

Enduring Civilian Support for Political Actors with Coercive Legacies

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DRAFT

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Abstract

In 2003, paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño claimed that the Colombian militias controlled 35% of Congress. After the militias' decommissioning, the extent of this political influence became a national and international scandal – *parapolítica* – and implicated large parts of the political class. Senators, governors, and mayors were investigated, jailed, and convicted for their links to the paramilitaries who themselves were found guilty of widespread crimes against humanity. Given the coercive legacies of these politicians and their national disrepute, we would anticipate that their political careers and those of their allies would become doomed. While such a dynamic manifested itself in some places, in many others, para-politicians and their heirs continued to win office. What explains the presence and performance of militia-tied politicians in elections? Why do citizens support political actors with violent pasts and do so continuously over time? To answer these questions, I analyze an original database of the electoral fates of Colombian militia-politicians and their successors in democratic politics from 2006–2014. This article contributes to our understanding of citizen voting patterns, transitional justice, post-civil war successor parties, and the quality of democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

A surprising feature of post-conflict environments is the large number of citizens who, after winning peace, vote for political parties with deep roots in the violent organizations of the past. Why do citizens support political actors with violent pasts and do so continuously over time? The durability of the success of human rights abusers and criminals at the polls is perplexing from an ethical standpoint and puzzling from a theoretical point of view. Moreover, it has important implications for the durability and quality of peace, democracy, and governance.

Existing accounts assume that postwar citizens confer their support to demilitarized political actors either because they continue to be coerced or because they share these actors' wartime ideology. The former explanation finds voting for human rights abusers puzzling and assumes that free agents would not vote in this fashion if they had the choice. Therefore, they must not; peace does not usually bring an immediate end to coercion. The latter case finds these voting patterns unsurprising, especially if the armed group was not highly or indiscriminately abusive and did a good job of fostering civilian solidarity. Both explanations eliminate the need to study postwar attitudes and behavior as they are largely dictated by wartime dynamics. I challenge this view by arguing that, in many cases, citizens voluntarily elect political actors who objectively exacted a heavy toll on civilians. They do so because they are, as most citizens, retrospective and prospective voters. I argue that postwar voters consider not objective rates of atrocity, but instead, how the violence is perceived, spun and justified. Violence becomes justified through intergroup bias and if it generated improvements in security. In this case, the former coercive actors come to own security issues because they are rewarded for their past performance and deemed credible providers of security going forward, especially where insecurity remains highly salient.

To test this argument, I use an original database of the electoral success of Colombian militia-tied politicians over time (2006-2014) and space. This project makes several contributions. It bridges the literature on authoritarian politics and transitions to democracy with that on civil war politics and transitions to peace. It studies not the rebel groups, which have received greater scholarly attention, but the militias. There exists no literature, to my knowledge, on the political postwar trajectories of militias over time and specifically on their success at the ballot box at their war's end. And it shows the importance of considering not only objective atrocities, but also how violence is perceived and the psychological mechanisms that drive civilian behavior in postwar environments. These have important implications for transitional justice and reconciliation.

PUZZLE

During the paramilitaries' reign in Colombia, the illegal non-state militias sought to permeate all facets of Colombia's society, politics, and economy. They significantly modified the political geography of twelve of Colombia's thirty-two federal departments, partially transformed others, won substantial parliamentary support, influenced presidential elections, and captured local governance (López 2010; Romero 2007). In 2001, the top paramilitary commanders met in Santa Fe de Ralito with politicians and members of the national legislature to sign a secret document calling for the "refounding of the country." Politicians saw the paramilitaries as advocates in their electoral competitions (Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos 2013). They possessed the capacity to intimidate voters through terror and assassination, buy

