

STATE CAPACITY AND SUPPORT  
FOR DEMOCRACY:  
CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR POST  
CONFLICT COLOMBIA

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# STATE CAPACITY AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POST CONFLICT COLOMBIA

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**Abstract.** Over the latest years one of the major concerns with political systems around the world is what some authors have called the “democratic recession”. Some recent discussions on these issues focus on the capacity of the state to respond to the demands of its citizens. This paper studies the relationship between state capacity -understood as state performance on areas such as providing security, justice administration, tax collection and guaranteeing rights-, and support for democratic principles and regime performance, for the case of Colombia. The empirical results show that lower levels of assessments of state capacity are associated to lower levels of support for democratic principles and performance. These results are discussed in the context of the peace agreements between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas, as well as the implications posed by this relationship in regards to the challenges and opportunities for post conflict Colombia.

**Keywords:** support for democracy, democratization, state capacity, peace building.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade one of the major concerns with political systems around the world is what some authors have called the “democratic recession”, that is, the halt in the advance of democracy and the retreat in the gains that were achieved during the third wave of democratization (Diamond, 2009, 2015, 2016; Møller & Skaaning, 2013). By different accounts, democracy has been losing ground since 2006, with remarkable cases as those of Botswana, Hungary, Nicaragua, Russia, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela, and growing doubts about the possibilities of democratic transition and consolidation in the Arab Spring countries beyond, perhaps, the case of Tunisia (Danahar, 2013; Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2015; Masoud, 2015; Rupnik, 2012; Shevtsova, 2015).

The decline of democracy around the world has coincided with the growing support for authoritarian regimes (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2014), the consolidation of different forms of competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way, 2010) and illiberal democracies (Zakaria, 1997), all this accompanied by a change in the norms and values away from those of liberal democracy (Cooley, 2015).

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Part of the skepticism with the performance of democracy has been explained by people's higher expectations of it, which are associated with an improvement in social and economic living standards (Norris, 2011). Nevertheless, in spite of the empirical evidence of this for developed countries, there is also evidence showing that citizens in less developed societies are more confident of their leaders and political institutions than those in the developed world (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Alternatively, other explanations for the discontent with democracy focus on the capacity of the state to respond to the demands of its citizens. According to Fukuyama (2015), for instance, the current scenario of democratic recession around the world is strongly related to a growing dissatisfaction towards some democratic regimes, in which the states fail in responding to their citizens' demands in areas like security or the guarantee of other basic rights, as well as situations in which important state institutions have been captured by criminal organizations.

The discussion about the state of democracy in the world is of particular interest for Colombia, given the context of the peace talks between the government and the FARC guerrillas in the city of Havana aiming at ending an over fifty year armed conflict. In particular, the agreement on the topic of political participation calls for a "democratic opening for building peace", and introduces a set of policies aimed at opening and improving democracy as a condition for peace consolidation (Delegación del Gobierno Nacional & Delegación de las FARC-EP, 2013). Moreover, the agreements emphasize that the peace building phase, after a final agreement is reached, demands for an active participation of the citizenry, in particular, the communities living in the territories that have been most affected by the conflict.

At the same time, the agreements include a set of provisions aiming at strengthening state capacities, such as improving security conditions, protecting property rights, administering justice and guaranteeing rights in rural areas, as well as collecting taxes at the municipal level.

This paper studies the relationship between state capacity and support for democratic principles and regime performance, for the case of Colombia. It shows that in spite of people in developing countries having relatively higher levels of confidence towards its leaders and institutions, the failure of the state to deliver to its citizens is associated to more critical assessments of democratic principles and performance. A positive empirical relationship between state capacity and support for democracy might be a challenge for post conflict Colombia insofar as an insufficient state capacity might impair one of the tenets of the agreements, that is, democratic opening. At the same time, considering the reversed causality relationship (that is, higher levels of democracy leading to better assessments of state performance), the opening of democratic spaces for discussing the implementation of the agreements, understood as a democratic innovation, might lead people to have a better assessment of state capacity and thus opens an opportunity for creating a virtuous circle of democratic opening and state strengthening.

Section 2 makes a brief presentation of regime support theory, discusses the concept of democratic deficit and reviews empirical literature in the topic. In section 3 some basic elements about state and democracy in Colombia are described. Section 4 presents the empirical analysis relating state capacity and support for democracy in Colombia. In section 5 these results are discussed from the perspective of the Havana agreements. Conclusions are presented in section 6.

## 2. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY: THEORY AND EVIDENCE

In his *Considerations on Representative Government*, John Stuart Mill argued that “[t]he people for whom the form of government is intended must be willing to accept it; or at least not so unwilling as to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to its establishment. They must be willing and able to do what is necessary to keep it standing” (Mill, 1862).

This statement is particularly important for democracies, as ‘the will of the people’ is what actually gives legitimacy to the regime and to its continued existence. With the third wave of democratization starting in the mid 1970s, and its recession since the mid 2000s, one research agenda has been that of studying the variables that affect support for democratic regimes and the conditions whereby democracy loses support from the population.

According to Easton (1965), there are three dimensions for studying support for political systems: the nation state, its agencies and its actors. Support for the nation state reflects an abstract idea capturing feelings such as that of belonging to a national community, national pride, patriotism and identity. It is rather diffuse insofar as it cannot be pinpointed to a few individuals, agencies or policies. Support for agencies and actors, on the contrary, is much more concrete considering that it refers to the performance of regime institutions and that of specific individuals holding positions of power at a given time. This is the case of the President, the courts, the police and the military, as well as elected representatives, party leaders and political parties, among others. From this approach, one would expect that given the abstract character of system support, it is more stable over time and thereby more enduring when compared to support for agencies and actors (Norris, 2011).

Norris (1999) extends the multidimensional character of system support proposed by Easton by establishing five categories for its study: (i.) support for the community, (ii.) regime principles and values, (iii.) regime performance, (iv.) regime institutions and (v.) political actors. As in the simplified version, these dimensions range in a continuum from the abstract and diffuse support for the nation-state, to the more specific support for officeholders.

Approval of regime principles and values, thus, captures the adherence to the ideas that are at the heart of the regime. For instance, in the case of a democratic system, principles and values are those of free and fair election of officials, as well as basic rights and freedoms, among others. Now, whereas evaluations of regime performance relate to how the regime does work, confidence in regime institutions relates to the public approval of those in power. Therefore, confidence in regime institutions captures the way in which different policy areas

such as the economy, provision of security, justice administration and social policy are dealt with. The empirical section of this paper investigates to what extent the democracy variables of these dimensions are contingent on the state capacity variables.

