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# Brazil Exporting Social Policies: From Local Innovation to a Global Model

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## Abstract

The importation of foreign models is part of Brazil's institution building story, owing to its Portuguese colonisation and the influence of European countries and the United States. After the transition to democracy and the Constitution of 1988, the scenario began to change. The country developed social policy innovations that rose to a national scale when the Workers' Party took office. These innovations started to spread globally, and international organisations began to recommend Brazilian social policies. Examples of Brazilian policies that have been transferred are the Family Allowance and the National School Feeding Programs. How has Brazil moved from importing foreign institutions to becoming a Southern country reference in terms of social policies? The main argument here is that Brazil, while building itself into a rising power, has developed new patterns of policy transfers that have so far been overlooked by the field literature. Through a process-tracing analysis of Brazil's social policy diffusion, we have been able to identify different forces that facilitate these transfers, such as a quest for international legitimacy, the role of "policy ambassadors," the joint efforts of various national institutions, Brazilians occupying positions in international organisations, and the creation of institutions designed for these policy transfers.

## Resumen

La importación de modelos extranjeros es parte de la historia del desarrollo institucional de Brasil, debido a su colonización portuguesa y a la influencia de los países europeos y

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Estados Unidos. Posterior a la transición hacia la democracia y la Constitución de 1988, el escenario comenzó a cambiar. El país desarrolló innovaciones de política social que se elevaron a escala nacional cuando el Partido de los Trabajadores asumió el poder. Estas políticas sociales brasileñas comenzaron a extenderse a nivel mundial - como por ejemplo el programa Bolsa Familia y los programas nacionales de alimentación escolar - y a ser recomendadas por las organizaciones internacionales ¿Cómo ha pasado Brasil ser importador de instituciones extranjeras a convertirse en un país del sur de referencia en términos de políticas sociales? El argumento principal aquí es que Brasil, en su camino a ser una potencia en ascenso, ha desarrollado nuevas formas de transferir políticas que hasta ahora han sido ignorados por la literatura. A través de un análisis del procesos de la difusión de las políticas sociales de Brasil, se identifican diferentes fuerzas que facilitan estas transferencias, como la búsqueda de legitimidad internacional, el papel de “embajadores de políticas”, los esfuerzos conjuntos de varias instituciones nacionales, el rol de profesionales brasileños que ocupan puestos en organizaciones internacionales y la creación de instituciones diseñadas para estas transferencias de políticas.

**Keywords**

Brazil, policy transfer, social policies, development studies, participatory budgeting, conditional cash transfers, food security

**Palabras clave**

Brasil, transferencia de políticas, políticas, estudios de desarrollo, presupuestos participativos, transferencias monetarias condicionadas, seguridad alimentaria

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Brazil has diplomatic steroids.<sup>1</sup>

Foreign models are an important part of the Brazilian institution building story. In fact, the legacy of Portuguese colonisation, the presence of European countries until the early 1900s, and the later dominance of the United States have favoured the importation of Northern institutions. After the transition to democracy, the policy import scenario began to change when Brazil developed important social policies, both on a local and national level, that began to consolidate in the years following the New Constitution which was enacted in 1988. At the beginning of the new century, Brazil's social policy innovations began to gain international attention. Moreover, the government used a strategy to export social policies, and international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) began to recommend Brazilian social policies to developing countries.

Examples of “Brazilian-style policies” that have been transferred to various countries in Latin America and Africa are Participatory Budgeting (PB), the Family Allowance Program (Bolsa Familia Program), and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE). This new scenario opens up empirical and theoretical questions associated with the study of policy diffusion. When did Brazil move from importing foreign institutions to

becoming a reference for Southern countries in terms of social policies? How did this movement occur? Which individual, collective, and institutional actors were engaged in this process? What strategies have facilitated social policy transfers? How can empirical findings in the case of Brazil highlight overlooked issues regarding the policy transfer and diffusion literature? And how can we improve our understanding of the policy diffusion phenomenon by drawing on empirical evidence from this case?

The main argument of this article is that Brazil, while building itself into a rising power over the past two decades, has developed new patterns of policy transfers that have so far been overlooked by the literature. By analysing the engagement of the country in terms of the international diffusion of social policies, it is possible to identify various processes facilitating transfers. These involve a quest for international legitimacy, the role of “policy ambassadors,” the joint efforts of various national institutions, proactive engagement regarding transfers via development co-operation, Brazilians occupying positions in international organisations, and the creation of institutions designed for policy transfers. The purpose of this article is not to construct a new theory of policy diffusion, but rather to highlight various patterns and dynamics that can be observed in the Brazilian experience – and that have not been explored in depth by the literature – as an attempt to improve the understanding of such phenomena, especially by including new trends cultivated by the experiences of policy transfer carried out in Southern countries, with a specific focus on Brazil.

Brazilian policy exports offer an important contribution to the literature on policy transfer and diffusion, as they represent an emerging reality that has brought about the past decade of South–South policy transfers, and which has included direct participation and incentives from international organisations. An important portion of the authors who have founded the field of policy transfer and diffusion studies have been developing research that analyses empirical objects that have migrated from North to North or from North to South, but the concepts and techniques of the literature are not sufficient anymore to consider completely the current transformations of this phenomenon. This is due to the fact that transfer circumstances that operate in North–North or North–South or South–South relationships may not be the same in each process. In fact, even if there are some degrees of similarity between them, it is believed that power relationships, administrative modernisation, the nature and role of actors, and the strategies and interests underlying various diffusion initiatives have created important variations in these situations. It is understood that research considering South–South policy transfers can improve and elevate the level of our discussions.

An *aggiornamento* of the debate is needed, considering new directions and dynamics of contemporary policy transfers. This article presents the results of a larger research project on Brazilian policy diffusion. A methodological strategy called “transnational political ethnography” (Porto de Oliveira, 2017) has been used to gather data and analyse this phenomenon. This method is based on extensive fieldwork via participant observation techniques in local, national, and transnational arenas, where in-depth interviews with key governmental and non-governmental figures have been conducted. Other sources of documents such as official material, newspaper articles, and literature have been used to generate information about the various processes described in this article.

Data have been gathered in regard to the diffusion of social participation, food security, family farming, housing, and conditional cash transfer (CCT) policies. This database has been used to track and reproduce the process of Brazilian policy diffusion, from the local to the national and global levels.

The narrative of the article begins with a discussion of the literature and then focuses on the empirical evidence that supports its argument. The first part brings back the discussion of policy diffusion, discussing the role of transfer agents and the new insights provided by the Brazilian experience. The second part presents the starting point of how Brazil began transitioning from policy imports to exports. The third part illustrates the various processes driving Brazilian social policy diffusion. These elements are integrated and summarised in the conclusion, which covers our analysis and briefly discusses the current scenario of Brazil's political shift towards a conservative agenda.

## **How Can the Brazilian Experience Contribute to International Policy Diffusion Heuristics?**

Policy diffusion is a fast-growing field, especially in the areas of public policy analysis and the study of international relations (Graham et al., 2013). The literature has produced various research traditions that can be synthesised as policy transfer, policy diffusion, and policy circulation, according to the approaches and epistemological assumptions used by a variety of authors in this field of research (Porto de Oliveira and Pimenta de Faria, 2017). Despite some subtle differences, all of these traditions are analysing the same phenomenon; that is, the movement of a political object in time and space. For simplification purposes, this article will use the term policy diffusion to refer to multiple policy adoptions as well as the transfer of singular policy adoptions.

A significant part of the literature has been produced by scholars from the global North. Authors have considered mostly cases involving North–North transfers or North–South transfers.<sup>2</sup> Even if there is an emerging stream of recent publications considering South–South and South–North policy transfers,<sup>3</sup> these have been overlooked by major studies for quite a while. Mainstream publications have been focusing on various aspects of international policy diffusion as motivations for transfers, transfer agents (governments, international organisations, think tanks, political parties, elites, etc.), transferred objects (ideas, policy instruments, and state reforms), transfer directions (origin and destination), degrees of transfer and translation (copy, emulation, mixture, and inspiration), temporality of transfers (fast and slow), and the effects of policy transfers in terms of failure and success, among others. Such elements are summarised in a seminal work by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) and now have been explored by a considerable number of studies. However, with the recent engagement of rising powers in global policymaking and the intensification of South–South co-operation, concepts and theories currently developed by this field are not sufficient to examine these movements in their totality. There is still an important gap that, if filled, would be of value to achieve a more thorough understanding of policy transfers.

In this article, the role of transfer agents deserves particular attention, insofar as the engagement of Brazil will be the topic of focus. The study of Europeanisation processes

has been a fertile ground for policy transfer research (Hadjiisky and Visier, 2017; Saurugger and Surel, 2006), where authors have been dedicated to understanding dimensions such as the role of the European Union on the standardisation of public policies across member countries during its various cycles of expansion, the intersections between national governments and European institutions in terms of the production of policy knowledge, and the institutional sources of transfers and multi-level dynamics.

Authors concerned with the role of international financial institutions have also been observing the influence of lending conditions as a strategy to induce policy transfers in various cases in sub-Saharan Africa (Woods, 2006). Weyland (2006) also highlights coercion and persuasion approaches that have been used by international institutions to push states to implement their programmes. While referring to the coercion approach, the author highlights the World Bank's engagement in social pension reform in Latin America by stating that "the World Bank promoted this reform with its whole arsenal of power" (Weyland, 2006: 69). Another perspective brings attention to softer pressures used by international institutions, such as Brooks (2004), for example, who argues that the World Bank played the role of a "teacher of norms" and shaped the debate on pension reform during the 1990s transforming "the way that policy makers conceptualized and spoke about" it (Brooks, 2004: 59). In a similar direction, Pal (2012) describes the "raison d'être" of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as "policy development, policy learning, and policy transfers through learning, research and emulation", and details the role of this institution in leading and modelling the reform agenda of the globalisation of public management.

The role of knowledge and expertise has also been considered by scholars interested in the agency of epistemological communities, think tanks, private consulting firms, and elites. Think tanks are important knowledge transfer agents, operating in various areas of global social policymaking, monitoring, implementing, and engaging in social policy practices, as well as serving as a locus of expertise about policies from various countries and regions, as Stone (2001) puts it. Saint-Martin (2004) produces – in his study of the advent of New Public Management – a historical account of the role of private consulting firms, such as McKinsey, in the diffusion of public policy and administration ideas, standards, and techniques. Analysing the diffusion of CCTs in Latin America, Osorio Gonnet (2018) identifies a group of experts who provide policy advice to governments and international organisations for the design and implementation of these policies in the entire region. From another perspective, Dezalay and Garth (2002) discuss the role of the circulation of elites between their home countries in Latin America to the University of Chicago and the "import" of neo-liberal paradigms in the 1990s in four countries in the region.

The empirical findings presented in this article reveal that the interest in Brazil is due to the state's progressive mobilisation of various agents operating on various levels with various agendas in both domestic and transnational arenas, building an international strategy, which has used several forms of conventional and modern diplomacy,<sup>4</sup> with policy export being the important element.<sup>5</sup> The fact that Brazil has been "exporting social policies"<sup>6</sup> does not mean that this is a project which has been planned from the outset. It has rather been an incremental process. The aim of Brazil has not been

exclusively to “export” policies, and there are a variety of sector agendas and private interests involved. In fact, the government has been interested in opening up new markets for the Brazilian private sector in Africa, assuming leadership in Latin America, having a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, gaining power in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, hosting the World Cup and the Olympic Games, as well as legitimising social policies internally *vis-à-vis* political opposition, and, of course, winning elections. Following this path, the government has been able to produce a confluence among these interests and bring multiple efforts to bear on the internationalisation of its home-made policies. An important part of the actions carried out abroad by Brazil has been its social policy transfers. If before, Southern countries were more susceptible to adopting policies – often induced by international organisations, when they were reluctant – this was not the case anymore for Brazil during the period examined by this article. As an emerging country with consolidated expertise on social policies, Brazilian power and bargaining possibilities have increased. Three different aspects will be considered in this article, first the role of policy ambassadors, second the engagement of Brazil in development co-operation, and third its interaction with international organisations.

International policymaking that has emerged from the Brazilian experience has taken on an “interesting” characteristic, namely the prominence of so-called “policy ambassadors” (Porto de Oliveira, 2019). Brazil has achieved international power and recognition, especially in the social arena. Individuals promoting Brazilian social policies abroad have been part of a small group – with extensive experience in one policy area – which has been circulating among international and domestic governmental and non-governmental institutions for a long time. They have typical attributes, such as authority in relation to specific policies, the promotion of a policy independently of the institution in which they operate, and continual action throughout this process. These “ambassadors” promote policies internationally at events, technical consulting firms, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and governments, and they can be academics, politicians, experts, and staff from domestic or international governmental organisations or NGOs.<sup>7</sup> Finally, they can combine three different types of legitimacy that rely on political, technical, and theoretical authorities, and their actions have been determinant in sponsoring policies in the agenda of local, national, and international institutions. Brazil has been engaged in various activities of development co-operation. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has been an important agent in this engagement, development co-operation projects also involve other institutions. The Brazilian Agency of Cooperation (ABC) is the institution that has co-ordinated these projects, and sectoral ministries and other governmental agencies have been the institutions executing them. Various international organisations under the aegis of the UN have been engaged in development co-operation projects. The “DNA” of Brazilian development co-operation is transferring ideas, social technologies, expertise, policy models, and instruments to other countries, in particular those in the South. In terms of international organisations, Brazil has not only advocated the inclusion of Brazilians in the direction of some of them (Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO] and WTO), but also has been a key player in creating



new organisations designed to transfer social policies (Center of Excellence Against Hunger (CEF) and the Rio+ Center).

In this article, a combination of forces and patterns somehow has been left under-explored, or is new or even unconventional from the point of view of current scholarship on policy diffusion that has been identified. In the following section, this article will detail the process of Brazil's rise as a global social policy exporter.

## **Brazil: A Global Social Policy Exporter**

During the first decade of this century, Brazil consolidated its role as a rising power, and its social policies improved inequalities and reduced poverty. The Economist began to acknowledge this, as can be perceived by this quote written during Lula's administration. *The Economist* has written about Brazil's rise to international influence on several occasions, including this quote written during Lula's administration: "When it comes to smart social policy and boosting consumption at home, the developing world has much more to learn from Brazil than from China. In short, Brazil suddenly seems to have made an entrance onto the world stage" (*The Economist*, 2009). Policies implemented in this decade showed how a combination of public intervention and strategic programmes for social assistance could start reverting poverty and hunger issues. This section will discuss how specific policies moved from the local to the national and global level.

### ***Institutional and Political Tipping Points***

As argued in a previous work, an important moment for the emergence of social policy innovations in Brazil was the enactment of the Constitution in 1988, which can be considered an institutional tipping-point as well as the country's transition to democracy (Porto de Oliveira, 2019). The democratic scenario opened the door to emerging political groups armed with progressive ideas to not only to run elections but also to participate in the public policy debate. In addition, the Constitution brought with it reforms in various areas, including the decentralization process, social participation in public policies and the principle of universality in social policy. Political authorities in local governments also benefitted from the increase of autonomy offered by the new Constitution, which facilitated local experimentation and innovations in public policies. A portion of the social policies that Lula implemented during his administration was a combination and adaptation of practices already put into effect on a local level, as well as adaptations of programs developed by previous governments on the national level, together with the implementation of ideas proposed by academia, especially the Universities of São Paulo and Campinas (Porto de Oliveira, 2019).

With this combination of elements, Workers' Party (PT) mayors were elected – and faced complex problems in terms of social poverty, a lack of administrative modernisation, and limited public budgets – and started to use the municipal space as a testing ground for policymaking. Cities were laboratories, where PT experimented with ideas and projects, associated with civil society's proposals and NGO solutions, as well as those of social movements, and these practices have been implemented. The result has

been an increase in the production of public policy innovations to solve social issues in their regions. It is worth mentioning that policy innovations at the local level were not an exclusive feature of the PT administration at that time. The results of a programme called Public Management and Citizenship held by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation offer a snapshot of policy innovation at the time. The programme was designed to award and disseminate innovative practices on municipal and state levels of government, as well as of indigenous organisations, and received 1,783 initiatives of policy innovations from municipalities between 1996 and 1999 (Farah, 2000: 60).

It was within this context of subnational policy innovation that pioneer experiments with CCTs were experimented with at the local level in 1995 in Campinas, during the Social Democratic Party (PSDB) administration, a more conservative party, and in Brasília, during the PT administration. In a different manner, the Zero Hunger Project, which became a national policy only in 2003, was developed earlier, in 2001. The project was produced by José Graziano da Silva and other collaborators from the Citizenship Institute, an NGO close to the PT. It was based, among other things, on practical experience in several municipalities, such as Belo Horizonte's innovations in terms of food security, nutrition, and management, featuring programmes with popular restaurants and the local food supply policy (Aranha, 2010).

Another practice that emerged was PB in Porto Alegre (1989), which was later adopted in Belo Horizonte and Recife, among other municipalities in Brazil, and it became a local and international reference on citizen participation and urban management.<sup>8</sup> PB was implemented after the first election of PT in Porto Alegre in 1989, and its internationalisation began in 1996. The first movement towards internationalisation was the creation of a Secretariat of Fundraising, to capture resources from institutions such as the Inter-American Bank of Development.<sup>9</sup> A second step was the construction of transnational networks, such as Mercocities. In 1996, the Porto Alegre PB project was selected as one of the forty best practices of urban management in the world by the UN. This was the first public international recognition of PB at a global level. The internationalisation strategy turned out to be more intense and global after the first sequence of World Social Forums in 2001, where activists, NGOs, politicians, journalists, and intellectuals, coming on a "pilgrimage" to Brazil, began to notice PB and this programme achieved a more international reputation. At this point, PB appeared on the world map. Individuals, such as former PT mayors from Porto Alegre (e.g. Tarso Genro and Raul Pont), and municipal staff working directly with PB were the main drivers of PB diffusion in the early stages of internationalisation. These "ambassadors of participation" (Porto de Oliveira, 2017) had to use creativity to work with low budgets for policy export. They were constantly doing roadshows abroad to present Porto Alegre's PB experience, hosting events on participatory democracy, building transnational networks, signing decentralised co-operation agreements with other cities to transfer PB techniques, gathering funds from international organisations, and receiving public policy delegations interested in the experience. Later, international organisations, such as the World Bank and the European Union, also took part in the process of PB international diffusion. The World Bank became interested and has funded several projects to transfer PB to developing countries.

PB was a sort of precursor of Brazil's exporting of public policies which operated at the local level, but it was not the only example. Another urban policy that acquired international recognition and inspired different cities in the world (Mejía-Dugand et al., 2013) is the public transport system developed in Curitiba (Paraná state) in the 1970s, which is now called Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The "policy ambassador" behind the policy is Jaime Lerner, a former Mayor of Curitiba and its architect. The city has also been a stage of international policy tourism – as Porto Alegre was for PB – to the extent that civil servants, urban planners, and politicians have travelled there in order to get a better understanding of public transport efficiency. In the next section, we will look at the scaling-up process, from local innovations to national policies, during the PT administration.

### *Social Policies Scaling Up from a Local to a National Level*

When PT took office on a national level, a range of innovative policy ideas and instruments were adapted to a larger federal scale. More importantly, the individuals who worked on these programs began to circulate between these arenas, bringing with them technical knowledge which was used to design or redesign public policies (Porto de Oliveira, 2019).<sup>10</sup> In addition, if before mayors had to depend on municipal budgets and administrative structure to implement their policies, at the national level there was a powerful structure, with ministries and national revenue to promote policies at the national level. During the first decade of the century, Brazil was implementing a wide range of social policies at the national level, producing unprecedented programmes across a vast territory, with geographical, demographical, and economic gaps of heterogeneity.

The country had accumulated knowledge that went way beyond having experts in international organisations. At this point, the MFA and its institutional branch, the Agency for International Cooperation (ABC), operated on the internationalisation of national social policies. As mentioned before, an important part of Brazilian international co-operation became the transfer of social policy instruments, ideas, and technologies. Moreover, specific ministries and governmental institutions developed a division of international relations, such as the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) and the Fight Against Hunger (CGFome), the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), and the public bank Caixa Econômica Federal. These are just a few examples of the domestic ministries that dealt with the internationalisation of Brazilian policies. The next section will present how Brazil included policy diffusion as part of a broader strategy of building international prestige.

### *Building International Recognition, Reputation, and Legitimisation*

In the first decade of the century, Brazil was a shining example of a country that had achieved a reduction in hunger and inequality via social policies. In 2014, Brazil was removed from the FAO's hunger map. The World Bank, various agencies of the UN, and

influential channels of the international press, including *The Economist*, were either recommending the adoption of Brazilian social policies or extolling them.

For the Brazilian government, the idea of international social policy promotion was part of a broader strategy. In fact, the country was not insisting on social policy diffusion as an isolated action; it was a broader innovative of foreign policy strategy, geared towards strengthening its soft power, which was called “active and haughty.” Brazil was a player on several fronts in the international arena, some of them in especially important areas. As an example, we could mention it’s seeking for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Policy diffusion was part of a set of foreign policy initiatives. The country allotted more space to global policy co-ordination, via international institutions, and also promoted its own interests on the global stage.

Interest in exports from the farming sector led Brazil to build an international coalition with developing countries to push their interests globally and to face protectionist measures from the United States and Europe (Ramanzini and Viana, 2012). These initiatives developed during the WTO Doha Round, especially in the Cancún Conference in 2003, which were among the first steps that Brazil took towards becoming a rising power in international relations in the contemporary era.

On a different front, Brazil had been leading a peacekeeping mission in Haiti since 2004. The country had previously been engaged in East Timor and Angola, and more than fifty other missions. However, the leadership in Haiti was a testing ground for Brazil to promote the country as a regional power, and was seen as an opportunity for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. Moreover, the country implemented a marketing strategy for its social policies. Lula focused his speeches abroad on the positive effects of the social policies enacted during his government, and asserted that those policies were responsible for reducing Brazil’s inequality. In addition, part of the Lula’s administration’s recognition and his successful re-election were attributed to these same policies. As *The Economist* said, “Lula’s crowning achievements have been big rises in the minimum wage and pensions, and the Bolsa Família Program” (*The Economist*, 2010). Briefly, Brazil was engaged in issues of global relevance, building international legitimacy based on assuming international responsibilities, and introducing innovative ways of participating in global arenas. Transferring social policies was part of this international recognition and diplomacy as a leader for developing countries and interests, and Brazil started to play a more relevant role in the international scene.

## Patterns of Brazilian Policy Diffusion

“The major contribution that Brazil can offer to the African continent is the export of our experiences of public policies, [...] of fighting against social exclusion.”<sup>11</sup>

In this article, only those forces facilitating the process of diffusion will be considered. It is argued that a combination of these elements has operated together to facilitate Brazilian policy transfers in various areas. The junction of these forces has been decisive in making Brazil a global policy exporter during the first two decades of this century. In this section, three processes will be presented: the circulation of individuals, development co-operation, and engagement with international organisations.

### *The Role of Policy Ambassadors and Branding Strategies*

If at this point Brazil depended on domestic institutions such as ministries and the ABC to support policy transfers, then the action of “policy ambassadors” (Porto de Oliveira, 2019) engaged in the promotion of sector policies was crucial, as were the actions of the Porto Alegre mayors for PB. There are different types of policy ambassadors and they are also numerous, but for the purposes of this article, we are interested in only three.<sup>12</sup> The first is Lula, who was the “ambassador” for all Brazilian social policies, then José Graziano,<sup>13</sup> who engaged in the fight for the anti-hunger agenda by circulating among international institutions, and finally Ana Fonseca, who worked on the basic income agenda and the Family Allowance Program.

In the conferences that Lula attended abroad, he used his charisma to advertise how Brazil had improved socially after implementing programmes such as the Family Allowance Program. One of our interviewees stated that Lula was considered “the only African leader who was not from Africa.” During his term in government, Lula was engaged in regional diplomacy with Latin American and African countries. His travels to other states were frequent; in eight years of office, he travelled thirty-three times abroad, and after he left office, our interviewee said Lula visited Africa twelve more times.<sup>14</sup> Once his term came to an end, he continued to be active with the Lula Institute. As an example, our interviewee said, “Lula was in Angola last year [2014] doing a big seminar on the Family Allowance Project for more than 800 people.”<sup>15</sup>

Graziano, a former professor at the University of Campinas, who was the co-ordinator of the Zero Hunger Program during the Lula administration, became the regional co-ordinator of FAO in Latin America, and from 2011 on he assumed the overall direction of the institution in Rome. His role was important in placing Brazilian food security and farming purchases on the international agenda and helping spread the word throughout Africa and Latin America. One of our interviewees at FAO said, “I think that [Graziano’s experience helped him realize] that you need a series of public policies [in order] to succeed in ending hunger.” This same interviewee also informed us that “one of the areas where this work is being developed, and that [is attracting] enormous interest from countries [that wish] to emulate this successful [program], is in the area of the Food Purchase Program [which] is associated with school lunches.”<sup>16</sup>

The third example is Fonseca, who was a researcher from the University of Campinas,<sup>17</sup> and is an expert on social policies, with a PhD thesis about Cash Transfers, and many years of experience working in this area. During Marta Suplicy’s PT administration (2000–2004), she was part of the staff in the municipal administration of São Paulo and worked on the Minimum Wage programme, and then at the MDS she worked on the Family Allowance Program. After leaving the ministry, she began consulting for international organisations and governments on the institutional design and implementation of CCT programmes in various countries, such as Uruguay, Costa Rica, Peru, and others.<sup>18</sup> One of our interviewees informed us that Fonseca brought a project for housing co-operation with the Dominican Republic to Caixa; in her words this was “a project accompanied by Ana Fonseca, who is one, as they say here in Brazil, of the mothers of the Family Allowance Program; she was the person who brought this [Dominican

Republic] project to Caixa".<sup>19</sup> The systematic circulation of these individuals inside and outside of governmental institutions promoting Brazilian social policies has been fundamental to fostering the diffusion of these instruments abroad.

### *Institutions Beyond the MFA*

After the PT came into power nationally in Brazil, international relations became more decentralised and various ministries and agencies, such as the MFA, started to engage more in policy diffusion according to their specialisation. However, while the MFA is an institution with a strong tradition and isolated in its actions, the concentration of foreign strategies in the hands of the MFA was not the vision that the Lula administration had in mind. As mentioned before, Lula was an emblematic case of presidential diplomacy. Moreover, with the globalisation of public policies, various state bureaucracies participated in international affairs during Lula's administration.<sup>20</sup> In fact, ministries, state agencies, and public banks were engaged in international affairs, mostly in relation to the transfer of policy instruments, ideas, knowledge, and technology to other states and international institutions, Southern countries, the UN, and the World Bank.

The MFA engaged directly in the international promotion of social policies – including facilitating policy transfers – via the General Coordination of Humanitarian Cooperation and the Fight Against Hunger (CGFome). Created in 2004, this body was in charge of promoting dialogue on food and nutrition security, as well as rural sustainable development on an international level, with the FAO, World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and other agencies of the UN system. The Fight Against Hunger carried out an important dialogue with civil society through the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security. It played an important role in the internationalisation of Food Acquisition Program (PAA).<sup>21</sup> As one of our interviewees defined it, the Fight Against Hunger was the “international mirror of the Zero Hunger [Program]”.<sup>22</sup> This institution was abolished in 2016 after Dilma Rousseff left office.

The MDA and the MDS are examples of policy transfers with the CCTs and family farming policies. MDA, created in 2000 under the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, was the institution responsible for agrarian policies, such as the programmes related to public food purchases from family farming. As one of our interviewees states, the MDA international relations office started with a staff of one, working part-time, around 2003.<sup>23</sup> At that time, the aim was to include the interests of family farmers in the international agenda, particularly in international trade at the WTO. Later on, the ministry began to broaden its international agenda, especially by working on development co-operation projects, including the transfer of the Brazilian experience. At its peak, according to our interviewee, the MDA had around fifteen people working on international relations.<sup>24</sup> The MDA was abolished in 2016 and transformed into the Special Secretary of Family Farming and Agrarian Development, and has come to be controlled by the Chief of Staff of the Executive Branch.

MDS was the institution responsible for designing and implementing part of Family Allowance Program, a social policy with the purpose of eradicating poverty and



inequality in Brazil. This programme acts as a revenue supplement for families in situations of extreme poverty. Beneficiaries of the Family Stipend receive a monthly stipend transferred from the federal government. To benefit from this income, families must meet a set of conditions in the areas of health and education, such as ensuring their children are vaccinated and properly fed, as well as proving that their children are regularly going to school, among other requirements. In addition, a system was developed for managing information regarding social assistance programmes through a unified registration list. According to the World Bank, there are now fifty-two countries that follow the Brazilian Family Stipend Program model. Between 2011 and 2015, MDS received 406 delegations from ninety-seven countries that had interest in learning more about the programme.<sup>25</sup> According to one of our interviewees, receiving delegations was very time-consuming and intense. MDS staff had to leave their work aside to host delegations, bring foreign civil servants to field missions to see Brazilian social programmes working in practice, and attend meetings with ministers. The amount of work exceeded the capacity of the MDS's international relations staff, and as a solution they started to organise an annual international workshop in an attempt to receive all of the delegations at the same time.<sup>26</sup> This workshop welcomed more than 200 participants from sixty-six countries in 2016. The Family Allowance Program was not the only policy promoted by the MDS. In fact, the ministry had a "portfolio" of Brazilian social policy instruments, ranging from youth policies to social security in general, that could be transferred to other countries (Pomeroy et al., 2019).<sup>27</sup> According to data collected from the MDS, the most requested policies by foreign delegations were food security with 110 requests, and the Family Allowance Program with 99 requests, between 2015 and 2018.<sup>28</sup>

Not only ministries, but also public agencies were engaged in policy diffusion. One example is the Brazilian Agricultural and Livestock Research Corporation (Embrapa), a research agency that produced techniques for planting in regions with low fertility capacity, such as the Brazilian semi-arid ecoregion known as the "Cerrado" which is a specific type of savanna, and developed genetic manipulation to build resistant seeds, capable of repelling pests. Besides this, the institution accumulated experience in building institutional capacity for farming research laboratories and practices for rural social development. It also opened an office in Ghana, which according to one of our interviewees, "was opened by President Lula as [...] a spearhead for cooperation in the agricultural area".<sup>29</sup> This office was responsible for facilitating and carrying out development co-operation projects in the agriculture sector. A portion of these was related to food security and transferring vegetable cultivation techniques to the region.<sup>30</sup>

Another type of actor was Caixa, which historically has been deeply engaged in public policies, and is one of the most popular financial institutions in Brazil. It controls important accounts such as the Workers Severance Fund (FGTS) and unemployment coverage, and it is also responsible for the national lottery. It has been the biggest national funding agent for private houses and urbanisation policies since the 1980s. In 2009, Caixa was made responsible for the implementation of My House, My Life (MCMV), the biggest housing programme in the history of Brazil. This is a milestone for housing policies in Brazil, and it was developed in view of the history of Brazilian urban

settlements, housing movement demands, and urban planning theses. MCMV is a programme for lending money to low-income families for the acquisition of their own houses. Some innovations were included in this process, such as a dialogue with civil society in regard to the process of policy implementation, as well as homebuilding, the self-management of housing, and social participation. Caixa also has an International Relations Department. Caixa has been engaged in policy transfers via international co-operation ever since 2003.<sup>31</sup> Also at that time, Caixa was asked to lead a Brazilian mission for co-operation in Namibia. Later, two major projects were developed in a bilateral effort, the Support for Urban Development in Mozambique (2007) and the Support for Housing Development in Cabo Verde (2010). Both were designed to assist African countries in the development of their housing policies, through technical knowledge transfers from Caixa, in partnership with ABC, the Brazilian Ministry of Cities and, in the case of Mozambique, help from public universities such as the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the University of Campinas, and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Caixa, 2012).

