

Bias in the Evaluation of Violence Against Civilians: Cognitive Dissonance and Moral Disengagement in Colombia

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September 23, 2022

Abstract

How do individuals' relative preferences for one side of the conflict over the other shape their evaluations of violence against civilians? I argue that, when faced with their preferred side committing civilian targeting, individuals experience cognitive dissonance. I suggest that people engage in three forms of moral disengagement to resolve this dissonance, characterizing the violence as serving a military purpose, minimizing its consequences, or placing responsibility on individual fighters. To test this argument, I use an online survey experiment in Colombia in which individuals read a news story about violence against civilians allegedly perpetrated by the state or guerrillas. The results suggest that respondents justify more lenient punishments for their preferred side by characterizing that side's violence as less severe and less systematic but not as more militarily necessary. These findings provide insight into the reasons that post-conflict societies struggle to reconcile and solidify lasting peace.

Word Count: 9,998

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Introduction

Citizenries face a range of choices which shape the viability of peace in the wake of conflict. Members of the public vote on peace accords (Otis 2016), live amongst former combatants (Godefroidt and Langer 2022; Kao and Revkin 2021), engage with truth and reconciliation commissions (Gibson 2002, 2004), and vote for individuals tied to conflict-related human rights abuses (Daly 2019; Bateson 2021). Thus, the public plays a key role in supporting or undermining peace accords and post-conflict stability more broadly.

One impediment to public acceptance of peace accords is their provisions regarding punishment. Simplistically, people seek harsher punishment for the other side than for their side. For example, people evaluate punishment for former combatants on the basis of partisanship and ideology, ethnicity, and religion (Samii 2013; Tellez 2019, 2020; Mironova and Whitt 2022). Amidst conflict, as well, people respond less negatively to civilian targeting when they share an identity with the perpetrator (e.g. Condra and Shapiro 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013). This existing research suggests that people evaluate violence against civilians differentially depending on their attitude toward the perpetrator, i.e., whether the group is on “their side.” Yet, despite its importance for understanding peace, transitional justice, and armed group propaganda, existing work does not explain how individuals are able to justify the violence committed by their side in the face of strong norms against civilian targeting.

How do individuals’ relative preferences for one side of the conflict over the other shape their evaluations of violence against civilians? By “relative preference,” I refer to which side an individual likes more or dislikes less. I build on research from psychology on moral judgement (e.g. Hester and Gray 2020; Malle 2021) to suggest that individuals experience cognitive dissonance (Bandura 1999, 2015) when their preferred side of the conflict engages in violence against civilians. In order to resolve this cognitive dissonance and its accompanying discomfort, individuals adjust their judgements of the violence, characterizing it as less morally wrong and less worthy of severe punishment. To reach these conclusions, I suggest that individuals engage in three forms of moral disengagement (e.g. Bandura 1999; Moore

2015). First, compared to violence committed by the other side, individuals judge violence committed by their preferred side as more necessary for winning the war. Second, they consider it less harmful. Third, they assess it as less likely to be the responsibility of the armed group as a whole. Those with the strongest preferences experience the greatest cognitive dissonance and utilize the most moral disengagement.

I test the implications of this theoretical framework with an online factorial survey experiment in Colombia in which respondents are presented with a news article about a recent act of violence against civilians committed either by FARC dissidents or the Colombian Armed Forces. The results suggest that people justify lighter punishments for perpetrators on the side of the conflict they prefer by characterizing the violence against civilians these groups commit as less severe and less organized. In contrast, they do not characterize violence committed by their preferred side as less morally wrong or more militarily necessary.

Evaluations of Violence Against Civilians

Indiscriminate civilian targeting increases support for the perpetrator's opponents, either because it makes neutrality more dangerous or because it evokes grievances (e.g. Mason and Krane 1989; Wood 2003; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Rozenas, Schutte and Zhukov 2017). Relatedly, individuals evaluating violence abroad prefer attacks that minimize civilian casualties (Johns and Davies 2019; Dill and Schubiger 2021). Yet, the public does not respond to such violence in a uniformly negative way. For example, people may forgive perpetrators who can claim credit for peace (Daly 2019). More broadly, people's reactions differ depending on the form of violence as well as their prior beliefs and experiences.

Characteristics of the violence shape the public's response to it. People use complex assessments of causality in judging violence against civilians (Pechenkina, Bausch and Skinner 2019; Levy 2022), and combatants' precise involvement in both abusive armed groups and specific acts of violence shapes judgements of those individuals (Kao and Revkin 2021; Levy 2022). Military utility and combatant mortality also affect support for violence with civilian casualties (Press, Sagan and Valentino 2013; Sagan and Valentino 2017).

Wartime abuse can also have heterogeneous effects on different segments of the public. Individuals' values and attitudes toward the victims shape their support for the use of nuclear weapons and other violence entailing civilian casualties (Sagan and Valentino 2017; Rathbun and Stein 2020; Bloom et al. 2020), as does gender and exposure to international law (Wallace 2019; Hadzic and Tavits 2019). Supporters of an armed group are less likely to approve of capital punishment for members of that group (Mironova and Whitt 2022). Relatedly, people respond less negatively to violence against civilians if their identity aligns with that of the perpetrator (Condra and Shapiro 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Silverman 2019). I expand on this prior research, focusing not on identity but more broadly on individuals' preferences for one side of the conflict. Additionally, I focus on the mechanisms underlying people's biased evaluations of violence in order to understand how they justify violence committed by their side. In making this argument, I follow scholars such as Kertzer et al. (2014), Young (2019), and García-Ponce, Young and Zeitzoff (2022) in drawing on work in psychology to understand public attitudes toward political violence.

Theory

I argue that people's relative preferences for one side of the conflict affect their evaluations of violence against civilians. When faced with their preferred side committing civilian targeting, individuals experience cognitive dissonance. To resolve it, they alter their evaluations of the violence, assessing it as less morally wrong and less worthy of severe punishment compared to similar violence committed by the other side. In order to reach these conclusions, individuals may engage in three forms of moral disengagement. They may morally justify the violence, asserting that it serves a military purpose; minimize the consequences of the violence, characterizing the number of victims as smaller; or attribute responsibility to the individual perpetrators rather than the armed group writ large. The stronger people's preferences, the more moral disengagement they engage in.

There are three scope conditions for this theory. First, there must be a strong norm against violence against civilians. Thus, I exclude conflicts with extreme intergroup animosity,

such as cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, or mass killings based on categorical victim profiles. In such conflicts, the norm against civilian targeting may be weaker. Given this exclusion of these conflicts, I do not examine the victim-blaming form of moral disengagement. Second, I focus on conflicts in which violence against civilians is common and publicized, meaning that neither armed groups nor civilians can plausibly deny that violence has occurred. Third, the war must feature two fundamentally opposing sides.

Moral Judgement and Cognitive Dissonance

When individuals observe their preferred side of the conflict committing violence against civilians, they experience cognitive dissonance. This phenomenon occurs when “inconsistency between two cognitions [elements of knowledge that people have about their behavior, their attitudes and their environment] creates an aversive state akin to hunger or thirst that gives rise to a motivation to reduce the inconsistency” (Cooper and Carlsmith 2015, p. 76). The inconsistency is simple: on one hand, violence against civilians is “bad,” and therefore the perpetrator is also “bad.” On the other hand, if the perpetrator is on the side of the conflict that the individual prefers, then the armed actor is “good” or, at least, “not as bad” as the other side. This contradiction is a product of how moral judgements combine information about actions with beliefs about actors.

While the definition of moral judgement is debated, Malle (2021) makes clear in a review article that people morally judge actions. For example, Haidt (2001) argues that an action is morally wrong when it contradicts a “a set of virtues held to be obligatory by a culture” (p. 817). Schein and Gray (2018) suggest that moral judgements hinge on whether or not an action harms another person. Thus, a large literature examines how varying elements of an action changes moral judgements (e.g. Waldmann and Dieterich 2007; Greene et al. 2009).

Relatedly, moral judgement of actors is shaped by their actions (e.g. Malle, Guglielmo and Monroe 2014; Malle 2021). People categorize behavior in trait terms, and then they characterize the actor who is engaged in that behavior in these same trait terms. (Gilbert 1989; Trope 1986). Such judgements can be unconscious (e.g. Uleman, Adil Saribay and

Gonzalez 2008). Thus, individuals who do “bad” things are “bad” people. I suggest that violence against civilians, and its perpetrators, are seen as immoral.

In many contexts, people agree that violence against civilians is wrong. For example, individuals oppose violence against civilians and have internalized many norms of international law, which includes prohibitions on direct targeting of civilians (e.g. Wood 2003; Wallace 2019; Dill and Schubiger 2021). According to a Red Cross 2016 survey, 78 percent of people living in countries affected by armed conflict believe that it is wrong to attack enemy combatants even “in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many civilians would be killed” (ICRC 2016, p. 7). Disapproval of direct targeting of civilians is likely even higher. Given that civilian targeting is seen in a negative light, so are its perpetrators.

However, when people make moral judgements, they do so not only on the basis of the actions but also the perceived character of those whom they are judging (e.g. Uhlmann, Pizarro and Diermeier 2015; Helzer and Critcher 2018). As Hester and Gray (2020) summarize, “when people make moral judgements in everyday life, they usually know both what someone did (i.e., their act) and who they are (i.e., their identity) – and who often matters more than what” (p. 217). In the context of conflict, I assume that people carry priors about which side of the conflict is better than the other into their judgements of violence.

