FARC in Colombia to determine whether is performative in character (Austin 1962) and/or has classic features of political lies (Arendt, 1993, 2003; Bok, 1978). To this end, we used a qualitative methodology, analyzing the discourse of the 33 official statements related to the peace process. These were disseminated by the president between 2012 and 2016 on the official YouTube channel of the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. The analysis of these statements allows us to identify seven statements that the president used to create the communicative framework with which he tries to influence public opinion in order to win the support of Colombian society and the FARC. An examination of these statements using the categories of performative discourse and political lie reveals their eminently performative character. This exposes the existence of some features of political lie and the ambivalence that some statements acquire when they move away from factual truth.

**KEYWORDS:** Colombia; Peace process with the FARC; political communication; performative discourse; political lies.

#### HOW TO CITE

Codina, M., Novoa-Jaso, M.F., & Marín-Cáceres, L. (2023) Discurso performativo y mentira política durante el proceso de paz con las FARC. *Cuadernos.info*, (56), 66-88. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.55.62511>

**RESUMEN** | Este artículo analiza la línea argumentativa del presidente Juan Manuel Santos durante el proceso de paz abierto con las FARC en Colombia para determinar en qué medida su discurso presenta un carácter performativo (Austin, 1962) y hasta qué punto presenta rasgos característicos de la mentira política (Arendt, 1993, 2003; Bok, 1978). Para ello, se sigue una metodología cualitativa de nivel explicativo-descriptivo del discurso político, realizando un análisis de las 33 declaraciones oficiales relativas al proceso de paz realizadas por el presidente entre 2012 y 2016 publicadas en el canal oficial de YouTube de la Presidencia de la República de Colombia. El análisis de estas declaraciones permite determinar siete enunciados con los que el presidente crea el marco comunicativo con el que trata de influir en la opinión pública para ganar el apoyo de la sociedad colombiana y de las FARC. En segundo lugar, tomando como referencia la obra de Austin (1962), el análisis de los recursos verbales utilizados por el presidente revela la naturaleza eminentemente performativa de estas declaraciones. Estas tienen carácter pragmático y no solo semántico, en la medida en la que ejecutan la acción y el compromiso presidencial de abrir un proceso que conduzca a la paz. Finalmente, los resultados revelan la ambivalencia de algunos enunciados que se alejan de la verdad fáctica, poniendo de manifiesto la existencia de algunos rasgos típicos de la mentira política.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Colombia; proceso de paz con las FARC; comunicación política; discurso performativo; mentira política.

**RESUMO** | Este artigo analisa a linha de argumentação do presidente Juan Manuel Santos durante o processo de paz com as FARC na Colômbia, a fim de determinar em que medida seu discurso é performativo (Austin, 1962) e até que ponto apresenta traços característicos da mentira política (Arendt, 1993, 2003; Bok, 1978). Para isso, optou-se por uma metodologia qualitativa de nível explicativa-descritiva do discurso político das 33 declarações oficiais relacionadas ao processo de paz emitidas pelo presidente entre 2012 e 2016, publicadas no canal oficial da Presidência da República da Colômbia no YouTube. A análise dessas declarações nos permite identificar sete declarações com as quais, de forma transversal, o presidente cria a estrutura comunicativa que busca influenciar a opinião pública para obter o apoio da sociedade colombiana e das FARC. Da mesma forma, a análise dos recursos verbais usados pelo presidente revela a natureza eminentemente performativa dessas declarações. Aquelas têm caráter pragmático e não somente semântico, na medida em que executam a ação e o compromisso presidencial de abrir um processo de traga a paz. Por fim, os resultados revelam a ambivalência de alguns enunciados que se afastam da verdade fáctica, permitindo ver a existência de alguns rasgos comuns da mentira política.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Colômbia; processo de paz das FARC; comunicação política; discurso performativo; mentira política.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, by its Spanish acronym), President Juan Manuel Santos' discursive line reflected the government's official position. Media debates questioned the veracity of statements made by high-ranking state officials, as well as by detractors of the negotiations throughout the different milestones of this process. This had a great impact on public opinion (Gómez Giraldo & Cárdenas Ruiz, 2019; Charry, 2020; Pino Montoya & Castaño Gómez, 2020).

