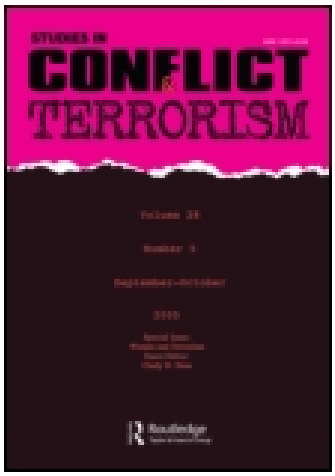

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Anti-Social Capital in Former Members of Non-State Armed Groups: A Case Study of Colombia

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Illegal organizations, like mafia syndicates, gangs, and insurgencies, are often highly cohesive and hostile toward the outside world. Such groups cultivate a particular form of "anti-social" capital, which relies on ingroup bonding and limits outgroup bridging for the purpose of commissioning illicit acts. We argue that experiences within the group leave members with varying intensities of anti-social capital, and that higher intensities lead to significantly weaker relationships with political institutions and civil society, even many years after they exit the group. We test this theory using survey data from 1,485 former members of insurgent and paramilitary groups in Colombia, along with insights from 68 qualitative interviews. We find strong evidence that anti-social capital has individually varying and sticky effects on former members. These effects are pervasive and intense, and exhibit surprising and counterintuitive properties: former members of pro-state militia with higher levels of anti-social capital are systematically less likely to trust political institutions, while members of peasant-based insurgent groups with high levels of anti-social capital are less likely to participate in their communities.

Our family were neither our sons nor anybody, but the group.
—Interview with ex-paramilitary in Barrancabermeja, March 2009.[1]

Many non-state armed groups, terrorist organizations, mafia syndicates, and criminal gangs are extremely cohesive. Relationships among group members are characterized by strong internal bonding and cooperation, and illicit groups develop family-like traits of mutual

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support.[2] Many illicit groups use a variety of means to promote cohesion within their ranks, including extreme or dangerous initiation rites,[3] violent or anti-social public acts, or tattoos and other visible markers, to indelibly mark and signal commitment to the organization.[4] In contrast to these cohesive ingroup dynamics, members of illegal organizations are often highly distrustful and hostile toward the outside world.

Translating these specific characteristics of illegal organizations into the terminology of social capital, we might say that their members show high levels of ingroup bonding and at the same time very low or non-existing bridging.[5] Contrary to participation in civic organizations like the often-cited bowling clubs or bird-watching associations, participation in clandestine organizations does not produce more cooperation with the outside world and trust in strangers. Rather, it produces distrust and social distance. Therefore, we call this form of social capital—produced for the purpose of illegal activities and relying on heavy ingroup bonding—*anti-social capital*. This concept builds on earlier research on the various negative manifestations, functions, and forms of social capital.[6]

While ethnographic research has explored the formation and functioning of anti-social capital within gangs, mafias, and armed groups,[7] the *consequences* of this particular form of social capital, particularly for members who leave the group, remain poorly understood. This article presents a new theoretical framework and empirical analysis of the impact of ingroup social processes on the long-term social trajectories of group members. The empirical analysis draws on survey data from 1,485 former insurgents and paramilitary fighters in Colombia. We also draw on insights from 68 in-depth interviews conducted primarily with former paramilitaries in 2009 and 2010 to shed light on the results of the quantitative analysis.

Our analysis explores the impact of anti-social capital through variation at the individual level. Anti-social capital is primarily a club good,[8] but it has a private dimension, and arises from individual beliefs, experiences, and behaviors. Members of illegal organizations are not equally socialized within their groups and are thus exposed to anti-social capital in varying degrees over time. We argue that variation in exposure to anti-social capital has enduring (though not necessarily permanent) effects on the social behavior of members of illegal armed groups, even long after they desist from their group. Former members with more anti-social capital will have, first, more difficulties in *bridging* outside the group and, second, will tend to *bond* more intensely with former comrades who belonged to the same non-state armed group. Our theory about the individually differentiated and sticky effects of anti-social capital should hold for any kind of cohesive illegal organization that relies on strong ingroup bonding.

We provide a first empirical test of this theory by analyzing the case of former members of non-state armed groups in Colombia. The advantage of the Colombian case is that it encompasses two antagonistic groups involved in a long-term armed conflict: guerrilla groups on the one hand and paramilitary groups on the other. On the group level, these organizations maintain quite different relationships to local communities and the Colombian state. Whereas the guerrilla groups have tried to establish cooperative relationships with local communities in their stronghold areas and focus their attacks on government forces,[9] paramilitary organizations have invested fewer resources in their relationship to local communities,[10] and have been implicated in atrocities against civilian populations to a much larger degree.[11] Moreover, paramilitaries did not fight against the state, but rather engaged in both tacit and in some cases direct collaboration with regular military forces.[12]

Despite the varying relationships of these distinct groups to both communities and the state if our theory about anti-social capital holds, the individual ingroup socialization processes of members of both groups should determine their level of bridging and bonding in the aftermath of their demobilization. Depending on the extent of their accumulation

of anti-social capital, members of both groups should face communities and state alike with more or less trust and cooperation, even years after they have ceased participating in illegal organizations. Potential cross-group variation in the Colombian case thus provides a particularly well-suited context for a first test of this theory.

In our quantitative analysis, we find strong evidence of the differential impacts of anti-social capital on ex-paramilitary and ex-guerrilla combatants' behavior and beliefs, even long after they have left their illicit organizations. Our analysis yields a range of counterintuitive results. We find clear evidence that the accumulation of anti-social capital degrades trust in state institutions, even for paramilitary fighters nominally aligned with the state, and for insurgents that deserted guerrilla organizations and entered state reintegration programs. Furthermore, we find that specific dimensions of anti-social capital reduce long-term bridging and participation in local communities. We also find that early socialization into violent illicit organizations has complex impacts on the long-term prospects of former child soldiers: youth recruits are *less* likely to remain socially linked to their former comrades than older recruits, but are also less likely to form new ties to the community at large. The evidence from in-depth interviews supports and further illustrates the dynamics of these findings.