For the case of democracy, the expansion of Easton's middle category allows Norris (2011) to account for the 'democratic deficit', that is, the gap between the aspirations the public has from democracy (regime principles and values) and the satisfaction with its actual performance (regime performance). Such phenomenon appears in many societies today capturing the feeling of individuals who aspire to democracy and who consider it the ideal form of government, but who are also skeptical about the performance of democracy in their own societies.

Research in modernization and post materialism theory provides a possible explanation for the democratic deficit phenomenon. According to this theory, the postmodern phase of development in advanced industrial societies has generated a values change process which has made citizens more critical and thereby more skeptical of every kind of authority. However, in spite of the declining respect for authority in these societies, which translates into lesser levels of support for governments and for hierarchical political parties and elite directed forms of participation, support for democratic principles has been on the rise (Inglehart, 1999; Inglehart & Welzel, 2010). This means that controlling for perceptions of state performance, increased levels of socio-economic development raise expectations from democracy and lead to a democratic gap whereby democracy cannot fulfill citizens' expectations.

Nevertheless, this theory, which finds empirical support in developed societies, does not necessarily hold for developing nations. The public in less developed societies shows more confidence in their leaders and political institutions than their counterparts in the developed world (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Modernization and post materialism theory, thus, would contribute to explaining the dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in developed societies, but falls short of explaining the same phenomenon in less developed countries. This approach, based on citizens' expectations and attitudes, constitutes so-called "demand side" explanations.

As a complement to the "demand side" approach, "supply side" explanations of the democratic deficit are based on the failure of governments in delivering to their societies. Norris (2011) identifies as possible sources of variability in the supply side of the democratic deficit equation three dimensions of regime performance: (i.) process performance, (ii.) policy performance and (iii.) institutional structures. In this setup, process performance relates to the intrinsic quality of democratic governance; it includes assessments about the fairness of elections, responsiveness and accountability of elected representatives, as well as measures of transparency and corruption. Policy performance includes evaluations on the provision of public services, health care, schools, living standards and domestic security. And finally, institutional structures emphasize the importance of constitutional arrangements, mainly those related to power sharing structures. This approach gives room for regime

evaluations based on the citizens' informed assessments of a government or a succession of them.

Recent studies on the state of democracy have focused on policy performance indicators as major explanatory variables. In this research agenda aiming to explaining support for democracy by using policy performance variables, economic performance has played a leading role. Kotzian (2011), for instance, finds that support for democracy depends on economic stability, which leads him to argue that economic performance is more important for explaining support for democracy than institutional and political development. In a similar fashion, Kriekhaus, Son, Bellinger, & Wells (2014) find that higher levels of economic inequality reduce support for democracy; Armingeon & Guthmann (2014) argue that the policies adopted in European economies in the context of the great recession starting in 2008 translated into lower levels of support for democracy; whereas Rudra (2005) argues that exposure to international markets leads to an increased support for democracy as long as it is accompanied by the strengthening of the welfare state. Therefore, this evidence points at support for democracy being highly contingent on economic policy and performance.

Besides the economic dimension, research on policy performance has also addressed the role of state institutions. Combining economic and political variables, Haerpfer (2008) studies the case of Russia from 1992 to 2002 and argues that the most important predictor of support for the regime is the support for the current macro economy. However, he also argues that trust in government institutions is the second most powerful predictor of regime support. Magalhães (2014) argues that the quality of policy formulation and implementation affects preferences about regimes, whereas Andersen, Møller, Rørbæk, & Skaaning (2014) find that state capacity enhances regime stability.<sup>2</sup>

Using data from Latin American and African countries, Fernandez & Kuenzi (2010) find that citizens' perceptions of security have a significant effect on both support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy. Whereas, for the cases of Ghana and Zambia, Bratton & Mattes (2001) find that in spite of there being an intrinsic support for democracy, general levels of support for democracy are highly dependent on governments' performance

The empirical section of this paper provides evidence in favor of the hypothesis that for the case of Colombia, policy performance, particularly in the areas of security, justice administration, tax collection and guarantee of rights, is positively related to support for democratic principles and democracy performance. Before that, in the next section a brief description of the situation of state capacity and democracy in Colombia is presented.

### 3. STATE CAPACITY AND DEMOCRACY IN COLOMBIA

Over the last decades there has been a growing penetration of the Colombian state over the

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<sup>2</sup> They also argue that the dimensions of state capacity playing out a role in this relationship differ between autocracies and democracies: whereas for the stability of autocracies the most important dimension is that of monopoly on violence, for the stability of democracies, it is that of administrative effectiveness.

territory and a reversal of the expansive trend of illegal armed groups gaining territorial control, which was common in the last decade of the previous century. At the same time, there has been an increased regulatory capacity of state institutions in issues like justice administration and the protection of property rights (Duncan, 2014), a situation that reverses the context of “collapse of authority” that some authors used to refer to Colombia (Centeno, 2002). However, the country continues to face important challenges for consolidating a modern democratic state.

One of the major problems the Colombian state faces today is that of combating mafias and other organizations that extract resources from illegal activities and that represent a threat to citizens’ security. There are multiple regions of the country with an active presence of illegal armed groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other organizations that appeared after the demobilization of paramilitary groups in the mid 2000s (Patiño, 2012). Some of those organizations –also called ‘Criminal gangs’ or BACRIM- carry out their actions in urban areas, and are involved in activities like extortion, drug trafficking and smuggling, generating dramatic conditions of insecurity in cities like Medellín, Barranquilla, Cucuta and Cali. They also pose a major threat on human right activists and social leaders (CNMH, 2013).

Similarly, the Colombian state faces important problems for guaranteeing property rights, in particular in the rural areas, many of them associated to problems of corruption or insufficient capabilities of the agencies that are responsible for administering information on property rights (Gómez, 2009). At the same time, the poor specification of land property rights contributes at explaining the high levels of violence and political repression that have characterized the country (Gutiérrez, 2014).