Several structural changes made it possible for the president to begin this process. Guerrillas were militarily debilitated, the international environment was favorable to the peace process, and there was a certain economic prosperity. Santos presented the moment as a historic opportunity in which, having learned from past mistakes, a reconciliatory policy could be initiated by deactivating former violence (Larraz Elorriaga, 2017). In this process, the narratives constructed through the official discourse became the political tool par excellence, until the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace was signed on September 26, 2016 (appendix 1).

Throughout this period, a significant portion of the journalistic corporations adopted informative frameworks that favored the governmental stance (Romero Jiménez, 2017; Grajales & Martínez, 2020). The textual analysis of the Colombian newspapers *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* underscores how these newspapers accepted the historical character of this process approaching it from different ideological stances (Osorio Monsalve, 2020).

Juan Manuel Santos' institutional discourse on peace was used as a banner for his reelection campaign in 2014. The analysis of the electoral videos shows that Santos placed his reelection within a context of ideological polarization. While the Uribistas (supporters of Uribe) of the Centro Democrático party intended to put an end to the guerrilla and drug trafficking using military means, Santos proposed to solve the conflict by inaugurating a process of dialogue with the FARC until peace was achieved. With this proposal he sought to obtain the support of voters (Mendoza-Escalante, 2017).

Larraz Elorriaga (2017) points out that the legitimization of the peace process pivoted on the construction of symbolic elements aimed at changing the social perception of the conflict and turning FARC, the historical enemies of peace, into allies to achieve it. Santos expected to achieve peace with the FARC at the Havana summit, while manifesting the fear of a continuation of the war if Zuluaga won the next elections (Valencia-Tello, 2017).

In 2016, Santos chose to endorse the peace agreement through a referendum that, preceded by a scenario of polarization and fear (Cardona Zulueta & Lodoño Álvarez, 2018), was against all odds won by its detractors. The results obtained in the referendum showed that the reconciliation proposal and the hope for a promising future that guided the government's negotiations clashed with the values that survived in Colombian society, detracting from the legitimacy of the process (Larraz Elorriaga, 2017). The complexity of this scenario has led narratives about the armed conflict and the peace process in Colombia to establish themselves as a prominent area of study (Richard & Llano, 2017; Ríos & Cairo, 2018).

This paper analyzes the official statements of President Santos between 2012 and 2016 in order to identify the major argumentative lines he used in favor of the peace process. Likewise, this analysis adopts a novel approach by asking whether President Santos elaborates a performative discourse (Austin, 1962) in which the speech act constitutes a form of political action aimed at articulating the necessary conditions that allow the peace process to move forward, and to what extent he was able to make use of political lies while distancing himself from the factual truth (Arendt, 1993, 2003; Bok, 1978; Martin, 2019). This issue is clearly relevant, as the legitimacy of Colombia's democratic institutions was clearly tested by the dialogue process and the subsequent signing of the peace treaty.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Political discourse as a form of action**

Hannah Arendt understands political life from a teleological perspective that concerns the relationship between people. It is about being together with each other as diverse (Arendt, 2003), so that freedom unfolds in personal intermediation and includes the bonds of cooperation and conflict inherent to human beings.

Arendt stresses that participation in public life takes place through speech and action, since “only through speaking and replying the space in which everything else occurs arises and is maintained in reality” (Arendt, 2003, p. 133). Therefore, she underlines the political value of discourse in ancient Greece, where “interest shifted from action to discourse, understood more as a mean of persuasion than as a specific human way of answering, replicating, and weighing what was happening and being done” (Arendt, 1993, p. 40).

