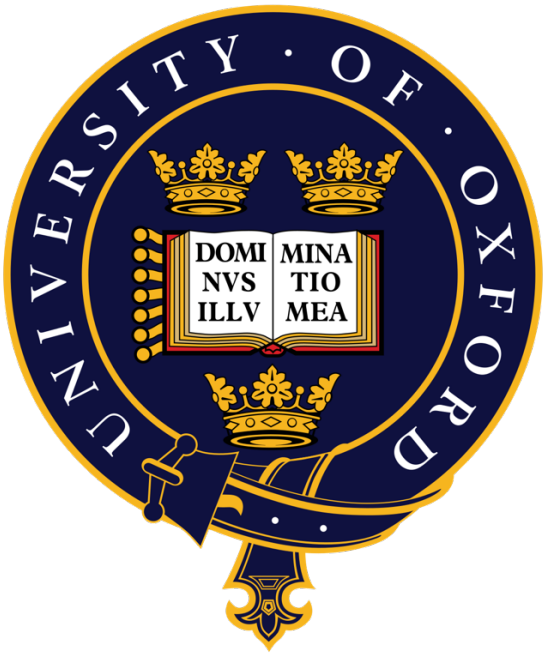



# When Rebels Turn Protesters: Demobilized Insurgents and Social Uprisings in Colombia

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics*

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## Abstract

Following civil conflict peace agreements, societies often continue to experience political volatility. Cleavages that provided reasons for some society segments to seek armed action may still exist, and violence might have increased political polarization. Consequently, peace process societies often face diverse expressions of discontent, including mass protests. This raises the question of if and how demobilized armed group members behave in such protests. Are they willing to participate and use protests as a new form to articulate their interests and political demands? What implications does their participation have for protest dynamics and political stability? How does the rest of society react to such protest participation?

This thesis explores these questions by examining the participation of demobilized members of the FARC guerrilla group in Colombia during mass protest waves following the country's 2016 peace agreement. The thesis contains three research articles. Article 1 is theory-testing and explores through qualitative field research in Colombia, including 94 interviews, to which extent existing social movement theories explain variations in former rebels' participation during mass protests, finding that existing links to protesting communities, integration into networks of former comrades, and perceived security risks had the most influence on former rebels' mobilization decision. Building upon the same 94 interviews, Article 2 is theory-building and examines the implications of former FARC rebels' protest participation, finding that their involvement reduced violence levels, enhanced their societal reintegration, and led to a professionalization of the protests. Finally, Article 3 provides an online survey experiment to assess how the protest participation of former FARC members and alleged links to vandalism alter public opinion, finding that former rebels' involvement reduces public support for protests but that vandalism weighs heavier. The analyses speak to the social movement and demobilized rebel literature and highlight the benefits of bridging these two literature streams.

I hereby certify that this thesis is the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated and due acknowledgment is given.

Signed



Date

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# Contents

**1 Introduction** **2**
1.1 Overview of the Project . . . 2
1.2 Elaboration of the Article-isation of the Project . . . 3
1.3 Introduction to the Papers and their Main Contributions . . . 4
1.4 Case Background and Selection . . . 6
1.5 Literature Review . . . 10
1.6 Reflections on the DPhil's Overarching Contribution . . . 13

**2 Article 1** **16**

**3 Article 2** **60**

**4 Article 3** **92**

**5 Conclusion** **160**
5.1 Takeaways Regarding the FARC's 2021 Protest Participation in Colombia . . . 160
5.1.1 Initial Insights . . . 160
5.1.2 Protest Participation as a Sign of Societal Reintegration . . . 161
5.1.3 Different Protest Participation Dynamics than by other Protesters . . . 162
5.2 Takeaways Regarding Former Rebels' Protest Participation in General . . . 163
5.3 Implications for Research and Policymaking . . . 165
5.4 Future Research Avenues . . . 167

**6 Bibliography of Introduction and Conclusion** **169**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview of the Project

During the last decades, civil conflicts have become increasingly frequent and a far more significant violence source than interstate conflicts (Pettersson et al., 2021). In many of these armed internal conflicts, the diverse actors include rebel groups, i.e., insurgent or guerrilla groups that are armed actors engaging in irregular conflicts against governments (Kalyvas & Balcells, 2010). Usually, these rebel groups have some political goals, such as territorial aims, ethnic and religious agendas, Marxist platforms, or attempts to overthrow the state (Matanock, 2017). While conflicts might have different forms of endings, from victories over stalemates to peace agreements, often the different involved sides also have political influence once the conflict is over. In the case of peace agreements, peace negotiators frequently establish such political participation through the agreement itself (Matanock, 2018a). Consequently, the political participation of former rebels is a common characteristic of peace processes (Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016).

This doctoral research project explores one particular aspect of former rebels' political participation following civil conflict peace agreements. While extensive literature exists on the transformation of rebel groups into political parties and the participation of former rebels in conventional party politics, both within large-N cross-country analyses and individual case studies, the literature review in this introduction shows that former rebels' participation in social movements and protests during peace processes have received less attention.

However, I argue that demobilized civil conflict rebels' participation during protests is relevant to political dynamics in peace process societies. Social media has made it much easier to organize protests, resulting in a surge of mobilizations across world regions in recent decades (Chenoweth et al., 2019). Peace process societies often suffer from political instability and volatility due to underlying structural factors and cleavages that provide reasons for contempt. Also, peace process societies usually include society segments that have proven during past conflict times to be willing to stand up and challenge the political and societal status quo by going as far as using armed action. It is, hence, likely that protests and contentious politics frequently also occur in societies in peace processes.

Since former rebels often have proven in the past their politicization and willingness to stand up for their interests, their political participation likely extends beyond political parties and formal political decision-making processes. Former rebels are thus likely participants in protests and social movements during peace processes.

Their participation might have significant consequences on protest dynamics, given that their politicization, experience in armed action, and logistical capabilities might enable them to impact protest demands and the professionalization of confrontational protest tactics. Likewise, former rebels' interactions during protests with fellow protesters and the authorities might foster or diminish their reintegration into society. Their involvement might also impact public attitudes towards the protests since demobilized rebels often face stigma due to their involvement in conflict-times atrocities. Therefore, understanding former rebels' protest participation may be relevant to comprehend social mobilization and political stability during peace processes.

Motivated by this relevance, this doctoral dissertation investigates which variables influence

the former rebels' decision to participate in protests, which impact such participation may have, and what kind of public reactions it may trigger, leveraging primarily the Colombian experience of mass protests that occurred following the 2016 peace agreement (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

In the remainder of this introduction, I first comment on the article-isation of this DPhil project by pointing to the motivation of developing three separate articles instead of one monograph. I then provide an introduction to the three articles covering their research questions, methodology and data, and the main contributions they provide to the literature. I then explain why Colombia is an adequate case study to analyze the phenomenon of demobilized rebels' participation in protests and give an overview of the country's armed internal conflict and social mobilizations following the 2016 peace agreement. Next, I provide an overview of the relevant literature the project addresses, covering general social movement literature and literature on mobilization during conflict and following peace agreements, literature on rebel political participation following peace agreements, and literature on demobilized rebels. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on the overarching findings of all three research articles.

## 1.2 Elaboration of the Article-isation of the Project

The three articles broadly address the same phenomenon - the involvement of demobilized rebels during social mobilizations in peace process societies. However, all three articles investigate different angles and build upon and speak to distinct streams of literature across political science and sociology. Such a multi-perspective and multi-disciplinary approach is adequate since former rebels' protest participation has diverse dimensions and implications, which follow very different dynamics.

The three articles do not intend to cover a holistic view of protest participation of former rebels following peace agreements but instead target three distinct issues that are frequently relevant in such settings: First, the variables that influence why such protest participation of former rebels occurs in the first place and with different levels of intensity. Second, the impact such protest participation of former rebels may have on protest dynamics and their societal reintegration. Third, the effect of former rebels' participation in protests on public perception of the protests since their participation may provide ample space for stigmatization by opponents of protests and rebels. All three articles leverage the experience of the former Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARC by the Spanish acronym) guerilla group in Colombia following its demobilization in 2016. The three articles' sequencing follows roughly the chronological order in which the analyzed phenomena occur during a wave of mass mobilization: First, former rebels need to decide whether they participate in the protests. Then, if they choose to become involved, their participation might trigger various consequences. Finally, their (alleged) participation might change public opinion.

Besides focusing on distinct aspects of former rebels' protest participation during peace processes, the three articles also build up on different streams of literature. Articles 1 and 2 build up mostly on existing social movement theories regarding the factors incentivizing individuals to mobilize and the consequences protest movements may generate for policymaking and beyond. Both articles thus apply insights from these existing studies that have focused on protesters without a rebel past to the particular case of (potential) protesters who are demobilized rebel group mem-

bers. Consequently, the articles add a specific case to the social movement literature and provide a bridge to the literature on political participation during peace processes and on demobilized rebels in general. Article 3, on the other hand, builds up more broadly on the peace studies literature and literature analyzing (former) rebel groups and their influence on public opinion. The third article thus addresses a slightly different field than articles 1 and 2, favoring approaching the different research questions as distinct research projects instead of one monograph.

Likewise, each article has very distinct contributions to the respective literature field. Whereas Article 1 highlights the differences between factors that drive former rebels and other potential protesters to mobilize and builds up heavily on existing social movement theories, Article 2 demonstrates the consequences of former rebels' protest participation in Colombia. Article 3 shows changes in Colombian public reactions triggered by such participation. The contributions across the three articles thus differ in the extent to which they are specific to the Colombian experience and the extent to which they address underlying theories. These differences further favor separate analyses. Also, regarding the methodology, the three articles follow distinct approaches ranging from qualitative theory testing (Article 1) and qualitative theory building (Article 2) to a quantitative online survey experiment (Article 3). Having the analysis split between three different research projects helps fully leverage the research potential of these three methods.

## 1.3 Introduction to the Papers and their Main Contributions

The following paragraphs introduce the three articles, including their research questions, methodologies, key findings, and central contributions to the existing political science and sociology literature. All three articles cover former rebels' protest participation and leverage the Colombian experience following the 2016 peace deal, focusing on three key elements: 1) The factors influencing the decision for such participation, 2) The impact of such participation, and 3) The public reaction that such participation generates. The contributions of this dissertation to the political science and sociology literature are thus manifold and vary across the three articles, yet all analyses contribute to discussions on post-conflict political stability and rebel political participation. A joint contribution of all three articles is that they highlight the particularities of former rebels' involvement in protests as opposed to (potential) protesters with a non-rebel past. Thus, they emphasize the need for rebel-specific analyses bridging social movement and peace studies literature.

Article 1 addresses the variables influencing the participation of demobilized rebels in protests during civil conflict peace processes. The title is: "Shall We Join? Factors Influencing Demobilized Rebels' Participation During Times of Popular Unrest." Motivated by vast regional variation in demobilized rebels' participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests as a starting point, the article analyzes the factors that influence former rebels' protest participation. Using extensive field research insights from Colombia, including 94 interviews with experts, former members of the FARC guerrilla group, politicians, protest participants, and staff of international organizations, the analysis finds that besides factors such as an alignment between protest demands and protesters' interests that also apply to non-rebel protesters, integration into groups' or former rebels, security concerns, and existing links to local communities were essential factors for individual demobilized members of the FARC guerilla to participate in the protests.

The key novelty of the findings is that social networks are the most critical variable influencing former rebels' decision to join protests and that the type of social network is different for potential protesters with a rebel past than for other protesters. For the demobilized rebels, especially pre-existing community links (i.e., ties with the non-rebel protesters) and integration into networks of their former comrades (i.e., living in an ETCR[1], a joint reintegration camp, or being members of business cooperatives[2] or other organizations of former rebels) were the key drivers in determining the extent to which they participated during the protests. Surprisingly, their participation occurred primarily independent of their political party and was most relevant in their former rural strongholds. The analysis thus contributes to a better understanding under which circumstances demobilized rebels are willing to influence politics.

Article 2 then explores the impact protest participation of former rebels during the 2021 Colombian mass protests has had. The article's insights are more context-specific than Article 1 since they reflect the particular circumstances of Colombia's post-peace agreement institutional order and the FARC's specific demobilization trajectory. The article's title is: "Protesting in Peace, Passing on Skills, and Reintegrating into Communities - The Impact of Former FARC Members' Participation during the 2021 Colombian Mass Protests." Also based on extensive field research in Colombia, including the same interviews as for Article 1, the article finds that the involvement of former FARC members during the 2021 Colombian mass protests had a pacifying impact since Colombia's transitional justice system incentivized them to refrain from any act of violence during the protests, while their participation attracted international observation, such as from the UN's verification mission, which calmed down protesters and authorities during the protests alike. Further findings from the article are that the former FARC's participation during the protests supported their societal reintegration and led to a professionalization of the protests in terms of a more efficient organization of protesters and protester camps and better-articulated demands during negotiations with the authorities.

The article's main novel contribution is thus the different perspective on former rebels. Whereas the existing literature treats them with a vision of potential risk for stability, this article shows that their political participation in Colombia led to a pacification of contentious politics, at least in the specific context of the 2021 protests. An additional contribution is that the article opens a new research agenda regarding the implications of former rebels' protest involvement. By highlighting the conditions that enabled the identified causal mechanisms to unfold in Colombia, the article provides the baseline for analyses of similar cases in other peace process societies, thus providing a starting point for a more holistic understanding of demobilized rebels' political impact.

Finally, Article 3 addresses public reactions to demobilized rebels' protest participation, vandalism occurrence during protests, and the combination of both. The title is: "Participation Yielding Stigmatization? Demobilized Rebels' Involvement During Colombia's Paro Nacional."

[1] Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación (in English, Territorial Space for Capacitation and Reintegration), village-like camps of demobilized FARC members, which the Colombian state provided for demobilized FARC members to facilitate societal reintegration as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement.

[2] Economic reintegration projects in which former FARC members individually or jointly try to build a business. The Colombian government and the international community support these initiatives to foster the societal reintegration of former FARC members as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement. Each demobilized FARC member received financial and technical assistance to launch these business projects, also named productive reintegration projects.

Since citizens might associate demobilized rebels with violence and wartime atrocities, these former rebels' protest participation may yield protest stigmatization and legitimacy concerns. The article's motivation stems from attempts during the 2021 Colombian mass protests by protest opponents, such as the Colombian government, to link violence and vandalism during the protests to (demobilized) members of guerilla groups. Based on an online survey experiment I conducted with the Colombian panel of a provider firm, the article explores whether demobilized rebels' participation and vandalism during protests alter citizen approval of protests, i.e., whether such stigmatization tactics were successful. Results show that both former rebels' participation and vandalism during protests reduce citizens' support significantly, while a name change of the rebel-successor organization mitigates such a negative effect on citizen perception.

Article 3's main novel contribution is that it enhances our understanding of how accepted former rebels' political participation is. The article highlights that Colombians seem less opposed to the FARC's political involvement than, as previous studies have shown (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018), they were seven years earlier, in 2015. The FARC's political participation was the most controversial aspect of the 2016 peace deal. Article 3 shows that in 2022, either Colombians are less worried (or less caring) regarding such participation or that protest participation is less controversial for Colombians than the FARC's presence in the Colombian Congress due to guaranteed seats granted by the 2016 peace deal. Another contribution is that the article shows that stigmatization and delegitimating tactics of protest opponents in peace process societies, such as in 2021 in Colombia, can be highly impactful, pointing towards a potential need to regulate such tactics. Moreover, Article 3 shows that vandalism during protests in Colombia had a similar impact on public opinion than comparable studies have demonstrated in the USA, indicating that the experience of Colombia's armed internal conflict has not led to a normalization of violence.

## 1.4 Case Background and Selection

In the 1960s, a leftist insurgency initially launched Colombia's armed internal conflict in response to extreme inequality, rural poverty, and the example set by the Cuban revolution. Several left-wing guerrilla groups, most prominently the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN by the Spanish acronym), emerged and aimed to overthrow the country's political and economic system. Particularly, the FARC understood itself as representing rural poor society segments with the fundamental objective to rehaul Colombia's land concentration among a small elite (Pécaut, 2008). Violence levels increased sharply with the emergence of right-wing paramilitary groups organized as anti-guerilla self-defense groups by rural landowners and drug barons in response to guerrilla extortions in the late 1980s. The paramilitaries often targeted civilians for alleged cooperation with guerillas, leading to a severe increase in casualties (Restrepo et al., 2004). According to extensive evidence, the paramilitary groups frequently colluded in their activities against guerilla groups with the Colombian military, and many Colombian politicians forged alliances with paramilitary groups (Dube & Vargas, 2013). However, the various guerrilla groups were also involved in severe atrocities against the rural population (Pécaut, 2008). Throughout the conflict, and especially since the 1980s, guerrillas and paramilitaries became increasingly involved in narcotrafficking and other illicit economies to finance their activities and for economic gains, diluting the conflict's original motivation and the conflict sides' political objectives (Pécaut, 2017).

Since the 1980s, several attempts have occurred to end the conflict via negotiated peace settlements. The FARC intended to establish a political party, the Patriotic Union, in the 1980s, which was unsuccessful, given extreme violence, mostly from paramilitary groups and often with state complicity, against its members. A first wave of peace agreements occurred in the early 1990s, leading to several smaller guerrilla groups' demobilization and societal and political reintegration (Pécaut, 2017). From 2003 to 2006, the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC by its Spanish acronym), a coalition of various paramilitary factions, partially demobilized through several negotiation rounds with the Colombian government (Pécaut, 2017). Even though several prior attempts failed, in 2016, following a four-year negotiation process, the Colombian government also reached a detailed and complex peace deal with the FARC, the country's largest insurgent group, leading to the group's demobilization with around 13,000 members handing in their weapons (International Crisis Group, 2021b; Steele & Schubiger, 2018).

The peace deal foresaw the FARC forming a political party including five guaranteed seats in each chamber of the Colombian Congress for two legislative periods, irrespective of the group's electoral performance (International Crisis Group, 2021b). While the FARC's successor party performed poorly in all elections since its demobilization, the party is thus nevertheless represented in Congress. Since 2022, it has formed part of the government coalition of President Gustavo Petro, the first left-leaning government in Colombia's recent history (Hernández Bonilla, 2022). The party first maintained its acronym FARC (standing for Alternative Communal Revolutionary Force) until 2021, when members approved a renaming to Comunes (Commons) (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Throughout the transformation from a rebel group to a political party, a small group of leaders maintained a tight grip on the power of the organization (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Since its formation, many former FARC members have left Comunes, often out of frustration with the hierarchical leadership style, while some new members without a past in the FARC have joined.

Since their demobilization, the socio-economic situation of the demobilized FARC members remains difficult. The peace deal foresaw the formation of small business cooperatives to facilitate the former members' integration into society (International Crisis Group, 2021b). However, only a few of these cooperatives are economically successful. The membership also suffers from a precarious security situation. By July 2023, armed groups had assassinated almost 400 former FARC members since the FARC's demobilization in 2016 (Ramírez, 2023). Often, the perpetrators are FARC dissidents, groups run by former FARC commanders that either refrained from the 2016 peace deal in the first place or rearmed afterward, usually due to economic interests or out of frustration regarding the government's lack of implementation of the peace deal. In consequence, while initially after demobilization, many former FARC members lived in rural areas close to the FARC's former strongholds in ETCRs, economic hardship and the precarious security situation led many former members to move across the entire country and often to large cities.

At the time of research in 2023, besides the FARC dissidents, several other groups, including the ELN and multiple paramilitary successor organizations, are still active in armed activities and illicit economies such as narcotrafficking and illegal mining. Violence levels and the human rights situation are still tenuous, especially in rural Colombia, with frequent combats between the Colombian army and the different groups and attacks on social activists such as trade unionists or community organizers (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020).

The 2016 peace agreement had a significant impact on Colombian political discourse. Even though the various guerrilla groups had waged the Colombian civil conflict in the name of social justice, the conflict prevented inequality from being at the top of the political agenda for decades. Instead, political debates until 2016 had focused on Colombia's armed internal conflict and security politics (Arjona, 2021).

The FARC's demobilization enabled other political fields, such as social policies, to gain more space in public debates. The comprehensive nature of the peace agreement, with proposals such as land reform and development of rural Colombia or a substitution program for illicit crops, fostered discussions on pressing social issues and allowed new debates and ideas to emerge, thus changing many people's beliefs and expectations. While previously, claimants of demands for social reforms and other left-leaning positions frequently received stigmatization for alleged links to the guerrilla, these political fields became more relevant (Arjona, 2021). Consequently, people started to think it was possible to demand more from the state and felt entitled and obliged to speak up. In particular, the feeling emerged that real peace is possible and the conviction that the state should do more regarding rural development, effective drug policy, and protection of peaceful political participation without repercussion (Arjona, 2021).

Consequently, several protest waves occurred in Colombia following the signing of the 2016 peace agreement. First, two relatively small protest waves for a more determined peace deal implementation and educational reforms in 2017 and 2018, and then two significant waves of mass protests: A first massive mobilization from approximately November 2019 until fading out due to the Corona pandemic in March 2020 and a second significantly larger massive protest wave from late April to June 2021, the so-called Paro Nacional or national strike (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

In both waves, the protesters came from different sectors of the urban and rural population, and particularly, students and young people from impoverished urban neighborhoods assumed a critical role as key protagonists. While most protests were peaceful, several violent incidents occurred, resulting in deaths and destroyed infrastructure and property. In 2021, subgroups of protesters created road blockages for several weeks, impeding services of ambulances and healthcare providers and transporting food and basic supplies, severely impacting local economies. The Colombian government reacted on the one hand by granting slight political concessions such as a dialogue table and limited political reforms. On the other hand, the government criminalized the protesters and showcased severe police brutality and militarization of cities, resulting in dozens of persons killed, arbitrary detentions, several cases of sexual violence, and many wounded (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Both protest waves were triggered by and demanded policy responses to a mix of old and new grievances mainly related to socio-economic and security concerns (International Crisis Group, 2021a). In terms of long-existing grievances, critical points of contention were the continued severe levels of poverty and inequality in Colombia combined with a lack of accessible education, other social mobility pathways, and sound social protection systems (e.g., in health care). Further, continued high levels of political, criminal, and social violence, high corruption levels, environmental degradation, and the Colombian state's shortcomings in meeting agreements with various social groups and movements such as indigenous communities, Afro-Colombians, students, and teachers groups caused protesters' indignation (Arjona, 2021).

In addition to these existing grievances, more novel factors contributed to widespread dissatisfaction: Unpopular policies such as the administration of President Iván Duque's 2021 proposal for a tax and economic reform, which would have disproportionally burdened lower-income classes; the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated long-existing grievances such as inequality, poverty, and women and youth rights and made them more visible [3]; the government's weak implementation of the 2016 peace agreement and its resulting lack of protection and violence against social leaders and activists (more than 1,000 killed since 2016); and finally, a governance crisis with a significant lack of trust in institutions and democracy, weak identification with Colombia's political parties, and a low approval of the Duque administration (Arjona, 2021). Additional factors stirring tensions throughout the protests, especially in 2021, were police brutality and corresponding demands for police reform (Arjona, 2021; Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2021).

While both protest waves shared several characteristics across the country, such as a relatively marginal role of political parties or various country-wide shared protest demands such as social reforms and thorough implementation of the 2016 peace deal, there was also significant within-country variation in terms of local protest demands, violence levels, interactions between protesters and authorities, and protest protagonists. Besides expressing nationally-shared grievances, protesters in different regions had specific demands related to their local context. For example, in most large cities, protesters demanded an end to police brutality and free and better access to higher education. At the same time, in the Amazon region, rural communities protested against a military anti-deforestation campaign, plan Artemisa, which had severe human rights implications (International Crisis Group, 2021a). Whereas in many cities, the protests entailed severe violent clashes between protesters and authorities (International Crisis Group, 2021a), in many rural areas, the protests occurred without violence (El Espectador, 2021). Also, in terms of authority reactions, there were vast regional divergences. Some mayors and governors expressed solidarity with the protesters, while others used violent repression. For instance, the mayor of Pereira was accused of inciting violence against the protesters, calling for a coalition between police, military, and private security companies (Sepúlveda, 2021). Meanwhile, Bucaramanga's mayor refused to deploy military units against the protesters and supported dialogues with the protesters (International Crisis Group, 2021a). While young people largely drove the protests in urban areas during both protest waves, campesino movements, Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, and the transport sector played a more prominent role in rural areas (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Most analysts indicate that the 2021 protests had a significant impact on the country's political landscape, leading to the strong performance of the Pacto Histórico, a coalition of various leftist parties, in the 2022 Congressional elections and the victory of Gustavo Petro in the 2022 Presidential elections (Doria et al., 2022; De Sousa Santos, 2022). Petro, a leftist politician who had run twice before as a presidential candidate and is a former member of the M-19 guerrilla (which demobilized in 1990), emerged as a critical figure in the protests. As a result of the protests, Petro's campaign gained momentum, focusing on issues such as income inequality, corruption, and

[3] For instance, the pandemic affected disproportionally lower-income classes (e.g., due to living in more densely populated neighborhoods with insufficient sanitary infrastructure, less access to healthcare, and more frequent employment in informal jobs without remote work possibilities and no access to state protection services) and showed crudely and visibly inequality, failures of the state, and government weakness, thus creating high uncertainty (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2021).

the country's ongoing armed conflict. The demonstrations mobilized a new generation of young voters, who saw Petro as a leader in addressing their concerns (Fajardo, 2022). As a result, Petro's victory, the first of a candidate with a distinct leftist platform in Colombia's recent history, is seen as a turning point in Colombian politics (Lloreda & Vélez, 2022). Petro's election reveals the Colombian electorate's growing rejection of traditional political parties.

Thus, the Colombian 2019 and especially the 2021 mass protests have significantly influenced political dynamics in Colombia. Given their timing, in the aftermath of Colombia's 2016 peace deal, they also offer many relevant insights for all three articles' research focus. Moreover, after the 2016 peace deal, Colombia maintains many characteristics emblematic of peace process societies, such as continued elevated violence levels, peace process institutions such as a transitional justice system, and political polarization. Analyses of mobilization dynamics following peace agreements in Colombia may thus provide valuable insights for similar cases in other peace process societies. The geographical within-country variation across multiple variables of interest, e.g., regarding security levels or links between local communities and demobilized rebels, further permits insightful comparative analyses. Finally, widely easily accessible quantitative and qualitative data allow for leveraging and materializing the Colombian case's immense research potential.

## 1.5 Literature Review

The following section provides a brief overview of the literature streams across political science and sociology relevant to the study of demobilized rebels' protest participation. The overview includes classical social movement theories, as well as studies focusing on protests in high-risk contexts such as during conflict and peace processes, protest movement analyses covering Colombia, the literature on peace agreements' influence on rebels' political participation and rebel successor parties, and studies on demobilized rebels in Colombia.

*General Social Movement Literature and Literature on Mobilization During Conflict and Following Peace Agreements*

Social movement and collective action theories since the 1970s have addressed diverse research questions. Social-psychological factors, such as ideological identification, and structural/ organizational factors, such as an individual's history of activism and integration into supportive networks, are relevant for high-risk activism, mobilization, and recruitment (McAdam, 1986). Participation ultimately depends on a successful alignment process between a movement's activities, goals, and ideology and the individual's interests, values, and beliefs (Snow et al., 1986). Regarding a social movement's dynamics, the potential of resource mobilization rather than collective actors' grievances drives a movement's growth and decline (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The actions and influences of opposing movements (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996) and authorities (Della Porta, 2011) further often drive a movement's actions. Within these dynamics, literature sees protests such as the ones in 2019 and 2021 in Colombia both as an activism instrument (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998) but also as a factor shaping movements through the creation of solidarity, a sense of community, new organizational and personal networks, and new trust (Della Porta, 2011).

Nevertheless, despite significant research on social movements and mobilization, many exist-

ing studies focus on Western democracies. Social mobilization might follow different patterns in conflict-torn societies with high risks for participants, such as Colombia. Conflict might alter political mobilization processes and the circumstances in which movements operate, e.g., through the military socialization of individuals and authorities, the polarization of social identities, or a fragmentation of the local economy (Wood, 2008). Researchers have further highlighted how mobilization and quotidian social networks in support of rebel groups (Parkinson, 2013) or anti-government protests (Leventoğlu & Metternich, 2018) can be crucial factors for sustaining rebel groups' military activity. Others have focused on civilian mobilization to protect communities from conflict and violence, highlighting the crucial role of ideology for civilian mobilization (Masullo, 2020), local-level dynamics (Hallward et al., 2017), non-violent strategies (Kaplan, 2013), or women's mobilization (Zulver, 2016).

Research on Colombian protests shows that throughout Colombia's armed internal conflict, social protests have been frequent across the country. Mobilization often included diverse actors from all social strata with sometimes surprising alliances (Ramírez, 2011), expressed itself through multiple forms, and included diverse demands, most commonly land redistribution, working conditions and salaries, social and human rights, and public services provisions (Archila Neira, 2005). Protest waves strongly correlated with real living costs and public expenditure changes, irrespective of the governing political party (Archila Neira, 2005). The latter implies that the 2019 and 2021 Colombian mass protests were anything but surprising. Analyses of specific Colombian social movements reflect these general insights. These studies confirm a long tradition of diverse marginalized groups standing up despite threats and violence from armed groups and state forces. For instance, analyses exist on the Cocalero movement in Putumayo in the 1990s (Ramírez, 2011), black political movements (Paschel, 2016), feminist activism (Zulver, 2017, 2021), and human rights activism (Tate, 2007). Relevant case studies highlight diverse links between guerrilla groups and these social movements, including alliances, protestors distancing themselves from the guerrilla, and stigmatization and repression of protestors by the state due to supposed connections to the guerrilla. The civil conflict has shaped Colombian collective action by altering the repertoire of actions of activists and the state (Archila Neira, 2005).

Unlike the case of social mobilization during conflicts, only a few studies have addressed social mobilization in post-peace agreement societies such as Colombia since 2016. Exceptions are, for instance, Touquet (2015) on mobilizations in Sarajewo, Snellinger (2018) on protests in post-war Nepal, and Amarasuriva (2015) on protests in post-war Sri Lanka. Mayan mobilization in post-war Guatemala shows peace processes may enable political opening and activism even though the previous conflict might have impacted a social movement's cohesion (Vogt, 2015). Student protests in post-war Nicaragua highlight the inspiration movements can draw from neighboring countries and how risky youth activism and symbolic achievements can encourage wider society to join (Rueda, 2018). For the Colombian 2019 to 2021 mass protests, these insights imply that the 2016 peace deal might have opened space for new expressions and thus enabled the protests. New alliances may have emerged in post-peace agreement Colombia, although the Guatemalan case highlights that civil society actors might have been reluctant to former guerrillas' involvement.

Thus, we have relevant knowledge regarding how social mobilization generally works, how it works in high-risk settings, and regarding social movements and protests in Colombia before the 2016 peace agreement. However, the question remains if and how demobilized rebels get involved

when protests occur in peace process societies.

*Literature on Rebel Political Participation Following Peace Agreements*

The literature on former rebels' political participation focuses on two key aspects: First, the influence of peace negotiations and agreements on such participation, and second, the development and characteristics of political parties emerging from rebel groups. Regarding the research on peace agreements' influence on former rebels' political participation, the work of Aila Matanock on electoral participation provisions (EPPs), clauses in peace agreements that arrange the rebels' participation in elections, such as was the case with the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, has shaped the literature in recent years. Building on previous studies that show that rebel inclusion in politics reduces the likeliness of violence and conflict recurrence (Marshall & Ishiyama, 2016; Walter, 2004), her main argument is that the inclusion of EPPs in civil conflict peace settlements enables external actors to effectively monitor and sanction the non-compliance of former conflict sides with peace agreements. Rebels thus obtain credible guarantees for future uncertainties, which they often require to commit to a treaty (Walter, 1999). When accompanied by credible and unbiased third parties, the inclusion of EPPs thus enhances the likeliness of lasting peace compared to peace agreements without EPPs (Matanock, 2017).

Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz (2016) also investigate rebel-to-party provisions in peace agreements and find that 30 out of 196 intrastate peace agreements between 1991 and 2011 included such clauses. These 30 agreements addressed disputes over government power as opposed to territorial conflicts. Besides rebel-to-party provisions, they commonly entailed other political arrangements, such as rebel integration into government and civil service power-sharing mechanisms. In line with Matanock (2018a, 2018b), Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz (2016) find that peace deal negotiators deployed such provisions only after the Cold War and often in peace agreements with third-party presence. However, despite being mentioned in the settlements, the clauses did not always lead to rebel-to-party transformations hinting at obstacles to implementation. Interestingly, rebel-to-party transformations often occurred through different mechanisms than participation provisions, such as military victory, the end of colonial rule, or settlements without EPPs.

A growing literature then covers the trajectory and characteristics of successor parties of former rebel groups. Several studies in this field analyze what drives variation in such parties' electoral performance, highlighting barriers through electoral rules, previous territorial control, and organizational legacy as critical factors (e.g., Allison, 2006, 2010; Ishiyama, & Widmeier, 2013a, 2013b; Manning & Smith, 2019). Other studies have focused on internal characteristics and dynamics of rebel-turned-parties, such as legacy military organization structures, identity building, electoral strategies, interest articulation, candidate recruitment, or financing, as well as their interplay with external factors such as the institutional environment or the competitiveness of the electoral system (e.g., Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Ishiyama & Marshall, 2015, 2017; Lyons, 2016; Manning, 2007). An additional group of studies on rebel-turned-parties has analyzed the transformation from a rebel group to a political party and why these groups decided to enter electoral politics in the first place. Particularly peace agreements and institutional settings may provide key incentives (e.g., Acosta, 2014; Clayton, 2013; Curtis & De Zeeuw, 2010; Fearon, 1995; Greig & Regan, 2008; Manning & Smith, 2016; Mason & Fett, 1996; Matanock & Staniland, 2018; Powell, 2002; Reiter,

2003; Soberg Shugart, 1992; Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016; Walch, 2016; Zartman, 2001). While none of these studies openly addresses EPPs, they hint that EPPs might be crucial to widening access to the political system. Rebel-turned-parties often face diverse challenges, particularly in the early days of transformation, while their long-term electoral performance depends on early electoral successes. By altering the competitiveness, EPPs might thus provide the needed extra support. However, these studies do not usually focus on how such successor parties of former rebel groups interact or influence protests and social movements.

*Literature on Demobilized Rebels*

Studies on demobilized fighters in Colombia primarily focus on their demobilization and reintegration process. For instance, these studies show why some combatants chose to demobilize individually (Nussio & Ugarriza, 2021). They further highlight the influence of community factors on demobilized combatants' successful reintegration (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018a), on the co-existence of demobilized combatants of different groups (Prieto, 2012), the risk that demobilized fighters become involved in criminal activities (Nussio, 2018) or recidivistic in joining armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b), and demobilized fighters' trust in government (Kreutz & Nussio, 2019). These studies show that social embedment and community links, such as family ties, friendship networks, educational opportunities, and criminal groups and other activists in their communities, especially drive demobilized fighters' trajectories. Regarding their political participation, Söderstöm (2016) finds in an analysis of the afterlife of the M-19 guerrilla group that a rebel successor party might significantly influence the political mobilization of the demobilized rebels. Relevant studies beyond the case of Colombia are, for instance, Blattman (2009), who, in a Uganda-based analysis, has demonstrated that past violence experiences, particularly witnessing atrocities, yield increased political engagement among ex-combatants. McMullin (2013) uses data collected from Liberia to demonstrate that ex-combatants' stigmatization works against the objective of reintegration: it disrupts integration into the everyday social, economic, and political life of the post-conflict state. While providing very relevant insights, these studies and different streams of literature do not focus specifically on the phenomenon of demobilized rebels' participation in protests during peace processes. Therefore, my DPhil project seeks to address this gap, basing my analyses on the described findings from existing scholarship.

## 1.6 Reflections on the DPhil's Overarching Contribution

By combining insights from the demobilized rebels and the social movements literature, the three articles demonstrate the benefits of bridging these two streams of literature. As the articles will show, demobilized rebels are in several ways distinctive from (potential) protesters without a rebel past and consequently behave differently and generate different impacts during protests. My insights reveal the relevance of considering these differences and, thus, of combined analyses that build up on and speak to both the demobilized rebels literature and the social movements literature.

A common finding across all three articles is that they hint at a surprisingly successful reintegration trajectory of the former FARC guerrilla in Colombia and a relatively positive outcome of

the Colombian peace process. Article 1 shows several incidences across various protest sites where former FARC members protested harmoniously along with other protesters without a rebel past and how other protesters chose former FARC members as protest leaders, i.e., granting them roles as protest spokespersons or negotiators with the authorities. Article 2 explicitly shows how former FARC members' reintegration into Colombian society improved following the 2021 mass protests, how fellow protesters were, in various protest sites, willing to accept their advice and guidance, and how their participation reduced violence levels at the protests. Finally, Article 3 shows that while triggering some adverse reactions, the former FARC's protest participation reduced public support for the protests surprisingly little, less than contentious protest tactics, and less than previous studies in 2015 detected (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018) that FARC endorsement reduced approval for policy proposals. These findings thus provide evidence of optimism regarding the FARC's demobilization trajectory, not just in terms of violence recurrence but even regarding somewhat surprising outcomes such as enhanced reintegration.

The Colombian peace process has faced many challenges, such as a failed referendum to approve the peace deal (Tellez, 2019), increased political polarization and elite divide resulting from the peace deal referendum (Matanock & García-Sánchez, 2017), political unwillingness under the Duque administration to implement the deal thoroughly (Turkewitz, 2021), or continued and re-accelerating deteriorations in the security situation with continued activity of several armed groups (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Also, the former FARC members' demobilization trajectory has faced significant difficulties with high levels of threats, displacements, and assassinations (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Likewise, as the literature review above has shown, many analyses in the existing literature on demobilized rebels (and civil conflict combatants in general) focus on the risks they provide for a resurgence of conflict and violence or criminal activities. Consequently, my somewhat positive findings are slightly surprising and, while not the main focus of my analysis, attract reflections regarding why these events occurred in Colombia.

Certainly, one scope condition contributes to the findings: my analysis only covers demobilized FARC members who stick to the peace agreement, whereas dissidents of the FARC peace process or former FARC members who joined other armed groups are out of scope. Consequently, among those former FARC members I interviewed, a large share expressed strong belief in the peace process, the need to become fully respected members of society, and the better prospects of achieving political change through democratic means. Likewise, the longitude of Colombia's armed internal conflict and the FARC's struggle, and the severe military losses the FARC had to endure from the early 2000s and onwards (Pécaut, 2008) certainly caused resignation regarding the usefulness of armed activities among many of the demobilized members. Thus, these factors contributed to a belief among many former FARC members that societal reintegration was the only way forward. Besides the eagerness among most parts of the former FARC to comply with the peace agreement and to rejoin civil society, likely additional factors contributed to the surprisingly positive outcomes.

As Article 2 will show, the institutions that the peace deal established, such as the transitional justice system and the UN's verification mission, incentivized Colombian authorities and former FARC members to act peacefully during the protests. Moreover, the strength of Colombian civil society with many NGOs, academic and cultural initiatives working towards reconciliation, memory building, and continued dialogue (often with support from the international community) likely

provided many former FARC members with encouragement and opportunities to seek reintegration which then translated into peaceful activism during the protests. While none of these factors likely caused on its own the positive developments, and only further research could identify which factor had a relevant influence on the FARC's demobilization trajectory, the combination of all of them likely led to the positive developments my research identifies for the 2021 protests.

Even though, at first glance, these insights on the positive consequence of former rebels' protest participation may sound surprising, the Colombian insights do, however, not strictly oppose existing research insights. While significant research focuses on potential risks from former rebels, and several studies show that former rebels may act as spoilers to peace processes (e.g., Stedman, 1997), other studies demonstrate that former rebels are not the dangerous villains one might expect. For instance, Nussio (2018) finds that demobilized combatants are no longer a key contributor to security threats in Colombia, and Blattman (2009) finds that political activism is higher for former rebels. My findings add to these insights and emphasize the relevance of considering potential positive contributions for reintegration, reconciliation, and other areas that may stem from demobilized rebels. For the academic literature and policymakers, this implies a potential need to analyze in more detail to which other positive outcomes, the characteristics former rebels may have, such as discipline, organizational capabilities, and political knowledge, could contribute. Moreover, analyses of former rebels' participation outside Colombia could further shed light on the scope conditions required for the mechanisms I detected in Colombia to unfold.

# Article 1: Shall We Join? Factors Influencing Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation During Times of Popular Unrest

**Abstract**

A plethora of literature exists on the political participation of demobilized rebels in conventional party politics, while research on their involvement in other forms of politics, such as protest movements, is scarce. However, peace process societies are prone to protests, and demobilized rebels are likely participants. Motivated by vast regional variation in demobilized FARC members' participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests, this study analyzes the factors influencing former rebels' participation in protests. Based on extensive field research, the analysis finds that existing links to local communities, integration into networks of former comrades, and security concerns were essential factors driving former FARC members' protest participation. Moreover, community links were crucial for some of them to take on leadership roles during the protests. The former FARC members' participation occurred primarily independent of their political party, and time and economic constraints did not usually impede their involvement. The analysis contributes to discussions on post-conflict rebel political participation.