At first glance it may seem intuitive that members of non-state armed groups would have weak trust in the state, and weak social ties with communities. However, we find that while at the *group level* trust and social ties follow predictable patterns, at the *individual level* these attributes are patterned in surprising ways by the accumulation of anti-social capital. Even though paramilitary groups were allied with the state, and at the group level have high levels of trust in the state, paramilitary fighters who underwent more intense ingroup socialization emerge with much *lower* levels of institutional trust. Likewise, while *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—FARC) guerrillas were partially dependent on civilian support, former insurgents with higher levels of anti-social capital have durably *lower* levels of community engagement. Together, these findings suggest that higher levels of socialization in illicit groups can have surprising, generalizable, and persistent negative impacts on participation in political and communal life.

In the first section, we elaborate a theory of anti-social capital and derive a set of testable hypotheses. The second section describes the Colombian context, while the third and fourth sections introduce the data utilized in our empirical analysis, and outline our empirical strategy. The fifth section presents the empirical analysis: descriptive evidence and batteries of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and logistic regression models, along with tailored vectors of control variables. The final section concludes.

Anti-Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has been very influential in the social sciences since the 1980s.[13] The core proposition is that participation in civic life builds a foundation of cooperation and trust between citizens, which underpins a network of functioning civil society institutions based on norms of reciprocity, in turn generating a civic culture.[14] While social capital and its related generalized trust has been praised as a panacea for economic development, democracy, and crime reduction,[15] critical voices have also warned against the potentially negative effects of social capital.

The Concept of Anti-Social Capital

An important body of literature suggests that social capital may not be unambiguously beneficial, and that in particular the "romanticism" of Putnam's version of social capital

overlooks its potentially negative effects.[16] Levi cites an extreme case: "Timothy McVeigh and other co-conspirators in the Oklahoma City bombing [in 1995] were members of a bowling league; this is a case where it may have been better to bowl alone."[17] Terms such as "unsocial capital,"[18] the "dark side of social capital,"[19] "perverse" social capital,[20] "uncivil" social capital,[21] "downside" of social capital,[22] "damaging forms" of social capital,[23] and "criminal capital"[24] express different aspects of social capital's negative attributes.

Some of these concepts are based on the distinctions (and tensions) between bridging and bonding social capital and inward versus outward-looking social capital.[25] While bonding occurs within a particular social group and tends to exclude outsiders, bridging among diverse groups of people has a larger potential for stimulating society-wide trust and reciprocity. Conceptually different but pointing to a similar problem, inward-looking groups are geared toward the creation of club goods (shared benefits enjoyed solely by group members), whereas outward-looking groups produce public goods. These conceptual refinements are related to the discussion of ingroups and outgroups treated heavily in social psychology. Some scholars argue that the very factors that create the beneficial impacts of social capital—most notably the formation of trust within an ingroup—requires or fosters a reciprocal distrust toward those outside the group.[26] However, evidence to date suggests that the effect of ingroup bonding is complex and contingent on social context, in particular the degree of social hierarchy and extent of cross-cutting cleavages.[27]

In this article, we are specifically interested in what we term *anti-social capital*,[28] which results from inward-looking groups' attempts to foster strong bonding among members. Within an illicit group, anti-social capital serves an important social signaling function: by participating in various acts and rites, group members signal their trustworthiness, nerve, and dedication to the group. Just as illicit groups foster bonding, they also self-consciously attempt to erode trust between group members and outsiders, and sever old social networks. By attempting to limit the potential for bridging, they aim to generate distrust toward outgroups in order to attain a specific benefit for the members within the group. Anti-social capital can thus be defined as *ingroup bonding used to foster trust and cohesion within an illicit organization and distance toward outgroups*.

Mafia organizations are often cited as a primary example of such anti-social capital.[29] In this article, we argue that all cohesive illegal organizations rely on anti-social capital. By *cohesive illegal organizations* we mean structurally coherent organizations with common criminal or illicit political goals.[30] Examples of cohesive illegal organizations include mafia syndicates like Cosa Nostra, Ndrangheta, or Yakuza, drug cartels and gangs in Central America and Mexico like the MS-13 and the Zetas, non-state armed groups like leftist insurgencies and paramilitary organizations in internal armed conflicts, and terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and its various local affiliates. Such organizations attempt to form bonding social capital among members and exclude outsiders systematically with the purpose of the commission of illicit acts (terrorist attacks, drug-trafficking, the establishment of protection rackets, etc.).

The Formation of Anti-Social Capital

Cohesive illegal organizations attempt to facilitate the formation of *anti-social capital,* expressed in high levels of trust, shared rules, cohesion, and cooperation within the group and social distance or hostility toward the outside world, through a range of measures. We focus here on three core mechanisms: *identity formation*, *participation in anti-social acts*, and *early socialization*. Research from organizational psychology and sociology suggests that symbolic interactions such as training and indoctrination sessions act to encode and

transmit group values, expectations, and norms, which in turn form the basis of a new social identity.[31] Training is a primary means by which armed groups, both formal and illicit, reshape the identity and behavior of recruits.[32] While training has the formal objective of building specific skills and capabilities, its tacit function is arguably more important: to build a shared sense of identity, trust, cohesion, and mutual interdependence through intense shared experience, pressure, and adversity.[33]

A further element to increase anti-social capital is the commission of anti-social acts, such as crimes or violence against civilians, which can lead group members to feel disconnected from "ordinary" people outside the group.[34] Emerging evidence suggests that armed groups use violence against civilians not only for strategic or emotive purposes, but for instrumental purposes linked to the industrial organization of the armed group. Cohen shows that armed groups that forcibly recruit combatants, and thus have low levels of social cohesion, utilize rape as a means to socialize recruits into the group.[35] Rodgers's ethnographic research into a Nicaraguan street gang found that the group used relatively minor (nonviolent) criminal infractions as a means to screen, test, and socialize recruits to norms of gang behavior.[36] Anti-social acts, in effect, create anti-social capital.