If words are understood as a form of action, it may be difficult to distinguish the performative character of public discourse from political lies, especially when

it is far from the factual truth. This is due to the fact that performativity refers to discourse that appears to deceive when it seeks to materialize the desires of those in power, even though it may be aimed at expressing the will to create favorable conditions of relations between people (Austin, 1962). It is typical of political discourse to establish communication strategies aimed at proposing future scenarios. “Performativity should be understood as the reiterative and referential practice through which discourse produces the effects it names” (Morales, 2014, p. 346).

According to Austin (1962), performative utterances transform a discursive effect into an action that is neither true nor false but is made in the reality of what is enunciated. “Performative utterances give existence to facts-events, starting from dialectics and considering the criterion of authenticity in a given context: the axis of the transformation of discourse into action, and the context in which the words are enunciated” (Suárez, 2021, p. 1009). The main objective of performative political discourse is to create the political conditions that allow for the materialization of understanding between different wills. The element that prevails is language, used directly (semantic level) or indirectly (pragmatic level) (Agelvis & Sulbarán, 2021). The performativity of discourse allows realities to be constructed, because “saying what is said is thus not limited to reflecting something, but does something” (Vallespín, 2012, p. 37). Therefore, these discourses constitute a form of political action aimed at modifying the relationships established between different actors.

The mechanisms of discourse can also be understood from a realm of ideological confrontation as a linguistic (Lakoff & Johnson, 1991) or semantic (Barrendonner, 1987; Lyons, 1997) battle. Van Dijk points out that “arguments do not only have abstract structures and involve mental processes and representations, but are, at the same time, a dimension of communicative acts of narration and argumentation performed by real language users in real situations” (1997, p. 22). Thus, it can be said that language as an action has the capacity to change or construct new conditions of social reality. This form of performative discourse is not equivalent to, nor is it necessarily configured through the use of lies, i.e., the denial of factual truth.

For Austin (1962), performative language features distinctive traits that are identified with verbal linguistic elements that define the speaker’s message. Without denying the factual truth, it is expressed through judicative, exercising, commitment, behavioral and expository verbal expressions. The characteristics of these verbal uses are shown in table 1.

Verb	Typical act	Features
Judicative	To pronounce a verdict or judgment on something.	The speaker’s social role must empower him/her to rule or arbitrate through judgment.
Executive	Exercising power, rights, or influence.	A decision is made about the past or future conduct of others, to perform certain acts.
Commitment	To promise or commit to do something.	The speaker commits to a certain course of action about future actions or supposed consequences.
Behavioral	Attitudes and social behavior.	They are a reaction to other’s conduct or condition, or they may be attitudes toward the past or imminent conduct of others.
Expository	How expressions fit into an argument or conversation.	They are resources used by a speaker to express opinions, conduct discussions and clarify usages and reference.

**Table 1. Verbs associated with performative language use**

*Source: Alarcón (2008) based on Austin’s classification (1962, 1996).*

**Political lies**

Sissela Bok (1978) defines a lie as any message that is stated and is intentionally misleading. In this case, lying is accomplished by means of a communicational act between people who have the capacity to construct messages and relationships based on language, as well as to employ the necessary means for those statements to spread and generate an impact. This form of action is different from persuasion. While lying is an intentional act aimed at deception, persuasion is a legitimate and necessary form of social interaction (Bok, 1978).

Lying deteriorates trust bonds between people; because of it, institutions decay and the precepts that govern social life lose meaning, ceasing to order peaceful coexistence among citizens (De la Escalera, 2005; Mahon, 2016; Swift et al., 2020).

The truthfulness that lies in facts is the departure point for the creation of a legitimate opinion in society. Lies have their place “on the ground of factual statements” (Arendt, 2017, p. 23) (not of reason). Insofar as truth “demands peremptory recognition” it tends to “avoid debate”, since the facts does not depend on opinion. Whereas “debate is the very essence of political life” (Arendt, 1996, pp. 368-369).