A revealing aspect of Brazilian international co-operation is that a significant part of it is based on policy transfers. In fact, the country had accumulated expertise in various social sectors and had, in a certain aspect, a monopoly in terms of this knowledge. More than that, the staff acquired a large amount of technical knowledge in terms of dealing with policy implementation and this was due to its daily experience in working with precarious situations. These circumstances of an absence of administrative modernisation, regional heterogeneity, and high levels of bureaucracy are also present in various regions of the world, especially in Southern countries.

Brazil began including policy transfers in various areas of foreign relations. In particular, transfers towards countries that were considered priorities in the foreign affairs agenda, like those of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, were given preference. Policy transfers were also a component of bigger projects in other areas. In the case of Haiti, where the peacekeeping operation was ongoing, there were farming projects led by the Embrapa which involved transferring planting technology. In 2014, a conference called “Brazil and North Africa: Opportunities for Agribusiness and Food Security” took place at the Industry Federation of the State of São Paulo, which is a major institution for promoting industrial interests. The main purpose of the conference was to produce incentives for Brazilian entrepreneurs to export their machinery, pesticides, and seeds to African countries.<sup>32</sup>

Brazilian social policies have generally followed the overall interests of its foreign policy. An important element in these knowledge transfers in relation to social policies is that they were operated via various state institutions by public servants. This means that there was no additional cost for foreign countries to engage an expert from Brazil, and thus it was “cheap.” To continue with the example of Caixa, in regard to housing technique transfers to Mozambique, one of our interviewees said the process was as follows: “Caixa does not get in with funding. What Caixa does is transfer knowledge within this expertise through public policy management agent operators.”<sup>33</sup> Staff from Brazil would leave their daily activities to attend an international mission and assist Mozambican civil servants. This was the case for several ministries and other



institutions, as can be seen from the MDS receiving the delegations mentioned before. In an informal conversation with a staff member from the ABC, it was revealed that it was too expensive for Brazil to afford an international consultant, and that it had to deal with national governmental staff members and researchers based in public universities. In short, the costs of policy transfers were not high considering the overall market of international co-operation. Transfer operations were implemented through public servants and were accomplished via technical support, through in loco visits (both to the receiver of policy instruments and the donor), and the promotion of workshops. Once missions were accomplished, it was not necessary to schedule follow-ups for the implementation process.

The fact that there were various institutions engaged in policy transfers does not mean that there were no conflicts between them. There were disputes based on policy ideas and instruments, among other issues. However, this will not be discussed in this article. It's also worth noting that Brazilian South–South co-operation engagement was not linear during all PT administrations and followed various patterns over this period of time. According to Marcondes and Mawdsley (2017), the expansion occurred during Lula's administration, including increasing the ABC budget, while a retreat occurred during Rousseff's term. The authors also state that this change of scenario had two major underlying drivers, the first being that Rousseff had a different personality and government style – which gave priority to domestic issues and she was not keen on presidential diplomacy. The second had to do with the economic situation in Brazil, with the end of the commodities boom and the coming of a financial crisis (Marcondes and Mawdsley, 2017). When Temer came into power, after Rousseff's impeachment, the narrative in regard to foreign policy changed and reinforced efforts but redirected them towards “traditional partners” (e.g. the United States and Europe). In addition, important institutions for social policy transfers were abolished, such as the aforementioned Fight Against Hunger and the MDA. In the next section, the interaction with international institutions and its implications for policy transfer will be described.

### *Occupying International Arenas and Building Institutions Designed for Policy Transfers*

As part of the strategy for Brazil's entrance on the international stage, the country started to occupy spaces in international organisations, as well as create new institutions. This began with the election of José Graziano da Silva as the Director of the FAO, who will conclude his second term in 2019, and the election of Roberto Azevêdo at the WTO. Various Brazilians became involved in these organisations. In the case of the FAO, with the increase of projects dealing with food security and nutrition, as well as family farming, driven by Brazilian developmental co-operation and the organisation's own agenda, experts from Brazil joined the institution either working as permanent staff or temporary civil servants, working for example on co-ordinating projects and participating as short-term consultants.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Brazil created two institutions in partnership with the UN, the World Center for Sustainable Development (Rio+) and the CEF, to promote social policies internationally that were originally developed in this

country. Finally, the World Bank also endorsed the Family Allowance Program and was an important driver of its diffusion.

The strategy of occupying the international arena was an important move to ensure the global continuity of Brazilian policies that were designed and named by the PT administration, and also reinforced Brazil's legitimacy in terms of domestic public opinion and fortifying it against the political opposition. In fact, by gaining these internationally recognised positions, supplemented by new ad hoc international institutions, the PT administration was able to guarantee that its efforts regarding policy internationalisation would not be in vain due to political change at the head of the Brazilian government. Moreover, these institutions were important to bypassing Brazilian bureaucracy and creating more agile policy diffusion, bringing it closer in line with the UN system. Put simply, these strategic steps aspired to reduce governmental dependency in the event that PT lost control of the government, with another party with a different political agenda taking its place.

Among the major parts of the PT agenda at the national level was the Zero Hunger Program. Implemented by the Brazilian government in 2003, this was the top priority during Lula's first administration. It was structured based on a combination of various fronts, including the revitalisation and nurturing of existing social policies with new programmes that dealt with food security, family farming, and the Collective Work Convention for food supply. The programme's first act was to offer food access to the low-income population via the Family Allowance Program, the PNAE, and the Worker Food Program. Meanwhile, the second action sought to strengthen family farming via the purchase of food from family farms. José Graziano da Silva designed this strategy during Lula's political campaign, and in a certain way the Zero Hunger Project "travelled with him" and was included in the FAO agenda, which participated in various co-operation projects via triangulation with Brazil to transfer policies such as the National School Lunch Program and the PAA to Latin American and African countries.

Another institution created to diffuse Brazilian food security programmes worldwide was the CEF. The centre, based in Brasília, is a branch of the UN's WFP. It was implemented in 2011. Among the main activities of the centre is offering technical assistance to other countries and consulting to implement food policies, having school lunches as the focus of their activity. It is also a research centre and advocacy institution for food security. The centre not only has programmes focused on transferring food security policy instruments, but also hosts delegations from other countries interested in Brazilian policies.<sup>35</sup> According to the CEF Evaluation Report (2017: 5), it "organized 51 study visits for 40 countries, promoted 38 in-country technical assistance visits, and supported the organization of 12 national participatory consultations." It received funding from the Brazilian Ministry of Education, the UK Department for International Development, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Similar to the CEF is Rio+. It was created after the 2012 Rio+20 World Summit, which was held in Rio de Janeiro. As a legacy of the event, the UN Development Programme and the Brazilian government decided to implement "a structure capable of promoting sustainable development," having as its core the mission of the "dissemination of successful policies for sustainable development."<sup>36</sup> The centre's

former director was deputy minister at the MDS and the Fight Against Hunger in Brazil, working directly with the core Brazilian social policies of the PT administration.<sup>37</sup> Among the actions of the centre is the diffusion of Brazilian policies. In fact, as one of our interviewees said, “Brazil is a barnyard of ‘best practices’,” and that “countries are very interested [in these experiences], especially because Brazil has been able to rapidly implement policies with a broad reach, [which are] also policies that have quality,” that is that they have a broad reach and are effective.

The World Bank worked closely with the Brazilian government during the policy design of the Family Allowance Program, which it was funding (Leite et al., 2016). The institution also endorsed the Brazilian model of CCTs, recommending it to various countries, publishing materials about the Family Allowance Program, encouraging field visits to Brazil, and funding projects to implement such policies elsewhere, as was the case with the Philippines, among others. In this regard, according to Howlett et al. (2018: 276), “in July 2009, President Arroyo [Philippines] and an entourage of members of congress and DSWD [Department of Social Welfare and Development] officials visited Brazil to meet with President Lula da Silva to learn about the Family Allowance Program.” Brazilian civil servants were invited to present the country’s experience in various global workshops organised by the World Bank, the “International Conferences on Conditional Cash Transfers,” held in 2002 (Puebla, Mexico), 2004 (São Paulo, Brazil), and 2006 (Istanbul, Turkey). According to Moraes de Sá e Silva (2017), this was an important transnational arena for sharing knowledge about CCTs, where both experienced countries and newcomers met and discussed different features of such policies. In general, the World Bank was a proactive promoter of CCTs and according to Howlett et al. (2018), the reports presented the main experiences which were those of Mexico and Brazil. This shows how the World Bank was also an importer of Brazilian policy instruments, as well as a promoter of them.<sup>38</sup>

The occupation of various international institutions by Brazilians and the creation of organisations designed for transfers, with the endorsement of agencies from the UN-based system of Brazilian public policies, were key elements to the globalisation of the country’s policy ideas, models, and instruments. The next section summarises all of the elements presented tying them together to highlight the interest in analysing Brazil’s experiences through the lens of policy diffusion. Moreover, it offers a concise update of the current situation, after recent changes that have brought about a new political direction in this country.

## **Conclusion: A Revival of Policy Imports?**

The overall purpose of this article is to innovate in the study of policy diffusion by presenting an overview of the Brazilian experience. The analysis of Brazil as a global policy exporter revealed how the country has prepared its policies in experimental circumstances at the local level, and after scaling them up nationally, began to transfer these policies internationally on a grand scale. Nonetheless, the internationalisation process started with pioneering municipal practices, such as the PB and BRT systems. It became a national strategy when the PT administration took power in 2003. Brazil moving from

policy “import to export” should be considered a metaphor. This does not mean that Brazilian individuals and organisations stopped drawing lessons from abroad. This only illustrates this new scenario, where Brazil started to be more proactive in transferring its social policies to other countries and used various means towards this end, mobilising elites, and governmental and non-governmental institutions, both domestic and international. The Brazilian experience illuminates a few facets of policy diffusion overlooked by the literature.

First of all, there is the importance of observing the micro-dynamics of the diffusion process. In this study, this has meant understanding international organisations as complex institutions and taking into consideration the role of individuals. More specifically, the case presented here insists on the necessity of observing the interplay between institutions (local, national, and international) and individuals as actors, as this combination was crucial to setting Brazil up as a global social policy exporter.

Another way of observing these micro-dynamics is via analysing processes that can constrain or facilitate the transfer process. In this article, a set of patterns operating within the Brazilian process have been presented. The diffusion of social policies was part of a bigger strategy, which aspired to gain legitimacy among the global community to become a player on the “big international stage.” This act depended on various elements, such as the transnational action of a group of “policy ambassadors,” who have been constantly engaged in the promotion of policy instruments from specific sectors. These actors had various roles, such as Lula, “the policy ambassador of Brazilian social policy,” as well as other specific “policy ambassadors.” The international engagement of various domestic institutions, ranging from ministries to specialised agencies, was also important. This promoted a mass diffusion of Brazilian policies in all social areas. A decade of policy experiments and innovations also led to an accumulation of knowledge and the rise of experts on social policymaking within the context of a country from the South. This was a crucial component for the co-production of models with international organisations (including the UN agencies and the World Bank), and represented an important opportunity to open up space and increase the potential of diffusion through these institutions, through policy legitimisation, recommendations, and funding. The combination of policy transfers via international co-operation for development also made Brazil an interesting place, owing to the costs of work, taking into account the fact that part of the work was done by public servants. Finally, the occupation of international organisations, such as the FAO and the WTO, represented an unprecedented achievement for Brazil, which played a role in the divulgation of its policies and ideas.

This orchestration of policy diffusion is an interesting result for this field. Brazil achieved international recognition with its social policies and engaged in a massive global transfer strategy. However, the political crisis in 2016 has turned the social policy transfer agenda developed in the previous decades upside down. After the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the arrival of Michel Temer, an abrupt and radical change towards a conservative agenda quickly took place, which has deepened much more after a dramatic shift to the right in the presidential election two years later.

With Bolsonaro’s arrival in power in 2019, Brazilian foreign affairs have been following a new direction, which includes not only drawing closer to the United States, but

also other governments with whom the president has an ideological affinity. The president's first trips abroad were respectively the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, as well as meeting with Donald Trump in the United States, Sebastián Piñera in Chile, and Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. Part of the agenda for these trips was to negotiate support for Brazil's admission to the OECD. Brazil seems to be going back to a policy import tendency in the current government. During his speech in Davos, the president stated that Brazilian "international relations will become more dynamic under Minister Ernesto Araújo, implementing policies where ideological bias will no longer exist. Through this we seek to integrate Brazil with the rest of the world, through the incorporation of international best practices that have been adopted and promoted by the OECD."<sup>39</sup> The government is also drawing on lessons from Chile, especially in terms of pension reform, one of the most important elements in the government's agenda. The idealiser of the reform is the current Minister of Economics, who was trained in Chicago, where he obtained a Master's degree and a PhD, and also worked as a professor at the University of Chile during the Pinochet Regime.<sup>40</sup>

Not only has the Brazilian context changed, but the overall context in Latin America has changed, with the so-called pink wave having ended. An important turnaround is also happening at the FAO, where Graziano will no longer be the Director General, from August 2019 on. This reveals that policy transfers, developmental co-operation, and foreign affairs projects are vulnerable, because they rely on personalities, political projects, and benefits with a similar perspective. The questions that need clarification for future research are: Will Brazil be able to maintain its international legitimacy as a social policy model under this new scenario, and how will the recent political change affect Brazilian (social) policy transfers?

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### Notes

1. At a 2017 conference in Cambridge about South–South co-operation, a member of the UN said that "Brazil had diplomatic steroids," in reference to the country's foreign policy.
2. For detailed literature reviews, see Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) or Hadjiisky et al. (2017).
3. See the works on policy reform in Latin America (Weyland, 2006), PB (Porto de Oliveira, 2017), CCTs (Morais de Sá e Silva, 2017; Osorio Gonnet, 2018) and on farming policies (Saburin and Grisa, 2018).
4. Includes sector diplomacy, social movement diplomacy, paradiplomacy, and so on – related to this common activity (see Cooper et al., 2013).

5. The use of the expression exporter in this article is rather metaphoric than literal, as we acknowledge that the international displacement of policy instruments is a complex process that involves multiple sites, agents, conflicts, translations, directions, round-way trips, mutual learning, and so on. However, it simplifies the presentation of the argument and is helpful to highlight the innovative features that this article seeks to present.
6. For a detailed discussion of Latin American policy exports, see Porto de Oliveira et al (2019).
7. Other examples of policy ambassadors from the South with international recognition are Muhammad Yunnus, for microcredit policies, José Piñera (Chile), for pension reform (see Brooks, 2004; Weyland, 2006), and Enrique Peñalosa (Colombia), for municipal transport policies (see Montero, 2017).
8. This argument has been developed in detail in a monographic piece about PB (see Porto de Oliveira, 2017).
9. Interview: Former employee of the municipality of Porto Alegre, 2011.
10. As an example, CCTs were already ongoing on the national level, such as the School Allowance Program (Bolsa Escola), implemented at the end of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's Social Democratic (PSDB) administration in 2001. When PT came into office, a broader Family Allowance was created, with a new policy design, amplifying the scale and amount of investment in social assistance.
11. Interview: Employee of the Lula Institute, São Paulo, 2015.
12. Brazilian "policy ambassadors" were promoting various types of policy instruments, on various levels.
13. A detailed account of Lula and Graziano as policy ambassadors can be found in Porto de Oliveira (2019).
14. Interview: Employee of the Lula Institute, São Paulo, 2015.
15. Interview: Employee of the Lula Institute, São Paulo, 2015.
16. Interview: FAO staff, Rome, 2015.
17. An important portion of the staff of Lula's government was associated with the University of Campinas.
18. Interview: Former staff member of the MDS, Campinas, 2016.
19. Interview: Caixa staff member, Brasília, 2014.
20. Ministries with more experience in sector diplomacy already had institutions dedicated to international relations, such as the Ministry of Health, which had the International Affairs Office for Health, created in 1998.
21. Interview: Diplomat, Brasília, 2015.
22. Interview: Diplomat, Brasília, 2015.
23. Interview: Former staff member, MDA, Brasília, 2018.
24. Interview: Former staff member, MDA, Brasília, 2018.
25. Brazil 2016. <http://mds.gov.br/area-de-imprensa/noticias/2015/dezembro/2016politica-de-protecao-social-brasileira-e-exemplo-para-o-mundo2016> (accessed 4 December 2019).
26. Interview: Former MDS staff member, Brasília, 2018.
27. Interview: Former staff member of the Family Allowance Program, Campinas, 2016; Former staff of MDS, Brasília, 2018.
28. Field research mission, Brasília, 2018.
29. Interview: Embrapa researcher, São Paulo, 2015.
30. Interview: Embrapa researcher, São Paulo, 2015.
31. Interview: Person responsible for the International Relations Department at Caixa, Brasília, 2014.
32. Participant observation during the event in São Paulo, 2015.

33. Interview: former Caixa staff, Brasília, 2014.
34. Different interviews held at the FAO headquarters, in Rome, 2015, and in the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Santiago, 2018.
35. Interview: Staff member of the Center of Excellence Against Hunger, Brasília, 2015.
36. Interview: Staff member from the Rio+ Center, Quito, 2016.
37. Profile of Rômulo Paes de Souza at the Institute of Development Studies, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/person/r-mulo-paes-de-souza>.
38. According to data published by DEVEX, “in 2009 alone, the World Bank planned to shell out \$2.4 billion to start or expand CCT programs in Bangladesh, Colombia, Kenya, Macedonia, Pakistan, and the Philippines, among a total of 13 countries where the lender says it provided CCT financing that year.” Available at: <https://www.devex.com/news/conditional-cash-transfers-taking-stock-and-looking-ahead-77999> (accessed 28 May 2019).
39. President Bolsonaro’s Speech at the World Economic Forum, 22 January 2019, in Davos, Switzerland. Available on the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website: <http://www.italy.maraty.gov.br/pt-BR/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas-categoria/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil-discursos/19984-discurso-do-presidente-da-republica-jair-bolsonaro-durante-a-sessao-plenaria-do-forum-economico-mundial-davos-suica-22-de-janeiro-de-2019> (accessed 23 May 2019).
40. For details about the biography of Paulo Guedes, see: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2018/10/economista-de-bolsonaro-paulo-guedes-viveu-mudanca-radical-em-chicago.shtml> (accessed 23 May 2019).

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# Inclusion and Political Representation in Peace Negotiations: The Case of the Colombian Victims' Delegations

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## Abstract

This article discusses the issue of inclusion in peace negotiations, in particular the Colombian peace process with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, with special emphasis to a perceived tension between “direct” and “indirect” inclusive initiatives. It argues that, as currently discussed by the Peace and Conflict literature, inclusion tends to be seen as neutral and benign, which leaves little room for critical discussions about the political contention behind peace negotiations deemed “inclusive.” It thus proposes to discuss inclusion through the theoretical lens of political representation and apply such reflections to the specific case of the Colombian victims’ delegations that travelled to Havana in 2014 in order to take part in the table’s discussions on the victims and transitional justice topic. Ultimately, I will argue there was simultaneous utilisation and rejection of the language of representation.

## Resumen

Este artículo aborda el tema de la inclusión en las negociaciones de paz, en particular el proceso de paz de Colombia con las *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, con un énfasis especial en la percepción de la tensión entre iniciativas inclusivas “directas” y “indirectas.” Argumenta que, como se discute actualmente en la literatura sobre Paz y Conflicto, la inclusión tiende a considerarse neutral y benigna, lo que deja poco espacio

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para discusiones críticas sobre las disputas políticas detrás de las negociaciones de paz consideradas “inclusivas.” Por lo tanto, propone discutir la inclusión a través de la lente teórica de la representación política y aplicar tales reflexiones al caso específico de las delegaciones de víctimas colombianas que viajaron a La Habana en 2014 para participar en las discusiones de la mesa sobre las víctimas y el tema de la justicia de transición. En última instancia, argumentaré que hubo una utilización y rechazo simultáneos del lenguaje de representación.

### **Keywords**

Colombia, political representation, peace negotiations, victims’ delegations

### **Palabras clave**

Colombia, representación política, negociaciones de paz, delegaciones de víctimas

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## **Introduction**

The Havana talks between the Colombian government and the FARC (formerly known as *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) received high international praise for their effort in promoting inclusion despite the fact civil society did not have negotiators at the table. The recognition received by the process is mainly related to its creative promotion of indirect inclusion without losing focus on the final target of reaching an agreement between the parties. Although inclusion was traditionally viewed by scholars and practitioners as a disruption to peace processes, the post–Cold War years witnessed a shift in paths for dealing with conflict, especially internal ones. Recent studies revealed that inclusive peace processes build more sustainable peace, which moved the discussion from an “if” to a “how” – specialists began searching for ways of promoting inclusion while at the same time avoiding that the echo of too many voices makes agreements impossible.

Within this tension between “direct” and “indirect” inclusions lie fundamental concerns of historically excluded social groups, usually the ones hit the hardest by civil wars, and relations not taken into consideration when thinking of inclusion as a vague and benign entity. In order to reflect on this issue, I will draw from political theory of representation and use it to try to understand the role of Colombian victims in the Havana dialogues (2012–2016) from a fresh perspective. In 2014, the negotiation table agreed to welcome five twelve-member delegations of victims into the discussions on the agreement on victims and transitional justice. The initiative was celebrated for its symbolic and practical effects, and will serve as an illustration for the theoretical discussion provided by the first two sections.

Two main sets of questions will thus serve as a guide for this article. First, can civil society actors serve as representatives of broader social sectors such as conflict’s victims? How would that work? More specifically, is it possible to say that the Colombians chosen as victims’ delegates were representatives of the conflict’s victims? Debating this

question entails contemplating the concept of representation in a wide and problematised way, considering not only its electoral component but all aspects involved in the establishment and conduction of representative relationships in non-institutionalised settings such as peace processes. This involves a second set of questions: What can the concept of political representation as a theoretical lens add to the current debate on inclusion in peace processes? How is it different from using the inclusion lexicon?

Ultimately, I will argue the actors involved in the case at hand both utilised and rejected the language of representation to define the victims' delegations. Representation was repeatedly rejected in official discourse, which stated the delegates were individual participants that spoke on behalf of no one but themselves. At the same time, however, all parties involved relied on a vocabulary of representativeness in order to claim and attempt to gather a group of people that reflected the variety of Colombian victims. By taking representation as a two-way street, a constant (additional) negotiation between the table and society, it becomes possible to try and identify representative relationships in peace processes and only then evaluate if they are inclusive or not – and, most importantly, inclusive *of whom*. In short, it allows for one to see inclusion as the result of political contention and as a means for guaranteeing rights.

The article will thus mobilise theoretical and empirical strategies that are supposed to complement and dialogue with each other. In the first section, I will provide an overview of the discussion on inclusion in Peace and Conflict Studies. The following section will propose a theoretical framework on political representation, relying on the works of Hanna Pitkin and Andrew Rehfeld on the concept. Finally, the last section will discuss the case of Colombia's victims' delegations in light of this framework, utilising for this assessment the work of specialists, official declarations, media and think tank reports, and impressions drawn from a few interviews.

## **From Exclusion to Inclusion**

### *The Inevitability of Inclusion*

The construction of lasting peace in contexts of deep-rooted, entrenched social conflict gained renewed attention in the post–Cold War world. In the early 1990s, with the unleashing of “new wars” (Kaldor, 2012) – especially intrastate conflicts triggered by social, ethnic, and religious issues – traditional approaches of conflict resolution were progressively deemed insufficient and gave way to projects of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Instead of aiming to stop immediate violence, transformation attempts to engage different conflicts in a different way. By the end of the twentieth century, boundaries between war and peace were even more blurred, and violent conflict continued imposing the reinvention of political communities. It was not enough to simply halt confrontations or try to negotiate a definite end to them anymore – as conflict becomes more complex and ingrained, specialists say, so too should any attempt of constructing peace.

In this scenario, experts such as John Paul Lederach (1997, 2003) contend that more profound approaches to peacebuilding initiatives are needed, which no longer can

artificially separate the battlefield and everyday life. Aside from stopping violence in the present, it becomes necessary to address conflicts' roots and transform relations in order for peace to get a real chance. Dealing with pervasive conflict, therefore, entails its contemplation over a wider time horizon, a careful analysis of its root causes and the fostering of transformed relations among all parties (intentionally or not) involved in it. Peace processes indeed move beyond stopping immediate violence and start directing increasing attention towards past violations and future guarantees – for example, establishing victim's reparations and devising measures for non-repetition of human rights abuses. These are part of a deeper agenda of social transformation and change in interests, objectives, identities, and perceptions of former conflict parties, a project capable of establishing less violent and more inclusive relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, secretive and closed-door negotiations become less acceptable for those who, despite not having picked up weapons, were somehow affected by those who did. If negotiation tables are to put in place wholesome, long-term peace processes, it now seemed reasonable to believe that negotiated agreements need to surface amidst a social consensus robust enough to sustain their implementation. Building consensual solutions that are also accepted and wilfully put in practice by the people becomes, for that reason, one of the greatest challenges of contemporary peace processes.

This weaved together the issue of inclusion and the debate on peace sustainability and legitimacy (see Zanker, 2014, 2018). As both the nature of conflict and its potential solutions suffer changes throughout the last few decades, popular pressure for transparency and participation gains strength, as well as the belief in the inclusion of diverse social groups (other than conflict parties) as a source of legitimacy for peace processes. For both practitioners and academics, understanding the motivations and effects of inclusive peace processes turns into a relevant topic and a much-needed investigation. There is a growing sense that, at the very least, the *idea* of openness to popular demands needs to be conveyed by negotiation tables.

The practice of inclusion and the *norm of inclusivity* cannot be taken as substitutes – while the first conveys the idea of something that either happens or not, the latter is vaguer and involves “the *assumption* that an inclusive process has the best chance to be seen as legitimate, to address all substantive issues and to reach a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement” (Von Burg, 2015: 8, my emphasis). The launch of the *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation*, in 2012, was a moment of consolidation for the discourse of inclusivity. The document, aimed to support mediation efforts worldwide and help them succeed, lists the questions of inclusivity and national ownership – alongside traditional aspects such as consent, impartiality, and international law and normative frameworks – as some of their fundamentals. According to the United Nations (UN), “[i]nclusivity refers to the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are *represented* and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort” (UN, 2012: 11, my emphasis). The UN cautions that exclusive consideration of conflict parties' viewpoints by mediators may overlook the needs of the wider public and, in effect, reward violence. It thus advises that preconditions for participation are minimised, stimulating civil society engagement and the inclusion of women in official delegations (p. 13).

### *Inclusion versus Effectiveness*

If, on the one hand, inclusion undeniably marches towards becoming an indispensable topic of discussion and has been recognised as a necessary step for long-term peace processes, it is not free of complex implications and ambiguities. The same experts who see it as a source of legitimacy and a potential for durable peace warn that the echo of too many voices obstructs the chances of a negotiation reaching an agreement. There is broad consensus among both practitioners and specialists that the more people have a say in a matter, the harder it gets to reach a collective decision regarding such matter (Kew and Wanis-St John, 2008; Nilsson, 2012; Zanker, 2014). Of course, when the decision at hand involves the end of an armed conflict, things get even more sensitive – depending on the power accumulated by the parties, they may simply refuse to see it diluted among additional participants and walk away before negotiations even begin (Paffenholz, 2014). In this point of view, peace negotiations deal with a trade-off between inclusion and effectiveness – peace processes either get to include all relevant actors or be effective enough in reaching a deal. In short, there is an *inclusion versus effectiveness dilemma* in peace processes.

Although most authors generally agree that inclusive peace talks may face more difficulties in the path towards successful closure, empirical research has also demonstrated the positive impact and even the indispensability of inclusion for the durability of post-agreement peace. Darren Kew and Anthony Wanis-St John (2008) and Desireé Nilsson (2012) have conducted studies on this topic and found similar evidence that, in cases where there was inclusion of civil society actors during peace processes, a more stable and durable peace was reached afterwards than in negotiations where they were not involved nor allowed to participate. Exclusive negotiations, in other words, represented a much more fertile ground for the return of violence than inclusive ones.

At this point, two key yet contradicting conclusions may be recognised from such investigations: (i) inclusion may make consensus harder to achieve in negotiation tables; (ii) *however*, once reached, an inclusive consensus will have much stronger chances of building sustainable peace. In sum, inclusion is considered to have both negative and positive practical influence over the single goal of lasting peace. While it turns agreements into much more difficult breakthroughs, delaying them and even at times precluding them, it is now clear that an agreement without it may miss the whole point of a peace process, which has to do not only with terminating a violent conflict but also with avoiding its resumption. Inclusion is perceived, therefore, as a paradoxical objective that represents both a risk and a necessity. Essentially, it is portrayed by the literature as a chimera: albeit desperately needed, it seems incongruent and impossible.