Another element potentially related to anti-social capital is their socialization into violence.[37] Social and cultural theories of trust suggest that individuals learn when and how to trust others from a young age.[38] Various accounts suggest that this process can be halted or polarized by early exposure to anti-social behaviors. Rubio, for instance, argues that the Colombian youth in certain marginal urban neighborhoods and poor rural areas do not build positive social capital that promotes pro-social behavior, but instead build "perverse social capital."[39] In formative periods of early identity formation and socialization they come in contact with anti-social but highly lucrative behavior. The World Bank notes that "child soldiers experience a process of asocialization in armed conflict" and that "overcoming the mistrust they learn in order to survive during a time of conflict can be difficult when transitioning to civilian life."[40] These statements point to a relationship between early socialization in armed groups and anti-social capital. However the empirical evidence is mixed. Annan and Blattman draw on a survey of demobilized fighters in Uganda to examine psychosocial reintegration, and find that fighters who were abducted as youths and forcibly conscripted were more likely to experience psychological distress (although they also find evidence of psychological resilience, particularly given the depth of trauma).[41] Additional research on the same population suggests that psychological trauma in former child soldiers may lead to less openness for reconciliation, and greater desire for revenge.[42] Recent synthesis research suggests that, on the whole, empirical evidence of dysfunctionality is potentially overstated, while youths' capacity for resilience is underappreciated.[43]

Impact of Anti-Social Capital on Bridging and Bonding

While the benefits of anti-social capital are collective (for the group), we argue that it also has a sticky and differentiated individual impact on the groups' former members, depending on the type and degree of ingroup socialization via the various mechanisms described above. Why is anti-social capital sticky? Social capital theory suggests that learned patterns of distrust toward outsiders may be difficult to break, even after group members part ways with the illicit organization.[44] These are patterns that must be un-learned over time; hence anti-social capital is sticky, but not necessarily permanent given countervailing contact and socialization experiences. It is also possible that specific asocializing experiences, such as violence against civilians, may induce shame or draw stigma onto the actor, which can potentially hinder social reintegration.[45]

We derive two sets of hypotheses from this theory that allow for empirical testing. First, for the case of former combatants from non-state armed groups in Colombia, we can expect that those who went through more intense ingroup socialization procedures will be less able to bridge to the outside world, even after they demobilized, since they have been imprinted with distrust toward non-members of the group. The outside world can be any social entity outside of the group's domain. However, here we look at two specific outgroups: the state (political bridging) and the local communities where ex-combatants live after demobilization (social bridging). This yields two testable propositions:

> H_1: Political Bridging: The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the more they will view the state with distrust.
>
> H_2: Social Bridging: The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the less they will participate in their local communities.

For the specific case of ex-paramilitaries and ex-guerrilla members, we can derive an additional observable implication for these two dimensions of political and social bridging on the group level. As paramilitaries did not act against the state, opposed to insurgent groups, and used more systematic violence against communities than guerrilla groups, we expect them to be generally more trustful of the state and less participatory in their communities than former guerrilla members. However, higher levels of anti-social capital among both groups will still correlate with lower levels of political and social bridging.

Second and similar to the bridging hypotheses, we assume that ex-combatants whose socialization within the group was strong will attempt to maintain ties to former members of their adoptive "families." Trust within the group might have different sources: Among them are generalized trust to members of the same illegal organizations through shared rules and norms, and individualized trust based on common experiences and continuous interactions.[46] Both sources of trust may have a continued influence in their lives after demobilization and make them socialize more often with former companions. We thus hypothesize that:

> H_3: Bonding: The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the more likely they are to remain linked with their former comrades.

Selection and Mediation

Before proceeding, we draw attention to a relatively intuitive issue of selection. People are not randomly assigned to participation in criminal gangs or armed groups, and it is likely that factors that drive participation in such organizations also correlate with institutional trust and broader social participation. A civilian randomly assigned to a criminal group, and exposed to the socializing mechanisms we describe above would also, we suspect, accumulate anti-social capital. However, the relevant comparison is not *between* civilians and members of armed groups who receive various "treatments" but rather *among* armed group members, based upon their varying experiences within the group. Various asocializing practices are likely to interact with the factors that motivated participation in clandestine groups in the first place. But we argue that these practices are analytically distinct, and carry separate and important implications for political and social life after members part ways with the group.

Colombian Non-State Armed Groups

Colombia provides an interesting case for examining the effects of anti-social capital for several reasons. First, both insurgent and paramilitary organizations have been active across the country; these illegal organizations were quite cohesive, particularly at the regional subunit level. Second, large numbers of former members of both right-wing and left-wing armed groups demobilized from these groups in the past years—between August 2002 and January 2010, 52,419 persons were certified as demobilized.[47] This allows for a test of our theory about sticky and individually differentiated anti-social capital.

Paramilitary groups were created largely as a reaction to increasing guerrilla influence in different rural regions of Colombia, mostly under the auspices of large landowners, but were related to drug-trafficking since its beginnings.[48] Although they were declared illegal since the end of the 1980s, several state institutions and representatives have continuously collaborated with these groups.[49] In 1997, several regional paramilitary factions were brought together under the umbrella of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC), followed by a time of territorial expansion and increasing power. Between 1997 and 2002, AUC units were the main responsible group for war atrocities, especially violence used against alleged collaborators of guerrilla groups and other undesired people like drug addicts and prostitutes.[50] Paramilitary groups differed from region to region depending on tradition, involvement in drug-trafficking and strategic interests. However, each subunit counted on a hierarchical internal structure and strong cohesion among its members. In 2002, the government of Álvaro Uribe started negotiations with the paramilitaries in order to "restore the monopoly of force in the hands of the state."[51] As a consequence, 31,671 members of the AUC demobilized between 2003 and 2006. This process was accompanied by many criticisms such as non-transparent negotiation agendas, inflated numbers of demobilized combatants, an improvised reintegration program and ongoing violence perpetrated by neo-paramilitary organizations involved in drug-trafficking.[52]

The still active guerrilla groups FARC and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) were founded in the 1960s following the Cuban revolution and intended to fight against inequality, especially among peasants in rural areas, and political exclusion.[53] In their evolution, they have sought the support of local communities in remote areas and have tried to govern these areas according to their principles.[54] The insurgent groups are internally governed by strict rules and most of their members are trained in communist ideology, speaking to a clear and cohesive organization at least at the subunit level.[55] Both groups achieved their peak level of territorial presence around the year 2002 and have since been fought back by increasingly professional and well-equipped armed forces.[56] In 2012—when peace negotiations between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government began—the FARC still counted on about 7,800 and the ELN on 1,500 fighters, according to military information.[57] The government's individual demobilization policy for guerrilla fighters (and before the AUC demobilization, also paramilitary fighters) has consisted in giving incentives to desert.[58] Between 2002 and January 2010, 20,748 combatants took the individual decision to demobilize.[59]

Since 2006, the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR)[60] has been in charge of the reintegration policy for all the demobilized fighters. Insurgents who abandon their group, and members of the AUC who collectively demobilized, receive education, vocational training, grants for micro-business projects, psychosocial support, healthcare, and a monthly stipend dependent on participation in the program.[61] The individuals surveyed and interviewed for this study were participants of this program.