Besides the security issues, a second dimension of the Colombian state to take into account is that of justice administration. According to García (2008), the Colombian state faces important obstacles for administering justice over the whole territory, some of them associated to security issues, the ‘capturing’ of the legal system by local economic and political interests, and the intimidation of judges and other judicial officers by illegal armed groups. In general, there is a poor evaluation of the judicial system by the citizenry. For instance, in the database used in this paper, only 31.2% of the respondents consider they are very satisfied or satisfied with the way the judicial system works. The situation of justice administration, nevertheless, is not uniform over the entire territory but, on the contrary, it is highly unequal, being particularly critic in areas with a major presence of illegal armed groups and whose economies have not been fully integrated to the dynamics of the rest of the country.

The third dimension for studying state capacity in Colombia is that of tax collection, in which there are at least two different levels for the discussion. On one level, over the latest years the Colombian state has shown an important increase in its capacity to collect taxes at the national level. However, this situation contrasts with that of the local level, where many municipalities are characterized by a weak fiscal capacity, which is mainly associated to their weakness in collecting property taxes (Kalmanovitz, 2010).



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A fourth dimension is the capacity of the Colombian state for guaranteeing social and economic rights and providing public goods and services. The Colombian Political Constitution includes provisions that make the state responsible for guaranteeing access to health services, education and dwelling, among others. Nevertheless, as in the other dimensions, the performance of the state on these topics is not only insufficient but most importantly, it shows important inequalities over the country (DNP, 2011a, 2011b; PNUD, 2011).

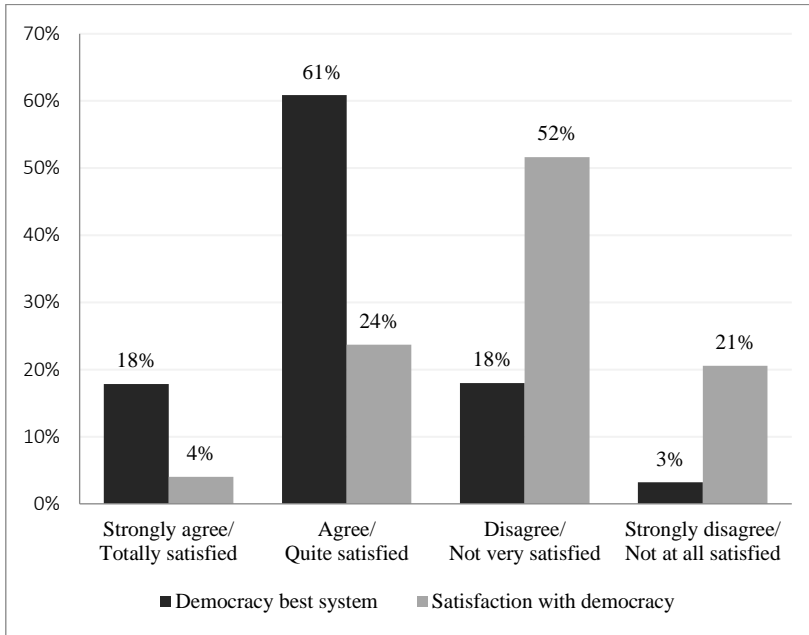
This whole situation accounts for what some scholars have called a “differentiated presence of the state” on the territory (González, Bolívar, & Vásquez, 2002; González, 2014), according to which the extent and performance of the state institutions over the Colombian territory is highly heterogeneous. This heterogeneity creates gaps in the way citizens’ economic, social and political rights are guaranteed, and opens a space for illegal actors to capture and reconfigure state institutions, a situation that obstructs the process of consolidation of a social State governed by the rule of law (Garay & Salcedo-Albarán, 2012).

The state of democracy also has important problems. The Colombia electoral system is characterized by problems like clientelism, lack of transparency in political campaigns financing, lack of confidence in political institutions and the presence of illegal interest in the political system (De La Calle, 2008). This situation translates into turnout levels of only about 50%, insufficient guarantees for opposition parties and candidates, and barriers to the creation of political parties.

At the same time, there are comparatively low levels of citizen participation in non-electoral democratic spaces; this situation is partially associated to the presence of the armed conflict and the context of corruption and clientelism (Alviar, Azuero, & Bejarano, 2009; Velásquez & González, 2003). Since the 1990s, the efforts for institutionalizing mechanisms of participation were associated to a halt in social mobilization (Velásquez, 2015) and there are still big challenges in order to reach important levels of citizen participation.

Going back to the concept of “democratic deficit” presented above, the case of Colombia offers a good example of the gap between the aspirations people have from democracy and their levels of satisfaction with the way democracy actually delivers. Data from the 2011, 2013 and 2015 waves of the Latinobarometer, allows to compare the percentage of people responding how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in Colombia, with that of those considering whether democracy is the best system. Figure 1 shows that whereas 18% of the surveyed strongly agree with the affirmation that democracy is the best system, only 4% are totally satisfied with the way democracy works. Moreover, 61% of the respondents consider democracy the best system, whereas only 24% are quite satisfied with the way Colombian democracy works.

Figure 1  
Democratic deficit in Colombia



This figure suggests the discontent with democracy in Colombia in spite of the expectations people have of it. The next section presents empirical evidence favoring the hypothesis that low levels of satisfaction with democracy in Colombia are associated to an insufficient state capacity to address citizen’s expectations on the areas of security, justice administration, tax collection and guarantee of rights. Interestingly, rates of approval of democracy as the best system of government are also associated to these dimensions of state capacity.

#### 4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This section studies empirically the relationship between regime principles and process performance (levels 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Norris’ analysis), and policy performance and regime institutions (levels 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>), for the case of Colombia. The 2011 wave of the Latinobarometer is used as the benchmark dataset, which is complemented with the waves of 2013 and 2015 whenever the information is available (see the appendix). Each of these datasets includes 1200 individual level observations.

The left hand side of the equation - ‘*support for democracy*’-, is operationalized with three variables associated to different dimensions of regime support. The first measure captures support for regime principles, using the variable *democracy best system*, based on the following question: “Do you completely agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with the statement: democracy could have problems but it is the best system of government”. Answers to this question were re-coded on a 4-point scale ranging from 4 (completely agree), to 1 (completely disagree).

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With the aim of capturing information on regime performance, two additional measures of ‘*support for democracy*’ were included. Respondents were first asked: “Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Colombia?” From this question the variable *satisfaction with democracy*, was constructed, taking higher values for higher levels of satisfaction with democracy. Similarly, the variable *democracy has improved* was constructed with the respondents’ answers to the question: “Do you believe that democracy in Colombia has improved/remained the same/worsened?” Descriptive statistics, precise definitions and coding for these and the other variables used in the paper appear in the appendix.

