

# Trust and Prospective Reconciliation: Evidence From a Protracted Armed Conflict

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## Abstract

Traditional approaches to international aid deal with post-conflict risks focusing on external safeguards for peacebuilding, leaving local social enhancers playing a subsidiary role. Trust has long been highlighted as a key factor that can positively affect sustainable peace efforts by reducing intergroup hostility. Surprisingly, most post-conflict studies deal with trust as a dependent variable. Using a cross-sectional multi-method field study in Colombia, we assess the impact of trust on prospective reconciliation in the midst of an ongoing peace process. We find that trust in ex-combatants and in government increases the likelihood of having positive attitudes towards future reconciliation and willingness to support not only the peace process but reconciliation activities after war. We offer evidence supporting the idea that rather than drawing exclusively on economic and military capabilities, investing in local governance infrastructures that promote prosocial behaviour and positive belief management in the pre-reconciliation face offers a complementary alternative to help societies exit civil wars while tackling barriers to peacebuilding efforts in the initial stages of a post-conflict.

## Keywords

trust, prospective reconciliation, post-conflict risk management, prosocial behaviour, peacebuilding, Colombia

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At the dawn of the 21st century, many societies initiated peace processes to end civil conflicts. Nevertheless, countries such as Ethiopia, Myanmar, and India have failed to overcome political and social violence and have experienced new episodes of civil conflict. They face the risk of falling into conflict traps, while the social divisions produced by war continue to deepen. In order to explore possible alternatives to the challenges posed by post-conflict risk management and sustainable peacebuilding, we identify two gaps in the literature that motivate us to study trust in the context of a protracted conflict.

First, traditional perspectives on international aid deal with post-conflict risks focusing on external safeguards (e.g., military, economic, and infrastructural strengthening), leaving internal enhancers of peace (e.g., measures targeting trust, prejudice reduction, peaceful collective action, shared economic entrepreneurship, or community-based policymaking) to play a somewhat subsidiary role. Second, trust has long been suspected to constitute a driver that can positively affect sustainable peacebuilding at large. Surprisingly, our review of the literature shows that while most conflict resolution and peacebuilding research deals with trust as a dependent variable, there are few attempts to study trust as an independent factor in post-conflict settings. In order to help fill these gaps, we argue that the interaction between different domains of trust: trust in national government, interpersonal trust, and trust in local actors that are protagonists of the peace agreements (victims and ex-combatants), increases the willingness of people in areas affected by conflict to reconcile and support peacebuilding at the subnational level.

We choose Colombian society as an appropriate case study because since 2016, it has been facing these institutional and social challenges. In 2017, Colombia's government and the oldest guerrilla organisation in the western hemisphere put a formal end to 52 years of civil war and allowed the remaining 7,000 fighters of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) to reintegrate into the nation's life and politics. The war between 1958 and 2013 has led to as many as 220,000 deaths, 25,000 missing persons, and 5.7 million displaced Colombians (Centro de Memoria Histórica -Center for Historical Memory, 2013). One in three of the 8.6 million registered victims of the conflict are children. However, as the war with FARC seems to reach its termination, the possibility of successful and sustainable peacebuilding is increasingly possible.

During the last 30 years, Colombia has had more than nine peace negotiations and has multiple times attempted the process of demobilisation for illegal armed groups (A. J. Cárdenas et al., 2018; López, 2016, p. 313). Since hostilities between the parties have not resumed, these agreements can be seen only as partial agreements. Uribe (2018, p. 170), inspired by Nasi (2007, p. 40), argues from an historical perspective of the Colombian war that the current agreement between the government and FARC is a partial agreement since violence continues with other hostile actors. Its success can be considered a necessary condition to ensure the transition to peace; however, it is not a sufficient condition to the extent that narco-paramilitary structures and other guerrillas such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and rearmed FARC factions persist in their armed challenge against the state. The latter situation implies that the termination of the armed conflict with FARC does not guarantee peace in Colombia or an end to conflict but opens a post-peace agreement scenario in the midst of a multi-front armed conflict that faces multiple security threats posed by a variety of criminal, insurgent, and political organisations.

Colombia is a middle-income South American nation that lacks the institutional capacity necessary to fulfil its own landmark agreement to end the war. Colombians perceive theirs to be a weak state unable to deliver on promises made to its citizens in the past. Collier and Hoeffler (2008) have evidenced that post-conflict peace is typically fragile: Nearly half of all civil wars are due to post-conflict relapses. The reduction of the risk of a recurring conflict is one of the two main challenges to be managed to avoid relapse. As depicted previously, societal violence, incentives for recidivism, the presence of illegal economies, and the absence of legitimate and trustworthy institutions to solve conflicts and enforce social order are the main risks that Colombia as a transitional society may fail to reduce (Casas & Méndez, 2016).

Using a multi-method field study developed by the authors between 2015 and 2017 in five subregions of Colombia with the participation of nearly 5,000 nationals, the article analyses the role of trust in the con-

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text of an ongoing transition to peace with one of the major insurgent groups in the world. Specifically, we analyse the impact of two dimensions of trust on future reconciliation (prospective reconciliation).<sup>1</sup> We find that two domains of trust matter for peacebuilding efforts. “Trust in ex-combatants (intergroup trust) and in national government (political trust) increase the likelihood of having positive attitudes and support towards reconciliation.” Although these attitudes might not be enough to keep countries free of violence, observational and experimental evidence has found that trust matters for peacebuilding efforts and the implementation of transitional justice policies.

Our argument unfolds through five sections. First, we present the review of the literature related to transitions from war to peace and the findings regarding trust and prospective reconciliation. Second, we present the key analytical categories tackled by the theory of our study. Measures, methods, and data used in the analyses are introduced in the subsequent section. Section 4 presents the results of the logistic regression models. The article concludes with a brief discussion about our findings and their implications for future policy applications.