Trying to overcome this contradiction, several authors (Bell and O'Rourke, 2007; Hemmer et al., 2006; Lanz, 2011; McKeon, 2004) have been trying to “unpack” what inclusive peace processes are, what inclusion ultimately means, and which types of inclusion are supposed to exert positive influence over the post-conflict phase. The above-cited empirical conclusions on the benefits of inclusion gave way to a series of additional questions: Does inclusion mean direct participation at the negotiation table?

Who should be allowed to participate? How does the selection of participants take place? Is there an ideal timing for participation to occur?

Whereas there are no definitive answers to such questions, the ponderations they trigger are a starting point to deeper practical and theoretical analyses. David Lanz (2011) tackled the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in peace processes by questioning how direct participation is delimited, that is, “who gets a seat at the table.” For the author, two independent yet interacting factors help explain who makes the cut. First, practical requirements tend to exclude whoever will complicate negotiations and include those who “add value to the process and augment the chances of reaching a sustainable settlement” (p. 281). The second factor is the normative dimension of participant selection, that is, the validation of those selected by international norms and the values of mediators and sponsors. If the two factors converge – for example, a candidate is seen as relevant in practical terms *and* acceptable or necessary in normative terms – there are higher chances he or she will be included. The opposite happens when both factors suggest the exclusion of a given postulant. There is always a chance, however, that the two factors do not match – a candidate is seen as practically relevant but normatively reprehensible (e.g. terrorists), or he or she is normatively acceptable but seen as an impractical addition to the table (e.g. social movements).

The emphasis given to the practical element in the choice of direct participants reinforces the idea that, at some point, a peace process is faced with a choice between effectiveness and inclusion. This is especially true for social groups such as victims’ movements, whose incorporation to the table can be considered overcrowding despite their legitimate (and perhaps post-conflict pertinent, sustainability-wise) demands and proposals. A few authors have attempted to overcome this dichotomy by urging researchers to look further and identify alternatives to direct inclusion, claiming there are other paths, observed in practice, that do not necessarily involve a seat at the table (Paffenholz, 2014).

Thania Paffenholz strives to move away from the trap posed by this “exclusion–inclusion dichotomy.” She chooses to focus, instead, on “how and under what conditions inclusion can work” (2014: 70). Through a research project entitled *Broadening Participation*,<sup>2</sup> the author compiled nine modalities of inclusion previously exercised by civil society actors in peace processes (see Table 1). From the most direct model of participation (i.e. sitting at the table) to the least (i.e. mass mobilisation), Paffenholz clarifies that there is no direct correspondence between specific peace negotiations and a single inclusion modality. What actually happens is a “mix and match” – inclusion does not always translate into only one method for each peace process, often, instead, combining more than one modality at a time. Direct participation, as one would expect, encounters resistance from conflict parties, which forces civil society actors to associate creativity and social pressure in their attempts to influence the negotiation table’s agenda and decision-making.

With all this in mind, a few reflections come up. The first issue concerns the already cited question of practical and normative realms of inclusion and the relationship between them (Lanz, 2011). Even though the effects from practical and normative factors of inclusion are probably too difficult to dissociate on the ground, the “attainable”

**Table 1.** Paffenholz's Nine Modalities of Inclusion.

## Paffenholz's Modalities (2014)

1. Direct representation at the negotiation table, in a separate delegation or incorporated into an existing delegation
2. Observer status at the negotiation table
3. Consultative forums that run parallel to official negotiations
4. Less formal consultations with civil society
5. Inclusive post-agreement mechanisms
6. High-level civil society initiatives, e.g. problem-solving workshops
7. Public participation, e.g. public hearings
8. Public decision-making, e.g. referenda
9. Mass action, e.g. protests

Source: Based on Paffenholz (2014).

observation of norms, conditioned by practical needs, may well serve to instrumentalise inclusive initiatives as empty mechanisms of legitimisation with little or no actual impact. Franzisca Zanker argues the Conflict Resolution literature on inclusion treats legitimacy in a circular way – “[p]ublic buy-in results in legitimacy, and because of legitimacy, there is public buy-in” – without actually diving into its mechanisms (2018: 7). A crucial part of further dissecting the notion of inclusion in peace processes thus involves overcoming a view of legitimacy that is not only circular, I would say, but also static and depoliticised, as if it were *one thing*, one uncontroversial goal associated with societal inclusion. In this regard, one must keep in mind legitimacy means different things for different people, and this is absolutely central for discussing the role of inclusion and its implications. As Zanker stresses, “the very idea of legitimacy in contemporary peacebuilding and inclusive negotiation debates results in questions of how legitimacy is actually constructed, as well as *for whom and by whom*” (p. 25, my emphasis).

Also, it is worth highlighting that the devising of rules and “practical requirements” in the selection of participants cannot be taken as a given or seen as neutral – they have to be seen as results of political contention. Perhaps no collectivity better expresses this than a conflict’s victims. Tami Amanda Jacoby (2015) differentiates between victimisation and victimhood, tracing a path between the first and the second in which people perceive a harm suffered as wrongdoing beyond “ordinary state of affairs,” seek redress, and organise politically in order to be recognised and compensated as victims (pp. 527–528). Jacoby sees the construction of victimhood identity as a contested process, arguing “[it] depends on a choice, however limited in its options, to use the experience of harm as the basis for identity, subject to the expectations of a political culture and its power relations” (2015: 527). Victims will be precisely the focus of the last section of this article, which will approach the role of Colombian victims in the Havana talks.

The purpose of inclusivity as a norm therefore lies not only on making “negative peace”<sup>3</sup> more effective, but also on addressing structural inequalities and opening up the way to the realisation of rights. The identification of the “right” or “effective” inclusion



encompasses opening up the black box where it is often placed and looking at what/who allows for it to take place and in what manner. In other words, the mostly technical debate on inclusion, as it defines and redefines its potential modalities, needs to recognise its own political origins and implications.

## From Inclusion to Representation

Between the cautious perception of direct inclusion – everyone wants a seat, not everyone can get one – and the intention to move past this by looking at “indirect” modalities of inclusion, there needs to be a discussion of peace negotiations as *political and representative ventures*. The added value of introducing representation into this equation pertains, in particular, the exposure of exclusions that remain ingrained in the current literature’s discourse of inclusion. Such exclusions cannot be unveiled nor evaluated unless they are taken as part of the political struggles that permeate peace processes. Figuring out how inclusion emerges at different levels demands a closer look at the elements mediating direct and indirect loci of inclusion. It also demands an analysis of the parameters and categorisations that shape and are shaped by the consecutive political decisions involved in letting certain sectors of society, but not others, reach the table and/or exercise certain roles. The choice of who to involve matters, as do the methods employed in aggregating those who wish to participate.

Another crucial aspect of this investigation concerns questioning what lies within the concept of inclusion. In formal political contexts, “inclusion” usually refers to the integration of a certain sector of society into an institutionalised political procedure – for example, the extension of the right to vote to women. There is no singular definition for what Conflict Resolution authors mean when they use this word, which, in its vagueness, ultimately serves to depoliticise a debate that is political to the core. Thus, the technical use of the language of inclusion needs to be broken down to account for politically driven choice of actors for all levels of a peace process, as well as the roles played by them. Much like “inclusion,” both “participation” and “representation” (and their accompanying lexicons) are found in the literature of inclusive peace processes; however, there is seldom a semantic or theoretical exercise of differentiating the three words, which become muddled in their application.

The use of the word inclusion in peace processes, in the absence of formal political instances and procedures, refers to both participation (individual engagement in name of oneself) and representation (engagement of a representative acting on behalf of one person or a collective of people). At each modality of inclusion, from more direct to more indirect, actors may be participants, representatives, or both. As one would expect, the closer to the negotiation table, the heavier the weight of representative mechanisms versus participatory ones. Political representation is herein taken in its wider interpretation (Urbinati and Warren, 2008), not taking for granted its recurrent “crises.” It is thus not excluded that social actors other than elected and government officials do exercise representation in various contexts, especially if one considers the legitimacy crisis experienced by party politics worldwide and the increasing capture of representation by non-institutionalised and “outsider” social movements (Castells, 2018). Civil

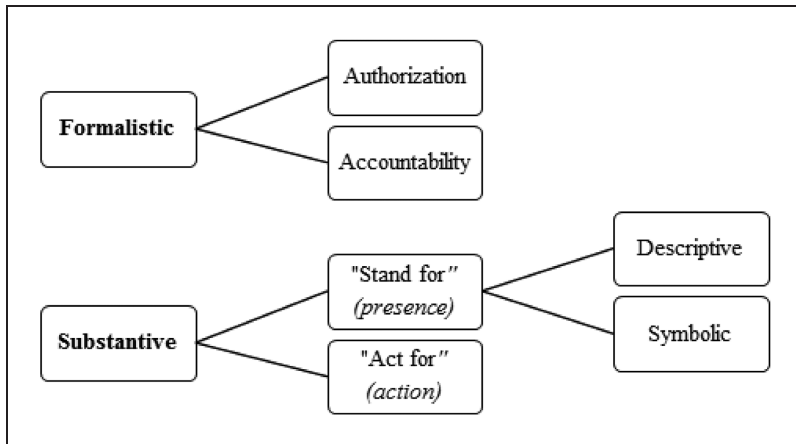
organisations may exercise what Lavallo et al. (2006) call “representation by intermediation,” which in fact makes participation and representation harder and harder to differentiate. Even if most of the time not explicitly, the literature on inclusion presumes that, faced with the impossibility of massive social participation, civil society and social movements become natural representatives of those absent from negotiation tables (Zanker, 2018: 6).

More than drawing borders between participation and representation, however, or artificially seeing society as the locus of participation and the negotiation table as the locus of representation, the intention is to dissect *what is meant* by these expressions, especially when it comes to the establishment of rules and the distribution of political functions in a negotiation process. Representation, be it institutionalised or not, democratic or not, embodies a common language and lens of analysis that is able to act as a common thread between the before, the during, and the after of an armed conflict. Unlike the somewhat nebulous idea of inclusion, the concept of representation sheds light on social pressures and power distributions that have much to say about the decisions being made at negotiations. Instead of using the inclusion lexicon, therefore, I choose to consider peace processes non-institutionalised representative instances that may, in turn, be deemed inclusive or not. The contrast between representative and participatory means of inclusion, on the other hand, will also serve to highlight the elucidatory potential of political representation in better grasping what inclusion is, or should be, in peace processes. The fourth section will look into the meanings attached to the words “participation” and “representation” in official discourse regarding inclusion, as well as the tensions involved in and between such labels.

### *The Concept of Representation*

Representation is a multifaceted, complex concept that precedes its political application. Its current political interpretation, however, often translates into an automatic association with contemporary electoral democracy. Beyond the ballot, political representation is a broader and older phenomenon than modern democracy, recognisable in a gamut of political interactions that, as peace processes, escape traditional, institutionalised settings. In this sense, Hanna Pitkin (1967) observes that the basic meaning of political representation in fact has not changed a lot since the seventeenth century and its formulation by Thomas Hobbes (1994). In its shortest, simplest etymological definition, Pitkin deems it “the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact” (pp. 8–9). Other authors observe representation does not even need to be legitimate or just – it merely needs to be collectively credible. Andrew Rehfeld argues it “results from an audience’s judgment that some individual, rather than some other, stands in for a group in order to perform a specific function” (2006: 2). In peace negotiations, it is possible to say those engaged in formal and informal instances are groups of *representatives* speaking on behalf of larger segments of society – the *represented* – with the shared function of stopping violence.

In *The Concept of Representation*, Pitkin proposes looking at apparently opposing takes on representation as pieces of the same puzzle. The author pinpoints two main



**Figure 1.** Hanna Pitkin's Typology (1967). Source: Based on Pitkin (1967).

criteria in such effort. First, there are *formalistic* views of representation, which identify it with the formal procedures that establish or verify it. The second one concerns the actual *substance* of representative activity, be it regarding the characteristics of the representative or the actions he or she takes on behalf of his or her represented constituency (see Figure 1 above).

Formalistic approaches concern either the “before” or the “after” of representation, claiming previous authorisation or posterior accountability of the representative as its defining trait. Most important between the two is the authorisation view, which maintains that representation is a transfer of authority from represented to representative. This was the unlimited Hobbesian interpretation of the social contract as early as the 1650s, but it is also a huge protagonist of modern democracies’ electoral element. The duration and extent of authorisation, as well as the method utilised to recognise it, are subject to debate. Still, it leaves out fundamental aspects of representation; “it cannot tell us what ‘misrepresenting’ or ‘misrepresentation’ might be, nor can it explain the noun ‘representativeness’ or the adjective ‘representative’” (Pitkin, 1967: 49). Who is the right representative for a certain social group? Once chosen, can a representative act as he or she wishes, regardless of his or her constituency’s preferences? The conflict put in motion by these questions demonstrates the importance of attaching the formalistic debate to another one, concerning the actual content of representation – namely who the representative should be, and what he or she should do while acting in name of those represented.

These last two issues translate precisely into the two interpretations that make up the substance of representation according to Pitkin. First, she says representation can work as a substitutive tool, such that representatives *stand for* the ones they represent, taking their places where they cannot be present. Secondly, one can also argue representatives are in fact *acting for* their constituencies. Once formally delineated, therefore, two dimensions to the substance of representation emerge: let’s call them “presence” and “action.”

The central question around the issue of presence, as mentioned, is who is best suited for the job – should he or she be similar to the ones represented or not? For instance, is a conflict victim best suited to represent the conflict's victims as a collective during a peace process? Based on this, Pitkin concludes there are two main types of “stand for” representation: (i) it can be *descriptive*, prioritising similarity between representatives and represented, and aiming at overall proportionality in representation; (ii) it can be *symbolic*, relying on bonds forged between representatives and represented, allowing the first ones to serve as symbols of the second without necessarily being similar to them or belonging to the same social group. The element of action, in turn, raises the essential question of whether the representative should strictly act as the represented would, and how far s/he can act differently from the wishes of the represented – a mandate versus independence dilemma.

It is the substance of representation that allows us to think in terms of representativeness, or deem a representative “good” or “bad.” Pitkin reminds us, in this sense, that representation entails simultaneous similarity and difference. This means neither complete faithfulness nor complete difference translate into actual representation, which requires, ultimately, a delicate balance between the metaphorical presence/action of the represented and the literal presence/action of the representative.

Each of the main features of representation portrayed by Pitkin is relevant for reframing inclusion in peace negotiations. From formalistic representation, more specifically the authorisation view, I may interrogate which procedures and categorising methods surround the choice of participants as well as the structuring of negotiation tables and other informal instances pertaining peace processes. Substantive representation may inspire a reflection on the opposition between descriptive and symbolic representatives in negotiations, stimulating the seizing of such concepts to discover possible advantages and disadvantages of having minority groups represent themselves. It may also bring attention to the fact that securing descriptive or symbolic presence does not guarantee representative action nor representative results. The next section will try to take the first steps towards a conceptual framework capable of evaluating not only how political representation gains life on the negotiation table, but also how it is portrayed in practice.

### *Political Representation in Peace Process Structuration*

The dynamics around peace processes are generally shaped before negotiations occur, during prenegotiations. Despite the fact they are frequently mentioned as an essential phase of a peace process by authors of diverse perspectives, this is a phase seldom talked about due to its fragility and secrecy. As the “negotiations that unleash negotiations,” they tend to prioritise getting parties to the negotiation table, staging their very first contact and a lot of decisions that are dragged throughout the whole negotiation and implementation processes.

It is precisely during prenegotiations, for example, that most direct participants are selected, the overall format and rules afterwards adopted by the negotiation table are defined, as well as the agenda that will guide the conversations (Saunders, 1985;

Zartman, 1989). This is also a phase that tends to be conducted in secret and with limited access to actors other than the parties and international mediators and sponsors. The characteristics of the table and its participants, once defined, probably unfold into more or less openness to other forms of inclusion, as well as reactions from indirect initiatives in order to influence the work of the delegations.

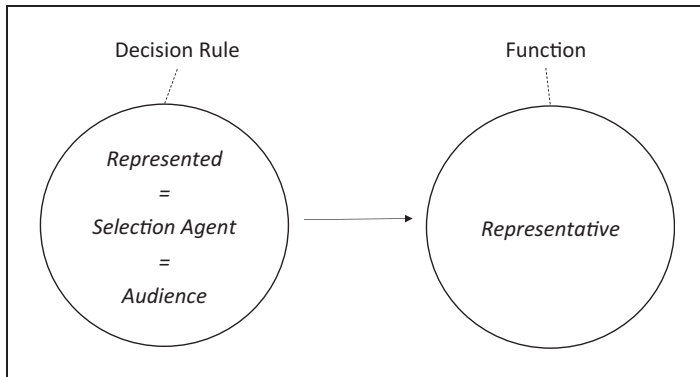
The authorisation view of representation, in its classical interpretation, seems incompatible with “informal” political scenarios such as peace negotiations. However, understanding this idea of authorisation – or lack thereof – may be informative. Andrew Rehfeld (2006) made an effort to demystify the idea that all representative endeavours involve being authorised, observing that the literature’s focus on procedural criteria for authorisation ignores cases of “illegitimate” or “unauthorized” representation (p. 3). In this sense, he argues

the general claim that political representation necessarily involves being authorized by those you represent is just false: even democratic political representatives represent people who did not authorize them to act, say those who voted for the losing candidate or those who did not vote at all. (p. 10)

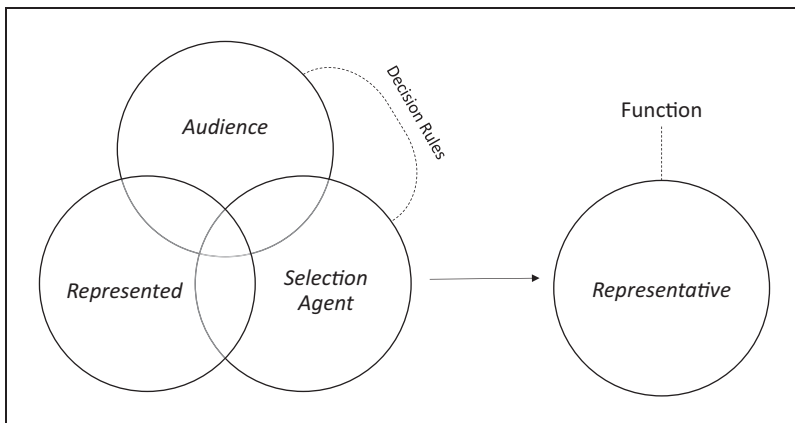
An alternative interpretation would be that *someone does authorise* representation, but this someone is not always the same person who will be – well or badly – represented upon such authorisation.

According to Rehfeld, the habit of equalising political representation and representative democracy blurs the fact that the formal selection of a representative involves more separate deciding roles than we can ordinarily put our fingers on. He highlights, then, that the choice of representatives depends on three main actors: the *represented*, the *audience*, and the *selection agent*. The represented consists of the group of people whose interests will be defended by the representative. The audience is the group before whom the representative, according to specific decision rules, needs to be considered acceptable. The selection agent, finally, is the one who chooses a representative among all candidates deemed “qualified” by the audience’s decision rule, in order to perform a specific function.

Rehfeld maintains that these three roles are hard to distinguish in practice because they happen to coincide in representative democracies, where represented, audience, and selection agent are the same collectivity of people: the electorate (see Figure 2 below). The “qualified set” of candidates to representative positions, in turn, is defined through electoral law and party politics. The representative’s function, finally, is likewise a predictable decision guided by law. When representation escapes this format, as is the case with intermediate representative roles taken up by civil society organisations (Lavalle et al., 2006), or the attainment of peace through negotiated settlements, a few fundamental questions come up: who shapes the (non)authorisation initiating representative activities, who makes up the “qualified set” of candidates to become representatives, who exercises each of the three above-cited roles (which, unlike what is seen in representative democracies, do not perfectly overlap), and how functions are delegated to such representatives.



**Figure 2.** Representative Selection in Representative Democracies. *Source:* Based on Rehfeld (2006).



**Figure 3.** Representative Selection in Peace Processes. *Source:* Based on Rehfeld (2006).

In the absence of institutions that provide political predictability to a peace process, Rehfeld's model and Pitkin's typology are a good starting point for scrutinising the establishment of rules, the selection of decision-makers and the roles attributed to them. I will thus analyse two main elements defining negotiation table participants, each illustrated by one side of the Venn diagram in Figure 3: their *choice* and the *function* they perform.

First, figuring out the choice of participants at negotiation tables means exploring the left side of Figure 3. The choice of representatives requires the identification of the audience, the selection agents, and the represented involved in this process. The interaction between them is revealing of the substance of representatives chosen to sit at the table, and of whether there is room for descriptive representation of marginalised sectors of society or not. Identifying these three actors and how they interact

with each other in peace processes can shed light on structural attributes that may thus prove decisive for a better understanding of inclusive peace. In this sense, it is also important to estimate where conflict parties, international mediators, and popular movements fall within these three categories. During prenegotiations, the selection agents of direct participants most likely will be the conflict parties themselves, mediators, and international sponsors. The parties may also prefer to establish general parameters and criteria for such choice, delegating it to experts or actors seen as neutral by the general public.

The audience, in turn, has a strategic role that deserves special attention. Rehfeld notes that the formal existence of representation depends not on the observation of decision rules, but on the beliefs of the audience. He ponders that “representation depends formally on the recognition by an audience, *not* on the coherence (or lack of coherence) of a purported case to a set of rules that the audience uses. In short, it is the beliefs of the Audience that matter, not whether those beliefs are true” (2006: 15). It is therefore important to emphasise the role of the audience’s perception in defining whether or not an actor is eligible to be a representative and if he or she can indeed be considered a representative. As Rehfeld stresses in his work, representation may also unfold “illegitimately” and may rely, more than it does on legitimacy, on the perception (and perhaps acceptance) that it is indeed happening.<sup>4</sup>

Even more so than the other two actors listed above, the audience ends up centralising, in great measure, the political disputes that surround peace negotiations. By concentrating the power to determine decision rules on representation and, based on its own beliefs, decide whether such rules were observed or not, the audience accumulates another kind of power: it sets the parameters that gather or break up agendas; it gets to categorise people by grouping them together in this and not that way. Modes of organising constituencies in societies facing reconstruction are thus a source of power less recognised than those most associated to violent conflict. Take, for example, the practice of gerrymandering<sup>5</sup> in established political systems: classification matters, and it should matter all the more so when overall political rules are up for grabs and in process of renegotiation.

It is noteworthy, then, that these three protagonists in the choice of representatives are not fixed categories, but fluid objects of political contention. Civil society actors can try to force their way into the represented category via public advocacy (i.e. entering the audience), with the sole purpose of influencing decision rules, the beliefs of the audience in general, and, consequently, the choice of direct participants by selection agents. The inevitable incorporation of the issue of inclusion in conflict resolution over the last decades may have (i) widened the portion of society that makes up the audience and, as a consequence, forced the reviewing of decision rules to incorporate inclusivity norms, and/or (ii) shifted perceptions of an audience that used to accept or even defend exclusive decision rules, but no longer does. If the involved audience is now demanding for decision rules that consider not only practical, but also normative standards such as inclusivity, there are higher chances more diverse social groups will join the “represented” category, be it through descriptive representatives or symbolic ones. But let’s not forget the role of the audience’s beliefs in these dynamics: if it believes its rules

are being respected, the chosen representatives will be deemed acceptable. Having said all of the above on the issue of choice, thus, two important points come up. First, the existence itself of political representation is a constant negotiation that is, in turn, always up for contestation. Second, not only do the represented constitute representation, representation also constitutes the represented, helping define represented groups' identities by categorising them and claiming that they exist in a certain way. Represented groups are not a static, given reality that are simply there to be apprehended – they are forged by selection agents and audience and shaped by the power dynamics under which they function.

The second main element of representation mentioned above is the *function* it is supposed to perform. Rehfeld stresses that “any particular case of representation is always context-limited: it is defined by the Function towards which it aims, and that Function always specifies that ‘The Representative *stands for* the Represented in order to do X’” (2006: 17). The function is therefore the starting point of representation, and it is also crucial to determine the audience it activates: “the Function of representation specifies who the relevant parties are; that is, who is the Audience” (p. 9). The more strategic the representative's function, of course, the more impervious to activism powerful actors tend to become. This means that marginalised sectors of society will have better chances of getting descriptive representatives when the function they are expected to perform is not considered too strategic by conflict parties and negotiation sponsors. Aside from the “presence” factor, another important point to consider regarding function is the “action” dimension mentioned in the previous subsection. Pitkin raises the issue of a “mandate versus independence” dilemma concerning a representative's actions and his or her constituency's demands. Rehfeld labels this “performance” – the final result of a representative process. It is necessary not only to ask what function was attributed to a certain actor, but also in which kind of performance it resulted.

The different categories and roles of representation are helpful for building another version of inclusion in the sense that they capture it in a wider manner. More than placing inclusive initiatives on a “direct–indirect spectrum,” aiming for an elusive (and flattened) goal of legitimisation, representation allows for their dynamic dissection in every step of the way, identifying how and why some were included but others were not, what kind of functions are delegated to civil society representatives and what were the effects of their inclusion. The representational lens, as a common language uniting the place of society before, during, and after peace processes, also allows for an approach that sees inclusion as a constant political negotiation, resulting from power dynamics, instead of deeming it a benign and instrumental element. In this sense, the recognition or rejection of representative relationships, their goals and processes reveal key for a deeper grasp on inclusion. In hopes of illustrating the theoretical ideas raised by this section, next I will evaluate the issue of inclusion in the context of the Colombian peace process with the FARC (2012–2016). More specifically, I will look at the case of the victims' delegations sent to Havana in 2014 in light not of the usual inclusion language, but of the concept of political representation, in order to explore what this approach may bring to the table.



## Inclusion and Representation in the Colombian Peace Process: The Case of the Victims' Delegations

The Colombian conflict has been unfolding for over fifty years and involves several actors – not only the armed guerrillas and the government, but also narcotraffickers, paramilitary groups, and *bandas criminales* (“bacrim”) – which helps explain its level of complexity and the difficulty encountered in reaching a peaceful closure for it. Its origins may be found in a deep-rooted association between politics and violence in the country, the people’s exclusion from politics as an instrument of social change, as well as issues with land use, ownership, and distribution. The conflict between the government and FARC originated precisely in rural areas in the 1960s, when the guerrilla was founded following years of severe violence in the country. This period (1948–1958), known as *La Violencia*, resulted in an elite political pact that further eluded the population’s hopes of receiving state protection and having their social rights guaranteed through non-violent channels (Skidmore and Smith, 2005).

In conflicts as long and complex as this one, victimisation is naturally a huge issue to be addressed once peace and reconciliation efforts are launched. Colombia’s conflict has left more than 8.4 million victims to date – over 17 per cent of the population.<sup>6</sup> The difficulty of dealing with victimhood in this context thus has to do with the multiplicity of angles involved: a wide variety of actors committed a wide variety of crimes against a wide variety of people. Victimisers include not only the guerrillas but also paramilitary groups and the state itself. Victims include people from urban and rural areas, from different social classes, ethnicities, genders, and so on. On top of the list of victimising crimes by far is internal displacement (currently more than 7.5 million), followed by homicide (over 1 million, including direct and indirect victims) and death threats (400,000).<sup>7</sup> Other perpetrated crimes include forced disappearance, kidnapping, sexual violence, torture, and the recruitment of minors.

After decades of confrontations, a handful of failed peace negotiation attempts, and a particularly belligerent few years under former president Álvaro Uribe in the 2000s, then president Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC established exploratory talks and finally agreed to initiate negotiations. In August 2012, the parties announced that, after a phase of prenegotiations, they would be pursuing a peaceful solution to their conflict. At the occasion, they signed and released the *General Agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of stable and durable peace*, which stated their intentions, the rules of negotiation and the agenda it would discuss. Over the four following years later, the Havana dialogues – guaranteed by Cuba and Norway, with support from Chile and Venezuela – concluded discussions of their six-point agenda<sup>8</sup> and reached an agreement.

Although the process was structured as a bilateral negotiation that did not foresee a high volume of direct participation or the granting of permanent seats to civil society representatives, the negotiation table made it a point to adopt an inclusive discourse particularly reliant on indirect participation initiatives. These initiatives, which are now seen by experts as successful and innovative (e.g. see Herbolzheimer, 2016; Maldonado, 2017), can be attributed not only to the spaces formally stipulated by the table, but also to the pressure exerted by civil society organisations throughout the process.

There were three official inclusion channels established by the table from the beginning: the launch of a website (as well as physical forms distributed in post offices and town halls) for submission of suggestions from the population, the thematic forums held at regional and national levels, and consultations with experts and civil society as seen fit by the table. In a recent publication, the government explicitly alluded to Paffenholz's modalities, identifying its early inclusive initiatives with modalities 3 and 4, and also adding modality 8, that is, the posterior approval of the agreements by the popular vote in a referendum<sup>9</sup> (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2018: 218–219). Other means of inclusion, such as the creation of the Gender Subcommission, were clear results of civil society co-ordination. Lastly, the forums on the topic of victims became a platform for the appointment of victims' delegations tasked with discussing the issue with the negotiators. These delegations will be the focus of this section.

It is important to highlight that the absence of modality 1 of inclusion (and perhaps also of 2) does not eliminate representative dynamics from this process. Political representation is present, at the very least, due to the fact one of the parties was a democratically elected government. But it also holds if I choose to interpret political representation as something that goes beyond formal authorisation and can occupy loci other than formal politics. While the Havana talks prioritised a language of political participation – in the first version of the sixty-three-page agreement on victims, the word “participation” showed up seventy-three times – the employment of the representation lexicon was selective, as discussed ahead. One can notice a lack of clarity in the employment of the two words by the government – it declared, for example, that the process witnessed “a model of participation that depended on multiple interactions, with distinct degrees of representation and inclusion” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2018: 226, translated from Spanish). This is detrimental to a deeper understanding of inclusion in peace processes.

This tension is especially evidenced in the case of the victims' delegations, in which the intensity of having victims invited to the table (albeit temporarily) led to simultaneous utilisation and rejection of the language of representation. It is fitting to enquire, then, if the role played by the delegations can be labelled representation or not, applying the framework discussed above in an attempt to look at inclusive initiatives such as this one from a different standpoint than usual. I am not searching to provide definite answers in raising this question, which is why it is important to separate the perception of the actors involved on the nature of the delegates' roles and, on the other hand, the choice of representation in a wider sense as a lens of analysis.

