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Trusting the Enemy: Confidence in the state among ex-combatants

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Abstract: War-torn societies are often racked with generalized distrust, both among citizens and between citizens and the state. Even long after conflict ends, former combatants who participated in violence and challenged the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force may have an especially unsettled relationship with the state. After demobilization, their potential relapse into armed struggle is thought to pose a severe risk to security and stability. What factors determine ex-combatants' degree of trust in the state after their demobilization? We present the first empirical examination of this question through a survey of 1,485 former members of paramilitary and guerrilla groups in Colombia. We find limited support for social theories of trust: our analysis indicates that participation in civic and association life has no discernible impact on ex-combatants' trust in the state. However, contrary to the warnings of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) practitioners, continuing connection between former fighters has a neutral to positive impact on trust, especially for former guerrilla. We find that intense socialization within the armed group during wartime has a corrosive impact on trust in the state, even years after demobilization. This finding suggests that the formation of "anti-social capital" may be difficult to reverse. With respect to institutional theories of trust, ex-combatants who perceive that the state performs well in important policy areas, such as the protection of civil and political rights, exhibit stronger trust. However, while conventional wisdom holds that ex-combatants are principally interested in material benefits we find no relationship between individual measures of well-being, including unemployment, and lower levels of trust in the state.

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INTRODUCTION

Of the many kinds of damage that war inflicts on a society, the erosion of trust is among the most debilitating. Particularly in internal conflicts that comprise the vast majority of contemporary wars, long-term violence can create endemic mistrust and fear of state institutions.³ This legacy of distrust can disrupt the potential for cooperation and political engagement precisely when these behaviors are most needed to secure near-term stability, and foster long-term development. The reconstruction of trust between citizen and state is thus a central concern.⁴

Since the end of the Cold War, international institutions, most notably the United Nations and the World Bank, have played an important role in transitions from war to peace. Over time, international engagement has shifted from minimalist peace monitoring and enforcement missions to more expansive interventions that monitor elections, oversee human rights investigations and truth commissions, and inject post-conflict reconstruction funding to generate an early peace dividend.⁵ The dismantling of armed groups, including rebel and paramilitary organizations, has also become a critical component of transition processes, and is typically engineered through formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs designed to ease combatants' transition into civilian society. Although the core objective of DDR programs is to prevent a return to violence by "groups of armed, uncontrolled, and unemployed ex-combatants",⁶ most DDR programs have a more ambitious longer-term objective: to contribute to security and stability by reintegrating combatants into civilian society through targeted economic support and measures designed to enmesh former fighters in civilian communities,⁷ and to establish a foundation of trust.⁸

However, while there is an established body of literature on the determinants of interpersonal trust and trust in state institutions, far less is known about what determines trust in the specific context of war-affected countries. Similarly, there are no studies that examine the factors that foster – or erode – trust among specific war-affected populations, like former rebel and paramilitary combatants. In this paper, we present a first empirical examination of this issue.

Former members of armed groups represent a challenging case for the establishment of trust and state legitimacy in the aftermath of a conflict, since by the very act of taking up arms, they have challenged the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The extent to which ex-combatants trust the state varies widely, and also varies over time as they transit through the demobilization process and into civilian life. Prior to the inception of the demobilization process, many ex-combatants viewed the state with extreme distrust: "when they told us that we were

³ Colletta and Cullen 2000.

⁴ Widner 2004; see also Fjelde and De Soysa 2009.

⁵ Doyle, Johnstone, and Orr 1997.

⁶ Stockholm Initiative 2006, 14.

⁷ CCDDR 2009; United Nations 2006.

⁸ de Greiff 2009.

going to demobilize, we thought that they would shoot us.”⁹ However, for some former fighters, this distrust may be transformed over time. As one former paramilitary member stated three years after his demobilization: “If they’d wanted to put you in prison, they would have done it long ago. And why would they have paid all of these courses and studies? They wouldn’t have invested money in that. But at first, we were kind of distrustful.”¹⁰

In order to analyze the determinants of ex-combatants’ trust in the state, we draw upon a survey of demobilized fighters from a range of rebel and paramilitary groups in Colombia. We exploit variation in ex-combatants’ responses about their pre-war attributes, war-time experiences, experience in the demobilization and reintegration process, and life after demobilization, in order to identify factors that shape trust in the state. We understand trust in the state as an individual judgment based on ex-combatants’ perception of how well state institutions and officials meet their personal expectations.¹¹

The Colombian case provides at least two advantages for our research: First, the correlates of trust among both former members of right-wing paramilitaries and left-wing guerrillas can be assessed. Second, the Colombian DDR process has been nationally owned, and the role of international actors has been largely limited to technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation. Under these circumstances, the impact of DDR on trust in the state can be more clearly identified.

In the following analysis, we first introduce the literature related to the problem of trust in the state among former combatants. Second, we construct a theoretical framework drawing on social and institutional theories of trust. Third, we describe the context of the DDR process in Colombia and the survey of 1,485 ex-combatants. Fourth, we present and discuss the results of our empirical analysis. Our results confirm some recent research on trust, but also raise challenges to both scholarship and policy guidance on trust, social capital, and DDR. In contrast to much research on the impact of social capital, we find no relationship between civic action and trust in the state. In addition, while practitioners warn of the dangers of continued contact between former combatants after the completion of DDR processes, we find that such contact has a neutral to positive impact on trust. Lastly, we find evidence that “anti-social capital” formation like intense processes of socialization in the armed group, are associated with reduced post-demobilization trust in the state. Consistent with institutional theories of trust, we find that ex-combatants who perceive that the state performs well in important policy areas (protecting civic and human rights, countering corruption, providing security and economic opportunity) exhibit stronger trust in the state. By contrast, individual well-being, considered by practitioners to be of special importance to former combatants who expect a peace dividend, is not related to trust

⁹ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Medellín, February 25, 2009.

¹⁰ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Tierralta, April 29, 2009

¹¹ See Rockers, Kruk, and Laugesen 2012, 406.

in the state. We conclude by indicating some of the theoretical and policy implications of our study.

LITERATURE

Trust is critical for economic development and prosperity,¹² as well as the successful management of political conflict. When conflict turns to violence, it destroys interpersonal trust, and erodes confidence in state institutions. As a result, the reconstruction of trust in the aftermath of war is of particular importance.¹³ However, trust has received little attention in the literatures on civil war recurrence and economic recovery, despite its potential importance to these issues.¹⁴

Trust dynamics within conflict-affected and post-conflict countries has rarely been empirically studied. This is surprising since, as Rose-Ackerman argues, “the state is a way of managing inter-personal conflicts without resorting to civil war” and “this task is much more manageable if the citizenry has a degree of interpersonal trust and if the state is organized so that it is trusted by its citizens”.¹⁵ Widner’s study of trust in three African post-conflict countries is one exception. She finds that government performance, effectiveness of the police, and public safety are all clearly related with interpersonal trust, while social capital has a surprisingly small impact.¹⁶ In a study on institutional trust in Nepal, Askvik et al. find an important relation between performance-based indicators and trust, and no discernible impact of indicators of social and ethnic identities.¹⁷ Another exception is a study by Hutchison and Johnson, who analyze conflict-ridden countries and weak states in a cross-country study of institutional trust in Africa.¹⁸ They argue that political trust is one of the primary indicators of regime legitimacy and find a strong association between state capacity and trust.

More attention to trust, especially conceived as interpersonal trust, and other social attitudes can be identified in the literature on intractable or protracted conflict.¹⁹ Hadjipavlou identifies mistrust and lack of intergroup communication as major obstacles for overcoming intercommunal conflict in Cyprus.²⁰ Yet, identity-based conflicts may also enhance the generation of trust *within* ethnic or religious groups, since external threats may create greater dependency on the community.²¹ The determinants of trust in the state in democratizing and transitional countries has

¹² See for example Fukuyama 1996.

¹³ E.g. Colletta and Cullen 2000; de Greiff 2009; Lederach 2005; Newman 2002; Widner 2004.

¹⁴ David Mason et al. 2011; Collier et al. 2003; Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2008; Walter 2004.

