Peace agreement design and public support for peace: Evidence from Colombia

Juan Fernando Telleza

^aDepartment of Political Science, Duke University, Durham

Abstract

Conflict negotiations are often met with backlash in the public sphere. A substantial literature has explored why civilians support or oppose peace agreements in general. Yet, the terms underlying peace agreements are often absent in this literature, even though: a) settlement negotiators must craft agreement provisions covering a host of issues that are complex, multi-dimensional, and vary across conflicts; and b:) civilian support is likely to vary depending on what peace agreements look like. As a result, we know much less about how settlement design molds overall public response, which settlement provisions are more or less controversial, or what citizens prioritize in conflict termination. In this paper, I identify four key types of peace agreement provisions and derive expectations for how they might shape civilian attitudes toward conflict termination. Using novel conjoint experiments fielded during the Colombian peace process, I find evidence that citizens evaluate agreements based primarily on how provisions mete out justice to out-group combatants, and further that transitional justice provisions produced sharp divisions among urban voters in the 2016 referendum. Additional analysis suggests that material, distributive concerns were particularly salient for rural citizens. The results have implications for understanding the challenge of generating public buy-in for conflict termination and sheds light on the polarizing Colombian peace process.

Keywords:

conflict termination, peace agreements, civilian attitudes, wartime public opinion, survey experiments

Corresponding Author: jft11@duke.edu

One of the fundamental challenges that warring actors face at the bargaining table is how to construct a peace agreement that will satisfy combatants *and* engender enough public support to be tenable and durable. Indeed, the conflict literature suggests generating public buy-in for peace processes is important for conflict-termination: intransigent domestic audiences can constrain negotiators by making certain sets of agreements impracticable (Walter, 2002; Hartzell & Hoddie, 2007; Mattes & Savun, 2010), while signed agreements that fail to garner broad popular support are likely to face difficulties in implementation (Paris, 2004; Nilsson, 2012). This dynamic can pose barriers to peace if the issues that warring actors are most hesitant to concede on are simultaneously those which publics have the strongest demand for.¹

A large body of scholarship has explored the determinants of public support for peace in general or support for particular peace agreements across a wide variety of contexts (Gibson & Gouws, 2005; Farrington, 2006; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Tellez, 2019). While providing insight on the drivers of broad, affective responses to conflict negotiations, agreements are complex and their contents can vary dramatically across conflicts. As a result, existing scholarship can tell us less about which aspects of peace agreements render them unpopular, or what types of peace agreements are most or least contentious. Moreover, the effect of broad drivers of public dissatisfaction with peace agreements, such as conflict exposure, might well depend on how agreements are constructed. Understanding exactly how peace agreements shape public approval thus requires disentangling the

¹Throughout the manuscript I use peace agreements and negotiated settlements interchangeably to refer to the codified set of terms or conditions under which one or more sides to a war have agreed to end hostilities. Elites are the actors who play a primary role in directly negotiating such terms, often representatives of the warring sides.

effect of individual peace agreement provisions on public attitudes.

This paper presents an account of how the contents of peace agreements shape popular support for negotiated settlements. I identify key dimensions over which negotiators have to reach agreement in order to end conflict via settlement, and derive expectations about how these provisions will shape public support. I argue that citizen's responses to individual provisions are driven by normative considerations, preferring agreements that punish actors perceived as perpetrators in the conflict and reward actors perceived as victims. I test these arguments using a conjoint experiment – fielded in Colombia during the popular referendum on the peace process between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) – that allows me to disentangle the individual effect of a variety of agreement provisions on citizens' attitudes. In the process I am able to explore the relationship between agreement preferences and citizens' vote choice in Colombia's urban areas, a constituency that was critical in the failure of the referendum.

The results indicate that civilians largely evaluate agreements in terms of how provisions mete out punishment and reward. I find consistent evidence that agreements that treat perceived perpetrators leniently or fail to redress victims are broadly unpopular. I further show that such weak transitional justice provisions helped drive opposition to the peace process referendum in Colombia's urban areas. Civilians who voted "No" in the October referendum demonstrated much stronger preferences for punitive transitional justice measures than "Yes" voters, indicating that the former group were sensitive to transitional justice issues during the peace process. Finally, I find large differences in the preferences of civilians across political partisanship, as well as across the urban-rural divide.

The paper makes theoretical and empirical contributions to scholarship bearing on

wartime public opinion. First, the study brings to the fore a tragic tension in conflict negotiations: the points that are often most difficult for warring actors to yield concessions on (i.e., transitional justice) are at the same time those which can elicit the most negative responses from the public. This is because these provisions play a central role in how people evaluate conflict termination schemes. This dynamic has the potential to constrain negotiators and has implications for bargaining theories of conflict termination (Walter, 2002; Hartzell & Hoddie, 2007; Mattes & Savun, 2010). While much of the conflict bargaining literature focuses on the distributive consequences of agreements for civilian stakeholders, the study highlights the importance of considering normative responses to settlement terms. Civilians may see some issues as indivisible based on normative grounds, creating barriers to peace (Atran & Axelrod, 2008).

Second, the results speak to scholarship that emphasizes the importance of popular buy-in for durable conflict-termination. A growing literature argues that settlements are fragile and prone to conflict resurgence when agreements fail to incorporate bottom-up mobilization and key civil society actors (Paris, 2004; Nilsson, 2012). The study sheds light on the dynamics of broad popular support for peace agreements in societies at war. Third, the novel experimental design allows the analysis to causally disentangle and compare the effects of distinct agreement provisions, and further to explore heterogeneous responses to such provisions. Finally, the study sheds light on the failed Colombian peace referendum and has implications for policymakers and negotiators who must make choices about how to craft and ultimately frame agreements to domestic audiences; the results suggest that while justice-related provisions are important, improvements in public approval can be made at the margins through provisions that improve the social welfare of victims.