The article seeks to contribute to the literature on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international aid policies by filling a gap in the relationship between trust and peacebuilding. Specifically, it offers an empirical account on trust as a socio-psychological resource that can complement traditional approaches to peacebuilding. Fostering trust may help make peace more secure and sustainable as a local enhancer for peace, as it fosters positive perceptions, attitudes and beliefs during the pre-reconciliation phase helping societies better prepare to tackle post-conflict risks.

### ***Why Is Trust Important for Post-Peace Agreement Societies?***

Post-conflict peace is typically fragile: Nearly half of all civil wars are due to conflict relapsing following a peace agreement (Collier & Hoeffler, 2008). In 2015, Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015) reported that in spite of a positive trend regarding the number of peace agreements reached, several peace processes remained unstable. Many countries fail to overcome political and social violence falling into “conflict traps” (Collier & Sambanis, 2002; Hegre et al., 2011), while the social divisions produced by the war continue to deepen (Walter, 2011). There is little consensus on the most effective policies to avert conflicts or promote post-war recovery (Blattman & Miguel, 2010). As Collier and Hoeffler (2008) have argued, post-conflict societies face two distinctive challenges: economic recovery and the reduction of the risk of a recurring conflict. As these authors empirically assessed, aid and policy reforms have been found to be effective in economic recovery. However, the authors remain sceptical of the power of political measures and institutional reforms to manage the risk of violent relapse.

Formal reforms and top-down administrative transformations fall short in generating a coordinated change in expectations and behaviours that will dramatically reduce the probability of relapse. On their attempt to empirically assess the conventional rules of thumb prescribed by traditional policy approaches, Collier and Hoeffler argue that post-conflict risk management in settings as described above relies upon external safeguards such as military, economic, and infrastructural strengthening.<sup>2</sup> Their results rule out aid to foster internal enhancers for peace, such as strengthening prosocial processes and citizen dispositions and motivations.

The high variance of the occurrence of post-conflict risks and restrictions of available data in previous analysis (Blattman & Miguel, 2010) can explain the blind spot left by mainstream views that focus on external safeguards. Micro-level (e.g., intrapersonal perceptions related to attitudes, knowledge and social practices) and meso-level perspectives (e.g., evidence regarding biases, beliefs, and dispositions

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of a societies' everyday life. Thus, it is worth paying attention to the cognitive barriers that underlie the macro processes associated with post-conflict risks. Biases and heuristics, norms, mental models, and cues from the environment in the form of perceived incentives matter. They can trigger or curb behaviours that may either increase or decrease the probability of occurrence of the threats related to post-peace agreement risks such as violent or criminal recidivism or intergroup violence.

between groups) of post-conflict risk management draw on the idea that armed conflicts generate collective shocks that have long-term persistence. These micro and meso factors mould the psyche of members of a given society and are expressed in the intrapersonal and the interpersonal domains

## **Trust, Peacebuilding, and Prospective Reconciliation**

Given the bottom-up nature of trust, the literature and practice on peacebuilding and reconciliation can benefit from a micro-social perspective. This section aims to build the analytical bridges as a prelude for our theoretical proposal. Peacebuilding approaches and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and rebuilding processes are normative frameworks in nature. They orient most policy interventions to facilitate transitions from war to peace. In both frameworks, reconciliation has been posited as a key process and as a final ideal outcome. The literature shows that an empirical gap remains on the specific causes and means to reach peace and reconciliation and on the possible role of trust in fostering both outcomes.

### **Trust**

The growing literature on trust and trustworthiness recognizes them as “lubricants” of the socioeconomic system, substitutes of formal contracts, and as factors which significantly reduce transaction costs in social and economic interactions by helping to enforce cooperative agreements in bilateral sequential exchanges (Becchetti et al., 2014).

As we previously pointed out, the literature on trust and peacebuilding has analysed trust as a dependent variable affected by factors related to conflicts. In-group attitudes, intergroup contact (J. C. Cárdenas et al., 2014; De Tezanos-Pinto & Mazziotta, 2017; Hewstone et al., 2014), security in settings under ongoing violent conflict (Vélez et al., 2016), the presence of armed actors (Arjona, 2014; Gáfaro et al., 2015), collective memory (Rothstein, 2000; Rydgren & Sofi, 2017), truth-telling processes (Casey & Glennerster, 2016; Rose-Ackerman, 2001), and reconciliation processes are some of these examples.

Trust has been identified as one of the most important factors in intergroup relations, conflict management, and resolution at large (Alon & Bar-Tal, 2016). Our article follows Bauer et al's (2014, p. 47) evidence regarding that “greater exposure to war created a lasting increase in people's egalitarian motivations toward their in-group, but not their out-groups [...] ‘war effects’ are broadly consistent with predictions from evolutionary approaches that emphasize the importance of group cooperation in defending against external threats.” This fact is aligned with a trend in recent experimental field research in economics that finds that internal armed conflicts have negative effects on some domains of trust but not on others, such as in-group trust in some specific contexts (Méndez, 2014).

## **Peacebuilding**

In relation to specific effects of trust on war, peace, and peacebuilding, the literature has focused attention especially in two domains: (a) how institutional trust facilitates transitions and (b) how interpersonal trust facilitates in-group/out-group dynamics. Wong (2016) finds that people are more likely to trust governments that are willing to listen and respond to their needs and demands. Additionally, results from a mediation analysis indicate that if government performance has any effect, it is transmitted through the responsiveness mechanism. De Juan and Pierskalla (2016) show how wartime effects on trust in state institutions are particularly relevant for political stability in the aftermath of violent conflict.

