

The Hugo Valentin Centre

Master thesis

DDR, Social Contact and Reconciliation

*A case-study on Colombian former
combatants*

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Abstract

As part of the peacebuilding measures in scenarios of transformation from civil conflict to a state of post-conflict, the control of hostile forces constitutes a risky, yet necessary process. In such contexts there is also a concern to generate strong ties and incentives that minimize the recurrence of violence. For this purpose reconciliation emerges as a condition for long-lasting peace. This concept eventually requires that armed actors, victimized subjects and society in general agree on critical points and become able to live together. For former combatants these steps are especially challenging since they are confronted by an adverse environment that requires the assumption of new codes of conduct that are no longer ruled by any sort of weaponry. With this puzzle in mind, this study enquired about *the extent to which social contact is likely to influence the perspectives of reconciliation held by demobilized combatants immerse in an institutional scheme of DDR*. In order to gather a comprehensive discussion around this question, this thesis observed the Colombian DDR process, gathering unique empirical data from individuals exposed to varying

degrees of contact. From the information collected and its qualitative analysis, it was found that inter-group interactions are able to promote deep understanding about out-groups; nonetheless, extended contact along ongoing hostilities does not ensure complete transformation of misperceptions, even among subjects coming to the end of their reintegration process.

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| ACR | Colombian Reintegration Agency |
| AD | Adjustment Disorders |
| AD M-19 | Democratic Alliance M-19 |
| APA | American Psychiatric Association |
| ASD | Acute Stress Disorder |
| AUC | United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia |
| CNRR | National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation |
| CODA | Operative Committee for the Abandonment of Arms |
| CONPES | National Council for Economic and Social Policy |
| CRS | Socialist Renovation Current |
| DDR | Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration |
| DNP | National Planning Department |
| DSM-5 | Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition |
| ELN | National Liberation Army |
| EPL | People's Liberation Army |
| FARC – EP | Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army |
| GAHD | Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Group |
| GMH | Group for Historical Memory |
| IAG | Illegal Armed Groups |
| ICBF | Colombian Family Welfare Institute |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDP | Internally displaced person |
| IDDRS | Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards |
| IDEA | International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance |
| IOM | International Organization for Migrations |
| M-19 | Movement April 19 th |
| MAPP/OAS: | OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia |
| MAQL | Quintín Lame Armed Movement |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OACP | Office of the High Commissioner for Peace |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| PAHD | Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Program |
| POW | Prisoners of War |
| PPR | Person in process of Reintegration |
| PRT | Workers' Revolutionary Party |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| R1 | ACR Route/Co-responsibility advisor |
| R2: | ACR Re-integrator |
| R3: | ACR Psychiatric advisor |
| RUV | Victims' Unique Registration |
| SIDDR | Stockholm Initiative for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration |
| SIT | Social Identity Theory |
| TRC | South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| UCDP | Uppsala Conflict Data Program |
| UN | United Nations |

Introduction

In recent decades, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants has been taken as a precondition for post-war stability. In fact, the main intention of it is to avoid hostile actors that prospered in the past to “return to the battlefield or find other ways to undermine efforts to build lasting peace.”¹ Nowadays, peace operations carried out by the UN and regional organizations have taken concrete steps in their mandates towards integrating ex-combatants in the regular social, economic and political life. It is, however, interesting to notice that the analysis on these issues has been mostly done from the macro perspectives of military and policy-oriented spheres. Therefore the literature in the subject, built from past experiences in nearly 40 different processes, has mainly explored the ‘mechanics’ in terms of planning, funding and implementing.

In spite to the dynamics around individuals who demobilize and start experiencing a different lifestyle, the works on DDR have actively described their origins and the motives for membership to IAGs. Some authors have instead stated the barriers and challenges that these populations encounter when they return to communities affected by violence. However, more academic efforts on the former perpetrators’ perception about communities and victims have been rather limited; these have mainly studied the reactions of those who have already experienced some degree interaction. In fact, there is a noticeable gap in the research related to how different beliefs and attitudes configure once ex-combatants have deposed the arms and experienced prolonged contact with society.

As one of the frequent goals associated with DDR and the social interaction inherent to it there is reconciliation. This constitutes a concept that historically the state tries to enforce every time it engages in negotiations with internal organized armed groups. However, in different contexts it has also been seen as a modulation of justice implying some degree of impunity. Although the meaning of the term can be quite extensive, its relevance lays on the fact of mostly developing through relationships at the micro level. With this reality in mind, the research question for the following work comes as: *To what extend interaction with society is likely to influence the perspectives of reconciliation held by demobilized combatants immerse in an institutional scheme of DDR?*

¹ Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, “The political reintegration of armed groups after war,” introd. In *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict Politics, violence and transition*, ed. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.

In Colombia peace talks with different insurgencies and paramilitaries have constantly referred to the need of bringing populations in rural and urban areas under the same scheme of rights and wealth. This would allow fostering co-existence and ultimately extinguishing violence as a dispute-resolution mechanism. In terms of public policy the attention to the human component that once belonged to illegal armed organizations in the internal conflict presents a dual, yet complementary, approach. On one side it focuses on disarmament and demobilization programs to bring irregular combatants back into civilian life; on the second phase the attention model seeks for autonomy, social interaction and effective reintegration through a series of conditioned incentives. Although the attention is provided through two different programs implemented by separate institutions, the different conditions surrounding both of them are likely to shape distinctive perceptions and even some degree of frustration towards society and the state.

The outline for this thesis is as follows. The theoretical framework is presented in chapter one. It is divided between the discussions of Social Contact, Reconciliation, DDR and Public Policy Action. Chapter two includes the research design featuring the case-study justification, as well as the differentiation of groups, specific variables and pertinent methodological remarks. Towards chapter three, the reader is presented with a contextual discussion on the Colombian case split between its historical, legal and executive pillars. Chapters four to six include the qualitative findings gathered from the data collection carried out in the city of Bogota and the Municipality of Cajicá. The areas of focus will be Acknowledgement of Wrongdoings, Narratives of War and Co-existence. Finally, chapter seven closes the work with a discussion on the contrasts between theory and the empirical findings, some concluding points and a brief description of the gaps remaining in the research.

1.0 Theoretical framework

Based on the previous introduction the present chapter will clarify a series of concepts while introducing several working theories. The idea here is to apprehend the proper meaning of some terms frequently used along this research. Beginning with a discussion on social identity and social contact theories, the first subsection lays several conditions to be taken into account through the analysis of former combatants' interaction with new environments. It will be also possible to have an idea of how attitudinal changes develop and which role is left to past self-characterizations. Merging into the dependent variable established in the main research question, the second subsection will explore the concept of reconciliation and some

of the most outstanding scholarly perspectives. Later on, the attention turns to the term ‘combatant’ along with a detailed analysis on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Furthermore, there will be a brief overlook in the public policy perspective when it comes to designing and implementing these specific programs and routes of action.

1.1 Social identity theory and contact hypothesis

Throughout civil wars in which the lines of struggle are not drawn by elements such as ethnicity, race or religion, the conformation of distinctive groups is seldom associated to socioeconomic factors. Since not all conflicts follow the same dynamics and not all individuals share an identical history, it is useful to observe how they identify themselves within society and the outcomes of interaction with perceived hostile out-group members.

Considering that identity and membership to a group are strongly determined by interaction, its understanding in this work is based on the Social Identity Theory (SIT). Under this perspective, sociologist Henri Tajfel proposed that a person systematizes and simplifies his environment by dividing the world into categories. Thus a higher status is given to someone who shares the “individual’s actions, intentions, attitudes and systems of beliefs.”² Those who do not comply with certain patterns are associated to one or more out-groups, which are eventually paired with a lower status; these categorizations ultimately give the person a system of orientation to find a place in society. More in detail, a social identity develops when three different factors take place. First, a sense of awareness of membership emerges. Second, an evaluation of value connotations occurs. Third, an emotional component is associated to both awareness and evaluations.³

With these precepts in mind, Tajfel drafts a list of implications for individuals regarding their membership to a group (or groups). Therefore, he assumes that people tend to remain in their groups and only seek membership into new ones in the case that those offer positive aspects from which satisfaction can be gathered. When a positive self-image is no longer perceived in the original group, a valid possibility for leaving configures although it might not always be feasible. In contexts when a man or woman has no other option than remaining in a group that cannot fulfill his or her expectations, the way to cope with that can be twofold; either by reinterpretation (or justification) of undesired features, or through acceptance of the

² Henri Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup behavior,” *Social Science Information* 2, no. 13 (April, 1974), 69, doi: 10.1177/053901847401300204

³ Henri Tajfel, “Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 33 (1982), 20 – 24, doi: 10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.000245

same while engaging in some social action to change them. Lastly, it must be noticed that for these dynamics to make sense, some degree of comparison with other groups' conditions is required.⁴

Another important contribution to this field can be found in the observations that Marilynn Brewer gathered about intergroup relations of blacks and whites in the United States. With this case in mind, she proposed the 'in-group-out-group' schema supported on three pillars. Firstly, an accentuation principle related to how a person sees members from his in-group as more similar than those belonging to the out-group; secondly, a selectively generalized favoritism for in-group fellows based on positive affect that does not replicate in the same way to the ones in the out-group; and thirdly, a perceived negative interdependence with overall prevalence of competitive relations over simple comparisons.⁵

With a different perspective, and based on Tajfel's paradigm, Miles Hewstone and Ed Cairns argue that outside laboratory conditions the size of the groups can offer a different idea about the role of social categorization. For them, lower-status or minority groups may find ways to legitimize their positions by demanding equality in questions that are likely to undermine the in-group's identity, leading to a backlash. In addition to these potentially conflictive arrangements, which are characterized by the saliency of group membership, they noticed that individuals shift their personal identity to a social one, in what is considered a process of depersonalization.⁶

Until this point SIT allows for a better understanding of behaviors in potentially tense situations with groups that would prefer to be separated. The situation of former perpetrators in the aftermath of a war can easily illustrate these circumstances. Ex-combatants with previous strong self-image start to experience a context of new categorizations likely to trigger membership into new groups. Despite the challenges perceived, life in society can offer them positive features that encourage the adoption of new social identities. The people's refrain from moving on in such process could also explain the resulting aversion to new sets of rules. However, in order to have a more precise understanding of these dynamics, it is now convenient to take a look on the field of contact theory; this line of thought could be

⁴ Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup behavior," 70.

⁵ Marilynn B. Brewer, "The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations: Can Research Inform Practice?," *Journal of Social Issues* 53, no. 2 (1997), 201.

⁶ Miles Hewstone and Ed Cairns, "Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict," Chap. 20 in *Ethnopolitical Warfare : Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* ed. Daniel Chirot and Martin Seligman (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001), 325.

summarized as “bringing people together would demonstrate to individuals that their attitudes were irrational and would lead to attitudinal change.”⁷

Considering that DDR aims for positive behaviors among hostile actors and society, the role of social contact should not be disregarded. Around this topic different authors have drafted theories in which they numerate possible effects of intergroup proximity in the aftermath of a situation that deteriorated mutual relationships. Gordon Allport’s work on prejudice stated four different phases shaping in-group members’ views towards a minority out-group. In order to modify adverse perceptions, interaction progressively goes through sheer contact, competition, accommodation and final assimilation. It can also occur that the outcome after competition is not positive, and instead relationships derive in retrogression and conflict. Such turnaround depends on the type of associations and the kinds of persons involved.⁸ With this path in mind, and after analyzing contexts of social misperception with high empirical support, Allport stated his contact hypothesis in the following terms:

Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports, and if it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.⁹

In order to draft this formulation, Allport observed several types of contact that occur when distinctive features are highly noticeable between in and out groups. In relation to superficial contact in contexts of segregation, either forcedly or voluntarily exercised, it was found that “it does not dispel prejudice” and instead it is likely to increase it. This occurs because upon external stimulus the human mind associates ideas made up of rumor, hearsay, tradition or stereotype by which the out group is commonly known. With such interaction, there is no space for an open dialogue while thoughts towards out groups remain in an ‘autistic’ level.¹⁰

On the other hand, the second type of interaction that can take place among members of different groups is acquaintance. Since this notion includes a deeper understanding of the other, the levels of prejudice and hostility are likely to diminish. Nonetheless, Allport warns

⁷ Michael O. Emerson, Rachel Tolbert Kimbro and George Yancey, “Contact Theory Extended: The Effects of Prior Racial Contact on Current Social Ties,” *Social Science Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (September 2002), 746.

⁸ Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), 250-251.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

that more knowledge and better relations with an out-group is still far from being a perfect way to overcome possible resentments. Under this arrangement only more positive relationships can be expected. Even if a change in beliefs occurs, a proportional effect should not be expected in terms of attitudes.¹¹

Following the examples on residential and occupational contact, often viewed as threats, Allport found an active correlation with the immediacy or distance of the minority out-group. Thus, segregation and other conditions likely to maintain differential statuses appear as obstacles for contact since they enhance a group's visibility, making it see larger and more menacing. This point is often reached in the absence of restrictive legal and policy barriers such as laws or programs aiming for separate developments. Bearing in mind the obvious limitations in these contexts, a proper change in attitudes can be attained if contact is channeled towards cooperation and common objectives.¹²

Following an approach focused on more indirect interaction, the group of researchers led by Stephen Wright proposed the hypothesis of extended contact effect. For them it is possible to develop more positive intergroup attitudes if an individual perceives that "an in-group member has a close relationship with an out-group member."¹³ The same effect is likely to be more notorious, while strengthening subsequent contact, once there is some knowledge that confirms compliance with in-group norms and positive stereotypes.

Later works also kept studying the implications of Allport's arguments. One of the most prolific authors in this effort is social psychologist Thomas Pettigrew who initially questioned the positive effects of contact in situations that did not follow the hypothesis' conditions. With this concern in mind Pettigrew's approach consisted in suggesting that "four interrelated processes operate through contact and mediate attitude change: learning about the outgroup, changing behavior, generating affective ties and ingroup reprisal."¹⁴ In the author's view, constructive contact requires of all of them and it is not enough to experience initial acquaintance to forge long-term close relationships.

Pettigrew ends up recommending that the positive effects of social contact require a prolonged period of time, along with more research on how and why it happens in a

¹¹ Ibid., 255

¹² Ibid., 265.

¹³ Stephen C. Wright et al., "The Extended Contact Effect: Knowledge of Cross-Group Friendships and Prejudice," in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 no. 1 (1997), 74.

¹⁴ Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," *Annual Review of Psychology* 49 (1998), 70, doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65.

generalizing perspective. Additionally, he proposes that Allport's theory should comprise a fifth component concerning the potential for friendship between members of both groups. This is due that friendship is one of the few ways of interaction that gather together the four processes mentioned above.¹⁵

For Brewer social interaction can take place on two non-exclusive dimensions. Due that social categorization places out-group members as undifferentiated representatives, contact should aim for a reduction in "the salience of category distinctions and to promote opportunities to get to know out-group members as individuals." Another kind of arrangement may, as an alternative, focus on re-stating super-ordinate categories covering both in-groups and out-groups. This option is set to reduce hostilities by enforcing individuals' self-perception as part of a single group rather than separate ones.¹⁶ Both models evidence how cooperation and shared goals through personalized interactions become conditions for the construction of a common identity.

In a more recent meta-analysis, Pettigrew in collaboration with Linda Tropp gathered a spectacular sample of studies on human interaction in multiple contexts. The main objective was to determine how contact actually reduces prejudice and the role played by affective, behavioral and cognitive mediators. They eventually identified a sequence for lessening prejudice set to include a decline of initial anxiety, increased empathy, perspective taking and knowledge of the out-group.¹⁷

Meanwhile, for Hewstone and Cairns, intergroup conflict can be reduced through several interventions. Thus, contact between members of different groups can produce positive outcomes with the noticeable limitation that generalizations beyond the specific situations for the rest of the out-group are not automatic. It is also noticeable that "optimal contact is hard to bring about, on a large scale, especially for adults." With these obstacles in mind, the authors admit that even though many people avoid inter-group socialization due its problematic features, engineering or externally encouraging it can contribute to more desirable results.¹⁸ In the question about the utility of interpersonal contact over the inter-group scheme, a previous work from Hewstone and Rupert Brown reminds that in the past

¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

¹⁶ Brewer, "The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations," 202.

¹⁷ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38 (2008), 922-934, doi: 10.1002/ejsp.504

¹⁸ Hewstone and Cairns, "Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict," 335.

friendships between members of different groups have not impeded mass killing.¹⁹ Therefore, failing to secure exchanges between two groups can imply that the conflicts become irreconcilable, at the same time that anxiety remains high and boundaries reinforced.

1.2 Reconciliation

After observing social contact as the independent variable for this study, this section will now define reconciliation in its role of dependent variable. Despite the importance that the term ‘reconciliation’ has gained in the past years, there have emerged numerous interpretations creating some degree of confusion rather than clarifying what it actually means. Karen Brounéus observes that the etymological origins of the word in Latin and Germanic languages have different roots. Nonetheless the meaning in both coincides as “the reestablishment of peace or friendship, going back to a state that existed earlier, before the bond was broken.”²⁰

One of the authors that have explored the multiple meanings of reconciliation is David Bloomfield by distinguishing noticeable differences between the scholarly definitions and interpretations gathered in the policy practice. For him the noticeable commonality that can be found in academic works is the lack of consensus on a single characterization. Meanwhile, stakeholders and governments aim towards a concept that favors the spread of democracy and development. Concretely, Bloomfield opens an interesting discussion by questioning from which perspective reconciliation should be assumed; he provocatively asks “Is reconciliation a national, societal, even political, process? Is it an individual, psychological, even “theological”, process? Is it a process at all, or does it describe a state of relationships at the end of a process?”²¹ For the same author such debates do generate resistance since victims tend to see reconciliation as a matter of their private lives or as a state of things that they do not necessarily assess as desirable.

Coming into terms with devastating experiences and forgiving the perpetrators of violent acts are extremely personal processes. However, the recognition and acceptance of a former enemy has a direct relation in the promotion of peaceful relations and mutual trust. Over this issue, Daniel Bar-Tal understands that the transformation of negative perceptions is

¹⁹ Miles Hewstone and Rupert Brown, “Contact is not enough: An intergroup perspective on the ‘contact hypothesis,’” Chap. 1 in *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters* eds. Miles Hewstone and Rupert Brown (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 1-41.

²⁰ Karen Brounéus, *Reconciliation – Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation* (Stockholm: SIDA, 2003), 12.

²¹ David Bloomfield, *On Good Terms: Clarifying Reconciliation (Berghof Report no. 14)* (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, October 2006), 4

a long psychological process with no fixed rules set for lasting peace. In depth this process focuses on achieving what has been termed as a *peace ethos* among all society members.²² Similarly, researcher Johan Galtung observes reconciliation as a “process of healing the traumas of both victims and perpetrators after the violence, providing a closure of the bad relation. The process prepares the parties for relations with justice and peace;”²³ for him, painful memories are carriers of war and therefore they must be overcome.