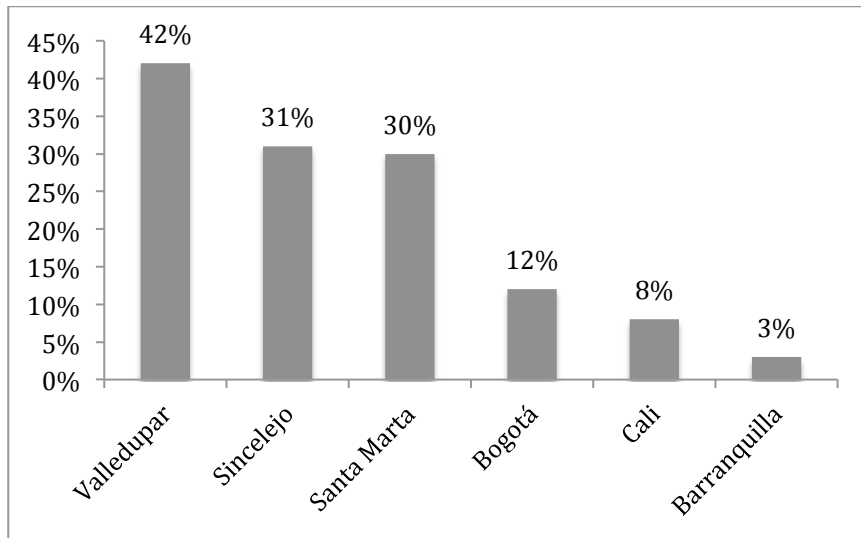
votes, eliminate or threaten political rivals, coerce voter abstention, manipulate or stuff ballots, steal voter IDs, and transport voters between districts.²

In 2005, the parapolitica scandal erupted.³ The mass media, human rights groups, international organizations, and transitional justice regime revealed the extensive collusion and alliances between local and national politicians and the illegal paramilitary groups. By June 2016, 104 members of Congress were under investigation and 66 had been convicted of links with the paramilitaries. Following the paramilitaries' decommissioning, daily stories and free testimonies (“versiones libres”) uncovered the extent of the atrocities committed by these violent non-state actors and, by association, the extent to which large sectors of the political class were implicated in these crimes against humanity. Given the revelation of these connections, we might anticipate that the ghosts from these parapoliticians' pasts would plague them equally in the polls, with popular support falling for parapoliticians across the board. Instead, enduring popular support for these political actors varied significantly across time and space.

Responding to a 2007 survey conducted by *Revista Semana*, “Would you vote for at least one of the politicians accused of paramilitary connections?” only 3 percent of the population in Barranquilla said “yes” while 8 percent in Cali and 12 percent in Bogotá responded “yes.” However, in Santa Marta and Sincelejo, approximately a third of the population said “yes” and, in Valledupar, a staggering 42 percent, unabashed, affirmed that they would vote for a parapolítico in prison or under investigation (*Revista Semana* 2007).

² Defensoría del Pueblo Reports 2002, 2004; Valencia, 2007; Semana, 2006a. In the municipality of San Onofre in the coastal department of Sucre, for example, paramilitary jefe “Cadena” sent trucks “picking people up” before the elections of 2002.

³ See Barrera and Nieto Matiz (2010).



Source: Revista Semana 2007.

Anecdotal evidence highlights similar levels of variation. Alvaro García Romero, “El Gordo García,” began his illustrious elected political career in 1982 when he joined the ranks of the Congreso. To maintain uninterrupted political hegemony over the Caribbean coast until 2010, he sponsored and colluded with the paramilitaries. Judicial investigations revealed that in 1997, he engaged in meetings to set up these illegal armed groups and to plot the massacres in Maceyo. Despite the demobilization of the paramilitaries in his districts and the eruption of the parapolítica scandal, he remained a congressman until finally, in 2010, he was convicted and sentenced to 40 years in jail. The legacy of this coercive political actor nonetheless endured. In 2014, his sister Teresita García Romero decided to participate in the congressional elections. Inheriting her parapolítico brother’s political power, she won a seat.

The case of Hugo Águilar presents another illuminating example of enduring civilian support for these coercive actors after the peace accord. Águilar’s initial claim to fame was in his role as the police officer who killed Pablo Escobar. After completing his police service in 2000, he became a representative of the assembly of Santander and then, in 2004, was elected governor

of Santander. In 2011, the courts found him guilty of sponsoring the paramilitaries and benefiting from their undemocratic electoral support during his tenure as governor. Sentenced to nine years in prison and banned from political participation for twenty years, his political legacy nonetheless persisted through his two sons, Richard Aguilar Villa, elected Santander's governor 2012-2015, and Mauricio Aguilar, elected to Colombia's Senate.

