Do Third-Party Guarantors Reassure Foot Soldiers?*

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Abstract

Since the Cold War, international third parties such as the United Nations (UN) have become frequent guarantors of peace agreements. Existing studies demonstrate that third parties ameliorate credible commitment problems, yet these studies nearly exclusively marshal evidence at the macro-level and focus on elites, rather than foot soldiers. Using a novel phone survey of 4,435 ex-combatants from the FARC-EP, Colombia’s largest rebel group, and an embedded survey experiment, we provide the first microfoundational test of prominent third-party credible commitment theories among former foot soldiers. We find no evidence that the UN Verification in Colombia: increased confidence among ex-combatants that the government would fulfill its commitment to implement the peace agreement; increased confidence that the FARC would do the same; improved perceptions of physical safety; increased positive perceptions of ex-combatants’ future economic prospects; nor increased trust in institutions more generally. Put differently, we are unable to recover microfoundational evidence in favor of third-party credible commitment theories at the foot soldier level. We discuss potential explanations for these null findings and the study’s relevance for debates about conflict termination, peace agreement implementation, and international interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, international third-parties such as the United Nations (UN) have increased their involvement in countries emerging from conflict, leaving behind traditional peacekeeping strategies and broadening the scope of activities undertaken to stabilize fragile countries. Third-parties have become the de facto guarantors of peace agreements: UN missions in East Timor, Mozambique, and elsewhere have revealed how third parties provide incentives for formerly warring parties to comply faithfully with agreed-upon commitments (Arnault, 2006; Howard, 2008; Walter, 2009).

The need for third-party involvement arises from credible commitment problems in the aftermath of civil war, when warring parties reach a mutual agreement yet some actors have incentives to violate it (Fearon, 2004). The actor with the most power—the government—can take advantage of power imbalances to undermine the peace agreement by creating new institutions that diminish the power granted or promised to opponents in the agreement (Atlas and Licklider, 1999; Girod, 2015); launching attacks on former rebels or political opponents (Fearon, 2004; Mattes and Savun, 2009); or creating excuses about the government’s limited institutional capacity to carry out changes promised in the agreement (Matanock, 2020).

Governments are unable to credibly commit not to exploit their power—even when their intentions are good—because incentives shift during transitions to peace (Simmons and Danner, 2010). While these problems initially arise during the negotiation and disarmament and demobilization stages, they carry over into agreement implementation, when former rebels are relatively weak and have not yet consolidated and legitimized political power (Matanock, 2017a, b). National political institutions are themselves often weak, making it difficult to detect and punish noncompliance (Matanock, 2020). Third party involvement, therefore, increases the likelihood of a stable peace, at least in the short term (Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild, 2001), insofar as it not only monitors non-compliance but provides conditional incentives that tie the hands of the stronger party (governments) and reassure the weaker party (ex-combatants) (Matanock, 2020).

Existing work focuses on how third-parties ameliorate credible commitment problems, but almost exclusively marshal macro-level evidence to do so.\(^1\) As such, they struggle to show whether and how ex-combatants are truly reassured by the presence and activities of third-parties, despite

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\(^1\)Three existing studies focus on the individual-level and explore citizen perceptions of international interventions, rather than those of ex-combatants. First, using survey data, Kelmendi and Radin (2018) find little satisfaction with the UN mission in Kosovo. Second, Nomikos (2022) finds experimental evidence that UN peacekeepers in Mali help reduce in-group and out-group tensions. Finally, Allen et al. (2020) examine U.S. interventions and find that closer contact and obtaining benefits from the U.S. increases support for the latter’s presence in the host country.
the fact that this represents the “hard core” of the research program. Most existing work on credible commitments also focuses on elite beliefs when studying how third-parties reassure ex-combatants, rather than those of rank-and-file soldiers, who represent the vast majority of former fighters.

We advance in this direction by providing the first microfoundational test—at the foot-soldier level—of prominent third-party guarantor theories. To do so, we conduct an original phone-based survey of 4,435 former combatants of the FARC-EP, Colombia’s largest rebel group, which demobilized following a 2016 peace agreement signed with the government. Fielded between December 2021 and January 2022, we embed a survey experiment to study the role of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. This Mission has the mandate to verify the implementation of political, economic, and social reincorporation, as well as to offer security guarantees to demobilized ex-combatants, in addition to human rights activists, and social and political leaders. Our survey experiment randomly assigns some respondents to receive a prime that includes a true statement mentioning that the UN renewed the Mission’s initial mandate (which ended in September of 2021), and has reiterated its commitment to the peace process. We then assess whether those randomly exposed to this message are more likely to support the peace agreement, are more optimistic about their reincorporation processes, are more optimistic regarding agreement implementation, feel safer, assess their future economic prospects more positively, or trust more in institutions when compared to those who did not receive the message. Respondents were block randomized to the treatment condition based on reported trust in the UN Verification Mission, which was measured pre-treatment.

Our results are somewhat surprising, and inconsistent with the theoretical framework proposed by the literature studying credible commitments after civil war, and with our own pre-analysis plan (PAP). More specifically, we find no evidence that the experiment moved the aforementioned attitudes. In other words, results from our survey experiment fail to recover microfoundational evidence in favor of third-party credible commitments theories at the foot soldier level, using survey data from a large sample of foot soldier-level ex-combatants in Colombia.

In the discussion section we entertain several plausible explanations to help us understand these null findings. We bring to bear additional qualitative evidence—gleaned from interviews with 20 core stakeholders intimately involved in both the negotiation and implementation of the 2016 peace agreement—to show that these individuals believed that the UN Mission mattered for implementation and effectively reassured ex-combatants, at least at the elite level. The reassuring

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2Our PAP was pre-registered with the Evidence and Governance and Politics network and the Open Science Framework prior to the completion of data collection. A version of the PAP is available at https://osf.io/kuze9.

3Including a former FARC high commander, representatives of the United Nations Verification Mission, international donors, and government officials responsible for demobilization and reincorporation, among others.
role that the Mission had on elites, in other words, likely failed to trickle down to foot soldiers. We ask whether the lack of boots on the ground in Colombia might, conversely, explain our null findings. In our view, however, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia is a case where we should expect reassurance among the ex-combatant population, given its formal role in demobilization and reincorporation, physical protection of ex-combatants, and economic reincorporation. As such, we do not believe our null findings can be attributed to a weak mission. The discussion then turns back to our survey data, where we show that neither lack of trust nor infrequent exposure to the third-party can explain our results: the UN Verification Mission elicits high levels of trust among ex-combatants, and we find no evidence that the treatment effect varies in a statistically significant way as a function of either trust or contact. We also use a manipulation check to show null effects among those ex-combatants who felt reassured by the UN Verification Mission’s commitment to the agreement’s implementation. Finally, we consider whether our null results can be attributed to limited statistical power. They are not, as we are well-powered to detect even small treatment effects. While we cannot refute outright some of the theoretical claims of third-party commitment theories, we suggest potential scope conditions and chart a path for future research to push the research agenda forward.

Our study contributes to multiple bodies of research. First, and most directly, we contribute to the literature on post-conflict peacebuilding, providing microfoundational evidence regarding third-party credible commitments following civil war. Second, we contribute to the broader literature on peacebuilding and post-conflict statebuilding by offering novel theoretical arguments about how international involvement differentially affects rank-and-file and elite ex-combatants. Third, we contribute to the literature on demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration, presenting findings from an original survey of FARC ex-combatants, among the largest surveys of ex-combatants ever implemented by scholars, and by making public the anonymized survey data to other researchers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Quantitative and qualitative research has shown that third-party guarantors play a crucial role in stopping the fighting during civil wars (Fortna, 2008; Howard, 2019) and in maintaining post-conflict peace (Fortna, 2008; Matanock and Lichtenheld, 2022). The vast majority of this literature, however, draws on evidence at the macro level, adopting as the unit of analysis the peace agreement or conflict dyad (e.g., Croicu et al. 2013; Karreth et al. 2022). In part due to inferential challenges, few studies examine the effect that guarantors have on former combatants’ attitudes.
and commitments to signed peace agreements.