One of the classic visions that have been forged about the concept of reconciliation can be found in John Paul Lederach’s works about divided societies. For this author the choice of “seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups’ affiliations” should be disregarded. Instead the path towards reconciliation should be paved with “mechanisms that engage the sides of a conflict with each other as humans-in-relationship.”²⁴

Bearing in mind the elements frequently associated with reconciliation at the personal and possibly local levels, the same have become the basis for more pragmatic macro perspectives. In her work on Bosnia and Herzegovina Janine Natalya Clark clarifies that despite the lack of a unified definition on reconciliation it is possible to observe two fundamental components. In first place it entails the dimension of reparations and restorations of relations at the psychological level. Secondly it requires dealing with the past in terms of historical memory, justice and acknowledgement of wrongdoings.²⁵ In addition to this view, Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf argue that the initiatives of reconciliation beyond the end of hostilities can also act as a mechanism to make communities feel safe in the aftermath of conflict.²⁶ In fact the very same initiatives, Bloomfield argues, are some of the preferred in the international cooperation budgets.²⁷

According to Morton Deutsch, one of the hardest points towards reconciliation has to do with the psychological sequels of violence. Initially, this author admits that in aftermath of serious harms forgiveness to an aggressor is unlikely as well as psychologically problematic;

²² Daniel Bar-Tal, “From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation; Psychological Analysis,” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000), 352.

²³ Johan Galtung, “After Violence, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Resolution: Coping with Visible and Invisible Effects,” in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, ed. Mohammed Abu-Nimer (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 1-2.

²⁴ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 26.

²⁵ Janine Natalya Clark, “From Negative to Positive Peace: The Case of Bosnia and Hercegovina,” *Journal of Human Rights* 8, no. 4 (2009), 361.

²⁶ Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf, “Localizing Transitional Justice”, chap. 1 in *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 12.

²⁷ David Bloomfield, “On good terms Clarifying reconciliation,” 5.

however the opposite alternative of nursing hate can also “keep the injury alive and active in the present, instead of permitting it to take its proper place in the past.”²⁸ By its turn, Priscila Hayner reminds that reconciliation is often cited as the goal of peace processes, although the details of an actual meaning remain extensively vague. As part of her work on truth commissions, she argues that coming into terms with past experiences inexorably makes part of reconciliation in societal terms. With this perspective in mind, this author calls for a distinction “between individual reconciliation and national or political reconciliation.”²⁹ Considering that an agreement in historical conflicting points allows a society to move forward, Hayner warns that the same result is not always visible at the interpersonal level. People tend to react and assume in very different ways the processes of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. In fact the charge of highly emotional memories makes the knowledge of the entire truth an important, yet not sufficient, condition for reconciliation between a victim and a perpetrator.

Along with truth, another aspect that is often assumed to accompany reconciliation is justice. Its delivery is often seen as a *sine qua non* condition in the achievement of positive long-term relationships. Researcher Luc Huyse argues that in this effort there must be a generalized feeling that justice has been done. More specifically, it envisages the acknowledgement of past crimes and the punishment of perpetrators.³⁰ This position can be explained due the widespread understanding of justice as a basic human need.³¹ It is off course convenient to observe that in many cases such retributive model based on prosecutions is not feasible and thus different alternatives have to be considered.

When it comes to protecting the rights of all those affected by conflict, criminal procedures in courts and international tribunals can hinder restorative actions and ultimately reconciliation. In response to this situation, the restorative justice model emerged by the end of the 1980’s decade with its priorities set on mediation and healing. In this perspective, crime is no longer “a violation of the state, defined by lawbreaking and guilt;” instead it constitutes a violation that affects people and relationships. For this same argument, Howard Zehr reminds that a rupture in the legal order “creates obligations to make things right.”

²⁸ Morton Deutsch, “Justice and Conflict,” Chap. 1 in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 59.

²⁹ Priscila Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 183.

³⁰ Luc Huyse, “Justice” Chap. 7 in *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict – A Handbook* ed, David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (Stockholm: IDEA, 2005), 97-100.

³¹ Howard Zehr, *Changing lenses: a new focus for crime and justice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 188.

Thus, it is desirable to seek solutions involving not only offenders but also victims and communities in shared efforts that promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance.³² According to Rodrigo Uprimny and Maria Paula Saffon in their analysis on the situation of illegal combatants, a scheme of restorative justice can achieve better results in disarming and reaching peace agreements. In fact, people unlikely to voluntarily surrender to justice need to be given attractive incentives such as forgiveness and forgetting of their acts.³³ Despite the reluctance that this option encounters, in contexts of violent conflict a plausible reconstruction of social relations could be better achieved by modulating the amounts of truth and justice desired.

Re-examining Brounéus' work, her take on reconciliation relates to a societal process intended to shape "mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace."³⁴ Aiming for clarity, Roland Kostić also sees reconciliation as a process that can be measured in terms of success or failure through its different goals. For him these include "1) mutual acknowledgement of past sufferings by former antagonists as well as a common understanding of the past, 2) a shared sense that justice has been done, and 3) a belief in a common future with the former adversary."³⁵

Recognizing that reconciliation can be estimated in terms of substantive needs such as justice, truth, healing and security taking part in national, community and individual social levels, Hugo van der Merwe drafts an approach of relationship-building. Therefore, his understanding emphasizes reconciliation as a process "confined to all initiatives which bring together, or engage, both sides in a pursuit of changing identity, values regarding interaction, attitudes, and patterns of interaction that move them to a more cooperative relationship."³⁶

As it has been showed the theoretical constructions around reconciliation are numerous and comprise a handful of indicators. For effects of simplicity in this study, this term will be understood as an interactive process aiming for 1) the acknowledgment of past sufferings, 2)

³² Ibid., 181.

³³ Rodrigo Uprimny and Maria Paula Saffon, "Justicia Transicional y Justicia Restaurativa: Tensiones y Complementariedades," Chap. 7 in *Entre el Perdón y el Paredón: Preguntas y Dilemas de la Justicia Transicional*, ed. Angelika Rettberg Beil (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2005), 215.

³⁴ Brounéus, *Reconciliation*, 20.

³⁵ Roland Kostić, "Ambivalent Peace External Peacebuilding Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (PhD diss., Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2007), 31-33.

³⁶ Hugo van der Merwe, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Community Reconciliation: An analysis of Competing Strategies and Conceptualisations" (PhD diss., George Mason University, 1999), 47-48.

the agreement on comprehensive conflict narratives among former rivals and, 3) the transformation of destructive attitudes and behaviors towards cooperative relationships. This working concept intentionally avoids referring to the perception of justice and models of delivery since such discussion would require additional levels of analysis to the ones envisaged for the present study.

1.3 Former combatants and DDR

Within the modern state, guaranteeing peace and security under its jurisdiction without interfering in another state's affairs is one of its most noticeable principles since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In fact the monopoly of the legitimate use of force allows the state to be the only actor bearing and regulating the use of arms, exercising domination over a territory.³⁷ This last perspective followed the classic Hobbesian precept of the state as the only actor entitled to make war and peace with other nations and states, according to the public good, through a properly formed army under command of the sovereign.³⁸ With the development of civil wars embedded in acts of sedition or rebellion, the functions of the military needed to be redefined; from its vocation of protecting the borders and fighting external enemies, state's arms turned to the suppression of internal uprisings risking the unity of the political establishment. In many cases the same situation allowed states to become the main source of insecurity and violence for its own citizens. For decades those people that have mobilized and embraced violence seeking political objectives have been labeled as criminals and targeted by the state forces with little regard for their human rights.

As a natural part of human society there is conflict. A basic meaning of conflict was drafted in 1921 by sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burges stating it as a struggle for fixing a status in society.³⁹ Through the years many definitions corresponding to different disciplines have been developed. For instance, in 1956 Lewis Coser remained on the side of the struggle for status, adding to it differences over power and resources.⁴⁰ More in depth, Lederach defined it as a dynamic "progression that moves through different stages."⁴¹ In order to settle their disputes both parts require equal spaces of participation to express their points of view and find plausible solutions. In the cases where such instances are not

³⁷ Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, trans. C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 83.

³⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*, First published 1651 (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 228.

³⁹ Robert Park and Ernest Burges, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1921), 574-576.

⁴⁰ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

⁴¹ Lederach, *Building Peace Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, 71.

guaranteed or simply do not exist, alternative mechanisms to impose one's will are set in place. Among them, group action striving into armed confrontation is a frequent one, which also means the transition of conflict into the category of violent conflict. In this particular take place individuals who disagree with a particular political, economic and security situation and who do not find guarantees or legal spaces to manifest their postures. Due the social effects of the problems denounced, it is not difficult for them to find support from persons with the same grievances.

When such newly created groups appear within a single state and start deploying hostile acts, the article 1 in the 1977 Protocol Additional (II) to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 defines them as belligerents or "organizations that under a responsible command, exercise control over parts of the territory in order to deploy sustained and concerted military operations."⁴² Through this work this will be the meaning associated to terms such as illegal armed group (IAG) and others alike.

The members of an IAG are often distinguished according to the organization's ideology and combat tactics. Thus, leftists groups usually fight for a resettlement of unequal conditions in society. They tend to operate in a hit-and-run manner and are generally labelled as insurgents. On the other hand, right-wing structures in civil conflicts fight side by side with government forces trying to defeat insurgencies. They are known as paramilitaries and can also serve to private security interests or even abroad in the form of mercenaries. Considering that both factions embrace violence and engage in gross violations of human rights, the more generic terms of 'combatants' and 'perpetrators' result convenient for grouping them. Under the same categories, it is also possible to include group members that do not take place in combats and instead run logistics and administrative tasks. For matters of clarity, it is useful to notice that although the term 'guerrilla' may refer indistinctively to organizations of any ideology seeking to overthrow a regime in power, this work will only use it for leftist structures.

The sequels of an armed conflict are not exclusively limited to the victims and unarmed groups; these can similarly become problematic for combatants in IAGs. In fact, perpetrators are normally confronted to highly emotional events involving high doses of pain. Witnessing or participating in the death or torture of comrades, relatives or innocent civilians is likely to

⁴² International Committee of the Red Cross, "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977." (Geneva: ICRC, 1977), 314. <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>

leave long lasting sequels, normally visible in varying degrees of stress or other physiological alterations. Nonetheless other situations that are not necessarily dependent on violence can also interfere in an individual's mental health. Conditions such as isolation, malnutrition, physical abuse, deindividuation, dehumanization or the threat of being killed play a determinant role in the development of disorders and diseases.⁴³

As part of the peace-building processes implemented in the aftermath of a conflict, states need to deal with the question of what to do with the human component that joined an IAG. In fact, Mats Berdan and David H. Ucko recall that success in this area constitute “the single most important precondition for post-war stability and, by extension, for more ambitious attempts to facilitate ‘a society’s transition from conflict to normalcy and development.’”⁴⁴ After a society has experienced a period of long-lasting war, the immediate aftermath represents a risky phase in which the return to violence is highly probable.⁴⁵ According to Paul Collier, one of the heritages of the military structures among rebel organizations is that societies accustom to violence as a regular element to solve political disagreements and groups’ grievances. In order to advance into a stage of durable peace, political conflict can remain “but the military option of conducting it should be made infeasible.”⁴⁶ To be able to reach this point, the bottom motives of political disputes need some degree of attention, especially the grievances that rebel groups once defended. It is not strange that claims from rebel groups correspond to the actual underlying causes of conflicts.

Despite of judicial procedures to determine responsibilities in the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, former combatants constitute a vulnerable population that requires some degree of state attention. During the second half of the 20th century, in different locations around the world there were deployed programs for disarmament and demobilization. Since these concepts related to short-term assistance measures and could not guarantee peace by themselves, further measures needed to be set in place. Thus, a more comprehensive process known as reintegration emerged with long-term components along several disciplines. In order to structure a truly integral approach, the three security-promoting mechanisms have been gathered together by international agencies and governments under the initials DDR. At large the main objective behind this cluster is “to

⁴³ Jelena Spasenica, “Stress and Trauma Lecture 2” (lecture, Uppsala University – Hugo Valentin Centre, Uppsala, February 2, 2015)

⁴⁴ Berdal and Ucko, “The political reintegration of armed groups after war,” 2.

⁴⁵ Paul Collier, *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, April 2006), 19

⁴⁶ Ibid.

prevent armed conflicts from resuming and keep the (presumed) sources of post-conflict violence at bay.”⁴⁷ More precisely, the UN has defined DDR as:

A process that contributes to security and stability in a post-conflict recovery context by removing weapons from the hands of combatants, taking the combatants out of military structures and helping them to integrate socially and economically into society by finding civilian livelihoods.⁴⁸

Disarmament of irregular combatants belonging to military structures of difficult accountability constitutes a complex procedure. The UN in the Integrated DDR standards has defined it as the “collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants and often from the civilian population.”⁴⁹ According to the Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration – SIDDR, the surrender of war material normally takes places before formal demobilization.⁵⁰ Within the first phase one of the major challenges to overcome refers to the perceptions of insecurity among combatants once they handle in the arms. In the view of Barbara Walter, when an armed group lays down their weapons, gives up conquered territory and sends home combatants, they become vulnerable to surprise attacks. The lack of instruments that once ensured a status of superiority over regular citizens is likely to create a societal security dilemma in which opponents can consolidate their position by filling up newly-empty spaces.⁵¹ Such a state of weakness may also have effects on the groups’ willingness to comply with their part in political agreements.⁵² Summarizing, Colin Gleichman *et al.* point out that disarmament constitutes a ‘confidence-building’ measure aimed at the “mindset of participants, irrespective of whether these are standing armed forces, guerrilla groups, paramilitary structures or civilians.”⁵³

⁴⁷ Robert Muggah, “The Emperor’s Clothes,” introd. in *Security and post-conflict reconstruction: dealing with fighters in the aftermath of war*, ed. Robert Muggah (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.

⁴⁸ United Nations, “Glossary: Terms and Definitions,” Module. 1.20 in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards IDDRS* (New York, May 2014), 6.

⁴⁹ United Nations, “The UN approach to DDR,” Module. 2.10 in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (New York, August 2006), 4.

⁵⁰ Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, *Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* (Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, February 2006), 15

⁵¹ Paul Roe, *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma* (Routledge: London and New York, 2005), 71-74.

⁵² Barbara F. Walter, “Designing Transitions from Civil War Demobilization, Democratization and Commitments to Peace” *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999), 134, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ins/summary/v024/24.1.walter.html>

⁵³ Colin Gleichman et al., *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration A Practical Field and Classroom Guide* (Stuttgart and Frankfurt: GTZ, NODEFIC, PPC and SNDC, 2004), 29.

Demobilization, as a step that may indiscriminately come before or after disarmament, is defined in terms of “the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups, including a phase of “reinsertion” which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants.”⁵⁴ This strategy can take place either in midst of the hostilities or in the aftermath of a conflict as part of a negotiated agreement. It can be achieved by persuasive or more incisive means aiming at weakening the combatants’ morale and motivations to remain part of an illegal armed group. According to Mark Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, the difference with the term reintegration is that the last implies the participants’ full participation in the economic, social and political life in the new places of residence.⁵⁵

In the practice the ‘demobilized’ status can be acquired voluntarily, either individually or collectively, and it is usually certified by a state authority. When the process obeys to a personal decision the person is classified as a defector within the illegal organization. Depending on the groups’ internal dynamics, defectors become subjects for persecution and eventual punishment. In the cases of the insurgencies individual demobilizations are more frequent than the collective alternative since this last normally requires political concertation. Exceptionally, it can also happen that the person does not seek any form of government attention or protection and instead chooses to avoid contact with public institutions by living a life in anonymity with all its risks involved. Those individuals, ousted from hostilities by capture or death, do not count as demobilized. In contexts of civil wars where demobilizations are high in number the estimation of the data about motives and conditions is likely to be inaccurate.⁵⁶

Lastly, there is reintegration. This is a long term stage that goes further from aid and emergency assistance. Within the IDDRS it has been defined as “the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. It is a political, social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level.”⁵⁷ According to Gleichmann *et al.*, reintegration takes place in

⁵⁴ “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration,” UNDPKO, accessed February 3, 2016 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/ddr.shtml>

⁵⁵ Mark Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 4 (July 2004), 500.

⁵⁶ Observatorio de Procesos de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (ODDR), *Modalidades de salida de las organizaciones armadas ilegales* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, February 2011), 3.

⁵⁷ United Nations, “The UN approach to DDR,” 5.

an economic and social perspective; since the effects are visible in the mid and long run, it is often included in the national development strategies with possible foreign aid involved.⁵⁸

In recent years reintegration has been portrayed as fundamental step to avoid ex-combatants from re-engaging into violence and thus disrupting peace processes. The need for reintegration is based, among other things, on the fact that ex-combatants are often affected by psychopathologies that affect their social interactions and health once they leave the armed group.⁵⁹ For authors like Andres Casas-Casas and Juanita Guzmán-Gómez, former combatants during the reintegration process are confronted with leaving behind violent mechanisms for dispute-resolution. Similarly, the long periods of time spent carrying out tactical operations and being exposed to rigorous conduct codes may undermine combatants' autonomy and ultimately their abilities to develop economic initiatives. These situations, if unattended, can easily make demobilized individuals prone to re-engage in hostile acts, which in many cases is the only mean of subsistence they perceive. The aim of reintegration is thus to generate capacities for ex-combatants to adapt back into life in community while feeling again as citizens with full rights.⁶⁰ Historically, this concept has been criticized for having a less apparent effectiveness on stability and safety than disarmament and demobilization. Nonetheless this inconformity is more related to the long-span of different programs and the difficult assessment of their objectives.

In sum, according to the parameters defined in the SIDDR, the previous concepts together can be seen as a contribution in guaranteeing a secure environment in the midst of a peace process. It is also important to bear in mind that such an offer for the ex-combatant population does not ensure peace by itself and instead it requires "other parallel programs that influence the success or failure of the peace process." These include strengthening judicial institutions, education policies and a framework for equal rights and opportunities, among the most common. Due the ambiguity in the definitions of perpetrators it is not strange to find hybrid cases taking part in the different phases of DDR. In fact it might happen that a perpetrator could also be object of victimizing actions such as forced recruitment or sexual violence; similarly, a person or a group that has been previously victimized might feel

⁵⁸ Gleichmann et al., *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*, 65.

⁵⁹ Ervin Staub, "Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory" *Political Psychology* 27, no. 6 (2006), 868.

⁶⁰ Andrés Casas-Casas and Juanita Guzmán-Gómez, "The Eternal Yesterday? The Colombian Reintegration Process as Social Dilemma," *Papel Político* 15, no. 1 (January – June 2010), 49 – 52.

motivated to seek retaliation for past events, giving place to more violence.⁶¹ In fact re-incidence constitutes one of the biggest challenges in DDR processes around the world. Thus, it is not strange to find cases of ex-combatants re-arming and joining criminal structures. This kind of outcome has been documented by Collier *et al.* who argue that in the aftermath of civil wars difficult social conditions are likely to instigate ex-combatants to re take the arms and ultimately re-ignite a state of conflict.^{62,63}

1.4 State action through public policy

When public issues such as poverty, violence, discrimination or lack of healthcare, among others, become troublesome the state institutions are required to deliver proper responses in the form of policy. According to André-Noël Roth, a policy can be understood as existing whereas state institutions assume certain objectives required to overcome a problematic state of affairs.⁶⁴ For the same author the intention behind is to influence “the behavior of individual or collective actors in order to modify a situation perceived as unsatisfactory or problematic.”⁶⁵

Although there might exist numerous social issues that cannot be solved by the citizens themselves and require the state intervention, only those with priority in the public agenda are policy addressed. In order to gain such a space among the concerns of stakeholders, the problems that initially emerge as private matters need to be ‘exteriorized’ by groups or individuals with a position and interest to act as spokesperson.⁶⁶ In the view of Pierre Muller, these mediators can be skilled social actors, policy brokers or even translators in charge of persuading the authorities, using an understandable language, to produce a political action.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Harvey M. Weinstein et al., “Stay the hand of Justice: Whose Priorities Take Priority,” Chap. 2 in *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*, eds. Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 42.