Data

"It is not easy to find, see and measure" either social capital or its anti-social analogue.[62] Although anti-social capital is a club good, it arises and manifests at the individual level, and thus as with the majority of studies on "regular" social capital, we operationalize and measure anti-social capital at the individual level.[63] In order to test the above hypotheses and identify the relationship between anti-social capital formation and post-demobilization bridging and bonding, we draw on a survey of former combatants. This survey was conducted by the *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (FIP), a Colombian nongovernmental organization with a long history of research on conflict issues.[64] Between 5 February 2008 and 31 May 2008, 1,485 former members of armed groups were surveyed. The sample was randomly drawn from the roster of ex-combatants who participated in the Colombian government's reintegration program.

For the specific case of the AUC, the demobilized population is relatively representative of the former group members since most combatants followed an order to demobilize collectively. For the case of FARC and ELN, the sample is representative of group members who have left insurgent organizations via demobilization programs. The demobilized population consists of deserters who left their armed group and became traitors in the eyes of their former comrades. However, our theory suggests that even this population, which has demonstrated the capacity to break ties with the illicit group and exit the conflict, *will still* exhibit the long-term impacts of anti-social capital accumulation. Due to the different group dynamics and the different demobilization modalities of guerrilla and paramilitary populations, we carry out separate empirical analyses for each subsample.

Ex-combatants are a difficult population to interview: anxieties regarding social stigma for having participated in conflict, a desire to avoid public exposure, and fear of potential retribution may reduce willingness to participate in surveys. These problems are all particularly acute in Colombia, where the conflict is ongoing. The enumeration process was designed to mitigate ex-combatants' concerns. Enumerators first traveled to regional service centers across Colombia, which provide economic and psychosocial support to former combatants. Reintegration program staff validated the list of randomly chosen participants, and staff members who were known to the potential respondents initiated contact to introduce the survey and the enumerator.

The resulting sample we analyze consists of demobilized combatants living in 44 different municipalities in 17 departments. The respondents included 232 women and 1,253 men. 846 respondents were demobilized from the AUC, 476 from the FARC, 119 from the ELN, and 36 from other smaller armed groups. At the time of survey, 194 were older than 40 years of age, 857 between 25 and 40, and 429 were younger than 25 years of age (for descriptive statistics, see the Appendix).

The questionnaire consisted of 234 questions, covering a large range of topics including life conditions before joining the armed group, context and incentives for recruitment, activities within the armed group, the exit from the armed group, the current situation, and finally the reintegration program. The average interview length was two hours.

The additional 68 qualitative interviews were conducted by the authors of this article[65] in separate field trips in 2009 and 2010 to four different municipalities: Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja, and Tierralta. While Tierralta provides a rather rural context, Bogotá and Medellín are large cities and Barrancabermeja an intermediate city. The four different municipalities were selected in order to capture variation with respect to their size and density, since the degree of urbanization has implications both for the tenor of community life as well as other aspects of reintegration, such as economic opportunities. The majority

of the interviews were held with former paramilitary fighters (62) and the remaining six with former guerrilla combatants. Most of the interviews (54) were organized with the help of the ACR and their local service centers. The duration of these open-ended in-depth interviews varied between thirty minutes and two hours and covered a range of topics including the interviewees' post-demobilization socio-economic circumstances, links to former companions, and their remembrance of the time in the group.

Empirical Strategy

We begin our analysis by briefly outlining the dependent variables, independent variables and a vector of individual control variables that we include in the quantitative analysis.

Dependent Variables

Political Bridging. The state is the clearest political outgroup for non-state armed groups, and so we identify trust in the state as an indicator of *political bridging*. We focus on the state rather than government because the former is a juridical construct with an independent legal personality,[66] as well as a sociological construct with an identity that is distinct from whatever government is in power at any given point.[67] Ex-combatants may have greater or lesser trust toward a specific government, but this is distinct from their trust in the institutional framework of the state itself. The survey contained a large battery of questions that probed respondents' trust in Colombian political institutions (see Descriptive Evidence section). Respondents were asked the extent to which they trusted the Colombian State, on a seven-point scale; we utilize this question as our dependent variable for measuring political bridging.[68]

Social Bridging. As in studies of conventional social capital, we conceptualize participation in local communities as an indicator for *social bridging*. Community engagement has been raised as a particularly salient issue for ex-combatants;[69] indeed the United Nations defines reintegration as a social process that unfolds within communities.[70] The survey explored several dimensions of participation, especially participation in community organizations and more informal activities. We use the question "Do you participate in activities and initiatives in your community such as . . .?," which indicates the following response options: parties, celebrations, and leisure activities; religious ceremonies; political meetings; community council (*Juntas de Acción Comunal*); workshops (*mesas de trabajo*); none; and other. Multiple options could be ticked; we use these responses to create a scale measuring the intensity of engagement across various dimensions of communal life.

Bonding. Continued contact with former comrades is an indicator of ongoing *bonding* with the (former) illicit organization. If the bonding hypothesis is correct, than ex-combatants who went through heavy ingroup socialization will maintain closer social ties with fellow ex-combatants. Continued bonding can also be dangerous, since former fighters may re-mobilize and form the basis of new, emerging armed groups, or become potent players in illicit economies. Scholars and DDR practitioners have warned against the potential risks of reintegrating former combatants without first breaking armed group structures and social networks.[71] The survey contains several questions about socialization between ex-combatants after demobilization. We use a question that asked "Do you have contact with ex-combatants from your own group?" Although this question does not indicate the intensity of contact between ex-combatants, we believe it is a sufficiently strong indicator for

continued bonding. We further explore the type of interaction with fellow ex-combatants in the Descriptive Evidence Section.