## 1 Introduction

> " *We had discussions within the ETCR*[1] *about whether to join the protests. Some decided it was too risky to participate. Others considered the risks but decided showing solidarity with the people was more important and joined for a couple of days. Yet others saw the national protests as the moment of revolution for which we had waited so long. They stayed for months protesting in Villavicencio, and a few were elected spokespersons of the local negotiation committee.*"

A former member of the FARC guerrilla (Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces, FARC by the Spanish acronym) described to me these decisions taken by former members of the FARC in light of Colombia's Paro Nacional, a nationwide mass protest wave from late April to June 2021,

[1]Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (Territorial Spaces for Capacitation and Reintegration), village-like camps of demobilized FARC members, which the Colombian state provided for demobilized FARC members to facilitate societal reintegration as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement.

during a field research trip to the Guaviare department in Southern Colombia in 2022. Further field research across multiple Colombian departments underscored these differences in protest participation patterns of former FARC members: Some former FARC members were the driving force behind the protests, orchestrating gatherings, running local and regional negotiations with the authorities, and organizing the protester camps. Others, however, merely turned to the streets as bystanders without taking on any responsibility. Another group abstained from participating in the protests altogether despite expressing support for the protests and despite central demands of the protests having been a thorough implementation of the 2016 peace deal as well as improved security for social activists and former FARC members and hence policies from which former FARC members across the country would have benefitted intensively (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Why did some former FARC members participate in the protests with great fervor while others did not participate at all, and why did the extent to which they took on responsibility during the protests vary across individuals? This article seeks to explore potential answers to these observed empirical puzzles. Based on the existing social movement and demobilized rebel literature, the paper articulates expectations of former rebels' participation during general unrest and tests these expectations through 14 months of multisite field research in urban and rural Colombia. The article seeks to identify which factors influenced former FARC members' decision, at the individual level, whether or not to participate and whether to take on a leadership role during the 2021 protests.

The article's core theoretical contribution is the identification of similarities and differences in the mobilization decision between (potential) protesters with and without a rebel past, thus enriching social movement theories with a new case and context. Perhaps the most surprising new finding is the relevance of existing relationships with local communities and their organizations for former FARC members' mobilization decisions. While existing social movement theories (e.g., Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Stryker, 2000) also emphasize the relevance of network factors for individuals' decision to join protests, these analyses have not identified close existing community links as a relevant network for protesters without a rebel past. Nevertheless, community links were crucial for former rebels in Colombia to join the protests and enabled some former FARC members to act as protest leaders. Furthermore, my insights highlight that integration into networks of their former comrades and perceived security risks were also crucial drivers influencing whether former FARC members participated in the protests.

The field research for the article included interviews across multiple Colombian cities and departments, which all entered the analysis. For illustrative purposes, the article also provides more details for two of the field research sites, which each offers considerable variation in the factors that influenced individuals in their mobilization decision and the outcome of these decisions: Cali, Colombia's third most populated city and the rural departments Meta and Guaviare, which acted as one block during the protests. The analysis thus also shows that, unlike frequently described in media reports, the 2021 Colombian mass protests were not a purely urban phenomenon, but that mobilizations also occurred in deeply rural areas

The analysis matters since understanding the protest participation of demobilized civil conflict rebels is a relevant phenomenon that the existing literature has rarely addressed. The emergence of social media has made it much easier to organize mass protests, resulting in a surge of mass movements across world regions in recent years (Chenoweth et al., 2019). Societies in peace

processes often suffer from political instability and volatility due to underlying structural factors and cleavages that provide reasons for contempt. Also, peace process societies usually include society segments that have proven during past conflict times to be willing to stand up and challenge the political and societal status quo by going as far as using armed action. It is, hence, likely that mass-scale protests and contentious politics frequently also occur in societies in peace processes.

Moreover, the political participation of former rebels is a common characteristic of peace processes (Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016), and peace negotiators frequently establish such participation in peace agreements (Matanock, 2018). Since former rebels often have proven in the past their politicization and willingness to stand up for their interests, their political participation likely extends beyond political parties and formal political decision-making processes. Former rebels are thus likely participants in protests and social movements during peace processes.

While not the focus of this article, their participation might have significant consequences on protest dynamics, given that their politicization, experience in armed action, and logistical capabilities might impact protest demands and tactics. Likewise, former rebels' interactions during protests with fellow protesters and the authorities might foster or diminish their reintegration into society. Therefore, understanding former rebels' protest participation, especially the factors influencing whether such participation occurs, may be relevant to comprehend social mobilization and political stability during peace processes.

There is a vast body of literature on mobilizations in high-risk settings such as during the Arab Spring (e.g., Howard & Hussain, 2011; Moghadam, 2018; Steinert-Threlkeld, 2017) or protests in highly polarized societies such as Chile (e.g., Palacios-Valladares, 2017; Rhodes-Purdy & Rosenblatt, 2023; Scherman et al., 2015), highlighting the rising relevance of social media for high-risk mobilizations and how individuals from vulnerable groups overcome fears and mobilize despite significant repression and risks. Some existing studies also exist regarding the dynamics of mobilization during conflict times. They highlight how mobilization and quotidian social networks in support of rebel groups (Parkinson, 2013) or anti-government protests (Leventoğlu & Metternich, 2018) can be crucial factors for sustaining rebel groups' military activity. Others have focused on civilian mobilization to protect communities from conflict and violence, highlighting, for example, the crucial role of ideology for civilian mobilization (Masullo, 2020), local-level dynamics (Hallward et al., 2017), or non-violent mobilization strategies (Kaplan, 2013).

However, only a few studies in the literature, primarily individual case analyses, have addressed mobilization during peace processes. For instance, Vogt (2015) shows that during Mayan mobilization in post-war Guatemala, the peace process enabled political opening and activism even though the previous conflict impacted social movements' cohesion. Rueda (2018) investigates student protests in post-war Nicaragua, highlighting the inspiration drawn from neighboring countries and the role of risky youth activism and symbolic achievements in encouraging the wider society to join. Other analyses in this realm are, for instance, by Touquet (2015) on mobilizations in post-war Sarajewo, Snellinger (2018) on protests in post-war Nepal, and Amarasuriva (2015) on protests in post-war Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, while we have some analyses on protests in high-risk settings, such as during conflict times, and some case analyses on protest dynamics during peace processes, the literature has not covered the involvement in protests of rebels following their demobilization. Instead, analyses of demobilized rebels have focused on questions such as the risk that these former rebels

become involved in criminal activities (Nussio, 2018), the factors encouraging them to reintegrate into society (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018a) or rejoin armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b), their trust in government (Kreutz & Nussio, 2019), or their motivation to demobilize individually (Nussio & Ugarriza, 2021). This article seeks to close this gap and focuses on the factors driving demobilized rebels' protest participation during peace processes.

Colombia offers an excellent case for studying demobilized rebels' protest participation. Since the signing of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, Colombia witnessed two waves of country-wide mass protests: A first wave lasting approximately from November 2019 to February 2020 until being thwarted by the COVID-19 pandemic and a second wave from late April to July 2021. Millions turned to the streets in both waves, demanding wide-reaching economic and social reforms. During the 2021 protests, many demobilized FARC combatants participated during the protests, especially in rural areas (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Their protest participation differed vastly across regions. While in many protest sites, their participation among the thousands of protesters was often marginal, in some rural areas and some specific neighborhoods of the capital Bogotá, former FARC members acted as spokespersons and key organizers of the protests. Protest opponents, such as the Colombian government, frequently used their participation as a narrative to discredit and delegitimize the protests (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Thus, Colombia provides an excellent case to investigate the involvement of former rebels in social mobilization within democratic settings.

In the remainder of this article, I first provide expectations regarding the factors influencing demobilized rebels' decision to participate and to take on positions of responsibility during protests based on the existing literature. Secondly, I describe the research design and data I use to test these expectations. I then present my findings regarding which factors influenced former FARC members' mobilization decisions during the 2021 Colombian mass protests and provide more detailed insights from two field research sites for illustrative purposes. Finally, I discuss the findings and point to future research avenues.

## 2 Expectations Regarding Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation Based on the Existing Literature

As outlined in the introduction to this article, during the 2021 nationwide protests in Colombia, the participation of demobilized rebels was puzzling since it varied significantly. Even though the protests articulated across the country demands that would have benefitted demobilized rebels enormously and would have addressed their perilous security and socio-economic situation, such as a thorough implementation of the 2016 peace deal, there was surprising variation in the extent of their participation: First, my field interviews revealed significant variation in demobilized rebels' decision to join protests. While many of them chose to participate with great fervor, others refrained from becoming involved at all. Second, there was considerable variation in the level of responsibility and influence the demobilized rebels assumed. While some demobilized rebels took on leadership roles during the protests and negotiations with the authorities, others acted as mere bystanders.

Since it is unclear what caused the observed participation variation, this section seeks to find

explanations for these two puzzles and identify the influencing factors. I explore existing theories from the literature on social mobilization, evaluate to which extent these may serve as explainers for the observed variation in protest participation of demobilized rebels, and, based on the literature on demobilized rebels, add additional factors that likely do not explain the involvement of protesters with a non-rebel past but might be critical drivers for demobilized rebels' participation. The section thus develops various hypotheses regarding the factors influencing demobilized rebels' decision to participate in protests, which I will test in the evidence section of the paper. Assessing these hypotheses will then permit us to conclude whether similar factors influence the mobilization decision of potential protesters with and without a rebel past.

Theories on social mobilization fall broadly into two major categories. Macro-level theories of revolutionary mobilization analyze the conditions that explain where and when mobilizations occur, such as the emergence of specific political, historical, or economic conditions (Viterna, 2006). For instance, Archila Neira (2005) identifies that protest waves in Colombia strongly correlate with increases in real living costs and reductions in public expenditure, irrespective of the governing political party. However, such macro-level analyses do not explain why some individuals join mobilizations while others do not and thus do not explain the identified puzzles in demobilized rebels' protest participation in Colombia.

Instead, micro-level social movement and collective action theories since the 1970s investigate the mobilization process of individuals. These micro-level theories emphasize different factors as crucial drivers for high-risk activism, mobilization, and recruitment, which I group into three broad categories: Firstly, ideological factors, which especially social-psychological perspectives focus on, such as individuals' interests, ideological identification, and discontent (Snow et al., 1986). Secondly, network factors, which resource mobilization perspectives focus on, such as an individual's integration into supportive or discouraging networks (McAdam, 1986). Thirdly, feasibility factors, which analyses of biographical availability focus on, such as limitations due to individuals' professional commitments (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993).

Based on the existing social movement and demobilized rebel literature, the following paragraphs highlight one factor within the ideological category (individuals' level of political alignment), three factors within the network category (individuals' integration into former rebel networks, individuals' links to the protesting communities, the extent to which a rebel successor political party influences them), and two factors within the feasibility category (individuals' resource and time constraints, their perceived security situation). I argue that these factors follow a sequential choice approach and are conditional on fulfilling the first factor, political alignment. Excluding cases of forced participation, individual demobilized rebels will only consider participating in protests if there is at least some alignment between their beliefs and the protests' demands. Assuming such alignment exists, the question is then why some decide to participate, whereas others refrain. While several other potential hypotheses than the ones provided here regarding what factors influence individual demobilized rebels' decision to join protests might exist, the ones presented are ex-ante the most plausible and relevant ones for the case at hand given the Colombian political context and the FARC's (demobilization) trajectory. Some of the presented factors likely incentivize protest participation, such as existing ties to participating communities, whereas others likely disincentivize participation, such as a risky security situation.

On average, some of the explored factors may matter more in rural areas, whereas others may

have more influence in urban settings. For instance, professional and economic constraints may weigh heavier in rural settings where protests are often further away from individuals' places of residence and thus require higher time and financial commitments. However, while such general tendencies may exist, the influence of the different factors ultimately depends on each individual's context. For instance, the security situation might be for some demobilized rebels more complex in cities and others in rural areas, depending on who presents a risk for them. Armed groups targeting former rebels might be more present in rural areas, whereas in cities, risks might stem instead from the authorities. Thus, it depends on each individual's specific context whether a variable would have more relevance in urban or rural settings.

Since existing analyses, macro-level and micro-level studies alike, are often very deterministic, for instance, stating that being a member of a particular social network yields participation while not acknowledging that some network members do not participate (McAdam, 2000; Viterna, 2006), I do not argue that any of the described factors will automatically result in or prevent individuals' mobilization. Instead, the interaction of these different variables influences individuals' decision-making process to join mobilizations, while the exact influence might vary across individuals. For instance, a demobilized rebel's membership in a participation-supporting network might interact with few professional constraints and result in protest participation. Hence, membership in the participation-supporting network does not guarantee protest participation but increases the likeliness (Viterna, 2006).

*Ideological Factors*

Existing social movement theories highlight the need for a successful alignment process between protest demands and individuals' objectives to incentivize mobilization (e.g., Klandermans, 1984, 1997; Snow et al., 1986). Individuals are only likely to dedicate their time to protests if there is at least to some extent a match between their interests, values, and beliefs and the protest activities, goals, and ideology (e.g., De Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; McAdam, 1986; Stryker, 2000).

I argue that such alignment is the primary condition that must be fulfilled for individuals even to consider mobilizing. Unless in cases of forced participation or intensive group pressure, only individuals who, to some extent, agree with the protests will consider participation. All other factors then explain why, conditional on a successful alignment process regarding an agreement with the protests, some individual former rebels but not others become involved, and some assume leadership roles.

If such a match exists, potential joiners develop a salient "participation identity" (Viterna, 2006, p. 5) before mobilizing. Network analyses argue that such participation identities explain why some but not other individuals in the same context and network mobilize (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Stryker, 2000; Viterna, 2006). Individuals can develop their participation identity based on individual-specific interests, such as expected personal benefits from the fulfillment of protest demands, or through group-based interests, such as class, ethnicity, or gender (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1992). The participation identity then interacts with social network patterns, yielding mobilization (Viterna, 2006).

Such a need for an ideological alignment with the protests is likely also the primary condition for demobilized rebels to consider joining protests. They only likely consider participation if

they have political claims and if there is a match between these claims and the protests' objectives and ideology. Likely, the extent of that match, i.e., the overlap between individual former rebels' and the protests' aims, influences whether individuals participate and with which intensity. Fervent supporters of the protests' demands are likelier to join and overcome potential obstacles than distanced supporters who only identify with a few marginal protest claims. The need for a significant match is especially the case in high-risk contexts such as during the 2021 Colombian mass protests, where participation implied, in some locations, potential exposure to state violence. While Blattman (2009), in an Uganda-based analysis, has demonstrated that past violence experiences, particularly witnessing atrocities, yield increased political engagement among ex-combatants, the level of political interest and the specific political values likely differ widely across individual demobilized rebels.

A potential factor that could explain why some demobilized rebels participate during protests while others do not, even though both fulfill the condition of at least a basic agreement with the protest demands, could thus be differences in the alignment process, i.e., differences in the extent of the ideological match between individual demobilized rebels and the protests. Some former rebels might identify less with the protests and thus refrain from joining. Alternatively, some rebels following their demobilization might not be too interested in politics anymore and thus have less motivation to join the protests. **H1** summarizes this expectation for the Colombian case:

> *Participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests occurred only by former rebels who agreed at least to some extent with the protests and was more common for former rebels who had a closer alignment between their political objectives and beliefs and the demands of the protests than those demobilized rebels with less of such alignment.*

*Network Factors*

A vast body of literature shows the importance of social structures, such as political, religious, and family networks, for individuals to mobilize and join social movements (e.g., Pfaff, 1996; Wickham-Crowley, 1992). This branch of social movement analysis argues that ideological disposition is insufficient to explain why some individuals decide to mobilize while others with similar ideological views do not (e.g., Briet et al., 1987; Klandermans, 1984; Olson, 1965). Instead, individuals need their social connections to motivate them to mobilize in order to achieve objectives and defend ideological views (e.g., Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Fernandez & McAdam, 1988; Kim & Bearman, 1997; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Snow et al., 1980; Stryker, 2000). Especially for high-risk activism and mobilization, integration into supportive networks is vital since being surrounded by trusted people who either accept or encourage activism encourages individuals to overcome potential psychological hurdles (Loveman, 1998; McAdam, 1986). However, discouraging networks might have the opposite effect (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993).

For individual former rebels, social networks likely also play a crucial role when deciding to join protests. Due to the stigma and threats that former rebels, as a group and as individuals, in peace process societies often face, encouraging social networks might be essential. Former rebels likely feel more secure participating in protests jointly with trusted contacts rather than alone. Likely,

many social ties to mobilization-encouraging contacts with close spatial proximity and significant emotional strength are more influential for mobilization than few and distant social contacts (Gould, 1995; Stryker, 2000; Viterna, 2006). I argue that former rebels can find supportive networks internally, with their former comrades, or externally, with communities that support or participate in the protests. A particular form of a group-internal network that encourages individual members' mobilization may be the organization emerging out of the former rebel group, such as a political party.

Former rebels might find diverse new networks following demobilization. However, stigma and other reintegration difficulties may make it more likely that their networks consist primarily of former comrades. Assuming that the group of former rebels is generally willing to participate in the protests, which in the Colombian case, given the protest demands, seems a reasonable assumption, individuals' continued integration into networks and groups of former rebels thus likely facilitates protest participation. Regular exchange and continuing trusted relationships with former comrades help overcome organizational challenges of protest participation through joint coordination. Likewise, integration into a familiar group and the possibility of participation in the protests with the group might mitigate potential security concerns. Also, research on demobilized combatants in Colombia shows that continued group cohesion following demobilization significantly impacts individual former armed group members' willingness to join activities in which the demobilized group engages, such as remilitarization (Zukerman Daly, 2016). While applicable to joining current protests, this is even more true when former rebels initiate new protests. Hence, demobilized rebels that continue to have close integration into networks with their former comrades, e.g., by living in areas with a high concentration of former members of their group or by being members of successor structures of their former organization, are more likely to participate in protests than those with less firm connections, such as those living individually in large cities and with few interactions with former comrades. For the Colombian case, I thus have the following expectation, **H2**:

> *Participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests was more common for former rebels who were firmly integrated into networks of their former comrades than for former rebels who were not.*

A factor that existing theories on individuals' decision to mobilize have addressed less but that might be crucial for demobilized rebels is the links of potential protesters to the local communities. Existing analyses on former combatants' paths following demobilization highlight the influence of community embedment on individuals' successful reintegration into society (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018a), on the co-existence of demobilized combatants of different groups (Prieto, 2012), and on the risks that demobilized fighters become involved in criminal activities (Nussio, 2018) or recidivistic in joining armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b). These studies show that social embedment and community links, such as close family ties, friendship networks, or educational integration, are critical drivers of demobilized fighters' actions.

The ties former rebels might have to the communities they become members of after demobilization can vary greatly. The relationships can stem from wartime activities or interactions following the demobilization. For instance, through rebel governance in conflict times, communi-

ties might see individual former rebels or the overall group as guarantors of stability or exploitive tyrants – depending on the ruling the rebel group conducted (Arjona, 2016) and the particular actions an individual took. Hence, the communities might see the former rebels, individually or as a group, positively or negatively. Also, post-demobilization activities influence these ties, such as the former rebels' willingness to reintegrate, become involved, and support the respective communities. Likely close and supportive links between demobilized rebels and their surrounding communities facilitate former rebels' involvement in protests. A more robust community integration might mitigate the former rebels' potential security concerns associated with protest participation. Likewise, community links might create a shared understanding between communities and former rebels of social and economic needs, encouraging activism for shared goals. With close ties to the communities, the former rebels likely also feel more welcome to participate. The community might actively ask for or encourage their involvement, which is crucial since former rebels may face severe stigmatization in post-conflict societies given their wartime actions. These links with local communities may be by individual former rebels or by the former rebels as a group since both ultimately affect individual former rebels' disposition to join the protests.

Furthermore, established links to the communities that participate in protests are likely crucial for individual former rebels to take on responsibility and leadership roles during protests, especially when joining existing protests. Without such links, it is unlikely that other protesters would agree to be represented by a former rebel since trust in former rebels is often low in post-conflict settings. For the Colombian case, I thus have the following expectation, **H3**:

> *Participation and assuming leadership roles during the 2021 Colombian mass protests were more common for former rebels who had trusted relationships with the local communities that initiated and participated in the protests than for former rebels who had not.*

The existing mobilization literature shows the influence political parties sometimes have on protests, for instance, by publicly encouraging their members or collectively deciding to participate (Semenov et al., 2016). There also exists significant research on political parties emerging out of rebel groups, investigating questions such as what drives these parties' performance (e.g., Allison, 2006; Ishiyama & Widmeier, 2013; Manning & Smith, 2019), the parties' internal characteristics and dynamics and their interplay with external factors such as the institutional environment or the competitiveness of the electoral system (e.g., Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Lyons, 2016; Manning, 2007) or the initial transformation from rebel group to a political party (e.g., Manning & Smith, 2016; Matanock & Staniland, 2018; Soberg Shugart, 1992; Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016). This stream of research shows that rebel successor parties are a common phenomenon and that peace agreements often arrange the establishment of such parties (Matanock, 2018). In a Colombia-based analysis of the afterlife of the M-19 guerrilla group, Söderström (2016) finds that a rebel successor party might significantly influence the political mobilization of individual demobilized members of the former rebel group. Those who become members of the rebel successor party, especially those in its inner circle, are more likely to receive guidance, motivation, and support for political activism.

Consequently, rebel successor parties likely also influence the protest participation of their

members. If protest demands align with a party's ideology, members of the rebel successor party likely receive guidance and encouragement to participate in the protests from the party. A rebel successor party might be particularly interested in its members assuming leadership roles during the protests to influence protest demands and negotiations with the government, and thus, the party likely encourages and supports such involvement. For the Colombian case, I thus have the following expectation, **H4**:

> *Participation and assuming leadership roles during the 2021 Colombian mass protests were more common for former rebels who were members of a rebel successor party than for former rebels who were not.*

*Feasibility Factors*

Existing social movement theories further highlight the need for sufficient time and resources to join protests. McAdam and Paulsen (1993) argue that an individual's availability and, thus, their decision to join protests depends on attributes such as gender, age, profession, or family status. Certain combinations of biographical attributes encourage or discourage activism. Professional or family commitments might hinder participation, particularly when protests last longer, whereas individuals without such commitments are more likely to join. For instance, despite being keen to join protests, parents might prioritize providing security for their children over their identification with the protest movement since protest participation could reduce their ability to act as parents (Stryker, 2000). Other studies, however, find that individuals often find ways to overcome such hurdles (Nepstad & Smith, 1999).

These insights likely apply to potential protesters with a non-rebel past and former rebels alike. Following demobilization, the economic situation of former rebels is often dire (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015). Economic obstacles may, especially in rural areas, prevent individuals from traveling to protest sites or giving up time needed for professional commitments, such as agricultural tasks, to attend protests. Likewise, personal commitments such as newly founded families might not leave sufficient time to become involved in protests. Corresponding constraints might weigh especially heavily on former rebels' willingness to assume leadership roles during the protests, which often require more extensive time (and economic) commitments. For the Colombian case, I thus have the following expectation, **H5**:

> *Participation and assuming leadership roles during the 2021 Colombian mass protests were more common for former rebels whose economic, professional, and personal situations left sufficient time and resources than for former rebels with more rigorous professional and personal constraints.*

Additionally, some studies on high-risk activism have identified that the perceived risk of activism is a crucial driver of activist commitment (Wood, 2003; Pearlman, 2018). The impact might, however, depend on the individual. While a high level of risk and repression might deter some from joining, it might create for others an urge for solidarity with the activists and thus encourage their participation (Lawrence, 2017; Pearlman, 2018). Yet others might simply ignore

the risks and join the protests to express their grievances (Donoso et al., 2022). For demobilized rebels in peace process societies, the perceived security situation is likely also a crucial factor impacting their decision to join protests. Despite formal peace and cease-fire agreements, peace process societies often face violence and instability (Stedman, 2003). Wartime cleavages may continue, and society may have normalized violence due to past exposure to violent action. Given rebels' past involvement in conflict activities, sometimes including responsibility for atrocities, the former rebels, even after demobilization, frequently have opponents to their activities or even their pure existence. Opponents might be state actors such as the public forces, which the rebels used to fight against to gain power and which may maintain a critical stance towards the former rebels, or other rivaling armed groups that target the demobilized rebels. This opposition to the former rebels might play out through legal and political ways or repression and violence. Participating in protests exposes the former rebels directly to such opposition. Public forces such as anti-riot police or sometimes military forces are present in protests such that there are opportunities for directly targeting repressive action at the former rebels if they are visible and distinguishable from other protesters. Likewise, rivaling armed groups may find accessible opportunities at protests to attack the former rebels, who, during protests, often have to move away from safe havens such as neighborhoods or villages with a solid support base. The perceived security risks likely vary across individuals and depend on personal perceptions and the visibility an individual demobilized rebel has. For instance, the perceived security situation is likely riskier for politically active demobilized rebels and former leaders since their enhanced publicity makes them more likely targets. Thus, a critical consideration individual former rebels have to make when deciding whether to participate in protests, particularly when deciding to participate visibly (i.e., participate in a way that permits identifying them and their identity as former rebels, which is more likely when assuming leadership roles), is whether the security situation is permissive. For the Colombian case, this results in the following expectation, **H6**:

> *Participation and assuming leadership roles during the 2021 Colombian mass protests were more common for former rebels who assessed the security situation as permissive for their involvement than for former rebels who did not.*

Table 1: Overview of Hypotheses

| **Cluster** | **Hypothesis** | **Assumed Direction if Factor More Extensive** |
|---|---|---|
| Ideology | **H1** Extent of Political Alignment | Incentivizes |
| Network | **H2** Group Integration | Incentivizes |
| | **H3** Community Links | Incentivizes |
| | **H4** Political Party Membership | Incentivizes |
| Feasibility | **H5** Time and Economic Constraints | Disincentivizes |
| | **H6** Perceived Security Risks | Disincentivizes |

Table 1 provides an overview of these six hypotheses. In the remainder of this article, I explain

my approach to test whether these expectations hold for the Colombian experience and discuss the corresponding results, i.e., the extent to which these factors influenced whether individual former rebels participated in protests and took on leadership roles during protests in 2021 in Colombia.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Research Design

This section explains the research design to investigate the factors influencing individual demobilized FARC rebels' mobilization decisions during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. The research design consists of qualitative interviews conducted during 14 months of multisite field research in Colombia. Since the protests occurred only a few years after the 2016 Colombian peace agreement and the demobilization of the FARC, the Colombian protests provide an ideal case to explore former rebels' protest participation during peace processes.

I investigate three different outcomes for the dependent variable, individual former rebels' involvement during the 2021 Colombian mass protests: Participation with roles of leadership, participation without roles of leadership, and non-participation. I thus assess which of the previously identified factors influenced variation across the three possible values of the dependent variable. Differentiating between participation with and without leadership is relevant because leadership roles enable former rebels to influence protest dynamics and outcomes more than when participating as bystanders. Hence, understanding what causes participation in leadership roles may be relevant for future analyses regarding the consequences former rebels' protest participation may generate. Table 2 provides an overview of the variation in the dependent variable.

The unit of analysis is individual demobilized rebels for each of the assessed factors. While some factors may be similar in a specific research site for all demobilized rebels in the area, the analysis always considers how the respective factor influences individuals' decision-making. For instance, in a given research site, threats by armed groups might target all demobilized rebels. However, some might have more exposure due to their political activism or the visibility of their actions before demobilization. Hence, the corresponding risk perception regarding protest involvement likely varies across individuals, and a group-level analysis would not capture such subtleties. The analysis further does not rank the relevance of the different factors since the factors' weights likely vary across individuals. Instead, I analyze which factors play any influence at all when individual demobilized rebels contemplate whether to join protests.

The focus is on the FARC, not former members of other Colombian guerrilla groups that have demobilized since the 1990s. The FARC's demobilization in 2016 is the most recent one. Hence, its membership is more coherent and less dispersed than other groups, facilitating interview access. Also, given the recency of their demobilization, it is likely that many former FARC members consciously identify as demobilized rebels. For instance, the demobilization of the M-19 guerrilla occurred already in the early 1990s. Many years have passed since their demobilization, and thus, the former M-19 members are often too well integrated into society to be identifiable as former rebels. Since the 2021 protests mainly included different social demands, focusing the analysis on demobilized members of right-leaning paramilitary groups would also not be reasonable. Their

Table 2: Specification of Dependent Variable

| **Dependent Variable (Protest Participation)** | **Specification** |
|---|---|
| Participation with role of leadership | Individual did participate physically in the 2021 Colombian mass protests and was either acting as an elected spokesperson of the protests or participating as a member of the negotiation committee in negotiations with local, regional, or national authorities. |
| Participation | Individual did participate physically in the 2021 Colombian mass protests but without acting as spokesperson or negotiator. For instance, individuals who merely attended the protests or helped to organize protester camps or resistance points fall within this group. |
| No participation | Individual did not physically participate in the 2021 Colombian mass protests (participation through social media or by sending supplies might have occurred). |

identification with the protest demands and, consequently, their protest participation was likely more limited than the participation of former FARC members.

The analysis focuses exclusively on the involvement of former FARC members who successfully proceeded through the peace agreement's demobilization program. In contrast, the possible involvement of dissidents, i.e., former FARC members who abstained from the peace process or initially demobilized but consequently resumed armed activities, is out of scope.

## 3.2 Data

During 14 months, I conducted multisite fieldwork in Colombia, including 94 semistructured anonymous interviews, both in urban centers and rural areas. I mainly focused on zones with a high concentration of demobilized guerrilla members.

Interviews with demobilized rebels allowed for identifying individual motivations to join and assume different levels of responsibility during the protests. Like with any qualitative interviews, some individuals might not have remembered the events accurately or have been uncomfortable providing honest answers (for example, former FARC members might have felt uncomfortable acknowledging that they did not join the protests due to time constraints). To cross-check their narratives and obtain an understanding of the overarching macro-level dynamics, I also conducted interviews with participants and representatives of the 2021 Colombian mass protests, experts such as journalists and think tank representatives, representatives from the UN[2], and politicians

[2]The UN Verification Mission in Colombia has a mandate for the security of the demobilized FARC members.

and representatives of the Colombian government and authorities opposing the protests. I carried out all interviews without an interpreter in Spanish, approximately 80% in person and 20% via phone or digital communication tools such as Zoom. Table 3 provides an overview of the number of interviews in each interviewee group, and the Appendix entails a more detailed list mentioning each interview. Additionally, I reviewed local and national media reports, secondary literature, social media accounts, and policy reports to triangulate the interview insights and draw robust conclusions.

Through initial interviews in Bogotá with experts and with members of Comunes, the FARC-successor political party[3], I identified those 2021 protest sites across Colombia where many former FARC members became involved. I selected these regions as field research sites since they provided likely rich interview data of protest participants. However, since some former FARC members decided to refrain from the protests at each site, the sites also offered sufficient variation for the dependent variable. Moreover, I conducted additional field research in areas where the protests occurred and demobilized FARC members reside, but none or only a few participated, allowing for additional dependent variable variation across observations.

Since the FARC's demobilization and societal reintegration differed significantly across Colombian regions, the various field research sites in different urban and rural settings contributed to increased variation across the assessed variables for the individual interviewed former FARC members.[4] For instance, differences across research sites regarding the security situation, economic constraints, or Comunes party presence enabled more variation at the individual level of all the former FARC members in this analysis. Nevertheless, focusing the analysis on individuals in the same country and from the same group facilitated comparisons since all individuals' decisions on whether to join the protests occurred within the same institutional setting, the same national protest and political dynamics, and within the same peace process. Consequently, some independent variables are identical for all interviewees. For instance, each interviewee's demobilization decision occurred within the same national anti-establishment climate, national media setting, and institutional context. Also, the different local contexts were not the sole contributor to differences in the assessed factors since differences in individuals' circumstances and preferences rendered similar local conditions differently for different individuals, as the variation across the dependent variable for individuals in the same research site shows.

To get access to the interviewees, I used the initial interviews in Bogotá, which then led to contacts with demobilized rebels and members of the other interviewee categories at the different protest sites. At each protest site, I used snowballing to identify further adequate interviewees until the additional interviews did not provide relevant new information. Unfortunately, there are several potential issues with this approach. Likely, snowballing does not create a representative sample for the overall protests and each protest site and instead carries the risk of having a biased

Therefore, the UN often accompanied the former FARC members during the protests, and UN representatives have relevant insights, for example, regarding the former FARC members' awareness of potential security risks due to protest participation. Interviews with UN representatives also allowed for a reasonably neutral and unbiased overview of protest developments in different regions and to fact-check statements made by other interviewees.

[3]Initially, after disarmament was complete in 2017, the FARC called its new political party, Alternative Communal Revolutionary Forces, maintaining the acronym FARC. Realizing this acronym's negative connotation for most Colombians, the party renamed itself in 2021 to Comunes (Commons) (International Crisis Group, 2021b).

[4]The interviews included leaders and members of Comunes and former FARC leaders and members not involved in Comunes.

sample with interviewees mainly holding similar opinions. Also, the small number of interviews in each interviewee category contributes to likely dealing with a non-representative sample. Since more outspoken interviewees are easier to reach, there is partial self-selection among participants. The implications of these shortcomings of my sampling strategy could be that the insights do not adequately represent the experience of all demobilized FARC rebels but merely those of a non-representative subset for which particular factors were crucial in influencing their mobilization decision. To circumvent these potential pitfalls, I cross-checked the interviews with former FARC members with the insights of the other interviewee groups and interviewed for each protest site several former FARC members. I also chose different entry routes into the networks of former FARC members for each protest site. For instance, I used different first-contact facilitators or randomly approached former FARC members within the ETCRs to reach interviewees with different views and protest participation patterns. I also ensured variation across the dependent variable across the different protest sites and thus tried, as far as possible, to include the views of former rebels who were protest leaders, participants, and non-participants. Moreover, by including among the interviewees the most relevant actors involved in the different protest sites, I ensured that the gathered information adequately reproduced the consensus reached by the protesters regarding the primary processes of interest (Vogt, 2015). Consequently, I hope I have reduced the risks associated with qualitative research as much as possible while leveraging its potential to explore individual motivations, which, with other research approaches, likely would not become visible.

Demobilized FARC members are a risk group in Colombia. By July 2023, almost 400 of them had been assassinated since the signing of the Colombian peace deal in 2016 (Ramírez, 2023). Consequently, conducting (in-person) interviews with former FARC members requires considering and mitigating various risks. For instance, in-person interviews could expose former FARC members to potential aggressors, theft of their interview recordings could give away their identity, residence, and other personal data to third parties, or recalling past experiences during the interviews could trigger traumatic memories. Likewise, conducting interviews with former rebels and other interviewees implied exposing myself to various risks, such as traveling to areas with armed group presence or attracting attention among opponents of the former FARC. To avoid such risks, whenever possible, I conducted interviews with former FARC members and other interviewees in neutral locations that I and the interviewees deemed secure. In line with the ethics review I obtained for the research project, I did not record interviews but instead took anonymous notes, which I saved in a secure cloud folder. Moreover, I meticulously planned each field research trip by discussing my plans beforehand with local UN representatives and NGOs. Consequently, I believe the research for this article did not expose interviewees or myself to significantly high risks.

## 3.3 Empirical Strategy

I conducted interviews across the different research sites with protest-participating and non-participating former rebels. I asked to which extent the various hypothesized factors played a role in influencing individual former FARC members' decision to join the protests or not or take on leadership roles. I further asked which other factors influenced these decisions and used the interviews with non-former FARC members to verify the insights and get a general feeling for the

Table 3: Overview of Conducted Interviews

| **Interviewee Group** | **Number of Conducted Interviews** |
|---|---|
| Demobilized FARC Rebels | 48 |
| Protest Participants and Leaders | 11 |
| Authorities and Government Politicians | 11 |
| UN Officials | 8 |
| Experts | 16 |
| Total | 94 |

context and protest dynamics. During the analysis, I coded the interviews across all field research sites, and according to the hypotheses, i.e., for each interview, I assessed which factors influenced the mobilization decision, which allowed me to identify the frequency with which interviewees mentioned each hypothesis. The approach allowed for identifying variances in the dependent variable and linking these to differences in individuals' specific circumstances.

The analysis and discussion of results build up on the insights from the conducted interviews in all the field research and protest sites; an exact overview of the covered locations is available in the detailed list of interviews in the Appendix. For illustrative purposes, the evidence section also presents a more detailed overview of experiences in two specific protest sites: Cali and the Southern Colombian departments of Meta and Guaviare, which acted as one block during the protests. These two field research sites offer different local conditions contributing to variation across the various assessed factors for the individual former FARC members. Moreover, within the field research sites, these sites also offer variation in the dependent variable, i.e., the demobilized FARC members' mobilization decision, and the independent variables, i.e., the extent to which the different assessed hypotheses were influential for the interviewed individuals.

The differences between the two sites make them ideal for offering significant variations at the site levels regarding the various assessed hypotheses, such as the local security levels for former FARC members, the extent to which the Comunes party has managed to establish itself locally, or links between local communities and the former FARC's successor organizations. These variations at the field site level contribute to variations at the individual level by interacting with individuals' specific circumstances. For example, while the security situation might be generally more risky in Cali than in Meta and Guaviare, an individual's specific security situation might also depend on her visibility such that a highly politically exposed former FARC member may face higher risks by participating in protests in Meta than a former FARC member with a less visible profile participating in Cali.

Figure 1 provides a map of Colombia and highlights the geographic location of the two illustrative field research sites. In urban settings, such as Cali, Colombia's third most populated city, time and resource constraints were likely less of an obstacle for former FARC members' protest participation since many live in neighborhoods where mobilizations and resistance points occurred such that attending required no traveling. Unlike in Meta and Guaviare, security risks associated with the protest participation of former FARC members mainly stemmed from the authorities and less from armed groups. Moreover, Cali offers significant variation regarding former FARC

members jointly organizing themselves in business cooperatives.[5]

Unlike in Cali, in the predominantly rural Meta and Guaviare departments, many former FARC members have established close links with the local communities. Moreover, both departments offer significant variation regarding former FARC members residing inside and outside of ETCRs and being or not being organized in the Comunes party, thus contributing to variation regarding the extent of former FARC members' integration into networks of their former comrades. Particularly, the Guaviare department offers relevant variation in the extent to which former FARC members have links to the local communities. One of the department's two ETCRs, Colinas, is close to several villages with which the ETCR closely cooperates, whereas the other one, Charras, is in a remote area with almost no other villages nearby.




Figure 1: Geographical Location of Illustrative Field Research Sites

# 4 Evidence

## 4.1 General Evidence

As described in the previous sections, the participation of former FARC members during the 2021 Colombian mass protests displayed considerable variation. Some joined the protests, some even assumed leadership roles, and others refrained from participating. This section explores to which extent the different hypothesized factors in section 2 influenced individual former FARC members' participation decisions. I first describe the relevance of the different factors for the

[5]Economic reintegration projects in which former FARC members individually or jointly try to build a business. The Colombian government and the international community support these initiatives to foster the societal reintegration of former FARC members as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement. Each demobilized FARC member received financial and technical assistance to launch these business projects, also named productive reintegration pro jects.

individual former FARC members in general terms using the interview insight from all field research sites. Second, I describe in detail the decisions of former FARC members in two illustrative field research sites, which, due to their different local circumstances, have, on average, significant differences in the independent variables for the individual former FARC members. However, given the small sample sizes, the interviews are not representative of each protest site.

*Assessment of Hypotheses*

Regarding the first hypothesis, the extent of alignment between protest demands and individuals' beliefs and interests, all interviewed former FARC members stated support and agreement with the protests and their demands. On average, there were no significant differences in expressed support for the protests between non-joiners, joiners, and protest leaders. This unambiguousness in support of the protests is of little surprise. While protesters' demands were often local and differed across Colombia, nationwide requests for improved social services, a thorough implementation of the 2016 peace deal, and anti-poverty and inequality measures aligned well with the far-left political platform of the FARC and Comunes and thus with the doctrines most demobilized FARC members had exposure to for years. Many former FARC members thought the protests were the moment of revolution they had long desired.

Nevertheless, this unanimity implies two consequences. First, it makes it difficult to assess whether the extent of alignment was a relevant factor in individuals' mobilization decisions. Since, across observations, almost no variation exists for this variable; it is impossible to conclude how a lack of alignment between protest demands and individuals' beliefs would have influenced the mobilization. For instance, it would be interesting to see whether former FARC members with a neutral view concerning the protests would have joined or not if their former comrades had encouraged participation. However, the available data does not permit such assessments. Secondly, since all interviewed former FARC members agreed with the protests, the puzzle remains about why there were such stark differences in participation. Was it not feasible for some to participate? Did some pertain to networks that encouraged mobilization more strongly? The need remains to assess the other hypothesized variables carefully.

*Network Factors*

Regarding the first network factor, continued integration into networks and groups of former rebels, interviews with former FARC members across all field research sites revealed significant variation. Whereas some former FARC members had distanced themselves entirely from their former comrades and intended to live independently from FARC heritage organizations, most former FARC members pertained to at least one such network. The networks varied from informal ones, such as friendships with former comrades, to official ones, such as joint business cooperatives or jointly living together with former comrades in an ETCR. The FARC's direct successor organization, the Comunes party, is a specific case of a continued network and thus has its particular analysis below.

Overall, all those interviewed former FARC members who participated in the protests or assumed leadership roles displayed continued integration into networks of former comrades. Their

statements indicate that such integration had influenced various individuals' mobilization decisions. In cities, critical networks stemmed mostly from economic reintegration projects or the Comunes party, whereas in rural areas ETCRs provided vital networks. Regardless of the type of network, the mechanisms were similar. Networks of former comrades enabled former FARC members to overcome participation fears by providing familiar and trusted contacts during the protests, supported participation by helping logistically to overcome obstacles such as economic and time constraints (explained in more detail below), and encouraged participation through peer pressure. This insight is valid for most interviewed former FARC members who pertain to such networks; only a few of them did not join the protests.