The starting point for this discussion in the Colombian peace process was the acceptance by decision-makers that the victims had to be placed at the centre of the whole peace process. This meant that both parties had to recognise their responsibility in the victimisation of the Colombian population throughout the conflict and vow not to “exchange impunities” (Presidencia de la República, 2014). Having done that, the parties acknowledged that victims deserve not only the truth about what happened to them and their loved ones, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition, but also a direct voice in this phase of negotiations. Given the brief scenario on the conflict's victims provided above, it becomes clear that including them in a fair way was no easy task – especially

considering the delegations amounted to 60 people out of a universe of 8.4 million victims. Such difficulty seems to simultaneously reinforce and challenge the choice of political representation as a lens of analysis.

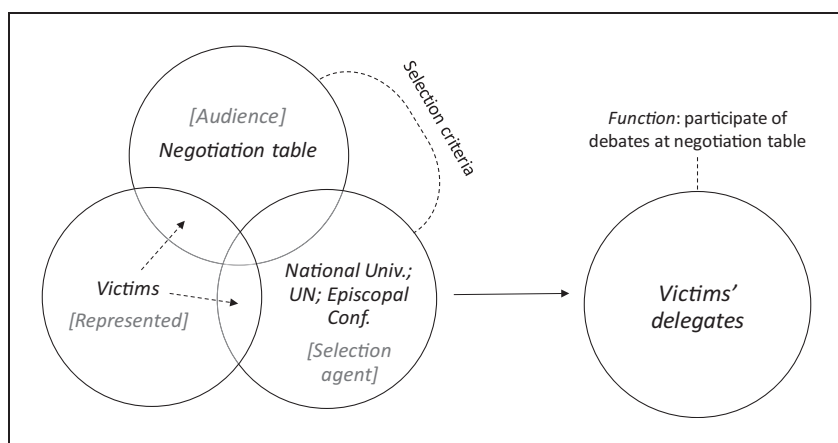
On 7 June 2014, driven by the above commitment, the parties released a joint communiqué in which the principles that would guide the debates on victims were established.<sup>10</sup> This declaration determined the holding of regional and national thematic forums<sup>11</sup> by the *Centro de Pensamiento y Seguimiento al Diálogo de Paz* (a think tank part of the National University of Colombia) and UN Colombia. It also announced that a first delegation of victims would soon fly to Havana to “present their proposals and expectations about peacebuilding in the territories and about the satisfaction of the victims’ rights” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014a).

Although the negotiators were not completely clear as to who would get to go, they mentioned, at that point, that “this delegation will be made up in such a manner as to ensure the plural and balanced representation of the different victims, as well as of the different victimizing events, but not intending to ensure that a delegation may represent the millions of victims left by the armed conflict” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014a). Virginia Bouvier wrote, at the time, that “[w]ith more than 6.5 million victims registered with the government’s Victims’ Unit, and tremendous diversity among them, it will be difficult to ensure complete representation at the table” (Bouvier, 2014). Indeed, despite the above-average level of organisation perceived among Colombian victims, differences invariably led to some tensions over who would go to Havana. It seemed, at first, that the ten to fifteen expected delegates would come from the *Mesa Nacional de Víctimas* – an organ that functions within the Victims’ Unit as a participatory instance for formally identified victims and a product of the Law of Victims<sup>12</sup> (*Ley 1448 de 2011*). Yet, concerns were raised that these choices could be influenced by political preferences, and such a group would consequently not be a representative sample of the totality of the conflict’s victims (La Silla Vacía, 2014a, 2014b).

On 17 July 2014, the delegations issued another communiqué to announce the selection criteria for participants. It was announced then that the National University and the UN would also be in charge of the selection process, with support from the Episcopal Conference of Colombia (assigned with securing the observation of said criteria). The main parameters for the choice of victims’ delegates would be

balance, pluralism and fairness, which should be reflected in the composition of each one of the delegations. In particular, the delegations should reflect the whole universe of human rights violations and IHL [international humanitarian law] infractions that have taken place throughout the internal conflict, taking the different social sectors, populations and the regional approach into account. [...] The delegations’ members shall be *direct victims of the conflict and they will participate in that capacity and not in representation of others*. The foregoing does not exclude the cases of collective victimization. (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014b, my emphasis)

The table established that it would welcome at least five delegations (one per cycle of dialogues) of up to twelve people each, in what eventually totalled the sixty participants that visited the Cuban capital from August to December of 2014. The declaration also



**Figure 4.** Selection of Victims' Delegations in the Colombian Peace Process. Source: Based on Rehfeld (2006).

signalled that negotiators would review the selection criteria with each visiting delegation, making additional recommendations to selection agents if necessary.

At the occasion of the first delegation's trip to Havana on 15 August, the three institutions responsible for the choice of participants, seeking to elucidate and detail the criteria established by the negotiation table, released a joint statement with further explanation on the guiding principles of their work. It reaffirmed the table's warning of the impossibility of perfect representativeness, as well as its request that the delegations contemplated the widest spectrum possible of victims, considering all types of victimisation from all categories of armed actors, from different affected territories and from varied social sectors, with special attention to marginalised groups and a gender focus (UNDP, 2014a). The institutions argued against calls for proportionality, claiming that (i) some types of victims, such as the internally displaced, are quantitatively disproportional in their large numbers, which could compromise the integration of important albeit smaller groups of victims; and (ii) it was not their role to tally or categorise the whole universe of the conflict's victims, a job, in reality, to be fulfilled later by the Truth Commission (p. 3).

Based on Rehfeld's standards of representation (see Figure 4 above), the negotiation table (alongside parties' leaders) were the "audience" in the sense they came up with the decision rule and were the one actor who needed to validate the choice of participants. The National University of Colombia, UN Colombia, and the Episcopal Conference were the "selection agents" whom – according to the selection criteria made public by the parties' delegations and considering the input received in regional and national forums – in fact decided which victims were best suited to attend the debates. The "represented," finally, would be the conflict's victims. It is worth noting that diverse victims' leaderships exerted pressure over both audience and selection agents during the selection phase – hence the dashed arrows in Figure 4 – attempting in this manner

to leave behind a mostly passive role of represented and infiltrate the two other remaining circumferences in order to have a say in the decision rule and the selection of delegates itself.

Although assessing the real impact of such pressure is a matter that remains to be further dissected, it is important to highlight that the definition of the representative function at hand (temporary participation at negotiation table discussions, with no decision power) was off-reach for victims and hermetic to social pressure.<sup>13</sup> In other words, whereas the choice of participants seemed like a fairly open-ended conversation, the actual role attributed to the victims that were picked was not up for debate.

The substantive facet of representation, on the other hand, brings attention to the issues of representativeness (presence/descriptive representation) and policy impact by the victims' delegates (action/"act for" representation). Despite the negotiators' reluctance to commit to proportionality or precise representativeness, it looks as if its request for balance and pluralism in the composition of the five delegations was fulfilled. Women made up 60 per cent of the delegates, and a wide variety of victimisations were represented by victims or their family members – kidnapping, massacres, forced displacement, gender-based and sexual violence, homicide, child recruitment, disappearances, false positives,<sup>14</sup> use of prohibited weapons, violence against vulnerable ethnic groups, and so on. Roddy Brett observes that the issue of victimisation variety was the single most difficult one to find balance for, seeing that the political opposition wanted only victims of FARC to attend and the FARC, in turn, was sensitive when it came to the numbers of victims from their violations (Brett, 2018: 281). Several social sectors were made present, from rural to urban, from powerful politicians and well-known journalists to human rights and minorities' activists of Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and women's groups. Keeping in mind that some territories were more affected by the conflict than others, the regional parameter was also respected – twenty-eight out of the thirty-two Colombian departments were represented.<sup>15</sup> Still, for Camilo Villa, a member of the fifth delegation, "this is a participation that lacks volume; [...] we know that 5 or 6 thousand people participated of the forums, but only 60 made it to Havana" (Trindade Viana and Mendes, 2016).

Lastly, the action dimension of this representative process may be seen from different perspectives. The initiative was celebrated as having made a lasting impression on negotiators and therefore exercised indirect influence on the negotiations from that point on. Brett argues "the encounter with victims and the clarity of their proposals provided the negotiators with a framework concerning specific measures for the design of the victims' accord" (2018: 292). At times, however, it seems as if the actual policy influence and impact of the victims (their "performance") stood beneath their own desired outcomes. One of the proposals brought up in the national forum at Cali, for example, maintained that "participation in the process is a right of the victims, as is its binding character" (UNDP, 2014f: 6, translated from Spanish). As mentioned earlier, however, the function performed by the victims' delegates was non-negotiable – they would share their experiences and voice their proposals, but no binding pledges were made on the part of government and FARC negotiators. Villa observes, in this regard, that "a lot of proposals were cut, mainly the ones that called for a commitment of policy modification on the part of the Armed Forces and the topic of state depuration" (Trindade Viana and Mendes, 2016).

Ultimately, what lies at the bottom of this process is a certain contradiction between the use of a language of representation and its simultaneous rejection. At the same time that the negotiation table vowed to “ensure the plural and balanced representation of the different victims” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014a), it was quick to clarify that victims would “participate in that capacity and not in representation of others” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014b). Much like the language adopted by the Conflict Resolution literature, Colombian negotiators are interested in (attainable) representativeness, but refuse to recognise popular engagement in formal instances as political representation. As a counterargument, one may say the delegates themselves did not believe they would be able to represent the extremely multifaceted universe of Colombia’s victims – something that perhaps many of the millions of victims who never got to go to Havana would agree with.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the formal representative role was not there, as Brett concludes,

a cohesive and unified victim-led peacebuilding agenda began to emerge. This agenda emerged directly out of the collective voice and thinking of the 60 members of the delegations, and logically did not speak for all victims and their organisations. However, it began to gain leverage at the national level and sought, to a degree, to represent itself as a formalised politics of victimhood within the context of peacemaking and peacebuilding. In this respect, to a degree, the delegations then amplified the voices of specific individual victims, while seeking to represent partially the broader demands of victims’ organisations. (Brett, 2018: 287)

Ultimately, two main reflections come up from this discussion. First, going back to the question I raised earlier – were the victims’ delegates representatives of Colombia’s victims? Yes and no. It became clear from official discourse and even from the delegates themselves that no official representative role was intended with the initiative. Using Pitkin’s typology, formalistic and “act for” languages of representation were repeatedly rejected in this process. On the descriptive side, however, representation was several times invoked and encouraged – if not in a key of proportionality or much less in volume of participation, definitely in the sense of a feeling of identification or incarnation involved in having victims invited to the table to voice their grievances while facing those responsible for their victimisation. The more repetitive use of the term “participation” by the parties might interestingly have something to say about this – perhaps it is seen as a more malleable label, involving demands easier to dismiss.

A second point is that representation allows for inclusion to be seen as a political endeavour. Rehfeld’s view on representation opens the possibility of approaching representation as a two-way street involving numerous actors that work through power dynamics and collective mobilisation. As mentioned earlier, not only do existing identities turn up in representation; representation itself – or those audiences defining decision rules for recognising representation – help turn loose social groups into collectivities by convening them as such. When it comes to the specific case of victims, for example, Jacoby observes that “often [parallels between personal and group experiences] are constructed on the victims’ behalf” (2015: 522). As opposed to constituting a mere legitimising end in and of itself, approaching inclusive representation as another form of negotiated political contention permeated by power dynamics

opens up the possibility of deeming inclusion a means towards the end of finally granting long denied rights.

## Final Remarks

This article tried to evidence the theoretical usefulness and potential empirical validity of reframing inclusive mechanisms of peace negotiations in light of the concept of political representation. While literature on the subject mostly speaks a language of inclusion, the vagueness of the term ultimately conceals fundamental (political) aspects of efforts to give voice to those social groups particularly affected by armed conflicts. The more technical approach used by specialists, in turn, often treats inclusion as a legitimising “bureaucratic box” to be checked off a list and makes no distinction between the notions of participation and representation.

This discussion was illustrated through the Colombian peace process with the FARC – emblematic in its intention to be both inclusive and effective – more specifically the invitation of victims’ delegations in 2014, in which all the above cited issues manifested quite clearly. Official discourse showed clear preference for the language of participation, rejecting that the role of victims’ delegates could be seen as representative. Representation can be a thousand things at the same time, however; it may be taken as the formal procedure behind the choice of representatives, but it is also about a feeling of identification, a convincing act of incarnation, that allows for one to think of a process as representative or not.

By refusing to accept the representative feature of the victims’ delegations while focusing on the lack of the formal, clear mandate to perform a specific decision-making function, they missed some of the most important aspects of representation involved in this effort. While there were no formal authorising mechanisms for the delegates to represent the complex universe of Colombia’s victims, the parties themselves widely employed the representative lexicon in regard to substance, specifically in relation to the goal of representativeness in the gathering of the group. The language of representation is both utilised and discarded, and such selectivity may be important to deepen our outlook on inclusive peace negotiations. While still walking a fine line between inclusion and effectiveness, the representational lens inserts yet another tightrope into this equation – one between political interaction and the creation of “technical” models capable of tracking concrete results. Therefore, more than simply treating inclusion as a condition for the creation of legitimacy, political representation in this context interacts with participatory initiatives and underscores, above all, the realisation of long denied rights.

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## Notes

1. This process is deeply related to the human rights regime, as well as mechanisms of transitional justice, which became a core theme in the post-Cold War environment (Lutz et al., 2003; Vinjamuri and Snyder, 2004).
2. <http://graduateinstitute.ch/home/research/centresandprogrammes/ccdp/ccdp-research/clusters-and-projects-1/participatory-peace-processes-an/broadening-participation-in-trac.html>.
3. Galtung (1967).
4. A similar argument may be found in Saward (2006, 2010).
5. Gerrymandering, a term inspired by the salamander-shaped district drawn by American politician Elbridge Gerry, is the practice of manipulating definition of electoral districts for political gains (Cox and Katz, 2002).
6. *Unidad Nacional de Víctimas*. See more: <https://www.unidadadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>.
7. *Unidad Nacional de Víctimas*. See more: <https://www.unidadadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>.
8. The points in discussion were rural reform development, political participation, the end of the conflict, the drug problem, victims, and mechanisms of implementation, verification, and popular approval.
9. In the plebiscite held on 2 October 2016, the first agreement was rejected by the Colombians by a very thin margin. The defeat prompted a “National Dialogue” that reopened the discussion of a few points with diverse sectors of society. The agreement was then successfully submitted to Congress approval.
10. They were ten: recognition of the victims, recognition of responsibility, satisfaction of the victims’ rights, *victim participation*, elucidation of the truth, reparation of the victims, guarantees of protection and security, guarantee of non-repetition, principle of reconciliation, and rights-oriented approach (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2014a).
11. Regional forums were held in Villavicencio (4 and 5 July 2014), Barrancabermeja (10 and 11 July 2014), and Barranquilla (17 and 18 July 2014). The national forum was held in Cali (3 and 4 August 2014). The choice of locations paid attention to regions most affected by the conflict (Presidencia de la República, 2014).
12. <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/registroEspecialArchivos/Decreto4800-11RegalmentarioLey1448-11.pdf>.
13. The above-cited rule n. 6 of the General Agreement makes it clear that third party participation at the table would happen at the discretion of both sides’ negotiators.
14. [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/colombia0615sp\\_4up.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/colombia0615sp_4up.pdf).
15. For more information of the profile of the delegations, see UNDP (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e).
16. This argument was presented to me in an interview with a government official who worked in the peace process and declared that the delegates themselves saw the representative label as a burden. This interview was conducted in Bogotá in November 2018 as part of my ongoing PhD research.

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# The Power of Charisma: Investigating the Neglected Citizen–Politician Linkage in Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela

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## Abstract

Charisma has long been considered a powerful tool for leaders worldwide to rise to greatness. Yet we have given less attention to the way in which charismatic leaders develop deep, unmediated emotional bonds with their followers. I propose a compact theory that explains how charismatic attachments form, overwhelm alternative linkage types, and facilitate the development of powerful and potentially enduring political movements. To illustrate the theory, I turn to Hugo Chávez’s Bolivarian movement in Venezuela. Firstly, the analysis of a 2007 survey from the Latin American Public Opinion Project demonstrates the disproportionate influence of charisma on citizens’ attachments to Bolivarianism relative to competing factors. Next, six original focus groups conducted with Bolivarian followers in 2016 illustrate the mechanisms underlying the followers’ surprisingly resilient loyalty, not only to the leader but also to his overarching movement. The results suggest that affective political attachments can help sustain charismatic movements after their founders disappear.

## Resumen

Se considera que el carisma es una herramienta poderosa que facilita el acenso de grandes líderes. Sin embargo, hemos prestado menos atención a la manera por la cual los líderes carismáticos desarrollan lazos profundos, afectivos y directos con sus seguidores. Este trabajo propone una teoría compacta que explica cómo los lazos carismáticos forman, abruma otros lazos alternativos, y facilitan el desarrollo de movimientos políticos poderosos y duraderos. Se enfoca en el movimiento bolivariano de Hugo

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Chávez en Venezuela para ilustrar la teoría. Primero, un análisis de una encuesta realizado en el 2007 por Latin American Public Opinion Project demuestra la influencia predominante del carisma en los lazos políticos de los seguidores al Bolivarianismo. Después, seis grupos focales originales conducidos con seguidores ilustran los mecanismos que mantienen la lealtad no solamente al el líder, sino también a su movimiento en general. Los resultados sugieren que los lazos políticos afectivos pueden ayudar a sostener a los movimientos carismáticos después de la desaparición de sus líderes fundadores.

### **Keywords**

Venezuela, comparative politics, charisma, citizen–politician linkages, public opinion, Hugo Chávez

### **Palabras clave**

Venezuela, política comparada, lazos políticos, opinión pública, Hugo Chávez

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## **Introduction**

Charisma has long been a powerful tool for leaders to rise to greatness, as exemplified by Perón, Chávez, Fujimori, Atatürk, de Gaulle, and Gandhi. Indeed, the deep, unmediated emotional bonds these leaders cultivated with millions of followers were crucial in allowing them to consolidate transformative political movements. For example, in Argentina, Perón won the hearts of millions of workers as Secretary of Labor, paving the way for his presidency and granting him virtually unchecked power during his rule. In Venezuela, Chávez won the 1998 presidential elections in a landslide and used his tremendous charismatic appeal to ratify a new constitution, propelling his Bolivarian Revolution. Similarly, in 1958, de Gaulle leveraged his overwhelming presidential victory and reputation as a liberator of France to found the Fifth Republic. In each of these cases, the “personalistic” or “charismatic” ties that leader forged with his followers were central to his ability to profoundly change the political landscape.<sup>1</sup>

Yet while personalistic attachments between leaders and followers help shape formidable movements across the globe, scholars widely consider this type of citizen–politician linkage rare and ephemeral (Eatwell, 2006; Hawkins, 2010; Jowitt, 1992; Kitschelt et al., 2010; Shils, 1965; Weber 1978 [1922]). Indeed, scholars contend that, to survive, such attachments must lose their charismatic nature by “routinising” into attenuated impersonal ties. Consequently, it remains unclear how these linkages influence charismatic leaders’ ability to consolidate political movements and impact party systems over time.

This article sheds light on how personalistic attachments form and facilitate the development of charismatic movements. Using Venezuela as an illustrative case, I combine insights from classic studies of charisma with empirical analyses of voters

devoted to Chávez and his Bolivarian movement. Specifically, I develop and test a clear, compact theory of personalistic attachments that offers two contributions. Firstly, I demonstrate how the mechanisms underlying such linkages shape citizens' identification, not only with the individual leader but also with the larger movement. In doing so, I also indicate the relative unimportance of programmatic and organisational factors for movement identification. Secondly, I show that citizens' ties to these movements have the potential to endure in their raw and deeply emotional state rather than routinising into depersonalised linkages, as existing literature would argue (Jowitt, 1992; Madsen and Snow, 1991; Shils, 1965; Weber 1978 [1922]; Willner and Willner, 1965). The findings suggest the potential for charismatic movements to live on in their original, personalistic state after their founders disappear.

To test my theory, I first use an important survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in 2007, at the height of Chávez's rule, to demonstrate the overwhelming influence of personalistic rather than programmatic or organisational factors on citizens' attachments to Bolivarianism. Next, I turn to six original focus groups with Bolivarian followers conducted in 2016, three years after Chávez's death, to analyse how citizens' attachments can retain their personalistic core rather than transforming into depersonalised ties after the leader's death. The results indicate that deep, resilient attachments to charismatic movements can survive and shape citizens' relationship with politics in the long term. I conclude by discussing avenues for future research, including possible long-term implications of these linkages for democratic politics and party-system development.

## A Theory of Personalistic Attachment

How do leaders foster deep, unmediated emotional attachments with voters to generate loyalty to their movements? Scholars indicate that a leader's charisma – defined by Weber (1978 [1922]: 241) as “supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” – plays a central role in the cultivation of these ties. Importantly, it is not the objective existence of these characteristics, but rather the followers' perception of them in the leader that cultivates personalistic attachments (Madsen and Snow, 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011; Weber 1978 [1922]; Willner and Willner, 1965). Studies highlight different dimensions of charisma that foster personalistic bonds between leaders and followers, including the leader's magnetic personality and extraordinary political skills (Eatwell, 2006; Pappas, 2011); the followers' material and psychological needs (Madsen and Snow, 1991; Weber 1978 [1922]); contextual problems such as severe crisis (Madsen and Snow, 1991; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011; Weyland, 2003; Weber 1978 [1922]); and discourse that glorifies the leader, demonises the opposition, and promises societal transformation (Willner and Willner, 1965; Zúquete, 2008). Taken together, these studies highlight important features of charismatic ties. Yet while they emphasise voters' affinity with individual *leaders*, they overlook how these ties can foster an enduring identification with a leader's overarching *movement*.



I propose a compact theory of personalistic attachment that rests on three conditions. For each condition, contextual factors combine with the leader's behaviour to shape citizens' attraction to the leader and, more importantly, their deep, emotional identification with his movement. The first condition involves the leader's direct recognition of and appeals to citizens who have suffered severe feelings of exclusion, deprivation, and hopelessness. The theory of "proxy control" developed in social psychology suggests that people who have experienced these feelings are likely to seek out a charismatic "saviour" to recognise their suffering, take control of their seemingly unmanageable situation, and combat the "evil" forces blamed for their problems (Bandura, 1982; Madsen and Snow, 1991: 12–15). This recognition is asymmetrical: the leader *directly grants* recognition to the followers, such that the latter feel indebted to, rather than empowered by, the former. Contextually, a severe crisis overseen by a low-performing government motivates citizens who feel excluded to seek out a hero to rescue them from their situation (Madsen and Snow, 1991: 143; Weyland, 2003: 843). Using this crisis, the leader recognises and vows to personally resolve citizens' suffering and perceived exclusion to gain their support.

Secondly, to prove his extraordinary ability to "save" the people from their misery, the leader aggressively attacks the "enemies" held responsible for their suffering and implements bold, *initially* successful reforms to improve their condition (Pappas, 2011: 4–5; Weber 1978 [1922]: 242). These impressive initiatives confirm the followers' exalted perceptions of their leader but lack programmatic coherence and sustainability. Instead, the leader's early success is most likely tied to his appearance following a period of crisis or at the cusp of favourable economic conditions, such as rising oil prices or a commodity boom. Nonetheless, many voters experiencing swift, tangible relief due to his policies will perceive the leader as extraordinary.

The third condition involves the construction of a symbolic narrative that glorifies the leader alongside other historical protagonists as a hero, vilifies opponents as enemies, and stresses the transformative character of the movement. Crucially, to legitimate the narrative and integrate it with the followers' everyday lives, the leader tailors it to the particular cultural setting in which he arises. For instance, in framing politics as an existential struggle between good and evil, the leader ties himself to "sacred figures, divine beings, or heroes" who already form part of the followers' cultural identity (Willner and Willner, 1965: 82). Equally important, he associates his opponents with familiar, epic foes. Integrating these commonly understood prototypes of good and evil permits the leader to reinterpret well-known historical events "within a salvation framework" (Smith, 2000: 103–104). Because the followers are familiar with the themes of heroism, villainy, and salvation evoked by the narrative, they perceive the leader as more authentic and therefore feel closer to him (Gauna, 2018: 40). Through this mechanism, the leader converts his support into an intensely personal form of "political religion" (Zúquete, 2008: 91).

To spin a convincing narrative that the followers come to internalise as part of their daily lives, the leader draws on personal appeal; achieves constant, direct contact with voters; and broadcasts "contentious performances" in which he inexhaustibly repeats the central components of his transformative mission – including the central heroes,

enemies, and stories of redemption (Gauna, 2018: 42; Michelutti, 2017: 233–237). Additionally, the leader dominates public spaces with images, words, music, and other symbols to help reinforce the power and moral superiority of him and his movement (Plotkin, 2002: 24; Zúquete, 2008: 93–103). Through these strategies, the leader successfully transforms “seemingly secular social and political life” into a sacred quest for salvation (Michelutti, 2017: 234).

Together, these factors consolidate citizens’ perceptions of the leader’s charisma. Consistent with existing scholarship, I claim that these perceptions foster deep emotional bonds between the leader and followers (Eatwell, 2006; Madsen and Snow, 1991; Pappas, 2011; Shils, 1965; Weber 1978 [1922]; Willner and Willner, 1965; Zúquete, 2008). Direct recognition of people’s exclusion and suffering makes followers feel indebted to the leader; bold, initially successful reforms deliver tangible improvements to the followers’ lives and appear to substantiate the leader’s exceptional capacities; and the symbolic narrative solidifies the leader’s role as the ultimate saviour. Yet while these conditions are essential to foster personalistic connections in the first place, I go a step further to argue that the symbolic narrative can transform these ties into a deeper and more resilient identification with the movement by sustaining the leader’s core promise of redemption – even after his death.

Specifically, I argue that the narrative sustains the movement through the followers’ cherished, intimate memories of the founder and through timeless symbols that reinforce his glorified status. Research in social psychology suggests the relevance of a “death positivity bias,” in which citizens’ inflate their positive perceptions of leaders after the leaders die (Allison et al., 2009: 116). More specifically, a recent study indicates that citizens tend to view leaders whom they considered to be “morally virtuous” in life as *more charismatic* in death (Steffens et al., 2017: 532). This literature casts doubt on the notion that charismatic bonds routinise or fade away when the leader dies. Indeed, it suggests that, because such attachments can endure and even intensify, followers are likely to continue worshipping the deceased founder and reinforcing his symbolic narrative for years, even across generations. Thus, over time, these attachments transform into a durable political identity that shapes the followers’ worldview, sustains their loyalty to the movement, and shapes their expectations of future politicians (Abdelal et al., 2009; Hogg, 2001; Vugt and Hart, 2004).

In short, unlike scholars of charisma who argue that symbols associated with the founder help diffuse his charisma and depersonalise attachments (e.g. Jowitt, 1992; Shils, 1965; Weber 1978 [1922]), I contend that the symbolic narrative helps sustain the followers’ deeply emotional bonds as well as a fervent hope that a new leader will pick up the founder’s baton and save them from their suffering. The hope that a worthy successor will sooner or later take the founder’s place is crucial because it sustains citizens’ support for the movement until conditions permit the rise of such a leader.

Chávez’s leadership in Venezuela strongly reflects all three components of the personalistic mechanism, suggesting that it underlies citizens’ steadfast loyalty to his movement. Firstly, he personally recognised and symbolically incorporated masses of impoverished citizens who had suffered from decades of socioeconomic and political

exclusion under the preceding Punto Fijo regime.<sup>2</sup> A speech by Chávez on 10 January 2003 illustrates how he claimed personal responsibility for poor and excluded groups:

[...] Make no mistake about Hugo Chávez [...] in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic and my powers as Chief of State and my responsibilities as President of the Republic, I cannot permit that people die of hunger; I cannot permit that children die because there isn't medicine or there isn't milk; I cannot permit that the people drown of hunger and death. Above all things it is my responsibility in front of God and the flag to defend the Venezuelan people, above all things and as dictated by the Bolivarian Constitution! (Chávez, 2003, author's translation)

Chávez's promises to single-handedly protect people from hunger, disease, and death demonstrate how he sought to personally recognise and incorporate excluded sectors of the population.

Secondly, the daring nature and initial success of Chávez's reforms confirmed his image in the hearts and minds of his followers as a hero who would save them from the malevolent "political class." One such reform was his bold yet unsustainable approach to constitutional reform. During his 1998 presidential campaign, Chávez vowed to enact a new constitution to break with the Punto Fijo regime, protect Venezuelans' socio-economic rights, and enhance their direct participation in politics. In June 1999, the constitutional referendum passed with 72 per cent support, validating Chávez's ability to deliver on his promises. In the long run, however, Chávez failed to realise many of the ambitious visions outlined in his new constitution. For instance, his regime never developed the political infrastructure necessary to expand and guarantee citizens' new rights to healthcare, work, education, social security, and housing (Maingon, 2004: 54–55). Rather than addressing these failures, Chávez reformed the constitution again in his second term through executive decrees and "organic laws" rushed through the National Assembly (López, 2003). As before, the sweeping changes these reforms promised were scarcely fulfilled. Nevertheless, Chávez's audacity to propose and ratify them through referenda or executive decree appeared unprecedented, impressive, and even miraculous (Hawkins, 2010: 35).

Thirdly, to stress the transformative power of his movement, Chávez constructed a vivid narrative with "missionary" rhetoric that glorified his image and tied him to classic heroes, including Simón Bolívar, Venezuela's nineteenth-century liberator; Ezequiel Zamora, the hero of Venezuela's Federal War; Guaiacairo, an indigenous Venezuelan chief who fought against the Spanish Conquest; and even Jesus Christ (Martínez and de Lustgarten 2014: 19–21; Michelutti, 2017: 237–238; Zúquete, 2008: 97). More than merely associating himself with these legends, Chávez portrayed himself as sharing "divine kinship" with them; most notably, "he cultivated the notion that he was Bolívar's true heir," suggesting that he, like Bolívar, should be worshipped "like a Catholic saint" (Michelutti, 2017: 237). By depicting himself as the true son of Venezuela's most celebrated and tragic hero, Chávez tapped into several preexisting identities relevant to his followers, ranging from popular Christianity to mestizaje to Santería, and thus initiated his own "process of deification" (Michelutti, 2017: 234–236).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to confirming his godlike status, Chávez used his symbolic narrative to demonise his opponents. While he affectionately called his followers “patriots” and “soldiers,” he referred to his critics as “enemies,” “coup-plotters,” and “imperialists” (Gauna, 2018: 47). As with the protagonists in his narrative, Chávez tied these adversaries to Venezuela’s historical foes, especially imperial powers – such as Spain, the United States, Britain, and France – and the “antipatriots” descended from the “Empire,” who constituted the country’s the white upper and middle classes (Zúquete, 2008: 104). Finally, the narrative promised his followers salvation from these enemies through a dramatic societal transformation – a “Moral Revolution” – that would vanquish evil and reclaim peace and prosperity for Chávez’s righteous people (Gauna, 2018: 48).