While additional examples abound,⁴ there also exist cases in which parapoliticians' power eroded, either quickly, or over time. Eleonora Pineda was born in Pueblo Nuevo, Córdoba, a paramilitary stronghold. She served as a nurse in the region before suddenly reinventing herself as a politician. In 2001, new to politics, as many other parapoliticians, she was elected to the town council of the municipality of Tierralta, and, after only one year, decided to participate in the congressional elections. She won a landslide in the 2002 congressional elections, with nearly 800,000 votes, among the largest vote share in that election. Salvatore Mancuso, a notorious paramilitary commander in the coastal region, had buttressed her political fate. Following the paramilitaries' demobilization, her political career came to an abrupt end. She was found guilty of links to the paramilitaries and, in 2007, sentenced to seven years in jail. After being released in 2009 for good conduct, she has remained entirely invisible to local and national politics. She has not resurfaced in the polls; she left no heirs; and she sustained no enduring political legacy in the region.

Overall, according to Ariel and Valencia (2014), the current Colombian Congress, over a decade following demobilization, still has 70 politicians who are themselves parapoliticians, are these individuals' direct political heirs, or are politicians with enduring connections to illegal

⁴ For example, Araujo, Dieb Maloof, Vicente Blel and Habib Merheg, having been exposed as parapoliticians before the 2006 elections with strong ties to notorious paramilitary commanders and narcotraffickers, were reelected to the Senate. Unable to use the name of any of the major Colombian parties, they founded their own party, "Colombia Viva" (Fergusson, Vargas, and Vela 2013).

armed actors. This includes 33 senators and 37 members of the House of Representatives. This means that at least 27% of the members of congress preserve the legacy of coercive politics.

What explains the enduring, and yet highly varied, support for political actors with violent pasts? I argue that voters treat former coercive parties as they do other parties: evaluating them retrospectively and prospectively. To the extent that they can claim credit for improving security (and, to a lesser extent, economic) conditions, can spin their atrocities as justified, and can sell themselves as the best able to provide protection into the future, their support will endure. I explore this explanation alongside two others. A first intuitive explanation for support for political actors with unsavory pasts, advanced by Fergusson et al. (2013), would be manifest coercion and voter pressure, especially in places of persistent state weakness. A second explanation derived from a burgeoning literature in Political Science on rebels' path from bullets to ballots would argue that the armed groups' voluntary wartime popular support, extent of civilian atrocities, and resource richness would drive variation in their postwar electoral success.

In this paper, I introduce two new datasets to evaluate the strength of these various explanations. The first is on individual parapoliticians and their heirs; the second, on the endurance and strength of civilian support for these politicians implicated in the parapolítico scandal at the municipal level. To further explore the mechanisms of citizen support, I use LAPOP survey data from 2005-2014 and qualitative evidence from interviews in regions in which parapolítica endured and where it waned. My goals are twofold: to better understand why civilians support political actors with violent pasts, and do so over time, both by developing new theory and by extracting explanations from existing literatures; and to engage in a longitudinal, sub-national analysis of the understudied political postwar trajectories of paramilitary groups.

EXPLAINING DURABLE SUPPORT FOR PARAPOLITICIANS

Why do citizens vote for politicians in bed with the victimizers who tortured, massacred, and kidnapped fellow civilians, politicians accused of corruption, of funneling public finances to illegal armed groups, and of filling their coffers with illicit campaign donations? Why, in particular, do they vote and, often elect, these politicians after the judiciary has revealed all of these crimes?

The two leading explanations, which I discuss below, suggest that citizens must do so either because they are coerced, or if voluntary, because the violence was not that bad, those voting were themselves not victims of the violence, or they had strong ideological attachment to the violent groups.

Retrospective and Prospective Voting

While coercion and wartime relations undoubtedly play an important role in determining postwar citizen attitudes and behavior, I argue that they are insufficient to account for this puzzling behavior. Instead, postwar citizens, as voters around the world, vote retrospectively and prospectively.⁵ As former coercive actors, security and law and order are militia-tied politicians' valence issues on which they can claim competence, credibility, and past performance (Egan 2008, 22). These politicians are well positioned to continue to win votes if the militias' violence can be justified by intergroup bias and by claims of bringing peace and security, and if insecurity remains a highly salient issue.

I argue that intergroup bias influences how violence is perceived, justified, remembered, and spun. One potential basis for in-group identification is geographical identity. Armed groups vary in the geography of their recruitment. Some factions are local to the places in which they operate; others are non-local; still others are a mixture. This influences citizens' relationships to

⁵ See Downs (1957); Fiorina (1981).

the militias' political associates after demobilization.

