

### The relationship between violence, peace activism and attitude regarding reconciliation in the context of the Colombian armed conflict

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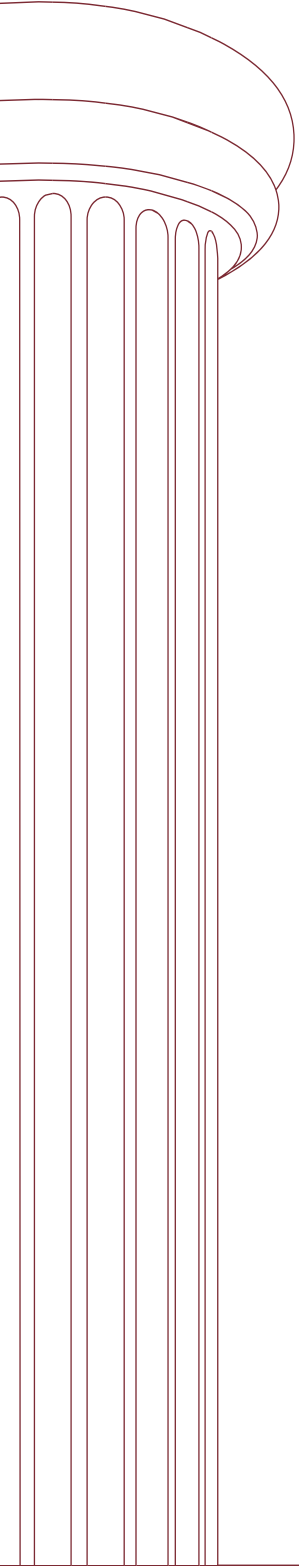
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# MAECENATA



Alina Bastian

## **The relationship between violence, peace activism and attitude regarding reconciliation in the context of the Colombian armed conflict**

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## **Abstract**

Merging survey data from the Colombian AmericasBarometer 2018 with the number of violent incidents and peace initiatives that have taken place in the respondents' respective departments of residence, this analysis attempts to improve understanding of social and contextual factors that inform individuals' attitudes in post-conflict societies. For this purpose, I develop a theoretical framework by reviewing previous research on the effects of violence, the relationship between violence and peace activism, and how these factors may contribute to a sense of agency and readiness to reconcile with former perpetrators on the part of civilians. Subsequently, I conduct a statistical interaction analysis to test if and how the prevalence of violence and peace protests inform reconciliation attitudes regarding former fighters of the two biggest guerrilla groups FARC and ELN.

Contrasting the common narrative of helpless and revengeful victimised communities, the present data suggests that the more violence per population of a department, the higher its prevalence of initiatives for positive peace. Furthermore, while readiness to reconcile cannot be predicted by prevalence of violence alone, combining it with peace protests has a positive effect on attitudes regarding reconciliation with both guerrilla groups. Even though this impact is rather moderate and only applies for some types of peace initiatives and the dichotomy "any peace protest vs none", the findings illustrate that contextual factors and civilian agency cannot be neglected in our understanding of civilian perspectives and political behaviour in post-conflict scenarios.

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## 1. Introduction

The Colombian civil war was one of the longest armed conflicts in recent years until its official termination in 2016, when the Government and the largest guerrilla group, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), finally agreed on an extensive Peace Accord (República de Colombia, 2016; López-López et al., 2018: 166-172; Kaplan, 2017: 62-70). However, other armed actors such as the second-biggest guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) or paramilitary groups were not included in these negotiations (Arjona, 2016: 85-97). Generally, peacebuilding does not only depend on the warring parties at the negotiating table (Sarmiento Santander et al., 2016: 38; Colchester et al., 2020; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019; Enloe, 2004: 193; Rojas et al., 2004: v). Instead, it inter alia requires policies that adequately and comprehensively support participation and reconciliation of perpetrators and victims of violence as well as civil society as a whole (Rojas Rodríguez, 2004: 34-37; Nasi; Rettberg, 2016: 23; Sears; Brown, 2013: 942; Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 945; Bar-Tal, 2000: 355).

As such, the Colombian Peace Agreement (CPA) and associated transitional justice policies attribute utmost importance to civilians regarding every stage of the conflict (CINEP/PPP-CERAC, 2018; Nasi; Rettberg, 2016; 2015: 111f, 145f; Kaplan, 2017: 9f; Tellez, 2019: 1057). This role can derive from a range of collective activities including interactions with armed actors or initiatives of resistance and for reconciliation (López-López et al., 2014: 111; Ballesteros de Valderrama, 2014: 26f). Furthermore, it is often thought to work in the spirit of pacifism (Rojas et al., 2004: 9; Idler et al., 2015; Kaplan, 2017) and result in agency, which in turn helps civilians to nurture a culture of peace that deems reconciliation with former perpetrators a desirable and possible outcome (García-Durán, 2005; Sarmiento Santander et al., 2019; Staub et al., 2005).

Understanding civilians as political actors is therefore necessary to evaluate the prospects of Colombian peace and reconciliation (Rettberg, 2015: 130; Mouly et al., 2016: 156; García-Durán, 2005; Kaplan, 2017: 34; Shamir; Shikaki, 2002: 185). They are not only the ones who have usually been victimised and have suffered the most due to the conflict (Bell et al., 2012; Nussio et al., 2015; Blum, 2007; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014; Novoa-Gomez, 2014), they also hold a pivotal role in the peace process and prospective reconciliation. Notwithstanding the historic invisibility of victimised civilians in Colombia (Rettberg, 2015: 106; Rojas et al., 2004: 2), the most recent wave of protests has demonstrated that Colombian civil society holds immense power and agency to express its dissatisfaction with the persisting violence or, more specifically, the lack of overall progress made since 2016 (CUT Colombia, 2021). This also illustrates why it is crucial to explore the social context in which post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation ought to take place (Rettberg, 2018: 16; Kaplan, 2017: 34).

In the spirit of shedding light on civilian agency in and after armed conflict, this paper will explore the following questions: Does the prevalence of violence and peace-related civilian protests inform people's readiness to reconcile with former perpetrators? If so, how? For this purpose, I will conduct an interaction analysis on the relationship between people's attitude regarding reconciliation with the two biggest guerrilla groups, the FARC and the ELN, and the number of incidents of violence and prevalence of peace initiatives associated with their respective department of residence. The data used is from the 2018 LAPOP AmericasBarometer (Zechmeister, 2018a), the Colombian Government's Victims' Unit (Unidad de Víctimas, Gobierno Colombiano, 2019) and the Colombian think tank Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular's (CINEP) Collective Action Database (CINEP/PPP, 2020a).

For the purpose of collating sensible hypotheses, the paper commences with an overview of relevant literature on the effects of violence, reconciliation attitude and mechanisms through which peace mobilisation relates to both victimisation and conflict outcome attitudes. I then introduce and discuss my methodological approach as well as the data used for the analysis. Subsequently, the findings are presented in statistical and substantive terms. As will be seen, the combination of the number of violent incidents and the question of whether a department of residence had any peace protests at all is significant to reconciliation attitudes regarding both guerrilla groups. Furthermore, specific types of peace initiatives seem to be more relevant in informing people's outlook on reconciliation than others. Likewise, socio-demographic characteristics like ideology, education, age and sex are also found to potentially affect these predictions to a significant extent. Overall, the present sample is characterised by much division and few consistent relationships between the variables explored. After engaging in some critical considerations of the analysis, its potential and limitations, I therefore conclude that insights into civilian agency vis-à-vis attitude formation is very promising but needs to be explored more deeply in analyses that consider an even wider range of factors.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Violence, and political violence (e.g. guerrilla violence) in particular, is widely associated with profound emotional and political changes to the fabric of society (Sears; Brown, 2013: 78; Espinosa et al., 2017; WHO; UNODC; UNDP, 2014). Such effects are often equalised with a deterioration or at least disruption of social relations and the risks of potentially endless cycles of violence. As about 60% of conflicts relapse within ten years after their respective peace agreements (Elbadawi et al., 2008), finding a way out of this spiral and towards reconciliation is crucial, especially in protracted conflicts like the Colombian one (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013; Lederach, 2005: 90).

While it is no longer true that intergroup forgiveness and reconciliation are as understudied as previously claimed (Noor et al., 2008), there are still wide gaps in relation to the conditions and factors hampering or supporting a society in its process of moving towards sustainable peace. Researchers have increasingly studied the relationship between victimisation and political attitudes including people's opinions on (former) adversaries or transitional justice policies (Meernik, 2019; Weintraub et al., 2015; Aguilar et al., 2011), and conducted at least some case studies on collective action in conflict-ridden areas (Wood, 2003; Krause, 2018; Kaplan, 2017). However, Arjona (2016a: 35-40, 65-74, 180-252) remains the only one who has considered the three pillars somewhat jointly: in her discussion of how FARC and ELN violence and governance relate to civil resistance, she also mentions the formation of political attitudes. This stands in stark contrast to various claims that peacebuilding efforts in situations as messy and complex as the Colombian case require comprehensive understanding of all societal factors that could potentially foster or impede long-term peace (Rettberg, 2018; Nasi; Rettberg, 2016). This is why my research question if and how contextual factors like violence and peace activism inform attitudes regarding reconciliation with former perpetrators deserves attention.

To build a meaningful theoretical framework for this analysis, I first present some general assumptions about group-based emotions, identities, experiences and attitude formation in contexts of armed conflict. Subsequently, I discuss earlier research on violence, victimisation and their negative as well as positive effects on society in more detail. This is followed by a section on received knowledge about reconciliation in and after situations of violence and armed conflict. Finally, I review the concept of peace initiatives, give some examples of collective action born from violence and connect the thinking about violence, peace activism and attitude regarding reconciliation in a final step to derive my hypotheses.



## **2.1 General assumptions**

My general assumptions are derived from a variety of sources in the fields of peace and conflict studies and psychological research. Firstly, contextual factors are presumably very important in shaping people's identity, behaviour and attitudes (Aguilar et al., 2011; Foweraker, 1995; Thoene et al., 2020). As such, both violence and peace initiatives may constitute a form of socialisation (Aguilar et al., 2011: 1403; Courtheyn, 2016: 933; Bar-Tal, 2000: 355), are relational in nature and embedded in their respective community contexts (Krause, 2018). Accordingly, especially in protracted conflict, human behaviour is conceived to be a function of a person's physical and social environment. This implies shared psychological states such as beliefs, attitudes, values, identities, emotions, motivations and behavioural practices (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 925-927), which can be subject to change alongside the respective contextual factors (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 943).

Secondly, hardships faced in war are generally assumed to be a collective experience that transcends vast parts of a society in armed conflict (Punamäki, 1990: 76; Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 43). This however does not negate that violence may be very geographically concentrated and thus results in extremely divergent civilian experiences of the conflict (Tellez, 2019: 1054; Le Billon et al., 2020). In Colombia, this is demonstrated by residents of rural areas (who have generally been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict (CINEP/PPP-CERAC, 2018: 2-23)) showing much higher rates of conflict-related mental health concerns and distinct political opinions compared to those in urban areas (Tellez, 2019: 1067-1070; Gaviria et al., 2016). This paper hence follows the constructivist assumption that violence is a factor in group-based emotions, which in turn constitute an active component of one's identity, attitudes, behaviours and actions (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2008: 392f). Moreover, victimisation is thought to be easily transmitted intergenerationally and within a community a person identifies with (Aguilar et al., 2011; Huddy, 2013; Staub et al., 2005: 300).

## **2.2 Violence, victimisation and their effects on society**

A comprehensive understanding of violence and its effects is very important because of the potential damage to social relations, overall wellbeing and development (Espinosa et al., 2017; WHO; UNODC; UNDP, 2014; Duffield, 2002: 87; UNGA, 2015; Holmes et al., 2006). It thus seems logical that people would make their political decisions in situations of armed conflict according to their personal or community's perceived risk of harm (Kaplan, 2017: 52; Krause, 2018: 245; Tellez, 2019: 1055).

In the spirit of building a meaningful framework for this analysis, I want to define some key terms. Firstly, VIOLENCE shall here refer to all acts of physical, personal, intended violence that serve a

political goal and, as such, are a necessary condition of armed conflict (Gleditsch et al., 2002). This explicitly does not encompass structural violence – that is, deprivation exerted by a social system like inequality, poverty or cultural oppression (Galtung, 1969; WHO; 1996: 4; Diehl, 2016). While structural violence clearly provides helpful insights into violent contexts like the Colombian conflict, it is far more difficult to measure than incidents of killings or kidnapping, for example. Additionally, the Victim's Registry RUV does not go beyond acts of personal violence either. Concretely, it applies the definition of the *Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras* ("Law on Victims and Land Restitution"). According to this, VICTIMS are "people who individually or collectively have suffered harm" from violations of International Humanitarian Law or other grave violations of International Human Rights. This means that direct victims' partners, siblings and children as well as third parties who were harmed when intervening to prevent victimisation and members of the Colombian Army can also be registered as victims. In contrast, members of armed groups that are deemed illegal (e.g. guerrillas) do not have victim status unless they were minors at the moment of their demobilisation (Ministerio del Interior, República de Colombia, 2011: Art. 3). Since the RUV is the most integrated source of information on victimisation in Colombia (Rettberg, 2015: 121), its definition practically dictates the present focus on personal violence.