Public opinion in societies at war

Key to accounts of the success and breakdown of conflict bargaining at the inter- and intra-state level is the presence of domestic audiences who constrain negotiating or third-party actors (Fearon, 1994; Debs & Goemans, 2010; Croco, 2011; Tomz & Weeks, 2013). Recent scholarship on audience costs has argued moral considerations play a prominent role in the preferences of domestic audiences. Kertzer & Brutger (2016) find that civilians vary fundamentally in their willingness to punish leaders who behave inconsistently or belligerently, while Stein (2015) argues that variation in how vengeful publics are shapes incentives for leaders to initiate inter-state conflict. These dynamics are likely to be more pressing in democratic countries like Colombia, as electoral pressures can make concessions politically costly, or introduce additional commitment problems related to turnover of leadership (Kreutz, 2016).

Beyond the bargaining stage, research indicates the implementation and durability of negotiated settlements could also depend on local buy-in and popular support. Scholarship suggests promoting popular ownership of peace processes can boost their legitimacy and reduce the likelihood that agreements fail (McKeon, 2005; Prendergast & Plumb, 2002). Indeed, Nilsson (2012) finds that agreements inclusive of civil society actors are less likely to lead to conflict resurgence, and Blaydes & De Maio (2010) argue that broad societal participation is key to conflict resolution. This is relevant in the Colombian context, where a prior attempt by the FARC to form a political party resulted in an extermination campaign by threatened factions of Colombian society (Dudley, 2004). Understanding how civilian wartime attitudes are formed is thus crucial to accounting for various conflict dynamics, including the behavior of elites at the negotiating table and post-conflict stability.

Research on the determinants of wartime attitudes has primarily focused on how civilian characteristics and lived experiences shape broad preferences for war and peace. Many studies have argued that civilian identification with one of the warring sides is a powerful obstacle for peace and conciliation, as partisans will find most settlements unsatisfactory (Irwin, 2006; Mac Ginty, Muldoon & Ferguson, 2007; Dyrstad et al., 2011). The effects of conflict exposure are also long-studied. Some studies suggest conflict experiences harden civilians against conciliation and pushes them to favor more aggressive responses (Bakke, O'Loughlin & Ward, 2009; Grossman, Manekin & Miodownik, 2015; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016), with some research in political psychology indicating threat perception is the relevant mechanism in this process (Huddy et al., 2005; Canetti-Nisim, Ariely & Halperin, 2008). Others find more heterogeneous responses to conflict exposure (Dorff, 2017). Weintraub, Vargas & Flores (2015) find that exposure to violence has a curvilinear effect on vote choice for the pro-peace presidential candidate in Colombia, while Nussio, Rettberg & Ugarriza (2015) largely finds no substantial differences between victims and non-victims in their peace preferences. Finally, contrary to studies proposing a link between victimization and intransigence, Beber, Roessler & Scacco (2014) find conflict exposure actually increases support among northerners in Sudan for the South to secede, a pattern likely to be specific to secessionist conflicts.

These accounts provide insight into the factors that determine civilian's broad support for negotiation and settlement. Yet, the actual content of the negotiated settlements in these studies is largely absent, even as the content of agreements varies dramatically from conflict to conflict. Moreover, theoretical and empirical accounts suggest civilians take issue with specific aspects of settlement schemes. Atran & Axelrod (2008), for instance,

argues that effective conciliation hinges on how settlements address 'sacred values' at play in the conflict. What little empirical work does exist on attitudes toward settlement terms have tended to focus on singular issues, such as provisions bearing on territory (Manekin, Grossman & Mitts, 2018) or evaluations of fairness (Gibson, 2002; Gibson & Gouws, 2005). Existing scholarship thus does not provide a holistic account of the varying dimensions over which negotiators have to craft provisions, or how public opinion interacts with each of these dimensions. It also cannot tell us which dimensions matter most for public approval, or how the public itself might vary along important conflict-related characteristics in its preferences for provisions bearing on these dimensions.

Peace agreements design and the public

Where civil wars fail to produce a clear victor, the transition to peace has to be brokered by the warring parties (Toft, 2009). The settlement that arises from this bargaining process is a complex bundle of policies meant to outline the end of the war and define parameters for the post-conflict society (Walter, 2002; Gibson & Gouws, 2005). These policies, or provisions, reflect the broad set of issues that warring actors have to broker in order to achieve peace. While some provisions address idiosyncrasies particular to their respective conflicts, many provisions aim to overcome fundamental obstacles to conflict resolution.

Drawing on the broad conflict-termination and peace agreements literature, I propose that peace agreement provisions seek to resolve four key questions of the post-conflict transition. These questions include how participation in the war and crimes committed during the course of the conflict will be dealt with by the post-conflict legal system (*transitional justice provisions*); the conditions under which conflict will cease and armed com-

batants will demobilize and reintegrate into society (*reintegration provisions*); what the post-war distribution of political power among the warring factions will look like (*political provisions*); and finally, how the root causes of the conflict will be acknowledged and ameliorated (*reform provisions*). I discuss why each of these questions is crucial to conflict-termination in turn.

First, transitional justice provisions define how, and to what extent, participation in and crimes committed during the war are addressed in the post-war period. These provisions are fundamental to conflict-resolution, as wartime crimes and participation represent violations of the rule of law that have to be reconciled with the existing legal system (Gibson, 2002; Vinjamuri & Snyder, 2004; Philpott, 2006). One of the questions transitional justice provisions must answer is the extent to which wartime participants are punished for their transgressions, what the literature calls *retributive justice* (Vidmar, 2002). Some peace agreements grant amnesty to negotiating actors as a precondition for demobilization (Jonas, 2000; Gibson, 2002), while others contain provisions that define who is subject to punishment and the nature of the punishment.