For the second network variable, the link between former FARC members and the communities that participated in the protests, my interviews revealed that this variable was crucial for participation and was critical in enabling some former FARC members to assume roles of responsibility during the protests. Many former FARC members had established close links with local communities, particularly with poor rural society segments, in areas the FARC had controlled or where it had heavily recruited during conflict times. Following demobilization in 2016, many former FARC members could deepen such existing ties to individuals or local organizations and establish new connections in rural and urban settings, for instance, through professional activities, joint participation in regional cultural events, or their personal lives. Existing links with the communities reduced individuals' former FARC members' perceived participation risk since knowing familiar people among the protesters provided a sense of safety. Moreover, existing links reduced communities' stigma against former FARC members, so the communities welcomed or encouraged their participation. Such links also permitted the communities to be aware of the former FARC members' political knowledge and capabilities and thus to trust some of them during the protests with diverse tasks and responsibilities and elect or assign those to whom close links existed as spokespersons. One former FARC member in the Caquetá department recalled (Interview ID 27):

> "*I constructed the territory in Caquetá while active in the FARC and am a member and have worked with many social organizations here since 2016 - that is why they chose me as spokesperson of the Paro committee.*"

For many interviewed former FARC members, existing links to the communities were crucial in influencing participation, and for all those who assumed leadership roles, it was the key determining variable to take on such roles.

While how former FARC members developed ties to local communities is not the focus of this analysis, and the analysis treats community ties as an exogenous factor, the former FARC members' place of residence had some influence on their ability to connect with local communities. Therefore, how former FARC members ended up in their respective places of residency at the time of the 2021 protests is an interesting question since it provides some hints regarding where differences in community embedment stemmed from. My interviews showed that following their demobilization in 2016, most former FARC members initially stayed in ETCRs, often in areas near their last deployment within the FARC. During their time in the FARC, many of the group's members had switched between the FARC's different fronts and blocks and, consequently, between different deployment zones one or several times due to the organization's changing needs. These

changes implied that many members' last zones of deployment were different from their area of recruitment when joining the FARC, which for some coincided with the areas in which they grew up. Following 2016, many former FARC members moved across the country and away from ETCRs or other areas of initial demobilization for various reasons. Given high violence levels, by July 2023, almost 400 former FARC members had been assassinated since the signing of the Colombian peace deal in 2016 (Ramírez, 2023); many fled to other areas, often larger cities such as Cali and Bogotá where anonymity provided higher perceived security levels. Others returned to their zones of origin, often to reunite with families and other networks. Given former FARC members' often tricky economic situation, another group moved to cities and other areas for better employment opportunities.

Consequently, by the time of the protests in 2021, many former FARC members resided in places different from their area of demobilization in 2016 and often also different from their pre-FARC areas of residency. These dynamics significantly influenced the community ties former FARC members possessed in 2021. Many former FARC members who possessed close community links with fellow protesters lived in areas where they, while active in the FARC, had been deployed for a long time, where they had grown up, or both. In contrast, former FARC members with limited community ties in 2021 often resided in areas where they had spent little time during their membership in the FARC or before joining the FARC.

Regarding the third network variable, membership in a rebel successor party, the interviews revealed that party membership was not a key driver for participation. Many former FARC members who participated in the protests no longer pertained to the Comunes party; the same was true for some former FARC members who assumed leadership roles. My field research further showed that the role of the Comunes party during the protests was ambiguous. On the one hand, the party supported the protests intensively on social media and in Congress debates. On the other hand, the party's central leadership left much responsibility to the regional membership. While the party encouraged members to join the protests through a public announcement calling for unity and a general uprising, it did not provide more detailed instructions to its members regarding how to participate and behave during the protests. The party shared experiences from its membership in different parts of Colombia but refrained from structured coordination across regions. Out of fear of causing a stigmatization of the protests, the party sometimes also suggested members not participate in the protests as visible members of Comunes, especially at night when clashes with the authorities were most likely. Several members of Comunes' leadership claim that the regional members' knew by themselves best how to act during the protests given the significant differences in social realities across the country. The limited communication between the party's central headquarters and the territories occurred through representatives from Bogotá's headquarters traveling to the regions and through social media channels such as WhatsApp. The relatively passive stance of the Comunes leadership led to inner-party criticism and a rupture within the party. Many members in the territories felt left alone by the party's leadership, and many party members realized their party's disconnect from the urban youth, the key protagonist of the protests (various interviews with former FARC members conducted in 2022 and 2023).

Consequently, numerous members, including two of the party's Senators, left the party in 2021 and 2022, partly due to Comunes' (lack of) positioning during the protests. Only a few former FARC members who still pertained to the party during the protests, especially those belonging

to the party's inner circles in Bogotá, mentioned that their protest activism received significant guidance from the party. Instead, most did not state that Comunes influenced their participation considerably. Also, most of those former FARC members acting as protest leaders did not mention significant guidance or support from the party. Overall, party membership was thus not a critical factor influencing former FARC members' participation decisions (various interviews with former FARC members conducted in 2022 and 2023).

*Feasibility Factors*

The interviews revealed that for most former FARC members, the first of the feasibility variables, sufficient time and economic resources, was not influential in their mobilization decision. Financial constraints and family and professional commitments led only very few interviewed former FARC members to refrain from participation during the protests. For instance, they mentioned a lack of financial resources to miss work or to travel to protest sites. However, most interviewees mentioned that, especially in rural settings, such constraints existed but that it was possible to overcome them. Whereas in urban contexts, most interviewees did not encounter such constraints since protests occurred near their homes and workplaces, in rural settings, former FARC members' coordinated joint activism reduced the influence of this variable. For instance, many former FARC members who lived jointly in the same ETCR or worked in the same economic reintegration project could take turns attending the protests and, during those days away from the protests, could take care of everyone's domestic and professional day-to-day work. Their continued integration into networks of former comrades thus could mitigate economic and time constraints, enabling (a more prolonged) participation and providing an example of how the different variables may interact (various interviews with former FARC members conducted in 2022 and 2023).

Regarding the second feasibility variable, the perceived security risks, most interviewed FARC members, whether protest participants or non-participants, mentioned this as a variable they considered in their mobilization decision. Some stated that they considered participating in the protests not necessarily riskier than the day-to-day risks they encountered following demobilization and, thus, that the participation-associated risks were not a key driver in their mobilization decision. For instance, interviewees stated that participating with former comrades or with trusted local communities would provide some protection against attacks from opponents within the state forces or from active armed groups and thus mitigate the risks. Others stated awareness that participation in the protests carried high risks but considered it their political duty to attend and support the protests.

However, several interviewees decided that the risks were too high and, despite expressing support for the protests and being integrated into supportive networks of participating former comrades, decided not to participate. Often, those who decided to refrain from participation due to the security risks were those who, since their demobilization, had experienced threats and assassination attempts against them. Due to the security risks, non-participating former FARC members mainly resided in urban settings where the protests were more violent, with frequent clashes between authorities and protesters. Also, several of them had come to live in their respective city because they had to flee from violence in the rural settings where they initially lived following demobilization (various interviews with former FARC members conducted in 2022 and

2023). Overall, the perceived security risks influenced some interviewees' mobilization decisions, but not for all of them, such that high perceived risks only sometimes influenced non-participation.

*Reflection on Structural Factors*

The interviews revealed that structural factors that, at first glance, affected all former FARC members in a given location or with similar characteristics equally may ultimately impact different individuals' mobilization decisions differently. For example, while the security situation in a given region might appear similar for all former FARC members, a closer look indicated that it affected individuals differently. Some interviewed former FARC members had much more public exposure, for example, due to their political activism or due to their activities in the FARC, than others and thus received more threats from armed groups than others living in the same region or village. Thus, they considered potential risks in their mobilization decision with more scrutiny than others. Other interviewed former FARC members had a lower personal risk tolerance than many of their former comrades, such that security risks affected their mobilization decision more strongly than how the same security situation affected other former FARC members in the same region but with a higher personal risk tolerance. Consequently, genuinely structural factors affecting all former FARC members did not exist since individuals' specific circumstances rendered these structural factors into individual ones. For instance, this became clear through my interviews in the Tumaco region, where most interviewed former FARC members opted not to participate, mentioning as the most relevant reason high risk levels associated with protest participation due to the presence of various armed groups in the region (Interview IDs 47 to 49). However, one interviewed former FARC member in the region nevertheless chose to participate in the protests due to that individual's closer embedment into local communities that participated in the protests, which gave that individual a more considerable urge to participate and a more positive assessment of potential security risks (Interview ID 46). The example shows that seemingly structural factors, similar for former FARC members with similar circumstances, e.g., individuals without public exposure living in the same region with similar exposure to adverse groups, ultimately turn into individual factors due to each individual's specific beliefs and circumstances.

Table 4 summarizes the hypotheses regarding which factors influenced the former FARC members' mobilization decision during the 2021 protests.

Table 4: Relevance of Hypotheses in Colombia

| **Cluster** | **Hypothesis** | **Relevance for Mobilization Decision** |
|---|---|---|
| Ideology | **H1** Extent of Political Alignment | Unclear |
| Network | **H2** Group Integration | For Many |
| | **H3** Community Links | For Many (Particularly for Leadership) |
| | **H4** Political Party Membership | For Few |
| Feasibility | **H5** Time and Economic Constraints | For Few |
| | **H6** Perceived Security Risks | For Some |

## 4.2 Illustrative Field Research Sites

### 4.2.1 Cali

Cali is Colombia's third most populated city and economically less prosperous than Bogotá or Medellín, with very high levels of inequality. In the last decades, Cali has been one of the most violent cities in Colombia. Given the perilous security situation in many parts of southwest Colombia, many displaced victims of violence settle in the city. Therefore, Cali also has a growing population of displaced former FARC members (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

During the 2021 protests, Cali was the place of some of the largest demonstrations across Colombia, with road blockades and resistance points across the entire city lasting for several weeks. Some severe acts of vandalism occurred in the town, such as protesters burning and ransacking large commercial outlets and gas stations. In response, the national government deployed military and additional riot police forces to the city, sometimes acting with severe violence (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Among the large group of protesters, former FARC members had only a marginal role during the protest in Cali and were not crucial protagonists. None of them participated in negotiations with national or local governments. Individual former FARC members and the Comunes party tried to infiltrate and use the protests to position themselves politically but were too fragmented and without sufficient capacity to have a meaningful impact. They mainly participated through two different means (Interview ID 94). Firstly, two members of the Comunes party participated and influenced the protests through positions they held within Cali's city administration. Cali's mayor had granted the Comunes party the role of sub-secretary of human rights and peace construction. A different former FARC member held the position of assessor of the city's peace secretary and had created a team of 60 protest mediators since 2019 to create a dialogue between authorities and protesters. Both acted as mediators during the protests by attending the resistance points to reduce outbreaks of violence and benefited from being accepted by the protesters as trustworthy counterparts within the institutions. Secondly, former FARC members participated and provided support (e.g., communal cooking, educational and political activities, and teaching defense tactics) at different resistance points in Siloé, a large and impoverished neighborhood. Their base work mainly occurred under the banner of their reintegration cooperative and less as part of the Comunes party, i.e., they wore T-shirts and signs of their cooperative, which identified them as former FARC members but not as Comunes party members (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

*Factors Impacting the Mobilization Decision*

Like in the rest of Colombia, in Cali, the protests included many demands matching all interviewed former FARC members' objectives, such as reducing violence against social leaders. However, such an ideological match did not prevent many of them from not joining (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022). One former FARC member stated (Interview ID 75):

> "*I did agree with the protests and supported them in online networks and indirectly by sending supplies; yet unfortunately, I could not participate for security*

*reasons.*"

Integration into groups of former comrades was, for all interviewed, protest-participating former FARC members in Cali a critical factor. Many former FARC members in Cali pertain to joint business cooperatives; only some remain outside, partly to be more invisible and attract less attention. Those former FARC members who mobilized attended the protests predominantly as groups of fellow members of the same cooperatives, which, in Cali, frequently also engage in community and political activities. By establishing pre-agreed security protocols, such as avoiding confrontations with the state forces, the group participation gave individuals a sense of security. While it is likely that some former FARC members participated individually during the protests, those that did so had an even more marginal role (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

Almost all of those interviewed former FARC members who participated in the protests in Cali stated that existing ties to neighborhood communities facilitated and encouraged their continued participation throughout the protests. These ties resulted from personal relationships and community work some reintegration cooperatives had conducted in the Siloé neighborhood since 2018, including activities such as peace education initiatives, community kitchens, or food distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite having a clear political agenda, these projects reduced many former FARC members' stigma in the neighborhood, increased mutual trust, and made the communities aware of the former FARC members' know-how relevant to organizing the resistance points (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

On the other hand, guidance from the Comunes party was a negligible factor for most former FARC member's participation in Cali. Many participants had left Comunes, and those still members claimed that they received little to no orientation from the party regarding the protests (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

Time and economic constraints were also not a relevant factor for all interviewees. Like the many protesters with a non-guerilla past, who sometimes participated daily for months during the protests in Cali, protest-participating former FARC members found ways to overcome such constraints. Given the close physical proximity of the resistance points to protesters' places of residency, it was often possible to participate despite other commitments such as family obligations. Work in many sectors stalled in Cali during the protests, so work commitments often ceased (various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022). Non-participants also stated that time and economic constraints did not hinder their participation, as this former FARC member describes (Interview ID 75):

"*Many of us are in informal work arrangements or unemployment; time to attend the protests would have been available.*"

Finally, the security situation in Cali during the protests was challenging for former FARC members and a key reason many interviewees stated for not participating. Those who participated were usually aware of the risks but saw their participation as an essential responsibility and intended to mitigate them by attending as groups and in a non-violent manner. The main dangers came from the authorities, which had a repressive approach in Cali, resulting in various deaths of protesters. The authorities placed infiltrators among the protesters that often provoked clashes

with ESMAD, the Colombian riot police. Given that the authorities publicly assumed links between the former FARC members and dissidents of the FARC's peace process, many former FARC members feared being a natural target of police persecution and losing their special judicial status in Colombia's transitional justice system in the case of detentions. Indeed, some former FARC members were arrested during the protests and accused of being part of armed groups. Threats from armed groups against some former FARC members in Cali also existed during the protests but were less of a concern for most since such threats were already common before the protests. Hence, those who decided not to participate for security reasons did so primarily due to risks of state persecution and less because of risks stemming from armed groups (International Crisis Group, 2021a; various interviews conducted in Cali in 2022).

### 4.2.2 Meta and Guaviare

The two Colombian departments of Meta and Guaviare acted as one block during the 2021 protests. Strong ties had historically existed between campesino organizations in both departments. The rural populations in both departments shared similar concerns, such as environmental degradation and the Colombian government's military anti-deforestation campaign Plan Artemisa, which from 2016 onwards had evicted many small-scale farmers from protected areas with severe human rights abuses. Rural areas in both departments historically had only limited state presence. Former FARC members across both departments had close ties with each other and frequent interactions and joint activities. Since 2016, both departments have been home to several ETCRs (Interview ID 91).

Protests in the two departments concentrated in Meta's capital, Villavicencio. Triggered by violent protests in Colombia's large cities, protesters from different parts of the two departments organized marches to Villavicencio, where the protests lasted for several weeks across four protester groups with corresponding separate protest sites. The largest rallies were those by the rural populations, including former FARC members, various campesino movements, and indigenous groups. Among the approximately 3,000 rural protesters, there were 300 former FARC members. Additionally, there were protests by young people, trade unions, and a fourth by truck drivers. The Paro committee, which led negotiations with the national governments, consisted only of representatives of the rural protests. The other protester groups protested for more local demands and thus had negotiations with the local authorities (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022). Integrating the different protests was impossible due to stark cultural differences. One participant in the rural protests recalls (Interview ID 42):

> "*The student protests were much less organized and disciplined than ours. They had loud music, and many smoked marihuana. It was not possible to reconcile both groups.*"

The rural protesters stayed for several weeks in Villavicencio, of which one month they camped in a high school provided by Villavicencio's mayor. After two months, the protests faded because many small-scale farmers had to return to care for their farms, and negotiations with the government yielded some agreements (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

*Factors Impacting the Mobilization Decision*

The interviewed former FARC members in Meta and Guaviare, including those who did not join the protests (primarily members of the ETCR Charras in Guaviare), all displayed great political and ideological alignment with the protests at a regional and national level, indicating that the extent of political alignment was not a decisive factor in their mobilization decision (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

However, integration into joint networks with their former comrades was a relevant factor for most former FARC interviewees in the two departments. The networks consisted of jointly living in ETCRs or working in joint business cooperatives. Also, former FARC members residing outside ETCRs mainly joined the protests with the group of former FARC members. Participating jointly with trusted contacts mitigated the security concerns that some of them had and enabled mutual support, such as taking turns in the protests, organizing food deliveries from the ETCRs to Villavicencio, and coordinating joint transportation with cow trucks and tractors to and from Villavicencio (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

The most relevant factor influencing the protest participation of former FARC members in Meta and Guaviare was the existing close ties with the local communities. The FARC had controlled large parts of the two departments for decades such that many of the rural protesters knew those former FARC members who had been active in the area. Also, many former FARC members had joined the FARC within the two departments and had family ties with the other protesters. Many rural communities in the two departments had trusted the FARC for years as an authority that had ensured relative stability and low crime levels, and several campesinos organizations in the regions had strong links or origins in the FARC or its associated collectives. Following the 2016 peace deal, in some areas of the two departments, former FARC members had worked closely with rural communities and campesino movements on protection from the government's military anti-deforestation campaign, peace education programs, joint cultural events, and the peace agreement's crop substitution initiatives. Former FARC members had also taken on roles in organizations of the rural communities. The ETCRs in the departments supported previous protests and the surrounding communities with road constructions and conflict mediation, yielding integration and a positive image of many former FARC members (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022). A rural protest participant from the protests in Meta explained (Interview ID 81):

> "*For us, the peace deal signers are just like any other person; they learn from us, and we learn from them.*"

These close ties improved the perceived security situation for the former FARC members and made the rural protesters willingly accept the former FARC members' participation and trust some of them with leadership roles. Consequently, in Villavicencio, four former FARC members were elected alongside others from the campesino and indigenous movements as protest speakers and strike committee members to negotiate with the national government. The four had previous

leadership roles in the ETCRs and had been active in the two departments during their time in the FARC (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

The differing experiences of the two ETCRs in Guaviare further underscore the relevance of the community ties for the former FARC's protest participation. Former FARC members from the ETCR Colinas in the Guayabero region have led many political processes since 2016. Many former FARC members in the Guayabero region also lived in communities outside the ETCR. Consequently, there were close connections between the ETCR and its surrounding communities. On the other hand, the ETCR Charras is situated more remotely with only a few dispersed surrounding villages, so many members have almost no connections to the local communities. Whereas around 110 Colinas members initially participated, and several were critical protagonists in the protests, acting as protest speakers or organizing the marches to Villavicencio, the former FARC members from the ETCR Charras had much less relevance. Despite political alignment with the protests, only around 30 members of Charras participated, and none took on a leadership role (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

The Comunes party played a minor role in guiding or incentivizing former FARC members' protest participation in Meta and Guaviare. Some former FARC members who had left Comunes and thus received no instructions from the party were key protagonists and even spokespersons of the negotiation committee. Also, those former FARC members still part of the Comunes party declared that the party's influence on their decision to join was limited (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

Likewise, time and economic constraints did not hinder most former FARC members' participation in Meta and Guaviare. Many of them decided that the political momentum of the Paro was too relevant, were willing to overcome financial or personal struggles to participate, and their within-group solidarity rendered resource constraints less relevant (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

Finally, perceived security risks were crucial only for some former FARC members' protest participation decisions in Meta and Guaviare. While aware of the risks, for most interviewed former FARC members in the two departments, showing solidarity and supporting the rural population was more relevant. Several stated that the other rural protesters lacked literacy or political education, so these interviewees felt a need to support them regardless of the risks. Moreover, mentioning constant exposure to threats from armed groups, many did not consider attending the protests as riskier than their day-to-day lives. The assassination of one of their peers before the protests mobilized some to protest for increased security. Many former FARC members discussed and evaluated the risks beforehand, but only some decided not to go (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

The limited relevance of the security variable likely benefitted from a, while differing across individuals, relatively permissive overall security situation in Meta and Guaviare. From the authorities, the risks of participating in the protests in Meta and Guaviare were negligible. Early dialogue, which the protesters sought with the authorities, reduced the risk of state violence or persecution. The protesters committed to refrain from vandalism, and there were agreements on non-provocations and peaceful protests. The police took a reconciliation stance, withheld from searches and checks, and facilitated the protesters' move to Villavicencio by protecting the protesters from armed groups. Also, in Villavicencio, the authorities were helpful with the protesters and accom-

panied them. The mayor of Villavicencio declared that all rural protesters were welcome, not differing between former FARC members and other protesters (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

The risks and threats from armed groups were more intense than those from the authorities. However, compared to other regions in Colombia, they were also relatively permissive. Both departments were predominantly FARC territories in the last decades with limited presence of paramilitary and other armed groups. Nevertheless, due to fears of violence, the former FARC members asked the UN to accompany the marches to Villavicencio. During the protests in Villavicencio, verbal and leaflet threats from paramilitary groups such as the Aguilas Negras occurred, especially against the protest organizers and negotiation leaders. To mitigate these risks, the rural protesters deployed indigenous guard units to protect their protester camp and established strict security protocols, such as an entry scheme to avoid infiltration from other groups (various interviews conducted in Meta and Guaviare in 2022).

# 5 Discussion

The previous section revealed that integration into networks of former comrades, links to local communities, and perceived security risks were relevant variables for many former FARC members' mobilization decisions. In contrast, it is unclear to which extent differences in individuals' political alignment influenced that decision. Time and economic constraints and membership in the Comunes party had no relevance for most former FARC members. This section discusses to which extent these insights align with existing analyses on (potential) protesters without a rebel past and whether similar results are likely in cases other than Colombia.

The analysis does not provide a clear result regarding the first hypothesis, that the extent of political alignment is an influential driver in determining former rebels' protest participation. All interviewed former FARC members across all field research sites, whether they participated in the protests or not, declared support for the protests, and there were no noticeable differences in the extent of the support between joiners and no-joiners. It thus seems that political alignment with the protests was not a critical factor in the mobilization decision. Nevertheless, I argue that some agreement with the protests was likely necessary for former FARC members' participation. Those who joined the protests would have likely not done so in case they would have disagreed with the other protesters and their demands. Thus, the insights align with the expectations raised by the existing literature (e.g., McAdam, 1986; Snow et al., 1986; Stryker, 2000) that there must be some alignment between individuals' objectives and protest for participation to occur. As one could expect, the need for political alignment thus applies to potential protesters with a non-rebel past and those who are demobilized rebels alike.

Regarding the network factors, interviews across all field research sites showed that integration into networks of former comrades was a key variable influencing many former FARC members' decision to join the 2021 Colombian protests. Integration into such networks encouraged participation since former FARC members living in communities or jointly working in business cooperatives with their former comrades received more encouragement to join the protests. Since it was easier for them to participate in the protests jointly with trusted contacts, this also mitigated factors such as perceived security risks, since many interviewees stated feeling safer when being surrounded by

familiar faces, and time and resource constraints since integration into groups of former comrades enabled mutual support to free time to attend the protests. Those interviewed former FARC members who decided not to participate frequently mentioned no embedment into networks of their former comrades. These insights thus confirm H2 and are very much in line with existing analyses on high-risk activism, which show that joined activism with trusted collaborators may cancel disincentives to become involved in dangerous actions (e.g., Gould, 1995; Loveman, 1998; McAdam, 1986; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Pfaff, 1996; Snow et al., 1980; Wickham-Crowley, 1992). Consequently, integration into supportive networks is a relevant variable for potential protest joiners with and without a rebel past alike.

The finding of the relevance of integration into networks of former comrades also aligns with Zukerman Daly's (2016) insights on the remilitarization of paramilitary groups in Colombia following demobilization. Her work shows the relevance of locality of recruitment for paramilitaries group combatants' social networks and thus on their post-demobilization trajectories. Members of those groups who recruited locally, individuals who had lived in the area of the group's operation, had more intact social networks with their former comrades after demobilization, enabling their groups to act more coherently after demobilization than paramilitary groups with dispersed members due to recruitment in areas different from the group's combat zones. Through the continued social networks of former combatants of locally recruiting groups, these individuals were more likely to join collective action with their former comrades and remilitarize. This result aligns with my finding that former FARC members who continued to be enmeshed in networks of former comrades were more likely to join the 2021 Colombian mass protests. However, while Zukerman Daly's (2016) work focuses on the effects and interplay of pre-recruitment and post-demobilization locality and social network coherence on the groups' remilitarization potential, my analysis addresses political activism. Also, my analysis shows that not so much locality, i.e., remaining following demobilization jointly with former comrades in zones of recruitment and deployment, has been the driver of individual former FARC members' integration into networks of former comrades. Instead, several of the former FARC members I interviewed could integrate into networks of former comrades in areas different from their zones of origin and deployment while in the FARC. For instance, former FARC members relocating to large cities could find networks of former comrades without being from the city or having been deployed there but by joining cooperatives of former rebels or being involved in the Comunes party. A potential reason for the divergence of findings could be that the paramilitary groups analyzed by Zukerman Daly (2016) were less pan-Colombian than the FARC was and that the members of the groups she analyzes are less ideology-indoctrinated than was the case for the former FARC.

The interviews also highlighted the relevance of existing ties to the local communities for former FARC members' involvement in the 2016 protests. Such ties reduced the perceived risk level of participation and often created incentives to show solidarity with the protesting communities. Sometimes, existing community links led to communities proactively asking former FARC members to join the protests. Those former FARC members who did not join the protests usually lived more detached or remotely from protest-participating communities. Moreover, existing community links were the critical variable enabling some former FARC members to take on leadership roles during the protests. Since the protesters usually jointly appointed the spokespersons and negotiators of the protests, existing trustful relationships were crucial for former FARC members to take on

such roles. These insights thus confirm H3 and are very much in line with existing analyses on the influence of community embedment for the trajectory of demobilized combatants in Colombia (e.g., Kaplan & Nussio, 2018a, 2018b; Nussio, 2018; Prieto, 2012). Also, these results confirm insights from the literature that network factors are very influential for individuals' mobilization decisions (e.g., Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Stryker, 2000). However, existing social movement theories have identified community links not so much as a driver of protest participation, indicating that the types of networks are different for former rebels and that community links are a novel factor that has particular relevance for potential protest joiners with a rebel past.

Regarding the third network factor, most interviews revealed that guidance from Comunes had only a limited impact on the former FARC members' protest participation. Many of the participating former FARC members, including those in roles of responsibility, were no longer members of the Comunes party, while several non-joiners still pertained to the party. The party was relatively hands-off and provided limited guidance for its members during the protests. These insights thus do not confirm H4 and are different from other studies on the role of political parties during protests, which show that parties may encourage party members to become involved (e.g., Semenov et al., 2016). The insights also differ from Söderström's analysis (2016), which showed that party dynamics significantly affected the political activism of former members of the M-19 guerrilla group in Colombia. The relatively limited influence of the Comunes party on many former FARC members' decision to join the protests was, however, in line with the relative marginality of other Colombian parties during the 2021 protests, which had only limited influence also on the involvement of protesters with a non-rebel past (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Finally, regarding the feasibility factors, the interviews revealed that time and economic constraints did not influence most former FARC members' mobilization decisions to a large extent. For many of the interviewed former FARC members living in rural settings, group arrangements facilitated by joint business cooperatives and by living jointly in ETCRs enabled taking turns in the protests and supporting each other with work commitments, thus permitting participation by mitigating time and economic constraints. However, several former FARC members outside of such arrangements joined the protests, too. In urban settings, the informal work arrangements of many former FARC members and physical proximity to the mobilization sites implied that participation faced only limited constraints. These insights thus confirm Nepstad and Smith (1999), who find that many protesters participate in mobilizations despite biographical barriers such as marital status and occupation, which McAdam and Paulsen (1993) argued limit participation due to corresponding time and economic constraints. Thus, there seems to be no difference regarding the relevance of this factor between potential protesters with a non-rebel past and those who are demobilized rebels.

The case differs for the second feasibility factor, the perceived security risks, which significantly influenced some former FARC members' decision to participate in the protests. Given the difficult security situation for demobilized FARC members, with almost 400 assassinations by July 2023 since the signing of the peace deal (Ramírez, 2023), and given the potential exposure to attacks from state forces and armed groups during the protests, many of them carefully considered whether the local security situation was permitting their participation confirming H6. Consequently, several non-joiners cited security concerns as the key reason for their non-participation. These insights

thus differ from traditional social movement theories, which rarely highlight protest-induced security issues as a factor that potential protest joiners consider. However, these insights confirm analyses on protest participation in high-risk settings such as repressive regimes, identifying perceived risks as a crucial variable (e.g., Pearlman, 2018; Tran, 2023; Wood, 2003).

Table 5: General Hypotheses' Relevance

| **Cluster** | **Hypothesis and Factor** | **Relevance for Mobilization Decision** | **Applicable in Other Cases** | **Similar to Non-Rebel Protesters** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ideology | **H1** Extent of Political Alignment | Unclear | Likely Similar | Likely Yes |
| Network | **H2** Group Integration | For Many | Likely Similar | Yes |
| | **H3** Community Links | For Many (Particularly for Leadership) | Likely Similar | No |
| | **H4** Political Party Membership | For Few | Potentially Different | No |
| Feasibility | **H5** Time and Economic Constraints | For Few | Potentially Different | Yes |
| | **H6** Perceived Security Risks | For Some | Likely Similar | No (Except for Other High-Risk Settings) |

In summary, the evidence in section four of this article based on the conducted interviews highlights that several variables identified by the social movement literature as crucial drivers for individuals' protest participation also apply to individual demobilized rebels, such as an alignment between individuals' and protests' objectives and encouraging networks. While my analysis does not rank the different variables' relevance, the results seem to confirm existing analyses' findings (e.g., Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Stryker, 2000) on the distinguished importance of network factors. However, this article's key contribution to the literature is that, as the analysis revealed, for demobilized rebels, additional variables that usually do not apply to potential protesters without a rebel past are essential for the decision to join protests. While networks matter for rebels and non-rebels alike, a particular type of network, existing ties to the communities that participate in the protests, has particular relevance for former rebels to join protests and to take on leadership roles during the protests. Moreover, a permissible perceived security situation is crucial for most former rebels. By demonstrating that the social mobilization of demobilized rebels follows partly different dynamics than the protest involvement of individuals without a rebel past, the article thus advances the research agenda of an undertheorized area in peace studies: protests in peace process societies. Given the impact protests in peace process societies might have on political dynamics and stability (for instance, observers commonly interpreted the 2021 Colombian mass protests as a crucial driver of Gustavo Petro's win for the Colombian presidency in 2022), this investigation thus shows the usefulness of overcoming separate analyses within the social movement and peace studies literature. Demobilized rebels might be a critical political actor in peace process societies, and thus, this analysis might help to better understand the dynamics of protest movements and political stability following peace agreements.

*Theorizing which Factors go Beyond the Case of the 2021 Colombian Protests*

The empirical underpinnings of my insights only leverage the experience of former FARC members during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. Naturally, this raises the question of to which extent the findings are generalizable, i.e., whether the insights could also apply to other cases of demobilized rebels contemplating joining protests in peace process societies. I argue that in several aspects, the Colombian case is emblematic of the security and political situation following peace agreements, such that the relevance of some of the identified variables for influencing protest participation may follow similar patterns in other peace process societies and for other rebel groups. However, others are likely more specific to the experience of the former FARC members in 2021.

Further, two scope conditions likely guide my findings. First, the society where the protests occur is democratic to the extent that peaceful protests are generally possible without severe repression. Second, the demobilized rebel group is no longer active violently and supports the peace agreement and its implementation, i.e., the group and the former members have no intention to resume armed activities.

Whereas many cases of demobilized rebels participating in protests likely occur following peace agreements, the presence of a formal peace process, i.e., a formally agreed process in which all signees have clear responsibilities of working towards peace and of working on measures to avoid violence resurgence, is not a strictly necessary scope condition. Even though a peace process may facilitate former rebels' participation in protests without severe state repression and without strong aversion by the population, and even though many cases of demobilized rebels' protest participation likely occur during peace processes, theoretically, cases are imaginable in which rebels demobilize without a formal peace process and subsequently participate in protests. Yet, the absence of a formal peace process likely impacts several of the identified variables, such as demobilized rebels' perceived security situation. Likewise, other factors such as the type of cleavage that motivated the preceding armed internal conflict, the dynamics and characteristics of the preceding conflict, the type of armed group that demobilized, or the type of protests likely impact the different identified variables but do not represent scope conditions for the theory. For instance, the objectives and means of the protests, their duration and intensity, or geographic location likely all impact the extent of individual demobilized rebels' political alignment with the protests, the extent to which individuals have links to participating communities, their time and economic constraints for participation, and their perceived security risks. However, specific types of protests do not represent a scope condition for the theory.

Regarding the ideological factor, the extent of political alignment between former rebels and protests, there is little reason to expect that dynamics follow different patterns in other cases. While my interviews did not include former rebels who disagreed with the 2021 Colombian protests, it is unlikely that any interviewees would have dedicated time and effort to the protests if they did not agree with the protests' objectives. This logic likely is also the case for other scenarios of demobilized rebels contemplating whether to join protests since the trade-off between dedicating time to protests and other activities probably exists across cases. Thus, in cases where the protest demands provide less ideological alignment for former rebels, it would likely be less attractive to join, and fewer would choose to participate.

The often precarious security situation in peace process societies likely implies that two of the three network variables, integration into groups of former comrades and community links, could also be relevant in other contexts for former rebels' decision to join protests and assume leadership roles. Since these factors, in the case of the demobilized FARC members' decision to join the 2021 protests, were crucial to mitigating perceived security risks, one could expect these factors to be relevant in other contexts, too. Demobilized rebels likely feel safer and more encouraged to join protests in other contexts if they are enmeshed in networks of former comrades who jointly decide to become involved. Similarly, in other contexts, it is also likely that trustful or hostile existing relationships with other protesters either encourage or deter the protest participation of demobilized rebels.

On the other hand, the limited influence of the Comunes party on former FARC members' decision to join the 2021 Colombian protests does not imply that rebel successor parties could not drive the former rebel group members' protest participation in other contexts. While Comunes has played a relatively marginal role in Colombian politics since its beginnings, the rebel-successor-party literature reveals considerable differences in the trajectory and influence of such parties (e.g., Allison, 2006; Ishiyama & Widmeier, 2013; Manning & Smith, 2019). Likely, the electorally more successful examples of such parties also have more influence on their former rebel group members, including the potential to mobilize them when protests occur.

Regarding the feasibility factors determining former rebels' protest participation, the role of time and resource constraints potentially follows different patterns in other contexts. While the factor did not play a significant role in the 2021 Colombian experience, partly because many former FARC members could mitigate such constraints through mutual support, such constraints might be more relevant in other contexts. Since civil conflict occurs more commonly in less prosperous countries (Vestby et al., 2021) and demobilized rebels often face severe socio-economic conditions (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015), one can imagine scenarios in which time and resource constraints prevent demobilized rebels from joining protests.

On the other hand, the analysis has shown that the perceived local security risks have significantly influenced many former FARC members' decision to join the 2021 protests. Likely, such relevance of the security situation is also present in other cases of peace process societies in which demobilized rebels consider joining protests. Peace process societies frequently face high violence levels, and former conflict participants such as demobilized rebels are likely targets, given that their actions during the conflict likely have created enemies (Stedman, 2003). Hence, the Colombian context of a precarious security situation for former rebels when deciding whether to join protests is likely also present in other peace process societies and influences former rebels' decisions.

# 6 Conclusion

Based on extensive field research across various Colombian regions and interviews with former FARC members, both joiners and non-joiners, as well as interviews with other relevant stakeholders, this study identifies the variables that influenced former FARC members' decision to participate or not participate during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. The most influential factors were network factors, particularly group integration, i.e., the extent to which the former

FARC members continued to pertain to networks of their former comrades, and community links, i.e., the ties the former rebels built up with the communities participating in the protests. The latter was particularly relevant for some former FARC rebels taking on leadership roles during the protests. Likewise, a perceived permissible security situation was critical for former FARC members to decide to join the protests. While non-joiners also declared support for the protests, it seems that some match between individuals' political opinions and protest demands was necessary for the former rebels to join. However, since the protests across Colombia articulated demands from which the former rebels would have benefitted, this study could not conclusively test the relevance of this ideological alignment variable. The investigation also revealed that other variables, such as economic and time constraints or guidance from the FARC's political successor party, Comunes, were not influential. The latter implies that following demobilization, many of the former FARC members managed to become agents by themselves despite being used to a hierarchical, top-down organizational structure with strict command lines.

The article's core theoretical contribution is the identification of similarities between the mobilization decision of protesters with a rebel past and non-rebel protesters, which enriches mobilization theories with a new case and context, mobilizations during peace processes. Previously, research on protesters with no rebel past had identified network factors such as being a member of encouraging networks or organizations and an ideological alignment process between individuals and protests as crucial drivers for mobilization. My analysis reveals that for former rebels, network factors are also of crucial importance, even though the types of networks are slightly particular. Given the high-risk levels former rebels in peace process societies often face, former rebels value joining protests with their former comrades. Being surrounded by familiar and encouraging people partly mitigates a perceived risky security situation and can provide opportunities to overcome economic and professional constraints for participation. Moreover, almost all interviews mentioned existing trusted links to the communities as a critical factor enabling their participation and enabling them to assume leadership roles during the protests. Another factor different from standard social movement theories is that, given the high-risk environment in which former rebels in Colombia live and act, a perceived permissible security situation was often crucial for them to consider mobilization.

Unlike traditional social movement theories often argue, there has thus been not one generalizable path to protest participation of demobilized FARC members in Colombia. Instead, the various relevant factors have differing degrees of influence on different individuals, given these individuals' specific views and contexts and that even similar situations affect people differently. For some, the biggest concern when joining the protests was the security situation, whereas network factors were more influential for others. Moreover, the different factors combinedly influenced the former FARC members' decision to join the 2021 protests, i.e., the various factors interact with each other in encouraging or disincentivizing activism. For example, a permissive security situation could mitigate an individual's low political identification with the protests, whereas, with higher risks, such an individual would have refrained from joining. Thus, my analysis confirms the argument made by Viterna (2006), who highlighted that various factors influence mobilization and that diverse mobilization paths can lead to similar outcomes such that researchers should not seek to find one uniform mobilization pattern for individuals.

My analysis thus provides relevant insights regarding the drivers that influence former rebels'

participation in protests. Nevertheless, the understudied phenomenon of demobilized rebels' protest participation offers various additional research endeavors. Future research could investigate, for example, whether the mechanisms identified in the 2021 Colombian protests work similarly in different contexts and thus move the field in a more systematic direction. Likewise, future analyses could explore in more detail the different modes of participation and activities former rebels might pursue in protests and the impact and consequences their participation might yield.

# 7 Appendix

Table 6: Detailled Overview of Interviews

| Interview ID | Category | Location | Protest Participation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 2 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 3 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 4 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 5 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 6 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 7 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 8 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 9 | Authorities/ Government | Guaviare | N/A |
| 10 | Authorities/ Government | Guaviare | N/A |
| 11 | Authorities/ Government | Putumayo | N/A |
| 12 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 13 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 14 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 15 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 16 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 17 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 18 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | No participation |
| 19 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 20 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 21 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 22 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 23 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 24 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 25 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 26 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation |
| 27 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 28 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 29 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 30 | Demobilized FARC member | Cesar | Participation |
| 31 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 32 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation as leader |
| 33 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 34 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 35 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 36 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 37 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 39 | Demobilized FARC member | La Guajira | N/A |
| 40 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | No participation |
| 41 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation |
| 42 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation |
| 43 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation as leader |
| 44 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation as leader |
| 45 | Demobilized FARC member | Popayan | N/A |
| 46 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | Participation |
| 47 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 48 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 49 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 50 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 51 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 52 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 53 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 54 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 55 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 56 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 57 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 58 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 59 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 60 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 61 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 62 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 63 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 64 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 65 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 66 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 67 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 68 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 69 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 70 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 71 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 72 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 73 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 74 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 75 | FARC | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | No participation |
| 76 | Protester | Bogotá | Participation |
| 77 | Protester | Bogotá | Participation |
| 78 | Protester | Caquetá | Participation |
| 79 | Protester | Catatumbo | Participation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 81 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 82 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 83 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 84 | Protester | Tumaco | Participation |
| 85 | Protester | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 86 | Protester | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 87 | UN | Caquetá | N/A |
| 88 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 89 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 90 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 91 | UN | Meta | N/A |
| 92 | UN | Meta | N/A |
| 93 | UN | Popayan | N/A |
| 94 | UN | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |

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# Article 2: Protesting in Peace, Passing on Skills, and Reintegrating into Communities - The Consequences of Former FARC Members' Participation During the 2021 Colombian Mass Protests

**Abstract**

Demobilized rebel group members often become politically active following civil conflict peace agreements. Substantial literature has explored their involvement in party politics. However, their involvement in protests and social movements is often absent in this literature, even though protests likely occur in peace process societies and former rebels are likely participants. As a result, we know little about how former rebels influence protest dynamics and what consequences their involvement generates. Based on 14 months of field research in Colombia, this article finds evidence for three consequences of the participation of demobilized FARC members during the 2021 Colombian mass protests and corresponding causal mechanisms. Given incentives set by Colombia's transitional justice system and through UN observation, the involvement of former FARC members led to reduced violence levels at the protests. By sharing time and experiences with fellow protesters, their participation also led to their enhanced societal reintegration. The protests also allowed the former FARC members to pass on negotiation and logistical skills, leading to more professionally organized protests and negotiations with the authorities. The results have implications for understanding the risks to political stability resulting from former rebels' political involvement and the challenges to reintegration efforts.