For the right hand side of the regression equations, four different dimensions of state capacity were studied: provision of security, justice administration, tax collection and guarantee of rights. In order to allow for different accounts of the same broader issue, each of these dimensions includes two or more variables, as follows.

In the *provision of security* dimension, five different variables were included: *protection against crime, have been assaulted, rate public safety, concerned to be a victim, and protection of private property*. In the *justice administration* dimension two variables were included: *benefited from justice policy* and *satisfied with justice system*. For *tax collection* another two variables were included: *how many people pay taxes* and *trust in the use of taxes*. Finally, for *guarantee of rights* four variables were included: *benefited from education policy, benefited from health policy, benefited from housing policy* and *state has done for you*.

Finally, in order to account for modernization theory and other possible explanations, *age, gender, income level, education, ideology* and *religiosity* of the respondent were used as control variables.

For each of the dependent variables a battery of ordinal logit regression models was run. Each regression includes only one independent variable and the control variables in the right hand side, plus year dummies when information for more than one year was available; for instance, the first regression is that of *democracy best system* on *protection against crime*, plus control variables and year dummies for 2013 and 2015.

Since most independent variables are ordinal, dummy variables were created for each of them always using the lowest value as the excluded category. The coefficients reported in Table 1 are each for a different regression that includes one independent variable, the controls and year dummies, so no multicollinearity problems are present.

All regressions include at least 856 observations and a maximum of 2819 (depending of how many years were included) and all results include heteroskedastic robust standard errors. The results appear in Table 1 and graphics of marginal effects appear in Figure 2.

Table 1.  
Regression results

Variable	Democracy best system	Satisfaction with democracy	Democracy has improved
Protection against crime (=2)	0.2259* [0.115]	0.3487*** [0.108]	0.5003*** [0.160]
Protection against crime (=3)	0.1950 [0.128]	0.4877*** [0.124]	0.6692*** [0.173]
Protection against crime (=4)	0.4056** [0.203]	0.6522*** [0.216]	0.4008 [0.288]
Rate public safety (=2)	0.0160 [0.190]	0.3626** [0.152]	-0.0895 [0.371]
Rate public safety (=3)	0.2364 [0.177]	0.8969*** [0.135]	0.6744** [0.329]
Rate public safety (=4)	0.5372*** [0.192]	1.5944*** [0.155]	0.9895*** [0.351]
Rate public safety (=5)	0.2097 [0.305]	2.0791*** [0.285]	0.9182* [0.517]
Protection of private property (=2)	-0.0154 [0.182]	0.4267*** [0.159]	0.3046 [0.302]
Protection of private property (=3)	0.1309 [0.179]	0.7052*** [0.158]	0.5851** [0.297]
Protection of private property (=4)	0.4752** [0.194]	1.1683*** [0.178]	0.5932* [0.313]
Have been assaulted	-0.0908 [0.083]	-0.3743*** [0.079]	-0.1988 [0.145]
Concerned to be a victim (=2)	0.1363 [0.145]	-0.1919 [0.147]	0.0852 [0.257]
Concerned to be a victim (=3)	0.1466 [0.136]	-0.1462 [0.131]	0.1423 [0.230]
Concerned to be a victim (=4)	0.0796 [0.137]	-0.5259*** [0.132]	-0.1567 [0.238]
Satisfaction with judicial system (=2)	0.1240 [0.134]	0.5184*** [0.123]	0.2640 [0.183]
Satisfaction with judicial system (=3)	0.6102*** [0.147]	1.0518*** [0.142]	0.5675*** [0.202]
Satisfaction with judicial system (=4)	0.3613 [0.257]	0.9865*** [0.274]	0.7817*** [0.284]
Benefited from judicial policy	0.5600* [0.323]	0.1518 [0.318]	0.5646* [0.308]
Trust in the use of taxes	0.2726 [0.216]	0.7849*** [0.212]	0.6220*** [0.192]
How many people pay taxes	0.0041 [0.003]	0.0032 [0.003]	0.0061** [0.003]
Benefited from health policy	0.1432 [0.149]	0.2594* [0.136]	0.1182 [0.134]
Benefited from education policy	0.2707* [0.150]	-0.0064 [0.138]	-0.0204 [0.130]
Benefited from housing policy	-0.0674 [0.187]	0.1330 [0.179]	0.2222 [0.175]
State has done for you (=2)	0.1591 [0.196]	0.4904*** [0.174]	0.2815 [0.171]
State has done for you (=3)	0.3558* [0.193]	0.8687*** [0.179]	0.8071*** [0.171]

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State has done for you (=4)	0.5063* [0.262]	1.2610*** [0.251]	1.1267*** [0.273]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

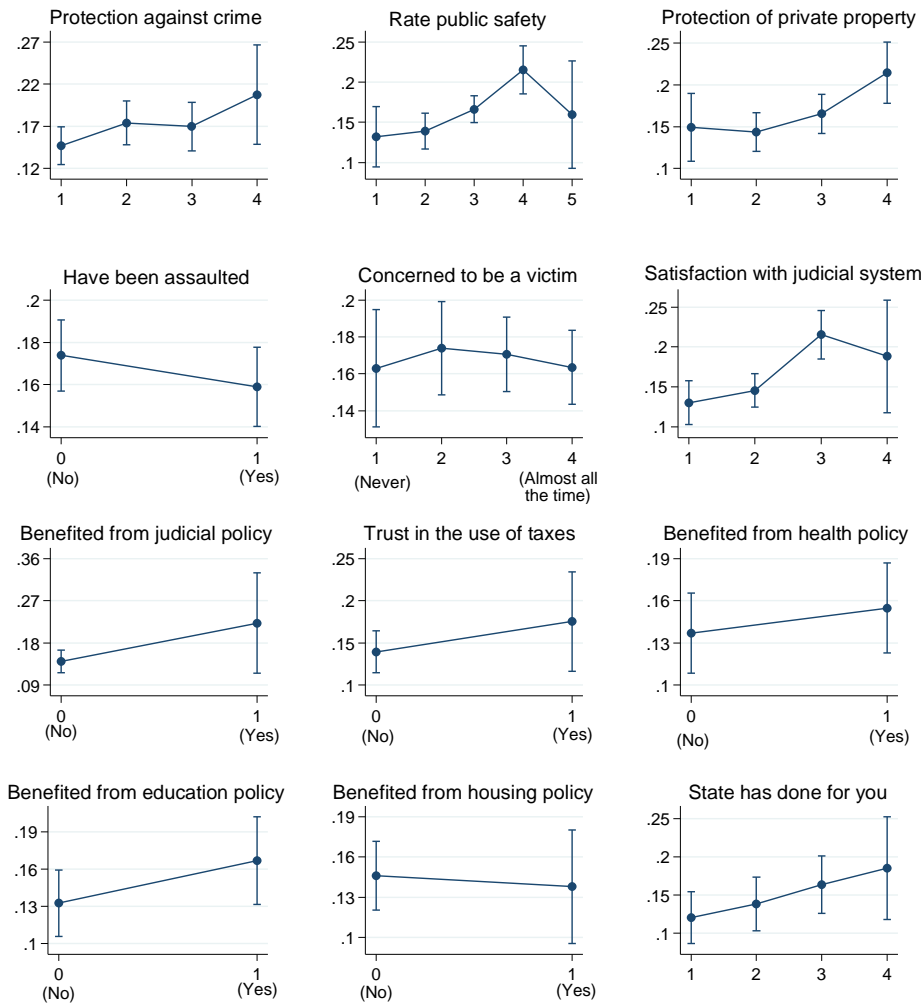
Notes: \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01; two-tailed tests. Coefficients for ordinal logit regressions; each coefficient is the outcome of a regression of the dependent variable and the corresponding independent variable (only one for each regression) plus control variables and year dummies when possible. Heteroskedastic robust standard errors in brackets.