This assumption that individuals have relative preferences for one side of the conflict entails three subsidiary assumptions. First, people have attitudes toward each side of the armed conflict; they like or dislike each side to varying degrees. While civilians’ attitudes toward armed actors are often endogenous to conflict, the reasons that an individual holds these attitudes are outside the scope of this project. Second, individuals can rank these attitudes toward each side of the conflict as more or less positive. Third, in a war with two fundamentally opposing sides, it is impossible for people to support both sides, although it is possible them to not like either side. Thus, relative preference is a continuous variable. For example, someone could strongly support side A and strongly oppose side B, and another

person could have a moderately negative attitude toward side A but an extremely negative attitude toward side B. Both individuals would prefer group A, but one more strongly. The individual with the stronger preference would experience a greater level of cognitive dissonance when faced with evidence of side A engaging in violence against civilians.¹

How do individuals resolve this cognitive dissonance they experience when their preferred side engages in objectionable violence against civilians? I argue that people alter their evaluation of the violence rather than adjusting their attitude toward the perpetrator. A wide range of evidence on motivated reasoning shows that people interpret new information in such a way as to confirm their prior conclusions (e.g. Kunda 1990; Epley and Gilovich 2016; Schon 2021). Existing research on public responses to civilian targeting also supports this assertion; people react less negatively to violence against civilians when it is committed by actors with whom they are religiously or nationally aligned (Condra and Shapiro 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Silverman 2019). Thus, I argue that individuals perceive violence by their preferred side as less morally wrong than similar violence committed by the other side. Because those with stronger preferences experience greater cognitive dissonance, this effect will be particularly pronounced among those with strong preferences.²

- *Moral Wrongfulness Hypothesis*: The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side is morally wrong in comparison to when it is committed by the other side.

Moral wrongfulness bears a close relationship with punishment. In fact, Malle (2021) characterizes judgements of appropriate punishment as “almost” moral judgements. Thus, people seek punishment for those who commit morally objectionable violence, including civilian targeting. For example, victims and witnesses of violence are more likely to prefer retributive to restorative justice (Aloyo, Dancy and Dutton 2022). Many people are even

¹I do not assume that individuals have preferences for some groups on one side over other actors on the same side; people likely do not have sufficient information for such a preference.

²Hypotheses are slightly different than those in the Pre-Analysis plan. See Appendix L for details.

willing to punish out-group members who have not directly participated in violence (e.g. Gordon and Arian 2001; Skitka, Bauman and Mullen 2004). Indeed, people respond to civilian targeting by supporting the perpetrator's opponents, thereby punishing the perpetrator (e.g. Wood 2003; Rozenas, Schutte and Zhukov 2017; Balcells 2012). I therefore suggest that preferences shape beliefs not only about the moral wrongfulness of violence but also appropriate punishment for its perpetrators.

- *Punishment Hypothesis*: The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that the perpetrators should be harshly punished when violence against civilians is committed by their preferred side in comparison to when it is committed by the other side.

Moral Disengagement

How do individuals reach the conclusion that violence committed by their preferred side is less morally wrong and less worthy of punishment? I suggest that they engage in moral disengagement: "the disengagement of moral self-sanctions from inhumane conduct" (Bandura 1999, p. 193). Moral disengagement allows people engage in or support "bad" behavior while maintaining a positive view of themselves (e.g. Bandura 1999; Moore 2015). While moral disengagement is primarily used to explain how people justify their bad behavior, it has also been used to explore how people justify their support for others' actions, particularly during wartime (e.g. McAlister 2001; McAlister, Bandura and Owen 2006; Aquino et al. 2007). In the context of this theory, moral disengagement is a mechanism whereby people resolve the cognitive dissonance arising from moral judgements.

There are four forms of moral disengagement: people can turn wrongful behavior into good behavior, for example by characterizing it as serving a worthy purpose; they can displace or obfuscate blame for the action; they can distort, deny, or disregard the harmful effects of the act; or they can blame the victim (Bandura 2015). I do not focus on victim-blaming given that the theory's scope conditions require a strong norm against civilian targeting. In

the context of evaluating violence against civilians, I argue that moral disengagement can operate in the following three ways. First, people can justify the violence by characterizing it as militarily necessary rather than gratuitous. In doing so, they justify the violence with reference to its purpose or *cause*. Second, they can minimize the *consequences* of the violence by characterizing it as harming fewer people. Third, they can displace the *responsibility* for the violence from group leadership onto individual perpetrators. The stronger an individual's preference, the greater the cognitive dissonance they experience and the more moral disengagement they engage in.

First, in moral justification of wrongful behavior, “detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy or moral purposes” (Bandura 1999, p. 194). The *cause* of the behavior justifies it. Relatedly, actors are blamed less when they have “valid” reasons for engaging in immoral behavior (Monroe and Malle 2019), and not having an obligation to prevent wrongdoing mitigates moral blame (Malle, Guglielmo and Monroe 2014). As such, people are more likely to support torture when it is portrayed as effective (Kearns and Young 2020) and more likely to support attacks with civilian casualties which offer military benefits (Press, Sagan and Valentino 2013; Sagan and Valentino 2017; Dill, Sagan and Valentino 2022). Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013) suggest but do not directly test a similar theory, arguing that members of one's in-group who engage in civilian targeting are seen as having been forced by the situation to do so. In the context of a conflict, abuses could be seen as serving a valuable purpose if they contribute to winning the war, i.e., if they are militarily necessary. Thus, I hypothesize that people's preferences shape whether they see civilian targeting as helpful for military goals. Those who perceive violence against civilians as militarily necessary are less likely to think that it is morally wrong and worthy of harsh punishment.

- *Cause Bias Hypothesis 1*: The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the more likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side is necessary for the achievement of military goals in comparison to when

it is committed by the other side.

- *Cause Bias Hypothesis 2*: People who believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals are less likely to believe that:
 - *a*: the violence is morally wrong
 - *b*: its perpetrators should be strongly punished

The second form of moral disengagement is minimizing, ignoring, or misconstruing the negative *consequences* of the wrongful behavior (Bandura 1999). Indeed, because wrongdoing is condemned proportionally to the perceived harm that is done to the victim (e.g. Schein and Gray 2018), violence which causes less harm is seen as less wrong. Although there are a wide range of ways to measure the harm that violence inflicts on civilians, a simple heuristic is the number of people killed. Indeed, academics, militaries, and human rights groups quantify harm to civilians by counting the number of deaths (e.g. Seybolt, Aronson and Fischhoff 2013; Wilke and Naseemi 2022). Importantly, people can characterize the volume of casualties in a range of ways even if the number of victims is constant. For example, in a study of Americans' attitudes toward the war in Iraq under a Republican president, most people correctly identified the number of casualties. However, Democrats tended to interpret this number as "large" rather than "small," like Republicans (Gaines et al. 2007). Thus, even if the number of victims is constant, I suggest that people think that the violence committed by their preferred side is less wrong because it doesn't cause as much harm.

- *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 1*: The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side causes extensive harm in comparison to when it is committed by the other side.
- *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 2*: People who believe that violence against civilians causes more harm are more likely to believe that:
 - *a*: the violence is morally wrong

- *b*: its perpetrators should be strongly punished

The last form of moral disengagement is the displacement of *responsibility*. At the individual level, this occurs when people blame authority figures for their wrongful behavior (Bandura 1999). Indeed, individuals with control over a negative outcome are judged more harshly than those who have less control (Alicke 2000; Malle, Guglielmo and Monroe 2014). Fighters only “following orders” have limited control over the violence and thereby do not intend for it to occur (Quillien and German 2021); a lack of intentionality also mitigates blame (for a summary, see Malle 2021). There are indeed cases where fighters engaging in civilian targeting are following orders: while some wartime violence against civilians is merely tolerated by the leadership or occurs against its wishes (Wood 2018; Hoover Green 2016), other times the abuse is part of a deliberate strategy (e.g. Downes 2008; Cohen 2013). While existing work on moral disengagement focuses on how individuals can avoid responsibility, I suggest that civilian targeting for which the group as a whole is responsible is seen as more morally objectionable than violence for which individual fighters are responsible. When the group bears responsibility, any given incident of civilian targeting is only one example of a more systematic pattern which likely inflicts more harm than an isolated incident of abuse. Relatedly, if agency is the ability to plan and execute, then violence against civilians which is part of a large-scale strategy requires far greater agency than any specific tactic involving civilian abuse. Moral judgement is correlated with agency (e.g. Gray and Wegner 2010; Schein and Gray 2018). Thus, individuals may dismiss violence committed by their side as an isolated incident for which group leadership was not responsible.

- *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 1*: The stronger individuals’ preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence committed by their preferred side in comparison to when it is committed by the other side.
- *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 2*: People who believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence are more likely to believe that:

- *a*: the violence is morally wrong
- *b*: its perpetrators should be strongly punished

Research Design

Case Selection

The Colombian state has fought leftist guerrillas since the 1960s, and pro-state paramilitaries and criminal groups have also participated in the war. The country is deeply divided over the conflict and civilian targeting, making it an effective case upon which to test the theory.

Colombia's truth and reconciliation commission, established in a 2016 peace accord between the FARC and the government, concluded that more than 90 percent of conflict victims were civilians. All armed actors engaged in violence against civilians (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición 2022). Colombia is reckoning with this abuse; transitional justice institutions are prominently covered in the news (e.g. Tiempo 2021), as are hearings in international institutions about civilian targeting (e.g. Espectador 2021). Despite the peace accord, a range of armed groups continue fighting, including FARC dissidents who did not disarm after the agreement or have since rearmed (e.g. Posso et al. 2021). Civilian targeting continues today (e.g. Indepaz 2020, 2022).

Amidst conflict, Colombians remain divided. In 2018, less than 6 percent of Colombians had confidence in the FARC (Dugand, García and Sánchez 2018). Yet, supporters of the state are also divided over the conflict. For example, President Duque (2018-2022) ran on a platform of modifying the peace agreement to ensure stricter punishment for FARC war criminals (Politica 2018). In contrast, President Petro (2022-2026) is a supporter of the peace accord and a harsh critic of human rights abuses committed by the state (Espectador 2019; Español 2022). Thus, the country is divided between guerrilla and state supporters as well as state supporters with different attitudes toward the armed forces.