If people distrust the state, they are less likely to endorse reform plans, will be less inclined to comply with state rules and regulations, and may uphold support for challengers of state authority. In the long term, these positive attitudes towards state reforms might lead to an open democratic discussion about what institutional designs should be more appropriate for peacebuilding. Overall, institutional designs based on more tolerant attitudes amongst former enemies are conducive to a self-enforcing peace (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2003).

Trust also may help influence factors that drive intergroup violence: parochial attitudes, dehumanisation, vicarious retribution, and competitive victimhood. Measures regarding trust as a moderator or as a mediator of the use of violence in in-group and out-group interactions, support and participation for inclusion in economic life, and cognitive mobilisation in support of transition policies are yet to be further studied. For example, trust may help ease the security dilemma that emerges from pressures ex-combatants face in returning to civilian life and to their families. Thus, reducing the probability of relapse of group violence. Trust can also foster cognitive mobilisation of support towards public officials, organisations, and political institutions by the local population (Wong, 2016) and motivate commitment and compliance with the law (Blind, 2006).

## **Prospective Reconciliation**

In order to empirically explore the relationship between trust, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, the first step then is to establish empirically how a social factor can act as a buffer to post-conflict or post-peace agreement risks. To do so, trust needs to be treated as an independent variable. A second step is to establish what domains of trust are involved and isolate their effects on key processes and expected outcomes of transitions to peace, such as reconciliation.

Reconciliation has been identified as a key ingredient of successful post-conflict societies. By its very nature, the concept remains undefined, as reconciliation has been considered to be both an outcome and a process (Bloomfield et al., 2003; Lederach, 1998). Most accounts convey the idea that reconciliation consists in the re-establishment of interaction between antagonists or improbable actors in a post-conflict era (Aiken, 2010; Aquino et al., 2006; Rushton, 2006). However, the mainstream definition for reconciliation is problematic since in protracted armed conflicts such as the Colombian, most citizens that benefitted by the 2016 peace agreement were not likely alive when the war started, and previous relations between actors were far from harmonious back in the 1960s or during the posterior stages of the war. In that regard, it is naïve to think that strict reconciliation is likely between contemporary Colombian society and FARC ex-combatants.

Pertinent and effective peacebuilding policies in such a context may benefit from this observation. Since reconciliation is something that can only be seen in the long run, after a protracted armed conflict, it materializes in the establishment of peaceful interactions, not their restitution. Given the long

**Table 1.** Types of Trust at Micro and Macro Context.

Level	Unit of Analysis	Type of Trust
Micro	In-group (relatives and neighbours) Out-group (victims and ex-combatants)	Interpersonal trust Trust in ex-combatants Trust in victims
Macro	Institutions (formal/public organisations)	Political trust

term of protracted conflicts, after a peace agreement, antagonists face the challenge of overcoming the barriers that block the generation of peaceful relations amongst old enemies.

The present study is about prospective reconciliation, not reconciliation itself. Prospective reconciliation is the perceived likelihood that future reconciliation is possible in settings where protracted

***Prospective reconciliation is the perceived likelihood that future reconciliation is possible in settings where protracted dynamics of conflict demand the development of new peaceful ties between former enemies.***

dynamics of conflict demand the development of new peaceful ties between former enemies. It is useful to explore expectations and dispositions between actors that have previously interacted through the harsh interactions of violent settings. In cases such as the Colombian, we are talking about generations of intergroup hostility with long-term legacies. The study of prospective

reconciliation is important because positive perceptions towards actors such as victims and ex-combatants can create favourable conditions or ease peacebuilding efforts.

The surveys we developed between 2015 and 2017 allowed us to gather future-oriented attitudes and dispositions towards prospective reconciliation and peace during the pre-reconciliation process.

## Theory

When analysing reconciliation processes, scholars have advocated for a parallel process at the micro-level (inter-group interaction procedures focusing on improving perceptions and relationships between persons from different social groups) and macro-level factors (such as rules, organisations and policy processes) which address broader societal needs and demands in the aftermath of conflict (Ugarriza & Nussio, 2017, p. 31). Based on this approach, we argue that trust is not a monolithic phenomenon exclusive of a unidimensional aspect of reality. Table 1 shows how different sorts of trust affect in a differentiated way the dispositions of individuals to engage in reconciliation activities.

At the micro social level, interpersonal trust is important because it is usually described in the literature as “the ability to regain empathy for another” (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004, p. 567). This kind of trust is positively associated with prosocial behaviour, especially with altruism, courtesy and cooperation with different groups. These behaviours are important for individuals in order to be willing to support reconciliation, after a peace treaty. The other key aspect of trust at the micro-level is trust in victims and ex-combatants. Trust, among previously antagonist groups involved in the transition from war to peace, becomes crucial for reconciliation to take place. In such a context, citizens can develop discriminatory attitudes against ex-combatants, or become pessimistic towards the reintegration process, reducing the perceived probability that a society can reconcile. (Barbosa et al., 2019).

Trust also has a positive effect on other attitudes that favour potential reconciliation such as the recognition and tolerance towards groups of victims and ex-combatants, and in general, preferences towards negotiated solutions for the end of civil wars.

The micro social dimension and the macro-level in this context meet through political trust, which refers to an issue-oriented perspective whereby citizens become trustful or distrustful of government because they are satisfied or dissatisfied with policy alternatives and public organisational performance. Organisational political trust can be further subdivided into the components of diffuse or system-based trust (Blind, 2006). It means that a specific or institution-based political trust could be directed towards many organisations such as Congress or the local police force. We follow Hetherington's (1998) proposal, by understanding "political trust as a basic evaluative orientation towards the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people's normative expectations" (p. 791). As a result, we measure political trust towards different state institutions such as the national and local government, security forces, Congress, the judiciary, and so forth.

According to our theoretical expectations, our hypotheses are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** As trust in state institutions increases, the perception of prospective reconciliation increases amongst people that live in areas with presence of armed actors such as guerrillas and paramilitary groups.