Before starting the analysis of the independent variables of interest, it is worth mentioning that from the set of control variables a statistically significant relationship of the variables income and ideology was found across all the regressions (not in the Table). That is, people of higher income and more towards the right of the political spectrum tend to be more content with the values of democracy and its performance in Colombia. Education was found statistically significant in the *democracy best system* and *satisfaction with democracy* regressions (more educated people have better assessments of democracy), whereas religiosity was found significant only in the *democracy best system* regression (more religious people have better assessments of democracy).

Now, turning the attention to the state capacity variables, each graphic in Figures 2A-2C shows the marginal effects; that is, they depict the probability of giving the highest possible answer to the democracy question for every possible value of the independent variable of interest. For instance, the first graphic in Figure 2A shows the probability of the respondent saying that he or she completely agrees with the statement that democracy is the best system of government, for every possible answer to the question of whether he or she feels protected against crime, keeping everything else constant at the mean levels. As can be observed, most results show a monotonic pattern in the expected direction, although not statistically significant in all the cases.

For the dependent variable *democracy best system*, the results show a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction only with two of the *provision of security* variables; namely, a positive and statistically significant relationship with *protection against crime* and *protection of private property*. For *rate public safety* the pattern changes in the last value, but the probability of agreeing with the statement on democracy is still higher than for the lowest levels of policy assessment. Finally, no statistically significant relationship was found with neither *concerned to be a victim* nor with *have been assaulted*. In terms of the *justice administration* dimension, a positive and significant relationship with *satisfied with judicial system* was found; with *benefited from judicial policy* a positive relationship was found, albeit not statistically significant. In regards to *tax collection*, no statistically significant relationship was found with either of the two variables. Finally, for *guarantee of rights* a positive and statistically significant relationship was found with *benefited from education policy* (at the 90%) and *state has done for you* but not for neither *benefited from health policy* nor with *benefited from housing policy*.

Figure 2A:  
Is democracy the best system of government?



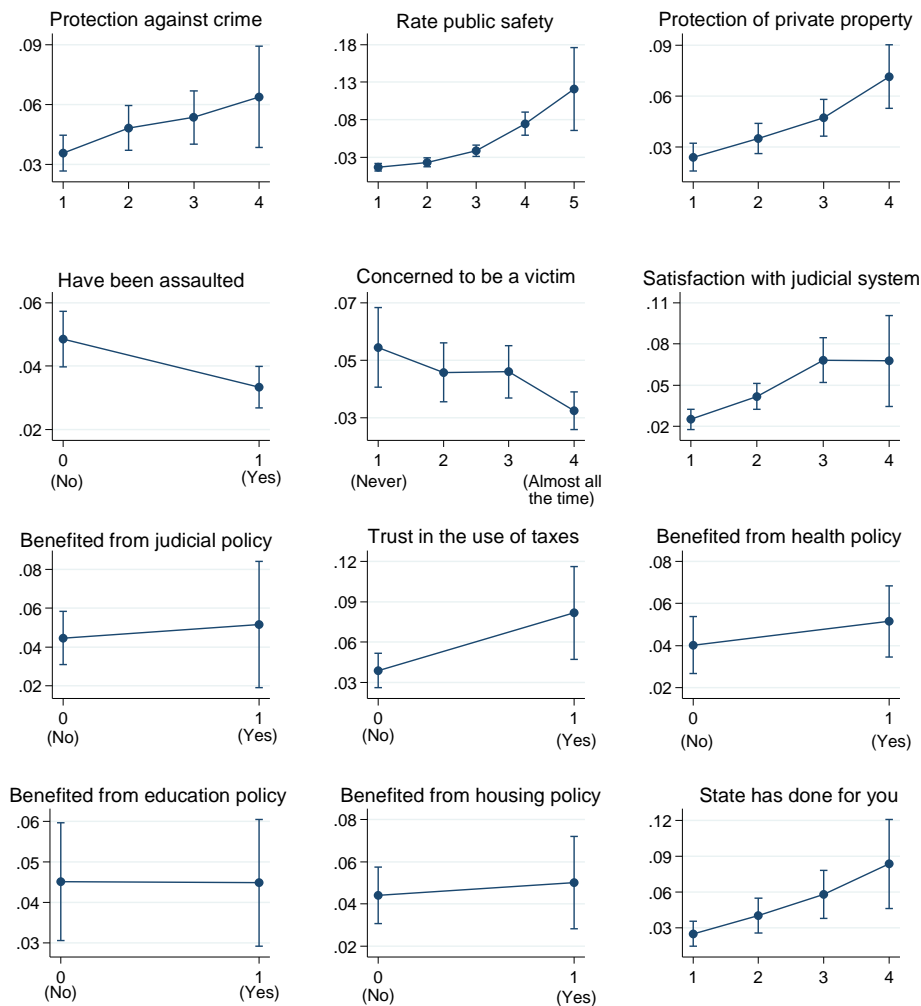
\* When not specified, higher values on the x-axis correspond to better assessments of the policy.  
Confidence level = 95%.