¹⁵ Rose-Ackerman 2001, 2.

¹⁶ Widner 2004, 225.

¹⁷ Askvik, Jamil, and Nath Dhakal 2011.

¹⁸ Hutchison and Johnson 2011.

¹⁹ Azar 1990; Coleman 2003; Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2005.

²⁰ Hadjipavlou 2007. For identity-related interpersonal mistrust in Kosovo, see Schwegler and Smith 2012.

²¹ Cook, Hardin, and Levi 2007, 168.

received also attention in the literature.²² As Mishler and Rose state, inhabitants of post-communist countries in Europe exhibit widespread distrust in the state.²³ Similar to Askvik et al., Mishler and Rose find that economic and political performance indicators are more important predictors of institutional trust than theories based on individual socialization and interpersonal trust.

We are unaware of any studies that empirically examine the levels of trust in the state among ex-combatant populations.²⁴ For the case of ex-combatants, the Cartagena Contribution to DDR (CCDDR) claims that reintegration processes depend upon “trust between ex-combatants, communities, and program implementers (whether local or international)”.²⁵ However, the CCDDR does not state what ex-combatants’ trust might depend on. In the United Nations’ Integrated DDR Standards, the UN’s body of doctrine and policy guidance on the design of DDR interventions, the topic of trust is not covered.²⁶

However, a number of analysts note that a key function of DDR programs – in some cases latent, and in others explicit – is to restore the legitimacy of state institutions.²⁷ In this vein, Mitton finds that ex-combatants who were members of groups that rejected the political system altogether, such as Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF), may have particularly acute difficulty reintegrating.²⁸ And several recent studies explore political engagement among former combatants. Söderström for example measures the impact of different DDR programs within Liberia on ex-combatants’ political involvement, tolerance of dissent, and expressed antagonism toward the political system.²⁹ Ugarriza experiments with the potential to deliberate among former combatants.³⁰ Despite significant progress in exploring the complex relationship between ex-combatants, their attitudes and the state, we know of no systematic inquiry regarding the factors that determine ex-combatants’ levels of trust.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recent studies have shown that cultural or social theories and performance based institutional theories are most relevant for explaining trust in state institutions.³¹

²² See for example Delhey and Newton 2003; Kornai, Rothstein, and Rose-Ackerman 2004; Sztompka 1999.

²³ Mishler and Rose 2001.

²⁴ The closest example is a study by Barron et al., which briefly analyzes the impact of a community-driven development intervention on material well-being, social cohesion, and familiarity with and trust in local and national government, on communities in Aceh, Indonesia, including conflict victims and ex-combatants. See Barron et al. 2009.

²⁵ CCDDR 2009, 18.

²⁶ United Nations 2006.

²⁷ Civic and Miklaucic 2011; de Greiff 2009; Little 2008; Rocha Menocal 2009; Söderström 2011b.

²⁸ Mitton 2008; see also Christensen and Utas 2008.

²⁹ Söderström 2011b; 2011a.

³⁰ Ugarriza 2012.

³¹ Other common theories about trust in the state, notably accounts that link trust in the state to individual personality and psychological characteristics, have little explanatory power. See Mishler and Rose 2001. The same holds for most of the social identity indicators explored by Askvik, Jamil, and Nath

Therefore, our analysis focuses on these two groups of theories.

SOCIAL THEORIES

A first major cluster of theories focuses upon the impact of social capital on trust. Social capital theory has primarily been associated with attempts to explain both cross- and subnational variation in economic development and the quality of democracy.³² But it has also found its place in the literature on institutional trust. The core proposition is that participation in civic life builds a foundation of cooperation between citizens, which underpins a network of functioning civil society institutions, in turn generating a civic culture.³³ Institutional trust thus depends on learned interpersonal trust, and we might expect a positive relationship between general social capital and levels of trust in formal institutions.

Researchers have subjected social capital to a wide range of empirical tests. Most importantly for the questions motivating this study, scholars have found little empirical support for the involvement in voluntary associations as predictor of individual trust in institutions.³⁴ Additionally, the direction of the causal relationship between social capital and trust remains unclear. Social capital theory implies a bottom-up structure of trust generation. However, a number of scholars argue that it is in fact the reverse, and that institutions can significantly shape the distribution and depth of social capital and interpersonal trust.³⁵ Muller and Seligson state that “interpersonal trust appears to be a product of democracy rather than a cause of it.”³⁶ This debate underlies our first hypothesis relating to social capital:

H_{1A}: Ex-combatants who are active members in civic organizations and community life will exhibit higher levels of trust in the state.

Another body of criticism suggests that social capital may not be unambiguously beneficial, and that the “romanticism” of Putnam’s version of social capital overlooks the potential effects of “anti-social capital.”³⁷ Anti-social capital is the result of patterns of voluntary association and group membership (strong in-group bonding) that erode rather than build trust across social networks (and excludes the possibility of bridging), leading to reduced cooperation or undesired social outcomes. Levi cites an extreme case: “Timothy McVeigh and other co-conspirators in the Oklahoma City bombing [in 1995] were members of a bowling league; this is a case where it may have

Dhakal 2011.

³² Putnam 1993; 1995; Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1996; Woolcock 1998.

³³ Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1997; Jackman and Miller 1996.

³⁴ Delhey and Newton 2003; Newton 2007; Uslaner 2002.

³⁵ Brehm and Rahn 1997; Harriss 2002; Hetherington 1998; Kumlin and Rothstein 2005; Rothstein 2004.

³⁶ Muller and Seligson 1994, 647.

³⁷ We subsume several related concepts under the term “anti-social capital”, including Levi’s “un-social capital”, Ostrom’s “dark side of social capital” and Rubio’s “perverse social capital”. See Levi 1996; Ostrom 2000; Rubio 1997.

been better to bowl alone.”³⁸ Some scholars argue that the very factors that create the beneficial impacts of social capital – most notably the formation of trust within an in-group – requires or fosters a reciprocal distrust or disfavor towards those outside the group.³⁹ This issue has been treated heavily in social psychology, but evidence to date suggests that this effect is complex and contingent upon social context, in particular the degree of social hierarchy and extent of cross-cutting cleavages.⁴⁰

Scholars and DDR practitioners have warned against the potential risks of reintegrating former combatants without first breaking armed group structures and social networks. Even absent these structures, former combatants are often seen as a security risk to post-conflict societies. Analysts suspect that when the command and control structures of nominally dismantled armed groups remain intact, networks of former fighters can become isolated, and fail to reintegrate into civilian society; at worst, former fighters may form the basis of new, emerging armed groups, or become potent players in illicit economies.⁴¹ In order to explore the potential impact of persisting bonds among ex-combatants, as a form of anti-social capital, on trust in the state, we formalize a second hypothesis:

H_{1B}: Ex-combatants who maintain ties with former fighters from their armed group will exhibit lower levels of trust in the state.

Research from organizational psychology and sociology suggests that symbolic interactions, such as training and orientation sessions, act to encode and transmit group values, expectations, and norms, which in turn form the basis of a new social identity.⁴² Military organizations use training and indoctrination for precisely this purpose. As a result, we expect that socialization efforts by armed groups and a long-standing membership in the group will create strong, potentially durable in-group identities that obstruct the transfer of trust to out-groups such as other citizens and the state. This yields the following hypotheses:

H_{2A}: Ex-combatants who have undergone frequent training and indoctrination within the armed group will have lower levels of trust in the state.

H_{2B}: Length of tenure within the armed group will be negatively associated with trust in the state.

Another element often identified among ex-combatants is their early socialization

³⁸ Levi 1996, 52.

³⁹ Gambetta 1988; Newton 2007.

⁴⁰ Brewer 1999.

⁴¹ See for example Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Themnér 2011; de Vries and Wiegink 2011; Zyck 2009.