From the work of Arendt (1993, 2003) and Bok (1978), we can identify seven features that characterize the political lie: (1) lack of correspondence with reality; (2) intention to deceive; (3) use of a communicative strategy; (4) compromises an

immediate interest of the political community; (5) declarations by one or more political actors; (6) presentation of a set of falsehoods in order to be effective, and (7) justification of a higher good through a pragmatic morality.

Martin (2019) points out the distinctive characteristics that define what he calls “modern political lie” (p. 39). This denies a commonly known factual reality, generating a situation of collective deception. It is relative to the immediate political present and happens in an organized manner. It is imposed with violence and creates an imbalance in power relations (Heuer, 2019), which leads to social self-deception by linking lies to action. Those who practice it underestimate the role of civil society, intermediate associations and institutions. It is justified as a means of obtaining a greater good, until it becomes structural (Melenovsky, 2018).

Political lies undermine the conditions and foundations of political life, specifically “freedom, equality, plurality, publicity, solidarity, and worldliness” (Estrada, 2004, p. 463). Likewise, it deteriorates any government system and internally corrodes the democratic pillars of plurality, participation, equality, and freedom. Therefore, “those who lie have the ability to shape reality in a way that benefits their own interests; however, in the long run, this is perhaps one of the major causes of political failure and degeneration of political life” (Herrero, 2008, p. 12).

Discourse performativity, along with the phenomenon of disinformation, gains strength in the post-truth culture, where political discourse does not present data or evidence of verification. Citizens admit deception as a natural part of politics; they lose interest in the rational aspects of the discourse, falling into apathy and distrust, so that their decisions tend to rely on emotional motives (Cárdenas & Polo, 2019; Rodríguez Ferrándiz, 2019). This is aggravated when political actors make use of the media construction of reality, playing with the performativity of language and approaching the destruction of factual truths (Biset, 2011).

Performative discourse and political lie categories will allow us to analyze the narrative created by President Santos through the statements made during the peace process between 2012 and 2016.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the argumentative line followed by Juan Manuel Santos through the analysis of the 33 official statements of the president regarding the peace process that are published on the official YouTube channel of the Presidency of the Republic and that were pronounced in relation to the milestones of the peace process in Colombia between 2012 and 2016.

The research method used was discourse analysis. Specifically, we conducted a qualitative research with an explanatory-descriptive level of political discourse. As Van Dijk (1997) points out, the discursive perspective responds to the social nature of language and can integrate concepts such as action, context, power, and ideology.

The objectives and hypothesis of this research are the following:

O1. Identify the statements with which President Santos frames the peace process and the peace agreements in Colombia.

O2. Examine whether there are features of performative discourse expressed in his statements through the verbal resource.

O3. Examine whether the statements with which Juan Manuel Santos frames the peace process through his declarations present features of political lies in his communicative strategy, considering its main characteristic, the absence of factual truth.

H1. The presidential discourses on the peace accords in Colombia include features of performative discourse (Austin, 1962) oriented towards political action and, some of them, present arguments in which features of political lies can be found (Arendt, 1993, 2003; Bok, 1978).

## RESULTS

### Statements used by Juan Manuel Santos to frame the Colombian peace process

The discursive analysis of the official statements in which President Santos presents the agreements on the peace process allows us to identify the cross-cutting use of seven statements with which the President justifies the opening of the peace process. Table 2 presents these statements and proposes some examples taken from his statements.

These statements were presented transversally in the presidential declarations during the four years of the negotiations.

Both hope and fear were emotions used to legitimize the peace process, encourage a favorable disposition among FARC members and counteract the opinion of detractors. During the process, there was encouragement to believe that the draft agreement and its progress would improve the situation not only for the victims, but would be beneficial for Colombia. The detractors of this process accused the government of deception. However, determining to what extent the line of argument used by the President reflects an expression of his will, typical of performative discourse, and to what extent it is supported or not by a factual truth, requires further review.