## 1 Introduction

From late April until June 2021, a mass protest wave shattered Colombia. Triggered by a proposed tax reform of President Iván Duque's administration, hundreds of thousands turned to the streets with a plethora of demands, including more social justice, a more thorough implementation of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, and improved state protection for activism and political participation across Colombia (Pardo, 2021; Turkewitz, 2021). The protests occurred across the country, and while most protesters remained peaceful, violent clashes between authorities and protesters, acts of looting, vandalism, and road blockades occurred on many occasions. In turn, the Colombian authorities reacted with severe police brutality and militarization of cities (In-

ternational Crisis Group, 2021a). Among the protesters were also demobilized members of the Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (FARC by the Spanish acronym) guerilla group, raising the question of how these individuals, often highly politicized and trained for combat battle, would influence protest dynamics. Would the former rebels be able to adjust their repertoire of action to peaceful protests, or would their experience in armed action translate into more contentious protest tactics and violent clashes with the authorities? Would they be able to protest jointly with other parts of society despite enormous resentment towards them from many Colombians and a (narrow) majority of Colombians who had voted in 2016 against the peace deal that foresaw their demobilization (Tellez, 2019)? This article seeks to address these questions by investigating the consequences resulting from the participation of the former FARC rebels during the 2021 Colombian mass protests.

The analysis is relevant since the emergence of social media has made it easier to mobilize people, such that protests have become more common across world regions in recent decades (Chenoweth et al., 2019). Also, in peace process societies, such as Colombia since 2016, protests are likely to occur since wartime cleavages often persist, and some society segments have proven in the past their willingness to stand up for their demands. These segments include demobilized rebels, who are often highly politicized and have even been willing to use armed action to fight for their beliefs. Consequently, former rebels are likely participants during protests in peace process societies, and their experience and skills might shape protest dynamics and, consequently, political stability.

Given that the Colombian 2021 mass protests occurred less than five years following the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, Colombia provides an ideal case to explore the consequences of former rebels' protest participation. The focus is on the FARC, not former members of other Colombian guerrilla groups that have demobilized since the 1990s. The FARC's demobilization in 2016 is the most recent one. Hence, its membership is more coherent and less dispersed than other groups. For instance, the demobilization of the M-19 guerrilla occurred already in the early 1990s, such that its former members no longer are a united group. Since many years have passed since their demobilization, the former M-19 are often too well integrated into society to be identifiable as former rebels. The 2021 protests mainly included different social demands; hence, focusing the analysis on demobilized members of right-leaning paramilitary groups would also not make sense. Their identification with the protest demands and, consequently, their protest participation was likely more limited than that of the former FARC. Focusing the analysis on the 2021 protests and not on 2019, when Colombia also experienced a mass protest wave, makes sense since, in 2019, the former FARC membership was much less active in the protests. Three years after the 2016 peace agreement, the former FARC members were not yet well organized, had less presence in urban settings where the 2019 protests mostly took place, and thus could not participate meaningfully. While the investigation is Colombia-specific, the insights might nevertheless provide some hints regarding the outcomes former rebels' protest participation might generate in other peace process societies that, like Colombia, are also multi-party democracies, provide some constitutional guarantees for the right to demonstrate (Colombian political constitution article 37), have peace process institutions such as a UN mission and transitional justice system, and have a demobilized rebel group committed to the peace agreement.

The analysis focuses on those protest sites where former FARC members were meaningful protagonists such that they could influence protest dynamics, i.e., either some of them assumed roles of responsibility such as leading protesters' committees or participating in negotiations with the authorities, or they formed a sufficiently large block within the overall group of protesters. Since 2016, around 13,000 FARC members laid down their arms (International Crisis Group, 2021b), but in 2021, many hundred thousand Colombians protested (Pardo, 2021); the former FARC members could only be influential protagonists in certain areas. While what accounts for where the former FARC members participated in the protests is not the article's focus, my field research revealed that the former FARC influenced the protests mostly in their former rural strongholds in Southern Colombia. In contrast, in large cities with a few exceptions, such as some neighborhoods of Bogotá, their influence was marginal among the masses of protesters. The article focuses on those former FARC members committed to demobilization, whereas the possible influence of former FARC members who abstained from the peace process or initially demobilized but consequently resumed armed activities is out of scope.

Whereas extensive analyses exist across the peace, democratization, and political party literature on demobilized rebels' participation in conventional party politics covering research questions such as the transformation from rebel groups into parties (e.g., Manning & Smith, 2016; Matanock & Staniland, 2018; Soberg Shugart, 1992), the factors influencing the electoral performance and longevity of such rebel-successor parties (e.g., Allison, 2006, 2010; Ishiyama, & Widmeier, 2013a, 2013b; Manning & Smith, 2019), or internal characteristics and dynamics of such parties (e.g., Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Lyons, 2016; Manning, 2007), research on former rebels' participation in protests and social movements is less comprehensive. However, there is extensive existing literature on the consequences of protests, and analyzing the impact that former rebels' protest participation generates adds a particular case to this literature stream. Corresponding studies have mainly focused on the political impact of protests, i.e., the influence of protests on political agenda setting and policy considerations of protest demands. These analyses show that, in particular, large and disruptive protests alter public discourse and push politicians to include protest demands in political agendas (e.g., Gamson, 1990; McAdam & Su, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1978), whereas the likeliness of such impact depends on political circumstances such as the regime type, whether a programmatic party system exists, the public's openness to the protest demands, and availability of political allies (e.g., Hanagan et al., 1998; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). For instance, protests might highlight the urgency of specific policy demands and thus attract new political allies (Kriesi et al., 1995). However, the consequences of protests are not limited to policymaking and public opinion changes. For instance, Giugni (1998) shows that protests and social movements may lead to broader intended and unintended cultural and societal shifts, and Della Porta (2011) highlights that among the protesters, participation may lead to a sense of solidarity, trust, and community, as well as new organizational and personal networks. Consequently, analyses of the impact of former rebels' protest participation must also consider potential consequences beyond the policymaking realm.

Based on 14-month multisite field research in Colombia, including 94 interviews with demobilized rebels, activists, UN representatives, authorities, and experts, this article explores the consequences of the involvement of former FARC rebels during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. The analysis thus develops a new theory regarding dimensions of the impact that former rebels'

protest participation might have. Based on field interviews, the article further inductively develops several hypotheses regarding the causal mechanisms that link former rebels' involvement during the protests to the observed consequences. The article also explores the required conditions for these consequences to occur and assesses whether similar conditions are plausible in other peace process societies such that we could expect similar outcomes in other cases.

The interviews revealed three outcomes resulting from the former FARC's protest participation. Firstly, in those protest sites where former FARC members were meaningful players, i.e., either many former members participated or some of them assumed leadership roles, their participation reduced violence levels. Secondly, participating in the protests enhanced former FARC members' reintegration into society. Thirdly, where they were meaningful players, their participation also led to a professionalization of the protests, particularly to a more efficient organization of the protesters and the protester camps and a better articulation of protest demands during negotiations with the authorities.

Whether these observed outcomes are emblematic of other cases of demobilized rebels' protest participation during peace processes depends on various factors. In Colombia, the outcome of reduced violence levels depended mainly on two factors. First, the design of the peace process institutions, which, through a transitional justice system and an international observation mission, provided incentives to former rebels and authorities to refrain from violence. Second, a commitment of most former FARC members to the peace process. The enhanced reintegration was possible since the 2021 protests provided opportunities for former FARC members to share experiences with fellow protesters, and former rebels and participating communities were open to enhanced reintegration. Regarding the professionalization of the protests, it was crucial that the former FARC members possessed relevant skills and knowledge, for instance, through their negotiation experience, and that other protesters were receptive to the former FARC's advice and guidance.

The remainder of this article has the following structure: Section 2 describes the data collection process and methodology. Then, section 3 presents findings from the case of the participation of the former FARC during the 2021 Colombian mass protests, particularly the consequences their participation generated and the causal mechanisms that link these outcomes to their involvement. Section 4 abstracts the conditions that in Colombia were required to obtain the identified outcomes and discusses to which extent these conditions might be present in other cases of demobilized rebels' protest participation during peace processes. Finally, section 5 concludes.

## 2 Data and Empirical Strategy

*Data*

The data for this analysis consists of 94 semi-structured anonymous interviews, which I conducted during 14 months of multisite fieldwork in Colombia between October 2021 and April 2023. To fully understand the phenomenon of former FARC members' protest participation, I first conducted interviews with experts such as academics, journalists, and think tank researchers in Bogotá as well as interviews with representatives of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC)

and with representatives of the FARC's successor political party Comunes[1] in the party's headquarter in Bogotá. These interviews revealed regions across Colombia in which the participation of former FARC members during the 2021 protests occurred meaningfully and with the most impact, i.e., where former FARC members participated in relatively large numbers (in absolute numbers and compared to the overall group of protesters) or assumed roles of responsibility such as acting as protesters' spokespersons or negotiators with the government. Interviewing neutral actors such as experts and UN personnel and cross-checking their insights with interviews with members of Comunes (representing different wings of the party) enabled hopefully to obtain a reasonably comprehensive overview of protest sites where former FARC members had some influence on the protests. These first interviews in Bogotá revealed that the participation of former FARC members during the 2021 protests was particularly meaningful in specific neighborhoods of Cali and Bogotá as well as in the rural departments of Caquetá, Guaviare, and Meta. Consequently, I focused my research on these regions and conducted various field trips for local interviews. To obtain more comprehensive insights, I also interviewed former FARC members who participated in other areas, where they became involved individually or with few fellow former comrades and no leadership roles, and former FARC members who chose not to participate.

To get access to the interviewees with former FARC members[2] in the five identified areas, I used local contacts, which I obtained through expert interviews and interviews with representatives from the Comunes headquarters in Bogotá and through connections at the UNVMC. In each of the five sites, I used snowballing to identify further adequate interviewees until the additional interviews did not provide relevant new information. Since interviewees in snowballing are likely partially self-selected, for instance, one is likelier to interview more outspoken individuals, snowballing carries the risk of having a biased sample with interviewees holding mostly similar opinions and characteristics. Therefore, snowballing does not create a representative sample for the overall protests and each protest site. To partially mitigate such issues, I chose different entry routes into the networks of former FARC members for each protest site. For instance, I used various first-contact facilitators or randomly approached former FARC members within ETCRs[3] to reach interviewees with different views and protest participation patterns. All potential interviewees that I approached were willing to participate. The interviewed former FARC members differed across multiple dimensions, such as whether they lived in urban or rural areas, whether they lived in an ETCR or not, whether they pertained to a joint business cooperative[4] of former FARC members or not, and whether they were members of the Comunes party or not.

Nevertheless, the small number of interviews in each interviewee category and research site

[1]Initially, after disarmament was complete in 2017, the FARC called its new political party, Alternative Communal Revolutionary Forces, maintaining the acronym FARC. Realizing this acronym's negative connotation for most Colombians, the party renamed itself in 2021 to Comunes (Commons) (International Crisis Group, 2021b).

[2]This included leaders and members of the new FARC party Comunes (Party of the Common) and former leaders and members not involved in the new FARC successor organization.

[3]Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (Territorial Spaces for Capacitation and Reintegration), village-like camps of demobilized FARC members, which the Colombian state provided for demobilized FARC members to facilitate societal reintegration as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement.

[4]Economic reintegration projects in which former FARC members individually or jointly try to build a business. The Colombian government and the international community support these initiatives to foster the societal reintegration of former FARC members as part of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement. Each demobilized FARC member received financial and technical assistance to launch these business projects, also named productive economic reintegration projects.

implied dealing with non-representative survey groups. Moreover, like with any qualitative interviews, some individuals might have been uncomfortable providing honest answers due to social desirability. For example, former FARC members might have felt uncomfortable acknowledging that they taught fellow protesters combat tactics for their encounters with the state forces and thus contributed to violent clashes between protesters and authorities. Additionally, while covering relatively recent events, I conducted the interviews six months to 2 years after the protests, such that the analysis relies on interviewees' correct recollections of past events. Even though the 2021 Colombian protests received close media attention, coverage largely ignored the more rural protest sites and the former FARC members' role during the protests. Consequently, there is limited written documentation of the analyzed phenomenon, and there is a risk that interviewees remembered events and their actions slightly inaccurately or that their identity-building influenced their memory (Viterna, 2006).

By cross-checking the insights of interviews with different former FARC members and by cross-checking their narratives with the insights of other interviewees in "more neutral" interviewee groups, such as local UNVMC representatives and protesters without a rebel past, as well as with protest opponents such as representatives of the Colombian government and political parties opposing the protests, I hope to have circumvented these potential issues. Moreover, by including among the interviewees the most influential actors involved in the different protest sites, I ensured that the gathered information adequately reproduced the consensus reached by the protesters (Vogt, 2015). Given that there was almost no discrepancy in the information obtained through the different interviews and given that the short period between protests and interviews implies that participants likely had not much difficulty in remembering the causal order of events or that changes in attitudes influenced their memories, I am confident that the interview insights were mostly unbiased. Additionally, I reviewed local and national media reports, social media accounts, and policy reports where available to cross-check further, triangulate the interview insights, and draw robust conclusions.

To inform interviewees, guide their participation, and gain their trust, I provided each interviewee with an information sheet outlining the objectives of the analysis and describing the data handling process with a particular focus on anonymity and data security. At the beginning of each interview, I offered participants to raise any questions regarding the interview and the data handling and reconfirmed their oral consent with participation. Since former FARC members are a risk group (by July 2023, almost 400 of them had been assassinated since the FARC's demobilization in 2016 (Ramírez, 2023)), I applied rigorous security measures and data protection to not expose them to potential attacks and also to ensure my security. I conducted all interviews with former FARC members in their proposed locations, ensuring that the place would be riskless for me to attend. I did not record the interviews for data security reasons and to comply with university research ethics guidelines. Instead, I typed notes during the interviews (in English), except for a few contexts (less than 10% of all interviews) in which it would have been imprudent to publicly use my laptop, such that I took hand-written notes, which I later transcribed.

To better understand each interviewee's circumstances, I then started each interview with some questions on the participant's background, such as their current professional, family, and socio-economic situation, their upbringing and political ideology development, and their role during Colombia's armed internal conflict (especially in the case of former FARC members), before

moving on to the specific questions regarding the 2021 protests. For this article on the impact of the former FARC's participation during the 2021 protests (the article is part of a broader research agenda on former rebels' protest participation), I asked interviewees openly what they thought the consequences of the former FARC's involvement might have been. I consequently asked for each of the mentioned consequences regarding how the respondents felt the former FARC's protest participation was causally connected to each outcome, emphasizing identifying the exact intermediate causal mechanisms within the reasoning chain. The approach allowed me to understand whether the presence of former FARC members contributed to the impacts the interviews revealed.

Table 1: Overview of Conducted Interviews

| **Interviewee Group** | **Number of Conducted Interviews** |
|---|---|
| Demobilized FARC Rebels | 48 |
| Protest Participants and Leaders | 11 |
| Authorities and Government Politicians | 11 |
| UN Officials | 8 |
| Experts | 16 |
| Total | 94 |

Interviews lasted 30 minutes to four hours, with the average interview taking approximately 90 minutes. I conducted all interviews in Spanish without the help of an interpreter or research assistant, about 80% in person and 20% via phone or digital communication tools such as Zoom. The interviewees did not receive any compensation for their participation. Table 1 provides an overview of the interviews conducted with each interviewee group.

*Empirical Strategy*

Following the interviews, I systematically coded the consequences of the former FARC's involvement in the protests and the mentioned corresponding explanations, which allowed me to identify which outcomes and causal mechanisms the interviews most frequently cited. While the interviews were thus at an individual level at various field sites, I combined the interviews at the field site level to identify the dynamics of each field site. By combining the insights from the different field sites, I could then draw general conclusions regarding the former FARC members' impact as a group across field sites instead of individually or at the field site level. The coding revealed those consequences of the former FARC's participation that were similar in areas where the FARC had meaningful influence, i.e., where either some of its former members took on leadership roles or the number of participating former FARC members was large enough to influence protest dynamics. I then analyzed whether the mentioned causal pathways seemed plausible, considering the different interview groups' viewpoints, i.e., checking whether protesters without a rebel past and UNVMC staff confirmed the outcomes and causal mechanisms the former FARC members mentioned. I thus theorize the causal pathways based on my interview findings. Finally, I identify the abstract scope conditions required for the former FARC's participation to have the identified consequences. For this discussion, I use regional variation across field research sites since

this allows me to determine the role of different contextual factors. For instance, I consider how variations in the behavior of other protesters and the authorities, or variations in the security situation, influenced the impact of former FARC members' protest participation. By determining these scope conditions, it is possible to develop expectations of similar consequences in other cases of former rebels participating in protests during peace processes.

# 3 Findings and Evidence

This section provides field research findings regarding the impact of former FARC members' involvement during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. Based on interviews conducted at different Colombian research sites (for an exact overview of the interviews and the various research sites, see the Appendix), the analysis identifies three separate consequences that one can directly link to the former FARC's participation: A pacification of the protests, an improved reintegration of the former FARC members into society, and a professionalization of the protests. For each of these three outcomes, this section describes the respective findings and presents evidence regarding the potential causal mechanisms that link each of the three outcomes to the protest participation of the former FARC. To verify the validity of the suggested explanatory mechanisms, I cross-checked the information from each interview with the insights from other interviewees and further explored for each finding plausible alternative explanations.

*Reduced Violence: Findings*

While no exact data is available on violence at different protest sites, the first key finding confirmed by all interviews is that protest sites at which former FARC members could influence protest dynamics, i.e., where they participated in large numbers or where some of them held roles of responsibility were primarily peaceful. For example, in the Meta department, a representative of the UN recalls (Interview ID 91):

> " *The pacifist nature of the Paro in Villavicencio was largely due to the presence of the former FARC members. There was not a single act of violence, and the authorities did not use the ESMAD (Colombian riot police) once.*"

Also, many of the former FARC members themselves confirmed this impact, such as an interviewee in the Guaviare department (Interview ID 31):

> " *The participation of us peace deal signers had a pacifist impact. Since previous Peregrino mobilizations (a previous mobilization in which they participated), our mobilization tactics have always been peaceful. We had agreements to remain pacifist and communicated any issue openly with the government to avoid violence.*"

These insights starkly contrast the situation in other protest sites during the 2021 protests. Especially in larger cities, the protests often entailed severe violent clashes between protesters and authorities. Whereas most protesters remained peaceful, violent incidents such as clashes between authorities and protesters or vandalism frequently occurred, resulting in deaths and destroyed infrastructure and property. The Colombian government reacted and sometimes provoked the protesters through severe police brutality and militarization of cities. Consequently, the Paro led to dozens of persons killed[5], arbitrary detentions, several cases of sexual violence, and many wounded (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

*Reduced Violence: Evidence*

What then explains the absence of violence in these protests, and does a potential link to the presence of former FARC members exist? While various factors likely contributed to the absence of violence, almost all interviews revealed that the presence of former FARC members was a crucial variable. Their presence impacted violence dynamics at the protests through two main causal mechanisms.

First, the former rebels had strong incentives to avoid violence at the protests at any cost, leading them to refrain from violence themselves and influence other protesters to remain peaceful. The 2016 Colombian peace agreement included provisions for a transitional justice system, the so-called Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP by the Spanish acronym). Through the JEP, perpetrators of crimes during Colombia's armed internal conflict receive special justice treatment, i.e., reduced and alternative sentences, under the condition that perpetrators contribute to truth and reparations, commit to legality and non-recurrence of violent criminal acts, and acknowledge responsibility. By violating the conditions of legality and non-recurrence of violence, perpetrators would lose their status within the JEP and enter the ordinary Colombian justice system, where legal sentences are higher (Triana-E et al., 2022). Consequently, former FARC members had a solid incentive to desist from any illegal or violent acts during the protests since corresponding detention would have implied the risk of higher legal sentences for past activities during their time as active guerrilla members. A former FARC member in Bogotá describes how this mechanism played out (Interview ID 23):

> " *We (the Comunes party leadership) gave verbal instructions to the members to not lose the JEP status during the protests and thus to refrain from violence. We did not advise not to use violence because we did not believe in it but rather because of the potential consequences such as higher sentences.*"

Since (contentious) protests often yield chaotic situations in which it is difficult to determine responsibility for specific actions or state forces might conduct arbitrary detentions, the former FARC members also had an incentive to encourage other protesters to refrain from violent activities. Aware of the potential consequences of being accused of illegal activities, the former FARC members significantly influenced fellow protesters to refrain from violence. However, the

[5]Official data by Colombia's Fiscalía (Office of Public Prosecutor) counts 24 deaths related to the 2021 Paro, whereas national NGOs such as Indepaz count 43 (Prieto et al., 2021)

extent of influence and the type of communication varied considerably depending on the positions the former FARC members assumed within the protesters' informal hierarchies and their relative weight among the total number of protesters. If the former FARC members assumed leadership roles or formed a large block of the total protesters, they often had significant influence on the other protesters and could provide direct instructions to remain peaceful. Otherwise, if they participated as bystanders and correspondingly with less influence, they tended to argue for peaceful protesting in protester reunions and discussions. For example, former FARC members were among the vital protest organizers in the Meta department. Several became elected spokespersons of the local organization and negotiation committee. Through these leadership roles, the former FARC members were able to convince fellow protesters during reunions regarding the benefits of keeping the protests peaceful. One former FARC member in Meta remembers (Interview ID 41):

> "*We had a clear influence on the other protesters. Some campesinos from Guaviare and remote areas in Meta wanted to get into clashes with the ESMAD, but then we (the former FARC members) had a reunion and decided not to become involved. We told them: We do not get involved in such activities, and if you start clashes, we will leave. We are ready to help if they attack us, but we do not support provocations from our side.*"

Also, provocations from the authorities did not occur in Meta, partly because the protesters led by the former FARC members sought pre-dialogues with the authorities, who in return were more permissive. However, in other protest sites, the former FARC members also intended to convince other protesters to refrain from violence but had insufficient influence, given their small number among the broader pool of protesters. For instance, in Cali, where the participation of former FARC members was a marginal phenomenon among the hundred thousands of protesters, a former FARC member recalls (Interview ID 47):

> "*We (the members of their cooperative of former FARC members) told the young people daily to calm down and go home when it became too violent. We also organized events such as nighttime fire chats highlighting the benefits of peaceful resistance. However, we had little impact because they did not want to take orders or listen to us. There was too much adrenaline.*"

The second causal mechanism through which the participation of former FARC members during the 2021 protests reduced violence during the protests was that the former FARC members' participation led to the presence of the UN and other international organizations. The UN Security Council's Resolution 2366 establishes the UNVMC to monitor the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement. The mandate entails that the UNVMC verifies FARC members' and their families' individual and collective security and protection measures and a comprehensive security system for political activity (UN Verification Mission in Colombia, n.d.). For the protests, this implied that the UNVMC would frequently accompany the former FARC members' participation in the protests. The former FARC members often asked the UN to be present during the protests, while traveling to the protest sites, and during the negotiations with the authorities. One former

FARC member recalled how they asked the UNVMC for support (Interview ID 25):

> "*In Kennedy (a neighborhood in Bogotá), the UN was present during the protests for various days. Of course, not everyone has the number of the UN and can call them; it was us (the former FARC members) who made these calls and asked them to come.*"

The presence of the UNVMC implied that the protesters and the authorities had international observation. Consequently, authorities and protesters were less willing to participate in violent acts. Interviewees stated that the authorities particularly took a more reconciliatory approach to the protests when international observers were present. International criticism of the authorities' violent acts was manifold during the protests. For instance, the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights visited Colombia in June 2021 and noted in its corresponding report authorities' disproportionate use of force and severe human rights violations (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2021). The administration of President Duque repudiated these accusations and intended instead to maintain a benevolent relationship with the international community (Interview ID 8). Consequently, the authorities were less inclined to use violent measures when under direct observation by the UNVMC or other international bodies.

Moreover, the UNVMC also provided direct support during negotiations between protesters and authorities when former FARC members participated during these negotiations, which the former FARC members at times specifically requested. A UN official recalls (Interview ID 87):

> "*The local Paro committee did not want the church to act as an intermediator and asked instead for us (the UN). The negotiations thus became tripartite, including the authorities, the protesters, and us. We were present during all local talks and facilitated discussions and dialogue. We achieved some concessions from the protesters, such as creating transport corridors through the blockade for medicine and petrol and from the authorities to not break the blockade by force.*"

Figure 1 provides an overview of these causal mechanisms.

*Reduced Violence: Alternative Explanations*

The interviews revealed that potential alternative explanations do not seem to explain the reduced violence during the protests in which the former FARC members had influence. First, one might argue that the former FARC's participation mainly occurred in rural areas where the protests might have been generally, independent of the former FARC's participation, less violent than in Colombia's major cities. Consequently, not the involvement of former FARC members but other contextual attributes of protests in rural Colombia might have led to the lowered violence. For instance, the rural protests consisted more of adult protesters from campesino and indigenous movements than the urban protests, where young protesters from impoverished neighborhoods were the main protagonists. Hence, not the presence of former FARC members but the larger

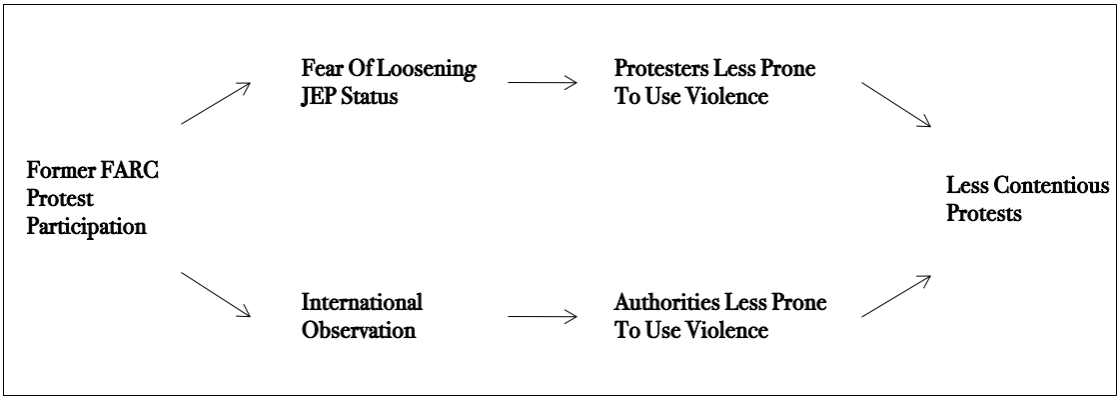



Figure 1: Reduced Violence Causal Mechanisms

share of older protesters could have translated into reduced violence. Nevertheless, the interviews highlighted several incidents of violence during rural protests, thus showing that protest violence occurred both in urban and rural Colombia. For instance, one former FARC member recalls an incident during the rural protests in Granada (Meta) before former FARC members entered the leadership committee of the protesters (Interview ID 41):

> "*There was a clash with the authorities at a local toll station, and things became tense. However, none of the peace deal signers (i.e., former FARC members) was involved.*"

Later, when the protesters of the Meta and Guaviare departments stayed for several months in Villavicencio, and the former FARC members became spokespersons of the protesters, no further incidents of violence occurred. Several other cases of violence during rural protests seem to confirm that the fact that former FARC members were mainly influential in rural protest sites does not indicate that it was the rural character of protests, instead of the former FARC's participation, which reduced violence levels.

Second, one may argue that the authorities took a more reconciliating approach in those protest sites where former FARC members were leading the protests. By refraining from deploying the Colombian riot police ESMAD in the streets or using conciliatory rhetorics, it might thus have been the authorities' attitude instead of the presence of former FARC members that reduced violence levels. However, the interviews revealed several instances in which authorities took a repressive stance during protests with the presence of a large group of former FARC members. For example, UN representatives and former FARC members recalled that in Altamira (Huila department), the national government was determined to break a road blockade connecting the Huila and Caquetá departments with the army by force (Interview IDs 27 & 87). Nevertheless, the negotiators, including several former FARC members and UN personnel, convinced the authorities otherwise. Consequently, a more reconciliatory approach of the authorities does not seem to explain why protests with significant participation of former FARC members tended to be less violent. Instead, the influence of former FARC members seems to have been the critical causal mechanism.

*Reintegration: Findings*

A second key finding is that the former FARC members' participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests led to their increased reintegration into society. While it is difficult to precisely measure and compare the extent of their societal reintegration before and after the protests, several interviews with former FARC members, UN staff working on the former FARC's societal reintegration, and members of the communities and municipalities in which the former FARC members live confirmed this. One representative of the UNVMC who has worked for years closely with a community of former FARC members in the Guaviare department recalls (Interview ID 89):

> "*Participation during the protests helped the former FARC members to integrate better, especially within the rural society and the campesino movements. The new links continue to exist after the protests have ended and manifest themselves through joint activism between former FARC members and campesinos. Before the Paro, the former FARC members did not participate in many events and activities of the surrounding communities they now attend.*"

Other interviews with similar insights also seem to confirm that participating during the protests positively affected the former FARC members' societal reintegration.

*Reintegration: Evidence*

What explains this strengthened societal reintegration of the former FARC members following the protests? As Della Porta (2011) shows, protests are often a tool to create new social networks, new personal ties such as friendships, and even professional relationships. Such dynamics were also the case for the former FARC members during the 2021 Colombian mass protests. Since the protests lasted for several months, many protesters had time to get to know each other well. In most urban and rural protest sites, the protesters created organized blockades and protest camps where protesters would meet each other daily. While many former FARC members participated in a group with their former comrades, all interviewed former FARC members mentioned that they had no special status and integrated seamlessly into the other protester groups.

Consequently, many participating former FARC members spent significant time with protesters without a rebel past and shared experiences and challenges with them. For instance, they had to jointly organize road blockades and protester camps, jointly face the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck many of them in the protester camps, jointly articulate protest demands, jointly endure, at times, police brutality, or jointly being the target of stigmatization attempts by political opponents. Often, these shared experiences led to increased trust between former FARC members and local communities. For instance, in the Siloé neighborhood of Cali, a former protester recalls (Interview ID 85):

> "*Those from the COPRIPAZ cooperative (a business cooperative of former FARC*

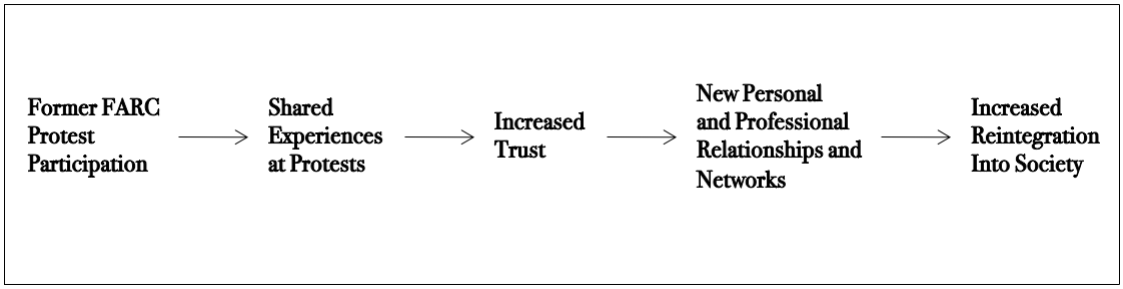



Figure 2: Reintegration Causal Mechanisms

*members active in Siloé) participated daily at the resistance points with us and risked everything for us.*"

The former FARC members' protest participation thus helped enforce trust towards them from the protest-participating communities and reduced their stigma within these communities. Also, for former FARC members living in remote areas, the protests were sometimes the first meaningful encounters and relationships after their demobilization in 2016 that they could build up with local communities. A former FARC member in Guaviare remembers (Interview ID 34):

"*Participating in the protests helped to reintegrate us significantly. Especially us in Charras (a remote ETCR in Guaviare), who live far away and do not know many people. The protests helped to change that.*"

New friendships and organizational and professional relationships could emerge through the increased trust between former FARC members and fellow protesters without a rebel past. For instance, in Guaviare, the former FARC members mentioned frequent new joint activities between their ETCR and nearby indigenous groups, such as jointly organized cultural events (Interview IDs 34 & 35). Several interviews mentioned that following the protests, these newly strengthened links, networks, and relationships made during the protests continued to exist, implying a strengthened reintegration of the demobilized FARC members into civil society (Interview IDs 34 & 35). Interviews in other urban and rural protest sites provided similar insights. Figure 2 provides an overview of these causal mechanisms.

*Reintegration: Alternative Explanations*

One plausible alternative explanation for the former FARC's improved integration into Colombian society following the Paro could be that there was generally a different social climate following the protests. The Paro altered political debates and yielded more societal focus on inequality, the need for a thorough implementation of the 2016 peace deal, and various social needs. Many observers consider that these changes in political discourse contributed significantly to the electoral victories of the Pacto Histórico, a coalition of multiple leftist parties, and Gustavo Petro in the 2022 Colombian congressional and presidential elections (Doria et al., 2022; De Sousa Santos,

2022). Consequently, one could expect that in such a climate of increased social awareness, society would also adopt a more reconciliatory approach to former rebels independent of their role during the protests. Thus, the change in societies' attitudes may have enabled the former FARC's enhanced reintegration.

However, interviews with former rebels who did not participate in the protests do not support such an explanation. For instance, in Tumaco on Colombia's Pacific coast, former FARC members of the ETCR Variante abstained from participation during the Paro despite protests occurring in Tumaco, like in the rest of Colombia, for various months. Interviews in Tumaco revealed that the community of former FARC members in the Tumaco municipality lives relatively isolated from its surrounding communities and that the change in Colombia's social and political climate following the 2021 protests did not have any mitigating effect. Interviewees did not perceive any change in the communities' attitudes towards them following the protests and did not mention increased involvement in activities with these communities after the Paro (Interview IDs 46 to 49). The example shows that it seems unlikely that changes in general societal discourse and opinions due to the protests led to improved integration of the former FARC since otherwise, former FARC members who did not participate in the protests should also have experienced increased reintegration. Since this has not been the case, protest participation seems to be a plausible explanation for why some former FARC members' reintegration improved following the Paro.

*Professionalization: Findings*

A third key finding is that the former FARC members' participation during the 2021 Colombian mass protests led to an increased professionalization of the protests. The interviews revealed that such professionalization occurred across two main dimensions: First, a more careful articulation of protest demands, particularly during negotiations with national, regional, and local governments. Second, enhanced organizational and logistical abilities, which the protesters required to organize the resistance points and protester camps. For instance, a UN representative who accompanied the protests and negotiations in Guaviare and Meta recalls (Interview ID 89):

> "*The former FARC members' discipline helped organize the protests and prevent chaos from happening as in Cali. There was almost a military atmosphere, just without arms. Their political capacity and negotiation knowledge enabled them to formulate local demands considering the macro-political climate. Their organizational capabilities were crucial to organizing the protesters' transfer to Villavicencio and the protester camp there. It was impressive, for instance, once they organized a coffee break serving coffee to 2,000 people within 15 minutes completely smoothly.*"

The interview insights regarding the former FARC members' professionalization of the protests stem predominantly from those protest sites in which the former FARC members had a leading role, i.e., the departments of Meta, Guaviare, Caquetá, and a few neighborhoods of Bogotá.

*Professionalization: Evidence*

How did such professionalization of the protests through the participation of the former FARC members occur? Through their experience in a guerrilla organization, through the peace negotiations, as well as the demobilization and reintegration process, the former FARC members had acquainted a diverse set of relevant skills. Most helpful during the protests were, on one hand, political and negotiation skills and, on the other hand, logistical skills relevant to organizing events and large groups of people. During their time in the FARC, most members needed to participate in ideological training, often daily; consequently, many are still highly politicized individuals nowadays. While such training was often highly ideological and focused on anti-imperialism and Cold War rhetoric instead of actual Colombian policy challenges (Pécaut, 2008), it trained them to understand macro-political and economic circumstances, to obtain some knowledge of the Colombian institutional setting and to articulate political ideas. Likewise, experience during the 2016 peace talks enabled those former FARC members who directly participated during the negotiations to acquire negotiation skills with Colombian authorities and those who did not participate to learn from the experience of their comrades. Since many former FARC members remained politically active following the demobilization, for instance, by building up the Comunes party or becoming involved in diverse other political organizations, many could deepen their political understanding further and adjust their political action repertoire from violent action towards democratic processes. Consequently, many former FARC members had more advanced political knowledge and a better ability to express political demands and face state representatives during negotiations than fellow protesters, such as those of campesino and indigenous groups.

Regarding the logistical capabilities, the experience of being part of a strictly hierarchical military organization enabled most former FARC members to become highly disciplined and well-organized. Due to the constant fear of potential attacks by the Colombian military or other armed groups, guerrilla camps had to function efficiently and be set up from scratch at new locations frequently (Pécaut, 2008). At the camps, they had to organize food and shelter for many people, set up rigid rules and time plans, and implement rigorous guarding systems. The former FARC members could maintain some of these skills following demobilization, such as high discipline levels and organizational and logistical capabilities.

The former FARC members could use their skills and achieve a professionalization of the protests through two separate channels. First, they could directly deploy these abilities when acting in leadership roles. For instance, those former FARC members who became members of the negotiation committees could directly deploy their political knowledge and negotiation experience when dealing with the government representatives. Those in charge of organizing protest camps could directly give instructions regarding how to set up the camps and which rules and schedules should apply to ensure the smooth running of the camps. Second, they could share and transfer their skills and experiences to their fellow protesters. For instance, some interviewees mentioned that the former FARC members briefed and supported negotiators from the campesino movements before entering negotiations with the government. Others mentioned that the former FARC members instructed the Guardia Indígena, an indigenous self-protection group (Glatsky & Turkewitz, 2023), regarding how to protect the protester camp at night best and the protests during the day from potential infiltration and attacks by paramilitary groups (Interview IDs 43

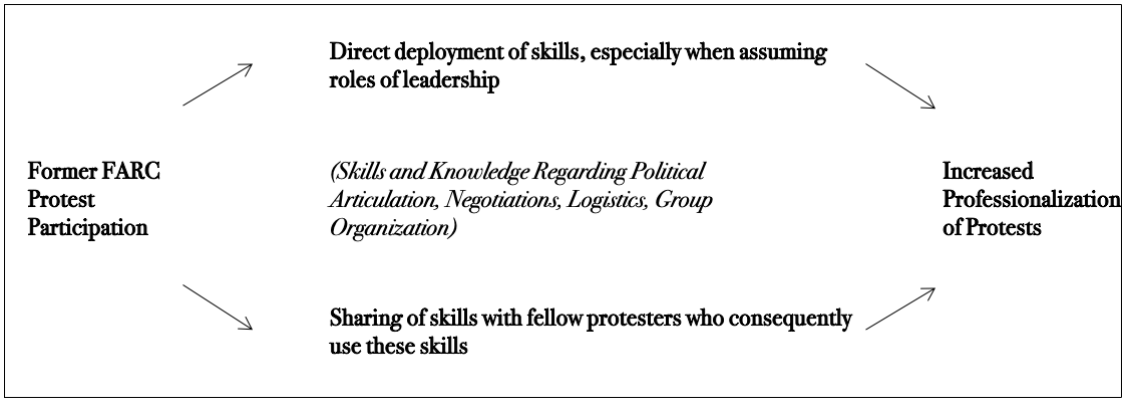



Figure 3: Protest Professionalization Causal Mechanisms

& 44). Consequently, the experience and capabilities of the former FARC members helped to professionalize the protests even when they did not deploy these skills themselves. One protester in the Meta department recalls (Interview ID 80):

> "*The Firmantes (former FARC members) were really great at organizing everything within the protester camp. They arranged supplies, cooked and distributed food, and ensured everyone had to eat.*"

Figure 3 provides an overview of the causal mechanisms of how the participation of former FARC members led to a professionalization of the 2021 protests in Colombia.

*Professionalization: Alternative Explanations*

Plausible alternative explanations for the professionalization of the protests could be that the protesters, independent of the participation of former FARC members, learned by themselves to negotiate and coordinate the protests more professionally over time or that other groups and individuals than former FARC members provided relevant skills and training. While some learning effects over the several-month-long protests undoubtedly took place without the former FARC members' input, their involvement accelerated such learnings and provided structure and professionalism in those protest sites where they participated from the get-go. Also, several interviews revealed that at many protest sites where no former FARC members participated, the organization remained relatively chaotic throughout the protests. For instance, one non-FARC protester in Bogotá who participated in resistance points where the former FARC had no influence recalls (Interview ID 77):

> "*Organizing the protesters at the resistance points in Usme (a neighborhood in Bogotá) remained a disaster throughout the protests. The local committee was very loose; it was difficult to agree on anything given the numerous demands, and it was tough to conduct meetings since everyone talked simultaneously. Ev-*

*eryone could join, so one day, there would be completely different people than the previous day.*"

Interviews from other protest sites confirmed such reports. They showed that since the 2021 protests were a grassroots movement with almost no central coordination, often the protesters had difficulties over the entire course of the protests in coordinating themselves and streamlining and articulating their demands towards the government.