Independent Variables

Similar to social capital, anti-social capital is difficult to directly observe; perhaps even more so, since it is an attribute of illegal organizations. We operationalize and measure anti-social capital formed within the armed group by means of proxy indicators. Instead of retrospective assignment of trust to former comrades or recollections of shared norms, we focus on experiential and behavioural indicators that theoretically correlate with anti-social capital: training, collective participation in abuse, and early socialization. These indicators are related to cohesion-enhancing dynamics within the group and are thus theoretically associated with anti-social capital.

Military Training. We measure identity formation through a binary variable, *Training*, that indicates whether each ex-combatant received training and indoctrination. Both guerrilla and paramilitary forces devoted significant resources and attention to training their recruits, including activity designed to pressure combatants, create a feeling of shared experience and adversity, and thus build cohesion.[72] Thus, training should act as a potent vector for the formation of shared identity.

Civilian Abuse. We suggest that participation in anti-social acts measures for armed group socialization are distinct from that which is created by structured, formal participation in training, and thus we operationalize and measure this concept separately. We create a binary variable, *Civilian Abuse,* which takes a value of one if respondents reported participating in acts of civilian abuse, notably the seizure of food and other goods. Survey questions that directly probe participation in taboo acts, such as the victimization of civilian populations, are likely to yield inaccurate responses owing to social desirability bias. The survey instead asks a relatively innocuous question regarding where combatants acquired food and other goods, with responses including buying goods, receiving donations of such goods, and taking consumption goods from various civilian groups, including peasants, merchants, and landowners. We treat the forcible seizure of goods as a proxy for other forms of civilian abuse.

Early Socialization. Last, we suggest that early socialization in armed groups has distinct effects on anti-social capital formation. The recruitment of child soldiers in Colombia was far more widespread than is typically acknowledged: between August 2002 and February 2010, the Colombian government registered 3,946 underage demobilized combatants (56 percent from the FARC, 25 percent from the AUC, and 15 percent from the ELN).[73] The precise scale and distribution of child recruitment into war is difficult to estimate. Although the ELN pledged in 1998 to halt recruitment of children, in 2005 and 2006 over 50 child soldiers demobilized from the group. The FARC appears to have recruited large numbers of child soldiers, both through force and perhaps through the promise of economic benefits. The AUC and other paramilitary groups also recruited child soldiers, but at an unknown scale, as many demobilized informally rather than through the government-mandated collective demobilization process.[74] We create a variable, *Minor recruitment*, which measures youth recruitment. Respondents were directly asked at what age they were recruited into the group. The mean age of recruitment for guerrilla fighters is approximately 18 years old; among paramilitary fighters, it is approximately 21 years old. Since we assume

Table 1
Hypotheses and indicators

Hypothesis	Dependent variable	Independent variables
H_1: Political Bridging: *The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the more they will view the state with distrust.*	Trust in the state	Anti-social capital (composite scale)
H_2: Social Bridging: *The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the less they will participate in their local communities.*	Participation in the community (composite scale)	Training Civilian abuse
H_3: Bonding: *The more ex-combatants have accumulated anti-social capital, the more likely they are to remain linked with their former comrades.*	Contact with former comrades (binary)	Minor recruitment

that socialization through the period of childhood and adolescence will have a heavier impact on anti-social capital formation, we use a dichotomous variable, differentiating between underage recruits and combatants recruited as adults (cutoff point: 18 years).[75]

We first build a scale that captures total anti-social capital accumulation, which we use in a preliminary set of regression models. The core empirical analysis, however, uses these distinct indicators instead of an overall index, so that we can explore the varying impacts of distinct aspects of anti-social capital formation. The main variables of our analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Control Variables

Besides the independent variables that reflect our theoretical outline, we draw on the survey data to derive a wide array of individual-level control variables that might confound the relationship between ingroup socialization and post-demobilization bridging and bonding. We control for gender (*Male)*, time elapsed since demobilization (*Time since demobilization*), and we also derive an estimate of each ex-combatants' length of time in the armed group (*Tenure*) from data on their age at recruitment and year of demobilization. Because trust in the state might correlate with contact with state institutions, we construct a proxy variable for state presence. State institutions are generally far stronger in urban areas, and so we build a dichotomous variable (*Rural residence*), which takes a value of 1 if the ex-combatant lived in the rural locality at the time of the survey. Because the most direct contact between ex-combatants and state institutions is via the demobilization program, we also include a variable measuring experiences of corruption or malfeasance in the reintegration program (*Corruption in DDR*), as this is likely to correlate with trust in the state (and thus potentially confound our estimates). We estimate separate models for former guerrilla and paramilitary subsamples, and include a variable capturing demobilization modality for each. For guerrilla, *Captured* takes a value of one if the guerrilla did not voluntarily leave

Table 2
Mean trust scores for ex-combatants

	Paramilitary	Guerrilla	Difference in means
Ombudsman's office	5.29 (1)	5.16 (1)	0.12*
National government	5.02 (2)	4.13 (2)	0.86***
Armed Forces	4.44 (3)	3.67 (4)	0.76***
Constitutional Court	4.20 (4)	3.82 (3)	0.39***
Justice system	4.03 (5)	3.65 (5)	0.36***
Elections	3.81 (6)	3.31 (7)	0.49***
Mayor's office	3.65 (7)	3.51 (6)	0.14*
National Congress	3.38 (8)	3.10 (8)	0.28***
Police	3.37 (9)	2.90 (9)	0.44***
Political Parties	2.95 (10)	2.52 (10)	0.41***
State	4.78	4.07	0.68***
ACR	5.59	4.81	0.73***

First figure is mean trust level on a 1–7 scale. Figure in parentheses is the rank among institutions. Two-tailed *T* tests conducted for difference in means. ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

the group but was instead detained; for paramilitaries, *Involuntary demobilization* takes a value of one if the paramilitary did not agree with the AUC's decision to collectively demobilize.

Empirical Analysis

Before we turn to the regression analysis of individual-level measures, we explore descriptive evidence related to political and social bridging and bonding at the group level, drawing both on survey data and insights from in-depth interviews with former combatants.