For the dependent variable *satisfaction with democracy*, the results show a statistically significant relationship with all the *provision of security* variables in the expected direction; that is, positive for *protection against crime*, *rate public safety* and *protection of private property*, and negative for *have been assaulted* and *concerned to be a victim*. In regards to justice, a positive and significant relationship of the dependent variable with *satisfied with justice* system was found, and a positive but not statistically significant relationship with *benefited from justice policy* was found. For the *tax collection* variables a positive and significant relation with *trust in the use of taxes* was found but none with *how many people pay taxes*. Finally, a positive and significant relationship with *benefited from health policy* (at the 90%) and *state has done for you* was found, but not for neither *benefited from education policy* nor for *benefited from housing policy*.

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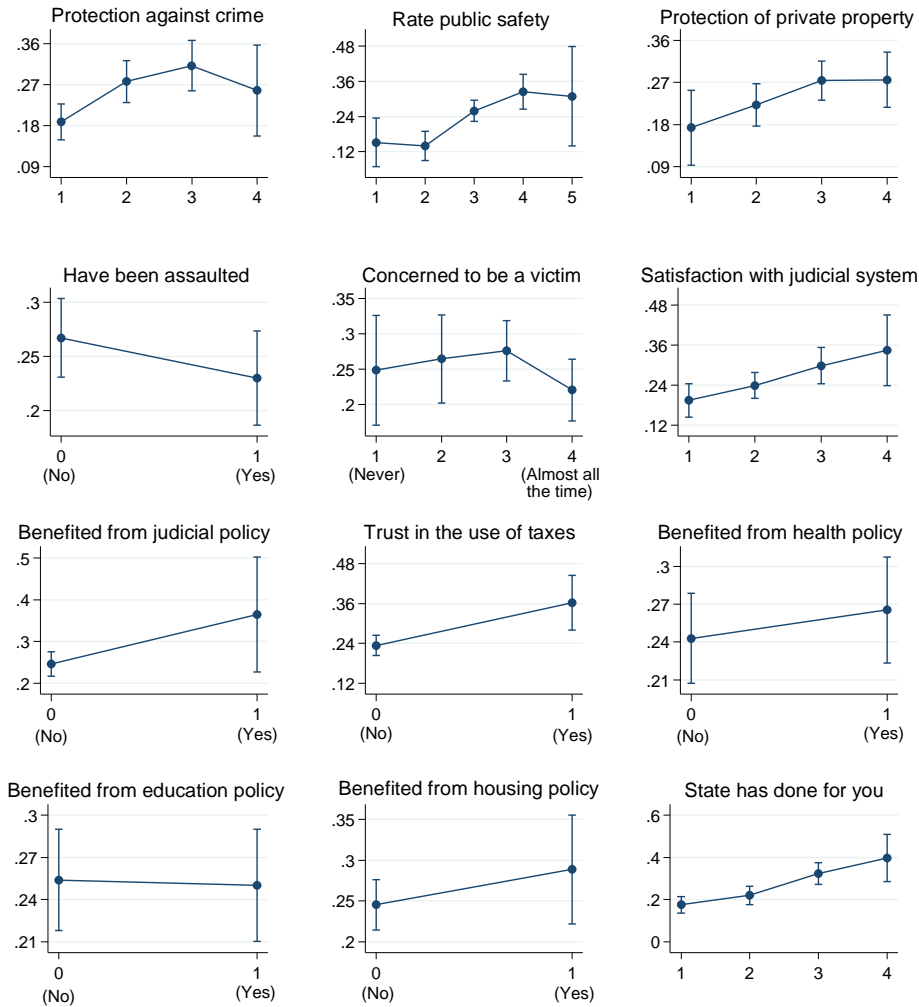
Figure 2B:

Are you satisfied with the way democracy works in Colombia?



\* When not specified, higher values on the x-axis correspond to better assessments of the policy.  
Confidence level = 95%.

Figure 2C:  
Democracy has improved



\* When not specified, higher values on the x-axis correspond to better assessments of the policy.  
Confidence level = 95%.

Finally, for the dependent variable *democracy has improved*, a positive and statistically significant relationship with most *provision of security* variables was found; there is a negative relationship, although not significant, with *have been assaulted*, and no relationship with *concerned to be a victim*. Also, a positive and significant relationship with both *justice* variables and with *trust in the use of taxes* was found, as well as with *how many people pay taxes* (not in the graphics, see Table 1). Finally, as in previous cases, a positive and significant relationship with *state has done for you* was found, and a positive but not significant relationship with health and housing policy was found.

Therefore, perceptions of protection against crime, protection of private property and ratings of public safety are always statistically related in the expected direction to evaluations of support for democratic principles and democracy performance. Other variables that are



consistent along the three dependent variables are *satisfaction with judicial policy* and *state has done for you*.

Having been benefited from education policy and being concerned to be a victim are slightly associated to democratic principles, but not to democracy performance. On the contrary, having been assaulted, having been benefited from health policy as well as fairness and trust in regards to tax collection are associated to democracy performance, but not to democratic principles.

Some examples might help illustrate the magnitude of the relationship between assessments of state capacity and support for democracy. Keeping everything else at the mean levels, an individual who answers that protection against crime is not at all guaranteed has a probability of 14.7% of answering that he or she completely agrees that democracy is the best system of government, whereas that probability for someone who feels protection against crime is fully guaranteed is 20.5%. Similarly, an individual who rates public safety as 'very good' has a probability of 11.6% of answering that he or she is satisfied with the way democracy works in Colombia, whereas that probability for someone who rates it as 'very bad' is just 1.6%. Finally, an individual who trusts in the use of taxes has a probability of 36% of answering that he or she believes that democracy in Colombia has improved, whereas for someone who does not trust in the use of taxes, that probability is only 23%.

As robustness tests, two different sets of specifications were created. First, the same models that were tested with ordinal logit regressions presented above, but using instead ordinal probit and ordinary least squared regression formulas. The second includes multiple *state* variables –one for each dimension-, in the right hand side of the ordinal logit regression equation, for each *democracy* variable. In both sets of specifications, the results were fairly similar to the ones previously discussed.