However, a second plausible alternative explanation for why the protests became more professional in some protest sites could be that individuals from other groups and organizations, instead of former FARC members, guided the protesters and helped to make the protests more professional. While this may have been the case in some protest sites, all interviews confirmed that generally, the 2021 protesters refused organizations such as political parties or trade unions to become involved. Also, the former FARC members who participated did so mostly privately as individuals rather than in their capacity as representatives of the Comunes party. Certainly, members of other political parties and trade unions could have contributed to the professionalism of the protests as individuals and likely occasionally did so. However, in many of the rural protest sites where the former FARC members were influential, few other people had abilities like the former FARC that could have led to a professionalization of the protests, such as a thorough understanding of the local socio-political needs and demands of the campesino movements or the ability to organize camps for large groups of people. Consequently, it is unlikely that other individuals or groups were accountable for the professionalization of the protests in protest sites where the former FARC members had meaningful influence.

# 4 Scope Conditions – Looking Beyond the Case of the Former FARC in Colombia

The previous section has shown the consequences resulting from the participation of former FARC rebels during the 2021 mass protests in Colombia with three key findings: Reduced violence at the protests, enhanced reintegration of the former rebels into society, and professionalization of the protests. The following section takes the analysis beyond the case of Colombia. For each of the three identified consequences, the section shows the abstract conditions required in other instances such that similar causal mechanisms may unfold and the Colombian findings generalize and occur elsewhere.

Other cases likely require the fulfillment of additional conditions for the presented causal mechanisms to unfold. Hence, the analyzed conditions are not for each case comprehensive. Nevertheless, they provide some essential scope conditions that help identify in which other cases similar causal mechanisms than the ones observed in Colombia could occur. Table 2 provides an overview of these conditions for each identified finding. As an overall underlying condition, the analysis assumes that the demobilized rebels are committed to the peace process and demobilization and that the protests last sufficiently long for the different causal mechanisms to unfold, i.e., for meaningful encounters between former rebels and fellow protesters to occur. Moreover, while, as I will show below, a formal peace process is needed for the violence reduction mechanism to unfold, a

peace process is not a strictly necessary scope condition for the other two findings since former rebels' protest participation can also yield improved societal reintegration and more professional protests without a formal peace process taking place. Also, the type of (preceding) internal conflict, its underlying cleavages, or the type of demobilized armed group do not necessarily provide scope conditions for the theory. These factors may influence fulfilling the below-described scope conditions but do not provide scope conditions themselves. For instance, the type of armed group might influence the extent to which former rebels have relevant skills that contribute to the professionalization of the protests. Yet, it is not a specific type of armed group that represents the theory's scope conditions but the participation of any type of armed group that possesses relevant skills for the protests. Likewise, the theory does not depend on specific cleavages having motivated the (preceding) armed internal conflict. While the cleavage might influence the extent to which fellow protesters are willing to accept guidance from the former rebels, it is, as described below, the fellow protesters' disposition to engage with and accept guidance from the former rebels that needs to be fulfilled for the causal mechanisms to unfold. Also, whereas these factors likely influence whether demobilized rebels are willing to engage in protests in the first place, this article's theory assumes their willingness to participate is exogenously given.

Finally, other causal mechanisms and consequences are also plausible in different contexts. The ones presented here are merely those observed in the Colombian experience.

*Reduced Violence*

Regarding the first consequence of the FARC's involvement during the 2021 Colombian mass protests, reduced violence levels, the previous section has shown that two causal mechanisms existed: Through the transitional justice system, the former FARC member had incentives to refrain from violence and to convince other protesters not to become involved in violent activities, and through the presence of international observers, the authorities were willing to act less violently. Hence, the transitional justice system and the UN mission verifying the former rebels' security were critical attributes of the Colombian peace agreement, crucial in Colombia for these causal mechanisms to unfold. In addition, further conditions that were crucial for both these attributes to have a pacifying impact on the protests were that other protesters were willing to let the former FARC members influence them and that the Colombian authorities were willing to adjust their actions in light of international observation, for instance, due to the desire to comply with international standards or out of fear of creating diplomatic tensions. Moreover, the incentives that a transitional justice system and international observation set may have little impact if the demobilized rebel group decides to take up the armed struggle again. Assuming the group still influences its (former) members, these individuals could thus use protests to stir tension and challenge the authorities. Consequently, an additional condition for the participation of former rebels to yield reduced violence at protests is that the former rebel organization is committed to the peace process.

Likely, these mechanisms also apply in other settings and require similar conditions to be able to unfold. Firstly, in other peace process societies, a functioning transitional justice system that incentivizes law-abiding behavior through lower legal sentences would also encourage demobilized rebels to act peacefully during protests. Since peace deal negotiators with increasing frequency

include transitional justice mechanisms in peace agreements (Bell & Badanjak, 2019; Clark & Ungar, 2021), other cases of former rebels' protest participation during peace processes likely display similar dynamics. However, former rebels must be fully aware of the consequences of not adhering to the transitional justice mechanisms, and the consequences of non-compliance must be credible. For the transitional justice incentives to spill over to other protesters, like in Colombia, either the former rebels need to be sufficiently influential to guide the behavior of the other protesters, or the other protesters need to be willing to follow the example of the former rebels in terms of non-violence. Consequently, fellow protesters must trust the former rebels to the extent that they are eager to follow the former rebels' lead, as in 2021 in some parts of rural Colombia. This second condition is likely less frequently given in many peace process societies since (former) rebels often face severe stigma (Bullock et al., 2017; Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Also, the former rebels may not be sufficiently influential on other protesters' behavior, which likely depends, amongst other factors, on the relative number of former rebels among the overall number of protesters.

Secondly, in other peace process societies, international observers at protests would also likely influence the authorities' readiness to use violence. To do so, the government in charge must be at least to some extent mindful regarding international reactions due to inadequate use of violence by the authorities, for instance, out of fear of damages to the government's and country's international image, political isolation, or economic sanctions. Since international observation missions are frequent in peace process societies (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006), one can also expect similar dynamics to unfold in other peace process societies. Nevertheless, similar to the Colombian case, international observation must specifically be present at protest sites where former rebels participate. Whereas in Colombia, this was the case since the UNVMC has the mandate to verify the security of the former FARC members; in other peace process societies, the presence of international observers at protest sites could also come through different arrangements, such as a mandate of UN peace missions that specifically includes accompanying social unrest.

Finally, unlike in the Colombian case, where, except for some dissident factions, the FARC successor organization is committed to the peace process, existing research shows that it is not uncommon for peace processes to fail and for former rebel groups to act as spoilers taking up armed activities (Stedman, 1997). In fact, from 1975 to 2005, fighting recurred in 40 percent of civil conflicts that ended with a peace agreement (Matanock, 2017). Consequently, in other peace process societies, the condition that the former rebel organization is committed to non-violence must not necessarily hold such that despite the incentives set through a transitional justice system and international observation, the organization might use the protests for violent actions against the authorities. However, whether such a mechanism unfolds ultimately also depends on the influence the organization continues to have on its (former) members who participate in the protests. Only if the organization has a preference to resume armed action and continues to have a firm grip on its former members could the peace institutions' incentives likely be offset.

Overall, the Colombian situation and its peace process architecture, including a transitional justice system and UN presence, are similar to other post-peace agreement settings. If the above-described required attributes are similarly designed and existent, and if the rebel successor organization is committed to the peace process, the involvement of former rebels at protests could also lead to reduced violence levels in other peace process societies.

*Reintegration*

Regarding the second observed consequence of the demobilized FARC members' participation during the 2021 protests, their enhanced reintegration into society, the causal mechanisms required three key attributes to unfold. Firstly, the reintegration depended heavily on the time demobilized FARC members and other protesters spent together. Only by sharing experiences at the protests and having time to get to know each other could the encounters at the protests lead to an enhanced reintegration once the protests ended. Therefore, the first relevant attribute of the Colombian case was that former FARC members and other protesters protested at the same protest sites, spent significant time together, and were open to such encounters.

Secondly, the enhanced reintegration could unfold because the former FARC members were willing to reintegrate. While this may sound tautological, existing analyses on demobilized rebels show that frequently, they are not fully committed to peace and reintegration and instead act as spoilers to peace processes (Stedman, 1997). For instance, in Colombia, the FARC peace process dissidents are relevant armed actors nowadays (Casey & Rios Escobar, 2018). Hence, the willingness to reintegrate was crucial for the newly established relationships with fellow protesters to translate into new stable networks following the protests and improve societal reintegration.

Thirdly, the communities in which the former FARC members reintegrated needed to be willing to accept them. In Colombia, trust in the former FARC and its political successor organization, Comunes, is low. In a 2020 nationally representative survey, only 13% of Colombians indicated trust in the FARC political party (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020, p. 43). Fellow protesters thus had to overcome potentially existing stigma toward former FARC members and be open to engaging and creating trusting relationships with them. Only by fellow protesters' and communities' disposition to let new relationships with former FARC members grow could the jointly spent time at the protests turn into continued relationships following the protests' end.

Likely, former rebels' protest participation could also lead to enhanced reintegration in other peace process societies if these attributes are present. Like in Colombia, in other cases, for reintegration to occur through joint activism, former rebels must be willing to reintegrate and commit to the peace agreement, and the communities must display some fundamental willingness to engage with the former rebels. Only if these essential dispositions exist is it likely that former rebels and protesters with a non-rebel past protest jointly and thus that time spent together and joint experiences might emerge, enabling enhanced reintegration.

Assuming that former rebels commit to a peace agreement, likely many of them have such disposition since, unless there was extreme pressure on them, they would not have agreed to a peace agreement in the first place. Regarding the fellow protesters' disposition to allow joint activism with the former rebels, there likely exists high heterogeneity within most peace process societies, with some society segments unwilling to engage with former rebels. Nevertheless, the Colombian experience shows that even in a country where the former rebels are highly unpopular, some societal segments are willing to engage with the former rebels. Consequently, it is likely that at protests in other peace process societies, some society segments are open to protesting jointly with former rebels, potentially yielding increased trust, new relationships, and ultimately enhanced reintegration into society.

Table 2: Conditions for Identified Causal Mechanisms to Unfold

| **Consequence of Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation** | **Required Conditions for Consequence to Occur** | **Condition Likely Present in Other Peace Process Societies** |
|---|---|---|
| Reduced Violence | Transitional Justice System | Yes |
| | International Observation | Yes |
| | Other Protesters Willing to Follow Former Rebels' Advice and Guidance | Uncertain |
| | Authorities Reactive to International Demands | Uncertain |
| | Former Rebels Committed to Peace Process | Uncertain |
| Enhanced Societal Reintegration | Jointly Spent Time by Former Rebels and Fellow Protesters | Uncertain |
| | Former Rebels Willing to Reintegrate | Yes |
| | Fellow Protesters Willing to Reintegrate Former Rebels | Uncertain |
| Protest Professionalization | Former Rebels Having Relevant Skills and Knowledge | Yes |
| | Other Protesters Willing to Follow Former Rebels' Advice and Guidance | Uncertain |

*Professionalization*

Finally, regarding the third observed outcome, the professionalization of protests in which former FARC members participated, the identified causal mechanisms required two key attributes to unfold. To organize protesters and protester camps efficiently, negotiate competently with the authorities, and pass on these abilities to the former protesters, the former FARC members needed to possess the corresponding skills and knowledge in the first place. Without possessing the corresponding skills, the former FARC members would not have been able to improve the protests' organization and negotiations. Additionally, a second required condition was that the other protesters were willing to accept the former FARC's lead, advice, and guidance. Only through the other protesters allowing the former FARC members to assume leadership during the protests or by being willing to listen to and accept guidance from the former FARC was the described protest professionalization possible. The interviews revealed that in areas where former

FARC members intended to contribute to the protests' organization and the negotiations but where fellow protesters did not grant them the necessary influence, did their participation usually not result in the described protest professionalization.

Likely, in other peace process societies, these conditions would need to be fulfilled too so that former rebels' participation leads to the professionalization of protests. While former rebels must possess some skills and know-how that could contribute to a professionalization of protests, the specifically required skillset and know-how likely varies across cases. For instance, in other contexts, the ability and experience to negotiate with government representatives might be less relevant than in the Colombian case, in which negotiations between protesters and authorities occurred for months throughout the protests and at local, regional, and national levels. Likewise, in other contexts, other skills and knowledge may be more relevant, such as the ability to link protests with party politics, which in 2021 in Colombia, given the grassroots nature of the protests, was of little relevance.

Similar to the case of the former FARC, in other contexts, a professionalization of protests due to the participation of former rebels requires that the other protesters are willing to accept guidance and learn from the former rebels. Exceptions to this are cases in which the former rebels form a more significant part of the overall number of protesters such that they have the natural authority to lead negotiations and organize protests without necessarily a need to pass on their skills to others. In such cases, their participation could lead to a professionalization of protests without the other protesters being willing to accept the former rebels' advice.

Given that demobilized rebels usually have pertained to a military organization in the past, it is likely that in other cases, too, they possess some relevant logistical skills to organize large groups of people, such as setting up protester camps. Likewise, especially in the case of rebel groups with a fervent political orientation, they likely have some skills and experience to articulate political demands. However, regarding the ability to negotiate with authorities, many other rebel groups likely have less experience than the FARC could gather through the 2012 to 2016 Havana negotiations with the Colombian government and previous peace negotiations. Consequently, whether former rebels' experience can contribute to more professional negotiations between protesters and authorities depends on the rebel groups' history and whether the former rebels have previously engaged in (peace) negotiations and thus could acquire the relevant negotiation skills. Since demobilization programs frequently follow peace agreements, at least some demobilized members likely possess negotiation experience.

Whether the fellow protesters are willing to accept guidance from the former rebels in other cases likely depends on the former rebel groups' actions (during conflict times and following demobilization) and thus on the former rebels' standing among the fellow protesters. While the former FARC is generally unpopular across Colombia (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020), the field interviews showed that support for the group displays vast regional variation. Those areas in which former FARC members were able to influence or lead the protests and negotiations, such as some neighborhoods of Bogotá and the departments of Caquetá, Guaviare, and Meta, were typically areas in which some society segments had a less adverse stance towards the FARC. Likewise, in other cases, the willingness of fellow protesters to accept the former rebels' guidance and leadership would also depend on local dynamics such that even highly unpopular former rebels might have support networks in some communities who happily accept the former rebels' advice.

Consequently, similar dynamics regarding the professionalization of protests are likely to occur in other cases of demobilized rebels participating in protests.

# 5 Conclusion

This article finds that the participation of demobilized FARC rebels during the 2021 Colombian mass protests had three main consequences. First, incentivized through the institutional setting that the 2016 Colombian peace agreement put in place, the former FARC members' involvement contributed to reduced violence levels at those protest sites, where they could significantly influence protest dynamics. Second, their participation enhanced their reintegration into Colombian society since the protests enabled new encounters with communities and civil society groups and thus expanded former FARC members' social networks. Third, by passing on their skills and knowledge, the former FARC members' involvement during the protests led to a professionalization of the protests, with protesters organizing themselves and their camps more efficiently and with the protesters' negotiation teams behaving more competently during negotiations with the authorities and articulating political demands more succinctly. The article further explores to which extent these dynamics are likely to occur during protests in other peace process societies and identifies the required conditions for the observed mechanisms to unfold elsewhere.

Thus, the article provides several contributions to advancing the research agenda on social mobilization in peace process societies and for policymakers dealing with such protests. Regarding academic contributions, the article first addresses an undertheorized area in the peace studies literature. Whereas previous studies on demobilized rebels' political activism focus primarily on conventional party politics, this article explores their involvement during social uprisings, showing that, if certain conditions hold, former rebels may shape protest dynamics intensively. When protests occur in peace process societies, demobilized rebels might thus be relevant actors, highlighting the usefulness of overcoming separate analyses within social movements and peace studies literature to understand protest dynamics in such settings comprehensively.

The article's second contribution is a new perspective on demobilized rebels. The finding that former FARC rebels' participation reduced violence levels during the 2021 Colombian mass protests is remarkably different from existing analyses on former rebels, which often focus on the extent to which former rebels maintain a violent nature following demobilization. For instance, studies in this realm often focus on whether former rebels become involved in criminal activities (Nussio, 2018), under which conditions they rejoin armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018), or their co-existence with demobilized combatants of different groups (Prieto, 2012). Instead, this article emphasizes former rebels' discipline and capabilities and shows that their participation can increase the peacefulness of protests. Consequently, the article highlights the relevance of considering former rebels' skills and capabilities, how these may contribute to society, and looking beyond the violent past and the potential threats that former rebels may pose.

Additionally, the article contributes to understanding political stability in peace process societies. By highlighting how peace process institutions such as a transitional justice system and international observation mission may influence protest dynamics, the article sheds light on an overlooked consequence of establishing such institutions following peace agreements. Since protests in peace process societies have the potential to strengthen wartime cleavages, escalate, and ulti-

mately cause conflict resurgence, the pacifying impact of demobilized rebels on protest dynamics is a surprising finding relevant to assess better the risks stemming from protests. The article thus improves knowledge regarding the interplay of protests, peace processes and the corresponding institutions, former rebels, and political stability.

The article's final contribution to the academic literature is a new perspective on the purposes protests may serve, such as being a tool that supports the societal reintegration of former rebels. While existing research (e.g., Della Porta, 2011) has shown that protests serve to enlargen social networks, foster new professional and personal relationships, and create a shared sense of identity, this article shows that in peace process societies, these unifying powers of protests may have a particular application, the facilitation of former rebels' reintegration. Consequently, whereas in the context of peace processes, one may expect protests and rebellion to be two distinct modes of contentious politics, protest participation is, in fact, evidence of political reintegration.

For policymakers, these findings imply that granting and supporting former rebels' rights to exercise political participation, especially their right to protest, may be beneficial. If they fulfill relevant conditions, such as a commitment to the peace process, policymakers can contribute to the former rebels' societal reintegration by securing their political participation rights. On the other hand, not ensuring those rights might bear the risk that the former insurgents rejoin armed groups and resume armed actions.

Future research could explore whether the impact of former rebels' protest participation identified in this article also occurs elsewhere and test whether the described conditions are indeed those that ensure the unfolding of similar mechanisms in other contexts. The empirical underpinning to my theory is entirely Colombia-based and may not be generalizable to all peace process societies; consequently, additional case analyses could move the field in a more systematic direction. Moreover, such studies could identify potential other implications of former rebels' protest participation, which did not occur in Colombia, and the corresponding required conditions for these to unfold.

# 6 Appendix

Table 3: Detailled Overview of Interviews

| Interview ID | Category | Location | Protest Participation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 2 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 3 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 4 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 5 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 6 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 7 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 8 | Authorities/ Government | Bogotá | N/A |
| 9 | Authorities/ Government | Guaviare | N/A |
| 10 | Authorities/ Government | Guaviare | N/A |
| 11 | Authorities/ Government | Putumayo | N/A |
| 12 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 13 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 14 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 15 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 16 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 17 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 18 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | No participation |
| 19 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 20 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 21 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 22 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 23 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 24 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation |
| 25 | Demobilized FARC member | Bogotá | Participation as leader |
| 26 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation |
| 27 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 28 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 29 | Demobilized FARC member | Caquetá | Participation as leader |
| 30 | Demobilized FARC member | Cesar | Participation |
| 31 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 32 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation as leader |
| 33 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 34 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 35 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 36 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 37 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Demobilized FARC member | Guaviare | Participation |
| 39 | Demobilized FARC member | La Guajira | N/A |
| 40 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | No participation |
| 41 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation |
| 42 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation |
| 43 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation as leader |
| 44 | Demobilized FARC member | Meta | Participation as leader |
| 45 | Demobilized FARC member | Popayan | N/A |
| 46 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | Participation |
| 47 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 48 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 49 | Demobilized FARC member | Tumaco | No participation |
| 50 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 51 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 52 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 53 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 54 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 55 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 56 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 57 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 58 | Demobilized FARC member | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 59 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 60 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 61 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 62 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 63 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 64 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 65 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 66 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 67 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 68 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 69 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 70 | Expert | Bogotá | N/A |
| 71 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 72 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 73 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 74 | Expert | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |
| 75 | FARC | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | No participation |
| 76 | Protester | Bogotá | Participation |
| 77 | Protester | Bogotá | Participation |
| 78 | Protester | Caquetá | Participation |
| 79 | Protester | Catatumbo | Participation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 81 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 82 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 83 | Protester | Meta | Participation |
| 84 | Protester | Tumaco | Participation |
| 85 | Protester | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 86 | Protester | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | Participation |
| 87 | UN | Caquetá | N/A |
| 88 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 89 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 90 | UN | Guaviare | N/A |
| 91 | UN | Meta | N/A |
| 92 | UN | Meta | N/A |
| 93 | UN | Popayan | N/A |
| 94 | UN | Valle de Cauca/ Cali | N/A |

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# Article 3: Participation Yielding Stigmatization? Demobilized Rebels' Involvement During Colombia's Paro Nacional

**Abstract**

While significant literature exists on the political participation of demobilized rebels in conventional party politics, research on their participation in protest movements is scarce. However, protests are likely in peace process societies, and demobilized rebels are probable participants. Since citizens might associate demobilized rebels with violence and wartime atrocities, their protest participation, especially in combination with violent protest tactics, may yield protest stigmatization and legitimacy concerns. Based on a survey experiment in Colombia, this article explores whether demobilized rebels' participation and vandalism during protests in peace process societies alter citizens' attitudes. Results show that both former rebels' participation and vandalism during protests significantly reduce citizens' support for the protests and perceived legitimacy, while a name change of the rebel-successor organization mitigates such effects. The analysis contributes to our understanding of how accepted former rebel political participation is and how successful stigmatization and delegitimating tactics of protest opponents in peace process societies are.

## 1 Introduction

"These acts of vandalism are done systematically by organizations linked to the FARC and the ELN" (O'Donnell & Tenembaum, 2021). With these words, Colombian defense minister Diego Molano of the rightist Centro Democrático party linked the occurrence of vandalism during protests to the presence of guerilla groups. His comment addressed Colombia's Paro Nacional, a mass protest wave from April to July 2021, during which large parts of Colombian society headed to the streets demanding wide-reaching social and economic reforms. Like several other politicians, Molano intended to alter public opinion on the protests by pointing to the participation of (former) rebel groups such as the demobilized FARC (Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces, FARC by the Spanish acronym) guerrilla or the ELN (National Liberation Army, ELN by the Spanish acronym – a still active guerrilla group), emphasizing the occurrence of vandalism, and arguing for a link between the two phenomena at the protests in public discourse[1]. Based on an online

[1]Molano and others did not distinguish between active armed groups and demobilized rebels or their political organizations.

survey experiment, this article analyzes whether such stigmatization attempts were successful, i.e., whether the Colombian public was receptive and changed its opinion of the protests due to the participation of former FARC rebels, vandalism occurrence, and the combination of both.

Existing studies have shown that demobilized rebels' political participation is a common characteristic of peace processes (Matanock, 2018; Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016), that their participation in electoral politics may receive a rejection from the population (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018), and that contentious protest tactics might reduce approval for protests (Feinberg et al., 2020; Gutting, 2020; Simpson et al., 2018). However, the literature has rarely explored attitudes toward former civil conflict rebels' protest participation, vandalism, and the combination of both during peace processes.

The emergence of social media has made it much easier to organize mass demonstrations, resulting in multiple mass movements across all world regions in recent years (Chenoweth et al., 2019). Peace process societies often face political instability due to underlying structural factors and cleavages that, in the past, encouraged some society segments to seek armed confrontations. Hence, mass-scale protests and contentious politics are also likely in such societies. Since former rebels are often highly politicized and willing to challenge the status quo and peace negotiators frequently establish their political participation in peace agreements (Matanock, 2018), their political participation likely extends beyond formal political decision-making processes and political parties to protests and social movements. Thus, understanding their protest participation is relevant to fully comprehending political dynamics and social mobilizations during peace processes.

Also, a frequent and relevant phenomenon at protests is the occurrence of vandalism. Particularly in peace process societies, the psychological barriers to engaging in acts of vandalism might be lower given these societies' violent past and a potentially resulting normalization of forceful measures to express discontent. Combined with the presence of militarily trained former civil conflict combatants, both on the side of protesters and within the ranks of counter-protest state authorities, vandalism can quickly escalate into more severe forms of violence and, consequently, present a risk to political order and stability. Understanding vandalism during protests is thus also relevant to comprehend social mobilization in peace process societies.

Some citizens may see former rebels' political participation, such as in party politics and during protests, as controversial, given the likely involvement of the former insurgents in past wartime atrocities. Likewise, citizens probably see vandalism during protests as incorrect, given the resulting costs for society. In turn, this may produce opportunities for opponents to utilize such sentiments to discredit protests.

Political elites will often try to discredit protests that are not comfortable for them. Especially in highly polarized societies, which peace process societies frequently are, such stigmatization strategies might find fruitful conditions, particularly among citizens with low political information and awareness (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). When information settings are complex, citizens often help form their political opinions through heuristics (Mondak, 1993). In polarized societies, citizens often develop preferences through cues and endorsements. Consequently, the involvement of different groups in protests, vandalism, or the combination of both might provide an orientation for citizens' judgment (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Protest opponents thus might capitalize on these tendencies by appealing to pre-existing citizen opinions towards the former rebels and vandalism and paint the protests and vandalism occurrence as organized and

aligned with the rebel movement, whether such influence exists or not.

Such protest stigmatization and delegitimization of protests can have several consequences for the protests and the former rebels themselves. If stigmatized, the protests are less likely to succeed. Some potential sympathizers might distance themselves from joining and participating in the protests, preventing the protests from growing and establishing organizations (Belgioioso et al., 2021; Chenoweth & Schock, 2015), the media might be less likely to report about the protests in a supporting way, and politicians might be less inclined to pick up protest demands in policy making.

For the former rebels, protest stigmatization due to their participation might make them realize their political participation is undesired. They may thus feel like second-class citizens without full rights to express political opinions. The literature shows that such stigmatization can hinder their successful societal reintegration (McMullin, 2013). Consequently, they could feel more inclined to take up armed activities again. The question of what type of reactions former rebels' protest involvement and vandalism during protests trigger are thus of utmost importance to understand protests and, more generally, political stability in peace process societies.

Colombia offers an excellent case for studying citizen attitudes toward protests in which demobilized rebels participate, and vandalism occurs. Following a peace agreement in 2016 with the Colombian government, the FARC, formerly Latin America's largest rebel group (Romero, 2008), demobilized. The peace agreement enabled the FARC to form a political party with electoral advantages in the form of guaranteed seats in the Colombian Congress for two legislative periods, which Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) show was highly unpopular among the Colombian public. The peace agreement also significantly impacted the space available for social policies in public discourse. Even though the various guerrilla groups had waged Colombia's internal armed conflict in the name of social justice, the conflict prevented inequality from being at the top of the political agenda for decades (Arjona, 2021). The comprehensive nature of the peace agreement suddenly fostered discussions on pressing social issues and allowed new debates and ideas to emerge. People started to think it was possible to demand more from the state and felt entitled and obliged to speak up.

Consequently, Colombia experienced two waves of country-wide mass-scale protests in 2019 and 2021: An unprecedented massive mobilization from approximately November 2019 until fading out due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and a second even larger massive protest wave from around April to June 2021 (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2021). The protests demanded policy responses mainly related to socio-economic and security concerns, such as, among others, severe levels of poverty and inequality[2], lack of accessible education and social protection systems, the Duque administration's 2021 proposal for a tax reform, which would have disproportionally burdened lower-income classes, weak implementation of the 2016 peace agreement, high levels of insecurity and corruption, environmental degradation, and the Colombian state's shortcomings in meeting agreements with various social groups and movements (Arjona, 2021). In both waves, the protesters came from different sectors of the urban and rural population, and particularly young people from impoverished urban neighborhoods assumed a critical role. During the protests, the participation of former rebels[3], who no longer engage in armed activities,

[2]The COVID-19 pandemic had further exacerbated inequality, poverty, and women and youth rights.

[3]Demobilized former guerrilla members were active in the protests, especially in rural areas (International Crisis

such as demobilized members of the former FARC guerrilla, and vandalism occurred.[4] Both were frequently used as a narrative by protest opponents such as the Colombian government to discredit and delegitimize the protests, e.g., by claiming the former rebels to be responsible for vandalism occurrence (International Crisis Group, 2021a)[5]. This article thus explores whether citizens are opposed to any political participation of former FARC members or whether, when such political participation occurs without preferential treatment and according to the same rules to which other political groups act (like it is the case during protests), opposition to their participation is less acute.

The participation of the former FARC reduced the Colombian public's agreement with the protests and the extent to which Colombians considered the protests legitimate by approximately 10%, confirming existing analyses that have shown that FARC endorsement reduces approval for policy initiatives (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Vandalism during the protests diminished public approval and legitimacy consideration of the protests even further. Particularly the combined effect of the participation of the former FARC and the occurrence of vandalism was acute, reducing agreement with the protests by 20% and the protests' average legitimacy consideration by 22%. In light of the closeness of recent election results in Colombia and the country's polarization, the shifts in public opinion are remarkable. The results also show that the FARC's renaming to Comunes in 2021 significantly mitigates the negative connotations most Colombians have with the group, presumable due to Comunes' political marginality. These identified effects are mostly independent of individuals' characteristics. Merely for men, the participation of the former FARC has less impact on their opinion regarding the protests than for women, and politically right-leaning individuals alter their legitimacy assessment of the protests more significantly when vandalism occurs.

While the analysis focuses on public opinion changes in Colombia due to the former FARC's protest participation, the insights could have implications beyond this specific case. Existing studies show that governments and other political elites around the world are likely to discredit protests that are uncomfortable for them (e.g., Boykoff, 2007; Smyth, 2020; Susánszky et al., 2022) and may use the participation of unpopular groups or population segments to do so. My results from Colombia hint that such delegitimization strategies may effectively alter public opinion.

In the remainder of this article, I first, based on the existing literature, develop theoretical expectations of how the participation of former rebels and the occurrence of vandalism during protests impact public opinion. I second describe the research design and sample of the online survey experiment used to evaluate the theory. I then highlight and discuss the experiment's results and potential heterogeneous effects. Finally, I conclude by pointing to future research avenues and the limitations of the present findings.

Group, 2021b).

[4]While most protests were peaceful, vandalism and looting of public transport, large businesses, and state buildings did occur on numerous occasions. In 2021, subgroups of protesters created road blockages for several weeks. The Colombian government reacted on the one hand by granting slight political concessions such as limited political reforms. On the other hand, the government criminalized the protesters and showcased severe police brutality and militarization of cities (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

[5]In its stigmatization of the protests, the political right did not distinguish clearly between demobilized guerrilla members and active armed groups.

## 2 Theoretical Expectations

Regarding how citizens evaluate the participation of former rebels in protests, one natural first step is to analyze citizens' overall attitudes toward the former rebels. Those citizens who see former rebels in a more favorable light are likely to support their political participation. Former rebels' past and current actions might impact their general popularity. Above all, the extent to which citizens consider the former rebels responsible for conflict-time violence is likely a crucial factor (Bullock et al., 2017; Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). If the former rebels previously conducted indiscriminate actions such as kidnappings or massacres against the population or if they were involved in criminal activities such as illicit resource exploitation or trafficking of microstimulates, citizens see the former rebels more critically (Bullock et al., 2017), and likely have considerate reservations towards the former rebels' political participation (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). On the other hand, the former insurgents might have also used their influence in the past to promote the population's social and economic well-being in their areas of control, which might have positively influenced their post-demobilization perception in those areas. Also, current actions might play a role, such as whether citizens credit the former rebels' move towards peace, whether citizens associate the former rebels with third parties such as a foreign regime, and their political platform and strategy after demobilization (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018).

How do these general attitudes towards former rebels then translate into assessments of their protest participation? While the existing literature has not investigated citizen attitudes towards former rebels' protest participation to date, the adversity citizens express towards other forms of rebel political participation hints that citizens also meet protest participation of former rebels with distance and adversity (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Citizens likely see the rebels as an outgroup, and existing studies show that outgroup endorsement lowers support for policies or peace agreements (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009; Haas & Khadka, 2020; Nicholson, 2012). If former rebels participate in protests, there is a *signaling effect*. Through the former rebels' participation, citizens perceive a signal of ideological alignment between the former rebels and the protests. Some citizens might thus think the former rebels' initiated the protests, that the former rebels and their political positions influenced the protest demands, or that the other protesters approve of the former rebels' actions and past. For these citizens, the former rebels' protest participation would thus imply ideological content signaling, indicating that the protests aligned with the former rebels' ideology. Likewise, citizens might see former rebels' participation as a sign that hidden interests are manipulating the protests, such that citizens question the protests' genuineness. Elites opposing the protests might frame discourse accordingly and emphasize such associations to discredit the protests.

Research on the effectiveness of such cueing tactics shows that particularly uninformed voters frequently use endorsements as a mental shortcut when selecting a candidate or program (Broockman & Butler, 2017; Matanock & García-Sánchez, 2017; Minozzi et al., 2015). For instance, in Colombia, during the campaigns for the 2016 plebiscite on the country's peace deal, elites cues successfully formed opinions on the peace agreement's provisions (Garbiras-Díaz et al., 2021). Whether citizens question the right of former rebels to protest legally or are generally ideologically opposed to the former rebels, citizens might develop a more critical stance towards protest demands and legitimacy and consequently alter their assessment.

The existing literature provides only limited insights into these mechanisms. A plethora of literature exists on the involvement of demobilized rebels in conventional party politics (e.g., Allison, 2006; Curtis & De Zeeuw, 2010; Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Manning & Smith, 2016; Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016) including an analysis showing that citizens in Colombia were averse to such participation (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). However, my analysis goes beyond citizens' attitudes to former rebels' general political involvement, e.g., in the form of a rebel successor party. Instead, I focus on how attitudes to protest movements change when former rebels participate and whether former rebels can mitigate pre-existing stigma by changing their organization's name. Several studies also exist on the involvement of demobilized state combatants in protests and social movements in the US and the UK, such as veterans' participation in peace movements, economic justice movements, movements for veteran benefits, or anti-vaccine movements (e.g., Burtin, 2020; Leitz, 2014; Schrader, 2019). Nevertheless, citizen attitudes towards veterans in the US and the UK likely follow a very different logic than attitudes and opinions concerning demobilized rebels, given that the former previously acted on behalf of democratically elected governments, whereas the latter challenged a society's status quo.

My theoretical expectation is that through the *signaling effect*, citizens' support and approval of protests are lower when former rebels participate than when protests occur without such involvement. The difference is likely contingent on the general aversion towards the former rebels and the visibility of their participation since subtle participation potentially gains less attention and thus creates less opposition than more visible participation. Hence, this expectation holds more for when former rebels participate collectively since such participation is more visible than when participating as separate individuals.

Citizens likely associate former rebels with violent activism due to their belligerent activities during conflict. Therefore, a convenient way for protest opponents to leverage former rebels' participation when intending to discredit protests is to link their participation to contentious protest tactics such as vandalism. The existing literature offers ambiguous insights regarding the mechanisms of how vandalism[6] occurrence alters the public's perception of protests. Studies claiming that vandalism increases public support argue that unarmed collective violence may provoke repressive authority reactions, producing images that galvanize others to protest (Kadivar & Ketchley, 2018). Other studies say that protest violence increases media coverage and attention, for instance, through more frequent, longer, and more prominently placed articles. This increased media attention signals the severity and urgency of protesters' needs and provides an example of political activism infusing more people to support and join the protests (Wasow, 2020). Violent protest flanks might also make the nonviolent protesters appear more moderate, increasing their support base since people might be scared that otherwise, the violent fractions gain control over the protests, such that violence escalates. Such a mechanism is primarily the case when nonviolent groups have a clear hierarchy and leadership able to control and isolate the violent flanks (Belgioioso et al., 2021; Haines, 1984). However, these mechanisms impacting public support might differ between people who share an identity with the protesters and those who do not. While some people might genuinely support the protests due to protest vandalism, others might merely support governments giving in to protesters' demands to prevent future protests and vandalism (Enos et

[6]Vandalism can take different forms, and likely, not all types of vandalism have a similar impact, yet such granularity goes beyond the scope of this article.

al., 2019).

On the other hand, several studies find that violence at protests has a detrimental impact on protest support. Differences in protest tactics lead to differences in media agenda setting and issue framing. Whereas nonviolent activism, especially when met by state repression, frequently leads to media coverage and elite discourse focusing on civil rights, protester-initiated violence moves news agendas and frames, congressional speeches, and ultimately, public opinion toward repression and social control (Wasow, 2020). Violent tactics thus reduce the perceived legitimacy of protesters (Wang & Piazza, 2016). Likewise, disruptive, harmful, or highly counter-normative tactics such as vandalism make the public perceive protesters as less reasonable. Consequently, there is an *identification effect*: Since people view themselves as reasonable and rational (Pronin et al., 2004) and identify with similar groups (Byrne, 1971), such "extreme" protest tactics lead to reduced identification with the protesters. In turn, this could result in undermined popular support for the protesters and the causes they advocate for (Feinberg et al., 2020; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Simpson et al., 2018; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Ultimately, these studies argue that highly disruptive protest activities diminish domestic and international support for protests and the associated groups (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008; Thomas & Louis, 2014), repel would-be participants (Chenoweth et al., 2019), and thus less likely result in political concessions (Berrebi & Klor, 2008; Huet-Vaughn, 2013).

However, these detrimental effects of confrontational protest tactics on public support and mobilization are heterogeneous across different protester and population groups. In an experiment with US-based participants, Gutting (2020) found that conservative-leaning participants were less supportive and less mobilized than liberal-leaning participants by protests that were violent and disrespectful to the police. Also, the protester's identity matters since, in a US and Israel-based study, the public perceived protests by ethnic minorities as more violent and requiring more policing than equivalent resistance by ethnic majorities (Manekin & Mitts, 2021). The consequent pessimism in attracting mass participation or inducing elite defections makes politically excluded and small ethnic groups less likely to initiate nonviolent campaigns (Thurber, 2018).

Nevertheless, these existing studies cover mainly protest movements in the US. The dynamics and magnitude of protest delegitimization following contentious protest tactics likely differ in peace process societies, where the public's memory of the diverse implications of violence occurrence and disorder is still fresh. This article thus contributes to the literature by analyzing popular responses to violent protests in peace process societies. While most existing literature investigating the influence of contentious protest tactics for garnering support and attention compares violent vs. nonviolent protest, this article focuses on vandalism, one of the most commonly used expressions of contentious protests. The theoretical expectation is that there is an *identification effect*, especially in peace process societies. Media and citizens value stability and order and thus can not identify with vandalism as a form of political expression; therefore, citizens' support and approval of protests are likely lower when vandalism occurs.

Regarding the Colombian case, existing survey data shows that trust in the FARC is low, with only 13% of Colombians indicating that they trust the FARC political party in a 2020 nationally representative survey (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020, p. 43). The FARC was officially founded in 1964 as a peasant self-defense force and transformed into a guerrilla movement with close trenches to Soviet doctrine and Colombia's Communist Party combining "all forms of fighting"

to achieve a Marxist revolution (Pécaut, 2008). The group became highly unpopular through wartime atrocities such as homicides, collection of extortion payments, and kidnappings and by constantly challenging Colombian democracy. Especially after the group's turn towards financing through narcotrafficking, an intensification of kidnappings during the 1990s, and failed peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government under President Andrés Pastrana in 2002, the FARC's public perception became and remained extremely negative (Pécaut, 2017). Nowadays, common associations with the FARC are violence, narcotrafficking, and terrorism; hence, the average Colombian citizen likely sees the FARC negatively (Botero, 2020, p. 308).

These persistent negative attitudes also seem to translate into the public's rejection of the FARC's participation in electoral politics. The FARC's electoral participation was the most controversial aspect of the 2016 peace deal since many citizens disapproved that rebels, some of whom previously were involved in conflict atrocities, would obtain support for their political involvement (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). In a survey experiment, Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) further find that FARC endorsement lowers citizens' approval for specific peace deal provisions.

In sum, I expect that the protest participation of a group that Colombians have such negative perceptions of might thus hurt citizens' support for and approval of protests. **H1a** reflects this expectation:

> *On average, citizens will be less supportive of protests when made aware that former FARC rebels participated.*

Likely, the participation of former rebels not only reduces citizens' support for the protests. Instead, their participation might also alter the extent to which citizens consider the protests legitimate. The difference between these two outcome variables, protest support and protest legitimacy assessment, is subtle but relevant. Whereas the former covers agreement with the protests' contents, particularly the protests' demands and protagonists, the latter addresses whether protests have the right to occur, i.e., whether protests are a permissible tool of political expression. Since former rebels once pertained to an illegal organization, their participation during protests potentially impacts the extent to which citizens consider the protests a legitimate way to propose policy demands and express discontent. Citizens might think that public spaces should not be made available for the activism of a formerly illegal organization that has used violent action against the state and society in the past. **H1b** reflects this expectation:

> *On average, citizens are more likely to consider protests illegitimate when made aware that former FARC rebels participated.*

However, it is less clear whether these expectations should apply when citizens know Comunes participated in the protests, which is the FARC successor party under its new name. Initially, after disarmament in 2017, the FARC called its new political party Alternative Communal Revolutionary Forces, maintaining the acronym FARC (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Realizing this acronym's negative connotation for most Colombians, the party renamed itself in 2021 to Comunes (Commons) (International Crisis Group, 2021b). The party is in parliament and, since 2022, in a government coalition despite obtaining less than 0.5% of votes in the 2018 and 2022

congressional elections due to the 2016 peace deal, which guarantees the party five seats in each chamber of the Colombian Congress for two legislative terms. Its limited support concentrates mainly in former FARC strongholds where the party was, in coalition with other leftist parties, able to win two mayoral elections in the 2019 local elections (International Crisis Group, 2021b).