To build his symbolic narrative, the founder established constant, direct communication with his followers through speeches and other performances that dominated media outlets. The extreme frequency of his contact with his followers and the repetition of the central themes of his narrative mattered as much as the content of any particular speech. As the star of his own weekly television show, he spoke directly into the camera for hours. He frequently interrupted radio and television programmes to make “emergency” announcements and travelled tirelessly around the country. Finally, Chávez tightened control over the media and saturated public spaces with symbols that glorified him and his movement. When combined with his recognition of previously excluded citizens and his implementation of bold reforms, the omnipresence of Chávez’s narrative transformed Bolivarianism into “a charismatic form of political religion” to which his followers became deeply attached (Zúquete, 2008: 92).

## Assessing the Relevance of Alternative Linkage Types

The preceding section outlined the conditions under which personalistic attachments form and demonstrated the role of these ties in Chávez’s Bolivarian movement. Yet evaluating the impact of charisma also requires analysis of competing linkage types. The present section assesses the development of programmatic and organisational ties – two prominent, alternative types of political attachment – and demonstrates how personalistic ties won out in Venezuela.

### *The Programmatic Mechanism*

Firstly, a programmatic mechanism suggests that citizens’ attachments rest on the substantive coherence of the leader’s ambitious programmes. Grounded in long-standing studies of issue preferences, retrospective and prospective economic voting, and partisanship, most scholars assume that this mechanism forms the natural and proper core of party and electoral politics. To develop programmatic ties, citizens must have well-formed issue preferences that align with the leader’s policies (Key, 1966: 7–8). In addition, the leader must *consistently* and *successfully* carry out these policies to earn voters’ approval and establish a clear programmatic trademark that is distinct from that of other parties (Fiorina, 1981: 66; Lupu, 2013: 60). In contrast to bold, shortsighted reforms, whose initially impressive performance casts the individual leader in a heroic

light, the programmatic trademark rests on the substantive content and steady functioning of social and economic policies. Citizens “constantly update” their attachment to the movement based on the leader’s adherence to this trademark (Kitschelt et al., 2010: 846). If the leader fails to implement distinctive and effective policies, citizens punish him and they reduce their attachment to the movement (Achen, 2002: 151). In turn, if the leader implements policies inconsistent with the trademark, the trademark becomes diluted and blends with the platforms of opposing parties, diminishing citizens’ loyalty (Lupu, 2013: 50).

Several scholars claim that Chávez developed a programmatic trademark that emphasised state-centred economics and redistributive social programmes called missions. To begin, Chávez attempted to increase the state’s role in the economy. For instance, he tightened his control over the state-run oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA), by ratifying the New Organic Hydrocarbon Law in 2001 (Parker, 2005: 44). Shortly thereafter, he nationalised dozens of non-oil companies and implemented a sweeping Land Reform Law. He also eventually imposed strict currency exchange and price controls to counteract inflation and keep consumer goods affordable (Corrales and Penfold, 2015: 64).

However, Chávez did not stake out a clear position on economic policy until late 2001, well after he had consolidated widespread popular support. Upon taking office, he confirmed his centre-right predecessor’s minister of finance, Maritza Izaguirre, and appeased the International Monetary Fund by cutting the state’s budget by 7 per cent and strengthening the Investment Fund for Macroeconomic Stabilization (Corrales and Penfold, 2015: 48–55). Despite these economically liberal policies, which diverged fundamentally from his later turn to “socialism of the twenty-first century,” Chávez’s movement cultivated impressive popular support: in 1999 and 2000, between 38 and 41 per cent of Venezuelans claimed to identify with the movement and 75–84 per cent approved of Chávez’s performance (Consultores, in press).

By late 2001, Chávez began to advertise and implement state-centred policies that achieved impressive results at the outset. But the performance of these policies soon dropped, providing little foundation for programmatic support. For example, though booming oil prices from late 2003 to 2008 allowed for substantial economic growth, his protectionist policies failed to stimulate investment and instead invited rampant corruption (Corrales and Penfold, 2015: 70; Ellner, 2010: 88–91). As a result, production in non-oil sectors declined, leading to sharp rises in imported goods; investment in infrastructure lagged, generating electricity and water shortages; and price and exchange controls caused increasing inflation, a rising black-market exchange rate, consumer goods shortages, and capital flight. The economy contracted by 3.3 per cent of GDP when oil prices fell in 2009, and in 2010, Chávez was forced to devalue the local currency sharply. The ultimate failure of these policies and the resulting inflation and shortages disproportionately affected low-income citizens, many of whom were strong supporters of Bolivarianism. This suggests that these citizens’ loyalty to Chávez over the course of his presidency was not fundamentally rooted in the substantive content and consistent performance of his economic programmes (Corrales and Penfold, 2015: 63–70).

In addition to state-centred economics, the Bolivarian programmatic trademark advocated redistributive social “missions.” Beginning with their launch in 2003, Chávez poured billions of petrodollars into these programmes and oversaw the construction of at least 50, in areas ranging from healthcare to information technology (Maingon, 2016: 20). The most prominent missions sought to reduce poverty and inequality through better provision of food, healthcare, education, and housing. Through these programmes, Chávez appeared to prioritise equality and social justice over individual rights.

Yet like his economic policies, Chávez’s social missions suffered from serious problems. The missions sprang up via presidential decree in a rapid, improvisational, and politicised manner that undercut their sustainability. Consequently, they failed to perform favourably after their first few years of operation. While poverty declined from 2003 to 2006, the trend stagnated from 2007 to 2012 and began to reverse thereafter (Aponte, 2014: 153; Ellner, 2011: 433–438; Maingon, 2016: 119–120). By 2014, poverty had risen to 48.4 per cent, surpassing 1998 levels by over 3 percentage points (España, 2014: 4). Finally, despite the missions’ rapid initial growth, a 2014 survey indicates that a mere 10 per cent of citizens report having benefitted from them, suggesting a failure to sustainably reduce poverty and protect Venezuelans’ socioeconomic rights (Aponte, 2014: 168; España, 2014: 8). Thus, it is more likely that followers’ fervent approval of Chávez’s programmes throughout this period arose from “lingering beliefs in [his] charisma” than from the substantive integrity of his policies (Kitschelt et al., 2010: 865; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011: 29).

In sum, the superficial nature and volatile performance of Chávez’s socioeconomic policies indicate his preference for dramatic reform over stable programmatic development. Though he promised to establish economic and social justice in Venezuela, his policies’ delayed implementation and ultimately negative performance made for a weak programmatic trademark. Most importantly, the bold, hasty application and short-lived success of these policies prioritised the establishment of Chávez’s saviour-like image at the expense of medium- and long-term effectiveness. Consequently, while deepening followers’ affective ties to Chávez, these policies held little appeal for programmatically principled voters. Moreover, the delayed application of Chávez’s policies cannot account for the movement’s widespread support during his first three years in office. These factors demonstrate how personalism infused Chávez’s policy agenda and compromised the development of programmatic linkages.

### *The Organisational Mechanism*

The organisational mechanism suggests that political attachments rest on the ties people cultivate with each other through local involvement in movement-affiliated activities and groups. Through these ties, citizens foster an enduring group identity that is maintained via involvement in the movement’s social clubs, neighbourhood associations, and political organisations (Granovetter, 1973; Green et al., 2002). Building this type of bond requires the followers’ *widespread* and *regular* participation. The movement’s organisations must also be sustained and strengthened over time and must maintain a “horizontal” rather than hierarchical character to inspire group members’ feelings of



efficacy (Ellner, 2011: 430–431; Rhodes-Purdy, 2015: 423–424). Unlike personalistic attachments, in which followers' sense of belonging comes directly from the leader, the organisational mechanism suggests that the followers ease their feelings of exclusion in a bottom-up fashion by interacting with each other.

Chávez promoted the organisational dynamic of Bolivarianism and even enshrined citizen participation in the 1999 constitution as a necessary condition for democracy. Early in his presidency, he launched several community-based organisations aimed at placing governance into the hands of the people, including Urban Land Committees, Health Committees, Technical Roundtables for Water, and Bolivarian Circles (Aponte, 2014: 252–263). In 2006, he appeared to strengthen this initiative by establishing the Communal Councils (CCs). Officially registered, neighbourhood-level groups consisting of 200–400 families, the CCs were intended to be self-governing: they would elect representatives, run their own meetings, and solicit funds directly from the government to resolve problems (Aponte, 2014: 264; García-Guadilla, 2012).

In practice, however, this network failed to cultivate genuine organisational ties to the movement. Firstly, citizen participation in the CCs was neither widespread nor regular. A 2005–2007 survey of poor Venezuelans by Universidad Católica Andrés Bello suggests that only 29 per cent had ever participated in a community event, while only 7 per cent had participated in a CC (Aponte, 2014: 260). Among the few citizens who participated in CCs, a 2008 survey by Centro Gumilla indicates that less than 50 per cent regularly attended meetings (Machado, 2009: 48–9). Secondly, the poor infrastructure of these groups compromised followers' ability to develop a strong grassroots network. Chávez's sluggish and haphazard institutionalisation of the CCs reflects this weakness: he did not legally recognise them through the Law of CCs until 2006, and he neglected to establish a government ministry to oversee them until 2010 (Aponte, 2014: 264). By 2012, in a famous speech titled "Changing Course" (*Golpe de Timón*), Chávez angrily acknowledged the weakness of his movement's grassroots spirit (Chávez, 2012). Thirdly, much evidence indicates that the CCs functioned in a hierarchical fashion. In many CCs, a mere handful of members remained active, and leaders often served as party bosses rather than local representatives, usurping control over projects and funds at the expense of other residents (García-Guadilla, 2012: 227–235). Perhaps as a result, a 2009 survey by Centro Gumilla suggests 76 per cent of Venezuelans perceived CCs as corrupt, while 77 per cent agreed that CCs did not involve most members of their community (Aponte, 2014: 271; Machado, 2009: 37).

Ultimately, the evidence suggests that the CCs did not foster genuine grassroots empowerment. While Chávez extolled the virtues of participatory democracy and made dramatic (if irregular) efforts to establish community organisations, these groups suffered low participation rates and severe institutional weaknesses. Outspoken leaders dominated many CCs and bred distrust rather than a genuine participatory spirit. Furthermore, citizens' feelings of recognition and inclusion depended more on their devotion to Chávez than involvement in community affairs. It is, therefore, unlikely that swaths of followers developed strong attachments to Bolivarianism based on an organisational mechanism.



### ***Bolivarian Attachments After Chávez***

Since Chávez's death in March 2013, Venezuela has fallen into even greater disarray. The economy has collapsed, and Bolivarian social programmes have failed to meet citizens' basic needs. The movement's fragile network of CCs has further eroded, and the movement's charismatic figurehead has been replaced with Nicolás Maduro, an inadequate and unsavory successor. Owing to these factors, several scholars argue that Bolivarian loyalty is fading (Denis, 2015; e.g., López, 2014). This claim reflects conventional understandings of charisma developed in political science and sociology: after the leader's death, citizens' deep ties to the individual either fade away or transform into depersonalised attachments that rest on robust political programmes and institutions (Jowitt, 1992: 107; Madsen and Snow, 1991: 24; Weber 1978 [1922]: 246).

Yet polling in the years since Chávez's death suggests that citizens' attachments to Bolivarianism have remained impressively resilient, reflecting the insights from social psychology that citizens idealise charismatic leaders and intensify their attachments to them after the leaders die (Allison et al., 2009; Steffens et al., 2017). Indeed, while support for President Maduro has dropped to about 15 per cent, over 30 per cent of Venezuelans – about the same proportion as in 2012, just before Chávez's death – have continued to express strong identification with the movement years later (Briceño, 2015; GBAO Strategies, 2019). In light of deteriorating Bolivarian programmes and organisations as well as Maduro's failed leadership, I argue that the followers' loyalty to the movement has persisted due to their deeply affective bonds with the charismatic founder.

The ways in which supporters have upheld Chávez's symbolic narrative demonstrate how they have managed to sustain personalistic attachments to the movement in his absence. Indeed, followers have continued to worship Chávez as an immortal spirit by constructing shrines dedicated to him in their homes, donning tattoos and necklaces of his eyes to watch over them, and replaying recordings of his speeches and television shows. Moreover, supporters have remained committed to the overarching mission of salvation enshrined in his narrative. Because this "scripture" hinges on the heroic power of a leader, it gives the followers hope that an impressive successor – a true heir of Chávez – will eventually rise and carry the movement forward. This faith in a better future delivered by a new, charismatic leader serves to strengthen rather than undermine citizens' personalistic attachments to the movement.

Maduro's behaviour as president further illustrates how the symbolic narrative reinforces citizens' support for Bolivarianism. Instead of enacting desperately needed policy reforms or revamping the institutional structure of the movement, the new president has focused relentlessly on Chávez's mission to transform society and vanquish the movement's enemies. He has also stressed his quasi-religious connection to the founder to keep citizens' affective attachments alive and vicariously garner support. For example, after becoming president, Maduro started referring to himself as "the son of Chávez" (Michelutti, 2017: 244).<sup>4</sup> He even claimed that, after death, Chávez had returned to Earth reincarnated as a bird to offer a personal blessing to Maduro (Scharfenberg, 2013). In 2016, he developed a hologram of Chávez that walked the streets of Caracas to celebrate the "Day of Loyalty and Love for our Commander Hugo Chávez

Frías” (Alvarado, 2016). By reconstructing the founder’s image, Maduro has leveraged citizens’ personalistic bonds to defend the contemporary regime and decry all who oppose it as traitors to Chávez’s legacy. Consequently, he has sustained crucial support for a strikingly long time, given the deplorable performance of his regime (Taub and Fisher, 2017).

To be sure, Maduro’s symbolic tactics alone cannot sustain followers’ continued support, especially as the economic crisis deepens. Indeed, the opposition’s sweeping 112-seat victory in the December 2015 legislative elections (the Bolivarian regime won just 55 seats), as well as the president’s unabashedly authoritarian tactics, suggests that Maduro’s legitimacy is fading. However, his personal decline does not necessarily imply that the movement is doomed to fail. In fact, while many followers disapprove of Maduro, they remain loyal to Chávez and deeply committed to his transformative mission. They are also deeply suspicious of opposition leaders. As two opposition candidates in the 2015 parliamentary elections emphasised in interviews with the author, steadfast devotion to the Bolivarian narrative makes it exceedingly difficult to construct *alternative* narratives to win followers’ support.<sup>5</sup>

In short, despite Maduro’s deplorable performance, the preservation of Chávez’s symbolic narrative has helped prop up his regime and, more importantly, has helped sustain citizens’ deep, emotional loyalty to the movement. This underscores the continued relevance of personalistic attachments. The following sections marshal evidence to examine the impact of personalism on citizens’ lasting commitment to the movement.

## A Quantitative Test of the Personalistic Mechanism

I draw from a nationally representative survey conducted by LAPOP to quantitatively investigate the impact of personalism on citizens’ Bolivarian attachments relative to programmatic and organisational factors (The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project). The survey contains relevant questions for all aspects of my analysis, including Bolivarian attachment (dependent variable); evaluation of economic and social policies (programmatic independent variables); participation in the Bolivarian CCs (organisational independent variable); and perceptions of Chávez’s charisma (personalistic independent variable). In addition, the survey was fielded in 2007, shortly after Chávez’s second reelection. By that time, voters had several years to experience and evaluate both programmatic and grassroots components of Chávez’s movement, including the social missions and CCs. The survey thus allows for an important analysis of the personalistic mechanism’s relative strength at a crucial point during Chávez’s rule.

### *The Dependent Variable*

I construct the dependent variable – attachment to Bolivarianism – using a question on respondents’ party identification. Political scientists have long understood party identification as a genuine expression of membership in or attachment to a political group (Campbell et al., 1960; Green et al., 2002; Lupu, 2013). Venezuelans’ identification with

Bolivarian parties, therefore, captures their self-perceived political ties more adequately than vote choice, which can result from a range of factors extending beyond attachment to the movement. I create a dichotomous measure of attachment where citizens who identify with one of three parties associated with Chávez's Bolivarian movement – Movement of the Fifth Republic, Fatherland for All (PPT), or the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) – are considered “attached” while citizens who do not are considered “not attached.” Twenty-three per cent of all respondents express attachment to Bolivarian parties, while just under 9 per cent identify with non-Bolivarian parties. Due to the weakly institutionalised nature of Bolivarianism, measuring identification with associated parties likely underestimates the number of Venezuelans attached to the broader movement. Nevertheless, I use this measure because the survey does not ask about attachment to the movement per se – and I assume that citizens who identify with affiliated parties have genuine attachments to the movement as well.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Independent Variables*

I select several survey items as independent variables to represent the three mechanisms. For personalism, I incorporate a five-question battery on perceptions of Chávez's charisma developed by Merolla and Zechmeister (2011).<sup>7</sup> This focus on citizens' perceptions of the leader, rather than “objective” personality traits, captures the essence of charismatic authority (Weber 1978 [1922]: 242). Additionally, the factors underlying the personalistic mechanism – direct recognition, bold reforms, and the symbolic narrative – increase perceptions of the leader's charisma, suggesting the validity of the measure. Though many successful leaders are perceived as charismatic, scholars have stressed that, relative to other Latin American presidents, perceptions of Chávez's charisma were uniquely high throughout his tenure (Hawkins, 2010: 37–38; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011: 37–38; Weyland, 2003: 822; Zúquete, 2008: 91). Furthermore, while related to party attachment, leader approval, and vote choice, charismatic perceptions remain a theoretically and empirically distinct concept.<sup>8</sup>

The questions in the charisma battery ask respondents to report on a four-point scale the extent to which they agree that: “Chávez articulates a compelling vision of the future,” “Chávez instills pride in being associated with him,” “Chávez's actions build my respect for him,” “Chávez considers the moral and ethical consequences of his decisions,” and “Chávez goes beyond his own self-interest for the good of the group” (Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011: 37). I add and rescale these items to create a continuous score of Chávez's charisma ranging from zero (not at all charismatic) to one (very charismatic).<sup>9</sup>

For the programmatic mechanism, I first include survey items that gauge respondents' perceptions of Chávez's economic performance. Following Merolla and Zechmeister (2011), I combine four questions – on current and retrospective evaluations of the economy at the national and personal levels – into a single variable using factor analysis, then rescale the variable to range from zero (bad) to one (good). It is important to note that this indicator does not exclusively reflect the programmatic mechanism. Indeed, citizens could give positive evaluations because they approve of the regime's economic

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables.

Variable	Scale	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Bolivarian attachment <sup>a</sup>	0–1	1,510	0.23	0.42
Charismatic perceptions	0–1	1,438	0.55	0.36
Economic evaluations	0–1	1,474	0.50	0.22
Mission recipient	0–1	1,510	0.60	0.39
Evaluation of missions	0–1	641	0.84	0.21
CC participation	0–1	1,495	0.25	0.36
Socioeconomic status	0–1	1,510	0.58	0.24
Education (years)	0–20	1,509	10.50	4.45
Age	18–89	1,510	36.27	14.06
Female <sup>a</sup>	0–1	1,510	0.50	0.50
Urban <sup>a</sup>	0–1	1,510	0.95	0.21

Note: CC = Communal Council.

<sup>a</sup>The proportion rather than the mean is given for dichotomous variables.

programmes *or* because they perceive Chávez as a saviour who makes good on his promise to rescue the people. As Merolla and Zechmeister suggest, “individuals who perceive Chávez as highly charismatic see Venezuela’s economy [...] through rose-colored glasses” (2011: 31). In other words, charismatic perceptions of Chávez may cause respondents evaluate the economy more favourably. To examine this possibility, I run one set of models in which economic evaluations and charismatic perceptions are independent and a second set of models in which they are interacted. The interaction term will shed light on whether and how charismatic perceptions impact the effect of economic evaluations on citizens’ attachments to Bolivarianism.

In addition to economic performance, I incorporate two questions on respondents’ assessments of Chávez’s two largest social programmes to measure the strength of the programmatic mechanism – the health mission (*Barrio Adentro*) and the food mission (*Mercal*). I add these evaluations and rescale the sum to range from zero (bad) to one (good). Incorporating these variables cuts the sample size by over half ( $N = 641$ ) because only about 50 and 70 per cent of respondents report having used the health and food missions, respectively. To address this issue, one set of models examines whether respondents accessed these missions in the first place, while a second set explores the subsample of respondents who report having used both missions. Whereas the former variable measures access to the missions, which tends to be restricted based on partisanship (Hawkins et al., 2011), the latter more closely reflects citizens’ substantive evaluation of those programmes.

To measure the influence of participation in movement-affiliated organisations on Bolivarian attachment, I incorporate a question about respondents’ involvement in CCs. Because the CCs represent the movement’s central network of participatory organisations, respondents with organisational ties should report extensive involvement in these groups. I rescale a four-point scale in which one is “never” and four is “every week” to range from zero (low) to one (high).

**Table 2.** Binary Logistic Regression Results.

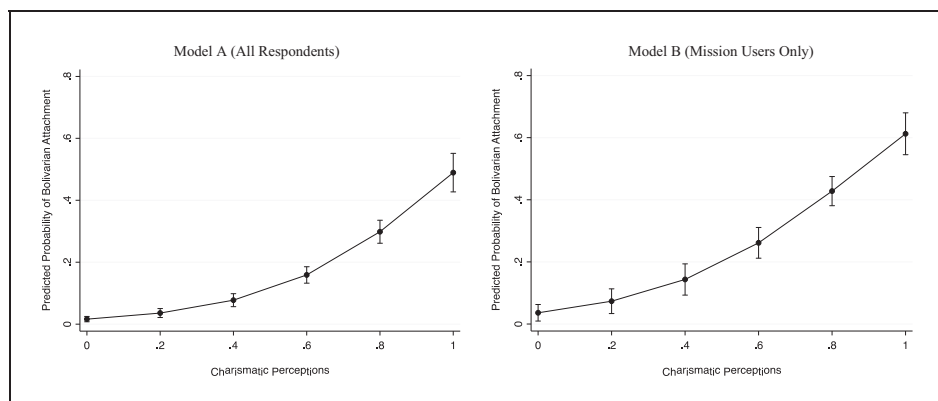
	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Charismatic perceptions	4.06*** (0.36)	3.74*** (0.49)	6.32*** (1.04)	6.65*** (1.51)
Economic evaluations	0.79 (0.41)	0.52 (0.52)	4.26** (1.50)	4.85* (2.11)
Charismatic Perceptions × Economic Evaluations	—	—	−4.32* (1.77)	−5.30* (2.49)
Mission recipient	1.26*** (0.23)	—	1.25*** (0.23)	—
Evaluation of missions	—	0.48 (0.53)	—	0.42 (0.53)
CC participation	0.17 (0.20)	0.29 (0.25)	0.20 (0.20)	0.32 (0.25)
Socioeconomic status	0.18 (0.33)	0.02 (0.43)	0.20 (0.33)	0.04 (0.43)
Education	0.05** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)
Age	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
Female	−0.19 (0.15)	−0.20 (0.19)	−0.19 (0.15)	−0.20 (0.19)
Urban	0.22 (0.35)	0.59 (0.47)	0.24 (0.35)	0.63 (0.47)
Intercept	−6.65*** (0.55)	−6.11*** (0.84)	−8.52*** (0.99)	−7.92*** (1.38)
N	1,390	607	1,390	607
Pseudo $r^2$	0.29	0.20	0.29	0.20

Note: Standard errors shown in parentheses. CC = Communal Council.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

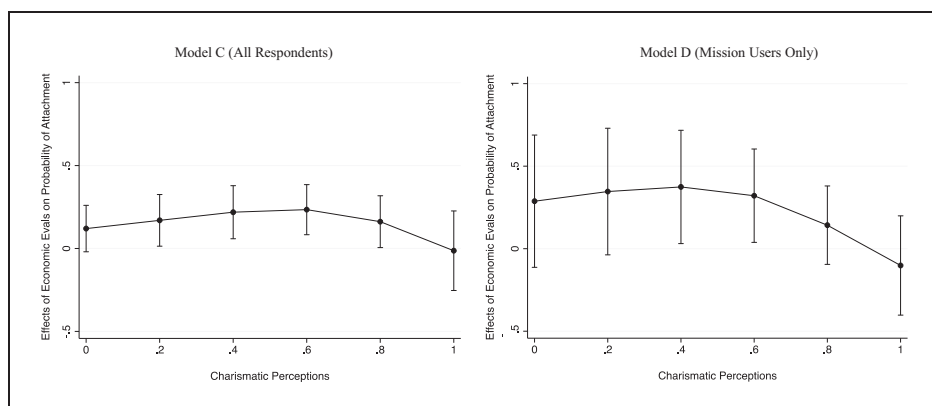
\*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 1.** Predicted Probability of Bolivarian Attachment at Different Levels of Charismatic Perceptions.

Note: Model A (all respondents); model B (mission users only); 95-per cent confidence intervals shown.

Finally, I incorporate four control variables thought to influence citizens' identification with Bolivarianism: socioeconomic status, education, age, and gender.<sup>10</sup> Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the key-dependent and key-independent variables for



**Figure 2.** Effect of Economic Evaluations on Probability of Bolivarian Attachment at Different Levels of Charismatic Perceptions (Interactive Models).

Note: Model C (all respondents); model D (mission users only); 95-per cent confidence intervals shown.

both surveys. Additional information on the survey can be found in the Online Supplemental Appendix.

In total, I analyse four binary logistic regression models. Models A and C include the variable on access to the missions and thus include most respondents ( $N = 1326$ ). Models B and D replace this variable with one on substantive evaluation of the missions among those who accessed them ( $N = 579$ ). Finally, models A and B treat charismatic perceptions and economic evaluations independently, whereas models C and D interact the two variables. The next section discusses the results based on these four models.

## Results

The results (see Table 2) suggest the uniquely strong influence of personalism on citizens' attachments to Bolivarianism. Models A and B suggest that charismatic perceptions have a statistically significant and substantively large impact on Bolivarian ties. In the unrestricted sample (model A), respondents who perceive Chávez as extremely charismatic (score of one) are 47 percentage points more likely to express attachment than those who find Chávez extremely uncharismatic (score of zero), holding the remaining independent variables constant at their means. Among mission users (model B), this figure rises to 58 points (see Figure 1).

In contrast, the programmatic and organisational variables are only weakly associated with attachments to the movement. Models A and B suggest that economic performance does not have a significant, independent impact on Bolivarian attachment. Models C and D examine the potential interactive effect of charismatic perceptions and economic evaluations on attachment. Interpreting this effect requires visual examination of predicted probabilities, as the statistical significance of interactions in nonlinear regression

does not necessarily indicate a substantively meaningful effect (see Figure 2) (Brambor et al., 2006: 73–74). Model C suggests no meaningful interactive effect: at different levels of charismatic perceptions, the influence of economic performance evaluations on attachment does not change significantly. However, model D suggests that the interactive effect may have a small, negative effect among mission users: as charismatic perceptions of Chávez increase, the effect of performance evaluations on Bolivarian attachment decreases slightly. While this interaction appears significant, its negative sign suggests that higher charismatic perceptions dampen the influence of performance evaluations, further indicating the power of personalism on citizens' loyalty to the movement.

In terms of social programmes, accessing benefits from one or both missions significantly increases the probability of expressing attachment to the movement. However, as discussed above, this does not necessarily suggest that the programmatic mechanism is at work. In fact, among mission users (model B), substantive assessments of the missions have no significant effect, suggesting that the quality of these programmes does not influence respondents' attachments. Finally, in both models, participation in the CCs has no significant association with attachment. These data indicate the relative weakness of the programmatic and grassroots mechanisms while further highlighting the strong effects of personalism on loyalty to the movement. Taken together, the four models suggest the relative insignificance of programmatic and organisational factors on Bolivarian attachments while highlighting the disproportionate influence of charismatic perceptions of Chávez.

To ensure the validity of the results, I explore two alternative explanations for the underwhelming effects of programmatic and organisational factors. Firstly, in the additive models (A and B), multi-collinearity between charismatic perceptions and the other independent variables could artificially inflate the significance of the former and depress that of the latter. However, the variance inflation factor (VIF) for charisma for both models is low (1.66 and 1.48, respectively), suggesting that multi-collinearity does not account for the results.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, preference falsification may explain the insignificance of these variables. Specifically, respondents could feel pressured to evaluate Chávez's charisma more highly than they otherwise might. Yet citizens generally do not hesitate to express dissatisfaction with Chávez's regime. In fact, 17 per cent of respondents perceive Chávez as completely uncharismatic and 56 per cent rate his performance as mediocre, poor, or very poor. One would expect substantially higher approval ratings if preference falsification were at play. The remaining explanation suggests that citizens' intense perceptions of Chávez's charisma are intimately linked with their attachment to his movement, while programmatic and organisational factors have notably weaker effects.

## **Personalistic Attachment in the Words of Followers**

The models analysed above demonstrate the overwhelming impact of personalism on citizens' attachments to Bolivarianism in 2007, partway through Chávez's rule. I now turn to focus groups conducted in March 2016 to investigate the evolution of these bonds



and the status of the movement three years after his death. Focus groups provide several unique advantages: whereas surveys limit the *depth* and individual interviews limit the *breadth* of citizens' insights, focus groups allow for thought-provoking discussion among participants and reflect both their individual experiences and collective understandings of the movement (Cyr, 2016). Furthermore, the timing of the focus groups allows me to gather information on citizens' affective ties during Chávez's rule and explore whether those bonds have remained salient. Given the context, in which Chávez's handpicked successor has overseen a severe crisis and deteriorating grassroots organisations, signs of persistent loyalty to the leader and his movement would indicate the resilience of the personalistic mechanism.