**Hypothesis 2:** Higher levels of interpersonal trust increase prospective reconciliation amongst people that live in areas with presence of armed actors such as guerrillas and paramilitary groups.

**Hypothesis 3:** Higher levels of trust in groups that participate directly in peacebuilding such as ex-combatants and victims increase the likelihood of positive attitudes towards prospective reconciliation amongst people that live in areas with presence of armed actors such as guerrillas and paramilitary groups.

**Hypothesis 4:** Higher levels of trust in groups that participate directly in peacebuilding such as ex-combatants and victims increase the likelihood of other positive attitudes towards prospective reconciliation such as tolerance and willingness to support peaceful negotiation as the preferred option to terminate the war.

### *Data and Measurements*

The Colombian case seems appropriate to analyse the effect of trust on the perceptions and dispositions to support peace and reconciliation after a protracted armed conflict. Data were obtained from an applied policy intervention developed in Colombia between November 2015 and March 2017. With the support of European Union, the Colombian Government, the "Tejiendo Acciones de Paz" project was implemented by the authors as part of the team from the Colombian non-profit Corpovisionarios (<http://corpovisionarios.org/?#Intro>). The project assessed the social effects of the New Territories of Peace (NTP) program, analysing collective action, trust, the perception of security, and victimisation after exposure to the program's activities. NTP was one of the largest governmental programs implemented by Prosperidad Social since 2011 with the support of the European Union for peacebuilding in the midst of war.

The evaluation of the NTP program was based on the characterisation and diagnosis of each one of the five departments of the country involved in the program. We developed a baseline through the application of economic experiments and a specific survey, focus groups, a representative survey and interviews with key actors, in order to obtain a complex vision of local realities. The assessment was conducted in the departments of Atlántico, Magdalena, Bolívar, Guaviare, and Caquetá. The first three were affected by the presence of paramilitary control in the northern part of the country. The latter two were marked by the historical presence of FARC in the south. In total, the project had the participation of 4,620 people, 2,198 women, 2,386, men and 36 who did not register gender information. Specifically, the project included 644 participants from Guaviare, 614 from Caqueta, 1,005 from Atlántico, 1,010 from Bolívar, and 1,028 from Magdalena. The survey respondents were selected because of their

participation in the NTP Program. The Colombian government chose these five departments<sup>3</sup> because they already had some peacebuilding projects from European Union, given the high impact of hostilities amongst those territories.

The data analysed in this article have two sources: a representative survey for all five departments and from an additional post-game survey that was applied after economic field experiments were implemented. On the one hand, the representative survey had a multistage probabilistic sample, and it was applied to 3,200 participants, 1,605 women, and 1,595 men. This survey was applied to the overall population in the five departments that were NTP operated. In contrast, the surveys conducted after economic experiments were applied to 1,101 people that participated in NTP (450 women and 615 men) in the same five departments. In this case, the sampling method was not probabilistic because the economic experiment was applied intentionally to participants of the program. The survey applied in both sources is comparable in terms of the questionnaire used.

### *Dependent Variables*

The main dependent variables that allow us to operationalize attitudes towards reconciliation are included in the representative survey: the individual level of support amongst people for the perception regarding whether it is possible for society to reconcile with FARC, the probability of successful implementation of the peace agreement, and the support for a military or negotiated solution to the armed conflict. The attitudes variables are the positive responses of survey respondents to four questions. The first question was: “Do you consider that Colombian citizens can be reconciled with members of FARC?” In this question, 1 identifies people who think that reconciliation is possible, while 0 corresponds to those who think that it is impossible (mean = 0.49, standard deviation = 0.50). The second question inquired: Do you believe that the agreements derived from signing the peace agreements with FARC will be fulfilled?, in which 1 is people that believed that the peace agreement will be implemented while 0 identify that it will not be fulfilled (mean = 0.44, standard deviation = 0.49). The third question was “What is the best solution for the armed conflict, to negotiate or to use military force?” 1 identifies people who believe that negotiation is the solution to the armed conflict, while 0 identifies people who prefer an armed solution (Mean = 0.93, standard deviation = 0.25).

For the data based on the stakeholders survey, models were estimated using two dependent variables that are also connected to the concept of prospective reconciliation. They are related with the possible solutions to ending war and tolerance towards groups participating in the peace process. Similarly, to the previous model of the representative survey, the dependent variable takes a value of 1 when the best solution to end the civil war is negotiation, and 0 when the best solution is to use military force. In the second model, the analysis also includes a proxy of tolerance, measured as the preference for specific groups to have as neighbours. A value of 1 is assigned when “ex-combatants” and “victims” are not mentioned as the groups that people do not prefer to have as neighbours.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables included in the different models were trust in institutions,<sup>4</sup> acquaintances, in victims, and the perception of whether demobilized are willing to tell the truth. The first set of variables about trust allow testing the theoretical argument of this article, since, as stated in the theoretical argument, these types of trust can be positively associated with attitudes and disposition of individuals to be reconciled, in departments that have been affected by the armed conflict. Trust in national government (mean = 2.48, standard deviation = 0.97) and security Institutions trust (mean = 3.04, standard deviation = 0.87) were measured on a scale from 1 to 4, where 4 means that the citizens trusted more in these institutions and 1 for those who trusted less in these institutions. Interpersonal trust was measured on a



scale of 1–4, where 4 indicated that the person trusted his family and friends and 1 that the person had no trust on her immediate circle (mean = 2.71, standard deviation = .63).

Finally, for the variables trust in demobilized (mean = 1.53, standard deviation = 1.52) and victims (mean = 1.99, standard deviation = 1.60), we aggregated the options “ex-combatants” and “victims” when the survey asked people about what groups they would not like to have as neighbours. These variables are on a scale where 0 means the lowest level of tolerance on “ex-combatants” and victims and 4 the highest tolerance level.