Given the party's marginality, it is uncertain whether most Colombians know that Comunes is the successor organization of the FARC. In turn, this raises the question of whether the protest participation of Comunes has a different impact on citizen attitudes towards protests compared to an involvement under the old FARC name. If citizens do not link the name Comunes to the FARC, the effect of their protest participation on protest approval would likely not be different from the impact of the involvement of any other unknown political party. Political parties in Colombia, in general, are highly unpopular, and protesters in 2019 and 2021 actively avoided any political party capturing and using the protests to promote its agenda. While in 2020, only 20% of Colombians sympathized with any political party, this rate is still higher than Colombians' trust in the FARC (Plata Caviedes et al., 2020, p. 90). The FARC's name change may thus have had a potentially mitigating effect on citizen attitudes towards the protest participation of demobilized rebels. The limited existing research on rebel successor parties' name changes indicates that name changes have little impact on political success regarding seat shares (Ishiyama, 2019). However, this might differ when assessing approval for former rebels' participation in protest movements.

In sum, I expect that some citizens might know that Comunes is the successor organization of the FARC party, such that protest participation of Comunes might also hurt citizens' support for and approval of protests. However, other citizens probably are not aware of the link between FARC and Comunes, and for those citizens, the protest participation of Comunes has likely no impact. **H2a** reflects this expectation:

> *On average, citizens will be less supportive of protests when made aware that the Comunes party participated. However, on average, the approval reduction will be less extensive than when citizens are made aware of the FARC's protest participation.*

Following the same logic as above, the protest participation of Comunes likely also affects the extent to which citizens consider the protests legitimate. **H2b** reflects this:

> *On average, citizens are more likely to consider protests illegitimate when made aware that the Comunes party participated. However, on average, the perceived legitimacy reduction will be less extensive than when citizens are made aware of the FARC's protest participation.*

Although most of the mass-scale protests in Colombia in 2019 and 2021 were peaceful, vandalism did occur. Especially in large cities such as Bogotá and Cali, some protesters damaged and looted monuments, public transport facilities, state buildings, and businesses (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

Authorities such as the Colombian Ministry of Defense and right-wing politicians frequently

used the occurrence of vandalism to stigmatize the protests (International Crisis Group, 2021a). Their narrative was to equalize vandalism with "low-level urban terrorism" and describe it as part of an orchestrated plan by armed groups such as the ELN or the FARC. The argumentation was, for example, used to authorize the military to assist the police in handling the protests (International Crisis Group, 2021a).

The vandalism occurrence likely also impacted public attitudes towards the protests. In the first weeks of the 2021 protests, most Colombians in a nationally representative poll supported the protests, with 76% being in favor at the end of May (International Crisis Group, 2021a). This support diminished over time. By the end of June, only 47% considered the protests useful for Colombia, and only 36% spoke out in favor of renewed protests (infobae, 2021). Since, over time, the 2021 Colombian protests became more violent, vandalism occurred more frequently, and the participation of peaceful protesters reduced, a potential explanation is that citizens increasingly became aware of these violent protest methods and disapproved of them.

In sum, I expect that amongst those citizens who were generally supportive of the 2021 protests, a significant share did not approve of violent protest means such as vandalism, while others were indifferent. Thus, when citizens become aware that vandalism occurred during the protests, support for and approval of the protests, on average, reduces. **H3a** reflects these expectations:

> *On average, citizens will be less supportive of protests when made aware that vandalism occurred.*

Likely, vandalism at protests also alters the extent to which citizens consider the protest legitimate. Vandalism might impact the extent to which citizens consider the protests legitimate more negatively than their support for the protests. Since most citizens likely do not think that protests that lead to the destruction of public property have a right to occur, are a permissible tool of political expression, or that authorities should provide public spaces for such protests, citizens' legitimacy assessment, on average, likely falls significantly more when protests occur. However, vandalism does not alter the political positions and demands that the protests articulate such that some citizens might stick to their genuine support for the protests. Consequently, on average, the reduction in legitimacy assessment might be more acute than the reduction in protest support. **H3b** reflects this expectation:

> *On average, citizens are more likely to consider protests illegitimate when made aware that vandalism occurred. Likely, the reduction in legitimacy assessment is more acute than the reduction in protest support.*

Most likely, these effects are most substantive when citizens are aware of the combined occurrence of vandalism and the participation of the FARC during the 2021 protests. Stigmatization attempts by Colombian politicians such as defense minister Molano intended to leverage precisely such a combination. Basing his claims on military intelligence, Molano linked the occurrence of vandalism during the protests to the presence of the FARC and the ELN in the protests (O'Donnell & Tenembaum, 2021). The following section will describe the experiment design and data I use

to explore these hypotheses.

# 3 Experimental Strategy and Data

I conducted an online survey experiment to test my hypotheses and determine how former rebels' participation and occurrence of vandalism during the 2019 and 2021 protests affected the general Colombian population's attitudes towards these protests. Oxford University's Central University Research Ethics Committee approved the experiment design with protocol number SSH_DPIR_C1A_21_036. I registered the main hypotheses and a description of the statistical tests in a pre-analysis plan.[7]

## 3.1 The Sample

Netquest, a Spain-based market research firm that frequently conducts surveys in Colombia and has access to a pool of approximately 100,000 potential respondents in Colombia, rolled out the survey. Participants had to consent to participate in the survey and received no information regarding the survey besides that it was for academic purposes and that all collected data would be entirely anonymous. All participants received a small remuneration if they completed the survey, and Netquest ensured that each participant could only participate once. Given that internet penetration in some parts of rural Colombia is less than 10 percent (Morales, 2020), an online survey sample in Colombia can not be truly nationally representative. Quotas ensured that the overall sample of 3,030 randomly selected adults over 18 years of age from Netquest's data pool was at least nationally representative across the variables gender, age, Colombian region of residence[8], economic strata[9], and immigration status.

However, besides being more urban than average Colombia, comparing the sample to the Observatorio de la Democracia's 2020 national in-person survey reveals that my sample is also politically slightly more left-leaning, with an average of 3.15 across all experimental groups compared to 2.82 on a 1-to-5 scale (5 being left, 1 being right). My sample is also more educated (e.g., 38% with a completed university education compared to 26% in the Observatorio de la Democracia's 2020 national survey). The sample is roughly in line with the Colombian average in terms of conflict exposure (37% compared to 32% in the Observatorio de la Democracia's 2020 national survey) and ethnicity distribution (e.g., 30% identifying as white compared to 33% in the Observatorio de la Democracia's 2020 national survey). The balance tables in Appendix C reveal that the sample is also significantly more pro-peace and less in favor of former president Iván Duque than the Colombian population demonstrated in the 2016 peace referendum and the 2018 presidential elections. I test whether these variables influence the detected treatment effects but find no such evidence.

[7] Available at https://osf.io/2zuvd

[8] The six regions structure the 33 Colombian departments the following way: Amazonas (Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, Putumayo, Vaupes), Center (Antioquia, Bogotá DC, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Huila, Quindío, Risaralda, Tolima), Orinoquía (Arauca, Casanare, Meta, Vichada), Atlantic (Atlántico, Bolivar, Cesar, Córdoba, Magdalena, La Guajira, San Andres, Sucre), Orient (Boyacá, Norte de Santander, Santander), Pacific (Cauca, Choco, Nariño, Valle del Cauca).

[9] In line with the official Colombian social strata classification.

After filtering out ten responses from those who gave clashing answers regarding their department and municipality of residence, the total number of valid and completed responses was 3,020, stemming from respondents in 278 different Colombian municipalities. I also included other quality checks, such as an attention check question and a timing test filtering out participants who clicked through the survey too fast. However, participants failing these tests are not counted within the 3,030 completes. I fielded the online survey, which was Qualtrics-based and in Spanish, on May 18, 2022. The detailed survey, including all questions, is available in Appendix F.

## 3.2 Randomization and Treatments

The survey design allocated all respondents randomly at the individual level into one control and five treatment groups. The six groups differed in the information revealed to each participant, resulting from the various combinations of two different treatments, treatment one with three legs and treatment two with two legs. Each subgroup thus entailed approximately 500 participants. Randomization ensured that the six experimental groups were, on average, balanced across various observable covariates and unobservable characteristics. Post-experiment, I tested for group balance across multiple covariates. The balance tables in Appendix C show that the different groups are indeed balanced and have no significant demographic differences.

Firstly, I investigated how the general population's attitude to social protest changes when individuals become aware that demobilized rebels participated in the protests. The survey confronted individuals in the control group with the following statement:

> "*In 2019 and 2021, large parts of Colombian society, including some political parties, participated in social protests, turning to the streets to demand significant political and economic reforms.*"

The statement says very little about the protests to avoid suggesting a specific kind of action or participating group. Individuals in treatment groups 1 and 2 received the same prompt. However, for treatment group 1, the statement included the amendment "large parts of Colombian society *including the FARC successor party* participated," for treatment group 2, the statement had the amendment "large parts of Colombian society *including the Comunes party* participated." The key difference is thus that the prompt for the two treatment groups creates awareness for the participation of the FARC successor party during the protests. Besides the additional information, there was no other difference between the groups. The design thus permits assessing how attitudes towards the protests change when former rebels participate by comparing the average attitude towards the protests across the experimental groups. I chose the FARC over other (former) guerrilla groups that demobilized since the 1990s, for it has been historically the largest Colombian guerrilla group. Thus, it was the group citizens most likely had associations with when protest opponents attempted to stigmatize the protests by denouncing the participation of (former) insurgents. Also, the 2016 peace agreement granted the FARC political participation with electoral advantages through guaranteed seats in the Colombian Congress for two legislative periods. This measure was highly controversial among the Colombian public (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018).

My analysis will show whether citizens oppose any political participation of former FARC members or if political participation occurs without preferential treatment and by the same rules to which other political groups act, opposition to their involvement is less acute. The difference between the prompts in treatment groups 2 and 3 further allows for identifying to which extent the renaming of the FARC successor party from FARC to Comunes might have mitigated potential stigmatization. Moreover, the prompt for the control group mentioned the participation of *some political parties* to be able to identify effects resulting from the participation of the FARC successor party and not citizens' discontent with Colombia's political parties in general.[10]

Secondly, as discussed in previous sections, I also investigated how the general population's attitude to social protests changes when individuals become aware that vandalism occurred during the protests. Even though several protest characteristics could potentially impact public support (e.g., reactions by authorities or protest demands), I focus on a specific protest tactic: vandalism. Vandalism occurred during the 2019 and 2021 Colombian protests, and protest opponents frequently used vandalism to stigmatize the protests (International Crisis Group, 2021a). Likely, such stigmatization tactics negatively affected citizens' attitudes towards the protests, but it is relevant to test this and identify the magnitude of such potential effect. To determine the potential impact, I added, for treatment groups 3, 4, and 5, the following sentence to the prompt that the control group and treatment groups 1 and 2 received:

> "*During the protests, diverse acts of vandalism occurred (for example, graffiti, damages to monuments, destruction of bus stations).*"

The key difference is thus that the prompt for these other three treatment groups creates awareness of vandalism during the protests. The design thus permits assessing how attitudes towards social protests change when protests include vandalism. Treatment groups 4 and 5 allow to see the combined effect on attitudes towards protests of former rebels' participation and vandalism during the protests (and the difference between the old and new naming of the FARC successor party).

I chose those two treatments to shed light on two highly controversial debates surrounding the Colombian protests of 2021 and, to a lesser extent, 2019. Firstly, parts of the Colombian press and the political parties opposing the social protests used supposed protest infiltration of (former) guerrilla members to stigmatize the protests. Secondly, these sectors of the Colombian press and political caste also used vandalism during the protests to discredit peaceful protests. They frequently combined both allegations, i.e., arguing that the infiltration of (former) rebels caused vandalism.

[10] If the control group's statement would not mention other political parties, potentially lower protest support by treatment groups 1, 2, 4, and 5 could be due to awareness of the participation of political parties in general and not specifically the FARC successor parties. Any effect can be clearly associated with the former FARC's presence by mentioning *some political parties*.

Table 1: Overview of Experiment Treatments and Size of Experimental Groups

| | | Treatment 1: Mentioning Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | FARC | Comunes |
| Treatment 2: Mentioning Vandalism Occurrence at Protests | No | Control Group, $n = 509$ | Treatment Group 1, $n = 492$ | Treatment Group 2, $n = 519$ |
| | Yes | Treatment Group 3, $n = 504$ | Treatment Group 4, $n = 515$ | Treatment Group 5, $n = 481$ |

### 3.3 Outcome Variables

The experiment seeks to identify how former rebels' protest participation and vandalism occurrence at protests alter political attitudes. Thus, after receiving the different prompts, the survey asked individuals two questions on political attitudes. First, respondents had to rate the extent to which they agree with the protests on a scale from 1 (very much disagree) to 7 (very much agree). Then, respondents had to rate the degree to which they consider the protests legitimate on a scale from 1 (not at all legitimate) to 7 (very legitimate). The reason for asking separate questions on agreement with the protests and protest legitimacy is that individuals might consider protests legitimate, i.e., that protests have the right to occur but might not agree with protests' demands (or vice versa). The two separate questions aim to detect such cleavages. I randomized the order of these two questions. The answers to these questions are my two dependent variables of interest.

### 3.4 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effects of the different treatments, I compare the means of the two outcome variables of the treatment groups and the control group. The following equation thus estimates the effect:

$$\pi_s = \overline{Y}_{s,t=x} - \overline{Y}_{s,c} \tag{1}$$

Where $\overline{Y}_{s,t=x}$ is the average response of treatment group $x$ (1 to 5) for outcome variable $s$, and $\overline{Y}_{s,c}$ is the average response in the control group also for variable $s$. I estimate all the models using ordinary least squares (OLS) with robust standard levels at the individual level to permit differing variances across the six experimental groups. The coefficient $\pi$ thus is a difference-in-means estimator. Since the balance tables in Appendix C show that the different experimental groups are balanced across multiple demographic indicators, the principal analysis uses no covariates.

To test for a potential mitigating effect of the FARC's successor organization's renaming from FARC to Comunes, the following estimator allows us to see whether such an effect exists:

$$\pi_s = \overline{Y}_{s,t=2} - \overline{Y}_{s,t=1} \tag{2}$$

Where $\overline{Y}_{s,t=2}$ is the average response of treatment group 2 (which received the information that the Comunes party participated) for outcome variable $s$ and $\overline{Y}_{s,t=1}$ is the average response of treatment group 1 (which received the information that the FARC party participated) for the same outcome variable.

### 3.5 Covariates

In order to test for potential heterogeneous effects, the survey asked respondents for various covariates. Before the experiment prompts, to be able to meet quotas for national representativeness and filter for relevant participants, the survey asked participants basic demographic questions such as participants' socio-economic strata[11] and whether they lived in Colombia between April and July 2021, the time of the 2021 protests.[12] Following the experiment prompt and questions, to avoid the questions for the covariates could prime participants in their answers for the dependent variables, the survey asked participants several additional questions on demographics such as participants' attained education level, questions on their experience during and attitudes towards the Colombian peace process, questions on their general political attitudes and participation, and questions regarding participants' pre-existent knowledge regarding the experiment prompts. A detailed listing of these questions and their exact wording is available in Appendix F. The following model allows us to see whether heterogeneous effects for the respective variables exist:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 H_i + \beta_3 T_i H_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{3}$$

Where $Y_i$ is the survey participant $i$'s answer to the respective outcome question, $T_i$ is an indicator for the participant's treatment group, $H_i$ is a variable for the different heterogeneous effects that I am analyzing, and $\varepsilon_i$ is an error term. The coefficients of interest are $\beta_1$ and $\beta_3$, and I estimate the model through OLS.

## 4 Results

The survey experiment reveals the effect of the participation of former FARC rebels and vandalism occurrence during protests (and their combination) on attitudes towards the protests.

### 4.1 Simple Model

Figure 1 shows the average extent on a 1-to-7 scale to which experiment participants, who received differing information regarding the participation of former rebels, support the 2021 Colombian protests. The survey experiment either mentioned no participation of former rebels (Control Group and Treatment Group 3), the participation of the FARC successor party (Treatment Group 1 and Treatment Group 4), or the participation of Comunes, the FARC successor party under its new name (Treatment Group 2 and Treatment Group 5).

[11] Possible answers were the strata one to six in line with the official Colombian social strata classification or "rural without stratification."

[12] Possible answers were "Yes, always," "Yes but with interruptions," or "No, at no moment." Participants not living during that period at all in Colombia were filtered out.

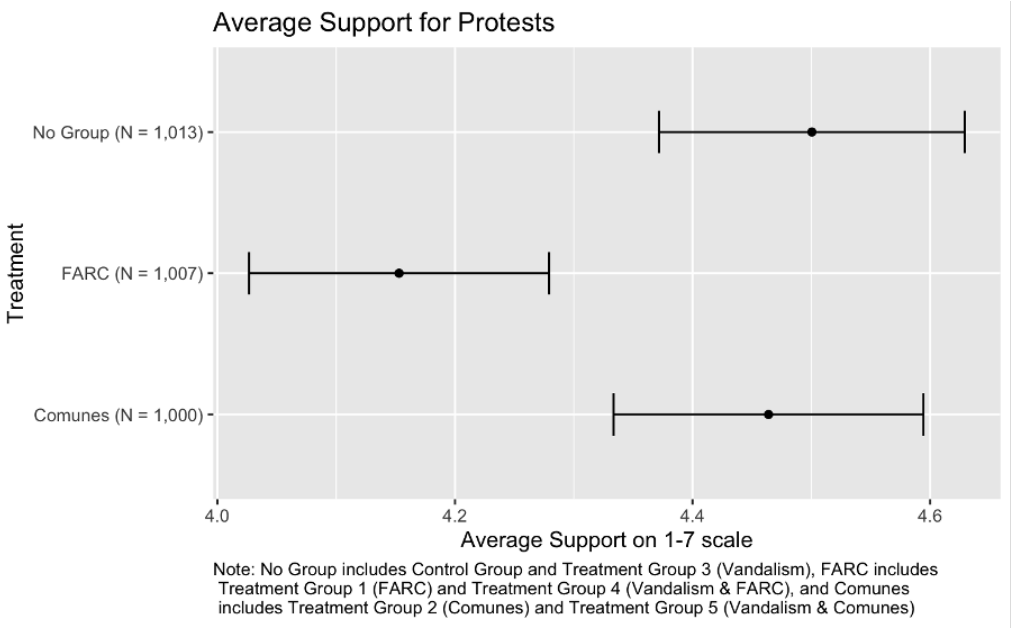



Figure 1: Average Outcome (Collapsed Model by Former Rebel Participation)

The graph in Figure 1 indicates that participants who did not receive information on the participation of former rebels agree most with the protests (on average, 4.50). When the survey highlights the FARC party's protest participation, agreement, on average, is at 4.15 whereas, with the involvement of the Comunes party, the average support is at 4.46. Regarding the second outcome variable, to which extent experiment participants consider the protests legitimate, results are available in Appendix A. The results are similar, yet slightly higher than those for outcome question 1.

Figure 2 shows the average outcome for the first research question regarding support for protests for participants who received differing information regarding the occurrence of vandalism at the protests. The survey experiment either mentioned no occurrence of vandalism (Control Group and Treatment Groups 1 and 2) or occurrence of vandalism (Treatment Groups 3, 4, and 5). The graph indicates that participants who did not receive information on the occurrence of vandalism at the protests support the protests most (on average, 4.71). When the survey highlights the occurrence of vandalism, agreement, on average, is at 4.04. Results for the second outcome variable, to which extent experiment participants consider the protests legitimate, are again available in Appendix A. The results are slightly higher than those for outcome question 1.

Figure 3 then shows the more granular results for the six treatment groups described in the research design for outcome question 1 (support for protests). For the control group, which did not receive information regarding the participation of the FARC successor organization or vandalism occurrence, the average agreement with the protests is 4.91. When mentioning the participation of the FARC (Treatment Group 1), support for the protests is, on average, at 4.41, and when mentioning the participation of Comunes, the FARC party under its new name (Treatment Group 2), support for the protests is at 4.78. I also formally test whether this difference between the Comunes and the FARC treatment is statistically significant (Appendix D), which is indeed the

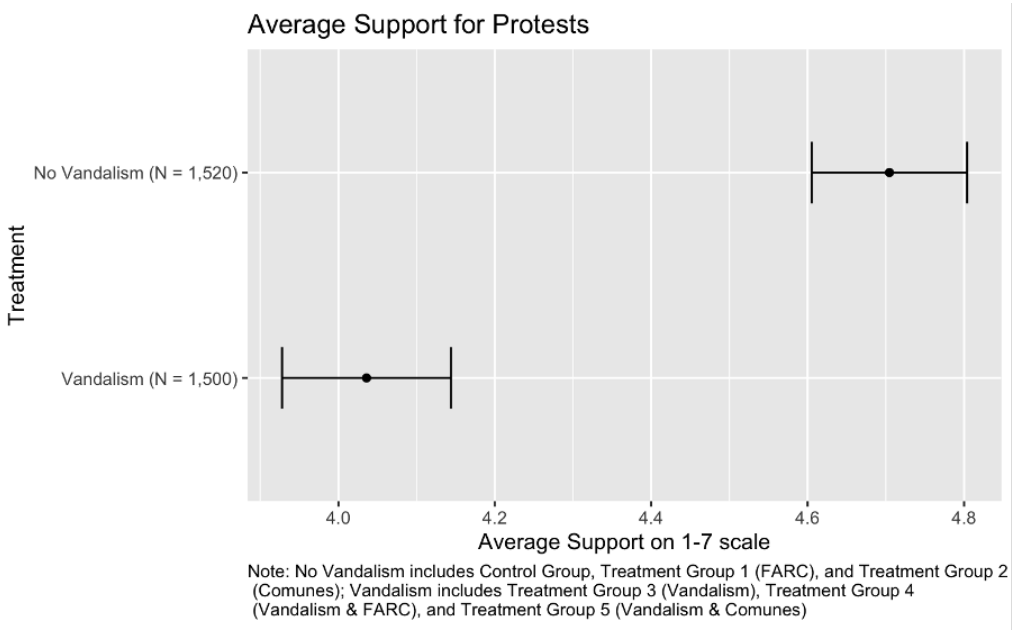



Figure 2: Average Outcome (Collapsed Model by Vandalism Occurrence)

case.

When vandalism enters the equation, support for the protests is significantly lower. Without mentioning the participation of former rebels (Treatment Group 3), average support is at 4.08 and is thus lower than when the survey mentions no vandalism but the participation of the FARC party. The average agreement with the protests is lowest, at 3.91, when the survey mentions both vandalism and the participation of the FARC party (Treatment Group 4). Mentioning vandalism and the renamed party, Comunes (Treatment Group 5), yields an average support rating of 4.13.

Exact tables showing the numeric results for the two outcome variables and confidence intervals are available in Appendix A. The results for the second outcome variable on the protests' legitimacy are slightly higher than those for outcome question 1. The differences between the average results of both outcome questions show that respondents, on average, consider the protests slightly more legitimate than that they support them, even when former rebels participate, or vandalism occurs. This difference indicates that some respondents value the right to protest even when disagreeing with the protest demands.

Figure 4 shows the average change regarding support for the protests between participants who received information that the FARC party or the Comunes party participated and those who did not receive information that former rebels participated. Appendix B provides the exact numeric regression output and the results for the second outcome question on the protests' legitimacy consideration. Since the survey allocated respondents randomly into the different treatments and the balance tables in Appendix C show that the experimental groups have balance across several variables, only the analysis of heterogeneous effects uses control variables.

The coefficient shows that the participation of the former FARC party reduces the support for the protests by 0.35 on the one-to-seven scale, confirming hypothesis 1a. The coefficient for when the survey mentioned the participation of the Comunes party is statistically insignificant,

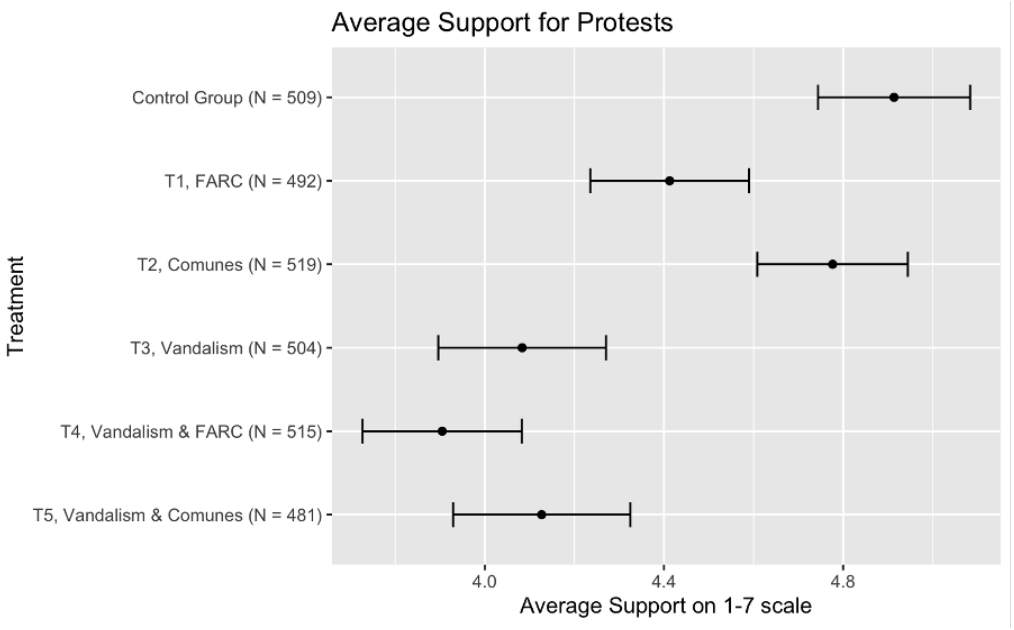



Figure 3: Average Outcome (Granular Model)

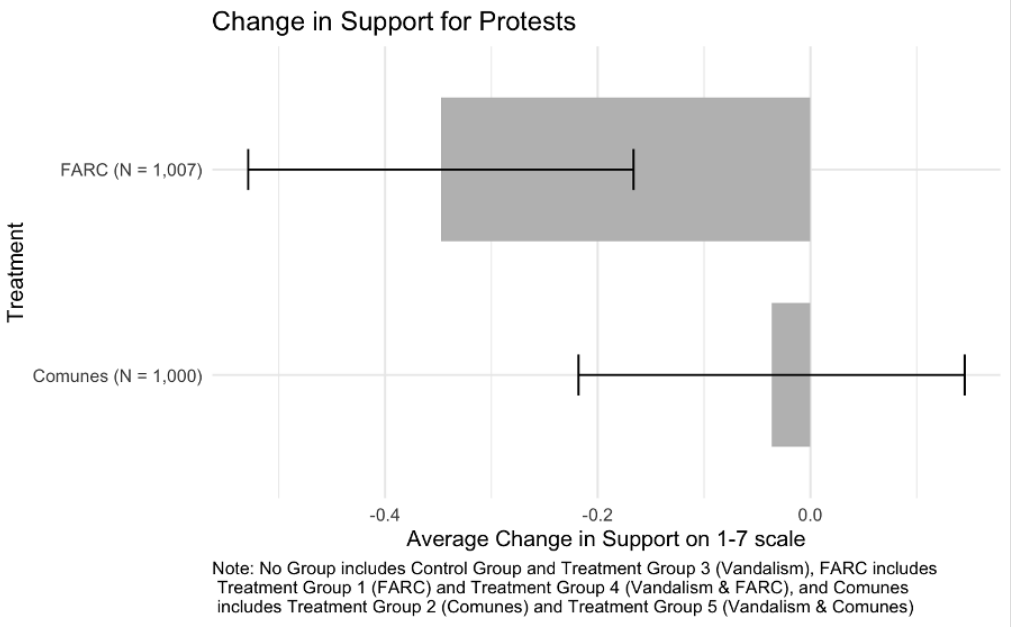



Figure 4: Coefficients (Collapsed Model by Former Rebel Participation)

refuting hypothesis 2a. The change is almost identical for the second outcome question regarding the protests' legitimacy, confirming hypothesis 1b and refuting hypothesis 2b.

Figure 5 then shows the average change regarding the support for the protests between participants who received information that vandalism occurred during the protests and those who did not. The coefficient indicates that vandalism reduces the support for the protests by 0.67 on the one-to-seven scale, confirming hypothesis 3a. The results for the second outcome variable

regarding the protests' legitimacy consideration (Appendix B) show a reduction of 0.9 and are thus more acute, seeming to confirm hypothesis 3b.

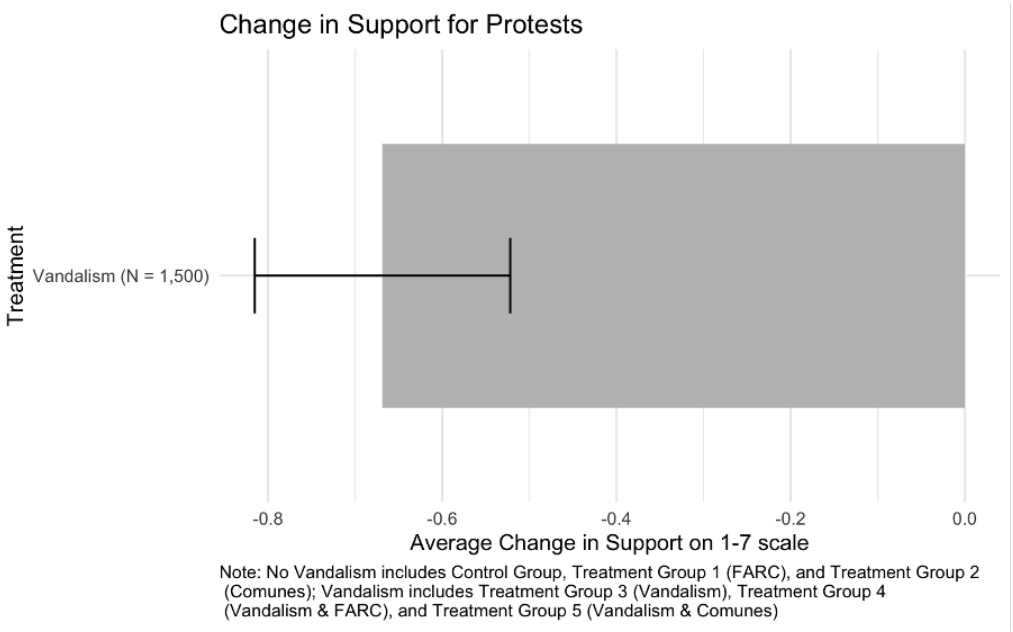



Figure 5: Coefficients (Collapsed Model by Vandalism Occurrence)

Figure 6 then shows the more granular coefficients for the five different treatment groups compared to the Control Group for outcome question 1 regarding the support for protests. Exact tables showing the numeric results for the coefficients and confidence intervals are available in Appendix B. The result for Treatment Group 1 indicates that survey respondents, on average, consider former rebels' participation during protests when forming an opinion on the protests. The average support for the protests falls by approximately 0.5 points on a 1-to-7 scale when the survey mentions the participation of the FARC party, representing a reduction of roughly 10% and confirming hypothesis 1a. Such change is proportionally slightly lower than the decrease in support for a component of Colombia's 2016 peace agreement that Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) find when the FARC endorses the component, but in light of the polarization of Colombian politics and the closeness of recent national election in 2022, still a relevant change. Individuals seem to assume that the FARC party's presence indicates, to some degree, an alignment between the other protesters and the FARC, whether in terms of common goals or that the other protesters approve of the FARC. Negative attitudes towards the FARC, prevalent across Colombian society (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020), thus seem to spill over into general assessments of the protests. To identify whether the identified effect size is meaningful, I also calculate Cohen's $d$, a standardized measure of effect size, which expresses effect sizes in terms of standard deviation units. The $d$ of 0.25 indicates that the effect size is, according to Cohen's scale, between small ($d = 0.2$) and medium ($d = 0.5$) (Sullivan & Feinn, 2013). The coefficient for Treatment Group 1 for the second outcome question regarding the legitimacy of the protests (available in Appendix B) is similar, confirming hypothesis 1b and statistically not significantly different from the coefficient for the first outcome question (test available in table 30 in Appendix E).

Why the impact of the former FARC's participation on public opinion is not as acute as one could expect based on the Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) analysis has multiple plausible explanations. For instance, the 2022 election of Gustavo Petro, a former member of the demobilized M-19 guerrilla, as Colombian president could have led to the Colombian public being more accustomed to the political participation of former rebels. Alternatively, the marginal role of the Comunes party in Colombian politics and its poor electoral performance could have implied for many Colombians that the FARC and its political successor organization have lost their threat potential. Ultimately, determining what exactly drives the results would require further research.

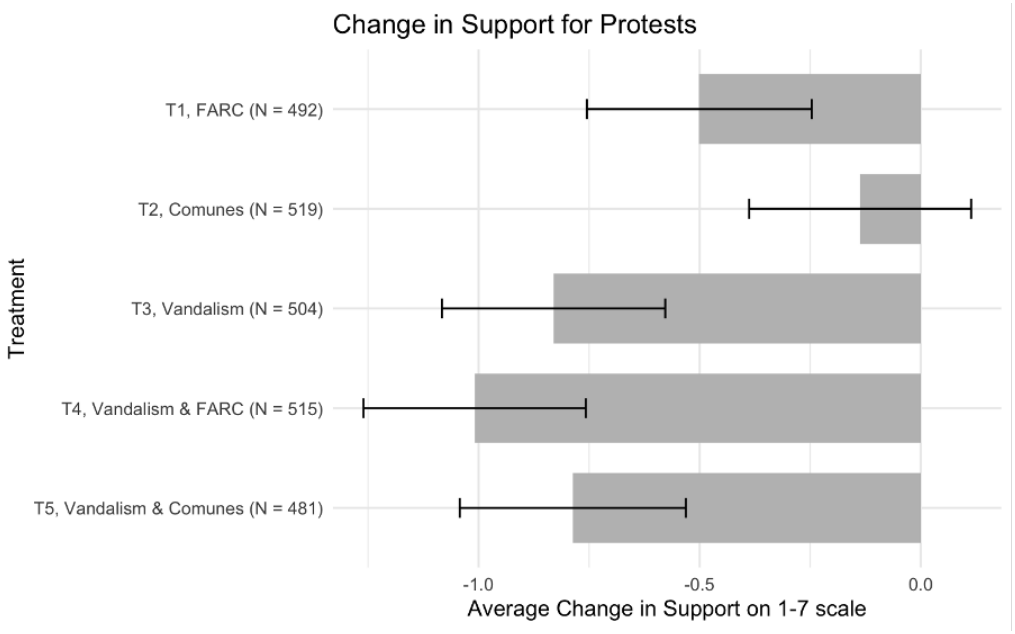



Figure 6: Coefficients (Granular Model)

The coefficient or difference-in-means estimator for Treatment Group 2, which mentioned the participation of the Comunes party (the renamed FARC party) in the protests, is also in the granular analysis statistically insignificant and considerably smaller than for Treatment Group 1, which mentioned the participation of the FARC party. The coefficient's insignificance refutes hypothesis 2a. Renaming the party from FARC to Comunes thus mitigates the negative and statistically significant effect for Treatment Group 1. Survey respondents, on average, do not alter their opinion on the protests when aware that the Comunes party was present, which leaves room for two alternative explanations. Participants might know that the Comunes party is the renamed FARC party and thus the rebel groups' political successor but believe that the party has credibly detached itself from its past and therefore assess the party more positively. Alternatively, participants are unaware that Comunes is the FARC's successor organization. Given the fragmentation of the Colombian party system and the Comunes party's marginality in Colombian politics (International Crisis Group, 2021b), the latter seems to be the more plausible explanation. For a better assessment, the survey experiment also asked respondents at the end of the questionnaire, out of which group the Comunes party emerged[13]. The balance test (last table in Appendix C) indeed

[13]Possible answers included the (former) guerrilla groups ELN, EPL, FARC, and M-19; the paramilitary group

shows that 39% of respondents claimed not to know Comunes' origins, 13% provided a wrong answer, and only 47% correctly stated that the Comunes party is the successor organization of the FARC (these answers were on average balanced across control and experimental groups).

These insights of Treatment Group 2 and the reduced adversity against the political activism of renamed rebel organizations have various implications for political parties emerging out of rebel groups. It seems that a rebel successor organization's name change can partially mitigate existing stigma against the group, thus potentially enhancing the likeliness of such a party's electoral success, of getting attention for policy proposals in public discourse, attracting new members, and being attractive for individual politicians to campaign with the party's name. Moreover, a name change might also imply improved security for the new party's members and activities, especially in public events, where the party's name less strongly provokes adverse reactions from the opponents of the former rebel group.

When the survey mentions vandalism at protests, the coefficient or difference-in-means estimator in the granular analysis decreases again significantly. Regarding protest support, the coefficient falls to -0.83 (Treatment Group 3, a 17% decrease from the Control Group) or -1.01 when also the FARC party's participation is mentioned (Treatment Group 4, a 21% decrease from the Control Group) and -0.79 when the survey also highlights the Comunes party's participation (Treatment Group 5, a 16% decrease). I again calculate Cohen's *d*, which are 0.41, 0.50, and 0.38, respectively, and therefore, all close to the threshold of medium effect sizes at 0.5. Thus, vandalism significantly reduces protest approval, confirming hypothesis 3a, and the reduction is most acute in combination with the presence of the FARC party. Respondents see vandalism at protests, thus even more critical than the participation of a rebel successor party, and, on average, include that opinion in their overall protest assessment.

These results confirm insights from existing experimental studies on contentious protest tactics and their impact on public opinion. In various US-based experiments, Simpson et al. (2018, p. 5) find a 34% decrease in support for antiracist counter-protesters when these protesters use violence, and Gutting (2019, p. 879) finds a 29 percentage-point decrease in support for protesters when they use violent tactics. Feinberg et al. (2020) see a reduction between 11% and 33% in different social movements' support when these movements deploy extreme protest tactics, including vandalism. These other experimental studies' results are thus even more acute, yet this might be because these studies mention violence at protests instead of vandalism.

The novel aspect of my findings regarding vandalism is thus twofold. Firstly, the fact that my results from Colombia align with existing US analyses shows that Colombia's conflict history has not led to a normalization of contentious politics, where actions such as vandalism become acceptable. The results thus add an important different setting, i.e., a society with a recent conflict history and a peace process, to studies on contentious protests and public opinion. Secondly, most of the existing studies do not measure solely and explicitly the effect of vandalism but violent protest tactics in general, whereas my results specifically measure the impact of this particular form of contentious protest on public opinion.

The granular results for the second outcome question regarding the extent to which survey participants consider the protests legitimate when vandalism occurs are again available in Appendix B. The coefficients for all the treatment groups, which include the vandalism treatment, are more

AUC; and the answer "do not know."

negative than those for the first outcome question. The occurrence of vandalism thus seems to have a more considerable toll on the extent to which participants consider the protests legitimate than on support for the protests. Cohen's $d$ for treatment groups 3 (Vandalism), 4 (Vandalism & FARC), and 5 (Vandalism & Comunes) are respectively 0.55, 0.64, and 0.57 and thus all above the threshold of medium effect sizes at 0.5. I test whether the differences across treatment effects for the two outcome questions are statistically significant which is indeed the case (Table 30 in Appendix E). The vandalism treatments affect protest legitimacy assessments more heavily than protest support which confirms hypothesis 3b. This finding indicates that some respondents might still agree with the protesters' demands but not with the means of the protests.

Both the results regarding former rebels' protest participation and regarding vandalism at protests (and the combination of both) seem to indicate that stigmatization tactics of protest opponents during the 2019 and 2021 Colombian mass protests were successful since the impact on public support for the protests was between 10% and 21%. The findings have several implications. For policymakers, the results imply a need to discuss whether policies should regulate such stigmatization tactics, i.e., whether regulation should limit the use of false accusations regarding protest participants and protest tactics in public discourse. For protest organizers, the findings imply that a clear distancing from participating (former) rebels and incidents of vandalism might be necessary to prevent negative shifts in public discourse.

## 4.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Since the existing literature on public opinion and contentious politics shows that socio-demographic variables and other contextual factors may matter (e.g., Enos et al., 2019; Gutting, 2020), I test for various heterogeneous effects. I provide detailed tests for gender, victim status, and political leaning, given that the existing literature shows these variables potentially influence my treatment effects. The following tables show the results of the collapsed analysis by former rebel participation (outcome question one regarding the approval of protests) and by vandalism occurrence (outcome question two regarding protest legitimacy assessment). Appendix B shows results for the respective other outcome questions and the granular analysis with the six treatment groups.

Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) show that gender matters for FARC endorsement since, in their experiment, support for a component of the 2016 peace agreement falls more for women than for men following FARC endorsement. Consequently, one would expect that the participation of the FARC successor organization during protests would impact women's assessment of the protests more negatively than men's.

Also, victim status likely alters how individuals react to the treatments. Haas and Khadka (2020) show that endorsement by ethnic outgroup leaders reduces support for peace settlements most strongly for those whose communities the outgroup targeted most violently. Bullock et al. (2017) show that militant groups in Pakistan receive less support in areas where they conduct most attacks, whereas individual-level variables, such as education and income, matter less. Hence, one would expect that victims of Colombia's armed internal conflict would change their assessment of the protests more negatively if aware that the FARC successor organization participated than non-victims.