Descriptive Evidence

Political Bridging. Generally speaking, even among demobilized paramilitary members distrust toward the state can reach extreme levels, as evidenced by the following quote: "When they told us that we were going to demobilize, we thought that they [representatives of the state] would shoot us."[76] In order to get a sense of political bridging among former combatants, in Table 2 we present trust levels in a series of institutions. Former guerrilla and paramilitary fighters rank the different institutions in almost the same order, but the guerrillas trust consistently less in institutions than the former paramilitary fighters. This difference might be due to the different relationship of their former groups to the state, as outlined in the Theory section: while paramilitaries fought on the side of the state, guerrilla groups have wanted to overthrow the government. The large differences (for trust in the state: .68, $p < .001$) are still surprising since the guerrilla fighters in our sample are mostly deserters who trusted the state enough to participate in a reintegration program. The difference between paramilitaries and active guerrilla members are, of course, likely to be much more pronounced.

Social Bridging. Participation in community activities is an important indicator for social bridging. In Table 3, we see that ex-combatants participate most in leisure and religious

Table 3
Mean participation (%) for ex-combatants

	Paramilitary	Guerrilla	Difference in means
Parties, leisure activities	38.24	24.80	13.44***
Religious ceremonies	46.92	36.58	10.34***
Political meetings	12.58	4.95	7.63***
Community council	19.47	10.06	9.41***
Workshops	10.88	3.84	7.04***
None	29.58	33.33	3.75

Two-tailed *T* tests conducted for difference in means. ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

activities. Levels of participation among former guerrilla fighters are significantly lower than among former paramilitaries for all categories. The fact that guerrilla committed fewer atrocities against local communities and tried to establish a support network among them, does thus not influence the post-demobilization participation rates. The demobilization modality of former guerrilla fighters (individual desertion) and the often related displacement to a new urban living environment might have distanced them more from their home communities than former paramilitaries. In any case, ex-combatants tend to connect their past interactions with local communities to their current participation, as this quote illustrates: "Thank God, in the neighbourhood I live and where I was active, the people can't say that I was a murderer, that I treated the community badly. The community likes me a lot in this neighbourhood. . . . I behaved and I still behave very well with the community."[77]

Bonding. Inside the armed group, fighters often cut even the most essential social ties to the outside world: "When you're there, you concentrate on yourself. I'm there and I have to safeguard myself, to save my skin, so that nothing happens to me. So much that you forget about your family, you don't remember them."[78] In some cases, the armed group might even substitute for these (normally) strong social ties: "What family was for me? The people with whom I lived, in the group."[79]

In Table 4, we see that ex-paramilitaries have generally more contact with former comrades than ex-insurgents. Social ties are primarily held among those of similar rank; ties with superior and subordinate group members are relatively rare. However, the ties to former members of their own group seem to be stronger for former guerrilla. Most ex-combatants state that their family members are their primary social contacts. For former guerrilla fighters, often their family members are former combatants. Much more often are they engaged in a relationship or even married to a fellow ex-combatant than former paramilitary fighters. These differences may be related to the prior relationship of the respective armed groups to communities and to the sheer number of women within the group (which is much higher for guerrilla groups). However, for both former paramilitary and guerrilla members, ties to fellow ex-combatants are relevant, which may be related to anti-social capital.

Regression Analysis

Political Bridging. We begin with batteries of OLS regression models exploring the relationship between anti-social capital and trust in the state. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 4
Contact with fellow ex-combatants (in %)

	Paramilitary	Guerrilla	Difference in means
Contact with ex-combatants of same group?			
All contacts	71.33	63.59	7.73***
Superiors	16.85	15.98	0.87
Subordinate	16.28	17.30	0.12
Same rank	59.80	50.58	9.02***
Primarily spend free time with?			
Ex-combatants from own group	0.80	2.64	1.84***
Relationship of partner to the own group? (of those who have a partner)			
Member or collaborator	7.74	34.10	26.35***

Two-tailed *T* tests conducted for difference in means. ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

Models one and two present the results of the aggregate anti-social capital index for guerrilla and paramilitaries, respectively, with full vectors of control variables. Model three is reduced, presenting only independent variables of interest for former guerrilla; model four adds a vector of controls. Model five is a reduced model for former paramilitary, while model six adds a vector of controls.

In the political bridging hypothesis, we suggest that higher intensities of anti-social capital accumulation will result in durable distrust of outgroups, and thus be associated with lower levels of trust in the state. Models one and two show a strong negative association between anti-social capital formation and *Political bridging*, for both former guerrilla and paramilitary. As we predicted, even though paramilitary groups were broadly aligned with the state, members of such groups who developed more anti-social capital have significantly lower levels of trust in the state.

In models three through six, we then disaggregate various sources of anti-social capital, to further explore the relationship between ingroup identity formation, commission of anti-social acts, and early recruitment. We find strong evidence that socialization via *Training* has a long-term negative impact on trust in the state. Across both former guerrilla and paramilitary, participation in military training is associated with significantly lower trust in the state ($p < .1$). The effect is stronger for guerrilla, who on average have a nearly 10 percent decline in predicted trust if they participated in training. Youth recruitment also has a significant and negative impact on trust. *Minor Recruitment* is statistically significant in all models ($p < .01$), with a substantive effect of over 10 percent lower trust levels. While we do not find any significant relationship between civilian abuse and institutional trust among former guerrilla, for former paramilitaries—by far the most abusive faction, both in frequency and scale of civilian victimization—participation in abuse is strongly correlated with greatly lowered trust. Among former paramilitaries *Civilian abuse* is associated with an over 20 percent decline in predicted trust.