I partnered with Consultores 21, a Caracas-based public opinion firm, to conduct six focus groups, each with six to eight self-identified Bolivarian followers from lower- and lower-middle-class neighbourhoods in and around Caracas. While not a nationally representative sample, the characteristics of followers in these neighbourhoods reflect those of followers from around the country. Participants were divided into focus groups based on two dimensions: Bolivarian orientation (supportive of/opposed to Maduro) and age (18–24, 25–39, and 40–55).<sup>12</sup> Given Venezuela's polarised political landscape, dividing participants in this way allowed them to speak openly about their impressions of and relationships to the movement. An experienced moderator led the discussions, which focused on participants' memories of Chávez; perceptions and anecdotes related to Bolivarianism during Chávez's lifetime; experience of Bolivarianism after Chávez's death; and thoughts and feelings about the movement's future.<sup>13</sup>

The discussions revealed insights regarding how citizens' charismatic identification with the movement is sustained after Chávez's death.<sup>14</sup> Firstly, consistent with the movement's symbolic narrative, the participants praised Chávez not as a past leader but as an *immortal* hero whose spirit continues to watch over them and offer protection. As one participant stated, "What we have is an affective connection. What other leaders could have done will stay in the past. But with Chávez the connection will live on in each person." A second proclaimed, "For me, Chávez was, and will always be, my hero." A third stated, "I am Chavista because I believe in Chávez. Because I believe in what he says [...] that's the way it is and the way it will be. I believe in him and that's why I'm Chavista." These visions of Chávez as an everlasting leader indicate that he remains the central focal point of the movement in death. Furthermore, consistent with social psychology research, the statements suggest that his death has generated "permanent positive remembrances" in followers' minds (Allison et al., 2009: 118). Indeed, the participants' use of the present and future tenses to describe him suggests that their bonds to the movement have the potential to survive and remain emotionally intense in the future.

Secondly, participants shielded Chávez's sanctified image from the regime's poor performance under Maduro, reinforcing that their loyalty to the movement remains tied to the founder. As those critical of the handpicked successor stated, "Maduro is a bad Chavista"; "We are more Chavista than Maduro is." Followers sympathetic to Maduro further clarified that their loyalty is anchored in Chávez. One participant stated, "There is a misunderstanding. You know that when Maduro comes to power [...] he comes to

power with Chávez, as the son of Chávez, and that's why we call him Chavista [...]. I defend [Maduro] but we aren't Maduristas [...] we are Chavistas." That followers' identification with the movement remains rooted in Chávez regardless of their feelings towards Maduro attests to their ongoing closeness to the leader and the resilience of their devotion to him, validating the presence of post-mortem charisma (Steffens et al., 2017: 532). It also suggests that the movement has the capacity to survive, even during periods of weakness.

Thirdly, participants expressed ongoing commitment not only to the spirit of Chávez but also to his mission to "free" righteous people from the malevolent opposition and achieve both physical and spiritual transformation. The way in which participants expressed this sentiment reflects the cultural frame of national liberation from conquest that the founder emphasised so fervently over the course of his rule (Gauna, 2018: 47; Michelutti, 2017: 237–238). One participant explained, "Chávez awakened his people, who were in darkness and gloom." Another stated, "Chávez gifted us a country that he wanted to be free. Where am I? I am here with him and his people. We are the country, we are his people." Yet another declared,

As the people, we have to awaken and we have to maintain a vision of everything Hugo Chávez Frías did [...]. He was a national leader, a global leader. And why do I say he is still a leader today? Because even though he isn't with us physically, his legacy continues, just like he thought it would, with us as his people giving the movement continuity.

The perception of Chávez's continued presence in followers' daily lives suggests his continued political relevance as well as his godlike status.

Finally, participants demonstrated intense faith that a new, more inspiring leader would eventually come to power, draw "divine inspiration" from Chávez, and resume the founder's mission of salvation (Michelutti, 2017: 237). Specifically, they expressed clear expectations that a new leader would appear who is "charismatic," "strong," "extraordinarily capable," "incorruptible," and "100 per cent Chavista." This hope for a new saviour suggests that the followers' understanding of the movement remains fundamentally personalistic and indicates that future politicians would do well to use charisma to garner support.

In sum, the focus group participants clearly demonstrated that their attachments to Bolivarianism remain strong and anchored to its founder's charismatic legacy rather than to his substantive policies or participatory organisations. As illustrated across all six focus groups, followers continue to express intense, affective attachments to Chávez as an immortal spirit, even three years after his death. They also remain committed to his mission to combat evil forces and express faith that they will emerge victorious with the help of a new charismatic leader capable of resuming his legacy. The persistence of this hope is remarkable in light of Venezuela's severe crisis and attests to the capacity of charismatic bonds to shape followers' worldview and carry the movement forward, even in the absence of effective policies or strong organisations.

## Discussion and conclusion

This article challenges the conventional wisdom that charisma is ephemeral. By investigating the mechanisms through which personalistic attachments form and overpower alternative forms of citizen–politician linkages, I demonstrate its potential to consolidate *resilient* support for charismatic leaders and their weakly institutionalised movements. Recognition of historically marginalised citizens, daring yet short-lived policies, and a compelling symbolic narrative of redemption that incorporates familiar cultural themes solidify personalistic bonds and lead citizens to perceive the founder as intensely charismatic. Leaders who fulfil these conditions foster quasi-religious attachments with voters and simultaneously undermine programmatic and grassroots linkages: bold policies compromise effectiveness and sustainability while unmediated, top-down recognition of excluded sectors undermines genuine grassroots participation. Furthermore, these bonds can survive beyond the leader’s lifetime in their original, personalistic state, which helps perpetuate the movement without the development of strong party institutions.

I illustrate my argument using Venezuela’s Bolivarian movement. With data from the 2007 LAPOP survey, I show that voters’ perceptions of the leader’s charisma provide a stronger, more consistent foundation for attachment than traditional political ties based on programmatic evaluation and participation in Bolivarian organisations. Though Chávez proclaimed state-centred economics, redistributive social programmes, and grassroots organisations as central to his movement, the results suggest his personal appeal eclipsed these factors. Indeed, most programmatic and organisational elements of Bolivarianism had no significant relationship with attachment to the movement; in contrast, citizens’ perceptions of Chávez’s charisma were strongly associated with Bolivarian ties.

In-depth insights from focus groups with Chávez’s followers further illustrate the personalistic nature of Bolivarian attachments. The dependence of these bonds on deeply held emotions and cherished memories also suggests their potential to remain strong despite Chávez’s death and unfavourable contextual circumstances. Indeed, these attachments have persisted in the face of devastating economic crisis overseen by Chávez’s handpicked successor indicates their remarkable resilience and casts doubt on claims that Bolivarianism has disintegrated.

To further investigate the staying power of charisma, future research should develop more precise measures of attachment that refer to the larger movement (e.g. “Bolivarianism” or “Chavismo”) rather than institutionalised parties (e.g. “PSUV”). In addition, scholars should examine whether the survival of charismatic ties incentivises future politicians to engage in personalistic rather than programmatic or grassroots strategies to garner support and should explore the potential consequences for democratic representation and party institutionalisation. Finally, analysis of similar movements in other contexts such as Argentina, where Peronism has survived for decades, and Peru, where Fujimorismo sustains a larger and more coherent base of support than any other political force, will help further generalise the theory and shed light on the potential of new leaders to reactivate voters’ bonds after the charismatic founder disappears.

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## Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

## Notes

1. Kostadinova and Levitt (2014: 494) define personalistic leaders as those seeking legitimacy based on personal authority rather than institutions. While not all personalistic leaders are charismatic, they note that all charismatic leaders are, by definition, personalistic. For the sake of simplicity, and because I address only charismatic personalists in this article, I treat “personalism” and “charisma” as synonyms.
2. The “Punto Fijo” regime, also called the “Fourth Republic,” refers to the democracy formed out of the Punto Fijo Pact, signed by select party leaders in 1958, which governed Venezuela from 1958 to 1999 (Smilde, 2011: 3).
3. Santería is a very popular religious cult in Venezuela that originated in Cuba and celebrates Afro-Indian heritage (Michelutti, 2017: 238).
4. In referring to himself as the “son of Chávez,” I argue that Maduro is attempting to integrate himself into the line of “divine kinship” that includes quasi-deities such as Chávez, Bolívar, and Christ so as to inherit their charismatic appeal. Although this behaviour seems related to Weber’s concept of “hereditary charisma,” in which the charismatic leader’s legitimacy is passed through familial ties, I argue that it is distinct. Indeed, whereas Weber conceived of hereditary succession as a form of routinisation, in which “personal charisma may be totally absent,” I argue that Maduro’s associations with Chávez are an effort to embody the former leader’s personal charisma (1978 [1922]: 248).
5. Author interviews with two opposition candidates running in the December 2015 elections to become deputies in the National Assembly. Interviews conducted on 15 September 2015 and 2 October 2015, respectively.
6. See Merolla and Zechmeister (2011: 40) for a similar coding strategy.

7. Merolla and Zechmeister (2011) developed the charisma battery based on a larger set of questions from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire – 5X Long Form, which was first introduced in the United States and has used the battery to assess citizens' perceptions of charisma in Mexico and Venezuela.
8. To validate charisma's conceptual distinctiveness, Merolla and Zechmeister (2011: 51) use the 2007 LAPOP survey to predict presidential approval with charisma, party identification, ideology, and performance evaluations. Though charisma has a strong, significant effect on presidential approval, "these effects do not drown out the influence of other key factors." Moreover, while the correlation between charisma, presidential approval, and vote choice is moderately high, they are "far from perfect," indicating the empirical distinctiveness of the charisma battery.
9. Eighty-four per cent of respondents answered all five questions in the battery, whereas 11 per cent only answered some of the questions. To include these respondents, I impute the mean of the items in the battery they answered onto the items they did not answer. The five items are highly correlated (Chronbach's  $\alpha = .953$ ), and the imputation does not produce significant differences in the mean charisma score for the entire sample (mean = .57, SE = .37 before imputation; mean = .55, SE = .36 after imputation).
10. I construct a weighted index of household assets to measure socioeconomic status to reduce the non-response bias associated with questions on respondents' income (Córdova, 2009).
11. Scholars suggest multi-collinearity issues emerge when the VIF ranges from 2.5 (conservative) to 10 (lenient) (Allison, 2012).
12. Venezuelans often refer to the Bolivarian movement as "Chavismo" and its followers as "Chavistas," as demonstrated in the focus group discussions. Followers unsupportive of Maduro are referred to as "Chavistas no Maduristas." This group constitutes about 16 per cent of all Venezuelans and 52 per cent of all Bolivarian followers (Briceño).
13. See the Online Appendix for further information on the research design and sample questions from the script.
14. The author analysed and translated the focus groups discussions using audio and video recordings and transcripts. Original wording in Spanish is available upon request.

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# Violence and Reconciliation in Colombia: The Personal and the Contextual

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## Abstract

In the aftermath of war and large-scale violence, how can nations function as societies? How can people learn to live together again? Or, have the foundations of trust, civility, and predictability upon which fully functioning societies depend been irrevocably damaged? If we want to understand why reconciliation does or does not take root, we must begin by understanding the perspectives and interests of individuals. In this article, I develop such a model of individual attitudes towards reconciliation. In particular, I analyse the determinants of individual beliefs about reconciliation, with a particular emphasis on the impact of violence in Colombia. I combine survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project survey on individual attitudes regarding reconciliation with data on political violence to measure the extent to which individuals live in environments characterised by violence and how this shapes their opinions about reconciliation.

## Resumen

A raíz de la guerra y la violencia a gran escala, ¿cómo pueden las naciones funcionar como sociedades? ¿Cómo pueden las personas aprender a vivir juntas de nuevo? ¿O se han dañado irrevocablemente los fundamentos de confianza, cortesía y previsibilidad de los que dependen las sociedades en pleno funcionamiento? Si queremos entender por qué la reconciliación se arraiga o no, debemos comenzar por comprender las perspectivas e intereses de los individuos. En este artículo, desarrollo un modelo de actitudes individuales hacia la reconciliación. En particular, analizo los determinantes de las creencias individuales sobre la reconciliación, con un énfasis particular en el impacto de la violencia

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en Colombia. Combino datos de encuestas de la encuesta del Proyecto de Opinión Pública de América Latina (LAPOP) sobre actitudes individuales con respecto a la reconciliación con datos sobre violencia política para medir la medida en que las personas viven en entornos caracterizados por la violencia y cómo esto da forma a sus opiniones sobre la reconciliación.

**Keywords**

reconciliation, violence, Colombia, peacebuilding

**Palabras clave**

reconciliación, violencia, Colombia, construcción de paz

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**Introduction**

Many observers and scholars have commented on the bloodiness and brutality of civil wars (see Kalyvas, 2006 for an excellent review). The violence where neighbour fights neighbour, brother battles brother, and daughters fight fathers is thought to be exceptionally severe because it is intimate and because the stakes could not be higher. The Rwanda genocide, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia–Herzegovina, and the staggering civilian death tolls in Syria, the Congo, and Colombia all attest to the exceptional destruction of civil wars. My concern in this article is what happens next. In the aftermath of such violence, how can nations function again as societies? How can people learn to live together again? Or, have the foundations of trust and civility upon which fully functioning societies depend been irrevocably damaged? There has been a spate of research regarding reconciliation after conflict, and if there is one simple fact that nearly all scholars agree on, it is that reconciliation is a profoundly human and social encounter (Clark, 2014; Gibson, 2004a, 2004b; Hamber, 2007; Hewstone et al., 2006; Meernik and Guerrero, 2014; Meernik et al., 2016; Mendeloff, 2004, 2009; Olsen et al., 2010; Staub, 2006, 2013). If we want to understand why reconciliation does or does not take root, we must begin by understanding the perspectives and interests of individuals. In this article, I develop such a model of individual attitudes towards reconciliation. In particular, I analyse the determinants of individual beliefs about reconciliation emphasising the impact of personally experienced as well as community-level violence. As well, I find that individual attitudes regarding the most salient issues raised by the war, especially their views on coca and cocaine, play a critical role in explaining people's opinions about reconciliation.

After a long and destructive war, some individuals may wish to forget the past, focus on the future, and prefer to consign questions of blame and consequences to history books. Other people may simply wish for retribution. Their pain and suffering may demand that the perpetrators of violence be held accountable for their crimes and punished to the full extent of the law. And then there are other persons who become more

resilient in the face of bloodshed and tragedy and discover inner strength that propels them towards social reconstruction. Research regarding the impact of violence on reconciliation has been growing. While some research has shown that many individuals develop positive attitudes and engage in socially constructive activities as a result of their personal exposure to violence (e.g. Bauer et al., 2016; Elchereth and Spini, 2009; Hall et al., 2018), others have found that victims of violence are often less likely to forgive the perpetrators (Bakke et al., 2009). Yet others find a lack of evidence of any specific impact (Nussio et al., 2015; Rettburg and Ugarriza, 2016). I contend that personal experience with violence is likely to have diverse impacts depending on a host of social and psychological factors, which are beyond the range of this study to assess, but are likely not to produce a consistent effect on individual attitudes regarding reconciliation. Conversely, I argue that individuals who reside in former conflict zones in general will tend to develop more positive attitudes regarding reconciliation. I suggest that the contextual effects of violence will tend to increase the resilience of many individuals and communities, and hence lead to a greater belief in the prospects for reconciliation.

I also highlight the impact of attitudes regarding the political issues that motivated the conflict violence. At the conclusion of such conflicts, one of the most critical questions for a society will be how its problems, as identified and highlighted by rebels and opposition forces, are to be addressed, especially when there is a negotiated peace agreement and not outright victory. Will society and politicians take seriously the issues raised by conflict actors, which in the case of Colombia generally focused on poverty in neglected regions of the country, the unequal distribution of wealth, and the lack of support and services for those residing in such areas? We would expect that those individuals who believe that government should take action to address the problems identified by the rebels will be more likely to support reconciliation. When individuals' political preferences align with the objectives of those fighting against the government, I suggest they are more predisposed to support reconciliation.

To investigate the determinants of belief in reconciliation, I focus on violence and politics in Colombia. I do so for several reasons. First, Colombia has been involved in internal conflicts since the early 1960s and thus makes the question of reconciliation especially vital and deserving of scholarly attention. The leftist revolts of the early 1960s ushered in two groups that have been at the centre of the violence in Colombia – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). Just recently, the Colombian government reached a peace agreement with the FARC guerillas and has sought to integrate them into society. Thus, after many years peace is at hand, but the real battle for reconciliation among the people of Colombia now begins. Second, Colombia is a data-rich environment. The Colombian government has kept extensive records for many years on the various types of political and war violence that have affected that nation. And while there are always concerns regarding the accuracy of such data and problems with under-reporting, we have among the most extensive data available on subnational violence across the 1100+ municipalities that comprise Colombia. Together, the critical importance of reconciliation in Colombia as well as extensive localised data make Colombia an ideal case to better understand the

determinants of reconciliation among individuals. Thus, I combine survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) to measure attitudes regarding reconciliation and personal experience with violence, with data on political violence from the Colombian government to measure the extent to which individuals live in environments characterised by violence. While my principal goal is to understand the role of violence regarding reconciliation, I also utilise a variety of other key factors regarding trust, government policy, and demographic indicators to better understand Colombian attitudes towards reconciliation.

The article is organised as follows. I begin by reviewing research on reconciliation after war and periods of human rights repression. Next, I develop my model of reconciliation and derive several hypotheses. I then discuss the other key parameters and control variables in the model, the methods used, and I test the model of attitudes regarding reconciliation using both a standard probit model and a multilevel probit model to account for the environments in which individuals develop these attitudes. I find while individuals who live in areas characterised by political violence are more likely to believe in the prospects for reconciliation, those who have personally experienced violence are neither more nor less likely to hold such attitudes. I also find that individuals' political preferences regarding the issues over which the conflict was fought play a powerful role in shaping attitudes towards reconciliation. Finally, I comment in the conclusion on how such models can be refined and how the results can inform future research.

## **The Many Faces of Reconciliation**

Reconciliation after war or periods of severe human rights repression has proven to be one of the most vexing concepts to define, measure, and assess change at all levels – the individual, group, and nation (Clark, 2009, 2011; Rettberg and Ugarriza, 2016; Tellez, 2019). While rather simplistic, a distinction between thin and thick depictions of reconciliation is useful for establishing key benchmarks and distinct ends of a spectrum of beliefs and actions. A “thin” definition of reconciliation, in essence, expects little out of people and is mostly content with a basic modicum of tolerance among individuals and peoples that would hinder a return to hostility and violence. Staub (2006: 868) writes that reconciliation, “. . . may be defined as mutual acceptance by groups of each other.” In his path breaking research on reconciliation in South Africa, Gibson (2004a: 13) contends that, “When people talk about reconciliation, they often mean nothing more than people of different races getting along better with each other – that is, a diminution of racial animosities.” Indeed, in the context of civil wars and other forms of violence in which hundreds if not thousands are killed, simple acceptance of the “other” is something of a victory. Deeper reconciliation may be necessary for a healthy and secure society, but in the aftermath of violence, the mere avoidance of war can mark a significant milestone.

There are adherents to the perspective that truly meaningful reconciliation is deep, difficult and drawn-out (Clark, 2014). Such “thick” definitions and expectations for reconciliation would demand changes in attitudes and behaviour that reflect truly

meaningful transformation and progress towards acceptance and interaction with one's former adversaries (Strupinskienė, 2017). On the one hand, a thin depiction of reconciliation might be limited to adherence to a particular belief in tolerance, and as such may constitute "cheap talk." A thick version of reconciliation, however, might demand the individual to not just "talk the talk, but walk the walk" and change behaviours, such as being willing to work with, live next to, and accept marriages with members of the "other." Thick definitions of reconciliation emphasise its dynamic nature (i.e. reconciliation should be conceptualised as a process or journey rather than a single state of mind); its complexity (it encompasses personal beliefs, social behaviours, political actions), as well as its elusive qualities (the intermixture of personal feelings and social mores). Indeed, as Strupinskienė (2017) points out, there have been over sixty definitions of reconciliation in the political science literature, to say nothing of research emanating from anthropology, psychology, and sociology. The challenges involved in defining and studying such a concept are substantial enough to be discouraging, but I would argue that the research demonstrates that we can learn more about this concept despite its complexity by remaining cognisant of problems of measurement and inference.

Not surprisingly, research has offered a number of diverse findings regarding what particular personal, social, and political factors may affect the degree to which individuals develop reconciliatory attitudes. Hewstone et al. (2006: 107) find that in the context of Northern Ireland, those individuals "who reported having more contact with out-group members held a more positive attitude toward mixing with the out-group" (see also Meernik et al., 2016). Some research has found that public education can help bridge divides (Cole, 2007; Jones, 2012; Smith, 2005). Hewstone and Brown (1986) and Hewstone et al. (2006) examined Protestant and Catholic schools in Northern Ireland and found that "contact predicts attitude toward mixing with the out-group, and is in turn predicted by education" (Hewstone et al., 2006: 106). Gordon Allport's "contact hypothesis" (1954) also holds that contact between groups can help to reduce intergroup prejudices and promote tolerance. Works by Gibson (2004b) and Staub (2006, 2013) demonstrate that if reconciliation is promoted in an integrated group environment in which citizens from all sides of a conflict are represented, there is a greater chance that attitudes and behaviours may change. Other research (Kostic, 2008, Staub, 2013, Gibson, 2004a, 2004b) indicates that when such environments promote mutual acknowledgement of suffering, a common view of the relevant events of the past and a vision for the future, reconciliation is more likely. However, such demands are almost as onerous as reconciliation itself and suggest that substantial amounts of effort and time are needed to prepare the way to bring people together.

A number of scholars, however, are not so optimistic about the prospects for reconciliation (Cole, 2007) in divided societies. Clark (2014) finds that in the Balkans, reconciliation is but a distant prospect, and that (2009: 372), "It is therefore imperative that the problems of denial and multiple truths, which both attest to the absence of, and fundamentally mitigate against reconciliation, are addressed." Indeed, since reconciliation became a buzzword in studies of transitional justice (especially after the formation of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission) and was held out as a rationale for the creation of the international criminal tribunals, there have been a

number of sceptics. Many scholars are doubtful that reconciliation can be deliberately engineered by politicians (Mendeloff 2004, 2009; Snyder and Vinjamuri, 2003). In fact, some research has found that schools in ethnically divided nations may promote a one-sided and divisive view of history and society that holds one's own group out as the victor or the victim and the "other" as the aggressive and uncompromising force bent on domination (Cole, 2007). Such post-conflict political strategies are implicitly or even explicitly designed to prevent groups from coming together to reconcile.

I am most concerned, however, with the impact of violence on reconciliation. The violence of war is, in fact, the very reason why reconciliation becomes necessary. Therefore, if we are to understand its determinants, we must take cognisance of the role violence played, and may continue to play, in affecting people's beliefs about their former/current adversaries. Here the research offers contradictory expectations. On the one hand, even the casual observer of war and violence would understand that individuals who have suffered harm and human rights repression might tend to harbour negative emotions regarding the adversary generally and the perpetrator more specifically. The desire for vengeance arising from personal human rights violations is natural. Those who have been victims might also develop psychological difficulties, such as post-traumatic stress disorder that interfere with the ability to reconcile (Staub, 2006). As Meernik and Guerrero (2014: 395) write, "Mistrust, a loss of a sense of control of their lives, a negative self-identity, and a lack of positive connections with other groups create psychological barriers for reconciliation amongst formerly warring parties."

Therefore, we might expect that greater personal exposure to violence may lead some individuals to become more reluctant to reconcile, in whatever form. The lack of trust, feelings of personal insecurity and trauma, and desire for retribution may cause individuals to reject outright efforts made to foster reconciliation (Hall et al., 2018; Posner, 2004; Widner, 2004). Even individuals who may be willing to consider the possibility of reconciliation may require a "price" for that effort that is expensive. They may demand a degree of truth (e.g. attribution of responsibility no matter how high in the chain of command it extends) and a severity of punishment (e.g. life imprisonment) that conflict actors are unwilling to accept. Using a mixed individual and contextual model to assess the impact of violence on attitudes towards reconciliation and forgiveness in the Caucasus region of Russia, Bakke et al. (2009: 1018) find that, "Respondents who feel that their lives have been significantly changed by violence in the region are also less likely to forgive than those who have not experienced such violence-induced life changes."

One finds evidence of such antagonism towards former adversaries in many post-conflict environments. For example, even when the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia handed down a 46-year prison sentence to Radislav Krstic, a Bosnian Serb general who played a prominent role in the Srebrenica genocide, there was substantial outrage that he was not given a life sentence at trial. Individuals with the Association of Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves expressed their anger that he was given "just" a 46-year sentence. One woman stated that, "Today, among the mothers with wounded souls, I do not see even a bit of satisfaction at the length of his sentence."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Colombian people narrowly rejected the peace treaty with the FARC in a



public referendum for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the perceived leniency accorded former FARC members for their crimes as well as their guaranteed political representation in the legislature. For many Colombians, especially those behind the “No” campaign, this was too much forgiveness, in effect, to offer. Ultimately in this case and in many others, conflict victims can be more interested in justice than peace.

On the other hand, there is research that suggests that some individuals become more engaged in and make positive contributions to their communities in the aftermath of violence. Bauer et al. (2016) provide an extensive overview of research on people’s reactions to violence and find that often such individuals grow more cooperative, participate in more social activities, assume leadership positions, and give altruistically. Further, the research suggests that these positive effects are not conditional upon gender, age, and victim/perpetrator status. They write:

The evidence suggests that war affects behavior in a range of situations, real and experimental. People exposed to more war-related violence tend to increase their social participation, by joining more local social and civic groups or taking on more leadership roles in their communities. They also take actions intended to benefit others in experimental laboratory games, such as altruistic giving. (Bauer et al., 2016: 3)

Additionally, Bakke et al. (2009) found that while individuals in the Caucasus region of Russia were less likely to forgive their victimisers, they also found that greater proximity to violence led to a greater willingness to forgive. As well, Hall et al. (2018: 350) find, “that while exposure to heinous war crimes increases support for retributive justice (stemming from the wartime logic of deterrence), interdependence with perpetrators increases victims’ support for restorative justice.” Elcheroth and Spini (2009: 190) find that in some communities that experience severe violence, there is often greater support for human rights and humanitarian norms (Spini et al., 2008), while Elcheroth (2006) shows that traumatised individuals are often less likely to desire retribution. The words of a witness who appeared before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia regarding his testimony epitomise this perspective:

... perhaps I ought to put it as simply as possible, which means that when you have been through a number of storms it is clearly easier to bear the next storm. Because you get a little harder, you have more experience, you know that there is sunshine after the rain, and after the sunshine, there is the rain again, so that, in that sense, you must accept it, with a lot of optimism, particularly from that side in order to preserve the mental health of both yourself and your family. (Meernik and King, 2019)

Thus, the literature is also supportive of the opposite expectation – that individuals who have been personally affected by the violence will be more supportive of prosocial attitudes and efforts that might include positive views regarding reconciliation.

As the research review has shown, there is not a solid consensus among scholars regarding the impact of violence on individual attitudes towards reconciliation after violence. The most thorough analysis to date, however, by Bakke et al. (2009), demonstrates that both the individual and the contextual level of analysis should be

incorporated into our research designs to best model the effects of the internal and external worlds in which people live. And as Rettburg and Ugarriza (2016: 533) write:

Notably, the findings fail to suggest any significant difference between victims and non-victims in terms of their opinions and preferences, a finding that we also arrived at in an earlier work (Nussio et al., 2015) and which suggests that either the violent experience of armed conflict impacts people's opinions on transitional justice mechanisms less than previously expected, or permeates the general population in a spill-over effect to such an extent that it levels people's preferences.

The research tends to suggest that because of the diversity of types of violence people experience, and the different ways they process and perceive such violence, we are unlikely to find there is one consistent relationship between personal exposure to violence and attitudes towards reconciliation. On the other hand, there are studies that suggest communities that have been exposed to violence are often (not always) more apt to view reconciliation in a more favourable light.

## **Theoretical Expectations**

### *Background*

Before delving more deeply into the theoretical expectations driving this article, it is important to understand a bit of Colombian history to put the questions of violence, peace, and reconciliation into context. Colombia has experienced decades of violence of all kinds. There was the political violence between liberals and conservatives, which reached its peak during the period known simply as “La Violencia” in the late 1940s and 1950s (although it too was preceded by other outbreaks of political violence). Leftist guerilla movements were organised in the early 1960s, although their violence peaked more in the last 20–30 years. There were the drug wars and violence among the drug cartels, the government, the paramilitaries, and eventually the guerillas beginning in the late 1970s. In short, Colombia has suffered much violence over the last 70 years and was, presumably, ready for a respite. After several failed attempts at peace, President Alvaro Uribe (elected in 2002 and again in 2006) took a much more hard-line position against the FARC guerillas, greatly increased spending on the Colombian military, countenanced alliances with paramilitary groups fighting against leftist rebels, and secured billions of dollars in aid from the United States. Uribe's hard-line tactics helped push the FARC to the negotiating table. Under President Uribe's former defence secretary and successor, President Juan Manuel Santos, the government pursued peace negotiations with the FARC for several years in Havana, Cuba. The 2016 peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC rebels is among lengthiest and most codified peace agreements ever engineered (Quinn and Joshi, 2019). However, shortly after the parties reached an agreement, the peace treaty was defeated in a referendum on 2nd October, by a narrow margin of Colombian voters. Subsequently, the Colombian government and the FARC rebels returned to the negotiating table to try to address some of the areas of the agreement where there was opposition. That revised agreement was

eventually ratified by the Colombian legislature. The difficult and expensive peace-building effort began.

I contend that the impact of violence on people's attitudes in this post-conflict era will depend on whether we are assessing the personal experiences of individuals who have been affected by violence, or the social context in which they experience violence. Simply stated, I argue that the effects of personal experience with violence are likely to differ substantially depending on a variety of factors, but most especially the psychological context through which the individual interprets and processes violence. Some individuals are more likely to be resilient and channel the abuses they suffered in productive directions as suggested by scholars like Bauer et al. (2016). Other individuals may develop more of a desire for retribution to confront their personal experience with violence. Therefore, I would not expect a consistent relationship between personal experience with violence and attitudes regarding reconciliation, and especially so in a place like Colombia where the violence involved multiple actors and various spells of violence and warfare over a number of years. Given the lack of consistent findings on this topic and in the absence of more in-depth psychological data that might allow us to identify individuals who are more or less inclined to reconciliation because of their own personality and history, I hypothesise that we are not likely to find a statistically significant relationship between personal exposure to violence and reconciliation.