Finally, existing analyses show that the political leaning of individuals may impact the treat-

ment effects. These studies demonstrate that endorsements or cues by outgroup and out-party political groups or elites reduce support for policies (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009; Nicholson, 2012) or peace agreements (or their components) (Haas & Khadka, 2020; Garbiras-Díaz et al., 2021; Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018), whereas evidence for the opposite, increase of support due to ingroup cues is less unambiguous (e.g., Brader & Tucker, 2012; Coan et al., 2008; Minozzi et al., 2015). Also, several studies find (e.g., Gutting, 2020; Simpson et al., 2018) that individuals of different political ideologies react differently to contentious protest tactics, whereas Feinberg et al. (2020) find no such evidence regarding the effect of extreme protest tactics. Consequently, one would expect that politically right-leaning individuals react more negatively to the participation of the FARC successor organizations and the occurrence of vandalism at the protests than left-leaning individuals.

Columns 2 to 4 in Table 2 show the results for outcome question one regarding protest support of estimating the heterogeneous effects in the collapsed model, which combines the treatment groups by the participation of a former rebel organization (No specific party mentioned, FARC party, or Comunes party). First, column two shows that the effect of the FARC party's participation on individuals' agreement with the protests is significantly less negative for men than women. For women, the effect is -0.49, while for men, it reduces to -0.19. Second, column three shows that, while victims of Colombia's armed internal conflict tend to agree with the protests more strongly than non-victims, the treatment effect of the former FARC's protest participation does not differ significantly by victim status. Finally, column 4 in Table 2 shows that while political leaning does not significantly interact with the treatment effect of the former FARC's participation, individuals' political leaning drives their general agreement with the protests. Left-leaning identifying individuals are, on average, significantly more supportive of the protests. The opposite holds for right-leaning individuals, although to a lesser extent. These insights make intuitive sense since the 2021 protests demanded social reforms and opposed a right-leaning government. In column 4, the stand-alone treatment effect of the FARC party's participation is no longer statistically significant. The reason seems to be a loss of statistical power. Since the question regarding individuals' political leaning was potentially sensible for some, the questionnaire included the option "prefer not to say." More than 1,000 experiment participants opted for this answer such that the number of observations reduced from approximately 3,000 in columns 1 to 3 to 1,981 in column 4. The corresponding results for the second outcome question on the extent to which individuals consider the 2021 Colombian protests legitimate and the results of the granular analysis with the five treatment groups follow a similar pattern and are available in Appendix B.

Columns two to four in Table 3 show the results for estimating the heterogeneous effects regarding outcome question two (the extent to which individuals consider the protests legitimate) of the collapsed model in which I combine the treatment groups by the mentioned occurrence of vandalism (no occurrence or occurrence of vandalism). Column 2 shows that the treatment effect of the occurrence of vandalism during protests on individuals' protest legitimacy assessment does not differ across men and women. Column three shows that the treatment effect of vandalism occurrence on protest legitimacy assessment is not different between victims and non-victims of Colombia's armed internal conflict. However, victims generally (independent of the occurrence of vandalism) consider the protest more legitimate than non-victims. Finally, column four confirms that individuals' political leaning greatly influences their protest legitimacy assessment. It also

Table 2: Q1 (Collapsed Model by Former Rebel Participation)

| | *Dependent variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| FARC | −0.348*** | −0.491*** | −0.325*** | −0.207 |
| | (0.092) | (0.127) | (0.097) | (0.185) |
| Comunes | −0.036 | −0.034 | 0.008 | 0.118 |
| | (0.093) | (0.129) | (0.097) | (0.188) |
| Male | | −0.082 | | |
| | | (0.131) | | |
| FARC:Male | | 0.305* | | |
| | | (0.185) | | |
| Comunes:Male | | −0.008 | | |
| | | (0.185) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.520** | |
| | | | (0.242) | |
| FARC:Conflict Victim | | | 0.029 | |
| | | | (0.351) | |
| Comunes:Conflict Victim | | | −0.269 | |
| | | | (0.357) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.938*** |
| | | | | (0.170) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −1.056*** |
| | | | | (0.178) |
| FARC:Positioning Left | | | | −0.204 |
| | | | | (0.240) |
| Comunes:Positioning Left | | | | −0.377 |
| | | | | (0.241) |
| FARC:Positioning Right | | | | −0.073 |
| | | | | (0.252) |
| Comunes:Positioning Right | | | | −0.313 |
| | | | | (0.255) |
| Constant | 4.500*** | 4.539*** | 4.443*** | 4.028*** |
| | (0.065) | (0.090) | (0.069) | (0.132) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.006 | 0.007 | 0.009 | 0.341 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.005 | 0.005 | 0.007 | 0.338 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.077 (df = 3017) | 2.077 (df = 3012) | 2.077 (df = 2940) | 1.764 (df = 1972) |
| F Statistic | 8.523*** (df = 2; 3017) | 4.128*** (df = 5; 3012) | 5.097*** (df = 5; 2940) | 127.444*** (df = 8; 1972) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

shows that the treatment effect of vandalism occurrence is more substantial for right-leaning individuals, who consider the protests significantly less legitimate when vandalism occurs than people identifying as centrists. This finding thus confirms the results of the existing literature that has shown that conservative-leaning individuals (Gutting, 2020; Simpson et al., 2018) are more sensitive to contentious protest tactics. The results for the first outcome question on the extent to which individuals agree with the 2021 Colombian protests and the results of the granular analysis with the five experimental groups follow a similar pattern. These results are again available in Appendix B.

Table 3: Q2 (Collapsed Model by Vandalism Occurence)

| | *Dependent variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q2 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Vandalism | −0.898*** | −0.847*** | −0.898*** | −0.776*** |
| | (0.072) | (0.099) | (0.075) | (0.150) |
| Male | | 0.076 | | |
| | | (0.101) | | |
| Vandalism:Male | | −0.101 | | |
| | | (0.144) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.321* | |
| | | | (0.193) | |
| Vandalism:Conflict Victim | | | 0.070 | |
| | | | (0.277) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.332*** |
| | | | | (0.136) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −0.874*** |
| | | | | (0.144) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Left | | | | 0.095 |
| | | | | (0.193) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Right | | | | −0.410** |
| | | | | (0.204) |
| Constant | 5.172*** | 5.133*** | 5.148*** | 4.903*** |
| | (0.051) | (0.071) | (0.053) | (0.106) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.051 | 0.304 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.050 | 0.302 |
| Residual Std. Error | 1.971 (df = 3018) | 1.972 (df = 3014) | 1.969 (df = 2942) | 1.737 (df = 1975) |
| F Statistic | 156.647*** (df = 1; 3018) | 52.145*** (df = 3; 3014) | 52.794*** (df = 3; 2942) | 172.636*** (df = 5; 1975) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

# 5 Conclusion

In this article, I argue that the participation of demobilized FARC rebels and the occurrence of vandalism during protests reduces public approval of protests in Colombia. I find convincing evidence for this argument. My survey experiment with over 3,000 Colombians revealed a negative relationship between former rebels' participation and vandalism occurrence and the extent to which Colombians support the protests and consider them legitimate. Expanding the analysis, I show that the relationship holds when considering diverse heterogeneous effects.

As with any survey experiment, there are potential limitations. A first limitation could be that the environment in which individuals participate differs from the real-world setting in which individuals experience demobilized rebels' participation and vandalism occurrence during protests. Hence, the experiment results could not truly reflect real-world behavior. For instance, one could argue that if individuals observe the participation of demobilized rebels and the occurrence of vandalism during protests directly, their attitudes towards protests change differently than when reading about these events in the experiment prompt. Nevertheless, such direct observation would have been very unlikely for most Colombians. The participation of demobilized FARC rebels, individually or jointly as part of the Comunes party, was primarily focused on very remote regions of the country. Also, while more visible, vandalism occurred mainly in specific neighborhoods in a few selected Colombian cities. Most Colombians experienced demobilized rebels' participation and vandalism during the 2021 protests through diverse news channels or social media and, therefore, in a similar setting to the online experiment.

A second potential limitation is social desirability bias, i.e., individuals responding to the survey questions in ways they think are expected of them rather than in line with their preferences. For instance, individuals might have falsified their answers because they are unwilling to reveal their honest attitudes toward the FARC since they think support for the FARC is socially undesired. However, to limit social desirability bias, the experiment prompt mentioned both former rebels' participation and vandalism occurrence in very neutral terms, thus not providing any hint of what kind of response the investigation expects. Also, the survey was completely anonymous and did not mention the purpose of the study. The distribution of responses further indicates that many respondents were very clearly willing to reveal negative or positive attitudes toward the protests and the FARC's political participation. Thus, it is unlikely that social desirability bias affected the responses significantly.

A third potential limitation of survey experiments is that the results are often specific to the individual case, so the results do not necessarily hold in other contexts. This limitation is likely also the case here since the political integration of other former rebel groups in Colombia or other countries might follow very different dynamics. Consequently, there are no strict scope conditions for my findings since the identified effects are highly context-specific, and whether they occur similarly in other settings depends on the demobilized group's popularity and the population's willingness to accept former rebels' political activism. Similar findings could thus occur in settings with different types of armed groups, different types of protests, or different dynamics and cleavages of the preceding armed internal conflict such that none of these factors represents a scope condition for my findings to occur elsewhere. Also, while the presence of a formal peace process, i.e., a process in which signatories commit to measures that foster reconciliation and stability, likely facilitates former rebels to join protests, the presence of such a formal process is not strictly needed for my findings to occur elsewhere. Demobilized rebels who are not part of a formal peace process could just as well trigger similar public opinion reactions when participating in protests.

The results reveal interesting dynamics in Colombian politics. Former FARC rebels' participation in protests reduces Colombians' approval of protests and the extent to which Colombians consider protests legitimate. With a reduction of approximately 10%, the impact of the demobilized FARC rebels' participation is not negligible, especially in light of the polarization of Colombian

politics and the close outcome of the 2022 national elections. However, these results are nevertheless significantly less acute than the approximately 18% decrease in support for a component of Colombia's 2016 peace agreement that Matanock and Garbiras-Díaz (2018) found in a 2015 survey following FARC endorsement. Given that the FARC has fought against the Colombian state since the 1960s and has been responsible for many human rights violations and wartime atrocities across Colombia (Pécaut, 2008), one could have expected a more dramatic impact than a 10% reduction. Since vandalism seems to impact individuals' attitudes significantly more than the former FARC's participation, it appears that for most Colombians, the FARC does not matter much anymore, giving space for different potential explanations, which future research could explore. Even the combination of the former FARC's participation and vandalism occurrence reduces public approval of protests, similar to what several comparable analyses on violence during protests in the United States find (Feinberg et al., 2020; Gutting, 2019; Simpson et al., 2018; ). My findings thus provide a positive sign for the FARC's political integration with Colombian democracy, seeming to have absorbed the FARC into political life without creating new tension.

Also, the results regarding vandalism at protests and public opinion indicate that Colombia's conflict history has not led to a normalization of contentious politics since support and legitimacy assessment of the protests fall dramatically, almost in line with existing US-based studies, when vandalism occurs. The findings, therefore, add a new relevant setting, societies with a conflict history, to the protest and public opinion literature. Since studies in this field often measure violence at protests (e.g., Gutting, 2019; Simpson et al., 2018) and not explicitly vandalism, this paper provides relevant insights regarding this specific and commonly expressed form of discontent.

Future research should provide more detail on the underlying mechanisms of these findings. Do Colombians in 2022 worry less about the FARC's political participation than they did in 2016 because, after four years with a presence in the Colombian Congress and poor electoral outcomes, the FARC's successor organization lost its threat potential for many Colombians? Or have Colombians partly changed their attitudes towards the FARC and now consider the organization's struggle for a more equitable society justified? Since Colombia voted in 2022 for the first time for a president with a past as a guerrilla member, another potential explanation could be that Colombians have become more acquainted with the idea that former insurgents have their place in politics, i.e., that normalization of former rebels in politics has taken place. By identifying what changes public perception of the FARC, future research could identify valuable paths to reduce former rebels' stigma and thus facilitate their integration into society.

Likewise, future research could explore whether the identified effects are specific to former rebels' or whether the protest participation of other outgroups generates a similar impact. Perhaps the insights indicate that a society's tendency to see certain groups in a specific (negative or positive) way would generally impact public opinion's protest assessment when these groups become involved. By assessing the protest participation of other outgroups, future research could thus identify to which extent the results are externally valid.

Regarding the policy implications of the analysis, the findings show that stigmatization campaigns linking protests in peace process societies to demobilized rebels do have (some) impact. While it is easier said than done, policymakers should thus find ways to reduce stigmatization campaigns in public discourse, for instance, through awareness campaigns or regulation of misinformation within political campaigning. Since vandalism significantly alters public opinion, ac-

tivists and other protest organizers are well advised to prevent such incidents and, if they happen, to distance themselves clearly from such acts.

# 6 Appendix

## 6.1 Appendix A - Outcome Tables

### 6.1.1 Granular Analysis

Table 4: Agreement with Protests

| | | Treatment 1: Mentioning of Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | FARC | Comunes |
| Treatment 2: Mentioning of Vandalism Occurrence at Protests | No | Control Group<br>4.91<br>(4.74 — 5.08) | Treatment Group 1<br>4.41<br>(4.24 — 4.59) | Treatment Group 2<br>4.78<br>(4.61 — 4.95) |
| | Yes | Treatment Group 3<br>4.08<br>(3.90 — 4.27) | Treatment Group 4<br>3.91<br>(3.73 — 4.08) | Treatment Group 5<br>4.13<br>(3.93 — 4.33) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

Table 5: Protests Legitimacy Assessments

| | | Treatment 1: Mentioning of Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | FARC | Comunes |
| Treatment 2: Mentioning of Vandalism Occurrence at Protests | No | Control Group<br>5.41<br>(5.26 — 5.55) | Treatment Group 1<br>4.92<br>(4.75 — 5.08) | Treatment Group 2<br>5.19<br>(5.04 — 5.34) |
| | Yes | Treatment Group 3<br>4.35<br>(4.17 — 4.54) | Treatment Group 4<br>4.18<br>(3.99 — 4.36) | Treatment Group 5<br>4.30<br>(4.11 — 4.49) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

### 6.1.2 Collapsed Analysis by Group Participation

Table 6: Agreement with Protests

| Treatment: Mentioning of Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation | | |
|---|---|---|
| No | FARC | Comunes |
| 4.50 | 4.15 | 4.46 |
| (4.37 — 4.63) | (4.03 — 4.28) | (4.33 — 4.60) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

Table 7: Protests Legitimacy Assessments

| Treatment: Mentioning of Demobilized Rebels' Protest Participation | | |
|---|---|---|
| No | FARC | Comunes |
| 4.88 | 4.54 | 4.76 |
| (4.76 — 5.00) | (4.41 — 4.66) | (4.64 — 4.89) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

### 6.1.3 Collapsed Analysis by Vandalism Ocurrence

Table 8: Agreement with Protests

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Treatment: Mentioning of Vandalism Occurrence at Protests | No | 4.71 (4.61 — 4.80) |
| | Yes | 4.04 (3.93 — 4.14) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

Table 9: Protests Legitimacy Assessments

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Treatment: Mentioning of Vandalism Occurrence at Protests | No | 5.17 (5.08 — 5.26) |
| | Yes | 4.28 (4.17 — 4.38) |

Note: Average Answers on a 1–7 Scale with 95% Confidence Intervals

## 6.2 Appendix B - Regression Results

### 6.2.1 Granular Analysis

Table 10: Q1 Granular Model

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| T1 (FARC) | −0.501*** | −0.692*** | −0.466*** | −0.415 |
| | (0.130) | (0.181) | (0.137) | (0.259) |
| T2 (Comunes) | −0.137 | −0.206 | −0.114 | 0.247 |
| | (0.128) | (0.180) | (0.135) | (0.260) |
| T3 (Vandalism) | −0.830*** | −0.894*** | −0.823*** | −0.701*** |
| | (0.129) | (0.177) | (0.136) | (0.258) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC) | −1.009*** | −1.176*** | −1.008*** | −0.701*** |
| | (0.128) | (0.176) | (0.136) | (0.256) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes) | −0.787*** | −0.794*** | −0.731*** | −0.756*** |
| | (0.130) | (0.183) | (0.138) | (0.264) |
| Male | | −0.170 | | |
| | | (0.182) | | |
| T1 (FARC):Male | | 0.393 | | |
| | | (0.259) | | |
| T2 (Comunes):Male | | 0.130 | | |
| | | (0.256) | | |
| T3 (Vandalism):Male | | 0.129 | | |
| | | (0.258) | | |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Male | | 0.359 | | |
| | | (0.257) | | |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Male | | 0.018 | | |
| | | (0.261) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.353 | |
| | | | (0.315) | |
| T1 (FARC):Conflict Victim | | | 0.129 | |
| | | | (0.490) | |
| T2 (Comunes):Conflict Victim | | | −0.099 | |
| | | | (0.481) | |
| T3 (Vandalism):Conflict Victim | | | 0.216 | |
| | | | (0.486) | |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Conflict Victim | | | 0.295 | |
| | | | (0.462) | |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Conflict Victim | | | −0.088 | |
| | | | (0.486) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.954*** |
| | | | | (0.236) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −0.953*** |
| | | | | (0.246) |
| T1 (FARC):Positioning Left | | | | −0.169 |
| | | | | (0.334) |
| T2 (Comunes):Positioning Left | | | | −0.705** |
| | | | | (0.331) |
| T3 (Vandalism):Positioning Left | | | | −0.061 |
| | | | | (0.334) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Positioning Left | | | | −0.279 |
| | | | | (0.332) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Positioning Left | | | | −0.058 |
| | | | | (0.337) |
| T1 (FARC):Positioning Right | | | | 0.057 |
| | | | | (0.352) |
| T2 (Comunes):Positioning Right | | | | −0.421 |
| | | | | (0.352) |
| T3 (Vandalism):Positioning Right | | | | −0.257 |
| | | | | (0.351) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Positioning Right | | | | −0.376 |
| | | | | (0.346) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Positioning Right | | | | −0.365 |
| | | | | (0.354) |
| Constant | 4.914*** | 4.996*** | 4.860*** | 4.382*** |
| | (0.091) | (0.127) | (0.097) | (0.184) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.032 | 0.033 | 0.034 | 0.368 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.030 | 0.030 | 0.030 | 0.362 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.050 (df = 3014) | 2.051 (df = 3006) | 2.052 (df = 2934) | 1.732 (df = 1963) |
| F Statistic | 19.905*** (df = 5; 3014) | 9.353*** (df = 11; 3006) | 9.339*** (df = 11; 2934) | 67.115*** (df = 17; 1963) |
| *Note:* | | | | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

Table 11: Q2 Granular Model

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q2 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| T1 (FARC) | −0.488*** | −0.657*** | −0.473*** | −0.534** |
| | (0.124) | (0.173) | (0.132) | (0.259) |
| T2 (Comunes) | −0.218* | −0.225 | −0.208 | 0.011 |
| | (0.123) | (0.173) | (0.129) | (0.260) |
| T3 (Vandalism) | −1.052*** | −0.982*** | −1.062*** | −0.936*** |
| | (0.124) | (0.170) | (0.130) | (0.258) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC) | −1.230*** | −1.367*** | −1.233*** | −0.919*** |
| | (0.123) | (0.169) | (0.130) | (0.256) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes) | −1.105*** | −1.043*** | −1.074*** | −1.006*** |
| | (0.125) | (0.175) | (0.132) | (0.265) |
| Male | | −0.039 | | |
| | | (0.174) | | |
| T1 (FARC):Male | | 0.348 | | |
| | | (0.249) | | |
| T2 (Comunes):Male | | 0.006 | | |
| | | (0.246) | | |
| T3 (Vandalism):Male | | −0.155 | | |
| | | (0.248) | | |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Male | | 0.301 | | |
| | | (0.246) | | |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Male | | −0.124 | | |
| | | (0.250) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.179 | |
| | | | (0.301) | |
| T1 (FARC):Conflict Victim | | | 0.389 | |
| | | | (0.469) | |
| T2 (Comunes):Conflict Victim | | | 0.008 | |
| | | | (0.461) | |
| T3 (Vandalism):Conflict Victim | | | 0.296 | |
| | | | (0.465) | |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Conflict Victim | | | 0.255 | |
| | | | (0.443) | |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Conflict Victim | | | 0.096 | |
| | | | (0.466) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.410*** |
| | | | | (0.236) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −0.757*** |
| | | | | (0.246) |
| T1 (FARC):Positioning Left | | | | 0.180 |
| | | | | (0.334) |
| T2 (Comunes):Positioning Left | | | | −0.412 |
| | | | | (0.332) |
| T3 (Vandalism):Positioning Left | | | | 0.036 |
| | | | | (0.335) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Positioning Left | | | | −0.093 |
| | | | | (0.332) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Positioning Left | | | | 0.113 |
| | | | | (0.338) |
| T1 (FARC):Positioning Right | | | | 0.093 |
| | | | | (0.352) |
| T2 (Comunes):Positioning Right | | | | −0.480 |
| | | | | (0.352) |
| T3 (Vandalism):Positioning Right | | | | −0.435 |
| | | | | (0.351) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC):Positioning Right | | | | −0.447 |
| | | | | (0.346) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes):Positioning Right | | | | −0.700** |
| | | | | (0.355) |
| Constant | 5.405*** | 5.424*** | 5.374*** | 5.079*** |
| | (0.087) | (0.121) | (0.093) | (0.184) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.055 | 0.057 | 0.056 | 0.311 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.053 | 0.054 | 0.053 | 0.305 |
| Residual Std. Error | 1.966 (df = 3014) | 1.966 (df = 3006) | 1.966 (df = 2934) | 1.734 (df = 1963) |
| F Statistic | 35.004*** (df = 5; 3014) | 16.521*** (df = 11; 3006) | 15.855*** (df = 11; 2934) | 52.019*** (df = 17; 1963) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

### 6.2.2 Collapsed Analysis by Group Participation

Table 12: Q1 Collapsed Model by Former Rebel Participation

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| FARC | −0.348*** | −0.491*** | −0.325*** | −0.207 |
| | (0.092) | (0.127) | (0.097) | (0.185) |
| Comunes | −0.036 | −0.034 | 0.008 | 0.118 |
| | (0.093) | (0.129) | (0.097) | (0.188) |
| Male | | −0.082 | | |
| | | (0.131) | | |
| FARC:Male | | 0.305* | | |
| | | (0.185) | | |
| Comunes:Male | | −0.008 | | |
| | | (0.185) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.520** | |
| | | | (0.242) | |
| FARC:Conflict Victim | | | 0.029 | |
| | | | (0.351) | |
| Comunes:Conflict Victim | | | −0.269 | |
| | | | (0.357) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.938*** |
| | | | | (0.170) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −1.056*** |
| | | | | (0.178) |
| FARC:Positioning Left | | | | −0.204 |
| | | | | (0.240) |
| Comunes:Positioning Left | | | | −0.377 |
| | | | | (0.241) |
| FARC:Positioning Right | | | | −0.073 |
| | | | | (0.252) |
| Comunes:Positioning Right | | | | −0.313 |
| | | | | (0.255) |
| Constant | 4.500*** | 4.539*** | 4.443*** | 4.028*** |
| | (0.065) | (0.090) | (0.069) | (0.132) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.006 | 0.007 | 0.009 | 0.341 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.005 | 0.005 | 0.007 | 0.338 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.077 (df = 3017) | 2.077 (df = 3012) | 2.077 (df = 2940) | 1.764 (df = 1972) |
| F Statistic | 8.523*** (df = 2; 3017) | 4.128*** (df = 5; 3012) | 5.097*** (df = 5; 2940) | 127.444*** (df = 8; 1972) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 13: Q2 Collapsed Model by Former Rebel Participation

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q2 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| FARC | −0.344*** | −0.530*** | −0.321*** | −0.258 |
| | (0.090) | (0.123) | (0.095) | (0.188) |
| Comunes | −0.122 | −0.120 | −0.084 | −0.007 |
| | (0.090) | (0.125) | (0.094) | (0.191) |
| Male | | −0.085 | | |
| | | (0.127) | | |
| FARC:Male | | 0.396** | | |
| | | (0.180) | | |
| Comunes:Male | | −0.005 | | |
| | | (0.180) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.401* | |
| | | | (0.235) | |
| FARC:Conflict Victim | | | 0.056 | |
| | | | (0.341) | |
| Comunes:Conflict Victim | | | −0.183 | |
| | | | (0.347) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.447*** |
| | | | | (0.173) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −0.937*** |
| | | | | (0.181) |
| FARC:Positioning Left | | | | 0.013 |
| | | | | (0.244) |
| Comunes:Positioning Left | | | | −0.194 |
| | | | | (0.244) |
| FARC:Positioning Right | | | | −0.017 |
| | | | | (0.256) |
| Comunes:Positioning Right | | | | −0.433* |
| | | | | (0.259) |
| Constant | 4.882*** | 4.922*** | 4.836*** | 4.606*** |
| | (0.063) | (0.087) | (0.067) | (0.133) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.005 | 0.007 | 0.007 | 0.262 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.004 | 0.006 | 0.005 | 0.259 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.017 (df = 3017) | 2.015 (df = 3012) | 2.015 (df = 2940) | 1.790 (df = 1972) |
| F Statistic | 7.567*** (df = 2; 3017) | 4.403*** (df = 5; 3012) | 4.003*** (df = 5; 2940) | 87.585*** (df = 8; 1972) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

### 6.2.3 Collapsed Analysis by Vandalism Ocurrence

Table 14: Q1 Collapsed Model by Vandalism Occurence

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Vandalism | −0.669*** | −0.668*** | −0.665*** | −0.660*** |
| | (0.075) | (0.104) | (0.079) | (0.150) |
| Male | | 0.003 | | |
| | | (0.106) | | |
| Vandalism:Male | | 0.004 | | |
| | | (0.150) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.384* | |
| | | | (0.201) | |
| Vandalism:Conflict Victim | | | 0.112 | |
| | | | (0.289) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.663*** |
| | | | | (0.136) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −1.067*** |
| | | | | (0.144) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Left | | | | 0.156 |
| | | | | (0.193) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Right | | | | −0.222 |
| | | | | (0.204) |
| Constant | 4.705*** | 4.701*** | 4.669*** | 4.325*** |
| | (0.053) | (0.074) | (0.056) | (0.106) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.026 | 0.026 | 0.028 | 0.361 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.025 | 0.025 | 0.027 | 0.360 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.055 (df = 3018) | 2.056 (df = 3014) | 2.056 (df = 2942) | 1.735 (df = 1975) |
| F Statistic | 79.897*** (df = 1; 3018) | 26.408*** (df = 3; 3014) | 28.304*** (df = 3; 2942) | 223.526*** (df = 5; 1975) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 15: Q2 Collapsed Model by Vandalism Occurence

| | *Dependent Variable:* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q2 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Vandalism | −0.898*** | −0.847*** | −0.898*** | −0.776*** |
| | (0.072) | (0.099) | (0.075) | (0.150) |
| Male | | 0.076 | | |
| | | (0.101) | | |
| Vandalism:Male | | −0.101 | | |
| | | (0.144) | | |
| Conflict Victim | | | 0.321* | |
| | | | (0.193) | |
| Vandalism:Conflict Victim | | | 0.070 | |
| | | | (0.277) | |
| Positioning Left | | | | 1.332*** |
| | | | | (0.136) |
| Positioning Right | | | | −0.874*** |
| | | | | (0.144) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Left | | | | 0.095 |
| | | | | (0.193) |
| Vandalism:Positioning Right | | | | −0.410** |
| | | | | (0.204) |
| Constant | 5.172*** | 5.133*** | 5.148*** | 4.903*** |
| | (0.051) | (0.071) | (0.053) | (0.106) |
| Observations | 3,020 | 3,018 | 2,946 | 1,981 |
| $R^2$ | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.051 | 0.304 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.050 | 0.302 |
| Residual Std. Error | 1.971 (df = 3018) | 1.972 (df = 3014) | 1.969 (df = 2942) | 1.737 (df = 1975) |
| F Statistic | 156.647*** (df = 1; 3018) | 52.145*** (df = 3; 3014) | 52.794*** (df = 3; 2942) | 172.636*** (df = 5; 1975) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

## 6.3 Appendix C - Balance Tables

Table 16: Gender Across Experimental Groups

| Gender | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 9% | 8% | 8% | 9% | 9% | 8% | 52% |
| Male | 8% | 8% | 9% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 48% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 17: Age Across Experimental Groups

| Age Group | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18-25 | 4% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 4% | 3% | 20% |
| 26-35 | 3% | 3% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 22% |
| 36-45 | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 19% |
| 46-55 | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 16% |
| 56-65 | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 13% |
| 66+ | 2% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 10% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 18: Social Strata Across Experimental Groups

| Social Strata | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strata 1 | 4% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 19% |
| Strata 2 | 5% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 5% | 5% | 33% |
| Strata 3 | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 29% |
| Strata 4 | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 10% |
| Strata 5 | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% |
| Strata 6 | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 3% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 19: Ethnicity Across Experimental Groups

| Ethnicity | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afrocolombian | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 4% |
| Indigenous | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Mestizo | 10% | 9% | 9% | 9% | 9% | 8% | 53% |
| Mulatto | 0% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 3% |
| White | 4% | 5% | 6% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 30% |
| Other | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 20: Education Across Experimental Groups

| Education | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary Incomplete | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Primary Complete | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Secondary Incomplete | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Secondary Complete | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 16% |
| Technical Incomplete | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% |
| Technical Complete | 4% | 4% | 4% | 5% | 4% | 4% | 26% |
| University Incomplete | 2% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 11% |
| University Complete | 7% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 7% | 6% | 38% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 21: Presidential Elections 2018 Vote Across Experimental Groups

| Presidential Elections 2018 | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ivan Duque | 5% | 4% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 29% |
| Gustavo Petro | 5% | 4% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 29% |
| White Vote | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 17% |
| Did Not Vote | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 19% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 7% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 22: Peace Referendum 2016 Vote Across Experimental Groups

| Peace referendum 2016 | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 8% | 7% | 8% | 8% | 7% | 7% | 47% |
| No | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 15% |
| Did Not Vote | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 29% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 8% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 23: Conflict Exposure Across Experimental Groups

| Conflict Exposure | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 7% | 7% | 6% | 5% | 7% | 6% | 37% |
| No | 9% | 9% | 10% | 10% | 9% | 9% | 57% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 24: Conflict Victims Across Experimental Groups

| Conflict Victim | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 7% |
| No | 15% | 15% | 16% | 15% | 15% | 14% | 90% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 25: Political Positioning Across Experimental Groups

| Political Positioning | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 13% |
| Center Left | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 14% |
| Center | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 18% |
| Center Right | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 11% |
| Right | 2% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 9% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 5% | 34% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 26: Political Information Across Experimental Groups

| Political Information | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily | 9% | 9% | 11% | 9% | 10% | 9% | 57% |
| Weekly | 5% | 6% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 31% |
| Monthly | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% |
| Yearly | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 3% |
| Never | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

Table 27: Protest Participation Across Experimental Groups

| Protest Participation | Control Group | Treatment Group 1 | Treatment Group 2 | Treatment Group 3 | Treatment Group 4 | Treatment Group 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| During Paro | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 17% |
| Other Protests | 3% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 3% | 18% |
| Never | 10% | 9% | 10% | 11% | 11% | 9% | 60% |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 5% |
| Total | 17% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 100% |

## 6.4 Appendix D - Differences Between FARC and Comunes Treatment

Table 28: Q1 & Q2 Difference FARC and Comunes Treatments (Granular Model)

| | *Dependent Variable:* | |
|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 |
| | (1) | (2) |
| T2 (Comunes) | 0.364*** | 0.270** |
| | (0.124) | (0.114) |
| Constant | 4.413*** | 4.917*** |
| | (0.089) | (0.082) |
| Observations | 1,011 | 1,011 |
| $R^2$ | 0.008 | 0.005 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.007 | 0.005 |
| Residual Std. Error (df = 1009) | 1.973 | 1.820 |
| F Statistic (df = 1; 1009) | 8.588*** | 5.571** |
| *Note:* | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 | |

Table 29: Q1 & Q2 Difference FARC and Comunes Treatments (Collapsed Model by Group Participation)

| | *Dependent Variable:* | |
|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 |
| | (1) | (2) |
| Comunes | 0.311*** | 0.223** |
| | (0.093) | (0.091) |
| Constant | 4.153*** | 4.537*** |
| | (0.065) | (0.064) |
| Observations | 2,007 | 2,007 |
| $R^2$ | 0.006 | 0.003 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.005 | 0.003 |
| Residual Std. Error (df = 2005) | 2.072 | 2.031 |
| F Statistic (df = 1; 2005) | 11.307*** | 6.037** |
| *Note:* | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 | |

## 6.5 Appendix E - Difference Between Both Outcome Questions

Table 30: Difference Between Outcome Questions Across Treatment Groups (Granular Model by Treatment Group)

| | *Dependent Variable:* |
|---|---|
| | Difference in Both Outcome Questions |
| T1 (FARC) | −0.013 |
| | (0.089) |
| T2 (Comunes) | 0.081 |
| | (0.088) |
| T3 (Vandalism) | 0.221** |
| | (0.088) |
| T4 (Vandalism & FARC) | 0.221** |
| | (0.088) |
| T5 (Vandalism & Comunes) | 0.319*** |
| | (0.089) |
| Constant | −0.491*** |
| | (0.062) |
| Observations | 3,020 |
| $R^2$ | 0.008 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.006 |
| Residual Std. Error | 1.403 (df = 3014) |
| F Statistic | 4.606*** (df = 5; 3014) |
| *Note:* | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

The dependent variable is for each observation the difference between the score for outcome questions one and two

## 6.6 Appendix F - Survey Questionnaire

**1) Intro**

**Proyecto de investigación**




**Resumen:** Esta encuesta esta dirigida a residentes colombianos mayores de edad. Las respuestas recopiladas serán utilizadas unicamente con fines académicos, no políticos.

**Tratamiento de datos:** Sus respuestas son completamente anónimas y ningunos de los datos registrados se pueden vincular directamente a usted. No es posible rastrear sus respuestas hasta usted. La información podrá ser utilizada en publicaciones y ponencias.

**Consentimiento:** Su participación es absolutamente voluntaria. Puede retirarse en cualquier momento de la encuesta cerrando el navegador. Solo serán remunerados los participantes que hayan diligenciado todas las preguntas de la encuesta.

**Contenido:** La encuesta consta de preguntas cortas, completarla requiere de 5 a 10 minutos.

**Instrucción:** Lea detenidamente cada pregunta y la información proporcionada. Habrá una prueba para comprobar que ha leído cada pregunta en detalle, y solo podrán continuar hasta el final los participantes que respondan correctamente.

*Haga clic en la flecha para comenzar la encuesta.*

**2) Initial demographics**

¿Actualmente vive en Colombia?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No

¿Cuál es su género?

- ○ Hombre/ masculino
- ○ Mujer/ femenino
- ○ Otro
- ○ Prefiero no responder

Figure 7: Questionnaire Page 1

¿Cuál es su estrato socioeconómico (de acuerdo con las facturas de su hogar, por ejemplo, según su recibo de luz)?

- ○ Estrato 1
- ○ Estrato 2
- ○ Estrato 3
- ○ Estrato 4
- ○ Estrato 5
- ○ Estrato 6
- ○ Rural sin estratificar

¿Cuál es su edad en años cumplidos? Por favor escriba en formato de número (por ejemplo 43)

¿En qué departamento de Colombia vive usted?

¿Vivió usted en Colombia entre abril y julio de 2021?

- ○ Sí, siempre
- ○ Si pero con interrupciones
- ○ No, en ningún momento

**3CG) Prompt**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido algunos partidos políticos, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

**3CG) Outcome**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido algunos partidos políticos, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas protestas?

Figure 8: Questionnaire Page 2

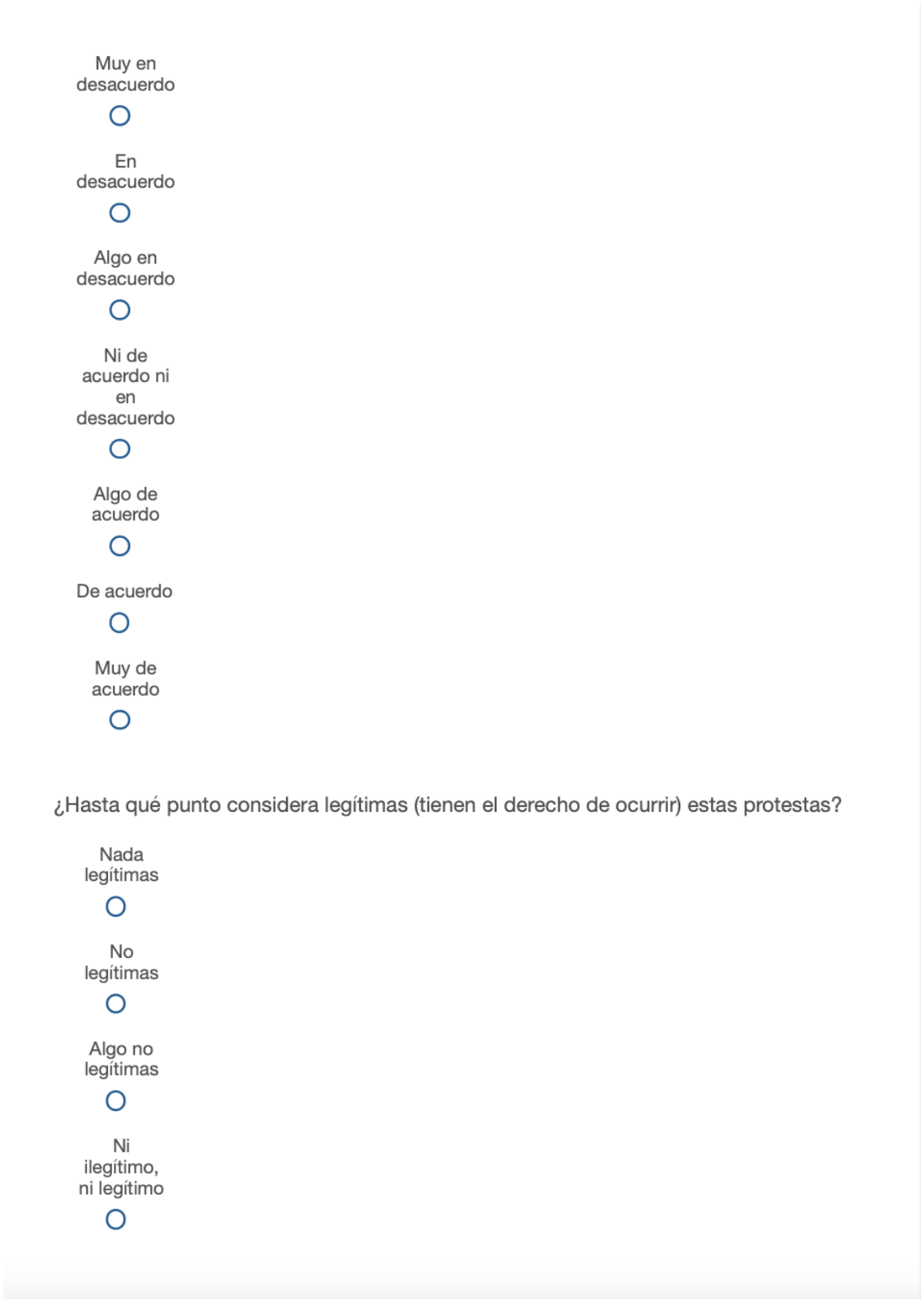



Figure 9: Questionnaire Page 3

Algo legítimas

Legítimas

Muy legítimas

**3T1) Prompt**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político sucesor de las FARC, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

**3T1) Outcome**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político sucesor de las FARC, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas protestas?

Muy en desacuerdo

En desacuerdo

Algo en desacuerdo

Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo

Figure 10: Questionnaire Page 4

Algo de acuerdo

De acuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

¿Hasta qué punto considera legítimas (tienen el derecho de ocurrir) estas protestas?

Nada legítimas

No legítimas

Algo no legítimas

Ni ilegítimo, ni legítimo

Algo legítimas

Legítimas

Muy legítimas

**3T2) Prompt**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político Comunes, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir

Figure 11: Questionnaire Page 5

reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

**3T2) Outcome**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político Comunes, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas.

¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas protestas?

- Muy en desacuerdo
- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo
- Muy de acuerdo

¿Hasta qué punto considera legítimas (tienen el derecho de ocurrir) estas protestas?

Figure 12: Questionnaire Page 6

Nada legítimas

No legítimas

Algo no legítimas

Ni ilegítimo, ni legítimo

Algo legítimas

Legítimas

Muy legítimas

**3T3) Prompt**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido algunos partidos políticos, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas. Durante las protestas ocurrieron diversos actos de vandalismo (por ejemplo, grafitis, daños a monumentos, destrucción de estaciones de buses).

**3T3) Outcome**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido algunos partidos políticos, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas. Durante las protestas ocurrieron diversos actos de vandalismo (por ejemplo, grafitis, daños a monumentos, destrucción de estaciones de buses).

Figure 13: Questionnaire Page 7

¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas protestas?

Muy en desacuerdo

En desacuerdo

Algo en desacuerdo

Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo

Algo de acuerdo

De acuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

¿Hasta qué punto considera legítimas (tienen el derecho de ocurrir) estas protestas?

Nada legítimas

No legítimas

Algo no legítimas

Figure 14: Questionnaire Page 8

Ni ilegítimo, ni legítimo

Algo legítimas

Legítimas

Muy legítimas

**3T4) Prompt**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político sucesor de las FARC, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas. Durante las protestas ocurrieron diversos actos de vandalismo (por ejemplo, grafitis, daños a monumentos, destrucción de estaciones de buses).