In addition, transitional justice provisions adjudicate how victims are redressed for their wartime losses. Parallel to the expectation that perpetrators are punished for crimes in most legal systems is the expectation that victims receive reparations for their losses (David & Choi, 2009). One way agreements tackle the question of reparations is by having perpetrators make public acknowledgment of their crimes, in the form of apologies, what the literature calls *restorative justice* (Braithwaite, 2002). The acknowledgment of crimes by participants was debated in the lead-up to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation process (Gibson, 2002) and is often contentious, as perpetrators are unwilling to admit

wrongdoing. Reparations can also be *distributive* in nature, so that victims receive material compensation for their trauma, death of relatives, or loss of property. Agreements can vary in whether perpetrators are tasked with paying victims or whether the state assumes responsibility, although of course the two can coincide where the state is a warring actor (Daniel, 2000).

Second, peace agreements must establish parameters for the cessation of conflict, and especially how fighters will demobilize and reintegrate into society. This is a key issue for conflict-termination, as armed fighters seek assurance that they will have physical and economic security after giving up arms. The success of this process – from the confiscation and destruction of arms to the demobilization and reintegration of fighters – is important for avoiding a return to arms (Knight & Ozerdem, 2004). Reintegration provisions bearing on disarmament might vary in the level of risk armed actor incur (i.e., full, immediate disarmament versus a staggered, gradual process). With respect to returning to civilian life, agreements sometimes incorporate economic programs to ease combatants into lawful work (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007). These programs vary in how much aid they provide ex-combatants.

Third, peace agreements have to make choices about the post-conflict distribution of political power among the competing sides. This dimension is critical given that combatants often have competing demands over post-conflict political power; demands which are often linked to grievances experienced in the pre-conflict period. Political provisions in this vein might grant combatants a greater degree of political autonomy, as in the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement that devolved certain political questions to Northern Ireland (Farrington, 2006), or full territorial separation. They might also allow combatants

to participate in electoral politics, as in the case of Colombia or El Salvador (Wood, 2003; Holiday & Stanley, 1993), or outline other power-sharing schemes.

Finally, negotiators often have to address root causes of the conflict that do not necessarily entail changes to the distribution of political power among competing groups. These reform provisions are important for the state because they aim to restore its internal and external legitimacy (Bell & O'Rourke, 2007). They are also important for non-state actors if combatants are beholden to constituents who demand particular reforms. In agrarian insurgencies, for example, rebel groups often negotiate and advocate for land reform and redistribution schemes, as in the Guatemalan case (Jonas, 2000). Such reforms might also serve to address or symbolically recognize historical injustices (Atran & Axelrod, 2008).

How do civilians think about the different dimensions of peace agreements? Facing complex decision-making, people seek to simplify their evaluations (Lind, 2001). With respect to peace agreements and their constituent provisions, I argue that civilians will evaluate agreements based on how its provisions mete out justice to the actors individuals perceive as 'perpetrators' or 'victims' in the conflict. This criteria is highly salient in peace processes given how frequently justice and injustice (in the motivation and behavior of armed actors, the grievances claimed by victims or other groups, etc.) are discussed in defining peace agreements (Bell, 2003). As a framework for decision-making, fairness is also simpler and more emotionally immediate than other criteria, such as how the provisions impact the probability of a durable peace.

In practice, this means that attitudes towards the broad agreement provision categories will largely mirror how people think about justice more generally. Broadly, people expect and find intuitive that those who commit wrongdoing are punished for their transgressions

(Moore, 2010), and research suggests such norms are deeply ingrained and cross-cultural (Axelrod, 1984). Failure to punish transgressions is often met with moral outrage that justice was not achieved (David & Choi, 2009). Similarly, people see victims 'getting their due' as a key aspect of justice; this can take the form of retribution against the perpetrator or through mechanisms that seek to 'restore' the victim to their pre-victimization status (Vidmar, 2002; David & Choi, 2009).

This is not to say that civilians make purely objective assessments of culpability in war. In highly polarized contexts where large segments of the population hold strong partisan attachments, people may well be unwilling to recognize wrongdoing by their in-group, or demand disproportionate retribution against the out-group (Dyrstad et al., 2011). In less polarized contexts, the process by which civilians determine who is 'perpetrator' and who is 'victim' in a war might depend on varied factors, including media coverage of the different actors in the war (González, 2015), how armed actors treat civilians (Lyall, Blair & Imai, 2013), and the influence of elites (Berinsky, 2007). Given these factors, who civilians view as culpable is likely to vary both across and within conflicts. However civilians come to identify 'perpetrators' and 'victims' in war, I expect that civilians will generally prefer agreements that punish perceived perpetrators and redress the grievances of perceived victims.

This 'just desserts' heuristic for evaluating agreements has specific implications for each of the four dimensions I identify. In line with punishing wrongdoing, transitional justice provisions that impose jail time on actors perceived to be perpetrators of war crimes should increase support for agreements. Similarly, support for agreements should increase in how generous transitional justice provisions are to victims. This logic of punishment

and reward should also extend to reintegration and political provisions; a lenient timeline for disarmament, economic assistance, or the ability to run for office will be seen by civilians as undue 'reward' for perceived perpetrators and decrease support for agreements that contain these provisions. Finally, given that reform provisions often aim to address broad societal grievances at the root of conflicts (e.g. land reform, inequity, poverty), I expect that civilians will see these provisions as aiding disadvantaged groups in the conflict. Reform provisions should thus generally increase civilian support for peace agreements.

I formalize these expectations below:

- **Hypothesis 1**: Transitional justice provisions that punish perceived wartime perpetrators and offer reparations to victims will increase support for agreements.
- **Hypothesis 2**: Reintegration provisions that are generous to perceived perpetrators will decrease support for agreements.
- **Hypothesis 3**: Political provisions that benefit perceived perpetrators will decrease support for agreements.
- **Hypothesis 4**: Reform provisions will increase support for agreements.