### **Control Variables**

Control variables are included in the model because they might be associated with individuals being more willing to be reconciled. Sociodemographic variables such as age, education, and economic income were included to the extent that older, more educated, and higher income individuals are more willing to be reconciled. Gender was also incorporated as a relevant variable since some studies have shown that men are more willing to be reconciled than women (Angulo et al., 2014). Our expectation is that those who have lived through the war as survivors (mostly women) tend to trust less and be less open when it comes to taking risks that affect their families. Therefore, women will be less willing to reconcile.

Finally, a control was included about the extent that individuals believed that ex-combatants were going to tell the truth about their actions. This variable measures whether people believe that the demobilized are willing to tell the whole truth about crimes, which is one of the main objectives of transitional justice. Another control included community participation, which measures whether or not the person has participated in any community organisation. The expectation is that individuals who trust transitional justice mechanisms and who participated more actively in their community were more willing to be reconciled.

### **Findings**

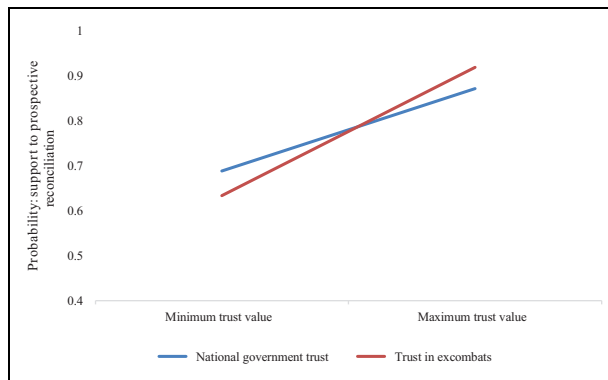
Table 2 presents the results of the logistic models with fixed effects by municipalities based on the data of the representative survey that was discussed in the data section. Four models were estimated, but only three are presented, since the variables of trust in security institutions and community participation were not significant. The first model include as a predictor trust in national government; in the second model, we introduce the other principal predictor of our article, trust in ex-combatants, and in the third model control variables are incorporated.<sup>5</sup> We include logit coefficients and odds ratio as quantity of interests. As opposed to probabilities from 0 to 1, odds ratio are determined from probabilities and range between 0 and infinity. An odds ratio is a helpful way to interpret logistic regression results, as it quantifies the strength of the association between two variables.

Our results indicate that trust in its different dimensions affects the perception that reconciliation with the demobilized groups is possible. This is particularly true for the variables of trust in government and trust in ex-combatants. In addition, the results show that the different types of trust have a differentiated effect on the probability of prospective reconciliation, especially trust with respect to the two main actors that led the conflict. This result can be explained by the extent that people attribute to the government the capacity to guarantee the implementation of post-peace agreement policies. Figure 1 shows that the probability of supporting a prospective reconciliation increases by 18%<sup>6</sup> when people have more confidence in the government, compared to people who have less trust in the national government. The likelihood of supporting prospective reconciliation is 28% higher in people who trust demobilized groups, compared to people who report distrust towards them.

**Table 2. Reconciliation Logistic Regression Models (Representative Survey).**

Models	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2	Model 3	Model 3	Model 4	Model 4
DV Reconciliation							
2. Trust in national government	Logit Coeff 0.310** (0.123)	Logit Coeff 0.229* (0.121)	Odds Ratio 1.257* (.1525)	Logit Coeff 0.267** (0.128)	Odds Ratio 1.306** (0.167)	Logit Coeff 0.289** (0.116)	Odds Ratio 1.334*** (0.154)
3. Trust in national government	0.671*** (0.138)	0.518*** (0.155)	1.678*** (.259)	0.548*** (0.147)	1.729*** (0.254)	0.539*** (0.136)	1.713*** (0.233)
4. Trust in national government	1.302*** (0.137)	0.993*** (0.173)	2.698*** (.467)	1.301*** (0.182)	3.671*** (0.668)	1.289*** (0.189)	3.629*** (0.686)
2. Interpersonal trust		0.0753 (0.279)	1.078 (.300)	0.0452 (0.267)	1.046 (0.279)	-0.170 (0.298)	0.843 (0.251)
3. Interpersonal trust		0.322 (0.318)	1.380 (.4389)	0.197 (0.267)	1.217 (0.325)	-0.0640 (0.300)	0.937 (0.281)
4. Interpersonal trust		0.787** (0.353)	2.196** (.775)	0.595* (0.320)	1.812* (0.579)	0.172 (0.339)	1.187 (0.402)
1. Community participation		0.292*** (0.103)	1.338*** (.137)	0.225** (0.0948)	1.251*** (0.118)	0.142 (0.0977)	1.152*** (0.112)
2. State security institutions trust		0.214 (0.188)	1.238 (.233)	-0.0938 (0.204)	0.910 (0.185)	-0.0300 (0.219)	0.970 (0.212)
3. State security institutions trust		0.171 (0.183)	1.186 (.216)	-0.135 (0.182)	0.873 (0.158)	-0.0878 (0.202)	0.915 (0.184)
4. State security institutions trust		0.395 (0.281)	1.484 (.416)	0.0324 (0.274)	1.032 (0.283)	0.0677 (0.281)	1.070 (0.300)
1. Trust in ex-combatants				0.694*** (0.119)	2.001*** (0.237)	0.661*** (0.120)	1.937 (0.233)
2. Trust in ex-combatants				1.153*** (0.137)	3.167*** (0.432)	1.161*** (0.144)	3.192*** (0.458)
3. Trust in ex-combatants				1.719*** (0.172)	5.579 (0.961)	1.689*** (0.189)	5.414*** (1.021)
4. Trust in ex-combatants				2.184*** (0.183)	8.879*** (1.628)	2.015*** (0.186)	7.504*** (1.395)
1. Guerrilla should tell the truth						0.826*** (0.0669)	2.283*** (0.152)
1. Female						-0.396*** (0.0893)	.672*** (0.060)
Age						0.157*** (0.0304)	1.170*** (0.035)
2. Income						-0.232** (0.104)	0.792*** (0.082)
3. Income						-0.294 (0.214)	0.745 (0.159)
4. Income						-0.136 (0.232)	0.872 (0.202)
5. Income						-0.0812 (0.213)	0.921 (0.196)
6. Income						0.582** (0.261)	1.789** (0.467)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0303	0.0426	1.0426	0.1488	0.1488	0.1898	0.1898
Observations	3,144	3,139	3,140	2,771	2,771	2,713	2,713