Statements on the peace process	Some noteworthy examples
(1) <i>The war in Colombia has ended.</i>	<p>“(….)to proclaim with all the force of my voice and my heart that the war in Colombia has ended” (Santos, 2016i).</p> <p>[Balance of the agreements adopted since 2012] “the main advance achieved in the negotiations: the end of violence and the Colombian people's peace of mind” (Santos, 2016l).</p> <p>“With this agreement we were able to put an end to the armed conflict with the FARC and lay the foundations to build a stable and lasting peace” (Santos, 2016o).</p>
(2) <i>In the friends versus enemies of peace dynamic, the latter are in charge of lying to kill the process.</i>	<p>“(…) we must understand that peace is not made with friends but with enemies” (Santos, 2013c).</p> <p>“(…) peace is not made with friends, peace is made with enemies” (Santos, 2015f).</p> <p>“(…) I really hope that there will be no enemies of peace” (Santos, 2015f).</p>
(3) <i>Violence for political purposes is a thing of the past and the FARC ceases to exist.</i>	<p>“This means that FARC ceases to exist and will become an unarmed political movement” (Santos, 2016g).</p> <p>“(…) this includes the laying down of arms and the reintegration of the FARC into civilian life” (Santos, 2012b).</p>
(4) <i>The guerrillas will not have direct and free seats in Congress. They will have to earn them in a campaign.</i>	<p>“(…) (the FARC) will not be hand-picked, they will have to participate in the elections and they will not have government positions, as has happened in many other cases, but they will be able to be elected” (Santos, 2016n).</p>
5) <i>The peace process is irreversible and unchangeable, it is not possible to sit down to renegotiate. In other words, if the No wins, the peace process is over.</i>	<p>“The whole continent wants to live in peace and supports us” (Santos, 2012b).</p> <p>“We said (in 2012) that this must be a serious, dignified, realistic and effective process, and it has been so” (Santos, 2015h).</p>
6) <i>In the referendum, citizens would choose between peace and war, as well as suffering and hope, tears and social coexistence, poverty and opportunities.</i>	<p>“We are waiting for the green light to the referendum from the Constitutional Court. What was established is nothing more than the participation of all the instances and controls of our democracy. It will be the people, the Congress and the Constitutional Court that will give validation and sustainability to the referendum”. (Santos, 2016c).</p>
(7) <i>If the referendum is not approved, the country returns to war, not to the negotiating table, but to urban warfare.</i>	<p>“(…)we have extensive information that they [the FARC] are prepared to return to war and urban warfare”. (Santos, 2016d).</p>

**Table 2. Statements used by President Santos to frame the peace process in Colombia before the public opinion**

Source: Own elaboration based on statements made by President Juan Manuel Santos.

### Traits of performative discourse in the official statements of Juan Manuel Santos during the peace process with the FARC

Once we identified the statements defining the line of argument of President Juan Manuel Santos during the peace process, we analyzed whether there are features of performative discourse in his statements. To do so, we followed the verbal taxonomy proposed by Austin (1962). Performative discourse allows the speaker to create the necessary conditions to accept a fact, without denying the present factual reality, becoming an essential instrument to promote actions or create future situations.

The analysis of the president's statements has made it possible to identify the verbal resources typical of performative discourse (table 1):

- a. Use of judicative verbs: Juan Manuel Santos uses them when he points out that the social context offers a real opportunity to terminate the conflict definitively:

(...) I saw a real opportunity to end the bloodshed for good. That opportunity, no matter how far we still have to go, I see it getting closer and closer. And we are a different country, a strong country that is advancing steadily in all fields (Santos, 2013a).

(...) because I see that we are facing a great opportunity. I made the difficult decision to initiate a peace process with the FARC and I hope to be able to do the same with the ELN, sooner rather than later, so that this better future becomes a reality with all its potential (Santos, 2013a).

In his discourse, he does not deny the factual reality of the existence of the conflict, but considers his presidency as an opportunity to achieve peace. Likewise, as president, he judges that the factual conditions are in place (his presidency, the economic, social, and security strength that Colombia has) to establish a process of change that operates with a view to a future situation.