In identifying these four dimensions of peace agreements, I both follow and break from existing attempts to categorize agreement provisions into broader categories. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Peace Agreement Database, which collects information on the content of all signed peace agreements between 1975 and 2011, demonstrates the complexity and variety of peace agreement provisions across conflicts (Figure 1) (Högbladh,

2011). The UCDP groups these provisions into four broad categories (military, justice, territory, and political) based on what aspects of the conflict they address.

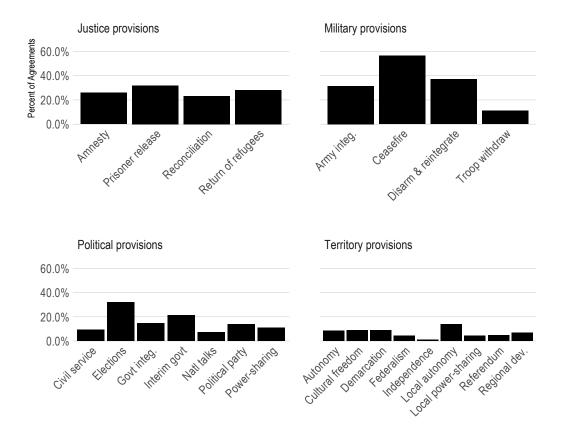


Figure 1. Distribution of peace agreement provisions across all conflicts in the UCDP Peace Agreement Database.

While transitional justice, reintegration, and political provisions closely align to the UCDP's justice, political, and military categories, I argue that many provisions categorized as territorial (e.g. power-sharing, federalism) are fundamentally about the post-war distribution of political power among the warring factions. Further, while UCDP groups

many reform provisions into the political provisions category, I argue that reform provisions are a critical aspect of many agreements and have their own internal dynamics, particularly with respect to public opinion.

The peace process in Colombia

The Colombian peace process is in many ways representative of a broader set of attempts to end conflicts in countries that hold regular elections. Indeed, trends suggest these types of conflicts are becoming increasingly common in more democratic states (Matanock & Garcia-Sanchez, 2017). In addition, over a quarter of negotiated settlements in the post-Cold War period have incorporated a political party in the peace process, and there is evidence to suggest the inclusion of such actors can improve the durability of peace agreements (Nilsson, 2012). Given these trends, actors subject to electoral pressure may increasingly seek to use public input to improve the legitimacy of settlements, even if institutional forms of public approval such as referendum have historically been rare.² Understanding how peace agreement design shapes public support is thus especially important in places like Colombia, where one or more warring actors are directly dependent on popular support.

Almost all modern Colombian presidents have initiated a peace process with one of the many armed groups active in the country (Zuluaga, 1999). Negotiations in the 1980s and early 1990s saw the demobilization of the M-19 and other smaller guerrilla groups, while peace with the two largest forces (the FARC and ELN) remained elusive (Nasi, 2009).

²Less than 10% of cases in the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset (1975-2011) involve a referendum (Högbladh, 2011).

In 1998 the administration of Andres Pastrana (1998-2002) began an historic set of talks with the FARC that at the outset looked to be the most serious effort to demobilize the group so far. The talks proved disastrous: numerous factors (including growing military strength and pressure from paramilitary forces) conspired against a serious effort at negotiations (Nasi, 2009). The FARC maintained an aggressive military campaign as the peace talks began, spurring public perception that the group was insincere in wanting to reach a settlement and were outmaneuvering the Pastrana administration.

Against the background of the failed talks and drawing on populist appeal, Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010) campaigned on an aggressive counterinsurgency policy that became a point of contrast to the Pastrana administration. Uribe struck significant military victories against the FARC, earning the president popular support as a "hard-liner" even as charges of human rights abuses were raised. Uribe maintained a position of refusing to negotiate with the FARC except under unfavorable terms to the group, despite being willing to demobilize paramilitary groups on largely generous terms under his presidency (Acemoglu, Robinson & Santos, 2013). His defense minister and successor, Juan Manuel Santos (2010–present), began the peace process that would ultimately end the conflict with the FARC, meeting with its representatives in Havana, Cuba, in 2012.

In Havana, representatives of the FARC and the Colombian government negotiated over (roughly) six broad points of a potential settlement (Arenas & Velez, 2016). The first point concerned land reform and the potential for land redistribution, agrarian social welfare programs, and protectionist trade policies. The second point dealt with the extent of political participation for the FARC and the legal status of oppositional groups in the government and media (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Third were details concerning

the end of the conflict, including the reintegration of combatants and the disarmament process. The fourth point touched on drug policy reform, including changes to the counternarcotic efforts in the country and the cooperation of the FARC in curbing the drug trade. The fifth point dealt with transitional justice and the reparation of victims. And finally, the sixth point of debate concerned questions surrounding implementation of the accord, such as whether the agreement would be subject to referendum or constituent assembly, and the international verification process.

Ultimately, the signed agreement comprised political victories and concessions for both sides (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016). The FARC won some level of land reform, the ability to run for office and hold a (temporary) guaranteed number of seats in Congress, and transitional justice provisions that allowed the vast majority of armed fighters to avoid prison time. For its own part, the state was able to avoid making drastic changes to trade policy or laws concerning political representation in the media, won a speedy disarmament of combatants and (perhaps ironically) a referendum vote on the process. The failure of the signed agreement to pass referendum vote in October of 2016 sent both sides back to the negotiating table to rehash some of the more contentious elements of the agreement.

Broadly speaking, the revised agreement placed stricter limits on the scope of land reform, set in place more punitive transitional justice terms, and curtailed the amount of state funding the FARC could use in political campaigning (Arenas & Velez, 2016). The final, signed agreement forwent public referendum and was instead submitted to a Congressional vote.

Data and empirical strategy

The experimental design

Testing the effect of individual peace agreement provisions on overall support for an agreement presents a number of methodological challenges. Regressing public perceptions of existing agreements against the provisions in those agreements is problematic if agreement provisions are correlated within conflicts. An added complication arises if only certain sets of agreement provisions ever make it to the agreement stage, which limits our ability to speak to how certain provisions can constrain negotiators at the *bargaining* stage. Moreover, asking people to evaluate specific agreement provisions in isolation is unlikely to reflect actual preference-formation over peace agreements, given that agreements are complex and imply trade-offs along many different dimensions.