⁴² Ashforth and Mael 1989.

into violence.⁴³ Rubio, for instance, argues that the Colombian youth in certain marginal urban neighborhoods and poor rural areas do not build positive social capital which promotes pro-social behavior, but instead build a form of anti-social capital.⁴⁴ They see how others earn money and acquire power without any education. In formative periods of early socialization they come in contact with anti-social, but highly lucrative behavior. Social and cultural theories of trust state that individuals learn from a young age on to trust others and by extension trust institutions.⁴⁵ By contrast, recent research suggests that psychological trauma in former child soldiers leads to less openness for reconciliation and greater desire for revenge.⁴⁶ Annan and Blattman draw upon a survey of demobilized fighters in Uganda to examine psychosocial reintegration, and find that fighters who were abducted as youths and forcibly conscripted were more likely to experience more psychological distress than other youth; they also found some evidence that abductees may exhibit greater aggression.⁴⁷

However, there is relatively little research or policy guidance on the long-run impacts of child soldiering upon ex-combatants' relationship to political institutions. The World Bank notes that "child soldiers experience a process of asocialization in armed conflict" and that "overcoming the mistrust they learn in order to survive during a time of conflict can be difficult when transitioning to civilian life."⁴⁸ In order to test this proposition, and examine the impact of child soldiering on trust in formal institutions, we derive the following hypothesis:

H₃: Ex-combatants who were recruited as minors will exhibit lower levels of trust than ex-combatants who entered the war as adults.

INSTITUTIONAL THEORIES

Consistent with the institutional theories on trust, we assume that there will be a positive relationship between ex-combatants' satisfaction with the performance of state institutions and their trust in the state. This general assumption finds support in wide-ranging theoretical and empirical literature.⁴⁹ However, we disaggregate the broad theory of institutional performance into a number of specific hypotheses.

The first group of hypotheses distinguishes between principles, procedures and outcomes. Kim argues that a credible commitment by the state, anchored in a

⁴³ See for example Barenbaum, Ruchkin, and Schwab Stone 2004; Bayer, Klasen, and Adam 2007; Blattman and Annan 2010; Boyden 2003; Kohrt et al. 2010; Özerdem and Podder 2011; Wessells 2006; Zack-Williams 2006.

⁴⁴ Rubio 1997.

⁴⁵ Mishler and Rose 2001.

⁴⁶ Bayer, Klasen, and Adam 2007; see also Nussio 2012a.

⁴⁷ Blattman and Annan 2010.

⁴⁸ World Bank Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit 2002, 3.

⁴⁹ Askvik, Jamil, and Nath Dhakal 2011; Coleman 1994; Dasgupta 1988; Hetherington 1998; Hutchison and Johnson 2011; Levi 1998; Rotberg 2004; Van de Walle and Bouckaert 2003.

demonstration that the state will consistently meet its commitments and uphold a high standard of behavior, is one of the most fundamental determinants of trust.⁵⁰ Similarly, Raiser argues that the state can build trust by exercising moral leadership.⁵¹ In a conflict or post-conflict environment, in which the moral basis of the state itself has been called into question by one or more armed groups, the extent to which the state upholds its most basic commitments may have an even greater impact upon trust. This leads us to the first hypothesis in this cluster:

H_{4A}: Perceptions that the government upholds basic political and human rights will be positively associated with trust in the state.

Another strand of theory suggests that citizens evaluate the state based upon its procedures.⁵² Kim notes that a broad swath of the public administration literature identifies the honesty of state employees as a major determinant of institutional trust.⁵³ Tyler et al. find that fair processes or “procedural justice” enhance trust between citizens and the police.⁵⁴ Levi cites the impartiality of state agents as a key factor shaping trust in public institutions.⁵⁵ Rothstein further argues that corruption or partiality among public officials does not only lead to an erosion of trust in institutions but also to less interpersonal trust among common citizens.⁵⁶ We draw upon these arguments to derive a related hypothesis:

H_{4B}: Perceptions of corruption in state institutions will be negatively associated with trust in the state.

Finally, a number of scholars explore the connection between governance outcomes—by which we mean the state’s actual production of positive public goods—and trust. Prior research has emphasized the connection between economic performance, such as the maintenance of low unemployment rates and stable macro-economic conditions, and public trust in institutions.⁵⁷ In a conflict-affected or post-conflict country, the provision of effective public security might be equally, if not more, salient. This leads to the third hypothesis in this cluster:

H_{4C}: Perceptions of effective provision of positive public goods will be positively

⁵⁰ Kim 2005.

⁵¹ Raiser 2003.

⁵² Mishler and Rose 2002.

⁵³ Kim 2005.

⁵⁴ Tyler, Jackson, and Bradford 2012; see also Chanley 2002; Manzetti and Wilson 2006; Medina and Rojas 2012; Mishler and Rose 2001; Newton 2007; Offe and Hartmann 2001; Rose-Ackerman 2001; Seligson 2002; Sztompka 1999.

⁵⁵ Levi 1998.

⁵⁶ Rothstein 2004.

⁵⁷ Cheibub et al. 1996; Hetherington 1998; Mishler and Rose 2002.

associated with trust in the state.

We now move on to a second hypothesis group, which relates not to principles, procedures and outcomes, but to the relationship between individual level well-being and trust in formal institutions. It remains unclear whether citizens evaluate the performance of state institutions based on judgments of overall performance and collective benefits, or on basis of private benefits.⁵⁸ Kinder and Kiewiet explore the balance between assessments of personal and collective economic benefits, and find that perceptions of public goods are more important.⁵⁹ However, we hypothesize that individual level outcomes need to be taken into account, particularly for former combatants in Colombia who often cite individual grievances as reasons for their entry into armed groups.⁶⁰ We thus argue that:

H₅: Ex-combatants who perceive that their individual well-being has improved since they demobilized will have greater trust in the state.

Next, we turn to the potential link between ex-combatants' experiences in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process, and their ensuing degree of trust in the state. It is quite plausible that the performance of the reintegration program would have a strong impact on the level of trust ex-combatants have towards institutions as a whole, since it is their primary contact with the state, and occurs at a pivotal moment in their life experience.⁶¹

Thus, positive perceptions of the DDR program should be associated with positive perceptions of the state, and the converse as well. In addition, negative experiences, such as encounters with corrupt officials, mismanagement, and failure to receive promised benefits should all have a corrosive impact on trust in the state. From these claims, we derive the last hypothesis:

H₆: Ex-combatants that are satisfied with the DDR program will evidence higher levels of trust in the state, while ex-combatants that are dissatisfied will have lower levels of trust.

THE COLOMBIAN DDR PROCESS

We examine the determinants of trust in the state among former combatants using the case of demobilized fighters in Colombia. Colombia provides a unique opportunity since large numbers of former members from both right-wing and left-wing armed groups reintegrated into civilian society. Between August 2002 and January 2010,

⁵⁸ Hardin 1998.

⁵⁹ Kinder and Kiewiet 1979.

⁶⁰ See for example Arjona and Kalyvas 2009; Nussio 2012a; Ugarriza 2009; Villegas 2009.

⁶¹ Nussio 2012b; Söderström 2011b.

52,419 persons were certified as demobilized in Colombia.⁶²

The majority of demobilized fighters belonged to the right-wing paramilitary group United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – AUC), the main responsible group for war atrocities, especially during their time of expansion between 1997 and 2002.⁶³ In 2002, the government of Álvaro Uribe started negotiations with the paramilitaries in order to “restore the monopoly of force in the hands of the state.”⁶⁴ As a consequence, 31,671 members of the AUC demobilized between 2003 and 2006. This process was accompanied by many criticisms such as non-transparent negotiation agendas, inflated numbers of demobilized combatants, an improvised reintegration program and ongoing violence perpetrated by neo-paramilitary organizations involved in drug-trafficking.⁶⁵

The individual demobilization of members of diverse guerrilla groups started in 1984 with the government of Belisario Betancur and continues to this day.⁶⁶ However, since 2002 it has become an increasingly important element of the government’s counterinsurgency policy against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC) and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN). Guerrilla fighters (and before the AUC demobilization, also paramilitary fighters) are given incentives to demobilize and provide intelligence to aid the state in locating active insurgent units.⁶⁷ Between 2002 and January 2010, 20,748 combatants took the individual decision to demobilize.⁶⁸

Since 2006, the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR)⁶⁹ has been in charge of the reintegration policy. The ACR has assisted ex-combatants with education, vocational training, grants for micro-business projects, psychosocial support, healthcare and a monthly stipend dependent on participation.⁷⁰

DATA

In order to test the above hypotheses and identify the determinants of post-demobilization trust in the state, we draw on a survey of former combatants in Colombia. This survey was conducted by the *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (FIP), a Colombian non-governmental organization with a long history of research on conflict issues. 1,485 former members of armed groups were surveyed between February 5, 2008 and May 31, 2008. The sample was randomly drawn from the roster of ex-combatants who participated in the Colombian government’s reintegration program.