Social Bridging. We now turn to *Social bridging*. Table 6 presents the results, which as before derive from a battery of OLS regression models, estimated for former guerrilla and paramilitary combatants in turn. As above, we begin with two models employing the anti-social capital index, and find a strong negative relationship between

Table 5
Political bridging (Dependent variable: Trust in the state)

Variables	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
Anti-social capital scale	−0.898**	(0.353)	−1.328***	(0.386)								
Training					−0.442*	(0.240)	−0.434*	(0.256)	−0.187	(0.150)	−0.273*	(0.163)
Minor recruitment					−0.456***	(0.171)	−0.527***	(0.181)	−0.516**	(0.238)	−0.599**	(0.248)
Civilian abuse					0.201	(0.250)	0.216	(0.250)	−1.316**	(0.565)	−1.074**	(0.538)
Time since demobilization	−0.025	(0.054)	0.001	(0.066)	−0.018	(0.049)	−0.016	(0.053)	0.004	(0.049)	0.012	(0.066)
Male	−0.106	(0.198)	0.366*	(0.221)			−0.164	(0.207)			0.310	(0.228)
Tenure	0.003	(0.015)	0.045***	(0.014)			0.004	(0.014)			0.047***	(0.014)
Corruption in DDR	−0.431**	(0.186)	−0.266	(0.162)			−0.457**	(0.184)			−0.272*	(0.162)
Rural residence	0.678*	(0.385)	0.447**	(0.182)			0.643*	(0.389)			0.429**	(0.183)
Captured	−0.157	(0.335)					−0.093	(0.336)				
Involuntary demobilization			0.068	(0.138)							0.058	(0.139)
Constant	4.743***	(0.285)	4.631***	(0.283)	4.698***	(0.247)	4.905***	(0.303)	4.979***	(0.178)	4.539***	(0.283)
Observations	542		783		563		542		834		783	
R-squared	0.030		0.043		0.023		0.041		0.019		0.047	

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

Table 6
Social bridging (Dependent variable: Participation in community)

Variables	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
Anti-social capital scale	−0.096***	(0.036)	−0.161***	(0.054)								
Training					−0.041	(0.031)	−0.027	(0.031)	−0.022	(0.024)	−0.031	(0.025)
Minor recruitment					−0.065***	(0.019)	−0.066***	(0.019)	−0.091***	(0.030)	−0.109***	(0.030)
Civilian abuse					0.030	(0.029)	0.028	(0.029)	0.043	(0.099)	0.078	(0.101)
Time since demobilization	0.021***	(0.006)	0.026***	(0.009)	0.019***	(0.005)	0.022***	(0.006)	0.024***	(0.007)	0.029***	(0.009)
Male	0.005	(0.020)	−0.031	(0.036)			−0.006	(0.020)			−0.042	(0.037)
Tenure	0.004**	(0.002)	0.005**	(0.003)			0.004**	(0.002)			0.006**	(0.003)
Corruption in DDR	−0.006	(0.020)	0.011	(0.024)								
Rural residence	−0.012	(0.037)	0.130***	(0.030)			−0.016	(0.037)			0.130***	(0.029)
Captured	−0.041	(0.029)					−0.032	(0.030)				
Involuntary demobilization			0.019	(0.020)							0.015	(0.020)
Constant	0.118***	(0.029)	0.213***	(0.046)	0.164***	(0.031)	0.124***	(0.035)	0.217***	(0.029)	0.202***	(0.048)
Observations	548		783		568		548		831		783	
R-squared	0.039		0.056		0.041		0.053		0.020		0.063	

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

anti-social capital and engagement with the local community among both former guerrilla and paramilitary.

However, as we turn to the disaggregated measures tracking various sources and dimensions of anti-social capital, we find some counterintuitive results. First, contrary to our expectations, we find no evidence that socialization via training has a long-term effect on patterns of civic participation. The coefficient for *Training* is negative as predicted, but small and statistically insignificant in both reduced and full models for each armed group. Nor do we find evidence that participation in *Civilian abuse*, particularly for members of paramilitary groups that (generally) articulated an anti-civilian ideology, is associated with lower post-demobilization rates of participation. However, we do find strong evidence that time both inflicts and heals some wounds. *Minor recruitment* is associated with lower levels of post-demobilization civil participation.[80] Also, time since demobilization is positive and significant, suggesting that over time, former combatants form denser bridging ties to local communities, via participation in civic associations. The effect of anti-social capital formation on social bridging might thus fade away over time.

Bonding. Last, we examine the long-term integrity of bonding ties among former combatants. Table 7 presents the results. Because *Bonding* is a binary variable, we model it using a logistic regression estimator; coefficient estimates are presented as odds ratios, and so numbers higher than one indicate greater likelihood for bonding, and numbers below one indicate lower likelihood. We hypothesized that higher levels of anti-social capital accumulation would lead to higher propensities to remain linked to other combatants through social relationships. However, as we see in the first two models in Table 6, we find no evidence for this proposition.

Turning to the disaggregated measures, we find evidence that distinct forms and mechanisms of anti-social capital formation have contrary impacts on the propensity of former combatants to remain linked to one another. The estimate for *Training* is positive and stable across both groups and model specifications, but only reaches significance for former paramilitaries ($p < .05$). The substantive impact is large; former paramilitary combatants who underwent training are around 50 percent more likely to remain in contact with members of their armed group. Evidence for former guerrilla points in the same direction, but is not statistically significant (at $p \sim .15$). We find no evidence that participation in *Civilian abuse* renders combatants more likely to maintain ties to former group members; abuse does not reach significance in any model. Surprisingly, we find that former combatants who were recruited as minors are significantly *less* likely to remain in touch with former comrades; across both guerrilla and paramilitary groups. *Minor recruitment* is significant ($p < .05$), and the coefficient estimates suggest that former youth recruits are 40 percent less likely to maintain bonding ties than fighters who were recruited as adults. At minimum this suggests that the process of "asocialization" for youth combatants is not a given. More substantively and in keeping with qualitative evidence, it suggests that youth recruits may come to resent their early induction into war, and the lost opportunities and experiences that accompany this process. Recent research using unstructured interview data from former combatants in Colombia has also found that many child soldiers leave their armed groups because of poor treatment within the group; such a motivation for departing the group would also be consistent with de-linking from other former members.[81]

Table 7
Bonding (Dependent variable: Contact with former comrades)—Coefficients in odds ratios

Variables	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
Anti-social capital scale	0.724	(0.280)	1.025	(0.483)								
Training					1.566	(0.469)	1.594	(0.519)	1.450**	(0.274)	1.565**	(0.326)
Minor recruitment					0.610***	(0.115)	0.649**	(0.131)	0.628**	(0.147)	0.558**	(0.141)
Civilian abuse					1.220	(0.313)	1.183	(0.312)	0.839	(0.486)	0.757	(0.425)
Time since demobilization	0.796***	(0.046)	0.994	(0.079)	0.805***	(0.048)	0.818***	(0.051)	0.983	(0.066)	1.028	(0.079)
Male	1.251	(0.265)	0.690	(0.210)			1.098	(0.242)			0.573*	(0.181)
Tenure	1.053***	(0.020)	1.025	(0.023)			1.052***	(0.019)			1.032	(0.023)
Rural residence	0.792	(0.314)	2.241***	(0.663)			0.787	(0.314)			2.187***	(0.641)
Involuntary demobilization			1.834***	(0.335)							1.779***	(0.329)
Captured	2.292**	(0.756)					0.600	(0.189)				
Constant	4.176***	(1.009)	2.599**	(0.998)	2.781***	(0.850)	1.728	(0.648)	2.112***	(0.510)	2.096*	(0.794)
Observations	569		787		569		549		835		787	

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.