As to the effects of violence and victimisation, the findings beyond the assertion that intense violence has an enormous impact (Staub et al., 2005: 299; Punamäki, 1990) diverge greatly. Researchers do not even agree on the direction of such effects. To the contrary, some scholars suggest no consistent or no linear relationship between victimisation and mental health disorders, the formation of attitudes and political behaviour (Nussio et al., 2015; Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016; Barber, 2013; Weintraub et al., 2015; Meernik, 2019; Summerfield, 2002). Meanwhile others argue that victims and nonvictims constitute very different groups in terms of their psychological wellbeing, and political activities and convictions (Balcells, 2012; Gaviria et al., 2016; Bell et al., 2012; Londoño et al., 2012; Rojas, 2004; Canetti et al., 2013; Dyrstad, 2013; Brewer and Hayes, 2011; Samii, 2013).

What most of these studies still have in common, however, is the assumption that exposure to violence causes widespread trauma. While key themes of this narrative like psychological wounds, healing and recovery (e.g. Staub et al., 2005; Moon, 2009) are intuitively located at the individual level, trauma in armed conflict is presumed to transcend a single person's fate (Espinosa et al., 2017: 851). Instead, according to insights from social psychology, identity theories and trauma science, violence affects people collectively if they identify with or are emotionally close to a targeted person or group (Thoene et al., 2020; Paéz et al., 2001; 2013; Stein, 2013). As Novoa-Gomez (2014: 43) sums up regarding the Colombian context, "the roots of this wound are not in the individual but in the

collective” – whether that is through historical or other group-based trauma (Staub et al., 2005: 302; Leisey; Lewis, 2016; Krause, 2018).

Like for the impact of violence and victimisation, the literature is divided on whether the presumed trauma leads to mostly positive or negative consequences for civilians and civil society as a whole. This largely goes back to people having different levels of agency to cope with violent attacks. Even differences in coping strategies and abilities, however, can potentially be either a sign of resilience or of damage (Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 41-43). To shed some light on these ambiguous findings, the following sections will compare arguments and evidence for negative and positive effects of violence and victimisation, respectively.

### **2.2.1 Negative effects of violence**

As stated before, armed conflict is commonly assumed to negatively affect mental health by traumatising entire generations, increasing psychopathy, aggression, substance abuse and overall psychological stress (Bell et al, 2012; Sears; Brown, 2013; Punamäki, 1990; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: ix-x; Novoa-Gomez, 2014). Additionally, scholars find that violence can shatter trust (Colchester et al., 2020: 9; Widner, 2004; Rettberg, 2020: 96; Meernik; Guerrero, 2014: 395) and strengthen in- and outgroup as well as threat perception (Meernik, 2019: 327f; Fisher et al., 2013: 499; Aggestam, 2014: 156). This may in turn fuel hostility towards the outgroup (Beber et al., 2014; Balcells, 2012). Overall, traumatic events are thought to disrupt lives and therefore generate powerful emotions (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2008: 385). Some examples include increased fear, anxiety, anger and resentment and decreased empathy, which all potentially perpetuate pre-existing antagonisms (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2008: 385; Bell et al., 2012; Gaviria et al., 2016; Halperin, 2008; Nussio et al., 2015; Cardozo, 2003). The dominant narrative also includes a causal relationship between victimisation and vengeance (Meernik, 2019: 328; WHO; UNODC; UNDP, 2014); hence, higher risks of victims normalising violence or brutalising, dehumanising, radicalising and de-individualising the outgroup and desiring violent revenge or retribution (Aggestam, 2014: 155; Stein, 2013: 386; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: ix-xi; López-López et al., 2014; Summerfield, 2002; Canetti et al., 2013). Regarding Burundi and Rwanda, for instance, trauma is even described as a “cause of violence” (Moon, 2009: 76).

Accordingly, the described tension rooted in collective negative emotions of victims and civilians exposed to violence is found to decrease their belief in the possibility of peace and reconciliation with (former) perpetrators (Espinosa et al., 2017: 850f; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: xi; Bakke et al., 2009; Hall et al., 2018; Stein, 2013).

## 2.2.2 Positive side effects of violence

As to the positive effects of violence, it is necessary to remark that violence is never desirable, as the negative effects on development and society as a whole by far outweigh the positive ones. Positive in this sense means nothing more than not limited to the complete deterioration that is commonly assumed, as in the case of residents of traditionally neglected areas developing unprecedented agency, for instance.

In this vein, some scholars have expressed their reservation about narratives that presume that victimisation automatically translates to trauma, suffering, increased fear and hatred as well as a desire for vengeance (Nussio et al., 2015: 351f; Barber, 2013). For Colombia specifically, research suggests that *La Violencia*<sup>1</sup> may not have been as detrimental to social cooperation as one might expect. Instead, communal responses to the violence engendered community solidarity, which, in many areas, helped to decrease or end the violence (Kaplan, 2017: 161). This connects to a number of factors associated with the impact of violence. Firstly, as McKeon (2005: 567) puts brilliantly:

*“As people become directly affected by armed conflict, they develop a central interest in contributing to its resolution. Living alongside the armed actors, they have greater need, and greater potential to take part in peacemaking efforts.”*

Accordingly, victimised communities in Colombia are found to predominantly stand behind peace (Kaplan, 2017: 308); Rojas et al., 2004: v) as well as the CPA and most of its concessions to former perpetrators (Tellez, 2019: 1055; Arjona, 2016a; Weintraub et al., 2015; Meernik, 2019). Arjona (2016b) finds that Yes-votes in the 2016 referendum on the initial version of the CPA<sup>2</sup> was at its maximum in areas with guerrilla presence. Additionally, she ascertains that victimisation by the FARC is associated with a higher approval rate in the referendum than non-FARC victimisation.

Moreover, some scholars observe that victimised communities are more willing to compromise because of a mere risk reduction calculation (Tellez, 2019: 1068-1070; Kaplan, 2017: 40; Meernik, 2019: 328-332) or having surpassed a certain tolerance level, resulting in so-called “war fatigue” and readiness to leave the past behind (García-Durán, 2005: 44f; Prieto, 2012a; 2012b; Albó, 1993: 46). This can in turn make peaceful coexistence possible locally even when the conflict has not been resolved on a national level (Prieto, 2012a; 2012b). Further contrasting the arguments discussed above, there is diverse empirical evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Aceh, Uganda and Colombia showing that violence and victimisation have led to increased pro-social behaviour including growing trust, political and community participation as well as willingness to cooperate with one’s

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<sup>1</sup> A very violent period in the 1950s-1960s that started off the Colombian conflict, see e.g. Arjona, 2014: 13 or Kaplan, 2017: 70-81; 133-173.

<sup>2</sup> The initial version of the CPA was put to a popular referendum, which failed unexpectedly, supposedly because of the high prevalence of fake information spread by various conservative forces. The initial text was then edited slightly and adopted by the Colombian parliament without another referendum shortly after (see Tellez, 2019: 1055; Nasi; Rettberg, 2016: 22f).

outgroup (Tellez, 2019: 1056; Sacipa-Rodriguez, 2014a: 68; Bauer et al., 2016; Bellows; Miguel, 2009; Blattman, 2009; Shewfelt, 2009). Additionally, victims can experience politisation due to omnipresent violence, which often goes along with being more informed on political issues (Punamäki, 1990: 81f; Matanock; Garbiras-Díaz, 2018: 651)

While there is ambiguity about the durability of such effects (Balcells, 2012: 334-336; Aguilar et al., 2011: 1403), there are manifold reports of short- to mid-term impacts. Concretely, exploring the period from 1978 to 2003, García-Durán (2005: 144f) finds that Colombian protest and resistance initiatives for peace are highly correlated with the level of combat deaths, forced disappearances and kidnappings. This tendency is reflected by qualitative evidence. As such, community management or autonomy organisations (so-called *Juntas*<sup>3</sup>) have predominantly formed needs-based and demand-driven as a response to violence (García-Durán, 2005: 40, 140-148; Kaplan, 2017: 73, 157-161). Another example would be victims and former perpetrators peacefully sharing workspaces, schools and other public infrastructure for delimited periods of time (Prieto, 2012a).

Similarly, communities in neglected areas tend to be closer-knitted and cohesive (Kaplan, 2017: 70), which in turn is thought to be a condition for engagement in socially and politically constructive activities and their success (Kaplan, 2017: 39f, 70; Meernik, 2019: 323, 325, 332). García-Durán (2005: 48) and Archila Neira et al. (2019: 14) also find that situations of violence in Colombia have typically led to diverse and plural peace organisation committed to (positive) peace alternatives. This indicates that victims may not favour retribution and revenge as much as commonly feared (Elcheroth, 2006; Killian et al., 2017; Rettberg, 2014). In fact, Rettberg (2015: 133, 143) suggests that social proximity between victims and perpetrators is positively related to willingness to forgive and reconcile, which may explain why victimised people predominantly voted in favour of the CPA (Arjona, 2016b).

Overall, the resilience and active coping strategies of victimised communities seem to have been underestimated (Hernández, 2002; Meernik, 2019: 325). This does not automatically mean that these communities and people are not traumatised, but it questions whether the effects of violence and trauma are as homogenous as portrayed by scholars and policymakers. Instead, the ways in which political behaviour is impacted by violence appear to be anything but straightforward (see also Barber, 2013; Novoa-Gomez, 2014; Beber et al., 2014; García-Durán, 2005: 149).

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<sup>3</sup>Their full name in Spanish is *Juntas de acción comunal*, which loosely translates to 'Community action boards'. Since 'boards' does not entirely reflect the quality of such institutions, I use *junta* in its original. A *junta* generally describes a (usually democratically elected) forum through which residents of a municipality or community coordinate to solve local problems and, in some cases, even provide public goods. They originally emerged during the *La Violencia* period in the late 1950s and are reasonably widespread in large parts of Colombia, but especially in historically conflictive areas. The violent circumstances arguably contributed to their emergence and they were often intended to enable peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. However, *juntas* were not specifically established for protective strategies during war (for a longer discussion of *juntas*, see e.g. Kaplan, 2017: 13f, 79-82, 110-161, 174, 194-247).

## **2.3 Reconciliation in and after situations of violence and armed conflict**

### **2.3.1 Definition of reconciliation**

Since the effects of violence are diverse, formal conflict resolution is only one necessary step towards sustainable peace and long-term development (Bar-Tal, 2000: 355; López-López et al., 2018: 288; Sears; Brown, 2013: 943). This makes reconciliation very important. Regarding Colombia, it is described as “el corazón de la paz” (“the heart of peace”) (CINEP/PPP, 2019: 47) and some argue that it is a means to prevent further violence (Staub, 2013: 576). This already points to the term RECONCILIATION being associated with many meanings, and very hard to measure (Aggestam, 2014: 157; Meernik, 2019: 324, 326; Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 518f). As a buzzword in the policy world, reconciliation either encapsulates a wide range of peacebuilding activities or is focused on the political settlement and resolution parts of a conflict (Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 517f; Johnston, 1996: 90). In contrast, various other sources conceive reconciliation as the individual and collective process of leaving the past behind and re-establishing relations, mutual acceptance and a peaceful vision for living together (Staub et al., 2005: 301; Staub, 2013: 582; Nadler et al, 2008: 4; Bakke et al., 2009: 1014f; Bar-Tal, 2000: 351-353; Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 533).

The more psychologically-oriented approach also includes some degree of victims healing as well as forgiving former perpetrators – hence, developing more inclusive identities or positive attitudes towards the adversarial outgroup (Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 520, 527; Bar-Tal, 2000: 356f; Espinosa et al., 2017: 854f; Staub et al., 2005: 300-302; Noor et al., 2008; Castrillón-Guerrero et al., 2018). Politically, reconciliation is also often understood as including the promotion of community building, legitimacy, citizen participation and the development of new norms that guide societal interactions (Aggestam, 2014: 157; CINEP/PPP, 2019: 49).

Reconciliation and forgiveness are often used interchangeably although the latter arguably describes an individual process more than a community-based one, which would directly relate to political activities (Staub et al., 2005: 301). On this note, however, it is worth noting that there is evidence from case studies in Chile and Northern Ireland showing that forgiveness (if defined with delimitation to reconciliation) appears to predict reconciliation intentions (Noor et al., 2008). Thus, it can generally be assumed that the two are closely related (López-López et al., 2018: 288; Scobie; Scobie, 1998; McCullough et al., 1997). Logically, readiness to forgive also correlates with the desired depth of reconciliation – hence, whether people only favour peaceful coexistence with former perpetrators or whether they are happy to welcome them into their closer social circles (López-López et al., 2018: 163f; Meernik, 2019: 326f). This alludes to reconciliation being a continuum that reaches from modicum tolerance to fundamental changes in attitudes and behaviours of the general public,

and former victims and perpetrators alike (Meernik, 2019: 326f; López-López et al., 2018: 163-165; Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 945).

Similarly, Rettberg and Ugarriza's (2019: 527) extensive study of related literature and the Colombian population's understanding of reconciliation reveals that reconciliation is mostly conceived as a process of political nature. Subsequently, the 1.843 respondents of their representative sample thought of psychological, economic and juridical dimensions of moving past violence and re-establishing relations and cooperation within society. Complementing this, Bar-Tal (2000: 356f) argues that reconciliation has an important cultural dimension because of the manifold ways in which it touches on the formation of new beliefs regarding former adversaries, one's own society and the relationship between the two. Thus, the overall aim of political reconciliation is creating and opening up spaces within which citizens who were formerly divided by violence can consolidate conflicts peacefully (Schaap, 2004).