Experimental Setup

Methodologically, this project consists of an online survey experiment in Colombia with 1,587 respondents. The survey was fielded by the firm Dynata. Dynata recruited participants from their Colombian proprietary panel of respondents. Respondents were randomly selected from among those Colombian respondents over 18 who logged into the Dynata online system while the survey was being fielded.³ All respondents consented and indicated that they were Colombian citizens before continuing to the survey, during which they were able to skip any question. The design was approved by Duke University’s IRB with protocol number 2021-0609, and the survey was fielded July 28th, 2021. All hypotheses were pre-registered.⁴ The main experimental component of the survey was a vignette concerning an instance of violence against civilians which randomly varied whether the violence was committed by the Colombian Armed Forces or by FARC dissidents.

I operationalize individuals’ preferences as how supportive they are of the military. I asked two questions concerning security-related policy preferences. First, on a scale of 1 to 5, “to what degree do you have confidence in the Armed Forces?”⁵ Second, “what should happen to the budget of the Ministry of Defense?” Responses range from “it should be decreased a lot” (1) to “it should be increased a lot” (5). For both questions, NAs are coded as 3. I then create an additive index, **Pro-Military**; this index is rescaled to range from 0 to 1.⁶ In robustness checks, I run the models with each of the two original questions on a 0-1 scale (Tables A4, A5). Questions about attitudes toward the armed forces were asked before treatment to ensure that the experiment did not affect responses.⁷

³Respondents were not nationally representative (Table A7). However, online convenience samples can provide reliable estimates of treatment effects (Coppock 2019; Mullinix et al. 2015). Additionally, the benefits of demographically weighing online samples in Latin America are limited (Castorena et al. 2022).

⁴The pre-analysis plan is available at <https://osf.io/myktb>.

⁵This is from LAPOP.

⁶This rescaling was not in the pre-analysis plan. In the pre-analysis plan, this index included an additional question. See Appendix L for more details.

⁷There is no way to guarantee that asking these questions before the experiment did not affect respondents’ answers. However, there is no pro- or anti-military content in these questions to prime respondents to think a certain way about the armed forces.

I utilize these two questions because they are precise enough to identify respondents' support for the state as an actor in the armed conflict. Alternative operationalizations, such as ideology or vote choice, are too broad. Additionally, the questions I used do not put respondents in physical danger. Colombia is a multi-party state, and politicians regularly run on and express distinct perspectives on the armed forces (e.g. Espectador 2019, 2021). Additionally, Colombians feel comfortable expressing disapproval of the armed forces in surveys (Rivera, Plata Caviedes and Rodríguez Raga 2018).⁸ Directly asking respondents about their support for guerrillas, in contrast, could place them in danger. The country is still beset by violence, and civilian supporters of the FARC's former political party were once violently targeted for voting for the group (Steele 2017). It is also unlikely that respondents would provide an honest answer to a direct question about their attitude toward guerrillas.

Respondents next read the following vignette simulating the first paragraph of a newspaper article about a recent instance of violence against civilians. The randomized treatment is whether the violence was allegedly committed by the Colombian Armed Forces or FARC dissidents. I did not include a control condition which did not name the perpetrator because, in the context of an ongoing and protracted conflict, it is probable that respondents would infer that the perpetrator was on the other "side" anyway. In other words, inferences about the perpetrator would be correlated with the key independent variable.

Imagine a hypothetical article in the newspaper *El Tiempo*. After you read the first paragraph of the hypothetical article below, please answer several questions about the violence described in the article. Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

"Four civilians, who were not fighting and were not a part of either a non-state armed group or the Colombian Armed Forces, were killed in Antioquia yesterday morning. According to initial reports, the victims were two men and two women; all were shot at close range. The local mayor alleges that the perpetrators were (*leftist dissidents of the FARC / members of the Colombian Armed Forces*)."

There are several design decisions to note about this vignette. First, the text references a

⁸Matanock and García-Sánchez (2018) have found that Colombians inflate their confidence in the military when provided with binary answer options.

massacre. A wide variety of armed actors have engaged in such a tactic, making it plausible that either FARC dissidents or the Armed Forces were responsible (e.g. Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013).⁹ In order to limit social desirability bias, the vignette does not use the term “massacre.” Second, the vignette is set in the *El Tiempo* newspaper; it is the largest newspaper in the country and is relatively centrist. Third, Antioquia was chosen as the site of the violence because it is plausible that a range of victims and perpetrators could be involved in violence there. Antioquia has been greatly affected by the conflict, and a range of massacres have occurred there over the past few years (Indepaz 2022). At the same time, Antioquia includes a large city with a robust state presence: Medellín. Fourth, the vignette features four deaths because that is the average number of victims of massacres in both 2020 and in 2021 through April 27 (Indepaz 2022). While these details have been chosen deliberately, the vignette says little about the victims in order not to suggest a specific perpetrator. For example, if the victims were campesinos, respondents may infer that the violence occurred in a rural area in which non-state groups were fighting over territory.

Respondents then answered a series of questions about the vignette.¹⁰ **Wrongfulness** asks, on a scale from 1 (“strong disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), how much the respondent agrees that the violence was morally wrong. **Punishment** asks respondents what degree of punishment is appropriate; responses on a 1-5 scale range from pardon to life imprisonment. These punishments are based off possible punishments established in the peace accord (Roccatello and Rojas 2020; JEP 2021).¹¹ **Necessary** asks, on a scale from 1 (“very unlikely”) to 5 (“very likely”), how likely it is that the violence was necessary to achieve military gains. **Severity** asks respondents to describe the number of victims on a 5-point scale ranging from “very small” to “very large.” Lastly, **Responsibility** asks how likely it is that the leadership of the organization was responsible for the violence, on a scale from 1

⁹The most massacres were committed by paramilitaries.

¹⁰These questions were presented in a random order.

¹¹Pardon and life imprisonment are more lenient and more harsh than those in the accord. Colombia does not allow the death penalty. Note that there are 6 response options, but the variable has been rescaled to range from 1-5 in order to match the scale of all other dependent variables.

(“very unlikely”) to 5 (“very likely”).¹² Full question wording can be found in Appendix J.

Regressions are OLS. **Armed Forces Perpetrator** takes a value of 0 if FARC dissidents are the perpetrator and a value of 1 if the Colombian Armed Forces are the perpetrator. Given that this is a randomized experiment and there are not significant demographic differences across individuals in the control and treatment group (Table A8), no control variables are used in the main analyses. All plots show 95 percent confidence intervals.

Results

The results can be found in Table A1. Overall, the findings suggest that people justify less severe punishment for their preferred side by characterizing the violence as less harmful and less organized. The results are robust to including controls (Table A2),¹³ to removing people who failed the attention check (Table A3), and to using each of the two variables which make up the **Pro-Military** index (Tables A4 and A5). The results also receive support using a moderated mediation analysis as detailed in Tingley et al. (2014); see Section F.¹⁴ There is little evidence that treatment affects beliefs about the state (Table A6).

Figure 1 shows the results of models 1 and 2 in A1. These models examine the effects of the **Armed Forces Perpetrator** treatment, **Pro-Military** attitudes, and the interaction between these two variables on judgements of moral **Wrongfulness** and perpetrator **Punishment**. As panel A shows, none of the coefficients are statistically significant in the regression on **Wrongfulness**. In contrast, as panels B and C show, in the regression on **Punishment**, the interaction between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Pro-Military** is negative and statistically significant. When someone has the strongest possible **Pro-Military** attitude (a value of 1), they seek punishment for state perpetrators which is .42 points less severe than the punishment they seek for guerrilla perpetrators. A .8-point reduction on the 5-point

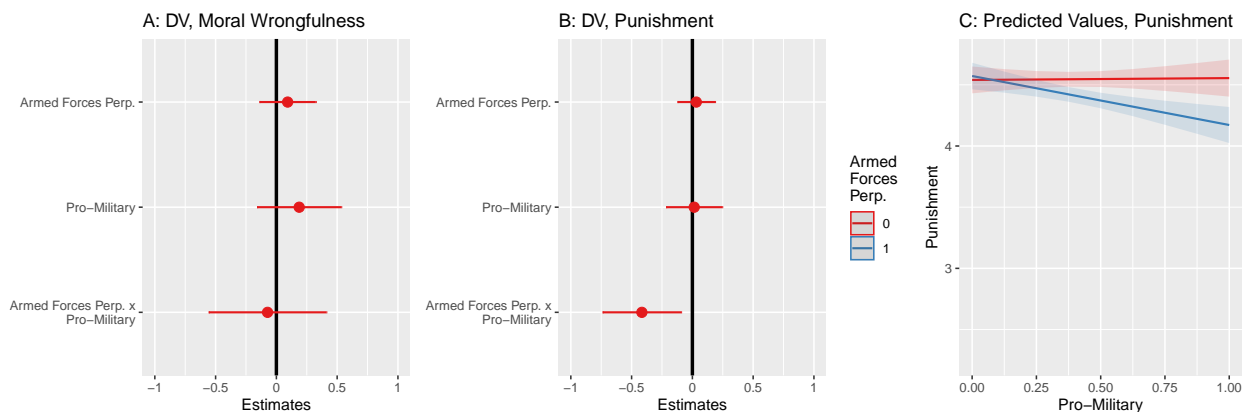
¹²The phrasing in the **Responsibility** question refers to “the leaders of the organization” rather than to the “armed group as a whole,” as in the hypotheses; this wording aids respondent comprehension.

¹³**Rural** has been reverse coded because, in the original survey question, higher values represented more urban locations.

¹⁴This is not the main analysis because it is unlikely that the data meets the second part of the sequential ignorability assumption which requires that, conditional on pretreatment covariates (in this case, demographic covariates), the mediators are as if randomized (Imai, Keele and Tingley 2010; Keele 2015).

scale corresponds to, for example, the difference between lifetime incarceration and 15 years in prison. At lower levels of support for the military, the difference between judgements of appropriate punishment for state and guerrilla punishment is smaller. Overall, these results do not provide support for the *Moral Wrongfulness Hypothesis* but do provide support for the *Punishment Hypothesis*.