Underpinning these macro-level findings on peacekeeping are assumptions about the micro-level behavior of different actors with a stake in the agreement. Elites, in particular, have been the focus of the existing literature, which has implications for how third parties resolve commitment problems among elites. Until recently, however, studies of how international third-parties stabilize peace settlements tended to focus on their coercive military capacity, assuring both governments and ex-combatants that no belligerent party would credibly rearm (e.g., Hultman, Kathman and Shannon (2014)). New work suggests that muscular military engagement is not a requirement for such missions to secure peace: conditional incentives—legal, political, and economic—are instead what provide third-parties with the most powerful tools to keep parties committed to the agreement (Matanock and Lichtenheld, 2022, p. 7). Such missions also have symbolic benefits, even absent boots on the ground (Dayal, 2021).

Despite the fact that foot soldiers make up the majority of the ranks of armed groups in wartime (e.g. Weinstein, 2006), evidence on how they respond to third-party guarantors remains scarce. The kinds of guarantees third parties provide to elites, well-theorized in the literature, may similarly drive the behavior of former rank-and-file soldiers. While third-parties have limited leeway to reassure foot soldiers during negotiations—given that peace agreements tend to be negotiated between elites (Matanock, 2020)—we argue that they are most likely to influence former foot soldiers’ perceptions of the agreement during the implementation rather than negotiation phase. Contact between former foot soldiers and third-parties is deepest and most frequent when former foot soldiers are transitioning to civilian life. As we argue below, the willingness of foot soldiers to remain committed to a negotiated agreement depends on the success of such reincorporation processes, which increasingly encompass economic, social, and political dimensions beyond the mere laying down of arms.

During the implementation phase, international third-parties go beyond simply enforcing compliance with agreement terms through blue helmets or military observers (e.g. Doyle and Sambanis, 2011). We discuss three mechanisms. First, these actors fund programs and ensure access to basic services for the demobilized population while coordinating disparate institutions involved in agreement implementation. Even if third parties cannot directly coerce governments to implement policies that guarantee the economic reincorporation of ex-combatants, they can coordinate other international actors to finance such programs (Karreth et al., 2022). The engagement of third-party actors therefore may yield better future prospects for rank-and-file ex-combatants.

Second, third parties can increase former foot soldiers’ willingness to remain committed to
the agreement by providing the latter with security and legal guarantees. Most post-conflict international missions are mandated to produce detailed reports for donor countries or international organizations, which can condition aid or investment to maintain recipient governments’ commitment to implementing peace. UN missions also submit these reports to high-level bodies, such as the UN Security Council. By observing the compliance of parties to the agreement, these missions can raise concerns about the security of ex-combatants, including threats posed by spoilers like dissident groups, among others. Third-parties therefore provide assurances to former rank-and-file soldiers that threats to their safety will be raised in high-level venues. These same actions also provide assurances to ex-combatants that the legal benefits enshrined in peace agreements—for example, reductions in the length of punishment in exchange for truth-telling—will not be revoked.

Finally, third-parties can facilitate foot soldiers’ political reincorporation. Because third-parties are seen as impartial arbiters in elections, they can provide safeguards to electoral processes that encourage the political participation of ex-combatants. Because these missions often include democracy promotion mandates, third-party engagement may help convince former foot soldiers that future elections will be free and fair (Blair, Di Salvatore and Smidt, 2022). Rank-and-file ex-combatants, who are often not the direct beneficiaries of electoral provisions increasingly included in peace agreements (Matanock, 2017b), can be assured that their political participation (whether voting or running for office) will be protected by third-party oversight.

The core prediction stemming from the third-party credible commitments literature is that third parties should positively affect ex-combatants’ perceptions of the likelihood that the government will implement the agreement, and their perceptions regarding reincorporation more broadly. As we argue above, third-parties need not deploy blue helmets in order to accomplish this.

**H1:** The presence of third-parties will increase ex-combatants’ commitment to the peace agreement, and improve their perceptions of their reincorporation processes.

Third-parties provide foot soldiers with other types of assurances, related to their perceived security and economic prospects. We thus derive the following sub-hypothesis from the above discussion:

**H1a:** By providing economic, security, and legal assurances, third-parties increase foot soldiers’ perceptions of their security and prospects for economic reincorporation.

We test additional potential implications, which are admittedly more speculative. First, the reassuring effects of third-parties may increase with levels of pre-existing trust in the third-party,

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4This includes granting congressional seats to ex-combatants.
and the extent to which ex-combatants have interacted with that third-party. (We acknowledge, however, potential ceiling effects.) Evidence shows, for example, that receiving direct benefits or having contact with foreign organizations such as the US Army positively influenced perceptions about the the US military, the US government, and the US population more broadly (Allen et al., 2020). A similar dynamic may be at work with third-party guarantors.

**H2:** Third parties’ potential to increase ex-combatants’ commitment to the agreement is conditional on pre-existing levels of trust towards (and interactions with) those third parties.

We also hypothesize about potential unintended consequences that these actors may generate, although these are not necessarily found in canonical credible commitment theories. Building on research about the effect of international state-building interventions on host states’ capacity, we argue that in weak institutional settings, international third-parties play roles that otherwise should be performed by national institutions. Absent a sufficiently strong and capable state to provide those services, international actors may be seen as the principal actor capable of ensuring the sustainability of reincorporation programs (e.g. Blair, 2019). As such, we may see “crowding out” of national and local institutions.

**H3a:** Substitution effects (“crowding out”) are likely to exist, increasing trust in international third-parties at the expense of trust in national and local institutions.

Alternatively, if these international institutions are seen as cooperating with and bolstering domestic institutions, we might expect instead a “transfer effect,” whereby the trust premium enjoyed by third parties is transferred to local institutions cooperating with them. Blair (2020), for example, shows that citizens with greater exposure to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) were more likely to rely on state (over non-state) institutions to solve criminal cases.5

**H3b:** Trust in international third-parties will increase trust in national and local institutions (“crowding in”).

**CONTEXT**

The Colombian conflict has involved an array of left- and right-wing armed groups, including but not limited to paramilitaries nominally aligned with the state (e.g., Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC), small insurgent groups representing marginalized populations (e.g., Movimiento

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5In a cross-national comparison, Blair (2020) also shows that the presence of UN personnel improves the rule of law (see also Blair 2021).
Armado Quintín Lame), and large rebel armies fighting for land redistribution and a new economic model for the country (e.g., FARC). The ongoing conflict has its roots in *La Violencia*, a conflict that lasted from 1948 until 1958, which ended with a rotating presidency between the two traditional Liberal and Conservative parties to stem the violence. Two left-wing insurgent groups—the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—emerged at the end of *La Violencia*. The ELN remains active to this day.

During the administration of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), a peace process with the FARC involved the creation of the *zona de distensión* (ZD), equivalent to nearly 40,000 square kilometers, which was demilitarized and ceded to the FARC. This process failed in 2002, shortly before President Álvaro Uribe took office and initiated a military offensive against FARC. The Uribe government successfully killed multiple members of the FARC’s Secretariat and induced many others to demobilize individually, dealing a significant blow to the insurgents’ abilities to operate as they once had while massively increasing human rights violations.