### **2.3.2 Determinants of reconciliation**

Beyond semantics, the question of how societies can reconcile is perhaps the most crucial one assuming that it may at times be lethal not to do so. Given that reconciliation requires personal and collective transformation in the sense of attitudinal and emotional change (Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 530), a few factors can encourage the sentiment and readiness. These include successful conflict resolution (i.e. stopping the harm as a condition to heal), a climate of dialogue, mutual understanding, goodwill, acceptance and perspective-taking as well as truth and justice (Bar-Tal, 2000: 361f; Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016: 530).

Empirically, while Shamir and Shikaki (2002) find that Israelis' and Palestinians' belief in reconciliation was related to their expectation of the success of transitional justice policies (e.g. truth-seeking or judicial persecution of former perpetrators), Dyrstad et al. (2011) observe that ethnic affinity trumped all other individual and contextual factors in people's support for peace and reconciliation in Northern Macedonia. Since the Colombian armed conflict is not an identity conflict as such but rather runs along ideological lines, its prospects for reconciliation are likely to be higher (Tellez, 2019: 1056f).

Nevertheless, trauma responses like generalisation and avoidance can interfere with reconciliation attitudes (Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 48-53). Earlier studies in Colombia have postulated that repairing the psychological damage is essential for reconciliation (Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 41). To some extent, for those directly affected by violence, however, thin reconciliation can be seen as a necessity rather than a choice (Meernik, 2019: 332). This argument certainly matches the results of the 2016

referendum and previous studies in which victimised people were predominantly positive regarding reconciliation and the peace process (Arjona, 2016b; Meernik, 2019; Rettberg, 2015: 137). At the same time, there are some scholars that find no significant differences between Colombian victims' and nonvictims' reconciliation attitudes or simply conclude that the omnipresent ambiguity implies that there are other factors interfering with the relation between victimisation and reconciliation attitudes (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Matanock; Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Precisely, Meernik (2019) makes several such observations: firstly, people from strongly victimised areas are more likely to believe in the prospects of reconciliation than their lesser affected counterparts. Secondly, people who have personally experienced violence are neither more nor less likely to hold such attitudes. Finally, people's convictions regarding reconciliation are generally highly dependent on their preferences regarding the contentious issues of the conflict (e.g views on coca and cocaine play a critical role in explaining people's opinions about reconciliation) (Meernik, 2019: 324-326).

Similarly, Weintraub et al. (2015) identify an inverted-U relationship between past insurgent violence and vote share for President Juan Manuel Santos, the pro-peace candidate in the 2014 election, as he performed better in communities with moderate levels of guerrilla (and especially FARC) violence and poorly in communities with both very high and very low violence. This also matches Arjona's (2016a) argument that the prevalence and type of guerrilla presence or governance matters greatly for long-term development as well as efforts in the spirit of peace like reconciliation.

Finally, another factor that is repeatedly mentioned as potentially relevant for victims' versus nonvictims' attitude regarding reconciliation is the prevalence of peace initiatives. While it does not become clear which direction the mechanism runs in or if it is simply a so-called "yeast effect" both ways, victims are observed to be more active in civilian efforts for peace, which may result from their preconceived perception of the needs, possibilities and agencies of reconciliation as well as shape those (García-Durán, 2005; Meernik: 331f; Arjona, 2016a: 305; Bellows; Miguel, 2009; Johnston, 1996: 73-84).

## **2.4 Peace initiatives as a product of and factor in and after armed conflict**

### **2.4.1 Definition of peace initiatives**

As with violence and victimisation, a concise definition of peace initiatives is necessary. There are of course numerous interpretations and wordings regarding peace action. In summary, what they share is a focus on civilian-led nonviolent activities advocating for and contributing to negotiation as a solution to the violent conflict as well as a future characterised by positive peace or a "culture of peace" (Rojas et al., 2004: 3; Ballesteros de Valderrama, 2014; López-López et al., 2014: 119).



Accordingly, they are a direct response to violence and armed conflict (García-Durán, 2005: 44, 145; Kaplan, 2017: 3, 300-304). Logically, armed (and often protracted) conflict is a condition for peace mobilisation as there would be no reason to protest for peace if peace was already present (García-Durán, 2005: 39f, 140-156; Kaplan, 2017: 163; Foweraker, 1995: 53).

Peace activists and their protests are delimited from armed resistance (e.g. the FARC or ELN against the political establishment) by their legality and adherence to the principle of nonviolence (Schneider, 2009: 6; Foweraker, 1995: 26). While the legal judgement perhaps fits better to democratic regimes where protesters' rights are not questioned and repressed as much as they are in Colombia (Rodríguez, 2016; Collins, 2021a; 2021b), it is still crucial to differentiate between guerrilla and civilian resistance, especially as they constitute adversaries in the present case study. The applied term PEACE INITIATIVES also specifically does not equate all collective action for peace with peace movements (Foweraker, 1995: 38). Overall, it describes actions geared towards a peaceful solution to an armed conflict and way forward. The possible organisations, motives, actors and participants of such initiatives are found to be quite diverse (Kaplan, 2017: 31; Nussio et al, 2015; CINEP/PPP, 2019; Sarmiento Santander, 2016: 30f; García-Durán, 2005: 42f; Foweraker, 1995: 19f, García-Durán et al., 2004). As such, they can inter alia take the form of marches, workshops, forums, strikes or takeovers (Schneider, 2009: 6). This variety is generally found to be a result of diverging experiences in war – whether that is in turn due to a different form of victimisation (Rettberg, 2015: 114), the history and type of contentious conflict or the geographic and institutional characteristics of the respective region (García-Durán, 2005: 41, 43, 48, 134, 148-156; Arjona, 2014).

In Colombia, community management and coordinated protests constitute the most prevalent types of civilian strategy choices (Kaplan, 2017: 302). While the former (including *Juntas*) are very relevant for grassroots peace efforts in Colombia (Kaplan, 2017), there are various reasons why this paper focuses on other forms of peace initiatives. Partly, CINEP's otherwise very extensive dataset on Collective Actions for Peace only includes mobilisations, strikes, road blockages, civil resistance, takeovers and hunger strikes (CINEP, 2020b: 19f; 2020c: 9-11). Additionally, there are already numerous studies on peace communities or zones of peace while less structured resistance has not been given the same attention (Arjona, 2014: 4). Finally, the Colombian Interior Ministry lists over 5000 *Juntas*, which differ largely with respect to their organisational structure, scope and general approach. It is also impossible to assess which *Juntas* work in the wide field of peace(building) and which do not (Ministerio del Interior, Gobierno Colombiano, 2019).

In view of these considerations, PEACE INITIATIVES generally refers to the activities resulting from civilians going beyond victimhood and helplessness and instead acting as political actors in the spirit of positive peace when facing violence (Kaplan, 2017: 3; Rettberg, 2015: 120). However, bearing in mind

that this is not the complete repertoire of civilian actors for peace, the focus of peace initiatives in the context of the present empirical analysis mostly lies on mobilisations, strikes, road blockages, civil resistance, takeovers and hunger strikes.

#### **2.4.2 Examples of collective action born from violence**

As previously mentioned, violence is commonly thought to be a mobilising factor for the reasons stated above. Indeed, Colombia has seen numerous and diverse local peace initiatives during (and after) the conflict (Meernik, 2019: 322f; CINEP/PPP, 2019). This illustrates both community resilience and what an important role local neighbourhood relations can play in responding to living circumstances in armed conflict. As such, creating networks of various kinds has helped construct local peace in many Colombian towns and regions (Sarmiento Santander, 2016: 38f; Sacipa-Rodriguez, 2014b). Some examples include communities attempting to persuade armed actors to abide by certain rules in their territories (Idler et al., 2015) or indigenous communities building and maintaining their own organisational and governing structures to achieve territorial peace (Serrano Pérez, 2016; Arjona, 2016a). Generally, there is much anecdotal documentation of indigenous and feminist organizing for positive peace including campaigns against violence (and even specific kidnappings), neoliberal economic policies and in support of indigenous culture (Kaplan, 2017: 74f). Many of these are also part of the Colombian NGO REDEPAZ's initiative '100 Municipalities for Peace', an effort to accompany the establishment of grassroots activities for peace (Mouly et al., 2016: 135).

Evidence from Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Israel/Palestine and the Philippines also demonstrates that civilian grassroots organisations can be very successful in changing hostile narratives. By producing new meanings and a better understanding of the factors causing violent behaviour in the first place, they can make major contributions to rapprochement with former adversaries and perpetrators (Foweraker, 1995: 49-53; García-Durán, 2005: 54). In Kaplan's (2017: 17-51) extensive study of civilian resistance in Colombia, he finds that this may also include tapping collective memory and knowledge, developing best practices of dealing with threats and thus achieving new agency.

Similarly, Krause (2018) observes that communities that adapt to a hostile environment (e.g. by effectively engaging with armed actors) tend to develop resilient agency. Various case studies support this finding. Mouly et al. (2016) for example conclude that peace zones and civilian resistance in the Colombian department Nariño have offered a sense of agency to people who had previously been forced to abide violent actors. Rojas (2004) adds that peace zones in Nariño and Santander contributed to transitioning from a perspective centred around victimisation to a notion of empowerment and agency of the local community. Peace initiatives born of violence can at times even flourish into

comprehensive local conflict resolution processes that include dialogue with armed actors, openly protesting aggressions and other forms of resistance (Kaplan, 2017). Altogether, these collective actions are viewed as nonmilitary pacification that connect to efforts in the spirit of grassroot-led (re-)conciliation, development and building a culture of peace including resilience, agency and empowerment of civil society (Kaplan, 2017: 10-14, 17, 79-82; 110-134; 273-275; Sarmiento Santander, 2016: 30f; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: 9; Arjona, 2016a: 63, 68-72).

Conceptually, these social struggles are a search, generation or recovery of space that is characterised by comprehensive peacefulness (Rojas, 2004: 72; Sarmiento Santander, 2016: 38f; Archila Neira et al., 2019: 18; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: 9f). One empirical example for reclaiming such a space is the San José de Apartadó Peace Community's massacre commemorations. Instead of vindictive violence, the community took on an alternative, transformative and emancipatory approach guided by the idea of internal and external solidarity (Courtheyn, 2016).

This illustrates that peace in relation to these kinds of initiatives can generally be understood as building a community and creating an alternative in the spirit of self-determination, solidarity and dignity as well as a collective identity and ethos (Kaplan, 2017: 110-134). Furthermore, this observation also matches the qualitative evidence of the first wave of Colombian peace mobilisation from 1986 to 1989 being strongly related to growing number of political assassinations, massacres and disappearances directed by paramilitaries against activists and social leaders. Likewise, increasing kidnappings (especially by the FARC and the ELN) led to massively supported *No más* ('No more' [violence]) protests in 1999. Generally, connections between violence and protests have been observed to be most visible for assassinations, massacres and forced disappearances, attacks on the population and public infrastructure as well as general contexts of general insecurity and violence (García-Durán, 2005: 145-147). Overall, there is strong evidence for the geography of violence also being the "geography of peace" in the sense of mobilisation (García-Durán, 2005: 156). As such, numerous sources indicate that Colombian civil society has responded to armed conflict by collectively organising and holding mass protests (Kaplan, 2017: 70-79, 83f; Rojas et al., 2004; Schneider, 2009; García-Durán, unknown: 16; García-Durán et al., 2004; Mouly et al., 2016; Sarmiento-Santander et al., 2016; Cameron, 2000). In fact, this agency and civil society participation in peace are found to have increased greatly since the 1990s in spite of persisting repression and violence (Rodríguez, 2016; Kaplan, 2017: 70f; Schneider, 2009: 2f).

### **2.4.3 The relationship between peace initiatives and reconciliation**

As opening up political spaces through which feelings of injustice can be worked through collaboratively is necessary for successful reconciliation (Hutchison; Bleiker, 2008: 386), peace initiatives can

make a major contribution (Schaap, 2004; García-Durán, 2005: 46f, 60f; Sarmiento Santander et al., 2016: 38f).

Humanising former adversaries and perpetrators (e.g. by fostering the way in which victims and perpetrators relate to each other and their respective motives) can lead to a culture in which reconciliation may be nourished based on the emergence of a common identity (Aggestam, 2014: 156f; Staub et al., 2005; 2013: 577; Lederach, 2020; Kaplan, 2017: 249; García-Durán, 2005: 54). In terms of these cultural changes, activists may be able to create images and symbols that help shift narratives about the conflict and help people (and victims especially) to make sense of it (Hernández, 2002; Aggestam, 2014: 156f; García-Durán, 2005: 57f). By the means of peace initiatives, communities can thus learn to cope and build structures that make them more aware of their own agency in resisting violence (Rettberg, 2017; Barber, 2013; Aggestam, 2014: 155; Punamäki, 1990; García-Durán, 2005: 60f; Kaplan, 2017: 33-53; Noor et al., 2008: 819f; Hernández, 2002; Thoene et al., 2020: 4f; Tovar Guerra, 2014).

Meernik (2019: 332) suggests a mechanism by which a shared exposure to violence may be channelled in productive reactions and result in increased resilience, which then leads to community bonding over peace initiatives and developing shared prosocial attitudes and finally recognising the importance of reconciliation for the respective community to heal and be restored. This can also mean that victims become more engaged and make positive contributions to their communities during and in the aftermath of violence (Meernik, 2019: 328f; Bauer et al., 2016, Tellez, 2019). Particularly growing civilian participation in political issues is seen as an important channel in the nexus between victimisation and the ability to deem reconciliation possible (Meernik, 2019: 327; Foweraker, 1995: 46f; Guerrero Guevara et al., 2018).