However, several challenges complicate the construction of a perfectly

⁶² Numbers in this section provided by the ACR and the National Police.

⁶³ Granada, Restrepo, and Vargas 2009.

⁶⁴ Acuerdo de Santa Fe de Ralito 2003.

⁶⁵ Nussio 2011b.

⁶⁶ Turriago and Bustamante 2003.

⁶⁷ Anaya 2007.

⁶⁸ FARC: 13.691, ELN: 2889, AUC: 3682, other armed groups: 486.

⁶⁹ Formerly *Alta Consejería para la Reintegración* and now *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*.

⁷⁰ ACR 2010.

representative sample of ex-combatants. Most importantly, as in other cases of DDR processes, there is no adequate sampling frame, since some ex-combatants choose to live in anonymity after leaving their armed group and do not participate in the activities offered by the ACR.⁷¹ Some of these non-registered ex-combatants may be among the members of newly created armed groups and criminal organizations. Other non-registered ex-combatants may be the most successful cases of reintegration who chose to distance themselves from any institution related to their previous life as combatants and reintegrated independently into civil society.⁷²

Furthermore, identification problems common to all demobilization processes may affect our sample as well: did all the combatants demobilize? Were impostors hired by unscrupulous armed group leaders to inflate demobilization numbers? Both issues have been raised with respect to the Colombian demobilization process. Surveys of ex-combatants in other parts of the world have faced similar challenges. For example, Humphreys and Weinstein relied on extensive contacts with U.N., government, and community leaders to identify the potential pool of ex-combatants for a survey in Sierra Leone, from which a random sample was drawn.⁷³ However, they conclude that “there is no guarantee that the lists generated in this process are statistically representative of the population of fighters.”⁷⁴

Our object of interest in this study is the experience and trust levels of former combatants who have been through the process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. This population of former combatants may differ from combatants who informally deserted from the war and ex-combatants who demobilized but do not participate in the formal DDR program. It is important to keep the specific population under study in mind while interpreting the results of our empirical analysis.

Ex-combatants are a difficult population to interview under the best of circumstances: anxieties regarding social stigma for having participated in conflict, a desire to avoid public exposure, and fear of potential retribution may reduce willingness to participate in surveys. These problems are all particularly acute in Colombia, where violence is ongoing. The enumeration process was designed to mitigate ex-combatants’ concerns. Enumerators first traveled to regional service centers across Colombia, which provide economic and psychosocial programs to

⁷¹ Nussio 2011a.

⁷² During 2011, 32,508 demobilized people attended the ACR program according to official numbers. Approximately 2,200 ex-combatants had died between 2002 and 2010, and a fluctuating number of demobilized people were in prison. As a result of these factors, as well as migration, or simple unwillingness or inability, between 15,000 and 20,000 ex-combatants did not attend ACR activities during 2011.

⁷³ Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; 2007.

⁷⁴ Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 540. For the case of Colombia, two surveys of former combatants are known to the authors of this study, see Arjona and Kalyvas 2009; Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2010. Surveys with ex-combatants in other countries were conducted for example by Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009; Bayer, Klasen, and Adam 2007; Blattman and Annan 2010; Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007; Hill, Taylor, and Temin 2008; Kohrt et al. 2010; Pugel 2006. See also a list of ex-combatant surveys under www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/XCSURVEYS/.

former combatants. Reintegration program staff validated the list of randomly chosen participants, and staff members who were known to the potential respondents initiated contact to introduce the survey and the enumerator.

The sample we analyze consists of demobilized combatants living in 44 different municipalities in 17 departments. The respondents included 232 women and 1253 men. 846 respondents were demobilized from the AUC, 476 from the FARC, 119 from the ELN and 36 from other armed groups. 194 were older than 40 years of age, 857 between 25 and 40, and 429 were younger than 25 years of age (for summary statistics, see Appendix A).

Ex-combatants have most trust in the Reintegration Program and the Ombudsman's Office and least trust in Political Parties and the Police (see Table 1). In terms of trust, former guerrilla and paramilitary fighters rank the different institutions in almost the same order, but the guerrilleros trust consistently less in the institutions than the former paramilitary fighters. For illustrative purposes, we present the descriptive data in comparison with trust levels of the general Colombian population (last column).⁷⁵ It is striking that ex-combatants seem to have a wider variation in their trust levels across institutions, with more extreme average values both for the most and least trusted institutions. While the most trusted institutions are for both ex-combatants and general population the Ombudsman's Office, the National Government and the Armed Forces, the National Congress and the Political Parties are among the least trusted. An interesting difference concerns the Police that takes an average rank for the general population but is very little trusted among ex-combatants.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

The questionnaire consisted of 234 questions, covering a large range of topics including life conditions before joining the armed group, context and incentives for recruitment, activities within the armed group, the exit from the armed group, the current situation and finally the reintegration program (for survey questions, see Appendix B). The average interview length was two hours.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY AND FINDINGS

We begin by briefly outlining the dependent variable, and a vector of individual and municipal control variables that we include across all of the regressions that comprise the empirical analysis. We then address the four hypothesis groups in turn, first touching on the construction of the independent variables for each, and then moving on to present the results of the empirical analysis.

⁷⁵ We rely on the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP – see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>) data for Colombia from 2008, the same year of the ex-combatants survey used for this study.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE—TRUST IN THE COLOMBIAN STATE

We argue that it is important to distinguish between the specific institutions and bureaucratic sub-components that collectively comprise the “hardware” of the state, and the broader institutional identity of the state itself. The state is not merely the sum of the institutions that govern and provide political goods over a given territory: it is simultaneously a juridical construct with an independent legal personality,⁷⁶ as well as a sociological construct with an identity that is distinct from the government that is in power at any given point: as Calvert notes, “the state is the community organized for political purposes; The government is the individual or team of individuals that takes decisions which affect the lives of their fellow citizens. Governments succeed one another; the state endures.”⁷⁷

The survey contained a large battery of questions that probed respondents’ trust in Colombian political institutions. The questionnaire distinguished between a range of government bodies, security sector institutions, and national bureaucratic entities. Respondents were also asked the extent to which they trusted the Colombian State as such.⁷⁸ All trust items were measured on a seven-point scale. Given that our primary interest is not support for any specific elected institution, political party, line agency, or component of the state bureaucracy, we utilize the single question regarding trust and confidence in the State as our dependent variable.

CONTROL VARIABLES

We draw on the survey data to derive a wide array of individual-level control variables, which span multiple dimensions of the ex-combatant’s social identity, recruitment into war, wartime experiences, demobilization process, and post-demobilization experiences.

First, social identity. We include a dummy variable for the ex-combatant’s gender, and a measure of their age at the time the survey was administered. We also control for the potential influence of childhood psychological trauma stemming from abuse. Respondents were asked what types of punishment they experienced as a child, ranging from verbal reprimands, to restrictions on leisure time, to physical abuse.⁷⁹ It is possible that childhood abuse can lead to long-term patterns of mistrust and alienation, which might influence trust towards institutions. We coded respondents as having suffered abuse if they reported experiencing physical punishment and include a dummy variable to control for this experience.

Second, we control for varying pathways of recruitment into war. Respondents were asked to state the primary reason they joined the armed group, with a wide range of options including poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, and ideology.

⁷⁶ Jackson and Rosberg 1982.

⁷⁷ Calvert 1987, 248. See also Zartman 1995, 5.

⁷⁸ The original Spanish-language question was “¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza en el Estado?”

⁷⁹ Such trauma may remain emotionally resonant long after the abuse has taken place, and it is quite possible that such a traumatic experience will be under-reported.