With severely weakened operational capabilities, the FARC entered into secret, exploratory meetings with the Juan Manuel Santos administration in 2011 to discuss a peace process. The process was launched publicly in mid-2012, with negotiations occurring in Havana, Cuba. In 2016, a final agreement was signed and initially put to a popular referendum, which was narrowly rejected in October of that year. To salvage the agreement, the negotiating parties made adjustments to the accords and then fast-tracked the agreement through Congress, without again subjecting it to popular approval.

In addition to addressing some root causes of the conflict, including rural reform, illicit drugs and the political participation of the FARC, the effective reincorporation of former members was a central objective of the agreement. Threats to the physical security of ex-combatants are severe: according to the UN, more than 300 have been assassinated since the peace agreement was signed. Beyond physical violence, surveys consistently show that stigma against FARC ex-combatants is pervasive (*Weintraub* et al., 2022), and represents a significant barrier to their successful insertion into social, economic, and political life.

An important role in the peace agreement was included for the UN Verification Mission, which was mandated to verify the political, economic, and social reincorporation of ex-combatants—allowing the FARC to transition from an armed organization to a legal political party—in addition to human rights activists, and social and political movements.\(^6\)

The core functions of the Mission can be divided broadly into security and economic tasks. In

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\(^6\)See sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the Final Agreement.
In addition to these functions, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia has coordinated the international aid community to grant additional funds aimed at ensuring the livelihoods and thus the successful economic reincorporation of foot soldiers. For example, it has bridged support to 34 ex-combatant-led income-generating projects, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UN, 2019). The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), through its “Colombia Peacekeeping Trust Fund,” has also invested more than $179 million in peacebuilding efforts in the country. Qualitative interviews—which we discuss in detail in the Discussion section below—corroborate that former high-ranking commanders perceive this as a key role played by international third parties in Colombia.

To what extent did these activities reassure ex-combatants? We now describe our empirical strategy.

**Research Design**

**Survey Data Collection and Sample**

In December 2021 and January 2022, we conducted a phone survey with 4,435 ex-combatants from the FARC-EP, part of a multi-year collaboration between the authors, the Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización (ARN)—the government agency responsible for reincorporation of FARC ex-combatants—and the CNR-FARC (now CNR-Comunes), the joint government/FARC mechanism for reincorporation and related topics as established by the peace agreement. We hired a survey firm, Sistemas Especializados de Información (SEI), to carry out the
survey, which we conducted by phone to comply with public health measures related to COVID-19.

Our universe of respondents consisted of 11,374 FARC ex-combatants who, as of November 2021, were engaged in reincorporation processes in Colombia and had contact information available in the ARN’s database. We contacted the full universe of respondents. For those we were initially unable to reach, enumerators called multiple times and at different times of the day, thereby increasing the probability of a successful survey. In total, SEI made 275,731 phone calls. On average, 24 calls were made per potential respondent, and in some cases we made as many as 101 attempts to achieve contact and minimize different response rates by levels of cell phone coverage, respondent availability, or other characteristics. The entire universe of respondents was called during the first 2 weeks—5,612 during the first week, and 5,722 in the second week—while the following 2 weeks were used to recontact those who had not yet answered the survey. Completed surveys lasted, on average, 25 minutes. All respondents were 18 years of age or older. Prior to administering each survey, the enumerator obtained informed consent. More details about the survey procedures and ethics can be found in Appendix A.2.

To increase response rates among a hard-to-reach and potentially resistant population, we worked both with local facilitators from the ARN and with representatives of the FARC component of the CNR before launching the survey. ARN facilitators are frontline state agents responsible for ensuring that ex-combatants receive benefits related to their reincorporation processes. The FARC component of the CNR encouraged us to work with the Fundación Colombiana de Excombatientes y Promotores de Paz (FUCEPAZ), the first legal, non-profit organization that FARC established, which has close contacts with ex-combatant communities in the field. Before initiating fieldwork, both ARN and FUCEPAZ reached out to the study population to inform them that a survey firm would be calling them to ask questions about reincorporation. They also clarified that participation would be completely voluntary, refusal would not entail any consequences in terms of the benefits to which they are entitled, and that the answers would be confidential. The ARN carried out this dissemination strategy throughout the country through text messages and facilitator contacts, while FUCEPAZ did the same via targeted phone calls to key representatives in hard-to-reach communities, to whom they also distributed a presentation with key information and a short instructional video.  

7 From a total of 12,028 individuals active in reincorporation processes.
8 FUCEPAZ engaged in the following communities: Vereda El Oso, Planadas, Tolima; Vereda Nueva Esperanza, Mesetas, Meta; Vereda Buenavista, Mesetas, Meta; Vereda Colinas, San José del Guaviare, Guaviare; Vereda Charras, San José del Guaviare, Guaviare; Vereda Mutatá, Antioquia; Vereda Tierra Grata, San Jose de Oriente, Cesar; Vereda Santa Rosa de Tetuan, San Antonio, Tolima; Vereda la Cooperativa, Vistahermosa, Meta; Ovejas, Sincelejo; Palmitos, Montes de María, Sucre; Corregimiento Pueblo Rico, Santa Cecilia, Antioquia; urban area of Chaparral, Tolima; Vereda La Pista, Uribe, Meta; Vereda La Fila, Icononzo, Tolima; Sector Kilómetro 8, Vereda Nuevo Quibdó, Chocó.
Prior to launching the survey, the polling firm also sent a text message to the full universe of ex-combatants to inform them that they would be contacted in the following weeks. In January, once fieldwork had been underway for a few weeks, SEI sent an additional two text messages to respondents who hadn’t yet answered the call from the survey firm, or had a phone that was reported out of service, to remind them that the survey was still active, to ask if they would like to be contacted in the future and, if so, to find a convenient time to respond.

The maps in Figure 1 show the distribution of ex-combatants in Colombia, using data from the ARN. Ex-combatants are chiefly concentrated in the departments of Meta (1,312 ex-combatants), Antioquia (1,251 ex-combatants) and Cauca (1,137 ex-combatants). At the municipal level, the population is currently located principally in Bogotá, the capital and largest city in the country, and otherwise in comparatively more rural municipalities like San José del Guaviare, Arauquita, and Icononzo.

**Figure 1: Distribution of ex-combatants’ population in Colombia**

(a) By department  
(b) By municipality

Ex-combatants’ location of residence can be divided into 2 different groups: those who live in municipalities with former Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCRs)—areas created by the peace agreement to encourage demobilization and reincorporation in rural zones—and those who reside in municipalities without former ETCRs. According to ARN data, there are a total of 2,233 ex-combatants—approximately, 19.63% of the total—living in former
ETCRs. Information on place of residence is available for the totality of this population. As the maps in Figure 9 show, those living in former ETCRs are mainly concentrated in the departments of Meta, Antioquia, Guaviare, Tolima, and Caquetá, and in the municipalities of San José del Guaviare, Icononzo, Arauquita and La Montañita. A total of 9,101 ex-combatants—approximately, 80.37% of the universe—do not live in former ETCRs. As the maps in Figure 10 show, these ex-combatants are predominantly located in the departments of Meta, Cauca, Antioquia and Bogotá, D.C., and mainly live in large cities such as Bogotá, Villavicencio, and Medellín.