Where violence is carried out by local militia factions, anger levels are reduced because the perpetrators are deemed part of the in-community and the violence is perceived to be justified by the motive of protecting that community. The local paramilitaries and parapoliticians' social ties and in-group membership exert a similar effect on levels of anger as a truth commission.⁶ Knowledge of the offender's identity and motivations, as revealed through multifaceted local ties, mitigates anger not via the ability to know whom to punish,⁷ but through a different mechanism: by altering the information available to the victims and civilians. Learning the perpetrators' motives and circumstances can un-do the distorting effects of anger on information and beliefs; that is, by individualizing the perpetrator and showing his/her humanity, shared community bonds can enable victims to overcome stereotypes brought on by anger. Rather than see the perpetrators as inherently bad, their actions are understood in their context. In contrast, non-local forces are more likely to be punished for their violence. Without social ties and informational short-cuts to moderate beliefs about blame, their violence confirms biases about the out-group members' inherent nature. It is through these psychological mechanisms that parapoliticians' membership in the local community reduces levels of anger at an accelerated rate and facilitates citizen support.

This logic echoes that of studies that find that victimization by co-ethnics can recast atrocities in a positive light. For example, based on a survey experiment across 204 Afghani villages in five Pashtun-dominated regions, Lyall, Blair, and Imai (2013) demonstrate that, while victimization led to rejection in the case of an out-group, there existed a "systematic tendency to

⁶ See Petersen and Zukerman Daly 2010.

⁷ Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock 1999.

interpret the actions of one's own in-group in a more favorable light.”⁸

Violence becomes justified not only by intergroup bias, but also by claims of bringing peace and security, activating retrospective voting. If militia-tied politicians can claim credit for establishing hegemonic control (often by eliminating rebels and criminals) and bringing a reduction in violence, they will be well positioned to “own” security valence issues.⁹ Doing so, in turn, serves to recalibrate citizens’ cost/benefit analysis of the rebels and militias’ past and to render the calculations net positive: the stability and peace the armed groups brought comes to be seen as outweighing their use of atrocities.

At a local level, parapoliticians are also likely judged retrospectively on how much the actions of the paramilitaries damaged property and sparked capital flight or conversely how much their clientelism, governance, and (often illicit) resource booms bolstered local economies.

However, the parapoliticians’ continued electoral success depends not only on repackaging their violence, branding on law and order, and “saving” the country from rebel and criminal “threats”, but also on the salience of these threats over time. This salience determines if their “pasts” are actually “usable” (Grzymala-Busse 2002) in the post-demobilization period and if they can effectively activate not only retrospective, but also prospective voting on expectations of future party performance.¹⁰ Fergusson et al. (2014), for example, reveal the “need for enemies” to sustain the comparative advantage of and support for parties running on security-oriented tickets in the case of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe.

H₁: I anticipate that politicians tied to local, in-group paramilitaries would perform better at the polls than those linked to non-local, out-group paramilitaries.

H₂: Parapoliticians will gain more votes after demobilization if conditions improved in

⁸ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)-inflicted harm reduced civilian support for ISAF and increased support for the Taliban, whereas Taliban-inflicted harm did not increase support for ISAF.

⁹ For example, former liberation movements tend to exhibit high partisanship over time as do any movements that are “identified in the public mind as protecting and representing the national interest” (Grzymala-Busse 2016)

¹⁰ See Downs (1957); Fiorina (1981).

the locality before demobilization.

H₃: Parapolitics will remain strong over time where security remains a salient issue.

Coercion

The most obvious alternative explanation to account for parapoliticians and their heirs' persistent success at the polls is continued voter intimidation and coercion. While Colombia's paramilitary groups demobilized, roughly half of them then remilitarized. And even those that demilitarized remained latently coercive in the short run (Daly 2016). Meanwhile, since the militias' peace accords, not only have resurgent paramilitaries populated the security landscape in Colombia, but rebels, drug cartels, and common criminal gangs have maintained a strong presence in the country's contested territory. The anticipation that a peace agreement ends violence overnight and that wartime patterns of politics suddenly halt is unfounded. Accordingly, the enduring influence of politicians tied to illegal non-state actors becomes unsurprising; it is not voluntary support, but coerced votes. The coercion explanation can also largely handle the temporal and spatial variation in enduring parapolitics as the presence of armed actors in Colombia has remained in flux, shifting in its geography across time.