**3T4) Outcome**

En 2019 y 2021, grandes segmentos de la sociedad colombiana, incluido el partido político sucesor de las FARC, participaron en protestas sociales y salieron a las calles para exigir reformas políticas y económicas significativas. Durante las protestas ocurrieron diversos actos de vandalismo (por ejemplo, grafitis, daños a monumentos, destrucción de estaciones de buses).

¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con estas protestas?

Muy en desacuerdo

En desacuerdo

Figure 15: Questionnaire Page 9

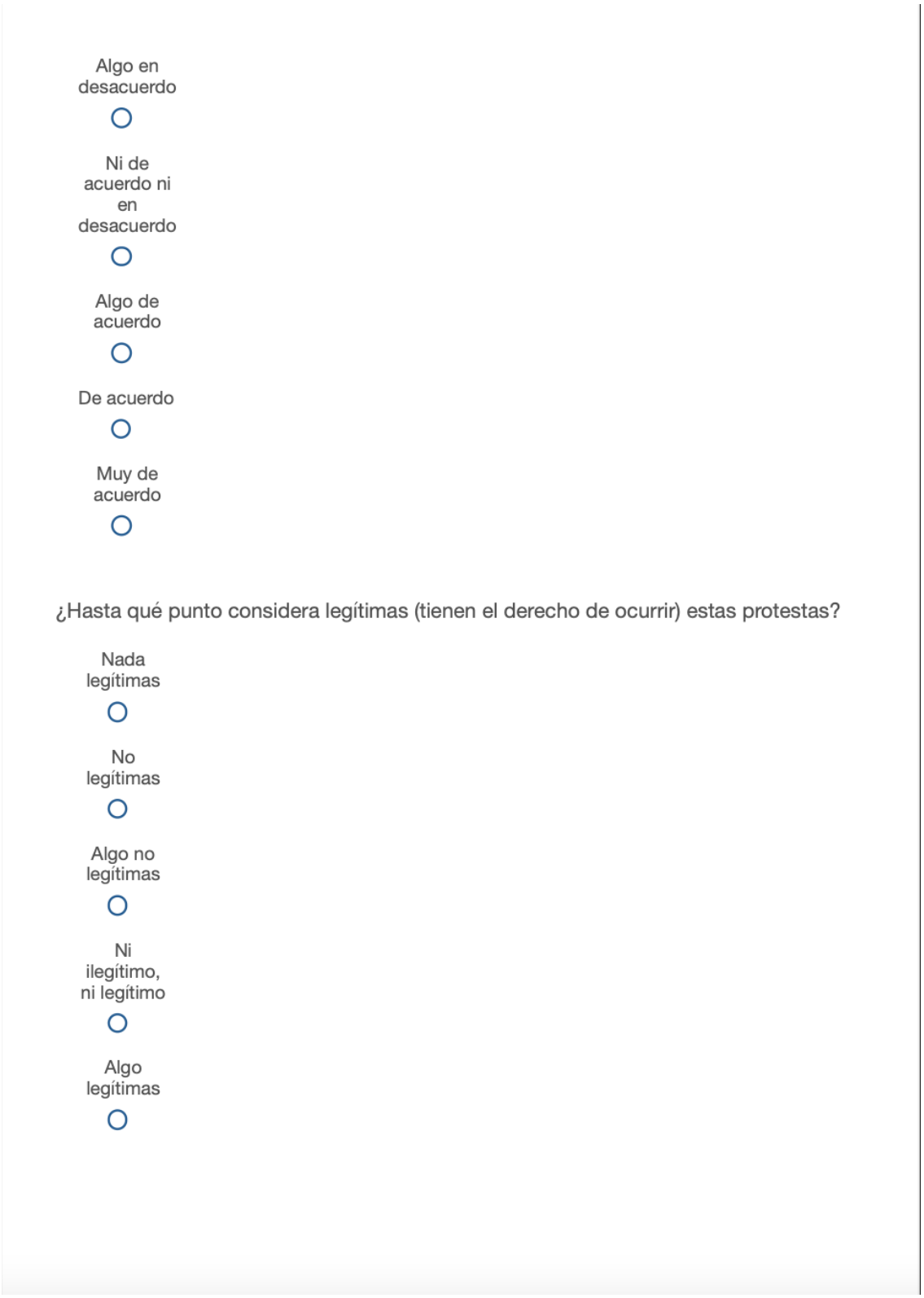



Figure 16: Questionnaire Page 10

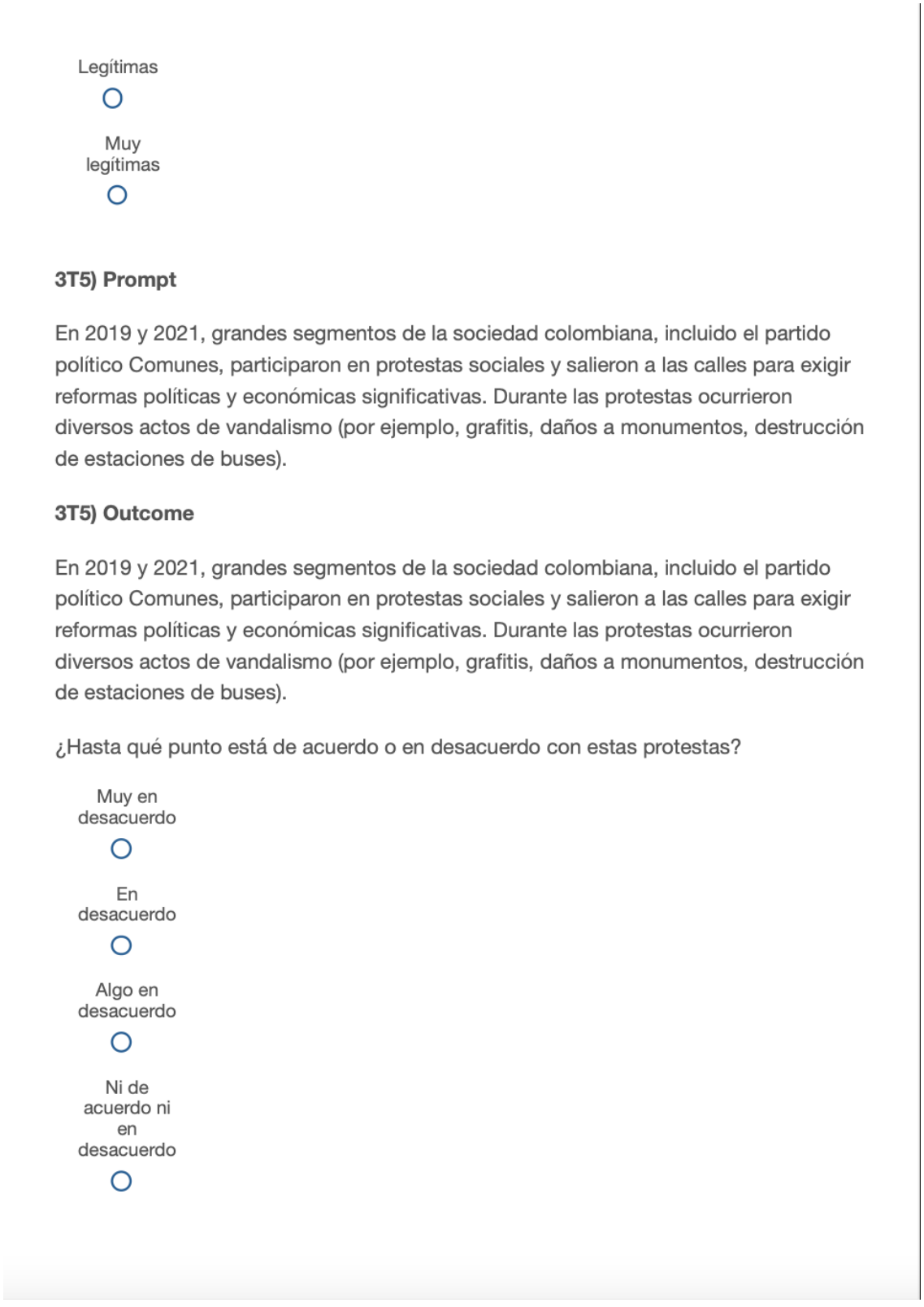



Figure 17: Questionnaire Page 11

Algo de acuerdo

De acuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

¿Hasta qué punto considera legítimas (tienen el derecho de ocurrir) estas protestas?

Nada legítimas

No legítimas

Algo no legítimas

Ni ilegítimo, ni legítimo

Algo legítimas

Legítimas

Muy legítimas

**4) Attention check**

Algunas personas leen periódicos o ven noticias, otras ni leen periódicos ni ven noticias. Queremos comprobar que está leyendo las preguntas hasta el final. Ignore la

Figure 18: Questionnaire Page 12

pregunta siguiente y seleccione la opción "Cada diez años". ¿Con qué frecuencia lee periódicos o ve noticieros?

- ○ Todos los días
- ○ Casi todos los días
- ○ Casi nunca
- ○ A veces
- ○ Cada diez años

**5) More demographics**

¿Es usted ciudadano colombiano?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No

¿Nació en Colombia?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No
- ○ Prefiero no responder

¿Usted se considera una persona blanca, mestiza, indígena, negra, mulata, u otra?

- ○ Blanca
- ○ Mestiza
- ○ Indígena
- ○ Negra/ Afro-colombiana
- ○ Mulata
- ○ Otra
- ○ Prefiero no responder

¿Cuál es el último nivel de educación que usted tiene?

- ○ Ninguno
- ○ Primaria incompleta
- ○ Primaria completa
- ○ Secundaria o bachillerato incompleto
- ○ Secundaria o bachillerato completo
- ○ Técnica/Tecnológica incompleta
- ○ Técnica/Tecnológica completa
- ○ Universitaria incompleta
- ○ Universitaria completa
- ○ Prefiero no responder

Figure 19: Questionnaire Page 13

¿En qué municipio de Colombia vive? Si no se siente cómodo compartiendo su municipio puede ingresar "Prefiero no responder".

**6) Peace process questions**

¿Cómo votó en el plebiscito de paz colombiano de 2016?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No
- ○ No voté
- ○ Prefiero no responder

¿Ha estado expuesto o le ha afectado directamente el conflicto armado interno de Colombia?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No
- ○ Prefiero no responder

¿Está reconocido oficialmente por el estado colombiano como víctima del conflicto?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No
- ○ Prefiero no responder

**7) Political participation questions**

¿Por quién votó en la segunda vuelta de las elecciones presidenciales de Colombia de 2018?

- ○ Ivan Duque
- ○ Gustavo Petro
- ○ Voto en blanco
- ○ No voté
- ○ Prefiero no responder

Figure 20: Questionnaire Page 14

¿Con qué frecuencia se informa de política, ya sea en televisión, radio, periódicos, redes sociales o Internet?

- ○ Diariamente
- ○ Algunas veces a la semana
- ○ Algunas veces al mes
- ○ Algunas veces al año
- ○ Nunca
- ○ Prefiero no responder

Hoy en día cuando se habla de tendencias políticas, mucha gente habla de aquellos que simpatizan más con la izquierda o con la derecha. ¿Usted se describiría como de derecha, centro derecha, centro, centro izquierda, o izquierda?

- Izquierda ○
- Centro izquierda ○
- Centro ○
- Centro derecha ○
- Derecha ○
- Prefiero no responder ○

¿Diría usted que el trabajo que está realizando el actual gobierno nacional colombiano es...?

Muy malo Mal Bueno Muy bueno

1 2 3 4

¿Alguna vez ha participado en una manifestación o protesta pública?

- ○ Sí, incluso en el Paro Nacional de 2019 y/ o de 2021
- ○ Sí, en otra(s) protesta(s) que no se relaciona(n) con el Paro Nacional

Figure 21: Questionnaire Page 15

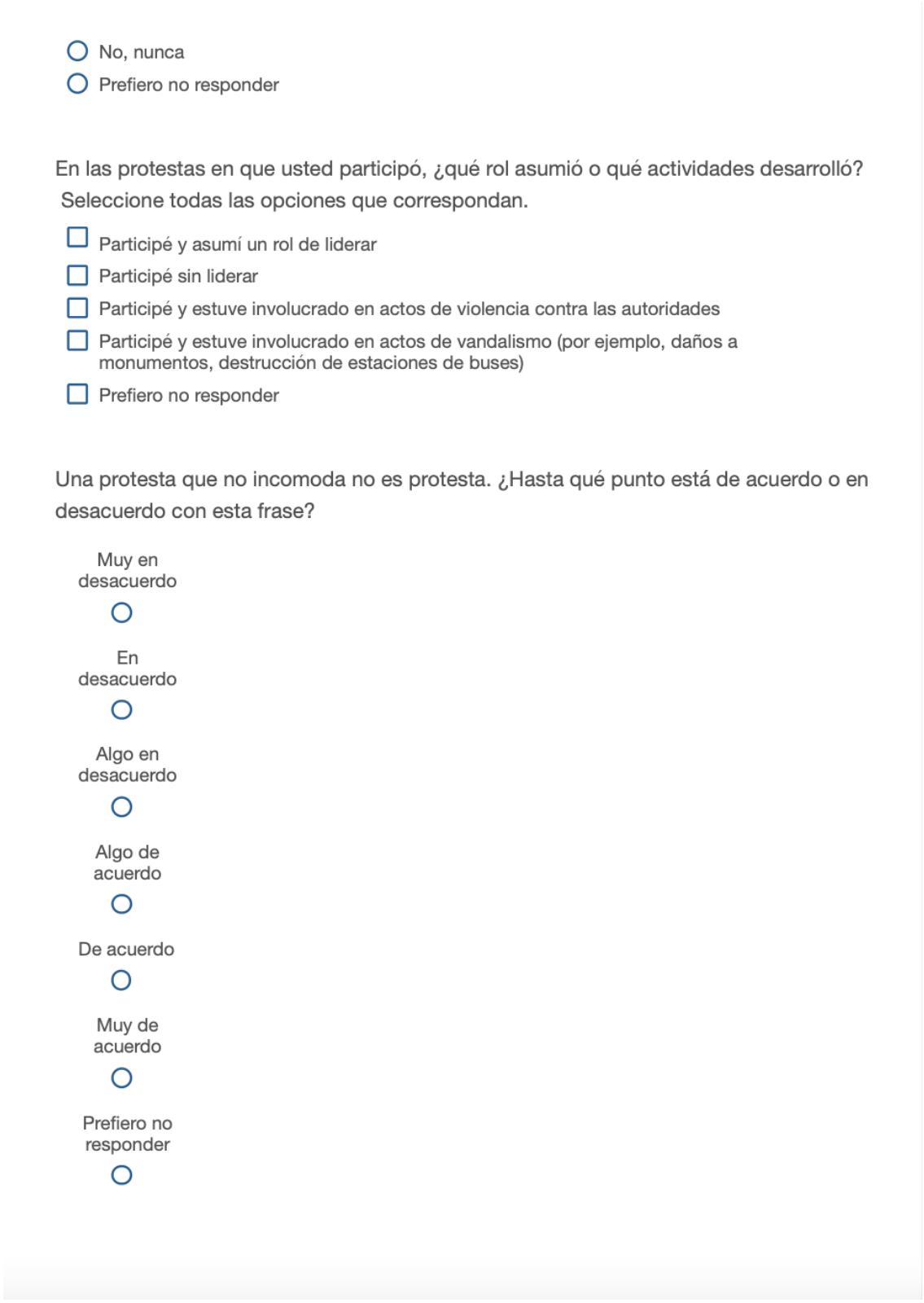
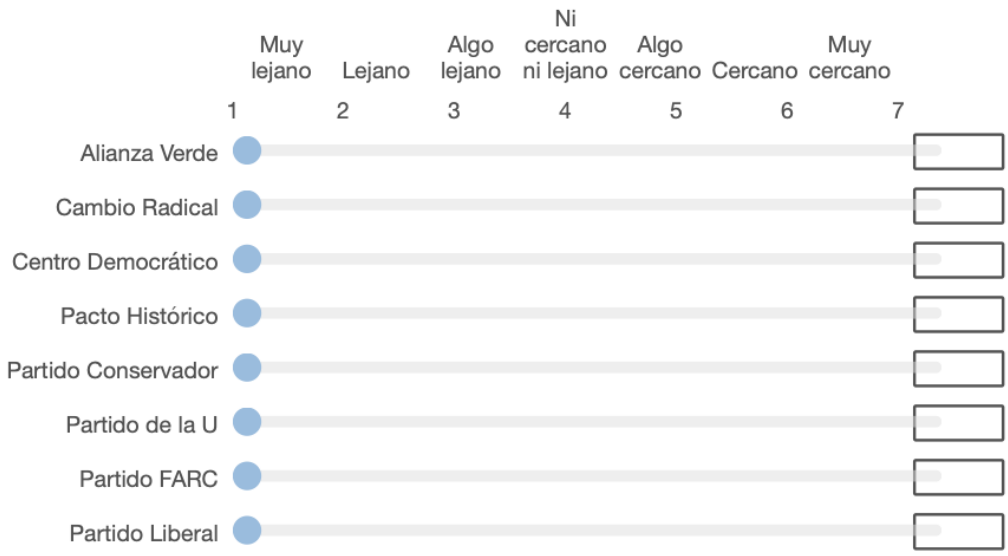



Figure 22: Questionnaire Page 16

¿Qué tan cercano políticamente se siente a los siguientes partidos?




**8) Pre-existing knowledge questions 1/2**

¿De qué grupo armado surgió el partido Comunes?

- ○ AUC
- ○ ELN
- ○ EPL
- ○ FARC
- ○ M-19
- ○ No sé

¿Cuáles de los siguientes eventos ocurrieron durante el Paro Nacional de 2019 y 2021? Seleccione todas las que aplican o si no sabe no seleccione nada.

- ☐ Atentado contra el presidente
- ☐ Bloqueos de vías
- ☐ Desapariciones
- ☐ Destrucciónes de estaciones de buses
- ☐ Participación de mingas indígenas
- ☐ Plebiscito sobre la reforma tributaria
- ☐ Saqueos de tiendas

**9) Pre-existing knowledge questions 2/2**

¿Qué grupos participaron durante el Paro Nacional? Seleccione todos los que aplican o si no sabe no seleccione nada.

- ☐ AUC
- ☐ ELN

Figure 23: Questionnaire Page 17




Figure 24: Questionnaire Page 18

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# 5 Conclusion

This concluding chapter discusses the combined takeaways from all three articles regarding the protest participation of the former FARC in Colombia and former rebels' protest participation in general, highlights the implications of the research project for academia and policymakers, and points to future research avenues that could build up on this DPhil project.

## 5.1 Takeaways Regarding the FARC's 2021 Protest Participation in Colombia

### 5.1.1 Initial Insights

Based on my (field) research, the following paragraphs describe general takeaways regarding the participation of former FARC members during the 2021 mass protests in Colombia. In general terms, given the small number of demobilized FARC members, their participation was a relatively marginal phenomenon. Around 13,000 former FARC members handed in their weapons in 2016 as part of the Havana peace accords (International Crisis Group, 2021b). Consequently, simply by the numbers, former FARC members could not be a significant part of the protesters among the millions that turned to the streets in 2021.

While individual former FARC members might have participated in protest sites across the country, their involvement as a group focused on a few specific protest sites in large cities such as Cali and Bogotá and the FARC's former strongholds in the Southern Colombian departments of Caquetá, Guaviare, and Meta. Especially in the latter, former FARC members were key players and became leaders of the protests, coordinating protests and protester camps and participating (sometimes as leaders) in the negotiations with the government. Similar influence on the protests had former FARC members only occasionally in urban settings. For instance, a few former FARC members were leaders of the protests in some neighborhoods of Bogotá (however, usually as representatives of neighborhood organizations), and a former FARC member, due to her role as a member of Cali's mayor's office, could act in a somewhat mediating capacity between authorities and protesters in Cali.

Group dynamics were very relevant; many former FARC members participated in groups of their former comrades, such as with fellow members of their ETCRs or their business cooperatives. However, my interviews show that the FARC successor political party, Comunes, played a surprisingly marginal role. Party leaders supported the protests mostly on social media and occasionally participated in the streets but arranged no collective participation of the party membership. The party headquarters encouraged its membership in an indirect way to become involved by arguing that the Paro is the moment for the Colombian people to step up for its demands jointly. Nevertheless, there were no direct instructions for the party's membership to participate, nor did the party provide active guidance regarding how to behave in the protests. The party leadership argues that given vast regional differences across Colombia, regional branches of the party would know better regarding adequate local participation strategies such that guidance from the party headquarters in Bogotá would have been counterproductive.

Consequently, there was little coordination across the party's different units in different regions, and the party's regional branches or individual members often acted independently without coor-

dination with the Comunes headquarters and leadership in Bogotá. Some of the party's Congress members sent members of their parliamentary employee teams to support the protests in different regions of Colombia and, through such involvement, had some influence on the protests. However, these attempts were also a relatively marginal phenomenon, with only a few individuals fulfilling such roles. While no written official guidelines existed, all interviewed Comunes members stated that there was a consensus within the party that their commitment to the 2016 peace deal implied that party members had to refrain from violent action during the protests.

The relatively passive stance of the party's leadership led to tension and a growing rupture within Comunes. Many party members, including some of the Comunes Congress members, left the party following the protests, stating that disappointment regarding the party leadership's marginal activism and the limited support for the party's regional branches during the protests were crucial reasons. However, representatives of the party in Bogotá tended to decline a link between these members' decision to leave the party and the leadership's behavior during the protests.

### 5.1.2 Protest Participation as a Sign of Societal Reintegration

The protest participation of former FARC rebels is evidence and part of their political reintegration and indicates their normalization as integrated members of society. Several aspects of my research highlighted this trend. As my survey experiment shows, the public reaction to the former FARC's participation during the Colombian protests was less extreme than one could expect. Support for the protests fell only by approximately 10% when respondents were informed regarding the former FARC's participation, whereas in a 2015 survey experiment, Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz (2018) found an 18% decrease in support for a component of Colombia's 2016 peace agreement following FARC endorsement. Likewise, my field interviews revealed that during the 2021 protests, former FARC members participated mostly just like other citizens and were also perceived as such by fellow protesters without a rebel past. Also, interviewed authorities stated that they treated protesters that pertained to the FARC before 2016 just like other protesters without a FARC past.

The normalized protest participation of the former FARC seems to reinforce political stability in Colombia. While the existing literature often focuses on former rebels' potential risks for political stability (e.g., Nussio, 2018; Stedman, 2003), the demobilized FARC members did not provide such risks during the 2021 Colombian protests, where their participation reinforced and did not challenge the political system. Their participation contributed to more peaceful protests and more professional negotiations with the government. Consequently, while we often consider protests and rebellion as two modes of contentious politics, in this case, the former FARC's participation and the corresponding impacts made protests a part of the former rebels' reintegration trajectory.

Also, the independence of the former FARC members' actions during the 2021 Colombian protests from the FARC's successor political organization, the Comunes party, demonstrate how the protests are part of the FARC's reintegration story. As articles 1 and 2 highlight, the FARC's successor political party had only limited relevance regarding the participation of former FARC members. Neither did the party significantly influence the former FARC members' decision to participate in the protests, nor did it significantly influence the former FARC members' impact during the protests. Given the highly hierarchical structure the FARC had during its existence (Pécaut, 2008), with clearly defined commando lines, it is slightly surprising that many former FARC members acted independently from top-down Comunes party guidance during the 2021 protests. The

protests thus revealed that many former FARC members developed their political independence. The protests provided the former FARC members with more space for individual decisions since the potential actions and developments at protests are more spontaneous and less pre-defined or plannable than in conventional party politics. Consequently, individual former FARC members had more space to develop their political identity and emancipate themselves politically, turning them into agents by themselves. Becoming independent political actors provided evidence of their reintegration and likely supported their political reintegration since it implied a reduced reliance on the structural and ideological FARC legacy.

### 5.1.3 Different Protest Participation Dynamics than by other Protesters

The analysis of the articles also reveals that the protest participation dynamics of the demobilized FARC follow a different logic than the participation of protesters without a rebel past. Regarding the initial decision to participate in protests, my field research has revealed that network factors play a crucial role in the decision-making process. While the existing literature (e.g., Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Snow et al., 1980; Stryker, 2000) has identified the relevance of networks for potential protesters without a rebel past, the type of networks differs. For the former FARC rebels, continued close ties to their comrades and close links to the communities participating in the protests were vital. Both networks enabled those former FARC members who pertained to these networks to overcome potential concerns regarding stigmatization, security, and work and family commitments. Additionally, compared to potential protesters without a rebel past, security considerations play a significantly more relevant role in joining protests than for protesters without a rebel past.

Also, regarding their participation's impact, the particular position of demobilized rebels as political subjects within a peace process society, implied in the Colombian context, altered protest dynamics. The former FARC members' status within the Colombian 2016 peace agreement's transitional justice system and the mandate the UN has to guarantee their security implied that their participation triggered mechanisms, which led to a pacification of the protests. Triggering these mechanisms was possible entirely due to their role as demobilized insurgents in the realm of the peace agreement, and it is unlikely that otherwise, other actors would have assumed a similar position. Likewise, for former FARC members, the Colombian mass protests offered an opportunity to strengthen their reintegration into society. By participating jointly with local communities, the protests created shared experiences and new friendships and professional relationships. This finding is similar to an analysis of Della Porta (2011), but given the specific circumstances of peace process societies and the often tricky endeavor of integrating former rebels, it has particular importance. The protests also enabled former FARC members to share their knowledge and skills with fellow protesters. Particularly, experiences regarding articulating political demands, negotiation tactics, logistical skills to organize large groups of people, and self-defense tactics during contentious protest moments were vital knowledge that the former FARC members spread with fellow protesters and through which they partly professionalized the protests.

Finally, regarding the analysis to which extent the participation of former FARC members had the power to alter public attitudes towards the 2019 and 2021 Colombian mass protests, my online survey experiment reveals that awareness of their participation significantly reduces public approval and public legitimacy assessment of the protests. The experiment results regarding

the FARC party's renaming to Comunes indicate that such a name change mitigates reductions in public approvals, likely because citizens are unaware of the links between Comunes and the FARC. Citizens, on average, thus judge the protest participation of the former FARC differently than they judge the involvement of other unspecified protesters, indicating that also, in this third element, the protest participation of former rebels follows distinct patterns. However, the experiment cannot show whether public support for the protests reduces similarly when another unpopular group participates, which might be the case.

The participation of demobilized rebels, at least in the case of members of the former FARC guerrilla, thus followed significantly different dynamics than the protest participation of protesters without a rebel past, highlighting the need for specific analyses that bridge the social movement and peace process literature.

## 5.2 Takeaways Regarding Former Rebels' Protest Participation in General

While the analyses offer relevant insights into the case of the demobilized FARC guerilla and the 2021 mass protests in Colombia, an important question remains: To which extent are the insights generalizable to other cases of demobilized rebels' participation during protests in peace process societies? The following paragraphs explore attributes of the analyses likely unique to the Colombian experience and comment on which dynamics could likely follow similar patterns in other peace process societies.

On the one hand, several aspects of the case of the former FARC during the 2021 Colombian protests are highly case-specific. Foremost, the FARC and its history and demobilization and reintegration trajectory are relatively unique and do not necessarily reflect the demobilization path of other rebel groups. Having been traditionally a hierarchical and centralized group with well-defined military commando lines (Pécaut, 2008) and carrying that hierarchical structure into the post-peace agreement political party may make the FARC a different case compared to more horizontally organized rebel groups. In more decentralized groups, individuals might be more used to acting independently without superiors' orders and guidelines. Being used to more independent action likely impacts how demobilized rebels become politically involved following demobilization, including their behavior and actions during social mobilizations. For instance, for demobilized members of less hierarchical rebel groups, network factors might play a less relevant role in their decision to participate in protests, given that they are potentially more often used to act on individual inclination. Likewise, such individuals might be more open to reintegrating into society following demobilization. Being less used to a rigid structure with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities might make them more adjustable to new social settings. In turn, this might shape their interactions with other protesters and the wider society and thus shape the impact such demobilized rebels might have on protest dynamics.

Likewise, the FARC's history and extremely negative reputation might imply that various insights are not easily transferable to other cases of demobilized rebels participating in protests. While financing through illicit economies might be frequent for rebel groups (Walsh et al., 2018), in the case of the FARC, their reliance on narcotrafficking, extorsion payments, kidnappings, and illegal mining contributed to a highly unfavorable image of the group within the Colombian

society. Combined with their often indiscriminate use of violence against the population and failed peace talks with the Pastrana administration during the 1990s (Botero, 2020), it created a highly unfavorable image of the group in Colombian society. As shown in Article 3, only 13% of Colombians trusted the FARC political party in 2020 (Gaviria Dugand et al., 2020, p. 43), and common associations with the FARC nowadays are violence, narcotrafficking and terrorism (Botero, 2020, p. 308). This negative standing within society might differ in the case of other demobilized rebel groups and shape their protest dynamics differently. For instance, it might have impacted the relevance of the different factors influencing the former FARC members to join the protests, the extent to which they could assume roles of responsibilities during the protests, and their interactions with other protesters. Very likely, a demobilized group with a more favorable standing in society would have different results than the ones I found in the survey experiment, i.e., mentioning the protest participation of such a group would serve less as an instrument of protest opponents to stigmatize the protests.

On the other hand, the Colombian experience holds many attributes typical for peace process societies. As Article 3 has shown, one key component for the former FARC members to have a pacifying impact on the protests was the institutions that the 2016 peace agreement established, particularly the presence of international organizations working with the former FARC members and the transitional justice system. While the specific setup and mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) and the Special Peace Jurisdiction (the Colombian peace deal's transitional justice system) might be particular to the Colombian case, the presence of such institutions is emblematic of other peace process societies. Doyle and Sambanis (2006) show that UN peacekeeping missions and special political missions, such as the UNVMC, are frequent tools and can effectively support involved actors to commit to peace, build governing institutions, and monitor and police peace deal implementation. Also, transitional justice mechanisms have become essential for post-war reconstruction, peacebuilding, and reconciliation in many countries, and peace agreements frequently establish them (Clark & Ungar, 2021). Consequently, such institutions might also incentivize demobilized rebels to act peacefully during social mobilizations in other peace process societies.

Likewise, as in Colombia, societies that go through a peace process often suffer from continued high levels of violence (Stedman, 2003). Peace agreements might incentivize certain groups to act as spoilers (Stedman, 1997). Adversaries of the peace deal might take advantage of the settlement, disappointed followers of the group signing it might see peace as a betrayal of their values and, therefore, fight against it, or parties excluded from the deal may seek to alter or destroy it (Stedman, 1997). Consequently, elevated violence levels might also influence former rebels' protest participation in other peace process societies. Like in Colombia, violence might render the political participation of former rebels risky, disincentivizing former rebels to participate during protests since protests imply they become visible and potentially move away from safe havens such as regions with a solid support base. Likewise, high violence at protests might allow opponents to use former rebels' (alleged) protest participation to discredit social mobilizations. Also, if committed to the peace deal, former rebels, like many former FARC members in 2021 Colombia, might want to demonstrate their commitment to non-violence and peace implementation during protests. The participation dynamics might thus not be unique to the Colombian experience but, given the commonly high violence levels in peace process societies, also apply in other cases.

Finally, some former rebel groups in peace process societies might have a similarly bad reputation as the former FARC has within Colombian society. Similar to Colombia, demobilized rebels' past actions, especially violence and indiscriminate actions such as kidnappings or massacres against the population or involvement in criminal activities such as illicit resource exploitation or trafficking of microstimulates (Bullock et al., 2017), might impact negatively former rebels' popularity in other peace process societies. The negative reputation might also translate into citizens' reservations regarding former rebels' political participation in those cases. Similarly to the Colombian case, it could impact how citizens regard protests and incentivize protest opponents to stigmatize protests through former rebels' involvement. If this is the case, the interplay between the protest participation of former rebels and public opinion might yield similar consequences in other peace process societies, such as protesters who avoid joint official and visible activism with former insurgents.

In sum, while several aspects of the former FARC's involvement during the 2021 Colombian mass protests are highly unique and reflect Colombia's specific conflict and peace trajectory, political and institutional context, and the FARC's history and structure, there are also several attributes in Colombia that one can expect in other peace process societies and which therefore raises the expectation that one can observe similar protest dynamics also in different peace process contexts.

## 5.3 Implications for Research and Policymaking

The analyses further have several implications for academic research and policymakers. Whereas extensive literature covers either demobilized rebels' trajectory or protests and social movements, my analyses combine these fields. Regarding academic research, my insights thus highlight the benefits of overcoming separate social movements and peace studies literature investigations. As the three articles display, there are several characteristics of demobilized rebels that make them distinctive from (potential) protesters who have not previously been members of an armed group. These different characteristics imply that former rebels sometimes behave differently in their decision-making, trigger different reactions across the population, and have different abilities than protesters with a non-rebel background. Consequently, standard theories on social mobilization might not always be 100% adequate to explain protest patterns and dynamics when former rebels become involved. Since existing research on former rebels' political participation has primarily focused on party politics, there is thus a need to bridge via combined analyses the political participation and demobilized rebels subfields of the peace studies literature and traditional social movement theories.

Secondly, a common finding across the three articles of this DPhil dissertation is that they demonstrate a surprisingly successful reintegration trajectory of former FARC members in Colombia. The articles show that former FARC members contributed to more peaceful protests, that their skills and experience contributed to more professional protests and negotiations between authorities and protesters, and that communities occasionally chose former FARC members as protest leaders. For academic research, this implies a need to pay more attention and rigorously explore the potential benefits demobilized rebels may provide for society. While some studies exist that demonstrate that demobilized rebels are not always a significant risk factor for conflict resur-

gence (Nussio, 2018) or that they display more intensive political activism than citizens without a rebel past (Blattman, 2009), future analyses could focus more comprehensively on the potentially positive outcomes which former rebels' training and experience may generate.

Thirdly, the analyses' insights emphasize the need for academic research to consider the heterogeneity of demobilized rebels' trajectories in terms of political participation but also in other realms. My field interviews revealed considerable diversity regarding former FARC members' attitudes and actions, so generalizations do not always provide adequate reflections. For instance, analyzing which factors influenced individual former FARC members' decision to participate in the 2021 protests revealed that different variables mattered at varying intensities for various interviewees. Whereas some former FARC members mainly considered potential security risks, integration into supportive networks was more relevant for others. Likewise, former FARC members participated in the protests with varying intensity and influenced the protests at varying degrees, some acting as leaders and thus shaping protest dynamics and negotiations with the authorities and others as mere bystanders. Consequently, analyses on former rebels need to consider such heterogeneity and avoid deterministic conclusions that argue that a particular combination of scope conditions automatically yields one specific outcome.

Beyond the academic realm, the analyses have several relevant implications for policymakers. Firstly, the finding that protest participation can facilitate demobilized rebels' societal reintegration implies that policymakers should not create obstacles to such participation. While it may appear worrying for authorities to have demobilized rebels who, perhaps for decades, have been trained in conflict battle to be present in the streets during protests, the analyses have shown that such participation, instead of escalating protests, might have a de-escalating effect. For such an effect to unfold, the demobilized rebels must be committed to their peace and reincorporation process, but if such commitment exists, their participation may yield a better integration into society. The former insurgents may experience that their political involvement is wanted, which may deliver a more substantial commitment to reintegration. Policymakers can, therefore, see protests as a tool to accelerate demobilized rebels' reintegration into society since it allows communities to get to know the former rebels and reduce stigma. Consequently, preventing former rebels' protest participation might be counterproductive for peace advancements and reintegration efforts.

Secondly, the beneficial impact protest participation has had on former FARC's societal reintegration shows that policymakers should not see protests necessarily as a tool of contentious politics. The analysis shows that protests are not simply a particular expression of rebellion but might be legitimate articulations of political demands with potentially unifying power. The relevance of such unifying influence should not be underestimated, especially in peace process societies, which, due to past violent actions, might have deep societal cleavages. Policymakers in peace process societies should acknowledge the potential of protests and, instead of preventing protests, provide security guarantees and logistical support such that protests indeed can unfold their positive influence on societal (re-)unification.

Thirdly, the results of my survey experiment have shown that mentioning the protest participation of former rebels, the occurrence of vandalism, and especially the combination of both has a considerable potential to impact public opinion regarding protests. Hence, there is ample space for stigmatization tactics by protest opponents, i.e., they may use the alleged occurrence of former rebels' participation and vandalism to discredit protests. The Colombian experience

shows that protest opponents may very well use such stigmatization tactics for their benefit, i.e., argue in public debates that (former) rebels are orchestrating protests and link such participation to violent protest tactics (see, for example, the case of Colombia's former defense minister Diego Molano described in Article 3 (O'Donnell & Tenembaum, 2021)). Since such stigmatization might not only reduce public approval for protests but also make demobilized rebels feel their political participation is undesired, which could be an obstacle to their societal reintegration, policymakers should regulate the extent to which fake accusations regarding former rebels' actions, especially regarding their use of violence, are permissible. Such regulation likely goes beyond the case of protest participation since former rebels are easy scapegoats and, thus, are a likely target that their opponents may use to steer public discourse. Given the detrimental impact on conflict recurrence, which a failed reintegration of former rebels may have, policymakers should thus regulate news and opinion articulation in a way that reduces fake news regarding the behavior of former rebels.

Finally, the experiment results have significant implications for party leaders of rebel-turned-parties, international organizations, and NGOs accompanying demobilized rebels in setting up their new parties. The results show that a name change of the rebel successor organization may significantly impact the extent to which the former rebels' participation may alter public opinion. When the experiment in Article 3 mentioned the former FARC's protest participation under the party's new name, Comunes, public support for the 2021 Colombian protests and public legitimacy assessment of the protests did not reduce at a statistically significant level. Article 3 discusses the potential explanations for these findings. Regardless of the precise causal mechanism, the implications for parties emerging from rebel groups are clear: A name change may mitigate potentially adverse public reactions towards former rebels' protest (and likely broader political) participation. It is advisable for rebel-turned-parties to quickly let go of their old name and take on a new one since then, public refusal towards their activism and general political involvement becomes less likely. Similarly, the experiment has shown that vandalism at protests, in combination with the participation of former rebels, has the most detrimental impact on public approval. Therefore, former rebels should, at all costs, intend to avoid vandalism at protests in which they participate since the combined effect might make achieving protest demands more complex and may backfire against their standing as a legitimate group within society.

## 5.4 Future Research Avenues

While my research provides relevant first insights into the protest participation of demobilized rebels during peace processes, one can consider the analysis as a starting point for a more systematic investigation beyond the case of Colombia. In the following paragraphs, I point out three potential additional research avenues relevant to thoroughly understanding the phenomenon.

Firstly, to fully understand the relevance of the topic for political stability, demobilized rebels' trajectory, and political dynamics in peace process societies, a natural first step would be to systematically investigate the frequency with which the phenomenon occurs, i.e., to create a dataset of protests during peace processes in which former rebels have participated. Such a dataset would provide ample opportunities for several further investigations, such as quantitative regional and cross-county comparisons that enable us to identify further the relevance of different country-

specific characteristics for different patterns of former rebels' protest involvement and resulting consequences. To do so, existing datasets on peace agreements, peace processes, and protests could serve as a starting point, whereas obtaining data on the involvement of former rebels likely would imply case-by-case investigations. For instance, such a combined dataset could allow us to explore how different designs and implementations of peace agreements influence protest participation patterns of demobilized rebels. Also, such data would enable us to investigate whether protests may lead to a recurrence of violence in peace process societies or whether the reintegrating effect that my analyses have detected in Colombia also holds in other settings. Potential investigations with such a comprehensive dataset would thus enable us to verify to which extent my findings are specific to the Colombian case or hold within other contexts.

Secondly, future case analyses beyond Colombia and the demobilized FARC could also verify whether my insights hold in other settings and the required scope conditions for my findings. Such studies of other cases in which demobilized rebels participate in protests during peace processes could identify whether the factors influencing former rebels' decision to mobilize are similar to the ones I detected for the former FARC and which conditions must hold such that one observes the decision-making patterns I have identified. Likewise, such analyses could verify whether demobilized rebels' protest participation has a similar impact in other settings and which conditions must be present to observe similar consequences to those my analyses identified, such as reduced violence levels, protest professionalization, or improved rebel reintegration. Also, additional case analyses could clarify whether demobilized rebels' protest participation frequently yields the same public reactions I have observed for the FARC or whether other rebel groups trigger different opinion shifts regarding protest approval and legitimacy assessment. Analyzing additional cases may thus explain to which extent Colombia-specific attributes, such as the institutional setting, the specific peace process design, or the country's culture, may have influenced my findings. Depending on data availability, future additional case analyses could be quantitative or qualitative, but ultimately, build up on my results to have a more systematic understanding of the dynamics of demobilized rebels' protest participation.

Finally, the research papers in this DPhil dissertation have covered the factors influencing demobilized rebels' decision to become involved in protests, the impact such participation generates, and shifts in public opinion such participation triggers. Further research could also focus on the exact modes of participation that demobilized rebels display during protests and the corresponding action repertoire. Such analyses could show to which extent the abilities and knowledge acquired as active members in rebel groups translate into the demobilized rebels' political activism. For instance, this could highlight to which extent demobilized rebels stick to the discipline and hierarchical orders they acquired in a military organization. Likewise, such analysis could identify how demobilized rebels forge alliances with other protesters. Moreover, such investigation could provide more detail regarding situations where former rebels do not join existing protests but launch new protests and the dynamics that follow such initiative-taking. Consequently, these insights would provide a more comprehensive view of demobilized rebels as political actors and show further detail regarding the causal mechanisms through which demobilized rebels generate impact at protests.

# 6 Bibliography of Introduction and Conclusion


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