We established effective contact with 4,435 former FARC-EP combatants. Within our sample, the average age is approximately 40 years old; the youngest respondent is 20 and the oldest 85 years old. Of the total number of respondents, 27% (1,197) self-identify as female and 73% (3,238) as male. As Figure 2 shows, approximately 83% (3,691) of our respondents do not live in a former ETCR, while the other 17% (744) do so. While respondents are distributed throughout the country, we see clusters in the departments of Meta, Cauca, Antioquia, Caquetá and the Capital District of Bogotá. At the municipal level, respondents are located mainly in Bogotá, Villavicencio, Medellín, Mesetas, Icononzo, Cali, and Neiva.9

Figure 2: Distribution of ex-combatants’ sample

(a) By departments  (b) By municipalities

Respondents in our sample are located mainly in the following ARN territorial groups: ARN Meta and Orinoquia, ARN Cauca, ARN Antioquia Chocó, ARN Bogotá, ARN Tolima, ARN Caquetá and ARN Cundinamarca - Boyacá - Casanare.
Crucially, as Figure 4 shows, our sample closely resembles the full universe across a variety of socio-economic variables, including age, sex, and residence within former ETCRs.
Figure 4: *Survey sample versus full universe*

**Age distribution**

**Distribution by sex**

Sample vs full universe
To the best of our knowledge, our sample is one of the largest among existing surveys of ex-combatants, and the first of this magnitude conducted with FARC ex-combatants. In Colombia, the *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (FIP) interviewed 1,485 demobilized members of various illegal armed groups. These data have been used by Kreutz and Nussio (2019); Oppenheim and Söderström (2018); Oppenheim and Weintraub (2017); Kaplan and Nussio (2018); Nussio (2011); Ugarriza and Nussio (2016), among others. Arjona and Kalyvas (2006) completed 829 interviews with guerrilla deserters (FARC and ELN) and demobilized paramilitaries in the summer of 2005, while Daly (2018) uses a representative ex-combatant survey of 10,951 former paramilitaries across Colombia. In other countries, Humphreys and Weinstein (2007) surveyed a total of 1,043 ex-combatants were completed in Sierra Leone; Hwang (2018) interviewed 50 Indonesian jihadists; Hill, Taylor and Temin (2008) based their research on a survey administered to more than 1,400 ex-combatants in Liberia. In other words, our remote survey of FARC ex-combatants is among the largest ever conducted, both in Colombia and beyond.

**EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN**

We investigate the extent to which third parties reduce credible commitment problems among former rank-and-file combatants. We would ideally randomly assign the presence of a third-party and analyze individual attitudes, but this is neither ethical nor feasible. Instead, we leverage the fact that the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in the country was set to expire in September 2021, and randomly assign respondents to two different groups: a pure control group (50%) and
a treatment group (50%). The treatment involves priming respondents by reading a true statement emphasizing that the UN Verification Mission’s mandate, which ended in September of 2021, was renewed by the UN. It also notes that the organization had reiterated its commitment to its role in peace agreement implementation.

Note that our treatment condition performs one of two functions: it either informs ex-combatants about the extension and continued commitment of the UN (among those who expected no extension) or primes those who already knew about this to think about the Mission and its continued commitment to peace in Colombia. Therefore, we induce random variation in the extent to which former combatants recognize the UN Verification Mission’s role and commitment.

We block randomize based on trust in the UN Verification Mission, measured pre-treatment. The stratifying question asked “[h]ow much do you trust the UN Verification Mission?” and respondents were given the options to respond “not at all,” “very little,” “somewhat,” or “very much.” We classify respondents answering “somewhat” or “very much” as those who already trust the third party, while respondents answering “not at all” or “very little” are classified as not trusting the third party. A third group consists of respondents who answer that they do not know or do not wish to answer.

Within these three groups (trust/does not trust/doesn’t know or won’t answer), we randomize subjects into our two aforementioned experimental conditions: pure control and treatment. The prime for those in the treatment group is as follows: “The mandate of the Peace Agreement Verification Mission has been extended and the United Nations has expressed its commitment to the reincorporation process. Did you know this?” Respondents were then given the opportunity to respond yes or no. We also include a manipulation check at the end of the survey, asking all respondents whether they know that the UN Verification Mission’s mandate has been extended. The wording is as follows: “Do you know if the mandate of the UN Verification Mission has been extended?” and respondents were then able to answer “Yes, it has been extended,” or “No, it has not been extended.”

We are interested in four core sets of outcomes. First, we measure how ex-combatants perceive the future of the implementation of the peace agreement, and more specifically how confident they are that the parties—the government and FARC—will follow-through with their commitments. The wording of these questions is as follows: “[h]ow confident are you that the National Government will comply with the Peace Agreement?” to which respondents answered using a scale from 1 to 4 (where 1 means “not at all,” and 4 means “completely”). We ask a parallel question about their perceptions regarding FARC’s commitment to the agreement: “[h]ow confident are you that
the signatories of the FARC-EP will comply with the Peace Agreement?” to which respondents answered using a scale from 1 to 4 (where 1 means “not at all,” and 4 means “completely”).

Second, we seek to understand whether third parties reassure ex-combatants about their physical safety. We include a question to assess perceived security risks during the reincorporation process: “[d]o you or your household consider that there is a risk to being in the reincorporation process?” to which respondents answered “yes” or “no.”

Third, given the important role that the UN Verification Mission has in supporting economic opportunities for ex-combatants, we include a question that measures ex-combatants’ expectations about their prospective financial situation. We ask the following: “[w]hen you think about the future, how do you think your financial situation and that of your household will be in the next 12 months?” to which respondents answered “better off,” “the same,” or “worse off.” If one mechanism for mitigating commitment problems concerns credibly committing to government-provided financial investments in ex-combatants’ futures, we should see movement in this question following our prime.

Fourth, to measure potential substitution effects between trust in third parties and trust in government institutions (“crowding out”), or a potential transfer effect of trust from the UN to national institutions (“crowding in”), we create a battery of questions that measure trust in different institutions at the local and national levels, using a scale from 1 to 4 (where 1 means “not at all” and 4 means “very much”). More specifically, we asked the respondents how much they trust: i) the ARN, ii) the mayor’s office of their municipality, iii) the National Government, iv) the National Congress, v) the Colombian Armed Forces and vi) the National Police. We test treatment effects on both an index of trust, and on its component parts.

Finally, the effect of third parties on respondent perceptions may vary depending upon pretreatment levels of trust in these actors, and how frequently respondents are exposed to them. To measure this, we interact the same pre-treatment question used for the block randomization—how much respondents trust the UN Verification Mission—with the treatment variable. Based on Allen et al. (2020), we include a question about frequency of direct contact with members of the UN Verification Mission. In particular, we ask the following: “[i]n the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family, or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?” and use a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is “never” and 5 is “always”). For the analyses, we coarsen this variable into three categories: no contact (if

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10All of the questions in our instrument—including those below—allow respondents to skip particular questions or to respond that they do not know or do not wish to respond, but we do not repeat those options when discussing our core outcomes, for compactness.
the ex-combatant answers 1 or 2), some contact (if answers 3), a lot of contact (if answers 4 or 5). We expect heterogeneity in treatment effects based on the frequency and type of exposure of ex-combatants to the UN Verification Mission.

**ESTIMATION**

Our main estimand of interest is the Average Treatment Effect (ATE). Specifically, we are interested in the average difference in survey responses to our outcomes of interest between treatment and control groups; that is, between those exposed to a randomized prompt about third party guarantors and those not receiving the prompt. To estimate this quantity, we fit the following regression model:

\[ y_i = \beta_0 + D_i + \alpha_b + \gamma_s + \epsilon_i \]  

(1)

where, \( y_i \) denotes subject \( i \)’s answer to the question measuring the outcome of interest; \( D_i \) denotes a treatment indicator; and \( \alpha_b \) and \( \gamma_s \) correspond to block and strata fixed effects accounting for our randomization and sampling strategies, respectively. When testing for heterogeneous treatment effects, we interact the moderator of interest with the treatment indicator in model (1).

**RESULTS**

Tables 1 and 2 present the results of estimating different versions of equation (1) using two outcomes of interest: the extent to which ex-combatants are confident that the government and the FARC will implement the peace agreement, respectively. For ease of interpretation, we show results for a dichotomized version of the original variables here, but present results using the scale in Appendix E. In the first column, we present tests for the pure effect (hypothesis 1). The second and the third column examine heterogeneous treatment effects by levels of confidence or contact with the UN Verification Mission, respectively (hypothesis 2).