Differently put, victimised communities and people may feel more capable and in possession of the necessary social infrastructure to implement local conflict resolution processes and build a so-called culture of peace (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 945; Foweraker, 1995: 50-62; Kaplan, 2017: 40-53, 307f; Theidon, 2007; Lederach, 2005: 97; Sacipa-Rodriguez, 2014b). The term CULTURE OF PEACE is frequently mentioned in the context of civilian peace action in Colombia and refers to learned behaviours and mechanisms of nonviolent coexistence, e.g. conciliatory ways of resolving disagreement and conflicts (Kaplan, 2017: 40-53; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: viii; Ballesteros de Valderrama, 2014; Schneider, 2009: 85). *Juntas* for example were originally intended to foster reconciliation and coexistence, which indicates that they as well as other initiatives dedicated to positive peace may be associated with higher belief in reconciliation towards former perpetrators on the part of activists and citizens in their catchment areas (Kaplan, 2017: 9-50; 79-84, 187-206). On this note, geographical proximity to peace initiatives and processes is widely assumed to be crucial for postconflict

reconciliation as “it is lived locally” (Theidon, 2007: 88 and CINEP/PPP, 2019; 31, Archila Neira et al., 2019: 18f; Mouly et al., 2016: 132; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019: 209; Sarmiento Santander et al., 2016: 38f; Le Billon et al., 2020).

While some scholars argue that communities protesting can make reconciliation and dialogue harder because it is a clear affront (Kaplan, 2017: 49-52; Krause, 2018: 245), the fact that 64-67% of peace initiatives in Colombia from 1978 to 2018 were dedicated to positive peace, and many even to reconciliation itself (Sarmiento Santander et al., 2019: 8; García-Durán, 2005: 143), indicates that the overwhelming approach is one of opening spaces and leaving the past behind.

Overall, it is widely agreed that peace initiatives’ results are mostly non-tangible and time-delayed (i.e. changes in values and cultural practices rather than direct effects on postconflict policies) but should neither be underestimated nor ignored (Kaplan, 2017: 17-20; García-Durán, 2005: 36-38, 56f, 283-295; Arjona, 2014). In fact, such changes in values, identities and cultural behaviours relate closely to reconciliation by mirroring the transition from negative/violent to positive/peaceful interactions (Idler et al., 2015; García-Durán, 2005: 296; Kaplan, 2017: 307f, 214-216). Regarding peace zones in Nariño and Santander, Rojas (2004) for instance finds that their community organising for peace contributed to a shift from identification with victimhood to a notion of empowerment. This eventually enabled people to reconstruct social relations and believe in reconciliation with former perpetrators. Likewise, Hernández (2002) observes that people can achieve a growing degree of resilience and agency that facilitates positive visions of peace including reconciliation if they do not define themselves (solely) by victimisation. This is presumably due to both challenges associated with competitive victimhood (i.e. who is and is not victimised when violence is omnipresent) (Penić et al., 2020) and victimhood being understood as a rather passive state. Contrasting this, peace protests can only occur if victims assert themselves as producers rather than consumers of the (violent) situation (Foweraker, 1995: 45-50). Accordingly, Kaplan (2017: 3f, 214f, 307f) identifies victims and civilians as possible agents of peace. At the same time, empirical evidence from Sudan shows that even differences in exposure to riots without active participation were associated with distinct attitudes (Beber et al., 2014). Either way, there seem to be two pertinent results from peace activism in Colombia specifically: firstly, people and communities being empowered to resist violence and move on towards peace, and secondly, their subsequent ability to develop their own peace initiatives because of a so-called “yeast effect” (García-Durán, 2005: 60f).

In view of these findings, peace initiatives are expected to be relevant for informing victimised communities’ attitudes regarding reconciliation with former perpetrators. This leads us to the hypotheses that will be tested in the statistical analysis.

## 2.5 Hypotheses

In view of the themes identified in the literature review, this analysis shall explore the following hypotheses:

- (H1) A higher number of incidents of violence per population in the context of the armed conflict is associated with a higher prevalence of peace protests.
- (H2) Residents of departments with a high number of peace protests are more positive about reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN than residents of departments with a low number of peace protests.
- (H3) Residents of departments with a high number of incidents of violence per population are more positive about reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN than residents of departments with a low number of incidents of violence per population.
- (H4) Residents of departments with a high number of peace protests and a high number of incidents of violence are more positive about reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN than residents of departments with a low number of peace protests and a high number of incidents of violence.

Additionally, I will check socio-demographic characteristics like rural/urban residence, ideology, education, age and sex that might relate to how victimisation and peace initiatives can inform people's attitudes regarding reconciliation. However, I do not provide a specific prediction concerning these variables because earlier findings on their impact have been very mixed (e.g. Rojas, 2004; Rojas et al., 2004; Lederach, 2020; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019; García-Durán, 2005: 294; Nussio et al., 2015: 351; Meernik, 2019; Krause, 2018; Staub, 2006; Rettberg, 2015).

Regarding the research question – if and how the prevalence of violence and peace-related civilian protests inform people's readiness to reconcile with former perpetrators – the overall expected answer is that the prevalence of peace-related protests in combination with exposure to violence is associated with positive changes in people's attitude regarding reconciliation both with the FARC and ELN.

### 3. Empirical analysis

#### 3.1 Data and Sample

To test these hypotheses, I merged data from multiple sources. The 2018 LAPOP AmericasBarometer survey (Zechmeister, 2018a) constitutes the foundation as it does not only include the questions about reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN, respectively, but also gives extensive demographic information. Using the respondents' department of residence as a shared baseline, I added a range of variables. These include violent incidents as registered with the Colombian Government's RUV (2020), population per department as given in the 2018 census (Gobierno Colombiano, 2018) and number and kind of peace-related protests as in CINEP's dataset on peace-related social struggles (CINEP/PPP, 2020a).

The CINEP data is derived from extensive press and institutional document reviews covering peace-related mobilisations, strikes, road blockages, civil resistance, takeovers and hunger strikes in the timeframe of 1990 until 2018 (CINEP/PPP, 2020a)<sup>4</sup>. This means that collective actions that were not deemed newsworthy are not considered (CINEP/PPP, 2020b; 2020c; García-Durán, unknown: 1). However, this limitation must be tolerated due to a lack of more complete alternatives.

The RUV numbers encompass all persons recognised as conflict-related victims of violence from 1985 to 2018 (RUV, 2020) according to the definition discussed in section B. I. (Ministerio del Interior, República de Colombia, 2011: Art. 3). The RUV dataset specifically includes all persons known to various national bureaucratic institutions (e.g. the Victim's Unit or the Beneficiary Selection System for Social Programmes) who are all uniquely identified either by their identification number, their full name or a combination of these (Unidad de Víctimas, Gobierno Colombiano (UdV), 2021).

The LAPOP AmericasBarometer is an annual open-source public opinion study in 20 countries including Colombia and is nationally and regionally representative of adults. This was achieved by developing the samples with a multi-stage probabilistic design (including quotas at the household level) and stratification by major regions of the country, urban and rural areas within municipalities and the size of municipalities themselves, i.e. multi-stage cluster sampling (Zechmeister, 2018b: 1-3). Institutionalised members of the population (e.g. people in boarding schools, hospitals, police academies, military barracks or prisons) constitute the only exception to representativeness (LAPOP, 2019: 3). In Colombia, 1.663 people participated in the 2018/2019 round of surveys, which were conducted via face-to-face interviews during fieldwork from 10/09/2018 to 27/12/2018 (LAPOP, 2019: 1f, 5). The statistical unit of the survey's itself is the household, i.e. only one respondent was interviewed per household and the vast majority of questions were focused on that individual

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<sup>4</sup> A complete list of motives and possible organizing and participating groups of the peace initiative included in this dataset can be found in CINEP-PPP (2020a).

(LAPOP, 2019: 3). The sampling frame covers 100% of the eligible voting age population and explicitly does not exclude any ethnicities or geographical areas or the like (LAPOP, 2019: 4). Non-sampling errors were nearly eliminated thanks to quality control protocols and SurveyToGo© software during field interviews (LAPOP, 2019: 2). As for sampling errors, the standard error was calculated and indicated a weighted 2.5% sampling error for Colombia (Zechmeister, 2018b: 3-5).

The Colombian survey provided two slightly different questionnaires, out of which the participants only responded to one. In view of the hypotheses, this is relevant because half of the respondents were asked about their belief in reconciliation with the FARC, and the other half with the ELN (Zechmeister, 2018c).

Table 1 in the results section gives an overview of the used variables and their characteristics.<sup>5</sup> In terms of measurement, the department-based variables are *cumulative number of incidents of violence* (or in short, *incidents*) as well as *cumulative number of mobilisations, strikes, road blockages, civil resistance, takeovers, and hunger strikes* (or in short, *mobilisation, strikes, roadblockage, civilresistance, takeover, and hungerstrike*), respectively. *Incidents* and *mobilisation* are continuous variables, as is *age*. Depending on their frequency, the other peace initiatives are categorical or binary in nature. *Ideology* and *education* are categorical variables ranging from 1-10 (left to right) and 0-18 (years of education). Finally, *rural/urban* residence, *sex* and the belief that reconciliation is possible (in short *reconciliationwFARC* and *reconciliationwELN*) are binary variables<sup>6</sup>, which I recoded into dummy variables like the binary peace initiative variables (Zechmeister, 2018d).

### 3.2 Methodology and Analytical Strategy

In terms of methodology, the following analysis will lead up to a statistical interaction model using the presented data. This choice goes back to several considerations. Firstly, a statistical analysis based on already existing datasets avoids many of the ethical challenges and dilemmas that are associated with original data collection in conflict settings. In view of both my position as a white European and non-native speaker of Spanish who has had no psycho-therapeutical training, conducting interviews with potentially traumatised Colombians about their experience and way of coping with violence would not fulfil the moral standards researchers should adhere to (Campbell, 2017). Moreover, a more detailed statistical analysis that includes victimisation and its contextual factors like peace mobilisation has been specifically called for in earlier research (García-Durán, 2005: 233). Additionally, there are several previous studies that serve as examples for considering contextual

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<sup>5</sup> A complementary list of corresponding measurements, abbreviations and survey questions including their original wording in Spanish and English translations of the LAPOP data can be found in Zechmeister (2018b, 2018d).

<sup>6</sup> All questions also provided the option “don’t know” and “no answer”. Whenever appropriate, it was also possible to state “inapplicable” (Zechmeister, 2018c, 2018d).



circumstances vis-à-vis attitudes regarding transitional justice policies and reconciliation by conducting analyses according to the region people live in instead of personal experiences per se (Tellez, 2019; Punamäki, 1990; Meernik, 2019; Bakke et al., 2009). In the same vein, this paper counters the general lack of data analysis on inclination to reconciliation and historical factors (Meernik, 2019: 331).

As elaborated in the literature review, both violence and peace initiatives are very unevenly distributed across Colombia (García-Durán, 2005: 323), which may have resulted in diverging convictions concerning reconciliation. To test this, an analysis sensitive to geographical units is necessary. In accordance with data availability, 22 departments and Bogotá serve as the shared baseline of my analysis.<sup>7</sup> 10 departments had to be cut due to lacking data on peace initiatives. The departmental data on incidents of violence and peace initiatives is merged with the 2018 LAPOP survey. This allows me to dissect differences in attitudes depending on the respective department of residence and its associated level of violence and peace action.

On this note, I opted to use cumulative numbers of incidents of violence and prevalence of peace initiatives, meaning that the analysis is not per annum but reflects the total number of violent incidents 1985-2018 (RUV, 2020) and peace initiatives 1990-2018 (CINEP/PPP, 2020a) each department experienced. On one hand, this avoids further complicating an already complex model. On the other hand, the time-delayed nature of many effects of violence and peace mobilisation justifies this choice (García-Durán, 2005: 149, 193f). The slight differences in timeframes are unfortunate, yet unavoidable due to data availability. The general timeframe was chosen because the confrontation between the Colombian government, paramilitaries and guerrillas increased exponentially from 1985 onwards, reached its peak 2001-2005 and steadily declined since then (García-Durán, 2005: 141f; UdV, 2021). The LAPOP survey being from 2018 dictates the decision not to count incidents of violence or peace initiatives thereafter.

The decision to concentrate on reconciliation with the FARC and ELN mostly goes back to data availability as well. LAPOP only enquires about reconciliation with the two guerrilla groups and there is no other openly accessible, representative survey that takes on a wider approach. However, it can be argued that, albeit not giving a complete picture, reconciliation with the FARC and ELN is very important as these guerrilla groups were the most powerful ones (Arjona, 2016a: 91). Additionally, García-Durán (2005: 154) observes that the civilian response to guerrilla violence has generally been

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<sup>7</sup> Concretely, the following departments are included in the analysis: Atlántico, (Bogotá), Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Caquetá, Cauca, Cesar, Córdoba, Cundinamarca, Huila, Magdalena, Meta, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Risaralda, Santander, Sucre, Tolima, Valle de Cauca, Putumayo.

bigger than to paramilitary violence, especially since 1999. Guerrillas are also the groups that are most shamed as responsible for the violence in Colombia (Rettberg, 2015: 134f).

Furthermore, I focus on peace initiatives that either take the form of mobilisations, strikes, road blockages, civil resistance, takeovers or hunger strikes because firstly, this is what the most comprehensive dataset on peace initiatives in Colombia includes, and secondly, protests have been the second most prevalent type of civilian strategy to cope with violence (Kaplan, 2017: 302). Finally, they are also more straightforward to operationalise than the most common strategy, community management and autonomy movements.