⁶² Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003), 84.

⁶³ Paul Collier, *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy*, 19.

⁶⁴ André-Noël Roth Deubel, *Políticas Públicas: Formulación, implementación y evaluación. Cómo elaborar políticas públicas. Quién decide, cómo realizarlas, quién pierde* (Barcelona: Ediciones Aurora, 2002), 27

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27

⁶⁶ Remi Lenoir, « Groupes de Pression et Groupes Consensuels Contribution à une Analyse de la Formation du Droit, » *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 1 (1986), 31 http://www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1986_num_64_1_2334

⁶⁷ Pierre Muller, « L’analyse cognitive des politiques publiques : vers une sociologie politique de l’action publique, » *Revue Française de Science Politique* 50, no. 2 (2000), 203.

As stated by Giandomenico Majone and Aaron Wildavsky, “policies are continuously transformed by implementing actions that simultaneously alter resources and objectives.”⁶⁸ In fact, it is in this stage where all previous planning done in the design phase is challenged. For Jeffrey Pressman and Wildavsky, policies normally contain both goals and means for achieving them. Thus, to a high extent, successful implementation depends on linkages between different organizations and departments at the local level, as long as proper funding and adequate legislation are previously secured. For them the degree of co-operation between agencies has to be close to a hundred percent if action is to be seen rather than having an ‘implementation deficit.’⁶⁹ According to Eugene Bardach, implementation is a political process and its success in the top-down perspective depends on adequate follow through.⁷⁰

Due the number of aspects associated to peacebuilding, policy in this subject requires a multi-factor approach. Therefore political, military, budgetary and cultural dimensions cannot be excluded from governmental strategies to reduce or avoid violence.⁷¹ For individuals affected by conflict as well as those responsible in hostile acts the public administrations need to develop strategies encompassing not only humanitarian relief but also social and economic stabilization. The success or failure of such public policies depends not only on a comprehensive, yet detailed, design, but also in the adequate enactment and follow up.⁷² Recently, these programs have come to incorporate a reconciliation element, which is able to ensure long term effects. Therefore, a noticeable feature in the different initiatives that local and national authorities display has required former enemies to experience some degree of contact.

The previous concepts evidence that all those actions intended to show positive incentives about an out-group do have an impact on a person’s self-image. This is due to a new scheme of categorizations that can even motivate membership into new social structures. The wide-range goals of reconciliation enounced above are likely to foster such processes of change. At the same time, policies for the treatment of former combatants can be taken as concise practical measures in this perspective. Drawing on the concepts and discussions

⁶⁸ Giandomenico Majone and Aaron B. Wildavsky, “Implementation as Evolution (1979),” Chap. 8 in *Implementation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 170.

⁶⁹ Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aron B. Wildavsky, *Implementation How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), xiv.

⁷⁰ Eugene Bardach, *Getting agencies to Work Together The Practice of Theory and Managerial Craftsmanship* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998),

⁷¹ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, April 1996),

⁷² Roth Deubel, *Políticas Públicas*, 35.

presented, the subsequent chapters elaborate an empirical examination confronting theory with real-life experiences of DDR.

2.0 Research Design

This work resembles a case study typical of a political science standpoint. Nevertheless, contributions from other disciplines such as public administration and social psychology have also nurtured the contents presented. As seen in the theoretical framework, the different arguments quoted have been previously developed on academic research that has eventually appeared in specialized publications or independent works. In order to prove the explanatory value of the first chapter, while advancing in answers for the main question, empirical research through primary sources was estimated as highly convenient. The text will be based on empirical data personally collected during six weeks in Colombia.

2.1 Colombia as a crucial-case for DDR

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding, this study opted for a single case perspective. This decision corresponds with John Gerring's advice about not falling exclusively for a case's empirical properties but also taking into account the formal properties of the theory at stake.⁷³ Thus, the next chapters will analyze the practical effects of social contact within a contemporary DDR program and its intended effects on reconciliation. More specifically, it is expected to observe how a multi-stage process with dissimilar levels of interaction with society can possibly shape variations in the former combatants' perceptions of wrongdoings, the surrounding conflict and the construction of a shared destiny.

The choice of the Colombian case for this research obeyed to a series of motives. This country constitutes a critical and almost unique example of a state implementing a DDR process in the midst of hostilities related to a violent conflict. Although the perception of insecurity in the country varies from the big cities to more isolated communities, this case is also exceptional for the active role of the state and its efforts to carry out innovative policies. This situation has led to a relatively minimum amount of foreign intervention. The analysis is equally challenging due the presence of new violent actors, a more dynamic media and several political and budgetary pressures. Similarly, the influence of recent and ongoing peace processes is constantly raising valid questions regarding the fate of the ex-combatants.

⁷³ John Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 3 (2007), 231-237

2.2 Groups of analysis

For this study, one of the key assumptions to always keep in mind is the distinction of the overarching variables. From the research question and the theoretical framework, it was defined that the concept of reconciliation in section 1.2 will remain unaltered fulfilling its role of dependent variable; simultaneously, social contact will be taken as the independent variable, implying that it will be intentionally manipulated in order to measure the first. This procedure was materialized with a selection of two study-groups exposed to different momentums in the DDR process. The first, composed of recently demobilized combatants, features limited interactions with society as part of the preparations for subsequent reintegration. The second one, conversely, is made of individuals that have already spent several months or years on it. By comparing the answers to the same questions from both types of respondent, it is possible to estimate if a transformation of attitudes towards reconciliation takes place and to what extent it can be attributed to social exchanges.

2.2.1 Recently deserted combatants enrolled in the PAHD – G1

After uncountable days of membership in an IAG different circumstances make combatants to start questioning their role and permanence within the organization. This situation takes place when they realize that the promises that were personally made to them are not fulfilled or the big groups' goals cannot be achieved. Similarly, injuries, diseases, pregnancies, boredom or inter-personal disputes can also motivate recruits towards desertion. In order to avoid such phenomenon, groups' commanders use different means to dissuade their troops. Some threaten them with retaliations likely to worsen if the desertion directly affects the groups' interests.

In the Colombian case individual desertion is considered as high treason among the IAGs. The leftist guerrillas in their rules books include harsh sanctions and persecution when it happens. Nonetheless, this situation has not stopped thousands to abandon their groups. Deserting is a process that requires conceiving escape routes, taking into account weather, time and some security measures. For many people the planning before finally doing it takes a long time since their lives are constantly at risk.

Once former combatants enter in contact with government institutions different factors are likely to shape critical views about the state and pessimistic perspectives concerning their personal future. The reasons behind this have to do in part with the membership to one type of group or another and the period of time spent without proper relations with civil society. It

is also possible to count on circumstances such as the stress associated with the desertion, the prevalence of military behaviors and the influence exercised by family ties.⁷⁴

In Colombia, until today, the men and women who individually demobilize from leftist guerrillas are taken care by the Ministry of Defense for a period of 90 days. During this time participants live in semi-isolated units called Peace Homes; more details about them are provided in the next chapter. Former members of right-wing paramilitaries are no longer admitted to the Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Program (PAHD) considering that these groups are officially extinct. For these structures a collective process of disarmament and demobilization was conducted between 2005 and 2007.

This study interviewed 13 people split between eight women and five men. Most of them belonged to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and few ones to the National Liberation Army (ELN). It is useful to remember that some of the members in this group were living at the Peace Home with partners and/or children with whom they were not allowed to stay during the permanence in the IAG. Others, especially the females, stated that they were separated from their children. The interviews took place at the Cajicá Peace Home with generous assistance provided by the Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Group (GADH).⁷⁵

2.2.2 Persons in process of reintegration (PPR) – G2

Once the demobilized people complete their time under the attention of the Ministry of Defense at the Peace Homes, they are able to continue into reintegration. In this phase the ex-combatants are in charge of ensuring their own accommodation and other subsistence means. Most of them return to their hometowns or other places where they can rely on support networks of family and friends. Similarly, in this stage the former combatants are able to re-encounter and take care of their own children. As part of the process, the persons in process of reintegration (PPR) can access several conditioned stipends linked to studies, work and monthly meetings at the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR). They are also entitled to comply with a mandatory social service, which is required to be carried out in a conflict-affected community.

Taking into account the longer time that PPR have to interact with society, facing the challenges of ensuring a living, they are able to experience varied reactions from fellow

⁷⁴ Dalia Andrea Ávila Castillo (Chief Psychologist, GAHD), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2016.

⁷⁵ For clarity in the abbreviation, the GADH is the Ministry of Defense's division, staffed with Army personnel, in charge of administering the PAHD.

citizens. As part of this process, their preoccupations shift and start being less associated with the possible consequences of desertion. Additionally, the fact of being under the optics of a different government agency for several years implies important differences from the attention received by the Ministry of Defense and the army. Within this group, it is thus possible to expect a noticeable change in their opinions in comparison with those who have recently deposited the arms.

For this group the sub-sample gathered consisted in 12 individuals split between two women and ten men from different regions of the country living in Bogota. In the city there are several ACR territorial branches where PPR are asked to attend follow up meetings with their ‘reintegrators’ (R2). The semi-structured interviews for this work were conducted in one of the territorial branches under strict confidentiality and security measures. Some participants refused to be recorded. It is important to mention that this entire effort was made possible thanks to the collaboration of the ACR staff at the main office.

2.3 Variables and indicators

As the main condition likely to shape different perceptions of reconciliation among former combatants, this study will observe the social contact inherent to the different moments within the DDR process in which participants find themselves. The specific structure in Colombia defines that the first two phases, disarmament and demobilization, are carried out separately from reintegration. Bearing in mind that interaction with fellow citizens and public institutions is more limited in one stage than the other, the beliefs and attitudes are exposed to constant change. Thus, the longer period of time that a PPR has spent back in civilian life is likely to encourage different answers to those who have recently abandoned the IAG and have not spent more than 3 months out of combat.

By taking into consideration the persons’ momentum within DDR, characterized by different amounts of social contact, it is possible to determine a number of indicators related to precise variables in the larger concept of reconciliation. The multiple steps that former combatants are required to undertake as part of the public policy for DDR are likely to have effects on their perceptions towards the state, their standpoint with victims and society, and their own self-image. The variables defined below in table 1 were classified into three different clusters: acknowledgement of wrongdoings, narratives of the conflict and co-existence. The first set, acknowledgement of wrongdoings, comprised Views on victims’ suffering and Disposition towards asking for forgiveness. The group related to the narratives

of war assembled together Disposition towards talking about the past and Prospects for the end of the conflict. Finally, the cluster dealing with co-existence involved Views on out-groups, Views on co-existence, and Views on close interpersonal links. The indicators (codes) were mostly measures of positive and negative views; for one of the variables this dual option was inappropriate and instead the measure was observed in terms of prevalence of a certain phenomenon.

Table 1 Clusters, variables and indicators

| Cluster | Variable | Indicators |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Acknowledgement of wrongdoings | Views on victims' suffering | Understanding views on victims' situation Justification of the IAG acts against victims Self-victimization |
| | Forgiveness | Positive views on asking for forgiveness Negative views on asking for forgiveness |
| Narratives of war | Truth and historical memory | Positive views on talking about the past Negative views on talking about the past |
| | Views on the end of the conflict | Positive prospects for the end of conflict Negative prospects for the end of conflict |
| Co-existence | Views on out-groups | Positive views on out-groups Negative views on out-groups |
| | Views on co-existence | Positive views on co-existence Negative views on co-existence |
| | Views on close links | Positive views on close interpersonal links Negative views on close interpersonal links |

2.4 Methodology and sources

The empirical part of this work consisted in a series of semi-structured interviews with demobilized individuals in the two distinctive stages of the DDR process in Colombia. This specific type of interview was preferred since it allows the interviewer to guide the entire process in an orderly manner while giving the interviewees the possibility to freely develop their ideas in open-ended questions. The same questionnaire of thirteen open-ended questions and seven closed questions for statistical purposes was applied to both groups (Appendix A).

The entire effort was also enriched with discussions held with program administrators and other public servants. Due the large universe of individuals that can be identified as members of illegal armed organizations taking part in hostilities since 1980, the statistical information related to the results of the DDR policy was gathered from databases compiled by the ACR and the Ministry of Defense.

The interviews were conducted with a small sample of 25 former combatants, most of them with no high-profile or any political position within the insurgent organizations. Some of the respondents might, however, have controlled large numbers of individuals or disproportionate amounts of money and other resources. The reduced size can be explained by several factors that came across once the author traveled to Colombia. Due the complex issues such as violations of human rights and other criminal actions in which former combatants might be involved, the authorities that take care of them are extremely cautious with disclosures of information. In fact, it was required to obtain special time-limited permits that were only granted upon presentation of specific credentials, research outlooks and the overall questionnaire.

Once access to the Cajicá Peace Home was approved, the visits were performed under companion of military personnel from the GADH while observing strict security measures. An important challenge to overcome consisted in the attitudes of reluctance from former combatants towards being interviewed. Normally, they enter the disarmament and demobilization phase after deserting, which involves life-threatening situations and actual injuries. Such situation, along with the fact of being regularly interrogated by intelligence officers and representatives from diplomatic missions, makes them feel suspicious to talk with outsiders. At the same time, it was necessary to coordinate the meetings according to their schedule of activities and free time in order to avoid major disruptions for the interviewees.

On the other hand, the PPR under attention of the ACR could only be accessed through visits to one of the regional branches located in Bogota. The process to be granted authorization was particularly time-consuming due the different bureaucratic barriers in place. Since the research proposal has to be assessed by different functionaries, processing and approvals take up to three weeks if no changes are asked. When the administrative procedures were finally accomplished it was possible to find a higher disposition towards the concession of interviews, however the amount of people was limited and profiles were mostly aleatory. This last was due because researchers are only allowed to come on specific dates in which the number of people attending counselling might variate. Even though treatment to the interviewer was always courteous, there were constant reminders about language appropriateness and avoidance of discussions on disturbing events.

In spite of the interviewees, they all were adults above the age of 18 years. Their times of permanence in the IAG and in the civilian life after demobilization were varying. Most of them were gathered from leftist insurgent organizations, which are the only ones currently admitted for individual demobilization. The exclusion of individuals from far-right paramilitary corresponds with the fact that their demobilization took place on a collective basis. In this research the fact of leaving the insurgency is taken as a voluntary act that does not correspond with a superior's order or the result of a political agreement. The interviews did not favor any specific geographical place of origin, age, gender, religion or ethnicity. It is important to notice that a considerable number of former combatants identified themselves as victims as well. Finally, it is worth clarifying that the questions applied, followed all ethical standards and did not enquire for acts related to combat, perpetration of crimes or practice of any degrading conduct.

In order to interpret the information gathered in Colombia, all the interviews performed were transcribed, translated, prepared for analysis and eventually processed with the qualitative research computer software MAXQDA.⁷⁶ This specific tool facilitates the isolation and analysis of each dialogue as a single unit while separating quantitative-type information. In this sense, the association of textual sources with several codes and conditions dictated by the more statistical closed-ended questions came as straightforward practice. The software allows to add color markers that indicated which parts of a statement exhibited proximity with a given trend or behavior. Once the responses to open-ended questions were coded in a certain way, they were retrieved for examination and comparison. With this strategy it was possible to ultimately develop a consistent analysis of the respondents' statements. This also gave the opportunity to identify outstanding declarations paired to each variable with their frequency of appearance. The coding was eventually carried out during several sessions in which some indicators were re-formulated and others dismissed. In order to ensure the highest level of appropriateness the final result was double-checked and contrasted with the content of the original recordings in Spanish.

3.0 Context

The armed conflict in Colombia constitutes today the longest active conflict in the western hemisphere. The following sub-sections will explore the historical transition of

⁷⁶ The program was conceived by the firm Verbi Software in Berlin, which released its latest version in September 2015. Unlike similar instruments, it is not based on grounded theory and instead it favors both qualitative and quantitative approaches following the notion of the mixed methods technique.

violent events in the country, the legal context that has articulated the DDR scheme, and the specific programs implemented from this policy.

3.1 Historical review

According to the Uppsala Database on Conflict Program (UCDP), the 20th century in Colombia exhibited the existence of two different, yet inter-connected, conflicts. Under the burden of the 1886 conservative constitution the state structure for the following decades favored centralism of government affairs in the capital with little autonomy for the regions. Additionally it established an unrestricted allegiance with the Catholic Church that deeply restricted social relations and civil freedoms. Discontent eventually emerged among more progressive sectors that had to endure a lack of institutions and development in places of difficult access.

During the years that humanity was confronted to the world wars in Europe, in Colombia the social and political life was characterized by internal power struggles. In response to sporadic acts of sabotage carried out by liberals, conservative governments did not hesitate to suppress them using indiscriminate tactics deployed by the army and police. After the assassination of the liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliecer Gaitan the country fell in a stage of rampant insecurity especially in rural areas. The hostilities also featured a portion of “landowners and organized peasants launching attacks and vendettas against neighboring villages”⁷⁷. This period of instability and widespread terror that lasted from 1948 till 1958 came to be known as *La Violencia* causing around 200.000 deaths.⁷⁸ The attempt to exclude liberals from any state participation in public entities failed once both sides reached a truce agreement popularly named the “National Front.” Since then the state action started targeting communist factions.

The National Front meant a scheme of power-sharing among the two reigning political parties. The exclusion of dissident forces from the political life, mostly those with communist ideologies, meant the appearance of a second wave of insurgencies seeking political representation. According to Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, these groups had the conviction that “a revolution was in fact possible even if it was carried out by a handful of rebels opposing a repressive government supported by the United States.”⁷⁹ Initially the new organizations

⁷⁷ Uppsala Conflict Data Program UCDP, (Colombia; accessed February 10, 2016), <http://ucdp.uu.se/#country/100>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, “Criminales y rebeldes: una discusión de la economía política del conflicto armado desde el caso colombiano,” *Estudios Políticos* no. 24 (January – June 2004), 45

faced extreme difficulties due the lack of military capacities and personnel, which forced them to go into long periods of inactivity. Moreover, the successive defeats during combat drove them to re-organize their fighting schemes. Their fate changed around the mid-70s with the affluence of new resources coming from the custody and regulation of illicit plantations of coca leaf and opium poppy. For decades the guerrillas deployed several attacks aimed at destabilizing the government, nonetheless theirs offensives often targeted civilians believed to collaborate with the ‘enemy.’ Among the crimes committed, extortions, bank robberies, kidnappings, massacres and targeted homicides were the ones responsible for the highest number of victims (see Appendix B). In sum the bipartisan violence that affected the country in the early years of the century never ceased from existing, it only transformed into insurgent violence.