Fergusson et al. (2013) make a compelling case for coercion. They argue that, when exposed by the media, parapoliticians intensify their coercive efforts to gain votes. These actors' ability to exercise coercion depends on state strength. Accordingly, they find that where there is paramilitary presence, less presence of (judiciary) institutions, and the available judicial institutions prove inefficient, senate candidates involved in the scandal gained significantly more votes. This generates the following hypotheses:

H₄: Where armed groups "friendly" to the parapolitics cause remain present, we should expect parapolitics to endure and to remain powerful.

H₅: Where electoral fraud risk is high (and electoral coercion more feasible), we should anticipate durable and strong parapolitics.

Wartime Relations with the Civilian Population

The prominent scholarly work on this topic assumes that wartime popular support is instead largely voluntary and therefore, where pronounced, it will endure after the war, when the constraints of coercion are lifted.

This approach derives from a recent literature in Political Science that studies the transformation of armed groups into political parties following peace agreements (De Zeeuw 2008; Lyons 2016; Manning 2004; Manning and Smith 2016; Marshall and Ishiyama 2016; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz 2016). Scholars have focused only on rebel groups and only on their party formation in the immediate aftermath of peace accords. However, the variables identified by this literature may have explanatory leverage over the question of ex-militias' enduring political power over time.

Söderberg Kovacs (2007, 8) argues that insurgents' reincarnation as peaceful politicians depends on the "level of popular support among the population at large at the time of the transition (followers)." Klapdor (2009) similarly writes that "the more popular support a rebel group enjoys at the moment of the peace process the more likely it is to successfully transition." Shugart (1992) suggests that if a rebel group has focused on cultivating a mass base during the armed conflict it is more likely to be able to count on its supporters to vote for it in elections. In other words, wartime civilian support produces postwar electoral support.¹¹

This argument finds itself intertwined, in scholarly terms, with one focused on armed group abusiveness and on resource endowments. Specifically, it is assumed that wartime support, and thus postwar support, will be higher where groups were less abusive. Kalyvas (2006)

¹¹ On wartime support, see, for example, Arjona (2013) who argues that the quality of pre-existing civilian institutions conditions civilian resistance during war. Wood (2003) posits that rebels' activation of the pleasure of agency affords them endorsement. Petersen (2001) proposes that community networks pull individuals from passive to active support, and Parkinson (2013) shows how women support fighters in their social webs.

demonstrates theoretically and empirically that indiscriminate violence backfires. Berrebi and Klor (2008); and Kibris (2011) show how terrorist violence creates a backlash against perpetrators of violence. Canetti et al. (2013); and Canetti-Nisim et al. (2009) similarly find that, through psychological mechanisms of distress and threat perception, victims of political violence radicalize against their victimizers.¹² Balcells (2011) illustrates how wartime victimization (especially that of a severe nature) leads to long-lasting postwar rejection of the perpetrators' identities (e.g., due to revenge, resentment, or moral outrage), hostile feelings, attitudes, and behaviors toward social or ethnic groups associated with the perpetrator(s) and nonsupport for the political group(s) with the political identity (or label) in the elections and support for groups with rival identities.

Abuse, in turn, is traced back to territorial control (Kalyvas 2006) and resource endowments (Weinstein 2002). The behavior of resource-endowed groups, those deriving their financing from drugs, gems, and other loot, is posited to be characterized by a disregard for the interests of the civilian population and higher levels of abuse, leading to civilian rejection postwar (Weinstein 2007, 216). Others, however, would argue that resource-richness instead could enable patronage and increase payouts to supporters, and could funnel important financing into campaigns, enhancing the groups' vote share.

Differentiating the paramilitaries and their allied politicians in terms of the extent of atrocities they committed; whether they were of a more criminal or political variant; and the level of sympathy for the paramilitary cause among the local civilian population would enable us to apply this logic to the parapoliticians. Specifically, we should expect:

H₆: Parapolitics will endure after the peace accords where wartime support for the paramilitaries was greatest.

H₇: Politicians associated with paramilitary factions that engaged in higher levels of

¹² See also Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson (2006).

violence against the civilian population should gain a smaller vote share in postwar elections with their legacy fading quickly over time.

H₈: We should anticipate that politicians tied to more resource-rich (criminal) paramilitary groups to suffer worse (better) electoral performance after decommissioning than their resource-poor (ideological) counterparts.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

To evaluate these varied explanations for the durability of coercive rule in the aftermath of peace accords, I created individual and municipal level datasets.