Control Variables

The statistical control variables provide additional insight into the dynamics of anti-social capital, and in particular its durability over time.

First, we note that an ex-combatant's post-demobilization location has mixed and surprising effects. Despite the fact that state presence is weaker in rural areas, *Rural residence* is consistently associated with higher levels of trust in the state—that is, stronger political bridging—across both former guerilla and paramilitary members. It is associated with higher levels of social bridging (community engagement) among former paramilitaries, but has no association with social bridging among former guerrilla.

Second, we find that *Tenure* has no effect on either political or social bridging, but a non-trivial effect on bonding among former guerrilla: each additional year spent in the group is, *ceteris paribus*, associated with around a five percent greater likelihood of remaining linked with other former group members.

Third, we find evidence that demobilization modality has potentially significant effects on the integrity of ties between former combatants. Former paramilitaries who went through *Involuntary demobilization* are nearly twice as likely to remain linked to other former group members than those who agreed with demobilization. The results for former guerrilla who were *Captured* are of similar scope, though only significant in some model specifications.

Fourth, we find strong and consistent evidence that while anti-social capital is sticky, its effects do fade, at least for some dimensions of reintegration. Longer *Time since demobilization* is associated with higher levels of engagement in the community, suggesting that former combatants do form new social ties over time; that said, the effect is relatively small in scale, suggesting that this may be a very extended process. The results for *Bonding* are consistent with this finding: particularly among former guerrilla, greater time outside of the group is associated with a significantly decreased likelihood of remaining linked to other group members. The effect suggests a steep drop: each year outside the group is associated with around 20 percent lesser likelihood of continued contact. However, in contrast to these findings, we find no evidence that time outside the group correlates with increased trust toward the state.

Conclusions

"Although we're here outside . . . here, in your head, you're not outside of it."[82] This is how an ex-paramilitary reflects on her former membership in the armed group that years later still marks her life. It is also an illustration of our theory of sticky anti-social capital.

In our empirical analysis, we find that an index of anti-social capital, along with all three proxy indicators for anti-social capital formation, helps explain variation in individual trust levels in the state (political bridging) for both former guerrilla and paramilitary members. Results for participation in communities (social bridging) and continued bonding with former comrades are mixed but indicate that certain forms of anti-social capital formation have a sticky and individually differentiated impact on social relationships after the membership in the group ends. For both forms of bridging, early "contamination," as one former child soldier said, is sticky: "You enter the group as a child. You grow up with this. You grow up side by side with these people and you get contaminated."[83] We do, however, find evidence that social "contamination" and distance may fade over time, albeit slowly.

This study opens up the black box of often group-oriented analysis of illegal organizations. It also emphasizes an important yet underestimated aspect of the reintegration of former members of such groups into civilian life. Reintegration processes have been widely

studied for the case of ex-combatants.[84] However, the focus of studies has usually been on economic reintegration (e.g., impact of job training, medium-term labor market outcomes), psychological traumas and political aspects related to the group level (e.g., power-sharing), rather than on the connection between ingroup experiences and longer-term social reintegration processes.[85]

Although contextual differences shape the social dynamics of each group and their members, we believe that our theory is generalizable to other illicit organizations, such as mafia groups and gangs.[86] Future studies might focus on members of other cohesive illegal organizations in order to clearly delimit the scope conditions of our theory. They might also explore additional potential mechanisms for anti-social capital formation, as illegal organizations rely on an array of tailored strategies to increase anti-social capital, including repertoires of targeted violence such as sexual violence against civilian populations.[87]

With respect to the specific case of former combatants of non-state armed groups, policy guidance stresses the importance of de-linking former fighters from their groups and from each other. Our findings, however, suggest that continued socializing among former comrades may be mediated by their wartime experiences, and thus these should be probed carefully in the design of reintegration programs. However, we also find some evidence that the most vulnerable combatants (such as former child soldiers) may also be the most likely to autonomously de-link from the group and that over time, ex-combatants will rely less and less on each other.

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Notes

1. All interview quotes translated from Spanish by authors.
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8. In the sense that those outside the organization are excluded from its benefits, but for group members, the benefits are non-rivalrous and can be enjoyed by all.

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10. One notable exception can be seen in the paramilitary leader alias McGuiver, described in James Robinson, "Colombia: Another 100 Years of Solitude?," *Current History* 112(751) (2013), pp. 43–48.

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75. The results are robust to alternate cutoff points, and are available from the authors upon request.

76. Interview with ex-paramilitary in Medellín no. 1, February 2009.

77. Interview with ex-paramilitary in Medellín no. 3, February 2009.

78. Interview with ex-paramilitary in Tierralta, April 2009.

79. Interview with ex-paramilitary in Medellín no. 4, February 2009.

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Appendix

Summary statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Trust in the state	1,458	4.48	1.89	1	7
Participation in community	1,456	0.22	0.25	0	1
Contact with former comrades	1,461	0.68	0.47	0	1
Anti-social capital scale	1,481	0.38	0.23	0	1
Training	1,481	0.84	0.37	0	1
Civilian abuse	1,485	0.06	0.24	0	1
Minor recruitment	1,485	0.24	0.43	0	1
Years since demobilization	1,425	2.80	1.40	0.09	17.02
Male	1,472	0.84	0.36	0	1
Years in the group	1,381	5.93	4.99	0	38.34
Corruption in DDR	1,485	0.24	0.43	0	1
Captured	1,485	0.05	0.21	0	1
Involuntary demobilization	1,485	0.20	0.40	0	1
Rural residence	1,485	0.10	0.29	0	1