3.1.1 FARC – EP

In 1964 a group of rural members of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) that had fought during *La Violencia* gave origin to the Revolutionary Colombian Armed Forces – People’s Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC-EP*). Although it is often referred that this guerrilla was the result of a Communist-Liberal alliance “the insurgency’s beginnings were systematically aligned with the PCC while Liberals remained an insignificant factor in its formative history.”⁸⁰ Their ideological framework, which arguably follows Marxist-Leninist principles, initially attracted between 400 and 600 recruits. Unlike other groups led by educated intellectuals, the FARC were mostly composed of peasantry and indigenous populations.⁸¹

According to the interviews with high-profile guerrilla commanders carried out by Juan Guillermo Ferro and Graciela Uribe, 50 years after their foundation, the organization had reached the spectacular figure of around 18.000 members with near 40% women and some fronts with up to 50%.⁸² In terms of warfare, once the FARC were able to secure a strong economic arm, the acquisition of new material and the increase in the figures of recruitment facilitated the perpetration of numerous massacres. The targeted groups corresponded mostly to rural populations believed to collaborate initially with the army and afterwards with the paramilitaries. Ambushes and direct combat were other war tactics that remained unaltered

⁸⁰ James J. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 5.

⁸¹ Juan Guillermo Ferro and Graciela Uribe, *El orden de la guerra. Las FARC-EP: entre la organización y la política* (Bogota: Centro Editorial Javeriano CEJA, 2002), 64

⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

until the US-backed ‘Plan Colombia’ and the ‘Democratic Security’ policy came into effect, which reduced those events.⁸³

3.1.2 ELN

Separate to the events taking place in the countryside throughout the 60’s, a group of students received scholarships from the Cuban government for ideological instruction and military training in the island. Upon their return they articulated a different insurgency known as the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* – ELN). The organization as such was formally founded by Fabio Vasquez Castaño in 1964 who initially exercised an authoritarian and absolutistic leadership. In addition to the initial student movements, other factions such as workers and former liberal guerrillas also joined them. Unlike the taxation that the FARC imposed on the cocaine production, the ELN openly refrained from financing via drug-trade. Instead, their main sources of funding until today have been the rent extraction from the oil and mining sector, kidnappings and extortions. This particularity explains why the ELN did not experience the same growth as the FARC and the paramilitaries between the 1980 and 2000.⁸⁴

Although until today the ELN also presents itself as a Marxist-Leninist organization, this has not helped to avoid violent confrontations with the FARC. Even though the military practices in the FARC are stricter than in the ELN, this last has been able to achieve deeper social ties as part of its refrain from drug trafficking.⁸⁵ In quantitative terms, this irregular organization reached a maximum approximate of 6.000 combatants.⁸⁶ According to Barbara Gruber and Jan Pospisil the ELN has been able to battle the loss of popularity of its ideology by developing a heavily normative and ideological identity.⁸⁷ Such particularity has been fundamental at the moment of overcoming serious defeats in combat, like the one suffered against the army in the 1973 *Anorí* operation. It is thus clear that the ELN’s resilience has been one of its central attributes to avoid complete annihilation from the state forces and the paramilitaries.

⁸³ These strategies, implemented between 1998 and 2010, consisted in the reinforcement of the country’s military capacities in order to regain control over regions traditionally under insurgent influence.

⁸⁴ Carlos Medina Gallego, *Ejército de Liberación Nacional ELN (1958 – 2007) Notas para una historia de las ideas políticas* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2007), 151.

⁸⁵ Alvaro Camacho Guizado, “Credo, necesidad y codicia: los alimentos de la guerra,” *Análisis político* 46 (2002), 145.

⁸⁶ Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, “Recruitment in a civil war: a preliminary discussion of the Colombian case” Working paper (Santa Fe, NM: Santa Fe Institute SFI, 2004), 5.

⁸⁷ Barbara Gruber and Jan Pospisil, “‘Ser Eleno’: Insurgent Identity in the ELN,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 26, no. 2 (2015), 227.

3.1.3 Other guerrillas: M-19, EPL, PRT and MAQL

In response to the classical notion of peasant guerrillas, a group of students with stronger political claims gave birth to a smaller organization with a more urban character known as the 19th of April Movement (*Movimiento 19 de Abril* – M-19). The founding motive to embrace the armed struggle was the inconformity towards the political elites responsible for the fraud in the 1970 presidential election. The group officially emerged in 1974 and openly opposed the rigid disciplinary frameworks reigning among the existing organizations. Instead it aimed for symbolic and publicized acts, which in the end meant a faster warfare. In compliance with drug-traffickers, the M-19 perpetrated in 1985 the assault to Bogota's Palace of Justice. In that event more than half of the Supreme Court Justices were massacred in the middle of the combat with the army, which was also responsible for the forced disappearances of civilians. This outcome debilitated the M-19's public perception and forced it into peace talks. In the end, the M-19 managed to negotiate the election of a constitutional assembly. The same dialogues offered participation to the FARC and ELN, which declined such option and remained in the armed confrontation. Eventually, M-19 members charged with political crimes were given amnesty, which "removed possible legal obstacles in running for public office."⁸⁸

The peace accords reached on November 2, 1989 and March 9, 1990 set the path for the surrendering of weapons and the creation of a new political party known as Democratic Alliance M-19 (AD M-19).⁸⁹ Despite the assassination of their presidential candidate and other figures, the process can be seen as a success in DDR to the extent that it achieved the demobilization of a large number of troops, the destruction of military material and their eventual return to civilian life in full exercise of political rights.

Other organizations with lower number of combatants and military material were similarly conformed along the more prominent ones. On the side of the peasants' guerrillas a Maoist-inspired group known as the Peoples' Liberation Army (*Ejército Popular de Liberación* – EPL) was created in 1965. Contrasting the FARC and ELN, the EPL did not have the capacity to expand its presence to multiple municipalities in the northern and southern parts of the country. According to Camilo Echandía, this guerrilla was instead

⁸⁸ Alexandra Guáqueta, "The way back in Reintegrating illegal armed groups in Colombia then and now," Chap. 1 in *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict Politics, violence and transition*, ed. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 18.

⁸⁹ Lawrence Boudon, "Colombia's M-19 Democratic Alliance: A Case Study in New-Party Self-Destruction." *Latin American Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (January 2001) 75- 80.

relegated to the Catatumbo and Urabá regions between the *Antioquia* and *Norte de Santander* departments. This movement was created in 1965 but it was only until 1968 that it became capable of deploying sustained military operations. On February 1991 this guerrilla, along with the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT) and the Armed Movement Quintín Lame (MAQL) subscribed an agreement of demobilization with the government.⁹⁰ The PRT was a late armed dissidence of the PCC while the MAQL surged as a guerrilla of indigenous population in the defense of their communities in the southern department of *Cauca*. Following the dynamics that had taken place with the M-19, the document for these groups also stated specific initiatives for the provision of education, psychological counselling and economic stipendiums.⁹¹

3.1.4 The drug cartels

In the mid-1980's the illegal drug industry experienced an unprecedented evolution in Latin America. In Colombia, traffickers successfully managed a transition from weak cannabis production to a multi-million dollar business based on large coca plantations, cocaine distillation and sustained exports. The Cali and Medellin cartels evolved as criminal organizations that in the effort to safeguard the drug trade articulated private armies and also relied on guerrilla groups and paramilitary structures. The prevalence of drug trafficking can be mostly associated with the “incomparable economic opportunities in backward regions regardless of the lack of development of their productive apparatus.”⁹² For many years this context of illegal crops, processing laboratories and changing trade routes has fueled the conflict and contributed to the prevalence of a culture of war. In response to this situation, the national government opted for a military offensive under the umbrella of the war on drugs early proclaimed in the United States by President Richard Nixon in 1971. The results until today are, however, questionable since the production of illicit substances remains steady despite changes in the ownership of profits.

3.1.5 The paramilitary phenomenon

As a response for the growing insecurity in rural areas in the early 80s, landowners created self-defense groups with support of politicians and the military.⁹³ In the beginning, it

⁹⁰ “Quintín Lame dejará armas el 31 de Mayo,” *El Tiempo*, May 23, 1991, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-87506>

⁹¹ “EPL firmó acuerdo de desmovilización,” *El Tiempo*, February 16, 1991, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-26917>

⁹² Gustavo Duncan, “Drug Trafficking and Political Power Oligopolies of Coercion in Colombia and Mexico,” *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 2 (March 2014), 20, doi: 10.1177/0094582X13509071

⁹³ Uppsala Conflict Data Program UCDP, (object name Colombia; accessed February 10, 2016), <http://ucdp.uu.se/#country/100>

was possible to evidence them as a proliferation of numerous small private armies exercising tasks of vigilance and ‘debt-adjustments.’ The power gained by the leftist insurgencies triggered this dynamic. Nonetheless, their involvement with drug trafficking did not take long to occur. The protection of plantations, production facilities, transit and even distribution required the control of areas under the scrutiny of the guerrillas. According to Alexandra Guáqueta, the first independent groups held reduced numbers of combatants from a minimum of 20 up to a maximum of 100 men. In 1997 these structures came together into the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which consisted in a “loose, pragmatic alliance of blocs.”⁹⁴ In the paramilitary organization it was not possible to distinguish a hierarchic configuration, instead their structure was better perceived as a federation. Consequently, the execution of their combat acts was “driven by strongly decentralized and local interests.”⁹⁵

In the period comprised between 1996 and 2002 the paramilitary groups came into the scene to challenge the order that had been created by the guerrillas. In the political arena, they developed a strategy of alliances with members of congress, departmental deputies, governors and majors seeking to play an active role in legislation and execution of public budgets. On the military side, the same groups deployed an active campaign for control of large extensions of territory and populations. As a result of these circumstances, civilians in rural areas found themselves in between of an armed confrontation that also included abuses from the state public force. In the history of violence in Colombia, the paramilitaries constituted the most murderous actor. According to Camilo Echandía, their strategy intended to create fear among communities believed to support the insurgent fight by perpetrating gruesome massacres and indiscriminate acts of torture.⁹⁶ Therefore, the death toll caused by paramilitary blocs was considerably higher than the one attributed to the guerrillas after decades of fighting. In fact, attacks against civilians have constituted a war strategy implemented by all the actors in this conflict.⁹⁷

The DDR process carried out with the paramilitary structures was made possible by the Law of Peace and Justice that ultimately allowed the peace negotiations to reach a palpable

⁹⁴ Guáqueta, “The way back in Reintegrating illegal armed groups in Colombia then and now,” 20 – 21.

⁹⁵ Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Andrea González Peña, “Colombia’s Paramilitary DDR and its Limits,” Chap. 7 in *Post-Conflict Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Bringing State-building back in*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 115.

⁹⁶ Camilo Echandía, “Organizaciones armadas y violencia global en Colombia,” in *Prolongación sin solución? Perspectivas sobre la guerra y la paz en Colombia*, ed. Eduardo Bechara (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2012), 133-157.

⁹⁷ Grupo de Memoria Histórica – GMH, *¡basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 2013), 47

outcome. According, to figures from the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP), 31.671 men demobilized and 18.051 weapons were surrendered to the state.⁹⁸ Despite the numbers, the dismantlement of the paramilitaries was considered a failure by the National Group on Historical Memory (GMH). Among the arguments that this organism presents to support its posture, there is the evident rearmament of demobilized individuals through the conformation of purely criminal gangs.⁹⁹

3.1.6 The BACRIM

The paramilitaries that did not participate in the collective DDR process and those who after demobilization re-engaged in hostilities gave birth to a new actor in the Colombian cycle of violence. These structures, commonly referred as ‘bacrim’ (Spanish acronym for criminal gangs), are more dispersed at the local level and mostly devoted to drug-trafficking in both urban and rural scenarios. Due their atomized nature it is not possible to have consistent figures about their membership; however, their active adherents have been estimated between 100 and 500 men. Their presence is nowadays highly visible in mid-size cities from where they have strategized the takeover of positions left by the AUC paramilitaries.¹⁰⁰ Even though the use of violence exhibits important similarities with acts perpetrated by their predecessors, the bacrim have devoted lesser efforts in confrontations with leftist insurgencies. Keeping up with the latest developments by May 2016, these structures have entered into an open-ended military confrontation with state forces. Since the current pressures imposed on them would eventually require a higher number of men in their ranks, such situation is likely to turn into a direct risk for demobilized ex-combatants.

3.2 Legal and policy context

In 1997 congress formally gave the president the attributions to initiate negotiations with the leftist guerrillas that remained active after the 1991 constitution came into effect. This was made with the pursuit of achieving peace and putting an end to a conflict that was escalating through terrorist tactics. The eventual law 418/1997 provided a series of judicial benefits that could be conceded to individuals willing to demobilize either collectively or individually. As a condition, it was stated that the acts committed must have been in concordance with political motives. The same law was eventually prorogued in several occasions in the following years and remains active in the legal order.

⁹⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Peace OACP, *Proceso de Paz con las Autodefensas Informe ejecutivo* (Bogota: OACP, December 2006), 99 – 102.

⁹⁹ Grupo de Memoria Histórica – GMH, *¡basta ya! Colombia*, 179.

¹⁰⁰ Frédéric Massé, “Bandas criminales o neoparamilitares?,” *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica* 11, no. 2 (April – June 2011), 44-45.

Following the dynamics of an imminent peace process with paramilitary structures, the law 782/2002 was passed as a prerogative of the 418/1997. This new piece of legislation excluded the political motivations as a condition to develop negotiations with IAGs. At the same time it added a number of especial dispositions related to the treatment of children unlinked or recovered by the public forces. As one of the most notorious points, some explicit procedures for carrying out the tasks of demobilization and reintegration were defined.

A couple of years later the 975/2005 law of Peace and Justice that established the procedures for the collective demobilizations of the AUC also defined additional judicial, social and economic benefits. The initial draft, in which full disclosure of the facts of the crimes was not mandatory, was largely modified by the constitutional court in order to comply with the victims' rights. Eventually, high expectations emerged since it was seen as a major effort to close the gap between DDR and its perceived impunity.¹⁰¹

Despite the inclusion of measures acknowledging the victims, based on international standards, in the practice the circumstances proved different. Many victims fell in a state of frustration because the declarations given by former paramilitaries were mostly self-justificatory with no concrete answers about disappeared relatives. This outcome was mostly due on the law's failure to establish any special non-judicial truth-telling mechanism.¹⁰² Additionally, the individuals testifying did not experience alternative forms of punishment and were instead given reduced jail sentences of up to a maximum of eight years.¹⁰³ From the larger perspective of historical truth the results were not much better. Although, a National Reparations and Reconciliation Commission (CNRR) was created, its main task consisted in putting together a historical report on the nature of each IAG.

Considering that many ex-combatants have been victimized as part of the conflict dynamics, it is also important to mention the law of victims 1448/2011. With this new legal instrument congress recognized the victims with a handful of rights and protective measures that the state has to guarantee seeking for truth, justice, reparations and no-repetition guarantees. In fact the DDR is envisaged as one of the strategies to ensure the compliance with the objectives that the law outlines. Additionally, the law demanded that all the steps

¹⁰¹ Catalina Díaz, "Colombia's bid for Justice and Peace," Chap 16 in *Building a Future on Peace and Justice Studies on Transitional Justice Peace and Development The Nuremberg Declaration on Peace and Justice*, eds. Kai Ambos, Judith Large and Marieke Wierda (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2009), 491.

¹⁰² Ibid., 493.

¹⁰³ Gutiérrez Sanín and González Peña, "Colombia's Paramilitary DDR and its Limits," 114.

taken towards the consolidation of DDR programs with inherence in delivering reparations must be discussed in territorial committees for transitional justice.

The mandate defined in these laws has been materialized through presidential decrees and ministerial resolutions. Some of these have contemplated visible measures such as the creation of the ACR as an especial administrative unit with the same rank of a ministry. Other decisions have dealt with more administrative measures concerning the management of the demobilization stage and the ministries in charge. In terms of punctual action, the state response has consisted in a series of policies at the national and local levels. In Colombia the implementation of public policy is defined through the documents produced by the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (Conpes), which is the country's highest planning authority. These documents state the motivations that support a given policy, the institutions in charge of the execution and their respective resources.

In relation to the DDR process, the 2008 Conpes document 3554 defined the phase of reintegration as a priority issue for public action. The document analyzed past experiences and went through the legal supports that allow the provision of attention to men, women, children and individuals in prison through specific programs. Although the emphasis revolves around the long-term process of reintegration, the policy correspondingly takes into consideration important complementary areas. Thus, it highlights on the need for coordinated efforts with already existing programs, more specifically in the stages of disarmament and demobilization. The same policy establishes a number of specific responsibilities for both state institutions and international organisms that take part in the attention of PPR. Additionally it emphasizes on the dual approach that the state intends to observe between individual and community reintegration. This last consists in strategies to be carried out with the communities in which former combatants come to re-build their lives.

In the specific front of individual reintegration, the national policy refers to five specific goals that must be carried out with the PPR. These include 1) complete identification of PPR and their families along with full disclosure of free statements in judicial processes; 2) provision of psycho-social attention; 3) development of healthy habits through the healthcare system; 4) permanence in the education system and; 5) improvement of abilities for income generation in the labor market. In addition to these prospects, the Conpes document 3554 opened the possibility of financing individual or group business initiatives upon compliance

with a fixed set of requirements.¹⁰⁴ Bearing in mind that DDR should not be seen as an assistance package that makes a number of citizens dependent on the state for the rest of their lives, the 2008 policy clearly warns on the importance of defining a moment in which the person goes totally independent. Therefore, the Reintegration Route agreed with each participant has to have a fixed period and a clear graduation date.¹⁰⁵

3.3 Government programs for ex-combatants

Although military means remain the main governments' choice to reduce security threats, international human rights' frameworks provide for fair and dignifying treatment of enemies. Following this precept, states develop policies to address the transition between the illegal combatant's life and civilian life. The government programs eventually face the challenge of offering benefits attractive enough for insurgents to give up their arms and the returns that these might assure.