Note. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.  
\*\*\*p < .01. \*\*p < .05. \*p < .1.



**Figure 1.** Effect of trust in the national government and ex-combatants on the perceptions of prospective reconciliation.

In the case of the demobilized, people who trust them the most believe considerably more in their willingness to reintegrate into civil society. On the other hand, people who show more distrust and social distance with respect to the demobilized are sceptical regarding the willingness of FARC members to reconcile. Interpersonal trust is not associated with prospective reconciliation. This result implies that building trust towards the demobilized is relevant for people to believe in the possibility of reconciliation. This important aspect in the policies and projects carried out by states and non-governmental organisations, but which is often not considered by policy makers.

In model 4, the negative significant logit coefficient shows that women have lower willingness to reconcile with FARC. Other sociodemographic variables show significant associations with a greater disposition towards reconciliation. First, income has a non-linear relationship with reconciliation causing a “curve pattern” in the data, so that low-income participants are less willing to reconcile (0.795 larger), while higher income individuals show a greater willingness to be reconciled (by 1.867). Finally, our models reveal a positive relationship between age and reconciliation, as willingness to reconcile increases with age.

Table 3 presents the results of the logistic models with fixed effects by municipalities to assess the relationship between the different types of trust and the willingness of individuals to believe that the peace agreement between the government and FARC will be implemented successfully. The first model includes a predictor of trust in the national government; in the second model, we introduce the predictor of trust in the demobilized and the victims. The third model includes the variables of trust in security forces and community participation. Finally, in the fourth model, the control variables are incorporated.

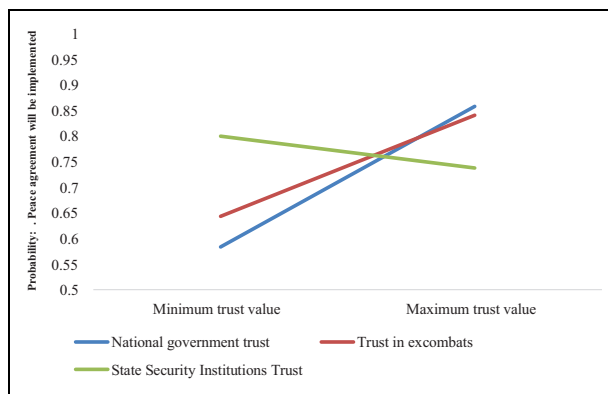
These results are similar to those evidenced in the reconciliation models. Specifically, the same types of trust are related to a greater probability that people support reconciliation and compliance with peace agreements. Figure 2 shows that people who have higher levels of trust in the government have a 27% more probability of believing that the peace agreement will be implemented compared to people who trust less, while those who trust more in demobilized groups have 19% of believing that agreements will be implemented. On the other hand, trust in security institutions decreases the probability that people believe that the peace agreement will be implemented.

The fourth column shows the odds ratio as the quantity of interest. In this case, the model shows that the probability of thinking that the peace agreements will be accomplished is 3.250 times greater in people who trust the demobilized compared to people that trust less, and 5.05 times greater in people who trust the national government compared to those that trust less.