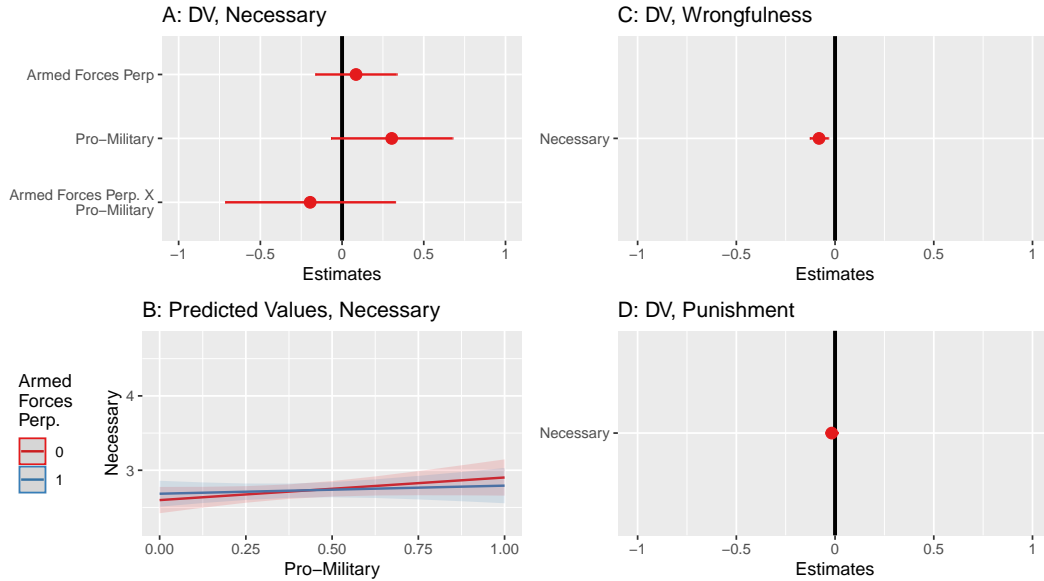
Figure 1: Wrongfulness and Punishment



Note: No control variables are used in these regressions, and numeric results can be found in models 1 and 2 of A1. These models test the *Moral Wrongfulness* and *Punishment Hypotheses*

Next we will consider the three forms of moral disengagement. Panels A and B of Figure 2 show the results of model 3 in Table A1 i.e. the effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator**, **Pro-Military**, and their interaction on perceptions of how militarily **Necessary** the violence was. None of the coefficients in this regression are statistically significant. As such, respondents do not seem to characterize violence by their preferred side as more militarily necessary than violence committed by the other side, regardless of how strong their preferences are. Panels C and D show the effect of **Necessary** on **Wrongfulness** and **Punishment** (models 4 and 5 of Table A1). While there is a substantively small negative correlation between estimates of how militarily **Necessary** the violence was and its moral **Wrongfulness**, there is no relationship between perceptions of military necessity (**Necessary**) and preferred severity of **Punishment** for the perpetrators. Overall, these results do not provide strong support for the *Cause Bias Hypotheses*.

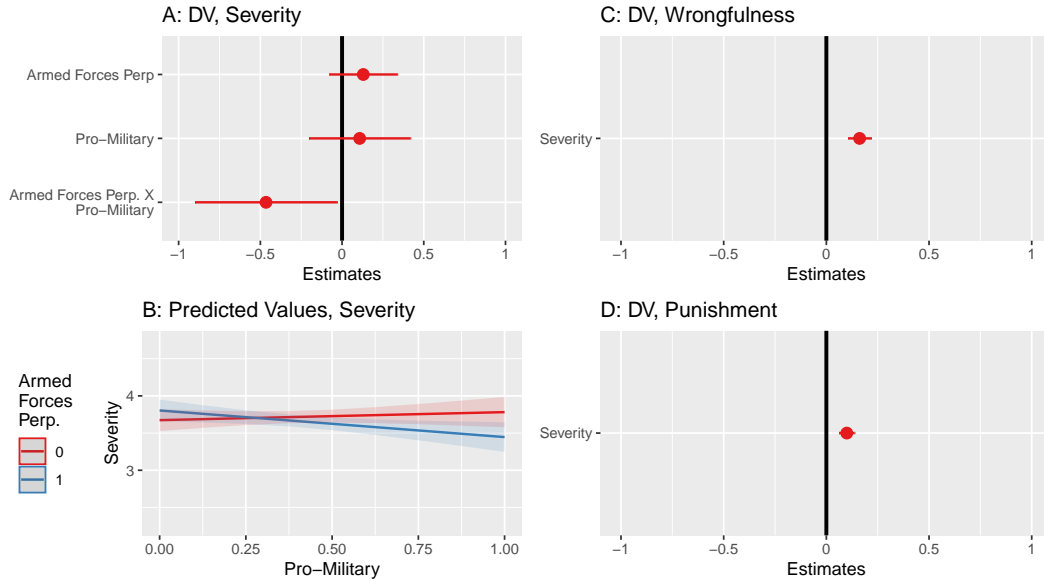
Figure 2: Cause



Note: No control variables are used in these regressions, and numeric results can be found in models 3-5 of A1. These models test the *Cause Hypotheses*.

Figure 3 provides support for the *Consequence Hypotheses*: preferences shape beliefs about the severity of violence against civilians, which in turns shape perceptions of wrongfulness and appropriate punishment. Panels A and B of Figure 3 show the results of model 6 in A1; this model examines the effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator**, **Pro-Military**, and their interaction on perceptions of the **Severity** of the violence. The interaction is negative and statistically significant. When individuals strongly support the military (**Pro-Military**=1), they characterize military violence as .47 points less severe than guerrilla violence, on a 5-point scale. At lower levels of support for the state, the difference in the perceived severity of state and guerrilla violence is smaller. Further, panels C and D (models 7 and 8 in Table A1) show that, compared to violence with a “very small” number of victims, violence with a “very large” number of victims is .64 points more morally wrong and its perpetrators deserve .40 points more punishment, on a 5-point scale.

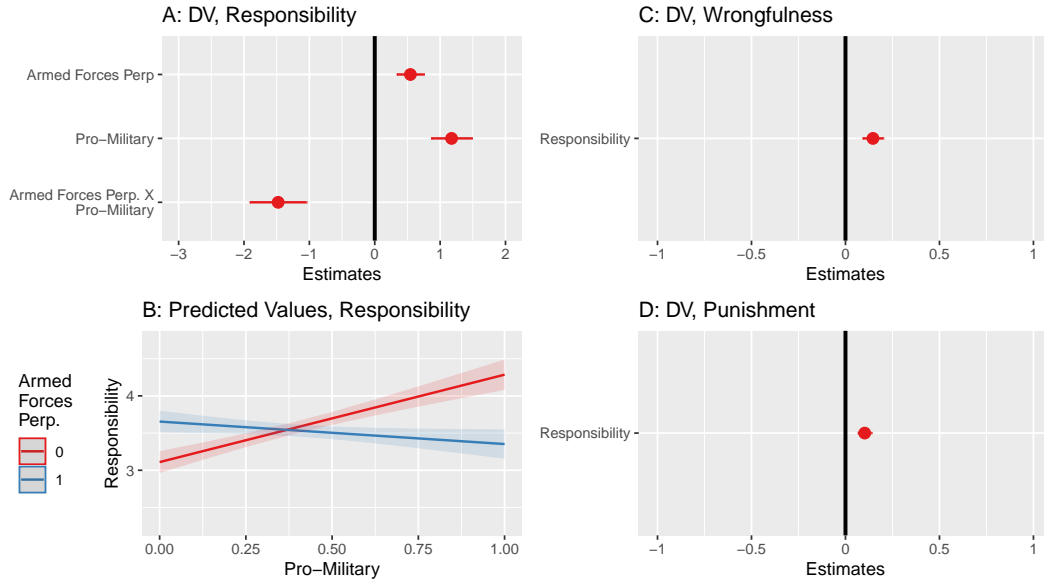
Figure 3: Consequences



Note: No control variables are used in these regressions, and numeric results can be found in models 6-8 of [A1](#). These models test the *Consequences Hypotheses*.

Figure 4 supports the *Responsibility Hypotheses*. Panels A and B are based on model 9 in Table [A1](#) concerning the effect of the treatment, pro-military attitudes, and their interaction on judgements of whether group leadership bears **Responsibility**. The interaction is negative, statistically significant, and substantively large. When individuals have a **Pro-Military** attitude of 1, they characterize state violence as 1.48 points less likely to be the responsibility of group leadership compared to guerrilla violence. In contrast, as panel B suggests, individuals with very low **Pro-Military** attitudes characterize military violence as *more* likely to be the responsibility of armed group leaders than guerrilla violence. Furthermore, as panels C and D (models 10 and 11 in Table [A1](#)) indicate, compared to individuals who think it is “very unlikely” that group leaders were responsible for the violence, those who think it is “very likely” that they were characterize the violence as .6 points more morally wrong and seek punishment which is .4 points harsher, on 5-point scales.

Figure 4: Responsibility



Note: No control variables are used in these regressions, and numeric results can be found in models 9-11 of [A1](#). These models test the *Responsibility Hypotheses*.