The individual-level dataset registers the 297 *parapoliticians* (politicians with a direct relationship with the paramilitaries) and their *heirs* (politicians with a direct relationship with the parapoliticians). Of these, 98 are direct heirs. I exclude indirect heirs: candidates endorsed and supported by the parapoliticians' heirs (i.e. two degrees of separation from the original parapoliticians). Of the heirs, 36 were direct political allies in the parapoliticians' political network and 24 were parapoliticians' family members (spouses, siblings, children, or parents). Of the cases, to date, 66 involve convictions.

To construct the individual parapolitician dataset, I first identified the names of paramilitary-linked politicians from public datasets and research reports. The main resources were the *Verdad Abierta* Parapolíticos dataset (2013), Misión de Observación Electoral's Dataset (2013) and Congreso Visible reports. I triangulated these names with multiple sources to verify and complete information for each individual parapolitician case (Lopez, 2010; Avila and Leon 2014; Romero, 2007; Giraldo, 2008). I then re-verified the information with official data I requested from the Colombian Supreme Court on congressmen being prosecuted and convicted by the judicial authorities for relationships with illegal armed groups from January 1980 to February 2016. I then transcribed and digitalized the responses to these "derechos de petición" and ensured inclusion of all politicians under investigation, convicted, or suspected of

paramilitary ties.

For the cases of parapolitician heirs, I used the reports and books published by Fundación Paz y Reconciliación (PARES), which has mapped the networks linking former parapoliticians and their political legacies, and reports of the Misión Observatorio Electoral. The reports specify the names, political parties and type of relationships between the parapoliticians and the politicians who inherited their power.

After completing and verifying the names of the parapoliticians, I gained information about their judicial status from 60 judicial sentences of the Supreme Court provided to me by the Fiscalía General de la Nación. For information about the candidates' individual characteristics, I used the datasets listed above and national and regional newspapers and journals including *El Espectador*, *El Tiempo*, *El Pílon*, *Heraldo*, *La Silla Vacía*, *Verdad Abierta*, *La Nación*, *Semana*, among others. Electoral data derives from CEDE.

I then constructed a municipal level dataset. To do so, I matched the number of votes for each parapolitician and each heir in each set of elections (2006, 2010, 2014) in each municipality. I then created a variety of indicators of “enduring parapolitics” after the paramilitaries' demobilization. I focus both on the intensity of parapolitics and the duration of parapolitics. In many cases the data is truncated because the parapoliticians remain in office through to the present. I address this issue below.

To measure intensity, I combine the number of votes cast for parapoliticians in each municipality in each election and divide it by the total number of votes cast in that municipality in that election. The unit of analysis of this dataset is the municipality-election.¹³ To capture duration, I test various thresholds and create a dichotomous variable coded “1” if the vote share surpassed the threshold and parapolitics can be deemed enduring in that place at that time; coded

¹³ I discuss how I address temporal and spatial dependence between observations below.

“0” if it falls short of the threshold. I then count the number of years of enduring parapolitics in each municipality.

EXPLANTORY FACTORS

Retrospective and Prospective Voting

To measure the geography of recruitment of the paramilitaries and intergroup bias (*hypothesis 1*), I recorded the name of the paramilitary bloque with which the politician allied. To code whether a militia group was local or not, I employed survey data of all 35,310 ex-paramilitaries’ self-reported locations of origin. From the survey data, I also determined to which paramilitary organization each individual ex-combatant belonged. Next, I gathered municipality-level information on each armed group’s zones of operation at the time of demobilization. Experts often contest these mappings, so I triangulated information from three different classified sources: Colombia’s Fiscalía General de la Nación (Attorney General), Justice and Peace Division, which generated these data using the confidential testimonies of 2,700 former top and mid-ranking paramilitary commanders; the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace; and the Organization of American States (OAS) Peace Mission (Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz, MAPP); plus one open source, the “Verdad Abierta” project of the Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and the Colombian magazine *Revista Semana*. Merging these sources of information with the survey data, I was able to estimate whether each individual was stationed “locally” by whether the zone of operation of his or her armed faction corresponded with his or her place of origin. I coded each individual in this binary way—local or nonlocal—and then calculated the proportion of local combatants at the organization level, dividing the number of local combatants by the total force size of the armed brigade. This generated a continuous measure of the

proportion of the armed group that was local to its place of military deployment. Among the thirty-seven paramilitary organizations, the share of their units who were local to their war theater ranged from 11 percent to 89 percent, covering nearly the full spectrum of recruitment geographies. I constructed a dichotomous version of the recruitment patterns: simply local or nonlocal by grouping together local and intermediate groups, using a threshold of one-third local combatants. Groups with fewer than one-third local members I coded as “nonlocal.”