**Table 3. Peace Agreement Will Be Implemented Logistic Regression Models (Representative Survey).**

Models	Model 1 Logit Coeff	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Logit Coeff	Model 2 Odds Ratio	Model 3 Logit Coeff	Model 3 Odds Ratio	Model 4 Logit Coeff	Model 4 Odds Ratio
2. Trust in national government	0.427*** (0.122)	1.532*** (.187)	0.470*** (0.151)	1.599*** (.2419)	0.521*** (0.155)	1.683*** (.260)	0.550*** (0.153)	1.732*** (.265)
3. Trust in national government	0.790*** (0.113)	2.203*** (.249)	0.809*** (0.130)	2.245*** (.291)	0.911*** (0.133)	2.487*** (.331)	0.929*** (0.141)	2.531*** (.356)
4. Trust in national government	1.470*** (0.129)	4.350*** (.561)	1.366*** (0.152)	3.921*** (.596)	1.578*** (0.158)	4.846*** (.765)	1.582*** (0.158)	4.864*** (.769)
2. Interpersonal trust			0.0124 (0.401)	1.012 (.405)	0.0197 (0.401)	1.019 (.408)	-0.131 (0.410)	0.877 (.359)
3. Interpersonal trust			0.279 (0.406)	1.321 (.537)	0.156 (0.394)	1.168 (.460)	-0.0428 (0.386)	0.958 (.369)
4. Interpersonal trust			0.651 (0.447)	1.918 (.857)	0.480 (0.413)	1.616 (.668)	0.169 (0.399)	1.183 (.472)
1. Community participation			0.278*** (0.0830)	1.320*** (.109)	0.219*** (0.0809)	1.245*** (.100)	0.151* (0.0836)	1.162* (.097)
2. State security institutions trust			-0.130 (0.211)	0.878 (.1852)	-0.345* (0.210)	0.708 (.148)	-0.344* (0.204)	0.705* (.143)
3. State security institutions trust			-0.383*** (0.152)	0.681*** (.103)	-0.655*** (0.149)	0.519*** (.077)	-0.657*** (0.149)	0.518*** (.077)
4. State security institutions trust			-0.166 (0.198)	0.846 (.167)	-0.406** (0.181)	0.666** (.120)	-0.392** (0.175)	0.675** (.118)
1. Trust in ex-combatants			0.351** (0.157)	1.420 (.223)	0.351** (0.157)	1.420 (.223)	0.300* (0.155)	1.350* (.209)
2. Trust in ex-combatants			0.650*** (0.184)	1.915*** (.351)	0.650*** (0.184)	1.915*** (.351)	0.629*** (0.180)	1.875*** (.336)
3. Trust in ex-combatants			0.994*** (0.200)	2.703*** (.539)	0.994*** (0.200)	2.703*** (.539)	0.957*** (0.205)	2.602*** (.534)
4. Trust in ex-combatants			1.283*** (0.157)	3.607*** (.566)	1.283*** (0.157)	3.607*** (.566)	1.157*** (0.150)	3.179*** (.478)
1. Guerrilla should tell the truth							0.602*** (0.102)	1.825*** (.186)
1. Female							-0.165 (0.101)	0.847 (.0852)
Age							0.138*** (0.0317)	1.147*** (.0363)
2. Income							-0.113 (0.134)	0.893 (.119)
3. Income							-0.288** (0.146)	0.749** (.109)
4. Income							-0.251 (0.181)	0.777 (.140)
5. Income							0.0724 (0.164)	1.075 (.176)
6. Income							-0.0134 (0.355)	.986 (.350)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.0373	.0373	.0485	.0485	.0922	.0922	.1176	.1176
Observations	3,139	3,139	3,134	3,134	2,773	2,773	2,715	2,715

Note. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.  
\*\*\*p < .01. \*\*p < .05. \*p < .1.



**Figure 2.** Effect of trust in the national government, state security institutions, and ex-combatants on the expectation of compliance with the agreement.

These results supports the theoretical expectation that trust in ex-combatants and trust in government increase the probability of having positive attitudes towards reconciliation amongst people that live in regions affected by the armed conflict. Our findings show the importance of trust as a variable that creates a more favourable attitude towards peace agreements and reconciliation in societies committed to peacebuilding amidst civil conflict, in this case Colombia.

Model 4 shows that the probability of thinking that a peace agreement will be fulfilled is 0.689 lower in people who trust state security institutions compared to those that do not trust these institutions. This result shows the need to study the trust of individuals in different state institutions in a differentiated way and not as a single and monolithic organisation. This is particularly relevant because of such controversial issues as the peace process in Colombia, which divided public opinion and the political elites of the country (Mata-nock & García-Sánchez, 2018). These findings reflect indistinctly that people who trust a government that promoted peace as its main political narrative were willing to support the peace process more. We also found a significant and positive association between community participation and confidence that the agreement will be implemented, as seen in model 4. People who participate actively in community organisations show a greater support to the process (about 1.805) compared to those that do not participate.

### *The Different Effects of Trust on a Stakeholder Survey*

Table 4 presents the results of the logistic models with fixed effects based on the data of the survey conducted after the economic experiments ran by the Tejiendo Acciones de Paz project. As we said previously, we are also interested in the preferences of stakeholders such as communities, organisations, and target populations of the program. As we mentioned, our methodology section, for models 1 and 2 in the first two columns, the dependent variable takes a value of 1 when the best solution to terminate the civil war is negotiation, and 0 is that the best solution relies on the use of military force.

The variable that is significant across all the models is trust in ex-combatants with a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . The coefficient confirms that it is more likely to think that negotiation is the best option when people have better perceptions of ex-combatants.

Column 2 shows the odds ratio as the quantity of interest. In this binary logistic regression, more trust in ex-combatants represents an increase in the perception that negotiation is the best solution in 2.169 times, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant. Similarly, a higher level of trust in institutions has the same positive effect on perception of negotiation.

**Table 4.** Logistic Regression Models Stakeholders Survey.

Variables	DV: Negotiation		DV: Tolerance Towards Ex-Combatants and Victims	
	Model 1 (Coefficients)	Model 2 (Odds Ratio)	Model 1 (Coefficients)	Model 2 (Odds Ratio)
Age	-0.021 (0.015)	0.998 (0.015)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.996 (0.006)
Female	0.483 (0.405)	1.620 (0.656)	-0.028 (0.167)	0.972 (0.162)
Education	-0.216 (0.206)	0.806 (0.166)	-0.039 (0.090)	0.961 (0.086)
Income	-2.940 (2.070)	0.999 (2.070)	-1.620* (9.450)	0.999* (9.450)
Trust in family	0.344 (0.336)	1.410 (0.473)	-0.308 (0.205)	0.735 (0.151)
Interpersonal trust	-0.280* (0.232)	0.756* (0.175)	0.002 (0.112)	1.002 (0.113)
Trust in community	-0.186 (0.238)	0.830 (0.197)	-0.003 (0.109)	0.997 (0.108)
Trust in victims	0.270 (0.221)	1.310 (0.289)	0.184* (0.100)	1.202* (0.120)
Trust in ex-combatants	0.774*** (0.321)	2.169*** (0.696)	0.742*** (0.123)	2.101*** (0.259)
Trust in government	0.366* (0.213)	1.442* (0.307)	0.179* (0.095)	1.197* (0.114)
Participation	0.857* (0.494)	2.355* (1.163)	0.049 (0.219)	1.050 (0.230)
Dpto. Bolívar	-0.048 (0.760)	0.953 (0.725)	0.697*** (0.265)	2.007*** (0.533)
Dpto. Caquetá	-0.271 (0.745)	0.763 (0.568)	0.900*** (0.281)	2.459*** (0.692)
Dpto. Guaviare	-0.614 (0.655)	0.541 (0.354)	0.359 (0.245)	1.432 (0.351)
Dpto. Magdalena	-1.084 (0.664)	0.338 (0.225)	0.102 (0.252)	1.107 (0.279)
Observations	580	580	846	846
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.1161	.1161	.0930	.0930
Log-likelihood	-111.94	-111.94	-471.92	-471.92