## 5. DISCUSSION: STATE, DEMOCRACY AND PEACE BUILDING IN COLOMBIA

The previous section provided evidence showing that low assessments of state capacity by the citizenry are associated to low levels of support for democratic principles and a less favorable evaluation of the performance of democracy in Colombia. In particular, perceptions about personal security, justice administration and the fairness and confidence in tax collection were shown to be associated to measures of support for democracy.

This evidence contributes to the discussion about whether regime support is stable and somehow not affected by regime performance. Contrary to that, the evidence coincides with that of other authors in that experiences with a particular regime, specifically in terms of government effectiveness and the quality of policy formulation and implementation, do affect preferences about regimes as well as rates of approval. Support for democratic principles is contingent not only on people's knowledge about those principles, but also on their own experiences with the functioning of democracy.

The relationship between state capacity and democracy is particularly important in a post conflict scenario due to the emphasis given to adopting democratic mechanisms as a

way out of armed confrontation and the disastrous consequences in the past of having done that in a context of weak states. Following the ideas of Huntington (1968) on political development, and putting them at the light of experiences such as those of post conflict Rwanda and Bosnia, scholars have brought the attention to the importance of strengthening state institutions and adopting policies that limit social conflicts before liberalizing the economic and political systems (Barnett, 2006; Paris, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Havana agreements between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas include a series of provisions aimed at both strengthening state institutions and at a democratic opening. Indeed, the concept of ‘territorial peace’ that underlays the peace building process in Colombia, considers democracy as the best mechanism for consolidating peace, and calls for a mobilization of the population in bottom-up participatory planning processes. It also recognizes the importance of transforming the regions most affected by the conflict and the need of strengthening state institutions in order to guarantee people’s rights in a fair and equal manner. It argues for participation and inclusion as the basis for these two processes of transforming the regions and strengthening institutions (Jaramillo, 2014).

The relationship between state capacity and support for democracy that has been studied in this paper poses at least two possibilities –a challenge and an opportunity- for a country that aims at opening its democratic spaces in order to allow for new political actors, as well as to encourage citizen mobilization. On the one hand, despite the advances made by the Colombian state over the last years, there might be concerns associated to low state capacities, which might reduce the chances of a successful democratic opening. That is, if the post conflict Colombian state fails to deliver to the increased expectations of its citizens, chances of a successful democratic opening as the one aimed at in the Havana agreements, will be slim. On the other hand, the opening of democratic spaces, carried out side by side with the institutional adjustments required for improving state capacity, might lead to better assessments of state capacity and the creation of a virtuous circle between democratic opening and state strengthening.

This paper shows that in Colombia, problems such as those associated to the presence of criminal organizations and other actors that affect security and public order, a weak judiciary and the insufficient capacity of the state to guarantee citizens’ rights are associated to lower levels of support for democracy. In a post conflict scenario, this situation is more complex and might translate into public skepticism about democratic mechanisms and practices like those that will be incentivized for discussing and implementing peace-building programs.

Since these problems have a more severe effect in marginal regions that are sparsely populated, where the state is weaker and the capital accumulation process is slower, there might be fewer incentives to make decisive actions oriented at transforming those territories

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<sup>3</sup> There is also evidence about the role of state capacity in guaranteeing the implementation of peace agreements (DeRouen, Ferguson, Norton, Lea, & Streat-Bartlett, 2010).

(Duncan, 2014). There might also be the case that the dependence of the economy of those regions on illegal activities such as illegal mining and drug trafficking, will impair –or coopt– state actors to comply with their obligations. If the state fails to respond to citizens' demands, particularly in those regions, support for democracy and its mechanisms will be negatively affected, whereby an important component of the Havana agreements will be missing. This situation only highlights the importance of the Colombian state compliance of the Havana agreements in terms of building or strengthening state institutions in those regions that have been more severely affected by the conflict.

Nevertheless, before reaching definitive conclusions, it is important to emphasize that the results in the empirical section of this paper do not claim for a causal relationship from state capacity to support for democracy and that there is actually room for a reversed causality relationship. That is, the results allow for a situation in which changes in support for democracy lead to changes in evaluations of state capacity. If that is the case, the opening of spaces for democratic deliberation in the context of the peace-building phase, provided they are perceived as a democratic innovation, could lead to better assessments of state capacity.

Although not in a post conflict, that was actually the case of initiatives such as the campaign for decentralized planning in Kerala, India, and the participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In both scenarios democratization went in tandem with the development of local actor capacities and translated into improved conditions in terms on service delivery, economic development, social inclusion and local actors capacities (Baiocchi, Heller, & Silva, 2011; Heller, Harilal, & Shubham Chaudhuri, 2007).

The spaces that are created by the Havana agreements for discussing issues such as rural development and illegal crop substitution, as well as the incentives for participatory budgeting and local planning, among others, have the potential of generating local level dynamics that address the tensions existing between local state capacities and democratization. In that scenario, the international experience shows the crucial role of civil society and social movements for guaranteeing a sustainable process, as well as the importance of having a strong central state and a well-defined political project (Heller, 2001). In the case of Colombia, considering the peace building phase as an opportunity for carrying out a state building process, there would be a need to convert the peace building initiative in such a political project.

Therefore, at least in the short term, a successful mobilization of the citizenry towards peace building activities might translate into improved evaluations of state institutions and would probably contribute to a virtuous circle between democratic opening and state capacity. However, in the medium and long term, a failure of the state in fulfilling people's expectations would increase the democratic deficit and the levels of dissatisfaction with democracy. In this alternative context, failing to correct problems of the political system such as massive clientelism and the presence of illegal interests in the political system, not only would affect the legitimacy of the representation and participation system, but would also translate into lower levels of evaluations of state capacity. As mentioned earlier, there is always a great danger associated to a weak state in a post conflict scenario.

Mobilizing the citizenry -as the Havana agreements aim-, without carrying out reforms that change citizen's perceptions of institutions efficiency, has been shown to degenerate in a larger number of civically active citizens in radical modes of political participation such as mass protests (Moseley, 2015).

Therefore, a successful post conflict scenario requires both, an active participation of the citizenry, and efforts from the state aiming at strengthening institutions and delivering to the people, particularly at the local level. These are some of the main aims of the Havana agreements for reaching a stable and lasting peace.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The current global context of retreat of democracy poses important challenges for countries aiming at deepening democracy, particularly in the case of Colombia, where this process is part of an agreement with an illegal armed group for putting an end to a more than fifty-year-old conflict.