We derive several additional dummy variables from this question, to isolate the effect of ideologically and economically motivated recruitment into war.

Third, we control for participation in civilian abuse, a wartime experience that might influence the accumulation of social capital. We do so by creating a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if respondents reported participating in acts of civilian abuse, notably the seizure of food and other goods.⁸⁰

Fourth, we introduce two group-specific controls regarding the demobilization process. One paramilitary-specific dummy variable takes a value of 1 if a respondent disagreed with their compulsory demobilization during the bilateral peace process. Another guerrilla-specific dummy takes a value of 1 if the respondent was captured by the Colombian armed forces, rather than voluntarily demobilizing.

Last, we utilize controls for post-demobilization experiences. We control for the length of time that the ex-combatant had spent in civilian society, by constructing a variable that measures the length of time between the date of each respondent's demobilization, and the date on which they took the survey. The experience of demobilization can have widely varying short, medium, and long-run impacts. The initial demobilization period may be marked by euphoria. Over the longer-term, some combatants become well integrated into civilian society, while others may face difficulty acclimating to civilian life, and experience disillusionment and despondency. We include a control variable to filter out these effects.

We additionally control for political party preferences. Perceptions of government and political parties may have strong effects on how citizens perceive state performance, potentially reversing the causal direction between performance and trust. As Van de Walle and Bouckaert ask: "do citizens have a negative perception of government because its services do not work properly, or do citizens evaluate government administrations and their performance in a negative way, because their image of government in general is a negative one?"⁸¹ In our case of former combatants who had presumably had very little trust in state institutions before demobilization, the causal direction might point rather from performance perception to trust than the other way around, but we cannot be sure about potential feedback mechanisms.⁸² Given Colombia's highly polarized political environment, it is possible that attitudes towards the Uribe government could influence perceptions of the state itself. The party preference variables provide a mechanism for us to control for this influence. Respondents were asked whether they had a preference for any political party, and if so, which. We code parties according to their relationship to the Uribe government,

⁸⁰ Survey questions that directly probe participation in taboo acts, such as the victimization of civilian populations, are likely to yield inaccurate responses owing to social desirability bias. The FIP survey instead asks a relatively innocuous question regarding where combatants acquired food and other goods, with responses including buying goods, receiving donations of such goods, and taking consumption goods from various civilian groups, including peasants, merchants, and landowners. We treat the forcible seizure of goods as a proxy for other forms of civilian abuse.

⁸¹ Van de Walle and Bouckaert 2003, 892.

⁸² See also Hutchison and Johnson 2011, 742–3.

which was in power at the point the survey was conducted, identifying parties as either opposition or pro-government.⁸³ These are dummy variables, for which the reference category is respondents who have no political party preference.

While the social identity controls are present in all linear regression models, the other batteries of control variables are introduced sequentially.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

1) Social capital

First, we examine the relationship between social capital and trust in the state (for the empirical results, see Table 2). We expect that benign social capital will be associated with higher trust in the state. On the other hand, we expect that anti-social capital, resulting from continuing social and group ties with other ex-combatants, will be associated with lower trust in the state.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

We measure benign social capital through several proxies. First, respondents were asked whether they were a member of a variety of voluntary organizations, such as civic groups, sports clubs, ethnic groups, peasant organizations, social clubs, and local political organizations. Second, respondents were asked whether they took part in a variety of local community activities, including community gatherings, civic and political meetings, religious ceremonies, and communal labor. We argue that group membership and communal activity measure distinct mechanisms through which ex-combatants might become enmeshed in the community. We construct additive indices of group membership and communal activity, and estimate the relationship between both dimensions of social capital, and trust in the state. Contrary to our expectation, we find no relationship between benign social capital and trust in the state: neither membership in civil society groups nor participation in communal life are associated with greater trust in the state. Even against the relatively weak popular participation in civic and associational life in Colombia, ex-combatants exhibit extremely low rates of participation. Why do we see no increase in trust among those former combatants who do participate in civic and associational life? The answer might lie in the kinds of participation that combatants appear to prefer. The most important social focal points for ex-combatants— religious organizations and sports groups— are de-linked from the state and conversations regarding governance and policy. And as Levi's argument regarding the Oklahoma City bombers suggests, participation in association life can support anti-social as well as pro-social narratives and behavior.

⁸³ In noting their party preferences, some respondents indicated specific parties, or groups of parties, or notable figures. We coded the following responses, which do not necessarily reflect exact party names, as government-aligned: Uribista, Conservador, Conservador Uribista, Partido de la U, (and similar responses). The following were coded as opposition parties: El polo, Partido Liberal, Socialista (and similar responses)

With this idea in mind, we now turn to the impact of anti-social capital on trust in the state. Respondents were asked to indicate who they spent the majority of their free time socializing with. Potential answers ranged from family, to spouse, friends from before they joined the war, friends from their former armed group, former combatants they met after demobilizing, and friends they met after demobilizing. We construct a dummy variable to indicate respondents who report socializing primarily with former combatants. We construct an additional dummy variable to indicate combatants who are socially isolated, and report that they do not spend free time with anyone (included in Table 2 as post-demobilization control). We find no evidence that continued association between ex-combatants erodes trust in the state. However, we find that former combatants that are socially isolated exhibit much higher levels of distrust in political institutions.

Respondents were also asked whether they had contact with ex-combatants, both from their former armed group, and from other armed groups; and through membership in a demobilized fighters' organization. We include these forms of contact as additional dummy variables, and estimate the relationship between these factors and trust in the state. The results are surprising. While we expected that ex-combatants who remain in touch with former fighters for their own group would exhibit lower trust in the state, we find no such relationship.

To the contrary, among former guerrillas, we also find a positive, significant, and stable relationship between membership in demobilized fighters' organizations and trust in the state. Among paramilitaries, there is no statistically significant relationship between membership in a demobilized fighters' organization and trust in the state. All of these results are robust to the inclusion of the full battery of controls.

Given the negative association between social isolation and institutional trust, and the neutral effect of social ties between ex-combatants, it may be preferable for ex-combatants to bond among themselves rather than becoming completely isolated. For some, the reintegration program is their only chance to create a social network, especially in large cities where ex-combatants often reside, as is the case for the following ex-combatant: "My friends are above all demobilized people. [People that I met] in the meetings, we were some 25 persons. These are my buddies and my friends. Apart from that, I have nearly no friends."⁸⁴

Policy guidance on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes stresses the importance of de-linking former fighters from their groups. Our findings however suggest that continued socializing among former comrades may have little or no bearing on trust in political institutions, while association through a formal organization can lead to increased trust. The different effect for former combatants of guerrilla and paramilitary groups may be explained by the nature of associations they mostly participate in. The reintegration program supported micro-business projects of collectively demobilized paramilitary fighters on the condition that they would

⁸⁴ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Bogotá, January 27, 2009.

collaborate with each other, while former guerrilla fighters received individual assistance for their projects and larger start-up credits. Therefore, most former paramilitary fighters participate in business associations, while associations of former guerrilla fighters are more often dedicated to civic, social or political objectives.⁸⁵ From this perspective, it may rather be the type of organization that determines whether ex-combatants trust more or less in the state than their earlier affiliation to one or another group.

2) Armed group socialization

Next, we examine another dimension of anti-social capital. In hypothesis 2, we suggest that intense forms of socialization will result in durable in-group trust and out-group distrust, and thus be associated with lower levels of trust in the state. We measure socialization through two indicators: the intensity of indoctrination, and the number of years the ex-combatant spent within the armed group. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they attended indoctrination sessions, and we construct a variable, socialization, which takes a value of 1 if they did so regularly.⁸⁶ Respondents were also asked to name the primary reason that they joined the armed group. By introducing a control variable which filters out the effect of ideological motivations for joining the war, we isolate the effects of socialization, rather than substantive ideological beliefs, on trust in the state. We also derive an estimate of each ex-combatants' length of time in the armed group from data on their age at time of survey, age at recruitment, and year of demobilization (included as during war-time control in Table 2).