To overcome these challenges I rely on a discrete choice conjoint survey experiment, where I present participants with two hypothetical peace agreements and ask them to choose which they would rather see implemented in the country. Conjoint experiments allow researchers to disentangle the effect of different profile attributes (in this case, agreement provisions) on preferences for a particular profile (in this case, peace agreements) (Hainmueller, Hopkins & Yamamoto, 2014). By randomizing the assignment of profile attributes, the effect of including a particular attribute level on the probability that a peace agreement is preferred can be estimated. Moreover, since the effect of all attribute levels are measured on the same scale, the relative importance of each attribute can be determined.

One potential limitation of this approach is that forcing respondents to choose forecloses the possibility that a respondent wants no peace agreement at all. While this is a common worry in discrete-choice conjoint designs (Hainmueller, Hopkins & Yamamoto, 2014), there are reasons to believe this concern is mitigated in the current application. If a respondent truly has no preference over competing agreements and effectively chooses at random, then they simply add noise to the analysis that should not bias effect estimates. While we do not learn about the preferences of 'anti-peace' respondents with this approach, citizens who will not accept peace under any circumstances (even unlikely ones, which the design allows for) are likely a very particular group who should be studied more directly.³

To construct the conjoint experiment I examined the (first) signed peace agreement and extracted the most important points relevant to the four key dimensions identified in the theory section (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016). To test the effect of *transitional justice* provisions, I include two different attributes. The first focuses on the punishment of transgressions and includes varying levels of prison-time for the FARC. A second attribute includes different levels of reparations for victims. These were arguably the key transitional justice issues debated in the negotiation process.

To measure the effects of *reintegration* provisions, I include different levels of economic assistance to demobilized fighters. I focus on economic assistance rather than other reintegration provisions, such as disarmament mechanisms, given the growing scholarly interest in these programs for reducing recidivism (Daly, Paler & Samii, 2017). Next, to measure the effect of *political* provisions, I include an attribute with different schemes of electoral participation for demobilized fighters. This was the most important political

³It is also likely that, in practice, this group is small; in the arguably much more intractable Israel-Palestine conflict, less than 10% of respondents indicate preferring 'no solution' to the conflict among a short list of options (Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 2018).

provision in the Colombian case; electoral provisions – either those that allow combatant participation or which stipulate other electoral reforms – are also common across conflicts, present in about 38% of signed agreements in the UCDP Peace Agreement Database (Högbladh, 2011).

Finally, to capture the effect of *reform* provisions on peace agreement preferences, I include two attributes that were critical aspects of the peace agreement. The first attribute bears on land reform, and its levels measure increasing intensities of land distribution. The second attribute relates to drug-policy and includes different approaches to state counternarcotic efforts, from the most aggressive (aerial fumigation) to the least aggressive (crop substitution program). Land reform is a frequently discussed reform provision in agrarian conflicts, and while the degree of entanglement between the conflict and the drug trade is perhaps unique to Colombia, drug-policy has a direct impact on how rural civilians are able to make a living.

I present three levels for each of the attributes in the experiment. In most cases, one level resembles the terms of the actual signed agreement while the other two levels represent alternatives that were either under consideration at the bargaining stage or are plausible changes to the agreement provisions. The levels were designed to be ordinal, so that differences between attribute levels represent "increases" or "decreases" in the intensity of the provision in question. This allows me to determine how peace agreement preferences shift in response to "softening" or "hardening" a specific attribute. Table I below summarizes the contents of the conjoint experiment.

Table I. Conjoint experiment attributes and levels.

Provision Type	Attribute	Levels
Transitional justice	Retributive justice	FARC members don't go to jail,
		Only human right violators go to jail,
		All FARC members go to jail
Transitional justice	Reparations	FARC do not make reparations of victims,
		FARC ask forgiveness from victims,
		FARC give monetary reparations to victims
Political	FARC elections	Demobilized fighters cannot compete in elections,
		Demobilized fighters can compete in elections,
		Demobilized fighters can compete in elections and have 5 guaranteed seats in Congress
Reintegration	Economic assistance	No help from the government for demobilized,
		A salary equivalent to 90% of minimum wage for two years,
		A salary equivalent to 2 times the minimum wage for two years
Reform	Land distribution	No transfer,
		Small transfer of land to landless peasants,
		Large transfer of land to landless peasants
Reform	Drug policy reform	Aerial fumigation,
		Manual eradication,
		Cultivation substitution program

The sample

Data for the study comes from a survey administered between November and December of 2016, a few months after the referendum vote but before the agreement was passed through Congress.⁴ The survey captures roughly 1,000 completed interviews and relevant covariates, including vote choice during the peace referendum and victimization experiences. It was fielded in 25 large and mid-sized cities, constituting a largely *urban sample* of the Colombian population.

To corroborate the findings from the primary sample I use data from a second survey of rural households. This latter survey captured 1,500 respondents across 50 municipalities characterized by a high degree of rurality and conflict exposure. The rural survey contains a shortened version of the conjoint experiment with four (retributive justice, drug policy,

⁴Given the timing of the survey, there might be concern that the controversial referendum results could have impacted civilians' stated preferences in the survey. People may be less willing to admit voting against the referendum after the public fallout; however, a recent study on preference falsification in polling of controversial topics finds no evidence of such a phenomenon (Coppock, 2017).

land reform, and electoral participation) of the six attributes used in the urban sample, but does not contain self-reported referendum vote choice. As a result, the rural data can be used to corroborate the main effects of the agreement provisions but is limited for understanding vote choice. Figure A.1 in the Online appendix maps the survey locations across Colombia in both samples. More details on survey characteristics and implementation are available in the Online appendix.