To test retrospective voting on security issues (*hypothesis 2*), I use the change in the homicide level (homicides per 100,000) in each municipality in the year before demobilization. I also use an indicator for the paramilitary group’s strength upon surrender as an indicator for whether it cleansed the territory of guerrillas and whether it brand itself on security lines.

For the salience of insecurity, I use data on homicide rates in the year before each election. I also consider LAPOP survey data on security salience for a restricted set of municipalities.

To operationalize economic retrospective voting, I use data on changes in the conventional poverty indicator in Colombia “unsatisfied basic needs” (NBI) in the year prior to each election.

Coercion

For a coercion argument to be correct for the period 2006-present, after the paramilitaries decommissioned, it should be the case that the parapoliticians performed better in areas with *remilitarized* paramilitaries and BACRIM (not in all areas of former paramilitary presence). These resurgent groups also must show themselves to be committed to political interference, not merely pursuing criminal activities under the radar (of course criminal groups also engage in extensive corruption and political manipulation so here, I question not the groups’ motives

(ideological or material), but their means: are the rearmed groups engaging in coercion for electoral ends as their paramilitary predecessors?). To capture parapolitician-allied armed groups, I use the presence of the remilitarized paramilitaries, relying on municipal-level data from Daly (2016).

The coercion argument posits that parapoliticians will perform better not only where there is a supply of coercion, but also where coercion and fraud is feasible and easier to undertake: where the state is weak. However, the strength of the state and judicial presence likely matters less than does the local government's tolerance of non-democratic means. I therefore use alternative indicators: the risk of voter intimidation, electoral violence, and fraud as collected by the Misión Observatorio Electoral (MOE). This data collection is still in process.

Abuse and Loot

To measure the abusiveness of the paramilitary groups to which the parapoliticians were allied in order to test H_7 , I construct several indicators. One: total violence committed by paramilitaries before they demobilized. By paramilitary violence, I mean internal displacement, homicides, massacres, kidnappings, (explosive and incendiary) terrorist attacks, incursions to towns, assaults, attacks on politicians, and attacks against the civilian population. For these indicators, I use the data of Grupo de Memoria Historia (GMH) on paramilitary violence 1981-2006. I first create a summation of these abuses, *AUC_Atrocities*. Because these measures tend to be noisy, I consider a dichotomous variable, indicating whether the municipality has a value of paramilitary abusiveness above the 75th percentile. Following Acemoglu et al. (2013) and Fergusson et al. (2013), I also use a third complementary strategy and extract the principal component of the attacks and displacement measures, and use this principal component as the

measure of paramilitary abuse.

Since emotional responses to violence may have a sharp decay function (Petersen and Daly 2010), I consider the total violence committed by paramilitaries in the five years before they demobilized. Additionally, civilians may consider not only absolute levels of atrocity, but relative and per capita ones. I therefore include a measure of violence committed by paramilitaries relative to total violence committed by all armed actors, before demobilization and an indicator of paramilitary atrocities per capita.

To measure resource-richness (H_8), I use the total hectares of coca grown in the municipality in the year before demobilization. Wartime support (H_6) for the paramilitaries is available from LAPOP survey data only for a subsample of municipalities. For these cases, I use the survey question from the pre-demobilization period: “To what extent do you trust the paramilitaries?” with response categories ranging from 1-7, increasing in trust.

Availability of Alternatives

The analysis also uses three controls capturing the availability of alternatives. First, I consider the length of parapolitics between the first election in which parapoliticians won and the paramilitaries’ demobilization. Second, I code the degree of political competition at the time of demobilization using Robinson et al. (2006)’s categories: hegemony (80%-100%); control (60%-79%) and competitive (0%-59%). Third, I consider an indicator capturing whether the parapolitician predated the paramilitaries (i.e. whether s/he was in power before rise of paramilitaries)

ESTIMATION

I engage in regression analyses to estimate the effects of the independent variables on both the share of parapolitician votes over time and on the duration of parapolitics. Specifically, I estimate the following models:

To do: (1) include estimation equations, (2) talk about robustness estimation

RESULTS

I begin by testing the eight main hypotheses on the determinants of support for parapoliticians running for the 166 seat Cámara de Representantes (House of Representatives). I look first at the results from ordinary least squares regression of the intensity of electoral support on each family of factors separately as well as jointly. Panel A presents results for the test of the hypothesis that coercion drives support for parapolitics. Panel B tests wartime relations with civilians (support, victimization, and resources) and Panel C examines the results for retrospective and prospective voting driving support for parapolitics. Finally, Panel D includes measures of the availability of political alternatives.