Among the paramilitary sub-sample, we find that socialization during wartime is associated with lasting declines in trust towards the state. However, while we expect that lengthy tenure in an armed group facilitates the formation of a strong in-group identity and thus lower levels of post-demobilization trust, contrary to this expectation, we find instead a small positive relationship for the full sample and the paramilitary sub-sample, and no relationship among the guerrilla sub-sample.

We also present results for the guerrilla sample, among which there is no statistically significant relationship between socialization and trust. The coefficient is instead positive, though not statistically significant. On first sight, this may seem counterintuitive since guerrilla fighters receive more ideological training than paramilitaries.⁸⁷ However, we noted above that while the AUC fighters were

⁸⁵ See also Observatorio de DDR 2009.

⁸⁶ We code respondents as having been regular participants if they participated in indoctrination sessions at least every two weeks.

⁸⁷ It is possible that demobilized guerrilla fighters received less, or different, training and indoctrination than fighters still with the group. For a variety of reasons, principally relating to the guerrilla groups' relatively rigid hierarchy and heavy emphasis on group training and ideology, we believe that this is unlikely to be the case. In an additional model, not presented here, we generated an interaction term to test whether captured FARC who were heavily socialized exhibit lower levels of trust in the state, and find that this is not the case. See also Gutiérrez Sanín 2008.

demobilized en masse in a government-brokered accord, the guerrilla groups remain active. Former guerrilla members essentially deserted, singly or in groups, from the armed movement. Thus FARC and ELN combatants who enter our sample left the war voluntarily, effectively severing ties with the group and shedding their social identity upon exiting the war. As such, they may be more open to forming new bonds of trust with out-groups and state institutions. This does not necessarily imply that they disagree with the original ideological objectives of the group, as this former FARC-member explains: "After some time, the group became more economically ambitious and the social processes I believed in, were left aside. This led to an internal contradiction in myself, and additionally, those who did not agree with the new objectives were declared military target, which produced the desertion of various guerrilleros."⁸⁸

3) Child soldiering

We now turn to the relationship between child soldiering and post-demobilization trust. The recruitment of child soldiers in Colombia was far more widespread than is typically acknowledged: between August 2002 and February 2010, the Colombian government registered 3,946 underage demobilized combatants (56% from the FARC, 25% from the AUC, and 15% from the ELN).⁸⁹ The precise scale and distribution of child recruitment into war is difficult to estimate. Although the ELN pledged in 1998 to halt recruitment of children, in 2005 and 2006 over 50 child soldiers demobilized from the group. The FARC appears to have recruited large numbers of child soldiers, both through force and perhaps through the promise of economic benefits, in eight departments. The AUC and other paramilitary groups also recruited child soldiers, but at an unknown scale, as many demobilized informally rather than through the government-mandated collective demobilization process.⁹⁰

We expect that former child soldiers will exhibit significantly lower trust in the state, owing to process of asocialization. We identify former child soldiers by constructing a dummy variable to indicate fighters who were recruited below the age of 18. However, contrary to our expectation, we find no statistically significant effect of child soldiering on trust in the state, either among the entire sample of former combatants, or among either the guerrilla or paramilitary subsamples. This finding resonates with recent research by Annan and Blattman, who find that former child soldiers who were forcibly-abducted into the Lords' Resistance Army in Uganda exhibit higher levels of political engagement, including higher propensity to vote and to take on community leadership roles.⁹¹ Considering the history of domestic violence in some cases, it is further questionable if staying out of the armed group would have implied

⁸⁸ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Bogotá, April 15, 2010.

⁸⁹ Observatorio de DDR 2011.

⁹⁰ Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, retrieved at:
<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/colombia>

⁹¹ Blattman and Annan 2010; Blattman 2009.

less asocialization for former child soldiers, as exemplified by the following ex-combatant who joined the paramilitaries with 14 years of age: “I told myself, either you suffer with your dad or you are there [in the group]. [...] So, yesterday you were a civilian and your father hit you, today you have a rifle in your hands.”⁹²

4) State principles, procedures and outcomes

We now turn to a battery of independent variables that explore a set of hypotheses regarding the relationship between government policies and trust in state institutions. First, we test hypothesis 4a: ex-combatants who perceive that the state “practices what it preaches” and upholds the commitments to political and human rights embedded in the constitution, will have greater trust in the state.

Respondents were asked to rank the extent to which the government promoted democratic principles, as well as the extent to which it protected human rights, on a 1-7 scale ranging from “not at all” to “a great deal.” Among both former guerrilla and paramilitary fighters, we find a positive and significant relationship between perceptions that the state upholds civil and political rights, and trust in the state.

We next turn to hypothesis 4b, which suggests that corruption should be associated with decreased trust in the state. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the government combatted corruption. While perceived efforts by the state to combat corruption are associated with higher levels of trust among former guerrillas, we find no such relationship among former paramilitary fighters. Due to the often symbiotic relationship between the AUC and the government forces, former paramilitaries, as the following former mid-ranked fighter, may see corruption as a natural ingredient of state action which might explain their seeming indifference with respect to this question: “When I was involved in crime, the police themselves came to our commanders asking for money. So the police themselves are corrupt.”⁹³

Third, we test hypothesis 4c, regarding the relationship between the government’s provision of two critical positive public goods, security and economic opportunity, and trust in the state. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the government ensured the security of its citizens, as well as the extent to which the government combatted poverty. Among both former guerrilla and paramilitaries, perceived efforts to provide positive public goods are associated with higher levels of trust.

5) Individual well-being

We now turn to the relationship between individual well-being and trust in the state, as expressed in hypothesis 5. Respondents were asked to compare their economic position at the time of the survey to their economic position when they were combatants, on a scale ranging from much worse to much better. They were also asked whether they were employed at the time of the survey; we convert this

⁹² Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Bogotá, October 27, 2009.

⁹³ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Medellín, February 24, 2009.

response to a dummy variable which takes a value of 1 if the respondent was unemployed. Finally, respondents were asked whether they lost personal security as a result of demobilization. We construct a dummy variable which takes a value of 1 if they indicated that this was the case.

Contrary to our expectation, we find no statistically significant relationship between the individual measures of well-being, and trust in the state. Among both the paramilitary and guerrilla sub-samples, economic position relative to that as a combatant, employment, and even physical security are all unrelated to post-demobilization trust in the state.

This is a surprising finding, particularly given a policy literature that suggests that individual benefits, particularly a post-demobilization “peace dividend” and job creation are necessary to keep combatants from rejoining the conflict or falling into criminality. Based on a set of qualitative interviews, we believe that the ACR may be seen by ex-combatants as some sort of unemployment insurance. In an interview, an ex-combatant said: “Yes, yes, [I depend] almost 100 per cent [on the government’s help], because at the moment we haven’t got any employment, we have nothing.”⁹⁴ The fact that the state is seen as the only solution might compensate for the negative effect of unemployment or economic hardship. For ex-combatants, relying on the state may be a behavioural impulse learned during their active time in a military organization. Schafer calls this impulse “dependency syndrome”.⁹⁵ With respect to security, we argue that ex-combatants attribute potential security problems to the cessation of their earlier “self-provided” security, rather than to a lack of state protection. That is why personal security and trust in the state are not related. One ex-paramilitary fighter commented that during “the first days in civil life, walking around without a weapon was like being naked. I felt unprotected.”⁹⁶

6) Perceptions of the DDR program

Finally, we explore the relationship between perceptions of the government’s reintegration program, and trust in the state. We expect that ex-combatants who have a positive experience during the critical and vulnerable period of reintegration will exhibit higher levels of trust towards the state, while those who experience problems in the reintegration program will exhibit lower trust (hypothesis 6). Respondents were asked to simply grade *Alta Consejería para la Reintegración* (ACR), the civilian government agency that administered the program, on a 1-5 scale.

Among paramilitaries, we find a strong and significant relationship between the rating of the reintegration agency, and trust in the state. This suggests the potential for DDR programs to make contributions to trust and state-building in the aftermath of war. Most importantly, unfulfilled promises and bad officials contribute to a negative

⁹⁴ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Tierralta, April 30, 2009.

⁹⁵ Schafer 2007, 13.