Conversely, I would argue that those living in a context of violence in their community would, in general, be more supportive of reconciliation. To be sure, some number of those in communities across Colombia that have experienced bloodshed will have first-hand knowledge of violence and will likely exhibit the same degree of diversity in their opinions regarding reconciliation. More generally, however, I argue that community-level or contextual violence will produce attitudes more supportive of reconciliation among members of the community, *in general*. Such pro-reconciliation beliefs might stem from several factors.

First, living in communities that have experienced violence may lead many individuals to be supportive of security and stability in general, as well as those social developments, such as reconciliation among adversaries that presage peace and prosperity. Having suffered through violence in their municipalities, these community members may be favourably inclined towards reconciliation as one method by which to establish and fortify peace. The consequences of the long war with the FARC impeded economic development and contributed to political and economic alienation in these municipalities from the rest of the nation. Those communities that have been especially harmed by the violence would, in theory, stand to gain economically because of the peace and the hoped for reconciliation. Research has shown in the Colombian context that those individuals who lived in the regions that saw the most conflict violence were more likely to support the peace treaty referendum (Dávalos et al., 2018).

For example, there were numerous, local peace initiatives during the conflict in Colombia that brought community members together in their common interest of ending violence committed by all sides. In Antioquia, there were two especially notable peace initiatives, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and the Tarso's Constituent Assembly (Uribe-López and Correa-Barrera, 2019). In both cases, community members

banded together and grew their social capital as a response to violence, which is quite similar to what scholars like Bauer et al. (2016) have argued about community resilience in general. Resilient communities come together to work against violence and for peace. It is reasonable to suppose that communities that engage in such productive responses because of violence might also be more inclined to support efforts at reconciliation as well.

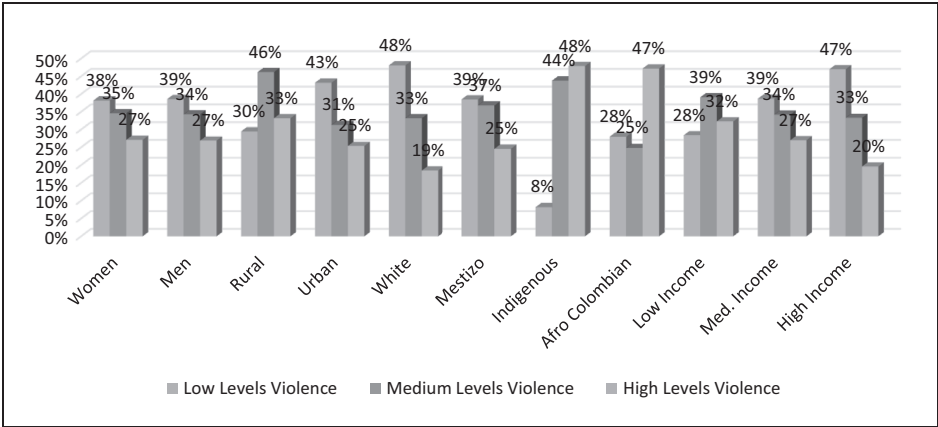
Second, when the potential and reality of being affected by violence exist throughout a municipality, there develops in such communities a sense of “shared risk.” This perception of sharing the same fate can then contribute towards greater community support for prosocial attitudes and norms such as reconciliation (see Spini et al., 2008). This community-level resilience in which the bonds among community members grows stronger as a result of their shared exposure to the effects of violence may also help to produce other prosocial attitudes that contribute towards recognition of the importance of reconciliation in the eventual and ultimately important healing and restoration of the community.

Finally, for individuals living in communities that have been substantially affected by violence and must coexist with the architects of such violence, reconciliation may be more of a necessity than a choice. Those community members who have remained in these areas despite the risks may well understand that their own political and economic security depends to some degree on tolerating, if not reconciling with those who have done them harm. For example, since the peace agreement was reached, in several communities where the FARC had been demobilised and residing in reintegration camps, local residents have asked that the FARC be allowed to remain in these camps. Even though the FARC may have committed acts of violence against community members, they recognised that they were better off reconciling with the FARC in their midst than saying goodbye to them. They feared that if the FARC were to leave, those who replace them may produce more violence and bloodshed.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, I hypothesise that because of more prosocial attitudes in Colombian municipalities that have lived through much violence, and because of the expected benefits of peace the treaty promised, we should expect that individuals in communities that experienced higher levels of wartime violence will be more supportive of reconciliation (see also García-Sánchez, 2016; Steele, 2017; Weintraub et al., 2015).

**Hypothesis 1:** Individual experience with violence during the Colombian conflict will lead to diverse reactions that will not produce consistent preferences regarding reconciliation with the FARC guerrillas.

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals from municipalities in Colombia that experienced greater levels of violence will be more likely to express favourable attitudes regarding reconciliation with the FARC guerrillas.

I utilise three measures for personal exposure to violence and one measure of contextual violence. First, I utilise a question in the LAPOP survey that asks whether the individual has registered as a victim of violence in Colombia. This provides a measure of personal exposure to violence throughout the history of the conflict. I note, however, that



**Figure 1.** Percentage of group that experienced various levels of violence.

we would expect there to be some undercounting in the data as some individuals may not wish to declare their status as a victim. As well, it is possible that there may be other individual or institutional errors in the recording and recollecting of this status. The second measure is derived from the LAPOP variable that asks survey respondents whether any family members had their human rights violated in the last twelve months. Third, I measure whether a member of the respondent’s family was lost to the conflict from the LAPOP data. By using different types of indicators, we can better understand how the complex, individual-level effects influence beliefs in the prospects for reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> Finally, I create a measure of the overall level of conflict violence in the municipality in which the survey respondent resides using data from the Colombian government’s victim registry. I count the total number of incidents per capita in each municipality for the preceding three years before the 2016 survey.<sup>4</sup>

The variable I use to measure attitudes regarding reconciliation is from the LAPOP survey data for Colombia for 2016 – colpaz6a – which asks respondents, “Do you think it is possible for citizens to forgive and reconcile with demobilised members of – The FARC?” Of the 1,504 respondents, 51.6 per cent (777) said “yes,” while 48.3 per cent (727) indicated they did not think it was possible. The Colombian population could scarcely be more evenly split – a division that was reflected in the 2016 plebiscite that was just narrowly defeated. I discuss below those additional factors that I expect will affect attitudes regarding reconciliation with FARC.

It is important to note some critical issues regarding this measure. First, the question asks individuals if they think that “citizens” can forgive and reconcile with the FARC. Hence, it does not directly inquire about their *personal* attitudes, although one might infer that there will be a rough equivalence among the two attitudes. Second, it speaks of the “demobilised” FARC members in particular and not necessarily the membership of the organisation as a whole, some of whom have not demobilised. As well, we cannot be certain as to the meaning of reconciliation that an individual may hold and how this

might affect their interpretation of the question. Some may have in mind a thick or thin view of reconciliation that demands more or less of the individual and the FARC. Despite these qualifications, however, I would still contend that this is a reasonable measure of attitudes on a critical subject that is worthy of serious scholarly consideration, even if it is not a perfectly designed vehicle for understanding such attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

Before proceeding, it is also important to understand just whom the violence in Colombia is affecting and whether there are any differences among groups as violence is experienced. In order to do so, I ran several tables to generate the percentages of each group that experienced low, medium, and high levels of violence (divided at the 33rd and 66th percentiles) in Figure 1. For example, the reader will see that within the sample of women in the LAPOP study (777 females), 38 per cent lived in areas that experienced low levels of violence; 35 per cent in areas of medium levels of violence; and 27 per cent lived in areas with high levels of violence. Indeed, we see that the percentages of men and the percentages of women in the LAPOP sample who experienced low, medium, and high levels of violence are remarkably similar. However, we can clearly see an urban/rural divide among the survey sample. Greater percentages of rural people live in areas of medium and high levels of violence – nearly 80 per cent reside in these areas. The urban population is concentrated more in areas with less violence – only 56 per cent live in areas that saw medium and high levels of violence. We see the most pronounced differences when we look at ethnicity. While nearly 50 per cent of the whites in the sample reside in areas with the least amount of violence and only 19 per cent reside in areas with high levels of violence, the relationship is flipped for the indigenous and the Afro-Colombian groups in the sample. Roughly 47%–48% of both groups live in communities that experienced high levels of violence. Only 8 per cent of the indigenous population surveyed in the LAPOP study live in areas of low violence. We see here the stark differences in the way people experienced the violence in Colombia, which also tends to mirror the breakdown in support for the peace referendum. Those living in the most violent areas were most in favour of peace.

### *The Key Conflict Issues*

Negotiations to reach a peace agreement and the contours of such settlements often highlight political divisions in a society that may make public acceptance and successful implementation contentious. Research has shown that support for the peace treaty with the FARC was strongly influenced by partisan ties (Demeritt et al., 2019; Dávalos et al., 2018). Therefore, I include several variables designed to tap into individual's support for some of the principal objectives of the peace treaty: justice, government efforts to reduce economic inequality, and attitudes regarding the treatment of coca, which played a major role in the conflict. The first variable measures individuals' support for increased punishment for criminal convictions. This question is not specific to the FARC or any other armed group and should indicate individuals' more general preferences towards getting "tough on crime," and thus it should not be directly related to individuals' attitudes regarding treatment of the FARC rebels. I expect that those individuals who believe criminal penalties should be increased will be less likely to support the FARC peace

agreement and be less willing to reconcile with them. Given that one of the principal criticisms levelled against the peace treaty was that it was soft on guerillas who violated international laws, those who are “tough on crime” may be more likely to oppose reconciliation.

Second, I include a variable measuring the extent to which an individual believes the government should take steps to reduce economic inequality in Colombia. It was the poor, the campesinos and others in remote regions of Colombia the government had long neglected who were the backbone of the FARC movement. Much of the fighting also took place in these areas, which were also often critical turf in the drug cartel violence. There seems to be general agreement that these long-neglected areas of Colombia are home to some of the most egregious cases of unequal wealth distribution. As well, the FARC claimed to be speaking for these long-suffering individuals and their needs (Arjona, 2016; Daly, 2016). I suggest that individuals who believe the government should do more to reduce economic inequality will be more favourably disposed towards reconciliation, as that is one of the principal, overall goals of the agreement.

Finally, it is important to consider individual opinions on the coca plant and the cocaine that is made from it. Cocaine production and transportation have exercised an outsize role not only in Colombia's economy but also its politics. Fortunes have been made, politicians have risen and fallen because of these ties, and it has helped produce a substantial degree of corruption in the government. The coca plant, however, has also played an important role in many of the indigenous communities that suffered much of the drug and political violence in the last forty years. While the indigenous communities, as well as other sectors of the Colombian population, have advocated for less intrusive and violent measures to address cocaine trafficking (e.g. preferring crop substitution programmes over aerial eradication), the Colombian government (especially under its more conservative presidents Uribe and Duque) has often pursued more violent measures to disrupt the cocaine trade.<sup>6</sup> Thus, there exists a critical difference of opinion in Colombian society. On the one hand, there are those who accept some legitimate uses of coca/cocaine (as the peace treaty envisions), as well as crop substitution programmes for marginalised indigenous communities and other poor farmers to address the compelling economic rationales for growing this crop. There are also powerful forces in society that believe drug production should be addressed using more aggressive measures (aerial fumigation, more severe criminal penalties). We might expect that individuals who are willing to accept the circumscribed use of coca by these communities or the medical/scientific communities, as an important part of the Colombian peace treaty, would also be in favour of another key aspirational goal of the treaty – reconciliation. Therefore, I suggest that those who perceive legitimate scientific or medical reasons for the continued production of coca will be more likely to support reconciliation, while those who find no such value will be more likely to be hostile to those involved in its production.

**Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who favour increasing penalties for criminal convictions will be less likely to express favourable attitudes regarding reconciliation with the FARC guerillas.



**Hypothesis 4:** Individuals who favour government policies to reduce economic inequality will be more likely to express favourable attitudes regarding reconciliation with the FARC guerillas.

**Hypothesis 5:** Individuals who believe there are legitimate medical or scientific reasons for the production of coca will be more likely to express favourable attitudes regarding reconciliation with the FARC guerillas.<sup>7</sup>

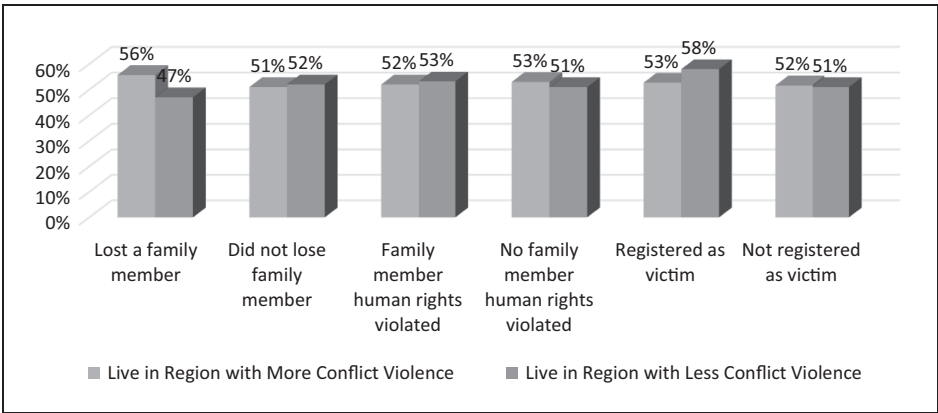
### *Control Variables*

I also include several other measures to capture the influence of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that might be related to favourable attitudes towards reconciliation. These include measures of age, gender, years of education, religiosity, and the respondent's perception of the current, economic situation in Colombia.<sup>8</sup> I do not provide a specific prediction for these variables as there are no theoretically based expectations regarding their impact or the results have been mixed.<sup>9</sup>

### **Analysis**

I begin by using a simple probit model to evaluate the hypotheses (Table 1). Subsequently, I use a multilevel probit model to account for the potential effects of the departments (i.e. provinces) and municipalities in which violence occurs. The fit of the first probit model, as measured by the percentage of cases correctly predicted (63 per cent) and the proportionate reduction of error – 24.4 per cent (which tells us the improvement of the model over predicted the modal category in each case) is fairly modest.

The probit estimates provide confirmation of both hypotheses regarding the effects of violence on individual attitudes regarding reconciliation. On the one hand, I find that the coefficients for the variables measuring whether the survey respondent was registered as a victim of the conflict; lost a family member to the conflict; or was in a family that experienced a human rights violation recently are not statistically significant, which is in keeping with hypothesis #1. More specifically, among those individuals who report having lost a family member or relative to the conflict, 52.3 per cent believe reconciliation is possible, while 51.6 per cent of those who did not experience such a loss hold similar beliefs. The lack of differentiation largely remains when we examine those individuals who registered as victims of the Colombian conflict. Of those who did register, 53.8 per cent believe reconciliation is possible, while the percentage drops just slightly to 51.2 per cent for those who are not registered as victims. I had argued that given the lack of consistent findings on this subject, as well as the recognition that individual victim reaction to the prospects of reconciliation would be highly diverse, the lack of a consistent impact was to be expected. On the other hand, the coefficient for the variable measuring the level of violence against individuals due to the armed conflict over the period 2013–2015 in the municipality is positive and statistically significant. Its substantive impact, however, is not so large. The marginal impact coefficient indicates



**Figure 2.** Effects of contextual violence and personal experience with violence on attitudes about reconciliation.

that for every one-unit increase in this measure, there is a 51 per cent increase in the probability of favourable attitudes towards reconciliation. However, because this is a per capitised measure and the values of the independent variable range from .0001 to approximately 1, it would take a fairly sizeable increase in such violence to exercise any meaningful impact on individual opinions. Yet, the community-level impact of violence on attitudes does indicate a robust relationship. Communities that experienced more violence may have a greater desire for the peace and prosperity associated with reconciliation, as well as a recognition of the necessity of reconciliation given the realities of power relationships in such violence-afflicted communities. Further, because of the destruction, disruption, and violence Colombians living in these zones have experienced, the response of the Colombian government to community needs will be critical in ensuring peace, security and reconciliation.

The findings suggest that to the extent there might be clear and direct relationships between personal and contextual violence and attitudes about reconciliation, the substantive effects are modest at best. We know that the thought processes by which the effects of violence manifest themselves (e.g. do they lead to PTSD, health problems, etc.?) in the development of opinions on reconciliation have largely remained a black box. We have not yet identified in the research cited above what psychological factors may mediate between the experience of violence and the development of attitudes regarding reconciliation (e.g. one’s outlook on life, previous mental health struggles), or what external factors may interpose in the development of attitudes (e.g. poverty, community-level experience with violence). If we are to uncover any systematic patterns regarding the effects of violence on reconciliation, it would seem to demand a more in-depth psychological assessment.

We can, however, examine whether belief in the prospects for reconciliation among those who have experienced a personal loss is mediated by whether they were living in a community that also suffered a great deal of violence as shown in Figure 2. I created a

**Table 1.** Probit estimates of Colombians' belief in the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	Z score	p Value	Marginal impact
Lost family due to conflict	−0.031	.087	−0.360	.721	−.012
Family human rights violated	−0.003	.097	−0.030	.972	−.001
Respondent registered as victim	−0.032	.125	−0.260	.795	−.012
Total violence per capita in municipality	1.293	.513	2.520	.012	.515
Believe punishments should be increased	−0.020	.022	−0.920	.359	−.007
Believe government should reduce inequality	0.075	.020	3.660	.000	.029
Accept scientific/medical uses of coca	0.114	.017	6.690	.000	.045
Age	0.014	.003	5.240	.000	.005
Female	−0.323	.070	−4.610	.000	−.128
Years education	0.003	.009	0.280	.781	.001
Religiosity	0.059	.042	1.390	.163	.023
Optimism regarding economic outlook	0.297	.056	5.320	.000	.118
Constant	−1.670	.404	−4.130	.000	

Note: N = 1,347. Percent correctly predicted = 63%. Proportionate reduction in error = 23.7%.

**Table 2.** Multilevel probit estimates of Colombians' belief in the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	Z score	p Value
Lost family due to conflict	−0.025	.089	−0.290	.775
Family human rights violated	−0.014	.098	−0.140	.890
Respondent registered as victim	−0.040	.127	−0.310	.754
Total violence per capita in municipality	1.251	.617	2.030	.043
Believe punishments should be increased	−0.022	.022	−1.000	.315
Believe government should reduce inequality	0.075	.021	3.620	.000
Accept scientific/medical uses of coca	0.115	.017	6.620	.000
Age	0.014	.003	5.330	.000
Female	−0.329	.071	−4.650	.000
Years education	0.003	.010	0.310	.760
Religiosity	0.053	.043	1.220	.223
Optimism regarding economic outlook	0.294	.057	5.190	.000
Constant	−1.611	.412	−3.910	.000
prov var	0.0076	.0178	0.0001	.7611
var(_cons)				
prov > municipio	0.0267	.0240	0.0046	.1551
var(_cons)				
LR test vs. probit model	$\chi^2(2) = 4.31$		Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.1159$	

Note: N = 1,430.

**Table 3.** Probit estimates of Colombians' belief in the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation with support for peace measure.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	Z score	p Value	Marginal impact
Lost family due to conflict	−0.016	.092	−0.170	.862	−.006
Family human rights violated	−0.023	.105	−0.220	.828	−.009
Respondent registered as victim	0.017	.135	0.130	.899	.006
Total violence per capita in municipality	0.853	.548	1.560	.119	.339
Believe punishments should be increased	0.005	.023	0.230	.815	.002
Believe government should reduce inequality	0.059	.022	2.760	.006	.023
Accept scientific/medical uses of coca	0.070	.018	3.810	.000	.027
Age	0.012	.003	4.250	.000	.005
Female	−0.316	.074	−4.250	.000	−.125
Years education	0.013	.010	1.290	.198	.005
Religiosity	0.020	.045	0.440	.662	.007
Optimism regarding economic outlook	0.154	.059	2.600	.009	.061
Support for peace	0.263	.019	14.190	.000	.104
Constant	−2.304	.440	−5.240	.000	

Note: N = 1,404. Percent correctly predicted = 72%. Proportionate reduction in error = 42.3%.

binary variable to distinguish individuals who lived in municipalities that were at the 75th percentile or higher on the contextual violence measure, and those who lived in less violent communities to investigate whether there were any conditional affects of personal experience on attitudes towards reconciliation. I find that among those individuals who lived in the most violent municipalities and who lost a family member, 56 per cent believe reconciliation is possible, while 51 per cent of those Colombians living in these communities, but who did not lose a family member report believing reconciliation is possible. Among those who lived in less violent areas, 47 per cent of those who lost a family member believe in reconciliation, while 52 per cent of those who live in less violent areas and did not lose a family member believe in the prospects for reconciliation. Hence, those who both lost a family member and lived in violent areas are most likely to express a more optimistic attitude about reconciliation. The percentages and the differences across the categories are largely the same when we look at whether the respondent's family experienced any human rights violation recently, or whether the respondent had registered as a victim. The most pronounced support for the possibility of reconciliation, however, is found among those individuals who live in less violent areas, but did register as victims – 58 per cent believe that reconciliation is possible.

What is clear from the probit analysis, however, is that other measures are important and substantively meaningful in explaining reconciliation. We see the impact of politics in the relationship between support for some of the underlying goals of the peace agreement and attitudes regarding reconciliation. Those individuals who believe strongly that the government should take steps to reduce economic inequality (a key provision of the peace agreement envisions the government taking a number of steps to help

impoverished communities within conflict zones) are more likely to believe in the likelihood of reconciliation. A one-unit increase in this variable (it ranges between “1” and “7”) tends to increase the probability of favourable opinions regarding reconciliation by 3 per cent. Similarly, individuals who are more likely to believe that there are scientific/medical purposes for cultivating coca are more likely to believe in the prospects of reconciliation (the variable ranges between “1” and “7”). The marginal impact of this variable – 4.5 per cent – indicates that greater belief in this notion leads to more support for reconciliation. However, the hypothesised relationship between those who believe in general that the justice system should impose more severe penalties on those who violate the law is not borne out, as the coefficient for this variable is statistically insignificant.

The effects of the control variables are especially interesting as there are very strong relationships between gender and age and beliefs regarding reconciliation. First, we see that older Colombians are much more inclined to believe in the prospects for reconciliation. Given that older respondents are more likely to have lived through previous peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, we might have suspected that these individuals would hold more sceptical attitudes regarding reconciliation. Instead, the marginal impact coefficient demonstrates that every one-year increase in age is associated with a 0.5 percentage point in belief in the prospects for reconciliation. A ten-year increase would thus be associated with a 5 per cent increase in the belief in reconciliation.

The gender effects are quite pronounced. Women are 12.8 per cent less likely to support reconciliation. Previous research (James Meernik) has also found that females are less likely to believe in or support reconciliation after armed conflict. Whether this is because women are typically singled out for abusive treatment because of their gender (sexual violence towards women has long been a weapon of war), or because women are often the ones left to pick up the pieces of their families and communities after the violence, I cannot say. This powerful finding would seem to call for a more in-depth examination of gender differences regarding reconciliation to identify what might be causing this significant difference of opinion. We would be most helped by more intensive studies that probe individuals’ attitudes regarding which aspects of reconciliation are more or less critical for men and women, such as forgiveness and trust. At the same time, individuals’ past and present experiences, such as previous encounters with political violence, familial violence, and crime may also mediate their opinions on reconciliation. Individuals’ present circumstances should also be incorporated in more depth to determine the extent to which women have more social and economic challenges to navigate, especially for those who are internally displaced persons; whether family ties mediate the effects of violence on reconciliation and so forth. This finding calls for greater theoretical development to identify the nature of these gender differences and more intensive survey research to identify the relative importance of these potential causal and mediating factors.

Finally, we see in the probit model that those individuals who have a more optimistic outlook regarding Colombia’s economic prospects are more likely to also believe in the prospects for reconciliation. The results suggest that perhaps such attitudes share a correlational relationship as each may tap into individual’s overall outlook on life. Nonetheless, we should not rule out the possibility that as individuals perceive the

country has a more secure economic future, they feel more secure in the country's social future as well as economic scarcity becomes less of an issue.

In the next stage of the analysis, I utilise a multilevel probit model to provide an alternative method of accounting for the contextual effects on attitudes towards reconciliation (Table 2). Multilevel modelling can be used to estimate the impact of larger units or groups in which individuals reside on their behaviour and opinions. For example, a model of student learning might incorporate the impact of the classroom environment, which resides within a particular school, which in turn exists in a particular school system. Each context can influence various aspects of student learning, such as the quality of individual instruction, school-wide curriculum plans, and the resources of the school system. Multilevel modelling techniques have been used in a variety of studies of individual attitudes (Anderson and Singer, 2008; Arzheimer, 2009; van der Meer et al., 2009; Weldon, 2006).

The  $\chi^2$  statistic, which tests whether a multilevel modelling process is more appropriate than a standard probit model, however, is not statistically significant. I note too that the statistical significance of the individual coefficients mostly remains from the initial probit analyses. The results would suggest that there is not a statistically significant rationale for utilising a multilevel model in this case.

Finally, it is also important to determine the extent to which support for the peace treaty overall affects support for reconciliation. I elected not to include this variable in the initial analysis because while it is highly correlated with reconciliation, it is not clear if one causes the other, or whether they both tap into a larger construct of support for the peacebuilding efforts of the Santos government. Nonetheless, it is important to ascertain how peace and reconciliation are related. Therefore, I reran the same model, but with the inclusion of the variable, "colpropaz1b," which asks the question, "The government of president Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC have signed a peace agreement (Table 3). To what extent do you support the peace agreement?" The fit of the model improves dramatically as evidenced by the pseudo  $R^2$ , which increases from .08 to approximately .20. Not surprisingly, the coefficient for the peace support variable is statistically significant and also exercises a major substantive impact on belief in the likelihood of reconciliation. For every one unit increase in the scale of this variable ("1"–"7," where "1" is no support and "7" is "support a lot"), there is a 10 per cent increase in the likelihood of the individual supporting reconciliation. The two variables are closely related to one another, but we do not yet know whether this is a correlational or causal relationship. While this research has given us a comprehensive understanding of what factors reconciliation, we still have much work to do in order to better understand not only the relationship between peace and reconciliation, but other relationships such as the connection between violence personally experienced and experienced contextually, and why women are markedly more distrustful of the prospects for reconciliation.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to better elucidate those factors that lead individuals to be more likely to believe in the prospects of reconciliation with their former

adversaries in Colombia. Previous research has evidenced mixed findings on one of the most critical factors related to reconciliation – personal and contextual experience with the violence that created the need for reconciliation (Bauer et al., 2016; Clark, 2009, 2011; Elchereth and Spini, 2009; Gibson, 2004; Hall et al., 2018; Rettberg and Ugarriza, 2016; Staub, 2006). While some argue and find that personal experience can matter a great deal and even spur individuals to engage in prosocial behaviours that would tend to benefit reconciliation, others argue that such experiences may lead to a desire for retribution or an unwillingness to forgive those who committed crimes. While I cannot claim this article has answered such questions, the results do provide insight regarding what may be happening in these cognitive processes and what further information we need to reach more definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, there are several key findings that can inform future research.

Those individuals who personally experienced violence were neither more nor less likely to exhibit favourable beliefs regarding reconciliation. Contrarily, individuals from communities that were more affected by violence were more likely to indicate they believed the prospects for reconciliation with the FARC were positive. I had argued that because of the expected benefits of peace and reconciliation, as well as the community-level prosocial attitudes that are more likely to exist in these Colombian municipalities harmed by years of violence, contextual violence would lead to pro-reconciliatory beliefs. The challenges of advancing peace and reconciliation in these Colombian municipalities are extraordinary as a result of the government's long neglect of these hinterlands in which many marginalised communities live, such as indigenous groups, Afro Colombians, and campesinos. Given that the individuals who are residing in these Colombian municipalities do support peace and reconciliation, there is fertile ground on which to build. Whether the current and future Colombian governments are compelled to address their challenges, however, is uncertain. Because there is currently support for the aims of the peace agreement in these formerly violent areas, it would seem that the time to act is sooner rather than later lest the same cycles of neglect, mobilisation, and violence, with which Colombia is all too familiar, recur.

While the findings bore out the hypotheses regarding violence, the results are also suggestive of the need for researchers to learn more about individual attitude formation and the manner in which these personal and contextual experiences are processed and then affect subsequent attitudes. Such research would entail a more in-depth psychological assessment of mediating factors that affect both how people emotionally deal with violence, and how the experiences and their attitudes towards the violence affect beliefs about reconciliation. Interdisciplinary research bringing together psychologists and political scientists (as well as anthropologists and sociologists) would be most helpful in the development of such an instrument for use in former conflict zones.

The model more conclusively demonstrated that opinions regarding critical conflict issues and demographic factors matter a great deal, such as those variables measuring support for the objectives of the peace treaty. I argued that if an individual supported the goals of the peace treaty, she would also be more likely to exhibit support for reconciliation as one more component of the peace process. We saw that support for government efforts to reduce inequality and an individual's opinion on possible legitimate



uses of coca increase confidence in the potential for reconciliation. Thus, some degree of sympathy or understanding of the ostensible goals of the FARC enhances one's belief in the likelihood of reconciliation.

Finally, I suggest that future research should investigate the components of reconciliation in order to understand more deeply what this concept means to individuals. At the risk of being repetitive, we know that reconciliation is a complex and dynamic individual attitude as well as a process of social interaction. We do not know what individuals are thinking when they are considering the question posed by LAPOP. The next step in the development of our understanding of reconciliation must be to unpack the social, political, and personal factors that define reconciliation to the individual. We need to know whether individuals possess thick or thin demands of reconciliation; whether such opinions change over time; whether there is a particular component of reconciliation that is critical to the individual, such as the need to hear the perpetrator seek forgiveness, or perhaps the fate of a loved one(s). Such psychological data can be combined with the attitudinal and contextual data to develop a more holistic understanding of what reconciliation means to the individual, and what will determine whether she believes in such possibilities. Colombia would be an excellent place to address such questions.