Table 1 assesses whether our treatment affected ex-combatants’ confidence in the national government’s commitment to peace agreement implementation. We see no treatment effects. The pure vignette effect, captured by the treatment indicator, is close to zero (the magnitude of the coefficient, \(-0.008\), is under 2% of the sample mean) and we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect. Looking at column 1, relative to ex-combatants who distrust the mission, those who have a positive or no opinion of the mission (i.e., who answer do not know or refuse to answer) are
more likely, on average, to feel confident in the government’s commitment to the implementation of the agreement. Although this finding provides initial support in favor of the macro-level theories tested, having high levels of trust in the UN Mission may mask many other correlates of trust in the government to implement the agreement.

Next, we examine heterogeneous treatment effects. The results indicate that null effects persist even among ex-combatants who trust the UN Verification Mission very much, or among those who do not have a strong opinion about it (column 2). Likewise, we observe no effect of the treatment, regardless of level of exposure to the UN Mission (column 3). The sign on these estimates suggests that, if anything, the effect might be smaller among those with more trust, and among those with comparatively more exposure to the UN, although we refrain from over-interpreting these noisy estimates.
Table 1: Confidence in the Government to Implement the Peace Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment = 1</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.213***</td>
<td>0.157*</td>
<td>0.210***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Trusts</td>
<td>0.197***</td>
<td>0.207***</td>
<td>0.206***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.048*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Trusts</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>-0.147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.332***</td>
<td>0.325***</td>
<td>0.343***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,388</td>
<td>4,388</td>
<td>4,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Control</td>
<td>0.405</td>
<td>0.405</td>
<td>0.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD Control</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>0.491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable comes from the responses to the question “How confident are you that the National Government will comply with the Peace Agreement?”. We created a dummy variable equal to 0 if the respondent answered “Not at all” or “Very little” and equal to 1 if he/she answered “Somewhat”, “A lot” or “Completely”. In all specifications, we include fixed effects by stratification block where the base group is those who do not trust the UN. In (2), we include heterogeneous treatment effects by stratification block. Finally, in (3), we also include fixed effects and heterogeneous treatment effects by frequency of contact with the UN. This variable was created from the question “In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?”. Those who answered “Always” or “Almost always” were classified in the “A lot of contact” group; those who answered “Sometimes” were classified as “Some contact”; those who answered “Almost never” or “Never” were assigned to the “Little contact” group; finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the “Doesn’t know or reply” group. The base group for this variable is the “Little contact” group. Finally, we include fixed effects by strata of the sampling process and robust standard errors.

Evidence from Table 2 points in the same direction. Reinforcing the UN’s commitment has a negligible (0.01, close to 1.2% of the mean), insignificant effect on confidence that the FARC
will fulfill the peace agreement’s commitments. Point estimates are very close to zero across specifications, and we find no statistically significant effects among subgroups. Again, those with high levels of trust and those without an opinion about the UN Verification Mission have more confidence that the FARC will implement the agreement. These estimates are slightly smaller in this case, presumably due to the fact that the vast majority of respondents are already confident about this (the estimated percentage in the control is 85%).
Table 2: Confidence in the FARC-EP to Implement the Peace Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Follow-through: FARC</th>
<th>(2) Follow-through: FARC</th>
<th>(3) Follow-through: FARC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment = 1</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.105**</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.106**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Trusts</td>
<td>0.158***</td>
<td>0.180***</td>
<td>0.148***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.043**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.059***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Trusts</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.696***</td>
<td>0.678***</td>
<td>0.673***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,337</td>
<td>4,337</td>
<td>4,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Control</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>0.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD Control</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>0.360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable comes from the responses to the question “How confident are you that the signatories of the FARC-EP will comply with the Peace Agreement?”. We created a dummy variable equal to 0 if the respondent answered “Not at all” or “Very little” and equal to 1 if he/she answered “Somewhat”, “A lot” or “ Completely”. In all specifications, we include fixed effects by stratification block where the base group is those who do not trust the UN. In (2), we include heterogeneous treatment effects by stratification block. Finally, in (3), we also include fixed effects and heterogeneous treatment effects by frequency of contact with the UN. This variable was created from the question “In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?”. Those who answered “Always” or “Almost always” were classified in the “A lot of contact” group; those who answered “Sometimes” were classified as “Some contact”; those who answered “Almost never” or “Never” were assigned to the “Little contact” group; finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the “Doesn’t know or reply” group. The base group for this variable is the “Little contact” group. Finally, we include fixed effects by strata of the sampling process and robust standard errors.

The results thus far suggest that reassurance about a third party’s presence does not shape ex-combatants’ attitudes. Furthermore, we find no effect of the treatment among subgroups that
should be most susceptible to this information: those with high levels of trust or exposure to
the third-party. While results for FARC’s commitment risk ceiling effects, that is not the case
for the government outcome: in the control group, only 40% of respondents are confident that
the government will implement the agreement, leaving more room for movement induced by the
treatment.

In the next set of tables we examine other attitudes potentially subject to influence by third
parties.\textsuperscript{11} Tables 3 and 4 test for treatment effects on ex-combatants’ assessments of their physical
safety and economic prospects, respectively.

We begin with effects on ex-combatants’ perceptions of security risks. We find that our treat-
ment does not shape attitudes in a statistically significant way: neither the estimated pure effect nor
the conditional marginal causal effect find empirical support. We note that high levels of trust in
the UN Verification Mission correlate with a lower propensity to feel at risk, while greater reported
exposure to the Mission is associated with greater perceived risk. However, in both cases we are
careful about interpreting these effects, as these may capture other variables associated with the
profiles of ex-combatants who are more trusting and more exposed to the UN Verification Mission.
For example, the latter could be a predictor of areas more (or less) exposed to violence or threats
from armed non-state actors.

\textsuperscript{11}Dayal (2021) refers to these as distributive benefits that go beyond security guarantees or compliance with the terms
of an agreement, and that may motivate ex-combatants to remain under a peace agreement.
Table 3: Safety Risks Given Reincorporation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Safety risks perception</th>
<th>(2) Safety risks perception</th>
<th>(3) Safety risks perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment = 1</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>-0.171***</td>
<td>-0.137</td>
<td>-0.167***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Trusts</td>
<td>-0.047***</td>
<td>-0.053**</td>
<td>-0.057***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.044*</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.055**</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Trusts</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.714***</td>
<td>0.718***</td>
<td>0.693***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>4,364</td>
<td>4,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Control</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD Control</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable comes from the responses to the question “Do you or your household consider that there is a risk for being in the reincorporation process?”. We created a dummy variable equal to 0 if the respondent answered “No” and equal to 1 if he/she answered “Yes”. In all specifications, we include fixed effects by stratification block where the base group is those who do not trust the UN. In (2), we include heterogeneous treatment effects by stratification block. Finally, in (3), we also include fixed effects and heterogeneous treatment effects by frequency of contact with the UN. This variable was created from the question “In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?”. Those who answered “Always” or “Almost always” were classified in the “A lot of contact” group; those who answered “Sometimes” were classified as “Some contact”; those who answered “Almost never” or “Never” were assigned to the “Little contact” group; finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the “Doesn’t know or reply” group. The base group for this variable is the “Little contact” group. Finally, we include fixed effects by strata of the sampling process and robust standard errors.

Results are similar when examining the economic prospects of ex-combatants. That is, while the observational measure of trust in the UN Verification Mission seems to make ex-combatants
more optimistic about their financial prospects, we do not find consistent evidence that the treatment induces ex-combatants to report more positive perceptions of their future economic prospects.