Due the long years that the Colombian conflict has remained active, the limits of the notions of combatants and victims have become highly permeable. As another of the particularities that are visible in this case is the implementation of the reparation and reintegration programs while the hostilities associated to the conflict remain active and no peace agreement has been signed. According to Juan Diego Prieto Sanabria, the DDR policy in Colombia "has been monitored by the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS), supported by the International Organization for the Migrations (IOM) and funded by the US, Canada, Spain, The Netherlands and Japan, among others."¹⁰⁶

3.3.1 Humanitarian Attention Program to the Demobilized (PAHD)

According to the legislation explained before and the Conpes document 3554 as public policy for DDR, demobilization is the base condition for a former combatant to join any public program. Since 2003 the national government made demobilization of illegal combatants one of its top priorities within the security and defense policies. The initiative was first aimed at persuading defection through an incisive campaign of radio and television advertisements. Early on, the entire process was developed by the Ministry of Interior (home affairs) and the OACP following an early policy for reincorporation. Soon after, the same responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Defense in coordination with the Army. This

¹⁰⁴ Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social – Departamento Nacional de Planeación, *Política Nacional de Reintegración Social y Económica para Personas y Grupos Armados Ilegales*. Documento Conpes 3554 (Bogotá: DNP, December 2008), 37-52.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁶ Juan Diego Prieto Sanabria, *Guerras, paces y vidas entrelazadas Coexistencia y relaciones locales entre víctimas, excombatientes y comunidades en Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2015), 29

decision meant the creation of the GAHD. The aim in this sense was to establish a concrete structure to materialize the concepts of individual disarmament and demobilization. Noticing that the numbers of desertions increased in the midst of a tougher military strategy, the Colombian state assessed the need of an adequate approach to guarantee basic human rights to all kind of combatants. The following table contains some of the most relevant figures obtained since these changes were implemented:

Table 2 Disarmament and demobilization figures in Colombia (2003 – 2015)

| Event | Total and percentage |
|--|----------------------|
| Demobilized people | 57.765 (100%) |
| Individual demobilization | 26.901 (46,56%) |
| Collective demobilization (2003 – 2006) | 31.671 (54.82%) |
| Population that entered reintegration | 48.814 (84,50%) |
| Arms seized | 46.358 |
| Ammunitions seized | 11.279.326 |

Source: Ministry of defense, Demobilized Humanitarian Attention Group GADH, Colombian Reintegration Agency ACR

Following the principle of humanitarian stabilization defined in the Conpes Document 3554, the PAHD provides demobilized individuals with several benefits aimed at preparing them for the reintegration phase. This model of attention is set in action right after an irregular combatant deserts from the illegal organization and reaches a military or police unit. In relation to the disarmament stage, this same moment is used by the state authorities to “collect, document, control and place in custody short and long range weaponry.”¹⁰⁷

Continuing into the demobilization phase, combatants are initially screened for background information and their cases are in due course compiled in a database. Later on, they are assigned to a Peace Home where they are provided with accommodation, toiletry kits, clothing, food, healthcare, psychosocial attention, basic literacy, sports and arts activities, and permits to visit their families. The stay in these places is voluntary and fixed for a period of 90 days. The number of peace homes in the country is regulated by the monthly national trends of demobilization. These physical spaces in semi-urban areas, equipped with all the material facilities, are gathered by a private firm upon dispositions of the Ministry of Defense and the GAHD. Within the homes is it possible to find groups of single men, single women and families with children, in which at least one of the parents is a demobilized person. At the moment of this research there were only two Peace Homes in service; the first located in the municipality of Cajicá, 39 km north of Bogota and another one

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of Defense, Colombia, *Grupo de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado* (Power Point Presentation) (Bogota: GAHD, October 2015), 2

with more space in the city of Villavicencio. When a person completes 90 days in a Peace Home, he or she is awarded a certification from the Operative Committee for the Abandonment of Arms (CODA). This committee is composed by a group of professionals that verify the true intentions of the former combatants to undergo a future life far from hostilities. The same document is required to proceed into the reintegration process administered by the ACR.

In spite of underage combatants that leave irregular troops, they are technically known as ‘unlinked’ individuals (*desvinculados*) and their process is conducted separately from regular demobilized. The agency in charge of them is the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF). For them a special program has been conceived aiming at the restitution of their rights as victims of the conflict.¹⁰⁸ Considering that the issues that affect child combatants differ from the subjects under consideration, this population was not included in this study.

3.3.2 The Reintegration Route

In Colombia the current DDR policy and more specifically the last phase of it has revolved around three complementary axis; economic, social and community reintegration. In order to advance in the three directions the reintegration contemplates a number of dimensions that require some degree of attention. In parallel the state expects the individual to fulfill a number of commitments that contribute in his own process. According to the ACR this entire scheme is devoted to people who have not committed crimes against humanity and who clearly demonstrate a desire to return to civilian life.¹⁰⁹

Once a demobilized person leaves the Peace Home he or she has a period of 40 working days to get in touch with any of the territorial branches of the ACR. Upon verification of their CODA certification and other identity documents, the former combatants are assigned a ‘reintegrator’ (R2). With the assistance of this professional the person defines a Reintegration Route, and formally becomes known as a person in process or reintegration (PPR). The route is basically an agreement signed with the person that states his activities during civilian life and the set of applicable stipends for each one. Those who have been diagnosed with disorders that require psychiatric treatment are assigned to one of the psychiatric advisors (R3). The whole process is coordinated by a Route advisor (R1) while another servant with

¹⁰⁸ Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social – Departamento Nacional de Planeación, *Política Nacional de Reintegración Social y Económica para Personas y Grupos Armados Ilegales*. Documento Conpes 3554, 4.

¹⁰⁹ “Qué es la Reintegración?,” Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración ACR, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/es/la-reintegracion/Paginas/quees.aspx>

the same rank is in charge of ensuring cooperation with public entities and private partners following a scheme of shared responsibility.¹¹⁰ With all this network of support in place the state seeks to minimize the rates of re-incidence in hostile or criminal acts while modulating the pressure on public institutions.

According to the figures produced by the ACR, the number of people that until December 2015 had experience the reintegration phase since 2003 was of 48.814 from a total of 57.765 demobilized in both the collective and individual ways. From this numbers 12.912 people have culminated their process and no longer receive any of the monetary stipendiums. Table 3 exposes below these and some other figures that have emerged during the process.

Table 3 Reintegration figures in Colombia (2003 – 2015)

| Type of population | Absolute and proportional figures |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Population that entered reintegration | 48.814 (100%) |
| PPR from collective demobilization | 27.563 (56.47%) |
| PPR from individual demobilization | 21.251 (43.53%) |
| Former FARC | 15.725 (32.21%) |
| Former ELN | 3.000 (6.14%) |
| Population that has culminated reintegration | 12.911 (26.44%) |
| Current PPR | 17.250 (35.33%) |
| Population removed from reintegration | 10.011 (20.50%) |
| Death | 3558 (7.29%) |
| Loss of benefits | 6399 (13.11%) |
| Voluntary renouncement | 54 (0.11%) |

Source: ACR

With this context of DDR in mind, it is now possible to focus the attention on the empirical analysis that intends to observe the correspondence of social contact in the lives of former combatants with their disposition towards reconciliation. The next chapters will individually analyze the variables grouped in the three clusters defined in section 2.3.

4.0 Acknowledgment of wrongdoings

Taking into account the first goal defined within the concept of reconciliation, one of the fundamental pieces in the puzzle has to do with recognizing what has been done and taking steps to re-establish things to the state they were before a bond was broken. For this work this point related specifically to the victims' suffering and the existing disposition towards asking for forgiveness. In order to observe how the acknowledgement of wrongdoings can be fostered by the institutional scheme of DDR and the influence of social contact, the questions posed in this cluster explored both groups' perceptions on victims'

¹¹⁰ Paula Garcia (Psychologist and Consultant, IOM), in discussion with the author, January 15, 2016.

sufferings and the possibility of face them and apologize. The following subsections present an analysis on the number and content of statements collected. Additionally, the most relevant responses from one or more interviewees are quoted apart.

4.1 Views towards victims' sufferings

The innumerable horrors that can be associated with the development of a conflict that lasts for many decades leave deep wounds that in some cases perpetrators fail to estimate. In the present section, the number of statements measuring the understanding of the victims' position, did not reveal major divergences in terms of quantity and content. Nonetheless, in relation to declarations intended to justify the perpetration of violent acts or to minimize their gravity, it was registered a lower prevalence of this trend among individuals in the stage of reintegration. Within this variable, the responses to different questions associated to a self-image of victims, either from the same IAG or the state was also taken as an indicator.

Table 4 Views on victims' sufferings

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|----|
| Views on victims' sufferings (G1) | Understanding of their situation | 11 |
| | Justification of IAG's acts | 7 |
| | Self-victimization | 7 |
| Views on victims' sufferings (G2) | Understanding of their situation | 14 |
| | Justification of IAG's acts | 3 |
| | Self-victimization | 4 |

Among those respondents that expressed understanding opinions about the victims' situation, one the most frequent concerns in their responses was the magnitude of the acts perpetrated. Correspondingly, it was noticeable how painful memories become elements that end up making approaches more difficult. Several interviewees, despite the overall simplicity and lack of details in their responses, also reminded on the hard time that individual victims and affected communities would go through by encountering those that disrupted their lives. The recognition of the disadvantages that violence creates is evident in this short quote:

I do not mind helping people that have been affected by the violence. I am aware that they are victims and they need help, that is why I would give them a hand.¹¹¹

Meanwhile a more consistent response, which elaborates both on the acts committed and the existing group boundaries, results outstanding in this statement:

¹¹¹ P5: G1. Note that each interview was assigned a unique code telling about the participant's number (P5) and group of origin (G1).

Massacres, killings and disappearances are things that we the members of the guerrillas have imposed on the families and the Colombian people for so many years and I would not be surprised if they decide to never forgive. We need a lot of respect, a lot of diplomacy when approaching those people [the victims], being careful of not offending when it comes to speak to them. Being well-behaved is also a good idea.¹¹²

The same indicator among PPR grouped in G2 included very similar notions and in fact no major changes were notorious. They equally reminded on the need to understand that dealing with victims implies being thoughtful about difficult personal experiences. Likewise, they also emphasized the utility to provide them with all the support they could possibly require. In the interviews conducted with G2 the allusion to victims' physical and psychological suffering can be seen as more decided and less hesitant. In the next quotation it can be perceived how group boundaries remain in place although a disposition to explore new ways to connect is made evident:

Victims will always have their pain and losses that for us are just too difficult to understand. We should develop long-term joint projects so we can have an idea of everything they have gone through. Being aware of the many perspectives that exist makes us more tolerant. It is obviously valuable to speak face to face with the person [a victim] about ours and his life experiences. Due the situation in the country, all that is not enough and if we actually do something to improve the victims' lives it would be better for everyone. When positive acts are seen the negative perceptions tend to disappear and victims are able to feel some comfort.¹¹³

Similarly, the desire to establish a scheme of cooperation, in this case under the optics of religion, was presented by this respondent who had already completed eight months in the Route of reintegration:

Victims have huge sufferings within themselves. I am a religious communist and I do not care about the differences in our social and political positions as long as I can help people.¹¹⁴

Proceeding now with the opposing points to the understanding views on the victims' suffering, this study examined for responses that could be seen as excusing of violent outcomes. Unlike the previous indicator, the number of statements, as well as their content, experienced a more notorious variation between both groups. In term of the language used,

¹¹² P10: G1

¹¹³ P2: G2

¹¹⁴ P9: G2

many G1 respondents still referred to themselves as active members of IAGs. This tendency was only unnoticed by those who had endured severely traumatizing experiences during their life as combatants or upon their desertion. The first respondent in this sense showed that membership into society, fostered by public benefits, does not offer her enough positive incentives and instead is seen as problematic.

We can halt kidnappings, children recruitment and assassinations, but then what's the government giving to us? There is no change. Right now we are surrendering to the government and leaving our things behind, but is it really worth it? Instead the government throws us against society as villains.¹¹⁵

Likewise, the following quote from another female ex-combatant confirmed some degree of self-identification with the group rather than with her-self in correspondence with the process of depersonalization described by Hewstone and Cairns.

The FARC were constituted in 1964 and then they created a set of rules. Those rules are divided in three parts, Statutes, internal commanding norms and the disciplinary regime. That is what we are always complying with all the time. The rules are though and they make sense to me but after 12 years fighting I realized that overtaking power is now impossible.¹¹⁶

As for the third example below, the reluctance to be held accountable for the unfortunate consequences that others endured can be considered as a strong deterrent of deeper links.

For us it is a very difficult situation to deal with. What do we do in the case of a victim that did not have any guilt and myself? I never participated in a violent action; I cannot be seen as responsible for anything that happened to them. Those are just things that happen in war.¹¹⁷

From the perspective of those who have had the opportunity to experience equal-status contact with members of society in different contexts, the justification of victimizing events was almost inexistent. The statements in this sense brought up political and state responsibilities that ended up motivating the perpetration of violence. The following excerpt denotes how knowledge on positive deeds in the out-group, which in this case is the army, contributes to a more balanced critique along with intentions for closer interaction.

¹¹⁵ P1: G1

¹¹⁶ P3: G1

¹¹⁷ P8: G1

Remember that the war began for political colors. The army and the police were persecuting peasants to kill them. Therefore the peasants armed themselves and then the war began. Which is the guilty one? The government was the one who invented this war. They are the ones who have to go and face the victims and the country. We defended ourselves because we were going to get killed. In the areas where we were living the army arrived to chase us. I now recognize that the army has changed and that many positive improvements have taken place. We for sure need to keep seeking a negotiated exit to the conflict. Each one must accept his own mistakes. The damages that the FARC caused are to be known as collateral damages. If you hurt me, and I try to respond to you but I accidentally hit someone else, the innocent one becomes a collateral damage.¹¹⁸

In the analysis of former combatants' acknowledgement of wrongdoings, an interesting feature that emerged in the interviews was their self-perception as victims. For some cases the association of their personal stories with those of the civilians served as a facilitator of the empathy expressed. Others instead quoted their past accounts and the ones from the acquaintances within the IAG as they main example of victimhood in the conflict. The same situation was also characterized by a reduction in the number of related statements from one group to the other. For G1 members, victimhood is a feature that shapes the insurgencies' social identity and therefore it is not strange, as can be seen in the following quote, the citation of fellow ex-combatants' experiences.

Many of my companions here still have strong resentments towards the state since many of them have also been victims. It is not difficult to find ex-fighters saying "I do not want anything with the government because they killed my dad or my siblings."¹¹⁹

Complementary, it is outstanding to observe some responses, like the following ones, in which victimhood is assumed as a negative shared attribute that pushes individuals out of their in-group. This outcome might also be motivated by the disappearance of obstacles to leave and interact with other groups seeking for positive responses and even new identities.

- There are so many victims out there that deserve reparations but the FARC will not do that. That is because the FARC is also full of victims and that will be used as an excuse to avoid further responsibility with civilians.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ P9: G2

¹¹⁹ P2: G1

¹²⁰ P5: G1

- I was once eight months pregnant and they performed an abortion on me against my will. They took the baby out and killed it right in front of my eyes. After 11 years of fighting side by side with them I became another victim. What they did to me is something that no reparation will erase from my mind.¹²¹

When taking into account the effects of social contact, the status of former combatants as victims is more related to cases of child recruitment and the impossibility for them to return to their hometowns. Even though this constitutes a commonality likely to shape self-perceptions, the reactions obtained seemed to be elusive and major explanations were avoided. The following quotes denote this trend:

- I was perpetrator and victim at the same time. In my case I was recruited when I was underage. I even got a victim's reparation but I am still a victim since I cannot come back to my hometown.¹²²

- I grew up in a red-zone, a rural area with a lot of guerrilla presence. When they see the boys and girls aged 12 to 15 years old they come and recruit them. I was 16 years old when they took me with them.¹²³

As it has been seen until this point the acknowledgement of wrongdoings, even among G2 members, is not as straightforward as expected. Although it is valuable that both groups show similar degrees of concern for the victims' fate, the fact of still having modulating statements that fail to explicitly recognize others' sufferings raises some concerns. This trend can be in part explained by the respondents' notorious effort to uphold a positive self-image, as it is often encouraged throughout the DDR policy. Since the acknowledgement of third-party affectations related to the conflict is not enough to assess reconciliation, the study examines in the subsequent sections other variables and clusters.

4.2 Views towards asking for forgiveness

In parallel with the victims' sufferings, another strong indicator in the acknowledgement of wrongdoings consisted in the disposition towards asking for forgiveness. The coding for this variable was split between positive and negative views identified along different statements obtained in the semi-structured interviews. In general terms, it was positive to estimate a slight increase in the disposition of asking for forgiveness,

¹²¹ P6: G1

¹²² P1: G2

¹²³ P6: G2

while the reduction in the reluctance was more meaningful. The actual number of statements in each sense can be observed in the following table:

Table 5 Views on asking for forgiveness

| | | |
|---|----------|---|
| Views on asking for forgiveness (G1) | Positive | 7 |
| | Negative | 6 |
| Views on asking for forgiveness (G2) | Positive | 9 |
| | Negative | 2 |

Observing the discussions held with individuals who had recently demobilized (G1) a clear division in opinions was found. Those who showed favorable to the idea of meeting the victims with an apology also expressed their doubts about the outcome of such initiative. For others, such event would be feasible as long as it could be carried out on a collective basis. This turnout, in which the prevalence of prejudices about the out-group of victims is still evident, can be observed in the first of the following selected quotations:

I know I would not be forgiven but it is the most viable thing to do. In fact, one cannot make everyone happy, and I know I have made mistakes. At least I would ask for forgiveness to feel some relief.¹²⁴

With a different tone, the following female ex-combatant whose desertion was motivated by a traumatic experience realized how an apology could make anxiety to decline.

I would do it because so many civilians have been victimized. For them the fact of knowing at least who belonged to the front that affected them would be important. I think that an event in which a member of the organization asks them for forgiveness might give them some relief.¹²⁵

Observing now a male respondent with an answer coded as positive view, it is perceptible how an overall good intention would be overruled by the fact that after superficial contact prejudices would remain unaltered, following Allport's terms.

I am fine with asking for forgiveness to a whole community. On the other hand, doing the same individually with a person that I might have harmed would be very difficult and I would end up rejected. Sure thing I could do it but I will be ignored.¹²⁶

From a more radical perspective, the portion of statements in which the respondents showed reluctance to ask for forgiveness perceived this as an implicit blaming for acts that

¹²⁴ P1: G1

¹²⁵ P6: G1

¹²⁶ P10: G1

they did not commit. To justify such position several ex-combatants alluded to the hostility and resentment they would encounter from the victims, at the very edge of endangering their lives. In the same way, some related to the concept of chain of command to justify that they were only following orders and therefore the ones with the moral need to face the victims should be the IAGs' commanders. The following statement that exemplifies this type of responses evidences the person's claim for equality as a way to legitimize her position.

I am aware that I belonged to the organization but I do not feel the burden to go and ask for forgiveness for something that I have not done. If I did not participate in anything why should I apologize for others' acts?¹²⁷

Meanwhile, the respondent below predicts how hostile reactions associated to the emotional value of a human loss would reinforce victims' identity along with the barriers for membership to the out-group.

As I told you, that is a risk for one self. People are full of resentment; people won't forgive you that easily because they have so many wounds that remain there. How come someone will not have any hatred after having a son or a brother killed?¹²⁸

In the same way, the following quote exposes a person with very strong prejudices deepen by the emotional component. It also reminds about the effects of generalizations based on prejudices, which would eventually lead to negative outcomes according to the logics of Hewstone and Cairns.

The acts of war are not subject of forgiveness. When the paramilitary killed my uncle, it affected me a lot. For the civilian population, it is the same. So who is going to forgive all that? Would you forgive the ones who have killed your family? I think that the people who must go and ask for forgiveness are the division commanders. They were the ones giving the orders for assaults and assassinations. However, the civil population does not see that. They care more about who was pulling the trigger. They generalize, and they assume that all field combatants are responsible for their tragedies. I would not be able to go and talk to a peasant and say to him something like "please forgive me for assaulting your farm, your house and killing your family". No peasant is able to forgive that. Not even if the commander is the one acknowledging them.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ P2: G1

¹²⁸ P7: G1

¹²⁹ P13: G1

Among the former combatants that take part in the Reintegration Route administered by the ACR, the supportive views in spite of asking for forgiveness are more common. In terms of the content of statements the willingness to take part in major events with victims is manifest. For the PPR, despite of the obvious challenges, asking for forgiveness should be assumed as something normal with no major opposition. From the following female respondent, it can be seen how after four years in reintegration there is an effort to understand her environment, resulting in wider dispositions for interaction.

When you demobilize you face a very hard-minded society. We got to be ready to leave the past in the past. For sure, I would ask the victims for their forgiveness. We all as humans commit mistakes and we all deserve opportunities to start again. One must be able to look backwards having an objective view on that.¹³⁰

Complementary, the next respondent shows a clear disposition to reinforce his moral correctness, which could constitute a super-ordinate category of convergence for members of all groups.