Analysis

I follow Hainmueller, Hopkins & Yamamoto (2014) in estimating average marginal component effects (AMCE) for each of the attribute levels. These estimates represent the difference in probability that a peace agreement with a given quality – for example, one where the rebels are allowed to compete in elections – is chosen over a peace agreement with a different quality – for example, where the rebels don't get to participate in elections. I estimate the AMCEs in a linear model where the outcome represents a binary choice between two agreements and the predictors are a set of categorical variables for each peace agreement attribute.

Figure 2 depicts the estimated AMCEs along with 95% confidence intervals from the main, urban sample (see Online appendix for regression table). The point estimate indicates the change in probability of a peace agreement being chosen containing a particular attribute level against a baseline level. The baseline level is depicted as a point estimate (at zero) without confidence intervals. I follow convention in clustering standard errors by participant, though estimating fixed effects models and models with random intercepts produces substantively similar results.

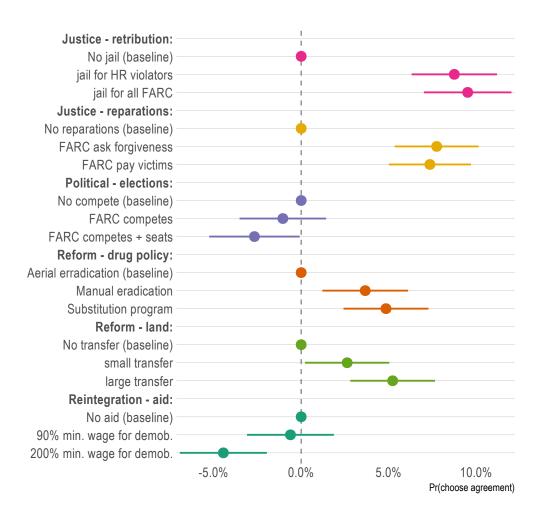


Figure 2. Effect of peace agreement attribute on probability of agreement choice. Standard errors clustered by respondent. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Points without horizontal bars represent baseline attribute values.

Results indicate *retributive justice* attributes have some of the largest effects on the probability that an agreement is chosen. Both selective punishment for human right violators and punishment for all FARC members produce a roughly 9% increase in the probability that an agreement is chosen when compared against the baseline of no jail-time. Transitional justice provisions bearing on the reparation of victims are also influential: *Distributive* and *restorative justice* provisions produce a roughly 7% increase in the probability that an agreement is chosen when included. Surprisingly, there does not seem to be much difference between requiring the FARC to apologize and requiring them to provide material reparations to their victims. Further, both land reform and drug policy attribute levels that are widely seen as beneficial to peasants produce modest increases in the probability that a profile is chosen. Reintegration and political provisions that are more favorable to the FARC, including economic aid and electoral participation, also slightly decrease the probability that an agreement is chosen, but in both cases only the more extreme policy level – aid equivalent to two minimum wages and participation plus guaranteed Congressional seats – is significantly different from zero.

The centrality of transitional justice provisions for shaping settlement support is further reflected in how urbanites voted in the October 2016 referendum⁵. Figure 3 shows that there is substantial heterogeneity in the estimated provision effects across "Yes" and "No" voters. Most importantly, there is a large difference in the effects of retributive justice measures on pro- and anti-referendum voters. For "No" voters, the effect of sending all

⁵I follow Leeper, Hobolt & Tilley (2018) in also estimating marginal means of agreement provisions and the difference in marginal means of agreement provisions (Online appendix). Results support the AMCE analysis in the main text, but suggest differences in preferences sharpest between the lowest and highest level within agreement attributes.

FARC members to jail is a roughly 15% increase in the probability of an agreement being chosen, while for "Yes" voters the effect is nearly indistinguishable from zero. "No" voters also appear to react more negatively to FARC holding congressional seats than "Yes" voters, while "Yes" voters tend to find reparations to victims a compelling reason to support an agreement. These differences suggest that transitional justice provisions represented a substantial wedge issue between "Yes" and "No" voters, with the latter having gone to the voting booth desiring more punitive measures.⁶

⁶The largely urban sample limits my ability to generalize vote patterns to Colombia's rural areas. However, the importance of urban areas in Colombia (and elsewhere) for determining political outcomes like the referendum should not be understated.

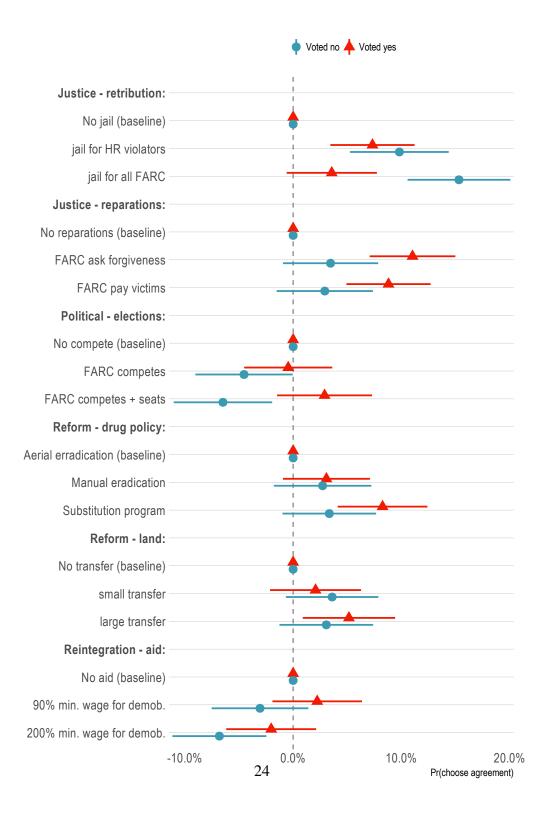


Figure 3. Effect of peace agreement attribute on probability of agreement choice by referendum vote. Approximately 36% of the sample reported voting in favor (N = 359), 30% reported voting against (N = 289), and 30% (N = 285) reported not voting, with the rest declining to answer.