⁹⁶ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Barrancabermeja, March 17, 2009.

perception of the ACR. For former guerrilla fighters, there is no significant relationship between ACR rating and trust in the state. This might be related to their demobilization process. Former guerrilla fighters took a decision to desert that converted them into traitors and implied a serious risk to their lives. Specific questions about reintegration benefits might lose importance in this context of an existential decision, as the following quote of a former FARC fighter reveals: “Before this [reintegration program] existed, those who deserted, were dead men.”⁹⁷

CONCLUSIONS

Ex-combatants are at once a difficult and important case for the establishment of trust in the state. By taking up arms, they challenged the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, and so demonstrated a profound distrust for the state itself. In the delicate post-demobilization period, their successful social, economic and political reintegration is seen as crucial to maintaining stability and avoiding the potential for relapse in violence. Trust is a fundamental ingredient for this process.

We found that both social and institutional theories help to explain variation in the level of trust in the state among ex-combatants. We found no evidence that social capital, as measured by standard proxies such as civic group membership, increased trust in the state. This does not mean that social capital is not important for ex-combatants’ reintegration into civilian society, but it indicates that it does not influence their relation to the state. However, we found that contrary to the warnings of some DDR practitioners, continued contact with former fighters from their own group had no negative impacts upon broader trust. Given the contrast between this finding and other studies, we claim that the implication of durable ties between fighters is contextually-dependent and should not be taken for granted. To the contrary, we found that membership in formal civil society groups devoted to demobilized persons had a positive impact, at least for former guerrilla members. This suggests both a potential avenue for future research, and a potential policy innovation, which could be exported from Colombia to other DDR processes and post-conflict arenas.

Our analysis shows that some forms of “anti-social” capital may have lasting negative effects. At least for paramilitary fighters, who did not undergo a self-selection to the demobilization process such as former guerrilla members, ideological indoctrination received in the armed group appears to have a corrosive impact on trust, even years after demobilization. One explanation for this finding is that highly charged in-group identities formed before demobilization may remain operative, and obstruct the transfer of trust to out-groups and the state. Former combatants who were recruited as children or adolescents do not show any significant relation to trust in the state. This finding suggests that some processes of early asocialization may be reversible.

⁹⁷ Interview with anonymous ex-combatant in Bogotá, April 15, 2010.

Ex-combatants who perceive that the state upholds core human and political rights, fights corruption and provides important public goods tend to trust more in the state. Likewise we found that a perceived failure to provide security and economic opportunity had downward impacts on trust. The same relationship applies to the reintegration program.

Reintegration policy within international organizations has focused primarily on economic and social reintegration rather than on political inclusion or the establishment of trust in state institutions.⁹⁸ Although trust has been cited as an issue in negotiation processes and as an objective of DDR processes, ex-combatants' trust in the state has rarely been a topic of concern. The neglect of DDR as a trust-building or state-building instrument may reflect the fact that DDR programs have typically been carried out by international actors rather than national governments. However, the Colombian case illustrates the potentially significant impact of a successful, nationally-directed DDR program. This may be an argument for greater national ownership, although more research needs to be done to explore the potential for trust-building via internally-supported or managed DDR interventions.

This study represents a first effort to systematically test the drivers of trust among former combatants using survey data. Other tools, including randomized control trials and behavioral games, may prove fruitful in estimating the impact of specific DDR interventions and program designs on trust.

Finally, we believe that post-conflict policies and processes of reconciliation and reconstruction must be understood and evaluated through the prism of trust, and that successive research must take into account the perspectives of conflict victims and indirectly war-affected populations, in order to identify policies that are conducive to both broad and integrative processes of reconstruction and healing. Trust is an "important lubricant of a social system."⁹⁹ Without it, a peaceful society seems unthinkable.

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⁹⁸ Söderström 2011b.

⁹⁹ Arrow 1974, 23.

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Tables and appendices

Table 1: Mean trust scores for ex-combatants and Colombian general population

	Ex-combatants (FIP 2008)			General population (LAPOP 2008)
	Total ex-combatants	Paramilitaries	Guerrilla	
Ombudsman's office	5.23* (1)**	5.29 (1)	5.16 (1)	4.91 (2)
National Government	4.66 (2)	5.02 (2)	4.13 (2)	4.78 (3)
Armed Forces	4.12 (3)	4.44 (3)	3.67 (4)	4.94 (1)
Constitutional Court	4.03 (4)	4.20 (4)	3.82 (3)	4.34 (7)
Justice system	3.87 (5)	4.03 (5)	3.65 (5)	4.38 (6)
Elections	3.60 (6)	3.81 (6)	3.31 (7)	4.17 (8)
Mayor's office	3.58 (7)	3.65 (7)	3.51 (6)	4.53 (4)
National Congress	3.26 (8)	3.38 (8)	3.10 (8)	4.09 (9)
Police	3.18 (9)	3.37 (9)	2.90 (9)	4.53 (5)
Political Parties	2.76 (10)	2.95 (10)	2.52 (10)	3.45 (10)
State	4.48	4.78	4.07	n.a.
ACR	5.26	5.59	4.81	n.a.

* Mean trust levels on a 1-7 scale

** Rank among institutions

Table 2: Impact of social and institutional factors on trust in the state among former combatants

Dependent variable: trust in the state															
Model	Full sample					Paramilitary sub-sample					Guerrilla sub-sample				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Group membership index	0.276 (0.507)	0.295 (0.510)	0.282 (0.526)	0.282 (0.526)	0.112 (0.535)	0.612 (0.621)	0.498 (0.629)	0.519 (0.635)	0.520 (0.636)	0.445 (0.650)	-0.692 (0.910)	-0.601 (0.899)	-0.820 (0.960)	-0.819 (0.961)	-1.396 (1.057)
Civic participation index	0.132 (0.166)	0.114 (0.168)	0.058 (0.172)	0.058 (0.172)	0.121 (0.179)	0.282 (0.209)	0.297 (0.214)	0.229 (0.217)	0.227 (0.217)	0.249 (0.226)	-0.175 (0.267)	-0.271 (0.273)	-0.284 (0.283)	-0.271 (0.284)	-0.214 (0.295)
Spends free time with ex-combatants	-0.101 (0.377)	-0.167 (0.370)	-0.124 (0.388)	-0.124 (0.388)	-0.157 (0.421)	0.226 (0.629)	0.263 (0.567)	0.368 (0.654)	0.374 (0.660)	0.414 (0.699)	-0.325 (0.447)	-0.386 (0.426)	-0.418 (0.455)	-0.396 (0.455)	-0.550 (0.511)
Member of demob organization	0.202* (0.099)	0.192 (0.101)	0.244* (0.104)	0.244* (0.104)	0.251* (0.103)	0.099 (0.122)	0.074 (0.124)	0.129 (0.127)	0.128 (0.128)	0.119 (0.128)	0.411* (0.173)	0.417* (0.180)	0.474* (0.186)	0.472* (0.188)	0.517** (0.187)
In contact with members of former group	0.022 (0.088)	0.007 (0.089)	-0.014 (0.091)	-0.014 (0.091)	-0.051 (0.093)	-0.099 (0.113)	-0.108 (0.114)	-0.149 (0.115)	-0.148 (0.115)	-0.161 (0.118)	0.230 (0.139)	0.210 (0.144)	0.237 (0.152)	0.246 (0.151)	0.197 (0.154)
Socialization	-0.143 (0.092)	-0.179 (0.095)	-0.197* (0.099)	-0.197* (0.099)	-0.177 (0.101)	-0.364* (0.168)	-0.388* (0.171)	-0.401* (0.178)	-0.401* (0.178)	-0.435* (0.181)	-0.011 (0.131)	-0.010 (0.134)	-0.027 (0.138)	-0.022 (0.138)	0.004 (0.141)
Recruited as minor	-0.025 (0.113)	-0.000 (0.131)	-0.032 (0.134)	-0.032 (0.134)	0.047 (0.137)	0.138 (0.199)	0.151 (0.220)	0.099 (0.222)	0.098 (0.223)	0.230 (0.225)	-0.100 (0.146)	-0.016 (0.175)	-0.065 (0.181)	-0.074 (0.181)	-0.059 (0.188)
Government protects democratic principles	0.306*** (0.041)	0.299*** (0.041)	0.303*** (0.042)	0.303*** (0.042)	0.290*** (0.043)	0.327*** (0.053)	0.322*** (0.053)	0.335*** (0.054)	0.335*** (0.055)	0.308*** (0.056)	0.251*** (0.069)	0.236*** (0.071)	0.241*** (0.072)	0.245*** (0.072)	0.246*** (0.071)
Government protects human rights	0.142*** (0.040)	0.145*** (0.040)	0.136*** (0.040)	0.136*** (0.040)	0.147*** (0.041)	0.164** (0.053)	0.173** (0.054)	0.163** (0.055)	0.163** (0.055)	0.176** (0.055)	0.105 (0.058)	0.102 (0.059)	0.079 (0.059)	0.074 (0.059)	0.078 (0.060)
Government fights corruption	0.113**	0.111**	0.116**	0.116**	0.113**	0.042	0.039	0.026	0.025	0.021	0.216***	0.214***	0.247***	0.247***	0.241***