Yes, that is a moral obligation for the simple fact of having belonged to the group. In my personal case I never took part in any activity of disappearances, assassinations or massacres, but I would still go and face the victims. You need to show your willingness. That is the minimum they deserve from us. Not having personally committed any war crime is not an excuse to ignore the victims and their suffering.¹³¹

Unlike the state of affairs observed at the Peace Home, among PPR already living their lives as regular citizens the aversion towards asking for forgiveness was almost inexistent. In fact only two statements with a strong ideological component could be coded in this sense. The following citation was obtained from a male former combatant, who spent 15 years within the FARC complying with commanding duties:

In this thing about forgiveness let me remind you that the war was not a guerrillas' invention. The peasants armed themselves because they were being killed. Who is the guilty one? Who is the one that has to go and ask for forgiveness? That one is the State and it also deserves to be forgiven. We as Colombians must forgive the state. Then we would be closer to reconciliation and true peace.¹³²

¹³⁰ P6: G2

¹³¹ P10: G2

¹³² P9: G2

From this variable it was possible to observe a stronger influence of social contact in the perspectives towards reconciliation of those former combatants in the reintegration phase. In detail, it was found that around the action of asking for forgiveness exist a number of perceived misconceptions such as being blamed and found guilty for violent acts. Although this can easily deter people from changing behaviors and creating affective ties, it is fortunately a trend that tends to disappear from one group to the other.

Bearing in mind that the analysis was based on answers from subjects that have not asked for forgiveness, according to Pettigrew's arguments, their *a priori* willingness can be associated with the phases of learning about the out-group and getting to change behaviors. In this sense, the actual switch in attitudes and beliefs is still distant. However, the sharp decrease in negative views, along with the weak arguments in the corresponding statements, confirms that some timid reflections do take place in the former combatants' mindset.

Although a change towards positive attitudes can be associated to the cluster in consideration, it does so through very reticent steps. On the other hand, the statements with negative contents on victims' sufferings and the presentation of apologies are much less prominent among PPR. Even though a decrease in adverse views does not imply total acknowledgement of wrongdoings, it reveals that there is a place for more optimistic positions in the future. The following chapter examines on the issue of the conflict narratives as the second goal in the concept of reconciliation.

5.0 Narratives of war memories

As one of the components of reconciliation, the views that former combatants hold towards the ongoing conflict represent a point that can be modulated in response to the DDR process and the contact with society after desertion. In order to observe this variation the two groups were asked the same questions with the opportunity to defend their postures. In this cluster the study first enquired about the dispositions towards talking about the past in full honesty. Correspondingly, the second variable considered the prospects to put an end to the conflict and de-articulate all IAGs. Both variables were evaluated through indicators of positive and negative attitudes. These were specifically coded in the statements pronounced by each respondent in at least one answer thru their respective interviews. In that sense the number of statements can be higher than the size of the samples.

5.1 Attitudes towards talking about the past

As it was observed in the theoretical framework, going through painful memories that affect many during conflict, including perpetrators, constitutes a vital step in laying the bases of reconciliation. The possibility of diffusing information of conflict-related acts is seen as a difficult decision for people recruited in IAGs. Bearing in mind Brounéus' findings, it is important to remember that such processes of disclosure can imply negative consequences for the psychological stability of the respondents. Additionally, in the Colombian context of ongoing hostilities, former combatants observe a number of undesirable effects related to their security and reputation once they chose to reveal what they have done or witnessed. Nonetheless, other individuals consider that telling about what they know constitutes a moral duty with themselves, the victims, the society and the future generations. The willingness or rejection shown in relation to acts conceived to gather and preserve their memories, such a truth commission or the establishment of museums, offers an initial insight of the disposition towards reconciliation. Following the hypothesis stated in the introduction, it was expected to observe a notorious variation in the responses given between the first and the second group. Thus, it would be possible to appreciate the influence of the DDR policy and the contact with society that one group has and the other does not.

From the sample of 13 people in the disarmament and demobilization phase interviewed at the Cajicá Peace Home (G1), 61.5% denied the possibility of their participation in initiatives to talk about their past against 38.5% who showed themselves favorable about it. As for the 12 people in the reintegration phase, interviewed at the *Primero de Mayo* regional branch of the ACR in Bogota (G2), the prominence of positive views increased to 75% while the opposing answers dropped to 25%. In terms of the number of statements pronounced to defend the distinctive postures in this variable, the following results were obtained:

Table 6 Attitudes towards talking about the past

| | | |
|--|----------|----|
| Attitudes towards talking about the past (G1) | Positive | 6 |
| | Negative | 9 |
| Attitudes towards talking about the past (G2) | Positive | 12 |
| | Negative | 3 |

From this table it is noticeable, in first place that the statements favoring discussions related to past events in the G1 are predominantly contested by those opposing them. In detail, the respondents expressed that their stories were of more personal character and therefore should be kept in the past. They also found justifications in possible retaliations that

could take place, either from the victims or the IAG in which they fought. Based on Allport's theoretical standpoint, the following two quotes display the respondents' fears of enhancing their visibility, which would lead out-group members to regard them as threats.

- I would be afraid of it. I would be pictured as traitor in history and I would not be very proud of it. Put yourself in my shoes! We were so many years in the mountains and then we left. We are traitors to the organization. Any recognition to me would be recognition to a traitor. I do not think traitors would like to be included in history.¹³³

- I prefer to keep my story for myself. I want peace but I do not want everyone to know about me.¹³⁴

In the meantime, the following ex-combatant, who had only spent two months far from the hostilities, did not perceive an appropriate incentive to speak out about her memories at the time of the interview.

They [the IAG] can easily target our families because they see deserters as a source of intelligence to the army. So I wouldn't really like to have that written about me in history. I do not want to create that stigma to my family.¹³⁵

On the other hand, those who expressed their enthusiasm about discussing their experiences saw it as a very normal thing to do in which they hoped to play an active role. Most of them referred to their background as an example of physical and mental endurance. Furthermore, the chance of commenting about their lives as combatants and the difficulties associated to it, in their opinion, can set an example for children in risk of forced recruitment. The following excerpts illustrate how former combatants see themselves as sources of knowledge for society in general and specific groups, which could lead to positive relationships:

- That is in fact something pending I got to do. Once I get out of here [the Peace Home] I want to start writing my book and tell my story. I have very good memory and I can easily remember all the places I went and all that I have done. I am not afraid to tell everyone in the country about my life and the experience in the FARC.¹³⁶

¹³³ P1: G1

¹³⁴ P8: G1

¹³⁵ P12: G1

¹³⁶ P5: G1

- The life that I had in the guerrilla has not been lived by anyone else. There you have to endure very difficult tasks and no one has idea of that. Then it would be good that some of our knowledge and experiences remain in history.¹³⁷

- Telling the truth about the combatants' life helps the children not to be exposed to those paths and risks that we faced. It might be helpful to avoid forced recruitment since they keep doing the same that was done to me 18 years ago and many people in the countryside are still ignorant about how they work.¹³⁸

Proceeding now with PPRs that have had the opportunity to interact longer among fellow citizens, there was a noticeable inversion of attitudes towards commenting about their lives as combatants in comparison with recently demobilized individuals. In addition to some of the arguments proposed by members of the G1, in the G2 it could be distinguished a higher concern for victims as well as for the veracity of what is to be assumed as historical truth. The following lines from a person close to complete his Reintegration Route exposed the potential of historical dialogues in re-shaping adverse categories in which the fighters are often grouped.

I think my story would be useful to see that violence can be avoided. I would also like for people to know about it because many do not know that the FARC is full of victims as well, myself included. They are either victimized by the same organization, especially the women, or from other groups.¹³⁹

As for another male ex-combatant who completed 15 years in the FARC, talking about personal experiences eventually disrupts polarizing images. The same perspective, explained by Hewstone and Cairns, also constitutes a form of avoiding future conflicts.

All our testimonies are valuable because they make part of our country's history. A country that doesn't know its history is condemned to repeat it. We need to focus especially on those one who have all the knowledge about the things that happened. They can better transmit the truth. We need and must have the real versions of many things.¹⁴⁰

In opposition to these optimistic views, the few negative attitudes expressed among G2 PPR showed that disclosing conflict-related information still encounters an important degree of opposition. Their arguments included references to the desire of not talking about what

¹³⁷ P11: G1

¹³⁸ P13: G1

¹³⁹ P11: G2

¹⁴⁰ P9: G2

they experienced and leaving the past untouched. Even though their statements presented a respectable choice, it is evident how it might be motivated by prejudices possibly reinforced during their time in reintegration.

- To be honest I am not very interested in that. I want to feel like whatever happened, happened and it's all past now. I avoid talking about all that. For me it is now very uncommon to even refer about that. I am doing it in this interview to collaborate with you but that is not something that I do every day and with anyone. Remembering about the past is just annoying to me.¹⁴¹

- People are rancorous and they easily assume as true whatever they see in the media. It is likely to have repercussions in the future.¹⁴²

- My stand about what happened and what I did during the war is that all that is past and that is how it should remain.¹⁴³

As observed in this section, talking about the past offers former combatants the possibility to fortify the quality of their approaches with society members while tackling previous misconceptions. Nonetheless, the prevalence of concerns related to eventual testimonies shows that a full in-group reprisal is still unachieved.

5.2 Prospects for the end of conflict

The second variable in the analysis of the narratives of war, as a measure of reconciliation, consisted in the prospects that former combatants perceive about what it takes to end the conflict. This specific point was considered due the respondents' claims about the efforts towards reconciliation falling short under the influence of ongoing hostilities. Although in both groups pessimism was predominant, it tended to be more moderate among those who experienced regular encounters with fellow citizens and state institutions. The comparative number of positive and negative statements obtained from both groups can be seen in the following table:

Table 7 Prospects for the end of conflict

| | | |
|---|----------|----|
| Prospects for the end of conflict (G1) | Positive | 5 |
| | Negative | 15 |
| Prospects for the end of conflict (G2) | Positive | 6 |
| | Negative | 9 |

¹⁴¹ P1: G2

¹⁴² P3: G2

¹⁴³ P7: G2

In the first group, the statements that revealed some degree of optimism in regard to the end of the conflict were characterized by support to the government and its efforts in reaching peace agreements with IAGs. At the Cajicá Peace Home the interviews also revealed a strong desire to dismantle the insurgencies by offering opportunities to their members to transition into civilian life. The next quotation obtained from a combatant who had recently deposed the arms offers a clear example of Wright's extended contact theory and its effect on positive reactions.

Yes, there can be peace but that depends only on the government. The government has the power and if it continues doing the projects that are currently going on such as giving resources and life opportunities to victims and to the demobilized. In the end that will drain the FARC and the ELN. For example, the last front where I was is smaller every day. When I entered it had about 500 - 600 men. Nowadays it is reduced to around 20 - 25 men.¹⁴⁴

Correspondingly, another two interviewees referred to the need of securing interactions on an equal-status basis for everyone. Such notion refers directly to Allport's condition for the pursuit of common goals between minority and majority groups.

- From one side we need the paramilitaries to be over. On the other hand, the FARC better sign the Havana agreements. We need both guerrilla commanders and the government to comply with those agreements. Only when that happens there will be a possibility for everyone to finally refrain from their weapons.¹⁴⁵

- Let's see what happens in a couple of years. In order to get there we need to put together all the armed groups and allow them to settle in a distention zone, giving them some time. If they get their place in society they will go quiet. That is just going to be the result of a negotiated agreement.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, those who showed reluctance and radically different points of view insisted that the social and economic conditions in the country constitute an immense obstacle for peace. Even so, the most notorious issue in the answers obtained among G1 respondents was the association of the end of conflict with the rendition or defeat of the IAGs. Different interviewees also commented on the few chances that exist for an actual disarmament of the same groups. Likewise, the amount of armed structures that remain around or have recently appeared in strategic regions was shown as a ubiquitous concern. According to the words

¹⁴⁴ P3: G1

¹⁴⁵ P5: G1

¹⁴⁶ P8: G1

from one respondent whose statement was classified as showing negative views, there are little chances for forging cooperation and common objectives. In fact, in the event of a peace agreement the saliency of the FARC as a violent actor would diminish although powerful armed individuals would remain active.

I see putting an end to the conflict as a very difficult thing to happen. That depends on how peace talks are carried out. It would be good to hand in the weapons and disarm, but being realistic, that is not going to happen. They [the insurgencies] will hide them. Those who have committed crimes and gained power positions are the most doubtful about demobilizing and turning themselves to the authorities. They know they will not be coming to a Peace Home but into a prison.¹⁴⁷

Among the statements coded in this sense, one of the most relevant came from a man who spent 22 years as a guerrilla fighter. Throughout the interview his pessimism about the end of the conflict gave a clue of particular features linked to the group's social identity.

There will never be peace and reconciliation because there are so many groups; FARC, ELN, EPL, the BACRIM, the paramilitaries and the military. Maybe things work out with one or two of them, but war will remain the same. Trust me with this one, the FARC will not demobilize. From the last meetings we had with our commanders in December [2015] the conclusion was that the FARC will never surrender the arms, never. Just remember that when the UP tried to pursue a political project, after negotiating with the government, they were massacred. For the guerrillas the logic is that once they surrender the arms they can easily be killed. That is why the arms will remain with the FARC and the commanders will not turn themselves to justice. Timo [Commander Timoleón Jiménez alias Timochenko] was often sending newsletters stating that the FARC will never surrender. They are also very skeptical on the concentration sites proposed by the government. The insurgencies might stop being rural armed organizations; nevertheless the weapons will remain with them.¹⁴⁸

Another respondent at the Cajicá Peace Home argued that the proliferation of armed groups is a consequence of the positive incentives offered to individuals in critical situations. Such dynamic remains in place until today with important implications for the lives of many.

As a former combatant I know that peace has been sought for many years. If we have not reached it yet, it is because every day we have more groups and criminals. Just tell me, what is more popular in Colombia? War, isn't it? War is a business. If the signature of the peace

¹⁴⁷ P4: G1

¹⁴⁸ P7: G1

agreement takes place, what is going to happen with all the war-related incomes? What will people do for a living? Where and how the country is going to provide so much employment for all guerrilla fighters and soldiers? War is a business and as long as all the surrounding interests remain alive there is not going to be peace.¹⁴⁹

In contrast to these pessimistic approaches, the PPR interviewed at the ACR regional branch were notoriously more moderated in their answers. In the statements classified as positive in relation to the end of the conflict some of them tried to acknowledge elements that go beyond military matters. Thus, it is not surprising to find multiple references to the exhaustion that war has caused among society and the state. There were also mentions to subjects of great impact in the sustainability of possible peace agreements. Although the respondents maintain a critical posture, they do not perceive the end of the conflict as an unreachable point. From the following PPR's statement it is possible to distinguish how some beliefs that used to be strong within the group's identity start to change:

I believe in the current government's efforts for peace. You can see that the FARC are very weak right now. At least it is clear that the armed struggle is no longer the way to achieve anything. After all they will not be able to overthrow the government and take power. If they want to attempt something they will have to try the political way.¹⁵⁰

On a different note, also coded as a positive view, one of the respondents discussed on the need of generating elements of cohesion in order to foster more cooperative actions in the future. Such approach, in Brewer's hypothesis, is capable of establishing super-ordinate categories in which different groups peacefully converge.

Peace as such is a very complex thing. In the group you study a lot about the national problematics. Therefore I know that more work is required in the areas that are an obstacle for our development. But if we really want peace in Colombia it is time for all of us start worrying about everything that affects us; that we start to respect each other. We need to make sure that education reaches the farthest corners of the country. In conclusion the end of the war requires from all of us.¹⁵¹

In consideration of the negative attitudes that remained prevalent, although in a lower scale, the main concern dealt with the actual intentions of the guerrillas. Similarly, the presence of renewed armed actors in socio-vulnerable regions was identified as an obstacle in

¹⁴⁹ P10: G1

¹⁵⁰ P1: G2

¹⁵¹ P10: G2

the efforts for peace and reconciliation. Although the answers coded as negative prospects for the end of the conflict were short and with little argumentative development, they surprisingly revealed the appearance of prejudices towards the IAGs. In the excerpts presented below it is clear how the IAGs' social identity was depicted by the interviewees who no longer saw themselves represented with it.

- Whoever wants peace looks for it! I really doubt that the guerrillas are considering their surrender while giving up their areas of influence across the country to the paramilitaries.¹⁵²

- Reaching peace and reconciliation is hard because the guerrillas are dishonest. They have not spoken about their properties and right now they are trying to ensure property rights over pieces of land violently acquired. The current peace talks mean a political opportunity. Nonetheless, I do not see any regret from them and instead they want to keep ground combatants under their sphere of influence.¹⁵³

- I seriously doubt that we will be able to put an end to the conflict. Right now many FARC guerrillas seeing that they will be given the order to demobilize are coming into contact with the ELN units to join them and remain in the mountains.¹⁵⁴

The end of the conflict is perhaps one of the issues in which the respondents' social identity can be more or less salient depending on the degree of social contact. For the majority of ex-combatants with limited out-group interaction, their warnings about incomplete disarmament encompass strong affiliation to IAGs' logics of war. On the other hand, those displaying better prospects remind about the need to provide better conditions of individual welfare in conflict-affected regions. On the side of the PPR, putting an end to the war corresponds more with defining common values towards understanding. Remarkably, the individuals in reintegration, whose statements were aligned with more pessimistic views, articulated society's prejudgments with their own previous knowledge.

Throughout this chapter, which intended to elucidate the agreement on comprehensive conflict narratives, it became visible how recently demobilized individuals tend to perceive more obstacles at the time of remembering and overcoming painful memories. Meanwhile, for PPR with previous social contact, the discussions about the war offer an opportunity to educate while strengthening links that before did not exist. Without a doubt the barriers

¹⁵² P3: G2

¹⁵³ P6: G2

¹⁵⁴ P7: G2

found, either physical or mental, affect the dynamic character expected in the large concept of reconciliation.

6.0 Co-existence

The last cluster of variables explores the situations that ex-combatants encounter when they start to live among regular citizens that in many cases have been victimized. In the analysis of DDR and its implicit social interaction as catalysts of reconciliation, the respondents' perceptions about out-groups along with the views on co-existence and closer links offer an insight on their disposition towards sharing and cooperating.

6.1 Views on out-groups

This initial section presents an examination on the way former combatants assess their surrounding social environment and how it possible changes. In order to do so, all the responses for every question in the interviews were checked for positive and negative statements rather than relying on a single interrogation. As it can be seen in the subsequent table, the pessimistic views are strikingly persistent in both groups.

Table 8 Views on out-groups

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----|
| Views on out-groups (G1) | Positive | 4 |
| | Negative | 13 |
| Views on out-groups (G2) | Positive | 3 |
| | Negative | 9 |

Within the G1 views the negative prejudice towards out-group members appears as the strongest trend. Nonetheless, before analyzing them it is useful to observe the positive statements, which emerge as the exception. In terms of form, these excerpts were deeply emotional while reminding about the shared human condition as factor of cohesion. Some of them also related to the desire of being treated as equal citizens, which gives an example of one the Brewer's super ordinate categories, in replacement to the tag of demobilized individuals. In the following two quotes compliance with the law is presented as another form of identification expected to lift negative prejudices.

- I do not feel any fear to be discriminated. Once I get my documents in order no one should see me in a different way as I try to do with everyone out there. I just want to find a place to work where no one would know what I was.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ P8: G1

- I have no fears about going out into the street. So far I have no fear to retake my civilian life, and I do not see it as a very hard thing to do or something like all civilians could oppose. Sure, there might be some discrimination but not from every single person. So there is some hope.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, another person who at the time of the interview had only spent one month at the Peace Home raised the concepts of nationality and humanity as sufficient deterrents for violent discrimination.