Exploratory Analyses

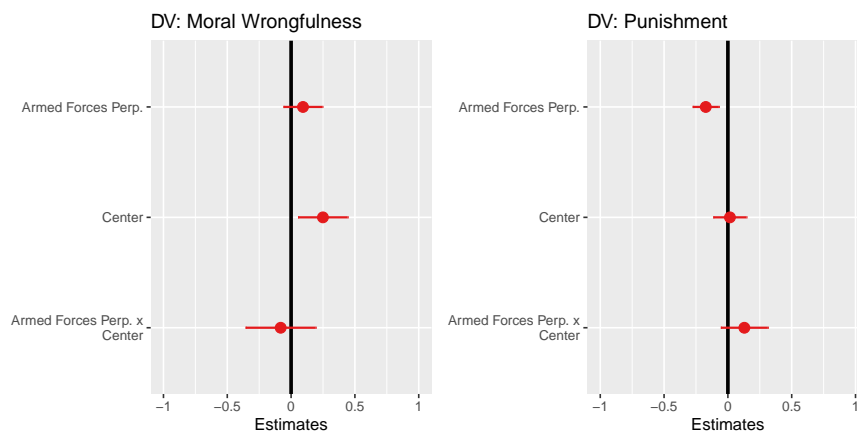
Centrists

Thus far, I have operationalized armed group preference as pro-military attitudes. This implies that individuals who do not support the military are more likely to support leftist guerrillas. However, there are probably individuals who dislike both the military and FARC dissidents: “centrists.” In the Colombian context, where a center-right president negotiated the accord but a far-right president has criticized it, centrists would exhibit low levels of **Pro-Military** attitudes but high levels of support for the peace accord. Thus, I utilize a question which asks respondents, on a scale of 1 to 5, how much they agree that “the peace accord was necessary to end the conflict with the FARC-EP.” I dichotomize both **Pro-Military** and answers to this question, classifying respondents as **Center** if they have a value of less than .5 on the **Pro-Military** variable and a response of 4 or 5 on the question about how necessary the accord was. Centrists are about 30 percent of the sample. I then

rerun some of the main analyses, using the variable **Center** instead of **Pro-Military**. The results can be seen in Figure 5 and Table A12.

These results suggest that centrists are more likely than the rest of the sample to say that violence is morally wrong, regardless of the perpetrator. Compared to a non-centrists, centrists characterize violence as .25 points more morally wrong, on a 5-point scale. The interaction between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Center** is not statistically significant. This is unsurprising; if centrists don't support either armed actor, they will oppose violence regardless of who perpetrates it. Interestingly, centrists are no more or less likely to say that violence should be punished harshly, regardless of the perpetrator.

Figure 5: Wrongfulness and Punishment, Centrists



Note: No control variables are used in these regressions, and numeric results can be found in Table A12.

Wrongfulness

Given that the *Wrongfulness Hypothesis* is not supported, it is important to consider in an exploratory fashion what is shaping perceptions of moral wrongfulness.¹⁵ A more in-depth exploration will require future research, but there are three possible reasons for the null results: different psychological processes may govern beliefs about morality and punishment, there may be social desirability bias, or other variables may drive attributions of wrongfulness. See the section below for a discussion of social desirability bias.

¹⁵The correlation between **Wrongfulness** and **Punishment** is only .08.

As for the possibility that attributions of wrongfulness and blame are driven by distinct psychological processes, Cushman (2008) argues that evaluations of punishment are sensitive to the harm that an individual causes whereas judgements of wrongfulness are sensitive to what an individual intends. Malle (2021) also argues that wrongness judgements are distinct from blame judgements. However, he posits that wrongness judgements are causally prior to blame judgements, making it unclear how blame could occur in the absence of wrongfulness judgements. This study is unable to empirically test these alternative theories.

Table [A13](#) suggests that attitudes toward the peace accord shape beliefs about the moral **Wrongfulness** of the violence. It makes sense that individuals who believe that peace is a superior solution see a specific act of violence as more unethical. Gender, age, income, and perceived quality of municipal services also affect **Wrongfulness**, although conflict victimization does not.

Social Desirability

I took several steps to limit social desirability bias in the experiment. Questions integrated uncertainty in order to give respondents more cover to express their opinions. For example, respondents did not have to indicate that violence was militarily necessary, but rather that it was “very likely” necessary. Several questions included the following language: “even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.” Additionally, the vignette did not include any graphic descriptions of violence. Nonetheless, social desirability bias could have prompted people to skip questions or to falsify their answers. A brief analysis of the data suggests that it is unlikely that either of these occurred to a significant degree.

Regarding missingness, the five dependent variables used in the analyses above have between 59 and 63 NAs each, out of 1,587 respondents who began the survey. There were only 76 respondents who did not navigate to the last page of the survey, so most of these NAs come from dropoffs. Indeed, the correlation between NAs on various questions is extremely high (See Table [A9](#)). Thus, there were not specific questions which made respondents uncomfortable. However, there may have been some kinds of respondents who

were unwilling to engage with the experiment at all. Balance tables [A10](#) and [A11](#) suggest that demographics matter: higher income respondents were more likely to skip both the **Punishment** and **Necessary** questions. However, respondents were no more likely to skip these questions if they had stronger **Pro-Military** attitudes, were in the **Armed Forces Perpetrator** treatment group, or were victimized in the conflict. Because victims could be more reluctant to answer questions about violence, and because people could be scared to express their negative opinions about an armed actor with the capacity to punish them, these nulls indicate that missingness is unlikely the result of social desirability bias.

Many respondents expressed distasteful opinions about violence, suggesting that social desirability bias did not prompt them to falsify their answers. The average respondent supported 15 years in prison for the perpetrators (4.47 on a 5-point scale) and indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed that the violence was morally wrong (3.48 on a 5-point scale). 2 percent of respondents thought the perpetrators should receive no time in prison, and 8 percent of respondents strongly disagreed that the violence was morally wrong. These descriptive statistics indicate that respondents were more willing to express objectionable perspectives about moral wrongfulness than about punishment, suggesting that it is unlikely that **Wrongfulness** was subject to greater social desirability bias than **Punishment**.

Conclusion

This study has examined the ways in which preferences for armed actors shape people's responses to wartime violence against civilians. I have argued that, in order to resolve the cognitive dissonance they experience when their preferred side engages in violence against civilians, people characterize the violence as less morally wrong and deserving of less severe punishment. There are three forms of moral disengagement which may help people reach such conclusions. Depending on whether the perpetrator is affiliated with their preferred side, people may differentially evaluate the causes of the violence, i.e., whether it is militarily necessary; the consequences of the violence, i.e., whether a lot of people were victimized; and responsibility of the violence, i.e., whether the armed group as a whole bears responsibility.

An online survey in Colombia which presented respondents with an instance of civilian targeting committed either by state armed forces or leftist guerrillas indicates that people justify lesser punishment for their preferred perpetrators by characterizing the violence as less severe and less organized but not as less militarily necessary. Individuals' preferences are not correlated with their judgements about the moral wrongfulness of violence.

Moral disengagement can be an impediment to societal reconciliation in the wake of conflict, encouraging people to support overly lenient punishment for their own side but excessively harsh punishment for the other side. As such, a key question is how to ameliorate the influence of moral disengagement on judgements of wartime violence. Although few studies exist on how to reduce moral disengagement, prior work indicates that explaining moral disengagement and teaching people how to recognize it reduces its use (McAlister 2001; Bustamante and Chaux 2014). In post-conflict contexts, emerging research suggests that it is indeed possible to change public attitudes toward war crimes. For example, Jo (2022) argues that collective memory of war is socially constructed and contextual. Balcells, Palanza and Voytas (2022) find that, among individuals across the ideological spectrum, visiting a transitional justice museum is correlated with increased support for victim compensation and pardoning perpetrators. However, it is likely that not all information about violence is equivalently impactful in shaping public attitudes. For example, recent evidence suggests that people respond more negatively to torture when it is portrayed as prolonged (harmful) than when it is portrayed as ineffective (not militarily necessary) (Hassner 2022).

My results suggest that transitional justice information campaigns may be particularly effective if they target the forms of moral disengagement which people rely on, for example by tying armed group leadership to war crimes. In the Colombian context, an approach emphasizing responsibility would have similarities to a civil society campaign about military killings of civilians called "who gave the order?" (Cuartas Rodriguez 2021). It would also resemble the messaging of Colombia's truth and reconciliation commission about how the state has tried to "negate" its responsibility for paramilitary abuses (Comisión para el

Escalarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición 2022).

Further research should more directly examine how information or propaganda about civilian targeting from armed groups, transitional justice institutions, and other actors affects people's judgements about war crimes. It should also consider why judgements of morality differ from judgements of appropriate punishment. Additionally, future work should extend this theory to conflicts in which one side committed the majority of civilian targeting as well as to conflicts without strong norms against civilian targeting.

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Bias in the Evaluation of Violence Against Civilians: Cognitive Dissonance and Moral Disengagement in Colombia

Supplementary Appendices

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A Main Results, Tables

Table A1: Main Results

	1: Wrong-fulness	2: Punishment	3: Necessary	4: Wrong-fulness	5: Punishment	6: Severity	7: Wrong-fulness	8: Punishment	9: Responsibility	10: Wrong-fulness	11: Punishment
Intercept	3.37*** (0.08)	4.54*** (0.06)	2.60*** (0.09)	3.70*** (0.07)	4.53*** (0.05)	3.67*** (0.08)	2.89*** (0.11)	4.11*** (0.07)	3.11*** (0.08)	2.96*** (0.10)	4.12*** (0.07)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.09 (0.12)	0.03 (0.08)	0.09 (0.13)			0.13 (0.11)			0.55*** (0.11)		
Pro-Military	0.19 (0.18)	0.02 (0.12)	0.30 (0.19)			0.11 (0.16)			1.18*** (0.16)		
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	-0.07 (0.25)	-0.42* (0.16)	-0.20 (0.26)			-0.47* (0.22)			-1.48*** (0.22)		
Necessary				-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)						
Severity							0.16*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)			
Responsibility										0.15*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)
R ²	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.02
Adj. R ²	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.02
Num. obs.	1527	1527	1525	1523	1523	1528	1525	1525	1524	1522	1522
RMSE	1.27	0.85	1.36	1.26	0.85	1.14	1.25	0.84	1.13	1.26	0.84