- b. Use of executive verbs: the president judges and uses them from his position as “head of state of the homeland that we all love”, since this would grant him the power to make the decision to initiate a peace process, calling on the FARC to “exchange bullets for votes, weapons for ideas, it is the bravest and most intelligent decision that any subversive group can make” (Santos, 2016i). Likewise, he appeals to Colombian society by inviting the FARC to participate in the peace process he has conceived:

FARC members, the ball is on your side and it is time for you to show us that for you peace is also that dreamed-of good (...) to the Colombian people, I ask

for temperance, patience, and fortitude in the face of possible new attacks by the FARC, or an increase in violence (Santos, 2012b).

(...) if this is not done correctly, if it is not done effectively, peace will not be consolidated. That is why I give so much importance to this Council and to the role that each and every one of you represent (Santos, 2015c).

The president decides on the past or future conduct of others to perform certain acts of change and, without denying the factual truth, invites to think about the future:

(...) with all due respect, I ask you to raise your eyes towards the future. Let us not only think about the now and the short term, let us think about the Colombia we want for the years to come. That Colombia we want to leave to our children (Santos, 2016ñ).

After the referendum “as I announced last Sunday, it is my obligation as president to seek ways for the nation’s union and reconciliation. As head of state, I also have the obligation to preserve public order, to guarantee the tranquility of Colombians, and to seek and negotiate peace. I maintain all the powers given to me by the Constitution to achieve that mandate [...]. In the framework of those powers and obligations I extended the bilateral ceasefire which can be renewed and extended to guarantee and preserve the main progress achieved in the negotiation: the end of violence and the tranquility of Colombians” (Santos, 2016l).

(...) the referendum outcome in which it did not obtain the majority of the votes. But that result could not bury the hope for peace, that result instead of paralyzing the country and drowning us in uncertainty, we had to turn it into a great opportunity to unite (Santos, 2016n).

c. Use of verbs of commitment: his communication strategy declares the commitment to do something new, to achieve peace. He commits to make a pact with the FARC “but that peace will be a just peace” (Santos, 2015f). At the same time, he commits to open a political path for his actions:

(...) I said that a process to end the conflict in my government would only be possible if it follows three principles: to learn from past mistakes and successes so as not to create false expectations, to effectively achieve the end of the conflict, not its prolongation, and not to yield a single millimeter of national territory (Santos, 2012b).

(...) Colombians, as I offered from the beginning, will have the last word to approve or reject the peace agreements at the ballot box. The agreements will have to be popularly endorsed, as I have always promised (Santos, 2016c).

As head of state and as a Colombian I will defend with equal determination their right to express themselves and for them [the FARC] to continue their political struggle through legal channels (Santos, 2016e).

- d. Behavioral verbs: the president uses behavioral verbs in which he reacts to the behavior of his environment and presents and calls upon the behavior of others.

Santos congratulates those who show their support:

(...) I thank them, the UN Secretary General, Pope Francis and all the countries and organizations that have expressed their support for our peace process (Santos, 2016b).

(...) I am also grateful for the support of the United States, of President Obama, of his Secretary of State, through his special envoy (Santos, 2016e).

Following the development of a proposals and options paper he states:

Once again, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and constructive spirit of all [members of the negotiating team] who participated in these long working sessions. In this process, very important and significant progress was made (...) (Santos, 2016m).

And on the fragility of the peace process after new episodes of violence:

My first and foremost concern is for the peace process and for the risk, which is growing every day, of reversing what has been achieved given the fragility of the ceasefire (Santos, 2016ñ).

- e. Expository verbs: the president uses expository verbs in which he states his convictions and clarifies his position:

(...) my duty as president is to promote union, not polarization (Santos, 2016ñ).

(...) I promised you that you would have the last word and so it will be. To that end, tomorrow I will send to Congress the final text of the final agreement (Santos, 2016g).