The empirical evidence of this paper shows that citizens' dissatisfaction with democratic principles and performance in Colombia is strongly associated to an insufficient capacity of the state to deliver in areas like provision of security, justice administration, tax collection and guarantee of rights.

This situation might translate into important obstacles for changing the underlying conditions in the areas that have been more severely affected by the armed conflict. However, exploiting the possibility of a reversed causality relationship from support for democracy to assessments of state capacity, this paper argues that the opening of spaces for democratic deliberation, associated to the implementation of the Havana agreements, can open the possibility of the state to consolidate its presence in the territory. Insofar as the initial boost associated to this democratic innovation translates into the strengthening of the state in the areas mentioned above, the end of the conflict with the FARC is a possibility for entering a virtuous circle of democratic opening and state strengthening that is required for political development

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Annex 1.

Description of Variables

Question from the Latinobarometer included in the analysis.

A. Dependent variables are based on the following questions:

1. (*Democracy best system*) Do you completely agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with the statement: democracy could have problems but it is the best system of government. The answers were coded on a 4-point scale, where: 4= completely agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree and 1 = completely disagree (Included in the 2011, 2013 and 2015 datasets).
2. (*Satisfaction with democracy*) Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Colombia? Answers to this question were on a 4-point scale, where 4 = very satisfied, 3 = rather satisfied, 2= not very satisfied, 1 = not at all satisfied (Included in the 2011, 2013 and 2015 datasets).
3. (*Democracy has improved*) Do you believe that democracy in Colombia has improved/remained the same/worsened? Answers to this question were coded on a 3-point scale, with 3= has improved, 2= has remained the same and 1= has worsened (Included only in the 2011 dataset).

B. Independent variables are based on the following questions:

- Answers to the next two questions use the following criteria

Fully guaranteed – 4

Fairly generally guaranteed– 3

Somehow guaranteed – 2

Not at all guaranteed– 1

4. (*Protection against crime*) To what extent is protection against crime guaranteed in Colombia? (Included in the 2011 and 2015 datasets).
5. (*Protection of private property*) To what extent is protection of private property guaranteed in Colombia? (Included in the 2011 and 2015 datasets).

- Answers to the next four questions use the following criteria:

- Not mentioned = 0

- Mentioned = 1

Which of the following public policies have benefited you and your family?

6. (*Benefited from health policy*) Health policy (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
7. (*Benefited from education policy*) Education policy (included only in the 2011 dataset).

8. (*Benefited from housing policy*) Housing policy (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
  9. (*Benefited from judicial policy*) Judicial policy (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
- Answers to the next two questions use the following criteria:  
No – 0  
Yes – 1
10. (*Have been assaulted*) Have you or a relative been assaulted, attacked, or the victim of a crime in the last 12 months? (Included in the 2011, 2013 and 2015 datasets).
  11. (*Trust in the use of taxes*) Generally speaking, are you confident that taxpayer's money will be well spent by the state? (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
  12. (*Satisfaction with judicial system*) Would you say you are very satisfied (4), fairly satisfied (3), not very satisfied (2), or not at all satisfied (1) with the way the judicial system works in Colombia? (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
  13. (*How many people pay taxes*) As far as you know or have heard, on a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 is "none" and 100 is "all", how many Colombians having to pay taxes do so properly? (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
  14. (*Rate public safety*) How would you rate public safety in Colombia? Answers to this question were on a 5-point scale recoded to range from 5 (very good), to 1 (very bad) (Included in the 2011, 2013 and 2015 datasets).
  15. (*Concerned to be a victim*) How often are you concerned that you could be a victim of a violent crime? The answers were coded on a 4-point scale, where 4 = almost all the time, 3 = sometimes, 2 = occasionally and 1 = never (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
  16. (*State has done for you*) How much has the State done for you and your family in the last three years? The answers were coded on a 4-point scale, where 4 = a lot, 3 = something, 2 = little and 1 = nothing (Included only in the 2011 dataset).
- C. Control variables are based on the following questions (Included in all the datasets):
17. (*Gender*) Gender of the interviewee: 1=Male, 0= Female.
  18. (*Age*) What is your age?
  19. (*Education level*) What level of education do you have? What was the last year you completed? What sort of technical school, what sort of institute, etc.?
  20. (*Income level*) Do your salary and the total of your family's salary allow you to satisfactorily cover your needs? Which of the following situations do you find yourself in? The answers were coded on a 4-point scale, where 4= It is sufficient, you can save, 3= it is just sufficient, without major problems, 2= it is not sufficient, you have problems, 1= it is not sufficient, you have big problems.

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21. (*Ideology*) In politics, people normally speak of “left” and “right”. On a scale where 0 is left and 10 is right, where would you place yourself?
22. (*Religiosity*) If you have a religion, how would you describe yourself? The answers were coded on a 4-point scale, where 4 = very devout, 3 = devout, 2 = not very devout, and 1 = not devout at all.

Annex 2.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Democracy best system	3451	2.9331	0.6961	1	4
Satisfaction with democracy	3481	2.1138	0.7707	1	4
Democracy has improved	1172	1.9770	0.7076	1	3
Protection against crime	2380	1.9748	0.9092	1	4
Rate public safety	3591	2.8635	0.8808	1	5
Protection of private property	2358	2.6115	0.9073	1	4
Have been assaulted	3588	0.4033	0.4906	0	1
Concerned to be a victim	3594	2.8904	1.0323	1	4
Satisfaction with judicial system	2318	2.1290	0.8164	1	4
Benefited from justice policy	1200	0.0450	0.2074	0	1
Trust in the use of taxes	1142	0.1427	0.3500	0	1
How many people pay taxes	1155	55.8719	23.187	1	100
Benefited from health policy	1200	0.4142	0.4928	0	1
Benefited from education policy	1200	0.3300	0.4704	0	1
Benefited from housing policy	1200	0.1525	0.3597	0	1
State has done for you	1199	2.1226	0.9733	1	4
Gender (Male=1)	3600	0.4764	0.4995	0	1
Age	3600	40.403	16.139	18	94
Education level	3600	12.493	3.8940	1	17
Income level	3574	2.4077	0.8479	1	4
Ideology	2984	5.9186	2.5691	0	10
Religiosity	3327	2.6546	0.8052	1	4

## DOCUMENTOS DE TRABAJO

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1	Juan Santiago Correa	Urbanismo y transporte: el tranvía de Medellín (1919-1950)	2002
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