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^o $p < 0.1$

B Main Results with Control Variables

Table A2: Main Results with Control Variables

	1: Wrong-fulness	2: Punishment	3: Necessary	4: Wrong-fulness	5: Punishment	6: Severity	7: Wrong-fulness	8: Punishment	9: Responsibility	10: Wrong-fulness	11: Punishment
(Intercept)	11.75° (6.54)	15.71*** (4.29)	-12.42° (7.03)	11.38° (6.34)	12.79** (4.21)	14.83* (5.84)	10.13 (6.31)	11.67** (4.17)	3.48 (5.83)	12.06° (6.33)	11.82** (4.18)
Armed Forces Perp	0.05 (0.12)	0.05 (0.08)	0.09 (0.13)			0.08 (0.11)			0.50*** (0.11)		
Pro-Military	0.05 (0.19)	-0.04 (0.12)	0.41* (0.20)			-0.02 (0.17)			1.07*** (0.17)		
Woman	0.08 (0.07)	0.08° (0.04)	-0.13° (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)	0.08° (0.05)	0.04 (0.06)	0.07 (0.07)	0.08° (0.04)	0.09 (0.06)	0.07 (0.07)	0.08° (0.04)
Education	0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.07° (0.04)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00° (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00° (0.00)
Income	0.02** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)	0.01° (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	0.01° (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)
Rural	-0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Victimized Gov	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.17° (0.10)	0.14 (0.17)	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.12 (0.10)	0.25° (0.14)	-0.15 (0.15)	-0.15 (0.10)	-0.32* (0.14)	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.08 (0.10)
Victimized Guerrilla	0.04 (0.10)	0.02 (0.06)	0.17 (0.11)	0.05 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.02 (0.09)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.12 (0.09)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.06)
Armed Forces Perp x Pro-Military	-0.08 (0.26)	-0.46** (0.17)	-0.20 (0.28)			-0.41° (0.23)			-1.42*** (0.23)		
Necessary				-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)						
Severity							0.16*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)			
Responsibility										0.14*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)
R ²	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.03
Adj. R ²	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03
Num. obs.	1408	1408	1405	1404	1404	1409	1407	1407	1404	1403	1403
RMSE	1.27	0.83	1.36	1.26	0.84	1.13	1.26	0.83	1.13	1.26	0.83

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$

C Main Results Removing Respondents Who Failed the Attention Check

Table A3: Main Results, Excluding Respondents Who Failed the Attention Check

	1: Wrong-fulness	2: Punishment	3: Necessary	4: Wrong-fulness	5: Punishment	6: Severity	7: Wrong-fulness	8: Punishment	9: Responsibility	10: Wrong-fulness	11: Punishment
Intercept	3.41*** (0.09)	4.59*** (0.06)	2.62*** (0.10)	3.72*** (0.08)	4.55*** (0.05)	3.73*** (0.08)	2.73*** (0.12)	4.16*** (0.08)	3.14*** (0.08)	2.93*** (0.11)	4.18*** (0.08)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.12 (0.13)	0.00 (0.09)	0.04 (0.14)			0.14 (0.11)			0.63*** (0.12)		
Pro-Military	0.16 (0.19)	-0.08 (0.13)	0.24 (0.21)			0.03 (0.17)			1.11*** (0.17)		
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	-0.16 (0.27)	-0.34° (0.18)	-0.16 (0.29)			-0.46° (0.24)			-1.59*** (0.24)		
Necessary				-0.08** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)						
Severity							0.21*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.02)			
Responsibility										0.16*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.02)
R ²	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.01
Adj. R ²	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.01
Num. obs.	1278	1278	1277	1276	1276	1278	1277	1277	1276	1275	1275
RMSE	1.27	0.83	1.36	1.26	0.84	1.12	1.24	0.83	1.13	1.25	0.83

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$. The attention check was a repeated question about rurality with the responses reverse coded.

D Components of “Pro-Military” Index

Table A4: Confidence in the Military Instead of Preference Intensity

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessary	4. Severity	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.46*** (0.08)	4.54*** (0.06)	2.62*** (0.09)	3.67*** (0.08)	3.13*** (0.08)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.01 (0.12)	0.02 (0.08)	0.06 (0.13)	0.12 (0.10)	0.50*** (0.10)
Confidence Military	-0.02 (0.14)	0.02 (0.10)	0.21 (0.15)	0.10 (0.13)	0.91*** (0.13)
Armed Forces Perp. x Confidence Military	0.12 (0.20)	-0.31* (0.13)	-0.11 (0.21)	-0.35* (0.18)	-1.10*** (0.18)
R ²	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
Adj. R ²	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.03
Num. obs.	1527	1527	1525	1528	1524
RMSE	1.27	0.85	1.36	1.14	1.14

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$

Table A5: Military Budget Increase Instead of Preference Intensity

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessary	4. Severity	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.35*** (0.07)	4.54*** (0.04)	2.65*** (0.07)	3.70*** (0.06)	3.34*** (0.06)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.14 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.06 (0.10)	0.04 (0.08)	0.26** (0.09)
Budget MinDef	0.32* (0.16)	0.00 (0.11)	0.23 (0.17)	0.05 (0.14)	0.77*** (0.14)
Armed Forces Perp. x Budget MinDef	-0.27 (0.22)	-0.28° (0.15)	-0.17 (0.24)	-0.30 (0.20)	-1.00*** (0.20)
R ²	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.02
Num. obs.	1527	1527	1525	1528	1524
RMSE	1.27	0.85	1.36	1.14	1.14

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$

E Effect of Treatment on Attitudes Toward the State

Table A6: Effect of Treatment on Attitudes Toward the State

	Confidence Nat Gov	Ideology	Gov Responsible for Violence
Intercept	1.13*** (0.06)	4.16*** (0.14)	0.41*** (0.03)
Armed Forces Perp.	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.20)	0.00 (0.04)
Pro-Military	2.66*** (0.14)	3.30*** (0.30)	-0.35*** (0.06)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	0.07 (0.19)	0.06 (0.42)	-0.01 (0.08)
R ²	0.35	0.14	0.04
Adj. R ²	0.35	0.14	0.04
Num. obs.	1509	1505	1587
RMSE	0.97	2.14	0.43

Note:*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$. “Confidence Nat Gov” is measured on a 1-5 scale, Ideology is measured on a 1-10 scale, and “Gov Responsible for Violence” is a binary variable indicating whether the respondent thinks that the state was primarily responsible for the violence the individual has experienced. These questions were asked after treatment, whereas the questions that make up the “Pro-Military” index were asked before treatment.

F Mediation Analysis

Neither **Necessity** nor **Severity** nor **Responsibility** is a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between the treatment, **Armed Forces Perpetrator**, and moral **Wrongfulness**. However, the theory suggests that these three mediator variables have different effects on the dependent variables depending on the value of **Pro-Military**. Thus, I conducted a moderated mediation analysis to examine whether the average causal mediation effect (ACME) varies between the case of a **Pro-Military** value of .25 and one of .75. The ACME of **Necessity** does not vary in a statistically significant way across the two values of **Pro-Military**. The ACMEs of **Severity** and **Responsibility** do vary across the two conditions to the level of $p=.1$. When **Pro-Military** is .25, the ACMEs of **Responsibility** and **Severity** are less negative than when **Pro-Military** takes a value of .75. In other words, compared to relatively weak military supporters, relatively strong military supporters designate Armed Forces perpetrators as engaging in less severe violence than guerrilla supporters for which military leadership is less responsible than guerrilla leadership. These altered evaluations of harm and responsibility result in judgements that the violence is less morally wrong.

Turning to desired severity of punishment, none of the three mediator variables, **Necessity**, **Severity**, or **Responsibility**, mediates the relationship between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Punishment** in a statistically significant fashion. The ACME of **Necessary** does not vary across the two examined values of **Pro-Military** (.25 and .75). However, the ACMEs of **Severity** and **Responsibility** do vary (at a $p=.1$ level of statistical significance); at **Pro-Military** values of .25, the ACMEs are more positive than at **Pro-Military** values of .75. In other words, compared to relatively weak military supporters, relatively strong military supporters see Armed Forces violence as less severe than guerrilla violence and less likely to be the responsibility of military leadership than guerrilla leadership. These altered evaluations of the violence against civilians result in a desire for less severe perpetrator punishment.

G Data

Table A7: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N (1,587 total)	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Year Born	1,504	1,987.862	11.276	1,945.000	1,981.000	1,997.000	2,011.000
Woman (1/2)	1,538	1.501	0.500	1.000	1.000	2.000	2.000
Education (0-4)	1,553	3.199	0.827	0.000	3.000	4.000	4.000
Income (0-16)	1,497	10.656	4.937	0.000	8.000	15.000	16.000
Rural	1,552	2.462	1.275	1.000	1.000	3.000	5.000
Accord Necessary	1,549	3.388	1.283	1.000	3.000	4.000	5.000
Confidence Military (0-1)	1,587	0.486	0.323	0.000	0.250	0.750	1.000
Budget Ministry of Defense (0-1)	1,587	0.315	0.294	0.000	0.000	0.500	1.000
Pro-Military (0-1)	1,587	0.401	0.260	0.000	0.250	0.625	1.000
Wrongfulness (1-5)	1,527	3.482	1.267	1.000	3.000	5.000	5.000
Punishment (1-5)	1,527	4.478	0.850	1.000	4.200	5.000	5.000
Necessary (1-5)	1,525	2.724	1.360	1.000	1.000	4.000	5.000
Severity (1-5)	1,528	3.688	1.138	1.000	3.000	5.000	5.000
Responsibility (1-5)	1,524	3.554	1.155	1.000	3.000	4.000	5.000
Ideology (1-10)	1,505	5.439	2.310	1.000	4.000	6.000	10.000
Victimized (0/1)	1,437	0.315	0.465	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
Victimized by Government (0/1)	1,587	0.054	0.225	0	0	0	1
Victimized by Guerrilla (0/1)	1,587	0.141	0.348	0	0	0	1

Table A8: Balance Table, Treatment

Variable	Treatment=0	Treatment =1	Difference
	Guerrilla Perp	State Perp	
Education	3.21	3.19	-.02
Woman	1.49	1.51	.02
Income	10.50	10.80	.30
Rural	2.48	2.45	-.03
Victimized	.30	.33	.03