In summary, president Santos made use of judgmental verbs that allow him to present Colombia's social situation during his term in office as a historic opportunity to achieve peace. The use of "executive verbs" allowed him to express his authority as mediator and political leader in initiating the peace process, as well as his capacity to influence the future of Colombian society by promoting an action for social change. The verbs of commitment were used by the president to declare his commitment to Colombian society and to the FARC. The announcements of intention

through pacts with the citizenry and with the armed group are recurrent. With the use of behavioral verbs, the president showed gratitude to the international community for supporting the process. Through expository verbal forms, Santos clarifies his position in the different phases of the process.

As we can see, the president's statements present verbal resources typical of performative discourse. However, the distrust generated by this process in some sectors of the Colombian population that opposed and criticized the government's position invites us to analyze whether traits of political lies can be found in his statements.

### **Political lies and presidential statements**

Santos' statements imply a discourse act of an authorized political actor (the nation's president), dealing with an immediate political situation (peace in Colombia); they are framed within a communicative strategy aimed at gaining the support of the FARC and Colombian society and appeal to the achievement of a greater good, lasting peace. However, whether they constitute a form of political lie or not will be determined by an essential feature, the absence of factual truth.

To determine whether there is any form of political lying in the presidential statements, the statements framing the peace process (table 2) are analyzed below to examine whether they deny the factual truth considering the linguistic usages and chronology of events (appendix 1).

#### *(1) The war in Colombia is over.*

In 2012, when the peace process begins, the war has not ended. The declaration does not deny the reality of the conflict that everyone knows, but rather establishes, performatively, the intention to create a new social scenario that allows progress towards the solution of the armed conflict. At this moment a first agreement has already been signed with the FARC to initiate the peace process. This process suffers ups and downs and new armed attacks that are known to the population. The historical past is not denied and the use of arms during the process is not hidden from society.

#### *(2) In the friends versus enemies of peace dynamic, the latter take it upon themselves to lie in order to kill the process.*

The president establishes a dialectical dynamic that attempts to situate those who are opposed to the process or fear that it will develop unfairly as enemies of peace. This is a fallacious argument, as it poses a false dichotomy. It labels those who support this process as friends of peace and those who reject it as foes, posing a disjunctive that is not real. The lack of agreement with the initiated process does not mean a rejection of peace, but it may mean the existence of

a partial disagreement with some of the president's proposals or the terms in which the process is proposed, as well as a fear that it will lead to a situation of injustice. This argumentative disjunction rhetorically forces a position in favor of the process.

*(3) The use of violence for political purposes is in the past and the FARC ceases to exist.*

It is mainly a performative statement that alludes to the desired situation. During the process, the FARC continues to exist and acts through its representatives at the dialogue table. Although a ceasefire is agreed, it is broken on several occasions, so that in a strict sense there were episodes of violence during the conflict. The argument is not misleading since the situation is publicly known and is not denied; rather, the president asks for patience from the Colombian society when episodes of armed violence appear.

*(4) The guerrillas will not have direct and free seats in Congress. They will have to earn them in a political campaign.*

This is a compromising statement that affects the way in which the process is to be developed. This promise was a source of conflict in Colombian society, as some sectors considered that it was not legitimate to offer political representation to the FARC once they had laid down their arms. Subsequently, the direct allocation of ten seats for two legislative periods (2018-2022 and 2022-2026) for those elected from the new party was agreed.

*(5) The peace process is irreversible and unchangeable, it is not possible to sit down and renegotiate. In other words, if the No wins, the peace process is finished.*

This is a performative statement of an exercise type that expresses the president's will not to abandon this process and wishes not to be abandoned by the actors involved. This statement enters into pragmatic contradiction with the second affirmation: *if the No wins, the peace process is over*. It is a declarative statement aimed at rhetorically convincing voters, but not binding, since after the failed referendum the president considered it his duty to continue with the peace process. Thus, a subsequent endorsement was carried out in the Congress of the Republic.