Table 4: Prospective Economic Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) Economic perspectives</th>
<th>(2) Economic perspectives</th>
<th>(3) Economic perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment = 1</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.101***</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.103**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Trusts</td>
<td>0.092***</td>
<td>0.076***</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Trusts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.065**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.751***</td>
<td>0.764***</td>
<td>0.738***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,332</td>
<td>4,332</td>
<td>4,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Control</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD Control</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The dependent variable comes from the responses to the question "When you think about the future, how do you think your financial situation and that of your household will be in the next 12 months?". We created a dummy variable equal to 0 if the respondent answered "Worse" or "The same" and equal to 1 if he/she answered "Better". In all specifications, we include fixed effects by stratification block where the base group is those who do not trust the UN. In (2), we include heterogeneous treatment effects by stratification block. Finally, in (3), we also include fixed effects and heterogeneous treatment effects by frequency of contact with the UN. This variable was created from the question "In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?". Those who answered "Always" or "Almost always" were classified in the 'A lot of contact' group; those who answered "Sometimes" were classified as 'Some contact'; those who answered 'Almost never' or 'Never' were assigned to the 'Little contact’ group; finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the 'Doesn’t know or reply' group. The base group for this variable is the 'Little contact' group. Finally, we include fixed effects by strata of the sampling process and robust standard errors.
Finally, we turn to the question of whether third parties crowd-out (thereby decreasing) or crowd-in (thereby increasing) former combatants’ trust in domestic institutions (hypotheses 3a and 3b). Table 5 shows the results of the estimation of model (1) using our institutional trust index. We standardize this index to facilitate interpretation.

Column 1 of Table 5 indicates that treated ex-combatants become neither less nor more trusting after hearing that the UN Verification Mission will remain in Colombia and has reiterated its commitment to implementation. We also do not detect effects between subgroups defined by their levels of trust and exposure to the UN Verification Mission. We also observe that trust in the UN Verification Mission is strongly associated with greater overall trust in Colombian institutions. Unlike in previous analyses, however, this correlation is not present among those who have no opinion about this third party (i.e., those who don’t know or do not respond to our trust question).
Table 5: Institutional Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment = 1</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.485***</td>
<td>0.308*</td>
<td>0.456***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block = Trusts</td>
<td>0.594***</td>
<td>0.634***</td>
<td>0.586***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.507**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td>0.350</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Block = Trusts</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Doesn’t know/reply</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.462</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = Some contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1 &amp; Contact UN = A lot of contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.247**</td>
<td>-0.276**</td>
<td>-0.270**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 4,435 4,435 4,435
Mean Control 0 0 0
SD Control 1 1 1

Note: The dependent variable is the institutional trust standardized index. A more detailed explanation of this variable can be found in section F. In all specifications, we include fixed effects by stratification block where the base group is those who do not trust the UN. In (2), we include heterogeneous treatment effects by stratification block. Finally, in (3), we also include fixed effects and heterogeneous treatment effects by frequency of contact with the UN. This variable was created from the question “In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?”. Those who answered “Always” or “Almost always” were classified in the “A lot of contact” group; those who answered “Sometimes” were classified as “Some contact”; those who answered “Almost never” or “Never” were assigned to the “Little contact” group; finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the “Doesn’t know or reply” group. The base group for this variable is the “Little contact” group. Finally, we include fixed effects by strata of the sampling process and robust standard errors.
DISCUSSION

Why did our survey experiment produce null results? Here we discuss several potential explanations and, whenever possible, marshal evidence to assess their validity.

WHO IS REASSURED BY THIRD PARTIES?

Third-party guarantors may be best suited to reassure high-level former combatants, rather than foot soldiers. Given that rank-and-file ex-combatants represent the bulk of our survey sample, we may be looking “in the wrong place” for evidence that third-parties in Colombia affect ex-combatant attitudes. To rule out the possibility that not even elites were reassured by the UN Mission (given null results among foot soldiers in our experiment), we rely on qualitative interviews.

Between January and December 2020, we conducted 20 interviews with 22 individuals who are or have been involved in the negotiation and/or implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. This includes members of the UN system; high-ranking diplomats based in Colombia and representing countries active in peacebuilding; representatives of the national government responsible for demobilization and reincorporation; human rights defenders and members of civil society; and a former high commander of the FARC-EP.12

The interviews reveal that the UN Mission has indeed played an important role in reassuring ex-combatants, at least at the elite level. As a former commander of the FARC-EP said: “The [UN] Mission has had a decisive role. Whatever small amount of progress we have made is due to its presence. The pressure it has exerted is important.” Other interview subjects concurred, reporting that the UN Mission “helped to create trust...it was very important,”13 during both the negotiation and implementation phases. As a diplomat recalled when asked about the UN Mission, “FARC wants an international presence. It has a very critical position about what is happening [with the Duque government] and it sees the importance of an international presence.”14 An embassy staff member reported that “the tripartite mechanism [composed of the UN Mission, the FARC, and government] functioned very well. The novelty was the good relationship between FARC and the Army, without notable problems. This generated trust. The Army increased its tasks in a professional manner, without bragging about victory;”15 The head of one of the Mission’s most important regional offices stated that the renewal of the UN Mission was “made possible by the

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12 Most of these interviews were conducted in person in Colombia and Spain, while a few were conducted virtually.
13 Interview 1, January 21, 2020.
14 Interview 2, January 22, 2020.
The UN Mission’s ability to build trust became particularly important in the context of the political transition from the Santos government, which negotiated the peace agreement with the FARC-EP, to the Duque administration, a successor government that, according to interviewees, sought to impede agreement implementation. As a civil society leader told us, “the Duque administration implements one part of the Agreement: disarmament and reintegration. But not land [reform] and not political participation, because it is not interested in those.”17 As a European development cooperation lead attested, “the international community has scolded [the Duque government] constantly: it has obliged the government to keep the process alive. If not, we’d now be in another context.”18 A high-level embassy staff member mentioned that the Duque government “is very critical of the United Nations and wants to reduce its presence.”19 Indeed, one European diplomat in Bogotá said that a few months prior to the Mission’s renewal, “I was afraid that the Duque government wouldn’t renew the mandate,” which would have effectively torpedoed the implementation of the agreement altogether.20

Trust with elite ex-combatants—former high-level and mid-level commanders—was built in several ways. According to an experienced, senior embassy official working on peace and security issues, “the Mission did something well: it drew attention to mid-level commanders from the FARC, those who gave orders, had power and status. They [mid-level commanders] tend to have problems in other [peace] processes. The Mission was attentive to this, giving them a salary ‘plus’.”21 The Mission also sought to counter foot-dragging by the government, as the director of a major civil society organization expressed: after the government “took a year to establish its role” in the implementation of the agreement, the Mission “said that if the government wouldn’t do things, then they [the Mission] would.”22 Because the United Nations Security Council had an active role, this provided the Mission an “impetus for this to work beyond [mere] verification.”23 In addition to fulfilling beyond-the-mandate implementation roles, the Mission also “leads the search for resources. Perhaps in other countries these missions do not look for funds from donors.”24 These actions, perhaps invisible to foot soldiers but clearly visible to elite ex-combatants partic-

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16 Interview 18, March 5, 2020.
19 Interview 2, January 22, 2020.
21 Interview 11, 2020.
23 Ibid.
ipating in political spaces like the Consejo Nacional de Reconciliación (CNR), signals to elite ex-combatants that the sustainability of programs that protect their lives and livelihoods depends upon the UN Mission. Despite acknowledging the importance of the aforementioned roles played by the UN Mission, a former FARC commander criticized the Mission for “not having concrete instruments to force the government, unless there is stronger support from the international community. There has been a lack of more pressure from the countries involved in the financing.”