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$

Table A9: Correlation between Missingness in Dependent Variables

	Wrongfulness NA	Punishment NA	Necessary NA	Severity NA	Responsibility NA
Wrongfulness NA	1	0.965	0.949	0.956	0.941
Punishment NA	0.965	1	0.949	0.956	0.941
Necessary NA	0.949	0.949	1	0.957	0.942
Severity NA	0.956	0.956	0.957	1	0.949
Responsibility NA	0.941	0.941	0.942	0.949	1

Table A10: Balance Table, Punishment Missingness

Variable	Not NA	NA	Difference
Education	2.87	3.21	.34 ^o
Woman	1.63	1.50	-.13
Income	8.42	10.70	2.28*
Rural	2.73	2.46	-.27
Victimized	.50	.32	-.18
Pro-Military	.42	.40	-.020
Armed Forces Perp.	.53	.51	-.02

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^o $p < 0.1$

Table A11: Balance Table, Necessary Missingness

Variable	Not NA	NA	Difference
Education	2.91	3.21	.30
Woman	1.55	1.50	-.050
Income	8.18	10.70	2.52*
Rural	2.82	2.46	-.36
Victimized	.67	.32	-.35
Pro-Military	.41	.40	-.010
Armed Forces Perp.	.53	.51	-.02

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^o $p < 0.1$

H Exploratory Analysis: Centrists

Table A12: Replace Pro-Military with Centrist

	Wrongfulness	Punishments
Intercept	3.37*** (0.06)	4.54*** (0.04)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.09 (0.08)	-0.17*** (0.05)
Center	0.25* (0.10)	0.02 (0.07)
Center x Armed Forces Perp.	-0.08 (0.14)	0.13 (0.09)
R ²	0.01	0.01
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.01
Num. obs.	1525	1525
RMSE	1.26	0.85
R ²	0.01	0.01
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.01
Num. obs.	1525	1525
RMSE	1.26	1.06

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^o $p < 0.1$

I Exploratory Analysis: Wrongfulness

Table A13: Determinants of Wrongfulness

	Wrongfulness	Wrongfulness
(Intercept)	15.88*	16.77*
	(6.56)	(6.73)
Armed Forces Perp	0.04	0.10
	(0.07)	(0.12)
Woman	0.14*	0.14*
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Education	0.00	0.00
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Age	-0.01*	-0.01*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Income	0.02**	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Rural	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Victimized Gov	-0.16	-0.17
	(0.15)	(0.16)
Victimized Guerrilla	0.05	0.05
	(0.10)	(0.10)
Vote	-0.10	-0.10
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Municipal Services	0.08*	0.09*
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Security	0.07	0.07
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Accord Necessary	0.13***	0.12***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Pro-Military		-0.02
		(0.19)
Armed Forces Perp x Pro-Military		-0.15
		(0.26)
R ²	0.04	0.04
Adj. R ²	0.03	0.03
Num. obs.	1384	1384
RMSE	1.25	1.26

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ° $p < 0.1$

J Full Survey Text, English

- In what year were you born?
- What is your gender?
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. Other gender
 99. Prefer not to answer
- In what municipality were you born (e.g. Cali)?
- In what municipality do you live (e.g. Medellín)
- What is the highest level of education you have finished?
 0. None
 1. Primary school
 2. Secondary school
 3. Associate degree
 4. University
- Can you tell me in which of these ranges is your monthly household income, including remittances from abroad and the income of all adults and children who work?
 0. No income
 1. Less than 205.000
 2. Between 205.001 and 325.000
 3. Between 325.001 and 440.000
 4. Between 440.001 and 565.000
 5. Between 565.001 and 650.000
 6. Between 650.001 and 710.000
 7. Between 710.001 and 750.000
 8. Between 750.001 and 810.000
 9. Between 810.001 and 915.000
 10. Between 915.001 and 1.000.000
 11. Between 1.000.001 and 1.250.000
 12. Between 1.250.001 and 1.365.000
 13. Between 1.365.001 and 1.600.000
 14. Between 1.600.001 and 2.000.000
 15. Between 2.000.001 and 3.150.000
 16. More than 3.150.000
 98. Inapplicable (no work or retired)

- What best describes the area in which you live?
 1. Rural area
 2. Small city
 3. Mid-sized city
 4. Large city
 5. National Capital (metropolitan area)
- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “strongly disagree” and 5 indicates “strongly agree,” how much do you agree with the following statement: the peace accord was necessary to end the conflict with the FARC-EP?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree

- On this page we have a scale that goes from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and signifies “none” and 5 is the highest and signifies “a lot.” To what degree do you have confidence in the Armed Forces?

1. None	2.	3.	4.	5. A lot

- What should happen to the budget of the Ministry of Defense?
 1. It should be decreased a lot
 2. It should be decreased a little
 3. It should stay the same
 4. It should be increased a little
 5. It should be increased a lot

Imagine a hypothetical article in the newspaper El Tiempo. Please read the first paragraph of the hypothetical article below, and then please answer several questions about the violence described in the article. Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

“Four civilians, who were not fighting and were not a part of either a non-state armed group or the Colombian Armed Forces, were killed in Antioquia yesterday morning. According to initial reports, the victims were two men and two women; all were shot at close range. The local mayor alleges that the perpetrators were (*leftist dissidents of the FARC / members of the Colombian Armed Forces*).

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “strongly disagree” and 5 indicates “strongly agree,” how much do you agree with the following statement: the violence described in the article above was morally wrong?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree

- What degree of punishment should the perpetrators of the violence described in the above article receive?

1. No punishment/pardon
2. 2 years of house arrest
3. 5 years of house arrest
4. 5 years of imprisonment
5. 15 years of imprisonment
6. Life imprisonment

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “very unlikely” and 5 indicates “very likely,” how likely is it that the violence described in the article above was necessary to achieve military gains? Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

1. Very unlikely	2. Unlikely	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	4. Likely	5. Very likely

- Do you think that the number of victims of the violence described in the above article is very small, small, neither small nor large, large, or very large?

1. Very small
2. Small
3. Neither small nor large
4. Large
5. Very large

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “very unlikely” and 5 indicates “very likely,” how likely is it that the leadership of the organization that the perpetrators belonged to were responsible for the violence described in the article above? Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

1. Very unlikely	2. Unlikely	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	4. Likely	5. Very likely

- On this page we have a scale that goes from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and signifies “none” and 5 is the highest and signifies “a lot.” To what degree do you have confidence in the National Government?

1. None	2.	3.	4.	5. A lot

- On this page we have a scale from 1 to 10 that goes from left to right, in which 1 signifies left and 10 signifies right. Today when we talk about political tendency, many people talk about those that sympathize more with the left or the right. According to the meaning that the terms “left” and “right” have for you when you think about your political point of view, where would you place yourself on this scale?

1 Left	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Right

- Have you lost a family member or close relative as a consequence of the armed conflict, or do you have a relative who was disappeared in the conflict?

0. No
1. Yes

99. Prefer not to answer

if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- Which type of actor or actors were responsible? Indicate all that apply.

1. Guerrillas
 2. Paramilitaries
 3. BACRIM (criminal bands)
 4. The army
 5. The police
 6. Other
98. Don't know
99. Prefer not to answer

- Would you say that the services the municipality is giving to the people are?

1. Very bad (awful)	2. Bad	3. Neither good nor bad (regular)	4. (Good)	5. Very good

- Speaking of the place or neighborhood where you live and thinking about the possibility of being a victim of assault or robbery, do you feel very insecure, somewhat insecure, somewhat secure, or very secure?

1. Very insecure	2. Somewhat insecure	3. Somewhat secure	4. Very secure

- Did you vote in the second round of presidential elections in June of 2018?

0. No
 1. Yes
99. Prefer not to Answer

if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- Who did you vote for?

1. Iván Duque
2. Gustavo Petro

99. Prefer not to answer
- In your opinion, which is the principal actor responsible for the violence youve lived through in Colombia?
 1. Guerrillas
 2. Paramilitaries
 3. BACRIM (criminal bands)
 4. The army
 5. The police
 6. Other
 7. All
 - 99. Prefer not to answer
 - What best describes the area in which you live?
 5. National Capital (metropolitan area)
 4. Large city
 3. Mid-sized city
 2. Small city
 1. Rural area
 - Imagine that (*no new information emerged about the false positives / the JEP found that former President Uribe ordered the false positives, but he continued to deny involvement / the JEP found that former President Uribe ordered the false positives, and he apologized for his involvement*). What degree of punishment do you think former President Uribe should receive for the false positives?
 1. No punishment/pardon
 2. 2 years of house arrest
 3. 5 years of house arrest
 4. 5 years of imprisonment
 5. 15 years of imprisonment
 6. Life imprisonment

K Full Survey Text, Spanish

- ¿En qu año nació?
- ¿Usted se considera?
 1. Hombre
 2. Mujer
 3. Otro género
 99. Me niego a contestar
- ¿En qué municipio nació usted (p. ej Cali)?
- ¿En qué municipio vive usted (p. ej Medellín)?
- ¿Cul es el nivel educativo ms alto alcanzado por usted?
 0. Ninguno
 1. Primario
 2. Secundario o bachillerato
 3. Técnico / Tecnólogo
 4. Universitario
- ¿En cuál de los siguientes rangos se encuentran los ingresos familiares mensuales de este hogar, incluyendo las remesas del exterior y el ingreso de todos los adultos e hijos que trabajan?
 0. Ningún ingreso
 1. Menos que 205.000
 2. Entre 205.001 y 325.000
 3. Entre 325.001 y 440.000
 4. Entre 440.001 y 565.000
 5. Entre 565.001 y 650.000
 6. Entre 650.001 y 710.000
 7. Entre 710.001 y 750.000
 8. Entre 750.001 y 810.000
 9. Entre 810.001 y 915.000
 10. Entre 915.001 y 1.000.000
 11. Entre 1.000.001 y 1.250.000
 12. Entre 1.250.001 y 1.365.000
 13. Entre 1.365.001 y 1.600.000
 14. Entre 1.600.001 y 2.000.000
 15. Entre 2.000.001 y 3.150.000
 16. Más que 3.150.000

98. Inaplicable (no trabaja ni está jubilado)

- ¿Cul categoria describe mejor el área en dónde usted vive?