I think we [former combatants] really need to see society in Colombia with different eyes. I agree with the idea of having peace in Colombia. I disagree with killing each other. Why would you and I kill each other? You do not know me, I do not know you. I have not done anything wrong to you and you have not done anything wrong to me. Why would we take a rifle and kill each other? We are Colombians, we are human beings. There are no true motives behind to kill each other.¹⁵⁷

According to the GADH's chief psychologist, the expressions of distrust are stronger against politicians and members of the police and military forces. With them past contact was mainly hostile and full of images of enmity. This outcome can eventually be related to the indoctrination processes inside the guerrillas. Similarly, it should be observed that those former combatants who have spent longer periods of time within the IAG, with little positive sheer contact with out-group members, are prone towards more pessimistic images.¹⁵⁸ The following are some of the negative points of view, associated to members of out-groups such as the state, society in abstract and victims, from two ex-fighters with more than 15 years of experience in insurgency operations:

- Here [at the Peace Home] the aim is to brainwash us in just 3 months. Once outside we are just a hindrance for society. Outside people look at us pretty badly. They know that we were guerrilla fighters. Society won't see us as anyone else. They see us as animals, as rare things. So you can see we as former guerrillas we have 2 bad things; we are traitors and at the same time you do not like us for what we were. We feel like we do not fit anywhere. On the other hand it would be useful to make them [society] see that we are not as they think of us; to show them that we are human beings just like they are, and that if we have our mistakes they also have theirs. It would be good for people out there to see that we are the same.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ P2: G1

¹⁵⁷ P11: G1

¹⁵⁸ Dalia Andrea Avila Castillo (Chief Psychologist, GAHD), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ P1: G1

- Remember that war is a business. You, the people in the cities make it very clear to us that everyone benefits from the war. With that state of things in place you people can sell your technological devices and your war materials.¹⁶⁰

Bearing in mind that in the second group the quantity of statements in any of the two senses was lower than in the first group, it can be inferred that there was less awareness on social differences. In other words, respondents did not feel the need to refer about fellow citizens as individuals belonging to complete separate groups. Even though some ex-combatants preferred mentioning the progresses made in the objective of recovering their full citizenship, it did not dissuade them from raising valid criticism on situations perceived as problematic in their environment. From the arguments drafted by Pettigrew and Tropp the statements below, coded as positive views from the G2, were characterized by a decline in anxiety and increased empathy:

- I have not perceived many barriers from all the people that I have encountered along this new life I enjoy now. I can visit my family in Urabá and I have not felt any risk there either. In fact, in that region they do not discriminate the demobilized people that much. Unless, of course, we talk about an army's informant or a person known to have stolen from the organization.¹⁶¹

- In the group you receive a huge indoctrination about the army and civilians who collaborate with the soldiers in their campaigns. Once you come into contact with them you see that what you were told was not true.¹⁶²

Observing now the statements that expressed discontent towards fellow citizens or society in general, the G2 respondents mentioned, among other things, acts of discrimination from employers and authorities. Unlike what occurred with the G1, fewer G2 respondents focused their answers on the perceptions of resentment and rancor from victims and neighbors. The following excerpts contain important evidence related to situations in which equal-status interactions did not end up in assimilation, following Allport's terms, and instead retrogressions occurred:

- My relationship with the military and the police has not been the best. When I have had to show them my documents of demobilization they have insulted me three times. It doesn't

¹⁶⁰ P7: G1

¹⁶¹ P3: G2

¹⁶² P6: G2

matter that this is Bogota. Here there's a lot of ignorance about us as well. Another thing that I can recall is that I once had a job interview; I had to tell that I had demobilized and the recruiter immediately called the police. After showing my documentation to the police and explaining my case I was asked to leave the building.¹⁶³

- Rejection and stigmatization are some of the most adverse things ex-combatants deal with. There is an evident lack of trust from different members of society because the group [FARC] remains active and citizens do not know about the internal dynamics.¹⁶⁴

The content analysis of statements in this variable offered a more holistic approach to the overall perspective on co-existence. Comparatively, the negative views tended to diminish in the presence of social contact; however, the high number of these statements evidenced how some of the barriers to effective reconciliation could persist after years of demobilization. Since it is easier to express prejudices towards out-groups, rather than specific individuals, this result did not come as a complete surprise.

6.2 Views on co-existence

One of the strongest components in the concept of reconciliation includes the possibility of having former enemies living side by side and even cooperating towards shared goals. In different contexts around the world such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone the first part of this enunciation took place since the conflicts diminished the possibilities for people to relocate. Many victims and perpetrators, as well as members of different ethnic groups found themselves as neighbors in the same community. Stathis Kalyvas explains this dynamic by reminding that in internal wars the occurrence of violence normally involves close people and even relatives.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, it is not surprising to find demobilized combatants returning to their homes in poor areas with scarce resources, high rates of unemployment and rampant security risks.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, despite the physical proximity, relationships between fellow citizens that once were confronted are rarely characterized by harmony and sustained contact. The ideas that resentment is common in recipient communities often motivate persistent negative opinions on co-existence from the side of ex-fighters. Based on the semi-structured interviews carried out with recently demobilized individuals and those who were already in reintegration, the positive and

¹⁶³ P2: G2

¹⁶⁴ P12: G2

¹⁶⁵ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.

¹⁶⁶ Ana M. Arjona and Stathis Kalyvas, "Recruitment into Armed Groups: A Survey of Demobilized Fighters," Chap. 7 in *Understanding Collective Political Violence*, ed. Yvan Guichaoua (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 143-174.

negative views were measured according to the content of their statements. The following table shows the resulting figures:

Table 9 Views on co-existence

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----|
| Views on Co-existence (G1) | Positive | 5 |
| | Negative | 8 |
| Views on Co-existence (G2) | Positive | 12 |
| | Negative | 3 |

In quantitative terms, this variable shows a marked switch in the views of the respondents from those in G1 to the ones grouped in G2. The interviewees who openly expressed their disposition to share different spaces with regular civilians, including many victims, emphasized on the fact of sharing the same citizenship and being free from any judicial rule against them. Similarly, some ex-combatants reminded on the need to draft proper parameters, which would tell people what is expected from them. It was also common to find responses that justified the possibility of living among victims based on their own empathy and easiness to forge interpersonal relationships. Reconnecting with the theory, these approaches corresponded with Pettigrew's arguments on the opportunities to establish friendships as part of the process of intergroup contact. Correspondingly, in the practice the allusions to formal institutions supposed to treat all persons equally, recreated Brewer's writings about identifications with major encompassing categories. In the following quotes it can be appreciated some responses coded as positive views towards co-existence:

- I feel like now I have a new life and I can easily meet with any civilian. I have absolutely no problems with anyone, either a soldier or a demobilized from another organization. It is not my problem to know what they think. As for me, I would not have any problem to live next to them.¹⁶⁷

- If I did not have any problem to come to the army and face the state, why would I have any problem in facing a victim that was not my fault? We have all suffered in equal parts. You need to try to live the few days that you have left here in the best possible ways. Those encounters are normal and we got to deal with that. We obviously need dialogue and clear laws and rules to live together. Also whatever we agree has to be doable, if we set impossible conditions then we lose our time.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ P6: G1

¹⁶⁸ P8: G1

On the other hand, the numerous statements that opposed co-existence with victims were mostly based on perceptions of resentment and security risks. Even if the person correspondingly acknowledged the victims' suffering, an eventual long-lasting interaction was assessed as inconvenient and uncomfortable for both parts. Some respondents albeit preferred to deal with higher living expenses rather than moving into communities in which their status could be revealed to victimized neighbors. Since at this point most of the respondents had not had the opportunity to enjoy sustained social contact with victims and society in general (their perceived out-groups), the remarks about them evidenced what Pettigrew and Tropp identified as initial anxiety. The subsequent quote signals some of these points:

It would be very complicated. If a person in a municipality knew that I participated in the siege of his town, that person would not agree with the idea of having me living there. I would live very isolated, probably avoiding much contact with the people.¹⁶⁹

Additionally, some statements featured strong negative generalizations about the out-group, as theoretically described in Tajfel's social identity theory, with notorious prejudices. The following statements exemplify such tendency:

- I personally do not expect to end up living among the victims. It is very risky to go and live in a place where for example lives a person whose family was killed by the FARC. Those people feel a lot of resentment; they also end up with lots of rancor.¹⁷⁰

- No, the victims have very complex stories of suffering and pain I would not like to be close to that. Not even if living next to them is cheaper or better located. I do not want to find myself in that situation.¹⁷¹

With these postures in mind, it is convenient to observe now the positive arguments on co-existence exposed by individuals currently enrolled in the Reintegration Route. In first place, it is noticeable how PPRs re-emphasize on the positive experiences that they have already enjoyed with regular citizens and victims, especially internally displaced people (IDP). Some of the accounts mentioned interactions at workplaces and neighborhoods. The most noticeable feature was the assumption that contact with former enemies and third parties should be rather natural while observing respect at all times. Since most of the individuals in

¹⁶⁹ P4: G1

¹⁷⁰ P3: G1

¹⁷¹ P12: G1

the G2 have experienced a good amount of social interactions in an equal-status basis, it is likely that their positive expressions correspond with the phases of empathy increasing and perspective taking formulated by Pettigrew and Tropp. A handful of constructive statements answering the question “What does it take to have both victims and perpetrators pacifically coexisting in the same space?” are presented below:

- Well, I have actually had a lot of interaction with people that we used to see as enemies. For example, 15 days right after I deserted I started sharing with demobilized paramilitaries and understanding the pain that we all caused on the victims. We were in the same Peace Home and it was a good experience.¹⁷²

- Living in a same space with people that have been affected by this war is totally possible. Nonetheless, there must be employment and means of subsistence in dignifying ways in order to be able to do so.¹⁷³

- In order to live together the two people need to be staying in a quiet place. No external inferences such as violence should be perceived. With those conditions they can see themselves as similar ones. It's a gradual process, yet completely possible.¹⁷⁴

Within reintegration, although the statements upholding negative views on co-existence decreased in quantity, their relevance lays on what could be learnt from actual experiences that have happened to PPRs. The statements coded in this sense featured a tone of complaint related to disreputable prejudgments perceived from society. Likewise they wished to warn on the consequences of forcing encounters to a point beyond tolerable. Some of the few negative statements also described how the interaction with victims, seen as an out-group, exemplifies Allport's definition of retrogression in relationships. The following response from a male ex-combatant who spent 12 years in the FARC and has been in reintegration since 2012 refers in detail to this situation:

From my personal experience, here in my Bogota neighborhood, I have seen that people do not know anything about the fighters' lives. I think people are not ready yet for close encounters with former guerrillas. They just do not understand what you live in the mountains. They are very judgmental. And to make things worse, there are also many ex-

¹⁷² P1: G2

¹⁷³ P7: G2

¹⁷⁴ P4: G2

combatants who have not left behind their military cultures and their group life; therefore they seek respect for the sake of knowing how to handle a fire arm.¹⁷⁵

In the large process of reconciliation, co-existence invariably offers a clear insight about it. The positive statements on which this section was based often reminded about the need to maintain everyday connections on cordial terms while observing rules that apply to everyone. Conversely, the negative views demonstrated that the lack of interest of former combatants to end up living among victims was in part due to fears and generalizations related to the victims' reactions.

6.3 Views on close links

Bearing in mind possible misunderstandings on the concept of co-existence, implying respectful attitudes without changes in behavior towards the out-group, this study separately enquired on the views of close links. The possibility of carrying out business initiatives with victims, developing friendships and forging affective relationships were some of the points on which the respondents were asked to comment. These types of social arrangements normally require a deeper level of trust than what it takes for living side by side in the same neighborhood. Alike the previous variables, the indicators for this one were similarly based on positive and negative statements. The numerical results gathered from the 25 semi-structured interviews performed to the two groups in consideration were as follows:

Table 10 Views on close links

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|----|
| Views on close links (G1) | Positive | 8 |
| | Negative | 8 |
| Views on close links (G2) | Positive | 11 |
| | Negative | 2 |

The first noticeable aspect from the statements collected among G1 participants was their polarization on the subject. Having the same number of positive and negative statements denotes a clear division in opinions. From the side of those who assessed close links with victims as desirable and ultimately positive, the answers were rather short and limited to acknowledge the fact of not being object of any judicial sentence. With such condition in mind, the respondents were able to see themselves as equals in the eventuality of closer relationships with victims. In the same accounts the ex-combatants once again reminded about the need of clear rules of behavior as well as contracts in order to avoid

¹⁷⁵ P10: G2

misunderstandings when investing money and other goods. The most representative quotes in this sense can be found below:

- Yes, if that person thinks the same way as I do, off course.¹⁷⁶
- Sure, I would not close myself to such alternatives [setting up a business and dating a victim]. Those are normal associations with their respective rights and obligations.¹⁷⁷
- I would do it but I am very doubtful in some things. Since I was part of an organization that possibly victimized the person, I might be negatively categorized. However, in today's Colombia our word has no value and what matters is what we have written and what is defined in contracts with limitations. In that case, if things are done in a legal and clear manner everything is possible.¹⁷⁸

From the point of view of more critical respondents, the difficulty of having perpetrators and victims holding deeper degrees of interaction corresponded to the others' predispositions. Former combatants in the G1 tended to assume that resentment and thirst for revenge were inherent to all the victims, which eventually dissuaded them from considering deep connections. Fear, lack of trust, insecurity and pride were some of the feelings evidenced in the statements coded as negative. The first excerpt below offers a better idea of a person that according to Tajfel's social identity theory wishes to remain in her own group regardless of the positive aspects embedded in the out-groups. With such degree of denial about comparisons, sheer contact and competition it is unlikely to move along in the major process of reconciliation.

I do not feel any interest about doing business with a victim. I would not even be willing to purchase a property with a victimized person. I am not up for that with those people, not even if they had been victims whose relatives have been killed.¹⁷⁹

As for the following respondents, the reluctance on the idea of closer links is related to the hope of avoiding undesired consequences, which equally diminishes their chances of learning about the out-group.

- No. Since always I have preferred to work alone. Having partners and businesses at the end becomes a problem. It is better for me to get my things by myself and do my work alone.

¹⁷⁶ P6: G1

¹⁷⁷ P8: G1

¹⁷⁸ P10: G1

¹⁷⁹ P2: G1

When I was in the ranks I was never expecting to get any help from anyone. I was instead helping a lot of people.¹⁸⁰

- I don't think so! I would only do that [setting up a business and dating a victim] If I were in a terrible situation and with a lot of needs. Let's say if I didn't have a place where to spend the night.¹⁸¹

Continuing now with the views held by PPRs, there is a moderate increase in the number of statements coded as positive. Furthermore, participants in the Reintegration Route whose views on close links were marked in this sense highlighted their disposition towards interactions without the mediation of any condition. Following the tendency in other variables, some respondents quoted experiences that they have already lived. Similarly, some of them constantly acknowledged the need of working side by side with the victims as part of the efforts to improve their situation. A closer look on the following two respondents' words evidences an example of extended contact in which both parts share professional objectives with no visible negative predispositions.

- I would not have any inconvenient to work and cooperate with a victim. People need to be able to leave differences aside and build a future together. That is not a problem for me. Actually, right now I work with 9 other people from different backgrounds.¹⁸²

- Personally I have no rancor with the military, the government or anyone else. I have seen that the conflict is not a money issue. The motives behind are mostly social. So you can totally work or collaborate with other people with the same good disposition. Respect to each other is the key for successful cooperation. In fact, now I work with 15 other people, some of them are victims and everything is fine.¹⁸³

The following statement from a person in his final year of reintegration, alternatively states a case that in Pettigrew's logics has reached the point of creating affective ties and most likely advanced into in-group reprisal.

For sure, without a doubt! In fact I am living proof that it is possible to go beyond superficiality. I am now married to a woman that was internally displaced by the FARC and we have two daughters. That is the reality for many people that have had to endure the conflict and cannot afford to move to a new place. Eventually, ex-combatants transit towards

¹⁸⁰ P3: G1

¹⁸¹ P11: G1

¹⁸² P6: G2

¹⁸³ P10: G2

complete citizenship. We need to encourage interactions without fear. Preferably in safe spaces for close encounters. There are people able to see and know about others. If we want reconciliation we first need to rebuild our trust.¹⁸⁴

Taking into consideration the only two G2 answers coded as negative views on close links, it was possible to observe some dynamics that also appeared in other variables. Firstly, it was evident that in quantitative terms for the sample of this study a change in beliefs and attitudes took place between the initial and last phases of the DDR process. It also became noticeable that the arguments used to refrain from profound interaction with society members were rather short, while limiting such possibility to close relatives. The following statements of two male ex-combatants, once again, represent some of the remarks formulated by Hewstone and Cairns related to the avoidance of contact due the prevalence of polarized images:

- If you want to run a business with a victim it is important that at least the two people have some common interests. As for me, I would only consider it if I get to trust the person as I trust my family and I could feel comfortable enough to reveal that I was a guerrilla combatant. Anything different than that is out of consideration.¹⁸⁵

- I would only do such things [setting a business and buying a home] with my family members, never with a victim.¹⁸⁶

After going through the indicators defined for this variable, which comes as a complement to the Views on co-existence, it is inferable that the respondents in most of the cases are clearly concerned about the people's reaction in accordance to conceived prejudices. Between those who recently demobilized and their counterparts who were already subsisting by their own means, the second demonstrated a higher disposition towards equal-status interaction merging into deeper links with fellow citizens. At the same time, they agreed to do so by acknowledging important needs of the victims and society, likely to be overcome through mutual knowledge and cooperation.

Drawing on the discussion on the cluster Co-existence, the variables analyzed through indicators of positive and negative views revealed salient differences between the two groups in consideration. Eventually, there was a better impression in spite of out-groups and their

¹⁸⁴ P12: G2

¹⁸⁵ P7: G2

¹⁸⁶ P8: G2

complexities among those closer to them. In a more personal sphere, the fact of people in reintegration living side by side with out-group members in their communities was estimated as an already-existing reality that should not find much opposition. Actually, the presence of clear legal boundaries was appraised as an overarching condition capable of guarantying security in emerging contexts of co-existence. By its turn, the prospects of deepening social ties propelled a striking contrast between the G1 and the G2. For this last, affective and durable relationships, based on trust and respect, would not pose major impediments while bringing them close to the stage of in-group reprisal.

7.0 Analysis and concluding remarks

After having presented an analytical framework with the main goals of reconciliation from the perspective of Colombian former combatants, in this last chapter the intention is to contrast empirical findings with theory. Thus it will be possible to gather punctual answers for the main research question which was defined as to what extend social contact influences perceptions of reconciliation among former combatants taking part in DDR. For practical matters the section below will first discuss detailed correspondences with the literature enounced in chapter 2 along with some of the flaws identified throughout statements collected in the interviews. Immediately, the last part will close the work with a discussion on the aspects of the DDR policy that could be reinforced bearing in mind the social interactions of former combatants right after leaving an IAG.