The relatively high capacity for policy implementation in Colombia, when compared to other post-conflict contexts, was mentioned repeatedly by those interviewed: as a former government official said, the UN “shouldn’t be an implementer in a country like Colombia where there is capacity. Here the issue is strengthening and modernizing our state to be able to overcome conflict.” The head of international cooperation within the embassy of an important donor country stated that “the role of the United Nations and international actors is there: to help the country realize reforms, confront inequalities, see how to speed up those reforms...we need to be clear about why there is [international] cooperation in a country like Colombia. We have to discuss the transition [away from cooperation], what the long-term solution is.” A relatively capable state likely explains the UN’s decision not to authorize a multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission in Colombia.

Despite the comparative strength of the Colombian state, the UN Mission, “is sometimes the only institution” present in far-flung regions of the country, as a chief of one of the Mission’s regional offices mentioned. As an individual in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and who previously worked in the Mission, remarked: “the value of the Mission has been its presence in the field.” The Mission’s presence in the hinterlands provides concrete benefits: the chief of one of the Mission’s areas said that “if it weren’t for the [Mission’s] local teams who are in the field, the ‘raw materials’ [that decision-makers receive] in Bogotá would be different...and they form the basis of the reports sent to New York.” Despite the lack of boots on the ground, there is a perception that the Mission’s monitoring actions are important in and of themselves: a member of civil society said that “for the majority of actors the presence of the Verification Component is crucial: it has significant capacity to influence, as each report has international repercussions.”

From the elite interviews, therefore, we can conclude that the UN Mission is generally seen to be (a) important; (b) strong, and perhaps even stronger than the mandate itself suggests; (c) capable

26 Interview 1, January 21, 2020.
27 Interview 2, January 22, 2020.
28 Interview 18, March 5, 2020.
of reassuring elite FARC ex-combatants; while (d) to some extent tying the hands of a government uninterested in implementation or that actively sought to undermine the agreement. If elites appear to be affected by the UN Mission, then, why do our experimental survey results show no effect on foot soldiers? We discuss additional alternatives below.

THE WRONG KIND OF MISSION?

The literature has distinguished between four types of missions (Sandler, 2017): (1) monitoring and observer missions, which simply observe and report on cease-fire violations; (2) traditional peacekeeping missions, which involve lightly armed troops that physically place themselves between adversaries to secure a cease-fire, and may also include disarmament and demobilization actions; (3) peacebuilding missions (sometimes known as “multi-dimensional peacekeeping”), which include the former aspects but also involve deep structural changes to the state, such as electoral reforms and beyond; and (4) peace enforcement missions, which “involve the use of military force to end hostilities between warring sides.” Some studies find that specific types of UN missions—multidimensional missions, for example—have significant positive effects on the success of peacebuilding (Walter, Howard and Fortna, 2021), while others—such as observation missions—have more limited effects (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000). Others find that interventions by third parties—regardless of the type of mission—have positive and significant effects on the consolidation and duration of peace (Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild, 2001).

Monitoring and observer and traditional peacekeeping missions—which are not mandated to use force—are the most common type of missions (Matanock, 2020), yet have been comparatively understudied. They are equally effective in preventing conflict recurrence when compared to more muscular missions (Matanock and Lichtenheld, 2022), even though they do not involve boots on the ground, naturally making them more cost-effective. Relatedly, they may be less prone to pathologies afflicting missions charged with wielding force, including human rights abuses (Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009) and disruptions to local economies (Jennings and Bøås, 2015). 32

Colombia combines aspects of monitoring and observer missions and traditional peacekeeping missions. One interpretation for our null findings might be that the UN Verification Mission in Colombia is not a peacebuilding or peace enforcement mission with blue helmets on the ground. Perhaps we have set the bar too high: Colombia’s mission never sought the wholesale transformation of the state or the rule of law (Blair, 2021), which may make this an impossibly tough case for

32For a dissenting view on the negative economic consequences of boots on the ground, see Bove, Salvatore and Elia (2022).
third-party credible commitment theories. We do not believe, however, that this explanation fully
captures dynamics on the ground. The Mission’s tasks in Colombia are well-aligned with some
core characteristics of the United Nation’s different peacekeeping strategies used to tackle conflict
globally. For instance, multidimensional peacekeeping overcame traditional peacekeeping because
it consisted of integrated missions in which there was not only presence of blue helmets but also
political, social and economic interventions on behalf of the UN Mission that aimed for long-run,
self-sustaining peace. Even though the Mission’s actions in Colombia have not been as direct as
coordinating election processes (as in Mozambique with UNUMOZ in 1992), for example, they
have contributed to preserving peace and development in post-conflict Colombia. For example,
during the 2018 electoral campaign period, the Mission identified risks to members of the political
party that emerged from the demobilization of the FARC-EP. In conjunction with the National Pro-
tection Unit, the Mission offered a tripartite protection and security mechanism that built a national
headquarters and ten regional headquarters where the party could carry out its activities. They also
designed a roadmap to address the needs of women involved in political activities (UN, 2018b).

Recent work by Dayal (2021, p. 1) shows that UN peacekeeping missions produce “unique
tactical, symbolic, and post-conflict reconstruction outcomes that have little to do with the end of
fighting.” The benefits that combatants receive from UN assistance can be achieved even when the
UN is deployed absent peacekeepers on the ground, and when peacekeepers are not effective.

In addition to symbolic benefits, the UN Mission in Colombia has also produced tangible eco-
nomic benefits for ex-combatant communities. Through March 2019, the Mission helped finance
34 income-generating projects led by former combatants,33 in addition to women-led entrepreneur-
ship programs in urban areas (UN, 2019). In parallel, the Mission has verified the living conditions
of ex-combatants as they undertake their reincorporation process: if conditions are deemed unsat-
sisfactory, the Mission works alongside the government and FARC leadership to provide services
directly (UN, 2017b, 2018b). The most recent extension of its mission included the verification
of sanctions imposed by the country’s transitional justice court, the JEP (for its acronym in Span-
ish), created by the peace agreement to prosecute crimes committed during the civil war. This
“proactive verification role”—one clear sign of a solid mission (García, 2017)—aims to help par-
ties overcome obstacles that may arise following an agreement’s signing (García and Pérez de
Armiño, 2022). Our own survey data reveals that 55% of respondents report having had direct
contact with the UN verification mission at least “sometimes,” confirming the mission’s frontline
role. An armed presence with boots on the ground is likely not the only or potentially even the
primary component of a third party’s contribution to a lasting peace.

33Along with the United Nations Development Programme and support from France, Norway, Sweden and the De-
partment of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.
LACK OF TRUST BY EX-COMBATANTS OR LACK OF CONTACT?

Another potential explanation for the null results is that the UN Verification Mission may not have won over ex-combatants. As such, reminding them of the third party guarantor’s commitment may not produce reassurance, as leading theories would expect. We can clearly rule out this explanation using our survey data. We asked (prior to treatment) whether ex-combatants trust the UN: as Figure 5 shows (left panel), they overwhelmingly do so. 56% report that they trust the UN Verification Mission “a lot,” while another 21% said “somewhat,” while only 19% and 2% reported “very little” and “not at all,” respectively. We also observe that this is not an artifact of lack of contact: Figure 12 shows, if anything, that trust is increasing in levels of reported contact with the UN Mission.34

**Figure 5: Ex-combatants’ trust in and their exposure to third parties**

34For these graphs we use a dichotomized trust variable, where “trusts” takes a value of 1 if a respondent answered that they trusted the UN Verification Mission “a lot” or “somewhat” and a value of 0 if they responded “very little” or “not at all”. In Appendix C we show that high levels of trust can be found both among ex-combatants living in ETCRs—who are more likely to be exposed to UN Verification Mission personnel—and among those living outside these areas.
Figure 6: Trust in third parties by level of contact

Note: This figure shows the distribution of trust in the UN within the different groups of frequency of direct contact with the UN. The groups of frequency of direct contact with the UN were created. were created from the question “In the last 12 months, how often have you, a member of your family or a close friend had direct contact with a member of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia?”. Those who answered “Always” or “Almost always” were classified in the “A lot of contact” group (N= 1,173); those who answered “Sometimes” were classified as “Some contact” (N= 1,256); those who answered “Almost never” or “Never” were assigned to the “Little contact” group (N= 1,960); finally, those who did not know or did not answer were classified in the “Doesn’t know or reply” group (N= 46). The trust variable was created from the response to the question “How much do you trust the UN Verification Mission?”. Those who responded “A lot” or “Somewhat” are classified as trusting the UN; those who responded “Very little” or “Not at all” are considered as not trusting the UN; finally, those who do not know or do not reply are classified as “Doesn’t know or reply”.