For both incidents of violence and peace initiatives, I chose to complement the numbers with information on the population of the respective departments. Simply put, this goes back to the assumption that it makes a difference for your threat perception and second-hand victimisation if one person was killed in a town of 10 million residents or of a mere 150 (cf. Meernik, 2019; Rettberg; Prieto, 2010; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 2014: ix). Likewise, you would have to be aware of protests for them to have an impact on you, which is more likely the higher the number of protests is per population in a specific location.

In terms of the choice of an interaction model, this is justified substantively by the argument that diverse contextual factors are crucial for understanding the formation of attitudes and identities. Since several studies in the Colombian context have indicated heterogeneous effects of violence and victimisation on people's inclination to reconciliation as well as differences in opinions between organised and non-organised victims (Rettberg, 2015), deterministic and monocausal tests seem inappropriate. Concretely, standard linear models that include interaction terms offer a superior and more precise way to test asymmetric hypotheses such as the ones explored in this paper (Brambor et al., 2006; Clark et al., 2006; Berry et al., 2012). Choosing a less deterministic and monocausal test on top of Logistic (Peng et al., 2002; Wright, 1995; Lavalley, 2008), and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis (Agresti; Finlay, 2013; Zdaniuk, 2014) thus makes it possible to explore whether victimisation comes along with differences in opinion *if* it occurs in combination with a certain level of peace initiatives (Clark et al., 2006). Precisely, it tests the hypothesis whether an increase in violence is associated with an increase in positivity regarding reconciliation when peace initiatives are also prevalent. The dependent variable in the interaction model thus is attitude regarding reconciliation with incidents of violence and peace initiatives being the independent ones.

To explore the statistical relationships in my data, I first run several regressions. Thus, before looking into the more complex interaction model, I explore the relationship between the prevalence of violence and peace initiatives, the latter being the dependent variable. According to the range of each type of peace initiative (hence, whether the difference between their maximum and minimum value

qualifies them as a continuous variable rather than a categorical one<sup>8</sup>), I run OLS or logistic regressions (Agresti; Finlay, 2013; Zdaniuk, 2014; Peng et al., 2002; Wright, 1995; Lavalley, 2008). Subsequently, I conduct logistic regressions for the relationship between peace initiatives and attitude regarding reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN because the latter are binary variables.

### 3.3 Results

The numbers as shown in table 1 confirm other scholars' observation that incidents of violence, especially when calculated per capita of each department, differ largely across the departments. Concretely, incidents per population range from 0,4% in Bogotá to 92,1% in Caquetá. Likewise, people's readiness to reconcile is very unevenly distributed between the departments, ranging from 25-100% rejection of reconciliation with the FARC and 23,08-75% for the ELN, respectively. While just about more than half of the FARC- and the ELN-related sample deems reconciliation possible, there is no consistent trend towards or against it. In fact, 95% of the values range from 47,47-54,45% and 46,72-53,65% approval of reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN, respectively. Moreover, initial calculations indicate no striking trend of reconciliation readiness with either the FARC or the ELN, nor is the distribution consistent with the prevalence of violence.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Obs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>department</b>	1.663	9,271	7,039	1	22
<b>incidents</b>	1.663	438157,400	555552,500	27040	1794887
<b>incidentsperpop</b>	1.663	0,190	0,174	0,004	0,921
<b>protest</b>	1.663	0,480	0,500	0	1
<b>mobilisation</b>	1.663	78,741	88,814	8	249
<b>mobilisationsperpop</b>	1.663	0,00002	0,00001	3,08E-06	0,00006
<b>strikes</b>	1.663	0,308	0,69	0	2
<b>strikesperpop</b>	1.663	6,69E-08	1,57E-07	0	8,33E-07
<b>roadblockage</b>	1.663	0,246	0,857	0	4
<b>roadblockagesperpop</b>	1.663	1,71E-07	5,95E-07	0	2,49E-06
<b>civilresistance</b>	1.663	0,328	0,47	0	1
<b>civilresistanceperpop</b>	1.663	1,26E-07	2,44E-07	0	7,52E-07
<b>takeover</b>	1.663	0,434	0,786	0	2
<b>takeoversperpop</b>	1.663	7,20E-08	1,28E-07	0	3,94E-07
<b>hungerstrike</b>	1.663	0,029	0,167	0	1

<sup>8</sup> For information on the characteristics of the variables, see Table 1.

<i>hungerstrikesperpop</i>	1.663	1,97E-08	1,14E-07	0	6,83E-07
<i>population</i>	1.663	3313298	2603311	348182	7412566
<i>reconciliationwFARC</i>	801	0,509	0,5	0	1
<i>reconciliationwELN</i>	803	0,502	0,5	0	1
<i>ruralurban</i>	1.663	0,796	0,403	0	1
<i>ideology</i>	1.555	5,779	2,683	1	10
<i>education</i>	1.649	9,892	4,326	0	18
<i>age</i>	1.663	40,356	16,33	18	90
<i>sex</i>	1.663	0,499	0,500	0	1

Table 1: Variables and univariate statistics

Meanwhile, comparing the means of reconciliation readiness is more insightful for other categories of respondents (table 2). Precisely, I ran t-tests for the equivalence between men/women, rural/urban residents and protests/no protests in areas of residence, and the associated values of *reconciliationwFARC* and *reconciliationwELN*. The results clearly show that men are significantly more positive about the prospects of reconciliation with both guerrilla groups than women. There are no significant differences between rural and urban residents as opposed to residents of areas that generally saw protests vs. no protests for peace, where those exposed to protests are significantly more positive about reconciliation with both guerrilla groups.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>[95% Conf. Interval]</b>		<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>
<b>Reconciliation with the FARC by sex</b>							
<b>Men</b>	385	0,566	0,025	0,517	0,616	0,002	3,112
<b>Women</b>	416	0,457	0,024	0,409	0,505		
<b>Reconciliation with the ELN by sex</b>							
<b>Men</b>	425	0,560	0,497	0,513	0,607	0,001	3,516
<b>Women</b>	378	0,437	0,497	0,386	0,487		
<b>Reconciliation with the FARC by rural/urban</b>							
<b>rural</b>	178	0,517	0,501	0,443	0,591	0,821	0,226
<b>urban</b>	623	0,507	0,500	0,468	0,547		
<b>Reconciliation with the ELN by rural/urban</b>							
<b>rural</b>	146	0,493	0,502	0,411	0,575	0,816	-0,233
<b>urban</b>	657	0,504	0,500	0,465	0,542		
<b>Reconciliation with the FARC by protest/noprotest</b>							
<b>protest</b>	376	0,548	0,498	0,497	0,598	0,040	-2,054
<b>noprotest</b>	425	0,475	0,500	0,428	0,523		
<b>Reconciliation with the ELN by protest/noprotest</b>							
<b>protest</b>	395	0,544	0,499	0,495	0,594	0,018	-2,372
<b>noprotest</b>	408	0,461	0,025	0,499	0,412		

Table 2: T-tests between reconciliation with the FARC and ELN, and sex, rural/urban, and protest/noprotest

The correlations I calculated (tables 3 and 4) support the hypothesis that the existence of protest is significant in relation to *reconciliationwFARC* and *reconciliationwELN* as opposed to incidents of violence (per population or not). Furthermore, I find that, out of the range of peace initiatives explored, only the prevalence of road blockages (per population or not) and *hungerstrikesperpop* are significantly correlated with *reconciliationwFARC*, and *strikes*, *civilresistanceperpop* and *hungerstrikesperpop* with *reconciliationwELN*.

In terms of other factors informing reconciliation, ideology, age and sex are found to be significantly correlated with respondents' attitude regarding reconciliation with the FARC. Meanwhile, *reconciliationwELN* appears to be highly correlated with people's education, age and sex. For both samples, sex is most strongly correlated with the respective attitudes.

The argument that the prevalence of violence is associated with the prevalence of peace activism is supported by the correlations in table 5. Indeed, calculated per population or not, all types of peace initiatives are highly significantly correlated with incidents of violence per population. Remarkably, however, *mobilisation*, *civil resistance*, *takeovers* and *takeoversperpop* are significantly negatively correlated, while all other correlations are either insignificant or positive.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>protest</i>	0,073	0,040**
<i>incidents</i>	0,005	0,891
<i>incidentsperpop</i>	0,002	0,964
<i>mobilisation</i>	-0,019	0,584
<i>mobilisationsperpop</i>	-0,003	0,942
<i>strikes</i>	-0,12	0,143
<i>strikesperpop</i>	0,054	0,13
<i>roadblockage</i>	0,271	0,012*
<i>roadblockagesperpop</i>	0,078	0,027*
<i>civilresistance</i>	.	.
<i>civilresistanceperpop</i>	0,041	0,244
<i>takeover</i>	-0,06	0,403
<i>takeoversperpop</i>	-0,019	0,599
<i>hungerstrike</i>	.	.
<i>hungerstrikesperpop</i>	0,077	0,029*
<i>ruralurban</i>	-0,008	0,821
<i>ideology</i>	-0,077	0,034*
<i>education</i>	0,017	0,638
<i>age</i>	0,077	0,029*
<i>sex</i>	-0,109	0,002**
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>		

Table 3: Correlation between reconciliationwFARC and other variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>protest</i>	0,084	0,018**
<i>incidents</i>	-0,009	0,810
<i>incidentsperpop</i>	-0,043	0,224
<i>mobilisation</i>	0,058	0,103
<i>mobilisationsperpop</i>	0,018	0,618
<i>strikes</i>	-0,155	0,078*
<i>strikesperpop</i>	0,052	0,143
<i>roadblockage</i>	0,082	0,447
<i>roadblockagesperpop</i>	0,012	0,731
<i>civilresistance</i>	.	.
<i>civilresistanceperpop</i>	0,063	0,074*
<i>takeover</i>	-0,006	0,933
<i>takeoversperpop</i>	0,064	0,071
<i>hungerstrike</i>	.	.
<i>hungerstrikesperpop</i>	-0,071	0,044**
<i>ruralurban</i>	0,008	0,816
<i>ideology</i>	-0,043	0,241
<i>education</i>	0,083	0,019**
<i>age</i>	0,078	0,028**
<i>sex</i>	-0,123	0,001***
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>		

Table 4: Correlation between reconciliationwELN and other variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>protests</i>	-0,191	0,000***
<i>mobilisation</i>	-0,427	0,000***
<i>mobilisationsperpop</i>	0,225	0,000***
<i>strikes</i>	0,198	0,000***
<i>strikesperpop</i>	0,172	0,000***
<i>roadblockage</i>	0,117	0,000***
<i>roadblockagesperpop</i>	0,39	0,000***
<i>civilresistance</i>	-0,274	0,000***
<i>civilresistanceperpop</i>	0,089	0,000***
<i>takeover</i>	-0,579	0,000***
<i>takeoversperpop</i>	-0,583	0,000***
<i>hungerstrike</i>	0,128	0,000***
<i>hungerstrikesperpop</i>	0,128	0,000***
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>		

Table 5: Correlation between incidentsperpop and peace activism

The regression analyses in models 1-7 (table 6) confirm that there is a highly significant relationship between the prevalence of violence and peace initiatives across the board. Since models 1-23 are logistic regressions except for models 2, 9 and 18, however, the coefficients are merely coefficients of the logistic log-likelihood function. This means that they cannot be directly interpreted as quantifying an effect. To evaluate the strengths of the effects, I compute average marginal effects as shown in table 9. These consist of the average of all individuals' partial derivations of the likelihood function with respect to the variable of interest. In addition to the insights from tables 7 and 8, this provides an estimation of the average increase in the probability of the default of the respective variable in the case of a one unit increase in the respective independent variables. Concretely, table 9 shows that the dependent peace initiative variables *strikesperpop*, *roadblockagesperpop* and *hungerstrikesperpop* increase in the default probability by 7,8-32,5% if *incidentsperpop* increases by one category unit. *Civilresistanceperpop* and *takeoversperpop* both decrease in the same scenario.

Regarding the extent to which reconciliation attitudes can be predicted by the prevalence of various peace initiatives, table 7 and 8 indicate that only *roadblockage* and *hungerstrike* are significant for *reconciliationwFARC*, while *civilresistance*, *takeover* and *hungerstrike* appear to be relevant for *reconciliationwELN*. Table 9 shows that the probability of approval of reconciliation with the FARC increases by a considerable 27% if hunger strikes increase, and by 5,7% for a rise in road blockages. Similarly, the scores for *civilresistance*, *takeover* and *hungerstrike* in relation to *reconciliationwELN* range between -2,1 and 8,7.

As shown by their R<sup>2</sup> and Pseudo R<sup>2</sup>, the majority of models 7-20 does not have high explanatory potential. Contrasting this, models 1-4 and 7 can explain 3-7,3% of the variation in peace initiatives per population of a department. Notably, *incidentsperpop* can predict 76,2% of the variation in *takeoversperpop* (model 6).