1. Área rural
2. Ciudad pequeño
3. Ciudad mediana
4. Ciudad grande
5. Capital Nacional (área metropolitana)

- ¿En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es “muy en desacuerdo” y 5 es “muy de acuerdo,” hasta qué punto est de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la siguiente frase: El acuerdo de paz era necesario para finalizar el conflicto con las FARC-EP?

1. Muy en desacuerdo	2. En desacuerdo	3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4. De acuerdo	5. Muy de acuerdo

- En esta página hay una escalera con escalones numerados del 1 a 5, en la cual 1 es el escalón ms bajo y significa “nada” y el 5 es el escalón más alto y significa “mucho.” ¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en las Fuerzas Armadas?

1. Nada	2.	3.	4.	5. Mucho

- ¿Qu debe pasar con el presupuesto del Ministerio de Defensa?

1. Debe ser reducido mucho
2. Debe ser reducido un poco
3. Debe quedar igual
4. Debe ser aumentado un poco
5. Debe ser aumentado mucho

Imagine un artículo hipotético en el peridico El Tiempo. Por favor lea el primer párrafo de este artculo hipotético ubicado a continuación, y luego por favor conteste las preguntas sobre la violencia descrita en el artculo. Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

“Cuatro civiles, que no estaban luchando y que no eran miembros de ningún grupo armado ni de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia, fueron asesinados en Antioquia ayer por la mañana. Según los primeros datos, las vctimas fueron dos hombres y dos mujeres; a todos les dispararon a corta distancia. El alcalde del municipio alega que los perpetradores fueron (*izquierdistas disidentes de las FARC / miembros de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia*).”

- ¿En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es “muy en desacuerdo” y 5 es “muy de acuerdo,” hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la siguiente frase: la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior fue moralmente incorrecta?

1. Muy en desacuerdo	2. En desacuerdo	3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4. De acuerdo	5. Muy de acuerdo

- ¿Qué tipo de sanción merecen los perpetradores de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior?

1. Ningún castigo/perdón
2. 2 años de detención domiciliaria
3. 5 años de detención domiciliaria
4. 5 años en el cárcel
5. 15 años en el cárcel
6. Cadena perpetua

- En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es “nada probable” y 5 es “muy probable,” ¿qué tan probable es que la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior fuera necesaria para lograr objetivos militares? Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

1. Nada probable	2. No muy probable	3. Ni probable ni no probable	4. Probable	5. Muy probable

- ¿Cree usted que el número de víctimas de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior es muy bajo, bajo, ni bajo ni alto, alto, o muy alto?

1. Muy bajo
2. Bajo
3. Ni bajo ni alto
4. Alto
5. Muy alto

- En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es “nada probable” y 5 es “muy probable,” ¿qué tan probable es que los líderes de la organización a la que los perpetradores pertenecen fueran responsables de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior? Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

1. Nada probable	2. No muy probable	3. Ni probable ni no probable	4. Probable	5. Muy probable

- En esta página hay una escalera con escalones numerados del 1 a 5, en la cual 1 es el escalón ms bajo y significa “nada” y el 5 es el escalón más alto y significa “mucho.” ¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Gobierno Nacional?

1. Nada	2.	3.	4.	5. Mucho

- En esta página tenemos una escala del 1 a 10 que va de izquierda a derecha, en la que el 1 significa izquierda y el 10 significa derecha. Hoy en día cuando se habla de tendencias políticas, mucha gente habla de aquellos que simpatizan ms con la izquierda o con la derecha. Según el sentido que tengan para usted los términos “izquierda” y “derecha” cuando piensa sobre su punto de vista político, ¿dónde se encontraría usted en esta escala?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Izquierda									Derecha

- ¿Usted ha perdido algún miembro de su familia o pariente cercano a consecuencia del conflicto armado, o tiene un familiar desaparecido por el conflicto?

0. No

- 1. Sí
- 99. Me niego a contestar

if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- ¿Qué tipo de actor o actores fueron responsables? Por favor marque todos los que apliquen.

- 1. La guerrilla
- 2. Los paramilitares
- 3. BACRIM (Bandas criminales)
- 4. El ejército
- 5. La policía
- 6. Otro
- 98. No sé
- 99. Me niego a contestar

- ¿Dira usted que los servicios que la municipalidad está dando a la gente son:

1. Muy malos (pésimos)	2. Malos	3. Ni buenos ni malos (regulares)	4. Buenos	5. Muy buenos

- Hablando del lugar o el barrio donde usted vive y pensando en la posibilidad de ser víctima de un asalto o robo, ¿usted se siente muy inseguro(a), algo inseguro(a), algo seguro(a) o muy seguro(a)?

1. Muy inseguro(a)	2. Algo inseguro(a)	3. Algo seguro(a)	4. Muy seguro(a)

- ¿Votó usted en la segunda ronda de las elecciones presidenciales en mayo del 2018?

- 0. No
- 1. Sí
- 99. Me niego a contestar

if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- ¿Por quién votó usted?

- 1. Iván Duque

2. Gustavo Petro
 99. Me niego a contestar
- En su opinión, ¿cuál o cuales son los principales responsables de la violencia que se ha vivido en Colombia?
 1. La guerrilla
 2. Los paramilitares
 3. BACRIM (Bandas criminales)
 4. El ejército
 5. La policía
 6. Otro
 7. Todos
 99. Me niego a contestar
 - ¿Cuál categoría describe mejor el área en dónde vive usted?
 5. Capital Nacional (área metropolitana)
 4. Ciudad grande
 3. Ciudad mediana
 2. Ciudad pequeña
 1. Área rural
 - Suponga que (*no hay información nueva sobre los falsos positivos / la JEP se entera de que el expresidente Uribe ordenó los falsos positivos, pero él continúa negándose a aceptarlo / la JEP se entera de que el expresidente Uribe ordenó los falsos positivos, y él se disculpa por su involucramiento*). Qué tipo de sanción merece el expresidente Uribe por los falsos positivos?
 1. Ningún castigo/perdón
 2. 2 años de detención domiciliaria
 3. 5 años de detención domiciliaria
 4. 5 años en el cárcel
 5. 15 años en el cárcel
 6. Cadena perpetua

L Deviations from the Pre-Analysis Plan

Below are the hypotheses from the Pre-Analysis Plan (PAP) for this project. PAP *Cause Bias Hypothesis 3*, PAP *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 3*, and PAP *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 3* are identical to what are now called the *Cause Bias Hypothesis 2*, the *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 2*, and the *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 2*.

- (PAP) *Punishment Hypothesis 1*: People are less likely to believe that the perpetrators should be harshly punished when violence against civilians is committed by their preferred armed group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Punishment Hypothesis 2*: The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 1*: People are more likely to believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 2*: The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 3*: People who believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 1*: People are more likely to believe that violence against civilians causes relatively little harm when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 2*: The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 3*: People who believe that violence against civilians causes relatively little harm are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.
- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 1*: People are less likely to believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 2*: The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 3*: People who believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.

However, there are several differences to note. First, the PAP hypotheses refer to individuals' "preferred armed group" while the manuscript refers to individuals' "preferred side." This change does not affect the methodology used or the interpretation of the results.

More importantly, all PAP hypotheses numbered 2 have been combined with the PAP hypotheses numbered 1. While writing the paper, I found three reasons to combine them.

First, PAP hypotheses 1 are nested within PAP hypotheses 2; PAP hypotheses 2 contemplate the possibility that the phenomenon described in PAP hypotheses 1 varies by the strength of preference. Second, in combining these two sets of hypotheses, I have prioritized for parsimony the models with fewer assumptions. In the PAP, I assumed that the sample would, on average, be more supportive of the military than of the guerrillas. Thus, in terms of testing PAP hypotheses 1, I predicted that respondents on average would characterize guerrilla violence as more morally wrong, more worthy of harsher punishment, less militarily necessary, more harmful, and more likely to be the responsibility of group leadership compared to military violence. The manuscript’s revised hypotheses do not require an assumption about the average preferences of the sample. Lastly, an examination of the data led me to reconsider the assumption that the sample would strongly prefer the armed forces. As Table A14 shows, in models which do not take into account **Pro-Military** attitudes or their interaction with the treatment, the treatment **Armed Forces Perpetrator** affects only perceptions of appropriate **Punishment** but not any other dependent variables.

Table A14: Non-Interactive Results

	1: Moral Wrongfulness	2: Punishment	3: Necessary	4: Severity	5: Responsibility
Intercept	3.45*** (0.05)	4.55*** (0.03)	2.72*** (0.05)	3.72*** (0.04)	3.58*** (0.04)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.06 (0.06)	-0.13** (0.04)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)
R ²	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Adj. R ²	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Num. obs.	1527	1527	1525	1528	1524
RMSE	1.27	0.85	1.36	1.14	1.15

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^o $p < 0.1$

In terms of methodology, there are a few other changes to note. First, several variables have been rescaled for ease of interpretation; this rescaling was not discussed in the PAP but does not affect the results. More importantly, in the PAP, the variable **Pro-Military** was to be an index of three variables rather than the two used in the manuscript. Originally, the index was to include responses to a question about agreement with the peace accord (**Accord Necessary**). This variable is now included in the exploratory section on Centrists; the variable **Center** combines all three questions which were originally going to make up the index. As that section indicates, the results change when support for the peace accord is taken into account. That is likely because the question about the peace accord is not an effective measure of support for the military. For example, the correlation between **Accord Necessary** and **Budget Ministry of Defense** is -.08, and the correlation between **Accord Necessary** and **Confidence Military** is -.02. In contrast, the correlation between **Budget Ministry of Defense** and **Confidence Military** is much higher: .42.