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### **Notes**

1. "Reward, Not Punishment." CNN.com as found on 6 September 2012 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/08/02/widows.reaction/index.html>.
2. See <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-wont-move-farc-reintegration-sites-after-protests-of-both-locals-and-former-guerrillas/> as accessed on 17 September 2019.
3. For the individual-level data, I use the question, "Are you part of the national registry of victims of armed conflict?" – collt5 in the LAPOP survey. I also use the Colvioldh question, which asks, "In the last 12 months, have you or any member of your family, i.e. your parents, siblings, children, spouse or partner, had any of the following rights violated: right to life, personal integrity, personal safety, personal freedom or free movement? Finally, I use the question, "Have you lost any family member or close relative as a consequence of the armed conflict in this country? Or, do you have a missing family member because of the conflict?"
4. For the contextual variable, I use data from the *Registro Único de Víctimas* (<http://rni.unidadvictimas.gov.co/>). These data report specific, self-reported indicators of violence including: land dispossession, terrorist attacks, sexual crimes, threats, forced disappearances, homicides, displacements, anti-personnel mine incidents, loss of goods, kidnapping, torture, and recruitment of child soldiers. I calculated the total number of all such incidents for each municipality for the years 2013–2015 and divided by the population of the municipality.

5. The dependent variable refers specifically to reconciliation with the FARC, while the exogenous, violence variables refer to actions taken by various actors. Ideally, the personal and contextual measures would refer to violence perpetrated by the FARC, but in the absence of such data, these measures are the best available. In fact, the inclusion of these broader measures of violence should make it more difficult to find support for these measures as they do not pertain just to the FARC.
6. See <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-insists-on-aerial-fumigation-of-coca-despite-court-ruling/> for more details on current policy. Accessed 1 October 2019.
7. To measure individual preferences regarding punishment for convicted criminals, I use the variable "aoj22new" in the LAPOP data set which asks respondents, "To reduce crime in a country like ours, penalties for criminals need to increase. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?" To measure support for reducing economic inequality, I use the LAPOP variable "ros4," which asks, "The [country] government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?" To measure attitudes regarding the medical/scientific value of coca, I use the measure "colpact12," which reads, "At the negotiating table in Havana, the government and the FARC have reached several agreements. I would like to ask your opinion about some of them. It was agreed to keep some coca crops under state supervision and for purely medicinal and scientific purposes. To what extent do you agree or disagree?"
8. The variable female is coded "1" for women. Age in years and years of education are self-explanatory. Religiosity is measured using the variable "q5b," which asks, "Could you please tell me how important is religion in your life?" The variable was recoded so that the response "Very Important" was coded as a "4," and the values for "Somewhat Important," "Not Very Important," and "Not Important at All" were adjusted as well. The variable used for economic evaluations is "Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago?," and the possible responses are "better," "same," or "worse." These were also recoded so that "better" was the highest value.
9. While there are other pieces of information that would be useful to include in the model, including beliefs about some of the key components about the peace agreement, such as reparations for the victims, these questions on the LAPOP survey were administered to only a very small number of individuals (in the case of the reparations questions, there were less than 200 respondents for this question), and so these measures were not utilised in the analysis.

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# Corruption Scandals and Anti-Corruption Policies in Argentina

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**Sebastián Pereyra**

## Abstract

The 1990s witnessed the spread of anti-corruption scandals in Latin American countries as well as a decade in which international transparency standards were developed. These two processes were closely related but they followed different local and global political dynamics. Transparency policies were perceived everywhere as a good response to the growing of corruption scandals. But, at the end of the day, the effectiveness of these policies was far from optimal. This article discusses the link between these two main aspects of the corruption as a public problem in Argentina. It reconstructs the dynamics of corruption scandals and state responses in Argentina during the 1990s, and asks how effective and efficient those responses were given the type of accusations and corruption cases exposed to the public through scandals. The hypothesis is that scandals, on the one hand, and public policy responses, on the other, refer to different aspects of the same problem and that the latter have failed to deal effectively with the demands and claims expressed through the scandals.

## Resumen

La década de 1990 fue un momento de difusión de escándalos anti-corrupción en los países de América Latina. Al mismo tiempo, fue una década en la cual se desarrollaron estándares internacionales en materia de transparencia. Estos dos procesos estuvieron estrechamente relacionados pero siguieron, a su vez, dinámicas locales y globales bien diferentes. Las políticas de transparencia fueron percibidas aquí y allá como una buena respuesta al crecimiento de los escándalos de corrupción. Pero, en definitiva, la

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efectividad de estas políticas dista de ser óptima. Este artículo discute estos dos aspectos de la corrupción entendida como un problema público en Argentina. Reconstruye la dinámica de los escándalos de corrupción y las respuestas estatales frente a los mismos durante los años '90, y se interroga acerca de cuán eficaces y efectivas son estas respuestas en virtud del tipo de denuncias que aparecen en los escándalos. La hipótesis principal es que los escándalos, por un lado, y las respuestas de política pública, por otro, refieren a aspectos diferentes del problema y que estas últimas fracasaron como modo de lidiar con las demandas expresadas a través de los escándalos.

**Keywords**

Corruption, Scandals, Transparency, Public Policy, Argentina

**Palabras clave**

Corrupción, Escándalos, Transparencia, Política Pública, Argentina

**Introduction**

Since the 1990s, corruption scandals became a recurrent phenomenon of the political life. This can be verified in many Latin American countries as well as in European ones. Throughout the decade, countries such as Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal – just to mention the most important examples – were shaken by scandals that had a strong impact on political life. In Latin America, corruption scandals became a trait feature of democratic politics to the extent that some administrations throughout this period have remained strongly tied to corruption allegations (Adut, 2008; Bågenholm, 2013; Blechinger, 1999; Costas-Pérez et al., 2012; Garrard and Newell, 2006; Shore, 2003; Thompson, 2013). A first wave of high-profile scandals begun with blunt allegations against Presidents Carlos Andres Perez in Venezuela, Fernando Collor in Brazil, Carlos Menem in Argentina, and Alberto Fujimori in Peru, among others (Blake and Morris, 2009). More recently, a second wave of accusations have also reached most major Latin American political leaders – including presidents and former presidents of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, and Guatemala, to name the most important ones. To end with large-scale anti-corruption demonstrations flourishing around the globe (Della Porta, 2017).

Corruption scandals have generally had great impact and significant political consequences in most countries, yet not necessarily in institutional terms. For instance, judicial responses to corruption scandals and allegations were usually insufficient and late (OCDAP et al., 2012). However, ever since the 1990s corruption has become a specific issue of public policy. Both in terms of legislation and the development of programmes and public agencies, states reacted to the growing concern on the matter as well as to citizenship's growing dissatisfaction. Anti-corruption reforms were initiated in many countries in the last two decades showing a few successes (Persson et al., 2013: 450).

This article discusses the synchrony and compatibility – at least in this early period and for the case of Argentina – between these two aspects of the corruption as a public



problem. It reconstructs the dynamics of corruption scandals and state responses in Argentina during the 1990s, and wonders about how effective and efficient those responses were given the type of accusations and corruption cases exposed to the public through scandals. The hypothesis is that scandals, on the one hand, and public policy responses, on the other, refer to different aspects of the problem and that the latter have failed to deal effectively with the demands and claims expressed through the scandals.

The first section assesses the dynamics of the early wave of corruption scandals in Argentina (1990–2001) and discusses the main features of a series of cases surveyed in the press. Then, the article focuses on the legislation and state-driven institutional innovations of the time. It reviews the bills that were discussed in Congress and focuses with more detail on the creation of the *Oficina Anticorrupción* (Anti-Corruption Office [OA]) in the late 1990s. The last section compares the approaches of the corruption issue that lie behind scandals and public policies, in order to assess the degree of decoupling between the two ways of addressing the problem.

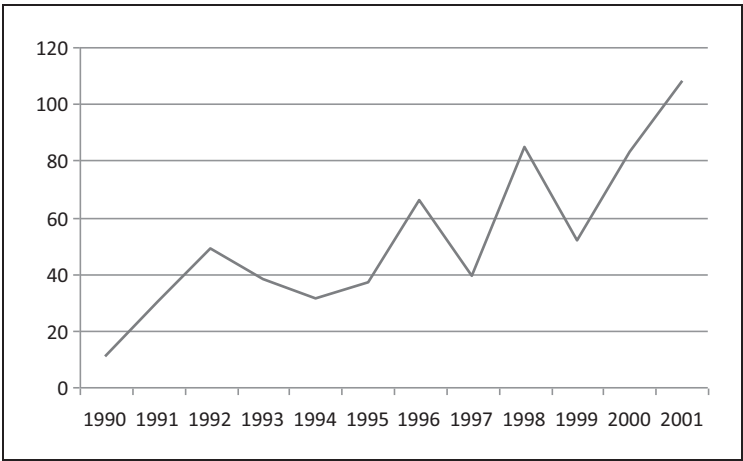
## The Growth of Corruption Scandals in Argentina during the 1990s

The 1990s is often mentioned by analysts as a key moment of emergence of corruption scandals around the world (Mattina et al., 2018). That's the case for Argentina that has witnessed a significant wave of corruption scandals during that period. In fact, the wave marked a significant change in the political landscape of the country. Since the 1990s, corruption is almost constantly present in public debate about national politics. This section focuses on scandals of that period offering a systematic analysis based on a data set built using national press as a main source.

In our analysis we use a classical of the term scandal referring to “[...] actions or events involving certain kinds of transgressions which become known to others and are sufficiently serious to elicit a public response” (Thompson, 2013: 23). This means that the scandal involves a particular form of mobilisation of moral indignation and the act of making a complaint before an audience. With this framework, a survey of all corruption scandals reported by the national press – from early 1990 to late 2001<sup>1</sup> – was undertaken. The sources were the three main national newspapers: *Clarín*, *La Nación*, and *Página/12*. Operationally, “scandals” were those events that had some continuity over time beyond the mere complaint, and led to disputes where some kind of legal evidence was involved (e.g. the judicial investigation, provision of evidence, documents, etc.). A total of 136 scandals were recorded during the period in order to assess its characteristics and observe some of their features: type of complainant, type of accused, scandal reason, and coverage of the consequences, among others.

Corruption occupied a growing place in the press throughout the decade only taking into account cover pages featuring the scandals under scrutiny (Figure 1). The relevance of the corruption scandals is a key trait of the decade especially considering that there was a change of the political coalition in office in 1999.<sup>2</sup>

Scandals during the decade show different type of narratives and plots. They changed over time and reveal different aspects of public concern about this issue. Predominantly



**Figure 1.** Number of Newspaper Covers Referring to Corruption Scandals (1990–2001).  
Note: N = 136.  
Source: Own elaboration based on data from *Clarín* newspaper.

the development of a citizens’ critic point of view towards politics and politicians. In this sense, it is risky to provide a general analysis of political scandals during the decade. But for the purpose of this text we move in that direction trying not to over decontextualise the data but focusing only in some general features of the scandals.

Scandals are triggered by complaints and establish the different types of complainants are relevant for the understanding of political dynamics in which scandals are embedded (Mattina et al., 2018). Table 1 shows the distribution of complainants throughout the period.

A review of the different types of complainants shows a significant heterogeneity. Contrary to what might be expected, journalists were not the major complainants in corruption scandals but rather political players (41.4 per cent). Interestingly enough, the proportion of those who were in the opposition at the time is only slightly higher (25 per cent) than the proportion of those who were part of the ruling majority (16.4 per cent). If we add to that the 14.5 per cent of complainants who were officials or former officials, it is clear that one-third of the complainants in 1990s scandals belonged or was linked to the government coalition. In this sense, corruption allegations seem to have become, over the decade, a resource and an instrument of political struggle, in a broad sense. Whereas opposition politicians denouncing a corrupt administration represent a classic image of political struggle, here it can be noted that criticism also operated as a key element of dispute *within* the administration or ruling coalition itself (Balán, 2011). The progressively hybrid nature of government coalitions brings important elements for the understanding of this phenomena (Calvo, 2013). Hence, research journalism – usually viewed as a condition of possibility for the triggering of political scandals – does not seem to occupy such a central place in this stage. Of course the work of journalism does

**Table 1.** Types of Complainant (1990–2001).

Type of complainant	%
Opposition politicians	25.0
Pro-government politicians	16.4
Public officials and ex-officials	14.5
Journalists or media	13.8
Lawyers, prosecutors, and judges	11.8
Experts/NGOs/control agencies	8.6
Businessmen	5.9
Others	3.9

Source: Own elaboration based on data from national newspapers.

Note:  $N = 136$ .

not disappear when journalists themselves don't become complainants since it is their work what is tighter linked to production than with research as a whole. It has to be noted that while many of the most emblematic and high-impact scandals were promoted by journalists, this was not the rule for the majority of the cases.

Considering the types of accused figures, it is possible to note that although the global picture is slightly diversified, public servants amount a clear majority (Table 2). Moreover, corruption accusations focused almost exclusively on those who were part of the world of politics and therefore, in some sense, were restricted to only one of the parties involved in corrupt exchanges (Granovetter, 2007).

The overwhelming majority of complaints (56 per cent) referred to public officials, which is consistent with the iconic main characters of the biggest scandals (Swiftgate, weapon trafficking to Ecuador and Croatia, the Yoma Case, bribes in the Senate, etc.). As just noted, most of the accused had direct ties with the political activity (83 per cent). It can also be noted a strong trend towards focusing on the person of the accused. This personalisation has a lot to do with the meaning of scandals themselves because they put on trial, above all, the moral status of the accused. Although the narratives that explain or justify acts of corruption tend to appeal to more complex and collective dimensions – such as hyper or systemic corruption, lack of controls, and Argentine culture – scandals were mainly about the behaviour of certain characters, whose moral integrity was under question.

What were the consequences of these scandals? Drawing upon available information, it can be noted that the coverage of scandals tended award a very important place to the judicial treatment of the cases. However, at the same time, as the thread of judicial treatment dilutes over time, scandals lost centrality and interest without reaching significant results. Most of the cases (87 per cent) include information about the first steps of the judicial process. However, very few scandals are still matter of public opinion concern when resolution of trials occurs.<sup>3</sup> In that sense, it is important to consider what is the main output of the scandals. Table 3 summarises the main consequences that put to an end the analysed scandals

**Table 2.** Types of Accused Figures (1990–2001).

Type of accused	%
Public officials or ex-officials	56.0
Politicians	25.2
Judicial officials	7.5
Businessmen	5.0
Police officers/armed forces	5.0
Others	1.3

Source: Own elaboration based on data from national newspapers.

Note:  $N = 159$  (total of accused figures on the scandals).

Scandals had one main kind of impact: the resignation or dismissal of public officials. Therefore, punishment should be considered an essential element in corruption scandals, 48.5 per cent of the surveyed scandals led to resignation or dismissal of the accused. If only the most important scandals were to be pondered – those which became headline in newspapers' front pages more than five times – the figure rises to 85 per cent. In that sense, scandals can be primarily understood as a mechanism for the removal of public officials, although the contexts in which these dismissals took place were very diverse.

Considering the complaints and the consequences that resulted from the scandals, the centre of the scene is occupied by the acts of corruption and the individuals who perpetrate them. Corrupt exchanges tend to blur and institutional and organisational contexts are often neglected. This first wave of corruption scandals shows that scandals arose as a recurrent element of political struggle to definitely become a key weapon to challenge political class. Professional figures such as journalists or lawyers reinforced their public image vis-à-vis the political class, but corruption scandals also acted (somewhat paradoxically) as a resource of political struggle. In the latter sense, it should be noted that internal struggles in governmental coalitions played a key role in the production and development of corruption scandals during this period. Thus, the most emblematic and significant scandals happened to be those which, on the one hand, showed a difference between the kind of complainant and the kind of accused and, on the other, succeeded in terms of the main consequence they could lead to: the dismissal of the person indicted.

## Origins and Main Aspects of Anti-Corruption Policies

The other significant and related aspect of this story is no doubt the development of anti-corruption or transparency measures as a new domain in public policies. This process has to do with global as well as with local dynamics (Krastev, 2004; Pereyra, 2013). We are going to focus here exclusively on local dynamics hopefully contributing that way to the better understanding of the impact and consequences of this new measure.

**Table 3.** Consequences of the Corruption Scandals.

Consequences of the scandals	%
Resignation or dismissal of the accused	48.5
Administration reforms	12.5
Resignation or dismissal of the prosecutor or the judge	11.8
Accusation to the complainant	10.3
Resignation or dismissal of the accused (headline in newspapers' front page more than five times)	85.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from national newspapers.

Note: *N* = 136.

During the 1990s the deployment of anti-corruption measures was linked to the growing presence of scandals involving administration officials from 1991 onwards. Complaints against the Menem administration itself elicited official responses. In a first stage, they involved parliamentary action and were primarily oriented to the criminal prosecution of corruption acts. Over the decade, however, transparency policies were developed progressively linked to international anti-corruption standards. The Peronist governing coalition's defeat in 1999 allowed the new anti-corruption paradigm to start producing reforms in the realm of the executive branch. The winning coalition (*Alianza*) had turned the corruption issue into one of its main campaign slogans, integrating into its ranks a number of experts and activists who had built anti-corruption networks in the country (Guerzovich and De Michele, 2010; Pereyra, 2013). Thus, the debate in the legislative arena gave way to institutional innovations that closed a cycle of complaints and policymaking that ended with the 2001 crisis. In what follows we first analyse legislative anti-corruption production during the decade and then the most significant institutional reforms.

A first important finding is that after the end of the last military dictatorship in 1983, and until 1989, no bill related to the anti-corruption issues had been filed in Congress. By contrast, 141 bills were presented in the following decade (1989–2001). Between 1983 and 1989, the concept of “corruption” was not absent in legislative vocabulary – at least seventeen legislative statements referred to the topic – but it seems elaborating legislation in this realm was not an urgent matter. Since 1989, this concern grew significantly and, in addition to the above-mentioned bills, a total of 471 draft resolutions, statements, and communications were prepared vis-à-vis this issue.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1989 and 2001, a total of 141 bills were submitted regarding the issue of corruption (see Table 4). The number of submitted bills grew irregularly since the early 1990s, featuring scaling peaks in 1991–1992 (thirty-two drafts) and 1996–1997 (forty drafts). Since 1991, at least seven bills were presented every year in one of the two chambers. This shows that throughout the decade there were sustained efforts to produce legislation on anti-corruption issues.

Regarding the characteristics of these bills, a wide heterogeneity of themes and approaches can be found (we developed a typology covering twenty-one different

**Table 4.** Types of Anti-Corruption Bill Drafts (1989–2001).

Type of bill draft	%
Amendments to the penal code	27.0
Public ethics law	17.0
National or Congress committee	13.0
Affidavits	11.0
International conventions	4.0
General statements	4.0
Institutional reforms	3.0
Creation of control agencies	3.0
Repentant	3.0
Others (less than 3%)	15.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Secretaría de Información Parlamentaria del Congreso de la Nación.

Note: *N* = 141.

varieties of drafts). Yet, despite this dispersion, some types are clearly dominant over the others: amendments to the penal code (27 per cent), public ethics laws (17 per cent), national or Congress committees (13 per cent), affidavits systems (11 per cent).

In terms of legislative output, punitive approaches on corruption prevailed throughout the decade. On a regular basis, new bills sought to increase penalties for crimes against public administration and jurists came up with new categories and definitions in an attempt to fully capture those crimes.

However, only 3.5 per cent of all projects under analysis were completely enacted, while 12.8 per cent were addressed and discussed giving way to other draft-laws and norms. The vast majority of these legislative projects were not sanctioned at all. These numbers heighten the idea of Congress as a low-intensity normative production body at that time.<sup>5</sup>

The Menem administration laid down specific anti-corruption measures regularly from the moment it took office, most of which sought heavier penalties for corruption offences (i.e. illicit enrichment, influence peddling, subornation) or aimed at introducing new legal definitions to describe them better. The first of those anti-corruption legislative projects, that endorsed what was being put forward through presidential discourses, was presented in March 1990.<sup>6</sup> This law-draft stirred debate among opposition legislators, who responded by presenting an alternative project focusing on public officials' financial disclosures rather than on the penalties themselves. The bill drafted by the members of the party in office posed tougher penalties for defamation, libel, and slander, which in a way was a response to the first accusations that, as shown above, had already begun to gain Media attention. Parliamentary debates during the decade recurrently focus on penalties for corrupt acts.<sup>7</sup>

Something similar happened with the bills that sought to establish a Regime, Statute, or Code for public officials. These initiatives came to be known as "Public Ethic Bills." In 1997, Menem administration created the National Office of Public Ethics (Decree

152/97). The Executive Power drafted and enacted the Code of Public Ethics provided for in the decrees of 1997. Decree 41/99 enacted the Code of Ethics drawn up on the basis of a set of general principles governing the activity of public officials. Towards the end of the Menem administration, discussions about public ethics and corruption also led to legislative approval of two other important initiatives: on the one hand, in September 1999, the Framework Law on the Regulation of National Public Employment (25.164) and, in November, the Law on Ethics in the Exercise of Public Function (25.188). Together, all of these regulations meant settling the debates that began in 1997 with the discussion of the Code of Ethics and modified the Basic Legal System of Public Function established in 1980 (Law 22.140). However, as an official report argues, the outcome of this process was a very complex and even contradictory regulatory framework for public employment (Alegre, 2001: 4).

Throughout this period, especially towards the end of the Menem administration, the ties between corruption and state reform led the ruling party to insist over and over about the need of completing a full re-engineering of state administration through the transformation of operation standards, labour reform, and the disciplining of public officials.

After the government change, new institutional reforms were conceived and enacted. The 25.233 Act gave way in 1999 to the creation of the OA. It should be borne that the Alianza coalition, who won the elections that year, built its campaign precisely on the idea of fighting "Menem administration" corruption.

Compared to its predecessor, the Public Ethics Office, the OA was conceived as a broader agency with enhanced and executive powers. Run by an Administrative Control Prosecutor, the OA structure was based on two bodies: the Department of Investigations (*Dirección de Investigaciones*), whose main function was to supervise that agents comply with their duties, make a proper use of state resources when investigating cases and eventually bring them to the Justice; and the Transparency Policy Planning Department (*Dirección de Planificación de Políticas de Transparencia*), in charge of elaborating comprehensive anti-corruption policies for the public sector.

The office began operations with forty employees, twenty per department. Its employee profile stood out counter to traditional civil servant stereotypes. These were higher educated young professionals with job and technical skills who drifted apart from the traditional bureaucratic model as well as the long-established partisanship and ideological conviction that had defined these jobs. However, the OA was created as part of the executive branch lacking autonomy and financial autarchy. As a result, agency policies were basically established by the new government and were oriented mostly towards an investigation of the previous administration crimes.

In that context, the Office began its work investigating corruption cases. By the end of 2000, the Office had received 1,076 cases, most of them against officials who had worked under the previous administration. Many of these cases had an important impact and after a lengthy judicial debate, the Office succeeded in obtaining courts' recognition to be part of the prosecution. Even when the OA bolstered research processes, judicial results were actually quite minor; besides, as soon as the Office sought to move forward in the investigation of Alianza government officials, it began to endure important political questioning. By 2003, the OA had filed a total of 667 cases,



and 127 officials and former public officials had been investigated for the alleged crimes, out of which 71 were indicted. However, only one case had reached trial and the accused had been acquitted (“Annual Anti-Corruption Office Balance,” en *Diario Clarín*, 20 February 2003).

The OA was then conceived to pursue former government officials and politicians. But, on the other hand, was also seen as a place to develop new control policies focusing on the functioning of public administration. In that regard, the OA creation responded to a line of action based on the efforts of anti-corruption and transparency experts. Thus, legal-punitive visions that fundamentally focus on an ex post control of administrative acts yield their ground before more administrative and management-oriented perspectives, guided by a systemic and predominantly preventive view. A transparency agenda was then developed but the OA was unable to translate that agenda into institutional reform. Even when the OA had succeeded in reinforcing a system of affidavits with compliance figures close to 95 per cent, most of the policy reform agenda was partially enacted and not in a sustainable way after the 2001 crisis.<sup>8</sup>

The investigation branch of the OA suffered a significant weakening process during the Alianza administration. With no investigation activity related to the administration in office, the development of new corruption scandals severely affected the reputation of the agency. In 2000, the Alianza administration suffered its most terrible crisis because of a bribery scandal in the Senate. The scandal led to the resignation of Vice President and produced a Cabinet change, promoting President de la Rúa’s brother to the position of Minister of Justice, in a move that triggered uncertainty and demands among the OA members. Without a doubt, this episode has imprinted one of the Office’s biggest constraints, and it’s an explanation for the low profile and performance in the years to come. The complementary trait of this low investigation profile of the OA was the production of a weak regulatory frame oriented towards day-to-day activities of the public administration. A regulatory frame that is, in principle, far away from anti-corruption demands is expressed throughout the scandals.

## **Conclusions: Can Transparency Policies Be Compatible with Anti-Corruption Demands?**

This text presents the results of research data that allow to ponder how anti-corruption claims rose and multiplied in Argentina during the 1990s. Corruption scandals became an important feature of the country’s political life. Consubstantially, policy responses begun to be articulated to address the issue. Thus, it gave way to an important legislative production, as well as the creation and transformation of specific public agencies. The emergence and consolidation of a new anti-corruption paradigm, synthesised in the formula “transparency policies,” was one of the most important traits of the period. This paradigm shows an interesting synchrony between the production of standards at an international level and the domestic consolidation of political actors capable of implementing those reforms locally.

Throughout this entire process, it is possible to see an important disconnection between the logics of scandals and that of public policies. Scandals, as shown above,

tend to focus on individual liability for corruption and to place the judicial treatment of cases and the moral degradation of those involved at the centre of the scene. The functioning of corrupt exchanges or the problem of collision between public interest and private interest also tends to fade behind that sort of emphasis on the participation of public officials or professional politicians. Private sector participation on corrupt exchanges tend to be overestimated. Organisational cultures and mechanisms that result in bribery practices are not considered as part of the problem (Pohlmann et al., 2016: 95). Hence, the ties between politicians and politics and other social actors appear as splintered, weighting over their heads the responsibilities for the causes and consequences of the issue of corruption.

The state response to the proliferation of corruption scandals was initially tied to that demand for a criminal treatment of these cases. During the 1990s most projects sought to increase or codify penalties for crimes against the public administration and this growth coincides with the highest points of the discussion of the problem in public opinion. However, it could also be observed that this initial response also gave rise to the structuring of an agenda on transparency policies meant to deal with the issue. This agenda mainly focused on the functioning of public administration and pondered corruption in a systemic and integral way, as well as in a more day-to-day fashion tied to the formal and informal rules that govern civil service and operate on the political activity. With strong arguments, this agenda starts at the assumption that it is not the individual cases, nor the most resonant ones that allow us to understand the forms of collusion between public and private interest in the State and Politics operations. Yet, this is the way through which transparency policy agenda gradually loses its connection with those individual and resonant cases that are fuelled by corruption scandals. As mentioned by other analysis, instruments to curb corruption tend to become ineffective since there will be no actors that have an incentive to enforce them (Persson et al., 2013: 450–451). In our case, this was particularly true regarding the investigative facet of the OA. Created in 1999, after the government change, the OA was rapidly confronted to the task of reacting to the own government corruption scandal. The lack of autonomy was then a key feature that produced the low profile and retrospective-oriented performance of the agency.

These circumstances took shape during the 1990s on the brink of the first wave of corruption scandals in the region. Today, we are witnessing a second wave of scandals whose scope and physiognomy continue to progress and expand. Thus it is under this context and considering this scenario it is relevant to ask how an agenda of reforms and transparency policies can be retaken and updated.

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## Notes

1. In December 2001, President F. de la Rúa – elected in 1999 – resigned amid a severe economic crisis, as a result of a government coalition breakdown and a strong social mobilisation that shook the country. The political crisis of December 2001 could be considered a key moment that put to an end this first wave of corruption scandals in the country. For the analysis of 2001 crisis in Argentina, see Pereyra et al., 2013 and Pucciarelli and Castellani, 2015.
2. President C. Menem (Peronist) was in office from 1989 to 1995 and from 1995 to 1999 and F. de la Rúa (Radical) from 1999 until December 2001 when he resigned as a consequence of the deepening of the economic and political crisis.
3. We found information about trials resolution in only 24% of the cases.
4. Unlike bills, data on draft resolutions, statements, and communications are not accurate, as a detailed analysis has not been done. Thus, among these 471 projects, some are related to other issues, such as, for instance, corruption of minors. Anyway, the difference is so significant that illustrates the argument. Draft resolutions and communications, on the other hand, are very heterogeneous. In most cases they relate to requests of information made by legislators to the executive branch, but they can also include the integration of impeachment committees, the establishment of investigative committees, communications of support of different causes, requests for interpellation to executive branch officials, requests for fines, etc.
5. It should be remembered that the President has, albeit limited, powers of legislation through the promulgation of decrees and that this has been, in these last decades, one of the most resorted strategies for the country's political leadership.
6. The draft meant to sanction “front men” who facilitate “money laundering”; increase the statute of limitations for offences; penalties from two to eight years for those who defraud the state, from four to fifteen in the case of elective positions and if there is serious damage to the estate or the interests of the State, the applicable penalty would be established for the crime of high treason. This same penalty applies to fraud, theft of money and property, as well as to illegal acts to favour taxes, fees, pensions, contracts, etc. and the use of reserved information for profit. It punishes gift and bribery, applicable to both the donor and the recipient. Illicit enrichment is defined in specific terms. See: “There will be life imprisonment for corruption,” cover note of the newspaper *Clarín*, 12 May 1990. See also: “New project on corruption,” newspaper *Clarín*, 21 April 1990, p. 5, and “Law against corruption is sent to Congress,” newspaper *Clarín*, 24 April 1990, p. 4.
7. “Menem announces that he will send to Congress a bill that increases the minimum and maximum penalties for those who commit crimes against the State and establish fines from 50 to 150% of the suggested bribe. In addition, it is proposed to establish a jury trial for corrupt officials” (“Government Project to try to stop corruption,” newspaper *Clarín*, 27 December 1994, p. 14) On the other hand, shortly after taking office and despite changes in anti-corruption policies, the Alianza administration also publicly presented reforms in the same direction: “The Government is ready to reform its Penal Code and intends to send it to Congress in the next ten days for approval. The reform, which tends towards a more rigorous application of the law, prompts an increase in penalties and the extension of the statute of limitations for crimes committed by public officials. (“The Government wants to harden the penalties for corruption,” newspaper *Clarín*, 28 December 1999).
8. Decree 1172/2003 partially enacted drafts created during the early years of the OA. The Decree allowed general regulations related to public hearings involving executive branch's major decisions, regulations for lobbying, participatory mechanisms for legislative initiatives and access to public information.

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