*(6) In the referendum, citizens will choose between peace and war, as well as suffering and hope, between tears and social coexistence, between poverty and opportunity.*

It is a declarative argument that makes a judgment to rhetorically encourage the electorate to support its position. The rhetorical argument is based on the fact that the approval of the referendum is presented as the only way to achieve peace, as opposed to the military policy of the previous government or the lack of support for the process.

*(7) If the referendum is not approved, the country returns to war, not to the negotiating table, but to urban warfare.*

This is a declarative, judicative argument, which tries to convince the electorate to support the process. This is not conclusive, as after losing the referendum the president continued with the peace process. By presenting the referendum as a guarantee of national harmony, it overestimated what could be achieved through the endorsement mechanism, by establishing the idea that the decision would be between the nation's supreme assets and war, or between the country's integral development and the absolute loss of opportunities for growth.

The analysis of the main statements used by President Santos to frame the different milestones of the peace process before public opinion reveals the eminently performative nature of his narrative, while at the same time presenting certain ambivalences regarding the factual truth during the different phases of the process, expressed rhetorically through the use of argumentative fallacies that force a choice between opposing positions.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The qualitative analysis of the 33 statements made by Juan Manuel Santos through the presidential YouTube channel has made it possible to identify seven statements that make up the political frame of reference created for the presentation of the peace process launched with the FARC in Colombia. These statements highlight the capacity of the process to put an end to violence; establish an antagonistic dynamic between friends and enemies of peace; present the process as a guarantee to eradicate the crimes of the armed group; indicate that the political participation of the guerrillas will be limited; consider the peace process as an irreversible fact, and deem the approval of the referendum that endorses it necessary to put an end to violence and promote well-being in society.

The statements predominantly contain verbal resources typical of performative discourse (Austin, 1962). Santos uses judgmental verbs when he considers that the conditions are in place to open a dialogue process with the FARC. The executive verbs emphasize that the president acts according to the power conferred upon him. Commitment verbs express the commitments that the president makes to Colombian society and to the FARC. Likewise, he uses expository verbs to declare the government's intention in the different phases of the process. Behavioral verbs appear less frequently to express gratitude for the support received, specifically at the international level.

The verification of the statements made enabled the identification of some traits of political lies. An ambivalent relationship with the factual reality has been found in the rhetoric used by the president when posing a fallacious disjunctive that divides Colombian society into two groups. The argumentative fallacy consists in situating as enemies of peace those who do not support this process in its tangible form. Similarly, a certain contradiction appears between the desire to have the social support sought by calling the referendum and the subsequent continuity with the peace process, despite the negative result of the consultation. It should be noted that, although in the president's discourses one can find a certain absence of factual truth, as well as argumentative fallacies, it is not possible to know the intention with which these statements were pronounced.

More easily noted is that President Santos' statements do not fall within the framework of what is called modern political lies. The statements do not deny the factual reality about the armed conflict, known by the Colombian society as a whole, and do not try to transform the sense of history. It does not lead society to self-deception about the political present, but tries to persuade about the convenience of opening a process of change. It does not aim to achieve a collective deception, imposed with violence, although the legitimacy of the decisions taken may be questioned and, above all, it does not underestimate the role of civil society or intermediate institutions, but wants to link them to the peace process.

### **Limitations and future research**

The results of this work are limited by the sample selected, since other presidential discourses corresponding to the same period are not analyzed. Nor are statements from other government sources or alternatives to the official discourse considered, the study of which would be relevant to expand this research. Future research can establish comparative frameworks that highlight the discursive differences between the political actors involved in the peace process in Colombia. In a post-truth social context, this work offers a relevant and replicable model of analysis, which allows us to delimit the performative features and political lies in the discourses of different political actors.

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## APPENDIX 1

*Peace Process Chronology (2012-2016)*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G6sxF--iru27SQsFXv2I2pNA84d0mhZb/view?usp=sharing>

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