Heterogeneous responses to agreement provisions

Of course, individual responses to agreement provisions might vary along important dimensions relevant to the conflict. Here, I consider three important sources of individual-level heterogeneity from the conflict-termination literature: political partisanship, the rural-periphery divide and conflict exposure.⁷

First, to examine differences in political partisanship I estimate separate models for citizens expressing support for either right-wing President Uribe or center-left President Santos. Throughout his tenure Uribe maintained a staunch anti-FARC orientation, and his supporters are likely to harbor strong partisan attachments against the FARC. Santos, by contrast, is a center-left political figure who maintained a more moderate orientation to the FARC and spearheaded negotiations. The results in Figure 4 show stark differences among the two groups, with Uribe supporters appearing significantly more punitive among various dimensions than Santos supporters. The finding reflects the extent of polarization in the Colombian peace process.

⁷I also test whether there are interactive effects among the different agreement provisions. I follow the methodology in Egami & Imai (2017) to estimate average marginal interaction effects (AMIE) among all possible two-way interactions. Figure A.5 in the Online appendix shows there are no significant interactive effects among the provisions.

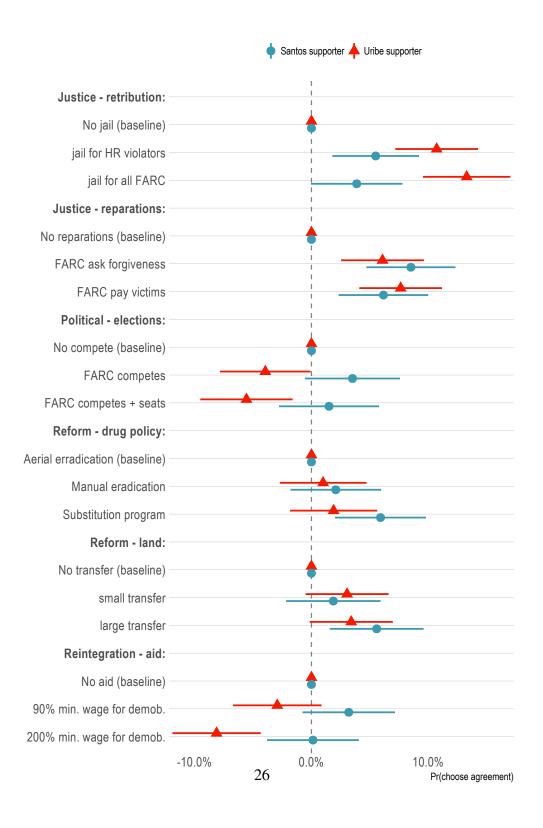


Figure 4. Effect of peace agreement provisions on probability of agreement choice by political partisanship, urban sample.

Second, I explore differences in civilians living in the center and periphery of the country, where exposure to the armed conflict has been markedly different (Arjona, 2016). Figure 5 plots the estimated provision effects comparing cities above and below median rurality, where rurality represents the percentage of the city's population categorized as rural by the National Statistics Agency (DANE). Peripheral areas appear to have stronger preferences for more restrictive political provisions than central areas. Similarly, peripheral areas also appear to prefer more punitive transitional justice provisions⁸. The most notable difference, however, pertains to land reform. Figure 6 shows that the magnitude of this difference is substantially large: urban areas elicit a weak preference for land distribution, while respondents in the most rural areas are 15% more likely to prefer an agreement with a large land distribution provision.⁹

 $^{^{8}}$ the difference is significant at p < .1 in the full interaction model presented in Online appendix Table A.4

⁹I also estimate the same model on a sample that combines both the urban and rural surveys, using the four common conjoint attributes (Figure A.4 in the Online appendix). The coefficient estimates are identically signed in the combined sample, although the magnitude of reform and political provisions increases substantially.

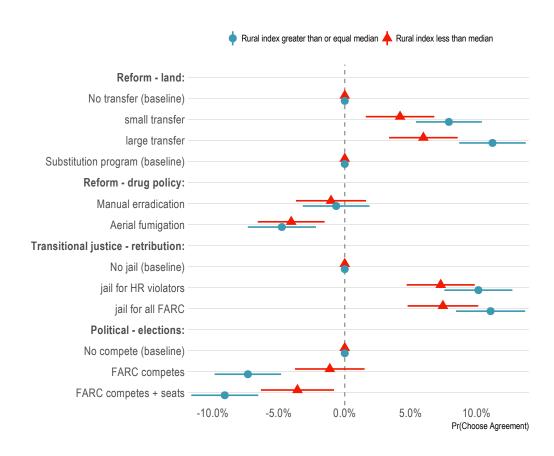


Figure 5. Effect of peace agreement provisions on probability of agreement choice by rurality of location, combined sample.

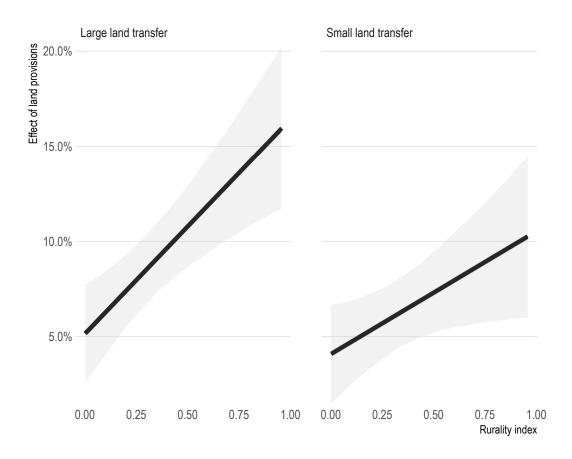


Figure 6. Interaction plot of land reform provisions against rurality index.