The entirely preliminary results suggest that because it is the perceptions of violence that matter, the occurrence of atrocity can tell us relatively little about how the victimized society will vote. While coercion undoubtedly plays a role, it is not the only predictor of enduring support for political actors with violent pasts. Instead, intergroup bias may help explain how violence is spun and justified. Whether the politicians were tied to militias who were strong upon demobilizing I interpret as an indication of their ability to “own” the security issue and offer themselves as credible providers of security going forward. And economic retrospective voting seems to matter even in the case of parapoliticians.

The data also highlight an additional explanation, focused not on the nature of the parapoliticians, but on the nature of preserved political competition. Are there any alternatives?

Or did the parapoliticians, with their coercive allies, eliminate all opposition and establish a monopoly on elected power? Support is relative to alternatives; it is not absolute,¹⁴ and alternatives become more likely if wartime parapolitics was short lived and never hegemonic. Social relations and hierarchies are not quickly dismantled. Civilians become accustomed to being ruled by less than democratic means. Where parapolitics has reigned for decades, generations grow up only knowing illicit politicians as authority figures. Social institutions are sticky in the short to medium term for several reasons: silent coercion, psychological power and fear, but also because of standard operating procedures; obedience becomes habit.¹⁵

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Panel A: Coercion</i>					
Remilitarization	0.03***	(0.01)			0.02* (0.01)
<i>Panel B: Wartime Relations</i>					
Auc_Attacks		0.00**	(0.00)		0.00 (0.00)
Coca		-0.00***	(0.00)		0.00 (0.00)
<i>Panel C: Retrospective and Prospective Voting</i>					
Non-Local			-0.06*** (0.01)		-0.04*** (0.01)
Defeat			-0.07*** (0.01)		-0.09*** (0.01)
Homicide Rt			0.00 (0.00)		0.00 (0.00)
NBI Rt			0.00 (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)
<i>Panel D: Availability of Alternatives</i>					
Length of Parapolitics				0.03*** (0.00)	0.03*** (0.00)
Hegemony of Parapolitics				0.14*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.01)
Observations	3040	3039	3040	3179	2980

¹⁴ Former rebel groups' success as political parties is often a vote *against* other parties rather than a vote *for* the rebel-to-party. The Nepalese Maoists, Hamas, and M19 are examples of this (Interviews by author, West Bank, 20 May 2009; ICG 2008).

¹⁵ I also plan to investigate if the politicians predated the paramilitaries. In some places, the paramilitaries created new politicians from scratch, running their own new candidates; in other places, the established political elite created the paramilitaries; in still other places, it constituted more of a mixture of these two strategies. Eleonora Pineda, for example, had no political relationships with the networks of traditional elites in Cordoba, and so, her political career ended as abruptly as it had begun. Where politicians and their families were in political power long before the paramilitaries emerged, remained in power throughout the paramilitaries' reign, it may be less surprising that they tend to endure in power long after the paramilitaries demobilize.

Standard errors in parentheses
(Unadjusted two-sided p-values.)
Ordinary least squares
Standard errors account for municipality clustering.
* p < 0:05, ** p < 0:01, *** p < 0:001

To study the endurance of parapolitics, a second set of analyses use as the dependent variable the duration of time until either the parapolitician loses political power or the observation is censored. Therefore, the appropriate statistical technique is an event history model. For these analyses, I use a Cox proportional hazards model.

The third set of analyses examine the intensity and duration of parapolitics in the 102-seat Colombian *Senado* (Senate).

To do: Complete results, discussion, explore mechanisms of findings with LAPOP survey data and qualitative evidence.

CONCLUSION

Millions of civilians face the threat of violence in conflict zones around the world. With peace comes the hope for an end to this violence, coercive governance, and undemocratic politics. However, instead citizens often elect violent, corrupt, and non-democratic politicians, but do so through democratic means. Understanding the mechanics of these selections is a first analytic step. With this knowledge, we can then seek to understand a second analytic step: what are the implications of former coercive actors in power for the quality of peace, democracy and governance?

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