	<b>M1:</b> <i>Protests</i>	<b>M2:</b> <i>Mobilisationsperpop</i>	<b>M3:</b> <i>Strike-sperpop</i>	<b>M4:</b> <i>Roadblockagesperpop</i>	<b>M5:</b> <i>Civil-resistanceperpop</i>	<b>M6:</b> <i>Takeoversperpop</i>	<b>M7:</b> <i>Hungerstrike-sperpop</i>
<b>Incidentsperpop</b>	-2,466*** (0,000)	0,000*** (0,000)	2,319*** (0,000)	2,474*** (0,000)	-4,727*** (0,000)	-72,815*** (0,000)	2,847*** (0,000)
<b>Constant</b>	0,376*** (0,000)	0,000*** (0,000)	-2,033*** (0,000)	-2,649*** (0,000)	0,068 (0,000)	2,744*** (0,000)	-4,204*** (0,000)
.....							
<b>R-Sqr</b>		0,050					
<b>Pseudo R-Sqr</b>	0,028		0,030	0,035	0,073	0,762	0,046
<b>dfres</b>		1663	1663	1663	1663	1663	1663

<b>Bic</b>		-	1516,3	1118,8	1966,4	458,3	429,9
		33500,8					
.....							
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>							

Table 6: Regressions of incidents of violence per population and forms of peace initiatives (results of logistic regressions for all models but model 2, which is the result of an OLS regression)

	<b>M8</b>	<b>M9</b>	<b>M10</b>	<b>M11</b>	<b>M12</b>	<b>M13</b>	<b>M14</b>	<b>M15</b>
<b>reconciliationwFARC</b>								
<b>protests</b>	0,291**							
	(0,040)							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>		0,019						
		(0,963)						
<b>mobilisation</b>			0,000					
			(0,583)					
<b>strikes</b>				0,022				
				(0,832)				
<b>roadblockage</b>					0,231**			
					(0,012)			
<b>civilresistance</b>						0,075		
						(0,626)		
<b>takeovers</b>							-0,056	
							(0,542)	
<b>hungerstrike</b>								1,086**
								(0,037)
<b>Constant</b>	-0,099	0,034	0,072	0,031	-0,015	0,014	0,061	0,013
	(0,309)	(0,746)	(0,447)	(0,695)	(0,838)	(0,865)	(0,449)	(0,858)
.....								
<b>Pseudo R-sqr</b>	0,004	0,000	0,000	0,002	0,005	0,001	0,000	0,005
<b>dfres</b>	801	801	801	801	801	801	801	801
<b>BIC</b>	1119,3	1123,5	1123,2	1123,5	1116,6	1123,3	1123,1	1118,5
.....								
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>								

Table 7: Regressions of incidents of violence per population and forms of peace initiatives, and reconciliation with the FARC (results of logistic regressions for all models but model 10, which is the result of an OLS regression)

	<b>M16</b>	<b>M17</b>	<b>M18</b>	<b>M19</b>	<b>M20</b>	<b>M21</b>	<b>M22</b>	<b>M23</b>
<b>reconciliationwELN</b>								
<b>protests</b>	0,335**							
	(0,018)							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>		-0,483						
		(0,224)						
<b>mobilisation</b>			0,001					



			(0,103)					
<b>strikes</b>				0,028				
				(0,789)				
<b>roadblockage</b>					0,081			
					(0,336)			
<b>civilresistance</b>						0,352**		
						(0,018)		
<b>takeovers</b>							0,156*	
							(0,076)	
<b>hungerstrike</b>								-0,844*
								(0,050)
<b>Constant</b>	-0,157	0,101	-0,095	-0,001	-0,012	-0,115	-0,064	0,033
	(0,114)	(0,334)	(0,314)	(0,994)	(0,869)	(0,190)	(0,429)	(0,641)
.....								
<b>Pseudo R-sqr</b>	0,005	0,001	0,002	0,000	0,001	0,005	0,003	0,004
<b>dfres</b>	803	803	803	803	803	803	803	803
<b>BIC</b>	1121	1125,1	1123,9	1126,5	1125,6	1120,9	1123,4	1122,4
.....								
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>								

Table 8: Regressions of incidents of violence per population and forms of peace initiatives, and reconciliation with the ELN (results of logistic regressions for all models but model 18, which is the result of an OLS regression)

<b>Model</b>	<b>Variable in model</b>	<b>Average Treatment Effect</b>	<b>95% Conf. Interval</b>	
<b>Predictions of various peace initiatives by incidentsperpop</b>				
<b>1</b>	protests	-0,593	-0,738	-0,448
<b>3</b>	strikesperpop	0,325	0,236	0,415
<b>4</b>	roadblockagesperpop	0,232	0,164	0,301
<b>5</b>	civilresistanceperpop	-0,953	-1,098	-0,807
<b>6</b>	takeoversperpop	-2,910	-3,078	-2,742
<b>7</b>	hungerstrikesperpop	0,078	0,043	0,114
<b>Predictions of reconciliationwFARC by various peace initiatives</b>				
<b>8</b>	protests	0,072	0,0039	0,141
<b>9</b>	incidentsperpop	0,005	-0,203	0,213
<b>10</b>	mobilisation	0,000	-0,001	0,000
<b>11</b>	strikes	0,005	-0,044	0,055
<b>12</b>	roadblockage	0,057	0,013	0,101
<b>13</b>	civilresistance	0,019	-0,056	0,094
<b>14</b>	takeovers	-0,014	-0,059	0,031
<b>15</b>	hungerstrike	0,270	0,018	0,521
<b>Predictions Of reconciliationELN by various peace initiatives</b>				
<b>16</b>	protests	0,083	0,015	0,151
<b>17</b>	incidentsperpop	-0,121	-0,314	0,073
<b>18</b>	mobilisation	0,000	0,000	0,001
<b>19</b>	strikes	0,007	-0,044	0,058

<b>20</b>	roadblockage	0,020	-0,021	0,061
<b>21</b>	civilresistance	0,087	0,016	0,159
<b>22</b>	takeovers	0,039	-0,004	0,081
<b>23</b>	hungerstrike	-0,210	-0,418	-0,002

Table 9: Average Treatment Effects for logistic regression models 1, 8-23

Overall, the low explanatory potential of models 8-23 validates the assertion that it is necessary to consider more variables and combine incidents of violence and peace activism as potential predictors of reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN in the next step. As shown in tables 10-13, however, the relationship remains anything but straightforward. In summary, it can be observed that the prevalence of peace protests overall (i.e. whether there were any or not) appears to be positively significant for reconciliationwFARC under the condition that it occurs in combination with a certain level of incidents of violence (models 24 and 38). Contrarily, the same cannot be said about reconciliationwELN, where the variable protest is only generally significant but not specifically for either value 0 or 1 (models 31 and 45).

Notably, the only other significant interactions between *incidentsperpop* and peace initiatives are *civilresistance* in models 28 and 42 as well as takeover in models 29 and 43. Their prevalence all appears to be positively related to *reconciliationwFARC*. While it was not possible to run interaction analyses with the *hungerstrike* variable due to collinearity issues resulting from the small total number of hunger strikes, their prevalence still appears to be a significant predictor of *reconciliationwFARC* in models 30 and 44 (tables 10 and 12) and *reconciliationwELN* in model 37 (table 11). In terms of complementing the logistic interaction analysis with socio-demographic variables, table 12 shows that *ideology*, *age* and *sex* are all, and mostly highly, significant predictors of *reconciliationwFARC*. Similarly, I find that *age*, *sex* and *education* are highly significant for *reconciliationwELN*. *Ideology* is also significant but only at a confidence level of 90% while the rest is significant applying 99% confidence levels (table 13). In summary, for both reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN it seems more likely for respondents to display a positive outlook the older, more left-leaning, and, for *reconciliationwELN*, more educated, they are. Additionally, being male is associated with a significantly higher probability of deeming reconciliation with the guerrillas possible.

	<b>M24: protest</b>	<b>M25: mobili- sation</b>	<b>M26: strikes</b>	<b>M27: roadblo- ckage</b>	<b>M28: ci- vilre- sistance</b>	<b>M29: takeo- ver</b>	<b>M30: hunger- strike</b>
<b>ReconciliationwFARC</b>							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>	-1,042 (0,150)	-0,316 (0,585)	-0,027 (0,951)	-0,336 (0,518)	-0,396 (0,426)	-0,153 (0,767)	-0,103 (0,809)
<b>protest</b>	-0,076 (0,736)						
<b>protest=0 # in- cidentsperpop</b>	0,000 (.)						
<b>protest=1 # in- cidentsperpop</b>	2,048** (0,028)						
<b>mobilisation</b>		-0,001 (0,435)					
<b>incidentsperpop # mobilisation</b>		0,005 (0,508)					
<b>strikes</b>			-0,155 (0,764)				
<b>incidentsperpop # strikes</b>			0,658 (0,727)				
<b>roadblockage</b>				0,099 -0,718			
<b>incidentsperpop # roadblockage</b>				0,470 -0,591			
<b>civilresistance</b>					-0,22 (0,311)		
<b>incidentsperpop # civilresistance</b>					2,151** -0,044		
<b>takeoversperpop</b>						-0,134 -0,2247	
<b>incidentsperpop # takeover</b>						10,488* -0,089	
<b>hungerstrike</b>							1,100** (0,036)
<b>incidentsperpop # hungerstrike</b>							0,000 (.)
.....							
<b>Constant</b>	0,124 (0,497)	0,108 (0,464)	0,038 (0,728)	0,046 (0,699)	0,097 (0,469)	0,084 (0,563)	0,031 (0,765)
.....							
<b>Pseudo R-sqr</b>	0,009	0,000	0,007	0,004	0,003	0,005	0,007

<b>dfres</b>	801	801	801	801	801	801	801
<b>BIC</b>	1127,4	1136,1	1136,7	1129,5	1132,5	1133,2	1125,2
.....							
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>							

Table 10: Interactions of incidents of violence per population, forms of peace initiatives per population, and reconciliation with the FARC

	<b>M31: protest</b>	<b>M32: mobili- sation</b>	<b>M33: strikes</b>	<b>M34: roadblo- ckage</b>	<b>M35: ci- vilre- sistance</b>	<b>M36: takeo- ver</b>	<b>M37: hunger- strike</b>
<b>reconciliationwELN</b>							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>	0,266	-0,204	-0,545	-0,428	-0,319	-0,084	-0,386
	-0,696	-0,708	-0,184	(0,382)	(0,501)	(0,864)	(0,334)
<b>protest</b>	0,493**						
	(0,028)						
<b>protest=0 # in- cidentsperpop</b>	0,000						
	(0,274)						
<b>protest=1 # in- cidentsperpop</b>	-0,886						
	(0,296)						
<b>mobilisation</b>		0,001					
		(0,241)					
<b>incidentsperpop # mobilisation</b>		-0,001					
		(0,920)					
<b>strikes</b>			-0,212				
			(0,767)				
<b>incidentsperpop # strikes</b>			0,966				
			(0,707)				
<b>roadblockage</b>				0,226			
				(0,395)			
<b>incidentsperpop # roadblockage</b>				-0,417			
				(0,620)			
<b>civilresistance</b>					0,260		
					(0,223)		
<b>incidentsperpop # civilresistance</b>					0,476		
					(0,638)		
<b>takeoversperpop</b>						0,126	
						(0,266)	
<b>incidentsperpop # takeover</b>						3,703	
						(0,590)	
<b>hungerstrike</b>							-0,794*

							(0,067)
<b>incidentsperpop # hungerstrike</b>							0,000
							(.)
.....							
<b>Constant</b>	-0,218	-0,035	0,098	0,065	-0,040	-0,046	0,106
	(0,238)	(0,821)	(0,358)	(0,577)	(0,774)	(0,757)	(0,307)
.....							
<b>Pseudo R-sqr</b>	0,007	0,003	0,002	0,003	0,005	0,003	0,005
<b>dfres</b>	803	803	803	803	803	803	803
<b>BIC</b>	1139,2	1137,8	1133,7	1137,4	1134,9	1136,5	1128,2
.....							
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>							

Table 11: Interactions of incidents of violence per population, forms of peace initiatives per population, and reconciliation with the ELN

	<b>M38: protest</b>	<b>M39: mobilisation</b>	<b>M40: strikes</b>	<b>M41: roadblockage</b>	<b>M42: civilresistance</b>	<b>M43: takeover</b>	<b>M44: hungerstrike</b>
<b>reconciliationwFARC</b>							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>	-1,165	0,201	0,172	-0,302	-0,498	-0,08	-0,044
	(0,141)	(0,711)	(0,717)	(0,543)	(0,326)	(0,887)	(0,923)
<b>protest</b>	-0,094						
	(0,701)						
<b>protest=0 # incidentsperpop</b>	0,000						
	(.)						
<b>protest=1 # incidentsperpop</b>	2,414**						
	(0,018)						
<b>ruralurban</b>	-0,093	-0,118	-0,112	-0,099	-0,033	-0,040	-0,107
	(0,633)	(0,545)	(0,559)	(0,609)	(0,866)	(0,837)	(0,578)
<b>ideology</b>	-0,076***	-0,078***	-0,079***	-0,070**	-0,070**	-0,076***	-0,075**
	(0,010)	(0,008)	(0,007)	(0,018)	(0,017)	(0,009)	(0,010)
<b>education</b>	0,026	0,024	0,023	0,027	0,031	0,026	0,026
	(0,209)	(0,245)	(0,247)	(0,184)	(0,133)	(0,200)	(0,197)
<b>age</b>	0,015***	0,015***	0,016***	0,015***	0,015***	0,015***	0,015***
	(0,004)	(0,003)	(0,003)	(0,004)	(0,003)	(0,005)	(0,004)
<b>sex</b>	0,550***	0,552***	0,550***	0,545***	0,558***	0,559***	0,532***
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)
<b>mobilisation</b>		-0,001					
		(0,452)					
<b>incidentsperpop # mobilisation</b>		0,000					
		(0,963)					
<b>strikes</b>			-0,358				

			(0,517)				
<b>incidentsperpop # strikes</b>			1,087				
			(0,590)				
<b>roadblockage</b>				0,115			
				(0,700)			
<b>incidentsperpop # roadblockage</b>				0,445			
				(0,638)			
<b>civilresistance</b>					-0,230		
					(0,335)		
<b>incidentsperpop # civilresistance</b>					2,382**		
					(0,040)		
<b>takeoversperpop</b>						-0,155	
						(0,228)	
<b>incidentsperpop # takeover</b>						16,230**	
						(0,047)	
<b>hungerstrike</b>							1,453**
							(0,025)
<b>incidentsperpop # hungerstrike</b>							0,000
							(.)
.....							
<b>Constant</b>	-0,446	-0,462	-0,477	-0,599	-0,563	-0,576	-0,550
	(0,295)	(0,254)	(0,236)	(0,148)	(0,163)	(0,157)	(0,171)
.....							
<b>Pseudo R-sqr</b>	0,037	0,026	0,026	0,032	0,030	0,031	0,032
<b>dfres</b>	744	744	744	744	744	744	744
<b>BIC</b>	1052,5	1062,9	1063	1056,7	1058,9	1058,4	1050,6
.....							
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>							

Table 12: Interactions of incidents of violence per population, forms of peace initiatives per population, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics, and reconciliation with the FARC

	<b>M45: protest</b>	<b>M46: mobilisation</b>	<b>M47: strikes</b>	<b>M48: roadblockage</b>	<b>M49: civilresistance</b>	<b>M50: takeover</b>	<b>M51: hungerstrike</b>
<b>reconciliationwELN</b>							
<b>incidentsperpop</b>	0,456	-0,423	-0,384	-0,439	-0,473	-0,085	-0,251
	(0,535)	(0,388)	(0,370)	(0,340)	(0,308)	(0,871)	(0,550)
<b>protest</b>	0,483**						
	(0,047)						
<b>protest=0 # incidentsperpop</b>	0,000						
	(.)						