Third, I consider whether there are heterogeneous effects based on direct victimization experiences. Here I leverage a question from the combined sample that asks respondents whether someone close to them suffered harm as a result of the conflict. Figure 7 visualizes the results and Table A.5 in the Online appendix presents the full interaction model. While there are some differences in preferences for transitional justice and political provisions between victims and non-victims, they are not consistent or substantively large.¹⁰

¹⁰Table A.6 in the Online appendix presents results using victimization by (specifically) the FARC, a survey item available only in the rural sample. I find no consistent differences in preferences between FARC-victims and non-victims.

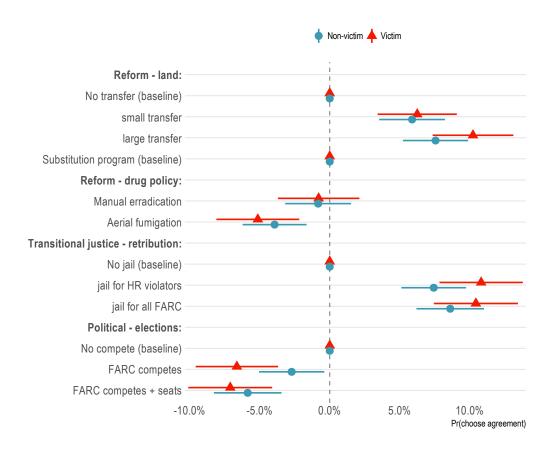


Figure 7. Effect of peace agreement provisions on probability of agreement choice by victimization status, combined sample.

Collectively, these results indicate that while civilians tend to support and oppose the same kinds of provisions, they also vary in their intensity of support or opposition along conflict-related dimensions. This speaks to how broadly-held justice-related concerns are in conflict negotiations, but also points to the importance of partisanship and the distributive consequences of agreements.

Discussion and conclusion

This article sought to demonstrate that the choices made in the construction of peace agreements have implications for public support. Contrary to extant scholarship that solely emphasizes the distributive consequences of peace agreements for the warring sides, the study argues that normative issues are important and can present substantial barriers to public support for peace processes. Results from conjoint experiments fielded during the Colombian peace process largely find support for these conjectures, and further identifies interesting heterogeneity in citizen responses to individual agreement provisions.

Other factors also play a role in the formation of public opinion. Elites are important to this process (Zaller, 1994; Carlin, McCoy & Subotic, Forthcoming), and their ability to persuade citizens on the merits of a particular agreement can push public opinion in defining ways. Rather than contradict elite framing theories, the current study and findings can complement understanding of how elites frame peace agreements to the public. Agreement contents are complex and open to interpretation, leaving elites room to emphasize certain provisions over others or depicting certain provisions as potentially damaging to society. This reflects the Colombian case, where opposition leaders framed the signed agreement in ways that emphasized its justice-related shortcomings and obscured its more universally appealing agrarian reform measures. Future work should consider the interaction of framing effects and elite cues in peace agreement preferences more explicitly (Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Chong & Druckman, 2007).

The geography of violence in civil conflicts is also critical to understanding wartime civilian attitudes. Victimization experiences have been linked to a number of social and political attitudinal changes (Bauer et al., 2016) and conflict exposure has been shown to

have implications for how civilians think about conflict-termination (Dyrstad et al., 2011; Beber, Roessler & Scacco, 2014; Tellez, 2019). In Colombia, referendum vote choice followed the country's geography of violence closely, with more afflicted areas voting overwhelmingly in favor of passing the agreement (Arjona, 2016). Given that referendum vote choice was only available in the urban sample, the current study cannot speak to how agreement supporters and opponents in rural areas differed in their preferences. Future work must explore this dynamic directly.

Finally, as previously discussed, the extent to which civilians identify with one of the warring sides is likely to shape views on who deserves blame and who deserves redress. This dynamic should vary across conflicts, with partisan attachment likely to be stronger in some conflicts than others (Sambanis, 2001). The Colombian conflict is a case with particularly low levels of public identification with the main rebel movement. Nationally representative samples find less than 1% of respondents holding favorable views of the FARC (Latin American Public Opinion Project, 2015), while experimental approaches for eliciting truthful answers find similarly low levels of support (Matanock & Garbiras-Díaz, 2018). Future work could shed light on this issue by experimentally priming respondents with negative (positive) information about the side's behavior during the war. Similar studies in other contexts, with greater levels of partisan attachment, are also needed.

The paper contributes to a growing literature in the study of conflict bargaining that argues normative concerns are important for understanding wartime preferences (Stein, 2015; Kertzer & Brutger, 2016). The process of preference formation thus has implications for the behavior and decision-making of actors at the bargaining table; unpopular provisions may lead audiences to reject settlements outright, punish leaders by withdraw-

ing support, or in more drastic cases push for reversals in the future, as seen in Argentina (Roehrig, 2009). Moreover, subnational and individual heterogeneity in preferences for specific peace agreement provisions – such as the significant differences between peripheral and central citizens found here – suggest negotiators must find ways to win broad swaths of support from society. Ultimately, the findings suggest that conflict-termination scholars must take the contents of agreements seriously.

Beyond scholarship, the study also has implications for practitioners and policymakers working in conflict-termination. The results add the Colombian peace process to a long list of historical experiences that indicate amnesty for violent actors is highly unpopular and politically costly. At the same time, amnesty might be politically necessary in certain settings, for example where armed combatants are strong enough to continue fighting. While this can imply negotiators have little hope of producing popular settlements, the positive effect of political reform provisions in the study indicate that small improvements can be made at the margins. Among citizens who stand to benefit from the proposed reforms, such provisions can serve as a galvanizing force for peace. These small changes can have particularly significant consequences in contexts where projected vote totals are very close.

Data Replication:

The dataset, codebook, and replication files for the empirical analysis in this article can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets.

Biographical Statement:

TELLEZ JUAN F, b. 1990, PhD Candidate in Political Science (Duke University); current research interests: political violence, conflict-termination, the public in civil wars.

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