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

Our analysis also includes a proxy of tolerance. Specifically, the survey asked people to express what groups they do not want as neighbours. The dependent variable aggregated the options of answer “ex-combatants” and “victims,” taking a value of 1 when people did not mention any of these two groups. In other words, a value of 1 represents a perception of tolerance towards these groups. As in the rest of the models, trust in government and ex-combatants increases the likelihood of having reconciliation predispositions. Trust in victims is also significant, and the positive sign confirms the same pattern expressed by the other two types of trust. We choose the perception about negotiation and tolerance with ex-combatants as other potential variables that are related with a positive attitude towards reconciliation. By reporting tolerance and willingness to negotiate with this group, people are reflecting reconciliation attitudes.

For trust in ex-combatants, as a person shifts from not trusting to trusting ex-combatants, this person is 2.101 times more likely to coexist with victims and ex-combatants. In the case of trust in government, the odds are 1.197 greater and 1.202 greater in the case of trust in victims. In this last model, the variable region results significantly when the dummy variable is “Bolívar” or “Caquetá.” Being a participant from these two departments heavily affected by political violence increases the likelihood of having more tolerance towards ex-combatants and victims. Intuitively, the highest levels of victimisation and a feeling of empathy in these two regions might be driving this finding.

## Conclusion

Prospective reconciliation is the perceived likelihood that future reconciliation is possible in settings where protracted dynamics of conflict demand the development of peaceful ties between former enemies in contexts where no previous peaceful ties existed.

As our statistical analysis reveals, trust is a relevant variable to explain the willingness of individuals to reconcile in regions that have been affected by the long-term presence of armed actors and hostilities.

***different types of trust are positively associated with the willingness of individuals to be reconciled, have higher levels of tolerance towards victims and ex-combatants and perceive negotiation in a positive way.***

According to the theoretical expectations presented in this article, different types of trust are positively associated with the willingness of individuals to be reconciled, have higher levels of tolerance towards victims and ex-combatants and perceive negotiation in a positive way. Especially, trust in the national government (political trust) and towards ex-combatants (intergroup trust) seems to positively impact prospective reconciliation.

On the other hand, trust towards victims or interpersonal trust is not found to be associated with prospective reconciliation. This is intuitive insofar as one will assume that biases developed in the context of the armed conflict were directed exclusively to combatants. They were the visible executors of the political violence and of the control practices that coerced communities for decades. As new experimental evidence shows (Casas et al., 2020), people who believe that perpetrators can reintegrate into society and effectively cooperate tend to support reconciliation. We recognize that potential endogeneity might exist between trust and prospective reconciliation. Identification of causal effects using instrumental variables is a potential extension of this project.

In this article, we have offered evidence that serves as a cornerstone for a complementary policy approach that has been neglected, given the scarce empirical evidence available to support it. We have argued that the standard external-safeguard perspective on post-conflict risk management has shortcomings and that post-peace agreement risk management and peacebuilding can be complemented by an internal enhancer's perspective that relies on social resources such as trust. Our assumption is that drivers existing at the micro-level can make peace more secure and sustainable during the pre-reconciliation phase and the initial post-agreement stages.

Pertinent and effective peacebuilding policies in such a context may benefit from this observation. Since reconciliation is something that can only be seen in the long run, after a protracted armed conflict, prospective reconciliation focuses on the establishment of peaceful interactions, not their restitution. Given the long-term nature of protracted conflicts, after a peace agreement, antagonists face the additional challenge of overcoming the barriers that block the generation of peaceful relations amongst old enemies.

Given the observable persistence of post-conflict and post-peace agreement's traps around the world, our research contributes by offering evidence that justifies a heavier focus on fostering prospective dispositions, prosocial behavior, positive social norms, and inclusive institutional strengthening in post-peace agreement settings. Our article contributes to the discussion about what institutions should be promoted for sustaining peace and peacebuilding (UNDP, 2020). By providing empirical evidence about the importance of trust on prospective reconciliation, we confirm the central role of inclusive and accountable institutions that mediate and encourage prosocial relations between citizens and the state. Investing in positive belief management and productive day-to-day interactions to promote trustworthiness and effective problem solving locally, through communication campaigns or local preparation activities, can have a great impact on peacebuilding in protracted conflict.

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## Notes

1. This work was possible by the support of the Colombian Government's Social Prosperity Agency (Prosperidad Social), the European Union's New Peace Territories Program (Nuevos Territorios de Paz) and the Non-profit Corprovisionarios.
2. We borrow the notion of external safeguards from Sako's (1998) excellent analysis on trust-based governance structures and her position on the limited power of external safeguards to reduce environmental uncertainty.
3. The departments in Colombia are intermediate government units equivalent to states in the United States or provinces in Argentina.
4. In these models, variables were estimated using trust in the following public institutions: mayors, governors, military forces, national police, public budget oversight institutions, and national government. The only variables that were significantly associated with better reconciliation prospects were mainly trust in the national government in all models and trust in state security forces (the military and the police).
5. Most of the variables are categorical polychromes, so the lowest level on the measurement scale was used as a reference category to see their changes as levels. This was used in all the models estimated in this article.
6. These percentages are estimated as the differences between the probability of the expected maximum value and the minimum value for the variables.

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