<b>protest=1 # incidentsperpop</b>	0,968						
	(0,287)						
<b>ruralurban</b>	-0,198	-0,167	-0,114	-0,133	-0,150	-0,165	-0,224
	(0,338)	(0,419)	(0,580)	(0,517)	(0,476)	(0,426)	(0,283)
<b>ideology</b>	-0,054*	-0,056*	-0,056*	-0,055*	-0,052*	-0,056*	-0,054*
	(0,063)	(0,051)	(0,053)	(0,056)	(0,073)	(0,051)	(0,061)
<b>education</b>	0,065***	0,069***	0,071***	0,071***	0,070***	0,068***	0,069***
	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,000)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)
<b>age</b>	0,016***	0,017***	0,017***	0,017***	0,017***	0,016***	0,016***
	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)
<b>sex</b>	0,510***	0,505***	0,514***	0,511***	0,498***	0,506***	0,495***
	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)
<b>mobilisation</b>		0,001					
		(0,595)					
<b>incidentsperpop # mobilisation</b>		0,001					
		(0,948)					
<b>strikes</b>			0,154				
			(0,841)				
<b>incidentsperpop # strikes</b>			-0,367				
			(0,893)				
<b>roadblockage</b>				0,346			
				(0,220)			
<b>incidentsperpop # roadblockage</b>				-0,716			
				(0,418)			
<b>civilresistance</b>					0,119		
					(0,611)		
<b>incidentsperpop # civilresistance</b>					1,092		
					(0,324)		
<b>takeoversperpop</b>						0,041	
						(0,743)	
<b>incidentsperpop # takeover</b>						8,045	
						(0,294)	
<b>hungerstrike</b>							-0,707
							(0,117)
<b>incidentsperpop # hungerstrike</b>							0,000
							(.)
.....							
<b>Constant</b>	-1,330***	1,125***	1,109***	1,228***	1,174***	1,154***	1,027***
	(0,001)	(0,004)	(0,004)	(0,002)	(0,002)	(0,003)	(0,008)
.....							

<b>R-sqr</b>	0,036	0,032	0,032	0,034	0,035	0,033	0,034
<b>dfres</b>	752	752	752	752	752	752	752
<b>BIC</b>	1064,7	1068,9	1069	1066,7	1065,6	1067,6	1060
.....							
<b>(p-value) * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.05, *** p&lt;0.01</b>							

Table 13: Interactions of incidents of violence per population, forms of peace initiatives per population, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics, and reconciliation with the ELN

Figures 1 and 2 show the results of probing the interaction between *incidentsperpop* and *protests* as a prediction of *reconciliationwFARC* and *reconciliationwELN*, respectively. As such, figure 1 illustrates how the probability of positivity about reconciliation goes up if the number of incidents per population is high *and* peace protests take place in the geographic area of reference. Contrarily, if incidents are comparatively low, the prevalence of peace protests are associated with only very slight negative changes in the marginal effects of *reconciliationwFARC*.

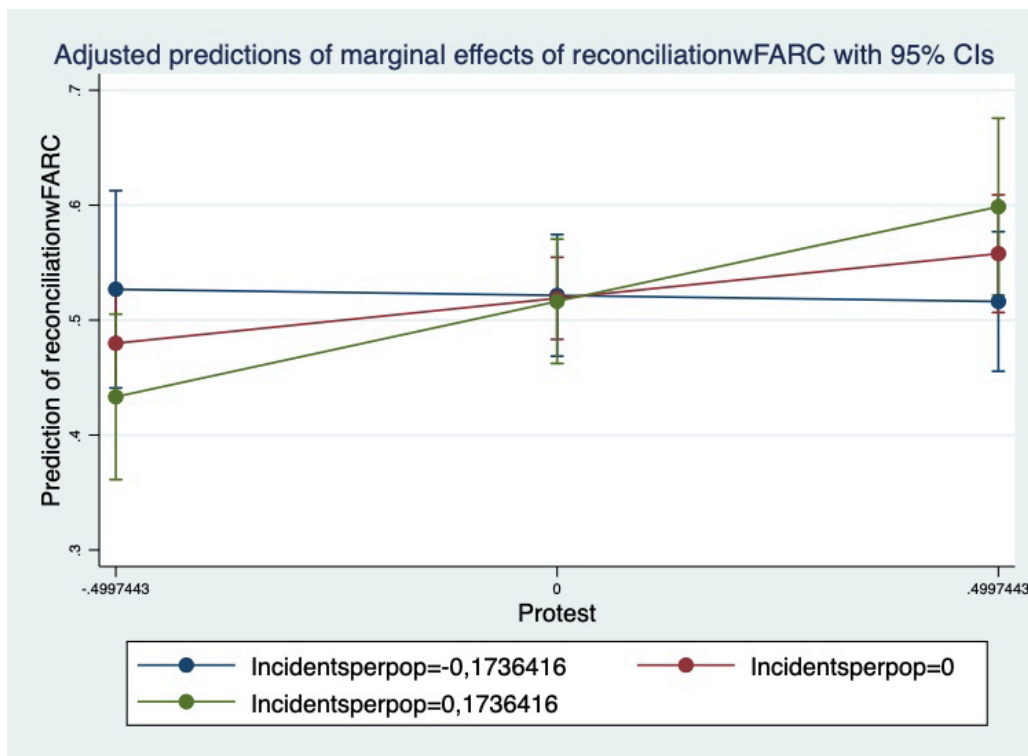


Figure 1: Adjusted predictions of marginal effects of "Reconciliation with the FARC is possible" in departments from lowest incidents of violence per population to highest



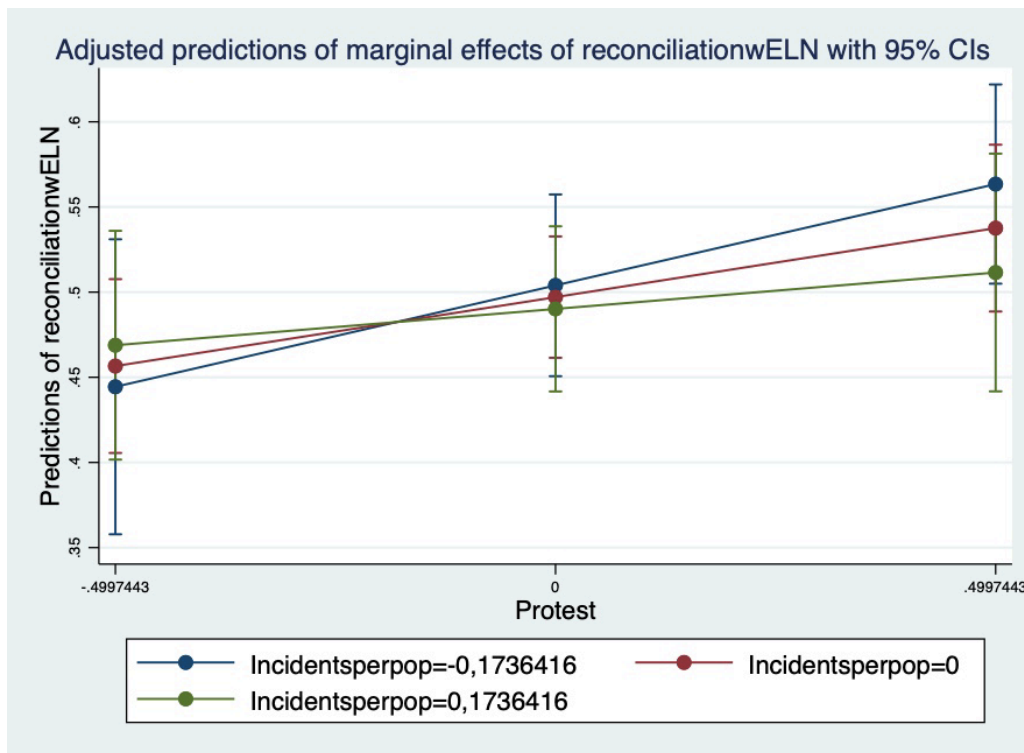


Figure 2: Adjusted predictive marginal effects of "Reconciliation with the ELN is possible" in departments from lowest incidents of violence per population to highest

As suggested by the numbers in model 38 (table 12) vs. model 45 (table 13), the adjusted predictions of *reconciliationwELN* confirm that the interaction between *incidentsperpop* and protests is not as significant of a predictor as for *reconciliationwFARC*. Notably, *incidentsperpop* do not seem to be as big of a factor. Additionally, people who live in comparatively high-incident-areas are predicted to be more negative regarding reconciliation with the ELN than their high-incident-counterparts as well as regarding the FARC. However, when these areas are also characterised by prevalence of peace protests, they become the group most open to reconciliation with the ELN. As such, figures 1 and 2 illustrate what the numbers suggested before: the interaction between *incidentsperpop* and the existence of peace protests makes a bigger difference for reconciliation attitudes towards the FARC than the ELN.

In view of the research question and hypotheses, the following conclusions can be drawn:

H1, that a higher number of incidents of violence per population in the context of the armed conflict is associated with a higher prevalence of peace initiatives per population, is supported by the evidence of this analysis. In particular regression models 1-7 (table 6) and table 9 show that there is a significant positive relationship between the prevalence of violence and peace activism.

Contrasting this, the evidence here does not support the expectations from H2 and H3 that residents in departments with a high incidence of peace activism or violence per population are generally

significantly more positive about the possibility of reconciliation with the FARC and ELN. Tables 7 and 8 show that this is the case for some types of peace initiatives (namely road blockages, takeovers, civil resistance and hunger strikes), but neither across the board nor in the same way for both guerrilla groups.

Furthermore, the hypothesis (H4) that a high number of peace initiatives in combination with a high number of violent incidents per population is generally associated with higher approval rates for reconciliation can only partly be accepted. While tables 9-12 as well as figures 1 and 2 show that whether there were any peace protests at all does seem to significantly impact reconciliation attitudes, this does not extend to all types of peace initiatives. More specifically, it can only be confirmed for civil resistance and takeovers concerning reconciliation with the FARC.

The overall research question – if and how the prevalence of violence and peace-related civilian protests inform people’s readiness to reconcile with former perpetrators – thus needs to be answered with modest confidence that the combination of violence and peace protests impacts such attitudes depending on the type of protest. This is due to the small number of significant relationships on the one hand. Additionally, there are various methodological and substantive reservations regarding the results that I discuss in the following section.

### **3.4 Discussion**

Putting these results into perspective requires a discussion of their real-life significance as well as potential limitations and reservations of the study. To begin with, causal claims are always difficult, but especially so in an analysis that treats prolonged timeframes in conflict settings (Kaplan, 2017). Hence, several factors may limit the substantive informative value of my findings.

Firstly, one reservation consists in potential demographic changes that could affect central units of analysis such as incidents per population. Data suggests that the population growth per department from 1985 to 2017 was overall minor, relatively even and is therefore deemed neglectable in this analysis (Gobierno Colombiano, 2018b). However, demographic changes like national migration might still limit the validity of the findings (Tellez, 2019: 1063). As such, almost 90% of victims are victims of forced internal displacement (UdV, 2021). Moreover, incidents of violence are registered according to the location of occurrence instead of topical residency (RUV, 2020). This stands in contradiction to the shared baseline of this analysis in terms of the prevalence of violence and peace protests being a person’s *current* department of residency, which renders complete accuracy of contextual influences improbable. For future research, a geo-references survey comparable to Dyrstad et al. (2011) could help circumvent this issue.

Furthermore, there may be issues of under- or overreporting, selection and social desirability biases or measurement issues in the data on violence and peace protests that may limit both the substantive significance and the generalisability of the present findings (Kaplan, 2017: 8-10, 23; García-Durán, 2005: 294; Nussio et al., 2015: 352). This adds to a certain level of uncertainty about the direction of the effects and causal relationships detected (Kaplan, 2017: 110-125). Concretely, it is possible that victimised communities have different attitudes and agencies that motivate them to mobilise for peace instead of peace activism shaping their political opinions relating to reconciliation.