7.1 Summary analysis

In the midst of volatile environments, SIT constitutes a convincing tool to explain groups' claims and ideals. As for social contact theories, they formulate appropriate arguments to describe the progression of beliefs and behaviors once well-defined groups with persistent differences are brought together. Considering that demobilization implies a radical change in a person's life, the assessment of new surroundings out of the IAG is based on categorizations without major support. Right after individuals depose the arms their self-image and every-day actions strongly resemble the profile of an active combatant. This arrangement also elucidates why interaction with former enemies, victims and communities is usually accompanied by feelings of distrust, fear and anger. In the meantime, individuals exposed to permanent exchanges and proximity to regular citizens are able to base their judgements on more grounded knowledge. As the data on PPRs showed, the men and women whose permanence in civilian life is more prolonged are likely to transition from having

biased visions about out-groups towards experiencing assimilation into them. However, this result constitutes only a partial component in the meaning of reconciliation.

Comprehensive understanding about wartime events constitutes a contested issue among actors at war. It not only refers to the versions that are eventually transcribed into history but also to the remembrance of painful memories. Discussions featuring dissimilar narratives based on high degrees of generalizations are likely to become debates with political re-vindications. However, these aspects can only take place in the event that concerned individuals decide to speak out. For many, the burdens of re-traumatization and re-victimization are unbearable at the same time that no positive incentives are perceived. The reluctance from a former perpetrator to discuss the past ultimately denies victims and society the opportunity to know about his personal and group motives. These gaps consequently affect negatively the chances to set a solid ground on which peace could be built.

In relation to the goal of reaching acknowledgement of wrongdoings, the sample in this study demonstrated that such possibility is often confronted by fears of unwanted consequences. Among people leaving the hostilities within a short timeframe, apologetic postures for their past choices are not uncommon. Although the understanding about the hard times that victims face is relatively high, independently of there is any social contact, the dispositions towards asking for forgiveness do not follow the same logic. Likewise, it is not strange to encounter testimonies reminding about the victimhood of perpetrators regardless of their momentum in the DDR process.

A noticeable shortage encountered while testing the literature was the difficulty to assess individuals' reluctance to social contact differing from the argument that in the presence of out-groups people tend to remain within their in-groups. Similarly, cases in which a person that is not compelled to keep a weak group identity and still aligns with prominent futures related to it were not anticipated in previous works. In this study men and women with complex stories found themselves in a point of transition between leaving an in-group that disenchanted them and assessing the possibility of new memberships within other social structures. Nonetheless, this process is not as expedite as assumed in Allport's basic arguments or in the more recent advances by Pettigrew and Tropp.

The theories observed implied that in the presence of adequate incentives from an out-group and the freedom to leave the in-group, the person would approach the new one and start identifying with its prominent features. In the practice, although the conditions stated

were in place, the transition and assumption of unknown social features was not always spontaneous. It was found that external factors, as well as the persons' desire to live a life without salient group memberships restricted the process. In the specific case of ongoing conflict, this outcome is also influenced by fears of violent retaliations and the lack of major safeguards from the state.

The interaction among former enemies or individuals who regard the other person as responsible for the infliction of sufferings is without doubt a complex process with high chances of failure. Nonetheless, in cases when the exchanges are mostly positive people acquire a more comprehensive perspective that allows dealing with the rest of society likewise. Additionally, positive predispositions beyond the wounds are likely to promote closer links without the burden of the differences that initially propelled conflict and affected one or both parts.

In the beginning, reconciliation was defined as a dynamic process with the goals of acknowledging wrongdoings, agreeing on comprehensive war narratives and securing co-existence. These conditions were set in place due their capacity of promoting changes at the micro level with the possibility of dispelling the chances of renewed hostilities. According to the sample of 25 former combatants, social contact, acting as an independent variable, is likely to influence recognition of what was done, along with adopting renewed life perspectives to move forward. Although it can manage to get people to discuss the past without taboos, the effect falls short when it comes to shaping optimistic views about society in general. Notwithstanding this situation, for those people with longer exposure to out-group members, the possibilities of living together and establishing friendships constitutes something normal.

7.2 Conclusions

An adequate DDR policy constitutes a convenient institutional back up for more and better interaction between former perpetrators, victims and communities. These exchanges are likely to shape tolerant views over subjects that are invariably complex due their correspondence to the conflict dynamics. The assumptions here must also be taken carefully; although a number of positive effects can be associated to social contact, the actual results on reconciliation can be very varied. Indeed, it can enhance relief from sufferings while raising awareness on past horrors and present needs. On the opposite side, it does not guarantee complete modification of stereotypes nor avoids adverse reactions from the affected parts.

From the findings in this work, it can be concluded that in the absence of significant social contact, a process of reconciliation observes little chances of continuity and success. Even though the re-ignition of hostilities in a post-conflict scenario is not entirely linked to conditions of segregation and poor inter-group dialogues, social tensions hinder trustworthy cooperation towards common interest objectives. The correlation of contact with reconciliation and eventual peace cannot be complete since such assumption would disregard vital topics like justice and psychological healing.

Considering that the chapters above were based on an individual perspective, in the light of collective disarmament and demobilization the effects of social contact need to be reassessed. Participation in this model is not always voluntary, which implies a major proclivity for conflict due the saliency of group identities and the lack of credible incentives to leave them. Bearing in mind that reconciliation is not a process that relates exclusively to one actor, and instead it constitutes a total transformation in society, forthcoming works may contribute by conducting researching on the victims' side. With knowledge about this group's perceptions it would be possible to test the degree of accuracy in the former combatants' assumptions about out-groups' resentment. Similarly, a detailed focus on victimized people can offer an insight in the role of social contact after a precise traumatizing event. In the Colombian context, an additional dynamic associated to the conformation of a victims' group identity, is also capable of playing a restricting factor in their relations with former perpetrators. Noticing that their attention is provided through a separate institutional scheme the disposition towards discussing the past, acknowledging ex-combatants' lives and live next to them could be significantly different.

Eventual policies for DDR need to take into consideration the promotion of former combatants' interaction with victims and communities from the moment of desertion. Even though overcoming hostile beliefs and attitudes is not entirely feasible through inter-group contact, it is possible to promote higher levels of understanding and reconciliation. For a critical case like Colombia, external elements such as the ongoing hostilities or the lack of economic opportunities are frequently quoted as obstacles for trust. The presence of such barriers must not be ignored, neither overestimated. Former combatants should ideally be encouraged to set their own path for subsistence without finding an adverse environment that rejects them. In this eventuality, they are likely to impose a considerable burden for the state in its obligation to deliver services to them as well as for society exposed to their re-armament.

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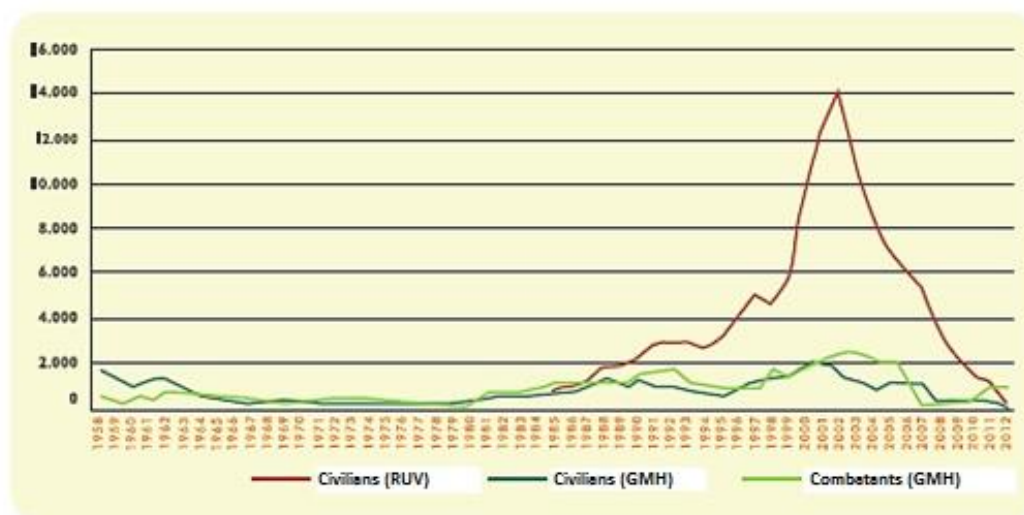
Appendix A

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews with former combatants

1. How old are you and what is your gender?
2. Please tell me, to which IAG were you ascribed?
3. How long did you spend within the IAG?
4. What were your reasons to leave the IAG?
5. Do you take part or intend to join "The route of reintegration"?
6. In a scale of 1 to 5 how do you evaluate the attention received at the GAHD?
7. In a scale of 1 to 5 how do you evaluate the attention received at the ACR? (PPR only)
8. How long have you been within your current program?
9. How has been your overall experience in the program?
10. To which extent the program's social and economic benefits contribute to reconciliation?
11. How could the program's social and economic benefits contribute to heal war traumas?
12. What kind of problems do you perceive due to your condition as ex-combatant?
13. Do you think that your personal experience should be included in the historical narratives of the conflict?
14. What is your take on historical memory in the form of museums, monuments and books about your experiences in the war?
15. Under which circumstances would you be you willing to ask for forgiveness to those victims affected by your illegal group?
16. What does it take to have both victims and perpetrators coexisting in the same space?
17. Under which circumstances would you carry out an economic initiative with a victim?
How about an affective relationship?
18. Under the current circumstances how do you think it is possible to achieve reconciliation?
19. What is there required to finish the conflict and put an end to violence?
20. How could Colombia reach a sustainable peace?

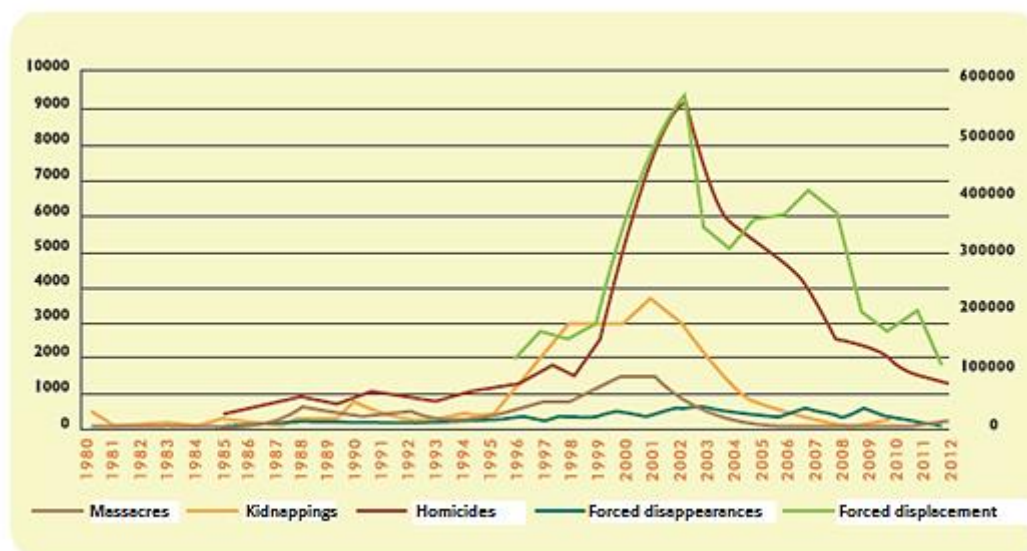
Appendix B

Evolution of the number of civilians and combatants killed in the armed conflict (1958-2012)



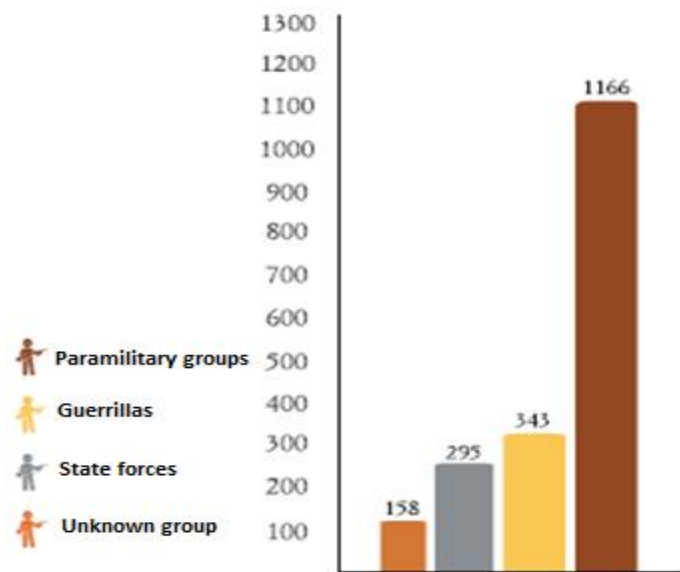
Source: Grupo de Memoria Histórica – GMH. *¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 2013, 32.

Evolution of the main forms of violence in the armed conflict according to the number of victims (1980 – 2012)



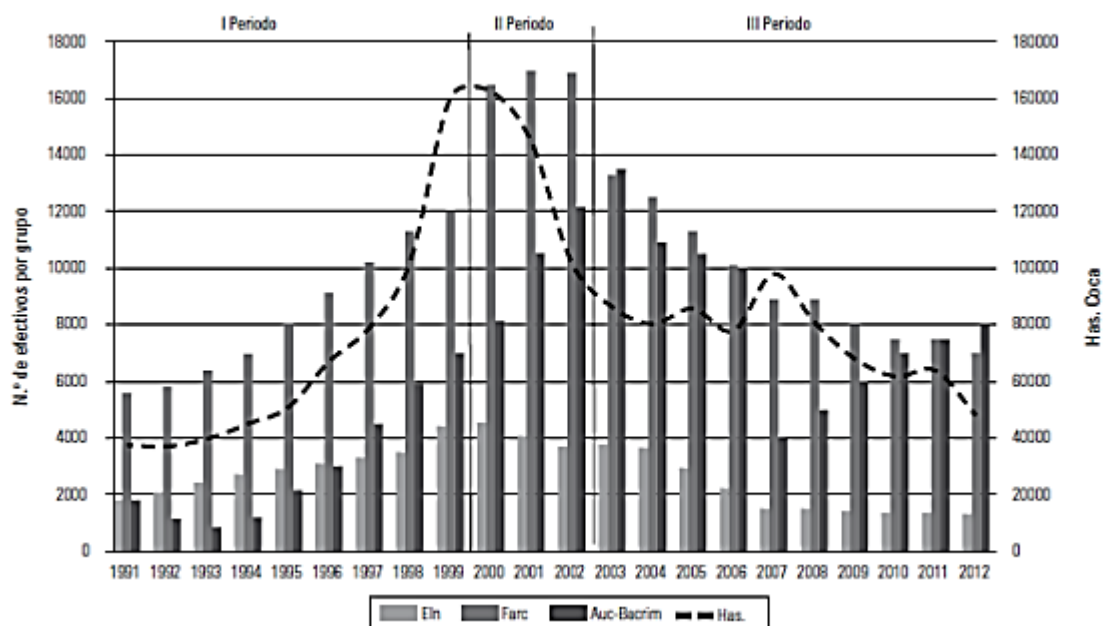
Source: Grupo de Memoria Histórica – GMH. *¡Basta ya!*, 2013, 61.

Distribution of the number of massacres in the armed conflict (1980-2012)



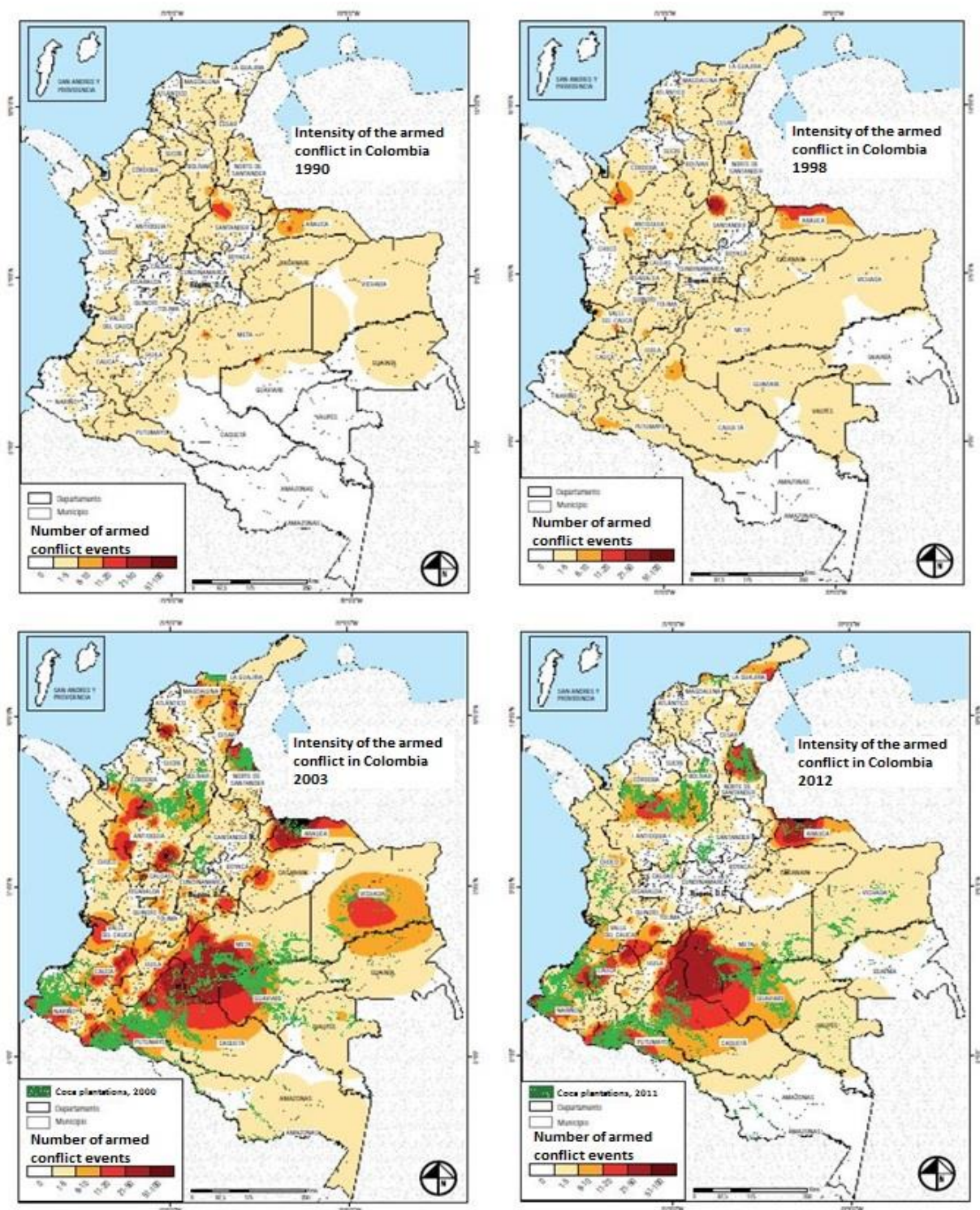
Source: Grupo de Memoria Histórica – GMH. *¡Basta ya!*, 2013, 36.

Evolution of coca plantations and number of combatants per IAG



Source: Luis Gabriel Salas Salazar, “Territorial Logics and Power Relations in the Space of Armed Actors: A Contribution to the Study of Violence and Armed Conflict in Colombia, 1990-2012, from the Perspective of Political Geography,” *Revista Colombiana de Geografía* 24, no. 1 (2015), 157-172.

Intensity of the armed conflict in Colombia (1990-2012)



Source: Salas Salazar, "Territorial Logics and Power Relations in the Space of Armed Actors," 157-172.