	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.061)
Government provides security	0.104**	0.108**	0.109**	0.109**	0.109**	0.106*	0.102*	0.114*	0.114*	0.118*	0.124*	0.137*	0.113	0.113	0.104
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.060)
Government combats poverty	0.112***	0.111***	0.116***	0.116***	0.117***	0.100*	0.100*	0.103*	0.103*	0.115**	0.138**	0.137**	0.145**	0.149**	0.141**
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.054)
Economic status	0.062	0.057	0.080	0.080	0.071	0.024	0.027	0.048	0.047	0.045	0.088	0.087	0.105	0.104	0.095
	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.063)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.074)	(0.078)
Unemployed	-0.136	-0.146	-0.156	-0.156	-0.141	-0.151	-0.165	-0.172	-0.171	-0.135	-0.058	-0.073	-0.091	-0.099	-0.081
	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.116)	(0.116)	(0.118)	(0.130)	(0.132)	(0.137)	(0.136)	(0.140)
Lost security with demobilization	-0.305	-0.336	-0.317	-0.317	-0.235	-0.428	-0.487	-0.376	-0.373	-0.228	-0.153	-0.169	-0.216	-0.220	-0.241
	(0.196)	(0.198)	(0.205)	(0.205)	(0.205)	(0.259)	(0.265)	(0.272)	(0.276)	(0.268)	(0.283)	(0.278)	(0.292)	(0.294)	(0.308)
ACR rating	0.150**	0.170**	0.181**	0.181**	0.183**	0.230**	0.221**	0.236**	0.236**	0.221*	0.082	0.110	0.114	0.118	0.156
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.075)	(0.078)	(0.081)	(0.080)	(0.084)
<i>Pre-recruitment controls</i>															
Male	-0.035	-0.037	-0.059	-0.059	-0.027	0.267	0.270	0.235	0.234	0.290	-0.282	-0.298	-0.313	-0.298	-0.311
	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.130)	(0.130)	(0.134)	(0.210)	(0.210)	(0.217)	(0.218)	(0.219)	(0.158)	(0.160)	(0.170)	(0.172)	(0.180)
Child abuse	0.261**	0.257**	0.226**	0.226**	0.214*	0.339**	0.339**	0.282*	0.282*	0.278*	0.069	0.050	0.067	0.079	0.086
	(0.082)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.108)	(0.109)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.129)	(0.132)	(0.135)	(0.137)	(0.138)
<i>Recruitment controls</i>															
Age joined		0.004	0.008	0.008	0.007		0.003	0.010	0.010	0.014		0.010	0.011	0.012	0.006
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)		(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)		(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Joined because of economic need		-0.077	-0.059	-0.059	-0.080		-0.108	-0.081	-0.081	-0.086		-0.080	-0.071	-0.057	-0.100
		(0.092)	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.095)		(0.116)	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.119)		(0.166)	(0.170)	(0.170)	(0.177)
Joined for ideological reasons		0.214	0.160	0.160	0.175		0.444	0.309	0.312	0.327		0.110	0.086	0.081	0.164
		(0.156)	(0.161)	(0.161)	(0.163)		(0.307)	(0.317)	(0.317)	(0.343)		(0.186)	(0.194)	(0.195)	(0.195)
Forcibly Recruited		0.017	0.047	0.047	0.045		-0.239	-0.109	-0.111	-0.146		0.181	0.184	0.197	0.203
		(0.226)	(0.230)	(0.230)	(0.234)		(0.321)	(0.303)	(0.304)	(0.328)		(0.298)	(0.307)	(0.307)	(0.307)

<i>During war-time controls</i>															
Years in Group	0.025**	0.025**	0.020*					0.036**	0.036**	0.036**			0.013	0.013	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)					(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)			(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Civilian abuse	-0.080	-0.080	-0.021					-0.670	-0.668	-0.588			0.115	0.129	0.217
	(0.178)	(0.178)	(0.178)					(0.419)	(0.419)	(0.385)			(0.183)	(0.185)	(0.190)
<i>Demobilization controls</i>															
Disagreed wth demobilization									-0,022	-0,099					
									-0,184	-0,185					
Captured														0,278	0,347
														-0,275	-0,267
<i>Post-demobilization controls</i>															
Time since demobilization															
Isolated															
Supports opposition party															
Supports governing party															
Partnered															
Post-demobilization education															
Constant	0.102	0.031	-0.270	-0.270	-0.174	-0.130	-0.087	-0.466	-0.460	-0.950	0.146	-0.102	-0.262	-0.341	0.183
	(0.267)	(0.309)	(0.328)	(0.328)	(0.404)	(0.375)	(0.407)	(0.437)	(0.441)	(0.577)	(0.393)	(0.518)	(0.541)	(0.537)	(0.633)
Observations	1,270	1,256	1,190	1,190	1,169	754	747	706	706	694	504	497	472	472	463
R-squared	0.444	0.441	0.449	0.449	0.453	0.399	0.399	0.414	0.414	0.422	0.493	0.491	0.493	0.494	0.502

Robust standard errors in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Appendix A: summary statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Trust in the state	1458	4,48	1,89	1	7
State upholds democratic principles	1420	4,69	1,73	1	7
State fights corruption	1461	4,79	1,89	1	7
State protects human rights	1461	4,87	1,8	1	7
State provides security	1468	4,93	1,79	1	7
State fights poverty	1461	3,5	1,82	1	7
Post-demobilization economic well-being	1480	3,48	0,96	1	6
Lost security with demobilization	1485	0,06	0,23	0	1
Unemployed	1478	0,54	0,5	0	1
Rating of reintegration agency	1426	3,67	0,88	1	5
Spends free time with ex-coms	1485	0,02	0,12	0	1
Member of demob organization	1457	0,18	0,39	0	1
Contact with members of armed group	1461	0,68	0,47	0	1
Group membership index	1456	0,039	0,09	0	1
Civic participation	1456	0,22	0,25	0	1
Socialization	1485	0,34	0,47	0	1
Minor	1485	0,24	0,42	0	1
Male	1472	0,84	0,36	0	1
Suffered child abuse	1485	0,56	0,5	0	1
Age joined war	1461	21,17	7,5	5	54
Joined war because of economic need	1485	0,4	0,49	0	1
Joined war because of ideology	1485	0,07	0,26	0	1
Forcibly recruited by armed group	1485	0,04	0,2	0	1
Years active in armed group	1381	5,93	5	0	38,34
Participated in civilian abuse	1485	0,06	0,24	0	1
Years since demobilization	1425	2,8	1,4	0,09	17,02
Isolated	1485	0,03	0,18	0	1
Supports opposition party	1485	0,07	0,25	0	1
Supports governing party	1485	0,13	0,34	0	1

Married or with long-term partner	1485	0,64	0,48	0	1
Education level, post-demobilization	1472	4,83	1,52	1	11
Captured	1485	0,05	0,21	0	1
Disagreed with collective demobilization	1485	0,05	0,22	0	1