On a similar note, we lack knowledge on the effects of activism on activists vs. non-activists to gain certainty about how empowerment transcends different parts of civil society (García-Durán, 2005; Arjona, 2016a: 190, 200f). Since the present study does not include information on whether a person took part in peace protests or not, the findings only reflect second-hand effects of peace activism to the extent elaborated above. Bearing in mind that only about 7% of victimised Colombians reportedly participated in peace initiatives, however, it would be very insightful to make a comparative study of activists vs. non-activists or organised vs. non-organised victims (Rettberg, 2015: 114, 144f). Likewise, it would be interesting to consider minors' outlooks on reconciliation since Colombia has had a considerable children's movement (Cameron, 2000) and age appeared to be a highly significant factor for the adult sample considered here. The same counts for a more gender-sensitive analysis since I find major differences in the attitudes of women vs men that one may be able to trace back to gendered experiences of the conflict, peace activism or the peace process overall (Buvinic et al., 2013: 123; Parpart, 2017: 2; Moser, 2001: 41-49; Cockburn, 2010: 151; Meernik, 2019).

To the contrary, ideology as a predictor is rather straight forward: with the FARC and the ELN both being declared communist groups (Arjona, 2016a), it perhaps does not need much further explanation as to why people would deem reconciliation with their former fighters more possible the more left-leading they are (and vice versa).

Alongside a more profound look at participants and channels of influence of peace protests, there is a clear need for studies that repeatedly look at the development of attitudes of an identical sample over an extended period of time. Such research would simultaneously eliminate the risk of only measuring short-term effects of violence and peace protests with no firm indication of the sustainability of changes in political behaviour (see e.g. Tellez, 2019:1069; López-López et al., 2018: 291; García-Durán, 2005). Having more detailed data on these factors may potentially also help to discover factors that interfere with people's attitude regarding reconciliation that have not been considered yet. One explanation as to why we find no consistent relationship between violence, peace activism and attitudes is that people cope and make sense of experiences differently (Punamäki, 1990;

Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 42; Thoene et al., 2020; Balcells, 2012: 313). Exploring these channels may therefore be very enlightening.

Similarly, assumptions about trauma and how it relates to civilian organising and resilience need to be revisited for a less Western-centred context. Previous studies have shown that trauma and PTSD especially can be quite culture-related (Summerfield, 2002; Elsass, 2001), which indicates that insights could be gained from research connecting psychological and political knowledge in relation to violence, activism and reconciliation (Espinosa et al., 2017; Hernández, 2002; Sacipa-Rodriguez; Montero, 204; Staub et al., 2013: 579; Moon, 2009). In terms of effects of violence, further exploration of how indifference as a coping mechanism (as opposed to becoming more politically active) may also interfere with people's formation of attitudes (or lack thereof) is advisable (Novoa-Gomez, 2014: 50-53). This seems to be particularly relevant because of the low turnout of the 2016 referendum regarding the original version of the CPA (Arjona, 2016b). While an overwhelming majority of LAPOP respondents gave answers to the question regarding reconciliation with the FARC and the ELN, the question's lack of nuance in terms of definition and scale (cf. Zechmeister, 2018e) may have led to short-sighted assertions that do not necessarily translate to a person's real-life openness towards former perpetrators. Going back to Rettberg and Ugarriza's (2016) finding that there are numerous interpretations and much blurriness of personal and political levels of attitudes and experiences (Brewer; Hayes, 2011: 326f; Tellez, 2019; Aggestam, 2014: 157; Staub et al., 2006: 889; Castrillón-Guerrero et al., 2018), it is questionable that LAPOP respondents had such a sophisticated, coherent concept in mind when answering the respective questions (Meernik, 2019: 333f). The delimitation to forgiveness is also lacking, which can generally be problematic to use in a political or group context because it is derived from research on interpersonal interactions. This inaccuracy implies potential qualitative differences between forgiveness and reconciliation that are neither accounted for in the collection nor can be considered in the evaluation of the data (Noor et al., 2008: 820).

Regarding the LAPOP question, it also needs to be remarked that the survey falls short of recognising that the FARC and the ELN were far from being the only perpetrators in the Colombian armed conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000; López-López et al., 2018: 168-170, 298; Mouly et al., 2016: 130). In fact, it is estimated that a mere 40% of casualties go back to guerrilla violence, with the other 60% being killed by paramilitary forces and the official army (Kaplan, 2017: 77, 187). Bearing in mind that most Colombian victims were forcefully displaced and not killed, and guerrilla violence often extended to underreported, sophisticated, yet coercive, governance systems (Rettberg, 2015; Arjona, 2016a), this does not go to say that guerrillas are not a major target of reconciliation in the spirit of sustainable peace. However, it is noteworthy that while guerrillas were most often named as the group most responsible for the violence in a survey, the second most shamed group were "all of us Colombians"

(Rettberg, 2015: 134). This sense of shared guilt alludes to reconciliation being necessary with far more actors than two guerrilla groups (Nussio et al., 2015: 343; Meernik, 2019: 333f).

On the note of blurriness of perpetrators and violence complicating the deed of definite conclusions, it is not entirely clear whether the macro factor incidents of violence constitutes an appropriate means to approximate people's sense of victimhood. Additionally, both people's identification as victims and connection of personal troubles to political issues are somewhat presumed in the micro-level part of the analysis (Foweraker, 1995: 49). While it is indisputably relevant to explore if different levels of violence come along with distinct effects, some of these underlying assumptions may limit the extent to which we can derive definite answers from statistical findings. Factors that are hard to measure or predict such as group identification, so-called chosen trauma and competitive victimhood as well as psychological violence make victimisation in civil war blurry (Netland, 2001; Noor et al., 2008: 821f; Nussio et al., 2015: 339; Brewer; Hayes, 2011; Riaño Alcalá; Uribe, 2016; Leisey; Lewis, 2016). In terms of the numbers themselves, it remains uncertain that all victims registered with the RUV are indeed victims and that all actual victims are registered (Rettberg, 2015: 120). These factors could undermine or distort the findings of the present analysis. At the same time, they could potentially explain why people's attitudes regarding reconciliation diverge as much as they do and allude to additional dimensions that need to be considered in future studies.

Similarly, the umbrella term of peace initiatives – even with the definition of the CINEP Collective Action Database (CINEP, 2020b: 19f; 2020c: 9-11) – is not clear-cut (Mouly et al., 2016; Rampf; Chavarro Rodríguez, 2014; Archila Neira et al., 2019; 132). The findings here clearly illustrate that different types of protests do not have the same impact. Accordingly, more detailed data on protests, their motives, strategies, participants, time frames, size and, if possible, effects are necessary for a more sensitive answer to my research question (Foweraker, 1995; Huddy, 2013; Schaap, 2004). This also points to the difficulties in measuring the impact of activism. Multiple scholars have asserted that such effects are often nontangible, subtle or simply not reported (García-Durán, 2005: 293f; Kaplan, 2017: 23). The moderate, yet observable relationship between violence, peace activism and attitudes found in this study support this argument, while making it clear that additional data and research in the area is very much needed.

As alluded to above, potential issues with knowledge production including reporting bias or uncertainty of accuracy of the numbers of violence incidents and peace protests are likely (Kaplan, 2017: 85-120; WHO; UNODC, UNDP, 2014: viii; Barrett et al., 2020; Campbell, 2017). As such, it is probable that the dark figure of peace initiatives is considerable with CINEP's database only including those that made it into the news (CINEP/PPP, 2020b; 2020c), which requires a certain level of infrastructure

and journalistic freedom. This may limit the extent to which the present findings reflect how violence and activism inform people's attitudes on reconciliation.

In addition to these data collection issues, it is worth noting that the maximum number of total hunger strikes and civil resistance per department from 1985 to 2018 was one, respectively, four for road blockages, and two for strikes and takeovers. Only mobilisations are characterised by a bigger range of 8-249 (CINEP/PPP, 2020a). This puts the substantive significance of the findings into question. Especially seeing that hunger strikes – which are one of the few forms of protests that are found to be significant for reconciliation attitudes – were only carried out by prisoners or their family members (CINEP/PPP, 2020a), it seems unlikely that they indeed had such a major effect on the entire population of the respective departments. In the same vein, the interactions between violent incidents, reconciliation attitudes and civil resistances and takeovers need to be taken in cautiously. While they do indicate that there are some characteristics about either the respondent or the department of residency that have led to the differences in outcome of the analysis, this observation adds to the emphasis that further research is necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between violence, activism and post-conflict attitudes. To add to this inaccuracy, the reasoning as to what is included in the peace-related data on collective action is far from transparent. As such, it is not intuitive how some of the protests' motives relate to peace and how they are delimited from civilian action in the spirit of development or gender equality, for instance (CINEP/PPP, 2020a).<sup>9</sup>

In terms of concrete ideas for future research, I have the following suggestions:

First, a more systematic understanding of feelings associated with first- and second-hand experiences of trauma and the manner in which these affective reactions can spread and generate collective emotions is required. Second, it would be helpful to gain more insights into whether people's understanding of reconciliation reflects their experience of armed conflict, or, more specifically, the relationship between different forms of victimisation on people's vision of reconciliation and ways to achieve it (Rettberg; Ugarriza, 2016).

Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to explore peace initiatives themselves more deeply in terms of their motives, strategies, formalisation, participants, organisational problems, characteristics of their geographic location (e.g. coca cultivation and drug trafficking) and other factors that may relate to their potential impact (López-López et al., 2018; Kaplan, 2017; Archila Neira, 1995; 2003; Ulloa; Coronado, 2016; Rodríguez, 2016). On a similar note, since this knowledge is found to be helpful in

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<sup>9</sup> For the full list of motives, see CINEP/PPP (2020a) database.

assisting victims to acquire more agency (Noor et al., 2008: 830f), it needs to be investigated if and how reconciliation itself may lead to a higher sense of civilian agency.

Lastly, reconciliation after civil war is not a one-way process, which means there should be an interest in getting insights into former perpetrators' perception and opinions of reconciliation-related policies and attitudes towards their victims as well (López-López et al., 2018).

#### 4. Conclusions

To conclude, this study has shown that the prevalence of violence and peace protests may inform reconciliation attitudes, but it is far from crystal-clear to what extent and through which channels exactly they do so. Since real peace only starts to build when a significant part of society stands behind peaceful resolution and acts to make this vision a reality (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 941), the importance of civil society action for peace can still not be underestimated. The most recent wave of protests (and the latest election results) in Colombia would not have happened if it was not for the urgent need to address the systemic effects and underlying causes of the armed conflict (Duque, 2020; Collins, 2021c; Delcas, 2022). Slogans like *Las Luchas de hoy sean paz de mañana* (“Today’s fight will be tomorrow’s peace”) (Torres, 2021) as well as former activist and now Vice President of Colombia Francia Marquez’s resonance with large parts of society (Rueda, 2022) illustrate how much Colombian activists and civil society conceive their collective actions as a crucial part of civilian-led peacebuilding efforts.

Simultaneously, the conflict continues to take a toll on civil society and civilians across the country. Both the drug-centred framing of the armed conflict and widespread persecution and killings of social leaders and activists of all kinds are major impediments to Colombian peace activism and peace itself (Rojas et al., 2004: 32; Collins, 2021a). Concretely, civil society needs to rise to the challenge and develop common agendas that transcend local and regional peacebuilding efforts to move past enemy-friend dichotomies all the while being targeted and repressed by armed actors and state actors alike (Rojas et al., 2004: 32; Collins, 2021b; Cevallos, 2020). Generally, Colombia as a whole needs to overcome the persisting gap between official actors at the negotiating tables and civilian actors that have been carrying out peacebuilding in a concrete way for decades (Rojas et al., 2004: 2f; Kaplan, 2017; Arjona, 2016a). As such, sustainable and comprehensive peace as well as reconciliation is heavily impeded by the slow and lacking implementation of the CPA as well as the state’s traditional repressive policies towards civil society action (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019; CINEP/PPP-CE-RAC, 2018; Rettberg, 2018).

Overall, a conflict as complex and protracted as in Colombian is naturally followed by a very challenging post-conflict scenario. However, this makes it even more important to thoroughly understand all underlying issues as well as the fact that all peace processes are intertwined, gradual, non-linear, reciprocal, planned, voluntary and very long (Bar-Tal; Halperin, 2013: 945) – and act accordingly.

While the present analysis unfortunately is not able to confidently answer the question through which channels peace activism and violence relate to attitudes regarding reconciliation with two of the major players of the armed conflict, it provides clear evidence that more factors than just



victimisation are relevant to how people make sense of the conflict and potential ways forward. As such, it confirms that changes in the context can lead to new beliefs, which are relevant to political behaviour in post-conflict scenarios like the Colombian one. Furthermore, it supports the observation that civilians and victims are not as helpless as frequently portrayed. If political actors in Colombia are serious about their commitment to peace, they need to take these contextual factors as well as civilian agency and perspectives seriously. This also requires expanding political visions for peace beyond a drug-policies-centred approach. Generally speaking, if the most topical wave of protests and the recent election results in Colombia have shown anything, it is that peace has not taken hold comprehensively since the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the FARC. Accordingly, high hopes and expectations lie on the newly elected political leaders – maybe this change in office will succeed in responding to the need for peacebuilding efforts to be thought of and implemented more intersectionally and holistically (Collins, 2021c; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019).

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