Ex-combatants may also need to have sustained contact with third parties for guarantees of protection to be rendered credible: Blair (2021) shows that individual-level interactions with UN personnel have a positive effect on supporting rule of law norms within countries featuring UN peacekeeping missions. Perhaps those in our sample did not have such sustained contact. But this is not the case: more than half of our sample reported either “a lot” or “some contact” with the UN Verification Mission. And we find no evidence that the treatment affected these ex-combatants dif-
ferently than those having less contact with the UN Mission (see Tables 1-4 in the results section).

**UNDERPOWERED EXPERIMENT OR WEAK TREATMENT?**

Our survey experiment may have been underpowered, hindering our ability to detect statistically significant effects of the treatment if they indeed existed. We can rule out this explanation, as well. We performed ex-post power calculations for two of our main outcomes: i) how confident respondents are that the government will follow through with its commitments, and ii) how confident respondents are that the FARC-EP will likewise follow through. Specifically, we used the empirical distribution of the control group for each question to set the parameters in our simulation-based calculation of minimum detectable effects (MDEs). As discussed in the results section, we dichotomize the dependent variable so that effect sizes can be interpreted as changes in proportions.

Our ex-post power calculations are depicted in Figure 7: for a sample size of $N = 4,435$, our design allows us to detect treatment effects as small as 0.046 for the government outcome and 0.032 for the FARC outcome. Overall, we are well-powered to detect effects that we believe are sizable and relevant from a policy perspective.

A related concern is that perhaps the treatment was not strong enough to move outcomes, or that a survey experiment in and of itself is not a useful tool for studying these questions. While randomizing exposure to the mission would have been ideal, this was clearly infeasible. The data indicate, however, that our vignette was not without impact. In response to the treatment question about the renewal of the Mission’s mandate, approximately 35.1% of respondents answered that they had not heard of it before (while 64.9% had heard of it), suggesting that at a minimum the information presented was novel to a large portion of the sample.

To check whether respondents’ perceptions were moved *at all* by the treatment, we included the following question at the end of the survey: “[d]o you know if the mandate of the UN Verification Mission has been extended?” with respondents given two options: “yes, it has been extended,” or “no, it has not been extended.” We code a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent answers that it has been extended, and 0 otherwise (e.g. if the responds answers “no,” does not know, or does not answer). In response to this manipulation check, approximately 69.7% reported “yes,” 7.6% answered “no” and 22.7% of respondents didn’t know or didn’t reply. For those who were treated, 72.4% responded “yes”, 6.7% responded “no” and 20.9% didn’t know or didn’t reply. For the control group, 66.9% of respondents answered “yes”, 8.4% answered “no” and 24.66% didn’t know or didn’t reply.

We test whether these differences are statistically significant. Figure 8 shows that our treatment
Note: **Randomization process:** We conduct power calculations using a simulation where we mimic our research design. Specifically, we replicate hypothetical experiments where we follow a block-randomized design that assigns subjects to either T0 (control) or T1 (treatment). The randomization strategy stratifies based on ex-combatants’ trust in the UN.

**The parameters of the simulations:** For both simulations, N = 4,335. For the simulation of confidence in government follow-through, the mean for those who trust the UN is 44.93%; 23.95% for those who do not trust the UN; and 41.17% for those who do not know or do not reply. For the simulation of confidence in FARC follow-through, the mean for those who trust the UN is equal to 88.79%; 69.84% for those who do not trust the UN; and 80% for those who do not know or do not respond.

increases by approximately 5% the proportion of individuals who correctly answered this question that the mission had been extended. This manipulation check suggests that our treatment was not altogether weak. When using an instrumental variable setup to estimate the effect of the treatment only for those who were moved by the manipulation check, we still find no evidence that our treatment improved confidence in the process, or induced more optimistic views. The results for all IV estimations can be found in Appendix D.
**Figure 8:** Proportion of respondents who answers correctly the manipulation check by treatment condition. Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals.

*Note:* In this case, we create a dummy from the answers to the manipulation check question “Do you know if the mandate of the UN Verification Mission has been extended?” which takes the value of 1 if the respondent answered correctly and 0 otherwise. More specifically, this variable takes the value of 1 if the respondent answered “Yes, it has been extended” and 0 if the respondent answered “No, it has not been extended”.

By ruling out some several explanations for our null results, this section has a few takeaways. Although we recover no evidence in favor of third-party commitment theories in our survey experiment, our elite interviews tell a different story. The UN Mission has been crucial to reassure elite ex-combatants (at the very least), pushing a recalcitrant government to implement and even taking on crucial functions not initially within its purview. This divergence between elite and rank-and-file results should prompt us to reflect on the kind of evidence used to test arguments about third-party commitment problems. Has the literature simply imputed reassurance to foot soldiers because evidence at the elite level was particularly strong? Relatedly, our study should push us to understand under what conditions third-party-induced reassurance trickles down from elite ex-combatants to former foot soldiers.

**CONCLUSION**

Third parties charged with monitoring and enforcing peace agreements are thought to be central to the consolidation of peace after civil war. International organizations like the UN reassure warring parties of their safety in the face of changing power dynamics, endowing former belligerents with the ability to make credible commitments and to make agreements enforceable, reducing the probability of conflict recurrence. A large literature, oftentimes relying on cross-national re-
gressions and case studies of UN Missions, has shown how third parties accomplish this task. Yet few have demonstrated at the individual level that third parties reassure ex-combatants (particularly foot soldiers) in the ways proposed by these theories.

We conduct survey experiments with a large ex-combatant population in Colombia. Reminding 4,435 ex-combatants of the FARC-EP about the UN Mission’s recent mandate extension, we measure whether the UN Mission positively affects ex-combatants’ perceptions regarding the perceived likelihood of follow-through by the government and the FARC; perceptions of physical safety; prospective economic outcomes; and trust in institutions. We find no evidence that our experimental treatment moved these outcomes. In other words, we find no micro-level evidence for third party credible commitment theories among former rank-and-file combatants.

Our experiment is not without limitations, which we entertain at length in the Discussion section. We are able to discard some explanations for our null findings—that the experiment is underpowered, that the UN Mission is simply “window-dressing,” and that contact between the UN Mission and ex-combatants is limited, for example—but others we are unable to adjudicate with data. By ruling out alternative explanations, and by encouraging similar efforts in other post-conflict contexts, we hope to begin a conversation about potential scope conditions for third party credible commitment theories. At the same time, we aim to better understand what kinds of programs and policies offered by third parties might best reassure ex-combatants during their transitions to civilian life.


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   **URL:** [https://colombia.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2019_265_english.pdf](https://colombia.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2019_265_english.pdf)

   **URL:** [https://colombia.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n2015182.pdf](https://colombia.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n2015182.pdf)

